Framing Resistance: Western Discourse, Double Standards, and the Dehumanization of Palestinians

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the persistent double standards in Western political and media discourse concerning state violence, resistance, and human rights, with a particular focus on the representation of the Palestinian struggle. While Western democracies often claim to uphold international law and moral responsibility, their support for Israeli military actions despite overwhelming evidence of civilian harm reveals a profound dissonance between stated values and foreign policy practices. This contradiction not only undermines global norms of justice but also entrenches a discourse that dehumanizes Palestinians and delegitimizes their resistance. The study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001) to interrogate how language and power interact in Western media and political rhetoric. CDA enables the exploration of how ideologically loaded terms such as "terrorism," "self-defense," and "security" are employed to frame Palestinians as perpetual threats while obscuring the structural violence of occupation and apartheid (Pappé, 2006; Finkelstein, 2003). Drawing on postcolonial theory, particularly Said's (1978) notion of Orientalism, the paper argues that Palestinians are persistently othered through orientalist tropes that portray them as irrational, violent, and culturally incompatible with Western values. The analysis is further supported by media framing theory (Entman, 1993), which highlights how selective emphasis and omission shape public understanding and policy outcomes. The findings reveal several key patterns: (1) Palestinian resistance is discursively delegitimized through labels like "terrorism," ignoring legal justifications under international law; (2) Israeli actions are consistently framed as defensive, while Palestinian voices and historical grievances are marginalized; (3) orientalist tropes reinforce colonial hierarchies and justify violence; and (4) human rights discourse is applied inconsistently, suggesting a racialized or strategic hierarchy of victimhood (Butler, 2008; Douzinas, 2007). Ultimately, these discursive patterns are not merely rhetorical but serve to legitimize geopolitical asymmetries and reinforce settler-colonial domination in Palestine.

Keywords: double standards, CDA, western discourse, dehumanising Palestinian

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INTRODUCTION

In an era where liberal democracies assert a commitment to universal human rights, international law, and the protection of oppressed peoples, stark contradictions persist in their foreign policy and media narratives particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite extensive documentation of Israeli military aggression, displacement, and systemic inequality, Western political leaders and mainstream media continue to offer near-unconditional support to Israel. These actions are frequently framed as legitimate "self-defense," while Palestinian resistance is portrayed as inherently violent and illegitimate.

This disparity reflects more than geopolitical alignment; it stems from a broader discursive framework that applies legal and moral principles selectively, often based on racial, cultural, or strategic considerations (Butler, 2008; Douzinas, 2007). Nowhere is this contradiction more apparent than in the representation of Palestine, where Palestinians are consistently othered and dehumanized through orientalist tropes that depict them as irrational, threatening, or culturally incompatible with Western values.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been a focal point of Western media and political rhetoric. This study critically examines the double standards in these discourses, particularly in relation to state violence, resistance, and human rights. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001), the research explores how language functions as a political instrument to shape public perception and legitimize asymmetrical power relations. Terms such as "terrorism," "security," and "self-defense" are frequently used to frame Palestinians as perpetual threats while concealing the structural violence of occupation and apartheid (Hitchcock, 2023).

Incorporating postcolonial theory, especially Said's (1978) concept of *Orientalism*, and media framing theory (Entman, 1993), the paper demonstrates how discourse reinforces colonial hierarchies and geopolitical asymmetries. Labels like "clashes" or "cycle of violence" obscure the settler-colonial dynamics at play, thereby sanitizing state violence and delegitimizing resistance. These discursive patterns not only shape public understanding but also serve to rationalize ongoing injustice and oppression.

By interrogating the intersection of language, power, and ideology in Western portrayals of the Palestinian struggle, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how discourse sustains global complicity in the denial of Palestinian rights.

Research Gap

While numerous scholars have examined media bias and Western representations of Palestine (e.g., Philo & Berry, 2011; Finkelstein, 2003), this study offers a distinctive contribution by focusing on real-time media discourse in the immediate aftermath of the October 7, 2023 attacks and the 2023–2025 Gaza war. By applying a multi-theoretical lens that integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, postcolonial theory, media framing, and Butler's concept of grievability, the paper uncovers how discursive patterns work to legitimize state violence and erase Palestinian

agency. Additionally, the analysis of metaphorical constructions such as "war is a journey" or "trauma is a burden" provides fresh insights into how language mediates moral hierarchies. This interdisciplinary framework allows for a nuanced critique of how Western discourse shapes global complicity in ongoing injustice.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The media sample, though carefully selected from high-impact English-language outlets, represents only a slice of the broader discursive landscape. Future research could benefit from incorporating a multilingual corpus or cross-platform analysis including social media or non-Western media sources for a more holistic picture. Furthermore, while the CDA approach provides deep interpretive insight, the study could be complemented by quantitative or corpus-based methods to validate findings across a larger dataset. Recognizing these boundaries allows us to position this research as a foundational inquiry that invites further interdisciplinary engagement.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The core research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does Western political and media discourse delegitimize Palestinian resistance and reinforce double standards in the application of international law and human rights?

2. What are the linguistic and ideological mechanisms that sustain global complicity in Palestinian dispossession?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Politics of Language

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a foundational lens for analyzing how language constructs and legitimizes power in public discourse. As Fairclough (1995) emphasizes, discourse is not merely descriptive but constitutive it actively shapes and reflects social hierarchies. Van Dijk (2001) extends this by highlighting how elite discourse, particularly in media and politics, constructs ideological narratives that reproduce inequality. Recent applications of CDA to the Palestinian context reveal how linguistic framing can obscure occupation and normalize violence under the guise of counterterrorism (Bibi & Shaheen, 2025).

The use of discourse to criminalize Palestinian resistance is not accidental but politically calculated. Language choices such as "militants," "terrorists," and "human shields" do more than convey information they embed judgments that serve state interests. As Bibi and Shaheen (2025) demonstrate in their analysis of Mahmoud Abbas's speeches, even counter-narratives produced by Palestinian leadership are subjected to discursive containment in Western media, where their framing is selectively distorted or stripped of context.

2. Postcolonial Theory and Orientalist Representations

The theoretical grounding of this study is also rooted in postcolonial critiques, especially Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which underscores how the West constructs the Arab "Other" as irrational, violent, and morally inferior. These orientalist logics continue to pervade contemporary media depictions of Palestinians, reinforcing colonial hierarchies and legitimizing military aggression.

As Isaac and Hall (2025) argue, Palestinian resistance today, including through non-violent platforms such as tourism, remains entangled in global settler-colonial dynamics that seek to erase indigenous identity and claim moral legitimacy for occupation. Their work highlights how seemingly apolitical spaces become contested arenas of discursive and material resistance.

Likewise, Khoury, Da'Na, and Falah (2013) introduce the concept of *feminized resistance* in Palestinian literature and cultural production, demonstrating how metaphorical representations such as "Palestine as a woman" subvert orientalist binaries and reclaim agency. These symbolic frameworks intersect with discourse to challenge dominant geopolitical narratives and recenter Palestinian subjectivity.

Figueira (2024) seminal exposition of the Hamas charter further complicates the landscape by presenting resistance not merely as reactive but as ideologically rooted. Although often decontextualized or selectively quoted in Western discourse, the charter positions itself within a long tradition of anti-colonial struggle, grounded in local, religious, and political legacies.

3. Double Standards in International Discourse and Human Rights

A key theme emerging from recent scholarship is the inconsistent application of international law and moral rhetoric, particularly in how Western actors frame conflicts involving their strategic interests. Slimia and Othman (2022) highlight the stark contrast between Western responses to Ukraine and Palestine, arguing that moral condemnation is mobilized selectively based on geopolitical calculations. Their analysis labels this phenomenon "Western hypocrisy" a discursive stance that undermines the supposed universality of human rights.

This is echoed in Aswadi's (2023) comparative legal study, which examines the invocation of sovereignty and international law in the two conflicts. He finds that legal justifications for self-defense are disproportionately granted to state actors like Israel, while Palestinians are denied recognition as a people with the right to resist under international law. This double standard is reinforced through media discourse, which acts as both a mirror and an amplifier of state narratives.

4. Media Framing Theory and the Manufacturing of Consent

Media framing theory, particularly as developed by Robert Entman (1993), focuses on how information is selected, emphasized, and organized to promote particular interpretations. Entman defines framing as "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient... to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or

treatment recommendation." In conflicts like Palestine-Israel, media outlets often frame Israeli actions as reactive or defensive, while Palestinian actions are framed as aggressive, even when initiated in response to structural violence.

Empirical studies support this imbalance. For example, Cherkaoui (2024) found that BBC and ITV news systematically failed to provide historical or legal context for Palestinian grievances, leading audiences to perceive Palestinian violence as unprovoked. Similarly, studies by Khalidi (2020) and Antai (2025) have shown how media silence around international law and occupation functions as a form of ideological reinforcement, shielding Israel from accountability.

4. The Selective Application of Human Rights and International Law

Legal scholars have critiqued the racialized application of human rights discourse, arguing that not all suffering is treated equally. Butler's concept of "grievable lives" captures the idea that some lives are deemed more worthy of mourning or protection than others. This concept is highly relevant in Western discourse on Palestine, where civilian deaths are often framed as regrettable collateral damage in contrast to Israeli casualties, which are highlighted as tragedies.

This selective moral lens is reinforced by political rhetoric that abstracts the conflict from its colonial roots, ignoring the legal frameworks that define occupation, apartheid, and the right to resist. International law clearly permits resistance against occupation (UNGA Resolution 37/43), yet Western discourse routinely criminalizes such resistance by invoking the specter of terrorism.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine how Western political and media discourses construct, legitimize, or obscure narratives around Palestinian resistance and Israeli state violence. Rooted in the works of Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2001), CDA offers a robust framework for interrogating the relationship between language, ideology, and power. It is particularly well-suited for exploring how certain discursive practices produce asymmetrical representations of conflict, reinforcing dominant geopolitical hierarchies.

Research Design

To critically analyze the discursive construction of Palestinian resistance and Israeli state violence, this study adopts a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology anchored in the foundational works of Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2001). The research draws upon a purposive sampling strategy, targeting high-circulation, English-language Western media outlets known for their influence on public and policymaker perception specifically *The New York Times, The Guardian, CNN, BBC, Sky News*, and *Fox News*.

Scope and Justification

The selection includes twenty-five articles and statements published between October 7, 2023, and May 2025, focusing on major flashpoints such as the October 7 Hamas-led attacks, the 2023–2024 Gaza war, and Western diplomatic responses. These texts were chosen based on their high visibility, representational framing of both Palestinian and Israeli actors, and presence of emotionally or ideologically charged discourse. This time frame enables the identification of recurring linguistic and rhetorical patterns in moments of heightened conflict, when discourse is most intensely politicized.

Analytical Procedures and Coding

To enhance methodological transparency, a structured analytical protocol was followed. Each article was initially read for thematic orientation and relevance, after which a coding scheme was developed to extract discursive features. These included:

- Lexical choices (e.g., use of "terrorist," "clashes," "militant")
- Grammatical constructions (passivization, modality)
- Evaluative language (emotive or judgmental terms)
- Metaphor usage
- Framing elements (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, treatment suggestion)

Codes were generated deductively from existing CDA and media framing literature (e.g., Entman, 1993; Martin & White, 2005) and then refined inductively as patterns emerged from the data. Coding was conducted manually to preserve sensitivity to nuance, and each coded segment was categorized under the corresponding CDA dimension: textual, discursive practice, or social practice.

To ensure reliability and reduce interpretive bias, preliminary findings were discussed collaboratively among the authors, all of whom have backgrounds in discourse studies and Middle East politics. This reflexive cross-checking allowed for critical triangulation of interpretations and reinforced analytical rigor.

Analytical Framework

The CDA methodology is structured through three interrelated dimensions:

1. **Textual Analysis** – Identifying specific linguistic elements (lexical choices, metaphors, modality, and passive constructions) used to describe violence, agency, and morality. For example, how terms like "clashes," "terrorists," or "human shields" are employed to obscure structural power imbalances.

2. **Discursive Practice Analysis** – Examining how texts are produced, circulated, and interpreted in institutional contexts. This includes analysis of press briefings, official diplomatic language, and editorial framing in mainstream media.

3. **Social Practice Analysis** – Situating discourse within broader ideological formations such as Orientalism, settler colonialism, and neoliberal geopolitics. This level engages with postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Pappé, 2006) to show how discourse both reflects and sustains colonial hierarchies and racialized forms of violence.

Theoretical Integration

The methodology integrates insights from:

- **Postcolonial theory**, particularly Said's (1978) critique of Orientalism, to trace how Palestinians are "othered" as culturally incompatible and politically irrational.

- **Media Framing Theory** (Entman, 1993), which explains how selection and salience in reporting shape public understanding and policy legitimization.

- **Human rights critique** (Butler, 2008), which helps assess the racialized inconsistency in how international law and moral responsibility are applied.

This multi-level, interdisciplinary approach enables a nuanced investigation of how discourse functions not merely as rhetoric but as a political technology that sustains structural violence and legitimizes asymmetry in global power relations.

Having established the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study, we now move into a detailed textual analysis of selected media narratives. These cases exemplify the linguistic strategies through which Western discourse frames Israeli and Palestinian actors in asymmetrical terms."

Data Analysis and Findings

Textual Analysis:

URL: Fox News Article
Publication Date: October 9, 2024
Focus: On the prolonged captivity of Israeli hostages in Gaza and the political and operational challenges surrounding negotiations.

Table 1: CDA Analysis of Fox News Article on Gaza

Dimension	Analysis
1. Lexical Choices	The article uses emotionally loaded words such as **"squalid conditions", "lost faith", "deteriorating health", and "hope fades". These lexical choices construct a narrative of humanitarian urgency and emotional despair, but only for the Israeli hostages. Terms like "terrorists" and "militant group" appear repeatedly to describe Hamas, evoking fear and illegitimacy.**

2. Passive Constructions	Phrases like **"hostages are believed to be held"** and **"intel is drying up"** deflect agency. No clear subject is responsible for inaction or lack of progress, which subtly reduces blame on Israeli or U.S. decision-makers. Similarly, **"hostages remain in Gaza"** removes agency of both captors and negotiators, passivizing the crisis.
3. Labeling	Hamas is consistently labeled as a **"terrorist group"** or **"militants"**, while Israeli figures are referred to by their official titles (e.g., **"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu"**, **"Israeli defense officials"**). This dichotomy legitimizes one side's political standing while delegitimizing the other as unlawful actors. The hostages are humanized and individualized, but Palestinian civilians affected by Israeli operations are not mentioned or labeled.
4. Framing (Entman)	The article frames the **problem definition** as the prolonged hostage crisis, the **cause** as Hamas' refusal to negotiate, the **moral evaluation** as the cruelty of hostage conditions, and the **treatment recommendation** as increased international pressure. Structural causes of the conflict occupation, blockade, or disproportionate Israeli military actions are omitted. The frame promotes a one-sided moral hierarchy, reinforcing Israeli victimhood.
5. Orientalist Tropes (Said)	The article indirectly perpetuates **Orientalist binaries**: Palestinians are depicted as uncivilized, unpredictable, and irrational aggressors (e.g., holding civilians in "squalid" underground tunnels), while Israelis are modern, organized, and victimized. This reflects Said's logic of constructing the "Orient" as culturally inferior and threatening. The enemy is faceless and brutal, while Israeli suffering is portrayed with emotional specificity.
6. Human Rights (Butler)	The notion of **"grievable lives"** (Butler, 2008) is clearly selective. The Israeli hostages are grieved, named, and described with concern for their wellbeing. No mention is made of Palestinian civilian deaths, mass displacement, or humanitarian conditions in Gaza. The suffering of one group is centered, while the other is erased thus demonstrating a racialized or strategic hierarchy of victimhood.
7. Metaphor	Metaphors like 'hope fades' (dimming light) and 'intel is drying up' (scarcity) suggest an irreversible decline. These naturalizing metaphors make the situation seem inevitable rather than politically constructed.
8. Evaluative Language	Terms such as 'extremely unlikely', 'deteriorating', and 'worsening' evoke pessimism. These evaluations reinforce a sense of helplessness and urgency for Israeli victims, ignoring Palestinian contexts.

Contextual Analysis and Interpretation

The Fox News article titled *"As Gaza war drags past 1 year mark, hope fades for a deal to bring hostages home soon"* exemplifies a dominant pattern in Western media that centers Israeli suffering and erases or decontextualizes Palestinian realities. Published on October 9, 2024 marking one year since the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks the article narrates the hostage crisis with emotionally laden descriptions and metaphors of despair.

The lexical choices are heavily tilted toward humanizing and individualizing Israeli hostages through phrases like *"squalid conditions"* and *"deteriorating health"*. In contrast, Palestinians are abstracted into faceless actors or labeled *"terrorists"*, aligning with Orientalist narratives that depict Arabs as irrational or inherently violent (Said, 1978).

By employing passive constructions, such as *"hostages are believed to be held"*, the article avoids attributing agency or responsibility to the broader systems of blockade, occupation, or Israeli military decisions. The framing, as per Entman's model, promotes a narrow understanding: the problem is Hamas' intransigence; the cause is their terrorism; the moral evaluation is Israel's justified fear and suffering; the solution is increased international pressure on Hamas.

Furthermore, metaphors like *"hope fades"* and *"intel is drying up"* imply inevitability and helplessness, subtly absolving powerful actors of accountability and presenting the crisis as apolitical or natural. These metaphors serve to depoliticize the conflict and construct it as a humanitarian issue stripped of its structural roots.

In Butler's (2008) terms, the article operationalizes a hierarchy of grievable lives: Israeli victims are mourned and dignified, while Palestinian victims despite the scale of destruction in Gaza are excluded from the narrative. Their invisibility reinforces a moral asymmetry that shapes Western policy and public opinion.

Table 2: CDA Analysis of October 7 Media Framing

Dimension	Analysis
1. Lexical Choices	Israeli suffering is described using emotionally charged language such as 'trauma', 'disaster', and 'embarking on a difficult journey'. In contrast, Palestinians are described with militaristic or criminal terms like 'militants', 'gunmen', and 'terrorists'.
2. Passive Constructions	The use of passive voice in phrases like 'Palestinian militants fired rockets' omits agency for structural violence or retaliation, making Palestinian aggression appear unprovoked.
3. Labeling	Hamas and Palestinian actors are labeled as 'terrorists', 'gunmen', and 'assailants', while Israeli forces are referred to as the 'IDF' or 'troops', conferring legitimacy and institutional authority.
4. Framing (Entman)	Western media frame the October 7 events as a catastrophic Israeli tragedy and legitimate cause for war. Palestinian perspectives are excluded. Problem: Hamas aggression; Cause: Palestinian attack; Moral evaluation: Israeli victimhood; Solution: war against Gaza.
5. Orientalist Tropes (Said)	Palestinians are presented as irrational, violent, and barbaric, reinforcing the Orientalist dichotomy of civilized West vs. savage East. Their actions are described through metaphors of chaos and criminality.
6. Human Rights (Butler)	Israeli victims are represented as grievable through individualized suffering, while Palestinian deaths and destruction are either omitted or presented in aggregate, stripping them of humanity or narrative focus.

