Topics of Arab Normalization with Israel in the Media: An Analytical study on Arabic RT Website

By

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Abstract

The present study tackles the issue of Arab normalization with Israel by highlighting the extent to which the RT Arabic website is interested in issues of normalization. The researcher sought to identify the most prominent topics and journalistic arts used in coverage, presentation methods, and press sources adopted by the website for the period from (1/8/2020) to (31/12/2020),). The research problem revolves around the most prominent issues addressed by RT Arabic regarding the issue of Arab normalization with Israel. The present study seeks to obtain a set of objectives, such as identifying the most prominent topics related to Arab normalization that were included in the media sites in question, revealing the sources adopted by the sites in obtaining information related to the topic, identifying the journalistic forms employed by the sites, and determining the methods and presentation of the journalistic contents that the media sites allocated to the normalization topic. The present study is a descriptive study adopting the analytical survey method and the introduction of content analysis. The researcher reached some conclusions, including that the category of political topics received great attention from RT Arabic, in the sense that it gave importance to political normalization with Israel. According to a systematic American-Israeli plan, this category is aimed to strengthen the presence of Israel in the Middle East. The website focused on news in the Middle East in its coverage, especially with regard to political issues such as diplomatic visits, agreements, and others. The website also praised the important and supportive American role in drafting these agreements. It shed light on economic issues as Israeli normalization was not only political, but it took multiple and important aspects such as economic normalization. These topics were In the form of news and articles that focused on the agreements that Israel concluded with the normalizing countries, such as economic gains, trade exchanges, partnerships and investments in the technological and financial sectors, flights, etc. The methods of presenting topics varied to attract the reader through the use of links, photos, and videos.

Keywords: Arab normalization, media sites

Introduction

Media often resort to highlighting important issues, especially political, economic, and cultural ones, to achieve their goal in conveying these issues. The issue of normalization is one of the important political issues that have arisen on the international political scene in general and the Arabs in particular. There is no doubt that transforming the relations of conflict between Israel and Arab countries to normal relations, and conflict mechanisms to normalization mechanisms, is the dangerous development that has recently undermined national goals of Arabs. However, there is a bitter reality that is on the rise. This

normalization movement may be parallel with the American influence in the region. Media sites may highlight the events in a way that leaves the reader with certain meanings that shape his/her attitudes towards the events. These websites have become an essential and effective factor in guiding countries, regimes, and governments. Israel took advantage of this arena in general and media sites in particular to promote the issue of normalization and consolidate it in the Arab mind to improve its image. The research problem centered on the most prominent issues addressed by RT Arabic regarding the issue of Arab normalization with Israel to highlight how the website dealt with the topics of normalization in political, economic, and cultural terms. To obtain the objectives of the present study, the researcher adopted the descriptive-analytical survey method. The present study is subdivided into several sections. Section one tackles the research methodology. Section two tackles Arab normalization with Israel in media sites. Section three is devoted to the analytical part of the study.

Section One: The Research Methodology

1. The Problem Statement

The research problem revolves around the most prominent issues addressed by RT Arabic on the subject of Arab normalization with Israel to highlight the topics covered by the site from the political, economic, and cultural point of view. Other issues tackled in the present study include:

1 What are the main topics covered by RT Arabic regarding the issue of normalization?
2 What are the press sources that the website relied on for the subject of normalization?
3 What are the journalistic forms that the website used in dealing with the issue of normalization?
4 What are the methods of displaying the content that the site employed on the subject of normalization?

2. Significance of the Present Study

This study sheds light on an issue that constitutes a tangible change in the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which affects the Arab values system. In one of its aspects, it will have a positive effect, so it will add a new dimension to media studies, as it is an important issue worthy of scientific research from all angles, especially the media ones.

3. The Objectives

The present study aims at:

1 Identifying the most prominent topics focused on by the website regarding the issue of normalization.
2 Identifying the press sources that the website relied on to elicit information related to the issue of normalization.
3 Exploring the journalistic forms that the website used in dealing with the issue of normalization.
4 Determining the methods of presenting the contents allocated by the site in dealing with the issue of normalization.

4. The Limits

1 The spatial limits; Media websites, including RT Arabic as a model. This website belongs to a superpower and conflict parties that have important interests in the Arab countries. The issue of normalization with Israel occupies an important position. Thus, the content of the website is commensurate with the topic of the present study.

