



RESEARCH PAPER

An Insight Into Palestine Politics: Edward Said Vs. Yasser Arafat

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to critically review the ideological perspective by Edward Said concerning the Yasser Arafat leadership in the 1970s 1990s. Yasser Arafat has been known globally as a major player in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, whereas Edward Said despite his international stature most times criticized the policies of Yasser Arafat. Said is seen as the supporter of resistance movement and secular ideals of democracy whose partial contradictory stand offers a multidimensional ideological stance that has to be examined more properly. The qualitative approach utilized and a critical discourse analysis is carried out on the published text of Edward Said, language, tone, and strategic rhetoric of such an analysis on Arafat is considered. The results highlight that Said was inconsistent in his arguments, so that his critiques, although based on the intellectual truths, could have interfered with the Palestinian political unity when it was needed the most.

KEYWORDS Long-standing Conflict, Diplomatic Efforts, Political Choices, Al-Ahram Articles, Hezbollah

Introduction

Following the publication of his seminal works, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said increasingly emphasized Palestine and Yasser Arafat as central thematic concerns, particularly in his journalistic contributions to Weekly *Al-Ahram* from 1998 to 2003. Yasser Arafat was an active socio-political figure in Palestine during the time Said was articulating his views in *Al-Ahram*. The Palestinian people's connection to Yasser Arafat presents a different narrative, as illustrated in Edward Said's articles. Amir Salama explores this in his corpus-based study (2019), stating, "Said is so explicit in his ideological stance on Arafat as a seemingly dysfunctional leader of the Palestinian people" (Salama et al., 2019, p. 431). Said employed disparaging collocations for Arafat, such as "Yasser blind" [to the fact], "servile acquiescence," and "a docile partner." These pejorative terms reflect the views of the then-president of Palestine. Nevertheless, Yasser Arafat was also regarded as a courageous and influential political leader who represented the

Palestinian voice of a people deprived of freedom and basic rights, resonating powerfully. He held strong reservations about Israel and, as a young leader, boldly articulated his views during his speech at the UN Security Council in 1974. His insistence, which bordered on a threatening tone, captured the attention of world leaders and newspapers globally, granting him significant visibility in the international political arena. This strategy proved effective for Yasser Arafat, as he was perceived as a representative of the disillusioned and oppressed on the world stage. The following excerpt from his speech illustrates the passion with which he advocated for his people:

"In one democratic state where Jews and Moslems live in a justice, equality, and fraternity state, he said, all Jews "now living in Palestine" could become citizens without discrimination"... "I have come bearing an olive branch and freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hands" (UNO General Assembly Speech, 1974).

This was Yasser Arafat, who commanded an eloquent presence among world leaders while highlighting the Palestinian issue, notably wearing a gun holster. A spokesperson for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) revealed that he had persuaded Mr. Arafat to remove the pistol before entering the hall for his address, where he passionately advocated for the Palestinian cause like a true statesman. *The New York Times*, in its November 14, 1974, edition, declared Yasser Arafat the PLO leader and a statesman committed to restoring the status of Palestine based on historical evidence. During this occasion, the Palestinian leader received significant applause from world leaders, while the Israeli delegation remained conspicuously absent during his address, underscoring their evasive behavior during critical times. *The New York Times* dedicated front-page coverage to Yasser Arafat's impactful presence. It was Arafat who referred to the Israeli regime as "Zionist Imperialism" while addressing the global audience. Amid the media frenzy, the well-established American newspaper portrayed Yasser Arafat as a volatile yet enigmatic leader. This politically motivated portrayal misrepresented Arafat as a diminished character and a ludicrous political figure.

