

Image repair theory: framing of Israel by gov.il media in the Gaza conflict

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Abstract The conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is highly complex. The initial attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, followed by Israel's counterattack, captured significant international attention. However, numerous accusations have been directed at Israel, which is increasingly perceived as an actor in the escalation of the conflict. This study aimed to examine how Israel, through its official media platform Gov.il, engages in media framing with the purpose of image restoration. The data in this study were collected by analysing 17 news articles published on the Gov.il website using the keywords "Israel image repair Gaza", "Hasbara communication Gaza", "IDF and civilians Gaza", "Gov.il narrative framing", and "Genocide accusation response" from October 7, 2023, to August 30, 2024. This study applies the data analysis method of Miles and Huberman to address the research questions. The findings highlight two key points: Israel's image restoration strategy in Gov.il media uses (1) a reduced offensiveness approach, specifically through the variants of bolstering and differentiation, and (2) evasion of responsibility through the variant of defensibility. This study also aimed to identify Israel's image restoration strategies in repairing and maintaining its reputation before the international community, especially regarding Israel being accused of committing acts of genocide in Gaza by the international community and countries in the world in the 2023 Israel-Palestine conflict. This research uses a qualitative method by collecting news articles from Gov.il media using the keyword "Gaza" and analysing them to obtain patterns of Israel's image restoration strategies in the media. The results show that the framing of news about Israel is positive by showing that Israel has good initiatives toward civilian victims and that Israel is a country that prioritises humanitarian actions. Furthermore, this study also proves that the pattern of Israel's image restoration tends to use the strategy of reducing forgiveness, especially using bolstering techniques, namely strengthening the positive feelings of the audience, compensation, reducing attack, differentiation, distinguishing their actions from other actions, and attacking the counterattacking the accuser.

Keywords: framing; gaza; gov.il; israel; image repair theory

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the methods of image repair for a country are no longer solely the domain of diplomats or foreign ministries. The shift and development of the times, as well as technology, explain why diplomats and foreign ministries are not as effective in restoring a country's image. The role of diplomats has been largely taken over by a country's official media sites, also known as cyber public relations. This context can be observed in the highly complex and debated Gaza conflict of 2023. Israel's military operation, which was in response to Hamas's attack on Gaza starting on October 7, 2023, has triggered reactions from various organisations and international communities. This includes balanced coverage of Hamas's initial attack on October 7, which was

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then met with a military operation by Israel (El Damanhoury et al., 2025), and a report from Amnesty International stating that Israel engaged in illegal actions with the intent to destroy Palestinian civilians in Gaza (International, 2024). Israel rejected these allegations, viewing them as modern anti-semitism under the guise of justice (Rosdalina, 2024). Therefore, this context is also why Israel carried out extensive operations to counter these accusations and present Israel's narrative positively to the world (Freiberg, 2025) through its official government media site, Gov.il (Gov.il, 2025). In line with this, William Benoit stated that in the discourse theory of image repair, a country focuses on message choices to restore its image in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, Benoit emphasised that this approach is useful for developing and understanding the messages to respond to a country's image crisis (Benoit, 1997).

Image Repair Theory in this study represents a strategy for image restoration (Kamboh et al., 2024) by individuals or organisations accused of committing mistakes that have caused a crisis to their reputation (Heppell, 2021). This context can be seen through the state of Israel, which has been accused of committing murders, bombings, and genocide, much of which has targeted civilians, women, children, and the destruction of hospitals in Gaza (Asi et al., 2024; Soraya et al., 2024; Wafi et al., 2024). This context is also in line with international law's view that the actions carried out by Israel in Gaza are often considered acts of genocide (Atallah & Awartani, 2024; Fúnez-Flores, 2024; McRobbie, 2024; Soraya et al., 2024; Wafi et al., 2024). In Israel, the media have been used to portray positive aspects of Israel, such as peace negotiations, in front of the international community without any real actions (Katz, 2024). Therefore, Benoit states that Image Repair Theory is a model of image restoration used by Israel to cover up or defend itself from the strategic responses they have taken (Ambituuni et al., 2024).

