Media Diplomacy in Regional Conflict Resolution: The Perspective of Jordanian Electronic Journalism

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Abstract

Media has always been a prominent tool to ensure the democratic process and success of government infrastructure. However, the role of media is even more important during regional conflicts and crises. This study aims to investigate the use of media diplomacy in settling regional conflicts from the standpoint of the Jordanian electronic press. Using the critical theory of media discourse, it used a descriptive method, employing the critical discourse analysis on three newspapers: "Al-Sawsana Jordan," "Ammon," and "Al-alsawsana." The results indicate that electronic newspapers primarily depend on their internal sources, constituting 66.7% of their political content. Also, images are extensively used in all news topics, accounting for 97.4% of the content. Notably, personalities, especially heads of state, occupy a considerable part, comprising 38.7% of the total personalities featured in the media content. Thus, this study highlights the critical cooperation between diplomacy and electronic media for improved regional management. Underlining transparent communication, especially through electronic journalism in Jordan, acts as a robust link between the government and citizens, promoting awareness and civic engagement. To address the challenges effectively, there is a need for new strategies, including continuous training for media professionals and encouraging collaboration through events and workshops. The transition towards investigative journalism further improves the possibility of media diplomacy, highlighting transparency as important for sustainable development and enduring positive results.

Keywords: *Diplomacy, Media, Conflicts, Electronic Journalism, Critical Analysis of Media Discourse.*

Introduction

According to the existing literature (Edwards, 2018; Sevin, 2018, p. 15; Zheltukhina et al., 2019), the idea of "soft power" holds substantial applicability in the media. It proves to be equally important in times of crises and conflict as the military prowess denoted by "hard power" (Hussein, 2018). Newspapers have invariably held the fourth position in shaping public opinion and are identified as the most persuasive and constant form of mass media (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). With the start of the internet, the electronic press has appeared as the fifth authority, playing a crucial role in psychological and propaganda warfare. This strategic impact successfully forms and shapes public perception in alignment

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with the procedures and objectives of a state (Mostafa Bakhit, 2020). Accordingly, it becomes a tranquil avenue for acquiring foreign policy goals and shaping international relations. The press advances beyond the mere transmission of news and information. It vigorously engages in analysis and clarification based on its editorial policy. Digitization of press materials, a product of the communications and media revolution (Sahel & Mokrane, 2019), further supports its ability to shape public opinion within societies. This evolution highlights the significant role of media in conflict management and decisiveness, encouraging states to prioritize the flow of information during times of conflict and war (Chaban & O'Loughlin, 2018).

Similarly, the Jordanian press has witnessed significant progress since its beginning, especially in its live coverage of regional conflicts among different countries. The preference for digitizing press materials aligns with the readers' desires, inquisitiveness, and aspirations in myriad fields, contributing immensely to shaping the political culture of the public. This impact extends to the regional and international levels (Zeid, 2021). As multiple countries transform different fronts, (Gharieb, 2022) contends the necessity for media research to focus on scrutinizing the media's role in covering diverse issues, especially those of Arab origin. Such an inquiry aims to determine the dimensions and impact of the media's role on these issues and the mutual impact between countries. Thus, there is a genuine interest in conducting an analytical study to examine the role of media diplomacy in resolving regional disputes from the perspective of the Jordanian electronic press, So the study aims to identify how to employ media diplomacy in resolving regional conflicts: the perspective of the Jordanian electronic press. This study is one of the descriptive studies that used the survey method. The study also used a content analysis tool for three newspapers, namely "Al-Sawsana", "Zad Al-Urdun" and "Ammon". The theory was applied. Critical analysis of media discourse.

