

Instructions for authors, permissions and subscription information:

E-mail: bilgi@uidergisi.com.tr

Web: www.uidergisi.com.tr



Whose Story Won? Public Diplomacy and International News Coverage of the 2010 Gaza Flotilla/Mavi Marmara Raid

Salih BAYRAM*

* Assist. Prof. Dr., Yalova University, Department of International Relations

To cite this article: Bayram, Salih, “Whose Story Won? Public Diplomacy and International News Coverage of the 2010 Gaza Flotilla/Mavi Marmara Raid”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 12, No. 45 (Spring 2015), pp. 39-60.

Copyright © International Relations Council of Turkey (UİK-IRCT). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted, or disseminated, in any form, or by any means, without prior written permission from UİK, to whom all requests to reproduce copyright material should be directed, in writing. References for academic and media coverages are beyond this rule.

Statements and opinions expressed in *Uluslararası İlişkiler* are the responsibility of the authors alone unless otherwise stated and do not imply the endorsement by the other authors, the Editors and the Editorial Board as well as the International Relations Council of Turkey.

Whose Story Won? Public Diplomacy and International News Coverage of the 2010 Gaza Flotilla/Mavi Marmara Raid

Salih BAYRAM

*Assist. Prof. Dr., Department of International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences,
Yalova University, Yalova, Turkey. E-mail: salih.bayram@yalova.edu.tr.*

ABSTRACT

This article examines international news coverage of the Gaza Flotilla and the Israeli raid on the ship Mavi Marmara in May 2010, which resulted in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens and created a long-lasting cooling of relations between Turkey and Israel. The two countries had different interpretations of what the flotilla represented and what happened during the raid, and used all the might of their respective public diplomacy apparatuses to get their version of the events reported. This article looks at which country was more successful in this effort, four years into the dispute, using automated content analysis. Findings include Israel's overwhelming success, especially in the first two years and in the media of the countries that generate most of the English-language coverage, somewhat qualified by the Turkish advantage in the media of Muslim-majority countries and gains in the last two years. Both countries enjoyed positive coverage when they initiated newsworthy events, with third-party involvement moderating the usually strong pro-Israeli slant.

Keywords: Gaza Flotilla, Mavi Marmara, Public Diplomacy, Content Analysis

Kimin Hikâyesi Kazandı? 2010 Gazze Filosu/Mavi Marmara Baskınının Uluslararası Haber Medyasında Ele Alınışı ve Kamu Diplomasisi

ÖZET

Bu makale, dokuz Türk vatandaşının ölümü ile sonuçlanan ve İsrail-Türkiye ilişkilerinde uzun süreli bir krize neden olan Mavi Marmara baskınının ve genel olarak Gazze'ye Özgürlük Filosu'nun uluslararası haber medyasında ele alınış biçimini incelemektedir. Filonun amaçları ve baskın sırasında yaşananlar konusunda farklı görüşleri olan İsrail ve Türkiye, uluslararası medyadaki haberlerin kendi bakış açılarını yansıtmaları için ellerindeki bütün kamu diplomasisi imkânlarını seferber ettiler. Bu çalışma, olaydan bu yana geçen dört yıllık süre zarfında hangi ülkenin bu konuda daha başarılı olduğunu sayısal metin analizi yöntemleri kullanarak incelemektedir. Çalışmanın ana bulgusu, yazılan haberlerin tamamına bakıldığında İsrail'in daha başarılı olduğudur. Bu başarı özellikle ilk iki yılda ve İngilizce haberlerin büyük çoğunluğunu üreten ülkelerin medyalarında daha belirgindir. Türkiye ise konunun nispeten unutulmaya başladığı son iki yılda ve ağırlıklı olarak Müslüman nüfusa sahip ülkelerin medyalarında başarılı olmuştur. Her iki ülke de başlamasında inisiyatif aldıkları haber değeri taşıyan olaylar sonrasında olumlu haberlere konu olmuştur. Üçüncü tarafların dâhil olduğu olaylar ise normalde güçlü olan İsrail yanlısı tutumun bir miktar zayıflamasına neden olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gazze Filosu, Mavi Marmara, Kamu Diplomasisi, İçerik Analizi

Introduction

Turkey and Israel are two countries that take public diplomacy seriously,¹ more so in recent years. Turkey established an Office of Public Diplomacy under the prime minister's office in 2010, assigned the task of coordinating public diplomacy activities by various government branches,² and Israel had a separate ministry dedicated to Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs from 2009 to 2013, after which the ministry was turned into a division within the prime minister's office.³ Although these bodies are not the only government agencies conducting public diplomacy – they work alongside other bodies such as their respective foreign ministries and press offices – they do have wide-ranging coordination duties and are good indicators of the strong commitment on the part of the Erdoğan and Netanyahu administrations to manage the images of their countries in the eyes of the international public.

The May 2010 Gaza Flotilla and the ensuing coverage in international news media concerning the Israeli raid on *Mavi Marmara*, the main passenger ship in the flotilla, provides a perfect opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the public diplomacy arms of two states in a conflict situation. The raid resulted in the deaths of ten activists, nine of them Turkish citizens and one a Turkish-American dual citizen, and the way the raid was reported in international news media was of utmost importance to both countries, which had differing interpretations of what the flotilla represented and what happened aboard the *Mavi Marmara* on the night of May 31, 2010.

To Israel, the organizers of the flotilla had links to Hamas, which Israel (and many other countries) considers a terrorist organization, and the deaths happened because some passengers attacked the Israeli forces boarding the ship, who in turn acted in self-defense. To Turkey, the flotilla was carrying humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, who were suffering under an Israeli blockade, and the deaths happened because of “excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate force... used by the Israeli soldiers against the civilians on board”.⁴ Thus, the two sides had competing frameworks describing the flotilla, its aims, and the raid. Both countries made efforts to influence the international public opinion in their favor, efforts that started immediately after the raid, and in the case of Israel, even before the raid took place, providing a rare opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the public diplomacy campaigns of two states in a conflict situation.

There have of course been many studies examining the media coverage of Israel, and more specifically the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,⁵ but these studies typically pit the state of Israel against a people or an unrecognized microstate, or a collection of “Arab states” or “pro-Palestinian actors”. As such, they are useful in understanding the dynamics of that specific conflict and its media coverage, but are usually of little relevance to the debate about best practices in public diplomacy, especially as it

1 İbrahim Kalm, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey”, *Perceptions*, Vol.26, No.3, 2011, p.5-23; Eytan Gilboa, “Public Diplomacy: The Missing Component in Israel’s Foreign Policy”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol.12, No.4, 2006, p.15-747; MOLAD, *Israeli Hasbara: Myths and Facts: A Report on the Israeli Hasbara Apparatus*, Jerusalem, The Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy, 2012.

2 See the official webpage of the Office, in Turkish, at <http://www.kdk.gov.tr/kurumsal/kurulus/7> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

3 See Herb Keinson, “Public Diplomacy Ministry Fades Away”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 April 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Public-Diplomacy-Ministry-fades-away-311363> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

4 Turkish National Commission of Inquiry, *Report on the Israeli Attack on the Humanitarian Aid Convoy to Gaza*, 2010.

5 For example, see Greg Philo and Mike Berry, *Bad News from Israel*, London, Pluto Press, 2004; Deborah A. Barranco and Leonard Shyles, “Arab vs. Israeli News Coverage in the New York Times, 1976 and 1984”, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol.65, No.1, 1988, p.178-181.

relates to state actors. On that topic, we stand to gain more, theoretically, from a comparison of more similar entities, and Turkey and Israel are ideal candidates for such a comparison: both are non-Arab states located in the Middle East, both are democracies (with legitimate criticism leveled at the quality of democracy in both cases, although for different reasons), both are considered to be middle powers with roughly comparable levels of economic well-being and military might,⁶ both are and historically have been US allies, and more crucially, in recent years both invested heavily to improve their standing with the international public, establishing dedicated government agencies, coordinating public diplomacy activities, and producing English-language press releases and other content to influence coverage in international news media.

This article will examine the coverage of the Gaza flotilla and the *Mavi Marmara* raid in international news media to see which side was more effective in selling their version of the events. More specifically, the article will seek answers to the following questions: Was the overall tone of coverage more pro-Israeli or more pro-Turkish? Were there any over-time differences? Which subsequent events or developments drew the attention of the media? What sorts of events or developments generated pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish articles? Were there differences in the tone of coverage between media organizations from different countries?

