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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Elicited Memory: Holocaust memory on social media between everyday discourse and crisis-driven intensification

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Abstract

This article develops the concept of *Elicited Memory* to explain how Holocaust discourse on social media shifts from persistent mnemonic undercurrents to heightened public salience during moments of crisis. Rather than treating Holocaust memory as either formally commemorative or diffusely embedded within everyday discourse, the article conceptualizes *Elicited Memory* as a crisis-driven mode of mediated remembrance in which historical analogies are activated as particularly prominent interpretive frameworks within networked media environments. The analysis draws on more than 9,000 Hebrew-language X posts collected during two major crises in Israel in 2023: the first 100 days of the judicial overhaul protests, and the first 100 days following the October 7 Hamas attack and the ensuing Gaza war. Using a mixed-methods approach organized around three dimensions – temporality, directionality, and vernacular articulation – the findings show that Holocaust references persist as a continuous mnemonic undercurrent within Israeli social media discourse while intensifying sharply during moments of political conflict and collective trauma. These intensifications emerge through interactions between elite interventions and networked circulation, alongside shifts from relatively flexible and often ironic Holocaust analogies during the protest period to narrower and more emotionally charged invocations during the war period. The findings suggest that existing distinctions between commemorative and non-commemorative memory do not fully explain how Holocaust discourse operates within networked crises. Instead, Holocaust memory functions as a dynamic interpretive resource through which political conflict, collective trauma, and moral uncertainty are publicly negotiated within digital media environments.

Keywords: Holocaust memory; social media; historical analogies; networked memory; X/Twitter; *Elicited Memory*

Introduction: Holocaust memory in times of crisis

On July 28, 2025, the presidents of five Israeli universities sent a public letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. 'We are watching the images coming out of Gaza with horror', the presidents wrote. 'The release of the hostages and minimizing harm to our soldiers are the top priorities, but as a people who

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were victims of the horrific Holocaust in Europe, we also have a special obligation to act by all the means at our disposal to prevent and avoid cruel and indiscriminate harm to innocent men, women, and children' (Channel 11, July 28, 2025). The letter immediately sparked intense public debate. Some praised its moral clarity, while others condemned the invocation of Holocaust memory in this current context. Yet many of the same critics have themselves employed Holocaust analogies in other political disputes (Ariely 2022; Adams 2024). The controversy was not exceptional; rather, Holocaust references routinely surface in Israeli public discourse during periods of political conflict, violence, and uncertainty. Hence, this example, alongside many others, illustrates how deeply Holocaust memory is embedded within Israeli public culture, not only as an object of commemoration but also as a symbolic resource for interpreting contemporary crises.

Periods of political upheaval and collective trauma frequently intensify recourse to the past. Scholarship on cultural memory has long demonstrated how societies draw on historical analogies, symbolic repertoires, and iconic figures to interpret unfolding events (Edy 1999; Erll 2011; Assmann, 2012). Yet existing approaches only partially explain what happens under conditions of crisis, when references to the past become unusually concentrated and publicly salient. To conceptualize this dynamic, we introduce *Elicited Memory* as a crisis-driven mode of mediated remembrance through which diffuse mnemonic undercurrents gain heightened public salience during moments of social rupture. *Elicited Memory* refers not simply to the circulation of historical analogies during periods of crisis, but more specifically to moments in which already available mnemonic repertoires are activated as especially salient interpretive frameworks through temporal concentration, networked amplification, and affective intensification.

Rather than emerging solely through institutional commemoration, Holocaust memory in such moments becomes intensified through interactions among institutional actors, networked publics, and vernacular discourse. Within this mode of mediated remembrance, historical analogy functions as an interpretive framework through which the past is mobilized to make sense of unfolding crises, enabling contemporary events to be understood, emotionally processed, and morally evaluated as they unfold. In this sense, historical analogy may also operate as a form of premediation (Grusin 2010).

The following analysis examines three interrelated dimensions through which *Elicited Memory* becomes visible within digital media environments: temporality, directionality, and vernacular articulation. Temporality concerns the clustering of Holocaust discourse around moments of rupture; directionality examines how mnemonic authority and interpretive framing circulate across interactions among elites, institutions, journalists, and broader digital publics; and vernacular articulation addresses the lexical, symbolic, and affective forms through which Holocaust analogies are reformulated within everyday discourse. These dynamics become particularly visible on social media platforms such as X, where historical references circulate rapidly across interactions between institutional actors and networked users and across 'collapsed contexts,' in which multiple and heterogeneous audiences encounter, negotiate, and reinterpret mnemonic invocations simultaneously (Marwick and Boyd 2011).

To examine these dynamics, this article analyses Hebrew-language discourse posted on X during two major periods of crisis in Israel: the first 100 days of the 2023 nationwide protests against the government's proposed judicial overhaul, and the first 100 days following the October 7 attack and the ensuing war in Gaza. These periods differed substantially in character. The protest period reflected a prolonged constitutional and political conflict marked by rhetorical contestation and ironic discourse, whereas the wartime period constituted a moment of collective trauma shaped by existential threat and heightened emotional intensity. Precisely because these crises vary so markedly, they provide an opportunity to examine how Holocaust memory shifts across different forms of rupture,

and under what conditions Holocaust analogies become intensified as interpretive resources for understanding the present.

Drawing on a mixed-methods analysis of more than 9,000 Holocaust-related posts, replies, and reposts, we examine how Holocaust references become intensified and publicly salient during periods of political and social crisis. The findings demonstrate how networked media environments facilitate forms of crisis-driven mnemonic activation that are neither fully ritualized nor merely diffuse, but participatory, temporally focused, and dynamically shaped through interactions among institutional actors and networked publics. Rather than functioning solely as retrospective references to the past, Holocaust analogies emerge within these moments as interpretive frameworks through which unfolding crises are publicly understood, emotionally negotiated, and morally contested. In doing so, the article contributes to scholarship on media memory by explaining how historical repertoires become reorganized and publicly foregrounded under conditions of crisis.