Research Background

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan plays a critical role in managing regional conflicts due to its strategic geographical surroundings among different Arab nations. The political power of Jordan in decision-making holds significant precedence for many Arab and foreign governments. The country is trusted and has an impact on decision-makers, supported by its foreign diplomacy's wisdom, understanding, and experience in conflict oversight. In the era of digital media, where international connectivity is prevailing, Jordan acknowledged the need to adopt electronic journalism as an important tool. This shift is especially critical as electronic media, observed by the masses, including the public, impacts decision-makers who depend on the Jordanian government for critical decisions. Situated amidst fierce political and economic crises, aggravated since the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Jordan uses media diplomacy to share messages instantly. This communication happens through diplomatic channels and different media outlets, using myriad methods to minimize human and material casualties in conflict resolution. Media diplomacy also plays a crucial role in navigating the region back to peace, security, and tranquility. Electronic journalism has proliferated in Jordan, with 169 officially authorized websites and specialized websites transcending 157 (Jordan Media Authority, 2021). This expansion significantly influences media diplomacy by shaping the public's mental image and sentiments on regional conflicts. Electronic journalism is instrumental in rectifying conflicting political trends and affecting active political forces.

Research Objectives and Significance

This study seeks to examine the changing role of media diplomacy in the digital era. It evaluates how effective the Jordanian electronic press, particularly electronic journalism, is in shaping public opinion and affecting decision-makers. Also, this research analyzes the approaches used by the Jordanian government and decision-makers in handling and resolving regional disputes. This study also focuses on the challenges and impediments encountered in using media diplomacy for conflict resolution. Also, this study strives to offer discernment into the clear vision of the Jordanian government involving regional conflicts and the techniques they use to overpower these challenges. Thus, this study is significant due to the increased importance of media diplomacy, particularly in the virtual world, where its influence has become critical for settling conflicts between nations. In the context of global stability and security, countries are striving for new approaches, with digital media emerging as a fundamental player competent in accessing a worldwide audience and facilitating reconciliation alongside conventional diplomatic policies. The Jordanian electronic press, as a prominent component of the media landscape, holds a crucial role in shaping perceptions and proposing conflict resolution solutions. Jordan's well-known international role, driven by its political and geographical importance, impacts decisions related to regional disputes, a situation that has endured for over seventy years. Media diplomacy involves scholars, writers, and experts using different media channels to manage regional issues. The significance of this study emanates from the unique role of Jordanian media, especially electronic journalism, which has not only contended with but also replaced conventional forms. Exploring how the public and decision-makers interact with this digital media is paramount. Thus, based on the role, importance, and impact of media on public perceptions in Jordan, this research aims to answer the following research question.

RQ1. *How is media diplomacy utilized in resolving regional conflicts?*

Previous Studies

Before proceeding to the analysis and result, this section is based on examining and reviewing the existing literature providing empirical support to current research. In this regard, it is found that previous studies highlighted the importance of media in covering conflict issues. (Ahmad & Al-Ameer, 2023) examined "Security Media and its Role in Conflict Management in Palestine," indicating the security media's strategy for conflict management and the impediments it faced. Ben (Lazaro & Rizzi, 2022) examined the theoretical vision of "Media Accompanying in Crisis Management," underlining the media's effectiveness in crisis management through the strategic formulation of media discourses. (Gharieb, 2022), "The Treatment of Political Crises in Egypt by Official Government and Media Pages on Facebook" questioned the media's role in negotiating with political crises, highlighting the impact of editorial policies and political exposure on news formulation. (Bishara, 2018), titled "The Egyptian Media's Discourse on Political Issues in the Arab Countries: Syria as a Model," strived to apprehend how the Egyptian media handled Syrian political issues. The study showed the effect of editorial policy on issue coverage.

Abu Naqira's study (Abu Naqira, 2023), "Palestinian Elite's Use of Israel's Narratives," examined the Israeli media's representations of Arab-Israeli relations after the current wave of normalization. (El-Sadany, 2021) explored the Sudanese Press's role in resolving conflicts peacefully and facilitating a peace culture. The study emphasized the interest of Sudanese newspapers in publishing conflict issues, with peace culture indexing highest. (Brown et al., 2012) titled "The Role of the Media in Change in the Arab World, an Analytical Study," aimed to comprehend the media's role in forming positive change in the Arab world. The study highlighted the media's abilities to bring about positive change and determined factors affecting

the media message's content and value. These studies collectively contribute to understanding the role of media diplomacy in settling regional conflicts, delivering discernment from different perspectives and contexts.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy initially appeared as a political tool for developing foreign policy, leading negotiations, and setting relations with other countries (Belkacem, Mounir, 2020). Over time, it transformed into an agreeable means that nations embraced for resolving disputes, ultimately becoming connected with the more general concept of public relations among countries. Its main purpose shifted toward promoting mutual acquaintance and international relations, which are important for creating a safe global environment (Pope, 2014). (Asadi, 2017) outlines that diplomacy depends on different media outlets, including radio, television, press, international federations, external representatives, professionals from international organizations, and periodicals targeting distinct groups to impact them.

