**Watermelon Fights: Narrative Wars in the US over the Palestine Conflict (DRAFT)**

**By: Kal Brown**

I began working on this paper sometime in January of this year, inspired by various interactions I’ve had since October 7th, 2023. I’ve been involved in protests, organizing events, and workshops aiming to help the Palestinian people. I’ve seen social media posts, videos, and infographics detailing and revealing the atrocities being committed by the Israeli government and the denial of them by Western powers in mainstream media. I’ve consumed books, films, and documentaries, by Iserali and Palesntin artists, historians, and academics. And I have had various interactions with Palestinians, Israelis, Zionists, Anti-Zionists, and everyone in between, discussing the attack on Gaza.

As a scholar I am interested in manifestations of modern colonialism and colonial legacies today, motivated in part by its impact felt in my family. As a result, I was focused primarily on the colonial legacy of African Americans and Native Americans in the United States. As a result, my understanding of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict and America’s role was limited. Unsurprisingly, initially, I was shocked that such a clear example of colonial setter violence with genocidal intentions was a topic considered up for debate.

But one particular baffling conversation I had in December last year finally led to this paper’s construction. I met a 65-year-old white Christian man from North Carolina. Our conversation led to Palestine after talking about various he expressed concern over his grandson attending Harvard due to the pro-Palestinian student protesters and the lack of repercussions against them. As we exchanged our differing perspectives on the situation, two statements he made stuck with me. One, he believed that the younger generations were being naive, stupid, or misled by social media and mainstream news sources. And two, he was insistent that Palestine as a nation and people never existed, and the concept is a fabrication to justify anti-semitism. It was not just the extreme denial of the history and perspectives of Palesitans that I found concerning, but the completely different narrative understanding of the conflict as well. This led me to investigate the role of cultural memory, colonial narratives, and social media on the American public’s response to the Palestinian catastrophe.

**American Perception of Colonialism**

Colonial narratives are collective memory structures that exist to justify, glorify, normalize, and legitimize the exploitation, dehumanization, theft, and destruction of Indigenous communities and cultures by a colonial state. As a result, these narratives often promote racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism and use them as tools to exploit the population that colonizers oppress and to maintain control. However colonial narratives were created during the major colonial periods of European nations, and since the decolonization movement after WWII, colonial narratives are present but are not actively evolving, since the states that designed these narratives no longer predominantly rely on their construction (Ono 2009). However, as moral standards shifted since the “decolonization” period, explicit colonial narratives are largely disliked by modern audiences. However, colonial structures and narratives still exist, and impact the world, they were just adapted into a more subtle manifestation.

Neocolonial narratives are created by active neocolonial states, such as the United States, to justify their continued colonial legacies and abuse, through the repression of colonial horrors from the collective memory and imagination. The goal of neocolonial narratives is to adapt colonial narratives and justifications so they better align with contemporary standards of morality to allow the public to be more comfortable with the state's current colonial standing. Neocolonial narratives will make adaptations to colonial narratives by including elements of modern standards of morality such as feminism, environmentalism, multiculturalism, and liberalism These adaptations function to make overt oppression covert. Phenomena such as green-washing and pink-washing, in which neo-colonial powers justify their colonialism by claiming to be more environmentally conscious or LGBT-friendly, are examples of neocolonial narratives (Ono, 2009). Additionally, neocolonial narratives employ the usage of visual and metaphorical symbolism to replicate colonial power dynamics between subjects in the films, providing an additional layer of subtext that audiences internalize but are often unaware of (Ono, 2009).

