



**Arab American University**  
**Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**The Salient Visual Mechanisms in 'Palestinian Memes' Content:  
A Cultural and Visual Analysis**

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**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master's degree in Digital Media  
March /2025**

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## Thesis Approval

### The Salient Visual Mechanisms in 'Palestinian Memes' Content: A Cultural and Visual Analysis

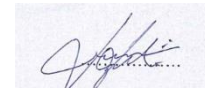
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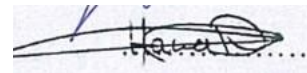
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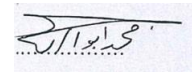
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## Declaration

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The Salient Visual Mechanisms in 'Palestinian Memes' Content I acknowledge that the content of this thesis is the result of my own work, except where referenced. Furthermore, I declare that this thesis, in whole or in part, has not been submitted by others for any degree or academic title at any other educational or research institution.

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Date : 15/7/2025

## **Dedication**

To all the frightened voices that cried out for help and suddenly fell silent...

To the bodies of our little ones that have been scarred...

To the empty arms of mothers...

To every dream of yours that has gone unfulfilled...

## **Acknowledgment**

This thesis would not have come to completion without the unwavering support of those who stood by me throughout the journey.

To my parents thank you for reminding me of my dreams when I had forgotten them, and for being the mirror that reflected my true self in times of doubt.

To my husband your endless support, patience, and understanding meant the world. Thank you for being my strength and light when I needed them most.

To my children thank you for being my heartbeat and motivation, even when I was away from your everyday moments.

To my supervisor, Dr. Hussein Al-Ahmad thank you for your guidance and for the words that stayed with me:

"Be strong like a root, not fragile like a tender plant."

To all of you this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

## **Abstract**

This study, titled "Prominent Visual Mechanisms in Palestinian Meme Content: A Cultural and Visual Analysis," examines satirical Palestinian memes as a form of digital resistance within the context of life under occupation. It aims to analyze the visual and linguistic symbols embedded in memes published by the Palestinian Memes Instagram page, uncovering their implicit messages and their connection to Palestinian political and cultural structures.

Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on semiotic tools, the study investigates a purposive sample of highly engaged posts during the Israeli assault on Gaza in October 2023. The findings highlight the effectiveness of memes in circumventing digital censorship and producing a resistant visual discourse characterized by satire and symbolic depth.

The study recommends incorporating meme analysis into digital media curricula and developing ethical guidelines to govern their production and circulation, ensuring respect for victims' dignity while enhancing the educational and resistant potential of such content.

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## **Chapter One**

## INTRODUCTION:

It is often said, "There is no laughter in paradise," because humor stems from pain, and we inhabit a weighty world alleviated by satire. When the Swiss psychologist Kiesler coined the term "bisociation" in 1964, he aimed to signify creative thinking that establishes connections—or creates links—between two conflicting or contradictory .

frames of reference yet can be concurrently consistent. This concept highlights how uncontrolled emotions find relief through laughter. Moreover, the aggression once beneficial to primitive humans in facing enemies, whether human or animal, has become an outlet for surplus energy in modern societies. Consequently, laughter has become a substitute for aggression, serving as a positive release for negative emotions.

Amidst this contradiction between pain and laughter emerged what is termed "*the meme*." English scientist Richard Dawkins did not contemplate scenes from plays of Adel Imam or Abla Kamel, or football players, when he coined the term "meme" for the first time in his book "*The Selfish Gene*," published in 1976. Dawkins employed the word "meme" to describe behavior that spreads from one person to another within a culture. This concept reflects how memes act as vessels transmitting cultural concepts capable of mutation and dissemination within society, similar to viruses. The spread of memes is even described using the term "viral." Memes, as we know them today, have fulfilled this social role and gained recognition after decades of Dawkins' book circulation.

"Memes" rely on social media networks, which have transferred media to unprecedented horizons. These platforms have revolutionized communication by providing users

opportunities to influence and traverse borders without the restrictions of traditional media controls. The emergence of social media channels has created avenues for direct broadcasting, altering the essence of established communication theories. This shift has decentralized media production, broadening its scope and fostering levels of interactivity and impact that communication experts could not have anticipated (Ibrahim, 2015).

Moreover, "memes" constitute a distinct pattern from traditional expressive methods, demonstrating a unique ability to influence and spread rapidly. For instance, followers of John Oliver, the host of the comedy program "*Last Week Tonight*," once disrupted the FCC website when John, on air, requested his audience to visit it! (Hoffman, 2015).

In this study, the researcher focuses on analyzing memes' content by examining the visual mechanisms used in their production and exploring the implicit meanings and ideas they convey. These memes often consist of simple, low-quality images; however, their significance lies in their message, satirical imitation, manipulation of images, intertextuality, embodiment, exaggeration, irony, and comparison. Their relatability to audiences stems from their departure from rigidity and seriousness. Instead, memes emphasize active elements such as body postures, movements, visual and verbal symbols, colors, and persuasive techniques, particularly verbal manipulation. Memes rely on symbols, rules, and meanings deeply rooted in prevailing social and intellectual representations.

**RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE:**

This research holds significance in uncovering the visual mechanisms employed in constructing Palestinian memes, which serve as a medium to express the needs, aspirations, and dreams of Palestinians by transforming pain into meaningful satire. The study

addresses a significant gap in academic literature by focusing on how memes evolve into distinct forms of digital expression, highlighting Palestinian issues on social media.

Palestinians are traditionally known for their serious approach to matters of concern. However, the rise of satire through memes, whether addressing political, economic, or social interests, represents a novel trend that warrants academic exploration. This study contributes new insights into social media studies, particularly regarding the intersection of humor and sociopolitical engagement in the Palestinian context. It fills a critical void in analyzing satirical social media content, which remains underexplored by specialists, researchers, and critics.

This research provides a base from which to study the memes, humorous, and satirical content that floods Palestinian social media. It also will analyze how memes are structured, their representations, embedded dimensions, and their modalities of representation. Consequently, the study yields very important insights into the features of visual imagery and mechanisms through which memes are created in a way that allows a profound investigation of how humor represents critical and sensitive issues. The research also shows the power of social media to transform the way new forms of content are created and disseminated. Unlike traditional media, social media fosters rapid influence and wide reach, meeting public demand for dynamic communication tools. Memes are a good example of this change, offering a creative outlet that caters to the public's desire for both humor and socio-political commentary.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

Ultimately, the study aims to:

1. analyze the visuals and modes of representation on the "Palestinian Memes" page in constructing their content, and how these elements engage the audience
2. examine the explicit and implicit meanings hidden in memes and to uncover the complex messages and ideas that they transmit.
3. assess how memes reflect the cultural, societal, and political life in Palestine and how they are connected with the particular conditions of Palestinian life.
4. analyze the most common themes and ideas expressed in memes and their relevance to social issues.
5. examine the structure, forms, and linguistic features utilized in memes, we need to understand how these stylistic choices shape meaning.

Through this comprehensive analysis, the study seeks to how memes play a role in shaping digital expression in Palestine

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What visual representations are employed by the "Palestinian Meme" page in creating meme content, and how do these representations engage audiences?
2. What are the primary meanings and implications of visual elements—such as shapes, colors, and lines—used in the meme creation process?

3. How is language integrated into meme creation, and what are the cultural and contextual significances of these linguistic messages?
4. To what extent do memes reflect the Palestinian cultural, social, and political context, and how do they convey these themes?
5. What central themes and ideas are represented in the memes, and how do they position themselves as digital cultural products?

## **CHAPTER 2**

## CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the foundational structure of the research and is divided into three key sections. The first section, 'Key Concepts and Definitions,' introduces and explains the critical terms forming the basis of this study, including memes, satire, and digital culture. The second section examines the theoretical framework underlying the study, discussing the cultural and historical evolution of memes and their formation as digital artifacts. The final section explores the theoretical foundation in detail, focusing on Liquid Modernity and Semiotic Theory. Together, these components create a coherent framework for understanding the visual processes and cultural relevance of Palestinian memes.

### KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:

#### MEMES:

The English scientist Richard Dawkins coined the term "meme" to describe behavior or ideas that transfer from one person to another within a culture. Dawkins' conceptualization emphasizes memes as vessels for transmitting cultural concepts capable of reproduction and dissemination, much like viruses (Al-Hamam, 2018).

Internet memes, often abbreviated as memes, can be understood as visual representations appearing in various formats, such as static images, animated GIFs, or video clips. Each format may stand alone or be accompanied by text, creating a singular message or layered meanings (Ayesha, 2022).

Memes are a modern communicative phenomenon characterized by their decentralized nature and participatory creation. The sender and receiver roles are often interchangeable, as receivers can modify memes and then resend them. Additionally, memes are defined

by their ease of production and rapid dissemination in the online space. However, they also reflect underlying social structures and cultural perceptions, representing a natural selection process within collective consciousness. This ability to reinforce and reproduce societal values and ideas, even outside traditional ethical norms, positions memes as vital cultural artifacts (Al-Hammam, 2018).

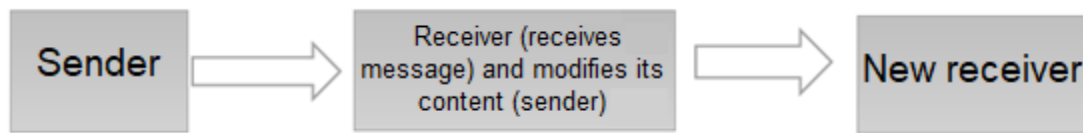


Chart 1: The Dynamic Cycle of Meme Transmission and Modification

The "Palestinian Memes" page is an Instagram platform with approximately 19,000 followers, dedicated to sharing memes. This page was founded in 2012 by Palestinian youths Mohammad Maher and Qassam Badeir. Initially, it shared images sourced from websites such as Reddit, but as its popularity grew, it began producing original content in Arabic and English. Some of its notable memes were created during the recent Israeli aggression on Gaza, reflecting its political and cultural engagement.

Examples of some memes that were posted on the page during the recent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip include the following:



Picture No. 1



Picture No. 2



Picture No. 3



Picture No. 4

#### SATIRE:

Satire is a method of expression where words are used to flip the intended meaning, often to critique or mock. Its dual purpose is to critique and entertain through humor (Gharbawi, 2015). Satire often portrays situations, individuals, or entities humorously by distorting or exaggerating flaws, without reaching defamation. This indirect, creative approach engages audiences while avoiding direct confrontation.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA:

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based applications built on web technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange content (Saleem, 2019). These platforms foster interactive communication, transforming traditional audience roles and redefining engagement.

#### Instagram:

Instagram is a social media application, blending the terms "instant" and "telegram," reflecting its roots in instant image sharing. Founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010, it was initially designed for photography enthusiasts. Today, Instagram supports multimedia content, direct messaging, and interactive tools, making it a dominant space for visual communication (Mubarak, 2022).

#### Cultural Semiotics:

Cultural semiotics explores how signs, symbols, and visual cues are interpreted within a specific cultural context. In the context of memes, this involves decoding how cultural meanings are encoded and subsequently understood by audiences. Barthes (1972) highlights that cultural artifacts, including memes, operate within shared sign systems where meaning is not static but negotiated through societal norms and histories. Palestinian memes, for instance, draw from symbols rooted in resistance, creating layered meanings unique to their cultural milieu.

#### Visual Rhetoric:

Visual rhetoric refers to the strategic use of images, symbols, and design elements to persuade or influence audience perceptions. Foss (2005) underscores the role of visual artifacts in shaping arguments and establishing connections with viewers. In memes, elements such as color, composition, and typography are leveraged to evoke humor,

critique, or empathy, often targeting sociopolitical issues. Palestinian memes, for example, employ juxtaposition and intertextuality to simultaneously critique and engage with cultural narratives.

#### Digital Culture:

Digital culture refers to the practices, beliefs, and forms of communication developed by online environments. Memes epitomize the interactivity, remixability, and democratized participation of digital culture. In this respect, Jenkins (2006) writes about the way in which participatory culture transforms the older media logic, situating memes as symptoms and catalysts of interaction in digital spaces. Local digital culture is not solely a medium of expression but even a space for identity assertion and collective action.

Political Satire: Political satire is a way of critiquing society and politics through humor and irony. Memes have become a way of digital political satire that simplifies complex issues while encouraging critical thinking and dissent. Gray, Jones, and Thompson (2009) discuss how satire can be considered entertainment, but also a means of resistance. Palestinian memes continue in this vein, addressing themes of oppression, identity, and survival, often using humor to make sharp comments about power.

#### Liquid Modernity:

Coined by Bauman (2000), the concept describes the everchanging features in modern societies. Memes make one key example of such liquidity, as they possess fluid and adaptive properties in and of themselves. Being digital in nature, they represent the fluid dynamics in politics and culture and contain the instability and dynamism associated with the concept of modernity. In such a system, Palestinian memes rapidly adapt themselves in

accordance with fluid sociopolitical situations and represent relevant and transient expressions of culture.

#### Public Sphere:

Formulated by Habermas (1989), the concept refers to the spaces where individuals engage in critical discussions. In our digital era, memes contribute to the "virtual public sphere," enabling voiceless to participate in public discourse. Papacharissi (2010) also expands on the idea and explores the interrelationship of digital media and public engagement. He emphasizes the way memes facilitate both formal/ structured and informal dialogues. Since Palestinian memes are operating within the same sphere to publicize narratives of resistance and raise awareness.

#### Intertextuality:

This is how certain texts (media reference), borrow assigned elements from other sources, then remix them to create structured meanings. For Kristeva (1980) no text exists in isolation; it is always a mix of previous texts. In the Memes context, media specialists combine references of varied origins (cultural, social, or political) in order to create humor/critique. An example is when Palestinian memes combine traditional symbols into contemporary digital formats, to offer precise critiques of sociopolitical figures or realities.

#### Mediatization:

As a concept and process, mediatization discusses how media intervene and shape the performance of institutions in the social relations. Hjarvard (2013) argues how this is not only a communicational role, but rather how cultural and political narratives are mediated

through digital platforms. As for ‘memes’, they play a crucial role in this transformation and reshapes how political resistance and cultural identities are expressed and understood.

#### Memetic Propagation:

Memetic propagation refers to the way memes goes viral across digital networks. Shifman (2014) argues how elements of humor, relatability, and the potential for participation, are essential to a meme's success. The wide *shareability* of memes and their capacity to influence wide segments of audience are crucial. Palestinian memes rely on such a viral nature to bypass geographical borders, promote public solidarity, and highlight both cultural and political trends.

