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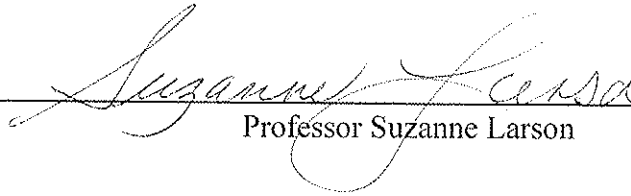
The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Humanities and Social Science, have examined the thesis entitled:

MANAGING THE ISRAELI IDENTITY:  
DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND DIALOGISM

presented by Bridget Reynolds Sheffer,

a candidate for the degree of Masters of Arts in Professional Communication,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.



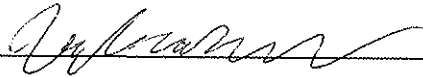
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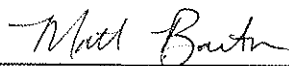
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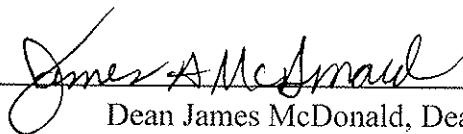
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Running Head: ISRAELI DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Managing the Israeli Identity through Digital Diplomacy

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the  
Communication Department at Southern Utah University

In Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Masters of Arts in Professional Communication

by

Bridget Reynolds Sheffer

Jezreel Kang-Graham, Thesis Supervisor

October 2010

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Bridget Reynolds Sheffer

Dr. Jezreel Kang-Graham, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

On May 31, 2010, the Israeli Defense Forces met with the Free Gaza Flotilla off the coast of the Gaza strip. The incident resulted in nine casualties. The purpose of this study was to explore Israel's use of digital diplomacy during this incident. The "thick description" required in this case study was encouraged by the work of Yin (2009), Mitchell (2009), Der Derian (2009) and Guillaume (2010). Using Bakhtin as a developmental tool for the case study, this case expands the research on a nation-state's identity management through digital diplomacy. Further, it explored the destruction and rebuilding of the online Israeli identity during the Free Gaza Flotilla of May 2010. Future research in political grammars and political dialectics is encouraged.

*Keywords:* national identity, digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, Israel

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude for each professor who assisted me with this study and throughout my course of my degree. First, Dr. Jezreel Kang-Graham for his ability to let me explore international relations through the communication lens and for his assistance during my times of utter confusion; for Dr. Suzanne Larson, who always believed in my capabilities, even when I did not; Dr. Kevin Stein for his willingness to be on my committee and his patience with my wild ideas; and Dr. Brian Heuett for allowing me to explore family communication and whose classes changed my life. I would also like to express my gratitude for Pam, department secretary, and her willingness to assist with me “in the little things.” I would also like to thank the entire Faculty in the Communication department for their interest in my success and their readiness to share their acquired knowledge.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, Ryan, for his unwavering support allowing me to complete the thesis and degree; and to my mom, who spent countless hours watching my children so I could write. Without these two compensating in the areas I neglected, this thesis would not have been possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Rationale .....	2
Literature Review .....	6
Identity Management .....	6
Issues Management & Identity .....	8
Legitimacy & Identity .....	10
Public Diplomacy .....	11
Global Society Evolution .....	15
Digital Diplomacy .....	16
Research Questions, Data & Method .....	20
Case Study .....	20
Bahktinian Framework .....	24
Data .....	30
The Case .....	33
Israel & Gaza: a basic history .....	33
The Incident .....	34
Case Review .....	38
Chronotope .....	38
Heteroglossia .....	44
Stratification .....	46
Political Dialectics .....	48
Discussion and Conclusion .....	52
Practical Implications .....	52
Theoretical Implications .....	54
Limitations .....	58
Future Research .....	59
Final Review .....	61
References .....	64
Appendices .....	75

## INTRODUCTION

Become powerful and prevail by persuasion.  
Martha Finnemore (1996, p. 141)

In late May, 2010, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) boarded, seized and rerouted nine Free Gaza humanitarian ships headed toward the Gaza strip from Ireland, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus and Sweden. The Free Gaza flotilla was journeying toward the Gaza strip in an attempt to break the Israeli blockade on the occupied territory. Motivated by the proposed suppression of Israel on the occupied territories, the Free Gaza flotilla sought to bring international attention to human rights violations committed by Israel.

The flotilla was acting under several humanitarian aid organizations working with the Free Gaza Movement and the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief among others. Israel had warned the flotilla it would be stopped before it reached the Gaza strip (Aljezeera English, 2010, p. 1). The flotilla proceeded despite the warnings from Israel (Black & Siddique, 2010). As the IDF boarded, conflict resulted in nine casualties and injured multiple humanitarian activists (Lynch, 2010).

The incident became a point of conflict for the international community. Airways in the United States expressed shock about the deaths of the humanitarian aid workers. The European Union called for immediate action to end the Israeli blockade. The United Nations quickly demanded an Israeli explanation and investigation (Aljezeera English, 2010). Countless other nations released official statements condemning Israel and its unnecessary aggression.

The Israeli blockade of the coastal region, the Gaza strip, has been in effect since 2007. After Hamas took control of the Gaza strip in 2007, the already tense situation between Israel and this occupied territory began to climax (Associated Press, 2007). A military conflict began. After civilian casualties in the Gaza strip in 2007, a cease fire was reached. Israel was under

investigation by the United Nations for killing civilians. The Israeli military forces blockaded the coastal region of the Gaza to prevent Hamas from acquiring more weapons to use against Israel. With this precedent, between the Gaza strip and Israel, the casualties from the flotilla stunned the global community. It was expected that Israel had learned from the 2007 civilian deaths (Tessler, 2009).

The Israeli response to the international community has been complicated. Aljazeera English (2010) reported:

Some Israeli officials see the situation as potentially disastrous in terms of public relations. 'We can't win on this one in terms of PR,' Yigal Palmor, a foreign ministry spokesman, said. 'If we let them throw egg at us, we appear stupid with egg on our face. If we try to prevent them by force, we appear as brutes.'

Clearly, the Israelis were shocked by the violence associated with the incident. Despite their attempts to manage the situation previous to its occurrence, the Israelis were still left awkwardly trying to explain their reason for killing nine activists.

Israel is notorious for its public relations strategies (Shaefer & Gabay, 2009; Toledano & McKie, 2009). This thesis explores Israel's identity management through the use of digital diplomacy strategies. In application of the literature, I will do a case study of the Israeli invasion of the Free Gaza flotilla ships and the subsequent Israeli response to the global communities' shock.

## **Rationale**

From a public diplomacy perspective, Israel's use of new media to advance its agenda on the Free Gaza Flotilla incident would prove enlightening. The patterns found in Israel's digital diplomacy may also apply to other contemporary international relations issues. The last five



years have seen a significant amount of literature encouraging “future research” in public diplomacy (Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Gerber, 2008; Lunsford, Wilson & Eberly, 2009; Mitchell, 2009). Further research on Israel and digital diplomacy has been encouraged (Shaefer & Shenhav, 2009, Shaefer & Gabay, 2009).

Public diplomacy is the influence of a nation-state on a foreign audience (Gerber, 2008; Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Mitchell, 2009; Ordeix-Rigo & Daurte, 2009). Public diplomacy uses “rhetoric [as] a mode of thinking and especially a mode of influencing the ways in which other people think” (Oliver, 1961, p. 214). Public diplomacy suggests nation-states position themselves through messages (Mitchell, 2009). Cheney and McMillian (1990) claim an organization is a rhetor which positions itself through messages. This is an applicable principle for public diplomacy since we view nations as rhetors or personages. This study will refer to Israel as rhetor. Groups within the larger Israeli context will be discussed, yet no specific focus will be given to any official within the Israeli government during the Free Gaza flotilla incident. This will allow exploration of Israel as it interacts within a global community experiencing sharp global pressures. It also allows the use of the narrative which employs thick description—a necessary and desirable tool during a case study.

Gerber (2008) suggested public diplomacy studies are already well-entrenched in the communication discipline. Gregory (2008) argued public diplomacy is a new discipline. The disconnection of ideas between Gerber (2008) and Gregory (2008) is typical in international relations literature. Molleda and Laskin (2005) reaffirm the need for more public diplomacy literature. Political science scholars recently have seen the value in public diplomacy studies while communication scholars claim international rhetorical studies and public diplomacy coexisted since Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (2007). There is considerable rhetorical literature on

international relations or speech analysis by international actors in the communication discipline. Yet, there is little material on public diplomacy and identity management—a major component of modern international relations (PeiJuan, et al., 2009; Holliday, 2010).

A point of unequivocal importance is globalization's direct connection to media technologies. Digital diplomacy (Dizard, 2001) and its influence on soft power has been a key to public diplomacy since the Cold War (Nye, 2004). With soft power defined as the influence a nation-state has over a foreign audience, the technological advancements enhance and heighten soft power. Digital diplomacy uses advancing technologies to promote the values, policies and relationships of a nation-state. Digital diplomacy provides a new infrastructure for diplomats to access target audiences and immediately inform foreign and local audiences of the country's international issues and positions. A nation-state may achieve this through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and web specific sites.

Social media, the internet and online newsrooms have diminished time and space. Diminishing time and space increases audience membership from local members to global participants (Phillips & Young, 2009; Kelleher, 2007). Nation-states are constantly releasing information to persuade through the internet. This study will use digital diplomacy as the panoramic lens viewing the Israeli nation's interplays as a global citizen. With an increasingly organized and global society no longer limited by time or space, the combination of public diplomacy and web 2.0 to examine one nation is timely.

The evolution and utilization of web 2.0 is worth review for this study. Web 2.0 evolved from the creation of the internet (web 1.0) to current socially interactive system currently in use. O'Reilly (2007) defined web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that connect information, time and space into one central core. Web 2.0 transitioned the user locality from the local

desktop to the networked “webtop.” Consequentially, web 2.0 became a collective intelligence for global society allowing citizens of many nations to access information almost anywhere in the world. These developments meant the nation-state’s ability to engage in diplomatic efforts in isolated areas and behind closed doors were challenged. Public diplomacy began to transition like web 2.0, from local and strategic to global and networked.

As implied, the chosen nation of study for this case is Israel. Israel provides a unique case for several reasons: 1) its political geography and related tensions, i.e. its challenges remain both local and global; 2) its creation and history; 3) its notable public diplomacy methods modeled after traditional public relations and advertising models. Several studies have explored Israel’s “mediated” public diplomacy in relation to warfare and the attempts Israel has made to persuade foreign audiences (Sheafer & Shenhav, 2009; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). While these studies have focused on war and media generally, this study explores the Israeli web presence during a precise act of controversial aggression involving civilians.

Accordingly, this thesis will review the literature about identity management and public and digital diplomacy. Drawing on literature from organizational communication, identity management will be discussed. The public diplomacy literature defines public diplomacy; discusses the global, networked society, and review current developments in digital diplomacy. Upon the conclusion of the literature review, I will state my research questions concerning the Israeli identity in relation to the Free Gaza Flotilla and the internet. Following a conversation on the study, the theoretical and practical implications will be noted. To conclude the paper, the limitations of this study and future research generated by this case study will be acknowledged.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Identity Management

Managing identity has been studied in organizational communication with some work in public diplomacy (Holliday, 2010; Peijuan, et al., 2009). Cheney and Christensen (2001) observed, “The ongoing rhetorical struggle for organizations of most kinds is to establish a clearly distinctive identity and at the same time connect with more general concerns so as to be maximally persuasive and effective” (p. 233). The distinctive identity of a nation-state is vital for legitimization and for the influence over foreign audiences.

During the process of “establishing a distinctive identity,” five strategies are typically used (Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006, p. 120). The first strategy is “common ground.” Common ground is the process of finding values or ideas common between two groups, or between the organization and its external audience. The second tactic is the antithesis. Antithesis is the creation of a common enemy between the two groups, or between the organization and the external audience. The third strategy is the assumed or transcendent we. The “transcendent we” is a “subtle strategy [that] associates dissimilar groups and articulates them as simultaneously present, transcending the differences” (McMillan and Meisenbach, 2006, pp. 120-121). Cheney (1983b) added a fourth tactic: unifying symbols. Cheney and Christensen noted, “The symbolism surrounding an organization’s identity can become something of a world of its own, even though it may often rely on other symbols to express what the organization is or is not” (p. 242). The concluding strategy was identified by Bostdorff and Vibbert (1994) who suggested organizational identity also centers on the promotion of values. These strategies are applicable not only to the corporate organization for which they were originally written, but also for the nation-state.