So far, scientific research on image repair has focused on three main contexts. First, image repair research in the context of tourist destinations (Avraham, 2021a, 2021b; Avraham & Beirman, 2023; Avraham & Ketter, 2017). Second, image repair research in the context of celebrity and influencer image (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Hobbs & O'Keefe, 2024; Sng et al., 2019). Third, image repair in the context of sports image restoration (Billings et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2020; Cohen & Avraham, 2018; C. Maiorca, 2024; C. Y. Maiorca, 2024). Other studies on image repair have also focused on hospital image restoration (Carmack, 2020), criminal perpetrators' image repair (Su et al., 2022), media image repair (Myers & Russell, 2019), hotel image repair (Zizka & Chen, 2023), political figures, state-owned oil companies, and cyberattacks (Abramson & Baram, 2024; Ambituuni et al., 2024; Benoit, 2017; Heppell, 2021). In general, the studies that have discussed image repair have focused on aspects of tourism, sports, celebrities and influencers, politics, industry, and security. However, the existing research has not been comprehensively discussed, especially research that addresses the framing of Israel's image repair in the ongoing Gaza conflict.

Image repair is a strategic step taken by Israel to cover up their impressive actions against civilians in Gaza and the world. Abramson & Baram (2024) also state that countries must use rhetorical strategies to protect their public image in the face of domestic, regional, or international audiences. However, existing research on Israel's image repair has not been conducted comprehensively, especially regarding image repair using Israel's official government media after carrying out impressive actions in Gaza. Given the lack of research on Israel's image repair in the Gaza conflict, this study not only fills the gap in previous research but also explains the patterns and forms in which Israel conducts image repair to respond to their impressive actions and refute the accusations of genocide by international law.

The Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza is highly complex. Israel's position, which is perceived as causing damage in Gaza, has motivated the country to deny these allegations and present a positive narrative to the international public. Therefore, this research focuses on three questions. First, how does Gov.il represent Israel's actions in the Gaza conflict to reduce negative perceptions from the international community? Secondly, how does the use of visuals on Gov.il reflect Israel's self-defence efforts in the Gaza conflict? Finally, in the context of genocide allegations, how does Gov.il construct a narrative that supports the legitimacy of Israel's actions? In line with this, the study also argues that the Israeli government seeks to counter negative narratives through their official website, Gov.il, as part of Cyber Public Relations.

The large number of casualties resulting from Israel's aggressive actions in Gaza has prompted the global community to call for a boycott of products and services supporting Israel. Claims of international humanitarian violations against Israel under international law further

reinforce this context. Consequently, Israel's efforts to restore its image through its government media (Gov.il) are crucial and warrant further research. Therefore, this study aims to explain and analyse this phenomenon through two main questions. First, how does the official Gov.il media frame Israel in the Gaza conflict? Second, how does the official Gov.il media work to restore Israel's image? In line with this, the study is also based on the argument that Israel utilises Gov.il as its official state media to rehabilitate its image concerning its aggressive actions in Gaza.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted amidst the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza. Its main objective is to identify the methods Israel uses to repair its image amid the complexity of the Gaza conflict. However, this study focuses solely on media coverage of Israel during the Gaza conflict on the official government website, Gov.il. Gilboa suggests that countries often repair their negative image using public diplomacy and image repair strategies (Tabak & Avraham, 2018). This research is based on three key considerations. First, the issue of negative image repair by countries is significant and underexplored. Second, the negative image repair by countries has complex characteristics, requiring more in-depth analysis. Finally, negative image repair by a country amid conflict is a contextual phenomenon that is very important and needs to be carefully examined. These three considerations form the foundation of this research, which focuses on a descriptive and reflective analysis of Israel's image repair efforts in front of the international public.

This qualitative descriptive research is based on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data in this study relies on excerpts from online news articles obtained through an in-depth reading of 17 news articles taken from the Gov.il official website, using keywords such as 'Israel image repair Gaza', 'Hasbara communication Gaza', 'IDF and civilians Gaza', 'Gov.il narrative framing', and 'Genocide accusation response'. The search and reading process of the online news articles began on October 7, 2023, as this period marks the major escalation in the Gaza conflict—specifically, the initial Hamas attack that triggered international reactions—until August 30, 2024, which served as the data collection cutoff, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the narrative and framing patterns throughout the post-active conflict period. This period also reflects the initial phase of Israel's image repair efforts through Gov.il. However, this study acknowledges that Israel's image repair efforts are still ongoing during the research period. The collected data was then rapidly filtered by three researchers, focusing on the headlines and patterns within the articles. The secondary data was obtained from readings of international media reports, websites, books, and journal articles relevant to the focus of this study.

Data analysis in this study follows a process previously employed by Wafi et al., (2024) which involves three stages. First is the data reduction stage, which involves selecting news articles that represent Israel in the context of the Gaza conflict. Second is the data verification stage, carried out through data triangulation among researchers and repeated readings of the news articles, examining elements such as dates and narrative consistency. Third is the data presentation stage, where selected and relevant news articles are organised into tables. Through these three stages, the data is analysed inductively by re-reading all documents and assigning codes to narratives that reflect defence, justification, and denial.