With advances in communication and media, a contemporary form of diplomacy known as "digital diplomacy" appeared through digital media, affecting public opinion. Researchers developed terms like "Twitter Diplomacy" (TWI Diplomacy) and "Facebook Diplomacy" to symbolize modern diplomatic approaches (Mesquita & Almeida Medeiros, 2016). The British Office of Foreign Affairs defines digital diplomacy as the solution to political issues through the Internet (Ahmad & Al-Ameer, 2023). Digital diplomacy proposes several benefits, including expense reduction, effective communication channels, improved availability of information for decision-making, and fast communication. Social media, a critical component of digital diplomacy, thoroughly contributes to conflict containment. However, there are challenges, such as delegates stumbling to separate personal and professional factors, the threat of information leaks and hacking, and the possibility of the spread of rumors in the digital space using fake narratives and identities (Mostafa Bakhit, 2020).

Media Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution

Electronic newspapers play critical roles during conflicts, demonstrating their importance in shaping a country's foreign policy (Tahat et al., 2020; Ziani et al., 2021). They serve as compelling tools, seeking to impact the public according to distinctive interests. To reach a more general audience, these newspapers increasingly depend on social media and websites. (Zeitoun et al., 2013) emphasizes their role in presenting both internal and external political emergencies, mobilizing public opinion, and pressuring governments. (Ayasreh, 2023) reports on the competition between media and embassies in disseminating information and holding meetings with political experts in the evolving terrain of the media revolution. Embassies traditionally declare their countries of events, according to the Vienna Treaty on Diplomatic Relations of 1961. International diplomatic communication strives to safeguard and support a particular country or issue, shape international public opinion, and decrease clashes between conflicting states (Gutkowski, 2016). Propaganda is also sometimes used to gain support.

(Cebul, 2023) states that countries using the virtual digital space find it facilitative to acquire their foreign policy objectives and shape their image globally. Cyberspace is not confined to any specific country. (Hager, 2015) argues that a state's media capability relies on how it encourages its activities internally and externally and the success of its media offices abroad. The press is deemed a tool for representing political positions.

The Jordanian press, embedded in the principles of the Amman Message, underlines moderation, patience, and concern for covenants. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein's speeches align with these principles, supporting peace and moderation. (Köprülü, 2021), in their review of previous studies, highlight King Abdullah II's media mandates to support Arab countries and address issues regarding Jordanian society. Jordan's foreign policy, entrenched in the Great Arab Revolt's message, focuses on acquiring Arab independence, sovereignty, and unity through measures to eradicate conflicts and facilitate peace. The 2017 Qatar crisis affecting Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the Emirates demonstrates how electronic newspapers handle and manage emergencies in the media. Amid the media confrontation, Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Qabas played a mediating role, showing Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's struggles for peaceful resolutions. Arab media presented suggestions and approaches to resolve the Qatar crisis.

Study Theory

This study uses the theory of critical analysis of media discourse to examine the role of media diplomacy in settling regional conflicts, particularly through Jordanian electronic journalism. Since the late 1970s, critical discourse analysis has achieved across-the-board acceptance in different social studies fields, especially in media discourse analysis. This theory is useful in determining ideologies and trends within media content, specifically in news discourses, seeking to indicate the authentic possibilities of events (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). The interest in critical analysis of media discourse stems from examining the association between language and authority. This involves analyzing the practices used by discourse producers, which may arise spontaneously but, in reality, represent the interests of distinct forces. Such discourse impacts the behavior of the masses in alignment with those interests (Gharieb, 2022). Also, (Carpentier & Cleen, 2007)emphasizes that the clash of discourses symbolizes a conflict of ideologies, using language as a mechanism to express them in conformity with the media institution's governing policy, regardless of its diversity. Concerning political discourse, (Breeze and Olza, 2017) note that its emphasis lies on power, where discourse aligned with power works to strengthen it while competing discourse sabotages and weakens authority.