2   The Temporal Limits; The period specified by the researcher, which extends from (1/8/2020) Until (31/12/2020). This period is selected due to the rapid events and developments that it witnessed. Amajor shift in favor of the Arab demand for normalization and relations between the Arab countries and Israel rose. Normalization took a new path and became not just an agreement, but it included political, economic, social, and cultural normalization.

5. The Research Methodology

This study is within the descriptive studies. To obtain the objectives of the study, the researcher adopted the descriptive-analytical survey method to identify the most prominent topics, forms, and journalistic sources that the website dealt with on the subject of normalization. The researcher relied on the content analysis tool in order to obtain the objectives in the presentation and analysis of the scientific material.

6. Population and Sample

The population of the present study is media websites, including RT Arabic. The researcher selected it intentionally for reasons, including the large size of its audience, its high readability, especially in most Russian and Arab countries. The website belongs to a superpower that has interests in Arab countries. Russia is anti-normalization. The prominent topics of normalization are known on the website in all its political, economic, and cultural aspects. A comprehensive inventory method is used, which is five months. The number of press materials for RT Arabic are (155) articles.

7. Reliability and Stability

The researcher built a content analysis form in accordance with the scientific controls and foundations used in its design. She presented it to a group of experienced and specialized arbitrators in the field of media, with the aim of evaluating and correcting it and judging the validity of its application from a scientific point of view. The apparent validity of the analysis form is extracted by conducting a arithmetic statistical equation and then extracting the percentage that shows the extent of their agreement. The percentage of agreement is (98.46%), as well as extracting the stability coefficient through the Holsty equation. The percentage is (94%), which is a scientifically acceptable percentage. That has been done as follows:

Total accepted classes 448

$$\text{Reliability} = \text{x } 100 = \text{ x } 100 = 98.46\%$$

Total categories x number of arbitrators 455

2M 2(86) 172

$$\text{Stability coefficient} = \text{x } 100 = 94\%$$

N1+N2 91+91 172

Names of Arbitrators (*)

1   assistant Professor, Abdulrahman Ali Al-Fahdawi; University of Anbar, Faculty of Arts, Department of Media.
2   Assistant Professor, Shukriya Kokiz Al-Sarraj, University of Baghdad, Faculty of Mass Communication, Department of Journalism.
3   Assistant Professor, Sahar Khalifa Salim, Al-Iraqia University, Faculty of Mass Communication, Department of Journalism.

4   Assistant Professor, Siham Hassan Al-Shujairii, University of Baghdad, Faculty of Mass Communication, Department of Journalism.

5   Prof. Dr. Muhsin Abboud Kashkool; Al-Iraqia University, Faculty of Mass Communication, Department of Journalism.

8. Previous studies

1   (Al-Muqeed, 2022) The study aims to identify the issues of Arab normalization with the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian news sites by identifying the extent of the interest of these sites in the issues of normalization with the occupation to monitor the forms of normalization, its topics and goals, and the most important aspects of normalization that the study sites focused on. The study reached important results, such as:

1   In the first place, the sites' interest is in political normalization among the forms of normalization, then economic issues. The topics of normalization focused on the goal of promoting normalization, followed by the absence of the concept of hostility with the occupation.

2   The form of the press release ranked first, the press report ranked second, the press article ranked third, the press talk ranked fourth, and other press forms were absent.

Section Two: Issues of Arab normalization with Israel in media

First: The concept of normalization and its definition

Normalization represents one of the concepts that emerged from the Arab-Israeli conflict. This term is not explicitly mentioned in the peace treaties that linked some Arab countries with Israel, but it came within the framework of settlement processes between Arabs and Israel. The concept of normalization is The one imposed by Israel within the framework of settlement that is one of the innovations of Israeli thought and one of the main goals that Israel seeks to achieve (Mahmoud, 2021).

Yet, this term has gone beyond that to include the form of the relationship between Jews and Arabs so that normalization is the recognition by the Arabs of the Zionist entity and acceptance of its existence as a realistic fact, which achieves its goals in obtaining recognition of the legitimacy of its settlement existence, and the legitimacy of its Jewish state, which will inevitably lead to an end to the economic and diplomatic boycott and the disposal of Any hostile activity to the State of Israel by Arabs (Bakr, 2018).

Second: Israel's strategy and plans for normalization

There are some landmarks that show the policy of Israel to reach the normalization journey (Bashir, 2014):

1   Gnawing and digesting is the strategy of Jews. In the past years, parts of the Muslim countries were occupied, so they need time to digest them. During this time, they are preparing for another round in which another part of the Levant will be devoured.

2   It has become usual for secret communications to begin first between delegates and mediators, and then to officials and leaders to arrange to announce the beginning of public negotiations to deceive people.

