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# Constructing Death Worlds: Israel's Occupation of Palestine

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Constructing Death Worlds: Israel's Occupation of Palestine  
by  
Nichole S. Arel

Master's Project Adviser: Simone A. James Alexander, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
English Department  
Seton Hall University  
South Orange, NJ  
2024

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College of Arts and Sciences  
English

## APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Nichole Arel has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the master's thesis for the master of English Literature during this Summer, 2024.

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**Abstract:**

Achille Mbembe's seminal work *Necropolitics* explains how the ultimate power of sovereignty is not exercised as Michel Foucault asserts in his theory of biopower in life over death, but rather in relegating certain populations to deathworlds, a place between the living and the dead. For over half of a century, Israel has illegally occupied both the West Bank and Gaza and exerted almost total control over the territories. It controls infrastructure such as roads, building permits, and water rights while also regulating the freedom of movement of Palestinians within and outside the West Bank's borders in addition to various other restrictions that essentially exile Palestinians of the territories to deathworlds. Arabs in these territories are confined to specific areas within their own territory, judged for minor infractions in military court, and killed at will, reducing their existence to a living death. My thesis will examine the ways in which Israel, in its continued and expanding occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, with a particular focus on the former, exercises this display of sovereignty over in consigning Palestinians to death worlds. It will look at the ways various political structures and policies place Arabs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in the position of homo sacer and consign them to death worlds, thereby simultaneously displaying Israel's ultimate sovereignty over this discriminated class of people, according to Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics, while also producing a link of enmity between the two peoples. It will then explore the means of resistance available to Palestinians as well as future areas of study regarding the issue.

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## **Critical Introduction for Thesis and Applicability to Palestine:**

Michel Foucault's influence is ubiquitous in political, social, and literary theory fields. One of his groundbreaking concepts is the notion of biopower, which originated in what Foucault feels was the evolution of new power structures since the eighteenth century and was linked to the development of modern states and capitalist societies. He traces what he sees as the evolution of the sovereign's power over life and death from the classical to the modern age. In ancient times, Foucault states, "The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing..." and that this right which was professed as "... 'power of life and death' was in reality the right to take life or let live..." (136). However, he proposes sovereigns' show of power has since shifted from one that rested primarily on the power of deduction via the ability to require wealth, materials, labor, and blood from his subjects to one that in addition to the power of deduction also sought to order, control, and develop life of their subjects. (Foucault 136). This concept exercises its control over populations through control and regulating life through institutions, practice, and knowledge. While his theory emphasizes modern states' control and fostering of the life of its citizens, it does acknowledge that there remains a power to mete out death to specific targeted individuals and groups in society.

Before the modern period, perceived threats to the state were focused primarily on the ruler, as evinced in executing those who threatened the king or his position and wars intended to defend his rule. These executions and wars were a means to preserve his own power over the populace. However, Foucault states that currently "[w]ars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity:

massacres have become vital" (137). Therefore, the figure of the ruler has dissolved into the image of the populace, and killing is now done in the name of the people and the preservation of life.

English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, suggests in his work *Leviathan*, that a social contract exists between the sovereign and his subjects. The contract ensures that heads of power offer peace and security to their subjects and in return, certain rights and liberty are surrendered to the state (Hobbes Ch. XIII). Hobbes insists that the surrender of such rights is done voluntarily and to gain some other benefit (Ch. XIII). Without such a contract, industry would suffer; life would become "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" and people would exist in a state of "constant fear, and danger of death" (Hobbes Ch. XIII). This understanding though, does not take into account the realities of Necropolitics or the exercise of sovereignty over an occupied people. The colonial subject does not willingly enter the social contract with colonial powers, it is forced upon them at the butt of a gun and the gains go solely to the colonizing state and its population. In the OPT, land and resources are seized by Israel and allotted to Israelis. Rights are taken away from Palestinians not in the name of peace and security for those who are ruled, but rather in the guise of security for those who rule. As French Psychiatrist and theorist, Frantz Fanon states, the violence and anxiety that underpins colonization only begets further violence (83). Therefore, occupation can never offer peace or security for anyone involved in the process. It is born in violence and will give birth to violence.

Cameroonian historian, Achille Mbembe's book *Necropolitics*, published in 2019, expands upon the theory of biopower and finds issues with the idea that sovereign power enters willingly into a social contract with its subjects. He does so by introducing his notion of Necropolitics. Whereas biopower is seen as power over life while allowing some to die,

Necropolitics views the sovereign's power over death as being central to the modern and capitalistic state. Mbembe explains “The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty’s limits, its principal attributes. To be sovereign is to exert one’s control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power” (66). Therefore, according to Mbembe current power is centered on the state’s authority to expose certain populations to death, thus exercising power over life and death. He states, “...the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death” (Mbembe 92). To illustrate Biopower’s insufficient inability to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death, Mbembe gives examples of slavery, colonial occupation, and modern wars and massacres. He attributes these tools and periods of death as being central to the formation of modern democracies. Regarding colonialism and slavery, Mbembe asserts, “The triumph of modern democracy in the West coincides with the period of its history during which this region of the world was engaged in a twofold movement of internal consolidation and expansion across the seas” (22). It is therefore impossible to disentangle modern democratic states with the pasts upon which they were built. Mbembe states, “The history of modern democracy is, at bottom, a history with two faces, and even two bodies—the solar body, on the one hand, and *the nocturnal body*, on the other. The major emblems of this nocturnal body are the colonial empire and the pro-slavery state—and more precisely the plantation and the penal colony” (22). Modern societies hide this “nocturnal body,” instead only choosing to present their “solar bodies” for judgment. This is evident in the assumption that the West represents a rules-based order, despite their record of supporting

dictatorships and repressive regimes around the world, as well as their establishment through colonization and slavery.

Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics illustrates the deficiencies of Biopower partly by incorporating a figure found in Giorgio Agamben's book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. The title refers to a Roman legal term regarding an individual or individuals who can be killed without punishment but are not worthy of sacrifice to the divine. This figure represents an individual stripped of political rights and reduced to "bare life"—a life subjected to violence without legal consequence (*Homo Sacer* 72). Mbembe states this concept of bare life amounts to inhabiting a space between life and death. To Agamben, *Homo Sacer* embodies sovereign power's ability to create a class that exists unprotected by the system of laws and subject to arbitrary violence (*Homo Sacer* 83). An example Mbembe gives to underline the ubiquitousness of this subset of populations in modern societies is those who have lived in either concentration camps, those subject to state-sanctioned violence, or Palestinians under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza (OPT) (43-46). They lack political and judicial protections and are at constant risk of death. While Biopower focuses on the roles of institutional spaces such as schools, hospitals, and prisons, where life is controlled, Necropolitics underlines the importance of death worlds: spaces where inhabitants are subject to conditions reflecting a living death while also being subject to actual death at any moment and for any reason.