#### Cultural Resistance:

The term frames memes as a form of dissent and a way to maintain identity in oppressive circumstances. Scott (1990) emphasizes the role that cultural forms play in subverting dominant narratives; they may be discreet, yet their effects are powerful. In this sense, Palestinian memes represent this resistance through humor and symbolism, as to challenge power dynamics and preserve cultural memory, proving how within repressive situations, the voices of resistance stay vibrant.

#### Digital Satire:

Digital satire fuses traditional humor with the immediacy and participatory nature of digital tools. Ott (2017) says that digital satire represents a new form of critique that actively engages audiences through its interactive and accessible nature. Memes, as digital satire, can respond to political and cultural events in real time and are thus particularly effective at galvanizing public discourse. In the Palestinian context, digital satire not only entertains but also serves as a powerful vehicle for advocacy and resilience.

### Conceptual Framework:

This framework sets the basis through which memes can be regarded as digital cultural products of Palestinian context. It looks at how the memes evolve, their defining character, and their roles in reflecting and shaping digital culture. This framework places memes within their cultural and historical contexts to provide a window through which their ability for satire, critique of social norms, and articulation of sociopolitical narratives can be studied. It further points out the place of memes within the broad landscape of digital communication, underlining their role as cultural bearers and means of expression in an interconnected world.

### The Nature of Memes and the Historical Context of Their Formation:

John White, the nature photographer, had no idea that his picture of the snowy owl taken in 2001 would evolve into memes spreading across social media platforms. The image of the owl sparked some users to decide to add their own captions to the photo, which later became one of the most famous chat comments and forum posts. Hence, it can be considered that the "John" or "O RLY" owl marked the beginning of memes entering the virtual world, responding to the popular need for language simplification. Its usage became widespread since 2004 and turned into a global phenomenon by 2013, thanks to social media platforms, where a community emerged dedicated to producing and following these visual comments (Khaled, 2022).

Consequently, social media platforms became a stage for this type of art, where users share images inspired by comedy films, statements by public figures, and comment on them in a comedic format. Some have even created humorous cartoon characters to make specific

criticisms that rally public opinion against certain decisions and issues. But why were these satirical images specifically termed "memes"?

Returning to the concept of the word "meme" in its current form, it gives the impression that it has been coined in recent times. However, it actually traces back to Richard Dawkins, who introduced it in his book "The Selfish Gene" as an analogy between natural and cultural evolution. Dawkins derived the term from the Greek origin "mimemo," meaning an imitated thing, and modified it to resemble the word "gene," highlighting the similarity between the two terms in terms of their ability for replication, selection, and evolution. He compared the function of memes to that of genes, stating: "Just as genes spread in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes spread by leaping from brain to brain through a process that can broadly be described as imitation" (Nafousi, 2020). Dawkins also defined memes as cultural units or elements that transfer from one individual to another through copying or imitation, subject to change, competition, and selection, similar to genes. Therefore, memes in the digital content realm can take the form of text, image, or video, originating from one or multiple users within the intertwined environment of the micro and macro digital spheres. They then spread from a narrower user base to a wider audience, whether through rapid textual sharing or through modifications made by users. This makes the content trendy, transcending geographic or cultural differences. Primarily relying on images, memes facilitate this transcendence and dissemination (Nafousi, 2020).

Hence, some have chosen to use the term "meme" instead of "cultural units" or any other term, employing the term "memes" to refer to cultural units and ideas for ease of writing.

The term "meme" originated from Richard Dawkins' theory of memes, wherein he draws parallels between genes as biological units and memes as cultural units. Just as biological genes transmit biological traits through reproduction, culture provides social behavioral patterns through learning and imitation. According to Dawkins, memes contain information crucial for building human societies, defining their identities, and ensuring their continuity. Genetic conditions can be applied to the cultural domain, with attempts made to adapt them to cultural units. Thus, Dawkins views memes as cultural units similar to genes, which are hereditary units that pass from generation to generation and undergo changes, transformations, and evolution through this transmission.

Dawkins perceives memes as informational units that replicate in human minds, where each pattern of thought or piece of information does not constitute a single meme. Rather, the meme complex is a collection of cooperative memes that have evolved together through a symbiotic relationship. Religious beliefs, political ideologies, social movements, artistic styles, customs, traditions, and frameworks are all considered memes by the theory of memetics, turning it into a self-standing science that studies the production of cultures.

Despite the theory of memes facing criticisms from sociologists, particularly regarding the spread of ideas that are—for Dawkins—associated with imitation or replication, the strong dissemination of ideas indicates an inherent strength and the presence of high values. This demonstrates psychological satisfaction and fulfillment, pertaining to rational thinking and conscious will, rather than mere imitation or copying (Khaled, 2022).

However, despite the criticisms leveled against Dawkins' theory of memes, its existence cannot be denied as a scientific basis for interpreting cultural phenomena, particularly the concept of internet memes. These memes are considered units of digital culture, with

memes being digital cultural products that have brought about significant changes in the language of online communication.

#### Key Characteristics of Memes:

Mememes can serve various roles depending on their creators' intentions. They rely heavily on societal memory and shared cultural understanding. As such, their interpretation is often limited to specific audiences who are culturally or contextually equipped to decode them. This exclusivity underscores their role as vehicles for group identity and solidarity.

Despite their rapid dissemination, memes often possess an ephemeral quality due to the constantly evolving nature of online communities. Successful memes depend on factors such as shareability, humor, and audience relatability, which drive their viral spread (Handayani, 2016). However, their transient popularity means that most memes lose relevance quickly, replaced by newer iterations.

Mememes also possess *a unique compressive power*, condensing complex ideas into simplified, digestible forms. Feller (2020) notes that collective laughter, often evoked by memes, can act as a form of protest, uniting audiences against shared adversities or ideologies. Political actors frequently employ memes to shape public opinion, using humor as a tool for persuasion and critique.

However, memes can also propagate harmful content, such as stereotypes or discriminatory narratives. Pages that exploit racist or sexist tropes rely on the guise of humor to normalize offensive ideas. The power of memes lies in their dual potential: to both challenge oppression and perpetuate bias.

## MEMES AS DIGITAL CULTURAL PRODUCTS

The word “culture” in Arabic linguistically denotes sound reasoning and human wit. It is considered a component of both individual and collective identity. From this perspective, we can assert that humans are creators of culture while simultaneously being shaped by it. In this sense, culture is the philosophy of life.

Based on this premise, the philosophy that culture draws for life and for itself becomes evident across various frameworks in its essence and content. These frameworks are divided into an external framework, encompassing the “term and definition of culture,” which carries inherent difficulties and contradictions, and an internal framework, which also includes contradictions. Since culture is always in a state of creation, motion, innovation, and dissemination, it inherently includes both traditional and innovative elements, as well as universal and particular aspects. Here, culture continuously reveals its philosophy. The “universals of culture” are represented in customs, traditions, ideas, language, and behavioral patterns, while the “particularities of culture” relate to the culture of the individual, group, or class, as well as philosophical, industrial, and technological culture, forming the core of culture. (Velafi, 2014)

Thus, culture is one of the components of human behavior that helps determine an individual’s path. The culture of a people is one of the most significant traits distinguishing them from others, granting them uniqueness in customs, values, language, and religion.

Meanwhile, the International Society for Technology in Education defines digital culture as an interactive system of strategies, knowledge, skills, standards, rules, principles, and ideas aimed at the optimal and intelligent use of digital technologies. This involves safely utilizing and producing digital content while balancing accessibility and benefits,

protecting against potential risks, and enhancing knowledge and best practices. (Bakhoush, 2021)

Digital culture also refers to the cultural changes brought about by the development and spread of digital technologies, particularly the internet and the web. Its concept and essence focus on building a methodology for thinking by integrating elements from several distinct cultural fields. (Zainab, 2021)

As humans are the primary element in creating culture and have transitioned to spending significant time in the virtual world, a recent report from “We Are Social” revealed that approximately 5.18 billion people worldwide use the internet, representing nearly 64.6% of the global population. This figure highlights the internet as a driver of digital culture, reflecting the cultural and behavioral patterns emerging from the integration of digital technology into our daily lives. Digital culture encompasses the consumption of digital content, the use of social media, and information and communication technology. It influences how we interact with and share information, forming an integral part of our modern lives. (The Global State of Digital in April 2023, 2023)

Considering that memes, as previously mentioned, are one of the new outputs of digital culture, they are a direct product of this culture. Internet users now create and share memes in the virtual world, resembling the “Minecraft” game in that one builds their own world through vision and design, re-creating and rearranging to shape new ideas and realms, much like memes.

From this perspective, a meme can be defined as a visual representation that appears in various formats, such as static images, animated GIFs, or video clips. Each of these formats can stand alone or be accompanied by text or icons. In this sense, memes become a means

of emphasizing the values, ideas, and culture of a people, reproducing them. Electronic memes, specifically, are composite images paired with a short, humorous caption that enables the recipient to grasp the intended idea. However, memes cannot be confined to images alone. Fundamentally, they are based on an idea that can sometimes be executed through sound and video or through text, but most commonly, memes are composite images accompanied by a short, humorous caption.

Thus, the process of producing and consuming memes represents a modern communicative phenomenon characterized by decentralization, ease of production, and rapid dissemination within the digital space. At the same time, memes reflect deeply embedded social structures and perceptions in our real lives. They are the result of a natural selection process in collective consciousness and the culture of a society. Sometimes, memes combine all these mediums to create a single implication and meaning.

### Memos Ethically

Amid the ongoing war and the profound suffering endured by the Palestinian people, internet “memes” have emerged as a dual-faceted communicative tool, blending psychological relief with political mobilization. Semiotic studies have shown that these concise image–text constructs reproduce the myth of resilience or pain through prevailing ideologies and cultural narratives, thereby imbuing the meme with an ethical–emotional charge (Barthes, 1957).

On one hand, Palestinian memes enable a condensed expression of anguish, achieving a form of collective catharsis (Zelizer, 2010) . On the other hand, they risk framing the

wartime experience within predetermined storylines that may overlook marginalized voices and identities, transforming individual suffering into a form of digital “entertainment” (Gray, 2016)

From an ethical standpoint, this phenomenon raises critical questions about the boundaries of humor in the face of death and destruction: a meme that exploits the suffering of a child or needy family for amusement carries an exploitative dimension that violates the dignity of victims (Nissenbaum, 2017). Conversely, satirical memes can function as a form of “digital resistance” against the machinery of war, calling for international solidarity and awakening the conscience of Western audiences through an explicit ethical appeal (Khatib, 2020). Thus, the central challenge lies in the awareness of both meme creators and sharers to balance the expression of pain with the preservation of victim dignity, avoiding the commodification of suffering and instead harnessing it as a platform for informed humanitarian and political action.

Moreover, the circulation of Palestinian memes within social networks transforms these artifacts into what Bleicher (2019) terms “participatory narrative spaces,” wherein audiences, through comments and derivative designs, actively reshape the original sign and disseminate it across varying contexts. This participatory exchange generates a communal counter-narrative to official discourses but simultaneously raises ethical concerns regarding the level of representation appropriate for a genuine tragedy that resists reduction or stereotyping (Nissenbaum, 2017). While younger generations view such memes as a legitimate form of digital resistance, some scholars caution that the speed and replicability inherent in meme culture may dilute the profundity of the humanitarian message, reducing it to mere digital entertainment (Zelizer, 2010).

Furthermore, Bourne's (2021) concept of the "attention economy" in digital contexts offers a critical framework for understanding the ethical value of memes during wartime; each share or repost incrementally contributes to the meme's digital capital, effectively commodifying pain and tragedy. This dynamic imposes a dual ethical responsibility: first, to preserve the integrity of the meme's content in accurately representing the Palestinian reality, and second, to safeguard the audience's reception and redistribution practices. Should the imperative for rapid dissemination eclipse contextual sensitivity, memes risk becoming tools of "pain trade," perpetuating consumption of suffering rather than catalyzing meaningful social and political change (Gray, 2016). Consequently, researchers and activists must establish clear digital conduct guidelines that outline ethical standards for meme creation and circulation, uphold victims' dignity, and ensure that meme-based solidarity genuinely promotes constructive humanitarian action rather than emotional superficiality.

#### The Historical and Epistemological Framework of Meme Evolution in Palestine:

Like many societies subjected to occupation and diaspora, Palestine has witnessed profound transformations in its modes of political and cultural expression—especially with the advancement of digital communication technologies. Among the most prominent tools emerging in the last two decades are internet memes: visual cultural units designed to rapidly and succinctly convey ideas and messages, often through irony or satire. These digital artifacts have come to occupy a central role in contemporary Palestinian media discourse, both in the homeland and across the diaspora.

### 1. Pre-Digital Visual Symbols (1969–2000):

One of the most iconic pre-digital visual symbols is the figure of Handala, created by Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali in 1969. Handala represents a young refugee child shown from behind, symbolizing forced absence and estrangement from the homeland. Al-Ali famously stated, “Handala is the child who never grew up because he embodies the childhood of victims who endlessly await justice.” (Najjar, 2007)

Handala evolved into a collective symbol of Palestinian identity, transcending newspaper cartoons to appear on murals, posters, and protest banners. It became one of the earliest instances of a “visual meme” that relied on concise, symbolic representation to transmit political messages. In this context, (Najjar, 2007) asserts that Handala served as a visual rhetorical tool exploiting the tension between innocence and powerlessness, making it amenable to digital adaptation in later decades.

### 2. The First Palestinian Digital Memes (2000–2010)

With the advent of internet access in Palestine in the early 2000s, memes began to take on a rudimentary digital form. Though lacking formal structure or aesthetic polish, these memes extended the cultural lineage of political satire and visual critique. They found a home in Palestinian online forums such as Palestine Dialogue Network and Jerusalem Forum, where users employed basic image-editing tools to satirize political division, occupation policies, and socioeconomic conditions.

### 3. Memes as Tools of Digital Resistance (2011–2014)

The Arab Spring uprisings marked a turning point in Palestinian digital activism, catalyzing the strategic use of memes as instruments of resistance. During the 2014 Jerusalem uprising

and the Gaza War, memes became integral to daily narrative construction, expressing anger, critiquing Israeli policy, and exposing international complicity.

