



Hamas in Cyberspace: Social Media and Forms of Political Expression

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Abstract

This study examines the digital practices and online discourses of Hamas on Twitter, with a specific focus on the Palinfoen account linked to the Palestinian Information Centre (PIC). The study examines 3,500 tweets related to events in Palestine, which were either tweeted or retweeted by the Palinfoen account. To explore these practices, the researcher employs digital ethnography and a discourse-historical approach to analyze the collected tweets and retweets. The findings of the analysis show that the tweets revolve around key figures such as journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and Israel. Abu Akleh is portrayed as a courageous and esteemed senior journalist who became a victim of Israeli brutality. Israel, on the other hand, is depicted as a criminal entity, held responsible for the cold-blooded killing of Abu Akleh and the desecration of her coffin. The killing is presented as an inhumane and irrational act committed by Israel against a respected journalist. Additionally, the tweets from Palinfoen focus on the events at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Israeli figures are described using terms like "genocidal Jews," "Israeli occupation forces," "enemy occupier gangs," and an "illegitimate regime," while Palestinian figures are referred to as "worshippers," "families," and "Muslims." The discourses promoted by Hamas on Twitter place agency and accountability on the Israeli side. In conclusion, this analysis unsurprisingly highlights how the Palinfoen Twitter account portrays Palestinian resistance as a legitimate reaction.

Introduction

For many decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained a contentious and extensively discussed issue, encompassing its historical origins and the motivations driving both Israelis and Palestinians. The ramifications of this conflict are widely felt, significantly impacting the political landscape in the Middle East region. The Islamic Resistance Movement¹, Hamas, took over the Gaza Strip in 2007. Since then, Israel has imposed a strict siege on Gaza (Milton, Elkahout, and Barakat 2021, 4). The Israeli siege affects and targets the life of all Palestinians living there,

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¹ In Arabic it is called *Harakat al-Muqawwama al-Islamiyya Hamas* حركة المقاومة الإسلامية حماس



including Israeli military aggressions, (e.g., the wars in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, 2021), and major events¹ in the West Bank and Jerusalem, (e.g., the events of Al-Aqsa Mosque and killing the Palestinian-American Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in 2022). In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mainstream media has a significant influence on shaping public opinions locally, regionally, and globally. Shreim (2015, 2) stated that “the media coverage of the latest [2014] surge of fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip has been met with criticism from both sides with the Western media being accused of privileging the Israeli narrative over that of the Palestinian.” According to the research findings of the study by El Damanhoury and Saleh (2017), Al Jazeera America (AJAM) exclusively quoted Palestinian citizens in its articles and consistently distinguished between militants and civilians while reporting on the Palestinian death toll. In contrast, around 15 percent of CNN articles did not provide clarity on whether the casualties were militants or civilians.

With the advancement of information technology in recent years, social media has emerged as a crucial communication tool, providing both Palestinians and Israelis with alternatives to customise their messages. Zeitzoff (2018) stated that “the 2014 Gaza war further saw both sides intensifying their social media strategy and increasing use of “citizen journalists’ to share images and video from the front line” (49). Social media has become an alternative outlet in Palestine, offering an avenue for discussions on local and international issues and events (Amer 2022). “What is perhaps most unique and important about social media and its role for future conflicts, is the speed at which it is able to disseminate information to audiences, and for those audiences to provide feedback” (Zeitzoff 2018, 49). This swift and interactive nature sets social media apart and makes it an influential force in shaping perspectives and public discourse during conflicts and beyond. Twitter and Facebook, in particular, have become powerful tools for resisting the Israeli occupation and amplifying Palestinian narratives. By using these digital channels, the Palestinians can present their perspectives, provide first-hand accounts, and share images and videos that might otherwise go unnoticed or underreported. Social media allows Palestinians to have direct control over their narrative, enabling them to tell their stories and communicate their struggles to a global audience.

In this context, this paper focuses on the usage of social media by the Palestinian side of the conflict, with a specific emphasis on the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas. More explicitly, this paper aims to analyse Hamas’s digital practices and discourses by focusing on its Palestine Information Center account on Twitter (henceforth Palinfoen), which tweets and retweets Hamas’s news and about events in Palestine in the

¹ *Giving detailed description of the events in Palestine is beyond the scope of this paper.*



English language. The primary goal is to conduct an analysis of the digital practices and discursive strategies employed by the account admins and followers of the Palinfoen Twitter account. Also, the paper aims to understand the implications of these practices and discourses in shaping positive and/or negative images of Hamas. The study focuses on how the Palinfoen account utilizes tweets and retweets to encourage engagement and discussions among its followers. By analyzing the captured tweets and retweets, the researcher aims to discern the patterns in the account's digital practices and the strategies used to present Hamas's views on significant events, such as the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh and the events at Al-Aqsa as we will see in the analysis section.

The Palestinian Information Centre (PIC) disseminates information, news, and perspectives aligned with Hamas's views and actions. The Palinfoen account on various social media platforms is often utilized to share updates on events in Palestine, express Hamas's position on various matters, and engage with followers who support or are interested in the organization's activities (for more information about PIC and its account, see methodology section).

Social Media Critical Discourse Studies: Developments and Dimensions

Discourse is a contentious vague term that has a variety of meanings (see Amer 2017; KhosraviNik and Amer 2020; Amer 2018). Traditionally, in critical discourse studies, discourse is a historical and communicative practice. As a practice, it “implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it” (Fairlough and Wodak 1997, 258). Wodak (1999, 187) claims that: “discourse (...) is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before” (1999, 187). Discourse is seen as a type of communicative action, e.g., language in use in spoken, written, or visual forms (see Fairclough 1995; Van Dijk 1998). In light of the development of information technology and communication, discourse studies have come to include the digital forms of communications as well or what can be said as digital (social) practices that shape digital discourse. In taking an initiative linking social media and CDS, discourse is seen as “independent of the medium although the magnitude, penetrability, and formal aspects of its realized forms may be heavily influenced by the medium” (KhosraviNik 2017).

In this context, Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) “deals with discourse, not technology, as its central object of analysis.” That means, the interest is not in what happens in media per se; it is to see how it shapes and influences the social and political sphere of our life worlds and where



the discourse concentration goes taken into consideration discourse as an independent unit of analysis. This means that there is not a distinction between online and offline worlds (various levels of discursive practices) but these worlds have intertextual and interdiscursive relations between these two levels of discursive practices.

In the context of social media, CDS is interested in examining the D-discourse in its overall operation, of which the technological aspect is a key part. This means there is no major difference between the online and offline worlds. There are intertextual and interdiscursive relations between these discursive practices and genres. This will lead to exploration of the way social media technologies work at the macro-industrial and operational levels and how a Techno-Discursive dynamic can be postulated (see KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018). For example, there is a host of co-creators and co-consumers with endless diversification on SMC spaces; and as such, detachment of the textual product from its context of production is practically impossible. This calls for an observational turn (of some sort) in digital discourse studies in order to be able to account for users' practices and what they do with the new discursive options at their disposal (see KhosraviNik and Amer 2020). In this vein, this study not only focuses on social media meaning-making materials, but also sheds light on Hamas's digital practices in order to account for the integration of SMC spaces and discourse production and dissemination.