Just as Mbembe expands upon, or in some cases, amends some of Foucault's ideas of Biopower, Irish-Israeli sociologist, Ronit Lentin expands Agamben's notion of *Homo Sacer* to consider the intersection between gender and sovereign power. Lentin originally proposed in 2006 that female Holocaust survivors embodied the 'femina-sacra.' In her later essay, "Palestinian Women from Femina Sacra to Agents of Active Resistance," she explains this

designation, stating, “Due to the link between birth and nation, in genocidal acts, which combine state racism and state sexism, women are permanently banned as the producers of future generations of the racially ‘inferior’” (167). She expands upon this designation, proposing that it not only applies to female Holocaust survivors but also to Palestinian women. She gives numerous examples of how gender adds a different dimension to the conditions of bare life that Palestinian women endure in both the OPT and within Israel proper, such as Palestinian citizens within Israel who are allowed to vote in elections but are prevented from changing the laws which fundamentally discriminate against them or undermine their rights as citizens of the state (167). Additionally, women under occupation embody femina-sacra in their active resistance to home demolitions and their participation in protests against home demolition (Lentin 168). Though Palestinian women in the OPT are not protected by Israeli law and are subjected to ‘bare life,’ they actively resist their designation of femina-sacra. By exploring the female resistance to occupation, Lentin shows that women play a vital role in undermining the colonial assumption that Arab women are oppressed by their native society and therefore require subjugation in the name of civilization.

Though Foucault acknowledges the role of race in Biopower, in determining what section of a population is more deserving of protection, Mbembe centers his theory of modern power on the racialized dimension, discussing how racial hierarchies and colonial histories frame the necropolitical choices of whom is deserving of being exposed to death or death worlds (2). The target of Necropolitics is often the racialized other, illustrating the direct line throughout history between colonial violence and modern democracies. Mbembe points to the example of Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories to illustrate the role Necropolitics plays in the importance of understanding the contemporary realities where the lines between

preserving life and inflicting death or bare life break down: allowing readers to understand how modern states wield power to determine who lives and who dies (43-46). He explicitly indicates a racialized dimension, discussing how racial hierarchies and colonial histories inform the necropolitical decision of who can be exposed to death. As he shows, Necropolitics often targets racialized others, highlighting the continuation of colonial violence in contemporary forms.

While the ideas within Biopower were some of the foundations upon which the theory of Necropolitics is constructed, Mbembe integrates and expands upon ideas found in Foucault's work. Mbembe posits that the policies meant to ensure life for some, inherently concern decisions about death, especially impacting racialized groups and within physical spaces such as colonized territories, refugee and prison camps. His theory sheds light on the darker aspects of modern power – the systematic exposure of certain populations to bare life and death. By developing Foucault's theory, he critically examines the contemporary political realities where lines between the preservation of life for some and reducing others to bare life and death blur. This allows readers to understand how states wield power to determine who lives and who dies.

An example of this can be witnessed in the fact that Palestinians in the OPT are subject to military law while Jewish settlers in the same physical territory are governed by civil law (Francis). According to Human Rights Watch, an international human rights organization:

The Israeli army has deprived generations of Palestinians in the West Bank of their basic civil rights, including the rights to free assembly, association and expression, regularly drawing on military orders issued in the first days of the occupation. Even if such restrictions could have been justified then to preserve public order and safety, the suspension of core rights more than half a century later with no end in sight violates Israel's core responsibilities under the law of occupation. (Shakir)

Military law governing Palestinians in the OPT was instituted upon Israel's seizure of the territories following the 1967 war. Israel instituted the Defense Regulations of 1945, a British Mandate-era proclamation that allowed authorities to suppress growing unrest. The order allows the Israeli military to prevent groups of ten Palestinians or more from meeting without a permit and those who defy this regulation can be sentenced to up to ten years in prison (Shakir). It also bans the publishing or displaying of political materials, including flags, without military approval (Shakir). For over half a century, Israel has enforced this order on the Palestinians in the OPT. Israeli settlers in the OPT are judged and ruled according to Israeli civil law, affording them a wide range of rights. Therefore, Palestinians, despite inhabiting the same physical space, are deprived of the rights afforded to Israelis and Jewish settlers. This discrepancy in judicial and political protections positions Palestinians as Homo Sacer as they are outside the protection of normal legal frameworks.

Additionally, as Homo Sacer, they are subject to detention or death at any moment. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between the beginning of January 2008 and early June 2023, roughly fifteen hundred Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, of which ninety-eight percent were civilians ("Data on Casualties"). Many of these are perpetrated at checkpoints and during home raids, which often occur at night while the occupants are sleeping. Palestinians are also subject to arbitrary detention by the Israeli military, often referred to as 'administrative detention', under which prisoners can be held "... without charge or trial that can be renewed indefinitely," according to Amnesty International's Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa ("Horrible Cases"). In scenes reminiscent of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, videos have circulated online showing Palestinian prisoners in detention being beaten, humiliated, stripped, and bound ("Horrible Cases").

Cases”). In their report, Amnesty International documents several cases related by former prisoners of their time in detention, stating they were beaten, stripped, and forced to curse Hamas and praise Israel. One female detainee relates that she was threatened with rape (“Horrible Cases”). While Israel’s use of administrative detention, holding Palestinians without charge indefinitely and without legal representation or protections is repressive enough, according to Heba Morayef, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, it is merely one of the methods by which “...Israel has enforced its system of apartheid against Palestinians” (“Horrible Cases”). She states that “Testimonies and video evidence also point to numerous incidents of torture and other ill-treatment by Israeli forces including severe beatings and deliberate humiliation of Palestinians who are detained in dire conditions” (“Horrible Cases”). In addition to often being held without charge, many of these prisoners are eventually released without filing formal charges against them, calling into question the purpose of initially holding these prisoners. The restrictions on freedom of assembly and political involvement while being subject to arbitrary detention and torture effectively reduces Palestinians under occupation to conditions of “bare life.” They inhabit a political and legal space of nonexistence and have no recourse for violence committed against them, exemplifying the condition of Homo Sacer.

### **Historical Context:**

To understand how Israel’s occupation of the OPT fits the criteria laid out in *Necropolitics*, how the OPT - specifically the West Bank - constitutes a death world, and what might be done to address these issues, a cursory understanding of the historical and political realities of the conflict is necessary. The occupation of the Palestinian territories, including the West Bank and Gaza, has entered its fifty-seventh year, making it the longest ongoing military



occupation in modern history. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading Zionist figures held several conferences and meetings in Europe and America in efforts to establish a Jewish state. They found a unique opportunity to accomplish this goal after the conclusion of WWI and the defeat of Ottoman forces, when the League of Nations enacted the British Mandate in 1919, which awarded Britain control of the historic land of Palestine and Transjordan. The stated goal of the mandate was to administer the land until the population could independently rule itself (“The Question of Palestine”). However, two years prior to the adoption of the mandate, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, declaring the British government's support for a “national home for the Jewish people” in a land already inhabited by roughly 700,000 Palestinians (“The Question of Palestine”). This habit of dividing territory without consulting with the current inhabitants followed a long-held Western tradition of carving up and apportioning territory to major powers during periods of colonization and surrounding WWI.