Cheney and Christensen (2001) wrote:

If we accept the idea that organizational communication is essentially a process through which meaning is created, negotiated, and managed, we should expect to find identity as the issue in most organizing processes, especially in those explicitly concerned with addressing external audiences. (p. 241)

From this statement, communicating identity is clearly the motive for communication beyond the bounds of the nation-state. However, identity is not the only motive for external communication. National identity is incorporated in all the issues addressed whether internal or external (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Since the issues and the identity of the nation-state are intertwined, “it can be argued that organizations communicate with their ‘environment’ not only to exchange information but also, and quite significantly, to maintain themselves and confirm their identities” (p. 252). An applicable example of a nation-state’s identity management was Holliday’s (2010) analysis of the Iranian national identity.

Holliday’s (2010) study focused on the Iranian national identity under the presidency of Khatami. Holliday argues the Iranian national identity under Khatami was an identity of resistance created through ideological discussions within the nation. These discussions deeply influenced communication between Iran and the world. Khatami strengthened the Iranian identity by clearly stating to the nation their identity is Iranian-Islamic (Holliday, 2010, p. 5). Khatami would combine traditional connotations of words, such as culture or civilization, and include a heavier Islamic implication. Islamic civilization and connection became a center theme for Khatami’s speeches. Khatami focused the Iranian national identity on the need to deal with a dominant civilization, that is, Western civilization (Holliday, 2010).

Redefining their national identity allowed Khatami to create a unique national identity which altered the way in which Iran interfaced with global society. In 2001, Khatami gave speech in which he encouraged greater interactions among nations and conversation would become equal. Clearly, Khatami felt global society was unequal suppressing those without a Western, Christian perspective. His attempts to strengthen Iranian identity were efforts focused on increasing the Iranian soft power. Increased soft power, would increase Iran's influence in global society and deep the connectedness of Iran to the Islamic community. Khatami's Iranian identity was later challenged. Yet, Holliday's (2010) study exemplifies the vitality of having a strong national identity for movement within global society.

Identity cultivation, such as Khatami did in Iran, is increasingly common among governments. Kunczik (2009) argues identity is structurally necessary for governments adequately to interact in global society. Kunczik (2009) claims that with the combination of public diplomacy and mass media, nations must have identities to attract and maintain the support of the nation-state's agenda and values. Soft power and identity maintenance are interconnected. Identity cultivation increases during crisis situations such as war. As a national identity is cultivated, if attractive to global society, the soft power of that nation will increase. If nation-state's agendas and values create identification with global society, then global society will favor the nation more highly despite crisis. As a result, the process of establishing a unique and distinctive identity as a nation-state previous to crisis is valuable. Once an issue emerges, channels of communication are ready for identity management during and following the crisis.

### **Issues Management & Identity**

Issues management is another form of identity management. Issues management, according to Cheney and Christensen (2001), is a combination of public relations and crisis

communication. Meisenbach and McMillan (2006) highlighted the consistency needed for nation-states to use their management skills to maintain national image, rally support, and to interface with global society. The ability to maintain or enhance national and global issues positively—or at least justifiably—directly reflects on the identity of the nation-state.

Issues management is also an attempt to maintain and expand control and power of the nation-state. With such a demanding goal, issues management must be proactive. “Being proactive means being involved in the definition and construction of reality” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 253). Proactively sending messages is intended to “define the situation in self-serving and self-referential terms” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 253). Cheney and Christensen (2001) claim: “In rhetorical terms, issues management means that the organization attempts to both ‘read’ the premises and attitudes of its audience and work to shape them, often in advance of any specific crisis or well-defined debate” (p. 239). Peijuan, et al. (2009) provides a solitary example. During an initial global analysis of the Chinese image, the Chinese were perceived as a hurried, confused people. With the efforts of identity strategies and issues management, a more confident image emerged of the Chinese correcting their image issue.

Interaction must occur in order to create and develop identity (West & Turner, 2010). In an international perspective, interaction comes from other nation-states, world organizations, the media, and local or foreign audiences. Typically, multiple messages are sent simultaneously from a nation-state. As a result, messages generally are organized for more than one purpose and aimed at more than one audience (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p.233). However, the environment in which nation-states are attempting to send messages of identity has become cluttered, requiring focus on niche audiences (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Phillips & Young, 2009) which increases the challenge of sending a broader message to a larger audience.

Phillips and Young (2009) recognized the complexity of reaching an audience when they wrote, “As many organizations have come to realize, the principle management problem . . . is not to take a stand on salient issues of the day, but to do these things with a certain distinctiveness that allows the organization to create and legitimize itself. . .” (p. 241). Accordingly, nation-states use multiple modes of mass communication to reach the maximum number of audiences. Digital diplomacy gives credibility for the foreign ministry or the state department to use a website, YouTube, and Facebook with the expectation to reach different audience members through each channel.

### **Legitimacy & Identity**

Legitimacy is “the process of justifying or supporting organizational existence” (Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006, p. 115). Simply, legitimacy is a struggle for power and visibility (Motion & Leitch, 2009). Legitimacy acts are intended to create a network for the nation-state and their directly concerned publics (Ordeix-Rigo & Duarte, 2009). Chadwick (2001) argues governmental use of the internet is a process of legitimization. Marmura (2008) claimed that “the internet changes the rules by which actors compete—providing novel means for disseminating information. . . . even as it allows for the enhancement of older activist strategies and techniques” (p. 152). The internet is a medium disseminating governmental information and building credibility for the nation-state that, in turn, develops legitimacy for the nation-state. Marmura (2008) claims the use of the internet by the nation-state solidifies authority and legitimizes the nation-state.

Some nation-states are required to work harder for legitimacy. Israel’s locality and modern existence is a constant struggle for legitimacy. When Jews began to return to Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century, their struggle for legitimacy began (Diller, et al., 1994). The



questions concerning a possible Jewish state would haunt the early Jewish settlers. Once an independent Jewish state was established, the question of legitimacy did not change. Legitimacy is an issue in which Israel is still hotly engaged and which requires considerable diplomatic efforts.

### **Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy researches and discusses emerging communication themes between a nation and its world audience. Public diplomacy may be defined as “direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments” (Taylor, 2008, p.12). For example, when studying public diplomacy, evaluation and analysis is completed using actors and contexts such as the interactions of the states, non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations, and world governing organizations and their respective impact on the people. Public diplomacy has been hailed as a new rhetorical genre as scholars begin to analyze the transmission of persuasive messages between nations (Gerber, 2008, Taylor, 2010). Public diplomacy may be further defined as the persuasive powers extended by a nation-state to influence the attitudes of foreign publics (Gerber, 2008; Ordeix-Rigo & Duarte, 2009).

Gerber (2008) argues, “due to the common *suasive* elements that recurrently appear in this type of discourse, rhetorical approaches to the study of public diplomacy are most appropriate” (p. 130). Thomas Goodnight (1998) reminded scholars, “over the course of Western culture, concern with the arts of rhetoric and interest in foreign affairs seem to flower together” (para. 9). Public diplomacy and its rhetorical characteristics encourage thick description and narrative evaluation to enhance our understanding of a nation’s identity and issues management strategies.

In a pivotal study combining international relations and rhetoric, Mitchell (2009) challenged the realist theories—the struggle for power in action, not words—of political science by applying generic rhetorical analysis to three international events: the Cold War, Jordanian foreign policy, and current political trends in foreign policy in the United States. Mitchell (2009) argued global studies should be conducted on argument-driven topics. Rhetorical analysis of public diplomacy “could enhance the descriptive power of IR theories . . . thicker descriptions position rhetoric as a practical art of using dialogue to coordinate action” when facts are unclear or options are uncertain (Mitchell, 2009, p. 253). While international relations theory has been reanalyzed, many scholars still confront the power-struggle realist theories of the past. During the Cold War, the predominate diplomatic orientation was realism. Realism is not a theory, but is an orientation or worldview. Realism and *realpolitik*, or power politics, governed most of the diplomacy theory previous to the collapse of the Cold War (Donnelly, 2000). Realism can be categorized by the following characteristics: first, nation-state’s interests are the motive for action. Second, moral principles must be excluded from political analysis. Third, the interest of the nation-state is survival for which the nation-state uses its military. Fourth, nation-states seek power and calculate their interests in terms of power beyond survival (Donnelly, 2000). These characteristics worked well in diplomacy theory until the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many diplomacy theories were reevaluated (Beer & Hariman, 1996; Goodnight, 1998; Krebs & Jackson, 2007, Mitchell, 2009). Public diplomacy continues to work toward the steadfast theories once provided by the consistent power play of the Cold War. Francis Beer and Robert Hariman (1996) posit a theoretical turning point for public diplomacy after the Cold War. Their thesis: rhetoric in international relations has been

systematically ignored and now it is time to increase the academic efforts toward studying international relations through a rhetorical lens (pp. 1-2). In the current literature, fourteen years after the publication of the Beer and Heriman (1996) text, the call for qualitative studies in international relations still remains.

Multiple scholars have applied rhetorical studies to public diplomacy. The rhetorical literature has produced multiple approaches to international relations using a variety of labels: controversy studies (Goodnight, 1998), dialogue of civilizations (Lynch, 2000), rhetorical coercion (Krebs & Jackson, 2007), public diplomacy (Gerber, 2008) or rhetoric and international relations (Mitchell, 2009). Though these terminologies are semantically different, they could theoretically be streamlined into one area of study. Whatever title the authors give their work, the work itself falls under one category, public diplomacy (Gerber, 2008). Each of these typologies follow a pattern: First, the case study method—differentiated by one case or multiple cases; second, the researchers evaluate content as means of persuasion in multiple international contexts: relational maintenance, relational accommodation or relational divergence (Stohl, 2001); and third, the research consistently reveals ways in which nations persuade other nations for ideological alignment.

Marc Lynch's (2000) piece on Iran and the United States is an example of this pattern. Lynch's (2000) study evaluates attempted ideological accommodation using public diplomacy. Lynch analyzed the relationship between the United States and Iran—under the leadership of Khatami—in which he discusses the Iranian desire to engage in talks instead of military force or conflict. Lynch (2000) operates within the framework of “international public sphere theory.” International public sphere theory centers on the impact of “state behavior and the potential for communicative action in shaping international order” (Lynch, 2000, p. 314). In Lynch's (2000)

application of this theory to Iran and the United States, he found the attempted dialogue between the two nations “significantly affected international conceptions” (p. 330). Conversation among nations changes the relationship and identity of the nations involved.

Other studies have been published under the genre of public diplomacy. Gerber (2008) suggests using rhetorical methods, such as the case study, for international relations exposes “the ongoing discursive management of national reputation[s]” (p. 130). Similarly, Mitchell (2009) noticed the “thick description” of rhetorical analysis enhanced the understanding of international relations. Mitchell (2009) warns, “the growing salience of transnational deliberation in world politics is an inescapable fact. . . as the interlocking trends of economic globalization and political interdependence gather momentum, stresses on the state-centric system of world politics are likely to mount” (pp. 258-259). These power alternations in the global system require scholars to reconfigure their perspective and develop new views on international relations different from our previous understandings.

Nye (2004) asserted a qualifying “new perspective.” He called it “soft power.” Nye (2004) stated, “Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” (p. 5). Nye (2004) suggests the use of soft power would change the nature of public diplomacy as the nation-state increasingly uses the “power” of attraction instead of commands. Soft power is “an intangible attraction that persuades us to go along with others’ purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place” (Nye, 2004, p. 7). A current example of band-waggoning persuasion using soft power may be found on the U.S. State Department website. On the U.S. State Department’s website the phrase, “the Quartet” frequently appears. The Quartet is the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. Frequently in the State Department’s press releases it will say “the Quartet decided. . .” or “the Quartet

encourages. . .” (The U.S. Department of State, 2010). This is an example of soft power—a band-wagon effect. Another general example are the diplomatic uses of the internet. In public diplomacy, framing enticing messages are intended to aligning the public with the countries’ proposed ideology. A distinctive national identity combined with technology creates a formula for international persuasion, or soft power.