One prominent meme from this period featured an image of a Palestinian woman defiantly standing before an Israeli bulldozer demolishing her home, captioned “This is my home.” The image quickly became an icon of peaceful resistance. Another notable meme, “Pixelated Kuffiyeh,” turned actual images of destruction into pixelated forms, symbolizing media censorship and the distortion of truth. In their article *When Memes Go to War* (2016), Gordon and Perlstein analyze these artifacts as part of a “soft visual warfare” strategy, wherein memes serve as symbolic weapons in information conflicts. (Gordon, 2016)

#### 4. Academic Institutionalization and Cultural Integration (2015–Present)

In recent years, Palestinian memes have become subjects of systematic academic inquiry, particularly within media and visual culture studies. In *Digital Resistance* (2020), Khaled Hammada characterizes memes as “symbolic tools that recode the Palestinian political discourse in popular language capable of breaching global media walls.” He highlights their function within strategies of “cultural infiltration,” especially through campaigns like #SaveSheikhJarrah and #FreePalestine. (Hammada, 2020)

A more recent study, *Playful Activism* (2023), offers an in-depth analysis of how Palestinian youth employ TikTok challenges as forms of expressive resistance. The study introduces the notion of “playful activism,” describing it as a hybrid of performative creativity and political communication (Mutsvairo, 2023)

In the Palestinian context, memes are far from being mere entertainment or fleeting jokes. They are symbolic instruments of resistance shaped by a complex interplay of occupation,

diaspora, and digital revolution. Emerging first through caricature (e.g., Handala), memes have evolved into dynamic digital narratives circulating across Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. Their power lies in their accessibility, rapid dissemination, and cultural resonance—making them essential tools for documentation, influence, and cultural struggle.

#### The Ethical Semiotics of Satirical Memes in Contexts of Pain and War

The use of satirical memes in contexts of pain and war raises a complex ethical dilemma, situated between the right to ironic expression—as a form of resistance—and the moral obligation to respect human suffering without commodifying or trivializing it. This tension becomes more acute when real tragic elements—such as a tank that crushed children—are incorporated into a satirical and seemingly cheerful visual discourse.

Susan Sontag (Sontag, 2003) argues in *Regarding the Pain of Others* that “viewing images of suffering imposes a moral responsibility upon us; it obliges us to maintain seriousness and respect toward what we see, as the danger lies in transforming pain into a visual commodity for consumption and entertainment.” In this sense, transforming the image of a tank into the subject of a joke, even if targeting the aggressor, may entail an ethical risk by diminishing the gravity of the crime or distorting the emotional meaning embedded in the image.

On the other hand, Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1984) in his theory of the carnivalesque, perceives popular satire as a subversive force against authority. He argues that it constitutes a “free space where meanings are overturned and opposites are equalized,” thus enabling the oppressed to redefine symbols of power—such as the tank—by re-framing them in a satirical manner that strips them of their intimidation. This concept justifies the use of dark

humor as a form of cultural resistance that restores a measure of dignity to victims and allows them to mock their oppressors.

However, Theodor Adorno (Adorno, 1991) in his critique of mass image culture, warns that irony may at times serve as a mechanism of collective denial, wherein suffering is cloaked in humor to facilitate its acceptance or avoidance without confronting its reality. This raises a critical question: does the meme alleviate suffering, or does it reproduce it in a banal form?

Therefore, the ethical framework for analyzing such a meme operates along three central axes:

The dignity and visual representation of victims: Care must be taken not to commodify their suffering or dissolve it into a joke.

Irony as a symbolic tool of resistance: Employing satire may constitute a liberatory act that redefines power and vulnerability.

Intention and reception: The ethical standing of the meme depends on the creator's intent and the context of its reception, making its evaluation inherently flexible rather than absolute.

From this perspective, memes may be regarded not merely as visual tools, but as ethically charged discourses that reflect an ongoing struggle between pain and laughter, respect and mockery, memory and denial.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is summarized in the following two main axes:

### THE FIRST AXIS: LIQUID MODERNITY AND ITS REFLECTIONS ON THE FORMATION OF MEMES AND THE VIRTUAL PUBLIC SPHERE

The Czech poet Jan Skácel speaks of the hidden dimensions lying within meaning, saying:

"They have always been, in their depths, present." This suggests that meanings always exist, concealed behind hidden walls, and cannot be understood without the ability to break through those walls. But how can these walls be dismantled? (Bauman, 2016)

Returning to the nature of memes, which are rooted in collective culture encompassing prevailing heritage, social, cultural, political, and even economic relations, they serve as a means to break down barriers and reveal meaning. In other words, as we previously mentioned, memes belong to those who understand them and grasp their messages, which can only be achieved by creating memes that reflect lived realities.

The image within a meme addresses being, cultural memory, and both individual and collective memory, emerging with meaningful connotations that can be constructed by assembling the image's components. At that point, the recipient can extract meaning from what has no voice—the image itself. This blending of deeply rooted collective culture condensed into a single image, accompanied by a few words or none at all, is considered an art form. "Great artists have no homeland" (Bauman, 2016). This statement, originally by Alfredo de Musset nearly two centuries ago, has transformed into a revolutionary slogan and a cry of defiance against dominant authoritarian ideologies, stirring the spirit of nations. From this perspective, meme creators often seek to convey their ideas, which frequently bear a political dimension. This is particularly evident in our study sample,

which focuses on a Palestinian page created by Palestinian meme makers. Political concerns dominate the Palestinian people's reality, and Palestinian meme creators craft their content in an intelligent artistic manner to navigate and evade the Meta algorithms that track Palestinian content.

Al Jazeera's platform "Ather" published a report addressing digital violations against Palestinian content, posing the question: "Have social media platforms succeeded in obscuring the Palestinian narrative?" The report revealed shocking figures on how algorithms target Palestinian content following October 7, 2023. Facebook, for example, removed 1.2 million posts supporting the Palestinian cause while highlighting pro-Israel posts. Furthermore, the word "Gaza" was labeled as terrorist content, while posts inciting direct violence against Palestinians were approved.

As such, creating content that aligns with the nature of these algorithms is not a matter of free choice but an inevitable necessity to convey specific ideas without being pursued or censored.

Here, memes emerge as a medium to articulate lived pain in an intelligent and carefully crafted artistic manner. While memes do not offer solutions to experienced pain, they act as a mechanism for expressing it. In essence, the act of exposing and expressing pain marks the beginning of its resolution. As Pierre Bourdieu states in his book *The Weight of the World*: "Awareness of the mechanisms that make life painful and unlivable does not mean neutralizing them. Revealing contradictions does not necessarily resolve them." (Bourdieu, 2010)

To understand the nature of memes, we must examine the circumstances surrounding their creation. Memes are quickly circulated images that align with the fast-paced nature of

contemporary social media platforms. These platforms, as manifestations of modernity, reflect a human tendency to reject permanence and stability—what is known as "liquid modernity." Content creators are therefore compelled to innovate and deliver new ideas to meet the evolving interests of their audience. In the introduction to his book *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman notes: "We can no longer tolerate anything that lasts... We no longer know how to benefit from boredom." Thus, society seeks new practices that disrupt old ones to better adapt to modern challenges and lifestyles. Bauman posits that all existing frameworks and patterns must be melted down and replaced, despite their susceptibility to criticism and eventual replacement. (Bauman, 2016)

In liquid modernity, Bauman believes we are experiencing a "vacancy of the throne" period. He redefines chaos in a deeper sense that aligns with its interpretation in physics—a deviation from the dominant and prevailing order. In the social context, this implies the restoration of agency and society's ability to propose alternatives that drive change. Bauman highlights humanity's capacity to maneuver within liquidity by creating asymmetrical, irregular, and unregulated actions. These actions, although not rigidly structured, can form "islands" within the fluidity, challenging the dominant rigidity and reclaiming the humanistic essence of modernity.

Given the nature of memes as expressive visual content that conveys lived reality through humor and satire, memes often deviate from conventional images. They usually bear meanings that contrast with their apparent elements, while simultaneously sharing certain characteristics. This contradiction between humor and pain, coupled with the prominence of specific meme elements, contributes to their widespread popularity on social media.

These platforms have created new virtual spaces that, in turn, influence societal, political, and other issues, playing a role in reshaping them.

The concept of the public sphere has evolved through various stages to encompass today's virtual space, where people gather beyond cultural clubs and literary salons to discuss global and local issues on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These platforms facilitate dialogue and the exchange of perspectives on universal and global issues, regardless of linguistic, religious, ethnic, or geographic differences. This enables modern individuals to stay informed about global happenings, not just those within their borders.

Janis Bled emphasizes that social networking sites form a real social structure, sustaining cohesion among their members on two levels: first, within the group through shared language and symbols, and second, with the external world. (Tesaïdit, 2013).

#### Second Axis: Semiotic Theory

Semiotics researches how visual language and images create meaning through signs, aiding in the perception of cultures and societies. This area developed as an integral part of post-modern discourse in objection to the simplistic methodologies of modernist approaches such as structuralism (Chandler, 2013). Ultimately, semiotics provides the scholarly community with analytical instruments to decipher the signs inherent in memes and illustrates through their analysis how these superficially simple images actually work as multi-dimensional units of communication.

Ferdinand de Saussure, Swiss linguist and widely regarded as one of the founding theorists of semiotics, traced the etymology of the word from its Greek source "semeion" and means "sign" or "symbol." He maintained that language is a system of signs used in

communicating ideas and it consists not only of the spoken and written variants but also larger symbolic structures such as rituals and visual forms (Ludhall, 2009). These revelations paved the way for the use of semiotics in the domain of visual communication, especially in meme studies, since these online products use cultural or symbolic allusions to stand for meaning.

#### The Roots of Semiotics: From Saussure to Peirce:

In Arabic linguistics, the concept of semiotics aligns closely with its Western counterpart. The term is derived from the root verb "*Sama*," which denotes marking or signifying, similar to Saussure's interpretation. For example, the Arabic expression "*Sawwama farsahu*" ("he marked his horse") reflects a parallel understanding of semiotics as a means of denotation and distinction. This convergence highlights the universal nature of symbolic systems across cultures.

Saussure viewed language as a *binary system* consisting of the *signifier* (the physical form of the sign) and the *signified* (the mental concept it evokes). This relationship, which he called "*signification*," serves as the foundation for understanding how memes operate. Memes use a combination of visual and textual elements to create meaning, where the *signifier* could be an image or phrase and the *signified* the cultural or humorous idea it conveys.

Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and semiotician, further expanded the field by categorizing signs into *icons*, *indexes*, and *symbols*:

- a) Icons are signs that resemble their referents, such as photographs or drawings.
- b) Indexes rely on a causal relationship, as in the association of smoke with fire.

- c) Symbols are based on convention and shared understanding, such as the use of a flag to represent a nation (Benkrad, 2003).

In memes, these categories manifest in various ways. For instance, an iconic meme might use a widely recognized image to evoke humor or critique, while an indexical meme might reference a current event, relying on shared knowledge to establish meaning. Symbolic memes, on the other hand, often employ cultural or political symbols to engage audiences on a deeper level.

#### The Role of Visual Language in Memes:

The visual components, such as color, shape, and line, of memes are significant in relation to their semiotic function. As Christian Metz points out, visual and linguistic languages are independent but collaborate in making meaningful messages; memes, through the manipulation of that relation, combine text and imagery to guide viewers to meaning.

- a) Colors in memes carry significant symbolic weight:
  - b) Red conveys passion, danger, or urgency, often used to draw immediate attention.
  - c) Blue conveys tranquility or trustworthiness but can also be sorrowful or reflective.

Yellow suggests happiness and vitality, while white may represent purity or mourning, again depending on cultural context (Pinkrad, 2003).

The shapes and lines also have layers of meaning:

- a) *Circles* symbolize unity and idealism, expressing wholeness in an unbroken continuum.
- b) Triangles stand for reason and stability but can also indicate direction or movement.

- c) Vertical lines depict energy and dynamism, and horizontal lines reflect stability and balance (Ahmed, 2005).

Working with such elements, meme creators craft complex messages that resonate with specific audiences and thereby reinforce cultural and emotional connections.

#### Text and Image Interaction in Meme Semiotics

The great semiotician Roland Barthes once posited that text and image, in a reciprocal relationship, are generative of each other in producing meaning. In memes, text often has a stabilizing function, pinpointing or augmenting the message of the visual so the right intended meaning is brought across accurately. Barthes identified several central functions of text in visual communication:

- a) *Explanation*: Text eliminates ambiguity, guaranteeing the viewer grasped the intended message.
- b) *Support*: Words supplement images, filling in gaps of meaning or context.
- c) *Hint*: Text provokes imagination to encourage further exploration of the image (Yakhluf, 2009).

For example, a meme using a historical image may use current slang or a joke caption to juxtapose the past and present, thus creating layers of meaning that rely on both the visual and textual elements interacting with each other. This interplay is more effective in political memes, in which the written part is often used to carry the punchline of satire or criticism.

#### ***MEMES ACT AS CULTURAL POINTERS IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT.***

The memes, being living artifacts of culture, are reflective of the dynamic and changeable traits that run in today's communication; they easily bend with existing events, technologies, or social environments to make themselves more relevant for engaging

today's issues. Memes are often used within the context of Palestine as a means of resistance and resiliency, carrying political and cultural messages within their structure of humor or satire. That way, they are engaging their audience both emotionally and intellectually in the creation of a solid sense of solidarity and common identity.

From a semiotic dimension, the analysis of Palestinian memes highlights the way they employ symbols to address repression and amplify marginalized perspectives. Notably, incorporating traditional Palestinian attire or patterns in a meme can evoke a sense of heritage and resistance, often softened by humor, which might otherwise render the message too harsh. The blend of humor and symbolic representation, presented in an engaging format, transforms a meme into a powerful tool for storytelling and mobilization.

#### Semiotic Mechanisms for Humour in Memes:

This intertextuality is at the heart of the humor employed in many memes, as creators draw on familiar references to craft their jokes. By using semiotic analysis, we can unpack the intricate meanings behind these references, revealing that humor serves not only as a coping mechanism but also as a form of critique. For instance:

- a) Irony and juxtaposition are frequently employed techniques, where contrasting elements bring to light the absurdities present in societal norms or political systems.
- b) Exaggeration highlights particular traits or events, generating comedy while still delivering the essential message.

By employing these strategies, memes can bridge the gap between enter/infotainment and critical discourse, providing audiences with a means to engage with complex issues in a more accessible method. A comprehensive framework for the analyzation of memes is offered by the 'semiotic theory', as it offers cultural and communicative artifacts. By

examining their visual and textual elements, media scholars can uncover the deeper meanings behind these digital creations. In the context of Palestine, memes are employed as means for resistance, identity formation, and sociocultural critique, showcasing the rich diversity found in modern digital communication. The distinctive features and adaptability of certain memes underscore their significance in shaping public discourse and fostering cultural exchange in the digital landscape.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Literature Review**

One of the defining characteristics of science is its inherently cumulative and continuously evolving nature. Building upon the insights and findings of predecessors, researchers strive to deepen understanding and explore new avenues. This literature review critically examines existing scholarly works, including theories, books, studies, and research articles, addressing memes as a new cultural content, their emergence, and their analysis. For clarity and scientific rigor, the literature review is divided into two sections: the first focuses on satire across various media forms, while the second specifically addresses memes as a distinct form of satire within the framework of digital culture.