7. **Metaphor**	WAR IS A JOURNEY, WAR IS A RAGE, TRAUMA IS A BURDEN, and MOVEMENT metaphors dominate. They frame Israeli responses as noble and inevitable while reducing Palestinian suffering to footnotes.
8. **Evaluative Language**	Terms like 'worst disaster', 'murderous attack', and 'terrifying attacks' are used to elevate Israeli pain. Palestinians are subjected to negative behavioral judgement (e.g., 'terrorists'), not affective empathy.

Contextual Analysis and Interpretation

Following the attacks of October 7, 2023, Western media quickly adopted a discursive framework rooted in metaphors, selective labeling, and moral asymmetry. Quoting Israeli officials such as Prime Minister Netanyahu, outlets like CNN and Sky News framed the Israeli response as a legitimate and noble act of national defense. For instance, Netanyahu's declaration that Israel is "at war" was uncritically reproduced, activating the metaphor CONFLICT IS WAR and soon expanded into WAR IS A JOURNEY, with phrases like *"embarking on a long and difficult war"*. These metaphors focus the reader's attention on Israel's endurance and resilience, masking the violent implications for Palestinians.

The lexical choices consistently emphasize Israeli pain through emotionally evocative terms such as *"trauma"*, *"disaster"*, and *"burden"*, particularly when describing the psychological aftermath for Israeli society. On the other hand, Palestinians are described through militaristic or dehumanizing labels *"gunmen"*, *"militants"*, *"terrorists"* which strip them of political agency and cast their actions as inherently criminal or irrational. This is in line with Orientalist tropes (Said), which frame the Palestinian side as chaotic, violent, and culturally unfit for Western norms of civility.

The media further entrenches this binary through passive constructions that obscure the initiators of violence. Phrases like *"clashes erupt"* or *"hostages were taken"* lack clear attribution, diluting Israeli agency in military escalations. Meanwhile, framing (Entman) positions Israel as the victim of an unprovoked attack, with Hamas serving as the cause of suffering and the justification for continued bombardment. The structural context namely occupation, apartheid, and Gaza's blockade is omitted, which reinforces a false sense of symmetry or moral clarity.

Evaluative language supports this asymmetry by highlighting the *"worst disaster in Israel's history"* while failing to apply similar moral gravity to mass Palestinian casualties. In Butler's terms, this reveals a discursive economy of grievability: Israeli lives are mourned, individually accounted for, and centered in the narrative. Palestinian lives, by contrast, are backgrounded or entirely absent from Western reporting.

This linguistic and ideological pattern is not merely descriptive it plays a central role in shaping public perception and legitimizing continued military aggression. The use of metaphors like WAR

IS RAGE and TRAUMA IS A BURDEN attributes emotional necessity to Israeli actions while denying Palestinians narrative complexity or moral standing.

In addition to lexical and syntactic patterns, metaphorical language plays a crucial role in shaping public perception. The following section explores how metaphors serve to naturalize violence and construct moral asymmetries."

Metaphor Analysis:
In their coverage of the October 7 events, western media began to cite descriptions by politicians, Benjamin Netanyahu among them:

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel is "*at war*" (CNN, October 7, 2023).

The expression "at war" indicates that the Israeli Prime Minister framed the October 7 events and the subsequent conflict with the Palestinians as a war (CONFLICT IS WAR/BATTLE). Later, once the war was established, the JOURNEY metaphor was employed:

- "Israel is *'embarking* on a *long* and *difficult* war'", Israeli Prime Minister says (CNN, October 8, 2023).

This news headline features the Israeli Prime Minister declaring 'entering into' a state of war with the Gaza strip. This war's length is not finite, it is rather depicted as a 'long' JOURNEY, that the entire state of Israel is poised to 'embark' on.

These instances of the CONFLICT IS A WAR/BATTLE and JOURNEY metaphors appeared in western media after the Israeli Prime Minister employed them. Framing the conflict as a war, and subsequently the war as a journey, highlights two key aspects. It first underscores that the entire state of Israel must be engaged in this war, meaning the imposition of the state of war extends not only to Palestinians, but also to Israelis. Second, viewing the war as a JOURNEY neutralizes the impact of the war on Palestinians. As a 'journey', the devastating effects of the war on Gaza are not emphasised; rather, the Israeli state's entrance into this journey is focalized. Ultimately, these metaphors primarily serve to highlight the Israeli perspective.

Furthermore, these two instances rely on "attribution" by citing sources of information (Martin and White, 2005). While giving sources is an important feature of the language of media, overreliance on one source shows an inclination towards one side of the conflict. This bias towards the Israeli perspective is also seen in the use of metaphors similar to those employed by the Israeli Prime Minister in other instances.

- Israel *ground* offensive into Gaza, (Sky News, May, 12, 2025)
- IDF troops *move* into the Gaza Strip (Sky News, May, 12, 2025)

- Israel launches its large-scale *ground* assault (Sky News, May, 12, 2025)
- Israel's *ground* offensive *pushes deeper into* Gaza (Le monde, May 13, 2025).

These instances adopt the viewpoint of the Israeli Prime Minister describing military operations in Gaza as physical movements into and within territory (MILITARY OPERATIONS ARE ACTIONS/MOVEMENT). The movement metaphor is part of the journey metaphor, launched by the Israeli Prime Minister. The use of this metaphor shows that Western news outlets such as Sky News and Le Monde adopt the same perspective as the Israeli narrative of the events. Secondly, this metaphor emphasises the physical nature of the IDF troops movements, and hides the atrocities of the war. Military actions are simply seen as physical movements in the Gaza Strip.

In addition to the Journey metaphor, other ways of talking about the October 7 events and the resulting war include references to physical burden:

- "*Trauma* of Oct 7 attack *still hangs* over Israel" (Reuters, October 7, 2024)

A year after the events of October 7, this news headline describes the events as a 'trauma' that 'hangs' like a heavy object over Israel. The metaphor TRAUMA IS A PHYSICAL BURDEN/WEIGHT combines two concepts: the psychological impact of trauma and its long-lasting effects, as encapsulated by the 'burden' metaphor. The Israelis are not suffering from the physical effects or the material losses of the 7 October events; rather, they are suffering from the emotional chock. This is also highlighted by the metaphor THE OCTOBER 7TH ATTACK IS A DISASTER/CATASTROPHE.

- "The attack was the *worst disaster* in Israel's history." (Reuters, October 7, 2024)

The disaster metaphor is further emphasised by the use of the superlative 'worst', which, from an Appraisal Theory perspective, represents a negative evaluation of an event in terms of its "aesthetic dimension" (Martin and White, 2005). Focusing on the aesthetic dimension of events, rather than the direct material and physical effects shows the western media's focus on the subjective experience of the Israeli perspective, rather than the real material loss. One possible explanation for this focus is that the material loss is negligible, compared to the psychological trauma. It is not the atrocity of 7 October events that Israelis suffer from, but rather their refusal to accept such a humiliating event. The Western media continues to highlight the suffering of Israelis because this justifies the ongoing war against the Gaza Strip.

The focus on the Israeli perspective in Western media can also be seen in cases where the war is likened to rage:

- War continues to *rage* in Gaza (Sky News, May, 12, 2025)
- One year after the October 7 attacks, war continues to *rage* between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. (France 24, October 6, 2024)

In these instances, the war on Gaza is depicted as a force of rage (WAR IS A FORCE OF RAGE). Rage is a state of extreme anger, and according to Lakoff (1987), an anger scenario usually starts with an offending event. Describing the actions of war as rage shifts the focus to the offending event that caused this war, and consequently, places all responsibility for the war on the initial offending event: the 7 October events. This metaphor legitimises the war on Gaza as an act of retribution for the offending event. Moreover, the metaphor highlights the psychological state of Israelis, showing that Western media report the news from an Israeli perspective.

In addition, while Israeli troops are referred to as the 'IDF', Hamas is conceptualised as an enemy.

· Just after dawn on Saturday, October 7, 2023, Hamas *unleashed* a *barrage* of rockets and mortar shells on Israeli towns and military bases. (France 24, 07/10/2024)

· Hamas *launches* rocket attack towards Tel Aviv (BBC, 26 May 2024)

· … after Palestinian militants from Gaza *fired a deadly barrage of rockets* and *sent gunmen into Israeli territory* Saturday morning (CNN, October 8, 2023).

· More than a month after Hamas *terrorists launched* an *unprecedented surprise* attack on Israel and *infiltrated* the country by air, land and sea on Oct. 7, the region stands on high alert amid fears of a wider conflict and thousands dead on both sides of the Israel-Gaza border. (ABC News, November 22, 2023)

· Hamas-led gunmen killed some 1,200 people during a rampage through communities in southern Israel and took more than 250 *hostages* into Gaza, according to Israeli figures, the worst single-day loss of life for Jews since the Nazi Holocaust (CNN, October 8, 2023).

· Assailants from Hamas, the Islamist militant group that *controls* the impoverished and densely populated Gaza Strip, had by nightfall killed hundreds of people and wounded hundreds more. (CNN, October 8, 2023).

· The Izzedine al Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed to *capture* "dozens" of Israelis during the Hamas *surprise attack* on Saturday. (CNN, October 8, 2023).

These examples demonstrate Hamas' ability to 'launch rocket attack', to 'infiltrate', to 'take…hostages', 'to control…Gaza' and to 'capture dozens of Israelis'. These expressions reveal that Hamas is not only an enemy, but also a strong and dangerous one. Indeed, these expressions

manage to build an image of Hamas and Palestinian militants as TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS or A FORCE OF CHAOS. Palestinian militants are also depicted as CRIMINALs and BARBARIANS as they 'capture' people, 'take hostages', etc.

When depicting the two conflicting sides (Israeli troops and Palestinian militants), Western media outlets use different metaphors. The MOVEMENT metaphor is used to describe the Israeli troops war on Gaza, while the ENEMY metaphors (TERRORIST, CRIMINAL, BARBARIAN) are used to talk about Palestinian militants. These metaphors are coupled with evaluative terms. News outlets use negative terms of 'affect' to describe emotions towards the Israeli side (Martin and White, 2005). Examples of these negatively loaded terms are 'deadly surprise attack', 'thousands of others are wounded', 'murderous attack' and 'terrifying attacks'. The use of such terms to describe the Israeli state is meant to affect the readers and lead them to side with Israel. However, words such as 'militants' and 'terrorists' imply a negative judgement of behaviour, which means that the news outlets negatively judge the behaviour of Palestinians with respect to values of social sanction (Martin and White, 2005).

Discursive Practice Analysis

Discursive practice analysis explores how the Fox News article constructs meaning through patterns of text production, distribution, and consumption that reflect institutional norms and ideological positions. In this case, the article's narrative centers on the prolonged captivity of Israeli hostages in Gaza, employing selective framing, lexical emphasis, and source bias to produce a particular version of reality. The article predominantly uses emotionally charged language such as "*squalid conditions,*" "*deteriorating health,*" and "*hope fades*" to evoke sympathy for Israeli hostages. Simultaneously, Palestinian actors, specifically Hamas, are consistently labeled as "*terrorists*" or "*militants,*" reinforcing a binary moral framework. This lexical dichotomy not only humanizes Israeli victims but also dehumanizes and delegitimizes Palestinian resistance actors.

The use of passive constructions, such as "*hostages are believed to be held,*" minimizes agency and accountability, particularly regarding the geopolitical and humanitarian context in Gaza. This technique subtly absolves powerful actors, including the Israeli military and Western governments, from their role in sustaining the conflict or obstructing negotiation outcomes. Furthermore, the article's source reliance is skewed toward Israeli officials and Western intelligence, without incorporating Palestinian voices or neutral third-party accounts. This imbalance reflects the institutional routine of mainstream media prioritizing elite and state narratives, in line with Marques' (2024) critique of elite discourse reproduction. These discursive practices work to naturalize Israeli victimhood and obscure the broader structural realities of occupation, siege, and asymmetric warfare, thereby shaping public opinion through a narrow interpretive lens.

Table 3: Discursive Practice Analysis of Fox News Article on Gaza

Dimension	Evidence/Excerpt	CDA Analysis
1. Lexical Choices	*"Squalid conditions", "deteriorating health", "hope fades"*	Emotionally charged language evokes sympathy for Israeli hostages. Centers Israeli victimhood and suffering, creating a humanitarian urgency narrative.
	"Militant group", "terrorists"	Repeated negative labeling of Hamas reinforces criminality and delegitimizes Palestinian resistance.
2. Passive Constructions	*"Hostages are believed to be held"*	Passive voice obscures agency, who is responsible or why they are held is unclear, diverting focus from systemic causes (e.g., occupation or blockade).
	"Intel is drying up"	Abstract, naturalizing phrase that deflects blame from Israeli or U.S. decision-makers; implies inevitable decline rather than structural failure.
3. Labelling	*"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu", "Israeli defense officials"* vs. *"militants"*	Use of official titles for Israelis and generic negative terms for Palestinians establishes asymmetry in legitimacy and status.
4. Framing (entman)	Problem: Prolonged captivity; Cause: Hamas' refusal to negotiate; Moral: cruelty; Solution: pressure on Hamas	Frame defines Hamas as obstructionist and violent while omitting broader historical, legal, or military context of the Israeli occupation.
5. Orientalist Tropes	Gaza tunnels described as *"underground"*, *"squalid"*, Hamas as *"unpredictable"*	Reinforces Said's (1978) Orientalist binaries, Palestinians depicted as barbaric, uncivilized, and inhumane, in contrast to rational, modern Israeli identity.
6. Human Rights (butler)	Focus on Israeli hostages' names, ages, and conditions; no mention of Palestinian casualties	Applies the concept of *"grievable lives"*, Israeli lives are mourned and individualized, while Palestinian deaths are invisible, reinforcing a racialized moral economy.
7. Metaphor	*"Hope fades", "intel is drying up"*	Metaphors naturalize the crisis as a declining process instead of a politically constructed reality.

8. Evaluative Language	*"Extremely unlikely", "worsening situation", "deteriorating"*	Language induces pessimism and urgency for Israeli victims; ignores Palestinian suffering or any possibility of nonviolent resolution.

Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of how language is constructed and operationalized in the Fox News article to shape public understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each row in the table represents a distinct linguistic or rhetorical feature, such as lexical choices, metaphors, passive constructions, and evaluative language, and explains how it contributes to the framing of Israeli hostages as humanized victims and Palestinians as illegitimate aggressors.

Through these discursive patterns, the article draws heavily on institutional routines and news production norms that favor elite sources and state narratives, particularly those of Israel and its Western allies. The use of emotionally charged language, selective labeling, and omission of Palestinian context reflects broader ideological mechanisms that reinforce Western geopolitical alignment and suppress alternative perspectives. Ultimately, this analysis reveals that media discourse is not neutral but deeply implicated in maintaining dominant power structures through linguistic framing.

Social Practice Analysis

At the level of social practice, the Fox News article participates in the broader ideological project of reinforcing settler-colonial narratives and Orientalist binaries within Western discourse on Palestine. Drawing on Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism, the portrayal of Hamas as barbaric and the Gaza Strip as a chaotic, lawless zone perpetuates the image of Palestinians as culturally regressive and inherently violent. This discursive framing positions Israelis as modern, rational, and legitimate state actors, thus justifying their geopolitical authority and moral high ground.

The selective grievability of lives, as theorized by Butler (2008), is apparent in the article's affective focus. Israeli hostages are described with empathy and detail, emphasizing their emotional and physical suffering, while Palestinian casualties, displacement, or humanitarian suffering are completely absent. This omission reveals a racialized moral hierarchy, wherein some lives are deemed more worthy of protection and mourning than others. In line with media framing theory (Entman, 1993), the article defines the problem as Hamas' refusal to negotiate, attributes blame solely to Palestinian actors, and prescribes increased international pressure as the solution, without questioning the legitimacy or consequences of Israeli actions such as ongoing blockade and military aggression. The omission of structural violence, such as Israel's long-term siege of Gaza and occupation policies, reifies a depoliticized, humanitarian crisis narrative rather than a contextually grounded account of colonial conflict. Thus, the article operates within a hegemonic Western media apparatus that legitimizes Israeli state violence while erasing Palestinian agency

and suffering. These social practices are not just reflective but constitutive of global complicity in the erasure of Palestinian rights and the reproduction of symmetric power relations.

Table 4: Social Practice Analysis of Fox News Article on Gaza

Dimension	Evidence/Excerpt	Analysis (Ideological Function & Broader Social Impact)
Orientalism (Said, 1978)	Descriptions of Hamas as "*terrorist group*," Palestinians as irrational aggressors, Gaza as "*squalid*" tunnels	Reproduces Orientalist binaries: Palestinians are dehumanized and depicted as culturally inferior, violent, and uncivilized, justifying Western support for Israel.
Settler-Colonial Logic (Pappé, 2006)	Absence of historical context of occupation, blockade, and apartheid	Omits structural causes and Palestinian claims to land and rights. Normalizes Israeli sovereignty and security needs while erasing indigenous Palestinian narratives.
Hierarchy of Grievability (Butler, 2008)	Israeli hostages are named, humanized, and described with emotional detail; Palestinian suffering is omitted	Demonstrates racialized valuation of life, Israeli lives are considered "grievable" while Palestinian deaths are backgrounded or ignored.
Legitimation of State Violence	Frames Israeli actions as responses to "*terror*" or "*hostage crises*"	Frames Israeli military power as necessary and defensive, thereby legitimizing disproportionate force and shielding Israel from accountability.
Moral Asymmetry	Focuses solely on the suffering of Israeli families, no reference to collective Palestinian trauma	Constructs a one-sided moral narrative in which Israelis are victims and Palestinians are threats, sustaining emotional investment in state-aligned narratives.
Geopolitical Alignment	Uses Israeli official language and sources without critique (e.g., quoting Netanyahu's framing of "*war*" and "*journey*")	Shows media alignment with Western and Israeli state interests. News discourse becomes an instrument of soft power and narrative control.
Erasure of Palestinian Agency	Lack of Palestinian voices, legal justification for resistance, or international law references	Denies Palestinians political agency, reduces them to objects of security discourse, and suppresses global recognition of their rights under international law.
Neoliberal Humanitarianism	Crisis framed as humanitarian, emotional, and depoliticized ("*deteriorating health*," "*hope fades*")	Shifts discourse from structural injustice to individualized suffering, allowing international audiences to sympathize without challenging systemic power dynamics.

Table 4 situates the language of the Fox News article within broader ideological and historical frameworks, drawing on theories of Orientalism, settler colonialism, and racialized hierarchies of moral concern. It interprets how the article's representations function as discursive instruments that normalize Israeli state violence, marginalize Palestinian political agency, and frame the

conflict through a selective humanitarian lens. Each entry in the table aligns a specific discourse pattern (e.g., erasure of Palestinian voices, emotional prioritization of Israeli suffering) with a social or ideological function (e.g., legitimation of state violence, reproduction of colonial hierarchies). By doing so, the table highlights how media texts do not merely reflect reality, but actively reproduce geopolitical asymmetries and racialized moral economies. The social practice analysis thus exposes the article's complicity in a larger structure of epistemic and political domination that extends beyond journalism into the realm of global discourse governance.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to critically examine how Western political and media discourses construct, distort, or obscure the realities of Palestinian resistance through a triangulated lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), postcolonial theory, media framing, and the concept of grievability. The analysis reveals a persistent pattern of discursive asymmetry in which Israeli narratives are humanized, legitimized, and framed within a moral vocabulary of defense and trauma, while Palestinian voices are reduced to abstraction, criminality, or barbarism.