The American public's relationship with colonialism has shifted once again over the last 30 years. Cultural manifestations of the perceptual shift can be seen in media representations of colonial conflicts such as Frozen 2 and Black Panther, and the now common usage of land acknowledgment of the various Native American populations that were displaced and killed in the American Colonial project. The manifestations demonstrate a need in the American public to rectify colonial legacies and answer the questions of accountability, guilt, and political responsibility. However, this trend seems to be largely affiliated with more liberal or left-wing spaces, and there are several divides across the American public regarding its colonial actions past and present, leading to the discourse surrounding the validity of the claims of American colonization and a reactionary pushback against claims of past and current American colonial actions. Furthermore, it can be easily argued that these anti-colonial demonstrations act primarily as counterinsurgent tactics, to appease public discomfort with colonial legacies, without engaging in the actual demands of colonized people. A key factor fueling this tension across the American public is the strength of colonial and neocolonial narratives in the nation’s cultural memory, and the several incentives the American government has to deny its continual (neo)colonial actions. Rarely does the American public view the nation’s domestic or foreign actions as colonial, partly due to a lack of general understanding of neocolonialism, and partly due to the naturalization of these actions. As a result, there are some tensions in the public surrounding colonialism, but rarely is it central to core national conversations. That said, I believe that the division in the nation’s opinion on colonization is exemplified by the contrasting responses to the Israeli attack upon the Palasitans diaspora starting October, 7th 2023.

In 2018, the NDN Collective launched the LandBack movement for North American Indigenous nations to revive and continue the efforts of their ancestries to regain political and economic control over their homeland, Turtle Island, now known as the United States of America. This movement directly calls into question the lasting and continuing impacts of colonialism, not only by the US but by other political entities as well. Their campaign includes building institutions to uplift and center Indigenous communities, protesting, and fighting for legislative change, changing the national narratives of America’s colonial legacy, and addressing their current neocolonial actions. For example, the NDN Collective identified the building of the DAPL as a continuation of colonial exploitation of the land. While the NDN Collective made headlines from 2019 to 2021, their national media attention has fallen recently. Still, their social media engagement has been consistent, and their advocacy for other indigenous populations is ongoing.

Unsurprisingly, the NDN Collective directly ties their efforts for LandBack to the Palestine people’s fight for the Right of Return, for both movements are efforts to combat the ever-present and central influence of unjust colonial structures and preservation in international affairs upon native peoples globally (Right of Return is Landback - NDN Collective, 2024). The NDN Collective has supported and stood in solidarity with the Pasletestian people since October 7th, calling for a ceasefire. The NDN Collective and other Indigenous activist groups in the US are not alone in their support of Palestinians, several black activists and organizations have supported the Palestinian cause for decades, due to the similarities seen in the oppression imposed upon by the American and Israeli states respectively. That said, activist groups and organizations acknowledge and challenge colonial structures and actions domestically and abroad. However, the general American consensus is more difficult to pinpoint.

The American education system rarely discusses colonialism outside of the British colonial period over the 13 colonies. History classes will discuss American colonialism only in colonial narratives that justify and glamorous the events, such as through the narrative of manifest destiny. Any critical reading of American colonial settler actions is glossed over or framed as unfortunate but necessary events to lead to the nation to its current success. Additionally, colonialism is not fully defined in the education system, allowing for a limited understanding of the topic. For example, both world wars had colonial tensions and motivations, the second war especially, seeing how both Germany and Japan were aiming to expand their colonial empires trhough the war. Yet, this is absent from the American education system. Intentionally so that the American public is less inclined to question the nation’s colonial systems. In addition to the US education system, support of colonials' narrative justifications permeates into our news, entertainment, and culture. So while most Americans are comfortable labeling colonialization as bad, especially since the post-coloanal movement, most are not able to identify the various manifestations of colonialism past or current.

When the American public’s perception of colonialism is challenged, they are momentarily made aware of the legacy and conflict, and media and education are utilized to create adjustments to the colonial narrative, to ease the discomfort created. The longstanding cultural narrative framing of colonialism has left the general American public inclined toward overlooking long-standing colonial exploitations, which have been continuously exploited during the Siege on Gaza.

Approximately 11 months ago, Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Hamas), the political and military entity that loosely represents the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip, conducted an attack against the state of Israel, killing roughly 1,200 Israeli citizens, and taking 253 hostages. The purpose of Hamas’ attack was to make clear that the issues that Palestinians faced under the hands of the Israeli government were not topics that Israeli or Global citizens could afford to ignore (Byman & Holtz, 2023). In alignment with this goal, Hamas used the hostages they took on Oct. 7th to negotiate with the state of Israel to release thousands of wrongfully imprisoned Palestinians that the state had taken (Al Jazeera, 2023).

