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"Bromancing" at Yad Vashem
Securitized diplomacy between Israel and its friends

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Abstract: Diplomacy and the arms trade are no strangers; for many decades, arms have been exchanged as part of the creation of state alliances. The sale of guns, warplanes, knowledge, and, increasingly, (cyber) security technologies is, therefore, a politically embedded endeavor and part of the way states govern themselves. Here, I use the case of Israel and its vast global security industry to study the sale of weapons. I analyze the accompanying diplomatic relations between states as a form of warfare governance. I investigate this "securitized diplomacy" through its security narratives, which are infused with deep racist ideology and which also have a normalizing, legitimizing, and sanitizing effect regarding the industry itself, its weapons and technologies, its violence, and the (international) actors involved.

Keywords: Israel/Palestine, securitized diplomacy, security industry, security narratives

At the moment of this writing, Israel is still attacking the Gaza Strip relentlessly, and IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) soldiers are fighting in the heart of this small piece of land. Over 60,000 people have been killed to date, many of them children. Over 150,000 people have been injured. The Israeli military utilizes not only fighter jets and bombs, rifles, tanks, and drones in its self-defined quest to obliterate its enemy, but also technologies such as AI tools and novel facial recognition software (Abraham 2024). Even as the International Court of Justice in the Hague has called Israel's actions a plausible genocide against the Palestinian people, and multiple Human Rights organizations and scholars have stated a genocide is being committed, the Israeli security and military industries' sales still put Israel among the top ten defense exporters according to SIPRI, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Wezeman et al. 2024). And even though India, Israel's biggest client of defense and security products, is increasingly criticizing Netanyahu for Israel's conduct in Gaza (Jangid 2024), sales have not significantly dropped (Kaushik 2024).

Here, I investigate the diplomatic relationships between Israel and countries such as India that are actively nurtured by its state leaders, Modi and Netanyahu, as warfare governance. I analyze this form of governance as "securitized diplomacy" through security narratives, which I conceptualize as consisting of both discourse and performances or acts (Grassiani 2019a, 2024). Actors use these narratives and evoke

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different processes that, as I show here, are fueled by a deeply (anti-Muslim) racist ideology. These narratives are used in ways that normalize and legitimize the security industry and its weapons while simultaneously cleansing its users (and their violence) by evoking the Holocaust (and the Jewish victims) in visits to memorial sites.

Importantly, the roots of these narratives lie in the oppression of Palestinians by Israel and the ongoing military campaign of occupation and dispossession. Using newly developed weapons against Palestinians in "real" combat, such as the attacks taking place in Gaza as we speak, is the industry's selling point when marketing its products as "combat proven."[1]

Beach stroll

Imagine the following: it is a sunny day in 2017, and Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, are strolling through the surf at one of Israel's sandy beaches near Netanyahu's mansion in Caesarea, barefoot and casually dressed. One imagines the two men talking about their children, homes, or hobbies in such a setting. However, this optimistic, peaceful scene—which local and international media alike enthusiastically reported on (AFP 2017)—also implies something else: namely, that the two men are engaged in doing business. Specifically, security business. As mentioned above, India is Israel's biggest client in terms of security and military exports, with an estimated 2.9 billion dollars over the last decade (Dutton and Lucente 2024). Over the years, this South Asian country has purchased missiles, cyber technologies, and machine guns from Israel. Since 2020, there has also been an agreement on the sale of cyberweaponry to India (Essa 2022). India has used many of these weapons against civilians in Kashmir, which borders both Pakistan and China (Patil 2022), and Israeli spyware has been used against Indian activists and journalists (Bergman and Mazzetti 2022).

Some commentators have playfully called such relationships between state leaders "bromances" (Lall 2019; Gilban 2019), especially after covering moments like Modi and Netanyahu's barefoot beach stroll and Netanyahu and Bolsonaro's bear hug, which I describe below. But these "bromances," as by now should be clear, have serious and violent consequences. As I discuss here, many state leaders' friendly relationships with Israel are deeply entrenched within the violence and different forms of war-making taking place "back home." Security diplomacy is one of the main avenues through which warfare is facilitated and expanded. Through this diplomacy, the state is shaped and re-shaped by state actors, but also by those who are active outside or beyond the state through (business) deals in violence. Following Bertelsen (this issue), I argue that this is a form of warfare governance, showing "the contours of statehood through its lines of in/visibility in war." For example, this "in/visibility" of the state comes in the form of its entanglements with the (private) security industry through which diplomacy is established.