With these questions in mind, the next section briefly reviews previous studies on the subject, followed by a section detailing the method used. The article then proceeds to present the findings from a content analysis of news articles covering the Gaza Flotilla and the *Mavi Marmara* raid, followed by a conclusion.

Literature

The term public diplomacy, although coined much earlier,⁷ gained new popularity in 1990s and 2000s, especially after Joseph Nye's influential work on soft power.⁸ In its classical definition, public diplomacy refers to "the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries".⁹ Later work, however, also identified non-governmental organizations and even private persons or companies as being among the actors involved in public diplomacy, which makes up an important aspect of "new public diplomacy".¹⁰ Being a very policy-oriented field, literature on public diplomacy abounds with recommendations and examples of good practices for state and other actors to follow. Probably the most common among these recommendations is that no amount of advertising can sell a bad policy,¹¹ and states should pay attention to public diplomacy implications of their policies at the stage of initiation, not later when things go wrong, an idea famously expressed by Edward R. Murrow in his

6 Süleyman Elik, *Iran-Turkey Relations 1979-2011: Conceptualising the Dynamic of Politics, Religion and Security in the Middle-Power States*, Oxford, Routledge, 2012; Martin Kramer, "The Middle East Circa 2016", 3 October 2011, <http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/2011/10/the-middle-east-circa-2016>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

7 The term was coined by Edmund A. Gullion in 1965, then dean of Fletcher School of Tufts University. See Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase", Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p.19-23.

8 Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*, Los Angeles, Figueroa Press, 2009; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs, 2004.

9 "What is Public Diplomacy", <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

10 Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

11 Nye, *Soft Power*.

plea to the US government to “be in on the take-offs,” not just “on the crash landings”.¹² Other major recommendations include investing in listening, which is the effort to learn about foreign publics,¹³ and measuring the effectiveness of campaigns or other public diplomacy activities so that adjustments and improvements are possible. The present article aims to contribute to the efforts to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy activities, although in an indirect manner.

A commonly used classification divides all public diplomacy activities into short-term news management, medium-term strategic communications, advocacy or publicity campaigns, and long-term relationship building.¹⁴ Of these, campaigns are the easiest to measure in terms of effectiveness because they are initiated by the government or actor in question; the effectiveness of relationship-building efforts is difficult to gauge because of their long-term nature. Measuring the effectiveness of news management is also difficult, but for other reasons: news management is reactionary in nature, happens in response to developing events, and there could be countless other factors influencing the tone of coverage in the media besides the news management efforts of the government in question, such as the nature of the events or the structure of the media environment – for example an overall bias for one of the sides in a confrontation as opposed to the other.¹⁵ These difficulties limit the use of media analyses for purposes of measuring effectiveness of public diplomacy activities, which the present article aims to do.

Alternative measures, however, have their own limitations. The magazine *Monocle* and the British think-tank Institute for Government, for example, provide a measure of soft power, which is a composite index of numerous indicators from the fields of business, culture, government, diplomacy, and education.¹⁶ This measure, the first to provide a ranking of countries in terms of their soft power, is useful for general comparison purposes, but is of little help in identifying whether certain campaigns or a specific public diplomacy activity following a certain event was effective or not, which is a key concern for practitioners. Another method, opinion surveys, can be used to generate both kinds of information, whether about the general image of the country in a foreign public or about how a specific campaign changed perceptions of the country or its policies. Surveys, however, tend to be very costly, especially in a multicountry set-up, limiting their practical use. Media analysis, on the other hand, can be easily scaled to include many countries without incurring heavy costs, especially when quantitative measures are used, and can have a narrow focus on specific campaigns or events, as well as a wider focus. What is more, the problem with other factors influencing results, such as an already existing bias in international news media, is not as severe as it first looks. It certainly affects the overall levels of pro-Israeli or pro-Turkish bias that this article reports, but analyses of the distribution of bias over time or by country, or on certain days when news coverage peaks, are immune to this problem because benchmarks for comparison already exist.

When it comes to the efforts of Israel and Turkey to shape the international perception of the events, these were not lost on observers, and there were many commentaries and short articles on the

12 Cited in John R. Kelly, “Between ‘Take-offs’ and ‘Crash-Landings’”, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p.72-85.

13 Cull, *Public Diplomacy*.

14 Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, London, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002.

15 The author would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

16 Jonathan McClory, *The New Persuaders: an International Ranking of Soft Power*, Institute for Government, 2010.

subject.¹⁷ These articles ranged from op-ed pieces by officials declaring their victory in the PR battle,¹⁸ to a *Wired.com* analysis of Israeli efforts to use Youtube and Twitter,¹⁹ to strategy-oriented reports by Stratfor analysts.²⁰ In addition, there were at least two studies examining the coverage of the Gaza Flotilla/*Mavi Marmara* raid in depth, those by Diana Allan and Curtis Brown²¹ and by Bridget Reynolds Sheffer.²²

Allan and Brown examined the coverage of the raid in Web 2.0, especially on Youtube, and argue that despite all the celebrations about the empowering potential of social media for ordinary users, and despite some positive examples, it was still the Israeli government with its formidable Hasbara apparatus that won more hearts and minds, not the pro-Palestinian activists. Pro-Palestinian activists did create some “cool” videos that gained some traction, but IDF-released videos were much more successful, with their viewers far outnumbering those of pro-Palestinian activists. According to the authors, the same was true with regards to the coverage in traditional news outlets too: pro-Israeli stories figured much more prominently both in print and online versions of *New York Times*, whereas the few pro-Palestinian ones were relegated to the less populated blogs. Their theoretical argument is that even if there is an improvement from the Palestinian perspective, this improvement is due to changes in the larger political context rather than the innate qualities of Web 2.0.

Sheffer is another author that examined the public diplomacy efforts in the wake of the *Mavi Marmara* raid. Instead of the media coverage, Sheffer focuses on the rhetorical devices used by Israel and by the Free Gaza Movement – which organized the flotilla – to manage their reputations and to generate positive coverage. She finds that the two sides mainly differed in their discourses on humanitarian aid, Israeli aggression, and activists and weapons on board the *Mavi Marmara*.

The present study, though informed by these articles, differs from them in important respects. The main difference is that it explicitly compares the efforts of two state actors, Turkey and Israel, whereas Allan and Brown, as well as Sheffer, compare Israel's efforts with those of various pro-Palestinian activists. Another way in which the present article is different is its quantitative approach to textual analysis. The only numbers Allan and Brown cite to support their claim that Israeli efforts were more successful in the wake of *Mavi Marmara* raid are those related to two specific videos uploaded to Youtube by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and by Cultures of Resistance. Sheffer's study has an even stronger qualitative orientation, being interested mainly in identifying the different discourses used, rather than quantifying them.

17 For a fuller list of media articles on Gaza flotilla and public diplomacy, see USC Center on Public Diplomacy's collection of links: “PD and the Gaza Flotilla”, http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/pdin_monitor_article/pd_and_the_gaza_flotilla (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

18 Danny Ayalon, “Public relations battle is a marathon, not a sprint”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 4 June 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Public-relations-battle-is-a-marathon-not-a-sprint> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

19 Noah Shachtman, “Israel turns to Youtube, Twitter after flotilla fiasco”, *Wired*, 1 June 2010, <http://www.wired.com/2010/06/israel-turns-to-youtube-twitter-to-rescue-info-war/> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

20 George Friedman, “Flotillas and the wars of public opinion”, *Geopolitical Weekly*, 31 May 2010, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100531_flotillas_and_wars_public_opinion#axzz394j9lvsT, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

21 Diana Allan and Curtis Brown, “The Mavi Marmara at the Frontlines of Web 2.0”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, 2010, p.63-77.

22 Bridget R. Sheffer, “Mediated Public Diplomacy and Political Dialectics: 2010 Free Gaza Flotilla”, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, Vol.43, No.2, 2014, p.134-150.