Norman Fairclough's analyses highlight that discourse plays a critical role in shaping identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meaning (Phelan & Dahlberg, 2011). In relation to this study, the critical discourse analysis of media has two rudimentary dimensions affecting the recipient's beliefs. The first dimension pertains to selecting important issues and noteworthy events, while the second concerns picking how media discourse levels serve the political and ideological interests of persisting powers that hold a dominant impact in society (Gharieb, 2022). Recognizing important problems in the context of regional conflicts differs among media institutions based on aspects such as spatial and ethical proximity to the conflicting parties, ownership-related editorial policies, and political orientations. Media discourse analysis explains discrepancies in news coverage purposes across diverse mediums and reveals the political interests of authorities during disputes. Table 1 provides definitions of key constructs employed in the current research study.

Table 1: Definitions of Key Terms in the Current Research Project.

Terms	Definitions	Sources

Media Diplomacy	Media Diplomacy is the systematic deployment of electronic journalism as a soft authority by media entities and the government to contend with regional stakeholders, share information, and encourage mutual agreement. This involves interpreting the content, style, and framing of news stories, interviews, and editorials to evaluate the role played by electronic journalism in shaping diplomatic relations.	(Asadi, 2017; Kilobi, 2019)
	Media Diplomacy is the deliberate use of electronic journalism outlets, including television, radio, and online media, by the Jordanian government and media platforms to shape perceptions, encourage dialogue, and affect public opinion in regional conflicts. This includes different strategies, i.e., news framing, agenda-setting, and the use of precise descriptions aimed at contributing to conflict resolution steps.	
Conflict Resolution	Conflict Resolution is the process through which conflicts, tensions, or disputes in regional conflicts are actively addressed and mitigated. This involves diplomatic dialogues, peace-building endeavors, and the enactment of agreements or measures strived to de-escalate hostilities and foster long-term stability.	(Kilobi, 2019; Zeitoun et al., 2013)
	Conflict Resolution is the systematic effort to address and resolve conflicts within the region involving Jordan by using diverse diplomatic, political, and socio-economic techniques. This includes examining the significance of mediation, peacekeeping, and conflict transformation initiatives in obtaining positive change.	
Regional Conflicts	Regional Conflicts are geopolitical conflicts or uncertainties that involve different nations or political entities within the geographical immediacy of a country. These conflicts may be personified as territorial conflicts, political clashes, or historical hostilities between neighboring countries or entities in the Middle East. Indicators include the existence of border conflicts, cross-border militancy, and regional political fluctuation affecting Jordan.	(Ahmed et al., 2019; Ayalon et al., 2016)
	Regional Conflicts are intricate and connected political, economic, or social confrontations involving Jordan and its adjacent countries in the wider Middle East region. These conflicts may contain issues such as resource competition, ideological discrepancies, or historical resentments and may have importance for regional stability.	

Study Approach

This study is classified as a descriptive study, focusing on providing a detailed description of the problem and collecting all relevant data linked to it (Kilobi, 2019). It uses the media content analysis approach, which systematically collects, analyzes, and interprets data by analyzing the content under study. It employs content analysis as an analytical technique. Involves reviewing and studying documents, records, or newspapers related to the study's subject (Ghasemi & Karimi, 2020). The study contains all officially licensed Jordanian electronic newspapers as the population. The study sample, considered a subset of the research community components, was selected from licensed electronic newspapers, i.e., Ammon, Al-Sawsanah, and Zad Jordan, acknowledged as the first Jordanian electronic newspapers launched, according to data from Al-Sawsana electronic newspaper (Christiansen, 2019). Using the media content investigation tool, the study seeks to provide an objective and organized explanation of the content in written, audio, or visual formats within the selected electronic newspapers, addressing the study's problem and purposes(Samuel-Azran, 2013). The content analysis focused on the electronic newspapers' representations and coverage of political issues from January 1, 2023, to October 1, 2023.