#### **INTERNET MEMES: KEY STUDIES AND PERSPECTIVES:**

as we previously mentioned, the nature of memes makes them cultural carriers. This has led some governments to rely on them to promote their ideas. This conclusion was reached in the study of Hazim (2023), *Virality and Memes on Social Media Platforms*, which focused on studying memes in terms of their impact on digital marketing operations on social media platforms. The study examined the forms of content circulated on these platforms and how to optimally exploit them for the benefit of companies, institutions, and even governments in their efforts to market their products, issues, and various ideas. The researcher analyzed the widespread viral content and its characteristics to determine the factors that might link it to memes. The study relied on the descriptive method in collecting information and data, alongside analyzing models of visual content widely spread on social media platforms in Egypt and abroad.

The study concluded that a set of factors and characteristics must be present in the content to achieve widespread and rapid dissemination among individuals using social media

platforms within a specific culture. These factors contribute to transforming the content into a unit for transmitting cultural information. Among the most notable factors are the ability to share, simplicity in content presentation, and finally, incorporating a degree of humor. This study aligns with the researcher's study regarding the assumption that memes are a widely disseminated cultural carrier dependent on humor to convey its ideas.

However, what about using memes in more serious and painful events, for instance?

From this perspective, a study by (Al-Tantawi K. K., 2022) titled *The Discourse of Memes and Comics Presented via Facebook Network about the Coronavirus Crisis and Its Relationship with Public Attitudes towards this Crisis: An Analytical and Field Study* examines this question. This study employed the semiological analysis approach and the media richness theory to monitor, analyze, and interpret the nature of the memes and comics discourse presented on Facebook pages about the COVID-19 crisis and its relationship with public attitudes towards this crisis. The study involved an analytical review of memes and comics published during the period from April 1, 2020, to July 2, 2020, on pages like "Asahbi," "Corona Sarcasm," and "Coronavirus."

As for the field sample, it consisted of 685 participants. The study relied on tools such as content analysis, analysis of active forces, semiological analysis, and questionnaires. The study concluded that there is a relationship between the discourse of memes and comics published on Facebook pages about the COVID-19 crisis and public attitudes towards the crisis and its active figures. This relationship is particularly evident when linking the recurring main idea within the memes and comics under study to public attitudes toward these themes.

This study shares with the researcher's study the ability to transform pain into humorous material that communicates suffering in a comedic mold, in addition to its focus on semiological analysis to understand the mechanism by which memes are created. However, can this comedic mold intentionally carry distortion or hate speech? This question was tackled in the study of (Mazyane, 2022) titled *Utilizing Visual Culture on Social Media Platforms to Distort the Image of Islam: Visual Memes as a Model*.

This study focused on the main strategies employed by meme creators to convey messages of hatred and bigotry towards Islam. The study adopted the semiological approach and employed Roland Barthes' approach based on denotative and connotative readings and relied on a purposive sample. After analyzing the sample semiologically to understand the composition of visual memes, the study concluded that despite their simplicity and spontaneity, memes carry numerous encoded messages that lay the foundation for violence, hatred, and rejection of the other if not used positively. The researcher's study shares the semiological approach with this study but differs in presenting memes as a vehicle for hate speech due to the differing objectives of the two studies.

For a more precise understanding of the nature of memes and the origin of this term, and how the biological nature of memes parallels their cultural counterparts, the study of Mourtada (2022), titled *Anthropological Foundations of Internet Memes*, comes into focus. This study emphasized that memes are a concept derived from biology, and borrowing concepts from one scientific field to another is a legitimate epistemological practice as long as certain scientific boundaries are respected. Robert Dawkins borrowed the concept of memes from biology to apply it to studying a widely used cultural phenomenon in our time, namely internet memes.

The researcher relied on interviews with a purposive non-probability sample, selecting individuals deliberately if they met specific characteristics to serve the research goals. Through analyzing the content of the collected interviews and interpreting them, the researcher concluded that this phenomenon is socio-anthropological in nature. Individuals who interact with memes have an intimate relationship with technology in terms of new practices and the interactions they engender. This was achieved by disassembling interview content and converting the interview guide questions into subtopics, relying on thematic content analysis to condense the data collected through interviews.

Since memes are a cultural carrier with scientific, intellectual, and even religious implications, and this phenomenon is almost becoming a new communicative language, the study of (Ayesh, 2022), titled *Internet Memes: Production and Consumption of Digital Culture: The Phenomenon of Memes as a Model*, focused on analyzing memes as a media phenomenon based on Richard Dawkins' meme theory. The study concluded that the term "meme" did not originate arbitrarily but was coined by a researcher affiliated with the naturalistic interpretation of social and human phenomena.

#### Satire and Its Forms on Social Media Platforms:

Given that memes are a manifestation of satire on social media, it was necessary to delve into the significant literature that tackled the subject of satire, within which memes fall. Regarding the relationship between satirical media and the freedom of expression, a study by Seham (2023) emphasized that freedom of expression is a cornerstone of human rights, wherein individuals enjoy complete freedom to express their intellectual positions, beliefs, selves, opinions, and beliefs about any issue, event, or topic within agreed-upon boundaries that do not defame others' reputations. Satirical media is considered one of the facets of

freedom of expression emerging from democracy. Satirical media relies on mechanisms to convey ideas and influence the recipient through various media formats, including satirical TV programs, caricature drawing, satirical sketches, and others. The study posed the following question: How do satirical media practices manifest under freedom of expression?

The study concluded that satirical media contributes to changing perspectives and encourages the public to direct their criticisms towards various issues, particularly those related to politicians' behaviors. Satirical media remains a vital and essential part of media arts, serving as a method of delivering media messages to the targeted audience, whether viewers, listeners, or readers. It contains implications and messages aimed at educating the public and alerting them to the bitter reality they are experiencing, while also providing suggestions for addressing these problems and crises.

And because "satire is not just for the sake of satire", a study by Saleh (2022), titled: "Satire in Journalism," addresses the hidden and underlying reasons behind the use of satire in journalism. The author argues that satirists, whether in the form of images, drawings, or programs, do not employ satire merely for amusement, but rather to convey a purposeful and critical message based on an understanding of reality and the connection between events. The study provides examples of books and magazines that have adopted the satirical approach and successfully attracted readers' attention.

Regarding the impact of satire on the youth, a study by Nuweir (2020), titled: "The Use of Satirical Videos on YouTube by Egyptian Youth and Their Relationship with Their Attitudes towards Terrorist Organizations: An Applied Study on Cairo University Youth," aims to explore the extent to which Egyptian youth use satirical videos on YouTube and

their relationship with their attitudes towards terrorist organizations. The study also seeks to identify the satisfactions derived from the use of YouTube by Egyptian youth, utilizing a descriptive-analytical approach to describe the facts and information related to the study subject.

The study sample was selected randomly, with a questionnaire administered to 300 undergraduate students at Cairo University. The study concludes with several key findings, including: the higher the level of Egyptian youth's use of YouTube, the greater the satisfactions they achieve, and the higher the level of satire use, the greater the level of undermining the prestige of terrorism and reducing its negative effects.

To examine satire on various social media platforms, a study was conducted by Swayqat (2019) titled: "The State of Satirical Journalism through New Media in Algeria: An Analytical Study of a Sample of Pages on Facebook - Mustafa Bounif Page - Fattah Ben Hamou Page - Osama Wahid Page." This study, which adopted the theory of ethical determinism by Azzi Abdel Rahman and the theory of prioritization, aims to understand the state of satirical journalism through new media in Algeria. It applies this through the study of a sample of posts by journalists and satirical bloggers on Facebook, consisting of 60 posts, from October 5, 2018, to May 25, 2019. The main question of the study is as follows: What is the current state of satirical journalism through new media in Algeria based on posts on Facebook? Given the descriptive-analytical nature of the study, the content analysis method was utilized, employing a specific content analysis form.

The study reached several key findings, including that politics is the most commonly covered topic by satirical journalism, with government employees being the most active actors in these posts. Concerning values, the value of cursing prominently emerged in most

of the posts. Additionally, Arabic is the most commonly used language, as evidenced by the table. Furthermore, satirical journalism often utilizes text in many of its posts, with interaction facilitated through likes or comments on the text.

Because satire arises from pain and originates from a contrasting reality, a study by Lambe Kayode Mustapha (2019) demonstrates the role of satirical media culture amidst conflicts in Nigeria, examining whether it plays a role in stimulating political interest among youth. The opinions of 366 university students from two universities in northern and central Nigeria demonstrated the predictive power of exposure to political satire on youth's lives based on political knowledge and stance.

The motivational results indicate that Belgian media are better predictors of youth political behavior through political satire, as opposed to state-owned media dominated by elites. These findings highlight the need to intensify satellite media to attract satirical youth, who play a significant role in supporting and consolidating democratic values in Africa's largest democracy.

The study relied on using a non-random sampling technique to achieve its goal, which is to pave the way for experimental exploration of the role of political comedy as a means of political communication within an advanced democratic environment. One of the criticisms leveled against this study is that the predictors involved in this study have made significant contributions to political knowledge and politics, even after controlling the effects of some specific confounding variables. However, the results may still be a product of unexamined variables such as political interest and political efficacy. Despite the limitations identified, this study opens up new avenues in the field of political satire as a sub-type of political communication in the most densely populated African democracy.

When we link social reality with actual reality, it is necessary to study the connection between them. The study conducted by Professor Ahmed (2019) titled "Satire on Social Media and Its Relationship with Public Perceptions of Reality" aims to explore the role of satire on social media platforms and its relationship with public perceptions of reality. It also seeks to identify the main motivations for individuals' use of Egyptian satirical pages on Facebook and their relationship with the nature of their responses and interaction styles with the satirical posts within those pages. Additionally, the study aims to identify the types of satire posted on these pages and the main satisfactions received by the study sample from the satirical posts.

The study utilized a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The researcher employed content analysis to analyze the posts of the study sample (60 posts) from satirical social media pages, as well as the analysis of hundreds of comments and the distribution of questionnaires to conduct field research on 240 users of satirical pages. The questionnaires aimed to study the public's perceptions of reality and analyze them.

One of the key findings of the study is that satirical social media pages enable ordinary citizens to overcome the traditional dilemma of the "gatekeeper" theory in sharing content created by other users. It predicts that audience-generated content will replace traditional media content as the main outlet for news, information, and entertainment. Regarding the topics of satire, the study found a repetition in presenting stereotypical images of certain social categories. The pages adopted multiple themes and addressed various issues, presenting them in many posts through video clips accompanied by satirical comments

(memes). Sports and social issues dominated most of the page's posts, despite other equally important issues such as poverty and education.

The study by Haydar (2019) titled "Satirical Political Programs on Al Jazeera: The Effectiveness of Critical Discourse and Mechanisms of Operation" focuses on examining the methods and strategies of satire used by "Above the Authority" (فوق السلطة) and "The Bold News" (السليط الإخباري) programs, and identifying the forms and templates employed by both programs in their satirical treatment.

The study used a mixed-method approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative methods, including content analysis and interviews with program presenters. It produced several key findings, such as the fact that language manipulation was the most frequently used technique in both programs, appearing in 24% of "Above the Authority" and 30% of "The Bold News." Additionally, comedic body language emerged as the most common satirical technique, with 28% in "Above the Authority" and 37% in "The Bold News." Criticism of politicians was the main target of satire in both programs, accounting for 48% in "Above the Authority" and 39% in "The Bold News." Moreover, videos and visual materials were identified as the primary methods of presentation in both programs, with 70% in "Above the Authority" and 65% in "The Bold News." In contrast, Howley (2019) explores the satirical program "Le Show" by Harry Shearer in the research paper "Satirical News as Alternative Journalism." This long-running weekly radio show illustrates the political value and cultural significance of "alternative journalism" within a satirical framework. The researcher utilized content and discourse analysis tools to examine one episode that exemplifies the style and structure of Le Show. The findings suggest that Harry Shearer's Le Show represents a form of political and cultural defiance, highlighting the role

of alternative media in the landscape of mainstream news content and practices. The relationship between alternative journalism and mainstream political news continues to evolve and intertwine.

70% of your text is likely AI-generated

To explore the historical roots of satire and understand its foundations and modern expressions, Amal's (2017) research paper titled "Satirical Media Discourse" was conducted. This study aimed to examine the new media discourse found in satirical media, its historical origins, objectives, and the criteria that govern this type of discourse. The paper concluded that satirical media content resonates with audiences who are grappling with various issues. It frequently critiques politicians, officials, public figures, corruption, bureaucracy, and low living standards. Such criticism of officials does not necessarily undermine the state's value; rather, it can serve the state's interests. Furthermore, satirical media discourse can be a powerful tool for constructive criticism that engages all segments of society. Satire has permeated written, audio, and visual media, as well as the internet, fulfilling various social, political, and communicative purposes. Some media outlets utilize satire to align their media policies and objectives with the interests of their target audience. The study by Amer (2016) examines the visual structure of satirical cartoons, specifically focusing on their functional dimensions in the Algerian newspaper Echorouk. It looks into the primary topics addressed, along with the colors, fonts, and other design elements, employing a descriptive-analytical method and semiotic analysis of the selected sample. The findings suggest that cartoons serve as a vital communication tool, effectively conveying information and reflecting current events. They capture both global and local

trends, and their sarcastic and humorous style provides an outlet for citizens, positively influencing their mental well-being by comically portraying their challenges.

Yet, it raises an important question: do media outlets present satire programs purely for entertainment, or do they also serve as a means of delivering news? This is the central inquiry of Andersson's (2016) study titled "Serious News vs. Funny News: A Study of Episodes of the Satirical News Program 'Last Week Tonight' with John Oliver." The research aims to explore whether the media perceives the program as entertainment or as a legitimate news source, and what implications this has for the interplay between satire and news. Using a descriptive approach, the study analyzes four episodes and applies content analysis. The researcher finds that the line between satire and news is often blurred for viewers, complicating their ability to distinguish between the two and making it harder to identify what constitutes news.

When examining the relationship between *satire* and *serious* issues, like resistance, Mounir (2015) provides valuable insights; satire serves as a tool for resistance, highlighting its role in the pursuit of democratic ideals. Political satire is often viewed as a manifestation of the desire for democracy, allowing for freedom of expression and diverse performances that extend beyond the confines of government-controlled media. It also illustrates how regime loyalists disseminate information and messages to the public. Additionally, Mounir's research explores the various forms and contexts in which political satire is expressed. Essentially, satire acts as a lens through which the populace critiques governance, drawing on their own experiences and memories. For Egyptians following January 25th, satire has evolved into a vital component of everyday resistance, embodying peaceful methods of opposition. In summary, the article concludes that the influence of satire as a means of

resistance and expression is undeniable, whether it manifests as a daily practice of resistance or as a broader struggle, whether organized or spontaneous, by individuals or groups engaging in it.