Method

This article has two strengths in terms of methodology: One, the automated method used allows a large number of articles to be analyzed, making it possible to cover a very long period after the key events took place. Thus, analysis is not limited to what happened, say, in the two weeks or months after the raid, which would be the usual time frame in a more intensive study using hand-coding, but covers four years, tracking changes in the way the issue was reported over this extended period, thus significantly improving our understanding of the interaction between the longer-term strategies and initiatives of the actors concerned and the tone of coverage in the media. The second strength of the article is that it takes validity seriously, which is usually a soft spot in automated analyses of content,²³ with multiple tests to establish and demonstrate that the method actually measures slant and not something else.

The news articles analyzed were identified and collected using Westlaw, which has an extensive database of English-language news from around the world. All short and medium-length articles²⁴ containing one of the phrases “Gaza flotilla” or “*Mavi Marmara*” in their titles or in the leading paragraph, published from May 31, 2010, the day the raid took place, to May 31, 2014 were collected. There were a total of 2371 news articles that met these criteria, from 260 separate news outlets (news agencies, newspapers, news websites and other services) based in 35 different countries. The news outlets included both major organizations such as the AFP, Xinhua News Agency, and the New York Times, as well as smaller titles mostly from English-speaking countries but from other countries as well.

These articles were examined in terms of how similar their language was to the language used by pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish actors, defined as the respective foreign ministries of the two countries, plus major pro-Turkish and pro-Israeli NGOs. The decision to include NGO actors in addition to the official actors stemmed from both practical and theoretical reasons. The theoretical reason is, as has become a truism in the literature on “new public diplomacy”, that non-governmental actors, including NGOs, are among the main players in public diplomacy. Thus, we are interested in comparing the total public diplomacy outputs of the countries concerned, not just what the official bodies produced. The practical reason was to have a larger and more capable “training set”, in the parlance of text classification, one that would be better able to serve as a yardstick to evaluate news content. The quality of the training set is arguably the single most important factor in text classification tasks, and considerable effort was put into developing a capable set of training documents for both countries. The training set thus consisted of articles published on the websites of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as in the websites of major pro-Turkish and pro-Israeli NGOs based in Turkey, in Israel, and in the United States.

23 Justin Grimmer and Brandon M. Stewart, “Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts”, *Political Analysis*, Vol.21, No.3, 2013, p.267-297.

24 Short articles contain less than 200 words and medium length articles contain between 200 and 1000 words. Long articles with more than 1000 words were excluded because the text classification method used, detailed below, is expected to work better with shorter texts, with a higher signal-to-noise ratio. In any case, the exclusion of the longer articles is not expected to bias the results, since there were only 220 long articles, less than 9% of the total number, and more importantly, there is no reason to expect the longer articles to differ from the rest in terms of their pro-Israeli or pro-Turkish slant.

There were three groups of NGOs included in the analysis: 1- pro-government NGOs in Turkey, 2- pro-government NGOs in Israel, and 3- pro-Israel NGOs based in the US. Content produced by opposition NGOs were excluded because they are expected to be critical of their governments' stances, and training set was to be as pure as possible. Pro-government NGOs in Turkey were identified as those belonging to the umbrella organization Turkish Foundation for Voluntary Organizations (*Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı* - TGTV), which is known for the Islamist/conservative orientation of its members, and which also plays a leading role in the international umbrella organization The Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW).²⁵ In practice, however, there was content from IHH only, which was the main organizer of the flotilla, because none of the other NGOs on the list had English language articles on their websites mentioning one of the search phrases in the title. A list of right-wing NGOs in Israel was given in a study by Shir Hever,²⁶ and this list was used as a proxy of pro-government NGOs in Israel, given that both at the time the raid took place, and as of this writing, there was a Likud-led coalition under Netanyahu's premiership. The decision to include pro-Israeli NGOs in the US was made because they are also prominent actors in matters relating to Israel's foreign relations, arguably even more so than local Israeli NGOs. The pro-Israeli lobby in the US, however, has become diversified in recent years, so much so that it is now possible to identify two distinct groups, one more right wing and the other more left wing. Thus, the task was to identify the pro-Israeli-government NGOs in the US, a subset of the larger pool of pro-Israeli organizations. This list consisted of all the members of the umbrella organization Conference of Presidents - which counts among its members such prominent organizations as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) - minus those mentioned in a list compiled by Partners for Progressive Israel (formerly Meretz USA),²⁷ which consists mainly of "left-wing", "progressive" or "pro-peace" pro-Israeli NGOs in the US.

All articles in the training set were collected using Google Advanced Search, with the criteria that they be in English and contain one of the phrases "Gaza Flotilla" or "*Mavi Marmara*" in their title. In addition to those, there were four more criteria for texts to be included in the training set: 1- They had to originate from the organization in question and not be reprints (The Jewish Federations of North America, for example, published many full-text stories provided by the news agency AFP, which were excluded); 2- pdf files were excluded; 3- Very long reports were excluded, Because the two foreign ministries, for example, published the full reports of Israeli and Turkish investigation committees, comprising hundreds of pages, but these were excluded because the text classification method used in this study works better when the training set consists of a large number of relatively shorter texts; 4- Texts which chose to mark quotations using means other than quotation marks were excluded. This applied mainly to some articles from *camera.org*, which documents biased reporting on Israel, and makes extensive quotes, sometimes without using quotation marks. As detailed below, all text within quotation marks were left out of the analysis to improve the performance of the text classifier. There were a total of 257 articles that met these criteria, 145 from pro-Israeli actors, 112 from pro-Turkish actors. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the articles in the training set by organization.

25 Zeynep Atalay, "Civil Society as Soft Power: Islamic NGOS and Turkish Foreign Policy", Riva Kastoryano (ed.), *Turkey between Nationalism and Globalization*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p.165-186.

26 Shir Hever, *Private Funding of Right-Wing Ideology in Israel*, Jerusalem, The Alternative Information Center, 2013.

27 "US Organizations", 12 September 2007, <http://partners4israel.org/u-s-organizations> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

Table 1. Number of articles in the training set

	# of articles
Pro-Israeli sources	
<i>Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mfa.gov.il)</i>	34
Israeli NGOS	
NGO Monitor (ngo-monitor.org)	12
US-based NGOS	
ADL - Anti-Defamation League (adl.org)	29
CAMERA - Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (camera.org)	29
The Jewish Federations of North America (jewishfederations.org)	12
AJC - American Jewish Committee (ajc.org)	9
JINSA - Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (jinsa.org)	7
Hadassah - The Women's Zionist Organization of America (hadassah.org)	4
ARZA - Association of Reform Zionists of America (arza.org)	2
Orthodox Union (ou.org)	2
Zionist Organization of America (zoa.org)	2
B'nai Brith International (bnaibrith.org)	1
Jewish Labor Committee (jewishlabor.org)	1
Union for Reform Judaism (urj.org)	1
<u>Total</u>	<u>145</u>
Pro-Turkish sources	
<i>Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mfa.gov.tr)</i>	20
Turkish NGOs	
IHH International Humanitarian Relief Foundation (ihh.org.tr)	92
<u>Total</u>	<u>112</u>

The next step was the selection of text features to be used in classification. To have only the authentic voice of the organizations concerned, all text within single or double quotation marks were deleted. Based upon the advice in text classification literature that multi-word phrases perform better than single words - also known as a bag-of-words approach -,²⁸ all phrases with a minimum frequency of three in the training set and varying from two to five words in length were then selected, using the phrase extraction feature of WordStat text analysis software.²⁹ Then, following the example of Gentzkow and Shapiro,³⁰ these phrases were sorted on the basis of how much discriminatory power they have, using chi-square statistic. Chi-square was preferred because simpler measures, for example

28 Dou Shen *et.al.*, "Text Classification Improved through Multigram Models", *Proceedings of the 15th ACM International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management*, ACM, 2006, p.672-681.

29 Wordstat's stop-word list for English was used prior to phrase extraction, to eliminate common words such as "and", "of", "with", etc. that carry relatively little information, except when they were placed in the middle of a phrase, in which case they were included.

30 Matthew Gentzkow and Jesse. M. Shapiro, "What Drives Media Slant? Evidence from US Daily Newspapers", *Econometrica*, Vol.78, No.1, 2010, p.35-71.

percentage distribution of a phrase between the two camps' texts, do not work as intended when the phrase in question is never used by one of the sides. For example, a phrase not used by pro-Israeli actors and used only once by pro-Turkish actors would be assigned the same value as that assigned to a phrase not used by pro-Israeli actors but used 20 times by pro-Turkish actors. Chi-square, on the other hand, works regardless of whether a phrase is absent from one of the texts, and is routinely used in quantitative analysis of texts. Table 2 shows the top 10 pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish phrases thus identified, and reports percentages to help with interpretation.