However, the mainstream (western) media representation of the attack privileges the Israeli narratives and viewpoints, ignoring and enabling the greater colonial conflict at hand. Missing from most reports are the decades of injustices and violence Palestinians have faced under the Israeli settler colonial project. The state of Israel is a settler colonial state established in 1949, after the forceful and illegal displacement and murder of Palestinians that took place during the Nakba. Roughly 53% of the historic Palestinian population was forced to seek refugee in neighboring nations, expelling roughly 800,000 people from Palestine. Allowing the Israeli state to form under its vision of a Jewish-majority state (Bishara, 2022). However, unlike other colonial settler states, like the US who were able to find largely well-received narrative solutions to either erase or naturalize their colonial histories, allowing these states to enter a neocolonial position, Israel is unable to follow suit, due to the political structuring of the nation. In addition, the current far-right political party running the state has made it clear that they want to complete the initial goal established by the Zionist leaders in the late 1800s, to establish an ethnostate for European Jews in Palestine (Dagres, 2023; Zion, 2022; Guyer, 2023; Arablouei, 2024). As a result, the millions of Palestinians who live under military occupation within the Israeli border have been under consistent threats and acts of violence by the Israeli military and settlers who established new illegal settlements in the West Bank. The violent Colonial actions of the Israeli government are obvious and apparent, however, the majority of the general public in Western nations was either unaware of the scope of the conflict or largely sided with Israel.

This trend is greatly reflected in the language and framing used to report the siege. The conflict has largely been referred to as the Isreal-Hamas war, when terms such as siege, genocide, or invasion, would be more adept to describe the disproportional violence inflicted upon Gaza (and Lebanon). Sources that do report the deaths of innocent Palestinians opt for passive and vague language and reporting that underplays the severity of death and destruction being inflicted upon Gazans by the Israeli state. In conjunction many political commentators, politicians, news organizations, and civilians frame the conflict as a complex and unmanageable situation as a deflection and offer an implied conclusion, that Hamas was the instigator and that the retaliation from Israel is justified. To support claims of Israel's right to self-defense, sources, and officials have reported exaggerated or falsified stories of attacks by Hamas to further dehumanize and vilify Palestinians, to sway public opinion on the matter. However, these tactics are not unique, they are simply a modern manifestation of colonial narrative tactics that justify and excuse the immoral actions of colonial actors upon their target populations for centuries.

Since early October of 2023, the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip has been continuously bombarded by the Israeli state, forcing millions of Palestinians to flee or die. According to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, as of the 24th of April, over 42,000 Palestinians have been murdered by the Israeli state in their largely one-sided “war” against Hamas (2024). Millions of Palestinians, are experiencing famine, disease, and housing insecurity due to the deliberate and illegal actions of the Israeli state. While the severity of this attack is previously unmatched, the bombing, killing, and forced relocation of Palestinians is, unfortunately, a common occurrence for the last 70 years. The key difference now is the global and for the focus of this paper, American reaction to Israel’s attack. The disproportionate violence that the Israeli state has enacted upon the population of the Gaza Strip has drastically impacted the perception that certain populations of the globe had of the Israeli government and the state itself, noticeably in younger populations.

The Pew Research Center reports that American citizens under the age of 30 have drastically more critical and negative perceptions of the Israeli government and their actions in Gaza compared to older American populations (Silver, 2024). Accompanied by a significant drop in general American support for Israel over the last year due to Israel’s actions (Jones, 2024). In this alignment, approximately one-third of the American population believes that the Israeli government is committing genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza (Luscombe, 2024). This shift presents a significant change regarding the Palestinian/Israeli conflict due to the role that the US plays in supporting Israel’s actions. The United States is Israel’s strongest ally and has provided substantial funds to Israel’s military for decades (Bishara, 2022; Narea, 2023). While several Nations, UN officials, and Non-governmental international organizations have attempted to hold the state of Israel accountable for their repeated violations, the United States has consistently vetoed these resolutions, as well as resolutions that affirm the rights of Palestinians (O’Dell, 2023). In conjunction, the US government, lobbying groups, and the state of Israel have invested billions of dollars into installing a pro-Israeli narrative into the American consciousnesses (Baroud, 2017; Zirin, 2024). The shift in the American public’s perception of America’s complicity in the ongoing attack on Gaza, stresses the United States' ability to blindly support Israel’s war crimes (McGreal, 2024).