Results of the Analytical Study

This section provides an overview of the data analysis, results, and discussion consistent with the existing literature. The results are provided in both tabular form and written manner to extend the readership and transparently represent the findings. The results discussion part shows the relationship between employing media diplomacy in resolving regional conflicts and from the perspective of Jordanian electronic journalism, through the study's use of the content analysis tool.

First, Journalistic Forms

Table 2: Shows the Journalistic Techniques Used in Electronic Newspapers.

Type	Iterations	%	ratio
Press release	6884	%73.5	1
Press report	2236	%23.8	2
Journalistic investigation	198	%2.11	3
Press talk	5	%0.053	6
Newspaper article	20	%0.214	4
story	15	%0.16	
Total	9358	100%	

Table 2 shows that press news has the top position with a percentage of 73.563%, observed by press reports at 23.894%. Journalistic research, press interviews, and press articles rank lower, with percentages of 2.116%, 0.053%, and 0.214%, respectively. This indicates a clear stress by electronic newspapers on political issues, likely due to the recurring and intense political affairs during that period.

The preference for press news and press reports aligns with results from (Lucas, 2021), who emphasized the strong reliance of electronic newspapers on these forms to provide information to readers. This observation is compatible with the study by (Ayasreh, 2023), which witnessed a dominant use of press news by the Jordanian daily press. Also, the study by (Alrantisi et al., 2022) found that news is among the most typically employed journalistic forms, followed closely by press reports.

Second: Sources of Journalistic Material

Table 3: Shows the Sources of Journalistic Material Published in Electronic Newspapers.

Type	Iterations	%	Ratio
The newspaper's sources	6632	66.7	1
News agencies	2256	22.6	2
Websites	875	8.8	3
Private sources	37	0.37	5
Security sources	89	0.89	4
Journalist	18	0.18	7
Others	34	0.34	6
Total	9941	10.0%	

The earlier table 3 shows that electronic newspapers primarily use their sources as the preliminary foundation for representing news related to political issues. This accounts for

66.7% of the total sources of published journalistic material. The second most notable source is news agencies, contributing 22.6%. Other sources, such as websites, security sources, private sources, journalists, and various sources, are less frequently used, with percentages ranging from 0.18% to 8.8%. This indicates that electronic newspapers mainly rely on their internal sources for information, and there is also dependence on news agencies, determined as key distributors of news for diverse media institutions. These results align with the study by (Toukan, 2021), which emphasized newspapers' preference to depend on their sources for information and news representation.

Third: Multimedia

Table 4: Shows the Multimedia Used in Political Issues Published in Electronic Newspapers.

Type	Iterations	%	ratio
voice	0	0.00	3
picture	9358	%97.4	1
video	284	%2.9	2
Cartoons/cartoons	0	0.00	3
Total	9606	%100	

According to Table 4, electronic newspapers primarily use images in all their news topics, totaling 97.4% with a frequency of 9358. Video content is included at a much lower percentage of 2.9%, but the use of animation, caricatures, or photos with text needs to be incorporated. This dependence on images aligns with the results of (Mark King and King, 2018), who also found a preference for pictures and videos in improving news material within the study sample. Nevertheless, there is a discrepancy noted in the use of caricatures, as they were not employed in the examined sample.

Fourth: The Central Characters

Table 5: Shows the Central Figures to Which the Journalistic Material Published in Electronic Newspapers Relates.

Type	Iterations	%	ratio
Heads of state	956	%38.7	1
Former heads of state	76	%3.07	8
Prime Ministers	261	%10.5	4
Ministers	306	%12.3	2
Businessmen	6	%0.24	11
Officials in countries	304	%12.3	3
Military leaders	128	%5.18	7
Representatives in countries	36	%1.45	9
Party leaders	200	%8.09	5
Islamic preachers	25	%1.01	10
Other*	172	%6.96	6
Total	9941	%100	

The results in Table 5 show that personalities having the position of heads of state reserved the highest position, comprising nearly 38.7% of the total personalities studied. This

dominance can be attributed to the timeframe of the newspaper analysis, which contained periods marked by wars, negotiations, and denunciations concerning heads of state. Following closely, individuals represented as ministers proclaimed the second position, containing 12.3% of the total. Notably, this percentage reflected that of officials in countries, who accounted for 12.3% of the main figures featured in electronic newspapers.