Holocaust memory between commemoration and everyday discourse

The distinction between commemorative and non-commemorative memory has long structured the study of mediated remembrance. Commemorative memory refers to institutionalized and ritualized invocations of the past, such as memorial days, ceremonies, museums, or monuments, characterized by temporal regularity, intentionality, and normative coherence (Young 1993; Schudson 1997, 2014). Non-commemorative memory, by contrast, denotes the ongoing and often diffuse presence of the past within everyday discourse, where historical references emerge implicitly through journalism, entertainment, political rhetoric, humour, and routine public discourse (Schudson 1997; Kitch 2005).

Within this broader tradition, media have been understood as central mnemonic agents that shape how the past is narrated, circulated, and made publicly meaningful (Zelizer 1998; Kitch 2005). Scholarship on media memory has further demonstrated that remembrance increasingly unfolds across interconnected media environments in which institutional, journalistic, and vernacular actors jointly participate in shaping public understandings of history (Van Dijck 2007; Erll 2011). In digital media environments, these processes have become increasingly decentralized and interactional. Memory is continuously produced, circulated, and reconfigured through interactions among users, platforms, algorithms, and networked publics, giving rise to what Hoskins (2011, 2017) describes as connective and distributed forms of remembering. Rather than replacing collective memory, digital media environments reorganize the conditions under which mnemonic visibility, circulation, and authority emerge across participatory publics. Under such conditions, mnemonic prominence is increasingly shaped by algorithmic amplification, personalization, and participatory circulation (Van Dijck 2012; Hoskins 2017).

Holocaust memory provides a particularly revealing case through which to examine these dynamics (Meyers *et al.* 2014). Over the past three decades, scholarship on Holocaust memory has increasingly expanded beyond institutional commemoration to encompass its circulation across popular culture, journalism, television, digital media, and social media environments (Zandberg 2006; Shandler 2017; Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2022; Novis-Deutsch and Adams 2024). Holocaust references now circulate well beyond formal commemorative settings and have become embedded within participatory and vernacular media environments (Van Dijck 2007; Schwarzenegger and Lohmeier 2020): they increasingly surface through irony, humour, political rhetoric, and user-generated discourse (Zandberg 2006; Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2021), functioning not only as objects of remembrance but also as symbolic resources for framing contemporary crises and political conflicts.

Such invocations frequently take the form of historical analogies that help publics interpret moments of uncertainty and crisis (Schudson 1997; Edy 1999, 2006). Previous

research has shown that Holocaust references often intensify during periods of political and social rupture, including during the COVID-19 pandemic and other contemporary conflicts (Steir-Livny 2022; Neiger *et al.* 2023). Yet while scholarship has demonstrated the widespread circulation of Holocaust memory beyond formal commemorative contexts, less attention has been given to the conditions under which such references become uniquely clustered, amplified, and publicly prominent within crisis discourse.

These tensions become especially visible in digital media environments, where Holocaust memory remains simultaneously anchored in commemorative institutions and embedded within everyday discourse. On the one hand, Holocaust remembrance continues to derive moral authority from memorial practices, survivor testimonies, museums, and national rituals (Young 1993; Zelizer 1998). On the other hand, Holocaust references circulating through social media – via irony, humour, political analogy, and vernacular reinterpretation – have become part of routine public discourse (Zandberg 2006; Van Dijck 2007; Marciano 2019). Importantly, such invocations cannot be understood as purely non-commemorative, since their mnemonic force derives precisely from the symbolic density historically associated with commemorative forms. This duality helps explain why Holocaust memory is particularly susceptible to rapid intensification during moments of crisis. Its symbolic weight lends moral force to interpretation, while its availability within everyday discourse enables its immediate mobilization across networked environments. As a result, Holocaust references can move rapidly from persistent mnemonic undercurrents within routine discourse to salient interpretive frameworks through which unfolding crises acquire symbolic and moral meaning.

These dynamics resonate with what Hoskins (2011, 2017) describes as connective and distributed forms of remembering, in which mnemonic meaning emerges through circulation, interaction, and networked uptake across heterogeneous publics. This perspective is also consistent with recent work emphasizing how digital platforms classify, rank, and shape the visibility of mnemonic contents, thereby influencing which mnemonic repertoires become publicly salient (Jacobsen and Beer 2021). Against this backdrop, we conceptualize *Elicited Memory* as a crisis-driven mode of mediated remembrance in which historical analogies become unusually intensified and publicly salient during moments of rupture. Its distinctiveness lies not in the circulation of historical analogies as such, but in the crisis-driven activation of already available mnemonic repertoires, which acquire heightened interpretive salience through temporal concentration, networked amplification, and affective intensification.

Emerging at the intersection of official commemoration and everyday mnemonic discourse, *Elicited Memory* draws its symbolic gravity from commemorative memory while relying on the participatory and circulatory affordances of networked publics through which mnemonic repertoires remain continuously available for appropriation, reinterpretation, and contestation. Under conditions of crisis, these existing repertoires may become rapidly activated and intensified as frameworks for interpreting unfolding events. Rather than constituting a distinct category of collective memory, *Elicited Memory* is therefore conceptualized as a crisis-driven mode of mnemonic practice through which the past is mobilized to interpret, negotiate, and morally evaluate unfolding crises (cf. Olick 1999).

While scholarship on mediated memory has illuminated how memory circulates across networked environments, *Elicited Memory* shifts attention to the crisis conditions under which persistent mnemonic repertoires acquire heightened interpretive salience. Guided by this framework, the article addresses the following overarching research question: How are Holocaust references mobilized in public discourse during political, social, and security crises?

Analytical framework

To examine how *Elicited Memory* operates within digital media environments, the analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: temporality, directionality, and vernacular articulation. Rather than treating *Elicited Memory* as a fixed category of discourse, these dimensions capture the communicative processes through which mnemonic repertoires become activated, amplified, circulated, and rearticulated during moments of crisis. Although analytically distinct, they frequently overlap in concrete episodes of crisis discourse.

Temporality examines how Holocaust references accumulate around moments of crisis and subsequently recede, distinguishing between ongoing mnemonic presence and periods of intensified analogical use. Directionality examines how mnemonic invocations circulate through interactions among political elites, journalists, institutional actors, and digital publics, while also tracing how Holocaust analogies are rearticulated as they move across interpretive settings. In this sense, directionality encompasses both the circulation of mnemonic authority among actors and the rearticulation of historical meanings across interpretive settings. The latter resonates with Rothberg's (2009) conception of multidirectional memory as an ongoing process of negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing across mnemonic contexts.