Table 2. Top 10 pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish phrases by chi-square

Pro-Israeli phrase	IS%	TR%	Chi2	Pro-Turkish phrase	IS%	TR%	Chi2
GAZA_FLOTILLA	39%	5%	40.73	MAVI_MARMARA	19%	58%	42.71
FLOTILLA_INCIDENT	16%	1%	16.72	FREEDOM_FLOTILLA	1%	26%	35.80
IDF_SOLDIERS	12%	0%	14.95	MAVI_MARMARA_ATTACK	0%	21%	32.70
JEWISH_STATE	10%	0%	12.30	IHH_HUMANITARIAN_RELIEF_FOUNDATION	1%	22%	32.52
GAZA_STRIP	19%	5%	11.62	MAVI_MARMARA_SHIP	2%	24%	29.77
PALESTINIAN_AUTHORITY	10%	0%	11.44	ISRAELI_ATTACK	0%	19%	29.61
FLOTILLA_ORGANIZERS	15%	3%	11.23	INTERNATIONAL_WATERS	5%	25%	21.86
ISRAELI_CIVILIANS	9%	0%	10.58	MAVI_MARMARA_TRIAL	0%	11%	16.30
TERRORIST_ORGANIZATION	9%	0%	10.58	GAZA_FREEDOM_FLOTILLA	0%	11%	16.30
GAZA_FLOTILLA_INCIDENT	9%	0%	10.58	MAVI_MARMARA_MARTYRS	0%	10%	14.88

Note: Chi-square figures were calculated on the basis of case occurrence, using WordStat. IS% and TR% refer, respectively, to the percentage of pro-Israeli documents that use the phrase and the percentage of pro-Turkish documents that use the phrase.

Looking at Table 2, we can see clear differences in the way pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish actors talk about the flotilla and the raid. First of all, pro-Turkish actors use the emotional phrase “Freedom Flotilla” when referring to the vessels, which was also the official name given by the organizers (as in “the barbaric aggression of Israel that targeted the *Freedom Flotilla* carrying humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in Gaza”),³¹ whereas pro-Israeli actors prefer the much more languid “Gaza flotilla” (as in “ADL Praises Greece for Preventing Departure of Anti-Israel *Gaza Flotilla*” or “As you well

31 “Statement by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, at the OIC, Extraordinary Session of the Expanded Executive Committee Meeting, June 6, 2010, Jeddah”, www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-by-h_e_ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-at-the-oic-extraordinary-session-of-th.en.mfa, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

know, the *Gaza flotilla* was not intended to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza”),³² refusing to use the word “freedom” to describe the vessels and all the implications that come with the word. Second, the pro-Turkish organizations’ concern to put the spotlight on Israeli aggression is clear in the phrase “*Mavi Marmara* attack” and even more strongly in the “Israeli attack” (as in “perpetrators of the *Mavi Marmara* attack” or “The UN report which was released on 22 September 2010 showed how illegitimate the *Israeli attack* on the flotilla was.”),³³ which leaves no doubt as to who the aggressor was. Pro-Israeli organizations, on the other hand, prefer to describe what transpired not as an attack, but as an “incident”, a much more ambiguous term: they talk about “flotilla incident” and “Gaza flotilla incident” (as in “Israel’s commitment to examining the facts relating to the *flotilla incident* in a transparent and responsible process” or “*Gaza Flotilla Incident* Sparks Anti-Semitism and Calls for Violence Online”).³⁴ Third, Turkey was keen to emphasize that the “attack” happened in “international waters”, thus illegal (as in “Israel carried out an armed attack in the *international waters* of the Mediterranean, against an international aid convoy” or “Israel does not have the authority to assign a national commission to investigate a crime perpetrated in *international waters*”).³⁵ Israel, on the other hand, was keen to emphasize the legality of its blockade - and by extension the raid - by referring to its obligation to protect “Israeli civilians” from the “terrorist organization” Hamas (as in “Gaza Strip is still controlled by a *terrorist organization* that ... refuses to accept international demands to recognize Israel and stop terrorist acts against *Israeli civilians*”).³⁶

There were a total of 1675 such phrases, of which 651 signaled a pro-Turkish slant, and 1024 a pro-Israeli slant. In order not to bias the results, and again following the example of Gentzkow and Shapiro,³⁷ equal numbers of pro-Turkish and pro-Israeli phrases were needed, and only the top 651 pro-Israeli phrases by chi-square were included in the classification model in addition to the 651 pro-Turkish phrases. These phrases, weighted by chi-square so that items with more discriminatory power are given more weight, were then used to classify news articles, which were similarly stripped of all quoted content. The classification was done using Wordstat’s automated text classification feature, with the options Naïve Bayes and case occurrence selected.

32 “ADL Praises Greece for Preventing Departure of Anti-Israel Gaza Flotilla”, 3 July 2011, <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/israel-middle-east/adl-praises-greece-for.html>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

33 “Mavi Marmara trial continues with 4th hearing”, 3 October 2013, <http://mavi-marmara.ihh.org.tr/en/main/news/0/mavi-marmara-trial-continues-with-4th-hearing/1891> (Accessed 16 March 2015); “UN’s Mavi Marmara Report”, <http://www.ihh.org.tr/en/main/pages/uns-mavi-marmara-report/154>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

34 “Background on the Gaza Flotilla”, 15 June 2010, http://archive.adl.org/main_israel/gaza-flotilla.html#VQa_0462qUA, (Accessed on 16 March 2015); “Gaza Flotilla Incident Sparks Anti-Semitism and Calls for Violence Online”, 8 June 2010, http://archive.adl.org/main_terrorism/gaza_flotilla_online_response.html#VQbAe462qUA, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

35 “Press statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, regarding Turkish-Israeli relations, 2 September 2011”, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/press-statement-by-h_e_mr_ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-regarding-turkish-israeli-re.en.mfa (Accessed on 16 March 2015); “No: 132, 14 June 2010, Press Release Regarding the Investigation Commission of Israeli Raid Against the Freedom Flotilla”, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_132_-14-june-2010_-press-release-regarding-the-investigation-commission-of-israeli-raid-against-the-freedom-flotilla.en.mfa, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

36 “Amb Leshno Yaar Addresses UN Human Rights Council”, 1 Jun 2010, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/InternatlOrgs/Speeches/Pages/Amb_Leshno-Yaar_UN_Human_Rights_Council_1-Jun-2010.aspx (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

37 Gentzkow and Shapiro, “What Drives Media Slant?”.

Excerpts from the training set documents, quoted above, provide initial face validity to the automated text classification method used, but the real test is how successful the model actually is in distinguishing pro-Israeli from pro-Turkish articles. For this purpose, a third set of texts are needed, called the test set, whose positions on the issue we already know. We can safely assume that news outlets based in Turkey, unless they clearly side with the opposition, would carry a pro-Turkish slant when reporting on the issue; and news outlets based in Israel, unless they clearly side with the opposition, would carry a pro-Israeli slant when reporting on the issue. Fortunately, the Westlaw database contains news outlets that fit this description: Anadolu Agency³⁸ and Cihan News Agency³⁹ from Turkey, and Jerusalem Post⁴⁰ and Israel National News⁴¹ from Israel. Content from these sources were used to test the text classification model, before applying it further. Table 3 reports the results.

Table 3. Performance of the Text Classification Model Used

	Total number of articles	Number of predictions	Number correctly predicted	Recall (number correctly predicted / total number of articles)	Precision (number correctly predicted / number of predictions)
Jerusalem Post	302	162	151	0.50	0.93
Israeli National News	147	53	48	0.33	0.91
Anadolu Agency	31	13	13	0.42	1.00
Cihan News Agency	56	31	29	0.52	0.94
Total	536	259	241	0.45	0.93

Of the two commonly used measures to evaluate the performance of a text classification model, recall figures were rather humble, but precision figures turned out to be very strong.⁴² In other words, the model is a shy one, it makes predictions only about half of the time, not having anything

38 Anadolu Agency is the state-run news agency of Turkey, and is under close government supervision. Given its history and administrative structure, it is close to impossible for the agency to take a critical tone towards the government, especially in matters relating to the foreign policy.