### **The Global Society Evolution**

Inherent in the discussion of nation-states is the context from which they developed or in which they currently function. Nation-states have merged diplomatically and economically. No longer are sovereign states completely sovereign. The evolution of global society demands a nation-state to function both as a sovereign state and as global citizen. Barnett and Sikkink (2009) suggest public diplomacy with its multiple audiences seamlessly merges into the new study of global society.

The evolution to global society began on a four-front transitional course after World War II and with increasing speed upon the conclusion of the Cold War. The four-tiered growth areas were: 1) increasingly interdependent global economics, 2) exponential technological growth, 3) multinational governing organizations, and 4) national security alterations. An example of increasing interdependent global economics may be found in the history and current state of the European Union. Technological growth and change has become an integral part of our increasingly dynamic society. Multinational governing organizations created after World War II, i.e. the United Nations, continue to increase in power and legitimacy. Toward the end of the last century, classical national security quickly became history with the emergence of the War on Terror. The once state-centered world is now an interdependent global society (Mitchell, 2009).

Global society, for the purposes of this paper, follows the definition outlined by English School Theory. Global society in the English School has four components in its definition (Buzan, 2004). First, global society gives distinction and value to the state as well as to non-state organizations. Each of these organizations are defined and accepted as legitimate players in world society. Second, global society is socially constructed. In order for a state or non-state organization to function within global society it requires sharing social experiences. Sharing may occur in multiple capacities, such as traditional diplomacy or a foreign ministry YouTube channel. Third, global society is not global community. Society is sharing the social experience; however, it does not have the “unity” found in community. Fourth, the individual still impacts global society although the state takes precedence (Buzan, 2004). Global society requires the nation-state to interact with the individual, the non-state organizations and other states differently than traditional history records. Part of the state evolution in current global society requires the use of digital diplomacy.

### **Digital Diplomacy**

Digitizing diplomacy began long before the Internet. Dizard (2001) argues the indications of digitization began with the first telegraph clerks employed by the government for the express purpose of communication with other government dignitaries. Since the age of the telegraph, the incorporation of telecommunications has been included in international affairs. Yet, in recent years, the use of telecommunications in connection with public diplomacy for global society has increased exponentially. Gilboa (2002) argued media diplomacy was in its infancy at the beginning of the century and would continue to increase as technology improved and as global society became increasingly networked.

Diplomacy involving the media, in any form, has been called by many names: cyber-diplomacy (Potter, 2002), real-time diplomacy (Gilboa, 2002), mediated diplomacy (Shaefer & Shenhav, 2009; Shaefer & Gabay, 2009) or digital diplomacy (Dizard 2001). Significant use of the media and diplomacy with the subsequent names are simply attempts to configure a word to describe the ever-changing nature of diplomacy in the digital world (Gilboa, 2002). Again, it is a matter of semantic differences; hence, I refer to media usage and diplomacy as digital diplomacy (Dizard, 2001).

When Dizard (2001) predicted the future of digital diplomacy, he did not and could not have comprehended the prevalence of new media in diplomatic relations. Dizard did understand, however, the interconnectedness of foreign relations with our increasingly digitized world. Although Dizard initially would have interchanged the terms digital diplomacy and public diplomacy, I would argue they are distinctly different. Public diplomacy is a broad term to include all forms of diplomacy, from formal dignitary visits to a Facebook page created and updated by state departments and foreign ministries. Digital diplomacy is the use of mass media in diplomatic efforts. New media intended to persuade external and internal publics of government positions on foreign affairs. In other words, digital diplomacy is a nation-state using new media to express views and values with the intent to persuade.

Potter (2002) compiled a list of accurate conclusions about digital media's impact on foreign relations. He summarizes his observations into five main themes. First, digital diplomacy will require an invigorated campaign by foreign ministries to verify and maintain correct and credible messages in mass media. Second, while mass media is used for increased transparency and legitimacy; it is also used for classified national security operations. Third, Potter suggests governments are required to be proactively engaged in media. Fourth, new media

creates accountability for governmental actions to global society. Fifth, foreign ministries and state departments are increasingly using the internet, which in turn will compel these groups to release quality presentational material to the masses.

Shaefer and Shenhav (2009) explore digital diplomacy under the guise of mediated diplomacy. Shaefer and Shenhav reviewed Israel's use of digital diplomacy in connection to convincing other nations of Israeli values as well as to increase Israel's influence and power. Shaefer and Gabay (2009) suggest terrorist organizations must use media for influence which demands nation-states also use mediated forms of communication. Israeli scholars Shaefer, Shenhav and Gabay draw heavily on Entman's (2008) description of digital diplomacy.

Entman (2008) explains digital diplomacy is a government's attempts to use media to influence and persuade the audiences of foreign nations. Entman (2008) draws on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. Nye (2004) predicted success in diplomacy during the twenty-first century would incorporate new media usage to attract the minds of people. Nye furthers the usefulness of soft power to include the importance of transparency through information-dissemination instead of information-hoarding by the nation-state—a common practice during the Cold War. The conceptualization of digital diplomacy has systematically been developed and is heading toward theory development (Entman, 2008). Competition for power is central to international relations. To compete for soft power, nation-states must use new media outlets.

Consequently, nation-states are required to communicate online. Production and consumption of media and organizational membership are no longer separate practices. The era of traditional diplomacy, or asymmetrical patterns of information dissemination, have changed into symmetrical patterns of public diplomacy with user-friendly content allowing “comments” by any individual accessing the nation-state's information anywhere in the world. In part, the



change from the previous eras of international communication exchange is the speed at which international communications are transferred, processed and responded to (Makikiza & Bornman, 2007; Wiley, 2004). Manuel Castells (2009) calls this era the “Network Society.”

Castells’ term directly implies the “rapid diffusion of information on a global scale [and its] many implications” (Stohl, 2005, p. 250). The traditional modes of knowledge, utility, and information dissemination for nation-states have changed. Unfortunately, most nation-states were not developed during a global, networked society; traditional hierarchy is challenged; and networked, global society with its accompanying technology has become reality.

Time and space compression progresses with new technologies, increasing international involvement and escalating global accountability. Castells (2009) asserts, “The construction of space and time is socially differentiated” (p. 35). As global identity solidifies, the socially constructed differentiation of time and space nearly ceases. Waters (1995) defined time-space compression as the shortening of time and the shrinking of space (as cited in Stohl, 2005). This is particularly true when large groups are linked to a “common communication technology” (Stohl, 2005, p. 251).

Due to the immediate nature of mass media, nation-states are vigilant in identity protection and management. Young and Phillips (2009) write:

Organizations have to be able to defend their values in public like never before. Spin, bling, hype and exaggeration as well as ethics and practices will be questioned and challenged, and any dissonance between the values of users and the organization is made very publicly evident. (p. 147)

The nation-state must be in constantly aware of the aggregate messages steaming from social networking and other websites. In turn, nation-states are increasingly pressured to engage in messages and update their citizens—home and abroad—on the nation’s current

accomplishments, value positions and conflict management strategies. Nation-states must be media savvy and anxiously engaged with their potential and current audiences to maintain their identity. For example, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs just released an application compatible with the iPhone, iTouch, and iPad allowing the user to immediately receive updated information about Israeli foreign affairs. This exchange of communication to and from Israel and its audiences allows for organizational legitimacy, a quick connect to issues management, and constant reinforcement of their identity.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATA & METHOD**

### **Case Study**

According to Yin (2009), case studies are appropriate for contemporary issues which ask “how” questions. The case study method allows for understanding real-life phenomenon in depth especially where the context is interwoven in the phenomenon. “Case study research comprises an all encompassing method—covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The case study method may function as a means of rhetorical analysis given that the text of the analysis is a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). The value of the case study design is specific to contemporary issues and adequately aligns with the Israeli identity and the Free Gaza flotilla attack—a bounded communication incident.

As in comparable methods of rhetorical analysis, theory development and theory enhancement is as equally important in the case study method. Theory development takes time and is a difficult process (Yin, 2009; Moore & Farrands, 2010). Theory enhancement deepens the richness of previous studies developing the theory’s heurism and scope. Using Bakhtin’s as a

framework for the case study, digital diplomacy and the analysis of Israeli identity will be enhanced.

The case study is a valuable form of social science research. “The case study approach to research is most usefully defined as the intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units” (Gerring, 2009, p.1139). Case study mode provides several strengths and some weakness. First, the case study is valuable during the exploratory stage of research. Second, case studies are appropriate for “how” questions. Third, cases allow for “thick description.” Fourth, case studies concede for the expression of complexity in communication. Fifth, this method provides unique internal validity, causal insight, and depth. Sixth, the case method encourages narrative analysis. To begin, case studies are valuable during an exploratory stage of research (Gerring, 2009). The combination of identity management and public diplomacy is indeed exploratory. Hence, it is fitting to use a case study to guide the research of this particular subject matter.

Case studies also provide “thick description” increasing the strength of the research and the enhancement of the theory (Derzin, 1989; Mitchell, 2009; Yin, 2009). A case study should be a good story allowing the researcher to “blend theory, analysis and practice to better understand how communication processes create and shape organizational events” (Keyton & Shockley-Zalabak, 2006, p.7-8). Since case studies are a typical tool in public diplomacy, this study will be consistent with previous research methods in the discipline (Gerber, 2008; Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Lynch, 2000; Motion & Leitch, 2009).

The purpose of a case is to focus on the nation-state’s communication (Keyton & Shockley-Zalabak, 2006). In this case, the focus will be on the nation-state and external communication. The case will describe the messiness of the situation and the need for

communication management. According to Keyton and Shockley-Zalabak (2006) the case study analysis provides several key opportunities:

1. Viewing communication in an organizational context with all of its complexity.
2. Contextualizes the communication patterns and strategies.
3. Allows for analysis participants in the situation may not have recognized.
4. Allows for the discovery of communication exemplars as well as inefficiencies or ineffective practices (p. 8-9).

Case studies should be both exploratory and prescriptive. “Analysis aims to provide theory-based explanations . . . [with follow-up] prescriptions [which] are recommended courses of action based on an examination of and the theory-based reasoning for recommended decisions” (Keyton & Shockley-Zalabak, 2006, p. 10).

Some strengths of the case study include internal validity, causal insight and depth. Validity in a study is intrinsic to the case study method’s value. While the case study mode is weak in its external validity, its weakness is compensated for the strength of the internal validity (Gerring, 2009). The internal validity results from two primary sources, the causal insights generated using a single example and the depth at which one sample may be explored. Gerring (2009) explains, “the opportunities for investigating causal pathways are generally more apparent in the case study format” (p. 1147). Such investigation requires analysis of the minute details. The composition of many details creates the depth of the case and the enlightenment of the study. Depth created from thick description.

The thick description (Denzin, 1989) achieved with a case study can provide unique and enlightening insights to the discipline (Sproule, 1990; Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006; Mitchell, 2009). The case study method allows for thick description through its narrative process.

Guillaume (2010) expressed identity as best understood through a narrative approach allowing for both the historical and relational context. The narrative process then exposes the communication and identity process of the nation-state which allows for exploration and analysis. This case study will provide a narrative of the Free Gaza Flotilla incident that occurred at the end of May 2010. The case will be explored and framed with the following typologies provided by Bakhtin: political grammars, heteroglossia, stratification, and political dialectics. These typologies will be defined and explained expounding on examples of digital diplomacy and identity management. During the case review, I will be looking for communication themes: attempts to create a strong Israeli identity, ways in which the IMFA responds to international issues, and evidence of the current international communication environment. The combination of these emerging traditions will demonstrate Israeli's attempt to legitimize their position (Mitchell, 2009; Motion & Leitch, 2009).

The case study method is appropriate when asking "how" questions (Yin, 2009). Since most the research questions will be "how" questions, the case study method is verified. Also, the case study method is consistent with other research done in the field of public diplomacy (Stohl, 2001). The work of Yin (2009), Mitchell (2009) and Stohl (2001) encourage the case study method for rhetorical international relations studies. The use of a case study combined with the Bakhtinian terms allows for a distinctive exploration. While the case could be provided without the Bakhtinian terms, the typologies require specific connections to be drawn within the data. For example, political grammars are the words used to communicate, yet which hold different connotations for those using the words. Using political grammars requires a deeper, structured analysis of the exchanges between Israel and those participating in the Free Gaza flotilla. Bakhtin believed identity existed only through interaction (Guillaume, 2010). This exemplifies

another reason the Bakhtinian terms will provide value to this case study. Drawing on the strengths of the case study method combined with the structures of the Bakhtinian terms further validate the study.