Vernacular articulation examines the lexical, symbolic, pragmatic, and affective forms through which Holocaust memory is reworked within everyday discourse, including analogical constructions, ironic formulations, symbolic invocations, and emotionally intensified expressions. Overall, these dimensions provide an analytical framework for examining how Holocaust-related mnemonic repertoires are activated and intensified during moments of crisis (Ben-David *et al.* 2024).

Platform and case selection

The study focuses on discourse on X (formerly Twitter), a platform particularly suited for tracing crisis-driven interpretive dynamics. X functions as a real-time networked media environment in which events are rapidly framed, amplified, contested, and circulated through reposts, quote-posts, replies, hashtags, and visibility metrics (Marwick and Boyd 2011; Bucher and Helmond 2018). As previous research on social media memory has shown, online platforms blur distinctions between institutional and vernacular mnemonic discourse, enabling continuous interactions among political actors, journalists, commemorative institutions, and everyday users (Hoskins 2017; Schwarzenegger and Lohmeier 2020). Such environments facilitate connective and participatory forms of remembrance in which mnemonic visibility and authority emerge through circulation, interaction, and networked uptake rather than exclusively through institutional commemoration (Van Dijck 2007; Hoskins 2011).

In the Israeli context, X occupies a distinctive position within the broader media ecosystem. Although it is used by a minority of Israelis and is not demographically representative of Israeli society as a whole, the platform plays a disproportionately important role in political and media discourse. Israeli X is characterized by intensive interaction among politicians, journalists, public commentators, and highly active networked publics, making it particularly well suited for tracing how Holocaust invocations are introduced, amplified, contested, and reinterpreted during moments of crisis. This approach is consistent with digital methods scholarship that treats social media not merely as sources of data, but as environments in which public controversies unfold and whose affordances shape their visibility and dynamics (Marres and Moats 2015). At the same time, the platform's interactional norms and affordances tend to privilege immediacy, polarization, and

engagement-driven communication (Davis and Jurgenson 2014; Bucher and Helmond 2018). Accordingly, the findings should be understood as reflecting platform-specific dynamics of visibility, amplification, and discursive contestation rather than Israeli public discourse as a whole.

The analysis focuses on two crisis periods: (1) the first 100 days of the 2023 protests against the Israeli government's proposed judicial overhaul, and (2) the first 100 days following the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack and the ensuing Gaza war. While both periods generated intense public debate and extensive Holocaust-related discourse, they differed substantially in character. The protest period reflected a prolonged political and constitutional conflict, whereas the wartime period constituted a moment of acute collective trauma shaped by existential threat and mass violence.

Data collection and analytical procedures

The analytical design adapts and extends previous methodological approaches for studying Holocaust discourse and social memory on social media (Neiger *et al.* 2023; Ben-David *et al.* 2024) by combining top-down query construction with bottom-up platform-sensitive analysis in order to examine how Holocaust discourse evolves during moments of political and collective crisis. The study employs a mixed-methods approach combining temporal and interactional mapping with qualitative interpretation in order to examine how Holocaust references emerge, intensify, and circulate within social media discourse. Computational mapping enabled the identification of temporal spikes, interactional visibility, and circulation patterns at scale, while qualitative interpretation made it possible to examine the symbolic, rhetorical, and affective dimensions through which Holocaust analogies acquired public meaning within crisis discourse.

Data collection followed a two-phase design combining top-down query construction with bottom-up analysis of platform-specific discourse (Rogers 2017), allowing the dataset to capture both formal commemorative discourse and everyday vernacular invocations of the Holocaust across crisis contexts. A set of Hebrew-language search queries was constructed to retrieve Holocaust-related content from X. Query construction drew on three complementary sources representing distinct forms of Holocaust discourse: institutional commemoration, professional news discourse, and vernacular digital culture.

Using computational extraction alongside iterative qualitative validation, we developed a final set of 76 Hebrew-language Holocaust-related bigrams and related search expressions (see Appendix 1). The query set combined recurring lexical patterns with qualitative refinement designed to capture institutional commemorative language alongside ironic, political, and vernacular Holocaust references circulating on X. Applying these queries, we retrieved posts, replies, and reposts with comments from X, yielding 4,673 items during the protest period and 4,348 items during the wartime period. To approximate Israeli-centred discourse, the dataset was limited to Hebrew-language content. While this does not fully exclude transnational participation, Hebrew-language usage serves as a strong proxy for discourse primarily oriented towards Israeli publics, particularly within politically engaged digital media environments. The analysis did not employ systematic bot identification. However, because the study examines patterns of mnemonic circulation and public visibility rather than individual intention, automated and semi-automated accounts were treated as part of the broader communicative ecology of the platform. The analysis began with temporal mapping of Holocaust-related discourse in order to distinguish between ongoing background levels of Holocaust-related discourse and periods of heightened mnemonic visibility. By examining time-series distributions, we identified significant spikes in posting activity in which Holocaust references increased sharply over short periods, indicating shifts in the public salience of Holocaust discourse during unfolding crisis events.

Building on this temporal identification, the analysis then traced patterns of directionality by examining how Holocaust references circulated across interactions among political elites, journalists, institutional actors, and digital publics. Particular attention was given to interactions between high-visibility accounts and broader patterns of uptake, amplification, contestation, reinterpretation, and vernacular circulation across the platform. High-visibility actors were identified through a combination of institutional prominence, verified public status, and repeated appearance within highly circulated interactional clusters during peak periods of activity.

Finally, the study incorporated qualitative analysis of posts sampled during identified peaks, focusing on the linguistic, symbolic, and affective forms through which Holocaust memory was articulated within crisis discourse. Qualitative examples were selected purposively in order to capture recurring analogical patterns, high-visibility interactions, and contrasting forms of mnemonic articulation across the two crisis periods. This qualitative examination focused on how Holocaust analogies were rhetorically constructed, emotionally intensified, symbolically negotiated, and publicly contested across different moments of political conflict and collective trauma.