39 Cihan News Agency is associated with the daily *Zaman* and the Gülen Movement in Turkey, which was a close ally of the governing party for most of the period under study, until late 2013.

40 Jerusalem Post is described as a right-wing newspaper by most observers, one with a “tougher line on issues such as security and the Palestinian territories” compared to the more left-leaning Haaretz. See “The Press in Israel”, 8 May 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4969714.stm (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

41 Israel National News is a website run by Arutz Sheva, a media network also running a radio station described as the “voice of the ultra-orthodox” and “established to combat the “negative thinking” and “post-Zionist” attitudes so prevalent in Israel’s liberal-left media”. See Morand Fachot, “Israel legalises religious pirate radios”, 24 February 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/285610.stm, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

42 This, of course, is partially by design because there is always a trade-off between recall and precision in text classification tasks, and the choice depends upon the particular task at hand. For example, in some cases, such as spam filtering, the model is expected to sort *all* incoming messages into spam and non-spam. For the purposes of this study, however, we do not have to classify all the news articles, it suffices that when we do classify an article our prediction is sufficiently reliable. Thus, a model with a higher precision rate was preferred at the expense of a lower recall rate.

to say about the rest,⁴³ but when it does make a prediction, it is very successful, producing predictions that are correct 93% of the time. Another way to put this is that when the model identifies an article as being pro-Israeli or pro-Turkish, we can be 93% sure that the diagnosis is correct.⁴⁴

Findings and Discussion

To focus on the “international” news scene, all articles published by news outlets based in Turkey and in Israel were left out of the analysis. This way, it becomes possible to study how successful the pro-Turkish and pro-Israeli actors were in influencing third-party actors, a definition that does not really apply to news organizations in Turkey and in Israel. This left 1800 articles to be analyzed.

Media Attention

Looking at Figure 1, which charts the distribution of media attention over time, it is clear that most of the coverage took place in the first two weeks, and the attention paid to the issue then declined sharply, with smaller local peaks in the following years.

The local peaks can also be used to identify the events that caught the attention of the international news media, which fall into three broad categories: 1- Developments relating to the various committees investigating the raid, and the reports they produced: The establishment of the Turkel and Palmer Commissions, release of the Turkel, Palmer, IDF and Israeli state comptroller’s reports, and testimonies by the members of the Israeli government before the Turkel Commission fall into this category, each generating a significant amount of interest in the international news media. 2- Developments relating to court proceedings in Turkey. Although this generated a smaller level of interest, it still stands out as a distinct category, with both the start of the trial, and the Turkish court issuing arrest warrants for Israeli generals receiving significant media attention. 3- The third category brings together events that can best be described as spectacles: the raid on *Mavi Marmara*, Israel’s warning to foreign journalists not to board the second flotilla, Greece stopping the second flotilla, Turkey expelling the Israeli envoy, and the Israeli apology are all events that fall into this category.

Pro-Israeli vs. pro-Turkish Slant

The model produced predictions for 1085 out of 1800 articles. Of those, 860 (79%) were classified as pro-Israeli, and 225 (21%) as pro-Turkish. These results clearly show that Israel was more

43 To be more precise, WordStat produces predictions for all the articles entered, but it does so with varying levels of confidence. For any given text, it produces two figures, one showing the likelihood that the text carries pro-Israeli slant, the other showing the likelihood that the text carries pro-Turkish slant, the two figures adding up to 1. I set the cutoff point at .90 instead of at .50, the default option. If the cutoff point were set at .50, recall would improve to 0.76 but precision would deteriorate to 0.76, the model making predictions about all the texts, but being correct only 76% of the time.

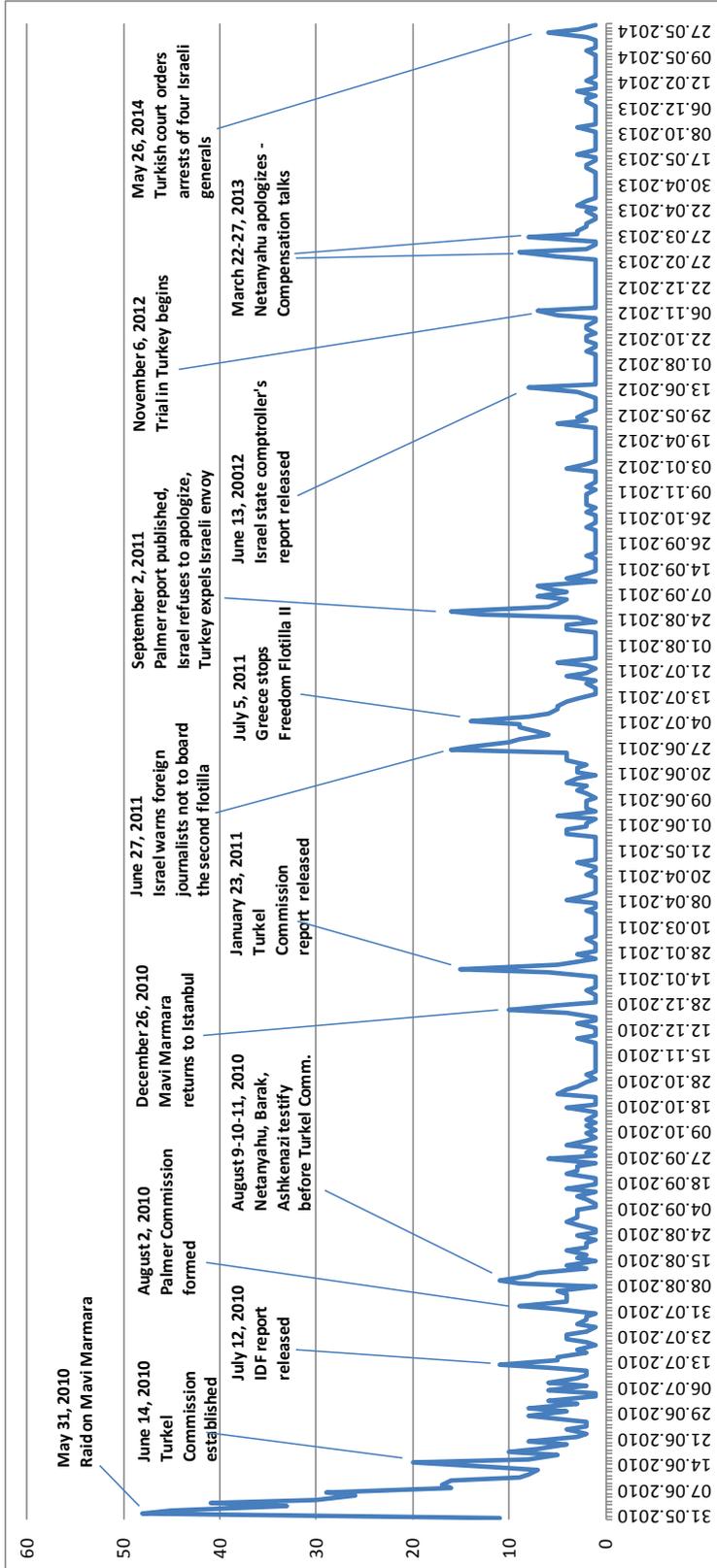
44 To make sure that we are picking up slant and not some other style characteristic shared by outlets from the same country, for example Turkish-English or Israeli-English, I have repeated the test with news articles from Electronic Intifada, a non-Turkish website that is expected to carry a pro-Turkish slant on this subject. The figures were similar to those reported in Table 3, with the model making predictions about 44 out of 58 texts, and being correct in its predictions 93% of the time.

successful in getting its version of the events reported by the English-language international news media. When we look at the breakdown of pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish news by country of origin of the news outlets,⁴⁵ we get a clearer picture: news outlets based in the US, France and the UK, which account for more than half of all the articles in the analysis, overwhelmingly produced pro-Israeli articles, with more than 90% of all articles originating from these countries carrying pro-Israeli slant. Turkey enjoyed an advantage on the pages of the news outlets from Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, UAE, Jordan, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, and Qatar, all majority-Muslim countries, but this advantage meant little because these outlets together produced less than 20% of all relevant articles in the dataset.