After centuries of oppression of Jewish citizens throughout Europe and the efforts of Zionist figures, Jewish immigration to Palestine slowly ticked up during the waning days of Ottoman control over the territory. The Great Arab Revolt against British rule occurred between 1936-1939 (Kelly). Historian Rashid Khalidi states that this conflict resulted in “...10 percent of the adult male population [being] killed, wounded, imprisoned, or exiled” (12). As a result of their human and territory losses, Arab residents of the territory resented the increased immigration into the territory because the Palestinians were aware via the Arab press that Zionists both within Palestine and abroad were stating that they would be able to seize full control of the country if Jewish immigration to the territory reached sufficient numbers (Khalidi 36). Eventually, British officials passed the 1939 White Paper, which restricted further Jewish

immigration, despite the persecution faced by Jewish Europeans during WWII. Jewish fighters already in the territory responded by blowing up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem which served as the British headquarters, killing ninety-one people (Khalidi 71-72). The explosion and the British government's inability to depend on Jewish support in the territory caused Great Britain to appeal to the UN for a solution to the Palestine problem (Khalidi 72). However, the trickle turned into a flood of mass immigration into the territory following the horrors of the Holocaust. As the Jewish population in the British Mandate of Palestine increased, so did the conflict between the two groups.

To remedy the rising tensions between the native population and the new Jewish immigrants the UN Partition Plan of 1947 was passed as a proposal to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under International Trusteeship ("The Question of Palestine"). While accepted by many Jewish leaders of the Zionist movement, it was refused by the Arab leaders. According to Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), an American-Jewish Anti-Zionist organization, using UN data, "The leadership of the Palestinians and of the Arabs rejected the UN decision because although most of the inhabitants of the country were Palestinian, the borders of the state planned for them included less than fifty percent of the country's land and they would lose most of the country's fertile regions" (JVP). The UN estimated the Jewish population of historic Palestine at thirty-three percent, owning only roughly seven percent of the land (JVP). Despite these statistics, the UN partition would award over fifty-five percent of the land to the new state of Israel (JVP). Arabs were also suspicious that the Jewish state's boundaries would expand in the future. This fear not without merit as one of the leading Zionist figures and future Prime Minister of Israel confessed in a letter penned to his son in 1937 that once a Jewish state is established in only part of the land, Israel "...would

not fail in settling in the remaining parts of the country, through agreement and understanding with our Arab neighbors, or through some other means” and that “If I were an Arab I would have been very indignant” upon partition (Ben-Gurion). Already losing a large portion of their land, including much of the fertile areas of historic Palestine, Arabs refused to agree.

In February of 1948, Israel enacted Plan Dalet, which called for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians who lived in the territory the partition plan deeded to the future Jewish state. According to Israeli historian, Illan Pappé, Palestinians were expelled from major cities and smaller towns such as Haifa, Jaffa, West Jerusalem, Acre, and Safad. The plan also called for the destruction of villages and planting mines in the rubble of “...population centers which are difficult to control continuously...” (Pappé). Pappé states that the Jewish forces were instructed that “In the event of resistance, the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.” He explains that this outcome was foreseeable as:

The goal of Zionism had not changed: it was dedicated to taking over as much of Mandatory Palestine as possible and removing most of the Palestinian villages and urban neighborhoods from the space carved out for the future Jewish state. The execution was even more systematic and comprehensive than anticipated in the plan. In a matter of seven months, 531 villages were destroyed and eleven urban neighborhoods emptied.

The mass expulsion was accompanied by massacres, rape, and the imprisonment of males over the age of ten in labor camps for periods of over a year. (Pappé)

The destruction of hundreds of villages within the future borders of Israel occurred prior to official establishment of the Israeli State and set the scene for all of the conflicts that were to follow.

Further panic ensued in the Arab communities upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 and the ensuing Arab-Israeli War, between the new Jewish state and its neighbors. The emptying of the villages inside Israel and the war led to the displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinians, and the demolition of hundreds of Palestinian villages, referred to as the Nakba by Palestinians (“Seventy + Years of Suffocation”). The Armistice Lines of 1949 resulted in Israel controlling more territory than the UN partition plan intended, including Western Jerusalem, with Jordan in control of the West Bank and Egypt holding Gaza (“History of the Question of Palestine”). In 1967, the Six-Day War broke out when Israel preemptively struck Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and seized the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, and the Golan Heights, marking the beginning of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (“History of the Question of Palestine”). The UN responded to the conflict by passing Resolution 242 in 1967, which called for Israeli withdrawal from the territories it seized in the conflict (“History of the Question of Palestine”). However, Israel has refused to abide by the resolution and has instead established numerous settlements, deemed illegal under international law, in these territories. These settlements are located within the Green Line, the line that indicates the border between Israel proper and the territories seized during the Six-Day War. Settlements are often built in strategic locations such as in especially fertile lands, on hilltops overlooking Palestinian towns and villages, or forming rings around Palestinian communities.

Twenty years later, the First Intifada broke out in early December of 1987. Partly in response to the increasing encroachment of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, growing economic stagnation, and an accident where an Israeli truck driver collided with a vehicle, killing four Palestinians, the uprising started in Gaza and soon spread to the West Bank. American Political Scientist, John Mearsheimer, states that “Israel tried to quell the First

Intifada by force in the late 1980s, with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin telling his troops to break the bones of the Palestinian demonstrators” (10). The Swedish branch of Save the Children estimates that up to 29,900 children required medical treatment to address the injuries they sustained from IDF and settler beatings within the first two years of the Intifada (Hussain). After widespread media coverage of the Intifada and Israel’s response, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization began secret talks that led to the Oslo Accords.

The agreements resulted in the mutual recognition between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) – granted limited self-rule over parts of the Palestinian territories (“History of the Question of Palestine”). Despite mutual recognition, they failed to reach a consensus on some of the most pressing issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for the Palestinian refugees displaced during the Nakba, and the ultimate borders of both the Israeli and Palestinian states (“History of the Question of Palestine”). The Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into three zones. Area A, comprising eighteen percent of the land area, where the PA would handle civil and security matters (“Areas A, B, C”). In area B, making up twenty-two percent of the West Bank, Israel would be responsible for security, and the PA responsible for civil matters. Israel retained complete control over all matters in the remaining sixty percent of the West Bank, Area C (“Areas A, B, C”). The stalemate reached during The Oslo Accords on the final statuses regarding the important issues of Jewish settlements, the right of return, and the question of Jerusalem, was carried through to The Camp David Accords in 2000.

Increasing Palestinian frustration, compounded by the Future Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, visiting the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a site revered by Muslims and Jews while being guarded by hundreds of IDF soldiers (Goldenberg). Suzanne Goldenberg, a Canadian journalist,

explains “The symbolism of the visit... by Mr. Sharon - reviled for his role in the 1982 massacre of Palestinians in a refugee camp in Lebanon - and its timing was unmistakable.”. The widespread Palestinian protests that followed, the Palestinian suicide bombings in the settlements and Israel proper, as well as the IDF and settler reprisals became known as the Second Intifada which lasted until 2005 (“History of the Question of Palestine”). Having ascended to the position of Prime Minister in 2001, Sharon, presided over the dismantling of all the Israeli settlements in Gaza during 2005. Ironically, he was one of the foremost proponents of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza to create “facts on the ground,” demographic and geographic shifts of the occupied territories which would prevent Israel from having to turn over the seized territories in the West Bank (Clairborne). Despite the dismantling of settlements in Gaza, the Israeli government maintains its occupation over this territory according to international law as it controls the population registry, movement, and all borders, both land and sea, going as far as to regulate the distance from the Mediterranean shore permissible to Gazan fishermen.