Delegitimization Through Lexical and Grammatical Choices

At the textual level, the repeated use of emotionally charged labels such as "terrorist," "militant," or "gunman" to describe Palestinian actors serves not merely as journalistic shorthand but as ideological positioning. These lexical choices strip Palestinians of political rationality and transform them into threats to be neutralized rather than subjects with legal and moral claims under international law. The selective use of passive constructions e.g., "clashes erupted" or "hostages are believed to be held" systematically obscures agency, particularly when describing Israeli military actions, thereby neutralizing critique and displacing responsibility. Such linguistic decisions are not arbitrary; they reflect and reinforce larger power structures.

Framing and Metaphorical Legitimization

Building on Entman's framing model, this study illustrates how Western media frame narratives around selective problem definitions and moral hierarchies. Israeli suffering is often framed as immediate and visceral emphasized through vivid imagery, human-interest stories, and direct quotations from officials while Palestinian suffering is presented as generalized, contextualized minimally, or omitted altogether. Metaphors such as "war is a journey," "trauma is a burden," or "hope fades" were consistently adopted from Israeli political figures and reproduced uncritically by Western outlets. These metaphors serve to normalize prolonged violence and present Israeli military campaigns not as acts of aggression but as stoic responses to emotional injury. In contrast, Palestinian actions are rarely granted metaphorical richness or emotional depth.

Orientalism, Settler-Colonial Logic, and Grievable Lives

At the social practice level, the findings underscore how the media's discursive practices are embedded in broader ideological formations particularly Orientalism (Said, 1978), settler-colonial logic (Pappé, 2006), and racialized moral economies (Butler, 2008). The portrayal of Palestinians as culturally regressive, irrational, and violent aligns with long-standing Orientalist tropes that justify Western support for colonial domination under the guise of modernity and security. Meanwhile, the concept of "grievability" is operationalized through selective empathy: Israeli victims are named, individualized, and emotionally foregrounded, whereas Palestinian deaths despite their vastly higher toll are anonymized or ignored. This hierarchy of life reveals a discursive economy in which moral concern is allocated along racial and geopolitical lines.

Implications for Knowledge Production and Policy

These findings are not only relevant to academic discourse but carry profound implications for public understanding, policy legitimization, and the global human rights agenda. When language dehumanizes and delegitimizes, it creates the conditions under which violence becomes not only thinkable but justified. As such, media narratives do not merely describe reality they help construct it. Recognizing and interrogating the discursive mechanisms that sustain these asymmetries is essential for promoting a more equitable media landscape and resisting the erasure of Palestinian voices from global consciousness.

Moreover, the paper contributes to ongoing debates about epistemic injustice where certain populations are denied full access to narrate their reality on the global stage. The structural omission of Palestinian perspectives from mainstream discourse reflects a broader pattern of narrative control in which dominant powers define whose pain matters, whose voice is credible, and whose resistance is criminal.

Future Research

Future studies could extend this work by incorporating Arabic media, social media discourse, or corpus-based comparative analysis to map linguistic patterns across cultural contexts. Additionally, computational discourse analysis may complement the CDA approach to test the prevalence of framing devices across larger datasets.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically interrogated how Western political and media discourses construct a highly asymmetrical representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict one in which Palestinian resistance is delegitimized, Palestinian lives are devalued, and Israeli narratives are discursively privileged. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), supported by postcolonial theory, framing theory, and the concept of grievability, we have shown how seemingly neutral language choices metaphors, labels, framing devices, and omissions actively reproduce systems of power, ideology, and complicity. By closely examining major Western media outlets' coverage of

the October 7, 2023 events and subsequent Israeli military operations in Gaza, this paper has revealed the rhetorical mechanisms through which Palestinians are linguistically erased or criminalized, while Israeli suffering is amplified and individualized. Terms like "terrorists," "militants," and "human shields," combined with metaphors such as "war is a journey" and "trauma is a burden," participate in a larger project of moral asymmetry. These discursive practices do not merely reflect geopolitical bias they sustain it. They naturalize settler-colonial violence and silence historical grievances under the guise of balance and objectivity.

At a deeper level, the findings affirm that language functions as a political technology one capable of shaping global perceptions, policy decisions, and moral hierarchies. The denial of narrative space to Palestinians in Western discourse reinforces not only epistemic injustice but also the material conditions of occupation, displacement, and siege. The persistent framing of Israeli actions as defense and Palestinian actions as aggression distorts international legal norms and undermines global efforts toward justice and decolonization.

This conclusion is not an endpoint but a call to action. For scholars, journalists, educators, and policymakers, there is an urgent need to interrogate the role of discourse in legitimizing violence and marginalization. It is imperative that future research continues to expose these discursive imbalances, expand the linguistic and media corpus across languages and platforms, and elevate Palestinian narratives from the margins to the center of scholarly and public conversations. Ultimately, dismantling the discursive architecture that sustains colonial hierarchies is a necessary step toward achieving not just media fairness, but political justice and human dignity for all peoples Palestinians included.

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Highlighting Biased Western Media Discourse on Israel-Palestine: A Textual Analysis of News Articles by Mohammed El-Kurd

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ABSTRACT

Western media is evidently biased when it comes to reporting on escalations in Israel and Palestine in a way that disadvantages the Palestinians. However, recently, there has been a visible trend in the rise of Palestinian counter-narratives that interrogate and address the biased discourse in Western media. The rise in Palestinian counter-narratives can be attributed to social media, as it allows Palestinians to bypass the problem of mainstream media censorship, including giving a platform to many Palestinians who advocate for the Palestinian cause. This paper focused specifically on Mohammed El-Kurd, who has used his platform as a journalist, writer, and activist to provide counter-narratives to dispute the misrepresentation and invalidation of the Palestinian people. Using the textual analysis element of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional (3D) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper explained the linguistic features of three of El-Kurd's articles published in the American magazine *The Nation.* The study finds that El-Kurd consistently used the active voice, negative expressive values of his Western counterparts, as well as repetition, overwording, and collocations.

Keywords: Counter-narratives; critical discourse analysis; Israel-Palestine; media bias; textual analysis

INTRODUCTION

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The news plays an important role in our everyday lives as it is heavily relied on by the public in order to be informed of key events. Western media has consistently misrepresented and disfavoured the Palestinians when reporting on events in Israel and Palestine. This bias can be seen in the ways in which news reports are written as well as in interviews conducted with prominent Palestinian figures. Such bias has contributed to the censorship of the Palestinian experiences in the context of the 76-year Israeli occupation of Palestine, and this bias can result in risks such as the perpetuation of unbalanced power structures, entire masses being misinformed, and, in the worst case, there being rampant journalism malpractice. Thus, addressing this issue is essential in preventing its harmful normalisation.

Despite the obstacles Palestinians face from mainstream Western media, in recent times, Palestinian counter-narratives have become more prominent and far-reaching, which can be attributed to social media platforms allowing a space for their experiences to be heard and reach a wide audience, bypassing the problem of mainstream media censorship. While many studies have been done analysing and reiterating the instances of biased reporting of Palestine by the Western media, very few studies have looked at how influential Palestinian figures, particularly Palestinian journalists and writers, respond to and address the biased discourse. In addition, specifically in the field of discourse analysis, not many studies exist that investigate the counter-narratives from a linguistic point of view.

This paper focused on the linguistic features of the counter-narratives provided by Mohammed El-Kurd, a writer, activist and journalist from Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood located in the occupied East Jerusalem which became a point of contention when the Israeli Supreme Court threatened the Palestinian residents - despite some of them having lived there for generations - with eviction to allow Jewish settlers and immigrants to move in. El-Kurd and his family were among the residents facing the possibility of losing their homes. Sheikh Jarrah was established in an agreement between Jordan and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to house Palestinians who were displaced during the 1948 Nakba, as they were displaced by Zionist militias who captured many cities and territories to officially form the State of Israel.

In April 2021, faced with the threat of eviction, the residents of Sheikh Jarrah took to the streets and engaged in demonstrations, which were met with brutal police response and hostility, including confrontations with Israeli settlers. The situation escalated on the night of the 7th of May 2021, when the Israeli police raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque on one of the last 10 nights of the holy month of Ramadan and proceeded to assault the Muslim worshippers with rubber bullets and stun grenades. This event resulted in the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, retaliating by firing rockets at Israel, leading to 11 days of violence between Israel and Gaza. The 11-day period began on the 10th of May and ended on the 21st after a ceasefire agreement was reached.

During the 11-day Israel-Gaza violence, Mohammed El-Kurd started gaining influence. El-Kurd campaigned on social media platforms to raise awareness about the issue as well as to document

the aggression from the confrontations with the Israeli police and settlers in real time. El-Kurd, alongside other activists, founded the #SaveSheikhJarrah online campaign, which aimed to bring international support and awareness. He was also interviewed on various news outlets such as CNN, MSNBC, as well as CBSN, where he would bring awareness to the Palestinian narrative and experiences living under Israeli occupation and explain how the Western media is complicit in the censorship of Palestinian voices. In the same year, El-Kurd was named in *TIME* Magazine's list of 100 Most Influential People of 2021. Shortly after, he was appointed as the first-ever Palestine Correspondent for the US-based magazine *The Nation,* known for discussing events related to politics, culture, and social issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis, or DA, refers to a way of analysing texts or speech at its language/linguistic level while taking into account its social and cultural contexts. DA is an intersection of various fields such as linguistics, cultural studies, communication, sociology, and education (Johnstone and Andrus, 2024). DA has several approaches, among them politeness theory, speech acts, and conversation analysis. For this paper, the approach of DA used as a theoretical framework was critical discourse analysis (CDA), particularly the Three-Dimensional (3D) Model introduced by the linguist Norman Fairclough in his 1989 book *Language and Power.*

The main idea behind CDA is that ideological beliefs can be spread and reproduced through text, therefore, CDA is used to study and observe the relationship between discourse and ideology. Discourse and ideology have a direct influence on each other, whereby ideologies can be propagated using a certain kind of language that appeals to the masses, and simultaneously, language can be intentionally manipulated to propagate certain ideologies. In Fairclough's 3D model, Fairclough proposed three elements to focus on when implementing CDA on a selected discourse, namely the text, discursive practices, and social practices. This paper focused only on the first element, the textual analysis, of Fairclough's 3D model. The textual analysis involves analysing and describing the text of the selected discourse linguistically, where the focus will be on, for instance, word choices, grammar, and sentence structure.

Role of Social Media Activism in Palestinian Counter-Narratives

Palestinian counter-narratives are essential in ensuring balanced knowledge about Israel and Palestine, challenging dominant Israeli and Western narratives (Rubeo and Baroud, 2021). There is several existing studies done on how social media has contributed to the circulation of the Palestinian counter-narratives during the May 2021 Gaza-Israel violence. The algorithm on

TikTok, in particular, has made it easier to promote pro-Palestine content (Abbas et al., 2022). The use and circulation of hashtags related to Palestine on social media platforms has also played a big role in getting more users engaged with content related to the Palestinian perspective, overall aiding in furthering the Palestinian cause (Huda et al., 2022). It also cannot be denied that social media activists and citizen journalists have played a crucial role in allowing for there to be an awareness on the plight of Palestinians as well as a shift in favour of the Palestinian counter-narratives among users of social media (Abbas et al., 2022; Sualman et al., 2024), as these citizen journalists and activists can directly reach and interact with their followers as well as share events in their surroundings happening in real time (Kokeyo, 2023; Vilchis, 2023).

Despite the fact that social media has proven to be an advantage in the propagation of the Palestinian narratives, there still exist some barriers that prove to be problematic. It is known that mainstream media poses the problem of intentionally censoring Palestinian voices, a problem that Palestinian journalists themselves are very much familiar with (Saba, 2021). Although social media has given the advantage of allowing pro-Palestinian activists to bypass this problem, undoubtedly, social media has also become a place of misinformation and hate speech, and pro-Palestinian activism-related works have faced instances of unwarranted mass reporting which results in their contents being removed from the social media platforms, further adding to the problem of censorship (Supriyanto et al., 2022).

Influence of Political Stances on Israel-Palestine on News Reporting Style

Previous studies have looked at how the foreign policies and political stances of a country may have an influence on the way events in a specific region are reported. For instance, Jackson (2024) found that *The New York Times* repeatedly showed favouritism towards the Israeli perspective when reporting on the First and Second Intifada. This favouritism can be attributed to the fact that the United States has always been consistently supportive of Israel. The findings also support that of another study done by Amer (2017), which found that British and American newspapers, namely *The Guardian, The Times London* and *The New York Times,* have a tendency to over-represent and feature more Israeli actors than that of Palestinians, further proving that the newspapers are more inclined to the Israeli perspective likely because of American and British support. The findings are still consistent and support another study done by Amer (2022), which, using Fairclough's 3D Model of CDA, compared how the *BBC and The New York Times* reported on the May 2021 Gaza-Israel violence, where the study found that both outlets not only over-emphasised the Israeli perspective, but framed the 11-day event in such a way that gave the impression that Palestinians were the sole instigator of that period of violence.

News outlets that have different versions, whereby reporting is done in different languages, have been found to have reporting styles not so different overall. This is proven by Abu Hashish et al.

(2023), who found that *BBC English* and *BBC Arabic* are still pro-Israel and do not differ much despite reporting in different languages and catering to different audiences. While these studies have proven that Western media are more pro-Israel in their reporting style, studies have also been done by Amaireh (2023) and Eldin (2019) which prove that Middle Eastern media outlets, particularly Arab news outlets like *Al Jazeera* and *Al Ahram Weekly,* report on Israel and Palestine using more emotional language to bring sympathy for the Palestinians, in line with the pro-Palestinian stances of Arab countries. This has also been supported by the research done by Abu Taha and Al-Khanji (2020), who also found that one way news outlets reporting on Israel and Palestine show favouritism is by how often a Palestinian or Israeli source is quoted, overall indicating which actor is over-represented. The research done by Eldin (2019) in particular has also found that how events and actors are represented and reported in the headlines of news outlets, specifically is essential, as the headline is the first thing that attracts the attention of the readers, as also emphasised by AR (2024).

Geographical factors could also play a big role in reporting style, specifically for news outlets which have branches in different countries. For instance, a study done by El Damanhoury (2017) found that the reporting style of *Al Jazeera America* (AJAM) regarding Israel and Palestine is similar to that of the American news outlet *Cable News Network* (CNN), and therefore different from other Al Jazeera branches. This is likely due to the fact that AJAM is a newspaper branch in the United States and has to appear more mainstream and relatable to the American public, overall adopting similar reporting styles to American newspapers to be more appealing and localised. Geographical proximity could also play a role, as AJAM is further away from Israel-Palestine than Al Jazeera networks in the Middle East.

Studies focusing specifically on Israeli and Palestinian media's reporting of the conflict have found that the "in" group are more likely to engage in positive self-representation while "othering" and negatively representing those in the "out" group, overall reporting in an "us versus them" perspective (Latif and Majelan, 2014)**.** For instance, Israeli media are more likely to portray Israelis and the Israeli government in a more positive light, while negatively depicting the opposition. In addition, in the case of Palestinian news outlets, despite belonging to an "in" group, there are still different ideologies that exist within that group, which affect the way events are reported (Qawariq, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This research was qualitative and aimed to investigate the linguistic features of the counter-narratives provided by Mohammed El-Kurd in three of his news articles published in the American magazine *The Nation.* Up until March 2024, El-Kurd had published a total of 20 articles, and, after doing a careful reading of the publications, three articles were selected for this research due to

their relevance to the topic, as the three articles focused on El-Kurd addressing the biased Western media discourse when reporting on Palestine. This study employed Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional (3D) Model of CDA, particularly the textual analysis, when analysing the news articles. When carrying out textual analysis on a selected text, focus will be on the linguistic features of the text, for instance, the sentence voices, grammar, and word/ lexical choices, among others. The three articles were analysed and categorised chronologically in this study based on their publication dates:

Article 1 (published on 25 May 2022): *How the Western Media Missed the Story of Shireen Abu Akleh's Death*

Article 2 (published on 20 October 2023): *Western Journalists Have Palestinian Blood on Their Hands*

Article 3 (published on 27 November 2023): *The Right to Speak for Ourselves*

FINDINGS

From the findings of the textual analysis, El-Kurd, linguistically, provides his counter-narratives by consistently using the active voice, negatively evaluating his Western counterparts as part of his expressive values and engaging in overwording, repetition and collocations to emphasise the point that Western journalists and mainstream media are unreliable when it comes to discussing Palestine, as they are biased and motivated by anti-Palestinian political ideologies.

The findings of the textual analysis of El-Kurd's three articles differ significantly from the findings of the previously published studies discussed in the literature review, which used various CDA-related theoretical frameworks. The previous studies merely compared how different news media reported on certain periods of escalated violence between Israel and Palestine, including explaining how the differences in the styles and methods of reporting are reflective of the inherent biases of the media and how it may be related, ultimately, to the government foreign policies and political stances on Israel and Palestine. The findings of the studies included, among others, the consistent use of passive voice when reporting on Israel's use of violence against the Palestinians in Western media reporting, where there is a failure to directly mention Israel as the perpetrator, overall shielding them from accountability (Amer, 2022; Jackson, 2024). In addition, bias can also be seen in the ways in which the media represent Israeli and Palestinian actors, how comprehensive and

in-depth the coverage of each side can be in addition to how often Israeli or Palestinian figures are quoted and sourced in the news (Abu Taha & Al-Khanji, 2020; Eldin, 2019).

Overall, there is a significant difference between the findings of this research and the findings of the previous studies. This can likely be attributed to the fact that El-Kurd's articles are concerned with giving counter-narratives to existing news articles and reports on Israel-Palestine, whereas the articles analysed in the previous studies were the actual news articles themselves that only reported on and described events in Israel and Palestine.

DATA ANALYSIS

After carrying out the textual analysis of the counter-narratives of the selected three articles by Mohammed El-Kurd, the findings showed that El-Kurd has consistently used the active voice when writing, in the headlines of his articles as well as throughout the rest of the articles. In addition, El-Kurd has repeatedly engaged in repetition, overwording, and collocations, whereby frequent words are repeated and often collocate in the sense that they are used repeatedly when addressing certain topics. Lastly, El-Kurd has shown negative expressive values of his Western counterparts, whereby he uses negative language to express his views regarding Western media and journalists, particularly when Israel and Palestine are being reported.