The recent shift from the American public’s opinion of Israel is largely due to the introduction of highly accessible Palestinian counter-narratives that younger generations have access to due to the prominence and ubiquity of social media platforms with video streaming features (Mohammed, 2024). On social media sites such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, and Twitter, now for the first time, the Global public has access to first-hand testimonies, witnessing, and perspectives of Palestinians who are experiencing the genocide in Gaza and from Palestinians across the diaspora, who provide insights to the severity and scope of the series of crisis that Palestinians have endured under the Israeli colonial regime. The videos that Palestinians and their allies have created online before and after October 7th provide not only evidence and context of the ongoing crisis in Gaza but also serve as historical and narrative interventions for the general public. These creators not only discuss the history of Palestinians with Zionism and the Israeli state, but also inform viewers of Palestinian culture, myths, heroes, and their everyday lives. It is through the representation of everyday life and perspectives that Palestinians effectively create an affective narrative strong enough to enforce their anti-colonial narrative to sufficiently challenge zionist narratives enforced by the Israeli and American actors (Adib, 2023).

As a result, what I consider a ‘war of narratives’ has emerged during this conflict, although it has also been called an information war (Adib, 2023). In response to the rise of Pro-Palestine content and rhetoric in online discourse and spaces, social media companies such as Meta and TikTok attempted to censor the content and the content creators (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Both Facebook and Instagram were accused of removing and suspending accounts sharing information from Gaza or about Palestine, and taking down the accounts of Palestinian activist organizers and organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Recently, Instagram implemented a new content moderation setting to reduce political information on your story, significantly decreasing users’ interaction with Palestinian content if you do not turn the setting off. In contrast, these platforms have promoted Israeli narratives and shown Ads promoting birthright trips or vacationing to Israel. Several users across the platforms (myself included) noticed birthright trips to Israel ads appearing on our for you page on TikTok, and Hulu ads blaming the Israeli destruction of the Gaza strip as the fault of Hamas (Krishnan, 2024). Outside of social media, American mainstream news media and political figures are committed to framing criticism of Israel’s actions as anti-Semitic (Al Jazeera, 2024). A narrative tool that Zionists and the Israeli government have used to avoid accountability for decades.

The usage of mass media impacts the international and political reputation of both Palestinians and Israelis is vital. Still, it is important to note that it did not emerge with social media. Both Palestinian and Israeli governing groups and citizens have been producing films to share, reflect, shape, or establish their collective national identities, struggles, and positionality globally for over a century. Zionist political leaders quickly utilized film as a tool to cultivate and influence people to join their cause and once the state of Israel was established, they used film to curate and reinforce their newly formed national identity. I argue that the emergence and use of activist film by Palestinian social media creators is following the tradition of activist filmmaking practices across the Palestinian diaspora that emerged after the Nakba. The importance of this global and regional narrative influence is reflected in Israel’s harsh and undemocratic ban on pro-Palestinian films and journalist groups, as seen in the recent closing of the Israeli branch of Al Jezzea (Al Jazeera Staff, 2024). In addition, some U.S. congressional leaders listed pro-Palestian favoritism as a justification for enforcing a ban on the app (Marcus, 2024).

I will elaborate on how the Palestinians' social media posts from October 7th to now are directly countering long-standing Zionist myths created to justify the colonization of Palestine, the strategies that Palestinian and pro-Palestinian social media users and influencers use to beat censorship, and possible implications for the future role of social media in American political campaigns.

**Theoretical Framework**

***Role of Film and Narratives in Social Movements:***

Films have played a vital role in social movements since the early 1900s, for their ability to quickly share narratives that relate to or impact the audience's understanding of history, collective identity, and conceptualization of everyday life. Narratives are powerful effective tools for collective identity construction, serving as the glue that holds collective imaginations (common understandings of a population) together by giving meaning to events, experiences, and observations (Moody-Adams, 2022). These narratives generate an affective atmosphere, allowing them to involve strong emotions that are attached to the time, space, and abstracts that influence one’s understanding of the world (Gerbaudo, 2022). Through the collective imagination, identity narratives are preserved through myths, legends, images, and stories shared within the community that shape or reinforce how the society functions. Allowing for the normalization and acceptance of specific institutional and social facets of society through embodiment from the affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009; Gerbaudo, 2022). However, narratives are used to justify and reinforce the exploitation and oppression of social groups, by limited agency, diminishing humanity, and marginalizing them. To decenter and remove these harmful narratives from the collective imagination, social movements must engage in narrative activism.