Despite the 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza, the territory remains under strict Israeli control including managing what goods can move in and out of the territory as well as supplying and cutting off the electrical and water grids. Under international law, this constitutes a continued occupation due to the lack of Palestinian sovereignty and the continued Israeli control over the Gaza Strip (Kmiotek). The absolute control over the territory, in conjunction with expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank in the face of stalling negotiations, has resulted in constant outbreaks of violence in the OPT and the region more widely. Conflicts sometimes drag in Lebanese and Yemeni militias as well as Iranian forces. The shrinking of Palestinian territory over the decades can be seen by referring to fig. 1, below.

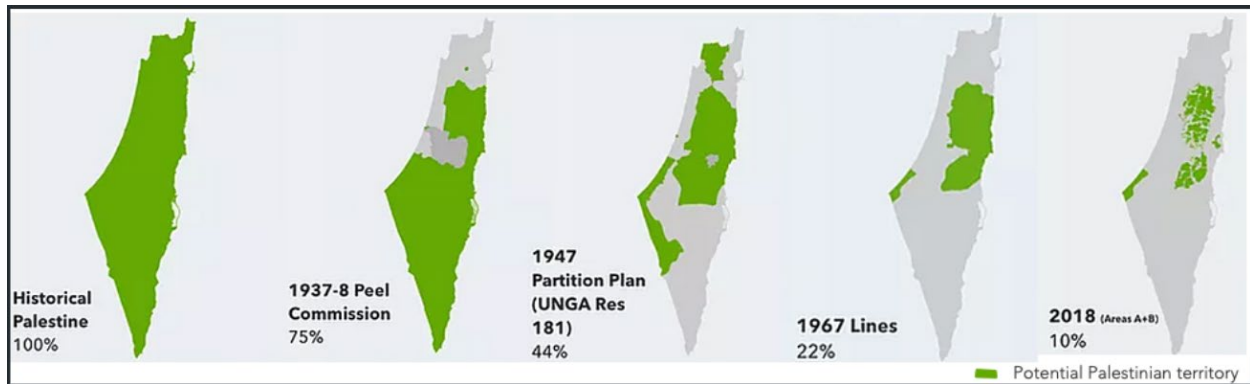


Fig. 1. Map showing the land allotted to Palestine over the past century from “Borders & Territory.” *Progress is Possible*, <https://www.progressispossible.org/issues/borders-territory/>. Copyright 2024 by S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. All Rights Reserved.

In the West Bank, Israel enforces its control over Palestinians with various measures, including control over roads, building permits, and water rights, especially in Area C which has remained under total Israeli control since the Oslo Accords. According to B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization:

In the West Bank, the potential for urban, agricultural, and economic development remains in Area C. Israel uses its control over the area to quash Palestinian planning and building. In about 60% of Area C – 36% of the West Bank – Israel has blocked Palestinian development by designating large swathes of land as state land, survey land, firing zones, nature reserves and national parks; by allocating land to settlements and their regional councils; or by introducing prohibitions to the area now trapped between the Separation Barrier and the Green Line -the boundary between Israel's sovereign territory and the West Bank. (“Planning Policy in the West Bank”)

B’Tselem reports that in the remainder of Area C, Israel exercises control over Palestinian development by rarely approving Palestinian building permits needed to construct homes, roads, schools, and agricultural projects, stating “The odds of a Palestinian receiving a building permit

in Area C – even on privately owned land – are slim to none (“Planning Policy in the West Bank”). In the face of the impossibility of receiving such permits, many Palestinians resort to building without the necessary permits, subjecting any construction to be demolished. By contrast, Israeli-only settlements in Area C, are frequently expanded, along with green spaces, and public areas, often overlooking the Palestinian villages and towns unable to expand their ever-growing population (“Planning Policy in the West Bank”). Palestinian communities, some without reliable access to water are within eyesight of bordering settlements with lush lawns and swimming pools (Debre). The native inhabitants of the OPT can witness the clear differences between the poverty in their communities and the abundance in the settlements constructed for the people occupying their land.

### **Death Worlds:**

Upon the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, roughly 250,000 settlers lived in approximately 128 settlements and outposts in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (“30 Years After Oslo”). The population has nearly doubled since the conclusion of negotiations while the number of settlements and outposts has ballooned to three hundred. The figure below shows the current number of settlements and outposts - smaller communities built on Palestinian land and considered illegal in Israeli courts but often later deemed legal and expanded – which dot the landscape and make hopes of a future contiguous Palestinian state nearly impossible (see fig. 2).



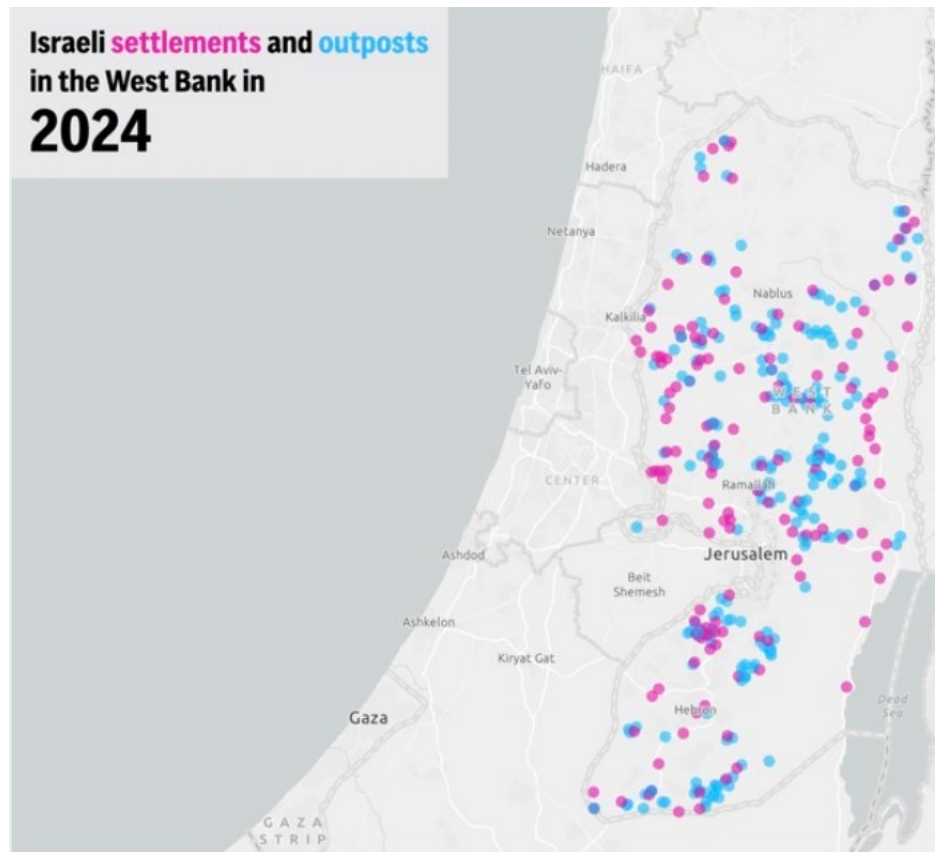


Fig. 2. Map showing the territory under Palestinian control and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza from “A Look at How Settlements Have Grown in the West Bank Over the Years.” *Arab News*, 5 July 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2544291/middle-east>. Copyright 2024 by SAUDI RESEARCH & PUBLISHING COMPANY.