3   The formation of a Middle Eastern bond that links all the countries of the region in the name of the Middle East and renounces belonging to Islam or Arabism, which is the project of the Jew (Shimon Peres), that was put forward by writing The New Middle East.

4   Normalization is an effective means for the Jews, which provides them with an opportunity to support the hypocrites and corrupters to perform their role within their societies in a way that pushes many Muslims to be psychologically defeated and despaired of reform because of their separation (Al-Ashmawy, 2019).

5   Jewish universities, research centers and studies become a scientific reference for the entire region, laying the groundwork for the Zionist project, which is directed at destroying the Islamic civilizational culture and identity for the entire Arab region, causing disintegration and chaos within every Arab country.

Third: Manifestations of normalization with Israel

Throughout history, many agreements were made between the Arab countries and Israel, such as the two peace treaties between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the signing of the Oslo Accords by the Palestine Liberation Organization with Israel in 1993, And the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel in 1991. The goal of those agreements was to reach a fair solution to the Palestinian issue, but these agreements did not achieve this. Rather, they increased Israel extremism in its occupation practices against the Palestinian people. It is clear that the implementation of relations with Israel has nothing to do with the solution of the Palestinian issue.

Fourth: Scenarios of normalization with Israel

1   The first scenario; Partial normalization; This scenario assumes that some Arab leaders will normalize in compliance with Israeli and American pressures in light of the escalation of local tensions and Iranian threats. These leaders may push towards modifying the Arab peace initiative and its approach with the American initiative, which does not achieve Palestinian demands. Some Arab countries rely on this scenario handing over the leadership of the region to Israel.

2   The second scenario; Complete Failure of Normalization; this scenario expects that the Arab peoples will reject normalization because they see Israel as the first enemy. Arabs also see that the Palestinian issue is the first issue. The insistence of some Arab leaders on normalization will remain far from popular legitimacy and isolated from popular recognition. The Arab peoples will keep opposing normalization.

3   The third scenario; Total Normalization; many Arab leaders rush towards normalization with Israel, citing the length of the Palestinian conflict and divisions. It is expected that these leaders will push to approve normalization through the Arab League. They may also provide an umbrella obligating countries to normalize. This scenario weakens the nature of the conflict and its historical development. The presence of other actors represented by the resistance movements, which have become more capable and experienced in managing the conflict is another factor (Samara, 2010).

Fifth: The concept and definition of media sites

Website is "a word for Informational materials that can contain texts, images, graphics, audio or visual materials, static or moving, such as songs or video clips (Burku', 2017). Media websites are defined as websites that publish news, investigations, and analyzes designed specifically for publishing on the Internet, using special programs and specific applications (Al-Faisal, 2014).

Sixth: Development of Media Sites

The increasing importance of digital media and its prosperity on the Internet has encouraged the emergence of electronic media sites, including news sites, which can be considered one of the fruits of the interactive space. These websites proved successful presence in the media scene. Since their emergence on the internet, these websites went

through different stages that contributed to their development. In the beginning, the development was through linking with the governmental or private media institutions. The Internet was employed as a communication medium to transmit content (Salim, 2020).

The next stage in media development is the reproduction stage, which constituted a clear exception since its appearance. The journalist reproduces some of the contents taken from the media outlet in a manner that is consistent with the characteristics and features of the web to publish them on the pages of the news site by enhancing the content with links, reference instructions, and some images (Sadiq, 2005). After that, it developed into the stage of transformation and spread, which began in 2000 and represented a serious attempt to establish a new form of digital media (Al-Fattah, 2014).

Seventh: Media website services on the Internet (Al-Batreeq, 2017):

1   The mobile news tape service; It is the tape through which the latest information and news is presented to the site, whose story and details have not been completed. This tape may be the most important local and international news headlines available on the main page.
2   Breaking news service; it means displaying urgent and emergency news and events directly from its website, accompanied by live video clips and audio emanating from the site of the event, or accompanied by an image that is embedded with colored flashes to attract attention.
3   Multimedia service; It means displaying the text accompanied by live clips of video, animation, audio materials and images, as it increases the power of the presentation and increases the experience of the recipient in the least time and at the lowest cost.
4   Media links service; it is intended to link the user to more than one media site on the same site to benefit from the information provided on other sites.
5   Site update service; Sites in general and news sites in particular are interested in updating their site throughout the day and constantly updating the program map of the site and following its developments, in addition to presenting analyzes and different views of events.