According to Michele Moody-Adams, narrative activism is the effort social movements must take to revise or replace societal narratives that allow for the oppression of social groups (2022). Narrative activism serves to restore the agency and provide justice for those who have been harmed by systemic violence. In doing so, the affective atmosphere of collective identities is altered, allowing for shifts in identity construction to be felt and embodied in time and space (Gerbaudo, 2022), eventually becoming a social foundation. Narrative activism shifts perceptions of reality, shifting the way people act in their everyday lives. The changes within everyday life can lead to powerful revolutionary changes in society (Bayat, 2021). Impacting dominant groups by shifting their affective relationship with the group seeking justice, leads to easier acceptance of the narratives. However, due to the strong affective ties that narratives curate within groups, the introduction of new challenging narratives when not carefully introduced can spur a strong rejection from the general public, or more specifically the dominant group that benefits from the oppressive narratives. At times this rejection can manifest in feelings of perceived victimization, in which the oppressive group accuses those who have been historically victimized to be victimizers themselves.

To avoid this outcome, there are several measures that narrative activists must engage in to be an effective tool for justice. Firstly, they should work in conjunction with other activist efforts aligned with the same goal that directly addresses policy, education, economics, and lifestyle. By tackling multiple elements of society, it can eventually bridge the difference in cognitive tools needed to understand and accept the competing narrative. The narratives have to work to effectively engage with the current social imaginary of the target audience, and avoid promoting harmful narratives that target another group unintentionally. They must provide perspectival orders in the narrative, that seek to establish timelines of events that do not create confusion of historical timelines or strip agency of any groups involved. And lastly, narrative activism must provide an empathetic and informed portrayal of all members involved with the injustice being remedied. It is the key factor of empathy and respect that will ultimately allow narrative activism to effectively counter preexisting harmful dominant narratives in society (Moody-Adams, 2022). If narrative activism fulfills these elements, then the narrative created by the groups will be harder to dismiss or misinterpret.

Film’s ability to combine music, visual images, and textual/audio stories together in a relatively digestible fashion allows for greater portions of the public to engage in and consume multiple aspects of culture that are infused with identity narratives, and invoke a strong affective reaction quickly by calling upon established narratives quickly and subconsciously. Unsurprisingly, Film has been a key tool utilized in Palestine and Israeli cinema in part because they are effective tools to disseminate collective identity constructs, and they are able to appeal to a wide range of audiences to gain support for their causes. That said, I argue that the majority of the work done in early Israeli cinema is establishing and reinforcing colonial narratives that subjugate and harm Palestinians, which is why a core focus of my narrative analysis will center on colonial and neo-colonial narratives specifically.

***Colonial and NeoColonial Narratives***

To conduct my analysis, I will be borrowing from Kent Ono’s neocolonial analysis, which aims to make covert colonial messaging in current media narratives overt. The shift from overt colonial narratives to convert neocolonial narratives can be seen in the development of Israeli films, as the nation’s relationship with its past continued to evolve. However, due to several factors including Israel's current ongoing explicit colonial project under Netanyahu's governance, the complete shift to the exclusive usage of neocolonial narratives has not occurred. Allowing for explicit colonial rhetorics to emerge in mainstream discourse. As seen in the emergence and focus on claims made by the Israeli government and their supporters of Hamas raping Israeli citizens or cutting off the heads of babies as an attempt to justify the bombardment of Gaza (Solmaz, 2024). Or Joe Biden’s claim that Hamas attacked Israel out of “ancient” hate for Jews (L. Green & D. Shear, 2024).