However, these connections between states through the (private) sale of weapons are not new. We have known for many years that diplomacy and the arms trade go hand in hand. As James Der Derian writes, "States now desire international recognition, not for its own sake, but because it provides access to diplomacy through which their security needs can be pursued" (Der Derian in Feldman 2005: 224). Often, such relations have been called military diplomacy (e.g., Muthanna 2011; Pajtinka 2016) or arms diplomacy (Pierre 1981). In particular, work from international relations and conflict studies on this kind of diplomacy has alerted us to the strategic moves that often lie behind such deals and the alliances they consolidate (e.g., Pierre 1981; Sachar 2004; Yorulmaz 2014). Historically, this academic work has mainly discussed arms sent to developing countries by the USSR (e.g., Porter 1984), nuclear weapons (e.g., Carranza 2016), and the arms deals made between North America and both Israel and countries in Latin America (e.g., Ben-Zvi 2012; Kaplan 1975).

What has been missing in this type of work is a deeper investigation into the growing role of the (private) security industry in diplomatic efforts, the effects this has had on global security discourses, and, more broadly, what this could mean for how the state is (re)shaped. Furthermore, such nation-state relations—relations that have been "sealed" with the sale of weaponry—are often studied on a more abstract political level, where the agreements are the focus. In contributing to this literature, I investigate the micro-level of security narratives, specifically those constructed around Holocaust memorials, through which we can understand more thoroughly how such relationships are established, what narratives they produce, and what their effects are.

In this article, I analyze these diplomatic "friendships" as forms of securitized diplomacy, which can be defined as relationships, often intense ones, between state leaders that involve the exchange of weapons and security technologies or knowledge. I argue that we can understand these as modes of warfare governance (Bertelsen 2024), as they are part and parcel of shaping the state through the entanglements of state and non-state actors like the private security industry. I zoom in on the "security narratives" (Grassiani 2019a) that are instrumental in this kind of diplomacy to understand how such relationships are (re)created and, importantly, what their affordances are. I argue that through these narratives, state leaders (re)construct shared threats and legitimize their domestic politics and the warfare they facilitate with these weapons at home or elsewhere. Furthermore, I show how the narratives also offer an almost ritualistic way of cleansing and normalizing the politics of war of the state leaders involved.

To make my argument, I begin by describing some of the friendships of Israel's current prime minister, Netanyahu, who has been in power since 2009 (with a short interruption in 2021) with (right-wing) state leaders, embedding them within the (anti-Muslim) racist discourse they are part of. I then briefly describe the Israeli military and security industries and their exports, after which I discuss security narratives as one of the central dynamics of Israel's securitized diplomacy, in particular those constructed around visits to Holocaust memorials. I use material collected during ethnographic fieldwork on the Israeli security industry between 2014 and 2019 along with secondary material, such as news items and legal documents concerning Israeli military and security and diplomatic involvement in foreign countries.[2]

(Racist) friends with benefits

Modi, who strolled on the beach with Netanyahu in 2017, is far from being the only person who has a keen interest in Israel's famed security industry and who has accessed it through engaging in a close relationship with Netanyahu. Other diplomatic friends who have visited Netanyahu in Israel or hosted him at home include former state leaders Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil and Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, to name but two. When Netanyahu visited Brazil to attend Bolsonaro's inauguration in 2019, we witnessed a similarly intimate relationship, which the two men sealed with a bear hug. Bolsonaro saw his relationship with Israel and its Jewish inhabitants as part of his religious cosmology (see also Salem and Larkins, this issue, and M. Shapiro 2021). Brazil, not by chance, is also a well-known customer of Israeli security products and weapons, and Israel's expertise in urban warfare has been used in favelas in Brazil's bigger cities (Grassiani and Mueller 2019).

