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## Wide-Ranging War: Words as Weapons Against Palestine

The battle of words and ideas is essential to the struggle of Palestinian resistance movements and pro-Palestinian voices. Now that Israel has revealed the ugliest face of Zionism in Gaza, the time has come to completely change the narrative and to put an end to the myth of Israeli victimhood forever.



While the Palestinians and their supporters have won the battle for information on social media, they must continue to work to undo the persistent linguistic parameters that Israel has long used to portray itself as a victim, terrorized and just.

He activated the English language and sent it to the battlefield

This was stated by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, on the speech given by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the House of Commons and which managed to convince the Conservative Party, in opposition, to enter the war against Hitler.

In a multipolar world where great powers compete to influence global public opinion, language is paramount. "[After all, words are the pillars of our psychology](#)" and shape our perception of right and wrong, right and wrong.



Portrait of a young man with the Palestinian flag painted on his face

Information warfare, dominated for decades by Western countries and with a huge media reach, seeks to shape our opinions about the geopolitical chess game. A struggle that became visible to all in the war in Syria, intensified with that in Ukraine and is now collapsing, in the face of Israel's shockingly brutal military assault on Gaza and its 2.4 million civilians.

Israel has the right to defend itself

The ubiquitous phrase used by Israel during its more than 75 years of oppression and occupation of Palestine often serves to justify its indefensible actions. It functions as a shield from accountability for its human rights abuses; A phrase that has not only been wielded by the Israeli government, but has also found resonance among Western leaders.

This rhetoric was renewed following the Hamas-led resistance operation, Al-Aqsa Flooding, on October 7, 2023. Immediately afterward, U.S. President Joe Biden promised to ensure that Israel would have "everything it needs to defend itself," [he declared](#) from his White House pulpit, assuring Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: "Israel has the right to defend itself and its people, period."



President Biden, accompanied by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, spoke from the White House on Oct. 10, 2023. Photo: Jonathan Ernst (Reuters), AP.

Similar statements were echoed by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who [posted](#) on X that Israel has "an absolute right" to defend itself, and by a number of EU leaders [who immediately joined in to assure](#) "their support for Israel's right to defend itself, consistent with humanitarian law and international law."

During his visit to the occupying state in November, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken not only reiterated Washington's support for "Israel's right to self-defense," but went so far as to say, "It is obligated to do so."

#### The Right to Commit Genocide

This assertion of the "right to defend oneself" is the key component of the linguistic and conceptual arsenal employed by the U.S.-backed Israeli government with respect to occupied Palestine and the broader West Asian region.

In a world where narratives compete to dominate public opinion, the importance of terminology cannot be underestimated. Israel has deftly used linguistic nuance and strategic ambiguity to advance its narrative on the Palestinian question, whether through historical revisionism, or past conflicts or contemporary events such as the Al-Aqsa flood. Cradle columnist Sharmine Narwani [wrote](#) about this in 2012 and insisted on the importance of "public diplomacy" as a crucial tool in geopolitics. "Anything that invokes the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and myths about historical Jewish rights to the land bequeathed to them by the Almighty serves to preserve Israel's right to exist and defend itself."

However, such narratives obscure the real situation: that a powerful occupying force, supported by a superpower, is confronting the indigenous population that has no conventional army to defend it.

### A War of Words

Gustave Le Bon, the founder of *The Psychology of Crowds*, begins in his book by describing one of the factors that directly contribute to the formation of mass opinions, what he calls "images, words, and phrases":

*The masses are excited by the intelligent and correct use of words, by the use of appropriate phrases, this fascinates their imagination. If we use words with art and tact, they become secret powers. They can evoke a powerful hurricane in the souls of many masses, but they also contribute to calm. Words whose meanings are difficult to determine precisely are sometimes the ones that have the greatest capacity for influence and action.*

In the aftermath of the 2008 Israeli offensive on Gaza, Republican pollster and political strategist Dr. Frank Luntz wrote a study titled "[Israel Project's Global Language Dictionary 2009](#)" commissioned by [the group The Israel Project](#) (for Security, Freedom, and Peace); a handbook for those on the front lines of the pro-Israel media war."