The Use of Active Voice

Sentences in the active voice mention the actions carried out when reporting on a certain event, including highlighting the two participants who are involved in the reported scenario: the agent and patient. When using active voice, the actions carried out by the agent and the explicit mention of the patient as a receiver of the action are explicitly acknowledged (Fairclough, 1989). The typical order of active sentences is SVO (subject-verb-object), whereby the subject (agent) is mentioned first, followed by the actions done by the subject and the object (patient) being at the receiving end of the action. Using active voice when reporting ensures that the involved agents are named and specified, leaving no room for doubt and uncertainty as to who or what is responsible for the action reported.

The use of passive sentences when reporting, on the other hand, presents the risk of being deceptive and misleading, as the identity and responsibility of the agent are not made clear to the readers. Such obfuscations and incoherence in passive-voiced news reports can be attributed to ideological motivations (Fairclough, 1989).

Throughout El-Kurd's articles, he has used the active voice to explicitly mention and emphasise how the Western media and journalists are complicit and biased in reporting on Palestine. Instances of these from the articles can be seen as follows:

Article 1 (headline):

How the Western Media Missed the Story of Shireen Abu Akleh's Death.

Article 2 (headline):

Western Journalists Have Palestinian Blood on Their Hands.

From the headlines, El-Kurd does not shield the identity of the agents, their actions as well as the patients at the receiving end of the actions. The two headlines are explicitly written to convey the intended information and leave no room for doubt regarding the involved parties. This is essential when writing headlines, as they are the first thing readers will read and focus on (Eldin, 2019).

The same use of active voice can also be found in the subheadings of the articles, giving a clear and brief preview of the topics that the articles will address:

Article 1 (subheading):

...the media proved yet again that it's not equipped to cover Palestine.

Article 2 (subheading):

The mainstream media's relentless dehumanization of Palestinians is enabling Israeli war crimes.

The rest of the contents of El-Kurd's articles continue to use active voice as well when highlighting instances of bias, negligence, and the shortcomings of Western media and journalists in their reporting of events in Palestine.

Article 1:

Western newspapers behave as they usually do… parroted Israeli state narratives, fabricated confusion about murder…

The New York Times deceived its readers…

Article 2:

…when MSNBC reported their massacre, the channel cast doubt on their innocence, calling them "what appear to be evacuees".

Article 3:

…journalists and cultural workers used a humanizing framework in their representation of oppressed people… the victimhood that emerges within this framework is a perfect victimhood, an ethnocentric requirement for sympathy and solidarity.

By using the active voice in the articles, El-Kurd does not obfuscate the agency and action when reporting the events, thereby leaving no room for doubt. The opposite is the case in Western mainstream media, as passive voice is often used when covering events related to Palestinians, which can be attributed to the inherent biases and ideological motivations of the media (Amer, 2022; Jackson, 2024).

Negative Expressive Values of Western Counterparts

Expressive values are the speakers' and writers' use of language to express their evaluations of people and practices, where the evaluation can be positive or negative. Expressive values can appear in grammar as well as in vocabulary. The expressive values that appear in grammatical situations are related to experiential values, which are the speakers' and writers' use of language that is reflective of their perceptions, knowledge, and beliefs (Fairclough, 1989).

Throughout El-Kurd's articles, instances of expressive values are present in his representation of Western media and journalists, where he makes clear and emphasises his negative evaluations of the issues caused by the bias, unreliability, and ideological motivations of his Western counterparts.

El-Kurd has depicted Western media and journalists as being unreliable in fact-checking and reporting, including being manipulative, biased, and uncritical when circulating unverified information, or information that is only half-truths. Instances of these can be seen as follows:

Article 1:

Western newsrooms generally love martyrs… men and women they can market to their readers as perfect victims. Shireen Abu Akleh… fit that profile… Palestinian Christian woman with an American passport… because of who killed her, Abu Akleh's very public death and "perfect victimhood" was up for debate.

Article 3:

There are prerequisites these victims must meet… They carry US or European passports.

The news that Shireen was an American was out in the following hours, and her alleged Americanness suddenly made her human.

To the average American, she was a person because she was a woman, a Christian, an American…

In the aforementioned extracts from Articles 1 and 3, El-Kurd negatively evaluates the "Western newsrooms" as being biased when discussing and reporting the death of the prominent Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed on 11 May 2022 while reporting a raid that took place in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. El-Kurd mentions how the Western media tend to "market" and amplify the voices of those they deem to be "perfect victims". The criteria of "perfect victims" include being as Western as possible, which Abu Akleh was due to her being Christian and having an American passport (and by extension being an American citizen). Despite Abu Akleh fitting the profile, the Western media did not grant her "perfect victimhood" the attention it usually would, thereby obfuscating information, as mentioning the involvement of the Israeli army would be a requirement.

Article 1:

Western newsrooms behave as they usually do… parroted Israeli narratives and fabricated confusion about a murder that was clear as day.

In the above extract in Article 1, El-Kurd also highlights the unreliability of the Western media when reporting on Abu Akleh's death and the circumstances surrounding it, mentioning that this unreliable nature is something of a regular occurrence ("...behave as they usually do…") and that the media would simply recirculate information solely from the Israeli perspective ("...parroted Israeli narratives…"), overall being biased and one-sided, including concealing information that "was clear as day".

El-Kurd also depicts Western journalists as being dismissive and complicit in the dehumanisation of Palestinians, as can be seen in the following extract:

Article 2:

Palestinian Authority's ambassador to the UK, Husam Zomlot, gave an interview to BBC host Kristy Wark… His family members among the thousands who have been killed in the assault… Wark replied, "Sorry for your own personal loss. I mean, can I just be clear, though, you cannot condone the killing of civilians in Israel, can you?" …

Wark's response to Zomlot's horrifying loss… reveals a troubling phenomenon in the mainstream media: The industry standard is to dehumanize Palestinians… Our death is so quotidian that journalists report it as though they're reporting the weather.

In the above extract, El-Kurd recounts Husam Zomlot's interview with Kristy Wark, where Zomlot recounts his family falling victim to an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip. Wark responds dismissively by bringing up the topic of whether he condones the "killing of civilians in Israel", blatantly disregarding the severity of Zomlot's experience and making it seem as though the interview was more of an interrogation of his values regarding the 2023 Gaza-Israel war.

This is an instance of what Fairclough terms "power in discourse", specifically enforcing explicitness, whereby the less powerful participants in an interaction are forced to be explicit to reduce ambiguity. Enforcing explicitness in interviews can be used as a means of control, where the interviewer can force the interviewee to validate their version of events that occurred, and this can overall limit the options for future input from the interviewees (Fairclough, 1989). Thus, not

much voice is given to Zomlot's experience, and by extension the Palestinian narrative, as the incident in the interview reveals a clear inclination towards the Israeli perspective. The lack of focus, validation, and attention on the Palestinian victims is essentially dehumanising, and the coverage is overall unbalanced. Furthermore, there is an important mention of how Palestinian deaths have been under-reported, if not normalised, as reports on the deaths fail to capture the severity and urgency of the situation, which El-Kurd equates to the journalists reporting it "as though they're reporting the weather".

El-Kurd has named the experience for what it is: a hostile interrogation motivated by personal bias and ideologies. He blatantly mentions another instance of this in the following extract:

Article 2:

I and a few other Palestinians have been hopping between TV channels and radio stations to talk about the atrocities unfolding in Gaza… we have encountered similar hostility. Producers invite us… not to interview us… but to interrogate us. They test our answers against the viewer's inherent bias - a bias well-fed through years of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian rhetoric.

Overall, the expressive values in El-Kurd's articles clearly show his negative evaluation of Western journalists and the mainstream media, as he explicitly depicts them as being biased when reporting on Palestine, being hostile and interrogative in an interview setting, being complicit in the dehumanisation of Palestinians, and being dismissive of their perspectives.

Repetition, Overwording and Collocations

Fairclough (1989) refers to "overwording" as a situation where the speakers and writers use many words that are near synonyms. This is done due to the need to put a strong emphasis on a certain point, or, as Fairclough states, it is due to the "preoccupation of some aspect of reality", which can be attributed to the need to address or highlight an existing ideological struggle.

In one of El-Kurd's articles, there is an instance of overwording when highlighting the ways in which Western media and journalists dehumanise Palestinians by being dismissive towards their deaths, overall invalidating such tragedies and treating it as though it has become completely normalised. The example can be seen as follows:

Article 2:

Our grief is negligible; our rage is unwarranted. Our death is so quotidian…

The three terms used - "negligible", "unwarranted" and "quotidian" - are near synonyms as they all contain negative connotations in this context and overall describe and emphasise the state of being invalidated and dismissed, as though something as severe and tragic as death and grief have become normalised and portrayed as less important than it is.

Examples of collocations can also be seen in El-Kurd's articles, where he uses similar words repeatedly when describing and talking about the Western media and journalists. Instances of these can be seen as follows:

Article 1:

*Western newspapers… **parroted**… **fabricated**….*

*The New York Times **deceived**… The Associated Press **altered**…*

*… the BBC, CBS News, and others **repeated**…*

***Fabrication** is permissible…*

*What makes this **journalistic malpractice**…*

Article 2:

*… we have encountered similar **hostility**.*

*Producers invite us… to **interrogate** us.*

*… took a break from repeatedly **interrupting**…*

*… reporters… repeat **fabrications**…*

*... one could argue it's **journalistic malpractice**.*

*Obfuscation and **fabrication** are permissible…*

The above extracts from Articles 1 and 2 show that El-Kurd has used similar words repeatedly in both articles when he negatively represents the Western media and journalists when talking about their shortcomings and biases when it comes to reporting on Palestine. These words overall collocate as they frequently appear when discussing a common topic in El-Kurd's articles (i.e. of Western media and journalists). In addition, these words are also near synonyms and are further proof of El-Kurd's habit of overwording in his articles. For instance, in Article 1, the words "parroted" and "repeated" are stated in order to highlight the unoriginality of Western media reports and their inclination towards recirculating information only from an Israeli source without taking into account the authenticity of the information. The same can be said for the words "deceived" and "altered", which indicate that the Western media outlets have a tendency to manipulate or alter their language when reporting in such a way that it can easily mislead - thus, deceive - their readers.

In Article 2, the words "hostility", "interrogate", and "interrupting" all contain negative connotations in the context in which they are used, where El-Kurd highlights the experience he faces as a Palestinian journalist when interacting with the Western media. These terms further emphasise his experience as one in which he is unwelcome in an already hostile environment, where he feels personally targeted and interrogated regarding his own personal views in instances where he is interviewed, including being continuously interrupted and not given the room to completely express himself.

Both Articles 1 and 2 contain the word "fabrication" several times, including the word "journalistic malpractice". The repetition of the word "fabrication" shows El-Kurd's strong need to emphasise the unreliability and manipulative nature of Western news reports, whereas for "journalistic malpractice", El-Kurd uses this term twice to ultimately highlight what all these practices - fabrication, deception, biased interviewing and intentional manipulation of language - lead to: the Western media and journalists, blinded by their own biases and ideologies, failing to do their jobs and thus complicit in malpractice.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlight the linguistic features of El-Kurd's counter-narratives, which aim to address and dismantle biased representations and reporting of Palestinians by the Western mainstream media. Overall, this research has found the main linguistic features - active voice, negative expressive values, overwording, repetition, and collocations - employed by El-Kurd in his news articles when providing a counter-narrative.

The limitations for this study include time and sample. The duration of this research was merely three months, and the sample of this study was limited to only three articles written by one writer.

For future research, it is recommended to focus more on the ideas of counter-narratives in journalism, generally. Regarding Israel-Palestine specifically, there may be more research that could be done on how other Palestinian journalists and writers provide their own counter-narratives. In addition, providing more elaborations on the impact of the normalisation and continuous practice of providing counter-narratives against biased media discourse in the journalism field could also be done, ultimately explaining how counter-narratives can shape and/or change the journalism field.

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Murdering Minds: Israel's Systematic Targeting of Palestinian Scholars and Its Impact on Palestinian Higher Education: A Case Study of IUG

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ABSTRACT

Since October 2023, Israel's intensified military campaign in Gaza has extended beyond physical destruction to the deliberate targeting of Palestinian intellectual life. Education, serving as both a means of development and a form of national resistance, faces an existential threat as the assassination of scholars directly undermines resilience and post-war reconstruction. This study examines how the killing of academics disrupts mentorship and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge among postgraduate students at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). It also assesses IUG's institutional responses amid widespread infrastructure collapse and ongoing genocide. Using a qualitative case study approach grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of academic capital (1986), the research draws on semi-structured interviews with three professors and three Master's students from the Linguistics, Islamic Studies, and Geography faculties. Findings reveal a collapse in supervision capacity, ruptured knowledge transmission, and loss of disciplinary depth, especially in specialized fields like the Islamic Creed. Beyond documenting these impacts, the study theorizes the destruction of a people's capacity to imagine and build a collective future as intellectual erasure. As a critical contribution, this paper introduces "mindocide"—the deliberate targeting and killing of scholars as epistemic warfare, and coins three additional terms: Palestiniacide (systematic targeting of Palestinians), futuricide (the killing of future possibilities), and humanitycide (the destruction of human dignity and collective humanity). By framing higher education as both a target and a tool of resistance, this study sheds light on the academic dimensions of genocidal violence in Gaza.

Keywords: Higher education in Palestine; Mindocide; Resilience; War Crimes; Palestiniacide

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli strategy of targeting and killing Palestinian scholars represents a calculated assault not only on individuals but also on the intellectual and educational foundations of Palestinian society.

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(Doménguez, 2024). This aggression is embedded within the broader framework of colonial violence and racial oppression that Palestinians have endured since the Nakba of 1948, marked by mass displacement, occupation, and apartheid. Across Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and within Israel itself, Palestinians face systemic discrimination and military aggression, which severely impact their right to education and national self-determination (Butler, 2006). While Israel has long sought to weaken Palestinian academic life, the ongoing genocide in Gaza, which began in October 2023, marks an alarming escalation in the destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure and academic institutions. These killings represent a devastating climax in the long-standing policy of "murdering the minds" of Palestine, targeting intellectuals to suppress critical thought, sever intergenerational knowledge transmission, and destabilize the foundations of higher education (Rabaia & Habash, 2024). These acts are not incidental casualties of war; they are a deliberate, systematic effort to erase Palestinian intellectual and cultural resilience. Therefore, education has become not only a form of survival but also a tool for resistance, providing the intellectual foundation necessary to challenge oppression and advocate for justice (Hasan, 2024)

The consequences of the Israeli campaign are far-reaching. Universities such as the Islamic University of Gaza have suffered immense damage from airstrikes, with faculty members across a range of disciplines, Islamic Studies, Engineering, Medicine, and Social Sciences, being systematically targeted. This decimation of academic capital has crippled postgraduate education and research, leaving students without mentors, disrupting academic continuity, and undermining the infrastructure that supports Palestinian national identity (Rabaia & Habash, 2024). Beyond Gaza, Palestinians living in Israel and East Jerusalem also face discriminatory policies that restrict access to education and resources, reinforcing an apartheid framework that undermines Palestinian education across all contexts. In this way, educational suppression is not limited to those in Gaza under bombardment, but affects Palestinians throughout the broader region (Hamdan, 2023). Despite these unprecedented challenges, Palestinian universities continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience. In the face of ongoing destruction and adversity, innovative strategies have been adopted to ensure the continuity of education (Hasan, 2024). Makeshift solutions, including emergency teaching methods and online learning platforms, have emerged as temporary substitutes for traditional classrooms, allowing students to continue their studies despite the collapse of infrastructure and essential services such as electricity and internet access (UNESCO, 2024).

This resilience highlights the vital role of education in Palestinian resistance. The struggle to maintain educational continuity amid overwhelming obstacles underscores the collective strength of Palestinian students, educators, and institutions (Quneis & Rafidi, 2023). This study seeks to explore the profound impact of the targeted killing of scholars on Palestinian higher education. Focusing specifically on the devastating effects of the genocidal war that erupted in 2023, the study examines how the systematic targeting of educators has disrupted the academic environment, undermined the quality of education, and halted the transmission of knowledge in one of the most academically vibrant regions in the Middle East. The toll of these attacks, compounded by the

ongoing siege and destruction, has created an educational crisis that threatens the future of Palestinian higher education.

Problem Statement

The ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza since October 2023 has inflicted unprecedented devastation on Palestinian society, with the academic sector—particularly higher education—bearing the brunt of the impact. A particularly alarming aspect of this crisis is the deliberate targeting and killing of university professors and scholars, especially those affiliated with the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). These individuals were not only educators but also key figures in mentorship, research, and the preservation of national intellectual identity. The loss of such intellectual capital has profoundly disrupted the academic ecosystem, undermining the quality of education, severing mentorship networks, and jeopardizing the stability of Palestinian universities. Education in Palestinian society is not merely a means of personal development; it is a cornerstone of national identity, resilience, and intellectual autonomy. Palestinian universities, especially IUG, have historically been vital centers of intellectual resistance, playing a central role in cultivating the next generation of leaders, activists, and critical thinkers. The targeted assassination of scholars represents a severe blow to the intellectual foundation of Palestinian society, stripping away essential resources for both immediate educational needs and long-term national development. This loss not only hampers the ability of universities to continue their academic missions but also threatens the broader social, economic, and political fabric, which relies heavily on a well-educated population to drive post-war reconstruction and ongoing resistance to occupation.

Despite the gravity of this crisis, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding the full impact of the targeted killing of academics on higher education in Gaza. There remains a critical gap in our knowledge of how Palestinian universities, particularly IUG, are responding to this depletion of intellectual capital and what strategies are being employed to sustain educational continuity amid widespread genocide, infrastructure collapse, and profound psychological trauma. Addressing this gap is crucial; without it, the long-term consequences for academic development, national resilience, and the future of post-war reconstruction efforts risk being severely overlooked. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the extent of academic disruption caused by the loss of scholars, assessing the institutional responses employed to adapt to this crisis, and evaluating the broader implications of intellectual erasure as a tactic of war and colonization. Through this exploration, the study will underscore the urgent need for both local and global support to preserve and rebuild Palestinian higher education as a vital pillar of national resistance and intellectual sovereignty.

Objectives:

1. To examine how the assassination of scholars disrupts mentorship structures and intergenerational knowledge transfer postgraduate students in Islamic University.

2. To evaluate the institutional responses of Islamic University to mitigate the loss of its academic staff amid infrastructure collapse and genocide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Genocide in Gaza: A Struggle for Survival Amidst Destruction

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has waged an unprecedented and brutal war on the Gaza Strip, resulting in multiple humanitarian catastrophes among civilians (Alsemeiri, Elsemeiri, Carroll, & Aljamal, 2024). As of March 24, 2025, more than 150 scholars, academics, university professors, and researchers have been executed, and over 800 teachers and educational staff have been killed by Israeli forces. In addition, at least 12,900 students have been killed, while 785,000 students have been deprived of their right to education due to the systematic targeting and destruction of schools and universities. Approximately 359 educational institutions, including schools and universities, have been partially or destroyed during the ongoing assault (Government, Media, Office, 2025).