**Bakhtinian Framework.** Mikhail Bakhtin's interdisciplinary work (Guillaume, 2010) effectively combines the concepts of identity management and public diplomacy. The Bakhtinian terms: chronotope, heteroglossia, stratification, and political dialectics will be used to provide structure and additional meaning to the case study. Mikhail Bakhtin's work provides the language and principles to combine public diplomacy with web 2.0. Der Derian (2010) argues that Bakhtin "provides a particularly apt expose of passes for criticism and debate" (p. 139). The Bakhtinian framework provides a capstone in the combination of diplomacy and a digitized world.

Bakhtin (1981) explains this connection: "There is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance" (p. 426). During the process of social construction, the theoretical must become practical and applicable. Bakhtin suggests identity requires interaction (Der Derian, 2009). The Israeli identity has no substance unless it is responding to or contrasting another national or organizational identities and agendas. "The boundaries of identity, as a social continuant, are the reflection of the interweaving of its expression, its context and its relation to other social continuants" (Guillaume, 2010, p. 101). Bakhtin's concept of identity synthesizes the exchange of information as a contested, dynamic process (Guillaume, 2010; Motion & Leitch, 2009). The identity creation process of political identity in conjunction with power status happens through interactions such as the Free Gaza flotilla.

Guillaume (2010, p. 99) suggests the first step of understanding identity is to understand identity creation and maintenance is a process; “it belongs to a dynamic network of meanings; identity thus represents a certain position in a field of relations.” Consequently, identity is never fixed. Identity maintenance is constantly fluctuating between the internal and external events engaging the nation-state. Identity is created from social events (Guillaume, 2010). Bakhtinian analysis allows the researcher to pay attention to the “national identity’s scope, style and context” (Guillaume, 2010, p. 101). According to Guillaume, Bakhtin’s work is a well-sharpened tool for national identity analysis.

To further understand Bakhtin’s (1981) value to this study, several applicable key terms relevant to the case must be defined. These terms are: chronotope, heteroglossia, stratification and political dialectics. First, chronotope themes will be applied to the flotilla incident. Chronotope is the analysis of the time and space continuum as it relates to a specific event. Chronotope perceives time and space as equally interdependent giving preference to neither condition (Bakhtin, 1981). When applied to international relations, chronotope reveals “understandings of the political where different political grammars are conflicting to emerge as the relevant and legitimate one” (Guillaume, 2010, 106). The chronotope allows the exploration to move from the dynamic identity to a momentarily static identity within an event for examination and understanding. Chronotope helps define the political as heteroglossia. As reviewed in the digital diplomacy literature, networked society is dependent on the absence of time and space. Nye’s soft power heightens the emphasis of time and space shrinkage for political gain. Chronotope is the analysis of soft power and digital diplomacy. This leads to my first research question:

**RQ1:** How does Israel manage its identity during the Free Gaza flotilla incident using the IMFA's online presence?

Chronotope perceives time and space as equally interdependent giving preference to neither condition (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin (1981) explains,

Chronotope points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people. Chronotopes thus stands as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves. (p. 84)

Bakhtin neither favored time nor space as chronotope but considered chronotope the fusion and personification of both.

Chronotope when applied to global society reveals “understandings of the political where different political grammars are conflicting to emerge as the relevant and legitimate” political grammar (Guillaume, 2010, 106). Political grammars are the language and symbols available to define the situations of public policy (Norval, 2006). Political grammars express similar words with multiple and divergent meanings. For example, let's consider the word and the condition of “peace” in international relations. The connotation of peace is a complete absence of war (Whitehall, 2004). Yet, with further analysis, the political grammar of “peace,” reveals contrasting situations. Peace may mean a cease-fire. Peace could be the toleration of the conflict or occupation. Political dialectics form the second research question:

**RQ2:** How does Israel and the Free Gaza flotilla exhibit divergent ideologies known as political grammars?



Heteroglossia examines the context of a given situation, or the communication environment. “At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428). In order for an organization to have conflict with its external environment, certain conditions must exist. For example, the United States would not have had tensions with British Petroleum Company (BP) if oil had not been spilled near the U.S. coastal border. The oil spill is heteroglossia. Heteroglossia is circular. The oil spill causes numerous responses from many organizations and nation-states in global society. BP’s response and the U.S. reaction to the response deepens heteroglossia. Heteroglossia creates the third research question.

**RQ3:** How does Israel indicate the communication environment of the flotilla incident?

Stratification is a process wherein words or identities are redefined due to external or internal pressure (Guillaume, 2010). In public policy, stratification would parallel the power plays of international relations. Organizations will be constantly redefined and maintained through the process of stratification. Stratification destroys unity as a new identity or meaning is created. The destruction and rebuilding of identity is central to public diplomacy and identity management (Cheney & McMillan, 1990; Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Lynch, 2000; Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006; Motion & Leitch, 2009). Identity creation and maintenance motivates many organizational processes especially when the process is external communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). The stratification of identity is best understood through a narrative perspective allowing for the historical and relational contexts (heteroglossia) (Guillaume, 2010). Ordeix-Rigo and Duarte (2009) claim stratification perpetuates key messages for organizational identity. These key messages not only reveal the identity of the organization, they also reveal

the issues the organization is managing. Identity management is a motivating force for communication.

The stratification process parallels the distinctive identity process explored by Meisenbach and McMillan (2006). Meisenbach and McMillan cited the rhetorical work of Cheney (1983a, 1983b) and the typologies he created from Kenneth Burke's work: common ground, transcendent we, and the antithesis. While Bakhtin's stratification suggests identity must be destroyed and rebuilt, he does not explain "how" to rebuild identity. Cheney, in contrast, has specific strategies to rebuild identity.

**RQ4:** What Cheney/Burke strategies were used during the Free Gaza Flotilla incident?

Bakhtin uses the Roman god, Janus, as the exemplar of dialectical tensions. Janus is a metaphor for the push and pull of our activity. Janus is the god of gates, doorways, beginnings and endings. He is depicted as having one face looking forward and another face looking back. He sees both the past and the future. Janus is experiencing a dialectical tension. He is pulled to the future and is equally drawn to the past. Since Janus can focus on only one the past or the future, he experiences tension in his decision of where to focus. Janus would prefer to have both the future and the past, yet he cannot. Janus's dilemma exemplifies dialectical tension.

Bakhtin (1993) writes:

An act of our activity, of our actual experiencing, is like a two-faced Janus. It looks into two opposite directions: it looks at the objective unity of a domain of culture and at the never-repeatable uniqueness of actually lived and experienced life. But there is no unitary and unique plan where both faces would mutually determine each other in relation to a single unique unity. It is only the once –occurrent event of being in the process of actualization that can constitute this unique unity; all that which is theoretical or aesthetic

must be determined as a constituent moment in the once-occurrent event of being, although no longer, of course, in theoretical or aesthetic terms (p. 2).

Political dialectics would be best clarified through an example. The sovereignty of nations is morphing. The world has shifted from sovereign nations making unilateral decisions to nations acting as members of a global society. For nations-states, there could be a pull in one direction to protect the unilateral sovereignty of the nation and yet a push, in the exact same moment, to act as a global citizen negating sovereignty to the collective. The dichotomy of global society and a sovereign nation is an example of a political dialectic. A nation's tendency to lean toward one or the other options aids in the creation of the nation's identity. The choices presented during political dialectics are affected by the stratification process, the heteroglossia and chronotope of the situation. Political dialectics are the simultaneous polarization of the nation-state's goals and values and create research question five.

**RQ5:** What political dialectics emerge from the flotilla attack as Israel attempts to maintain and rebuild its challenged identity?

The combination of identity management and public diplomacy generates a unique set of research questions related to Israel's online presence with depth drawn from: chronotope, heteroglossia, stratification and political dialectics. According to the searchable literature, these tools have not been applied to public diplomacy or identity management. The Bakhtinian terms will be used in connection with the Burke/Cheney identity management tools. During the process of "establishing a distinctive identity," three strategies are typically used (Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006, p. 120). The first strategy is "common ground." Common ground is the process of finding values or ideas common between two groups, or between the organization and its external audience. The second tactic is the antithesis. Antithesis is the creation of a common

enemy between the two groups, or between the organization and the external audience. The third strategy is the assumed or transcendent we. The “transcendent we” is a “subtle strategy [that] associates dissimilar groups and articulates them as simultaneously present, transcending the differences” (McMillan and Meisenbach, 2006, pp. 120-121).

## **Data**

A primary way in which organizations and nation-states manage their identity is through the use of online communications. Israel manages its identity through the internet via the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IMFA) website. The role of the IMFA is parallel to a public relations office in the corporate world. The purpose of the IMFA is external communication; that is, its mission is to communicate with the world on Israeli matters.

The Foreign Ministry formulates, implements and presents the foreign policy of the Government of Israel. It represents the state vis-a-vis foreign governments and international organizations, explains its positions and problems throughout the world, endeavors to promote its economic, cultural, and scientific relations, and fosters cooperation with developing countries (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website posts speeches and interviews given by Israeli leadership to foreign audiences as well as speeches and interviews involving diplomatic visits from foreign dignitaries visiting Israel in conjunction with posts detailing current press releases. The IMFA also uses social networking websites: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr. In addition, the IMFA provides applications for mobile devices allowing subscribers to be “instantly” informed.

The data collected and reviewed for this paper is information posted on the IFMA’s website and subsidiary networking pages, all of which meet the criteria for external international

communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). The website outlines the case study in a chronological format with stories and statements provided by Israel on the incident as sidebar links. Specifically, the website used for data evaluation will be the IMFA's webpage titled "IDF forces met with pre-planned violence when attempting to board flotilla 31-May-2010" ([http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2010/Israel\\_Navy\\_warns\\_flotilla\\_31-May-2010.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2010/Israel_Navy_warns_flotilla_31-May-2010.htm)). This web page is the key to all other links and networking sites produced by Israel as it attempted to manage its identity during the crisis and subsequent UN investigation. The website and correlating web pages were downloaded in June, July, August and September. To tell the "full" story, making the narrative of the case complete, the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (2010) website will be used. The data focuses on the management of the Israeli identity during the flotilla incident. Many "news stories" were produced about the Free Gaza flotilla incident. Although these news stories are part of a larger interaction (Bakhtin, 1981) which aid in the creation of the Israeli identity, the purpose of this study is to examine the Israeli methods specific to their identity management. Hence, the external news stories will be minimally included as supplemental material to gauge the international response to the incident.

While other perspectives of the incident are voiced in numerous locations, this website contains all links and statements necessary to understand the Israeli diplomatic efforts. The website was a key diplomatic tool in the incident. Diplomacy is "a channel of contact for clarifying positions, probing for information and convincing states and other actors to support one's position" (Gilboa, 2002, p. 83). The IMFA website on the flotilla is intended to clarify and convince others of the actions taken by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Here after, this web page will be referred to as the "originating website." In searching for further Israeli-originating information on the incident, no new information surfaced which was not already linked back to

the IMFA's website. Hence, this sole website with its accompanying links reaches the point of saturation for the study.

The case was created in several steps. First, the originating website was read and reread for details of the incident. Outside news articles were also explored for case details. Next, the sidebar links were each explored to form the examination of the narrative. The process webbed into other web pages on the IMFA website which were helpful in the creation of the case. Third, the history of the Gaza strip was explored using history books from the university library. Fourth, the brief history—for context purposes only—and case were written. Upon the conclusion of the case details, the case will be reviewed with the Bakhtian framework extracting further finite details from the web pages previously examined.

## **THE CASE**

### **Israel and Gaza: a basic history**

Nearly all of Israel's modern history is steeped in violence. For the Israelis, it has been a conquest for existence (Adelman, 2008). For the Arab citizens, it has been a revolution of equality. A central point of this conflict has been the Gaza strip. The Gaza strip is a small piece of land on the southern coast of Israel. During a short time in history (1947-1967), the Gaza strip was under the command of Egyptian forces. Although Egypt had the option to annex the Gaza strip, it never did. The Gaza strip remained a military externality of Egypt until the Six-day war. During the Six-day war of 1967, Israel occupied the Gaza strip (Diller, et al., 1994). Israel currently retains the occupation.