In the second chapter, titled "Glossary of Words That Work," Luntz presents "For the first time, and as a product of our communication effort, an A-to-Z glossary of specific words, phrases, and concepts that should be at the core of any pro-Israel communication." The following are just a few examples from their glossary of terms:

*Human Rockets: Present a vivid and idealized picture of what life is like in Israeli communities and their vulnerability to attack. It is important to cite the number of rocket attacks launched and immediately continue to describe what the night will be like in the bomb shelter.*

*"Peace Ahead of Political Borders": This is the best phrase to talk about why a two-state solution is unrealistic at this point. First, we must put an end to rockets and war. Then both peoples will be able to talk about political borders.*

*"The RIGHT to": This is a very strong phrase and the one that "deserves it" the most. Use the phrase frequently, including the rights that both Israelis and Arabs enjoy in Israel, the right to peace to which Israelis and Palestinians are entitled, and Israel's right to defend its civilians against rocket attacks.*

### Narrative manipulation and linguistic tactics

Understanding historical efforts to control the narrative surrounding the "Arab-Israeli conflict" begins with the absence of a clear definition or identification of its parts. This

ambiguity allows for manipulation and flexibility in defining the issue. Consequently, we can identify the vocabulary and terms selected to shape the discourse on the Palestinian cause.



The international mainstream media and political leaders have progressively framed the resistance against the occupation from the historical description of the Arab-Israeli conflict, then as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and now further limited to a confrontation between  [Hamas/Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Israel](#). The Western press and mainstream media also use terms like "shock" instead of "Israeli aggression" and frame the killing of Palestinians as people who "died," rather than "were killed" by Israel.

This reductionist approach diminishes the complexity of the conflict, emphasizes Israel's role, and minimizes the agency or ability of the other side to act. In addition, overused terminology, such as "conflict," replaces more nuanced terms, further simplifying the narrative.

Moreover, Israel's perpetual portrayal of itself as a victim [turns the Holocaust into a weapon](#) to gain more sympathy and global support by asserting its "legitimate right to self-defense."

Israel and the United States have also [confused anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism](#) and equated criticism of their policies with bigotry against Jews. This combination has led to accusations of anti-Semitism against people who criticize Israel, such as [university presidents](#), perpetuating a narrative that stifles intellectual dissent.



Biden, you're killing Gaza. Permanent Ceasefire Now!

The Israeli media uses "horrific" terms such as "neutralization" to describe the killing of resistance fighters in Gaza and the West Bank, language that minimizes the emotional impact on Palestinians and presents an aseptic version of events while dehumanizing them.

#### Writing and Countering

It is critical to recognize that the lexicon surrounding the Palestinian issue and the resistance in the West Asian region against Israel plays an important role in shaping narratives and collective consciousness. This linguistic battlefield, which is often overlooked, is critical to understanding the dynamics of the current war and the framework of events.

For example, in the aftermath of Al-Aqsa's Operation Rain, Israel strategically used its [Hasbara](#) apparatus to propagate a specific narrative that included the assertion of Israel's "right of self-defense," which portrays Israel as a victim justifying its actions.



In addition, Israel referred to people held by Hamas as "hostages" rather than "detainees" or "prisoners," hinting at their potential use as human shields and justifying lethal responses. The forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza was described as

"repositioning" or "[relocation](#)," a euphemism meant to downplay the gravity of the situation. »

As the Axis of Resistance has often repeated, this war is being waged on multiple fronts, not only in the physical realm but, above all, in the realm of propaganda on social networks. However, correcting the power imbalance in information warfare is not an easy task. The battle of words and ideas is essential to the struggle of Palestinian resistance movements and pro-Palestinian voices. Now that Israel has revealed the ugliest face of Zionism in Gaza, the time has come to completely change the narrative and to put an end to the myth of Israeli victimhood forever.

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