Over time, the advantage enjoyed by Israel has somewhat declined. In the first two years after the raid, for each pro-Turkish article published, there were five pro-Israeli ones, whereas in the last two years under study, Turkey had the advantage, with 1.2 pro-Turkish articles for each pro-Israeli article. This, however, did not help Turkey much overall, because most of the coverage relating to the event happened in the crucial early periods: over 90% of the coverage took place in the first two years, whereas Turkey's advantage was limited to the later periods when the interest in the issue has visibly declined, with less than 10% of the total coverage. One question that arises from this observation is, what was it in the later periods that generated more pro-Turkish than pro-Israeli news, deviating from the norm? Why did the news outlets change their minds and started to carry a stronger pro-Turkish slant? One explanation could be that by this time, having scored early points, pro-Israeli actors had more of an interest in keeping the issue low profile rather than continuing to push their own version, whereas pro-Turkish actors were still very much animated about the issue. This interpretation is also supported by the observation that the most recent entry on Israeli Foreign Ministry's website mentioning the incident is from September 2011, when Palmer Commission's report was released, and from that point onwards, no other material was posted on the Ministry's website about Gaza Flotilla or the *Mavi Marmara*. The most recent entry on Turkish Foreign Ministry's website, on the other hand, is from September 2013, which reports that "Foreign Minister Davutoğlu thanked Nicaragua for the firm stance and the solidarity shown with Turkey on the *Mavi Marmara* attack". This suggests that one of the sides, believing that the issue is not yet closed, is trying keep it on the agenda, whereas the other side, believing and content that the issue is settled, is keeping mum.

45 It should be kept in mind that we do not know if news outlets covered by Westlaw are representative of the media in individual countries in general. Thus, one should be careful not to read too much into the findings about the country of origin.

Figure 1. Media attention over time



Note: Figure 1 charts the number of news outlets that produced one or more stories on the subject on a particular day. Thus, on June 1, 2010, a total of 48 different news organizations produced reports mentioning 'Mavi Marmara' or 'Gaza flotilla' in their title or leading paragraph. Number of articles was not used because some outlets produced multiple news stories on the subject on the same day, inflating the total number of articles.

A more general question, regardless of time period, is which types of events generated more pro-Israeli news and which types of events generated more pro-Turkish news.⁴⁶ To answer this question, we can have a closer look at the crucial dates when coverage intensified, the local peaks labeled on Figure 1.⁴⁷ There were 13 such peaks besides the raid itself, and as was the case with coverage in general, most of the coverage around these events carried pro-Israeli slant. At closer look, however, it is possible to discern three distinct categories, as shown on Table 4.

Table 4. Events that Generated pro-Israeli and pro-Turkish Slant

News peak	Event	% pro-Israeli	% pro-Turkish	
June 15, 2010	June 14, 2010 Turkel Commission established	1.00	0.00	
July 13, 2010	July 12, 2010 IDF report released	1.00	0.00	
January 24, 2011	January 23, 2011 Turkel Commission's report released	1.00	0.00	
June 27-28, 2011	June 27, 2011 Israel warns foreign journalists not to board the second flotilla	1.00	0.00	strong pro-Israeli slant
July 5, 2011	July 5, 2011 Greece stops Freedom Flotilla II	1.00	0.00	
August 9-10-11, 2010	August 9-10-11, 2010 Netanyahu, Barak, Ashkenazi testify before Turkel Commission	0.97	0.03	
September 2-3, 2011	September 2, 2011 Palmer report released- Turkey expels Israeli envoy	0.89	0.11	
March 23, 27, 2013	March 22-27 2013 Israel apologizes - Compensation talks	0.86	0.14	moderate pro-Israeli slant
August 3, 2010	August 2, 2010 Palmer Commission formed	0.71	0.29	
June 14, 2012	June 13, 2012 Israel state comptroller's report released	0.67	0.33	
December 27, 2010	December 26, 2010 Mavi Marmara returns to İstanbul	0.33	0.67	
November 6-7, 2012	November 6, 2012 Trial in Turkey begins	0.29	0.71	pro-Turkish slant
May 27, 2014	May 26, 2014 Turkish court orders arrests of four Israeli generals	0.00	1.00	

46 This question was inspired by Sheaffer and Gabay's finding that events initiated by the Palestinian side, such as the Palestinian elections in 2006, generated more pro-Palestinian coverage and events initiated by the Israeli side, such as the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, generated more pro-Israeli coverage. See Tamir Sheaffer and Itar Gabay, "Mediated Public Diplomacy: A Strategic Contest over International Agenda Building and Frame Building," *Political Communication* Vol.26, No.4, 2009, pp.447-467.

47 Some of the peaks were twin or multiple peaks, with hardly any difference in the amount of coverage from one day to the next. In those cases, a "local peak" refers not to a single day but to two or three consecutive days. Thus, June 27-28, 2011; August 9-10-11, 2010; September 2-3, 2011; and November 6-7, 2012 were treated as single peaks. Similarly, news articles on March 23, 2013 and March 27, 2013 are about the same development, and were also collapsed into one.

In the first category are events that generated no pro-Turkish coverage to speak of, with 100% or close to 100% of all articles published at these dates carrying pro-Israeli slant. All the events in this category were initiated by Israel. Establishment of the Turkel Commission -the Israeli commission to investigate the raid on *Mavi Marmara*-, release of the Israeli Defense Forces' internal report on the raid, release of the Turkel Commission's report, Israel's warning during the preparations for a second flotilla to foreign journalists not to board any of the ships, and testimonies by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi before the Turkel Commission all fit that description. The only problematic case seems to be Greek government's decision to ban and then to physically prevent the second flotilla from leaving Greek ports, on the grounds that participants' lives would be in danger. This case certainly involves a third-party actor, the Greek government, but we can still characterize it as Israeli-initiated because the Greek government's decision was in response to pressure and requests by Israel, and was described as a 'diplomatic victory' by Israeli government officials.⁴⁸

A second category of events again generated more pro-Israeli than pro-Turkish articles on balance, but this time they were accompanied by a sizeable number of pro-Turkish articles as well. Formation of the Palmer Commission - tasked by the UN Secretary General to investigate the raid -, release of the Palmer Commission's report, and Netanyahu's apology on March 22, 2013 all involved third parties, the UN and the USA, and what is more, they were initiated by these third parties. This was most clear in Netanyahu's dramatic apology, which took place over a phone call from US President Barack Obama's tent at Ben Gurion airport just before he took off,⁴⁹ and which many observers attributed to strong US pressure.⁵⁰ The problematic case in this category is the release of the Israeli State Comptroller's report, which was highly critical of the government's handling of the flotilla. This event involves Israeli actors only, and is initiated by them, and at first look, might be expected to generate strong pro-Israeli coverage, like the Turkel Commission did. A closer look, however, reveals that the Turkel Commission and State Comptroller's Office are two very different entities: Turkel Commission was a government-appointed body, its mandate defined by the government, and was required to submit its final report to the government,⁵¹ whereas the State Comptroller is elected by the Knesset in a secret ballot, can only be removed by the Knesset,⁵² and has a history of criticizing government conduct.⁵³ Thus, it could be argued that the State Comptroller was more of a third-party actor in this

48 Phoebe Greenwood and Richard Spencer, "Israel Claims Diplomatic Victory as Greece Stops Gaza Flotilla", *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8614090/Israel-claims-diplomatic-victory-as-Greece-stops-Gaza-flotilla.html>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

49 Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu phones Erdogan to apologize for deaths of Turkish citizens on Gaza flotilla", *Haaretz*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-phones-erdogan-to-apologize-for-deaths-of-turkish-citizens-on-gaza-flotilla.premium-1.511394>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

50 "Israeli PM apologizes to Turkey after Obama push", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/israeli-pm-apologizes-to-turkey-after-obama-push.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43445&NewsCatID=352>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

51 See Articles 1,2 and 3 of the government resolution on the appointment of the members -which included two foreign observers which could participate in discussions but not vote-, and Article 4 on the mandate of the Commission, which was limited to examining the legality of the raid from the perspective of international law: The Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident of 31 May 2010, "Commission's Mandate", 14 June 2010, <http://www.turkel-committee.com/content-189.html>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

52 See Basic Laws of Israel, section on State Comptroller at https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic9_eng.htm, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

53 Ira Sharkansky, "Israel's State Comptroller and Public Administration", David Nachmias and Gila Menahem (eds.), *Public Policy in Israel*, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2002, p.133-152.

case. At the very least, release of the State Comptroller's report was not an Israeli-government-initiated event, and differs from the events in the first category in this respect.