Findings

Temporality: From mnemonic undercurrent to crisis-driven intensification

Figure 1 presents the daily distribution of Hebrew-language X posts containing Holocaust-related terms during the first 100 days of the judicial overhaul protests. One striking feature is the continuous presence of Holocaust references throughout the entire period. Rather than appearing only on commemorative occasions, Holocaust discourse persists as an ongoing mnemonic undercurrent embedded within routine public discourse. In the present analysis, this undercurrent functions as the baseline against which moments of crisis-driven intensification become visible as episodes of *Elicited Memory.*

Viewed alongside the corresponding distribution from the wartime period (Figure 2), the findings demonstrate that Holocaust references are not confined to ritual remembrance or commemorative events, but remain continuously available within everyday social media discourse. Across both periods, Holocaust analogies circulated within discussions that ostensibly bore no direct relation to Holocaust commemoration itself. Yet crisis conditions

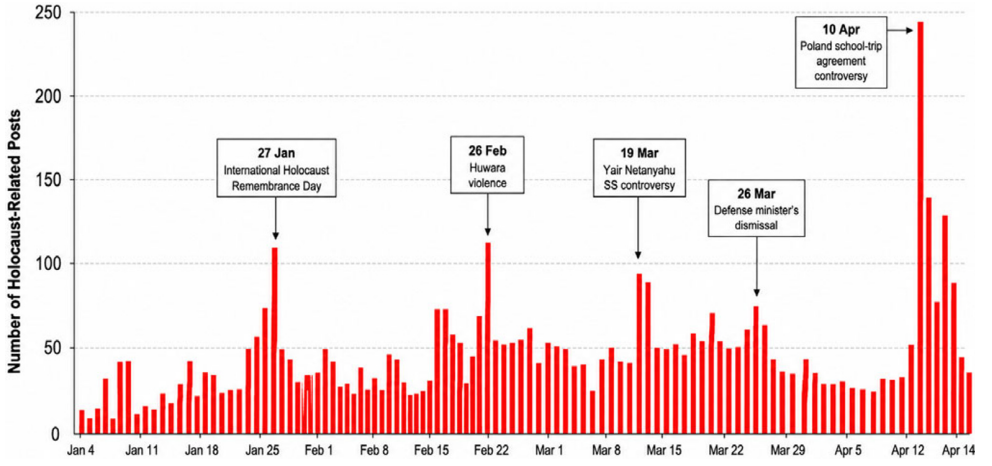


Figure 1. Daily frequency of Holocaust-related discourse during the protest period, January 4–April 14, 2023.

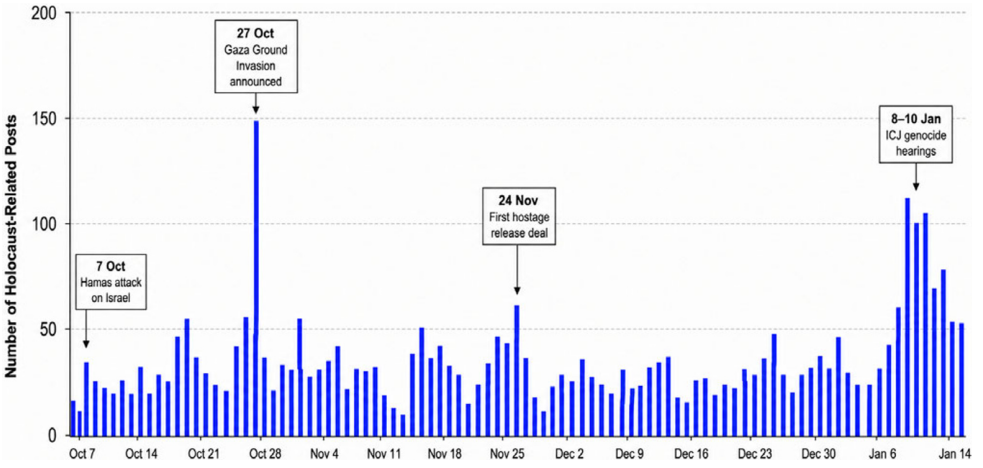


Figure 2. Daily frequency of Holocaust-related discourse during the war period, October 7, 2023–January 14, 2024.

reorganized this ongoing mnemonic presence into concentrated bursts of analogical activity surrounding unfolding political and traumatic events. The significance of these spikes lies not merely in increased visibility, but in the recurrent mobilization of Holocaust analogies as interpretive frameworks across heterogeneous actors, controversies, and crisis events. During the protest period, overall activity remained relatively stable, punctuated periodically by sharp bursts of mnemonic intensification (Figure 1). One early peak coincided with International Holocaust Remembrance Day, during which references were predominantly commemorative.

Most subsequent spikes, however, were closely tied to unfolding political controversies and contemporary conflicts rather than ritual memory itself. A major spike emerged on February 26 following the killing of two Israeli settlers in the Palestinian village of Huwara near Nablus. In the aftermath, Jewish extremists carried out a retaliatory violent attack in Huwara, including arson attacks on buildings and assaults on residents. Reports described extensive injuries, property destruction, and clashes involving settlers, Palestinians, and Israeli security forces. Holocaust analogies rapidly intensified within online discourse surrounding the event and remained highly prominent for several days, particularly through references linking the violence to historical persecution and pogrom imagery. The temporal clustering of Holocaust references around Huwara illustrates how contemporary violence can trigger sudden mnemonic activation in which Holocaust analogies become salient interpretive resources within the discourse surrounding the event.

The most pronounced spike during the protest period occurred on April 10, 2023, following controversy surrounding an agreement regulating Israeli school visits to Poland (Figure 1). A *Haaretz* investigation claimed that some recommended sites included in the agreement minimized or omitted Polish involvement in the persecution and murder of Jews during the Holocaust. Once the agreement circulated online, it generated extensive debate concerning Holocaust remembrance, historical responsibility, and the politics of memory. Holocaust discourse became increasingly entangled with broader anxieties surrounding democratic erosion, government legitimacy, and authoritarianism during the judicial overhaul protests. Here too, the spike reflected not only intense discussion of the Holocaust itself, but the growing use of Holocaust analogies as interpretive frameworks for understanding contemporary political developments.

While protest-period spikes were largely organized around contested political analogies and struggles over democratic legitimacy, wartime intensifications became increasingly structured around themes of existential threat, persecution, captivity, vulnerability, and historical trauma. The first major wartime peak emerged in late October 2023 following a United Nations Security Council speech by Israeli ambassador Gilad Erdan, who invoked Holocaust symbolism in response to international criticism of Israel's actions in Gaza. During the address, Erdan wore a yellow Star of David resembling those imposed on Jews during the Holocaust and argued that contemporary criticism of Israel echoed the international indifference shown towards Jews during the Holocaust. The intervention generated extensive public debate concerning the legitimacy, proportionality, and political meaning of Holocaust analogies during wartime.