A year earlier, in 2018, Duterte visited Netanyahu in Israel. This former state leader was responsible for the Philippines signing a 21 million dollar deal with Israel for the import of radar and anti-tank equipment (Associated Press 2018). The *Jerusalem Post* described Duterte's ambitions as follows: "In cozying up to Netanyahu, Duterte brought useful Israeli resources and military advisers to his country, which he used to train his military in counterterrorism. This was especially helpful to the then Filipino president as he ratcheted up counterterror op-

erations and his sickening domestic repression campaigns against drug users and political opponents" (Z. Shapiro 2019).

Importantly, all of the state leaders mentioned, like Netanyahu, are right-wing hardliners who promote racist policies and are (religious) nationalists. They strongly believe that increased militarization and securitization of their countries are crucial in order to keep external enemies out or to pacify internal opposition. An important issue on the agenda during meetings between these state leaders and Netanyahu is how to keep such internal and external "enemies" at bay and how the particular "security situation" of one's country can and must be improved. Above all, common threats, such as Muslim terrorism, are highlighted and reproduced. These relationships, the discourses they consist of, and the activities politicians have undertaken in light of them are bound together by narratives that normalize, legitimize, and sanitize the security industry, its products (weapons, technologies), and the actors (both state and non-state) involved. Most of all, the violence and death resulting from the industry and the use of its products are swept out of view.

To illustrate this security narrative, I turn to Netanyahu's 2018 visit to India. In an official speech he gave, he was cited as saying: "Our way of life [meaning both Israel's and India's] is being challenged, most notably, the quest for modernity, the quest for innovation (are) being challenged by radical Islam and its terrorist offshoots from a variety of corners" (Miglani 2018). Here, Netanyahu positions himself as representing a nation-state, Israel, that has suffered violence and terrorism for many years, and he promotes its ability to deal with it. Notably, he creates a shared idea of commonality between the two countries: both face challenges to their "modern way of life" and threats from Muslim terrorists. In such a narrative, the existence and legitimacy of ways to combat these challenges and threats go without saying.

As it becomes very clear from this initial example, anti-Muslim racism is at the very core of this shared narrative. Not only is the Israeli violence against Palestinians driven by chronic islamophobia present in Israeli society, but this anti-Muslim racism is a driving force of its security industry. Israel is not alone here; in 2012, Glenn Greenwald already wrote about the way American security or terror experts were part and parcel of creating the idea of a "Muslim threat" (Greenwald 2012). In my work in Israel, security experts' knowledge generation about Islam was also very present. Security experts who trained foreign clients interested in purchasing security technology or knowledge made sure to include sections on "Islam" in their programs and, as such, connected this highly problematic "knowledge" to a narrative of threat and, ultimately, the need for a firm security response. Thus, in connecting hate and prejudice against Muslims in the context of Israel/Palestine to a common "Muslim enemy" elsewhere, Netanyahu is contributing to a globalized islamophobia (Ganesh et al. 2024; Najib 2021; Nguyen 2019). This narrative, as mentioned above, is instrumental in the way Israeli security is sold and marketed; the Muslim enemy figure is used to create a common threat for which Israel has the perfect solution.

Racist and exclusionary discourse also cements other diplomatic relationships, such as those between former state leaders Bolsonaro and Duterte with Netanyahu. In the case of Brazil, this Other is found in black favela residents who need to be "pacified" by military police units. Tomas Salem and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen describe these activities as follows: "Pacification implied a process of 'civilizing' the symbolically black and savage spaces of the favelas, and specifically, the black male bodies associated with drug trafficking through racial profiling, dress, and appearance" (Salem and Bertelsen 2020: 99). In the Philippines under Duterte this Other was the drug trafficker and any drug user that was targeted as being "sinful" (Cornelio and Medina 2019). These relationships are based on racist ideas regarding a threatening Other, but also on specific types of moral policing. Interestingly, both Bolsonaro and Duterte's moral claims over who is good/bad are strongly in-

spired by their religious backgrounds (both are devout Catholics), similar to Modi's Hindu background and Netanyahu's Jewish one. All these leaders' violent and racist campaigns are infused with religious righteousness.