While Israeli colonial narratives share many similarities with other colonial narratives, there are a few elements surrounding the development of Zionism and Israeli state development that allowed for the construction of unique narratives. These conditions include the Jewish Problem, the religious element of Zionism, and the Holocaust. A factor in Zionism’s emergence in the early 19th century as a fringe political movement by European Jews was the political, economic, and cultural hardships faced by Europe’s “Jewish Problem”. The movement proposed that the only way for Jews to live in peace was to forge their nation-state for Jews (implicitly European Jews), in Palestine, based upon religious ties to the ancient lands of Zion. With this in mind, because Zionism was created for a diaspora, it is a settler colony without a parent state, for Zionists believe that Palestine is the ancestral home that they are returning to. While this proposal was largely disliked by a majority of the Euro-Jewish population at the time, Zionists found support in Gentile sympathizers who either due to protestant religious sympathy or their desire to export the Jewish problem abroad supported Zionism. With this support, the Zionist project was able to quickly begin the cultural construction of their proposed ethnostate, while Palestine was still under the Ottoman empire, and was able to lobby and start establishing settlements in the region in the late 1800s. Unlike other colonial settler states, the narrative and foundations of the settlers emerged before a significant population arrived in the land, and purposely aligned itself with Western nations to establish, moral, ancestral, religious, and economic rights over Palestine (Bishara, 2022).

The relative youth of the zionist colonial project positioned it to emerge close to the invention of the film camera. Zionist groups quickly invested in creating propaganda films for their causes to gain new members to the Zionist movement and encourage settlement in Palestine (Tryster, 1995). A majority of the early work produced were silent films that depicted life in Palestine, engaging audiences for very few people had been exposed to film or photographs of the land until then. Early zionist films serve as the foundation of modern Isaerlis cinema, and unlike other nations, it does not have a film tradition that is not rooted in propaganda (Tryster, 1995). One such influential early zionist film is The Land of Promise (1935), which utilizes colonial narratives and framing in a way that can still be seen in modern Israeli film and cultural narratives.

Lastly, the Holocaust allowed zionist groups to use their previous victimization to avoid scrutiny and victimize others. (Bishara, 2022). The depth and intensity of the subjugation and genocide that the Jewish population faced as a result of the Holocaust, led to Western nations avoiding taking accountability for their racist policies that brewed for centuries and made it possible for the holocaust to occur. As a result, they instead shifted their guilt by unquestioningly supporting Zionism in its totality. This relationship is present today in the discourse nurtured by Israeli and Western nations, stating that supporting the state is the ultimate act of supporting Jews globally. Using this narrative positions Israel as a perpetual victim to hostile “others in the region” and globally, that Israel is the only safe place for Jews, and they have the “right to defend themselves' ' (Bishara, 2022). In doing so, the Zionist movement has successfully implemented a political communications strategy of hijacked victimhood concerning their aggressive colonial treatment of the Palestinians and surrounding nations (Hronešová & Kreiss, 2024; Bishara, 2022).

While the Israeli state and Zionists have utilized anti-Semitism to shield themselves from criticism and further justify their colonial actions, that does not mean that anti-Semitism is not a serious issue that the Jewish population faces. I would like to make it clear that not all Jewish Individuals are Zionist. Not all Israelis are Zionists. Zionists are composed of people from all ethnicities and religious backgrounds. While researching for this paper, people who are generally ignorant of the history of anti-Semitism easily fall into utilizing it while attempting to criticize the state of Israel. In addition to observations of individuals who are anti-Semitic using Palestine as an excuse to display their bigotry. However, I do not believe a majority of the criticism for the state is rooted in Anti-Semitism or justifies it. On the flip side, I've seen Islamophobic (and orientalism) comments emerge from Zionist posts to discredit Palestinians. However, there is a systemic power difference involved in the discussion of these two issues, and the existence of wrong cannot be used to excuse systemic violence that is occurring. In this case, orientalism and islamophobia are both tools utilized in colonial narratives against Palestinians, while anti-semitism has not been as effectively utilized to depower the Israeli state.

Here I present a list of common Israeli Colonial and Neocolonial narratives; The rebirth of the Jewish State in Palestine, the Construction of the New Jew, the Negation of Exile, An Empty Land for a People without a Land, A Few against Many, White Man's Burden, Primitivity of Non-White Individuals and cultures, The irrationality of Palestinians, and the Civilizing agents (Bishara, 2022). These colonial narratives are abundant in Israeli and American news reporting and in social media posts of individuals and organizations that support Israel. While the spread of colonel narratives is effective for engaging some of the American public to encourage their support of Israel, other social media postings from Israeli and pro-zionists users harm the narratives as well, for they disrupt the illusionary narrative of victimhood and moral righteousness that is essential to the functionality of colonial narratives.