This study investigated how Israel restores its image amidst widespread accusations of genocide by the international community. However, the research focused on uncovering the framing strategies that Israel's official government media (Gov.il) employed to rehabilitate its global image. Koa & Abu Hassan (2022) emphasised that organisations should utilise media framing to manage information effectively and avoid negative public responses. This study is based on three key considerations: first, image restoration through government media framing is a critical issue that has been insufficiently addressed in previous research; second, using government media framing for image restoration is a complex and context-dependent characteristic; and third, analysing government media framing is essential to understand how Israel counters allegations from the international community.

This qualitative research relies on primary and secondary data. The primary data were sourced from news articles published on Gov.il, Israel's official government media platform, through an in-depth review of 400 English-language articles using the keyword 'Gaza' in the Gov.il search bar. Searching and analysing these articles spanned from 7 October 2023, to

August 20, 2024, focusing on headlines and content related to Israel and Gaza. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected by reviewing books and relevant websites that align with the study's objectives.

The data analysis method followed the process used by Fernando et al., (2023) involving three stages: first, data reduction, which organised the collected data systematically based on patterns and trends related to framing in Gov.il as Israel's government media; second, data verification, which involved analysing and elaborating on the reduced data; and third, data presentation, where the verified data are displayed in tables containing excerpts and statements from Gov.il news articles. Following these stages, the data were analysed inductively to provide a foundation for interpretation. These steps aim to conclude Israel's image restoration efforts through framing strategies in Gov.il media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION


The Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza is full of complexity. The international community perceives this conflict as increasingly complicated due to the large number of civilian casualties resulting from attacks by both Israel and Hamas. However, negative accusations have primarily been directed at Israel, which is often viewed as the main factor behind the ongoing complexity. In response, Israel utilises the Gov.il media platform to counter these accusations. Tabak & Avraham (2018) also argue that the use of media as a tool for image repair serves as a substitute for military means in shaping public perceptions of conflict and achieving success in the battleground of image warfare in modern conflicts. Three main findings support this observation.

Table 1. Israel's stance in advocating for humanity

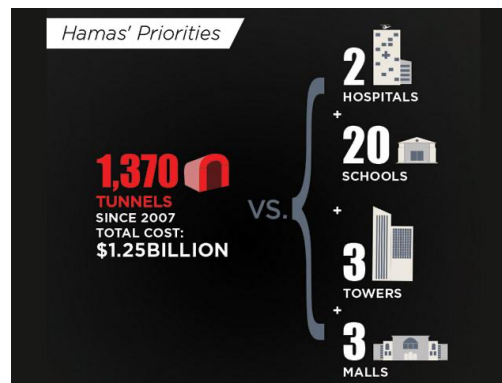
Narration	Description	Code
Today, the finest sons and daughters of our nation have been laid to rest in the land of Israel. On behalf of myself and all the people of Israel, I wish to express boundless gratitude for their heroism and profound appreciation for their sacrifice (Gov.il, 2024r)	The fallen Israeli youths are regarded as heroes.	Hero
...and expressed hope that Israel would soon witness the return of the hostages and the arrival of peaceful days in the future (Gov.il, 2024m)	The President of Israel expressed hope that the Israeli hostages held by Hamas would soon be able to return and reunite with their country.	Solidarity
This step will enable Israel to continue ensuring food security for its citizens, relocate important crops from the battle zones, and increase the production capacity of farmers in the areas affected by the war (Gov.il, 2023e)	Israel ensures that its citizens do not face a shortage of natural resources.	Protection of civilians
Israel has returned 135 of these hostages, including seven who were freed in a daring rescue operation. One of the freed hostages, Noa Argamani, is here today sitting close to my wife, Sara (Gov.il, 2024i)	Perdana Menteri Israel Benyami Netanyahu telah menyelamatkan para sandera untuk kembali bergabung dengan negara dan keluarganya	Solidarity
The lives of our soldiers are our highest priority. This is the order we have given—to ensure their safety and do everything to allow them to fight and remain safe. This is what we have done and will continue to do. Nothing is more valuable. You are the true heroes (Gov.il, 2023c)	Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ensured the safety of their soldiers remains secure.	Hero
In a joint IDF and ISA operation on the night of Wednesday, August 28, 2024, an IDF soldier who was killed and kidnapped on October 7 and held hostage in the Gaza Strip has been rescued and returned to the State of Israel (Gov.il, 2024b)	The IDF and ISA soldiers successfully rescued the civilians who had been taken hostage.	Solidarity
All of this speaks for itself that we protect civilians by moving them to safe zones, providing them with the necessary and adequate humanitarian aid, and allowing us to defend ourselves (Gov.il, 2023d)	Israeli President Isaac Herzog urged Gaza civilians to seek shelter in safer places, assuring them that they would be provided with humanitarian aid.	Protection of civilians
To provide effective early warning and reduce civilian casualties, the IDF also urges civilians to temporarily evacuate areas with intense fighting and from individual targets (Gov.il, 2023a)	The IDF Israeli soldiers prioritize the safety of civilians amidst the Hamas attacks.	Protection of civilians