Although the aforementioned article is old, the connection between the concept of resistance and satire, reminiscent of the Palestinian situation, is evident. As we initially mentioned, the use of memes as a means to express the situation and resistance in Palestine represents a departure from the confines of Meta's algorithms.

It is noteworthy that the studies mentioned above share a common focus on the topic of satire, including its definition, various dimensions, and motivations. However, they differ in terms of the context and space they cover, as well as the selected sample. For instance, the study by Ahmed (2019) focused on the motivations behind the public's use of satire on social media platforms, while the study by Nuweir (2020) addressed young people's use of satire on YouTube. Similarly, the studies by Andersson (2016) and Haider (2019) examined satire as presented in television programs, whereas Howley's paper (2019) focused on the radio aspect and its satirical programs.

Furthermore, all the aforementioned studies utilized descriptive methodology and content analysis. Haider's study (2019) also incorporated interviews, while Ahmed's (2019) and Nuweir's (2020) studies included questionnaires. They all share the commonality of employing descriptive methodology and content analysis to analyze the content of the sampled pages.

In previous literature, satire has been considered a means of expressing the various problematic issues and challenges facing society, such as resistance, for instance. Regarding the use of memes as a tool of satire, literature emphasizes its role as a cultural

communicative medium. Thus, the researcher agrees with previous findings in considering memes as a form of cultural communication and critique, delivering specific messages to the audience for which they were originally designed and later became recipients. Memes, in essence, are rooted in the culture of society and the specifics of its environment.

This study aims to add to the understanding of memes as an output of the new digital world, representing a facet of liquid modernity that transforms solid entities such as reports and lengthy articles into concise images encapsulating different ideas rapidly and profoundly. Memes, by virtue of their ease of dissemination and interaction with lived reality, carve out in a distinct manner a space conducive to those who wish to propagate and endorse their ideas.

The researcher explores the visual mechanical relationship inherent in memes, which have an impact on the public sphere by swiftly disseminating ideas, humor, or cultural references. These elements can contribute to shaping public discourse, often providing a humorous approach for individuals to engage with various topics. This characteristic aids in their spread, consequently allowing memes to influence opinions, reflect social trends, and contribute to the collective culture of the public sphere, particularly in online communities.

The process here is inherently intertwined between what has arisen from modernity and the audience's inclination towards speed. Memes offer a simplistic yet expressive, humorous, and rapidly circulated representation within this public sphere.

**CHAPTER 4**

## **Methodological Framework**

### **Research Methodology:**

In the field of communication and media research, there is an array of scientific methodologies that can be employed to systematically explore different phenomena. This study uses a descriptive methodology, particularly through semiotic analysis, to examine the visual mechanisms found in 'Palestinian memes.' Angers (2019) defines research methodology as "a set of processes aimed at achieving a goal". Therefore, methodology refers to the systematic approach a researcher adopts to investigate a problem, based on objectivity and logic. It enables the researcher to explore, understand, and define a phenomenon, identify its causes, and achieve specific outcomes. In this study, the descriptive methodology was selected to analyze the visual mechanisms and representations utilized by the Palestinian Memes page on Instagram. This approach provides a structured framework for systematically analyzing the content. By employing descriptive tools, the study aims to uncover the underlying intentions and messages directed at the audience. Specifically, content analysis was conducted on selected posts from the Palestinian Memes page, offering insights into the communicative objectives of the administrators.

### **Semiotic Framework:**

Semiotics serves as a crucial tool in visual studies and forms the foundation of this research as the main analytical method. Roland Barthes defines semiotics as "a meticulous investigation into the deeper layers of iconic or linguistic messages." This approach ensures neutrality and objectivity, allowing the researcher to explore the message's psychological, social, and cultural dimensions while situating it within a broader interpretative framework.

Danish researcher Louis Hjelmslev highlights the essence of semiotic analysis as "a set of techniques and steps used to describe and analyze an entity as meaningful in itself and in its relationship to other entities." Thus, semiotic analysis transcends surface interpretations, delving into the relationships and functions that construct meaning within specific contexts (Mubarak, 2022). In the case of memes, this involves analyzing their multifaceted components, such as visual elements, text, and cultural symbolism.

#### Analytical Process:

To decode the signs and symbols embedded within memes and to understand their formation mechanisms, this study employs semiotic analysis focusing on three key elements:

1. **Icon:** The visual representation resembling the object it signifies.
2. **Index:** Elements that imply a direct connection to their reference, often causal or associative.
3. **Symbols:** Arbitrary signs whose meanings are shaped by cultural conventions.

These pillars help in analyzing different components of memes, including:

- a. **Colors:** Symbolizing emotions, cultural identities, and political messages.
- b. **Language:** Reflecting tone, humor, or satire.
- c. **Characters and Visual Elements:** Enhancing relatability and emotional resonance.

By integrating these dimensions, the study deciphers the holistic mechanism that drives meme production within the virtual space

#### STUDY POPULATION:

The study population consists of posts published by the Instagram page "Palestinian Memes," which creates its own memes. This page is followed by approximately 900,000 users on Instagram. However, the page frequently faces shutdowns as part of Instagram's efforts to monitor and suppress Palestinian content. During the preparation of this study, the page was shut down approximately four times, alongside actions targeting the administrators of the page. As a result, the study was forced to rely on the alternative account after the page was closed during the study period.

The study sample is a purposive random sample, meaning it was selected randomly from the most interactive posts on the page during the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. The specific samples chosen for analysis were based on the content of the ideas, covering various aspects, contexts, and parties involved in the aggression, including:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly the concept of resistance and its adoption by various parties and figures.
- The issue of Israeli prisoners held by Palestinian resistance, including discussions and negotiations between parties.
- The northern warfront between the Lebanese resistance and the Israeli occupation.
- The Arab political role during the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip.
- The stance of the Palestinian National Authority regarding the Israeli aggression on Gaza.
- The global perspective on the Palestinian cause and the Israeli aggression on Gaza.
- Arab resistance in Yemen and Iraq.

**SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES OF THE STUDY:**

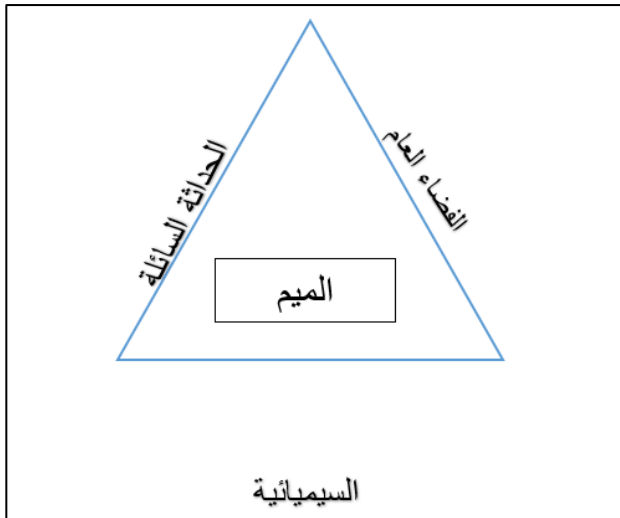
The spatial boundaries of this study are defined by the content of the "*Palestinian Memes*" Instagram page, focusing on analyzing a sample of its posts during the period of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, which began on October 7, 2023, and had not ended by the time this study was conducted. This event is considered a significant political development in the Palestinian context. The study's focus reflects the page's primary emphasis on political dimensions in its posts, leveraging escalating events to create and produce memes. The page was specifically chosen among various Palestinian satirical pages because it specializes in meme creation. Unlike other pages that simply copy and share memes across social media platforms, this page produces its own memes in both Arabic and English using specialized digital applications. Its unique approach has garnered a large following of approximately 900,000 users on Instagram.

**CHAPTER 5**

### Data Analysis:

In analyzing the data collected from the study sample, the focus is on these key aspects:

1. General Description of the Meme,
2. Formal Analysis: This involves looking at colors, camera angles, shot types, gestures, and movements,
3. Textual Analysis,
4. Semiological Analysis: Concentrating on icon, signification, and symbol.



*FIRST MEME:*



The study sample released this meme during the first week of the Israeli aggression on Gaza. It features two primary elements: a handmade bomb and soldiers from the occupying army. Notably, the angle of the shot, taken from a high vantage point, exaggerates the size of the bomb compared to the Israeli soldiers, who appear disproportionately small relative to the natural size of the human body. This creates an impression of the dominance and significance of the larger, elevated element (the bomb) in comparison to the opposing element (the soldiers).

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung states that "colors are not merely visual details but are a silent language that carries within it a deep understanding of our inner worlds. Their effects on our minds and emotions make them a powerful tool for understanding our psychology" (Chandler, 2013). When analyzing the colors in this meme, three main tones stand out: orange, black, and yellow. Orange and black dominate the handmade bomb, while yellow forms the background, resembling the desert or land. Among these, orange emerges as the focal color, associated by psychologists with its ability to attract attention and convey a sense of energy and vitality.

Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure notes that "if the role of words were to represent predefined concepts, we would be able to find a precise equivalent for each concept, as if they were the same in two different languages, but this is not the case" (Chandler, 2013). In the analyzed meme, the English phrase "Hope this email finds you well," typically used at the beginning of a formal email, is repurposed with irony. Here, it accompanies the bomb rather than an email, creating a stark contrast between the polite formal tone and the violent visual context, amplifying the meme's satirical effect.

Semiological theory, particularly in linguistics, posits that one must first examine the commonalities within systems of the same type. In this meme, the creator establishes a connection between the bomb and the email introduction, crafting an ironic message that reflects the bomb's perceived purpose or "outcome."

Focusing on the symbolism of shapes, the circle plays a prominent role in the meme's design. The circle represents completeness and wholeness; its lack of clear starting or ending points conveys unity, perfection, and continuity. Furthermore, the circle's

association with cycles and renewal signifies that events or processes can repeat indefinitely, symbolizing life's cyclical nature and continuous change (أحمد، 2005).

When conducting a semiological analysis, we must also address the icon, defined as "a sign that refers to the object we indicate by virtue of qualities it possesses that are unique to it" (تشاندلز، 2013). In this context, the handmade bomb serves as the central icon, anchoring the general message of the meme by linking it to its symbolic meaning conveyed in the accompanying text. This connection relies heavily on the cultural and social context in which the meme was created, aligning with meme theory's assertion of memes as cultural transmitters embedded with scientific, intellectual, and even religious implications.

The interaction between the text (signifier) and the visual icon (the handmade bomb) creates a unified image that conveys a deeper meaning. This interpretation is influenced by collective memory, shaped by real-life experiences projected onto the analysis of the meme. Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity*, posits that "our ability to break down barriers is what leads us to meaning, as these meanings are hidden behind these walls and cannot be discerned without the capacity to dismantle them" (Bauman, 2016). In this sense, memes act as tools for dismantling barriers of understanding, revealing layered meanings hidden within collective culture.

Returning to the nature of the meme, it is rooted in a collective culture shaped by shared social, cultural, political, and economic relations. As a form of communication, it breaks down walls to reveal meaning, belonging to those who understand its message and context. This alignment with lived reality strengthens its impact. Charles Sanders Peirce supports this notion, stating that "a symbol is a sign that refers to the object it denotes based on a law that is usually a set of general ideas, interpreting the symbol based on the existence of

a mind that uses the symbol; without this mind, there is no connection. What makes it a symbol is fundamentally its understanding through usage. Therefore, the symbol is a conventional sign, or one that relies on acquired or innate habits" (Chandler, 2013).

### SECOND MEME



If we divide the aforementioned meme into three horizontal sections, we notice the first section includes a black background with white text written in formal Arabic: *"The Israeli Heritage Minister: Dropping a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip is a possible solution."*

The second section features three male characters engaging in a discussion about the statement, standing beside a white car. Their gazes are directed inward toward each other within the frame. It is worth noting that these images were taken from an Egyptian film but repurposed for a different context: meme creation. The shot is a medium frame.

In the third section, a sentence in Egyptian colloquial Arabic is written in yellow, illustrating the ongoing discussion among the characters: *"Wait a minute, nuclear what? Where did you even get this 'heritage' from in the first place?"*

The meme design relies on three primary colors: black, white, and yellow. The yellow text, representing the satirical comment, was chosen to draw attention and diminish the importance of the preceding statement.

When considering the timeframe in which the meme was designed and published, it coincided with the viral spread of the Israeli Heritage Minister's statement across social media. The post sparked widespread objection due to the severity of the statement. The meme's concept derived from current events and the aggression, leveraging the audience's knowledge, awareness, and disapproval. It was creatively designed and redistributed on social media platforms. According to Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, the public sphere can be likened to an echo chamber that reflects unresolved problems requiring political intervention. Janis Bled also emphasizes that social networking sites form a real social structure based on the cohesion of their members on two levels: first, within the group through shared language and symbols; and second, with the external world. (Alili, 2013)

The term "heritage" serves as the central element and key concept upon which the meme is built. According to the *Al-Maany* dictionary, the term "heritage" (in Arabic: تراث) refers to "inheritance," stemming from the triliteral root verb *taratha* (تَرَّثَ). It denotes something left behind to be passed from one generation to the next.

In the Palestinian context, Palestinians strive to preserve their heritage, which represents their history and rightful claim to the land amidst attempts to obliterate their identity and enforce Judaization. For any country, heritage symbolizes its civilization and history. In this context, the Israeli Heritage Minister's statement about using nuclear weapons in war drew attention not only for the enormity of the claim but also for the use of the word "heritage." Social media users questioned how a relatively young state, established on land, history, and existence that were not its own, could claim to have heritage or even a minister of heritage.

The historical context surrounding the use of the term "heritage" played a significant role in crafting the meme. This aligns with the findings of (Ayesh, 2022), which considered memes as cultural carriers with scientific, intellectual, and even religious connotations, describing them as a new communicative language.

#### Semiotic Analysis:

From a semiotic perspective, focusing on the icon, symbol, and signification, we observe that the word "heritage" carries a specific image and pattern in people's minds. It is tied to the cultural and historical legacy of a particular community. In the Palestinian context, it evokes images of cultural heritage such as traditional Palestinian arts, literature, and significant religious and historical landmarks that represent a long history.

The term "*heritage*" signifies the values, customs, and practices that a society adopts and passes down through generations. In Palestinian context, it refers to the cultural identity and historical roots, fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty to a shared cultural legacy. Preserving this heritage is not only a social responsibility but also crucial for maintaining Palestinian identity in the face of Judaization efforts. These efforts involve renaming cities, streets, and villages, as well as altering historical and religious landmarks.