Using these videos, Palestinian and Pro-Palsitenian content creators and users can directly target and counter colonial narratives. Colonial and neocolonial counter-narratives function by centering the perspectives of the group experience of colonization and counter the myths and narratives through several tactics. This can be achieved in many ways, but usually, counter-narratives target specific narratives by providing alternative perspectives, accurate historical events, or at times simply the truth. The foundational goal of Palestinian film from the history that I have access to is to serve as a direct counter-narrative for Israeli colonial narratives. It aims to center and expose the unjust colonial structures that have prolonged their refugee status for the last 75 years, and how the state of Israel and their allies have violated both the Palestinian right to self-determination and their Right of Return, disrupting and dismantling colonial narratives in the process (Bishara, 2022). I say the history that I have access to because many Palestinian films and works have been destroyed or lost due to the Israeli state. With that in mind, one of the earliest Palesitent films is *They Do Not Exist (1974*), created by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This film directly responds to a claim by former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, who claimed that Palestine (and Palestinians) do not exist (). The film takes great care to show the conditions of Palestinians, their humanity, and why they are seeking justice against the Israeli occupation through the documentation of their experiences in the Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon.

Several social media posts and influences follow this model of narrative activism directly addressing and countering these myths and narratives. Like *They Do Not Exist,* Palestinians can directly show the conditions and violence they are experiencing in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and refugee camps during Israel’s attack. Posters provide historical context through historical text, first-hand testimony, and stories from their family's history to provide context on the conflict and dismantle tactics and lies that the Israeli state provides. Other posts showcase the everyday lives before and after Israel’s assault further disrupting the colonial narrative presented by Zionists. In my analysis, will provide examples of how various types of social media posts aim to deconstruct colonial justifications and how posters are avoiding censorship on social media. I’ve collected roughly 100 posts from TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. I will be focusing on the goal posting types and the cross-posting of specific posters and how they provide counter-narratives.

**Social Media Post:**

***Educational:***

Educational posts created by Palestinians and allies that primarily aim to educate the public on the greater history of Israel and Palestine and the current actions of the IOF against Gazans. Over time, as Israeli violence expanded into the West Bank and Lebnon, posters would include coverage as well. Individuals Palestinians across the diaspora that previously had larger account followings took up to speaking out against Israeli attacks and provided historical and cultural context that the US audience lacked. Many of these posts include sources, infographics, and photographs to provide additional content. Their video posts either on Instagram reels or TikTok largely consisted of them sitting in a room or outside giving detailed carefully worded explanations of the situation. Topics focused on were largely aspects that directly tied to the history of Palestinian resistance and symbols that would be helpful for organizers and activists who wanted to support Palestine. Videos covered vocabulary and terms, for example why Palesntisn refers to the Isreali Defense Force as the Isreali Occupation Forces. Cultural symbols such as the olive tree, watermelon, oranges, and Keys. Lessons informing people of the Geography of the Country; including important historical and present, often providing insight on where their families were displaced from originally. Educational posts from allies were similar in nature, but also served to increase attention and interaction with Palestinian account holders. Providing updates and breakdown of information from major news organizations and social media posters to create a more centralized news delivery system. The Palestinian accounts that were most promoted were of the Civilian Journalist or Crisis activists such as Bisan and Mataz, who were individuals who joined the press during the siege and were able to generate large social media followings across platforms to inform the general public. Additionally, community accounts and activists organizations repost and share content created by individuals and contributed themselves. Through these combined efforts, a network of information allowed one, a wide reach to the public for anyone interested in the topic. Flooded social media algorithms initially to allow the topic of Palestine, the Israel-Hamas war, and Gaza to trend and further promote content on the platform. The crossflow of information between content meant that people would be exposed to information several times, increasing the chances of information retention.

Educational accounts often directly respond to posts from Zionist Israeli account posters, and statements made by Politicians and news sources to break down colonial narratives or myths that were being utilized to justify the bombardment on Gaza.