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

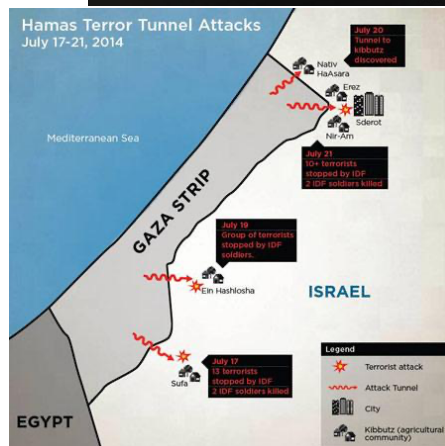
Figure 1. Israel's self-defence by blaming Hamas

Figure	Description
	<p>In other departments of the hospital, the soldiers found Hamas' operational command center and technological assets, indicating that the terrorist organization was using the hospital for terrorist purposes (Gov.il, 2023b)</p>

Findings from inside the hospital. Video: IDF Spokesperson.



Hamas has built an extensive network of tunnels extending from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. These tunnels are used by the terrorist group to cross beneath the border in attempts to carry out attacks, kill, and abduct Israeli civilians (Gov.il, 2014)



In a misguided order of priorities, Hamas invested significant funds in the construction of this tunnel and underground bunker network instead of meeting the needs of the people of Gaza. The tunnels in Gaza have truly become a money pit: an evil underground city built solely for terrorism, draining the already scarce resources of the people of Gaza (Gov.il, 2014)

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Advocating for Humanity

Israel's image repair strategy in the Gov.il media involves presenting itself as a strong advocate for humanity. The country's efforts to portray a humanitarian stance are part of its broader image repair approach, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 presents news about advocating for humanity in the Gov.il media. Along with this, the table highlights three main tendencies. First, there is a narrative of advocating for humanity as heroes. This can be seen through the news narrative conveying that the best sons and daughters of Israel have been buried. Therefore, Israel expresses gratitude for their heroism. Next, there is a narrative of advocating for humanity in the form of solidarity. This context is observable through the news narrative that conveys the Israeli president's hope that hostages held by Hamas will be able to reunite with their country.

Finally, the message of advocating for humanity shows efforts to protect civilians. This can be seen through the news narrative that conveys Israel's commitment to ensuring that its citizens maintain food security and do not lack natural resources.

Blaming Hamas

This study shows images posted on the Gov.il media with indications of blaming Hamas as part of Israel's image repair efforts. The visuals illustrating Hamas' wrongdoing are shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 presents the mistakes Hamas illustrated. In line with this, there are three main trends depicted in the image. First, there is an image of IDF soldiers showing a hospital that Hamas used for their defence purposes. The issue is clarified through a caption stating that the IDF soldiers found Hamas's operational command centre and technological assets in the hospital, which were being used for terrorist purposes.

Next, there is an illustration showing that Hamas has built 1,370 tunnels since 2007, spending a total of 1.25 billion. This context is further clarified by a caption explaining that Hamas has built a tunnel network extending from Gaza to Israeli territory, which the terrorist group uses to carry out attacks, kill, and abduct Israeli citizens.

Finally, the illustration marks the locations of Hamas tunnels along the Gaza Strip. This context is further clarified through a caption stating that Hamas invested large amounts of money into building the tunnel and underground bunker network as part of a misguided priority. Instead of meeting the needs of the Gaza population, these tunnels were constructed for terrorism purposes, draining the already scarce resources of the people of Gaza.