On November 22, 1967 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242 due to the growing concern for the conflict in the Middle East. Resolution 242 states the following:

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security. . . [which] requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include . . . Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict. . . (as cited in Diller, et al., 1994, p. 395)

Although U.N. Resolution 242 strongly encourages withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza strip, they have not withdrawn. Not only has Israeli leadership not withdrawn, they have intensified their presence in the area over the last couple of decades (Gordon, 2008).

In a historically unprecedented event of withdraw in 2005, Israel disengaged in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank asking Israeli citizens to relocate (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Following their disengagement, the Palestinian Authority held elections. In 2006 and 2007, relations between Israel and the Gaza Strip heightened due to clashes between Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas who were fighting for government control of the disengaged areas. During 2006-2007, Hamas launched rockets the Gaza strip killing Israelis. The rockets came with increasing intensification in 2007. Israel initially responded forcibly. After the death of several civilians—women and children—and pressure from global society, Israel stopped using military means and enacted a sanction on the area (Tessler, 2009). This defensive sanction—which included the current maritime blockade on the Gaza strip—was an attempt to prevent further military aid to the Gaza from Iran and other weapon suppliers.

### **The Incident**

On May 31, 2010, reports came of an attack by the IDF on a humanitarian ship headed to the Gaza strip. Israel was already under investigation by the United Nations for the death of civilians in the Gaza strip in 2007. The fatal conflict on a humanitarian aid ship, headed for

people in destitution, shocked global society. Within hours of the incident, the United Nations (2010) were condemning the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) actions. Before all the facts on the incident were released, news channels were reporting the conflict. As global society began formulating its opinion of the Israeli response to the flotilla, Israel began posting video of the IDF interaction with the volunteers explaining the need for the IDF to use force. Public statements defending the Israeli position were also posted on Facebook, on YouTube and on the IMFA website in an attempt to manage their identity and maintain their legitimacy.

The flotilla was supported by several humanitarian aid groups: the Free Gaza movement (Free Gaza), the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), and the IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010b). The Free Gaza movement is a humanitarian aid group “registered in Cyprus as a human rights project” (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010b, para. 1). In an attempt to break the blockade to the Gaza Strip, Free Gaza had sent four previous flotillas. The ISM is a Palestinian grassroots movement to counter the Israeli occupation of the Gaza using nonviolent means (International Solidarity Movement, 2010). The ECESG is an umbrella body of NGOs for human rights in Gaza (The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, 2010). The IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation is a Turkish organization whose mission is to assist in the aid of Muslims. Israel considers the IHH as a radical Islamic organization (Black & Siddique, 2010). Hereafter, in the paper, the humanitarian aid group will be called Free Gaza with the exception of the IHH because of its classification with Israel.

Ships associated with the flotilla began sailing in late May 2010. The ships sailed from Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey meeting ships which sailed from Sweden and Ireland. Seven ships were part of the flotilla intending to break the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip.



However, the ships did not sail as tightly as planned. As the ships neared the Israeli coast, Israel took strategic steps to avoid conflict with the ships.

On Thursday, May 27, 2010, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs encouraged the flotilla to dock at Ashdod, and from this location the aid brought by the flotilla would be transferred to the Gaza strip after appropriate investigations were concluded. The IMFA Director-General met with the ambassadors of Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden and Ireland—the countries from which the boats sailed. The IMFA D-C worked with the ambassadors to create the best possible situation for all parties involved (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010f). After multiple warnings were given to the ships (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b), the first five boats of the flotilla were intercepted by the IDF and escorted to Ashdod port with no incident (Flotilla Facts, 2010).

However, the Turkish ship, *Mavi Maramra*, proved to be an entirely different situation for the IDF. As IDF soldiers were lowered from helicopters to the ship, aggression from the ships' passengers erupted into violence. The IDF soldiers were deployed with riot dispersal means not defensive weapons. As commanding IDF troops witnessed the fighting on the ship, more IDF soldiers were dispersed with live weapons. Seven IDF soldiers were wounded. Nine "violent" activists were killed. The IDF finally seized the ship and ported the *Mavi Maramra* in Ashdod (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b). Media outlets immediately released what was known of the story and global society began to react. Before the day concluded, the United Nations held an emergency meeting condemning Israel's actions and encouraging an investigation (Department of Public Information, United Nations, 2010).

As the *Mavi Maramra* was investigated and key characters were interviewed, another motive for the flotilla--beside humanitarian aid--appeared.

During a search aboard the maritime vessel Mavi Maramra, IDF forces uncovered a cache of weapons including many knives, slingshots, rocks, smoke bombs, metal rods, improvised sharp metal objects, sticks and clubs, 5KG hammers, firebombs and gas masks in case IDF forces fired riot dispersal means at the activists as they violently attacked the soldiers. These weapons were used against Israeli Navy personnel as they attempted to board the ship (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b, para. 12).

The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (2010) released intelligence findings from interviews, paperwork found on multiple ships, and video documentation collected from media wires before the ships sailed for Israel. After interviewing passengers of the Mavi Maramra, evidence developed that the IHH had planted 40 operatives on the ship in an attempt to provoke Israeli forces. It was these operatives the IDF encountered as they boarded the Mavi Maramra. The operatives were well organized and appeared to work outside of the framework already existing on the passenger ship. The operatives not only had weapons, they also carried large sums of money on their persons with the suspected intent for delivery to Hamas (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010a).

The Rachel Corrie, an Irish ship, headed for the Gaza strip on June 5th was intercepted by the IDF without incident (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b). From the audio records on the ship, the captain prepared to port in Gaza. He was repeatedly encouraged to redirect the Rachel Corrie to Ashdod port. When he did not redirect the ship, IDF troops seized the ship and sailed it to Ashdod port (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n).

Within a couple of days of the Rachel Corrie's peaceful interaction, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the need for an independent investigation of the Mavi Maramra matter. This investigation would be independent of the pending investigation sponsored by the United

Nations. The Israeli Cabinet quickly approved the independent investigation committee: Major General Eiland, Brigadier General Kohavi, Brigadier General Halamish, Cornell Daabul (Israeli Defense Forces, 2010a). The conclusion of the commission revealed several findings:

Not all of the possible intelligence methods were fully implemented for the Mavi Maramra.

1. Communication between the Navy intelligence and Israeli Defense intelligence could have been improved.
2. The anticipation of violence against the IDF troops was underestimated.
3. The troops had no alternative plan for the violence enacted upon them.
4. Media relations could have been improved with better coordination between the IDF, IMFA and other foreign agencies.

With these points of criticism, the commission did express the troops acted appropriately and the commands given were necessary (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010i). This report concluded the Israeli independent commission with the U.N. investigation still proceeding at the writing of this paper.

### **Case Review**

Bakhtin developed four principle terms applicable to the Free Gaza Flotilla case. They are chronotope, heteroglossia, stratification, and political dialectics. Chronotope is the examination of the time and space continuum as it relates to a specific event. Chronotope is also the exploration of situationally defined meanings in the words used by the interlocutors.

Heteroglossia is the context, or the communication environment, of the situation. Stratification is a process wherein words or identities are redefined due to external or internal pressure.

Political dialectics are the tensions experienced by Israel to conform to global society while

maintaining its sovereignty. The intent of this review is to provide deeper description and meaning for the case study.

**Chronotope.** The structure of the IMFA website signifies the importance of chronotope for this case. The website contains the date of the initial incident, May 31, 2010. Underneath the title, it also includes the dates when the website was updated. At the time of this study, the website was updated on June 21, 2010--three weeks after the incident. Each time the content was updated during the three weeks, the date was noted. The links located on the right-hand side of the site are not as consistent in their time-stamp notation. Some links, both internal and external, have dates; others do not.

The IMFA updated the website for three weeks giving a time-line to the subsequent events following the Mavi Maramra attack. The website was created the day of the event, May 31, 2010. It was updated again on June 5, 2010 as the 7th flotilla was peacefully boarded and seized. The IDF appointed a team to examine the flotilla operation on June 7th. Prime Minister Netanyahu encouraged an independent investigation of the incident on June 9th. By June 13th an Israeli independent commission had been created and was approved by the Cabinet. On June 15th, the website was updated again exposing some volunteers as IHH operatives who had prepared for a violent exchange with the IDF. Videos were imbedded into the originating website on June 16th. The timeline is supported by articles available as links near the assigned dates or on the list of links on the sidebar of the website. The frequent updates of the website are evidence of the external conversation in which the Israelis were engaging. It is clear from the timeline of comments defending the Israeli position that the Israelis were vigilant in their attempt to manage the crisis.

Geographical space in a networked, global society is shrinking. The flotilla incident proved no different. The events occurred during the early morning hours of May 31, 2010. By the evening of the same day, reports of the news and videos posted on the internet were justifying both the Israeli aggression and the humanitarian aid mission. Instantly, news was assessable to audiences worldwide. “Space” was geographically condensed. The condensation of time was evidenced by the frequent updates to the IMFA website and the ability for audiences to access the information no matter their global location.

Another purpose of chronotope is to reconcile conflicting political grammars (Guillaume, 2010). Political grammars are the words available to define a public diplomacy situation which may have contradictory definitions (Norval, 2006). For example, an evaluation of the word peace. In certain situations, peace means ceasefire. In another situation, peace means complete absence of war. The definition of peace is situational constructed and dependent on heteroglossia. Understanding conflicting political grammars requires an exploration of the definitions assigned to words specific to the situation and perspective. After reading and searching the IMFA website, linked websites and other websites linked to the IMFA originating website, several political grammars developed.

The Free Gaza flotilla claimed they were a humanitarian aid mission. Humanitarian aid implies relief from destitution. Although the Gaza strip is compromised, it is not Israel alone who challenges the security of the Gaza strip. It is also Hamas, the controlling authority in the area, which challenges the quality of life of those who reside in the Gaza strip (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a). The Free Gaza Movement’s (2010) website states, “We want to raise international awareness about the prison-like closure of the Gaza Strip and pressure the international community to review its sanctions policy and end its support for continued Israeli

occupation” (para. 1). Israel allows internationally recognized organizations to consistently cross from Israel to Gaza with humanitarian aid ensuring there is not a food shortage or humanitarian aid crises of any kind (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a).

There is inconsistency in the statements by Israel and the concerns of Free Gaza. Free Gaza claims the Gaza strip is a humanitarian aid crisis—it is in a state of destitution. Free Gaza argues Israel is to blame for the destitution in the Gaza strip. Israel's claim is opposite of the Free Gaza claim. Israel suggests that if there is a humanitarian aid crisis, it is directly connected to Hamas. Further, Israel insures all measures are taken to relieve the poverty of those in the Gaza strip. This is a demonstration of political grammar. Free Gaza states the humanitarian aid must be provided to those in the Gaza strip; Israel claims humanitarian aid is being provided. There conflicting definition of humanitarian aid is more complex than whether or not humanitarian aid. Deeper examination suggests humanitarian aid is a question of whether or not there is a need for humanitarian aid in the Gaza strip and who is to blame.

Another example of political grammar is Israeli aggression. When viewing the websites of the organizations supporting the Free Gaza Flotilla, it is evident Israel is their common adversary. With statements such as the Gaza is “prison-like,” then prison-keepers are the Israelis. Yet, the Israelis see the occupation as a form of protection for the Israeli citizens and a reclaiming of the Jewish Holy Land (Diller, et al., 1994; Gordon, 2008).

Israeli aggression coincides with the political grammar resistance. With Israel constantly defending its identity, or legitimacy, the chronotope reveals a contentious personification. Pushing against Israel are pro-Palestinian non-government organizations, countries surrounding Israel, the Palestinian people, Hamas and terrorists groups such as Hezbollah. Resistance is

generated by these groups in response to the contentious personification as it defends Israel legitimacy and identity.

During the Free Gaza flotilla crisis another political grammar emerged in form of a question. Who is in authority? Although the Rachel Corrie was eventually redirected to Ashdod port without incident, a conversation demonstrates the challenge of Israeli authority. The Irish captain said:

The Irish government, I think, had been in talks with the Israeli government seeking safe passage for this ship into Gaza and I think that the best compromise that they could come to was to send this aid to Ashdod. We are further asking to let this ship go to Gaza.

(Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n, para. 11).

The captain credibly referenced the Irish government and the Israeli government, yet implies a disconnection between the IDF's order and the Israeli government. The captain equally assumes the Israeli and Irish governments had concluded it was permissible for the Rachel Corrie to port in Gaza. On the contrary, all supplies and materials for the ship had been arranged for reception at the Ashdod port (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010e).