A second major wartime analogy burst during the week of January 8–14, 2024, when the International Court of Justice held hearings regarding allegations that Israel violated the Genocide Convention. Holocaust references again became highly concentrated, particularly around debates concerning victimhood, persecution, moral inversion, and historical reversal. Many posts emphasized that former Israeli Supreme Court president Aharon Barak, himself a Holocaust survivor, participated in Israel's legal delegation, while others mobilized Holocaust analogies to challenge the legitimacy of the proceedings themselves. The hearings thus generated another moment in which Holocaust memory moved from ongoing mnemonic presence into interpretive salience within crisis discourse.

Across both periods, Holocaust discourse persisted as a continuous mnemonic undercurrent while becoming sharply reorganized around moments of political conflict, violence, and collective rupture. At the same time, Holocaust references also remained embedded within routine and often fragmented everyday discourse, appearing continuously across political commentary, humour, symbolic comparisons, and ordinary online interactions even outside major crisis peaks. These temporal bursts mark moments in which Holocaust analogies move from diffuse background circulation into publicly salient interpretive frameworks through which unfolding crises are narrated, emotionally negotiated, and morally interpreted in real time.

Directionality: Elite interventions and networked amplification

While the temporality dimension examined when Holocaust discourse intensified during moments of crisis, directionality concerns how Holocaust analogies gained visibility, legitimacy, and interpretive authority across networked media environments. Holocaust discourse did not circulate evenly across digital publics. Rather, Holocaust analogies frequently gained traction through interactions among institutional actors, journalists, political elites, and highly visible users whose interventions shaped how contemporary crises were framed through Holocaust memory. Directionality therefore concerns the processes through which mnemonic authority is amplified, contested, and publicly negotiated across digital publics.

The Huwara events provide a clear illustration of this dynamic. Following the retaliatory violence in the village, Ahmad Tibi, an Israeli member of parliament, posted images of burning Palestinian buildings captioned 'Kristallnacht in Huwara'. The post generated extensive engagement and rapidly became a focal point for subsequent Holocaust-related discourse. Vernacular analogical forms soon proliferated around the intervention, including formulations such as 'Huwara's Holocaust' and hashtags such as 'I too recognize the Holocaust of the Arabs of Huwara'. Similar formulations spread rapidly through reposts, replies, and derivative posts, illustrating how elite interventions often served as catalysts for broader vernacular circulation and reinterpretation.

A different directional pattern emerged during the Poland controversy. Posts by Haaretz journalist Ofer Aderet, Education Minister Yoav Kisch, opposition leader Yair Lapid, and

journalist Erel Segal generated extensive engagement and helped structure the broader online debate. Whereas the Huwara discourse centred on moral inversion and analogical accusation, the Poland controversy redirected mnemonic contestation towards questions of historical responsibility, democratic erosion, and political legitimacy. While many X users addressed the historical implications of the agreement itself, others connected Holocaust remembrance directly to contemporary anxieties surrounding authoritarianism and democratic decline during the judicial overhaul protests. Hence, for instance, responses to Kisch's post included comments such as 'Do students also learn how democracies collapse?' while other users incorporated images from anti-government demonstrations into debates surrounding Holocaust education and Polish wartime responsibility. Directionality in this case involved not only the circulation of Holocaust analogies, but also struggles over the shaping of their political meaning and interpretive boundaries.

The wartime corpus displayed similar directional dynamics, although the emotional register of Holocaust discourse became substantially narrower and more affectively charged. Following Gilad Erdan's speech at the United Nations Security Council, Holocaust symbolism rapidly became an object of intense public dispute. Dani Dayan, the chairperson of Yad Vashem, Israel's official Holocaust memorial institution, publicly criticized Erdan's use of the yellow badge, arguing that it symbolized Jewish helplessness under persecution rather than contemporary Israeli sovereignty and military might. Dayan's intervention generated substantial engagement, including both support and criticism. Some users defended his position, while others argued that the October 7 attack represented an even deeper rupture precisely because it occurred despite the existence of a sovereign Jewish state. Holocaust discourse during wartime was thus shaped through competing efforts to define the legitimacy and contemporary applicability of Holocaust analogies under conditions of perceived existential threat.

Directional dynamics also appeared during the ICJ hearings. Many posts emphasized the participation of Aharon Barak, the former President of the Israeli Supreme Court and a Holocaust survivor in Israel's legal delegation; correspondingly, journalists, politicians, and highly visible users circulated Holocaust analogies linking the proceedings to historical reversals of victimhood and persecution. One widely circulated formulation stated that 'The Hague trial is like Hitler blaming Anne Frank'. The analogy condensed complex geopolitical and legal debates into a morally charged mnemonic formulation that circulated rapidly across online discourse. Legal proceedings thus became intertwined with Holocaust symbolism, survivor biography, and competing claims regarding historical victimhood, legitimacy, and moral responsibility.

Holocaust references circulated widely across digital publics, yet moments of heightened mnemonic visibility frequently developed through interactions between elite interventions and broader processes of vernacular uptake, reinterpretation, and circulation. *Elicited Memory* therefore emerged through ongoing struggles over mnemonic and interpretive authority across digital publics, shaped through continuous interactions between institutional visibility and vernacular media practices. These dynamics align with broader normalization arguments in digital-politics research, according to which online discourse frequently reproduces existing hierarchies of visibility and authority even within ostensibly open online environments (Gibson and McAllister 2015; Bene 2023).

The vernacular of memory: Pragmatics, affect, and lexical reconfiguration

While temporality revealed when Holocaust discourse intensified and directionality examined how mnemonic authority circulated across digital publics, the vernacular layer reveals how Holocaust memory was pragmatically and affectively reworked within everyday discourse itself. It is at this level that Holocaust references become emotionally charged,

rhetorically flexible, and embedded within routine media practices. Holocaust-related figures and symbols were continuously recontextualized within contemporary communicative struggles, acquiring shifting meanings as users negotiated moral legitimacy, victimhood, fear, and political identification through recognizable mnemonic repertoires.