The broader civilian toll has been staggering. Over 54,636 people have been killed, and more than 128,650 have been injured, alongside at least 18,700 detainees, many of whom remain forcibly disappeared or missing under the rubble. Around 2 million people representing over 85% of Gaza's total population have been forcibly displaced. Furthermore, more than 173,311 buildings, including homes, hospitals, health centers, and critical infrastructure, have been either totally or partially damaged or destroyed (PCBS, 2025). Hunger, famine, and the spread of diseases have become daily realities for the besieged population, while environmental toxication threatens to inflict long-term, possibly irreversible, devastation on Gaza's ecosystem. Essential services from healthcare to higher education have been crippled, if not completely obliterated (Iriqat, et al., 2025) Importantly, these atrocities unfold against the backdrop of long-standing, systemic hardship. Even before the latest escalation, the two-decades-long blockade had already caused severe shortages of basic commodities and essential life-supporting services. In 2018, the United Nations warned that Gaza was rapidly approaching the threshold of becoming 'unlivable' (UN, 2018). Today, the compounded destruction — the mass killing of civilians, the decimation of residential areas, the collapse of healthcare and education systems, and the environmental devastation — reflects not merely the consequences of war, but a systematic attempt to erase Palestinian life in Gaza (The Guardian, 2024). In the face of relentless violence, survivors are trapped in a vicious cycle of death, displacement, hunger, and the ever-looming threat of complete annihilation. Their struggle to survive amidst destruction stands as a stark testament to the ongoing genocide in Gaza (Dader, et al., 2024).

Palestinian Higher Education: Knowledge as a Philosophy of Resistance

The trajectory of higher education in the Gaza Strip cannot be understood in isolation from the broader historical and political upheavals that have defined the Palestinian experience. For

decades, Palestinians have lived under conditions of occupation, displacement, and statelessness—realities that have deeply shaped their relationship with education. Within this context, knowledge has evolved not merely as a vehicle for individual advancement but as a collective philosophy of resistance. Education has become both a tool of survival and a powerful assertion of identity, dignity, and continuity in the face of systematic erasure (Quneis & Rafidi, 2023). Jebril (2018), observes, that Palestinians view education as more than a pathway to socio-economic mobility; it is also a means of psychological resilience and a form of resistance. Jebril (2024) reinforces this view, noting that education functions as a political act—an act of defiance against occupation and blockade. The enduring commitment of students and academic staff in Gaza to pursue higher education, despite some of the harshest conditions in the world, is a testament to this philosophy of resistance.

Gaza's educational journey could be situated within its long and turbulent history. Over the centuries, Gaza has experienced a succession of foreign dominations: Ottoman rule (1516–1917), British colonial control under the Mandate (1917–1948), Egyptian administration (1948–1967), and Israeli occupation from 1967 to the present. During each period, education was often co-opted as a tool for exerting control over the Palestinian population (Jebril, 2024). However, Palestinians consistently resisted these efforts by investing in education as a counter-hegemonic force. Before the establishment of local universities, many Gazan students relied on scholarships to study abroad. Over time, however, increasing Israeli restrictions and shifting regional geopolitics made this path less viable. In response, Palestinians founded their own institutions, most notably the Islamic University of Gaza in 1978—an initiative launched under occupation, with the university's first classes held in tents. The post-Oslo period saw the establishment of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 1994 and an expansion of the higher education sector (Milton, Elkahlout, & Barakat, 2023).

Educide: The Systematic Assault on Palestinian Universities

The term Educide—a portmanteau of "education" and "genocide"—has emerged as a powerful analytical framework for understanding the calculated obliteration of Gaza's educational infrastructure. This concept encapsulates the deliberate targeting of schools, universities, libraries, and cultural institutions in conflict zones, aiming not only at physical destruction but also at erasing a people's identity, memory, and capacity for future development (Alousi, 2022). The notion was sharpened further by Professor Karma Nabulsi, who coined Scholasticide to describe the systematic murder of educational life, blending the Latin "schola" (school) with "cide" (killing) to highlight the war crimes embedded in the annihilation of learning spaces (Hajir & Qato, 2025). Recent scholarly work has drawn urgent attention to how Israel's war on Gaza represents a multidimensional campaign of destruction military, cultural, and epistemic against Palestinian society. According to Giroux (2025), Israel's brutal assault is not confined to the physical targeting of civilians. Rather, it constitutes a structural and ideological war on dissent, critical thought, and knowledge production. This form of warfare, he argues, aligns with broader authoritarian trends

globally, including assaults on intellectual freedom in the United States. The bombing of educational institutions thus serves a dual function: erasing Palestinian narratives and deterring any future intellectual resistance.

Domínguez (2024) emphasizes that we are witnessing the first genocide broadcast in real-time by its victims yet astonishingly rationalized by Israel under the guise of legal warfare. She frames this as a manifestation of de-civilianization, whereby Israel systematically dehumanizes Palestinians by destroying the civic infrastructure including education that underpins any civil society. According to UN data, 90% of Gaza's schools have been destroyed, and all 12 universities have either been bombed, severely damaged, or rendered inoperable (UN, 2024). Desai (2024) highlights that approximately 90,000 university and school students have had their education interrupted many forcibly displaced as Gaza becomes increasingly uninhabitable. This is not merely collateral damage; it reflects a strategy of intellectual extermination, designed to cripple Palestinian capacity for resilience and recovery.

Desai further documents the extensive destruction of cultural institutions—libraries, publishing houses, archives, cultural centers, and even cemeteries—arguing that Israel's campaign is not only against physical bodies but against Palestinian memory, scholarship, and identity. El-Affendi (2024) echoes Giroux's assertion, emphasizing that the genocide in Gaza is evidenced not only by mass killings but also by the deliberate erasure of its intellectual and civic life. Moreover, Hussein, Wong, & Bright (2024) provide a broader historical lens, tracing the long-standing Israeli siege as a key driver of educational collapse. Restrictions on student mobility, destruction of infrastructure, and psychological trauma have compounded to produce a deeply fragmented and endangered educational system (Alsemeiri, Carroll, & Aljamal, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach centered on the Islamic University of Gaza to investigate the impact of scholar assassinations on higher education, with a focus on Master's studies. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) Academic Capital Theory, the research explores how the loss of key scholars disrupts institutional knowledge, teaching quality, supervision, and academic continuity. Participants were purposively selected to include three active scholars from the faculties of English and Linguistics, Islamic Studies, and Geography. These scholars were chosen for their current engagement with the university, familiarity with its procedures, and their involvement in the institution's response to the ongoing genocide. Alongside them, three Master's students from the same faculties were selected to reflect diverse supervision challenges arising from the crisis, such as losing a supervisor, lack of contact, or inability to secure a replacement due to faculty shortages. Data collection occurred between April and May 2025 through semi-structured interviews conducted via email, providing a safe platform for participants amid ongoing military attacks and infrastructure damage. Two tailored interview guides with open-ended WH questions elicited rich, detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Responses were manually coded, and recurring themes and patterns were identified across both scholars' and students' narratives. To ensure participant safety and confidentiality, especially given the sensitive context, Master's students were anonymized and

referred to as Participants 1, 2, and 3. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed: all participants provided informed consent, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the profound and ongoing impact of scholar assassinations on academic life at the Islamic University of Gaza, offering critical insights into the wider destruction of Palestinian higher education under genocide conditions.

FINDINGS

Professors' Testimonies on the Resilience of Higher Education in Gaza

The following data analysis is based on in-depth interviews with three professors from different academic departments at the Islamic University of Gaza: Linguistics, Geography, and Islamic Creed. These interviews provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted challenges faced by faculty and students amid ongoing conflict, infrastructural devastation, and the tragic loss of academic staff due to targeted attacks. The analysis synthesizes their experiences in terms of the impact on academic functions, teaching and supervision difficulties, communication methods, coping strategies, and the long-term effects on higher education in Gaza. Table 1 below summarizes the key thematic findings derived from the interviews.

TABLE 1: Key Thematic Findings from Professors' Testimonies

Aspect	Linguistics Department	Geography Department	Islamic Creed Department
1. **Faculty Losses**	Lost 2 senior professors; increased workload on remaining staff	Lost 3 senior professors; multiple faculty taking extra courses	Lost 1 senior professor; significant mentorship gap
2. **Teaching Modality**	Shifted fully to remote teaching via Moodle and WhatsApp	Remote teaching with asynchronous materials, WhatsApp groups	Fully remote teaching, mostly asynchronous, WhatsApp used
3. **Communication Tools**	WhatsApp groups, email; unstable internet connectivity	WhatsApp, Moodle; frequent power outages disrupting classes	WhatsApp groups primary tool; poor connectivity and power outages
4. **Supervision Challenges**	Difficulties monitoring graduate students' progress	Limited face-to-face interaction; supervision mostly online	Graduate supervision impacted by faculty loss and connectivity problems
5. **Increased Workload**	6. Doubled teaching hours and supervision duties	7. Tripled supervision responsibilities	8. Significant increase in teaching and mentoring duties

6. **Infrastructure Challenges**	Frequent electricity outages; unstable internet access	University buildings damaged; unreliable infrastructure	Severe power cuts; destroyed classrooms and offices
7. Psychological Impact	Concern about students' motivation and mental health	Students and staff emotionally strained due to conflict	Trauma and loss deeply affect students and faculty
8. **Adaptation Strategies**	Flexible scheduling; use of simplified assignments	Volunteer support; community solidarity	Simplified assignments; flexible deadlines; peer support
9. **Long-term Academic Effects**	Threat to academic continuity and research productivity	Risk of erosion of academic leadership and memory	Loss of institutional knowledge; threat to department sustainability
10. **Needs & Recommendations**	Restore infrastructure; increase international support	Mental health services; academic scholarships	Rebuild facilities; establish partnerships; psychological aid

The analysis of these three interviews highlights the profound and multifaceted impact that war and targeted killings have had on academic life at the Islamic University. Across all three departments—Linguistics, Geography, and Islamic Creed—the loss of senior faculty has been devastating, creating significant gaps in teaching capacity, research mentorship, and leadership. These losses have forced remaining faculty members to take on dramatically increased workloads, often doubling or tripling their teaching and supervision duties. This strain is compounded by severe infrastructure challenges, including frequent electricity outages, unstable internet connections, and physical damage to university buildings. All departments have shifted fully to remote teaching, primarily using asynchronous methods supplemented by WhatsApp communication. While these adaptations have ensured some continuity of education, they fall short of replacing the dynamic and interactive nature of in-person learning. Professors report considerable difficulties in effectively supervising graduate students and maintaining the quality of instruction amid these constraints. Additionally, students' psychological well-being has been deeply affected by the ongoing conflict and losses within the academic community, adding another layer of complexity to the educational challenges.

The interviewed professors describe numerous adaptation strategies, such as flexible scheduling to cope with erratic electricity supply, simplifying assignments to reduce student burden, and relying on community and volunteer support networks to sustain academic activities. However, they all express concern about the long-term consequences of these disruptions, warning that continued loss of faculty and damage to infrastructure could erode academic leadership, institutional memory, and overall research productivity. To address these urgent challenges, the professors unanimously call for comprehensive support measures. These include restoring reliable electricity and internet infrastructure, providing mental health services for students and staff, establishing scholarships to assist displaced or struggling students, and fostering international

academic partnerships to bring resources and advocacy. Such support is crucial to not only rebuild physical facilities but also to preserve the intellectual and cultural resilience that these departments embody. Despite the immense difficulties, the faculty members interviewed demonstrate a remarkable commitment to their mission. They view education as a vital form of resistance and hope amid conflict, emphasizing the critical role universities play in sustaining knowledge, identity, and future possibilities. Their perseverance highlights the resilience of Gaza's academic community, underscoring the need for sustained global solidarity to protect and support education in conflict zones.

Master's Students' Testimonies on the Resilience of Higher Education in Gaza

Building on the perspectives of faculty members, this section delves into the lived experiences of Master's students at the Islamic University of Gaza. Through in-depth interviews, these students recount the profound academic, emotional, and logistical challenges they have faced amid war, displacement, and infrastructural collapse. Their testimonies offer critical insight into how resilience takes shape at the student level—revealing both the daily struggles of pursuing graduate education under siege and the unwavering determination to continue learning against all odds. The following tables highlight key themes that emerged from their accounts, including academic disruption, digital adaptation, psychological impact, and hope for the future, see Table 2.

TABLE 2 Key Themes of Student Perspectives on Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

Theme	Participant Responses	Representative Quotes	Interview References
Loss of Professors / Supervisors	Emotional and academic disruption due to loss or absence of mentors and supervisors, affecting research continuity and guidance.	"The loss... had a profound impact on my work."	Interviews 1, 3
Infrastructure Collapse	Widespread destruction of university infrastructure (buildings, electricity, internet, library access), severely limiting academic activities.	"No electricity, no stable internet."	Interviews 1, 2, 3
Communication Barriers	Difficulties maintaining contact with supervisors and academic networks, causing delays and isolation.	"Communication breakdown."	Interviews 2, 3
Change in Research Focus	Forced adaptation of research topics toward war-related issues, reflecting survival strategy and resistance.	"Changed my thesis focus to analyze massacres in Gaza."	Interviews 1, 3
Psychological Impact	Emotional and mental toll including stress, anxiety, loss	"I feel overwhelmed and discouraged."	Interviews 1,2, 3

	of motivation, and fatigue affecting productivity.		
Alternative Learning Strategies	Adaptive behaviors like peer groups, remote supervisors, and self-study to overcome academic obstacles.	"Formed study groups, found new supervisors abroad."	Interviews 1
Lack of Remote Academic Support	Scarcity or ineffectiveness of online academic assistance due to infrastructure damage and security concerns.	"No remote academic support currently."	Interviews 2, 3
Urgent Needs	Requests for safe spaces, reliable electricity and internet, and psychological support to cope with trauma.	"Need face-to-face guidance and reliable internet."	Interview 3

Table 2 presents a comprehensive thematic analysis derived from interviews with Palestinian master's students, offering insight into the multifaceted academic challenges caused by the ongoing war. The table captures both structural and psychological dimensions of disruption, while also highlighting adaptive responses and urgent needs as articulated by the participants. The loss of professors and supervisors emerged as a critical theme, underscoring the emotional and intellectual void created by the death or displacement of senior academics. This loss severely disrupted research continuity, mentorship, and academic progress. In parallel, infrastructure collapse, marked by the destruction of university buildings, electricity shortages, and unstable internet, created an environment where basic academic engagement became nearly impossible. Participants also identified communication barriers as a significant impediment. The breakdown in contact with academic networks, including supervisors and institutional channels, led to delays, missed feedback, and increased feelings of academic isolation. In response to the altered realities of war, many students reported a change in research focus, shifting their theses and projects to address conflict-related themes. This shift reflects not only an act of academic resilience but also a means of contextualizing their scholarship within their lived experiences.

The psychological impact of war was a recurring theme, with students describing heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and loss of motivation. These psychological burdens have compounded academic challenges, affecting concentration, productivity, and long-term educational aspirations. Despite this, students demonstrated adaptability through alternative learning strategies, such as forming peer groups, engaging with remote supervisors abroad, and relying on self-study. However, these efforts were often undermined by a lack of remote academic support, with many participants citing the ineffectiveness or absence of institutional assistance due to damaged infrastructure and safety concerns. Finally, the theme of urgent needs reflects the participants' calls for immediate intervention. Students emphasized the necessity of safe, equipped learning environments, reliable access to electricity and internet, direct academic mentorship, and mental health support to cope with trauma and ensure educational continuity. Overall, Table 1

offers a focused and evidence-based depiction of how war has reshaped the academic realities of Gaza's postgraduate students. It captures the devastating impact of violence on educational infrastructure and intellectual development, while also foregrounding the agency, resilience, and pressing needs of students striving to continue their academic journeys amidst crisis.

The following table summarizes the key findings from the Master's students' interviews, highlighting the major challenges they face and the strategies they employ to persist in their academic pursuits amid conflict. It reflects the profound disruptions to supervision, infrastructure, and mental health, alongside their adaptive responses and urgent needs see Table 3.

TABLE 3: Summary of Key Findings

Category	Findings
Supervisory and Research Disruption	Loss of supervisors and mentors has led to halted or derailed research trajectories, forcing many master students to abandon or restart academic work.
Destruction of Physical Infrastructure	Damage to university buildings, electricity cuts, and unstable internet access severely limit engagement with academic resources.
Supervisory Communication Breakdown	Disrupted communication with academic mentors leads to missed feedback cycles, delays, and growing academic isolation.
Adaptation and Academic Agency	Despite overwhelming challenges, students formed peer support systems, engaged remote supervisors, and redirected research toward conflict-relevant topics.
Psychological Impact	Persistent stress, trauma, and emotional exhaustion undermine academic focus and mental well-being.
Deficiency in Institutional Academic Support	Institutional efforts to provide remote academic support are minimal or absent due to war-related destruction and targeted attacks on educators.
Immediate and Structural Needs	Participants call for protected academic spaces, dependable electricity and internet, in-person supervision, and integrated psychological services to support recovery and educational resilience.

Table 3 presents the core themes that emerged from the data, structured into analytical categories that collectively capture the lived academic and psychological realities of Palestinian Master's students under conditions of war and genocide. Each category reflects interrelated challenges that extend beyond isolated experiences, revealing systemic patterns of disruption and resilience. The first category, Academic Disruption, represents one of the most severe consequences of the conflict: the severance of academic mentorship. The sudden loss of supervisors and research advisors not only brings academic work to a standstill but often forces students to abandon or completely redesign their projects. This academic instability significantly hinders scholarly progression and undermines the continuity of graduate-level education. Physical Infrastructure refers to the destruction of essential academic facilities and services. The demolition of university buildings, frequent electricity blackouts, laboratories, libraries, and unreliable internet connectivity create a hostile environment for teaching, research, and learning. These structural barriers also limit access to global academic networks and resources, thereby isolating students

from broader scholarly engagement. The Communication category addresses the breakdown in academic interaction between students and faculty members. Disrupted communication channels lead to missed academic deadlines, limited feedback on research progress, and increased detachment from academic communities. This disconnection exacerbates the sense of academic isolation and further undermines students' motivation and productivity. Amid these challenges, Adaptation and Resilience emerge as a vital theme. Despite overwhelming obstacles, students demonstrate remarkable resourcefulness by forming peer support networks, modifying research topics to fit the current context, and pursuing remote supervision when available. This reflects a strong determination to maintain academic continuity and intellectual engagement despite the circumstances.