Prime ministers as prominent personalities were ranked fourth, overseeing a share of 10.5%, while party leaders followed with a rate of 8.0%. Researchers highlighted the crucial role played by political parties and heads of government during political emergencies as a rationale for this ranking. Military leaders' personalities secured the seventh position, denoting 5.1% of the total. Former heads of state occupied the eighth spot with a percentage of 3.0%. This lower ranking is linked to the fact that some heads of state had either stepped down or failed the trust of their people. However, their political assertions continued to exert a considerable impact on countries.

Personalities associated with political representatives in countries, Islamic clerics, and businesspeople were at the lowest ranks. Researchers assert that, specifically in international political issues, these figures, though significant across economic, religious, and other territories, manage to revolve mainly around presidents and politicians.

Theoretical Implications

As the theory of media discourse supports this study, it signifies the evolving role of media diplomacy in the Jordanian electronic journalism context. The dominance of press news and reports in electronic newspapers, especially focusing on political issues, indicates that frequent and fierce political affairs significantly impact media discourse during the scrutinized period. This aligns with the theory of media discourse, highlighting the influence of socio-political events on media portrayals. This study highlights the crucial role of electronic newspapers, acting as a critical player in shaping perceptions and offering solutions to regional conflicts. This role underlines the media's agency in partaking actively in political discourse and diplomatic efforts. The theory of media discourse recognizes the media's possibility to affect public opinion and political decisions. The overwhelming usage of images in political news, in conjunction with inflexible dependence on video content, indicates a preference for visual communication in the digital media terrain. This aligns with the theory of media discourse, which identifies the importance of multimedia elements in creating and sharing narratives. The importance of heads of state, ministers, and other political figures as major characters in journalistic content highlights the media's role in constructing political narratives. This aligns with the theory of media discourse, which asserts that media manifestations play a crucial role in framing public comprehension of political events and figures. The study mirrors the media's responsiveness to the political climate, with an emphasis on conflicts and controversies involving heads of state. This aligns with the theory of media discourse, which indicates that media content reflects and, in turn, affects societal perceptions and attitudes.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study highlights the importance of incorporating efforts between diplomacy and the media to improve effectiveness in managing regional challenges. Translucent and efficient communication among involved parties plays a critical role in sharing information and promoting an extensive understanding of international and regional issues. In Jordan, electronic journalism

plays a key role in this collective effort, acting as a bridge between the government and citizens, thereby facilitating awareness and civic engagement. To effectively recognize and handle current and future challenges, it is important to adopt new strategies that promote the role of electronic media in regional exchange. This necessitates providing continuous training and development prospects for journalists and media professionals, improving their abilities to address international issues with professionalism and commitment. Supporting collaboration between the media and diplomatic mechanisms is required. It can be acquired through the organization of events and workshops that promote the exchange of sentiments and focus on matters of regional importance. A transformation towards investigative journalism is suggested to convey objective information to the people and decision-makers, thereby improving the success prospect of media diplomacy. Again, highlighting the interaction between diplomacy and electronic media has a positive impact on resolving regional conflicts. The foundation for building sustainable acquaintance and attaining long-term positive development lies in promoting transparency and extending access to information.

Limitations

This study has some primary limitations that can be addressed and overcome by future researchers. First, this research is based on a single methodology (descriptive method) that limits its scope. Future research can use other diverse methodologies, i.e., mixed method, to further mitigate the relevant limitation. The second limitation involves focusing only on Jordanian news media. While this focus implies the applicability of results in Jordan, they cannot be generalized in other geographical terrain. Future studies can also replicate this research and acquire in-depth findings, overcoming these limitations. Finally, the third limitation is based on.

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