The figure of Anne Frank provides a particularly revealing example through which to examine the vernacular transformation of Holocaust memory across the two crisis periods. Although Anne Frank remains one of the most globally recognizable symbols of Holocaust remembrance, her invocation in these contexts did not reproduce a fixed commemorative meaning. Instead, her figure circulated through multiple ironic, parodic, and affective reinterpretations shaped by contemporary political conflict.

A notable example emerged during the protest period when Sara Netanyahu, wife of the Israeli Prime Minister, visited a hair salon in Tel Aviv's Kikar Hamedina while demonstrators gathered outside. Media reports described the scene as a 'siege', and Netanyahu later claimed that the incident 'could have ended in murder'. These descriptions generated a wave of ironic Holocaust analogies. Users juxtaposed images of Sara Netanyahu with those of Anne Frank, accompanied by captions such as 'Anne before the haircut' or mock 'diary' excerpts describing Netanyahu's imagined trauma. Additional posts extended the analogy sarcastically, including formulations such as 'Sara Netanyahu in the hair salon > Anne Frank in the attic'. Another user wrote: 'From Anne Frank's diary: If they had broken down the glass door, they would have killed me'. Such formulations reveal how Holocaust references functioned as ironic tools for moral inversion, mobilized to ridicule perceived exaggeration, elite victimhood, or claims viewed as detached from material danger.

Anne Frank's name was also mobilized in broader political commentary. Media personality Einav Galili shared a post criticizing politician Almog Cohen for referring to former Supreme Court president Aharon Barak, a Holocaust survivor, as 'privileged', adding sarcastically: 'Wait until Almog Cohen attacks other privileged people like Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, and Anne Frank'. The post generated extensive circulation and further ironic responses, including comments such as: 'Anne Frank got an attic, a penthouse. And she still has complaints'. Similar appropriations appeared in more routine everyday discourse. One user jokingly described suspicious looks received at a wedding 'as if I had turned Anne Frank over to the Nazis', while another described hiding in a bathroom from a cleaner through the formulation: 'Me in the bathroom/the cleaner 🤝 Anne Frank/the Nazis. Tok tok tok'. In such examples, Anne Frank functioned less as a stable commemorative figure and more as a highly adaptable mnemonic shorthand through which users negotiated exaggeration, ridicule, fear, victimhood, and political legitimacy across rapidly shifting communicative contexts.

This vernacular pattern shifted markedly following the October 7 attack. During wartime, ironic uses of Anne Frank largely disappeared. Instead, her figure resurfaced in posts describing actual experiences of hiding, fear, and vulnerability. Users invoked Anne Frank when describing civilians hiding from Hamas attackers, debating the safest locations inside their homes in case terrorists entered, or expressing existential anxiety regarding Jewish safety and survival. Anne Frank also appeared in discussions surrounding hostage Ofelia Roitman, who reportedly wrote a diary while in captivity, prompting posts such as: 'Anne Frank could write, why not Ofelia Roitman?'

The same mnemonic figure thus continued to circulate across both crises, yet its pragmatic, affective, and moral functions shifted dramatically – from ironic political parody to emotionally charged expressions of fear, hiding, vulnerability, and existential threat. The findings, therefore, suggest that a crisis does not necessarily generate entirely new mnemonic repertoires, but rather reorganizes the rhetorical boundaries and emotional uses of already familiar historical symbols. Similar transformations affected not only figures associated with victimhood but also representations of Holocaust perpetrators. During

the protest period, figures such as Heinrich Himmler were frequently invoked as generalized symbols of authoritarianism through hyperbolic comparisons directed at political actors associated with the judicial overhaul. In contrast, wartime discourse shifted towards more affectively grounded references, particularly to Josef Mengele, in posts describing alleged Hamas 'selection' processes among Israeli hostages held in Gaza, or comparing abuses committed during captivity to Nazi practices. Such analogical tropes have previously appeared in Israeli media discourse (Nossek 1994), but here they re-emerge in contemporary networked media environments. These invocations moved from relatively abstract political analogy towards more emotionally anchored comparisons, reflecting the transition from political conflict to perceived existential trauma.

These vernacular transformations also became visible at the lexical level, where broader shifts in affective tone and interpretive framing became sedimented into recurring analogical constructions and patterned linguistic repertoires. In the protest corpus, prominent terms frequently invoked authoritarianism and democratic decline, including references to 'Nuremberg Laws', 'Nazi Germany', 'yellow badge', and 'the Third Reich'. By contrast, wartime discourse foregrounded more affectively charged expressions such as 'gas chambers', 'extermination', 'Holocaust victims', and 'like sheep to the slaughter', reflecting intensified perceptions of violence, captivity, vulnerability, and existential threat following October 7. Some expressions appeared in both corpora, yet their rhetorical function and emotional resonance shifted considerably between the two contexts.

A particularly revealing manifestation of this dynamic appeared in the widespread use of the phrase structure 'the Holocaust of [name/event/phenomenon]'. During the protest period, such formulations spanned a remarkably broad range of rhetorical registers. Alongside expected commemorative references to 'the Holocaust of European Jewry', users extended the structure into political analogies, metaphorical expressions, and openly parodic uses, including 'the Holocaust of Ukraine', 'the Holocaust of Huwara', 'the Holocaust of the Climate', and playful formulations such as 'the Holocaust of the Cucumbers' or 'the Holocaust of the Zombies'. In these expressions, 'the Holocaust' functioned less as a bounded historical referent than as a flexible rhetorical template through which users intensified claims of injustice, absurdity, persecution, or symbolic harm across highly diverse contexts.

In contrast, wartime uses of the same structure became markedly narrower and more sombre. Common formulations included 'the Holocaust of the South [of Israel]', 'the Holocaust of October 7', or 'the Holocaust of the Black Sabbath', directly linking Holocaust language to experiences of massacre, captivity, violence, and collective trauma. Other formulations, such as 'the Holocaust of ISIS-Hamas', framed the attacks as existential and genocidal threats. A smaller but politically charged subset used the same structure to assign blame and responsibility, including accusatory formulations such as 'Netanyahu's Holocaust'. Yet despite these competing appropriations, the ironic and playful register that characterized many protest-period formulations largely disappeared during wartime.