In this context, Khalil Tufkaji, head of the Maps Department at the Arab Studies Society, pointed out that Israel has long pursued a program aimed at Judaizing Palestine through various laws, including the Land Expropriation Law for public purposes and the Building Regulation Law. He stressed that these laws have enabled the confiscation of about 87% of Jerusalem's total area, with the goal of increasing the Jewish population to 88%.

The controversy ignited by the minister's statement on social media was effectively captured in a meme that satirized the term "heritage" when associated with an Israeli

minister. This illustrates the relationship that the meme's design relies on, using symbols and signals to communicate within the virtual public sphere. As suggested by Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, the virtual public sphere can act as a stage for power struggles and the manipulation of meanings and symbols. Semiotics examines how power structures control symbols and their meanings to shape public opinion and influence behavior. In conclusion, the interplay between the virtual public sphere and semiotics helps us understand how meanings are constructed, exchanged, and their impacts in the context of the modern digital age.

*THIRD MEME:*



**General Description:** The sample page published this meme approximately on the 230th day of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, following an announcement by the military spokesperson of Al-Qassam Brigades. The statement detailed the luring of a group of Israeli soldiers

into one of the tunnels during their attempt to free previously captured Israeli prisoners, resulting in casualties, injuries, and captures among the soldiers.

The meme draws inspiration from a scene in an old Egyptian film set in a traditional market, a common backdrop in Egyptian comedic or dramatic cinema. It seems the scene has been edited to include new elements. The meme showcases an image of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is dressed in a traditional Egyptian farmer's robe ("*galabia*").

He has an expression of astonishment and confusion while gesturing with his hands. This attire adds a satirical touch, highlighting the difficulties he encounters in negotiations with the opposing party, represented by Yahya Sinwar, the political leader of Hamas in Gaza. Sinwar appears indifferent, looking away from the frame, dressed in a formal white suit that symbolizes power and authority. His holding of a hookah pipe may suggest a readiness for defense or force. The background—a traditional market—serves as a symbol of exchange and negotiation, enriching the political context being portrayed. When examining the gazes of the characters in the meme, all eyes are on Yahya Sinwar, underscoring his importance. However, Sinwar does not meet their gaze; instead, he looks outside the frame. In semiotics, this outward gaze implies contemplation or consideration of something beyond the immediate scene, adding psychological depth to his character. The background characters, representing the general public, seem to be closely watching Sinwar, reflecting the public's keen interest in the issues surrounding prisoners and negotiations.

The way the characters look at each other reveals the power dynamics between Hamas and Netanyahu. Sinwar seems to hold a stronger position, while Netanyahu is depicted as negotiating from a place of weakness.

The language in the meme is casual Egyptian: "Give us the prisoner at yesterday's price, ya Ma'alem." This expression, often heard in local markets during daily haggling, adds a humorous element to the serious and intricate negotiations between political factions. It is essential for grasping the meme's core idea. Chandler (2013) discusses how captions accompanying news images often guide us on how to interpret the subject's facial expressions. Therefore, the connection between text and image is mutually reinforcing,

with the text acting as a key to unlock the image's significance. The meme creator's skill in recognizing and utilizing this relationship ensures that the intended message is effectively communicated.

**Semiotic Analysis:** A closer look at the meme's design shows that the visual components, particularly the faces of the Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, serve as recognizable symbols for viewers, enabling quick identification and sharing of the message. These symbols are based on actual images and are repurposed in different contexts, making them easily relatable to the public. Today's communication methods have increased the speed and scope of such messages. Bauman, in his work *Liquid Modernity*, points out that contemporary society often discards old practices, prompting the need to discover and implement new ones to adapt to changing life patterns and challenges. Memes, as a modern medium, represent one of these new practices. They function as cultural artifacts passed from person to person through replication or imitation, creating a form of digital content—whether text, image, or video—that starts in a particular setting and spreads to a broader audience. This phenomenon crosses geographical and cultural lines, primarily depending on visual elements for its swift spread (Nafousi, 2020).

**Symbolism in the Meme:** The meme draws on symbols like traditional attire and recognizable political figures. These cultural symbols are embedded in a common sociocultural understanding, which helps the meme circulate within communities that grasp these references. This quality makes the meme effective in public discussion, as it swiftly captures attention and generates interest, especially since it uses symbols instead of direct confrontation.

Hannah Arendt stated: “True political activity requires a public space where individuals can act and speak freely, making the world more understandable and transparent.” Here, the meme presents the issue of prisoner exchange deals within a satirical framework, functioning as an informal platform to provoke discussion on the topic—specifically the political tensions between Hamas and Israel and the exchange of prisoners—making it a subject of public debate.

**Meaning in the Meme:** The meaning of the meme lies in its satire of the negotiation process and the outcomes of the war up to that point, particularly the capture of Israeli soldiers during their failed attempt to free prisoners. The meme’s design incorporates symbols familiar to the Palestinian and Arab audiences, particularly those aware of the events of the aggression. This reliance on shared cultural knowledge enhances the meme's comprehensibility and effectiveness—it ultimately belongs to those who understand it.

**Art as a Reflection of Life:** Oscar Wilde stated: “Art imitates life,” suggesting that art reflects and mimics life. Our understanding of life comes from various fields, such as reading, watching news and television, and participating in interest-based groups. Habermas emphasized that the public sphere is a space where individuals gather to exchange ideas and engage in discussions, leading to the formation of public opinion and collective knowledge. Art, in this context, frames this knowledge and presents it in various forms, including memes.

*FOURTH MEME:*



**General Description:** The meme combines two images to deliver its message. In the upper section, an image of Tel Aviv with black smoke billowing in the sky is accompanied by the caption: “*Qassam rockets are directly hitting Tel Aviv.*” The lower section features an image of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at a conference, asleep with translation headphones on his ears, with the caption in Arabic: “*The Iron Dome.*”

Starting with the placement of the two images, the Qassam rockets over Tel Aviv are positioned at the top to signify importance compared to the lower image. The graphic design website *Grafill* explains that a visual hierarchy arranges elements to place the most important parts at the top and the less important ones below, thereby directing the audience’s attention to them.

The meme integrates three elements: (1) Qassam rockets, (2) the Iron Dome, and (3) President Mahmoud Abbas. The first element, Qassam rockets, does not appear explicitly but is represented through the smoke rising in the Tel Aviv sky, as indicated by the accompanying caption. The phrase “*are directly hitting*” implies that the Iron Dome failed to intercept them. The second image complements this meaning by juxtaposing the caption “*The Iron Dome*” with an image of President Abbas asleep, wearing black headphones, symbolizing the ineffectiveness of the much-celebrated Iron Dome.

The designer specifically chose Mahmoud Abbas to pair with the Iron Dome, emphasizing the marginal and ineffective role of the Palestinian Authority during the Israeli aggression on Gaza. This meaning is reinforced by depicting Abbas asleep and wearing headphones, symbolizing his detachment from the events surrounding him and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

**Semiotic Analysis:** According to Daniel Chandler, a *symbol* is a type of sign whose relationship with the object it refers to is arbitrary; there is no natural or direct connection between the symbol and its meaning. Instead, understanding a symbol depends on social and cultural conventions. This aligns with the nature of memes, which are designed based on the political, social, and cultural context of a society. For example, in the meme, the first symbol, Qassam rockets, does not inherently represent violence or resistance but has become a symbol of both due to its social and political context. Israelis may interpret Qassam rockets as a symbol of violence, while Palestinians may see them as a symbol of resistance. Similarly, black smoke, while not naturally linked to destruction, is culturally understood as a sign of war-induced devastation. The second element, President Mahmoud Abbas asleep, does not naturally signify complacency. However, in this context, it symbolizes inaction and ineffectiveness. The Iron Dome, which is generally seen as a defensive weapon, is associated with security and protection in Israeli society.

**Iconic Representation:** An *icon* relies on a direct resemblance between the sign and the object it represents. In this meme, the smoke rising from the bombardment serves as an icon of destruction, based on the visual similarity between actual smoke caused by explosions and the image shown. Similarly, the image of President Abbas sleeping acts as an icon of neglect or lack of seriousness, as the visual resemblance between a sleeping

person and inattention conveys the intended message of leadership complacency. The juxtaposition of the term “*Iron Dome*” with the image of a sleeping Mahmoud Abbas employs irony, transforming the figure into an icon representing inefficiency in protection. The humor in the accompanying captions skillfully uses visual icons to emphasize the contrast between the expected role of the Iron Dome (protection) and the reality (inaction and inefficiency).

Critical Analysis: German prominent philosopher, sociologist, and musicologist, Theodor Adorno once said, “*Our need for thought compels us to think,*” emphasizing how political pressures and algorithmic censorship can stifle creative expression. This fourth meme employs vital political symbols to critique Palestinian leadership and voice public frustration over its failure to tackle security and political issues. It also captures the growing disillusionment among Palestinians about their leaders' ability to effectively promote or defend their cause. The humor in this meme adds a satirical twist when it underscores the gap between what is expected from leadership to do (provide defense and protection) and what actually is going on (fall asleep in an urgent Arab summit). While it's funny, it also delivers a sharp critique, showing how satire and contradiction can serve as powerful tools in semiotics to express complex ideas.

Contextual Relevance: Memes do not emerge in a vacuum; they are shaped by the context in which they are created. The ongoing struggle of Palestinians for safety and effective leadership is at the heart of this meme. In his book ‘*Leave Us Alone,*’ Grover Norquist (2009) discusses how government overreach and intervention contribute to societal challenges, focusing on the divide between those who seek minimal government and those who benefit from its expansion. He suggests that the lack of safety connects various societal

challenges and uncertainties. Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity*, argues how the growing "liquefaction" of modern life leads to insecurity, which is intensified by the rising individual responsibilities across generations. This sense of insecurity fuels a collective desire for safety, which is evident in the meme's critique of leadership. As Saleh (2022) pointed out, satire emerges as a means of expression in response to the failure of serious efforts to address political issues. This meme exemplifies such satire, humorously yet effectively critiquing the ineffectiveness of Palestinian leadership and the Iron Dome.

*FIFTH MEME:*



**General Description:** The previous meme depicts the city of Kiryat Shmona in northern occupied Palestine, with flames and smoke rising in the background, covering the area. The meme labels it as "*Mexico Filter*," a reference to the yellow and orange tones associated with a "Mexican filter," which evokes a hot and sandy atmosphere reminiscent of Mexico.

This meme was designed within the political context of the ongoing escalation between Hezbollah and Israel in northern occupied

Palestine. The escalation began alongside the Israeli aggression on Gaza, with Hezbollah linking the cessation of hostilities to an end to the aggression on Gaza. Despite Israel's frequent attempts to conceal casualties, injuries, and damage, this image and others like it highlight the scale of destruction and fires that persisted for several days due to Hezbollah's rockets targeting Kiryat Shmona, a city in northern occupied Palestine with a population of approximately 23,076 residents.

Elements of the Meme: The meme highlights key elements, particularly the text: "KIRYAT SHMONA GOT THAT MEXICO FILTER ON." This phrase humorously implies that the settlement of "Kiryat Shmona" looks as if it has been edited with a photo filter that gives it a "*Mexican vibe*." The sarcastic tone contrasts the city's damaged and smoky appearance with the bright and colorful aesthetic typically associated with such filters. The "*Mexico filter*" usually evokes images of hot, dusty, and vibrant scenes, which ironically mirrors the city's current state due to the fires. This adds a layer of irony, juxtaposing the expected lively image of a bustling city with its current desolate and ruined condition. The shift from its former state to a quiet and empty one reflects themes of liquid modernity, where identities and social conditions change rapidly in response to evolving circumstances.

Visual Analysis: The image features several significant symbols:

- Smoke and Fire: These elements dominate the background, symbolizing destruction and the aftermath of rocket attacks.
- Yellow and Orange Hues: The warm colors saturate the image, representing the intense heat, fires, and devastation, while also evoking the typical Mexican climate—hot, dry, and vibrant.

- Empty Streets and Quiet Buildings: The foreground depicts deserted streets and still buildings, conveying a sense of abandonment and fear.

These visual elements, along with the accompanying text, create a satirical commentary on the settlement of Kiryat Shmona's situation. The blend of irony and contradiction amplifies the meme's effect, making its message clearer and more engaging.

Context and Symbolism: The symbols in this meme, such as the text, smoke, fire, and desolate cityscape, together create a satirical commentary on the condition of Kiryat Shmona settlement. The stark difference between the ideal image of a lively, populated city and the harsh reality of destruction and emptiness tells a compelling story. As mentioned earlier, Israel's efforts to downplay its losses and impose publication restrictions have led social media users to share their thoughts and observations online. This tension between freedom and limitation mirrors the everyday political experiences of Palestinians, where the digital realm serves as a safe space for critical and satirical voices. Memes, as part of this online environment, provide an alternative avenue for open commentary, highlighting the constraints of traditional public discourse.

*SIXTH MEME:*



**General Description:** The meme consists of a scene taken from a TV series or movie, featuring a man in traditional attire and a woman with sorrowful expressions. The image has been edited to include a photo of Queen

Rania, wife of the King of Jordan, in the top right corner, seemingly added using photo editing software. A sarcastic caption in colloquial Egyptian Arabic reads: "You must feel relieved now; four Israeli mothers no longer have to worry about their sons."

This meme was created in response to the Nuseirat massacre during the Israeli aggression on Gaza, which resulted in approximately 600 casualties and injuries. During the same event, the Israeli forces managed to free four Israeli prisoners held by the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas. The meme sarcastically sympathizes with Queen Rania, assuring her that the four Israeli mothers can now find solace, contrasting this with the plight of Palestinian mothers who lost their children, have imprisoned children, or are enduring other hardships. The facial expressions of the actor seem to confront Queen Rania, reminding her of the other side of the war—the ongoing suffering of Palestinians. The farmer character in the image looks inward with hand gestures that express rejection and anger, while Queen Rania's gaze is directed outward, with expressions of shock and astonishment, as if she is looking beyond the frame. This gaze suggests emotional detachment or perhaps a focus on something outside the scene's scope, whereas the

farmer's intense engagement reflects his emotional involvement in the issue being discussed.