Legal Military Operations

Israel considers the attacks it carried out in response to Hamas' assaults—labelled as genocide by the international community—as legitimate military operations. They view these attacks as integral to their defence and fight against terrorism in Gaza. The construction of Israel's legitimacy narrative is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The construction of Israel's narrative of action legitimacy

Narration	Description	Code
I would like to welcome you and express my gratitude for France's firm and consistent support against this barbarism since day one—your position at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the absurd accusation of genocide against Israel, and many other matters (Gov.il, 2024l)	France's Support for Israel Regarding Genocide Allegations	Genocide Allegations
In this case, Israel does not base its operations on the Genocide Convention or on the prevention of genocide. The legitimacy of these operations does not involve the interpretation, application, or fulfilment of the Convention over which the Court may have jurisdiction (Gov.il, 2024o)	Israel does not claim that its actions constitute genocide. Therefore, it is inappropriate for the court to conclude that such actions amount to genocide.	Genocide Allegations
We are witnessing an exponential rise in antisemitism across America and throughout Western societies as Israel seeks to defend itself from genocidal terrorists—terrorists who hide behind civilians. Yet it is Israel that is wrongly accused of committing genocide, wrongly accused of causing starvation, and accused of various other war crimes (Gov.il, 2024p)	Accusations of genocide against Israel by Western countries have led to a rise in antisemitism.	Antisemitism
Efforts to politicise or manipulate the term genocide against Israel in the current context not only tell a highly distorted story to the court but also empty the word of its power and unique meaning. This, in turn, undermines the purpose and intent of the Convention itself—with implications for all countries that seek to defend themselves against those who show utter contempt for life and for the law (Gov.il, 2024g)	The use of an inappropriate term when referring to Israel's actions as genocide.	Information manipulation
Today, they are spreading a new lie, claiming that we are committing genocide and causing famine in Gaza. This is far from the truth (Gov.il, 2024h)	Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the claim that Israel is committing genocide is a lie.	Lies
This ridiculous antisemitic lie leads to persecution, mass murder, and ultimately the worst genocide in history, the Holocaust (Gov.il, 2024j)	Antisemitism against Israel has led to persecution, mass killings, and genocide. This genocide is perpetrated by Hamas.	Lies

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Table 2 presents the construction of the narrative that the genocide accusation against Israel is considered a legal action. In line with this, Table 2 also highlights three main trends. First, the construction of the narrative around Israel's genocide is framed as an accusation. This context is further supported by the narrative that France's support for Israel serves as a force to prove that the accusation of genocide against Israel is absurd.

Next, the genocide accusation against Israel is constructed as antisemitism. This context is visible in the news narrative, which conveys that the genocide accusations against Israel by Western countries have led to antisemitism.

Finally, the genocide accusation against Israel is constructed as a manipulation of terminology. This is evident in the news narrative; the use of the term genocide against Israel's actions is an attempt at politicization and manipulation of the term. Such behaviour undermines the purpose and intent of the term itself and has consequences for all countries.

Israel's actions in Gaza represent a highly significant and compelling phenomenon, particularly regarding Gov.il as the official government media framing news to restore Israel's image on the international stage. The framing of news tends to highlight positive aspects of Israel, despite its role as a perpetrator of genocide in Gaza. Two main findings support this observation.

Categorisation of Israel's good initiatives and image restoration through reduced offensiveness

The reporting on Israel's actions in Gaza demonstrates positive framing in Gov.il media, despite Israel being a perpetrator of war crimes and genocide that have claimed hundreds of thousands of civilian lives. The framed news emphasises Israel's good initiatives toward victims, who were also harmed by their own IDF soldiers. In line with this, the framing also reflects Israel's efforts to restore its image through Gov.il media. Andreeva et al., (2024) argue that the combination of political, legal, historical, and other narratives enables reports on genocide to serve as vital advocacy tools for international human rights organisations. This context is illustrated in Table 3, which supports this observation.

Table 3. The use of reduced offensiveness as Israel's image restoration strategy

News tittle	Context	Quotation	Type of Image Restoration
Arrival of humanitarian aid to Gaza	Saving civilian lives	Israel will continue to permit and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and essential services to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, subject to security arrangements. Deliveries that do not comply with established procedures and are not coordinated with Israel cannot be adequately facilitated and are not permitted. (Gov.il, 2024a)	Bolstering
Statement By PM Netanyahu	Prioritizing civilian populations	Our forces are fighting throughout the Gaza Strip - in Jabaliya, Zeitoun, and Rafah. We are doing this even as civilians are being evacuated and while fulfilling our obligations towards their humanitarian needs. Our recent efforts have yielded results. So far, in Rafah, nearly half a million people have been evacuated from the combat zones (Gov.il, 2024q)	Minimization
Germany's decision to renew cooperation with UNRWA in Gaza	Opening aid delivery to Gaza	We will continue to cooperate with the German government through all channels to direct humanitarian aid to Gaza through other organizations (Gov.il, 2024c)	Compensation
Government Approves Proposal to Name Yesterday's Operation to Rescue the Hostages in the Gaza Strip 'Operation Arnon'	The rescue of hostages by the Israeli IDF soldiers	At the initiative of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the government today approved the proposal from the IDF General Staff to name the hostage rescue operation in the Gaza Strip that took place yesterday as 'Operation Arnon'. (Gov.il, 2024d)	Bolstering