With the development of SM-CDS, "all media practices/contents should be interpreted within a wider socio-political context of a given society (horizontal and vertical contexts). This is where a social, historical, cultural, psychological, or political account is provided for explication of the discourse under investigation (KhosraviNik 2017). KhosraviNik (2017) explains that in SM-CDS "horizontal contextualization of discourse practice (accounting for: norms of production, consumption, and distribution of texts on different platforms) including the patterns of users' textual/semiotic/etc. practices in their online worlds, would need to be complemented by a vertical contextualization level which embeds both the text and the medium. That means there should be a link between discursive practices and the material socio-political contexts of society" (6). This development of SM-CDS would call for combining observational approaches of screen data, like online ethnography and some CDS traditional toolkit, in treating new meaning-making artefacts where relevant as we can see in this paper in exploring digital dynamics and online discourses of Hamas on Twitter.



The Case Study: Hamas

Hamas is a Palestinian organization established in the Gaza Strip in 1987. Although it has governed Gaza since 2006, it has ramifications in the West Bank, too, and expanded its work throughout Palestine. Hamas is a major Palestinian party that was established during the first Palestinian intifada (see Singh 2012), and “has been active under Israeli occupation” (Aghazarian 2007, 2). Historically, Hamas has roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna (1906 to 1949) (see Roy 2011). Scham and Osama (2009) highlight that “the establishment of Hamas represented the culmination of a decade-long attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership in Gaza to establish an armed force to confront Israel” (4). Dunning (2015) states that “Hamas is a mass sociopolitical movement and multifaceted in its nature rather than a monolithic ideological block” (285). Dunning further explains that Hamas is “a mass socio-political movement comprising a number of overlapping social, political, and armed movements, which often appears to intertwine religion and politics” (285).

Hamas began as a social movement that focused on social affairs, services, and nationalism in Palestine (Singh 2012). After winning the 2006 elections, the movement engaged itself in politics and claimed to be an alternative to the PLO. This victory was not welcomed by many regimes in the Middle East and the West; Hamas’s political and military wings have been considered terrorist entities by the USA, Canada, the EU, and Israel. Chehab (2008) claims that “unlike Hamas’s image in Israel and the West as a fanatical, dogmatic, Islamic terrorist organization bent on destroying Israel, the reality is much more complicated. Hamas appealed to the Palestinians because of its social programs and transparent and accountable governmental record” (as cited in Handley and Ismail 2010, 283).

Hamas employs a media strategy that firstly focuses on mainstream media outlets like newspapers, graffiti art, satellite broadcasting, radio, and magazines (for deeper analysis, see Abdelal 2016; Margolin 2020). Also, as part of its communication and media strategies, Hamas uses social media platforms to reach a wide audience locally and internationally, so it can communicate and convey its messages and materials to as many people as possible. At the center of Hamas’s social media campaigns are its accounts and channels on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Hamas has several accounts that are blocked by the administrators of social media companies (e.g., @AlqassamBrigades, @qassamfeed). Meta announced in its monthly Adversarial Threat Report that they “removed 141 Facebook accounts, 79 Pages, 13 Groups, and 21 Instagram accounts from the Gaza Strip in Palestine that primarily targeted people in Palestine, and to a much lesser extent in Egypt and Israel” (i24NEWS 2022).



Methodology

This study examines digital practices and online discourses on Twitter related to the events in Palestine in 2022. A total of 3500 tweets from the Palinfoen account were identified. The identification was done by Nvivo software based on the account, the hashtags, and the events. These tweets were tweeted or retweeted by the Palinfoen account that belongs to the Palestinian Information Centre (PIC). PIC is “ Hamas’s voices to the world” (Abdelal 2016, 101) although the center describes itself as “a news website that provides news coverage of mainly Palestinian events for its readership in the world in various languages.”¹

The Palinfoen account was chosen because: (1) it tweets in English language in addition to other languages, so it can reach large international audiences; (2) it is arguably Hamas’s most supported account (see detailed discussions Abdelal 2016, 101-102); and (3) its tweets give ideas and insights into the way Hamas employs Twitter to report on the events in Palestine. Notably, the Palinfoen account has amassed a substantial following of 50,328 followers. This indicates that the account has a considerable reach and potential impact on social media users interested in Palestinian-related news and events.

The one-year timeframe was chosen because of the serious escalations and tensions in Palestine, primarily the killing of the Palestinian-American journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, and the attack on worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque. Twitter data was scraped by Nvivo software and NCapture from the following popular screen-resource: a Twitter account, Palinfoen available at <https://twitter.com/palinfoen>. Given the limitations of captured and limited tweets by Nvivo, the researcher cannot, of course, claim that these discourses represent the movement as a whole, however, some insights about Hamas on Twitter can be gathered.

The paper focuses on the mediated actions (Scollon 2002). This means, the analysis gradually develops from starting the text towards the context (Barton and Lee 2013, 14). To do so, the paper employs digital ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008), i.e., starting from the observation of practices to arrive at texts (in this case, tweets). For the analytical approach, discourse historical approach (Wodak and Reisigl 2001; Reisigl 2017) is employed to examine discursive strategies of the sampled tweets. This is in line with an argument by Barton and Lee (2013) that there is a “need to both closely look at the texts and to observe ‘users’ lives and beliefs about what they do with their online writing” (167) to provide an explanation of the dynamic of language online. In social media, there are a variety of co-consumers, co-producers, and co-distributors. “There is a consensus that a key feature of social media is the dissemination of information” (Ren et al. 2022, 3).

¹ <https://english.palinfo.com/about-us>



In employing an online ethnography to examine online discourses, the paper adapts and adopts procedures following Androutsopoulos's (2008) framework Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography (DCOE). It "combines the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors" (Androutsopoulos 2008, 2). He further explains that DCOE "uses ethnographic insights as a backdrop to the selection, analysis, and interpretation of log data, in order to illuminate relations between digital texts and their production and reception practices" (2). In this paper, the focus is mainly on online systematic observation. The observational approach accounts and reflects on the way Hamas makes use of the communicative affordances on Twitter (tweeting and retweeting) to share, disseminate, and re-distribute relevant content as well as forming chains of invisible networked publics. In employing online ethnography, the paper suggests the following detailed sub-questions: who are the (social actors) producers of captured tweets and/or retweets? This is to look at type and number of tweets, number of comments, any links with the tweets or the retweets, the hashtags associated with the tweets or the retweets, and network relationships that can be seen in number of followers and number of followed users.

For the textual analysis aspect, the paper employs the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) devised by Wodak and Reisigl (2001) and Reisigl (2017). Wodak (2015) explains that the DHA is three-dimensional: (1) after having identified the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse; (2) discursive strategies are investigated; then, (3) linguistic means are examined as types, and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations are examined as tokens. Several strategies are identified when analyzing a specific discourse and related texts in relation to the discursive construction and representation of "us" and "them". According to Reisigl (2017) and Wodak (2015), DHA goes through five simple questions: 1) How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically? 2) What characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes? 3) What arguments are employed in the discourse in question? 4) From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed? 5) Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated?

Analysis and Discussions:

1. The Digital Practices

The observational phase of this paper serves as the starting point, providing contextual information surrounding the tweets from the Palinfoen account. Figure 1 of the diagram of codes illustrates that the account places significant emphasis on Israeli aggressions against Palestinians and various



issues relevant to the Palestinian community. The analysis presents a diagram of codes, organized into parent (main) and child (branch) categories, offering a visual representation of the themes and topics addressed by the Palinfoen account on Twitter. The content of the re/tweets from the Palinfoen account primarily revolves around Israeli actions directed at Palestinians. This focus suggests that the account aims to highlight and bring attention to instances of perceived aggression and violence perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian population. Figure 1 likely illustrates the primary areas of focus and key subjects the account engages with in its digital practices and communication strategies. Overall, this observational phase lays the groundwork for further examination and understanding of how the Palinfoen account employs social media to disseminate information, shape narratives, and engage with its audience, potentially influencing public opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see Figure 1).