Literature Review

Edward Said had ignited cultural and material debates for several reasons. He is often regarded as a cultural negotiator who may have misled numerous nations in their quest for cultural purity and identity, which, in turn, has reinforced identity politics at the expense of material concerns. Language, being inherently decentralized, embodies the post-structuralist notion of indeterminacy, challenging the idea of fixed meaning. This perspective underscores the complexities of the textual and semantic frameworks surrounding any given text, and Edward Said's work is no exception. Regarding culture, Terry Eagleton (2000) emphatically defined it as follows: "Culture is the child of a one-parent family, having labored as its sole progenitor" (Eagleton, 2000, p. 231). Edward Said's intellectual ambivalence not only left him feeling dislocated but also uprooted his fundamental concerns regarding identity politics, particularly in relation to Palestine. In *The Guardian*, Noam Chomsky articulates Edward Said's cultural position as follows:

Edward's in an ambivalent position about the media and mainstream culture: his contributions are recognized, yet he's the target of constant vilification. It comes with the turf if you separate yourself from the dominant culture (Jaggi, 1999, para. 4)

Benita Parry (2004) criticized Edward Said for his insufficient attention to the socio-economic structures and material conditions that underpin imperialism. She argued that postcolonial discourse should be approached through a dialectical framework that reveals the material realities of exploitation and resistance, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of imperialism. In particular, Ibn Warraq (2007) points out that one of the major currents in the West that contributed to Said's prominence was the intellectual tradition of guilt. Meanwhile, Aijaz Ahmed, a significant Marxist scholar, highlighted the importance of Said's works, particularly in relation to Palestine.

When the dust of the current literary debates settles, Said's most enduring contribution will be seen as residing neither in *Orientalism*, which is a deeply flawed book,

nor in the literary essays that have followed in its wake, but in his work on the Palestinian issue. (Ahmad, 1999, p. 161).

Considering examples from his contemporaries and other critics, Edward Said's work is being reevaluated to more effectively address the misconceptions surrounding the finality of meanings, particularly in relation to his cultural discourse, Palestine, and Yasser Arafat. Despite Yasser Arafat's prominence as a Palestinian political leader, the treatment he received from Israeli authorities was profoundly dehumanizing. However, Edward Said's ongoing criticism of Arafat was not without its own scrutiny. Viewing Arafat as a representative of the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom, Said dismissed Arafat's earlier consistent opposition to his views. As a symbol of ideological purity, Said remained an influential figure in the United States and globally for many years. Critics have challenged Edward Said on multiple fronts: some accused him of being a disingenuous scholar, others labeled him biased, and some even claimed he deliberately misrepresented data in his writings. I aim to connect these deliberate shifts in his stance and conflicts with his intentions to create space for substantive debate. While this assertion may seem somewhat audacious, the backdrop of various political upheavals and the foundations of Said's claims underscore the opposition to his binary thinking. The objective is not to conduct a psychoanalytic study of his imbalanced ideological stance but to reimagine his mental framework in order to understand the economic dimensions of this complex situation. The timing, the text, and its interpretation align with former colonial and neo-colonial forces collaborating to support a free economy. It is a surprising fact that global powers have invested substantial resources in the war industry for political gains, while investors have funneled their money into helping these nations establish their status as developed countries capable of maintaining superpower status on the global stage. Conversely, states that invested less in health and care industries could have done more to benefit global communities. It is an open secret that both industries create opportunities for their products targeted at marginalized populations.

Major international entities, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, often exacerbate severe economic crises in developing and underdeveloped nations under the pretense of promoting development and disseminating knowledge. Globalization initiatives not only encourage closer social interactions on a global scale but also integrate economies more tightly with industrial sectors, frequently leading to harmful consequences. Academic texts within an interdisciplinary framework institutionalize conflicting epistemologies and obscure the recognition of realities by overshadowing genuine understanding. It is essential to further examine the intentions of colonialism as a mechanism for transforming the cultural identities of societies into material wealth. What insights did the subjugated peoples gain during the colonial era?

This exemplifies the colonizer's agenda, which was implemented across various colonies under the guise of educating the subjugated and perceived inferior populations of the territories they once occupied. However, the project of globalization, bolstered by the ideology of capitalist democracy, is meticulously orchestrated and advanced by diverse teams of agents, including bureaucrats, bankers, politicians, policymakers, institutions, religious leaders, academics, and prominent intellectuals. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank formulate policies for countries deeply entrenched in the cycles of loans and remittances. Their inadequate understanding of monetary affairs, coupled with internal corruption—often a byproduct of capitalist democracy—renders these nations direct victims of such financial institutions. Economic collapse and social unrest are interlinked, each exacerbating the same magnitude.