The Israeli security industry and its export

Israel's security and military exports are considerable. As mentioned above, Israel is the tenth largest arms exporter in the world (Wezeman et al. 2024), and its defense exports were worth 14.8 billion dollars in 2024, an all-time high (Fabian 2025). This increase in revenue was largely driven by the war in Ukraine, which boosted significant sales to Germany and Finland, and by the Abraham Accords and the subsequent normalization of relations between Israel and some of its Arab neighbors. Israel's three most important customers in the years 2021–2024, according to SIPRI's database, were India, the US, and the Philippines (SIPRI 2025). Weapons that were sold include weapons systems, missiles, drones, and border technologies. Every year, Israel organizes a multitude of exhibitions, fairs, and conferences for the international public where such products, including cyber technology, anti-riot gear, weapons, and training packages, are exhibited and sold. Both private entities and public ones, such as SIBAT (the International Defense Cooperation Directorate of the Israel Ministry of Defense), organize these events, which host a multitude of international guests from all corners of the world. Many of these guests are part of state institutions, such as the military and police. During fieldwork at these fairs, I was told that, while security knowledge and weapons are on display and for sale, establishing relationships is the event's most important facet. Customers do not typically just come up and buy a drone or border security equipment; a relationship of trust—and in the case of government players, diplomacy—is needed first.

Most literature on Israel's foreign relationships traces the history of its ties with a specific country (e.g., Blarel 2015 on India, Balci and Kardaş 2012 on Turkey) or with a continent, Africa in particular (e.g., Gidron 2020; Yacobi 2015). In such works, authors often mention the issue of security cooperation as only one aspect of the relationships Israel maintains with different countries. They then typically reference the security actors in the "entourage" that boarded the plane with the head of state on a trip abroad. However, they seldom discuss the public/private security industry's part in diplomacy and warfare in detail or critically analyze the effects it can have. The question of how the security industry strengthens diplomatic ties (and vice versa) and is part of the (re)shaping of the state through entanglements in warfare thus requires more attention.

The security industry is based on immense investments in the development of weaponry and technologies that Israel claims it needs to defend itself from neighboring enemies—and that it uses in its military operations in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, such as the ongoing genocide in Gaza (2023–25) and in its more general "fight against terrorism." By leveraging the experience of its agents in combat, wars, and occupation, Israel has succeeded in creating an image of itself as the world's "best" and most knowledgeable security specialist (Grassiani 2018, 2019b). As I show below, the narrative that supports this branding is very selective in what it does and does not include; importantly, the violence, repression, and displacement, which is the price Palestinians pay for this Israeli "success story," is omitted.

Its immense investments have made Israel one of the major players in the homeland security and defense field internationally. As such, Israel features in the discourse on the international arms trade, ranging from reports by groups such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, which monitors the arms trade) to academic literature that critically reflects on its effects (e.g., Feinstein 2011; Stavrianakis 2011, 2012; Stohl and Gillot 2009). This work has recently investigated more deeply Israel's security and military industries, which are much broader than just the

arms trade (Gordon 2011; Grassiani 2017, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2024; Halper 2015; Hever 2017; Loewenstein 2023; Machold 2024; Stockmarr 2016). While the global reach of this industry has not been studied extensively, some notable exceptions exist, such as work by myself and Frank Mueller (2019), by Jeff Halper (2015) and by Rhys Machold (2015, 2024).

Thus, there is quite a bit of knowledge and research about the (Israeli) weapons and security industry, but there is a need to understand in greater depth how alliances between states are made. I use security narratives as part of diplomatic relationships to contribute to this lacuna in the literature.

Securitized diplomacy through security narratives

I posit that security narratives are essential to developing the relationships between Israeli political actors and foreign ones and, thus, between states and the wars they engage in. These narratives work in various ways. On the one hand, they are used in ways that normalize and legitimize the security industry, its weapons and technologies, and, importantly, the violence resulting from the use of the latter. They do so by, for example, constructing threats and common enemies and framing the use of weapons and technologies into heroic success stories embedded in the development of security materialities, technologies, and knowledge. On the other hand, security narratives are used in an effort to sanitize violent actions and the involvement of those same actors using them. This is done by separating weapons and technologies from their origins—which in the Israeli case can be traced back to the oppressive apparatus of the state—and by almost ritualistically cleansing state actors from the violence they use with performances at Holocaust memorials, such as Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. I briefly describe these processes below.