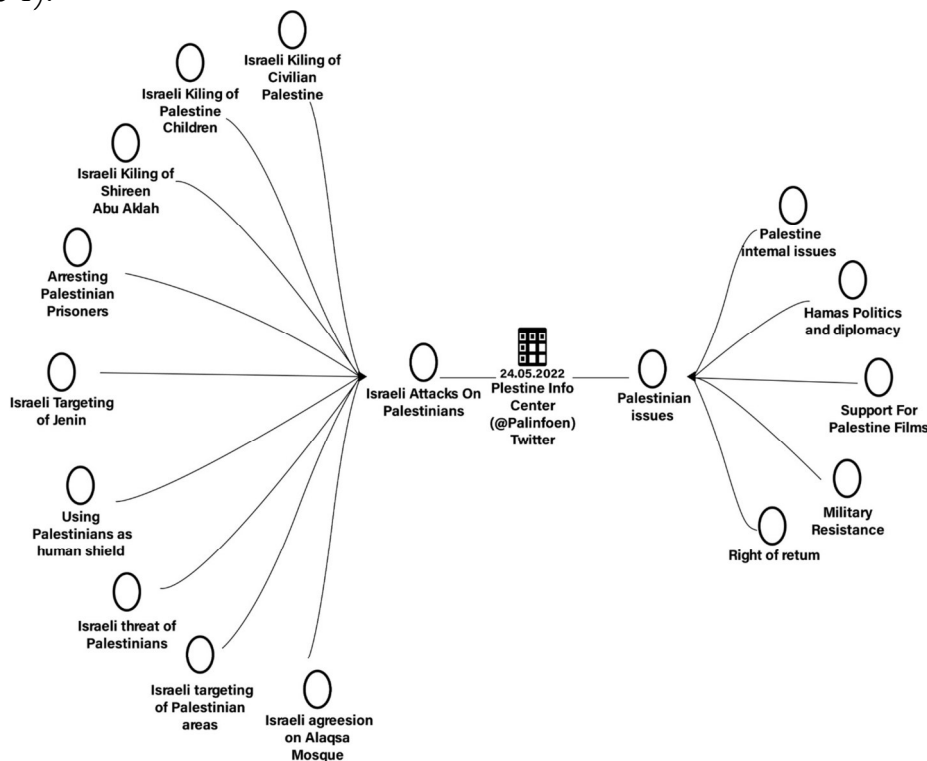


Figure 1: Palestine Info Center (@palinfoen) Twitter

The data presented in Table 1 sheds light on the content and themes covered by the Palestine Info Center account on Twitter (@palinfoen).

Deconstruction of Digital Dynamics and Online Discourses in Cyberspace: The Case of Hamas Movement on Twitter

Table 1: Palestine Info Center (@palinfoen) Twitter

<i>Palestine Info Center (@palinfoen) Twitter</i>	
<i>Israeli Attacks on the Palestinians</i>	<i>Palestinian Issues</i>
<i>Israeli killing of Palestinian civilians</i>	<i>Palestinian internal issues</i>
<i>Israeli killing of Palestinian children</i>	<i>Hamas politics and diplomacy</i>



<i>Palestine Info Center (@palinfoen) Twitter</i>	
<i>Israeli killing of Shireen Abu Akleh</i>	<i>Support for Palestine-films</i>
<i>Arresting Palestinian prisoners</i>	<i>Military resistance</i>
<i>Israeli targeting of Jenin</i>	<i>Right of Palestinian</i>
<i>Using Palestinians as human shield</i>	
<i>Israeli threat of Palestinians</i>	
<i>Israeli targeting of Palestinian areas</i>	
<i>Israeli aggression on Alaqsa Mosque</i>	

The analysis shows that the tweets primarily focus on 'Israeli attacks', which encompass various themes related to Israeli violent actions. These themes include incidents such as the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, killings of Palestinian civilians, the use of Palestinian children as human shields, and the arrests of Palestinians. On the other hand, the parent code 'Palestinian issues' covers different topics, including Hamas speeches, resistance activities, and Palestinian internal matters. In terms of the most frequent words used in the tweets, the analysis highlights that the words 'Israeli', 'Palestinians', and 'Jerusalem' are recurrently mentioned. These words likely indicate the core focus of the Palinfoen account's content, reflecting its emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the significance of Jerusalem as a central issue in the ongoing dispute. Overall, this data provides valuable insights into the key areas of focus and the recurring themes in the Palinfoen Twitter account's digital practices and discourses. Understanding the prominence of certain topics can help in comprehending the account's messaging strategies and the narratives it seeks to promote to its audience on Twitter. See Figure 2.



Figure 2: Word Cloud of the Most Frequent Words

The analysis of the Palinfoen Twitter account's digital practices reveals several noticeable patterns. These practices include heavy tweeting and retweeting of tweets on Israeli aggressions; the account frequently shares information and updates regarding Israeli aggressions, with a particular emphasis on events such as the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022 and the events at Al-Aqsa Mosque in April 2022. The account maintains consistent daily tweeting and retweeting activity. Use of hashtags: The Palinfoen account extensively employs hashtags in its original tweets. These



hashtags cover a range of topics, including #Jenin, #Jerusalem, #IsraeliCrimes, #ShireenAbuAkleh, #Nakba Palestine, #FreeThemAll, #MassaferYatta, #Nakba74Day, #JusticeforShireen, #ApartheidIsrael, #IndependenceDay, and others. The use of multiple hashtags per tweet expands the network and reach of the tweets, enabling followers to access multiple sources of information. Additionally, hashtags facilitate engagement, as followers can reply, share, or like the original tweets. Another noticeable practice is the incorporation of multimedia elements; the Palinfoen account makes use of images, links, and/or videos in its tweets. By including multimedia content, the account aims to attract and engage followers, providing them with visual materials that enhance their understanding and participation in trending events.

2) Discursive Strategies

The analysis of the thematic categorization, and linguistic contents and discourses of the Palinfoen account on Twitter provides insights into how the account constructs a positive representation of the Palestinian Self and a negative representation of the Israeli Other. The analysis delves into the referential and predicational strategies used in the tweets to understand how these representations are discursively constructed. Despite acknowledging the limitations of the corpus of tweets being relatively small compared to other discourse studies, the analysis identifies two main recurring themes: the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and the attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque. In these themes, the Palinfoen account predominantly portrays Palestinian actors, particularly Shireen Abu Akleh and Palestinian journalists, in a positive light as the heroic victims and resistance fighters against the Israeli occupation. This positive representation implies justification for Palestinian reactions, such as their resistance to the Israeli aggressions. Conversely, the account aggregates Israeli actors under the representation of Israel and its forces, which is depicted negatively. The tweets emphasize the brutality and illegal actions of Israelis, particularly regarding the harm inflicted on the Palestinian civilian population, including journalists and worshipers. This negative construction leads to blaming Israelis and holding them responsible for the actions and consequences of the conflict. Through these discursive strategies, the Palinfoen account attempts to create a particular narrative and shape the perception of its followers. The positive representation of Palestinians seeks to garner support for their cause, while the negative representation of Israelis aims to evoke sympathy for the Palestinian victims and condemn the actions of the Israeli forces. It is important to bear in mind that the limited size of the tweet corpus might impact the generalizability of the findings. However, the discourse analysis provides valuable insights into how the Palinfoen account uses language and thematic choices to construct and reinforce distinct representations of the two sides involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

In the most recurring theme, which revolves around the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palinfoen account uses referential strategies that primarily focus on the Self-presentation of Palestinians, with a major emphasis on Shireen Abu Akleh herself. She is frequently mentioned with her full name, family name, or sometimes referred to simply as 'She'. The referential strategies encompass various aspects of her identity, ranging from her professional role as a journalist and correspondent (e.g., 'veteran', 'professional', 'senior'), her religious background as a Christian, and her patriotic/national identity as a Palestinian and an American citizen. These references are employed intentionally by the account to create a positive representation of Abu Akleh. Furthermore, the terms used to identify her, including her profession, religious background, and nationality, emphasize her authoritative role as a conflict reporter.