Material and Methods

This research is qualitative in nature and employs Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction, which challenges the notion of fixed meanings within discourse. The objective of this theoretical framework is to analyze the intellectual and ideological shifts in Edward Said's works, with a specific focus on Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian issue. The concept of *différance* enables socio-political critics to uncover alternative perspectives in complex texts by disrupting the semantic chain. This study examines Edward Said's writings through the lens of deconstruction, aiming to reimagine the textual landscape by identifying temporal shifts, deferred meanings, internal anxieties, and textual disunity.

Results and Discussion

In an interview that Edward Said conducted with Cindi Katz and Neil Smith on September 8, 2000, in New York, his tense demeanor powerfully conveyed his sense of positional defeat. He seemed to grasp the fragility of a straightforward stance on liberation, which, while somewhat ambiguous, was nonetheless fervent in its call for coexistence. However, he consistently criticized his followers in Palestine, particularly Muslims. Edward Said articulated his disillusionment with his position on Palestine in an interview he gave to Cindi Katz and Neil Smith, published in "Environment and Planning D: Society and Space" in 2003:

"Liberation is a word that you do not hear anymore. Go back to the early part of this year in Lebanon. This was the only example in our recent history where territory was liberated from the Israelis, namely in South Lebanon, thanks to Hezbollah." (Said, 2003, p. 640)

This perspective is particularly intriguing because Edward Said acknowledged the armed struggle of Hezbollah. Associating the armed struggle of a militant group with a narrative of liberation offers insight into its conceptual framework and the envisioned solutions to conflicts within the region's discursive politics. Hezbollah successfully defeated the Israeli Army, forcing them to retreat from southern Lebanon, a territory that Israel occupied for 18 years before relinquishing it in May 2000. Yasser Arafat himself expressed a degree of sympathy for Hezbollah and met with its armed representatives in 2002, despite the media labeling the group as a terrorist organization. Several factors must be disentangled from misconceptions, one of which is Edward Said's role as a genuine advocate for Palestinians, who have been deprived of fundamental human and native rights. If Yasser Arafat and the leaders of Hezbollah had aligned on a common agenda, what prompted Edward Said to criticize Arafat, who was widely regarded as the voice of Palestine and the Arab world? This shift aligns with the principles of a free market, as economic prosperity is often hindered by chaos and hostility. Consequently, it undermines the conflicting rhetoric in the region, complicating efforts to establish business relations when prejudices manifest in their most extreme forms within a global economy that operates autonomously to resolve issues.

Mentioning Hezbollah in a 2000 interview was highly significant. Edward Said identified a robust armed resistance as a strategic and discursive approach to achieving independence. *34 Days*, authored by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff and published by Palgrave in 2008, analyzes the Lebanon War, igniting a discourse on Israel, Hezbollah, and the broader conflict in Lebanon. Over the decades, tensions between Israel and Lebanon have intensified, exacerbated by Israeli settlements and their perceived asymmetrical strategic alliances with global literary and academic circles. This dynamic has transformed genuine conflicts into contentious controversies. Yasser Arafat has often been portrayed as bearing the burden of frequent political failures. I found Edward Said's cursory remarks

about Yasser Arafat and the contentious criticisms from the anti-Arafat camp regarding the president of the Palestinian state to be remarkably similar.