The participants of the Free Gaza flotilla considered themselves activists for the Palestinian cause or supporters of the Palestinian people, and supporters of human rights (International Solidarity Movement, 2010; The Free Gaza Movement, 2010; The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, 2010). The Israelis consider the activists supporters of Hamas (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010b). When evaluating the term "activist," the Israeli's were careful to differentiate between the peaceful activists on the ships and the violent activists (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d). The violent activists were later noted as IHH operatives strategically planted on the Mavi Maramra to incite conflict with

the Israelis (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010a). Demonstrated here are the different definitions of “activist” and “supporters,” another political grammar surfacing during the Mavi Maramra attacks.

In the seizure of the Mavi Maramra more than humanitarian aid supplies were found. The Israelis filmed gas masks, metal poles sawed off the ship used to attack IDF troops, metal cutters, pipe wrenches, knives, hatchets, marbles and hand rockets (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010a). Beyond the knives, nearly all of the weapons had alternative purposes such as the pipe wrench or metal cutters. Both tools are needed in building. Some of the Rachel Corrie's cargo was cement for building. It could be argued the humanitarian aid mission was to provide building supplies to the people in the Gaza strip, and some of those building supplies were pipe wrenches and metal cutters. The political grammar is weapons. What the Israelis deemed as weapons may have been deemed building supplies by the flotilla leadership. Weapons extracted from pre-existing ship materials left the IDF unprepared as they landed on the Mavi Maramra with riot dispersion methods (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010i). What is definably a weapon becomes a challenge.

Political grammars are the personification of time and space as defined by chronotope. Several examples of political grammars were provided: humanitarian aid mission, Israeli aggression, resistance ((Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b), authority, activism or activist, weapons (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d), and supporters (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n). Political grammars highlight the application of chronotope to international relations. Bakhtin claimed chronotope was the personification of time and space in one moment. Political grammars reveal the time and space collision as words are situationally defined by the parties involved that relate specifically to that time and space unique and different



from all other time and space moments before or after. Political grammars are practical examples of the abstract concept of chronotope. Also exemplified in chronotope was the 24/7 access to news media and the management of the Israeli identity through consistent posts to the originating website and videos to YouTube, giving the website viewer a multimedia experience, a definable example of digital diplomacy.

**Heteroglossia.** Heteroglossia explores the context of the Free Gaza flotilla.

Heteroglossia is a circular definition. It is the history of the situation, and it is also exclusively the moment of the situation different from every other situation previous to it. The heteroglossia is similar to a case study. In this paper, a brief history was given of Israel and the Gaza Strip to create the history and context. The incident described the events surrounding and including the attacks on the Mavi Maramra—a situation unique from every other situation previous to it.

Multiple flotillas have attempted to break the Gaza blockade (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010b) and other flotillas will attempt to break the blockade (The Free Gaza Movement, 2010); this flotilla with the associated violence on the Maramra was uniquely different.

The communication environment, or heteroglossia, incorporates the dialogue unique to the moment into the context. The concluding dealings of the violent interaction was Israeli identity management. For example, “Accumulated information indicates that the anti-Israel coalition behind the Mavi Maramra flotilla to the Gaza Strip has spent the past three months promoting plans for new projects as part of a general campaign to smear Israel and erode its legitimacy” (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2010c).

Another example of legitimacy in the interaction between an IDF officer to the Rachel Corrie. The officer said, “The cement that you said is the bulk of your cargo will be transferred

to Gaza. That's the assurance I have just been given by my superiors. To the best of my knowledge that would be precedent setting. It would be something you could take back to your supporters, to your fellow passengers, to the people you say you want to support, and to the government you say you are rebuking for not doing more for Gaza" (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n, para. 14). Here the officer defines the line of authority for the IDF creating credibility. He also acknowledges the Israeli desire for aid from the ships. This would be an act of correlating humanitarian values between the two parties. The negotiation was to please the ship passengers as well as the supporters in Israel and abroad.

After the incident, the Israeli communication became identity management, some of which was evidenced by the previous quote. As the flotilla began heading toward Israel, the IMFA posted a page on its website directly related to the humanitarian aid Israelis consistently deliver to the Gaza Strip (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a). The existence of the IMFA web pages indicates some of the tools Israel used to manage its identity before, during and after the crisis. The title of the heretofore mentioned web page strongly uses "lifeline" as though the Palestinians in Gaza could not exist without Israeli humanitarian aid. It also infers the flotilla does not need to bring supplies to Gaza; they have what they need. It implies, "Israelis are nice people, so what's your problem?" In contrast, other messages were being sent through the media. A violent act was committed. Nine "activists" were killed; global society was stunned. The Israelis seemed unnecessarily aggressive (Aljezeera English, 2010; Black & Siddique, 2010). The communication environment deemed Israel guilty before all facts were released.

Heteroglossia reveals the communication environment. The Security Cabinet (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010m) released the following statement on June 1, 2010, "True, there is international pressure and criticism of this policy but we must understand that it is vital

in order to maintain Israel's security and Israel's right to defend itself" (para. 10). This statement highlights a reply to the accusatory tone of global society and question of Israel's motivation to use such aggression on what appeared to be an innocent situation. Prime Minister Netanyahu made a similar statement defending the Israeli actions. He said, "The world needs to know the whole picture and we will ensure that the whole picture is made public" (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010j). The IMFA postings suggest the communication environment strongly implied Israel was guilty until proven innocent.

**Stratification.** Stratification is tearing down to build again. It is stripping the identity of its substance and then requiring the identity to be recreated. In crisis management, the identity of a nation-state is questioned because the actions of the nation-state exhibited are contrary to the expected values of global society. It is the redefinition of the identity through crisis. In politics, stratification comes through challenges to the identity of the nation and questions about national legitimacy. For example, during the Mavi Maramra incident, as the Israeli's contacted the ship, statements of defamation were made. "Go back to Auschwitz," a passenger said from the flotilla (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d, para. 25). Another voice exclaimed, "We are helping Arabs go against the U.S., don't forget 9/11" (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d, para. 25). These statements were intended to offend the Israeli forces. Another challenge came from Hamas. It refused to allow the humanitarian aid brought by the Free Gaza flotilla into the Gaza Strip after the Israelis had examined and shipped the goods (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n).

The flotilla itself was a challenge to the Israeli identity as it questioned the legality of the blockade by attempting to break it. The intent of the flotilla was three fold: 1) to implant IHH operatives; 2) to break the naval blockade on Gaza; and 3) to provide aid to the Palestinians

living in the Gaza Strip (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d). Each of these motives implies an underlying distrust of Israel and posits them as oppressors and enemies. It is a covert method to challenge the Israeli identity and legitimacy. The Israeli's redefined their identity in this unique situation to counter the interpretations made through media channels in conjunction with the flotilla's motives and the Israeli response.

The recreation of the defamed Israeli identity, in this situation, occurred through digital diplomacy. The IMFA created web pages for the IMFA website to counter arguments created by global society. For example, the Rachel Corrie's interaction with the IDF warranted an entirely new web page (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n). All the videos documenting the event earned their own page as well as a connection to the IMFA YouTube channel. The IMFA also created a list of several pro-Israel news articles to increase credibility (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010l). Some of the news articles attempt to discredit Turkey--which Israel claimed had ties to the violent activists on board. Other articles were written in opposition to those demonizing Israel in the situation. None of the reviewed articles were unbiased, but were intended to increase credibility. For example, the independently-run Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center housed in Israel tracked the news articles and websites related to this incident which defamed Israel. In contrast, the Foreign Ministry posted responses to the defamation.

Breaking down the Israeli identity with such defamation requires the nation to legitimize their case. Consistent with identity management strategies described by Meisenbach and McMillan's analysis of George Cheney and Kenneth Burke's work (2006), the Israelis found common ground, used an antithesis, and created a "transcendent we." Both the flotilla and Israel are attempting to give the people in Gaza humanitarian aid. Through the humanitarian aid campaign, the IMFA attempted to create common ground with the flotilla and global society by

allowing the humanitarian aid into Israel. The Israeli's attempted to create an antithesis, or common enemy, with the audience accessing their website. The antithesis were the terrorist planted violent IHH operatives. The antithesis—planted terrorists—leads to the use of the “transcendent we.” The “transcendent we” is an us-against-them theme. It is grouping peoples into categories, i.e. Israel against Hamas or law-abiding nation against terrorists. As the Cheney/Burke typologies developed, they led directly into political dialectics.

**Political Dialectics.** Political dialectics are the simultaneous push/pull in a situation. It is a simultaneous pull in two directions exemplified in by the two-faced Janus. Bakhtin (1993) says, “It looks into two opposite directions” (p.2). In the tradition of Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics theory (also influenced by Bakhtin) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) which analyzed dialectical tensions in interpersonal relationships, political dialectics develops. In the political dialects section, the pattern set by Baxter and Montgomery is extrapolated into international relations. A number of political dialectical tensions emerged from the data. The first two dialectical tensions relate to national security: passively retreat / preemptive aggression; and national security / humanitarian aid. Other dialectical tensions emerged: cessation / action; conformity / resistance; national sovereignty / international law; and rules of engagement / unbridled terrorism.

In review of the originating website, two tensions quickly emerged. Israeli's national security concurrent need to supply humanitarian aid to the occupied territories and the global perception that Israel was acting in unwarranted aggression: “passively retreat / preemptive aggression” and “national security / humanitarian aid.” Upon learning another Free Gaza Flotilla was heading toward the Gaza Strip, the Israeli's released the following information through their IMFA website: “Despite attacks by Hamas, Israel maintains an ongoing humanitarian corridor for

the transfer of perishable and staple food items to Gaza” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a). This statement epitomizes the dialectical tension “national security/humanitarian aid.”

In contrast, “passively retreat / preemptive aggression” is understood through statements such as this, “The organizers of the Gaza flotilla announced in advance their intention of using violence against Israeli forces if the latter tried to prevent ships from reaching Gaza” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b, para. 1) contrasted with statements, “If we let them throw egg at us, we appear stupid with egg on our face. If we try to prevent them by force, we appear as brutes” (Aljazeera English, 2010, p.1) Sailing under the claim of international aid, the Free Gaza flotilla exhibited questionable intentions when the flotilla was unwilling to alter directions to Ashdod port. The uncertainty of these intentions heightened the dialectical tensions already present from the Israeli occupation and the history of the region.

Further doubts of the legitimacy of the Free Gaza flotilla were expressed by the international community, “Mechanisms exist for the transfer of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza by member states and groups that want to do so. Direct delivery by sea is neither appropriate nor responsible, and certainly not effective, under the circumstances” (Department of State, United States, 2010, para. 1). Yet, tensions thickened through statements such as, “The Brazilian Government was shocked and dismayed to learn of the Israeli attack against one of the boats in the flotilla that carried humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. . .” (Ministry of External Relations, Brazil, 2010, para. 1). Before the arrival of the flotilla, the Israeli Foreign Minister stated, “There is no humanitarian aid crisis in Gaza” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010c, para. 2) Each statement is representative of global society’s response to the Mavi Maramra incident; tension about Israeli national security and actions which resulted in nine deaths. The

international audiences were skeptical about the humanitarian aid, the ships, the Israeli motives, and who was responsible for the violence.

Other dialectical tensions emerged as the data was exhausted: “cessation/action” and “conformity/resistance.” For Israel, the dialectical pull was “cessation/action,” and the tension for the flotilla was “conformity/resistance.” As the boats moved toward the Gaza strip, Israel was faced with a decision, at what point to act and with what means and at what point to stop. On an IDF link located on the originating website, an IDF video captures the troops receiving live fire as they boarded Mavi Maramra. In an interview with one of the soldiers, he states, “We came with the intention of stopping the ship and taking it to Ashdod, and we did not come with the weapons we usually have, we came for something entirely different” (Israeli Defense Forces, 2010b). Suggesting they were not prepared for a “battle,” the warnings for the ship(s) to recourse to Ashdod and the need for action became a point of stress. At this point, the commanding officer for the IDF forces needed to decide whether or not to stop boarding the Mavi Maramra, or to take more aggressive action. In another example, the dialogue between the IDF officer and the Rachel Corrie captain demonstrates the same tension. Appendix two contains the entire dialogue exemplifying the tension “cessation/action.”