By highlighting her professional status as a journalist working at Al-Jazeera, the Palinfoen account seeks to underscore her authority and credibility in reporting on wars and conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The choice of professional words is used strategically to cultivate a critical stance towards the truth that journalists like Abu Akleh strive to deliver in their coverage. By presenting her as a professional journalist, a Christian, and an American, the account aims to highlight her unbiased perspective and reliability as a source of truth, particularly due to her Western and non-Muslim background. The account underscores the significance of these facets of her identity to emphasize the gravity of her loss and the impact of her killing by Israel. It is suggested that the elimination of these aspects of her identity through her death metaphorically represents the loss of an unbiased source of truth in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, the use of professional terms in reference to Abu Akleh serves to create a positive image of her work as a journalist, emphasizing her adherence to journalism standards and her commitment to delivering accurate Palestinian narratives. The Palinfoen account aims to position her as a credible and reliable source of information.

Focusing on Abu Akleh's religious background as a Christian also plays a significant role in evoking sentiments of national unity among all religious groups within the Palestinian community. This representation underscores the idea that Palestinian Christians are an integral part of the Palestinian collective, and their voices and experiences are essential in the struggle for their rights and aspirations. Additionally, highlighting her as a Christian may suggest that she was unbiased in her reporting since she did not align herself with Hamas's religious discourse, thus further adding to her credibility.

Moreover, the reference to her as an "American" is significant as it points out that Israel targets all journalists regardless of their nationalities. This



underscores the indiscriminate nature of attacks on journalists and reflects the dangers and challenges journalists face while covering conflicts in the region. The fact that she is depicted as a Western source may also imply that she is perceived as unbiased, despite being from a country known for its staunch support of Israel. This suggests that her reporting was not influenced by any pro-Israel bias, making her an objective and credible journalist. The use of specific referential strategies in describing Abu Akleh in the tweets aims to construct a positive and credible representation of her journalistic work and emphasizes her importance as an unbiased source of information within the Palestinian narrative. It also highlights the indiscriminate nature of attacks on journalists, regardless of their nationalities, and underscores the significance of her reporting as a Western source who stands with the Palestinian cause.

The referential strategies used to present the Israeli Other (actors) in the Palinfoen Twitter account show a clear pattern of negative representation. The account often describes them as criminals, responsible for various atrocities and acts of violence against Palestinians. They are depicted as untrustworthy agents, horrifying, and involved in Abu Akleh's cold-blooded killing, which is described as a dreadful crime. Their actions are referred to as a campaign of barbaric incursions into places like Jenin, where they systematically attack Palestinians.

Unlike the detailed and personalized referential strategies used for Shireen Abu Akleh, the Israeli actors are not mentioned by their names and are mostly referred to collectively using negative adjectives. This aggregated representation suggests a more generalized and dehumanized view of Israelis, portraying them as a powerful and inherently aggressive force. The use of criminal and responsible labels for Israelis reflects a negative representation that emphasizes their greater military aggressions and perceived injustices towards the Palestinian population. These labels create a mental model of the Israeli Other as a menacing and oppressive force, influencing the audience's value judgments about their actions and motivations. It is important to note that labels and references in discourse are not value-free representations. They carry inherent biases and can influence how the audience perceives and interprets the information presented. As such, the Palinfoen account strategically employs referential strategies to shape a negative representation of the Israeli Other, influencing the perceptions and attitudes of its followers towards the Israeli side in the conflict.

In examining the predicational strategies, there are four categories employed in the presentations of Self and Other. The first category pertains to the target and killing of Abu Akleh, as seen in phrases such as 'was shot and killed,' 'was shot,' 'was on assignment in Jenin,' 'was killed by a trained sniper,' 'was left to bleed to death,' 'was denied dignity and compassion,' 'was



not part of clashes,' 'was a target for assassination by the Israelis,' 'was fatally shot in the head by Israeli live bullets,' and others. The use of the verb 'killed' in these predications highlights the Israeli forces' brutal actions in a negative construction. This category suggests that the primary target of the Israeli forces was to shoot Abu Akleh in the face purposefully, portraying them as having a clear intent to harm and kill her. By using the term 'trained sniper', the predicational strategy emphasizes the choice of a professional soldier for the assignment, affirming that the killing was intentional and purposeful. It's worth noting that Abu Akleh had been reporting and covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1997 for Al Jazeera. This background information reinforces the negative representation of the Israeli actions, indicating that her killing was not accidental but a deliberate act targeting a well-known journalist. The use of the passive voice in these tweets—typically employed to conceal agency—appears to serve the opposite purpose here. Instead of obscuring responsibility, the passive voice directs attention to the Israeli actions, holding them accountable for the killing of Abu Akleh and other Palestinians.

This predicational strategy contributes to a negative representation of the Israeli Other, portraying their actions as illegal, widely condemned, and asserting that Israel is responsible for the killing of Abu Akleh and other Palestinians. This construction of Israeli actions in the tweets provides clear evidence of their use of lethal force against civilians and journalists, reinforcing the negative depiction of their behavior in the conflict. In this category of predicational strategies, the representation of the Israeli Other features the killing of Palestinian journalists, primarily focusing on Shireen Abu Akleh. The use of active structures with verbs such as 'shot', 'shot dead', 'attacked', 'murdered', 'beat', and 'killed' highlights the agency of Israelis in these actions. By employing these verbs, the Palinfoen account emphasizes the direct responsibility of Israeli actors for the killing of Abu Akleh and other Palestinian journalists. This predicational strategy makes it clear that the Israelis are the ones who initiated and executed the actions leading to the death of Abu Akleh. This portrayal holds them accountable and responsible for these violent acts. The use of active verbs like 'shot', 'attack', 'murder', and 'kill' suggests a deliberate and intentional approach by Israeli actors to silence Palestinian voices, particularly journalists like Abu Akleh. The active structures also serve to de-legitimize the Israeli militarist ideology and condemn the illegal killing of Palestinian journalists. By attributing agency to the Israeli actors, the tweets aim to draw attention to their actions as the causal agents in these events, placing the blame on them for the attacks on journalists. The foregrounding of the Israeli actions and their agency in these clauses positions them as exclusively responsible for initiating the attacks on Palestinian journalists. This foregrounding contrasts with the backgrounding of the Palestinian journalists—including Abu



Akleh—who are portrayed as victims of these violent acts. The purpose of this predicational strategy is to reveal the consequences of Israeli actions and to elicit sympathy for the journalist victims. By foregrounding the agency of the Israeli actors in these violent incidents, the Palinfoen account seeks to highlight the human cost of their actions and garner support for the Palestinian journalists who face danger and violence while reporting on the conflict.

The second category of predicational strategies pertains to the professional nature of the journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh. The tweets use phrases like 'covering an Israeli army raid' and 'doing her work' to confirm her journalistic tasks and responsibilities, particularly in covering events in Jenin, northern West Bank. These predications highlight her role as a dedicated journalist fulfilling her duty to report on the unfolding events.