Security narratives are constructed by the multitude of discourses in which Israel's history, the military, and the historical and future uses of weapons and technologies are embedded. Furthermore, they explain the importance of security materials, for defending Israel against its many enemies. These narratives are, by definition, politically colored and produced, reproduced, and performed by actors, both private and public, that are part of Israel's security industry—not least by state leaders (Grassiani 2019a, 2024). Beyond their nationalist and deeply racist elements, neoliberal and commercial features characterize these security narratives, which sell Israel's military/security image and its security products beyond its borders and empower the military/security elite within the country. Simultaneously, they work, as I show further on, to cleanse foreign buyers from the "residue" that their use of violence leaves on them.

Israel's cooperation with India, as mentioned above, exemplifies how such narratives are produced. During his visit to India in 2018, Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "Indians and Israelis know too well the pain of terrorist attacks. . . . We remember the horrific savagery in Mumbai. We grit our teeth, we fight back, we never give in" (Keinon 2018). Netanyahu does a few things here. First, he refers to the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, which also targeted the local Chabad House, a Jewish center where many Israeli travelers come together. By doing so, he connects Israelis and Indians through their experience with (Muslim) terror attacks. He further emphasizes the need to fight against such attacks and for resilience on the part of both peoples. Though victimized, he seems to say Israel and India are not victims but fighters—directly referring to self-defense and, indirectly, to the security industry. Crafting this diplomatic but emotional relationship—in which Israel and India are "bound together" through victimhood and the fight against evil—led to the establishment of commercial ties between the two countries and, subsequently, to their multibillion-dollar defense deal. The entwinement of diplomatic relationships with the sale of security became very visible when Israel and India

celebrated 25 years of diplomatic ties during the 2017 ISDEF (an acronym for "Israeli Defense") conference, which I attended. Part of this biannual private security affair was a huge "Indian pavilion" where Indian companies showcased their wares.

The (re)production of a shared threat here is instrumental in the construction of the international relationships of Israel's political and security actors. Through a security narrative, such threats are articulated in reference to an extensive range of "others" who, unlike those seeking security, are set on destroying "peaceful" democratic systems. The common "us" in this narrative is usually understood to refer to all those suffering from "terrorism," which are grouped together in a revamped definition of "the West." At the security fairs I attended, for example, international crowds, no matter where they came from, were rhetorically included in references to "us" and "the West." "All of us" were the people present, concerned with safety and making an effort to secure their companies, nation-states, and citizens. An example was former Defense Minister General Shaul Mofaz at the HLS & Cyber Conference in Tel Aviv in 2016, which I attended. He emphasized not only "our" common interests, such as economic ones, but also the threats "we" shared while calling out: "Western countries, what should they do? Not wait, act now! . . . Need to invest." This "us," then, is opposed to the "Other," who is—at times, explicitly—a "terrorist," a "radical," a "Muslim terrorist," or any other threat to "our way of living"—a category that can also include overly critical citizens. In other words, different threats are constructed through these narratives. Depending on the partner, the threat is tailored to fit the goals of the partner at any given time.

This tells us more about where Israel positions itself within this narrative, its role, and its relationship with other states worldwide. As Netanyahu said to Modi, "Our way of life is being challenged; most notably, the quest for modernity, the quest for innovation (are) being challenged by radical Islam and its terrorist offshoots from a variety of corners" (Miglani 2018). The Israeli prime minister clearly connects Israel to a broader part of the world in "us against them" terms and through orientalist notions of modernity versus a "backward, violent Islam." We can easily interpret this as another version of the known "War on Terror" initiated by the US, but adopted happily by others with a similar agenda.

Sanitizing narrative: The Holocaust Memorial

Security narratives also have a cleansing element as they sanitize political reality when they are used to construct an image of a militarized and righteous Israel. This image is bolstered by a particular logic, according to which the security products that Israel develops and sells are a necessity, qualitatively sound (if not the best), and a necessity also for foreign customers. Unmentioned is the context in which these products were developed, whether we call it a violent occupation or settler colonialism. While in the narrative put forward, Israel's "heroic" conduct in its fight against terror is emphasized—reflected in Netanyahu's words to Modi—it hides the oppression of Palestinians under Israeli occupation and the history and even existence of the Palestinians in the area. According to this narrative, Palestinians (including those with Israeli citizenship) are foremost potential terrorists and local incarnations of the threats mentioned above, while the occupation as the all-too-real context of violence and oppression remains invisible. Furthermore, the role of the security industry in the oppression of Palestinians, along with the instrumentality of the occupation of Palestinian lands to the development of numerous weapons and technologies, is downplayed by referring to the "legitimate" use of the weapons produced by the industry by the Israel Defense Forces, often framed by Israel as "the most moral army in the world." The narrative, importantly, does not tell us much about how security products and knowledge will be used in the places they travel to or what role they may play in human rights abuses elsewhere in the world.