The Psychological Toll highlights the emotional and mental health burden associated with protracted conflict. Participants report chronic stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, which make sustained academic focus increasingly difficult. These psychological strains not only affect individuals but also weaken the overall academic environment within institutions under siege. Institutional Support is identified as critically lacking. Due to infrastructure damage and administrative paralysis, universities are largely unable to provide consistent academic or psychological support. The absence of coordinated efforts for remote learning or mental health services reveals a broader institutional fragility in the face of ongoing genocide. Finally, the Urgent Needs category consolidates the immediate priorities expressed by students. These include the creation of safe and equipped academic spaces, access to mentorship, and trauma-informed mental health services. These are not supplementary supports but essential requirements for academic survival and continuity under conditions of war. In sum, Table 2 serves not only as a summary of findings but as a diagnostic framework that exposes how interlocking layers of physical destruction, institutional breakdown, emotional trauma, and academic disruption threaten the viability of higher education in conflict zones. At the same time, it points to clear areas for urgent intervention and long-term recovery.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a deliberate and organized pattern in the targeting of Palestinian Scholars by the Israeli military. These acts are not random or accidental; they reflect a calculated strategy aimed at erasing the intellectual and cultural foundations of Palestinian society. Over 150 university professors and more than 800 academics have been killed in recent Israeli attacks, many alongside their families. The Islamic University of Gaza, one of the most important academic institutions in the region, has suffered extensive human and material losses. Despite efforts by the remaining academic community to continue education, the damage inflicted has had long-lasting and severe consequences for the entire educational system. This evidence can lead us to the concept of mindocide, a term that combines "mind" and "genocide." Mindocide refers to the systematic targeting and elimination of a society's academic and intellectual leaders. Unlike traditional

definitions of genocide, which focus on the physical destruction of a people, mindocide focuses on their cognitive and cultural annihilation. Its goal is not only to silence individuals but to destroy the ideas, knowledge, memory, and leadership they represent. It is a form of warfare that seeks to eliminate people's capacity to think, teach, create, and lead.

This phenomenon is not without historical precedent. Under the Khmer Rouge (1975–1979), intellectuals in Cambodia were systematically eliminated in a campaign to "purify" the country (Kiernan, 2002). Similarly, Operation Tannenberg in Nazi-occupied Poland targeted over 30,000 members of the intelligentsia to preempt organized resistance (Gross, 2001). In the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, the killing of Tutsi intellectuals further erased future leadership and societal memory (Mamdani, 2020). In each of these cases, the targeting of intellectuals was essential to eliminating not only present opposition but also the capacity for long-term recovery.

Additionally, the evidence points to the destruction of the tools necessary for rebuilding. This can lead us to the concept of futuricide, which describes the deliberate erasure of a society's ability to envision, plan, or achieve a collective future. By eliminating educators, researchers, and cultural figures, futuricide ensures that the damage will continue across generations. It prevents recovery and development by attacking those who guide, mentor, and inspire future progress. Moreover, these patterns reflect a broader phenomenon. The systematic assault on Palestinian life, history, identity, and institutions can lead us to the concept of Palestiniacide. This term captures the ongoing attempt to eliminate Palestinian existence not just physically, but politically, culturally, and intellectually. Palestiniacide includes acts of violence, forced displacement, institutional destruction, and the suppression of language, heritage, and national narrative.

Most critically, Palestiniacide does not remain isolated. It poses a global risk. The normalization of such policies and the failure of international institutions to intervene can lead us to what this study refers to as Humanitycide. Humanitycide is the destruction of shared human values such as justice, dignity, accountability, and the right to life. It represents the collapse of moral and legal systems that protect all people. If the world continues to ignore or excuse the ongoing atrocities in Palestine, it risks losing the very foundations of human rights and international law. Together, these emerging concepts—mindocide, futuricide, Palestiniacide, and Humanitycide—provide a powerful framework for understanding how modern violence extends beyond the battlefield. It targets the mind, the future, the identity, and the moral conscience of humanity. What is happening to Palestinian higher education is not only a local tragedy but a global warning. The erasure of intellectual life in Gaza threatens not just one people, but the ideals that bind all people to a shared sense of justice and hope.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals a cruel and systematic assault on the Palestinian intellectual and academic community, representing one of the most severe attacks a nation can face. Despite global awareness and scrutiny, these acts continue to violate fundamental human rights and international laws. Israel's ongoing campaign reflects a resurgence of brutal ideologies rooted in imperialism, colonialism, racism, and capitalism, deliberately aimed at erasing Palestinian cultural and academic identity and fracturing the bonds of shared humanity. The research highlights how the targeted killings and destruction at the Islamic University of Gaza have profoundly disrupted higher education, leading to what can be described as mindocide, the destruction of intellectual capital, and futuricide, the erasure of a society's ability to envision and build its future. These acts are part of a broader process of Palestiniacide, which threatens Palestinian existence politically, culturally, and intellectually. Moreover, this systematic destruction poses a global threat to universal human values, a phenomenon this study refers to as Humanitycide. The findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated international intervention to protect academic freedom, support the recovery of educational institutions, and uphold justice. Such action is essential to restore dignity, preserve knowledge, and foster hope for oppressed populations worldwide.

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The Gaza War and the Dynamics of U.S.-India Multilateral Cooperation in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the U.S.-India multilateral cooperation in the Middle East, most notably through the I2U2 group and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). It examines the regional and international factors that have shaped this cooperation, with particular emphasis on its political, economic, and geopolitical dimensions. The analysis reveals how these initiatives reflect deeper strategic shifts in the regional and global order, including U.S.-led efforts to advance Arab-Israeli normalisation , India's emergence as a pivotal actor in reshaping regional trade and logistics networks, and the formation of new alliances that move beyond traditional frameworks strategically bypass China in alignment with a shared U.S.-India strategic vision. The study also highlights Dynamics of U.S.-India multilateral cooperation, after the outbreak of the Gaza War in October 2023 through April 2025. While the Gaza War introduced complex security and geopolitical challenges to the prospects of renewed cooperation between Washington and New Delhi, the study identifies credible indicators of potential continuity that emerged during the war itself, particularly through nascent political and economic arrangements. It concludes that the resumption and sustainability of U.S.-India cooperation in the region remain plausible in light of ongoing transformations. This outcome, however, is contingent upon the capacity of the involved actors to navigate prevailing regional challenges, establish a minimal degree of stability, and foster a broader consensus that accommodates the diverse interests of participating states within an international environment marked by volatility and accelerating change.

Keywords: Gaza War; U.S-India; Middle East; I2U2; (IMEC).

INTRODUCTION

U.S-India cooperation in the Middle East has witnessed notable developments in the context of regional and international transformations that have fostered a favorable environment for a multilateral strategic Cooperation between the two countries. This evolving cooperation aligns with a broader U.S. vision aimed at expanding the scope of Arab-Israeli normalisation , and India's

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strategic objective of enhancing its regional footprint presence within the framework of the "Extended Neighborhood Policy" toward West Asia (the Middle East).

The cooperation between New Delhi and Washington culminated in the formation of the I2U2 group in July 2022, comprising India, Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates. (U.S. Department of State;, 2022) The group emerged within a newly evolving regional landscape shaped by the "Abraham Accords", which signalled a strategic shift toward "political and economic integration" in the Middle East, beginning with the normalisation agreement between the UAE and Israel in 2020. In the years that followed, these states experienced a marked deepening of their bilateral relations with India, laying the groundwork for broader multilateral cooperation, most notably through the I2U2 group.

This cooperation paved the way for broader strategic initiatives, most notably the signing of a memorandum of understanding during the G20 Summit held in New Delhi on September 9, 2023. The agreement brought together India, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, alongside key European partners including France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union. It aimed to advance the development of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a project envisioned to enhance connectivity and trade integration across the regions. (The White House;, 2023)

However, the outbreak of the Gaza War on October 7, 2023, significantly disrupted the momentum and implementation of these initiatives, which had been progressing under U.S. sponsorship with active Indian engagement. The launch of the corridor project, originally scheduled to begin within 60 days of the memorandum's signing, was postponed. (The White House;, 2023) while I2U2 meetings and Summits were suspended, with no subsequent steps publicly announced.

Following the implementation of the Gaza ceasefire agreement in January 2025, (McCready, Alastair; Kurmelovs, Royce ;, 2025) discussions on U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East resumed. In February 2025, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with U.S. President Donald Trump in his first official visit since Trump's inauguration for a second term. (Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India;, 2025) A joint statement issued after the meeting emphasised the two countries' commitment, stating, the two countries affirmed their commitment to deepening cooperation and diplomatic consultations, stressing the importance of investing in critical infrastructure and economic corridors to promote regional peace and security. They also announced plans to convene partners from the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and the I2U2 Group within six months to launch new initiatives in 2025. (Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India;, 2025)This step reflects a joint U.S.-Indian effort to reinitiate the geopolitical and economic frameworks disrupted by the war.

The renewed outbreak of war in Gaza on March 18, 2025, (AJLabs;, 2025) introduced significant uncertainty regarding the future of these regional initiatives. This escalation highlights the need to closely examine the evolving dynamics of multilateral U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East,

particularly through the I2U2 framework and the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor as part of a broader strategic reconfiguration of the international order amid intensifying rivalry with China. Both Washington and New Delhi view this cooperation as a means to reshape regional power balances and counter China's growing influence.

OBJECTIVE

The Gaza war has disrupted the trajectory of cooperation and introduced complex security and geopolitical challenges to its potential resumption. Amid these challenges, this study aims to examine the prospects for revitalizing U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East, with particular focus on the I2U2 group and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

This study is guided by the main question: What regional and international factors have driven the rise and strengthening of multilateral U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East? It also explores the effect of the Gaza War on this cooperation's development and evaluates the chances for its revival amid ongoing regional changes.

To address this inquiry, **two core hypotheses are proposed**:

First, the I2U2 group and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) represent strategic efforts to reshape the regional balance of power through multilateral projects that strategically bypass China, while positioning India as a central actor through active collaboration with the United States.

Second, the revival of these initiatives depends on the emergence of a conducive political and economic environment, one that entails progress and the reinvigoration of regional trade and connectivity frameworks. Within this context, the United States plays a pivotal role in facilitating diplomatic and political arrangements, with particular emphasis on supporting the normalisation agreements, while India contributes through its expanding capacity to restructure regional trade and logistics networks.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an inductive methodological approach, (Witkowsky, Patricia; Bingham, Andrea ;, 2021) which involves identifying empirical indicators and observable developments stemming from U.S. and Indian policies toward the Middle East. The aim is to analyse the concrete factors that have contributed to the emergence of multilateral cooperation between the two countries in recent years. The analysis focuses on two primary frameworks of this cooperation: the I2U2 group and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). By analysing the dynamics of this cooperation during the Gaza War, the study aims to uncover its fundamental strategic dimensions and to evaluate the prospects for its continuation or revival amid ongoing regional and international transformations.

The study relies on a diverse range of sources, including official documents such as data and reports issued by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of India and the United States. Additionally, it draws upon specialised analytical reports and academic studies published by leading international and regional think tanks. This multi-source approach enhances both the analytical rigour and the credibility of the study's findings.

To address the research problem and examine the study's hypotheses, the paper is structured around four main thematic sections: The first section analyses the regional and international factors that have contributed to the emergence of U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East. The second section examines the frameworks of multilateral cooperation through the initiatives of the I2U2 group and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Whilst the third section assesses the impact of the Gaza War and the broader security escalation in the region on the trajectory of this cooperation. The final section assesses the prospects and potential for reviving U.S.-India cooperation in light of current regional transformations.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Two key findings can be drawn, which may elucidate the nature of this cooperation and its future prospects:

First: the multilateral U.S.-India cooperation constitutes a component of emerging geopolitical frameworks aimed at recalibrating the regional economic and political power balance, chiefly through the containment of Chinese influence, a mutual objective for both Washington and New Delhi. This dynamic was prominently evidenced in the outcomes of the inaugural I2U2 Summit (July 2022), notably India's endorsement of the acquisition of the Port of Haifa, situated adjacent to a Chinese-operated facility. This strategic move bears significant geopolitical ramifications and aligns closely with the proposed India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC), which functions as a competitive alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Second, the successful resumption of this cooperation depends on several critical factors, foremost among them the capacity to surmount geopolitical challenges through the establishment of regional stability conducive to the implementation of joint initiatives. Equally imperative is the attainment of a broader regional consensus that ensures a balanced alignment of interests among diverse stakeholders, particularly within an international order marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation.

Section One: The Formation of U.S.-India Cooperation in the Middle East: Regional and International Drivers.

U.S.-India cooperation in the Middle East has witnessed notable expansion in recent years, propelled by accelerating regional and international transformations that have fostered a conducive environment for the development of a broader strategic Cooperation between the two countries. The primary drivers of this cooperation can be analysed across two key dimensions:

Arab Israeli normalisation and India's Expanding Strategic Presence in the Middle East.

Since 2020, the Arab-Israeli normalisation arrangements have gained considerable momentum under active U.S. sponsorship during Donald Trump's first term (2017 2021). This process was initiated by the announcement of a "peace agreement" between the United Arab Emirates and Israel on August 13, 2020. (U.S. Embassy in Israel- U.S. Mission Israel;, 2020) followed by the formal signing of the "Abraham Accords" in Washington, D.C., on September 15, 2020, with the participation of Israel, the UAE, (U.S Department of state;, 2020) and Bahrain. (U.S Department of state;, 2020) Subsequently, Morocco signed its normalisation agreement on December 22, 2020, (U.S Department of state;, 2020) followed by Sudan in January 2021. (U.S Department of state, 2021) These agreements marked a departure from traditional peace treaties toward the establishment of comprehensive diplomatic, economic, and security partnerships within a U.S.-led framework referred to as "economic peace", aimed at fostering regional stability.

This trajectory was further reinforced during the administration of Joe Biden (2021 2024), which adopted a multilateral cooperation approach exemplified by the establishment of the Negev Forum, comprising Israel alongside the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Egypt. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs- United Arab Emirates;, 2022)

In this context, India's presence in the region has acquired growing significance within the framework of New Delhi's "Extended Neighbourhood Policy" toward West Asia (the Middle East). (Trigunayat, Anil;, 2019) In 2004, the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched the "Look West Policy", which aimed to enhance cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. (Press release, Prime Minister's Office Congress ;, 2005) Following Narendra Modi's assumption of office in 2014, this policy evolved into the "link-West" Policy, (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2014) which placed greater emphasis on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly with the United Arab Emirates and Israel.

India-UAE relations culminated in the declaration of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2017. (Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi- United Arab Emirates;, 2024) In the fiscal year 2023 2024, bilateral trade reached $83.65 billion, making the UAE India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination. Conversely, India is the UAE's second-largest trading partner and ranks as the seventh-largest foreign investor in the country. (Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi- United Arab Emirates;, 2025)

India-Israel relations have also deepened significantly, with bilateral (non-defence) trade reaching $16.53 billion in 2023 2024. Indian direct investment in Israel amounted to $396 million, while Israeli investment in India totalled approximately $314.87 million. In the defence and security sectors, the strategic partnership between the two countries encompasses arms sales, counterterrorism cooperation, joint training exercises, and military-to-military diplomatic initiatives. (Embassy of India, Tel Aviv-Israe, 2024)

This trilateral rapprochement between India, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel has coincided with the acceleration of Arab Israeli normalisation. This convergence has facilitated India's integration into emerging regional frameworks alongside the so-called "Abrahamic states". A notable manifestation of this alignment was the establishment of the I2U2 Group in 2022, bringing together the United States, India, the UAE, and Israel within a framework that blends economic cooperation, longstanding bilateral alliances, and coordinated political and security engagement.

The Strategic Implications of the Russia-Ukraine War for U.S.-India Convergence.

The official announcement of the establishment of the I2U2 Group on July 14, 2022, was not an isolated development, but rather part of broader international geopolitical realignments, most notably the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war on February 24 of the same year, which was accompanied by a deepening of Russian Chinese strategic convergence. (Shakhanova, Gaziza;, 2024) Prior to the war, a pivotal meeting took place between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on February 4, 2022. During this meeting, the two leaders issued a joint statement stating:

"Russia and China stand against attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions, intend to counter interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext, oppose colour revolutions, and will increase cooperation in the aforementioned areas" (President of Russia;, 2022) implicitly referring to Ukraine and Taiwan.

These developments have emerged as a shared strategic concern for both the United States and India, despite the differing historical trajectories of their respective relationships with Russia. While Moscow has long been regarded as a traditional ally of New Delhi, Washington has historically viewed Russia through the lens of strategic rivalry. Nevertheless, China continues to represent a common strategic challenge: as a geopolitical adversary to India and as a direct peer competitor to the United States. This convergence in threat perception renders the deepening of U.S.-India cooperation a geopolitical imperative.

India-China relations have remained consistently strained due to a protracted border dispute, which culminated in a full-scale war in 1962. The legacy of that conflict continues to shape bilateral dynamics, manifesting in recurrent border clashes, most notably the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops. Tensions resurfaced in 2022, when Chinese forces attempted to breach the Yangtze Plateau in eastern Arunachal Pradesh,

a territory Beijing claims as part of the Tibet Autonomous Region. (Bhattacharjee, Yudhijit ;, 2024)

From Washington's perspective, China is perceived as a rising power that poses a strategic challenge to U.S. dominance within the international order, owing to its expanding regional and global influence. The bilateral relationship is marked by persistent tension and mutual distrust across a broad spectrum of economic, technological, and geopolitical domains most notably in matters related to trade, advanced technologies, Taiwan, and intellectual property rights. Moreover, both states are engaged in a global contest for influence that extends beyond their immediate regions, competing for primacy in cutting-edge technologies, conventional military capabilities, as well as in outer space and cyberspace. (Zhong , Raymond; Myers, Steven Lee ;, 2021)

Concurrently with the aforementioned Sino-Russian joint statement, which emphasised a mutual commitment to counter external powers' attempts to undermine regional security, the United States articulated its strategic priorities in the Indo-Pacific Strategy. The document states:

"The United States has modernised its longstanding alliances, strengthened emerging partnerships, and forged innovative links among them to meet urgent challenges, from competition with China to the pandemic. It has done so at a time when allies and partners around the world are increasingly enhancing their engagement in the Indo-Pacific…". (The White House;, 2022)

Furthermore, the strategy set forth an action plan focused on building coalitions and enhancing coordination mechanisms both within and beyond the region.

Within this context, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy implicitly underscored the strategic importance of forging partnerships with emerging Asian powers. India has assumed a pivotal role within this framework, serving as a key actor in efforts to counterbalance China's growing influence, particularly in light of the convergence between New Delhi's regional priorities and Washington's broader containment strategy. Just as India became a core member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) (What is QUAD?;, 2025) alongside the United States, Australia, and Japan to respond to China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, Washington has sought to replicate and expand this model of cooperation in the Middle East through the I2U2 Group, comprising India, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel.

The U.S. vision for integrating India into this strategic framework rests on two principal factors. First is India's geostrategic position in South Asia, which positions it as a critical node in any prospective regional security and economic. Second is the expanding network of India's economic and diplomatic relations across the broader Asian landscape, particularly with key actors in the Middle East.

India's accession to the I2U2 Group was not an abrupt or unforeseen development, but rather the culmination of a gradual trajectory of strategic alignment and cooperation. Even prior to the

outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the United States had already been laying the groundwork for India's integration into this emerging bloc. A notable milestone in this process was the virtual meeting of the foreign ministers of the group's member states in October 2021, during which shared priorities for collaboration were discussed. However, the war served as a catalytic event that further accelerated the institutionalisation of this framework, culminating in the group's formal launch just five months after the war began.