Under conditions of collective trauma, Holocaust memory becomes less rhetorically expansive and increasingly organized around narrower repertoires of persecution, vulnerability, captivity, and existential threat. The same mnemonic figures continue to circulate, yet the range of analogical play contracts considerably as crisis intensifies. These vernacular transformations demonstrate how *Elicited Memory* operates not through the emergence of entirely new mnemonic symbols, but through shifts in the pragmatic boundaries, emotional intensity, and interpretive functions of already familiar historical repertoires. Crisis therefore reorganizes not only the visibility of Holocaust discourse, but also the conditions under which Holocaust memory can be publicly articulated, negotiated, and emotionally inhabited within digital environments.

Discussion and conclusions: Elicited Memory as a crisis-driven mode of remembrance

This article examined how Holocaust memory shifts from persistent mnemonic undercurrents to heightened discursive salience during moments of political conflict and collective trauma within networked media. Across both the judicial overhaul protests and the post-October 7 wartime period, Holocaust references functioned as a persistent mnemonic undercurrent within Israeli public culture, continuously present within everyday discourse even outside explicitly commemorative contexts, yet becoming sharply intensified during moments of rupture. These spikes were significant not merely because Holocaust discourse became more visible, but because relatively limited analogical repertoires became repeatedly mobilized across heterogeneous actors and crisis events as frameworks for interpreting unfolding realities.

The findings demonstrate that Holocaust memory in digital environments operates not only as commemorative remembrance or diffuse cultural background, but also as a dynamic infrastructure for crisis interpretation. Rather than emerging only through formal memorial practices or isolated analogical references, Holocaust memory becomes temporarily consolidated as a salient framework for making sense of unfolding crises. Under such conditions, Holocaust analogies become increasingly prominent within efforts to interpret political conflict, violence, and social rupture. Within the discourse examined, Holocaust memory operates as a recurrent interpretive resource through which events are publicly narrated, emotionally processed, and morally evaluated as crises unfold.

Moreover, the findings complicate the conventional distinction between commemorative and non-commemorative memory that has long structured scholarship on mediated remembrance (Schudson 1997, 2014). Holocaust discourse in digital environments did not operate exclusively through ritualized commemorative forms, nor merely as diffuse background memory embedded within everyday discourse. Rather, the findings demonstrate how crisis conditions temporarily reorganize the relationship between these two mnemonic modes. The symbolic authority historically associated with institutional commemoration becomes rapidly reactivated within vernacular online media, allowing Holocaust memory to move from latent mnemonic undercurrents into highly visible interpretive frameworks during moments of rupture.

The findings also suggest that these processes emerge through the interaction of three interrelated dynamics: temporality, directionality, and vernacular articulation. Temporally, Holocaust discourse shifted from continuous background presence into intensified spikes linked to moments of political violence, institutional controversy, legal confrontation, and collective trauma. Directionally, mnemonic intensification developed through interactions among institutional actors, journalists, political elites, and digital publics, rather than through either purely top-down orchestration or purely bottom-up participation. Vernacularly, Holocaust references underwent ongoing rhetorical transformation as analogies circulated through irony, parody, symbolic condensation, emotional escalation, hashtags, memes, and everyday linguistic improvisation.

The findings also reveal a process of mnemonic compression, through which the complexity of the Holocaust is repeatedly mediated through a recognizable repertoire of names, figures, symbols, and analogical templates within everyday discourse. Across the corpus, recurring references to figures such as Anne Frank, Adolf Hitler, Josef Mengele, Auschwitz, or Kristallnacht suggest how vast historical realities can be rendered accessible through a comparatively limited set of mnemonic shortcuts. These recurring symbols function not merely as historical references, but as resources through which publics negotiate fear, victimhood, persecution, legitimacy, and moral responsibility under conditions of crisis.

At the same time, heightened mnemonic intensification did not produce a unified or stable interpretive consensus. During the protest period, Holocaust memory largely functioned as a flexible interpretive repertoire, accommodating ironic, provocative, strategic, humorous, and parodic forms of analogy. Following October 7, however, this flexibility increasingly gave way to an imperative of comparison: within the Holocaust-related discourse we examined, Holocaust analogies were framed not merely as legitimate, but as morally necessary for interpreting the scale and meaning of the attacks. This shift resonates with Koselleck and Richter's (2006) understanding of crisis as a condition in which mounting pressure narrows the range of available interpretations and generates a perceived need for judgement and decision. In the present case, a relatively open field of historical comparison increasingly narrowed into a perceived interpretive necessity through which the attacks and their aftermath were rendered morally and historically intelligible.

This narrowing was also reflected in the analogical repertoire itself, which became increasingly structured around persecution, captivity, existential vulnerability, and historical threat. Yet Holocaust analogies continued to circulate across competing political positions and conflicting moral claims. Crisis-driven mnemonic intensification therefore did not stabilize Holocaust discourse around a singular authoritative narrative; instead, it intensified struggles over symbolic legitimacy, proportionality, victimhood, and historical comparison itself.

In this respect, the findings extend Edy's (1999, 2006) work on historical analogy by showing how digital platforms accelerate and intensify analogical reasoning in real time during moments of crisis. They also extend the directional dimension of *Elicited Memory* by demonstrating that historical meanings do not merely circulate among actors, but are continually appropriated, reframed, and contested as they move across political and interpretive settings. This understanding builds on Rothberg's (2009) concept of multidirectional memory, which conceptualizes public memory not as a zero-sum competition over scarce symbolic resources, but as a dynamic and relational process of borrowing, cross-referencing, and negotiation among different historical memories. The findings show that such multidirectionality persists under conditions of heightened mnemonic intensification: Holocaust analogies are taken up across competing political positions, adapted to divergent moral claims, and repeatedly rearticulated as they move among institutional actors, journalists, and digital publics. Intensification may therefore narrow the range of available analogical forms without producing interpretive closure. Moments of *Elicited Memory* thus remain sites of contestation over the legitimacy, proportionality, and political meaning of Holocaust invocation itself.