In 2003, Barry Rubin, an American-born Israeli writer with a profound interest in Middle Eastern and Arab affairs, co-authored a book with his wife, Judith Colp Rubin. The title of the book is *Yasser Arafat: A Political Biography*. Rubin also served as the editor of the internationally recognized "Middle East Review of International Affairs". In 2004, a review of Rubin's book was published in the strategically significant "US Naval War College Journal", also titled "*Yasser Arafat: A Political Biography*". The reviewer, C.J. Krisinger, asserts that:

"The Palestinian people would have been better off as citizens of Israel. That is a conclusion one can reach after digesting the political biography of Yasser Arafat by the veteran Middle Eastern writer-reporter team of Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin." (Krisinger & Rubin, 2003, p. 188)

The review also highlights several negative personality traits of Arafat, describing him as "he is petty, arrogant, megalomaniacal, and disingenuous". Such comments, in my view, represent moral policing rather than political critique, employing a manipulative strategy rooted in hate discourse. Some individuals maintain an unyieldingly harsh stance, perpetuating their biased judgments; however, others serve as an appraisal of a lens through which to assess a personality's disengagement. Intellectuals like Edward Said reject the missionary narratives that elevate and construct political figures by theoretically emphasizing their repeated failures and human flaws. In his *Al-Ahram* article "Paying the Price for Personal Politics", Yasser Arafat is portrayed as "a man victimized by his vulnerability and selfishness, the embodiment of his people's surrender and humiliating defeat" (Said, 1999, p. III).

Such broad categorizations by intellectuals suggest an underlying agenda that is systematically propagated through discourse. Edward Said frequently characterized Yasser Arafat as exhibiting megalomaniacal tendencies, a rhetorical stance that indicates the construction of a binary opposition. In comparative analyses of leadership within the Arab world, Israeli governance, and Western political structures—including American counterparts—Arafat emerges as a figure who has left a significant political legacy. However, the intellectual deconstruction of Arafat by pro-Israeli scholars has systematically undermined his global stature and diminished his political charisma. Yaseen, et. al., (2023). The critique that Said advances in *Culture and Imperialism* regarding the discursive subjugation of victims—wherein they are strategically represented as politically inferior in mainstream media to consolidate hegemonic power—finds a parallel in the case of Yasser Arafat, whose portrayal was similarly subjected to ideological marginalization.

However, his image was overshadowed and distorted by various media outlets. Edward Said's portrayal of him placed him in a different category of leadership. In several interviews given to mainstream media, Said characterized Yasser Arafat as a man of weak will, someone with a subservient approach, and as the individual who undermined the Palestinian cause, which encompasses Palestinian self-determination and liberation. Interestingly, in one interview, while advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian issue, he proposed dialogue as the method for both nations. He explicitly stated: "I have always believed that the only resolution is dialogue, not armed struggle."



Figure 1: Edward Said on Yasser Arafat

This statement forcefully represents Edward Said's perspective on armed struggle. Although this interview was conducted in 1994, in his subsequent media appearances and articles, he has consistently advocated for the Palestinian leadership's armed struggle. This evolution in his stance was not an anomaly but rather a gradual shift aimed at benefiting the arms industry and portraying Israel as a dominant, controlling force in the region. In another interview, Said positioned himself as a threatening figure to the Israeli delegate, who opted to stay in a separate building from where Said was located. The delegate in question was Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. During a television program, when the host asked Edward Said why you do not want to stay with the Israeli ambassador, Said responded that he did not have any issue staying with the Israeli ambassador. It was the Israeli ambassador who did not want to stay with the Israeli ambassador. Said clarified that he had no issue with sharing space. Instead, it was the Israeli ambassador who preferred to avoid him, believing that Said would the building. Said further revealed that during the program, the moderator informed the audience that Edward Said and the Israeli ambassador were unwilling to speak to one another. Said corrected the moderator, asserting that he had no problem engaging in conversation with Netanyahu. Subsequently, the moderator asked Benjamin Netanyahu why he would not speak to Professor Said, to which Netanyahu responded that Said wanted to kill him. Reason: The revisions enhance clarity, improve vocabulary, and correct grammatical errors while maintaining the original meaning of the text.