Eighth: Characteristics of media sites

1   Immediateness; It means speed in transmitting news. Thus, it competes with satellite channels in transmitting urgent news and may precede them in transmitting news details, especially since satellite channels adhere to fixed bulletin dates that are often at the head of the hour (Turban, 2008).
2   News websites provide a great opportunity for satellite channels to present them with live broadcasts, which provided them with access to large numbers of viewers in countries where the authorities do not allow the establishment of satellite channels, which is a special feature for news websites linked to news channels (Al-Hadi, 2012).
3   Interactivity; The most important characteristic of new media in general is interactivity, so the recipient is no longer just a passive party who does not receive what is published or broadcast, but has become a participant through comments, discussion panels, and opinion polls (Hamdan, 2013).
4   Depth; Although news on news websites is characterized by short sentences and paragraphs, this does not prevent the achievement of depth by taking note of the hyperlinks and attachments attached to the news (Sharqi, 2010).
5   Diversity; News websites are able to present media material in more than one journalistic form, as well as links and attachments and the use of multimedia (Hamdan, 2013).
6   Archiving; these sites provide their own electronic archive or the channels they issued, allowing the user to return to the site and the topics he/she wants at any time.

Section Three: Presentation and interpretation of the results of the analysis of the content of RT Arabic

First: The category of the most prominent topics covered by RT Arabic on the topics of normalization with Israel

Table (1) the most important topics covered by RT Arabic

Rank	Percentage	Frequency	Categories	No.
First	64,51%	100	Political topics	1
Second	19,35%	30	Economic topics	2
Third	12,90%	20	Military topics	3
Fourth	3,24%	5	Cultural topics	4
	100%	155	Total	

Table (1) clarifies that the category of Political Topics ranked first with (100) recurrences and a percentage of (64.51%). RT Arabic focused on the political issues brought about by the peace agreement with Israel. The site focused on alliances. The political situation between Israel and the UAE against Iran and its threats, the full Israeli and American support for the Emirates and the normalizing Arab countries, and the American role that granted Israel recognition by Arab countries as a sovereign state are the major topics. The website published an article describing Tramp as the prince of peace who persuaded Arab countries to normalize with Israel. The category of economic topics ranked second with (30) recurrences and a percentage of (19.35%). The website highlighted economic gains and the existing cooperation and partnerships between Israel and the normalizing countries such as agriculture, industry, trade, aviation, and others. The website published news about cooperation between Morocco and Israeli investors in the fields of investment. The category of military topics ranked third with (20) recurrences and a percentage of (12.90%). The website tackled topics related to selling jets, drawn, and fighters to the normalizing countries. The site published news that the US government intends to sell F35 fighters to the UAE and Morocco. Finally, the category of cultural topics ranked fourth with (5) recurrences and a percentage of (3.24%). The site did not show much interest in cultural normalization between Israel and the normalizing countries. The site published only one news about the opening of Israeli offices to teach the Israeli language, customs and traditions in the Emirates.

Second: The category of confirmed sources on RT Arabic on the subject of normalization with Israel

Table (2) *the confirmed press sources on the RT Arabic website*

Rank	Percentage	Frequency	Categories	No.
First	35,48%	55	Journalist	1
Second	25,80%	40	International and Arab News Agencies	2
Third	16,12%	25	Satellite Channels	3
Fourth	12,90%	20	International Russian and Israeli Newspapers	4
Fifth	7,12%	11	Authors	5
Sixth	2,58%	4	Social Media Twitter	6
	100%	155	Total	

Journalists ranked first with (55) recurrences and a percentage of (35.48%). The site relied heavily on the journalists to transmit facts and information about the normalization of relations with Israel. The category of international and Arab news agencies ranked second with (40) recurrences and a percentage of (25.80%). The website focused on Russian, Western, and Arab agencies such as the Russian Sputink agency American Reuters Agency, and Arab Maghreb Agency. The category of satellite channels ranked third with (25) recurrences and a percentage of (16.12%). The website relied on satellite channels, especially Israeli, such as (12) Israeli channel and (24 NEWS) Israeli and others. The category of international newspapers ranked fourth with (20) recurrences and a percentage of (12.90%). The website was keen to rely heavily on Russian and Israeli newspapers in collecting information, such as the Vizgliar Komir Saint Newspaper, the Russian Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper, and Israeli newspapers such as Yediot Ahronot, Jerusalem Post, and others. The category of journalistic writer ranked fifth with (11) recurrences and a percentage of (7.12%). The website also relied on journalist writers to provide information and provide some interpretations on the issue of normalization with Israel. The category of social networking sites ranked sixth with (4) recurrences and a percentage of (2.58%). The website was satisfied with transmitting a few tweets.