Mbembe explores the need for new colonial states to simultaneously be tied to and separated from the colonial subject. He explains that the new colonial approach relied on turning the native population into objects, stating that it requires "... permanent contact with them, and indeed showed itself to be particularly vulnerable to being separated from them (Mbembe 47). The proximity of settlements to Palestinian villages and towns underscores the Israeli necessity to be near yet disconnected from the native inhabitants. The division of Palestinian territories is accomplished in numerous ways, such as the separation barrier, Jewish-

only roads, and Israeli-issued travel permits. According to a report released by the UN in 2022, Israel has fragmented the territory into more than one hundred cantons while restricting Palestinian movements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank through a myriad of measures such as “...a complex system of checkpoints, permits, military roadblocks, settlements, a bypass road system, parallel legal regimes and the wall that Israel has been constructing” (“Palestine Under Occupation III”). Regarding the territorial fragmentation of the OPT, Mbembe observes:

Everywhere, the building of concrete walls and wire fences and other “security barriers” is in full swing. Alongside the walls, other security structures are emerging: checkpoints, enclosures, watchtowers, trenches, all manner of demarcations that in many cases have no other function than to intensify the enclaving of entire communities, without ever fully succeeding in keeping away those considered a threat. This is the case with all those Palestinian towns that are literally surrounded by areas under Israeli control. (43)

The fracturing of their land and multiple restrictions on their movement severely hinder the daily lives of Palestinians including restricting their access to employment, healthcare, and social connections between Palestinian communities. Restricting travel fragments the ties between Palestinian communities and families that stretch across the physical borders of separation constructed by Israel.

In addition to controlling the physical borders, Israel maintains strict control over water rights in the territories. The Israeli government controls the water sources in the OPT such as the Jordan River, natural springs, and water wells. They also prevent Palestinians from accessing other available sources such as rainwater. Amnesty International states that, “...Israel forbids the collection of rainwater, and rainwater cisterns are frequently destroyed by the IDF, making it even more difficult for Palestinians to meet the water needs of their ever-expanding

population (“The Occupation of Water”). Israeli state-owned water company, Mekorot, has constructed water wells and obtains water from springs located in the West Bank, the bulk of which is allotted to the settlers in the OPT (“The Occupation of Water”). The lack of access to water resources from their own land forces Palestinians to often purchase water from Israel, consuming up to half of some families’ income (“The Occupation of Water”). By contrast, settlers in the same territory have enough water to produce lush farmlands and fill their swimming pools. Israelis, by capita, consume over four times the amount of water as Palestinians in the OPT (“The Occupation of Water”). Both Fanon and Mbembe recognized that colonization is first and foremost a means of resource extraction obtained by subjecting a population by dividing the land and its people. By dividing up the territory into hundreds of small, disconnected islands, Israel is better able to extract the natural resources of the OPT and to build hundreds of settlements.

In his book, Mbembe explores the spatial component of occupation. Israel not only controls the land it occupies, through bypass roads, walls, border crossings, and checkpoints. It also controls the airspace and strategically builds its settlements on hilltops. He explains “The ground itself is divided between its crust and the subsoil” (Mbembe 81). However, the occupation delves even deeper underground, as seen in Israel’s occupation of water, explored above. Mbembe draws on ideas proposed by Israeli-Architect Eyal Weizman, who describes the occupation as “the politics of verticality.” Weizman states, “the organization of the West Bank’s particular terrain has created multiple separations, provisional boundaries, which relate to each other through surveillance and control.” Mbembe refers to this as a splintering occupation (81). The occupation controls, isolates, and surveils the Palestinians using various

means tied to the physical space it occupies, aided by the very landscape it seeks to capture as well as the airspace above.

Amnesty International, in their report “Automated Apartheid”, explores the impact the checkpoints and separation barrier erected in the West Bank have on the population, explaining that these serve to further fragment the already disconnected cantons into hundreds of tiny islands, disconnecting Palestinian communities who must obtain travel permits from Israel to travel between neighboring villages, further isolating them (5). This permit system, in conjunction with the division between the West Bank and Gaza, has a profound impact, not only on physically carving up the territory but also on dividing Palestinian families, as evidenced in Israeli policy regarding residency permits for West Bank Palestinian residents for the Gaza Strip.

It is not uncommon for Palestinians in the OPT to marry across Israeli-imposed borders separating the West Bank and Gaza. However, as Israel forbids a Palestinian with a Gazan identification card from relocating to the West Bank, many West Bank spouses have no choice but to move to Gaza if they want to be reunited with their spouse and children (“One-Way Ticket”). Gisha, an Israeli human rights group, states that after relocating to Gaza, a spouse from the West Bank is required to apply for a travel permit, issued by Israel, should they want to visit family still in the West Bank (“One-Way Ticket”). To obtain a travel permit, the West Bank spouse who has relocated to Gaza but wishes to visit the West Bank, for any reason such as visiting a sick family member or attending a family wedding, must sign a document declaring that they have “settled” in Gaza permanently and that they waive the right to settle again in the West Bank permanently (“One-Way Ticket”). This process ensures the flow of the native population can only go one way: from the area of least control, the West Bank, to the area of

greater control in Gaza. It also reduces the West Bank Arab population, aiding in the Israeli goal to change the demographic realities in the territory in the hopes of annexing increasingly larger swathes of land.

Due to Israel's control over the land, its resources, and the people residing there, the occupation profoundly impacts the Palestinian economy. Amnesty International reports "Israel's long-standing discriminatory policies towards its Palestinian citizens have not only impeded their socio-economic development but also resulted in a large gap between them and their Jewish Israeli counterparts, in terms of standard of living, livelihood opportunities, education, welfare, healthcare and cultural services" ("Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians" 165). They go on to say that the systemic Israeli discrimination favors Israeli works at the expense of Palestinians, ensuring that Palestinians are dependent on Israel for economic opportunities ("Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians" 165). The construction of settlements, Israeli agriculture, manufacturing, and manual labor depend on the Palestinian population to supply cheap labor. Roughly 100,000 Palestinians from the OPT are employed in the settlements and in Israel proper, according to Kav Laoved, an Israeli human rights organization. Mbembe draws parallels between the South African apartheid regime and Israel's occupation of the OPT, stating that both regimes required cheap labor from the colonized subject (44). While the South African apartheid regime was eventually abolished, the Palestinian population is still largely dependent on the income generated by its own displacement.