In the third category, the tweets shed light on the appreciation and admiration that Abu Akleh received from the Palestinian community. Expressions such as 'is a household name and face', 'most well-known', 'senior', 'voice', 'icon for Palestinians', and 'a product of Jerusalem' emphasize her historical background and the recognition she garnered for her work. The predications portray her positively as an esteemed figure and a symbolic voice representing the Palestinian cause. The glorification and respect for her in the Palestinian community are evident in these tweets, positioning her as a significant and influential individual in the context of Palestinian journalism.

The fourth category focuses on highlighting the lack of protection for Palestinian journalists. The tweets describe the protective gear that Abu Akleh was wearing, such as 'a press vest,' 'a helmet and a bulletproof vest,' indicating that she was in an official capacity, adhering to the safety requirements for journalists covering wars and armed conflicts. The predications draw attention to the fact that despite taking these safety precautions, she was unable to evade harm and was left bleeding until she tragically lost her life. This highlights the dangers and risks faced by Palestinian journalists while reporting on the conflict. The tweets also point out that targeting Abu Akleh was not an isolated incident, but rather part of a pattern of violence, harassment, and intimidation against Palestinian journalists. The predications present her killing as an attack on journalism itself, reflecting the broader challenges and risks faced by Palestinian journalists working in the region.

In summary, these predicational strategies serve to highlight the professional dedication of Shireen Abu Akleh, her significant role as an icon and voice for Palestinians, the appreciation she received from her community, and the lack of protections for Palestinian journalists. The portrayal of her as a dedicated journalist, who adhered to safety protocols but was still targeted,



evokes sympathy and underscores the dangers faced by journalists covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also emphasizes the broader issue of attacks on Palestinian journalists and the impact on the profession and communities they serve.

Overall, the referential and predicational strategies focusing on the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh on the Palinfoen Twitter account present different perspectives on the purpose and implications of her death. One perspective highlights that the killing of Abu Akleh was intended to send a message to the Palestinian community; an attempt to silence all Palestinian voices by targeting Palestinian journalists. The tweets portray her as a prominent figure who represented the events and experiences of Palestinians from an alternative perspective. This perspective suggests that her voice, which resonated with the Palestinian narrative, became a target for silencing by Israel through her tragic killing. By targeting a well-known and respected journalist like Abu Akleh, the Israeli forces aim to intimidate and suppress other journalists and Palestinian voices reporting on the conflict. Another perspective focuses on the killing of Abu Akleh as an attack on journalism itself. The tweets condemn this act and call for an investigation by the international community. The tweets express a lack of trust in any Israeli-led investigation, implying a belief that such investigations might not yield unbiased and transparent outcomes. This perspective highlights the need for accountability and justice for journalists like Abu Akleh, who are targeted while covering conflicts and serving as witnesses to events on the ground. Throughout these referential and predicational strategies, Abu Akleh is depicted as more than just a journalist; she is regarded as an icon within the Palestinian community, symbolizing resilience and resistance. Her tragic killing is seen as not only a loss for journalism but also a loss for the Palestinian cause and the broader struggle for justice and rights.

In the context of Wodak's discourse-historical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, the referential and predicational strategies play a crucial role in shaping the representation of Abu Akleh as a "representative depicter" of the Palestinian group. By employing specific linguistic choices, the discourse producer (in this case, the Palinfoen Twitter account) seeks to foreground her role as a journalist and symbol of Palestinian experiences and resistance. The use of these strategies reflects the social, psychological, and political views and interests of the discourse producer, which in this case is Hamas and its aligned perspective. The representation of Abu Akleh as a heroic victim and symbol of Palestinian struggle aligns with their narrative and objectives, as it serves to rally support, evoke sympathy, and condemn the Israeli actions. It is important to recognize that language is not neutral, and discourse producers use linguistic strategies to shape the perception and interpretation of events.

The discourse-historical approach to CDA helps us understand how



linguistic choices and strategies contribute to the construction of particular representations and narratives, reflecting the perspectives and interests of the discourse producer. The analysis of referential and predicational strategies sheds light on how language is utilized to shape public opinion and influence the way events and actors are perceived in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Absolutely, the intensification of the action of killing by using terms like "killed by a bullet" and "shot dead" is a clear example of how referential and predicational strategies can shape the representation of events and individuals in discourse. These linguistic choices serve to highlight the severity and brutality of the act, evoking strong emotional responses and drawing attention to the tragic nature of Abu Akleh's death. They reflect the social, psychological, and political views and interests of the discourse producer, which in this case is Hamas and its aligned perspective. The representation of Abu Akleh as a brave journalist who was targeted and killed by Israeli forces aligns with their narrative of Israeli aggression and Palestinian victimhood. By employing intensifying referential and predicational strategies, the discourse producer aims to evoke empathy, solidarity, and condemnation of the Israeli actions. This strategic use of language shapes the way the audience perceives the events and actors involved, influencing public opinion and garnering support for the Palestinian cause. The discourse-historical approach to CDA helps us understand how language is a powerful tool for constructing representations and narratives, shedding light on the social, psychological, and political forces that shape discourse and public discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Martin and Wodak 2001).

Events of Al-Aqsa Mosque

The events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan in April 2022 constitute a significant and recurring theme on the Palinfoen Twitter account. The Al-Aqsa Mosque, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, holds immense religious importance for Muslims worldwide, making it a focal point of tension and conflict in the Israeli-Palestinian context. During the holy month, thousands of Palestinian Muslims gathered at the Al-Aqsa Mosque to observe and worship, but they faced restrictions imposed by Israel, preventing them from praying freely or accessing the Mosque without obstacles. These restrictions, along with the symbol of division and separation represented by Israel's apartheid wall, added to the challenges faced by the worshippers. The situation led to a challenging and dangerous journey for the worshippers who attempted to reach the Mosque by scaling the apartheid wall, defying the barriers imposed upon them. This act of exercising their right to access the Mosque often resulted in clashes with the Israeli police, who sought to prevent their entry.

The Palinfoen Twitter account highlights these events and portrays the struggle of the Palestinian Muslims to access and worship at the Al-Aqsa



Mosque despite the obstacles imposed by Israel. The discourse produced in these tweets positions the Israeli actions as oppressive and unjust, denying Palestinians their right to practice their religion freely at one of their holiest sites. By emphasizing the clashes and confrontations between the Palestinian worshippers and the Israeli police, the discourse seeks to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinians and garner international sympathy and support. The events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque serve as a symbol of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with religious tensions and the struggle for access and rights playing a crucial role in shaping the discourse surrounding the issue.

The referential strategies for self-presentation on the Palinfoen Twitter account use various linguistic elements to highlight and represent Palestinian social actors and objects. These elements can be seen as follows:

- *The pronoun 'we'*: The use of the pronoun 'we' aligns the discourse producer (Palinfoen) with Palestinians, creating a sense of unity and collective identity. This strategy emphasizes that the account's perspective represents the views and experiences of the Palestinian people.
- *Top officials of Hamas*: The nomination of top Hamas leaders by their family names, such as 'Haneyya', 'Mishaal', 'Hayya', and 'Sheikh Sabri', serves to highlight their significance and authority within the Palestinian context. By using their family names, the discourse producer reinforces their prominence and positions them as important figures within the Palestinian cause.
- *Religious dimensions*: The use of terms like 'worshippers', 'Muslims', and 'Palestinian and Arab Christian worshippers' emphasizes the religious significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the people who gather there to pray. It highlights the religious aspect of the conflict and the importance of the site for Muslims and Christians alike.
- *Gender*: The nomination of gender categories, such as 'women' and 'men', recognizes the diverse participation and experiences of individuals of different genders in the events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This strategy acknowledges the active role of both women and men in the context of the conflict.
- *Professionals*: The use of terms like 'medics' and 'journalists' highlights the role and importance of these professionals in covering and providing medical aid during the events. It underscores the dedication and risks faced by journalists and medical personnel in reporting and providing assistance in conflict zones.
- *Age*: The reference of age categories, such as 'children' and 'elderly', underscores the vulnerability and impact of the conflict on different age groups. It draws attention to the suffering and challenges faced by children and elderly individuals during these events.