Third; The category of journalistic forms used on RT Arabic for topics of Arab normalization with Israel

Table (3) *Journalistic forms used by the website*

No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1	News	83	53.54%	First
2	Article	40	25.80%	Second
3	Opinion Article	20	12.90%	Third
4	Reports	12	7.76%	Fourth
Total	155	100%		

Table (3) clarifies that the category of news ranked first with (83) recurrences and a percentage of (53.54%). The website relied on news as a means of conveying information and facts about the normalization agreement. The website published various news about normalization such as Diplomatic visits, commercial deals, and others, including news about the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia. The category of article ranked second with (40) recurrences and a percentage of (25.80%). The website published several articles about announcing the agreement of normalizing relations between Morocco and Israel, and other articles that reported the reality of the normalization events. The category of opinion article ranked third with (20) recurrences and a percentage of (12.90%). The website relied on The press and opinion in conveying the views and opinions of many writers and journalists on the normalization agreement with Israel, including the visits of US Presidential Adviser Jared Kushner to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The category of photo report ranked fourth with (12) Recurrences and a percentage of (7.76%). The website also used video reports, but not to a large extent, such as the video report on the Bahrain-Israel agreement on the exchange of embassies.

Fourth; The category of methods and presentation of the contents of the topics on the RT Arabic website on the subject of normalization with Israel

Table (4) *Methods and presentation of the contents of the topics on the website*

Rank	Percentage	Frequency	Categories	No.
First	50%	155	Hybrid text	1
Second	27,41%	85	A text associated with a fixed photo	2
Third	16,13%	50	A text and a video	3
Fourth	6,46%	20	A text associated with two overlapping photos	4
	100%	310	Total	

Table (4) clarifies that the category of text associated with a hyperlink ranked first with (155) recurrences and a percentage of (50%). All the website's news contains hyperlinks. The website also used this type of media to support the credibility of the published information. It is worth noting that the hyperlink is a link used as a means of publishing and coordinating textual content, interacting with other pages of the web, and navigating from one page to another. The category of text associated with a fixed image ranked second with (85) Recurrences and a percentage of (27.41%). The percentage was also high, which is a matter that indicates the website's dependence on accompanying press photos with the text of the article to give greater credibility to the press material. As for the category of text with video, it ranked third with (50) recurrences and a percentage of (16.13%). The percentage was not bad, as this type is one of the means of transmitting information on the website in dealing with the issue of Arab normalization with Israel. A video is attached to the text that supports the credibility of the text. Finally, the category of text associated with two overlapping images ranked fourth with (20) recurrences and a percentage of (6.46%). The website used it with a few percentages. Two photos of two people are taken and combined into one. These people are mentioned in the text and have a relationship with the subject of normalization.

Conclusions

1   The category of political topics has received great attention from RT Arabic because the issue of normalization with Israel is primarily a political topic, as it came in accordance with a systematic American-Israeli plan to strengthen the presence of Israel in the Middle East. The website focused on many news that dealt with political normalization, such as diplomatic visits, agreements, and others.

2   The website highlighted the important and supportive American role in drafting these agreements. It also shed light on economic issues. Normalization between Arab countries and Israel is not only political, but it took multiple aspects such as economic normalization. The website dealt with many news and headlines. And the topics and agreements that Israel has concluded with the normalizing countries, such as economic gains, trade exchanges, partnerships, and investments in the technological and financial sectors, tourism, and flights.

3   RT Arabic tried to avoid recognizing normalization as a great diplomatic achievement in the historical record of American diplomatic achievements. The website questioned what the United States of America had done, which is a real peace that will achieve security and prosperity in the Middle East, or if the peace agreement is just an agreement to satisfy Israel, And its recognition as a state by the neighbouring Arab countries. The website used press and opinion to analyse the political dimensions of

this agreement from a Russian point of view. The website used only Russian journalists' writers.

4   RT Arabic was keen to use text with hyperlink and text with image or text with video in most news publications in order to achieve the greatest interaction with the text publication. The different visual effects in the image and videos are among the most influential and persuasive tools that attract Others. For this reason, the website relied on them to attract the recipient towards the issue of normalizing relations with Israel.

5   RT Arabic relied on news more than its reliance on reports due to the escalation of events against normalization, especially since the same period witnessed the announcement of normalization with Israel by three countries, including UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.

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