



# A National Brand and Soft-Power Instrument for Palestine

This Week in Palestine




By Dalal Iriqat

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*his Week in Palestine* has branded Palestine through 300 issues that help answer the question: What is the Palestine we aspire to and promote? *TWiP* has become a prestigious national brand for Palestine, albeit this is not what the founders expected it to be. Nonetheless, today *TWiP* is anchored in the service of national branding.

Branding a nation is frequently inspired by its national identity that relies heavily on an attachment to land, culture, and traditions. Nations promote themselves through public diplomacy, soft power's key instrument that reflects the country's narrative and reality that is in part inherited from history and in part a continuing construction. In the process of nation branding, it is wise to fall back on the manageable elements that we can rely on and that are subject to change: leadership, culture, cuisine, individual accomplishments, fashion and design, traditional crafts such as embroidery, agriculture, and products.



How Palestine is seen versus how Palestinians want to be seen: victims versus heroes.

In this sense, *TWiP* plays a crucial and active role by disseminating information on Palestine's key aspects. It informs on topics such as views and outlooks, cultural activities, economic and social developments, and the ongoing struggle for independence and justice – reminding the world that Palestinians do not fit into the categories to which many are trying to limit them. Since it saw the light in December of 1999, *TWiP* has used publishing to raise awareness of Palestinian identity in the English-speaking world.

In the past, power was measured mainly through wars. Nowadays, power manifests in various forms, including technology, education, economic growth, international relations, raw materials, and population. Moreover, according to Robert Nye, power is no longer identified primarily with military power.<sup>1</sup> Instead, private

## Testimonies

It is an honor to be part of this outstanding group [the *TWiP* advisory board] who work relentlessly to put Palestine where it deserves. I am convinced that *TWiP* remains one of the essential mediums to properly brand Palestine.

*Dr. Dalal Saeb Iriqat  
Jericho, Palestine*

*TWiP* Celebrates **300** Issues

actors, such as *TWiP*, can play a significant role in increasing a nation's clout through peaceful, dedicated action.

Tom Fletcher puts the national story at the heart of what he describes as magnetic power, which is close in meaning to Joseph Nye's attractive power. So how do nation-states use their magnetic power in the digital age? Three ideas should be considered: having a strong national story; knowing how to tell it; and knowing how and when to mix the tools. In order to have soft power, a nation needs an attractive national story and a narrative that encourages others to support, rather than obstruct, its strategic objectives. We must differentiate between national inventions that are used and admired, constituting elements of national reputation, on the one hand, and soft power, the ability of a nation to set the agenda and achieve its objectives without using force, on the other.

The role of Arab, regional, and international players in shaping Palestinian identity has led to introducing Palestinians to the international world as refugees, victims, guerrilla fighters, stone throwers, poor people, and beggars. Whether we like it or not, the image of a Palestinian abroad tends to be of someone who is stateless, ID-less, and jobless. Not wishing to diminish the dire conditions of Palestinian refugees and underprivileged communities, the rich content of more than two decades of *TWiP* has proven that this image is one-sided.

If we look at Simon Anholt's six elements of national branding,<sup>ii</sup> we will easily discover that identity for Palestinians relates not only to the nation's image but also to the political image of its leaders and the

human capital of its heroes. Palestine considers it important to study icons and symbols that present a positive image of the Palestinian national narrative, symbolizing resistance and perseverance. Names that have become linked to the Palestinian struggle worldwide include leaders or personalities who are human capital and include poets, artists, and figures who managed to penetrate the international borders with their soft-skill gifts. In order to counter the image of victim, why not introduce the heroes? In Palestine's nation branding, there exist a number of already established brands that include musicians, athletes, poets, cartoonists, writers, artists, scientists, and others who have gained the attention and inspiration of the world.

Tourism is another aspect of national branding, especially if the focus is placed on the old Palestinian cities, such as the ones listed on the UNESCO list of world heritage. Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, Battir, and Bethlehem have great significance for tourism, culture, history, and religion. Highlighting what makes them unique can attract attention and show the Palestine that we wish to promote. Palestinian culture is a treasure: the *thobe* (traditional hand-embroidered dress); the *dabka* folk dance; the delicious, healthy, varied cuisine; and the amazing hospitality are among the many things that make Palestinian culture very attractive.

*TWiP* has covered all these aspects in one or more themed issues and thousands of articles. The magazine has made sure that Palestinian identity is deeply engraved in its pages, covering struggle and resilience through stories on championships, scholars, chefs,

imprisoned child heroes, and many others from the Palestine human capital whose names or stories make Palestine unique. It has focused on the treasures of talented Palestinians and communicated their stories, thereby positively impacting the image of Palestine. This form of nation branding is of crucial importance in identifying the uniqueness of Palestine – its people, culture, and landscape.

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<sup>i</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80, 1990, p. 154.

<sup>ii</sup> Simon Anholt, "Nation Brand as Context and Reputation," *Place Branding* 1, 2005, available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.pb.5990023>.

## Testimonies

كنت في مقابلة مؤخرًا مع طلبة أقسام صحافة دوليين، سألوني أين الإعلام الفلسطيني الموجه للعالم؟ قلت: This Week in Palestine دائماً ممزة وهادفة. من يحترم المعلومة، يستطيع بناء منهج اعلامي مؤثر.

I was recently in an interview with international journalism students. They asked: "Where is the Palestinian media that is directed towards the world?" I replied, "This Week in Palestine, always special and purposeful. Whoever respects information can build an effective media platform."

*Jameel Dababat  
Toubas, Palestine*

It is crucial that, as Palestinians, we fill the gap in reshaping our own narrative to be shared with the world.

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