Figure 2. When Edward Said "Met" Benjamin Netanyahu

This discourse portrays Edward Said as a perceived existential threat to Israel. It exemplifies a prominent capitalist strategy of constructing individuals as figures potentially threatening to others, thereby enabling financiers to capitalize on such perceptions for economic gain. Books of this nature are often considered controversial and sell rapidly, a trend that also applies to political celebrities. I give a slightly horrendous example here about Colonel Gaddafi, who was killed by the rebel fighters of the National Transitional Council during the Battle of Sirte on October 20, 2011. When the rebels attacked him, he was severely injured, and before he died, he was sodomized with a bayonet. His last words were, "What did I do?" The purpose of mentioning this incident is to enable the readers to read between the lines. The man who had ruled his land from 1961 to 2011, how cruelly and brutally his life ended. After his death, the movie *The Dictator*,

depicting Colonel Gaddafi, was made. It was a political satire on the Gaddafi regime. The way Colonel Gaddafi was projected in the movie punctures the West's anti-racism ideology; it was a furiously racist movie that portrayed Gaddafi's character - the silliest of all amongst his type of people. This was not an A-rated movie, but rather a low-budgeted, second-rate movie with a prime objective to make fun of a deposed political character and to present him as an ill-fated person for the Libyan people. However, it had other implied intents also. Libya, after Gaddafi, was undergoing the great violence of history; there was a rise in uncertainty, exploitation, corruption, zero economic sovereignty, tribal clashes, and many others. The rebels were said to be supported by the USA and European Union, and the project behind the end of the Gaddafi era was providing space for Capitalist Democracy. The contemporary model of capitalism that has been offered is known as capitalist democracy, which is now being implemented with a religious spirit. However, the people who project and follow this ideology believe that this act would help the countries turn into welfare states. As far as Edward Said is concerned, his untenable positions are trivial for many reasons. I reckon his waffling and elastic exploration of self-conceited absurdity is confusing, misleading, and a tool for helping democratic capitalism in the Far East in general and in the Arab world in particular. He focuses on democracy in one of his articles in *Al-Ahram* entitled "A Desolation, and they Call it Peace" in these words:

No, our battle is for democracy and equal rights, for a secular commonwealth or state in which all the members are equal citizens, in which the concept underlying our goal is a secular notion of citizenship and belonging, not some mythological essence or an idea that derives its authority from the remote past, whether that past is Christian, Jewish or Muslim. (Said, 1998, p iii)

Here, we observe that the narratives of self-determination and liberation have been explicitly revitalized alongside the project of democracy. This stance advocates for a secular commonwealth state, devoid of pride in connection with a 'remote' past and religion. This is an intriguing development, as this discourse represents an illegitimate claim regarding the Palestinian struggle for an independent Muslim state, which has been central to their political ideology. Simultaneously, Edward Said proposed this solution to the Israeli people, who are often perceived as a staunchly religious state since its forced inception.

Engaged in the superficial pleasures of dreaming about a bright future, reminiscing about a glorious past, and existing in a state of social identity that is nowhere, individuals find themselves in positional limbos that breed uncertainty. As time progresses, the new generation tends to forget the past, leading to a narrative that becomes eclipsed, obscuring their awareness of demographic changes in the region and resulting in the disavowal of foundational ideologies. Edward Said's historical perspective on Palestine has also been contested by Israeli intellectuals, who deemed his influential ideas as biased, unjust, distorted, and politically inappropriate regarding Israel. Generally, society values intellectuals for their dissenting voices; the more individuals discuss someone's boldness in speech and writing, the more marginalized people are likely to gravitate toward that intellectual's magnetic influence, as evidenced in Edward Said's case. Said demonstrated a keen awareness of contemporary propaganda mechanisms, as articulated in *Al Ahram*, where he exposed Israeli strategies aimed at reshaping narratives to align with their political objectives. Notably, he criticized the Israeli media for depicting Yasser Arafat in a dehumanizing manner, underscoring the significant impact this portrayal had on political perceptions. Observing such a paradigm shift in his approach toward Yasser Arafat is quite perplexing, especially considering his history of dehumanizing Yasser Arafat on numerous occasions, both in spoken and written forms. In his article "Israel, Iraq, and the United States," published in *Al-Ahram* on October 10, 2002, he states, "Sharon is now Israel's prime

minister, his armies and propaganda machine once again surrounding and dehumanizing Arafat and the Palestinians as 'terrorists'" (Said, 2002, p. 3).