Understanding the above-mentioned referential strategies used in the Palinfoen Twitter account helps us grasp how language is utilized to construct and represent Palestinian social actors and objects in specific ways. These strategies reveal the discourse producer's perspectives, values, and intentions, shaping the portrayal of the Palestinian experience and framing the discourse within the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The use of formal nomination reflects the account's alignment with official views, particularly those of Hamas officials, which shapes the discourse in a way that emphasizes Hamas's image and perspective on the events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

By positive association with Hamas leaders and using formal nominations for Hamas leaders, the discourse producer highlights their authority and gives weight to their views. This strategy serves to legitimize Hamas's stance on the Al-Aqsa events by attributing their statements to specific individuals, lending credibility to their perspectives. On the other hand, the discourse producer uses a genericization strategy when referring to Israeli actors. This obscures their individual identities and roles, making it challenging to pinpoint specific responsibility for actions. This genericization strategy may serve to avoid direct attribution of actions to specific individuals or groups within the Israeli establishment. In the meantime, there is a collective reference to Palestinian prayers. In this case, the collective reference to Palestinian prayers underscores the unity and solidarity of Palestinians in their efforts to worship at the Al-Aqsa Mosque despite the challenges they face. However, it also highlights the indiscriminate nature of Israeli actions, affecting individuals and groups of different backgrounds, ages, and religions. This portrayal reinforces the negative discourse regarding brutal Israeli actions against Palestinians.

The use of formal nomination and genericization strategies in the Palinfoen Twitter account aligns with its ideological background and the interests of its supporters. By shaping the discourse in this way, the account aims to influence public opinion and garner support for the Palestinian cause, particularly Hamas's perspectives and objectives. The formal nomination strategies used in the account play a crucial role in constructing and framing the representation of different actors involved in the Al-Aqsa events. These strategies reflect the account's alignment with official views, while also influencing the perception of responsibility and unity among Palestinians, as well as the perceived indiscriminate and brutal actions of Israeli forces. The language choices and discursive strategies employed serve to reinforce the ideological background of the Twitter account and its goals in utilizing social media to influence public opinion.

In this theme, the Palinfoen Twitter account heavily focuses on Israeli social actors and objects, particularly in the context of the Al-Aqsa events and the situation in Jenin. The referential strategies used in the tweets highlight



Israel's occupation, military forces, and settlement activities, portraying them in a negative light. Terms like 'forces', 'enemy occupier gangs', and 'very heavily armed soldiers' portray the Israeli military presence as oppressive and aggressive, reinforcing the notion of an occupying force. The term 'enemy of everything' depicts a hostile perception of Israel, suggesting that it is seen as a threat to all aspects of Palestinian life and identity. References to 'genocidal Jews', 'fanatic Jewish colonial settlers', and comparisons to Nazi-like actions draw on historical and emotive associations, presenting Israel and its actions in a highly negative manner.

Terms like 'genocidal settlers' and 'enemy settlers' condemn the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, reinforcing a negative view of Israel's presence. The overarching portrayal of Israelis and Israel as an 'illegitimate regime' is a significant theme in the discourse produced by the Palinfoen account. The referential strategies emphasize collective identity, categorizing Israeli actors with various backgrounds, such as Jewish, Nazi, and Zionism, to underscore the multifaceted negative representation of Israel.

Regarding predicational strategies, the analysis shows that in response to the events in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jenin, the Palinfoen account focuses on Hamas's call for resistance and fight against Israeli actions. These predicational strategies highlight Hamas's stance on resisting the occupation and opposing Israel's policies in the region. The referential and predicational strategies employed in the tweets contribute to constructing a negative representation of Israeli actors and Israel as a whole. The language choices and discourse produced in the Palinfoen account serve to reinforce the Palestinian narrative of resistance and opposition to what is perceived as Israel's illegitimate and oppressive actions. These strategies aim to garner support for Hamas's call for resistance and mobilize public opinion in favor of the Palestinian cause. See the following examples,

- 'Hamas: We will not allow settlers to defile Aqsa Mosque'
- 'Haneyya: The resistance will respond to settler provocations in J'lem'
- 'Mishaal: The battle with the occupation is not over yet'
- 'Hayya: Our people are determined to end the Israeli occupation'
- 'Sheikh Sabri: Al-Aqsa worshippers protect their holy site'

The analysis highlights that Hamas's call for resistance is a central aspect of its discourse, as reflected in their threat to fight against Israel's actions, particularly regarding the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The call for resistance is seen as a means to prevent Israeli settlers from invading the mosque and to respond to their provocations. It is presented as an ongoing battle with Israel, with the ultimate goal of ending the Israeli occupation. Hamas's call for resistance



is not merely symbolic or rhetorical; it is framed as a decisive action, driven by determination rather than mere words. This reflects Hamas's commitment to taking tangible steps to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque and challenge Israeli actions in the region. For Hamas, resistance is not just a response to specific events but is ingrained in their core ideology. It is considered the "founding idea," (Abdelal 2016, 48) as evident in their logo and name. This indicates that resistance holds both religious and political significance for Hamas, and it defines their identity and purpose. By emphasizing the call for resistance and positioning it as a fundamental aspect of their discourse, Hamas aims to galvanize support and mobilize its followers. It serves as a rallying point for Palestinians who share the belief in resisting the Israeli occupation and protecting their sacred sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The analysis of Hamas's discourse reveals that the call for resistance is a central and defining aspect of their ideology and actions. It reflects their determination to challenge Israeli actions, protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and ultimately work towards ending the Israeli occupation. By highlighting this call for resistance, Hamas seeks to assert its political and religious orientation and garner support for its cause among Palestinians and beyond.

In the predicational strategies, Israel is represented as responsible for all circles of violence. See these examples:

- 'is renewed against Palestinian worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque'
- 'gangs attacked worshippers'
- 'storm Al Aqsa Mosque and assault Palestinian worshippers'
- 'attack on al-Aqsa Mosque'
- 'caused the injury of over 150 Palestinian worshippers, triggers worldwide condemnation'
- use elderly Palestinian man as a human shield
- used Palestinian girl as human shield
- played a major role in empowering and enabling Trump and his neo-Nazis
- benefited a lot by annexing Arab land and massacring many Palestinians
- a new Israeli campaign of terror, raids, beatings, tear gas, and live bullets, Zionist attack, drones, sound grenades and rubber bullets.

Indeed, the use of specific verbs in the tweets, such as 'attacked,' 'storm,' 'caused,' and 'use,' contribute to a negative representation of Israeli actions against Palestinians. These verbs imply aggressive, forceful, and intentional actions by Israel, depicting them as the initiators and perpetrators of violence. The verbs 'renewed' and 'played' suggest that Israel is responsible



for the ongoing cycle of violence, indicating that they are the ones who initiate or escalate confrontations with Palestinians. This portrayal aligns with the broader narrative of Hamas and the Palinfoen Twitter account, which often highlights Israel's role in perpetuating the conflict. The violence is particularly emphasized in the context of Al-Aqsa Mosque, where the tweets depict Israeli attacks on Palestinian Muslims praying at the holy site. This portrayal emphasizes Israel's disregard for the sanctity of the mosque and its use of force against worshipers, further contributing to the negative representation of Israeli actions. Furthermore, the mention of specific military means used by Israel, such as 'drones,' 'sound grenades,' and 'rubber bullets,' highlights the severity and brutality of their actions. The reference to using children as human shields amplifies the negative representation, presenting Israel as employing unethical and inhumane tactics in their approach to dealing with Palestinians. By employing these verbs and highlighting specific incidents of violence, the tweets construct a narrative in which Israel is depicted as responsible for initiating and perpetuating the cycle of violence, targeting Palestinian worshipers, and employing excessive force against vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population. This framing serves to reinforce the image of Palestinians as victims and Israel as the aggressor in the ongoing conflict.