Education in the territories is also negatively impacted due to the near impossibility of Gazan students to obtain a permit to travel abroad or even to the West Bank for education. Communities with overcrowded schools, or no schools at all, struggle to provide education to children. They are left to decide between three terrible choices: either spend hours each journey

to transport the children navigating the numerous military checkpoints into neighboring communities, to illegally build schools that are frequently demolished by the IDF, or not to provide education to the children, all but ensuring an increasing population economically reliant upon the occupation. For example, in Area C, roughly 98% of Palestinian construction permits are denied by the Israeli military (“Most Palestinian Plans to Build in Area C Not Approved”). An example of the hardships caused by Israel’s denial of building permits can be seen in the village of Jubat Ad-Dhib, which lacks electricity, running water, and a school (Khalel). In 2017, several non-governmental organizations built a school for the village. When the residents gathered to celebrate the opening of the new school, IDF bulldozers demolished the school and shot tear gas and rubber bullets at the attendees (Khalel). It also demolished a second school in the village in 2023, leaving the village struggling to meet the educational needs of its population. This is only one of the many communities in the OPT facing similar struggles.

Control of the space through policies is only one facet of domination, technology also plays a vital role in repression. While Foucault’s notion of Biopower examined the role of technology in promoting and controlling life, Necropower explored how technology can reduce populations to bare life or even to death. Technologically enabled death worlds can be seen in many facets of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, but few are as striking as the facial recognition technologies (FRT) employed in the West Bank city of Hebron. Amnesty International reports that the IDF targets this city with at least two FRTs: Wolf Pack and Blue Wolf, often used in conjunction with each other and with a multitude of cameras in public spaces, cameras pointed into Palestinian homes, and ambient noise detection (“Automated Apartheid” 41-42). Wolf Pack is a database with information on “...Palestinians from the West Bank, such as permits, family members, license plates, and whether they are wanted by the

Israeli authorities or not,” intended to be a repository on “...every Palestinian in the West Bank” (“Automated Apartheid” 41). Blue Wolf, is a mobile app used by IDF soldiers stationed at the checkpoints and around Hebron whereby they can quickly access Wolf Pack data so to make decisions regarding allowing or denying Palestinian movement in, out, or within the city of Hebron (“Automated Apartheid” 42). It also allows them to do intelligence mapping of the city. IDF soldiers are often encouraged by commanders to carry out random home invasions of Palestinian residents to “make their presence felt”, according to former soldiers (“Automated Apartheid” 42). These systems are not only a form of surveillance but also reduce Palestinians to a constant state of anxiety as they are unable to leave their homes without being perpetually surveilled and monitored. Hebron has proved an invaluable testing ground for Israel’s technological control over Palestinians.

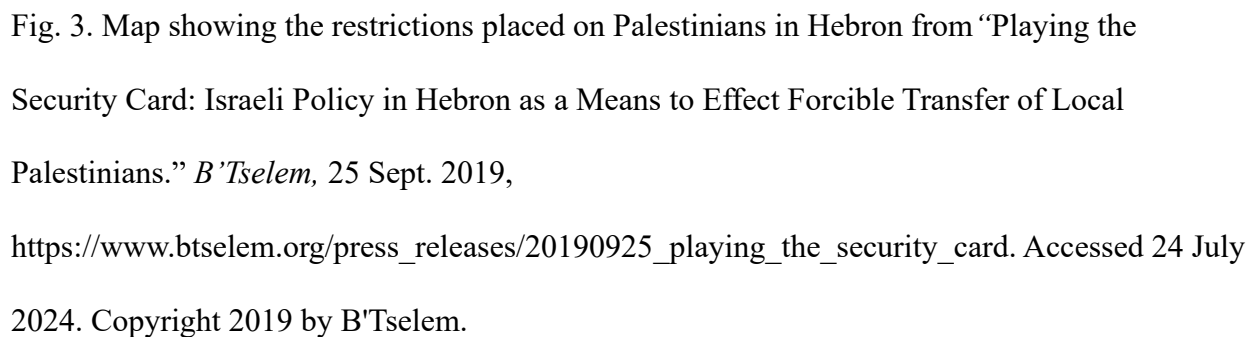
Soon after Israel captured the West Bank in the Six-Day War of 1967, an Israeli settlement was established just outside the city of Hebron, the second largest city in the West Bank, with settlers moving into the city center a decade later to establish a second settlement (“Hebron: Life Under Siege”). Tensions rose even higher when, in the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and the Jewish holiday of Purim, an American Jewish settler entered a site sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, opening fire on the Muslim congregants, killing twenty-nine Palestinians (“Hebron: Life Under Siege”). Riots broke out in the city and the IDF responded by welding shut the doors to Palestinian homes and shops on the main street, which remain shut almost thirty years later (“Hebron: Life Under Siege”). Those Palestinians who remain in their homes and shops in the city, often cover their homes and areas between their narrow streets with mesh wire to catch the garbage frequently thrown at them by neighboring Israeli settlers (“Hebron: Life Under Siege”). The residents who live and work close to the settlements are

reduced to living behind a mesh protective fence in their own homes and businesses to protect them from settler attacks.

Even the streets of Hebron, the second largest city in the West Bank, are divided into Jewish and Palestinian streets, according to B'Tselem (“Separation Not Only on Buses, But Also on Streets of Hebron”). One of the main streets is divided lengthwise, beginning and ending with two checkpoints. The paved side is accessible to Jewish residents only while Palestinians are only able to access the narrow unpaved section, ending with a staircase, making it impossible to travel in wheelchairs or transport goods in handcarts or horse-drawn wagons previously allowed to Arabs on the road. The Jewish side of the road is available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles (“Separation”). While most Jewish settlements ring Palestinian towns and villages, Hebron is the only Arab urban city with a settler population within the city borders, according to the UN (“Joint UN Strategy for Hebron” 3). It also has the highest rate of poverty in the West Bank, at roughly 32.5%, as of 2016, which the UN attributes to the continued occupation and the settlements in its borders (“Joint UN Strategy for Hebron” 3). Much of this poverty results from the closures of the former commercial center of Hebron to protect the settlements in and surrounding the city as well as from the stranglehold caused by the multitude of IDF checkpoints, which restrict movement inside the city and also between Hebron and the surrounding Palestinian communities. These closures and restrictions can be seen in fig. 3 below.



**ב'תס"ל**  
**B'TSELEM**  
**بتسيلم**



25

West Bank, the blockade of Gaza, and surrounding communities with rings of settlements. He explains that the form of the occupation Israel imposes on the population is unique due to its structure and changeability. Through Israel's "monopoly of the issuing of Palestinian identity cards" as well as the myriads of ways the state controls the daily lives of Arabs in the OPT including regulating daily travel, permits, and taxes that "...can be tailored to the demands of occupation (or abandonment, if need be). Further, at any moment, it can be transformed into an instrument of strangulation. Occupation is in every respect hand-to-hand combat in a tunnel" (Mbembe 45). This strangulation gripping the OPT amounts to a death world, which Mbembe states are "...new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*" (92). This is also evident in Israel's perpetual closing off of cities and refugee camps and curfews imposed on the population of the OPT which Israel justifies as necessary military measures. While Gaza might be the most glaring example of Israel constructing a death world for Palestinians, especially during the current crisis, the West Bank also fits the criteria laid out by Mbembe. The severe restrictions on necessities such as water, access to agricultural land, as well as exposure to extrajudicial killings or imprisonment, result in the entire OPT as consisting of a space between life and death.