For the flotilla, a different tension existed, “conformity/resistance.” The flotilla was intending to break the blockade suggests their desire to resist Israel’s blockade of the region. It was intended to be a statement of civil disobedience. The flotilla organizers had the option to work through the organizations already providing humanitarian aid on the ground. Instead, the Free Gaza flotilla was organized. Hence, they resisted the “authorized” humanitarian aid distribution methods for the region.

A contextual dialectic developed as expected: “national sovereignty/international law.” When the UN decided to form an independent commission, Israel was disheartened. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the following statement, “Israel regrets the resolution which was passed by the UN Human Rights Council even before the event was over. A resolution of this nature points to politicization and not a genuine concern for human rights” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010g, para. 2). Israeli sovereignty was challenged. Yet, PM Netanyahu stated, “It is in the national interest of the State of Israel to ensure that the factual truth of the overall flotilla events comes to light throughout the world and this is exactly the principle we are advancing” (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010h, para. 4). Hence the tension, “national sovereignty/international law” explains the push/pull of participating in global society yet still retaining unilateral control of a nation.

Consistent with much of the foreign tension of the day, the dialectical tension “rules of engagement/unbridled terrorism” was found in these web pages, videos and sound bites. IDF officers stated they were engaging in the instructions given to them by their superiors (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010n). The Foreign Minister proposed a plan, or rules of engagement, to ambassadors of the respective countries’ citizens participating in the flotilla. Recommend rules for the flotilla was to port at Ashdod and transfer the humanitarian aid by ground. An initial rule of engagement for this incident for the IDF was no live fire (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010f ). These are examples of attempted rules for engagement with the flotilla. Yet, the IMFA website links with scores of other statements by Israeli leaders stating the flotilla was intended to support Hamas, a terrorist organization. Further investigation reveals, IHH preparations for terrorist-type activities (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center,



2010a). Rules of engagement are constantly challenged by terrorist tactics. Those on the flotilla exposed the tension of following rules of engagement/unbridled terrorism.

Political dialects in the Free Gaza flotilla developed with the following dialectical tensions: passively retreat / preemptive aggression; and national security / humanitarian aid. Other dialectical tensions emerged: cessation / action; conformity / resistance; national sovereignty / international law; and rules of engagement / unbridled terrorism. Political dialectics are polarizations between opposites. It is looking forward and looking back.

Political dialectics was one of multiple Bakhtinian terms used to create greater depth for the case study on the Free Gaza flotilla. Also incorporated for think description were examples of stratification, heteroglossia, political grammars and chronotope. The purpose of the case study was to focus on the external communication of Israel during the Free Gaza flotilla May 31, 2010 incident. Through the Bahktinian concepts, the case study has allowed for exploration of the Israeli motive and tensions in global society (Keyton & Shockley-Zalabak, 2006). Keyton and Shockley (2006) suggest “prescriptions” (p. 10) upon the conclusion of the case are recommended.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Practical Implications**

As explored in this thesis, identity management strategies increase during conflict (Kunczik, 2009). Cheney and Christensen (2001) argued the external communication of an organization is intended for identity management. Peijuan, et al., (2009) claim national identity management is a necessary part of emerging global relations. One method of national identity management strategy is utilizing the internet (Phillips & Young, 2009). A nation-state's online presence is becoming increasingly valuable (Potter, 2002) as nations connect with foreign

audiences (Entman, 2008). This discussion explores Israeli identity management online during the Free Gaza flotilla raid.

When the Israeli government learned the flotilla was heading for the Gaza strip, its issue management began. Before the flotilla neared Israel, the IMFA posted links on its website about the humanitarian aid Israel provides to the Gaza strip. Web pages were posted defining the legalities of the Gaza maritime blockade (appendix 3). Public relations releases were generated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs detailing the efforts made by the Israelis to detour the flotilla from reaching the blockade. Even before the potential confrontation with the flotilla, the Israelis were managing their global identity through their online presence. However, the Israeli online presence did not have the soft power desired by the Israeli government. When news broke of violence on the Mavi Maramra, nothing was said of the public relations campaign attempting to deter the flotilla to Ashdod port (Aljazeera English, 2010; Black & Siddique, 2010). The online presence was effective for those accessing the information, but not for foreign audiences disengaged from the IMFA website.

As the incident with the Mavi Maramra occurred, video and news feeds were uploaded to the IMFA website to counter the global news. Most stories released by international news agencies accused Israel of unwarranted aggression. As some countries condemned the Israelis; other some countries condoned the Israelis. With conflict in stories, Israeli soft power was diminished. Had more compliance with global society and transparency, Israel and the Free Gaza flotilla may have avoided the violence interaction on the Mavi Maramra.

The Israeli representative at the United Nations also could have taken immediate action upon learning the news of the attack. Instead, the United Nations had an emergency Security Council session to analyze the incident with the anticipation of a UN sponsored investigation.

With the global communities' diverse reactions, it is evident the Israelis would need to further manage their identity. The original website, created May 31st, 2010, the day of the Mavi Maramra conflict, became a launching page for more websites, news links, and press releases directly related to the incident. The May 31st website was consistently updated until June 21, 2010 in an attempted to “tell” the Israeli-side of the story. Including more information from the communication environment from global society would have deepened the context of some posts on the website. Web pages of explaining an opposing position on the story were difficult to find connected to the information posted by the IMFA. However, had the IMFA included more from the international community, it would have distorted the narrative theme consistently found on the website.

The narrative theme of the originating website is one of self-defense. The Israeli navy gave each ship multiple warnings to reroute to Ashdod port instead of Gaza. When the ship(s) refused to reroute, IDF troops boarded the ships. The Israeli soldiers were geared with riot gear when they boarded the Mavi Maramra and were met with live fire. They had no choice but to defend themselves.

The self-defense theme threads throughout most of the press releases along with the black and white, us-against-them theme. The online stories written by the IMFA use language such as “murderous, violent” men planted on the Mavi Maramra or how Israel is the “life line” of humanity for the people of the Gaza Strip. Each of these themes works well into the identity which Israel is managing—the peace maker defending its people. The implied identity during the flotilla crisis is the Israeli need to defend and maintain their volatile legitimate position in the Middle East. The IMFA used digital diplomacy to maintain this identity during the face-off with the flotilla.

## Theoretical Implications

In a world of digitization, national identity management is equally digitized. Public diplomacy, the persuasion of foreign audiences or the use of soft power, has become increasingly important in globalized society. One of the few ways to persuade foreign audiences is through the use of online tools: websites, social networking sites, phone applications, among others, since it allows for the shrinkage of time and space (Castells, 2009; Stohl, 2001). Digital diplomacy (Dizard, 2001) is vital for identity management in global society.

Digital diplomacy increases soft power. It is suspected to increase technological capacities for both the nation-state and the common household (Potter, 2002). Mediated public diplomacy, or digital diplomacy, is a common Israeli practice (Shaefer & Gabay, 2009; Shaefer & Shenhav, 2009). This study exemplifies the application of digital diplomacy. The May 31st website created by the IMFA specifically for the flotilla demonstrates the exactness with which the Israelis use mediated means to express its messages to global society. With the onslaught of news challenging the Israeli identity through global society, the response by the Israelis was strategically handled using persuasive means to convince audiences, accessing their digital message, of the Israeli innocence and their need for self-defense in an unexpected situation of violence. This furthers the evidence of the rhetorical nature of public diplomacy as the Israelis were attempting to persuade audiences of their necessary use of force.

The use of digital diplomacy allowed for a rapid dissemination of the Israeli position. Israeli identity management was immediate and their position was clearly stated. Yet, only those accessing their website clearly understood the Israeli position. The May 31st website title demonstrates this well, “IDF forces were met with preplanned violence when attempting to board the flotilla” (2010). Implications of unexpected violence are weaved into the defense of the

Israeli position. The Israeli anti-terrorist position was demonstrated throughout the website's use of the word “shahid”—a martyr for Allah. Our global cultural experience suggests a “shahid” would die carelessly with extreme and unexpected acts of violence. If a shahid would carelessly kill, it justifies the Israel live-fire response on the Mavi Maramra when heated conflict occurred.

Soft power (Nye, 2004) was illustrated through the use of digital means to protect the Israeli identity. Soft power is influence over foreign audiences through mediums which attract the mind (Nye, 2004). In this instance, digital diplomacy was a medium of soft power. The context of the Israeli interaction after the flotilla incident was an attempt to protect the Israeli “self-defense” identity. The use of the website with embedded photos, audio between ships and videos enhance and correlate with the persuasion technique of soft power. The techniques of soft power enhance the prevalence of digital diplomacy and vice versa.

The discussion of soft power and digital diplomacy needs to be in context of global society and the foreign audience members accessing the website. Without the context of global society, the need for the web page to defend the Israeli identity would be non-existent. Global society provides the external audience building the pressure on the Israelis for both legitimization. Global society questioned the motive of the Israelis as they violently advanced upon activists. They also questioned the necessity of the blockade on the Gaza Strip as well as the deaths which occurred on the Mavi Maramra. Global society has evolved and produced a condition different than any in recorded history. The United Nations commissioning an investigation further exposes the pressure generated by global society.

The pressure of global society and technology was evident at the turn of the century. Potter (2002) claimed global society and technology would become interdependent. Potter's (2002) themes of digital diplomacy are valid in the case of the Free Gaza flotilla. As global

society and technology become interdependent, Potter (2002) claimed foreign ministries would engage in correcting and maintaining credible information online. The Israeli implied their distrust with mass media as it hosted a link titled, “Selected Articles” on the originating website. Potter (2002) suggested mass media would be used for legitimacy and transparency tools. Israel was accountable to global society for the aggressive interactions on the Mavi Maramra. Potter expected the next interplay for governments would be the use of new media. Examples of this can be found in the videos uploaded on the origination website. In turn, Potter notes, new media will develop accountability from the world's governments to the world's population. Potter also foresaw the increasing use of the internet for international relations—or public diplomacy. This study is a case of Potter's forecast. As Potter (2002) foretold, digital diplomacy is central to public diplomacy.

Guillaume (2010) suggested Bakhtin's concepts were multidisciplinary. Several striking discoveries emerged during the analysis related to identity: the importance of the communication environment in international relations, the emergence of consistent political grammars and the development of political dialectics.

Israel's use of digital diplomacy shrank time and space for global society and the Mavi Maramra interaction. Bakhtin suggested, through the use of chronotope, that time and space would draw immeasurably closer. The simple access of the IMFA website allows any interested audience member to be informed no matter the time or location. The complications of the flotilla could immediately be seen and reacted to by other nation-states, world organizations, and citizens of any nation-state. In the study of chronotope, political grammars proved enlightening and unique to this situation.

Political grammars are the words available to define a specific public diplomacy issue. The political grammars in this study revealed the identity differences between Israel and those who do not subscribe to the “self-defense” Israel narrative. Their vocabularies for simple words, such as activist, are steeped in historical conflict and cultural tension. Hence, the difference between those on the flotilla and the IDF were strong enough to challenge Israeli legitimacy and identity. Although not mentioned in any of the reviewed news stories, or on the IMFA website, the volunteers involved in the flotilla had equally challenged identities. By attempting to break a blockade they intentionally challenged their own identity with the global community. Yet, their collective identity proved less important (outside of those killed, or those who acted violently—i.e. the majority of the passengers) than did the Israeli identity. This play on identity was examined through the political grammars between the multiple parties involved.

Heteroglossia is the context of the situation which exists in a singular moment never to be repeated. The Israelis have had multiple flotillas attempt to break the blockade to the Gaza Strip. The uniqueness of this situation was the violent interaction between the IDF troops and the IHH implants on the Mavi Maramra. This altered the context and will alter all future contexts for Israel, the IHH, Turkey, and other flotillas with the Gaza strip. This also alters the context for the United Nations, Israel and other nation-states which provided a stance on the situation. Although the Free Gaza flotilla did not change the status of the blockade on the Gaza strip, it has brought increasing attention to the area adding to the current context and forever adjusting the future context and history between Israel and the Gaza strip.

Political dialectics are the push-and-pull of a nation-state in two different directions simultaneously. Although the concept is in its infancy, many of the political dialectics could be common to most nation-states. The dialectical tension most peculiar to Israel was the national

security and humanitarian aid tension. In times of crisis, humanitarian aid is delivered for relief with some expectation of opposition depending on the region. This tension reveals the open conflict among Israel and its neighbors. Because this case was restricted to the Free Gaza flotilla case, other dialectical tensions unique to Israel may exist.