Globally renowned economist and well-versed in mathematical economic affairs, Joseph E. Stiglitz, dissects the concept of globalization, broken promises, harsh economic policies, and the hidden agenda of these global economic institutions that benefit from the crises and hijack the policies. The author of the book, who is a Professor of Economics at Columbia University, J. E. Stiglitz, has been the chief economist of the World Bank and has been the chairperson of the US President's Council of Economic Advisors. He also received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2001. Presenting all this information is to establish his status as a person who is well familiar with politics and internal policies, so his firsthand experience could be taken as authentic and credible. He writes in the preface of his book *Globalization and Its Contents* (2002) about the process of policymaking and other affairs:

The IMF prescribed outmoded, inappropriate. If "standard" solutions, without considering the effects they would have on the people in the countries told to follow these policies. Rarely did I see forecasts about what the policies would do to poverty. Rarely did I see thoughtful discussions and analyses of the consequences of alternative policies. There was a single Palestinian prescription. Alternative opinions were not sought. Open, a frank discussion was discouraged-there was no room for it. Ideology, guided policy prescription, and countries were expected to follow the IMF guidelines without debate (Stiglitz, 2002, p. xiii).

The rigid attitudes and immense pressure exerted by the leaders of these financial institutions during internal discussions on policy design reflect a taskmaster mentality. Joseph E. Stiglitz, in his book, highlights the duality of these organizations and reveals the hidden agendas of certain powers that influence them. In my view, what cannot be achieved from the cockpit of a tank or a fighter jet can often be accomplished from the seats of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). No instrument has the potential to devastate humanity as profoundly as money. These narratives are reinforced by the principles of economic power and subsequently imposed on the populace for financial gain.

Edward Said referenced Sara Roy's study, "The Palestinian Economy and the Oslo Process: Decline and Fragmentation", published by the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies. Sara Roy is a senior research scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at

Harvard University and has authored several significant works on the Palestine-Israel conflict. In the second decade of the 21st century, various ideological perspectives shifted, particularly in the post-9/11 context, leading to deliberate changes in the meanings of certain concepts.

Some people view these changes as a shift in political perspective, signaling the end of bipolarism. The conclusion of the Afghan War and China's emerging economy have also offered us new insights into contemporary realities. Sara Roy was referenced to illustrate Yasser Arafat's inadequate strategic, economic, and political capabilities, which have contributed to the significant economic challenges faced by the Palestinian people. However, there is a need for further exploration of this topic. To analyze the writings of Sara Roy, it is essential to clarify why Edward Said specifically referenced her work in his articles "Occupation is the Atrocity," "An Incitement to Revolt," and "Archaeology of the Roadmap." Sara Roy articulates ideas that closely align with those expressed by Edward Said in his journalistic pieces and other writings concerning the Palestinian issue:

Even if a Palestinian state was declared in May 1999, the fifth anniversary of the Cairo Agreement, it would be very different from the one envisioned by Palestinians at the time of the *Oslo Accord* in September 1993. It will be a weak and increasingly impoverished state, almost dependent on Israel and other external forces for its survival. The "peace process," which was supposed to end the conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel and allow the Palestinians greater independence of action, has done quite the opposite, and tensions between the worst antagonists remain. (Roy, 1999, p. 75)