In the third category are events that generated more pro-Turkish than pro-Israeli coverage. This is a less populated category, with three events only, and they were all initiated by Turkish actors. Returning to Istanbul after being withheld by Israel for six months, the ship *Mavi Marmara* was met by large demonstrations, drawing media attention, and the court in Turkey, when it pressed charges against four Israeli generals and later issued arrest warrants because they failed to show up at the court, generated much media attention and mostly pro-Turkish coverage.

MFAs vs. NGOs

The analysis was repeated with a new training set that consisted of documents from the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) only. This was done to remove any oversize influence the IHH might have had in the make-up of the pro-Turkish discourse in the original training set, as the IHH was the only Turkish NGO that produced English-language content and there were more than four IHH documents for each document produced by the Turkish MFA. The texts from the "Israeli side" also contained a large number of NGO documents, but they came from a number of different organizations. Another goal was to directly compare the effectiveness of the official sources only, which was not possible with the larger training set.

When the analysis was repeated using the MFA documents only, excluding texts produced by the NGOs, the validity of the measure used suffered, with the model now being correct in only 77% of its predictions, as opposed to 93%. This results from the much smaller number of documents in the new training set (54 as opposed to 257), and means that we have less confidence now in the classifications provided. However, we can still use the new measure to make some broad comparisons, if not incisive analysis.

With the smaller training set, the overall pro-Israeli bias remained, but declined to 67% from 79%. It seems that with the influence of civil society organizations removed, the "Turkish side", now represented solely by the Turkish MFA, was relatively more successful against the "Israeli side", also represented by the Israeli MFA only. There might be two potential explanations for this difference: first, it could be argued that the Turkish MFA has more credibility, compared to the IHH, as an official source, and as a result is cited more frequently in the stories. Similarly, the Turkish MFA's more formal, more diplomatic language might have been perceived by the news outlets as more worthy of reporting than IHH's emotionally loaded language, resulting in a bigger influence on media discourse. This explanation would imply, however, that there are no equivalents to the IHH among the pro-Israeli NGOs - similarly lacking in relative credibility and using emotional language -, or if there are, they make up a smaller proportion of the total Israeli discourse, which needs to be examined empirically. Apart from style and credibility issues, another explanation could be that there was less coordination among the official and NGO actors on the Turkish side, compared to the Israeli side, resulting in a failure to present a unified message. Some evidence for this explanation can be found in the sometimes harsh criticism the IHH directed at the Turkish government, regarding foreign policy in general and more specifically the handling of the flotilla-related developments.⁵⁴ Whatever the mechanism,

54 "İHH Başkanı Bülent Yıldırım'dan çarpıcı tespitler; Türkiye, Suriye ve Mısır'da nasıl hata yaptı?", *Zaman*, 24 January 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_ihh-baskani-bulent-yildirimdan-carpici-tespitler-turkiye-suriye-ve-misirda-nasil-hata-yapti_2273089.html, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

one thing seems clear: the Israeli MFA's efforts were aided by the involvement of pro-Israeli NGOs, whereas this was not the case for the Turkish MFA.

The smaller training set produced similar results with regards to the distribution of slant by countries - with Turkey enjoying positive coverage mostly in the news outlets from Muslim-majority countries -, and distribution of slant over time, with pro-Israeli slant giving way to pro-Turkish slant in the last two years.

Conclusion

It is a much repeated piece of advice in the literature on best practices in public diplomacy that deeds speak louder than words.⁵⁵ In this case too, deeds seem to have spoken louder indeed, for whatever other advantages Israel might have had in terms of public diplomacy resources, part of its success should be attributed to the larger number of newsworthy events that it initiated, including the investigations carried out by three separate Israeli bodies, and dramatic appearances of politicians before one of these committees. Turkey, too, enjoyed positive coverage when it initiated high-profile events such as the trial of Israeli generals and mass demonstrations to welcome the *Mavi Marmara* ship, but these were smaller in number. It should also be pointed out, however, that there were other events initiated by Turkey that failed to receive much coverage, such as the work of the Turkish investigatory commission, and the referral of the case to the International Criminal Court.⁵⁶ These two events failed to attract the attention of the English-language news media in general, suggesting that sometimes even deeds do not speak loud enough.

The findings also suggest that part of the reason for Israel's success needs to be sought in the "cultural and political congruence" Israel has with countries like the US, France and the UK,⁵⁷ where most of the English-language news coverage originated. In the US, for example, which single-handedly accounted for more than one fifth of all English-language news articles on the subject, there is a large number of pro-Israeli NGOs that produce press statements and other content to influence the public discourse there, whereas Turkey has no comparable presence. The cultural explanation is also

55 For example, see Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.616, No.1, 2008, p.94-109; Peter van Ham, "Power, Public Diplomacy and the Pax Americana", Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.47-66; Lamis Andoni, "Deeds Speak Louder than Words", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.25, No.2, 2002, p.85-100; Rhonda S. Zaharna, "American Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World: A Strategic Communication Analysis", 1 November 2001, http://fpif.org/american_public_diplomacy_in_the_arab_and_muslim_world_a_strategic_communication_analysis/ (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

56 These two events are not among the local peaks identified in Figure 1. Another conspicuous absence from the list of news peaks was the release of the UNHRC report, which somehow failed to generate much media attention. The referral to ICC was made by Comoros, where *Mavi Marmara* was registered, but it was made via a Turkish law firm, *Elmadağ*, which we can assume to have initiated the process, as the firm was founded by lawyers with a history of activism in human rights NGOs in Turkey. For a news article detailing the application, see Reuters and JPost.com, "ICC to examine Israeli raid on 'Mavi Marmara'", *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/International/ICC-to-examine-Israeli-raid-on-Mavi-Marmara-313176> (Accessed on 16 March 2015). For the curriculum vitae of one of the two founders of *Elmadağ*, see <http://www.elmadaghukuk.com/?q=7&h=8&l=2&id=24> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

57 Sheafer and Gabay argue that this congruence is stronger with the US than with the UK, and find significant differences between content originating from these two countries. The present study did not find much of a difference between content originating from the US and the UK, but found that content originating from Muslim-majority countries was substantially different from the rest, in that it carried more pro-Turkish slant overall. Sheafer and Gabay, "Mediated Public Diplomacy", p.447.

supported by the fact that Turkey enjoyed an advantage only in content originating from Muslim-majority countries, such as Iran, Malaysia and the UAE, which, however, were responsible for a much smaller percentage of the total news output in English. Future studies involving more languages could provide a fuller picture of the international media scene.

Another significant finding of the study is that third party involvement moderated the otherwise strong pro-Israeli slant of the news media. Regardless of whether this third-party was the UN or the US, events initiated by these actors resulted in some pro-Turkish coverage accompanying the still larger number of pro-Israeli articles. As to why third party involvement should moderate the pro-Israeli slant, even though it was not enough to tip the balance, we could only speculate. It might be that these third actors had their own interpretations of the events, which are less pro-Israeli than Israel would like, but not nearly as pro-Turkish as Turkey would like.⁵⁸

Public diplomacy, as one observer notes, is usually depicted as “nice and warm and comforting in contrast to the harsh realities of hardball diplomacy and military action”, whereas the reality is that it frequently involves “ideas compet[ing] head on with other ideas for dominance in a dynamic, competitive, and intensely adversarial environment”.⁵⁹ The literature on public diplomacy could use more studies examining dynamics of competition and influence in the arena of international public opinion.

58 This can be seen, for example, in reactions to the UN’s Palmer report, which Israel accepted with a few reservations. See Gili Gurel, “Turkey rebuffs Palmer findings”, *Ynetnews*, 2 September 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4116918,00.html> (Accessed on 16 March 2015). Turkey, on the other hand, agreed with very little in the report, listing its objections in a separate statement added to the report by the Turkish representative to the Committee, and described the report as “null and void” in the words of the then President Abdullah Gül. See “Turkey expels Israeli ambassador over Gaza flotilla row”, 2 September 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14762475> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

59 Anthony Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis”, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p.111-153.