Ruling over the huge Palestinian population in the OPT requires a multiprong approach of using Israel's various means of control. Mbembe explains how this is accomplished, stating, "As the Palestinian case illustrates, late modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical. The combination of the three grants the colonial power absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory" (82). He explicitly labels Israel's occupation of the OPT as "[t]he most accomplished form of

necropower...” (Mbembe 80). Mbembe explains that due to the competing historical claims of the two people as well as the impossibility of reconciling these claims despite the close ties between one another, “...a demarcation of the territory on the basis of pure identity is quasi-impossible” (80). Using necropower against a population requires a state of exception: a concept explored by Mbembe and Agamben, addressing what is meant to be a temporary suspension of laws to deal with crises and threats to a nation. German philosopher Carl Schmitt studied the term in the 1920s and it was later examined in Agamben’s 2003 book *State of Exception* and further explored in *Necropolitics*. Both Mbembe and Agamben feel the state of exception has developed from a temporary measure to a permanent fixture in modern states, with Agamben asserting “...the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics” (*State of Exception* 2). The state of exception allows governments to take extraordinary measures ostensibly to protect the government and its people. However, the current use of the state of exception in modern states, and especially in Israel’s approach to the Palestinians in the OPT, is instrumental in producing death worlds – a place between life and death – and a means in expanding the settlements, thereby seizing more land from any future Palestinian state.

Despite the territorial and historical proximity of these two people, Israel cannot or will not see Palestinians as deserving of life to the same degree as Israelis. According to Fanon, “...decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one “species” of mankind by another” (1). He states that the binary oppositional nature of colonization causes the colonizer to speak in “zoological terms” regarding the colonized subject (Fanon 7). In 2013, the then Deputy Defense Minister of Israel, Eli Ben Dahan stated during a radio interview “To me, they are like animals, they aren’t human,” referring to Palestinians (Pileggi). Roughly a decade later, and following

the October 7th attacks on Israel, the then Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated, “We are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly” (Karanth). While it is possible that Gallant was referring specifically to Hamas fighters, the language is a means of justifying colonization and the violence that stems from it through the use of dehumanizing a group of people and aligns with the previous statement made by Ben Dahan, over a decade ago. Similarly, during an interview with Sky News, Israel’s former Ambassador to the UN opined, “I am very puzzled by the constant concern which the world is showing for the Palestinian people and is actually showing for these horrible, inhuman animals who have done the worst atrocities that this century has seen” (Harb). This indicates a view within the Israeli military and government that they are not colonizing the Palestinians; rather, they are domesticating a population consisting of animals.

When one is able to dehumanize a population, it becomes even easier to discount their history. Fanon explains that colonialism requires the destruction not only of the future hopes of the colonial subject but also of their past. He states “Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance” (Fanon 149). The erasure of Palestinian culture and history has occurred in numerous ways, beginning even before the partition of the land. One notable examples can be found in the common justification for Jewish settlement in historical Palestine: the refrain “A land without people for a people without a land.” While this phrase finds its origin in the Christian Zionism of the 1800s, it is interesting to observe that while it was common knowledge

that Palestine did have hundreds of thousands of occupants, being Arab made them less deserving of recognition and therefore the land than Jewish immigrants from Europe.

Another example can be found in the widespread narrative that Israel “made the desert bloom.” The Palestinian Institute for Public Diplomacy terms this slogan “...an Orientalist colonial trope that depicts non-European lands as desolate and uncared for, where only the so-called civilized white people are able to transform it into a fertile paradise” (“Myth vs Reality: Israel Made the Desert Bloom”). Prior to the partition, “...Palestine was a primarily agriculture-oriented society, thanks to ground and mineral water from its aquifers, along with its fertile soil and minerals” with the city of Jaffa renowned for its oranges (“Myth vs Reality”). While agriculture has since accelerated in Israel and the West Bank, this would have been impossible without Israel seizing control of all the water sources in the territory, including expropriating control of the water in the West Bank, the Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee (“Myth vs Reality”). This is necessary not only to support the growing Israeli population in Israel proper and in the West Bank, but also to grow the water-intensive European species of trees they have planted to obscure “the ruins of hundreds of demolished Palestinian villages” destroyed during the Nakba (“Myth vs Reality”). Theorists Mbembe and Fanon acknowledge that colonialism is fundamentally a movement to extract resources. Still, it is interesting to note the intersection between Israel’s drive to appropriate resources and its desire to erase Palestinian history, culture, and humanity.

### **Paths of Resistance:**

Some Israeli historians are attempting to resist the erasure of both Israeli and Palestinian history by challenging traditional Israeli historical narratives. This group is sometimes referred to as “The New Historians” and includes notable scholars such as Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, and

Benny Morris. These scholars “...portrayed Israel's founding fathers as less than heroic and the state's very foundation as something other than a miraculous victory of beleaguered underdogs” (Caplan 96). By combing through archives, these historians call into question the dominant narratives that have justified many of Israel’s actions towards the Palestinians and neighboring countries. Doing so allows these scholars to disrupt the almost mythical status Israel has sought to embody, personifying David slaying the mighty Goliath with nothing more than a few stones and a slingshot.

As the state of exception is invoked to allow the suspension of laws to exert total control over a population while illustrating the power of the sovereign state, it becomes vital that international law intervenes to restore judicial protections to the subjugated people. The international community has failed in its duties to protect the Palestinian people and foster peace in the Middle East as the US, a permanent member of the Security Council has consistently used its veto power to protect its strongest ally in the region, despite international law. The nonprofit and nonpartisan group, Chicago Council on Global Affairs reports that:

The U.S. has vetoed resolutions critical of Israel more than any other council member – 45 times as of December 18, 2023, according to an analysis by Blue Marble. The U.S. has vetoed 89 Security Council resolutions in total since 1945, meaning slightly over half of its vetoes have been used on resolutions critical of Israel. Of the vetoed resolutions, 33 pertained to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories or the country’s treatment of the Palestinian people. (O’Dell)

America consistently portrays itself as a neutral arbitrator willing to negotiate between the two sides. However, by regularly vetoing resolutions on behalf of Israel, as well as supplying them with military aid and weapons used to perpetuate the colonial violence inflicted on Palestinians,

America has repeatedly proven its claim of neutrality cannot be taken seriously by those who wish to end the occupation.

Furthermore, by militarily supplying Israel and not sufficiently pressuring them to agree to a ceasefire, the US has all but assured that its principal ally in the region will continue its bombardment of a largely civilian population in Gaza that has endured a brutal blockade for seventeen years, all while accelerating the expansion of settlement. The continued escalation of violence has now expanded beyond Israel and Gaza, with the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon, and the Iranian military in Tehran launching attacks against Israel, threatening a regional war. So, what can be done? The role of the population in exerting political pressure cannot be overlooked. After Hamas' October 7th attacks on Israel and the resulting onslaught against the Gaza Strip, people around the world have witnessed horrific images coming out of the territories and have begun protesting in large numbers worldwide. While the public backlash is partly due to the shocking images featured on mainstream media, much of the conversation around the conflict has been centered online, especially on social media. People march through major cities carrying banners, flags, and signs bearing the names and pictures of children killed by Israel's bombing of the territory. A ubiquitous sight at these protests is the symbol of the watermelon, which became a symbol of Palestinian resistance after the Six-Day War when Israel outlawed the display of the Palestinian flag (Syed). The colors of the fruit correspond to that of the banned Palestinian flag.