In parallel with the deepening strategic alignment between Moscow and Beijing, the United States signalled its readiness to offset India's historical dependence on Russia in the defence and economic domains. In March 2022, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, affirmed Washington's willingness to become a "strong defence and security partner" for India. She emphasised the United States' preparedness to provide viable alternatives in defence and energy cooperation, thereby facilitating New Delhi's gradual recalibration of its strategic ties with Moscow. (Razdan, Nidhi;, 2022)

Despite the cautious approach India adopted towards the Russia-Ukraine war on one hand, (Allan, Manal;, 2023)and its new partnership with the United States on the other, (Allan, Manal;, 2022)New Delhi has increasingly consolidated its role as a pivotal actor within U.S.-led multilateral frameworks. The formation of the I2U2 Group stands as a salient manifestation of this strategic realignment. This trajectory culminated at the 2023 G20 Summit with the unveiling of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a project that will be examined in the subsequent section.

Section Two: U.S.-India Multilateral Cooperation Frameworks in the Middle East.

The I2U2 group and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) constitute the most prominent manifestations of U.S.-India multilateral cooperation in the Middle East. These initiatives signal a qualitative shift in the geopolitical orientations of both Washington and New Delhi. For India they align with its broader objective of deepening regional integration and expanding its strategic footprint beyond South Asia. For the United States, there are initiatives with its efforts to advance Arab Israeli normalisation through innovative regional frameworks, while not explicitly stated, are implicitly designed to curtail China's growing influence. Together, these developments reflect a converging U.S.-India strategic vision for the region.

Integrating India into a 'Non-Abrahamic' Cooperation Framework through the I2U2 Group.

Although the establishment of the I2U2 Group unfolded within a regional landscape shaped by the momentum of the "Abraham Accords", it represents a distinct model of multilateral cooperation. By including India a rising Asian power with deep historical and strategic ties to the region, the group reflects an expanded vision of regional integration.

Following the signing of the accords, New Delhi stated:

"We welcome these agreements regarding normalisation of relations between Israel and other countries, which, we believe, will contribute to peace and stability in West Asia". (Embassy of India, Cairo- Egypt, 2021)

It is noteworthy that India refrained from using the term "Abrahamic", which can be attributed to several reasons. First, India's religious composition is predominantly Hindu, a faith that is not classified among the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Second, the invocation of religious categories in foreign policy statements is a particularly sensitive issue for New Delhi, especially in light of growing domestic and international criticism regarding its treatment of religious minorities. As such, the Indian government tends to avoid religiously charged terminology in multilateral settings to maintain a secular and inclusive diplomatic posture. (Allan, Manal;, 2022)

This cautious stance was exemplified by India's decision to abstain from participating in the trilateral ministerial meeting held on October 13, 2021, which convened the foreign ministers of the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel. The meeting aimed to consolidate the "Abraham Accords" and proposed the formation of two thematic working groups: one focused on "religious coexistence" and the other on "water and energy". (US Department of State;, 2021)

However, just five days later, on October 18, 2021, India participated in a separate meeting with the same parties the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel that notably avoided any religious framing. Instead, the discussions centered on "enhancing economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia". (US Department of State;, 2021)This meeting is widely regarded as a foundational step toward the formal launch of the I2U2 Group.

The administration of President Joe Bide adopted a markedly different approach to Arab Israeli normalisation compared to that of his predecessor. During Donald Trump's first term, the " normalisation arrangements with Israel" were overseen by a team with pronounced ideological orientations, including Evangelical Christians and Zionist-aligned advisors. In contrast, the Biden administration deliberately avoided the use of the term "Abraham Accords" in its official discourse, favouring more neutral and pragmatic language such as " normalisation agreements". (Wagenheim, Mike ;, 2021)This lexical shift reflects a broader policy orientation toward cultivating flexible regional cooperation and partnerships, with India positioned as a strategic interlocutor within these emerging multilateral frameworks.

These dynamics culminated in the joint statement issued following the first official summit of I2U2 leaders in July 2022, which stating:

"We reaffirm our support for the Abraham Accords and other peace and normalisation arrangements with Israel". (The White House;, 2022)

It is noteworthy that while the United Arab Emirates and Israel continue to use the term "Abraham Accords" in official discourse, both India and the United States have consistently preferred more general formulations such as "peace and normalisation arrangements". This deliberate lexical divergence appears to reflect underlying differences in domestic political considerations and strategic narratives among the member states.

The statement further emphasized its support for the economic opportunities, particularly in fostering cooperation across the Middle East and South Asia and encouraging sustainable investment among I2U2 partners. It also welcomed emerging regional groupings, such as the Negev Forum, which underscore the unique contributions of each partner including Israel's role as an innovation hub linking new partners and regions to address shared strategic challenges. (The White House;, 2022)

Within this context, the I2U2 Group may be interpreted as a foundational platform for broader regional integration, paving the way for subsequent strategic initiatives such as the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor.

The India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor: An Innovative Historical Experiment and a Step into the Future.

Although no official map has yet been publicly released outlining the precise route of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the corridor's Memorandum of Understanding specifies that the project will consist of two main segments:

"The IMEC will be comprised of two separate corridors, the east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and the northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf to Europe. It will include a railway that, upon completion, will provide a reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship-to-rail transit network to supplement existing maritime and road transport routes   enabling goods and services to transit to, from, and between India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe". (The White House;, 2023)

The proposed geographical route of the project echoes historical efforts to link India with Europe via the Middle East, most notably reflecting the strategic approach employed by Britain during the colonial era to secure both maritime and overland trade routes connecting the metropole to its colonies in the Indian subcontinent.

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, Britain relied heavily on the Cape of Good Hope route as a crucial artery for trade, primarily facilitated by the East India Company. (Roos, Dave;, 2020) As British influence expanded, the government abolished the Company's privileges in 1858 through the Government of India Act, placing India under direct Crown rule (Government of India Act of 1858;, 2025) a status that remained until independence in 1947. In the same year, the proposal to construct the Suez Canal was put forward, (Kennedy, Robert C.;, 2021) and the canal was officially inaugurated in 1869, establishing the shortest maritime route between Europe and India. Six years

later, in 1875, Britain acquired Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal Company, thereby consolidating its influence in the region. This acquisition paved the way for the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, which lasted until their withdrawal in 1956 the same year the canal was nationalized. (Blumenthal, Ralph;, 1975)

This historical dimension underscores that the success of economic corridors depends not only on infrastructure but also on effective geopolitical coordination. Within this context, the India Middle East Europe Corridor reinterprets the British historical experience by situating it within a contemporary framework of multilateral alliances, led by the United States in collaboration with India, Gulf and Middle Eastern countries, as well as European partners.

Balancing China: A Core Element of U.S.-India Multilateral Cooperation
Reflecting the profound geopolitical significance of the I2U2 Group for both the United States and India, it was announced on July 14, 2022 mere hours after the group's inaugural summit that an Indian company, in partnership with an Israeli firm, had acquired a 70% and 30% stake respectively in the Port of Haifa, as part of its privatization process. (Ministry of Finance;, 2022)

This acquisition marks a strategic shift in India's regional policy, aimed at bolstering its presence in West Asia and countering China's expanding influence. The geopolitical significance of this move is amplified by the proximity of the acquired facility to the "New Haifa Bayport Terminal", which has been operated by China's Shanghai International Port Group since 2015. Construction of the terminal commenced in 2018, and it was officially inaugurated in 2021. (David, Ricky ben;, 2021)

This development also aligns with Washington's broader objective of mitigating the security risks associated with deepening China-Israel cooperation, (Sobol, Mor;, 2020) particularly given the port's proximity to naval facilities regularly used by the U.S. Sixth Fleet. (Zakheim, Dov S.;, 2021) Successive U.S. administrations have expressed concern over the potential for surveillance and espionage arising from Chinese control of strategic infrastructure, emphasising the geopolitical sensitivities surrounding critical maritime assets. (U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa;, 2019)

In this context, India positions itself as a reliable strategic partner for the United States in efforts to counterbalance China's growing influence. Through targeted initiatives, New Delhi contributes to reshaping the geopolitical landscape across critical ports and maritime corridors. The Port of Haifa, in particular, is anticipated to serve as a pivotal node within the emerging India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a project increasingly regarded as a strategic alternative and potential competitor to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

According to the memorandum of understanding associated with the proposed corridor, the project envisions the development of integrated infrastructure that includes electricity cables, digital connectivity networks, and pipelines for clean hydrogen, all aligned along a trans-regional railway system. This infrastructure is intended to strengthen supply chain resilience, facilitate more

efficient trade flows, and promote sustainability and economic integration across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. (The White House;, 2023)

Since 2013, China has been advancing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), (The Belt and Road Portal;, 2023) designed to link Asia, Europe, and Africa through an expansive network of transportation, energy, and communications infrastructure spanning over 100 countries and regions. (Belt and Road;, 2025) The steady expansion of Chinese investments particularly in ports situated near critical maritime choke points has generated strategic apprehensions in both Washington and New Delhi, given the geopolitical leverage such locations afford Beijing in projecting influence and shaping regional security dynamics. (The Print;, 2022)

Despite their shared ambition to enhance transcontinental connectivity, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) diverge significantly in focus and strategic orientation. While the BRI seeks expansive geo-economic integration through large-scale infrastructure and investment networks, IMEC emphasizes the development of efficient and secure transport corridors, resilient supply chains, and sustainable energy infrastructure, including clean hydrogen and digital connectivity. This distinction reflects differing priorities: Beijing's pursuit of global economic influence versus a U.S.-India-led model centred on strategic efficiency, sustainability. Consequently, states will weigh their options between alternative frameworks for connectivity, each offering different economic, political, and infrastructural incentives.

However, the successful implementation of the ambitious India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC) remains closely tied to the region's stability. Persistent conflicts, most notably the war in Gaza pose significant threats to the project's security and constitute major obstacles to achieving sustainable political and economic integration. These challenges will be explored in greater detail in the following section of the study.

Section Three: The Implications of the Gaza War on U.S.-India Multilateral Cooperation.

The military and security escalation resulting from the Gaza War produced both direct and indirect adverse effects on the trajectory of U.S.-India multilateral cooperation in the Middle East. This War disrupted the emerging regional dynamics that underpinned efforts to reshape political, economic, and strategic alliances across the area. dynamics which both India and the United States were aspiring to shape. The most prominent of these repercussions can be categorised as follows:

Suspension of the I2U2 Summits

The I2U2 Group was established to foster regional integration within the economic and developmental sectors. The group reaffirmed its support for the "Abraham Accords and other peace and normalisation arrangements with Israel", expressing its aspiration to broaden cooperation through multilateral platforms such as the Negev Forum. (The White House, 2022)

Following the inaugural summit of the I2U2 Group in July 2022, a series of subsequent meetings took place to advance its agenda. In September 2022, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, member states reiterated their commitment to deepening economic cooperation, assessing ongoing projects in agriculture and clean energy, and exploring future initiatives to further the group's objectives. (U.S Department of state, 2022)Furthermore, the first I2U2 Business Forum was convened in Abu Dhabi in February 2023, attracting extensive participation from both public and private sectors with the aim of accelerating collaboration and joint investment. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2023) In April 2023, the I2U2 Business Coalition was launched as a private sector initiative jointly formed by the U.S.-UAE Business Council, the UAE-Israel Business Council, and the UAE-India Business Council. (U.S. Department of State;, 2022) In September 2023, the group launched its official website, designed to enhance engagement with the business community. (Emirates News Agency – WAM, 2023)

The momentum of this cooperation was abruptly halted following the outbreak of the Gaza war. Since then, no further meetings have been convened, nor have any joint projects been announced. This suspension highlights a critical reality: the mere convening of meetings within the group does not necessarily translate into substantive progress on the ground. The deteriorating political and security environment, particularly due to the ongoing war, has generated considerable uncertainties that impede the advancement of initiatives such as the I2U2 Group as originally envisioned.

Suspension of Saudi Arabia Israel " normalisation Talks".

At the beginning of 2023, clear signs emerged indicating progress in the " normalisation talks" between Saudi Arabia and Israel. In January 2024, former U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his intention to discuss normalisation with Saudi officials during his visit to the region. (Wong, Edward;, 2023) This momentum was further underscored by an unprecedented official visit in September, when Israeli Minister of Tourism Haim Katz traveled to Riyadh/ Saudi Arabia to participate in a multilateral tourism conference marking a notable development in the relations between the two countries. (Kingsley, 2023)

However, the outbreak of the war on Gaza marked a critical turning point for these political and diplomatic efforts. On October 14, 2023, Saudi Arabia announced the suspension of " normalisation talks" with Israel, (Al Jazeera News, 2023) representing a significant setback in a process on which Washington had placed considerable reliance as part of its broader vision for building regional alliances in cooperation with India.

The suspension of " normalisation talks" between Saudi Arabia and Israel presents a challenge to the realization of the ambitious India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project. Given that the corridor's proposed route passes through Saudi territory, its effective implementation requires a minimum degree of Saudi Israeli coordination and cooperation. Notably, neither Jordan nor Israel was among the signatories of the IMEC declaration, despite both

countries being geographically situated along the corridor's intended path. (The White House, 2023)

The stalled initiation of the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC).

Merely 28 days after the announcement of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) on September 9, 2023, the outbreak of the Gaza war on October 7 led to the suspension of the project's investment timeline.

These developments have presented unforeseen challenges to an ambitious Project that had been envisioned as a strategic alternative to traditional trade routes. India and its partners including Israel had placed considerable reliance on operating a segment of the corridor through the Port of Haifa, which is managed by India's Adani Ports in partnership with the Israeli "Gadot Group".

Although the Indian company affirmed the existence of a business continuity plan for the port, (Reuters, 2023) the war's repercussions have adversely impacted this critical component of the project particularly following the maritime blockade imposed in November 2023 by the Houthi group (Ansar Allah) on vessels destined for ports located in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. The blockade was later reinstated amid a renewed escalation of the war. (Motamedi, Maziar;, 2024)

This situation has contributed to an unprecedented surge in maritime insurance premiums, including those associated with the Port of Haifa. Trade reports indicate that shipping costs from India to Israel and Europe have increased fivefold compared to pre-war levels. Moreover, the ongoing escalation between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon has further heightened the security vulnerabilities surrounding the Port of Haifa, which is increasingly regarded as a potential target in the event of a broader regional confrontation. (Barakat, Abdul Tawab;, 2024)

Nonetheless, these initiatives maintain their strategic relevance, underpinned by the convergence of interests among key actors most notably the United States and India both of whom remain committed to revitalizing these projects once a more stable regional environment is established. This aspect will be examined in greater depth in the concluding section of the study.

Section Four: Prospects for the Resumption of U.S. India Cooperation in the Middle East.

The prospects for renewing U.S. India multilateral cooperation in the Middle East are contingent upon several critical factors that will shape the feasibility of reviving key regional initiatives most notably the I2U2 grouping and the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC).

Despite the setbacks caused by the Gaza war and the subsequent suspension of key regional initiatives, recent political and economic signals most notably the joint announcement by Washington and New Delhi of their intention to convene a stakeholder meeting within the next six months suggest a renewed commitment to reviving multilateral cooperation. During his visit to Washington, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed India's dedication to working in

partnership with the United States to advance regional connectivity and infrastructure development through these frameworks. (Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India, 2025)

Opportunities for Resuming I2U2 Summits.

Within the framework of the I2U2 grouping, recent diplomatic developments suggest a potential resumption of its activities. In March 2025, a delegation of Israeli settlement leaders conducted a high-profile visit to the United Arab Emirates, (Middle East Eye, 2025) followed in April by a meeting in Abu Dhabi between UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed and Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar. The two ministers discussed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, explored de-escalation measures, and examined opportunities to strengthen bilateral ties. (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025)

These meetings could contribute to the resumption of I2U2 summits. There is a possibility that political and diplomatic considerations regarding the participation of Arab states such as the United Arab Emirates in multilateral frameworks involving Israel could be set aside, particularly against the backdrop of the enduring war on Gaza.

Prospects for Resuming Saudi Israeli " normalisation Talks" with U.S. Facilitation.

On March 24, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump praised the "Abraham Accords", describing them as a "tremendous success" and emphasizing the growing interest of additional countries in joining the framework. (Reuters;, 2025) This statement raises questions about which countries may move toward normalisation , particularly in light of the possible resumption of Saudi Israeli " normalisation talks".

In a related development, U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright conducted an official visit to Saudi Arabia as part of a regional tour. During a press conference held in Riyadh on April 13, 2025, he addressed efforts to strengthen cooperation in critical energy sectors. (U.S Department of Energy;, 2025) Secretary Wright announced:

The Trump administration has revived talks with Saudi Arabia over a deal granting the kingdom access to U.S. nuclear technology and potentially allowing uranium enrichment, aiming to develop a "commercial nuclear power industry". The agreement, previously pursued by the Biden administration as part of a broader normalisation effort with Israel, is expected to see "meaningful developments" this year, according to Mr. Wright. He noted that "relationships are always package deals", highlighting multiple areas of potential cooperation. (Nereim, Vivian;, 2025)

It is important to acknowledge that the prospect of recommencing the " normalisation talks" at this juncture remains remote due to the ongoing Gaza war. The escalation of hostilities has profoundly tarnished Israel's regional and international standing, thereby compromising the U.S. strategic framework aimed at fostering economic integration and regional stability through this avenue. Moreover, these developments have impeded the momentum of the   normalisation

agenda. Consequently, the United States may find it necessary to defer further progress on the normalisation agreements until the emergence of more conducive geopolitical conditions.

Prospects for Renewing the (IMEC) with Indian Backing.

Despite the ongoing war on Gaza, indicators of the potential resumption of the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC) project have begun to emerge through logistical arrangements and memoranda of understanding. These developments reflect the firm commitment of the participating parties particularly India to ensure the continuity of the initiative. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Economic Corridor stated that:

"In support of this initiative, Participants commit to work collectively and expeditiously to arrange and implement all elements of these new transit 2 routes, and to establish coordinating entities to address the full range of technical, design, financing, legal and relevant regulatory standards". (The White House, 2023)

The prospects for advancing the corridor's implementation can be evaluated by closely monitoring developments across two interconnected geographic levels, with particular emphasis on the countries officially engaged in the initiative.

The East Corridor Connecting India to the Arabian Gulf.

The Eastern Corridor, connecting India to the Arabian Gulf, constitutes a critical geopolitical component within the broader India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor project. This corridor has witnessed significant advancements in cooperation between India and key Gulf states, notably the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

In February 2024, India and the United Arab Emirates signed a framework agreement aimed at operationalizing the corridor, which encompassed the establishment of a digital logistics platform designed to enhance supply chain efficiency. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India, 2024) Furthermore, during the fifteenth session of the Joint Committee in December of the same year, two major initiatives were launched: the "Virtual Trade Corridor" and the "Maitri" platform, both intended to streamline and digitize commercial operations between the two countries. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India, 2024)

In March 2025, high-level bilateral discussions were held between India and the United Arab Emirates, focusing on key strategic areas including the development of port infrastructure, customs integration, digital trade platforms, and renewable energy cooperation particularly in solar energy networks and green hydrogen production. (TIE Staff- Eye on India, 2025) Subsequently, in April 2025, the "Free Trade Warehouse Zone" in Mumbai was officially inaugurated in the presence of Dubai's Crown Prince, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed. This milestone event represented a pivotal advancement in enhancing supply chain efficiency and advancing India's broader commercial and logistical ambitions within the framework of the corridor initiative. (Emirates News Agency – WAM, 2025)

With regard to cooperation with Saudi Arabia, a joint statement issued on April 22, 2025 following the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Riyadh

"Expressed mutual commitment to work together to realize the vision of connectivity as envisaged in the Corridor (IMEC), including the development of infrastructure that includes railways and port linkages to increase the passage of goods and services, and boost trade among stakeholders, and enhance data connectivity and electrical grid interconnectivity. In this regard, both sides welcomed the progress under the MoU on Electrical Interconnections, Clean/Green Hydrogen and Supply Chains signed in October 2023. Both sides also expressed satisfaction on the increase in shipping lines between the two countries". (Ministry of External Affairs - Government of India, 2025)

Reflecting ongoing efforts to deepen the logistical partnership within the broader framework of the corridor initiative, which had already been set in motion following the project's initial announcement.