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Table 3 shows how Gov.il media frames Israel as a perpetrator of genocide while presenting the country as having good initiatives toward the victims, thus shifting the focus of their genocidal actions toward positive news. In line with this, Table 1 also highlights two main trends. First, there is media framing in Gov.il that Israel, through its IDF soldiers, is helping save civilian lives and rescuing hostages in the Gaza Strip. This context is illustrated by news headlines such as 'Arrival of humanitarian aid to Gaza' and 'Government Approves Proposal to Name Yesterday's Operation to Rescue the Hostages in the Gaza Strip 'Operation Arnon'', which convey that Israel will continue to authorize and facilitate all forms of humanitarian aid delivery to civilians in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that they had carried out a hostage rescue operation. Along with this, the framing of Israel's actions in Gov.il media also involves a type of image restoration called bolstering, where Israel strengthens the positive feelings of the audience toward the country.

Second, Israel emphasises its continued coordination with other countries to channel humanitarian aid to Gaza. This context is reflected in the news headline 'Germany's decision to renew cooperation with UNRWA in Gaza', which highlights that Israel consistently cooperates with the German government to direct all aid to Gaza through other agencies. Similarly, the framing of Israel's actions in Gov.il media shows efforts for image restoration through compensation, providing compensation to victims so that if the victims accept, the country's image improves.

The coverage of all of Israel's activities in Gaza in Gov.il media has demonstrated framing and image restoration efforts. This context is illustrated by the two trends presented above, which show the categorization of Israel's good initiatives framing and image restoration types of bolstering and compensation. The news about Israel always being involved in helping civilians and victims in Gaza serves as an indicator that Israel is restoring its image through positive coverage in Gov.il media.

Classification of Israel's humanitarian actions and image restoration through reduced offensiveness

The classification of framing in Israel's Gov.il media includes the framing that Israel is undertaking humanitarian actions toward the victims in the Gaza Strip. Medien, (2021) also states that Israel often portrays its military operations as moral and humanitarian actions. This action is also seen as a concept of liberal warfare to justify all its military operations under the guise of humanitarianism, despite evidence of serious violations. In line with this, the framing in Gov.il media also shows Israel's image restoration efforts. This context can be seen in Table 4, which supports this observation.

Table 4 shows how Gov.il media frames Israel as a genocidal actor that still upholds humanitarian concerns. This framing portrays Israel's war and actions as part of a humanitarian struggle, shifting focus from Israel's brutal actions toward civilians. In line with this, Table 2 also highlights two main trends.

First, the framing emphasises Israel's consistent humanitarian aid efforts. This context is illustrated by the news headlines 'Israel welcomes the inauguration of the maritime corridor from Cyprus to the Gaza Strip' and 'MFA response to the ICC prosecutor's decision', which convey that Israel will continue facilitating the transfer of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through land, sea, and air. In line with this, the framing in Gov.il media also shows Israel's image restoration using the bolstering strategy, reinforcing the positive feelings of the audience toward Israel.

Second, Israel accuses Hamas of being responsible for the deaths of civilians they have fought to protect. This context can be seen in the headlines 'PM Netanyahu addresses the AIPAC Conference' and 'President Herzog speaks with family of Nepali hostage held captive in Gaza', which convey that, for Israel, every civilian death is a tragedy. In contrast, for Hamas, each civilian death is a strategy. In line with this, the framing in Gov.il media also shows Israel's image restoration using the differentiation and attack the accuser strategies.

Gov.il media, as Israel's 'spokesperson' on the international stage, has played a crucial role in restoring Israel's image as a war criminal and genocidal actor. This observation is supported by the two trends outlined earlier in Table 1, which show that Gov.il media frames Israel as an actor providing humanitarian aid to civilians while accusing Hamas of causing the incidents in the Gaza Strip.

Table 4. The use of reduced offensiveness as Israel's image restoration

News title	Context	Quotation	Type of Image Restoration
Israel welcomes the inauguration of the maritime corridor from Cyprus to the Gaza Strip	Humanitarian aid	Israel will continue to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip population by the laws of war and in coordination with the United States and our allies worldwide. (Gov.il, 2024e)	Bolstering
MFA response to the ICC prosecutor's decision	Humanitarian aid	Israel will continue to make efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to the civilian population in Gaza, through land, sea, and air (Gov.il, 2024f)	Bolstering
PM Netanyahu addresses the AIPAC Conference	Accusing Hamas	For Israel, every civilian death is a tragedy. For Hamas, every civilian death is a strategy. Therefore, it is wrong and immoral to demand that Israel adhere to standards for avoiding civilian casualties that are not applied to other countries in the world (Gov.il, 2024k).	Differences
President Herzog speaks with family of Nepali hostage held captive in Gaza	Accusing Hamas	The suffering of Bipin's family and friends— from the other side of the world—is further evidence of Hamas' disregard for all human life—regardless of belief, nationality, gender, or age (Gov.il, 2024n)	Attacking the accuser