The predicational strategies used in the tweets highlight the impact of Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians, emphasizing the human cost and suffering inflicted on the Palestinian population. By mentioning the number of Palestinians injured and killed, such as "injured by Israeli troops firing an array of weaponry" and "has killed 58 Palestinians," the tweets draw attention to the scale of violence and the severity of the injuries sustained by Palestinians. These predications also portray Israeli actions as a campaign of terror, raids, and Zionist attacks, further intensifying the negative representation of Israel's actions and their consequences. The use of terms like "terror," "raids," and "attack" serves to underscore the violent and oppressive nature of Israel's military operations.

Additionally, the tweets depict the emotional and psychological toll on Palestinian families and communities, with phrases like "struggling with grief and picking up pieces of their lives" and "Rami's hand was broken." These predications humanize the Palestinian victims and evoke empathy and sympathy from the readers, reinforcing the image of Palestinians as innocent victims of Israeli aggression.

The negative construction and critical voices toward Israel's actions can be seen as a form of resistance within the discourse. By framing Palestinian resistance as legitimate and noble in the face of occupation and injustice, the tweets aim to garner support and solidarity for the Palestinian cause. The predicational strategies used in the tweets emphasize the violence and injustice perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians, while also highlighting



Palestinian resilience and resistance. This negative construction not only serves to inform and raise awareness but also to rally support for the Palestinian struggle for justice and freedom.

The referential and predicational strategies in the tweets emphasize the significance of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Palestinian struggle and conflict with Israel. By describing Jerusalem as the "core" of the Palestinian struggle, the tweets highlight its central importance in the collective Palestinian identity and resistance against the Israeli occupation. The representation of Israel's actions as an "attack" and "settler incitement" against Al-Aqsa Mosque frames them as provocative and dangerous, evoking a sense of urgency and concern among Palestinians. The phrase "playing with fire" suggests that Hamas views such actions as highly inflammatory and potentially leading to further escalation of tensions in the region. In response to these threats to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the tweets call for action and protection. Hamas urges people to converge on and protect the mosque, demonstrating a sense of responsibility and commitment to safeguarding this sacred site, which holds immense religious and cultural significance for Palestinians. Moreover, the mention of "civil disobedience" by Father Manuel Muslim indicates a call for nonviolent resistance against the Israeli occupation. This approach aligns with the idea of peaceful protest and resistance as a means to challenge the injustices faced by Palestinians.

The referential and predicational strategies in these tweets seek to elevate the importance of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Palestinian struggle, while also urging Palestinians and supporters to take action in defense of their religious and cultural heritage. The construction of these perspectives emphasizes the urgency and gravity of the situation, aiming to mobilize public sentiment and support for the Palestinian cause. The construction of Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem as belonging to the Palestinians (Muslims and Christians) and not to the Israelis is a central theme in the discourse presented by the Palinfoen account. By framing the Palestinian reactions to Israeli actions as legitimate resistance, the tweets seek to mobilize Palestinians to take action in defence of their rights and the protection of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The tweets emphasize the idea that Palestinians have the right to resist the Israeli occupation and defend their land and holy sites. The use of terms like "brutality" and "savage Zionist aggression" portrays the Israeli actions as oppressive and violent, which, in turn, justifies the Palestinian resistance as a necessary response to protect their rights and sacred places. Moreover, the tweets challenge the perception of Israelis as occupiers, presenting them as "thugs" armed by the "West," suggesting a complicit role of the international community in supporting Israeli actions.

By constructing these perspectives, the Palinfoen account aims to strengthen the Palestinian narrative of resistance and legitimize their struggle against the Israeli occupation. It mobilizes support from both Palestinians and their



international allies by presenting the resistance as a just cause in defense of their rights and religious heritage. The discourse presented by the Palinfoen account reflects a strong emphasis on the Palestinian ownership of Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem, and the legitimacy of their resistance against the Israeli occupation. This construction seeks to inspire action and solidarity among Palestinians and their supporters worldwide, rallying them to stand united in defending their rights and sacred sites. The tweets from the Palinfoen account intensify the portrayal of Palestinian Muslim worshippers' resilience as an act of bravery and heroism in the face of Israeli aggression. By quoting an elderly woman from Al-Aqsa Mosque who defiantly declares, "They will never scare me," the tweets emphasize the unwavering determination of Palestinian worshippers to continue their religious practices despite the obstacles and threats posed by the Israeli forces. This representation serves to highlight the courage and strength of the Palestinian people in their resistance against the occupation.

On the other hand, the tweets also intensify the negative representation of Israeli actions and ideology. They shed light on the Israeli government's policies towards Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem, portraying them as attempts to undermine the rights of Muslims and control the sacred site. The tweets report on a range of Israeli actions, including the killing of Palestinian civilians, assaulting funeral processions, demolishing houses and trees, targeting educational institutions, using human shields, and making arrests. The focus on reporting the high number of Palestinians killed in 2022, as well as the specific instances of violence and abuse against Palestinian civilians, aims to expose the human cost of Israeli actions and underscore the impact on Palestinian lives. The tweets also criticize Western media coverage of the Al-Aqsa events and Israeli actions, highlighting what is perceived as biased reporting that fails to accurately represent the realities on the ground for Palestinians. This condemnation serves to challenge the dominant narrative and raise awareness about the need for fair and accurate media coverage of the situation.

These perspectives in the tweets aim to strengthen the Palestinian narrative of resistance and expose the injustices and violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation. They intensify both the positive representation of Palestinian resilience and the negative representation of Israeli actions and ideology, aiming to garner support and solidarity for the Palestinian cause from both the local and international communities. The retweeting of the Al-Aqsa events by the Palinfoen account reinforces the negative construction of Israel as the enemy of Palestinians, particularly in the context of undermining the Palestinian presence in Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem. By highlighting Israeli actions that violate Palestinian Muslims' values and rights to pray and worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque, the tweets construct Israel as the oppressor and aggressor in the conflict.



The use of terms such as "enemies" and "opponents" to refer to Israel emphasizes the agency and responsibility of the Israeli forces in the confrontations at Al-Aqsa Mosque. This construction aims to evoke sympathy for the Palestinian worshippers who suffer from Israeli aggression and injustice, thereby legitimizing their resistance and struggle to protect their religious site. Additionally, the negative representation of Israeli actors as "forces" and "troops" and the portrayal of their actions as those of militia groups and attackers serves to rewrite their identities. This portrayal aims to challenge the mainstream news coverage that might downplay or justify Israeli actions and instead asserts the agency and responsibility of the occupation forces for the violence and oppression against Palestinians. Furthermore, by emphasizing the purpose of the resistance and reconstructing the identity of Palestinians as legitimate resisters, the tweets seek to present the Palestinian cause as just and worthy of international support. The referential and predicational strategies employed in this discursive theme work to reinforce the self-representation of Palestinians as victims of aggression and injustice, and their resistance as a legitimate response to oppression.