**Semiotic Analysis:** Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founders of semiotics, noted that "the sign is not a single entity but dual." This means that an image is a holistic unit, where each component complements the other to convey the intended meaning. In this meme, the text acts as a symbol conveying a critical message about the plight of Israeli mothers and highlights Arab perspectives on the aggression against Gaza. This symbolism relies on a shared social and cultural understanding among the audience of the page. The icon, represented by Queen Rania's recognizable face, is immediately identifiable to Arab and Palestinian audiences. This recognition adds layers of meaning related to her status, role, and possible opinions or statements on the topic. The second character, the farmer, symbolizes frustration or anger, serving as a representation of Palestinian public sentiment toward Arab official positions on the Israeli aggression. The signification in this meme is the result of the interplay between the symbols and icons. The combination of the text with the images creates a specific meaning. The text addresses Israeli mothers while integrating a well-known figure (Queen Rania), signaling that the person represented by the text is part of the broader discourse or stance on the issue.

Facial expressions and gazes add another layer of meaning. The outward gaze of Queen Rania suggests concern or detachment, while the farmer's passionate demeanor reflects anger and rejection. These visual elements work together to deliver a critical or satirical message about a political stance that resonates with Palestinian and Arab audiences.

**Message Delivery:** The visual and textual elements interact to convey a more complex message. Analyzing these elements deciphers the meme's intended meaning. Chandler, in

his book *Semiotics: The Basics*, stated: “No discourse is comprehensible outside the framework of its code.” Understanding the meme requires grasping the context in which it was created. Facial expressions and gazes enhance the text’s meaning, fostering a critical understanding of the scene. By combining icons and symbols, the designer constructs a message that relies on the audience’s cultural and political knowledge, rooted in the lived political context.

The fusion of these components allows the meme to convey a complex message in a simple and effective manner. Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity*, observed: “In a world of liquid modernity where positions, tasks, roles, and relationships cannot remain stable for long, long-term strategies and rushed life plans become futile.” In this context, simplifying complex ideas becomes necessary to adapt to rapid changes and immediate responses. This is mirrored in the public space, where political and social issues are openly discussed, enabling citizens to reach new agreements through public dialogue (Zrouq, 2018). Simplifying complex ideas into straightforward and direct messages ensures that they are understood and absorbed by a wider audience, while maintaining the core essence of the message .

*SEVENTH MEME:*



**General Description:** During the Israeli aggression on Gaza, with a significant rise in civilian casualties, particularly among women and children, alongside the targeting of hospitals, schools, and humanitarian centers, global protests erupted across American universities in solidarity with Gaza. These

protests gained substantial momentum in early 2024 as students expressed their opposition to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and their universities' perceived support for Israel through investments and policies.

The protests kicked off at Columbia University on April 17, 2024, where students set up tents and demanded that the university cut ties with companies that support Israeli military actions. These demonstrations led to arrests and attracted significant media coverage, reminiscent of the passionate protests during the Vietnam War in 1968. The movement quickly spread to other universities across the U.S., including New York University, Harvard, and the University of California, as well as institutions in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Europe, showcasing a global wave of solidarity with Gaza and calls for changes in policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Protesters created tent encampments in public areas and advocated for divestment from Israel. Despite the peaceful nature of these protests, university administrations and security forces reacted

with violence, including arrests, denial of graduation privileges, and even university closures.

**Context and Content of the Meme:** The meme was designed within this political context to highlight the stark contradiction in how these peaceful protests were met with violence and force, whereas calls for the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, including explicit statements by some activists and Israeli officials advocating for nuclear attacks on Gaza, were not met with similar resistance.

The meme features illustrations of police officers, individuals dressed as police, and a person holding a sign that reads: "NUKE GAZA NOW." Despite the extremism and violence of this statement, the illustration portrays the police as either supportive of or indifferent to the activist, implying that the individual is regarded as a "peace activist." This suggests that violent and extremist rhetoric is either tolerated or ignored. The police officers are depicted wearing sunglasses and smoking cigarettes, symbolizing their apathy.

In stark contrast, the meme portrays how the police handle protesters expressing solidarity with Gaza: heavily armed and ready to use violence against peaceful protesters. The protesters, camped out in tents, are shown as a non-threatening group opposing injustice and supporting the Palestinian cause. The peaceful nature of their protest underscores the unjustified violence and repression used against them.

**Themes of Contradiction and Bias:** The meme critiques the double standards in the treatment of individuals based on their political stances. For instance, an activist calling for violence against Gaza is labeled a "peace activist," while pro-Palestinian protesters are accused of "inciting genocide." This duality exposes a bias in how violence and justice-related issues are addressed, highlighting institutional and societal prejudice toward matters

involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The design integrates real and satirical cartoon images with text to construct its meaning within the political context. According to semiotics: *“All systems of perception are languages”* (Chandler, 2013). Understanding the symbols within the text leads to comprehending its language, or meaning. Gestalt psychologists, as cited by Chandler, argue that *“human visual perception carries universal traits that can be considered a semiotic cognitive code.”*

**Liquid Modernity and Public Spaces:** In the era of liquid modernity, values and attitudes shift rapidly, reflecting inconsistencies and contradictions in how issues are handled. The public sphere plays a role in disseminating these contradictions, where public opinion can quickly shift in response to unfolding events. The meme embodies a sharp critique of this inconsistency, shedding light on the biases and injustices prevalent in societal and institutional approaches.

**Symbolism and Visual Messaging:** Through its symbols and visual messaging, the meme conveys a powerful critique of double standards in addressing issues of violence and justice. The elements of the meme, such as the police’s indifference toward violent rhetoric juxtaposed against their aggressive response to peaceful protest, demonstrate how visual icons and messages can shape public opinion and stimulate debate on controversial issues, particularly in modern public spaces like social media. Immanuel Kant, regarded as the philosophical foundation of Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, stated that the public sphere bears a political responsibility. It serves as the domain where critical thought takes form and wields the weapon of critique against anything that contradicts freedom, justice, and virtue (Thabet, 2018). By leveraging symbols and contradictions, the meme critiques

institutional and societal biases while encouraging reflection and discussion about broader issues of injustice and inequality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

EIGHTH MEME:



**General Description:** The meme features actor Giancarlo Esposito in his iconic role as Gus Fring from the series *Breaking Bad*. He is dressed in a formal suit, adjusting his tie, and maintaining a steady, direct gaze at the camera. This expression conveys confidence, authority, and composure. Despite his calm demeanor, there is an underlying intensity that exudes strength, control, focus, and determination. The pose and facial expression suggest a meticulous strategist

who carefully plans each step, reinforcing the impression of a disciplined and effective leader.

The act of adjusting his tie symbolizes control and attention to detail, portraying a readiness to face challenges and maintain dominance. This gesture amplifies the character's image as a disciplined, professional, and self-assured individual.

Textual Elements: The meme combines Arabic and English text:

- The Arabic text reads: "أنت بتهاجم السفن ويتخسرهم، أنا بهاجم رأس المال نفسه" (You target the ships and cause them losses; I target the capital itself). This conveys a sense of strategic superiority, implying that the person in the image outperforms others in their methods and actions.
- The English text states: "We are not the same" emphasizing the core message of the Arabic text and underscoring the stark difference in approach and impact.

Political Context: The meme references the early stages of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, when the Yemeni political and military group Ansar Allah (the Houthis) announced their support for the Palestinian resistance. They targeted Israeli and Israeli-supporting vessels in the Red Sea.

The character in the meme, presumably representing an Egyptian from Alexandria who directly attacks Israeli interests, contrasts this with the Houthi attacks on ships. The message highlights a comparison between direct attacks on Israel's core resources ("capital") and the indirect economic losses caused by targeting vessels.

This meme does not diminish the Houthi role; instead, it portrays a friendly rivalry among Arab nations and movements in their support for Gaza. It contrasts the active solidarity of grassroots and political movements with the silence of Arab governments on the issue.

Semiotic Analysis: The selection of Gus Fring as the main character is particularly fitting because of his intelligence, calm demeanor, and strategic decision-making. His dual nature as a respected businessman and a mastermind behind intricate criminal operations mirrors the rapid changes in contemporary political strategies. While the page clearly supports the Houthi resistance, the choice of this character may subtly suggest that political figures must adapt to constantly evolving environments, taking on multiple roles to effectively navigate

political complexities. Gus Fring's traits—careful planning, flexibility, and decisive action—align with the meme's core political message: achieving success in modern politics demands quick adaptation and strategic decisiveness. The meme powerfully communicates this idea through the combination of Fring's image, strong textual elements, and the broader context of support for Palestinian resistance across various Arab fronts, reflecting the hopes and desires of the people.

**Functional Use of Character:** The character's qualities serve a distinct communicative purpose, utilizing his traits to strengthen the meme's message. As Levi-Strauss points out, "All myths and stories can be condensed into a limited number of functional elements that characters represent." By drawing on Fring's persona, the meme encapsulates its political narrative within the cultural and contextual framework of his character. The meme's design demonstrates how a single character can be employed as a tool to articulate complex political concepts. By stripping down the broader narrative into succinct symbolic and functional elements, the meme succeeds in delivering its political message with clarity and impact.

**Broader Implications:** This meme operates as a powerful communication tool in the digital public sphere, combining cultural and political symbols to draw attention to the issue of Palestinian resistance. It critiques the silence of Arab governments while celebrating grassroots and political movements for their active solidarity. By blending iconic imagery and impactful text, it underscores the importance of direct, strategic action in a rapidly evolving political landscape.

As Levi-Strauss suggests, "Deconstructing the story told by a myth into its simplest possible components enables us to understand its functional significance." Similarly, this

meme deconstructs political dynamics into simple, relatable elements to effectively convey its message within the larger cultural and political discourse.

*NINTH MEME:*



The preceding meme is inspired by a well-known scene from the animated series *Scooby-Doo*. In this iconic scene, the character "Fred" reveals the mask of a disguised individual. In the modified version of the meme, the face of the disguised character has been replaced with the logo of Al Arabiya Channel, and upon unveiling the mask, the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) logo is revealed underneath. The accompanying text in English reads: "Let's see who this

really is."

**Semiotic Framework:** The Moroccan semiotician Said Benkirane (Benkird, 2012) asserts that "perception does not occur instantaneously without intermediaries. An image does not manifest in the mind based solely on its specific existence; instead, it is presented to the eye through an abstract schema known as the 'cognitive structure' or 'cognitive model.'" This cognitive structure acts as a filter, helping the viewer to identify and understand components of the image through commonly shared cultural frameworks. These frameworks facilitate the processes of recognition, naming, and classification, which are

crucial for interpreting the intended message of the meme. In this particular meme, the cognitive model is built from various interconnected elements, such as the characters, logos, text, and the wider cultural backdrop of Scooby-Doo.

**Characters and Cognitive Models:** Characters and Cognitive Models: Fred Jones, a character from Scooby-Doo, plays a vital role in conveying the meme's message. As the leader of the group and a problem-solver, Fred is recognized for his intelligence, organization, and commitment to uncovering the truth, making him an ideal choice for this role. Throughout the series, he consistently strives to keep the group united and ensure the safety of his friends while solving mysteries. This connection to truth-seeking and rationality emphasizes the meme's goal of "unmasking" hidden realities. Choosing Fred to unveil the mask is symbolic, representing an effort to expose the underlying truth behind Al Arabiya's media coverage. The act of removing the mask signifies a desire to reveal what is perceived as bias or misinformation, linking Fred's investigative nature with the meme's critical perspective. **Signifier, Signified, and Symbolism:** To analyze the meme's cognitive model, it's essential to examine the signifier and signified. According to Jonathan Clare, "The signifier, in its fundamental existence, operates through signifieds."

In this meme: The signifier consists of both visual and textual components, such as Fred removing the mask, the "Al Arabiya" logo on the mask, the "Israeli Broadcasting Authority" logo that is revealed underneath, and the accompanying English text. The signified conveys the underlying message: that Al Arabiya serves as a disguise for the Israeli Broadcasting Authority, implying that the content presented by Al Arabiya may be influenced or aligned with Israeli viewpoints. The logos of Al Arabiya and the Israeli Broadcasting Authority act as symbols, representing two distinct media organizations. The

meme utilizes these symbols to establish a link between the two entities, critiquing Al Arabiya's perceived bias towards the Israeli perspective in its reporting. Fred functions as an icon, embodying the quest for truth. His portrayal as a clever and capable investigator enhances the meme's aim of uncovering and questioning media narratives. The image of Fred pulling off the mask represents the act of exposing hidden truths, aligning with the meme's critique of Al Arabiya.

**Use of Colors and Contrasts:** The meme's design effectively uses logos and their colors to illustrate the disparity between appearance and reality. The Al Arabiya logo, representing the surface level, sharply contrasts with the Israeli Broadcasting Authority logo, which symbolizes the underlying truth. This contrast highlights the difference between Al Arabiya's public image and the message the meme seeks to communicate about its perceived role.

**Shared Knowledge and Irony:** The meme relies on the audience's understanding of the classic Scooby-Doo scene, along with their awareness of Al Arabiya and the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. This connection enables it to convey its message effectively to those who are culturally informed. The irony is especially notable, transforming a familiar and playful pop culture reference into a sharp commentary on media biases. The caption, "Let's see who this really is," deepens the critique by implying a journey of uncovering that reveals an unexpected or enlightening truth.

**Broader Implications:** The meme offers a satirical perspective on the way media representation and bias function, prompting significant inquiries into how narratives are created and disseminated. By using recognizable symbols and cultural references, it demonstrates how semiotic tools can effectively critique and question dominant narratives.

Drawing on Fred Jones and the theme of unmasking, the meme connects to a broader discussion about truth and accountability in media. It emphasizes the role of satire and irony in fostering critical engagement with media content, encouraging viewers to examine the sources and motives behind the information they come across.

In toto, by combining semiotic elements, cultural references, and irony, the meme effectively critiques Al Arabiya's supposed bias in its reporting. It merges humor with serious commentary, employing the visual metaphor of unmasking to uncover hidden truths and challenge established narratives. This layered approach allows the meme to resonate with its audience, offering a critical yet relatable perspective on media and its influence in the broader sociopolitical context.

*TENTH MEME:*

New version: The meme features a scene from an Egyptian film, showcasing actor Adel Imam as he walks down some stairs in a jacket and jeans, appearing puzzled. Next to him is a small box displaying a close-up image of a tank. At the top of the meme, there's text in the Egyptian dialect that reads: "دي مش نقطة الصفر" ("This is not zero point"). The second part of the meme reinforces the idea with the comment: "ده داخل يغير زيت للدبابة"

("He is going in to change the oil of the tank"). This funny remark implies that the resistance is so close to the tank that they have metaphorically moved past the "zero point" and can even take the time to do something as ordinary as changing its oil. This contrast not only emphasizes the bravery of those planting the bomb but also pokes fun at the tank's supposed power.