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Framing of Gov.il and Israel's strategy of reduced offensiveness and evasion of responsibility

This study finds that the Gov.il media has become a strategic tool for Israel's image repair in the context of the Gaza conflict by framing messages and creating a positive impression of Israel while portraying Hamas negatively. Three main findings illustrate this point. First, there are news reports showing that Israel is fighting for humanity in Gaza. The evidence suggests that Israel is not the actor killing civilians in Gaza but instead plays the role of rescuing them from Hamas attacks. Second, visual illustrations are identifying the mistakes made by Hamas. These visuals effectively convey messages more powerfully than words. This context also aligns with the opinion of Wafi et al., (2025) who state that Hamas is often framed as a terrorist organisation and as perpetrators of civilian killings, a group that rapes women and beheads babies. Third, Israel frames the narrative around genocide accusations as a legitimate military operation. This justifies Israel's actions in Gaza as a response to Hamas's attacks.

This study reflects that the Gov.il media has framed news to direct the audience, initially perceiving Israel as the actor, to instead portray Israel as the victim in the October 7, 2023, Gaza conflict. The study also shows that Gov.il media serves as a tool for Israel's image repair using the Reduce Offensiveness strategy through two variants and Evasion of Responsibility with one variant. The reduced offensiveness approach consists of, first, bolstering, which strengthens the audience's positive feelings towards Israel. Israel achieves this by demonstrating empathy through its efforts to defend humanity in Gaza. Secondly, Israel makes a distinction between its similar actions and those that are more offensive. In this context, Israel blames Hamas, claiming that their actions at the beginning of the October 7, 2023, attack were much more dangerous than Israel's retaliatory actions. Furthermore, Hamas is accused of deliberately constructing tunnels along the Gaza Strip to carry out its terrorism. The evasion of responsibility approach is defensibility, where Israel defends its actions against accusations of genocide, framing them as based on good intentions—namely, a legal military operation. Therefore, this finding reflects Israel's image repair strategy through Gov.il media.

The construction of narratives in Gov.il media subtly reflects Israel's efforts to repair its image through well-crafted word choices. The findings in this study also suggest that an effective strategy for democratic countries to repair their image in asymmetric conflicts is by using the state's own official media outlets (Tabak & Avraham, 2018). This is because media outlets tend to prefer portraying crises and conflicts with news of human suffering (Tabak & Avraham, 2018). In line with this, Meadows et al., (2022) also agree, stating that government-owned media are

responsible for disseminating important information to the public on behalf of the government. This strategy aims to maintain and enhance the legitimacy of the government.

The discussion on national image repair strategies concludes that the use of private media by state representatives during asymmetric conflicts follows three stages. The first step involves presenting issues that are essentially accusations against the state. Then the interviewer presents these accusations. Third, identifying three types of strategies that state representatives can use as part of their image repair efforts (Tabak & Avraham, 2018). However, the findings in this study show that Israel's image repair strategy in the Gaza conflict utilises the framing of Israel's official government media site, Gov.il.

The Image Repair Theory or Israel's image restoration, as a war criminal and genocidal actor on the international stage, can be seen through two key findings in this study, which uses the image restoration strategy of reduce offensiveness. First, Gov.il media frames Israel as a country with good initiatives, which can shift the reader's perspective from initially negative views of Israel to a positive one. The image restoration strategies used by Israel, such as bolstering and compensation, are also visible here. Second, Gov.il media frames Israel as a country prioritising humanitarian action, which can change the audience's perspective from viewing Israel as a civilian killer to seeing Israel as a 'late hero'. The image restoration strategies used here are bolstering and attacking the accuser. These findings collectively show Israel's image repair theory on the international stage through the official Gov.il media, reducing offensiveness. This context not only demonstrates Israel's image restoration as a genocidal actor but also shows how Gov.il media is used as a political tool by Israel.