Overall, the retweeting of the Al-Aqsa events by the Palinfoen account serves to strengthen the Palestinian narrative of resistance, highlight Israeli actions as oppressive and unjust, and garner support and solidarity for the Palestinian cause. It is a strategic use of discourse to shape public opinion and mobilize support for the Palestinian struggle for justice and freedom.

Conclusions

Here, we answer the question: what conclusion can be reached by examining the digital practices and online discourses in constructing the Self and Other in the tweets and retweets of the selected Twitter account, Palinfoen, which is administered by Hamas. As expected, Palestinians are positively represented as seen in the legitimacy of the Palestinian reactions and activities and the sympathy for the Palestinian suffering, whereas Israelis are negatively represented as seen in provocation of the Israeli actions and the blame of the Israelis. This conclusion shows that there is a battle of representation and narrative on social media platforms like Twitter. As we usually see in the pro-media outlets, each fighting party promotes its ideologies. Almahallawi and Zanuddin (2018) concluded in their study on the frame of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency that "the human-interest frame contributed significantly as the voice for the Palestinians" (149). This is consistent with findings that media can be used as a mediator during conflicts. In Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya's news website coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, (Alwan 2022) found that "security-related content topped the Al Jazeera website, highlighting the strength of the Palestinian resistance and its ability to reach any point within Israeli territory. On the other hand, the political content took the lead on the



Al Arabiya website, revealing the scale of destruction caused by the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza's infrastructure. Consequently, it held Hamas leaders responsible for what happened and the consequences of the aggression on Gaza" (532, original text in Arabic).

In this study, I argue that Twitter has given space for Hamas to reach audiences around the world, and thus it reinforces its arguments and constructions of the events in Palestine. The analysis shows that the Palinfoen Twitter account represents the Palestinian resistance as 'a legitimate reaction' that comes as a natural response to Israeli aggression and crimes. The reactions come as a result of the brutality of Israeli militarist actions. That is, this resistance is presented as a way to fight Israel's brutality and crimes as shown in the Israeli policies at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Thus, Hamas justifies its narrative laying the groundwork to protect Palestinians, not only in the Gaza Strip, but also everywhere they live. In this mode of representation, Palestinians are not held responsible for initiating violent actions but rather they are represented as responding to and resisting it. This resistance shows extraordinary resilience as seen in Palestinians persistence in worshipping at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Positive construction of Palestinians is also shown in religiously legitimate characterization of the Palestinian social actors and objects as worshipers and families, and Muslim worshipers. Choosing words and references is critical as they can "obscure the proper considerations of causes and possible solutions of ongoing events" (Philo and Berry 2004, 173). Tamimi et al. (2021) explains that "resilience in the Palestinian context is not a synonym for creating acceptable living standards within the occupation. Rather, resilience comprises two interlinked elements: 1. Awareness building 2. Continuation of resistance and the national struggle toward liberation" (15).

Furthermore, positive characterization of the Palestinian social actors and objects can be seen in the building and enhancing a national resistance that aims to propel forward the Palestinian cause. The positive representation glorifies the Palestinian resistance. The personal tragedy of Shireen Abu Akleh is seen as a heroic action that evokes Twitter followers' sympathy and conciseness. The negative construction attributes transitive agency to Israelis and holds them responsible for erupting the violence presented in killing the Palestinian-American journalist and in attacking Palestinian Muslim worshipers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Palestinian media consistently held Israeli agents responsible for killing the Palestinians. This is in line with the findings of Almahallawi and Zanuiddin (2018) who determined several levels of Israeli government were responsible for the Israeli war on Gaza in 2014. Additionally, Wenden (2005) states that "participants in a conflict and their relationship to one another can be viewed from yet another perspective by asking how responsibility is attributed [...] Is the agent of violent actions made explicit? Or not? Is agency shared by both participants in the conflict?"



Or not? Attribution of agency in a text or talk can also create antagonism between conflicting parties and thus serve to legitimate a militarist ideology” (100). Linguistically, transitive agency can be seen in the questions: who does what to whom? As Halliday puts it: meaning as representation... meaning in the sense of content... things happen, and people, or other actors, do things, or make them happen (see Halliday and Mathiessen 2004). Thus, the representational meaning is constructed to show Hamas’ resistance to Israeli violence during the events of 2022.

The attribution of Israeli agency is seen in the negative characterizations in referring to the Israelis as ‘occupation troops’, ‘enemy occupier gang’, ‘armed soldiers’ and ‘enemy settlers’. These violent actions show Israeli brutality against the Palestinians and put the responsibility of violence on Israel. Also, Israeli brutality reinforces their destructive agency as a provocative cause of violence. Further, the construction characteristics of structural violence portrays Israeli agency as repressive and unjust. This puts exclusive responsibility of violence on Israel. The negative attitudes towards Israelis portrays them as untrustworthy. This can be seen in the calls for an independent international investigation for the Israeli killing of Abu Akleh and their attack on her coffin. This discourse reflects Israeli horror and inhumanity in insulting mourners. This untrustworthiness highlights the lack of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as aspects of trustworthiness suggested by (Connelly 2016). Also, this untrustworthiness builds angry public opinion against Israel by emphasizing Israeli military action against the Palestinians (Wagemakers 2010).

Various aspects of religion, resistance, heroism, worship, serve the account Palinfoen’s positive representation of Palestinians (Self) and the negative representation of Israelis (Other). With the capabilities of social media, despite some restrictive policies imposed by tech companies against Palestinian activism on social media, Hamas’s actors—as seen in the Palinfoen account—can publish their content on Twitter unlike in traditional mass media. This means, they can directly communicate messages to audiences, representing themselves positively and defending their views. By using Twitter, Hamas has developed its communication network and has drastically improved its narration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, describing the events on Twitter. This has allowed Hamas to convey its discourse to international and external audiences.

The censorship of Palestinian voices on various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as traditional media outlets in the US and UK, has been a subject of concern and controversy. On social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, there have been numerous reports of Palestinian content, posts, and accounts being taken down or restricted, often on the grounds of violating community guidelines or terms of service. Some activists and advocacy groups argue that this censorship



disproportionately affects Palestinian voices and narratives, limiting their ability to share their perspectives and stories with the world. Similarly, on YouTube, videos and channels related to the Palestinian cause have faced removal or demonetization, raising questions about freedom of expression and the ability to highlight Palestinian issues in an unbiased manner. In traditional media, concerns have been raised about the portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with some critics arguing that the coverage tends to favor the Israeli perspective while downplaying or misrepresenting Palestinian viewpoints. This has led to debates about media bias and the need for fair and balanced reporting. The issues of censorship and media representation are complex and multifaceted, intertwining political, social, and technological factors. They have sparked discussions about the role of these platforms and media outlets in shaping public discourse and the need for transparent and equitable content policies. Advocates for free speech and human rights often call for a more inclusive and open environment that allows all voices, including Palestinian perspectives, to be heard and understood.

Since the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2021, there has indeed been a noticeable shift in public discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Majzoub (2021) states that “the Gaza-Israel conflict in May 2021 resulted in increased global awareness of the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine, and was accompanied by international scrutiny of western mainstream media’s biased portrayal of the Israeli violence” (2). One significant example was a *New York Times* cover story that depicted the faces of Gazans who lost their lives during the conflict. This coverage brought attention to the human toll and tragedy of the conflict, resonating with many readers and generating widespread discussion. However, despite this shift in public discourse and increased awareness, it is crucial to note that such changes in public sentiment do not always translate into immediate policy changes. The complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, combined with various geopolitical factors and longstanding international dynamics, make it challenging to translate public opinion into tangible shifts in policy.

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