Edward Said has also contested the *Oslo Accords* and overshadowed the rising voice of Palestine for reasons that remain unclear. Numerous examples cited above support the assertion that Edward Said was portrayed as a pro-Palestinian scholar. However, his overarching advocacy for Palestine inadvertently strengthened democratic capital and enabled Israel to solidify its regional foothold. Sara echoes this ideology in her writings, maintaining a focus on economic factors. The primary requirement for achieving better economic conditions was the capital that established people as nations first; subsequently, these nations are further categorized into various groups representing different ideologies, ethnic backgrounds, geographical disparities, socio-cultural differences, and geopolitical perspectives. Such segmentation aids capitalism in sustaining its market and increasing the number of adherents to its economic ideology. Reid Weiner was an international human rights lawyer and a member of the Israel and New York Bar Associations who wrote a review essay in the Cornell International Law Journal (1996) entitled "Peace and Its Discontents: Israeli and Palestinian Intellectuals Who Reject the Current Peace Process." It was a review essay of Edward Said's book *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (1995). Justus E. Weiner forcefully introduces the title of Said's book, The title of Edward Said's book, *Peace, and its Discontents*, as he would readily acknowledge, in error, that no "peace" exists between Israel and the Palestinians" (Weiner, 1996. Peace and Its Discounts: Israeli and Palestinian Intellectuals Who Reject the Current Peace Process. Cornell Int'l LJ, 29, 501).

Wiener positions Edward Said as an uncompromising critic of Yasser Arafat, aligning his perspectives with those of Israeli detractors who opposed the Israel-Palestine peace process. While Said's textual engagements ostensibly construct his identity as an authoritative representative of the Palestinian cause, a deeper critical examination reveals an inherent discursive ambivalence that underscores his ideological conflicts. This argument is substantiated by an excerpt from Said's writings, in which he vehemently critiques Israeli media for its systematic demonization and dehumanization of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian people, particularly through their portrayal as terrorists—a rhetorical strategy aimed at legitimizing their marginalization. Wiener further discusses Edward Said's critical stance towards Yasser Arafat, noting, "Edward Said castigates Arafat for selling out the interests of the Palestinian people" (Wiener, 1999).

Yasser Arafat is believed to acknowledge the rights of Palestinians residing only in the Palestinian territory. This agreement does not grant the right of return to the Palestinian population. Israelis, as residents of a disputed territory, are often portrayed as advocates for peace talks, while Edward Said is regarded as a champion for the Palestinians. However, Yitzhak Rabin, the former general and Israeli Prime Minister, was assassinated in 1995 after addressing a large crowd in Tel Aviv.

The primary theme of Rabin's address was the pursuit of peace with his neighboring nation, Palestine. In 1995, a twenty-five-year-old man named Yigal Amir, who was a law student at the time and harbored deep resentment towards Rabin's peacemaking policies, armed with nationalism and a firearm, fired two bullets at the Prime Minister, resulting in his death. Amir also injured several bodyguards during the attack and is

currently serving his sentence in prison. This act dramatically altered the political landscape of the region, representing a significant setback for both nations. It was widely believed that the peace talks were merely a strategy to provide Israel with the opportunity to bolster its security measures. Amir targeted another figure under the guise of legitimacy—his home in the United States. As Amir Hussain Radjy asserts:

The root of the problem was the U.S. government—the “big white father,” as Said caustically called it—never treated the Palestinians as equals to the Israelis; this is not merely a moral question but an inadequacy of U.S. diplomacy that foreclosed any agreement. The Declaration of Principles—the document known as the *Oslo Accords*—does not make a single reference to a Palestinian state, self-determination, or sovereignty but provides for a kind of “municipal self-rule” (as Said termed it) without committing to ending the Israeli occupation of the West Bank or Gaza. (Radjy, 2021, p. 19)

I have analyzed Said's political dynamics in his newspaper contributions as carriers of entailing and compromising interventions in Palestinian affairs. He seeks to challenge the traditional narratives of armed struggle, engaging readers in a critical examination of the failures and complexities surrounding their quest for a separate homeland. Said attempts to persuade Palestinians that the true power behind the broader political landscape in the Middle East is the United States, referring to the U.S. government as the white father. By using the term, he aims to educate people about the historical context of colonization, as most colonizers throughout history have been white individuals. However, this framing may divert attention from the actual perpetrators, namely the Israelis. There is no doubt that the suspension of peace talks, the calculated undermining of political credibility in the region, the deliberate promotion of propaganda, and the provision of aid to combat resistance have been orchestrated by forces such as the USA and UK; however, the pivotal role regarding the unrest and injustice, radical power, and imperial ambitions lies with Israel.