This study reflects that countries experiencing crises as perpetrators of genocide also strive to restore their image on the international stage. Moreover, the condition of civilian victims and property damage does not escape the attention of international media, as television audiences tend to sympathise with the weaker party, and such coverage often influences public opinion and international perceptions of the countries involved in the conflict (Tabak & Avraham, 2018). However, according to Tabak & Avraham, (2018) few studies analyse strategies employed by countries to manage conflict in the media arena. Existing image repair models have been limited to addressing negative corporate and brand images, and no model can be used to analyse the image restoration efforts of a country during an asymmetric conflict. In line with this, Ayalon also noted that media use as a conflict arena is referred to as 'imagefare', a tool for achieving success in the battlefield of image warfare, which plays a crucial role in modern conflicts (Yarchi, 2025). Similarly, Yarchi, (2025) stated that image warfare has become an essential battleground in contemporary conflicts. Therefore, the image restoration strategies used by countries involved as perpetrators of genocide, employing victimization, generating substantial support, and other strategies such as emphasizing the opponent's mistakes and highlighting the nation's good actions have also been effective (Yarchi, 2025).

Israel's image repair through the Gov.il media has become a significant step in gaining public support and shifting international perceptions of Israel. In line with this, Yarchi, (2025) argues that 'imagefare' is frequently employed in state conflicts, and message strategies effectively mobilise international support. In other words, although there is no precise model from (Benoit, 2017) or image repair strategies for countries involved in conflict crises, Israel has successfully utilized the 'imagefare' strategy to improve its image through the Gov.il media. This is further explained by Yarchi, (2016) who states that Israel uses Gov.il to repair its image by promoting the messages it frames. Therefore, this demonstrates that when a country uses 'imagefare' to face asymmetric conflicts, it is in an ideal position to frame the messages it chooses and repair its image (Yarchi, 2016)

The findings in this study differ from previous research, which mostly focused on image repair in companies and brands (Ambituuni et al., 2024). However, this study reveals that image repair theory can also be applied to the image restoration of countries involved in asymmetric conflicts. In line with this, Yarchi, (2025) argues that the literature in this field has yet to provide a more cohesive understanding of the strategies and messages that can help countries influence public perception during conflicts. Therefore, the findings from this study collectively contribute to the discussion and literature on image repair models, particularly for countries involved in conflicts.

Based on the previous discussion about Israel's image restoration in the Gov.il media as a country involved in a conflict crisis, it is clear that the image repair strategy proposed by (Benoit,

2017) requires further discussion. The image repair strategy is limited to corporate and brand image, not countries. Therefore, the image repair theory introduced by Benoit should receive more attention, especially in public relations and image restoration. This statement highlights the important role of academics involved in image repair studies to determine a more ideal framework for image repair theory that can be applied by all elements, both companies and countries.

CONCLUSION

Israel's image restoration strategy is evident through the media framing of Gov.il amid the complexity of the Israel-Hamas conflict on October 7, 2023, in Gaza. The findings of this study show that Gov.il has become a tool for Israel's image restoration. On the other hand, Israel creates a negative image of Hamas through the media outlet Ynetnews, which is affiliated with their government (Wafi et al., 2025). Israel's image restoration in the Gov.il media is manifested through strategies like reduced offensiveness and evasion of responsibility.

Through the findings of this study, it can be demonstrated how Israel uses Gov.il media to restore its image in the context of the complex Gaza conflict. This study has limitations regarding the material object, as it analyses only one Israeli government media outlet. This restriction is due to limitations in identifying other government or non-government media that play a significant role in Israel's image restoration. Therefore, this study solely concentrates on Israel's strategy for image restoration through a single government media outlet. However, the limitations of this study are expected to inspire and serve as a reference for future research, particularly for those interested in examining Israel's image restoration strategies through its official government social media.

The image repair theory of Israel in the Gov.il media is reflected in two significant findings in this study. First, Gov.il, as the official government media, frames Israel as a country with good initiatives, and the image repair strategy they apply is the 'reduce forgiveness' strategy. Second, the media frames Israel as a country that takes humanitarian actions, while accusing Hamas of being responsible for killing civilians. In line with this, their image repair strategy is also 'reduce forgiveness'. Overall, these two findings provide evidence that Israel has restored its image in the international community using Gov.il as its official government media. This context is reflected in Israel's image repair theory, even though the country is involved as a genocidal actor in Gaza.

The findings in this study differ from previous research. Most studies on image repair focus on the image of companies or brands. However, this research shows a different perspective, that image repair is not only applied to companies or brands but also to countries involved in asymmetric conflicts. This significant finding provides evidence that Israel is repairing its image using its official media and contributes to and enriches the ongoing dialogue in image repair research.

This study has limitations in its methodology, relying solely on literature review. Therefore, the data collected and presented in this study comes only from textual descriptions of news articles. Despite this, the limitations of this study are expected to provide a foundation or guideline for future research, especially those aimed at uncovering the image repair strategies of countries involved in wars or genocidal actions

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