### **Limitations**

This study exhibited several limitations. First, an asymmetrical perspective was taken in the study creating a solitary Israeli perspective. Upon the review of news stories—outside of the Israeli influence—there was considerable blame placed on Israel for unnecessary violence. The blame is a result of changing frames in the news media about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict was once framed in the news media as pro-Israeli. Over the last several years, the common news media has altered their frames from pro-Israeli to pro-Palestinian—framing Israel as oppressors in the occupied territories. There is evidence of oppression (Gordon, 2008) and the framing in question has been explored in other studies such as Shaefer’s & Gabay’s work (2009). These are, however, continuing in the asymmetrical approach.

Second, the term stratification is not unique to Bakhtin. Although Bakhtin developed the concept of stratification in his work, the term has an entirely different meaning in the sociology discipline. Stratification is a defining of socioeconomic classes. According to Bakhtin, the process of stratification is related to identity creation and recreation. These conflicting definitions could be misleading.

Third, during the defining political grammars, Guillaume (2010) suggested one political grammar (or definition) would exceed all other definitions. Due to the asymmetrical nature of this case, the prominent political grammars were not examined. To examine which political grammars would emerge most strongly would require a content analysis of all news stories on



the Free Gaza flotilla. Since many outside news stories were neglected in an attempt to focus on the Israeli identity, a case study was chosen instead of a content analysis. This could, however, prove a useful topic in future research.

Finally, another limitation of this study was neglect of international relations' realist notions. While I have favored social constructionist principles in this paper, there are innate limitations to social constructionism, particularly in combination with international relations. International relations theory has long held nations of realist vs. idealist perspectives and theories. Realists suggest the nation of international relations is the struggle of power while idealists claim a more humanistic perspective. Social constructionists are idealists. International relations theories heavily favor realist notions which I have neglected to acknowledge.

### **Future Research**

The study initiated possible trajectories in future research. Future research and more intense development of political in the tradition of Baxter and Montgomery's (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) relational dialectics would provide insight to the workings of globalized society. Further study of political dialectics would provide enlightenment on the tensions in relationships between nation-states, non-governmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations. It also examines the interconnectedness created through technology and economics with the resulting positive and negative aspects on these relationships.

Connected to the opposing tensions of dialectics are political grammars. Political grammars could be applied to other international situations to further develop the depth of the principle. Further depth in political grammars may reveal which grammars are consistent, which grammars are regional or which grammars are local. Understanding political grammars

increases global society's fluency and connection. A multiple case study of political grammars would effectively demonstrate insight into which political grammars increase legitimacy. Several questions emerge: are political grammars divergent in global interactions? Or are political grammars convergent in global society? How interconnected are political grammars and political dialectics?

Other possible research could be rhetorical analysis using the Cheney/Burke typologies typical of organizational communication. During Cheney's (1983b) initial work in organizational rhetorical analysis, he reviewed Kenneth Burke's work. Cheney extracted three themes Burke suggested as tools of persuasion: antithesis, transcendent we, and common ground. These persuasion techniques are equally as intriguing when applied to public diplomacy. Future research with heavier use of the Cheney/Burke typologies may further enlighten scholars on the modern use of soft power.

Additional research could use a rhetorical exploration using Bakhtin's theory dialogism. Dialogism is intended to analyze dialogue between two or more parties. This study did not include the tremendous amount of comments by other parties about the violence on the Mavi Maramra. Although dialogism is a symmetrical study, the way in which the Israelis managed their identity was asymmetrical. However, both political grammars and political dialectics could be better explored under the dialogism theory.

Finally, future research on digital diplomacy connected to social media could reveal the ways in which nation-states are attempting to stay networked to their supporters no matter their location. Research, such as Shaefer, Shenhav & Gabay's (2009) work on Israel's mediated public diplomacy, has begun to examine the ways in which Israel is using digital diplomacy. Further development applying their work to other nation-states could be revealing.

While nation-states are managing their identities using web 2.0, more research such as Peijuan, et al. (2009) could reveal more definitive patterns of identity management and maintenance for the nation-state. While trends are focusing on new media as identity management tools, the probability of multiple nations using the same new media for the same intent is likely. Research on such patterns would prove enlightening.

### **Final Review**

Keyton and Shockely-Zalabak (2006) suggest case studies should reveal the complexities of the communication in the case. This study exposes international relations as a complex communication environment and not solely as a power-play among the nations. Communication among nations and their citizens is complex and difficult to ascertain as globalizations deepens. Studies, such as this, aid in the explanation of the dynamic nature of international relations and its connection to technology. The connection of public diplomacy to technology was a significant principle exposed in this study, and its application to nation-states.

Another key point for case studies, according to Keyton and Shockley-Zalabak (2006) is the case writer's obligation for predictions. Predictions are the result of investigation and encouragements for better communication. Five total flotillas have tried to break the blockade on the Gaza Strip. It is expected more flotillas will sail to the Gaza Strip. Increasing numbers of operatives will be planted to breach the blockade may be predicted. It could also be predicted the suggestions made by General Eliad's investigation will be more closely followed in the future. Future analysis of appointed commissions after controversial incidents may expose how frequently the same suggestions are made during investigations. Reviewing investigation commission suggestions provides potential patterns of communication which would create stronger predictions.

This thesis endeavored to understand how Israel manages their identity during a crisis. The value of such analysis is to understand the ways in which nation-states define their distinctive identity using web 2.0. The May 2010 Free Gaza flotilla case study demonstrated some ways in which public diplomacy works online during a crisis. With increasing usage of web 2.0 for a nation-state's identity management, Israel's digital diplomacy was reviewed and enhanced using Bakhtin's work. From Bakhtin, four applicable tools were applied to the case study for additional framework: chronotope with political grammars, heteroglossia, stratification and political dialectics. Each of these tools proved valuable as the case was reviewed and discussed. Bakhtin's concepts exposed the ways in which tensions develop and perpetuate over time. With the constant power-play of international relations, the development and perpetuation of tensions and possible dissolution could have applicable effects if nation-state were willing to redefine the meaning of their motive and communicative actions.

The violence and deaths associated with the Free Gaza flotilla shocked global society. What appeared to be "civil disobedience" resulted in nine deaths of seemingly innocent volunteers. Yet, further analysis of the case revealed the "violent activists" were acting under a terrorist organization. While mass media was reporting the Israeli actions on the Mavi Maramra, little investigation was done to explore the motive behind the violence which occurred. Studies, such as this, provide an avenue for depth. Applying chronotope, heteroglossia, stratification and political dialectics revealed the complexity within which Israel works to manage its identity. As society becomes increasingly interconnected, studies on the cyclical nature of national identity are increasingly important. It also revealed the way in which Israel uses the internet to disseminate its position to global society. These findings are significant as many nation-states transition to digital diplomacy in an attempt to use and enhance their soft power.

Further, exposed were the tensions associated with the modern nation-state in global society. As globalization becomes entrenched in our global and local experiences, the tensions of other nations more readily affect the men and women of all nations. This study exposes the ease with which foreign policy issues may be accessed, no matter time or location. As Mitchell (2009) asserts, “the interlocking trends of economic globalization and political interdependence” make such studies viable and necessary to understand this ever-changing process.

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## APPENDIX ONE

**Dialogue between an IDF officer and the Mavi Maramra**

Israel Navy: "Mavi Marmara, you are approaching an area of hostilities which is under a naval blockade. The Gaza area coastal region and Gaza harbor are closed to all maritime traffic. The Israeli government supports delivery of humanitarian supplies to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and invites you to enter the Ashdod port. Delivery of supplies in accordance with the authorities' regulations will be through the formal land crossings and under your observation, after which you can return to your home ports on the vessels on which you have arrived."

Response: "Negative, negative."

In response to a radio transmission by the Israeli Navy warning the Gaza flotilla that they are approaching a naval blockade, passengers on one of the ships responded, "**Shut up, go back to Auschwitz**" and "**We're helping Arabs go against the US, don't forget 9/11.**" (bold in original)

(Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010d)

## APPENDIX TWO

**Dialogue between an IDF officer and the Rachel Corrie**

*The following is a transcript of the radio transmission recording:*

*Israeli Navy: I'd like to propose something else. First I'd like to make clear it is not our desire, I repeat, it is not our desire, to board your boat. My proposal is as follows: We escort you to Ashdod Port. At the Port of Ashdod you'll undergo standard inspections, standard of all incoming vessels, and we'll take it from there in terms of expediting your loading of cargo trucks at the port.*

*7th Flotilla Ship: How about this for a suggestion...you stop, have a cup of tea, and we'll continue on to Gaza. We cannot go into Ashdod and off load. I have explained already for circumstances we've already gone through that we cannot off load in Ashdod, over.*

*Israeli Navy: I've just been informed I may have not been clear in detailing our previous offer, so I'd like to go over another detail in case you feel I was not clear. Should you agree to come with us to Ashdod and off load your cargo, your cargo would not be delivered to the people of Gaza by the State of Israel. We could do it through an intermediary under the U.N. or an NGO, we have several available willing to help. If you weren't aware of this issue, it is possible, and we would like to bring this to your attention.*

*7th Flotilla Ship: The Irish government, I think, had been in talks with the Israeli government seeking safe passage for this ship into Gaza and I think that the best compromise that they could come to was to send this aid to Ashdod. We are further asking to let this ship go to Gaza, over.*  
*Israeli Navy: I'm still hoping we can take this a step ahead and reach a solution.*

*7th Flotilla Ship: I do too, over.*

*Israeli Navy: It has been brought to my attention that should it result in the way I proposed, of you coming into Ashdod under escort and offloading the cargo in Ashdod Port, the cement that you said is the bulk of your cargo will be transferred to Gaza. That's the assurance I have just been given by my superiors. To the best of my knowledge that would be precedent setting. It would something you could take back to your supporters, to your fellow passengers, to the people you say you want to support, and to the government you say you are rebuking for not doing more for Gaza.*

(“Ship Attempts to Break Gaza,” 2010).

## APPENDIX THREE

**Legal Background of the Gaza Blockade**

1. A maritime blockade is in effect off the coast of Gaza. Such blockade has been imposed, as Israel is currently in a state of armed conflict with the Hamas regime that controls Gaza, which has repeatedly bombed civilian targets in Israel with weapons that have been smuggled into Gaza via the sea.
2. Maritime blockades are a legitimate and recognized measure under international law that may be implemented as part of an armed conflict at sea.
3. A blockade may be imposed at sea, including in international waters, so long as it does not bar access to the ports and coasts of neutral states.
4. The naval manuals of several western countries, including the US and England recognize the maritime blockade as an effective naval measure and set forth the various criteria that make a blockade valid, including the requirement of give due notice of the existence of the blockade.
5. In this vein, it should be noted that Israel publicized the existence of the blockade and the precise coordinates of such by means of the accepted international professional maritime channels. Israel also provided appropriate notification to the affected governments and to the organizers of the Gaza protest flotilla. Moreover, in real time, the ships participating in the protest flotilla were warned repeatedly that a maritime blockade is in effect.
6. Here, it should be noted that under customary law, knowledge of the blockade may be presumed once a blockade has been declared and appropriate notification has been granted, as above.
7. Under international maritime law, when a maritime blockade is in effect, no boats can enter the blockaded area. That includes both civilian and enemy vessels.
8. A state may take action to enforce a blockade. Any vessel that violates or attempts to violate a maritime blockade may be captured or even attacked under international law. The US Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations sets forth that a vessel is considered to be in attempt to breach a blockade from the time the vessel leaves its port with the intention of evading the blockade.
9. Here we should note that the protesters indicated their clear intention to violate the blockade by means of written and oral statements. Moreover, the route of these vessels indicated their clear intention to violate the blockade in violation of international law.
10. Given the protesters explicit intention to violate the naval blockade, Israel exercised its right under international law to enforce the blockade. It should be noted that prior to undertaking enforcement measures, explicit warnings were relayed directly to the captains of the vessels, expressing Israel's intent to exercise its right to enforce the blockade.
11. Israel had attempted to take control of the vessels participating in the flotilla by peaceful means and in an orderly fashion in order to enforce the blockade. Given the large number of vessels participating in the flotilla, an operational decision was made to undertake measures to enforce the blockade a certain distance from the area of the blockade.
12. Israeli personnel attempting to enforce the blockade were met with violence by the protesters and acted in self defense to fend off such attacks.

(Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010k).