Discussion

I assert that Edward Said's systematic critiques of Yasser Arafat subtly influenced the perceptions of those around him. His personal biases overshadowed Arafat, undermining the strong connection he had with the Palestinian people, who believed in him.

Said's actions disrupted the peace process by transforming Arafat's initiatives into unproductive and defensive measures. Additionally, Said exacerbated conflicting narratives by distorting Arafat's claims. As a representative of Palestine, Said redirected the attention of global intellectuals and those connected to him toward trivial issues, creating a dense fog between reality and fiction. This diversion allowed Israel, a capitalist democracy, and the United States to thrive in numerous ways. Edward Said's prominent intellectual and literary presence as an anti-imperialist inadvertently served the interests of capitalist democracy in the Middle East by altering the ideological foundations of the oppressed. As we enter the 21st century, the struggle of the Palestinians remains a complex and unresolved global conflict. In contrast, the geopolitical and socioeconomic conditions in Israel are significantly more favorable than those in Palestine. Edward Said, who professed to be a proponent of peace, incited a populace that was already engaged in struggle.

In an armed struggle against Israel, the Palestinians find themselves at a disadvantage in this ongoing conflict. Despite this, he commended them as courageous fighters. In an excerpt from Edward Said's article “Defiance, Dignity, and the Rule of

Dogma," it is stated: "Palestinians, armed with a few rifles and stones, are bravely defying Israel's military. The leadership is still acting like a supplicant in trying to re-open negotiations with Israel and the US" (Said, 2001, p. 3). During these chaotic times of political uncertainty and profound confusion, when the victims are expending their energies and shedding their blood for a cause whose outcome remains uncertain, Said's perspective on the armed struggle seeks to validate such movements. In other words, he posits that the path to resolution in these troubled regions lies in armed resistance. However, he has also indicated on various platforms that the resolution to conflicts ultimately resides in peace negotiations. He aimed to critique the Palestinian leadership that engaged in peace talks with the international community, which was broadly supported by the trio of superpowers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intricate relationship between Edward Said's intellectual stance and Yasser Arafat's leadership reflects a complex dynamic rooted in the broader struggles of the Palestinian cause. Despite Arafat's strong association with Palestinian politics and the accusations leveled against the Palestinian leadership, the conflicts inherent in his position can be viewed as a form of self-deception. Arafat's historic 1974 address to the United Nations underscored his commitment to the liberation of Palestine, symbolized by his iconic metaphor of carrying both an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. However, Said's writings in *Al-Ahram* from 1998 to 2003 reveal a more critical assessment of Arafat's leadership. Said repeatedly portrayed Arafat as a leader compromised by vulnerability, self-interest, and perceived submission to external pressures, employing phrases such as "Yasser blind" and "a docile partner" to express his disapproval of Arafat's approach. Despite advocating for dialogue over armed struggle in his 1999 article "Paying the Price for Personal Politics," Said's fluctuating perspectives on the means to achieve Palestinian liberation—evidenced by his admiration for Hezbollah's resistance—suggest ideological tensions in his critique of Arafat. These tensions are further illustrated in Said's later writings, where he lamented Arafat's victimization by Israeli propaganda and military aggression, as described in "Israel, Iraq, and the United States" (2002). Said's perspective on the Palestinian struggle, articulated in "A Desolation and They Call it Peace," underscores his vision for a democratic resolution untethered from religious or historical ideologies, a stance that appears at odds with Arafat's alignment with armed resistance groups like Hezbollah. This ideological divergence, coupled with Said's evolving critique of armed struggle, highlights the nuanced and often contradictory nature of his views on Arafat and the Palestinian movement. Ultimately, Said's writings reveal a duality: on one hand, he emerges as a voice of Palestinian advocacy, challenging the dehumanization of their cause; on the other hand, his sharp critiques of Arafat's leadership reflect a broader intellectual and personal conflict with the methods and compromises inherent in political leadership. This duality captures the broader complexities of Palestinian resistance, leadership, and the pursuit of liberation amidst a deeply fraught geopolitical landscape.

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