The findings also clarify the role of agency within processes of mnemonic intensification. *Elicited Memory* is neither purely top-down nor purely bottom-up. While high-visibility actors frequently trigger or amplify mnemonic spikes, their interventions gain traction only through uptake, circulation, repetition, and reinterpretation by digital publics. Yet vernacular participation does not merely reproduce elite framing. Holocaust analogies are frequently transformed, exaggerated, redirected, parodied, condensed, and contested as they circulate across heterogeneous interpretive communities. Moments of *Elicited Memory*, therefore, emerge through interactional processes in which institutional framing and vernacular participation jointly shape the ongoing negotiation of mnemonic meaning.

In this respect, the findings build upon Hoskins' (2011, 2017) conceptualization of connective and distributed memory, which emphasizes how digital media environments transform memory into an ongoing, networked, and participatory process. However, whereas connective memory scholarship primarily explains how digital media sustain the continuous circulation of memory across platforms, *Elicited Memory* identifies the crisis conditions under which particular historical repertoires are activated as especially salient interpretive frameworks. The contribution of the present analysis, therefore, lies not simply

in demonstrating that Holocaust memory circulates across digital networks, but in explaining how moments of rupture intensify and temporarily foreground specific analogical repertoires as publicly salient frameworks for interpreting unfolding crises.

Consistent with memory studies scholarship's understanding of media as central mnemonic agents, the findings further demonstrate that networked ecology not only circulates Holocaust memory but also actively shapes the conditions under which particular mnemonic repertoires acquire heightened public visibility and interpretive salience during moments of crisis. Holocaust memory, in the cases studied, did not emerge retrospectively after crisis events had stabilized into historical narratives. Rather, memory operated simultaneously with unfolding events themselves, shaping interpretation in real time as crises were still being experienced, contested, and emotionally processed. The analysis, therefore, highlights how networked media increasingly blur distinctions between remembrance and immediacy, retrospective interpretation and real-time crisis sense-making, and institutional commemoration and vernacular participation.

The analysis, therefore, suggests that Holocaust references are mobilized during crises not simply as rhetorical comparisons but also as rapidly activated interpretive frameworks through which publics negotiate fear, legitimacy, victimhood, responsibility, and historical meaning in real time. More broadly, the dynamics identified here may illuminate processes that extend beyond Holocaust memory in Israel. While the Holocaust occupies a uniquely central place within Israeli cultural memory, similar forms of mnemonic intensification may emerge wherever historically significant collective traumas become mobilized as widely recognizable interpretive frameworks during moments of uncertainty, threat, political conflict, or collective rupture within digital environments.

These conclusions should nevertheless be understood in light of several limitations. The analysis focuses exclusively on Hebrew-language discourse on X and therefore reflects the communicative dynamics of a specific platform within a particular sociopolitical context. While X enables the observation of rapid interpretive interactions among political elites, institutional actors, journalists, and networked publics, its user base and communicative norms are not representative of Israeli public discourse as a whole. The findings should therefore be understood as capturing dynamics of networked mediation rather than broader collective attitudes within Israeli society. Moreover, the platform's accelerated, algorithmically amplified, and often confrontational communicative environment may privilege emotionally intensified, conflict-oriented, and highly visible forms of mnemonic expression.

Methodologically, reliance on keyword-based retrieval necessarily excludes implicit, visual, audiovisual, or multimodal Holocaust references that lack recognizable textual markers. The analysis therefore does not systematically address memes, images, symbolic visual references, or video-based mnemonic practices. Future research employing multimodal, cross-platform, and cross-linguistic approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how mnemonic intensification operates across increasingly hybrid digital media ecologies.

Beyond these empirical limitations, the conceptual scope of *Elicited Memory* also invites further theoretical development. Although the present analysis focuses on historically constituted mnemonic repertoires, future research might examine whether *Elicited Memory* also extends to idealized, nostalgic, or mythologized pasts (e.g., Boym 2001; Bauman 2017). Such cases may involve comparable processes through which culturally available representations of a lost or idealized past become activated and intensified during moments of social, political, or economic crisis, emerging as salient interpretive resources for making sense of present dislocation, perceived decline, or uncertainty. One possible context for exploring such an extension is the contested re-emergence of Franco as a moral and political exemplar in contemporary Spain, where an authoritarian and partially mythologized past has been mobilized amid present-day political conflict as an interpretive alternative to the present (Ferrándiz 2022).

Moreover, future comparative research might examine whether similar forms of crisis-driven mnemonic intensification emerge around other foundational traumas, national myths, wars, or historical catastrophes across different societies, media systems, and cultural contexts. Such work would help clarify both the empirical scope and the theoretical boundaries of *Elicited Memory*, including whether it remains an episodic and crisis-dependent mode of mediated remembrance or develops into more enduring interpretive formations within political culture.

Data availability statement. The data supporting the findings of this study are available on the X platform. These data are subject to availability restrictions. Anonymized data are available from the authors upon request.

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Appendix 1: List of Holocaust-related Hebrew bigrams

Adolf Eichmann; Adolf Hitler; Aktion; Anne Frank; Auschwitz Birkenau; Auschwitz camp; Belzec Sobibor; Bergen Belsen; concentration camp; Dachau camp; death camp; death march; dp camp; einsatzgruppe; Elie Wiesel; extermination camp; final solution; gas chamber; German

SS; Heinrich Himmler; Holocaust denial; Holocaust victim; Holocaust remembrance; John Demjanjuk; Josef Mengele; kristallnacht night; Lodz ghetto; Nazi Germany; Nuremberg trial; operation Reinhard; Raul Hilberg; Schindler; six million; Treblinka camp; Wannsee conference; Warsaw ghetto; Yad Vashem; Adam Czerniaków; Aryan race; Chelmno camp; crematoria; Drancy camp; Efraim Zuroff; forced labor camps; Gabor Neumann; gestapo; ghetto; Holocaust and revival; Holocaust day; Holocaust memory; Holocaust's lessons; International Holocaust remembrance day; Janusz Korczak; judenrat; Kovno ghetto; like sheep to slaughter; Lohamei Hageta'ot (the ghetto fighters kibbutz); march of the living; Minsk ghetto; Nazis and their collaborators; Nazi oppressor(s); perished (in the Holocaust); race laws; racism; reparations; Richard Williamson; Riga ghetto; righteous among the nations; second generation; swastika; Theresienstadt ghetto; third generation; third reich; transport (de); Vilno ghetto; witness; yellow star; youth educational trips to Poland; zikaron basalon (memory in the living room).

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