References

- “ADL Praises Greece for Preventing Departure of Anti-Israel Gaza Flotilla”, 3 July 2011, <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/israel-middle-east/adl-praises-greece-for.html> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Allan, Diana and Curtis Brown. “The Mavi Marmara at the Frontlines of Web 2.0”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, 2010, p.63-77.
- Andoni, Lamis. “Deeds Speak Louder than Words”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.25, No.2, 2002, p.85-100.
- Atalay, Zeynep. “Civil Society as Soft Power: Islamic NGOs and Turkish Foreign Policy”, Riva Kastoryano (ed.), *Turkey between Nationalism and Globalization*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p.165-186.
- Ayalon, Danny. “Public relations battle is a marathon, not a sprint”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 4 June 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Public-relations-battle-is-a-marathon-not-a-sprint> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- “Background on the Gaza Flotilla”, 15 June 2010, http://archive.adl.org/main_israel/gaza-flotilla.html#.VQa_0462qUA (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Barranco, Deborah A. and Leonard Shyles. “Arab vs. Israeli News Coverage in the New York Times, 1976 and 1984”, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol.65, No.1, 1988, p.178-181.
- Basic Laws of Israel, section on State Comptroller at https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic9_eng.htm, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Cull, Nicholas J. “Public Diplomacy before Gullion: The Evolution of A Phrase”, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p.19-23.
- Cull, Nicholas J. *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*, Los Angeles, Figueroa Press, 2009.
- Elik, Süleyman. *Iran-Turkey Relations 1979-2011: Conceptualising the Dynamic of Politics, Religion and Security in the Middle-Power States*, Oxford, Routledge, 2012.
- Fachot, Morand. “Israel legalises religious pirate radios”, 24 February 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle-east/285610.stm>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Friedman, George. “Flotillas and the wars of public opinion”, *Geopolitical Weekly*, 31 May 2010, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100531_flotillas_and_wars_public_opinion#axzz394j9lvsT, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- “Gaza Flotilla Incident Sparks Anti-Semitism and Calls for Violence Online”, 8 June 2010, http://archive.adl.org/main_terrorism/gaza_flotilla_online_response.html#.VQbAe462qUA (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Gentzkow, Matthew and Jesse M. Shapiro. “What Drives Media Slant? Evidence from US Daily Newspapers”, *Econometrica*, Vol.78, No.1, 2010, p.35-71.
- Gilboa, Eytan. “Public Diplomacy: The Missing Component in Israel’s Foreign Policy”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol.12, No.4, 2006, p.715-747.
- Greenwood, Phoebe and Richard Spencer. “Israel Claims Diplomatic Victory as Greece Stops Gaza Flotilla”, *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8614090/Israel-claims-diplomatic-victory-as-greece-stops-gaza-flotilla.html>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Grimmer, Justin and Brandon M. Stewart. “Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts”, *Political Analysis*, Vol.21, No.3, 2013, p.267-297.
- Gurel, Gili. “Turkey rebuffs Palmer findings”, *Ynetnews*, 2 September 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4116918,00.html> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Hever, Shir. *Private Funding of Right-Wing Ideology in Israel*, Jerusalem, The Alternative Information Center, 2013.
- “Israeli PM apologizes to Turkey after Obama push”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.hurriyet-dailynews.com/israeli-pm-apologizes-to-turkey-after-obama-push.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43445&NewscatID=352>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

- “İHH Başkanı Bülent Yıldırım’dan çarpıcı tespitler; Türkiye, Suriye ve Mısır’da nasıl hata yaptı?”, *Zaman*, 24 January 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_ihh-baskani-bulent-yildirimdan-carpici-tespitler-turkiye-suriye-ve-misirda-nasil-hata-yapti_2273089.html, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Kalın, İbrahim. “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey”, *Perceptions*, Vol.26, No.3, 2011, p.5-23.
- Keinon, Herb. “Public Diplomacy Ministry Fades Away”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 April 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Public-Diplomacy-Ministry-fades-away-311363> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Kelly, John R. “Between ‘Take-offs’ and ‘Crash-Landings’”, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p.72-85.
- Kramer, Martin. “The Middle East Circa 2016”, 3 October 2011, <http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/2011/10/the-middle-east-circa-2016>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Leonard, Mark. *Public Diplomacy*, London, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002.
- “Mavi Marmara trial continues with 4th hearing”, 3 October 2013, <http://mavi-marmara.ihh.org.tr/en/main/news/0/mavi-marmara-trial-continues-with-4th-hearing/1891> (Accessed 16 March 2015); “UN’s Mavi Marmara Report”, <http://www.ihh.org.tr/en/main/pages/uns-mavi-marmara-report/154> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- “Mavi Marmara”, *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/International/ICC-to-examine-Israeli-raid-on-Mavi-Marmara-313176> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- McClory, Jonathan. *The New Persuaders: an International Ranking of Soft Power*, Institute for Government, 2010.
- Melissen, Jan (ed.). *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- MOLAD, *Israeli Hasbara: Myths and Facts: A Report on the Israeli Hasbara Apparatus*, Jerusalem, The Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy, 2012.
- Nye, Joseph S. “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power”, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.616, No.1, 2008, p.94-109.
- Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs, 2004.
- Philo, Greg and Mike Berry. *Bad News from Israel*, London, Pluto Press, 2004.
- Pratkanis, Anthony. “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis”, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p.111-153.
- Ravid, Barak. “Netanyahu phones Erdogan to apologize for deaths of Turkish citizens on Gaza flotilla”, *Haaretz*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-phones-erdogan-to-apologize-for-deaths-of-turkish-citizens-on-gaza-flotilla.premium-1.511394>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Sharkansky, Ira. “Israel’s State Comptroller and Public Administration”, David Nachmias and Gila Menahem (eds.), *Public Policy in Israel*, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2002, p.133-152.
- Shachtman, Noah. “Israel turns to Youtube, Twitter after flotilla fiasco”, *Wired*, 1 June 2010, <http://www.wired.com/2010/06/israel-turns-to-youtube-twitter-to-rescue-info-war/> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Sheafer, Tamir and Itar Gabay. “Mediated Public Diplomacy: A Strategic Contest over International Agenda Building and Frame Building”, *Political Communication* Vol.26, No.4, 2009, p.447-467.
- Sheffer, Bridget R. “Mediated Public Diplomacy and Political Dialectics: 2010 Free Gaza Flotilla”, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, Vol.43, No.2, 2014, p.134-150.
- Shen, Dou, Jian-Tao Sun, Qiang Yang and Zheng Chen. “Text Classification Improved through Multigram Models”, *Proceedings of the 15th ACM International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management*, ACM, 2006, p.672-681.
- “Statement by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, at the OIC, Extraordinary Session of the Expanded Executive Committee Meeting, June 6, 2010, Jeddah”, www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-at-the-oic-extraordinary-session-of-th.en.mfa (Accessed on 16 March 2015).

- “The Press in Israel”, 8 May 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4969714.stm (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- The Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident of 31 May 2010, “Commission’s Mandate”, 14 June 2010, <http://www.turkel-committee.com/content-189.html> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- “Turkey expels Israeli ambassador over Gaza flotilla row”, 2 September 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14762475> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- Turkish National Commission of Inquiry, *Report on the Israeli Attack on the Humanitarian Aid Convoy to Gaza*, 2010.
- USC Center on Public Diplomacy. “PD and the Gaza Flotilla”, http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/pdin_monitor_article/pd_and_the_gaza_flotilla (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- “US Organizations”, 12 September 2007, <http://partners4israel.org/u-s-organizations> (Accessed on 16 March 2015).
- van Ham, Peter. “Power, Public Diplomacy and the Pax Americana”, Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.47-66.
- “What is Public Diplomacy”, <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy>, (Accessed on 16 March 2015.)
- Zaharna, Rhonda S. “American Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World: A Strategic Communication Analysis”, 1 November 2001, http://fpif.org/american_public_diplomacy_in_the_arab_and_muslim_world_a_strategic_communication_analysis/, (Accessed on 16 March 2015).