***Everyday Live:***

Palestinians and allies alike often would post mundane or everyday activities or events to that provided a contrast to the disruption of Palesntain life due to Israeli attacks. Individuals in Gaza would post content walking people through their daily lives under the siege and the difficulty in obtaining food, water, and shelter. Some post-show efforts of the community to provide resources, showing the creation of gardens, water systems, and clothing for their community. The post would also showcase the efforts made by Palestinians to help the wounded and identify and honor the martyred. Many posters updated how they continued their hobbies while under attack, people participating in parkour, swimming, art, and weightlifting using the material left from the rubble to start again. Included in this are several posts of Palestinians returned to their homes after it was destroyed or damaged by Israel to restore, and rebuild them. Some posts are reminiscent of the day in my life vlog style providing commentary similar to the lighthearted tone in most vlogs, a while describing the war around them in the backdrop destruction from the attacks. The disruption of the popular vlog style serves to encourage outrage and empathy for Gazans and the extent of the violence. Similar posts include cook with me or outfit of the day posts. Overall these postings showcased various levels of community care, creativity, intelligence, and perseverance that colonial myths often strip from palestians. Especially Palestianain men. Vlog style posts were also created by Palestians and allies not located in sites of attack, but thier commentary differed. Commentary in these vlogs expressed guilt, rage, and frustration, at the fact that Gazan Palestians were beign denied access to the factors of life. The commentary ranges to biting criticism, and addressing disinformation from zionist source to reflecting on and promoting palesitan tradions such as cultural dishes. All of which counter attempts from Zionist post to co opt paleisan cultre as thier own or erase it out right.

***Overcoming censorship:***

Censorship of Palesntian contnet was not only on soical media plateforms. Israel new sources deliberately targeted and labled Palesnteitan journalsit as agents of Hamas to discredit them and justify there targeting. Israel’s attacks have disrupted gazans access to internet, disrupting thier ability to report the siege. Censorship on discussing Palestine and criticizing Isreal on social media platforms pressured by Government and Lobbying groups largely manifested in 2 tactics; Shadowbanning and disruption to account access. On platforms such as instagram, facebook, tik tok, and twitter, shadowbanning accounts is a tool to block account posts from reaching either thier followers or the from showing up in people's feeds. Shadowbanning drastic decreases the enteratiocn of post. To countershadow banning, Disruption of account access include suspensions and account deletion, with the a community violation being sited as a justification. Gernal account of surpression of content tagged with gaza and palesitanina have been reported as well.

Posters navigated around censorship by utilizing back up accounts and community members to challenge account suspionsions leading to restoraton of accounts, adjusting tags on posts to match other popular or trending topics and leaving off gaza or palestine to reach wider audcines. The most interseting tactic in has been the usage of hidden posts to reach larger audiences. In this case, hidden posts are videos that begin with clips from videos that appear on gerneal pages such as funny pet videos or pranks, that then cut to Palestian posters or orgnizers to discuss palestine. On image based posts, the first one or two images would be something inteicing or mild, then reveal a post about palestine that provided updates or showcased a family in gaza requesting for help.

***Affictive Public:***

From October to April, common postings on indiviuals stories and accounts would be candid disscussions of the emotional impact of the genocide upon them, there families, and the reflection overall. American social media users affect range from grief, despare, outrage, and guilt. Social media provided a space for organizer to grief and find agency to counter their precieved complicity with the US actions aiding Isreal. Which has allowed for the large protatest in the nations.

**Final Remarks:**

Ultimately, the impact on soical media’s ability to expose American citizens to the perscpecitves of Palisteians and dislodge colonail narratives is evident. The governments fustrations with thier inability to curb protests and activism for a ceasefire is reflected in their multple attempts to cenors social media and the harsh punishments inflicted upon protesters in the nation. However, I wonder how long the these postings will impact the American youth demographic, and if being exposed to counter- colonial narratives regarding Palestine and Isreal will be similary effective when this demographic interacts with ongoing coloinial crisis in the Congo, Haiti, and Sudan. In future work, I would like to invesetigate the attitude change overtime, and in comparison to exposure to other anti-colonial soical media campaigns.

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