An important strategy for the sanitization work of narratives in Israel is instrumentalizing the Holocaust as part of diplomatic security relationships. This is one of the various and rather sophisticated ways in which Israeli state actors use the horrors of the Holocaust to distract from and legitimize violence perpetrated by Israel itself and its diplomatic friends. One central way this is done is by including the memory of the Holocaust as a topic of conversation between Israeli state leaders and their visitors and, thus, making it a backdrop for diplomatic and security ties. It is then mentioned, as I have shown, in many formal speeches, and importantly, all foreign state leaders who visit Israel are taken to Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem. This center houses archives, research centers, memorials, a synagogue, several museums, and memorial sites, such as the Hall of Remembrance and the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations. Visiting state leaders are shown around, often with their spouses and leading Israeli political or religious figures. After such a visit, typically, a press conference is held, and the visitors are invited to write something in the center's guest book.

Modi, for example, said the following after he visited the center in 2017: "I am deeply moved by my visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is as much a poignant reminder of the unspeakable evil inflicted generations ago as it is a symbol of the endurance and fortitude of the Jewish people" (Yad Vashem 2017). Viktor Orbán, whose visit was especially controversial because of his well-documented racist and anti-Semitic sentiments, was invited to plant a tree on the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations during his visit to Israel in 2018 (Ziv 2020). Discussing such visits, human rights attorney Eitay Mack sharply noted, "Every dictator, every murderer who wants to buy weapons from Israel must come and lay a wreath at Yad Vashem. We saw the head of the junta in Myanmar come here for a visit, only to carry out a genocidal campaign months later [. . .] Yad Vashem has turned into an institution that whitewashes the crimes of these regimes—as long as they do business with Israel" (ibid.).

If we analyze the narratives constructed through these visits and speeches more closely, the way in which they legitimize politics and violence and sanitize these political leaders simultaneously becomes apparent. Take, for example, former president of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte's visit to Israel in 2018. In a press conference he and Prime Minister Netanyahu gave at the beginning of his visit, the focus was on shared concerns and interests. Duterte stated, "We [he and Netanyahu] also share the same passion of not allowing a country to be destroyed by those who [have] corrupt ideologies that promote nothing but to kill and to destroy. In this sense, Israel can expect any help the Philippines can extend" (Bachner 2018). For his part, Netanyahu began by thanking the people of the Philippines for taking in Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. Interestingly, not long before his visit, Duterte had compared himself with Hitler, whose murder of millions of Jews he wanted to emulate by killing just as many "drug addicts" (McKirdy 2016). Of course, his visit also included a tour of Yad Vashem, and he laid a wreath at a memorial where he also met one of the Jews who had fled to the Philippines to escape the Nazis.

As mentioned above, Duterte became known for his "war on drugs," which has left between 12,000 and 30,000 dead, according to Human Rights Watch (2022). Many were killed by police forces that may have been trained by Israel, which has been known to provide such training in the Philippines. Furthermore, many human rights defenders and activists have been killed in the country, often after being accused of being communists. Yet, during Duterte's visit, business deals were brokered that included drones, surveillance systems, and assault rifles for the police. It is then unsurprising that his close relationship with Israel would be in dire need of (political) sanitization. A host of visits to Holocaust memorials in different places in Israel, along with accompanying speeches, accomplished this.

The other former state leader, already mentioned before, whose conduct concerning human rights was very problematic is Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil. Bolsonaro was outspokenly against the rights of women and LGBTQI people, and he was said to "long" for the days of Brazil's dictatorship (in 2019, he even ordered the commemoration of the military coup that led to the dictatorship). As a president, he was a firm supporter of militarized action against crime, which he called "a return to law and order." Even before Bolsonaro had been elected, Brazil saw a rise in violence against LGBTQI people and human rights activists that can be attributed to his rhetoric. One notable example was the murder of the progressive councilwoman Marielle Franco in 2018 by gunmen who turned out to have been in contact with the prime minister. In Bolsonaro's Brazil, it seems there was no place for dissident voices or the voices of those of the indigenous and LGBTQI communities. The former prime minister has called for more securitization, the killing of suspects without trial, and the monitoring of NGOs.