In October 2024, Fulk Marine Services a subsidiary of the Saudi Public Investment Fund launched the "India Gulf" maritime service, establishing direct connections between key Gulf ports, including Dammam and Umm Qasr, and major Indian ports such as Navi Mumbai and Mundra. (Saudi Press Agency;, 2024) Subsequently, in April 2025, the Saudi Ports Authority announced the introduction of an additional shipping route linking the Port of Jeddah with these Indian ports, as well as with other strategic ports in the region, including Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates. (The Gulf Observe, 2025) These developments reflect a growing emphasis on maritime connectivity as a cornerstone of Saudi-Indian logistical cooperation within the broader framework of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor.

This emerging cooperation aligns with the broader development plans for Indian port infrastructure, particularly the Navi Mumbai Port, (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), 2025) which presented an expansion blueprint during a site visit by a corridor-related delegation in April 2025. (Daily Shipping Times, 2025) Meanwhile, Mundra Port maintains strategic linkages with key Gulf ports through the Adani Logistics Group (Mundra Port, 2025) a major stakeholder that also holds ownership of the Port of Haifa thereby underscoring a geostrategic continuum that connects India with the Eastern Mediterranean via the Gulf.

Although Indian Saudi cooperation in commercial shipping routes and port infrastructure has not been officially incorporated into the formal announcement of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor, it nonetheless constitutes a de facto extension of the Eastern Corridor component, which seeks to link India with the Arabian Gulf. The absence of formal acknowledgment of these arrangements may be attributed to the suspension of " normalisation talks" between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Should these talk resume, the potential exists for the formation of an integrated transregional corridor spanning India, the Gulf states, Jordan, and

culminating at the Port of Haifa which is operated under an Indian Israeli partnership thus completing a geoeconomics arc between South Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Northern Corridor connecting The Arabian Gulf to Europe.

The Eastern Corridor serves as the strategic foundation for extending the route northward toward Europe, thereby necessitating the consolidation of India's partnerships with key European stakeholders most notably France, Italy, Germany, and the European Union. Strengthening these ties is essential for ensuring the viability of the broader transregional connectivity envisioned by the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor.

Regarding cooperation with France which constitutes the northwestern anchor of the corridor via its integration into the European railway network French President Emmanuel Macron visited India in January 2024 and held high-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Both leaders underscored the strategic importance of the corridor in bolstering trade resilience and enhancing regional energy transmission capabilities. Prime Minister Modi also welcomed France's appointment of a dedicated envoy for the project, (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India, 2024) Gérard Mestrallet, who was part of the official French delegation and is expected to coordinate France's involvement in advancing the corridor initiative. (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs;, 2024)

In September 2024, Gérard Mestrallet conducted an official visit to the Indian state of Gujarat to evaluate infrastructure components relevant to the corridor most notably Mundra Port, which functions as a critical logistical node within the corridor initiative. During the visit, Mestrallet underscored the strategic value of the direct maritime route between Mundra and Marseille, noting that it offers a "competitive edge" in facilitating trade flows. The visit culminated in a preliminary agreement to enhance cooperation between the French government and Indian public and private sector stakeholders, thereby laying the groundwork for the project's preparatory implementation phase. (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs;, 2024)

Following Prime Minister Modi's visit to France in February 2025, the joint statement released by both sides reaffirmed the strategic relevance of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor in promoting regional integration and fostering sustainable economic growth. Particular emphasis was placed on the pivotal role of the Port of Marseille as a Mediterranean gateway, underscoring its function as a key terminal for European connectivity within the broader framework of the corridor. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2025)

Regarding Italy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in November 2024, during which both leaders agreed to advance the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor initiative. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2024) Subsequently, in February 2025, Italy initiated discussions to appoint a special envoy dedicated to the project. (Rossi, Emanuele;, 2025) This process culminated in April 2025 with the official appointment of Francesco Talu as Italy's special envoy, (Rossi, Emanuele;, 2025) coinciding with

the visit of the Italian Foreign Minister to India (April 11-12, 2025). (Ministry of External Affairs-Government of India;, 2025)

Both parties underscored the strategic significance of initiative India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC). (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2025) And Both parties underscored the strategic significance of integrating Italy's maritime activities in the Mediterranean with India's operations in the Arabian Sea, framed by the Italian Foreign Minister as the "Cotton Road" corridor. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2025)

Regarding Germany, Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited India in October 2024 and participated in the seventh round of bilateral government consultations. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2024) Although these consultations were not formally conducted within the framework of the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor initiative, their focus on sustainable development and clean energy two foundational pillars of the corridor reflects a strategic convergence of priorities and provides an essential basis for potential future cooperation under the project.

At the European Union level, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen conducted an official visit to India in February 2025, (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2025) accompanied by several commissioners. During this visit, concrete measures were agreed upon to advance the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor project. (Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India;, 2025)

These developments underscore the potential for the imminent resumption of I2U2 summits and pave the way for the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor project to advance, once the situation in Gaza and the broader Middle East stabilizes.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the regional and international drivers influencing U.S. India convergence in the Middle East over recent years reveals a multilateral cooperation encompassing intertwined political, economic, and geopolitical aspects. These dimensions are prominently reflected in initiatives such as the I2U2 framework and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), both of which embody significant strategic realignments within the regional and global contexts. Key developments include the advancement of Arab Israeli normalisation efforts under U.S. auspices; the emergence of new regional alliances that transcend traditional frameworks while deliberately excluding China; and India's ascendance as a pivotal actor in reshaping trade and logistics corridors across the region.

Despite the considerable challenges posed by the Gaza war to the trajectory of this cooperation, subsequent developments have revealed tangible opportunities for its revival. These dynamics

indicate that the continuation of U.S. India cooperation in the Middle East remains a plausible prospect, particularly in light of evolving regional and international shifts.

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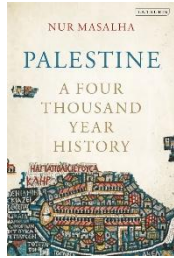
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Book Review: Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History by Nur Masalha

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ABOUT THE BOOK AUTHOR:

Professor Nur Masalha is a distinguished Palestinian historian and a prominent scholar at the Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS, University of London. With a career dedicated to decolonizing historical narratives and reclaiming indigenous Palestinian perspectives, he has authored several influential works that critically examine Zionist historiography and the politics of memory. Professor Masalha also serves as the editor of the Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies, contributing significantly to academic discourse on Middle Eastern history and settler-colonial studies. His key publications include Expulsion of the Palestinians (1992), A Land Without a People (1997), The Politics of Denial (2003), The Bible and Zionism (2007), and The Palestine Nakba (2012). His scholarship is widely recognized for its rigorous historical methodology and its commitment to justice and narrative restoration in the context of Palestine.

INTRODUCTION: Reclaiming Palestine's Historical Continuity

In the introduction, the author challenges the prevailing notion that Palestine is a modern construct, asserting instead that it has existed as a continuous geopolitical and cultural entity for over four millennia. He critiques the Eurocentric and Zionist historiographies that have sought to erase or marginalize Palestinian history, emphasizing the importance of indigenous narratives. Masalha employs a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from archaeology, cartography, and toponymy to reconstruct Palestine's historical landscape. He underscores the significance of place names and their transformations over time, illustrating how colonial powers have used renaming as a tool of domination. This foundational chapter sets the stage for a decolonized reading of Palestinian history, advocating for a historiography that centers Palestinian voices and experiences.

Chapter 1: The Philistines and Philistia as a Distinct Geo-political Entity: Late Bronze Age to 500 BC

This chapter begins by examining the Philistines, a people who settled along the southern coast of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age. He argues that Philistia was a distinct geopolitical entity with its own culture, language, and political structures (Masalha 1992, 1997). Contrary to biblical

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depictions that portray the Philistines as antagonists to the Israelites, archaeological evidence suggests a more complex and nuanced relationship between these groups. Masalha highlights the continuity between Philistia and later Palestinian identities, challenging narratives that seek to disconnect modern Palestinians from their ancient predecessors. This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding Palestine as a historically rooted and continuous entity.(antoineonline.com)

Chapter 2: The Conception of Palestine in Classical Antiquity and During the Hellenistic Empires (500–135 BC)

This chapter explores how the term "Palestine" entered classical usage, particularly during the Hellenistic period. Masalha traces the etymology of "Palestina" and its adoption by Greek and Roman writers to describe the region. He examines how Hellenistic rulers and scholars conceptualized Palestine, often through orientalist lenses that exoticized and othered its inhabitants. Despite these external impositions, local cultures persisted, adapting to and resisting foreign influences. Masalha emphasizes the resilience of indigenous identities and the ways in which they navigated the complexities of Hellenistic rule. This chapter underscores the importance of critically engaging with classical sources to uncover the lived experiences of ancient Palestinians.(Bloomsbury Publishing)

Chapter 3: From Philistia to Provincia 'Syria Palaestina' (135 AD–390 AD): The Administrative Province of Roman Palestine

Following the Bar Kokhba revolt, the Roman Empire renamed the region "Syria Palaestina" as part of a broader strategy to suppress Jewish identity and assert imperial control. Masalha examines this renaming as an act of colonial erasure, aimed at reconfiguring the region's identity to align with Roman interests. He analyzes administrative records, legal documents, and archaeological findings to reconstruct the socio-political landscape of Roman Palestine. Despite imperial efforts, local populations maintained their cultural practices and resisted assimilation. Masalha highlights the continuity of indigenous traditions and the ways in which they adapted to the changing political context. This chapter illustrates the complexities of identity formation under colonial rule.

Chapter 4: The (Three in One) Provincia Palaestina: The Three Administrative Provinces of Byzantine Palestine (4th–Early 7th Centuries AD)

During the Byzantine period, Palestine was divided into three provinces: Palaestina Prima, Secunda, and Tertia. Masalha explores the administrative, religious, and cultural developments within these provinces, focusing on the rise of Christianity and its impact on local communities. He examines the construction of churches, monastic institutions, and pilgrimage sites, highlighting the region's significance in early Christian history. Masalha also addresses the interactions between Christian, Jewish, and Samaritan populations, emphasizing the pluralistic nature of Byzantine Palestine. This chapter provides insights into the region's religious transformations and the ways in which they shaped its socio-political fabric.(ia601600.us.archive.org)

Chapter 5: Arab Christian Palestine: The Pre-Islamic Arab Kings, Bishops, Poets, and Tribes of Provincia Palaestina (3rd–Early 7th Centuries AD)

Masalha delves into the often-overlooked history of Arab Christian communities in pre-Islamic Palestine. He highlights the roles of Arab kings, bishops, poets, and tribes in shaping the region's cultural and political landscape. Through an analysis of literary texts, inscriptions, and ecclesiastical records, Masalha reconstructs the vibrant Arab Christian presence that predated Islamic conquests. He challenges narratives that portray Arab identity as solely Islamic, emphasizing the deep-rooted and diverse nature of Arab cultural expressions in Palestine. This chapter contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the region's religious and ethnic diversity.(Gale Learning Resources)

Chapter 6: The Arab Province of Jund Filastin (638–1099 AD): Continuities, Adaptation, and Transformation of Palestine under Islam

With the advent of Islamic rule, Palestine became known as Jund Filastin, one of the administrative districts of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. Masalha examines the continuities and transformations that occurred during this period, focusing on urban development, agricultural practices, and religious institutions. He analyzes the integration of Islamic governance with existing local structures, highlighting the adaptability of Palestinian society. Masalha also addresses the coexistence of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities, emphasizing the pluralistic nature of Islamic Palestine. This chapter illustrates the dynamic interplay between continuity and change in the region's history.(Bloomsbury Publishing)

Chapter 7: Between Egypt and al-Sham: Palestine during the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Early Ottoman Periods

This chapter explores the political and cultural developments in Palestine under the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and early Ottoman dynasties. Masalha analyzes the region's strategic importance, situated between Egypt and Greater Syria (al-Sham), and how this influenced its governance. He examines the patronage of religious and educational institutions, the construction of architectural landmarks, and the flourishing of intellectual life. Masalha also addresses the challenges posed by external invasions and internal conflicts, highlighting the resilience of Palestinian society. This period is characterized by both continuity with previous eras and the emergence of new socio-political dynamics.(Bloomsbury Publishing)

Chapter 8: Palestinian Statehood in the 18th Century: Early Modernities and Practical Sovereignty in Palestine

Masalha challenges the notion that Palestinian nationalism emerged solely in response to Zionism, arguing that forms of Palestinian statehood and sovereignty existed in the 18th century. He focuses on figures like Dhaher al-Umar, who established autonomous rule in parts of Palestine, fostering economic development and political stability. Masalha examines the administrative structures,

trade networks, and diplomatic relations that characterized this period, highlighting the agency of Palestinian leaders. He contends that these early modernities laid the groundwork for later nationalist movements, emphasizing the indigenous roots of Palestinian political aspirations. This chapter reconfigures understandings of Palestinian history by foregrounding local initiatives and governance.(Blinkist)

Chapter 9: Being Palestine, Becoming Palestine: Rediscovery and New Representations of Modern Palestine and Their Impact on Palestinian National Identity

In this chapter, Masalha explores the formation of modern Palestinian national identity, tracing its evolution through literature, art, and political discourse. He examines how Palestinians have engaged with their history and heritage to construct narratives of belonging and resistance. Masalha analyzes the role of intellectuals, poets, and activists in articulating a collective identity that draws from diverse cultural and historical sources. He also addresses the impact of colonialism, displacement, and diaspora on the shaping of Palestinian consciousness. This chapter underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of national identity formation.

Chapter 10: Settler-Colonialism and Disinheriting the Palestinians: The Appropriation of Palestinian Place Names by the Israeli State

This chapter concludes by examining the Israeli state's efforts to appropriate and Hebraize Palestinian place names, viewing this as a form of settler-colonial erasure. He analyzes the policies and practices aimed at rewriting the geographical and cultural landscape to align with Zionist narratives. Masalha argues that this toponymic transformation serves to disinherit Palestinians from their ancestral lands, undermining their historical claims and identities. He situates these practices within broader frameworks of colonialism and decolonization, calling for the recognition and restoration of indigenous place names. This final chapter reinforces the book's central thesis: that reclaiming historical narratives is essential to resisting colonial domination.(Barnes & Noble)

Now that we have provided a general note on the content covered in the book, it is only appropriate to discuss what the conglomeration of all the content covered in the book would bring about. First, it must be noted that the book successfully aims to improve our understanding of Palestinian history as a long-standing, deeply rooted, and continuously evolving civilizational narrative. By synthesizing multiple historical periods, from the Philistine age through Byzantine and Islamic governance, to modern nationalist consciousness, Nur Masalha constructs a compelling counter-narrative that dismantles reductionist and settler-colonial interpretations of the Palestinian past. His use of archaeological, linguistic, religious, and administrative records, combined with a decolonial historiographical approach, enables the reader to grasp the significance of Palestine not merely as a political entity but as a cultural and historical continuum.

Moreover, the book contributes to broader scholarly conversations on memory, identity, and spatial justice, illustrating how toponyms, cartographic manipulations, and historiographical erasures have been central to the logic of settler-colonialism. By restoring indigenous perspectives

and voices, the book challenges academic complicity in epistemic violence and underscores the moral imperative of historical truth-telling.

Cumulatively, the book calls on historians, educators, and policymakers to reframe how Palestine is taught, narrated, and situated in both local and global discourse. It invites a reconsideration of Palestine not as a "problem" to be solved, but as a civilizational subject with its own epistemologies and historical agency. In doing so, *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History* does not merely document a past—it intervenes in the present and gestures toward a future anchored in justice and recognition.

RECOMMENDATION

Finally, as a recommendation for improvement, the inclusion of a companion website that could provide *interactive maps, digitized archival documents, historical timelines, and annotated bibliographies* would significantly enhance the reader's engagement with the content. Given the book's interdisciplinary nature, which spans archaeology, historical geography, religious studies, and postcolonial theory, a digital supplement could serve as an invaluable pedagogical tool for students, educators, and researchers alike. Such a platform could visually demonstrate the evolution of place names, showcase primary source materials referenced in the text, and host short video lectures or interviews with the author and contributing scholars. It would also allow for periodic updates in light of new discoveries or shifting political contexts, thereby ensuring the book remains a living and evolving academic resource. Furthermore, in an era increasingly shaped by digital humanities, providing open-access resources that complement the book's thesis would not only extend its reach but also democratize access to Palestinian historical knowledge, particularly for audiences in the Global South or conflict-affected areas. This kind of multimodal scholarly engagement would deepen the impact of Masalha's work and encourage broader, more nuanced public conversations on the history and identity of Palestine.

Personal Reflection as a Palestinian Researcher on Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History by Nur Masalha

As a Palestinian researcher, reading *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History* by Nur Masalha is both a deeply affirming and intellectually invigorating experience. The book does more than revisit historical narratives, it reclaims them. For too long, Palestinian history has been framed from the outside, often distorted by colonial and Zionist discourses that have sought to fragment, marginalize, or erase our collective past. Masalha's work stands as a monumental corrective to this erasure.

What resonates most profoundly is his insistence on indigenous continuity that Palestinians are not a modern invention nor a recent population, but rather inheritors of a millennia-old civilization rooted in Canaanite, Philistine, Arab, Islamic, and Christian heritage. This narrative, so meticulously documented, restores agency and dignity to Palestinian identity. It also affirms what

many of us know through oral history, cultural memory, and lived experience: that our belonging is ancestral, not contingent.

Furthermore, Masalha's integration of decolonial methodologies is especially vital. He does not merely write history; he disrupts epistemological violence. His critique of biblical archaeology, analysis of toponymic appropriation, and exposure to settler-colonial historiography all contribute to a radical reshaping of how Palestine should be studied and understood.

From an academic standpoint, the book offers a robust foundation for further research, especially for young Palestinian scholars seeking to anchor their work in a historically grounded yet critically engaged framework. As a Palestinian, I see this book as part of a broader intellectual resistance movement that challenges imposed silences and replaces them with historical truth, narrative justice, and cultural resilience.

In sum, *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History* is not only a scholarly achievement but also a declaration of historical presence. Masalha presents a structured academic perspective, asserting that Palestine is historically real while Israel is fake. The book reaffirms that Palestine is not a vanishing past but a living, rooted, and enduring reality. For any Palestinian academic, this book is not optional reading; it is essential.

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