This symbol and the protestors who carry it can be interpreted as a beneficial use of strategic essentialism: a term coined by theorist Gayatri Spivak during a 1984 interview with Elizabeth Grosz. Strategic essentialism is the targeted and intentional use of essentialism, the assumption that specific populations innately possess certain qualities. Spivak suggested that

“... strategic essentialism champions essentialism even if it is not fully believed in because it is needed in intellectual conflicts, intellectual arguments, and political battles” (Ritzer & Ryan 193). While the employment of this theory can have negative consequences in the real world, such as reductive and binary thinking, as well as discrimination, Spivak felt, at least until she renounced the use of strategic essentialism in her book *Other Asias*, that strategic essentialism could be useful in resistance (Ritzer & Ryan 193). By using symbols associated with the Palestinian people, protesters demonstrate a constructive use of Spivak’s theory. Furthermore, the broad coalition of activists from Black Lives Matter, Indigenous groups, and the LGBTQ+ community shows how protests based on intersectionality can gain momentum and publicly pressure politicians in the West. Sentiments in the West are changing regarding the American government’s support of Israel. A CBS/YouGov poll conducted in October of 2023, found that nearly half of Americans polled supported supplying Israel with weapons. However, six months later, less than a third supported arming Israel (Moqbel). The role of these massive protests, as well as the ease of accessing previously silenced narratives coming out of Gaza, cannot be overstated. The question is whether the politicians who have leverage over Israel will acknowledge the change in public sentiment.

These worldwide protests and examples of activism also illustrate a positive example of Identity Fusion: a theory explored by Dr. William B. Swann Jr. et al. The authors of the article explain:

Identity fusion ... entails a visceral feeling of oneness with the group. This feeling is associated with unusually porous, highly permeable borders between the personal and social self. These porous borders encourage people to channel their personal agency into



group behavior, raising the possibility that the personal and social self will combine synergistically to motivate pro-group behavior. (441)

The intersectionality of these protests shows that the feeling of connectedness can transcend traditionally assumed boundaries between people who might initially appear to have little in common with the population they are protesting on behalf of. The protesters instead see the “porous boundaries” between marginalized groups and acknowledge that the ties that bind oppressed people exist beyond geographical territory.

Another means of pressure is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS). The BDS movement is a decentralized “...global campaign initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, including trade unions, student groups, women’s organizations, and refugee networks” and they call for “...boycotts, divestment and sanctions to be used to bring pressure on Israel to end its regime of settler-colonialism, military occupation and apartheid against Palestinians” (“Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) Movement”). They hope that these methods will be able to replicate the economic pressure that helped end South African Apartheid. Standing in their way though, is a host of legislation passed to hinder the efforts of the BDS movement. However, their goal is hindered by a host of laws passed by individual US states.

As of 2024, “...38 states have adopted laws, executive orders, or resolutions designed to discourage boycotts against Israel,” according to the Jewish Virtual Library. The ACLU reports that after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, in 2015, the city of Dickson required applicants for hurricane relief funds to certify in writing that they would not participate in a boycott of Israel (“No Hurricane Harvey Aid”). Human Rights Watch reports that dozens of states in the US are “...using anti-boycott laws and executive orders to punish companies that refuse to do business

with illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank...” (“US: States Use Anti-Boycott Laws”). The US Supreme Court long ago ruled that the First Amendment protects the right to boycott under the ruling in *NAACP v. Clairborne Hardware Co.*, which the ACLU states “...held that the First Amendment protected a civil rights boycott to protest segregation and inequality” (“Supreme Court Denies to Review Challenge to Law Restricting Israeli Boycott”). However, the Supreme Court has declined to hear cases challenging anti-BDS laws, leaving the laws in place.

Some might argue that attempting to understand the occupation of Palestine should not be attempted through the lens of multiple theoretical frameworks across several disciplines, including literature, Terry Eagleton explains that literary theory can provide a unique understanding of the political. In the introduction to the second edition of *Literary Theory: An Introduction* he asserts:

There is, in fact, no need to drag politics into literary theory... it has been there from the beginning. I mean by the political no more than the way we organize our social life together, and the power-relations which this involves... The history of modern literary theory is part of the political and ideological history of our epoch... literary theory has been indissociably bound up with political beliefs and ideological values. Indeed literary theory is less an object of intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular perspective in which to view the history of our times. (Eagleton 169-170).

It is impossible to disentangle literature, politics, sociology, anthropology, and international relations as they are all fields inexorably bound up with human understanding of its own history. Just as the dispossession of colonized subjects is multidimensional, the analysis of it should be approached from various perspectives so that a deeper understanding can be reached.

The future use of Necropolitics to understand the occupation of Palestine is rich in potential. Scholars might examine how world powers, such as America and Europe, effectively contract out Necropolitical power to their ally, Israel, and how that attempts to absolve more powerful states on the world stage from blame while allowing them to reap the benefits of such abusive forms of power. Alternatively, the intersection of environmental policies and Necropolitics can be explored. Researchers might look closely at how Israel's seizure of land and resources in the OPT, as well as the burning of Palestinian orchards by settlers, further reduces the conditions of bare life for Palestinians. The potential to explore the intersection of gender and Necropolitics in Palestine also offers a rich field of studies. Writers can explore the different ways gender influences necropolitical experiences and inform strategies of resistance. For those interested in the economic facets of Necropolitics, one could examine how Neoliberalism encourages control and state-sanctioned violence in the OPT. The military-industrial complex in the US and across the world certainly influences Western support of Israel.

Often considered the national poet of Palestine, Mahmoud Darwish, ends his 1964 poem, "Identity Card" with the following two stanzas:

Write down!

I am an Arab

You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors

And the land which I cultivated

Along with my children

And you left nothing for us

Except for these rocks ...

So will the State take them

As it has been said?!

Therefore!

Write down on the top of the first page:

I do not hate people

Nor do I encroach

But if I become hungry

The usurper's flesh will be my food

Beware ...

Beware ...

Of my hunger

And my anger! (24)

The narrator asserts his identity in the first stanza, apparently addressing one of the occupiers by defiantly instructing them to “Write down!/ I am an Arab.” He then acknowledges the weakened position he embodies as one who has been dispossessed of his land, leaving nothing aside from “these rocks.” The reader can feel the narrator’s simultaneous emotions of helplessness and empowerment in these verses. He ends the poem warning of the dangers of cyclical violence present in the colonial occupation of Palestine. The poem asserts that while the speaker does not hate the occupier, Israel must beware of Palestinian hunger and anger for their continued repression and dispossession. The speaker warns twice “Beware.../Beware...” The world would do well to heed his words of warning. Scholars across multiple disciplines, including literary studies, should remember the importance of striving for justice as writer John Steinbeck stated

in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "...a writer who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man has no dedication nor any membership in literature." Justice and man's potential are ideas that span across fields of study.

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