As mentioned, through his close relationship with Netanyahu, Bolsonaro has firmly positioned himself as a good friend of Israel regarding business and even cosmology (see also Salem and Larkins, this issue; M. Shapiro 2021). Notably, both countries have been linked through security and military deals for many years. Elsewhere, I have written about the extent of these transactions (Grassiani and Mueller 2019). Brazil has bought a host of Israeli weapons, armored vehicles, and technologies over the years. Brazilian forces, furthermore, use the Tavor assault rifle, which is produced in Israel, and in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the notorious Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (Special Police Operations Battalion) uses vehicles purchased from Israeli companies. Another example of the security relationship between Israel and Brazil is the activity of the Israeli security company ISDS, which has an office in Brazil. ISDS has been active in Central America and South America for decades and has trained armed groups (both state-affiliated and otherwise) and sold weapons, armored cars, and technologies to Brazil and its neighbors. The company was also responsible for security at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio.

At the end of 2018, the Israeli prime minister flew to Brazil to attend Bolsonaro's inauguration as that country's new prime minister—the first Israeli PM to do so while in office. From the moment Bolsonaro was elected, he and Netanyahu courted each other and made it clear to the world that they would cultivate an intense relationship. Some three months later, on 3 March 2019, Bolsonaro visited Israel just before the Israeli elections. The first order of business was to sign several cooperation agreements on issues such as defense, security, cybersecurity, and the police. The relationship between the two countries is one of entanglement between different ideologies: Bolsonaro is an evangelical Christian, and Netanyahu is a Zionist Jew. While these may seem difficult to reconcile, right-wing nationalists in Israel see the support by evangelical Christianity as promoting their goal of Jewish control over the whole area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. For example, the Zionist Christian organization Friends of Zion in Jerusalem has bestowed on Bolsonaro the "Friends of Zion Award." Netanyahu takes the same stance and hence welcomes figures such as Bolsonaro to Israel; on his arrival, Bolsonaro was greeted with full military honors, and Netanyahu began his welcome speech by addressing him as "my good friend." When Netanyahu visited Bolsonaro in 2019, the latter said to him: "We are like a couple that has just become engaged" (Mack 2020).

Bolsonaro's trip to Israel also included a unique visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He was the first state leader to make this visit in an official capacity, signaling his position regarding Israel's control of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, where this site is located. Before his election victory earlier that year, one of Bolsonaro's main messages to Israel (and his Jewish electorate) was his desire to move the Brazilian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, just as United States president Donald

Trump had done with the American embassy during his first term. As part of the security narrative, this highly symbolic and controversial move was a clear sign of the former Brazilian prime minister's willingness to continue and solidify his relationship with Netanyahu, who warmly welcomed the initiative, especially announced so close to the elections, which he eventually won. Brazil and Israel were envisioned as connected through their fight against terror, simultaneously delegitimizing the existence of the Palestinian people.

Of course, a visit to Yad Vashem could not be omitted from Bolsonaro's itinerary. He wore a black yarmulke in the memorial center as he laid a memorial wreath and signed the guest book. Interestingly, during the visit, he was asked about a comment by one of the ministers in his government, who had called the Nazis "leftists." Bolsonaro answered that he had "no doubt" they had been. Making matters worse, only weeks after his visit, Bolsonaro stated that the genocidal crimes of the Holocaust were to be "forgiven, but not forgotten" (Associated Press 2019).

Besides these diplomatic visits to Yad Vashem, another way the Holocaust is used to sanitize and normalize Israel's international security efforts is Netanyahu's habit of mentioning Iran and its "evil-ness" when he gives speeches at Holocaust memorial ceremonies. For example, in a speech at a ceremony in 2020 marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—a ceremony at which then United States Vice President Mike Pence was present—Netanyahu made statements about "the tyrants of Tehran" and said that Iran was the "most anti-Semitic regime on the planet." His message was clear: "We" (the righteous and good of the world) need to fight the evil powers of the "Other." He continued his speech by saying, "Israel will do whatever it must to defend our state, defend our people, and defend the Jewish future" (Al Jazeera 2020).

In another speech in 2021, on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel, Netanyahu critiqued the International Criminal Court's investigation of war crimes committed in the Gaza Strip. He again made a direct connection with the Holocaust by stating that "during the Holocaust, we had no rights, no country, no protector. Today, we have a country, we have protection, and we have the natural and complete right, as the sovereign country of the Jewish people, to defend ourselves from our enemies" (Federman 2021).

These visits to memorials, along with invocations of the memory and horrors of the Holocaust, are central in the (re)construction of the security narrative and the construction of securitized diplomatic relationships. Showing respect for the dead and the horrors that the Jewish people went through sanitizes transactions with Israel, cleansing them of the violence that is at their core and legitimizing the use of the weapons that are exchanged. Invoking the memory of the Holocaust, furthermore, is a tool with which Netanyahu emphasizes the threats that Israel (and thus the Jewish people) still face and, along with them, the need for security. Within this narrative, a connection is repeatedly made between the horrors of the Holocaust, Israel's security and its very existence, and Judaism and Zionism—each according to the binaries of good versus bad, perpetrator versus victim. All these notions paint a clear picture when it comes to Israel's legitimacy and its exchanges of weaponry with its diplomatic friends.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how security narratives are central to the securitized diplomacy between state leaders. The development of the Israeli security and military industries, as a result of the extensive development of weaponry, technologies, and other security and military equipment, is deeply political, as it closely interlinks with the diplomatic relationships Israel maintains. These diplomatic/security efforts reach far beyond the Israeli state, extending toward political meddling in foreign countries and subsequent human rights abuses. This securitized diplomacy is then a form of warfare

governance as it (re)shapes the state and relationships between states through the sale of the materialities that warfare is based upon.

Within this interchange between diplomatic relationships and the sale of weapons and security technologies—sets of relations that are often labeled "bromances"—common threats are (re)constructed and embedded in racist discourse. By taking Israel as a case in point, I have shown in greater depth how these securitized diplomatic ties come into being through the construction of security narratives, which consist of discourse but also performative activities, such as visits to Holocaust memorials.

The narratives work towards the normalization and legitimization of the industry and its products as part of the heroic story of a small country surrounded by many enemies that ultimately wins the battle it never wanted to fight. In this story, the Israeli security industry was developed because of a "lack of choice" and as a result of experience in warfare and security gained through "unfortunate" circumstances initiated by outsiders—that is, by neighboring enemies and Palestinian Muslim terrorists. These processes continue with the export of weaponry and technology to foreign countries and the legitimization, via a security narrative, of their use against a wide range of groups. Such military and security deals are fraught with diplomatic interests, and human rights are not taken into consideration when weapons and tanks are sold to countries such as Brazil, India, and the Philippines. Again and again, Israel has shown a lack of consideration for how the weapons it sells are used. As I showed in my analysis of the security narratives that accompany these sales and the diplomacy around them, it even actively silences such considerations.

Notably, security narratives also work as tools of sanitization, cleansing state leaders from their involvement in violence. It also sanitizes the Israeli security industry itself from its violent heritage—which is rooted in Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land. By visiting Holocaust Memorial spaces and using their story of the victimhood and the resurrection of the Jewish people, state leaders hosted by Israel co-construct a narrative of compassion for and closeness with Israel while simultaneously legitimizing the fight against terrorism they themselves and Israel are part of. By invoking the Holocaust and taking foreign state leaders to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the violence and oppression associated with these leaders are ritualistically washed away.

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Notes

1. In this article I have chosen to study the Israeli security industry and its securitized diplomacy by explicitly and critically analyzing the discourses and acts of Israel and its partners, in order to shed a light on the violent dynamics of this industry. While the voices of those who are the main victims of Israel's state violence, Palestinians, are extremely important, I cannot do

them justice within the scope of this particular work.

2. I did fieldwork in Israel on its global security industry between 2014 and 2019, which included (participant) observation at security and defense fairs and security trainings and interviews with Israeli security actors.

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