Symbols and Semiotics: The main symbolic elements in the meme include the text in Egyptian dialect and the image of Adel Imam next to the tank. The text humorously describes an action—changing the oil of the tank—that is completely unexpected in a war

context, adding a layer of irony. The image of Adel Imam is taken from a film scene, leveraging his status as a cultural icon in Arab popular culture, known for his satirical comedic roles. The tank, typically a symbol of military power, is stripped of its seriousness and portrayed as an object needing routine maintenance, highlighting the resistance's audacity and resourcefulness. The significance of the image lies in its underlying meaning: it mocks the surprising situation by combining incongruous elements—an everyday task like an oil change with the imposing image of a tank. This contrast creates comedic irony, where the tank, despite its strength and destructive power, is depicted as something trivial in light of the resistance's actions. Adel Imam's iconic presence adds another layer of significance. In Egyptian cinema, Imam's roles often evoke humor and nostalgia, making him an ideal figure for satire. Conversely, the tank is usually associated with military dominance and control. In this meme, its symbolic power is turned on its head, transforming it into a mundane, almost laughable object, thereby diminishing its intended intimidation.

Visual and Contextual Analysis: The background colors, with their light blue, gray, and brown shades, reflects a sense of calmness and dullness. This peaceful setting sharply contrasts with the typical chaos and destruction linked to tanks, underscoring the resistance's indifference to the tank's might. The character's gaze, directed outside the frame, hints at confusion regarding something unseen, reinforcing the notion that the situation is both unexpected and odd. The blend of visual and textual elements in the meme effectively illustrates semiotic principles. By featuring recognizable symbols like the prominent Egyptian comedian 'Adel Imam' and the tank, the meme constructs a satirical narrative that mocks traditional notions of power and control. The humor and irony woven

into the piece highlight the resistance's creativity, showcasing their ability to confront symbols of authority.

**Liquid Modernity and the Public Sphere:** This meme embodies the Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, by which he highlights how societies transition from stability to constant change. In this context, fixed symbols like the tank are deconstructed and reinterpreted, prompting us to question their conventional meanings. The tank, once a representation of control and power, is trivialized, demonstrating how humor and satire can undermine even the most entrenched symbols in nowadays society. This adaptable reinterpretation reflects the uncertainties and rapid transformations characteristic of liquid modernity, where nothing is immune to critique or change. Imam's satirical performance further showcases this adaptability: His comedic approach to serious subjects illustrates how individuals navigate the fluid dynamics of modern life, using humor as a coping mechanism for ongoing change. The satire in the meme serves to blur the boundaries between serious and trivial issues, challenging traditional values and highlighting the malleability of symbols.

**Public Sphere and Social Interaction:** The wide spread of this meme in the digital public sphere denotes its role as a platform for public engagement. By merging humor with political commentary, the meme challenges traditional values associated with symbols like the tank, reshaping public discourse to mirror changing social values. This viewpoint resonates with Casillo's idea of *public space* as a venue for interactions where various identities and opinions converge to discuss political issues. In this meme, satire fosters the debate over prime political matters, encouraging audiences to reconsider established notions of power and resistance.

To sum up, the Adel Imam meme employs familiar cultural symbols and humor to question conventional ideas of military power and authority. Through irony, visual elements, and cultural references, it delivers a sharp critique of the tank's symbolic dominance, highlighting the courage and defiance of the resistance. The meme's connection to liquid modernity underscores its importance in a rapidly evolving world, where symbols are continually reinterpreted, and public discourse adapts to new realities. By intertwining humor with political insights, the meme shifts perceptions of power and resistance, reinforcing its role as a powerful tool for social and political critique in the digital public sphere.

#### A Semiotic-Ethical Analysis of the “Adel Imam and the Tank” Meme

This meme serves as a vivid example of acute ethical tension between the function of comedy as a tool of resistance and the reality of suffering symbolized by the tank—an apparatus of oppression that crushed the bodies of children beneath its wheels during the war on Gaza.

##### 1. The Victims' Dignity Perspective

In light of Susan Sontag's (2003) theoretical contributions (Regarding the Pain of Others, 2003), employing the image of a tank in a humorous context risks undermining the ethics of representation by reducing it to oversimplification or even vulgarity. Particularly when the tank is interpreted as a witness to a real massacre, where children were crushed, the satirical framing of the killing machine—even if it weakens its symbolic power—risks transforming the symbol of violence into an object of ridicule. This could be perceived as an indirect denial of the horror of the tragedy or as entertainment at its expense.

## 2. The Perspective of Resistance Through Irony

Building on Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) theory of carnival and popular satire, this meme can be interpreted as a form of symbolic subversion that redefines power relations. The tank, a dominant icon of fear and control, is stripped of its menace and reframed as a "machine in need of repair," reflecting the creative ingenuity of resistance in dismantling the enemy's iconography. In this sense, the meme becomes a form of psychological resistance, allowing Arab audiences to restore symbolic balance through laughter at the "master of death."

## 3. The Perspective of Visual Consumption and Commodification

According to Theodor Adorno's (1991) critique of mass visual culture, there is a danger that images of death might be consumed within the rapid tempo of meme culture and digital humor without confronting the real pain they encapsulate. Even when viewers are conscious of the symbolic depth of the image, the process of recycling trauma into satirical content risks commodifying sorrow and neutralizing its emotional gravity within a visual discourse that demands lightness and amusement.

## 4. Intent and Context

Ethically, the meaning of a meme is also shaped by the intent of its creator and the awareness of its audience:

If produced within a Palestinian or solidaristic context, the meme can be understood as a form of symbolic negotiation with suffering, converting pain into empowerment.

However, if circulated out of context or merely for light-hearted satire, it may devolve into detaching the symbol of violence from its ethical weight.

*ELEVENTH MEME:*

This meme depicts a well-known cartoon character appearing sad or confused, accompanied by the caption “It’s because I am Jewish.” This statement underscores how animated figures can convey themes of innocence and victimhood. In the lower-right corner, there’s an image of the

Nazis icon of Adolf Hitler, infamous for his extreme views, animosity towards Jews, and the horrific events of the Holocaust, shown with a look of anger and hostility. The components of the meme serve as linguistic symbols that emphasize the differences in Israeli behavior based on the language used. The upper section of the image features the phrase "Israel in English," while the lower section states "Israel in Hebrew." This contrast highlights the gap between the two versions of Israel's international vs domestic (actual) narrative, which aims to project an innocent and victimized image to Western audiences, and its domestic violent narrative; highlighting a tone of aggression and extremism.

**Symbols and Contrasts in the Meme:** The upper part of the meme features a cartoon character that embodies innocence and victimhood. This imagery, aimed at Western audiences, portrays Israel as a sympathetic victim. In stark contrast, the lower section includes Adolf Hitler, which introduces a threatening and extremist tone within the Hebrew

context directed at Israelis or Palestinians. Hitler's image represents aggression and hostility, sharply contrasting with the innocent depiction above. This juxtaposition serves as a satirical commentary on the moral contradictions between Israel's external narrative, which seeks global sympathy, and its internal rhetoric, often characterized by aggression or extremism. The inclusion of Hitler amplifies this critique by recalling the historical animosity he held towards Jews, while also mirroring the aggressive and extremist elements found in Israeli internal discourse. The satirical irony of employing the character of Hitler—an emblem of violence against Jews—to highlight extremism in Israeli rhetoric adds layers of complexity! This situation brings to light two conflicting historical memories: the Holocaust—emphasizes Jewish victimhood, and Nazism—intensifies violence and extremism. The meme leverages this tension to highlight the moral ambiguity and contradictions inherent in the dual narratives of Israeli discourse.

**Semiotic Analysis:** In means of semiology, the meme stresses the employment of conflicting texts, images, and symbols to construct new varied meanings. In this context, signs are not static; they are shaped by cultural and political environments. The cartoon character represents the 'victim', while 'Hitler' symbolizes the aggressor, highlighting a clear duality that underscores the moral and rhetorical inconsistencies in Israeli political discourse. The concept of liquid modernity—coined by the sociologist Bauman's—provides a theoretical framework to explore such a contradiction. Given liquid modernity is characterized by fluidity, ambiguity, and the instability of identities and positions, the meme aims to expose the way Israeli discourse adapts to attract varied segments of audiences, within varied contexts. E.g., presenting a sympathetic and victimized identity to

Western audiences, while in the same time, domestically adopting a more aggressive and extreme stance.

**Identity and Discourse in Liquid Modernity:** In the context of liquid modernity, identity and discourse shows to be inherently adaptable, shifting according to different situations. In this meme this adaptability is raised in showing how Israelis depict themselves as victims (represented by the cartoon character) in English, while in Hebrew, they adopt a tone of strength and extremism (symbolized by Nazi Hitler). This flexible approach aligns with Bauman's idea that liquid modernity lacks fixed values or morals, allowing identities and narratives to change based on immediate circumstances. The moral ambiguity in this meme is evident in the dual representation of Jewish identity, which evokes sympathy in English, contrasted with the reference to Hitler in Hebrew discourse to express power and aggression. This contradiction captures the moral flexibility typical of liquid modernity, where stark opposites are employed to achieve specific rhetorical effects.

**Cultural and Social Significance:** The meme also leverages sociocultural norms to convey the message that, the exposed character and Nazi symbolic Hitler are not isolated symbols; they exist within a larger framework of signs shaped by cultural exchanges. The victim-aggressor dichotomy highlights how symbols derive their meaning from social and cultural contexts. This supports Id's (2019) assertion that semiotic classifications have become increasingly significant in contemporary culture, where images are pivotal in communication.

**Public Discourse and Social Interaction:** The meme further taps into the concept of the public sphere as a venue for political dialogue. Habermas (1962), he conceptualized the public sphere as a space where individuals come together to discuss and influence political

and societal matters, ideally free from state or economic control. The meme demonstrates this notion by sparking conversations about the contradictions in Israeli rhetoric, employing satire to challenge and reinterpret established narratives. Through social media, this meme contributes to a broader public discourse, urging audiences to examine the authenticity and intentions behind conflicting narratives.

In sum, the meme employs irony, semiotics, and sociocultural symbols to critique the duality of Israeli discourse, emphasizing its moral and rhetorical inconsistencies. The juxtaposition of innocence (cartoon character) with aggression (Nazi Sympol), the meme highlights the fluidity of identity and narrative in a rapidly evolving world, where different contexts allow for stark contradictions to coexist. This irony reflects wider societal trends of adapting values and symbols to appeal to specific audiences, questioning traditional notions of fixed identity and morality. The meme's satirical approach effectively engages with public discourse, utilizing both of humor and contradiction to provoke critical reflection on the complexities of political rhetoric today.

## **CHAPTER 6**

## Discussion of Findings

Theodor Adorno states, “Our need to think is what makes us think” (Bauman, 2016). This idea resonates strongly in the context of memes, as our ongoing efforts to convey messages—whether shaped by social media algorithms or restrictions from authorities—drive us to reflect and find new ways to express ourselves. Writer Milan Kundera, in *Art for Art’s Sake*, claims that “the act of writing, for the poet, means breaking down walls” to discover meaning. In a similar vein, in the world of memes, breaking down these walls means decoding their essence to uncover meanings that “have always existed in their depths” (Bauman, 2016). When viewed through the lens of creativity, which inherently involves challenging conventions, memes push back against the routine following of rules. They disrupt traditional norms, providing meaning through the combination of various visual and textual elements. As Chandler notes in *Semiotics: The Basics*, “No discourse can be understood outside the framework of a code” (Chandler, 2013).

This statement emphasizes the importance of understanding meme signifiers within their specific context. Elements such as facial expressions and gaze direction add depth to the written text, enriching the critical interpretation of the scene. By utilizing icons and established symbols, meme creators develop messages that rely on the audience’s cultural and political awareness, enabling these messages to resonate within the current sociopolitical environment. This combination allows memes to express complex ideas in clear yet impactful ways. Bauman’s concept of liquid modernity provides insight into this trend. He argues that in a world characterized by fluidity and instability, “positions, roles, and relationships cannot remain fixed for long, making long-term strategies and urgent life

plans futile” (Bauman, 2013). In this context, memes adapt by distilling complexities, keeping up with the swift changes in society. According to Zarrouk (2018), the public sphere acts as a platform for simplifying intricate ideas into easily understandable messages. These messages however, maintain their core meaning while reaching a broader audience. This dynamic urges the simplification in a such a dynamic society like Palestine, ensuring that messages remain accessible without sacrificing their essence.

When we observe memes as creative works, it becomes clearer how their effectiveness relies heavily on designated elements, primarily, the choice of characters. Selecting the right character adds depth to the meme’s analysis and understanding, because characters selection is not just decorative but play crucial roles in the way messages are conveyed. For example, Egyptian actors known for their comedic humor are often attendant in memes that other Arab actors for their capacity to introduce irony, or dark humor into the meme’s meaning. Meanwhile, political figures might be depicted as apathetic or indifferent to highlight the gap between their expected roles and actual behaviors. In some instances, characters that embody seriousness, intelligence, or decisiveness are chosen to project these qualities onto the group or idea being presented.

This choice of characters reveals a deeper semiotic layer. Lévi-Strauss notes that while “all known stories and myths yield a multitude of volumes, they can be distilled into a few basic patterns if we extract a limited number of functional elements from the multitude of characters” (Chandler, 2013). Similarly, the characters in memes are simplified to fulfill specific roles, encapsulating political ideas within their design. This process involves “deconstructing the story told by the myth into the smallest possible sentences” (Chandler, 2013). The functional purpose of a character in a meme must align with its intended role,

as satire serves more than just entertainment. The creators of satire—whether through images, drawings, or programs—don't craft humor merely for amusement; rather, they design it to convey meaningful and critical messages rooted in a nuanced understanding of reality and the interconnectedness of events. This perspective aligns with Saleh's (2022) findings, which demonstrated how authors and publications effectively used satire to engage readers and highlight significant issues. Memes, like the satirical works examined by Saleh, thrive on irony and wit to critique societal and political dynamics, ensuring their messages resonate with a broad audience.

#### Language, Text, and the Semiotics of Memes:

Language and text in memes form systems of organized signs that are governed by specific codes, reflecting deeper values, beliefs, and assumptions (Chandler, 2013). However, the text in memes isn't just an isolated element; it functions as part of a cohesive vision where every component—whether textual or visual—is linked within a larger interpretative framework. This framework is used by both meme creators and viewers to generate and understand meaning. The selection of text in a meme is crucial, as it needs to match the intended message. For example, in earlier analyses, colloquial Egyptian dialects were intentionally chosen to bring out a satirical aspect, due to their connection with humor and irony in Egyptian cinema. On the other hand, when discussing global issues like international solidarity with Gaza, English was used, even for Arabic-speaking audiences, to cultivate a sense of worldwide empathy for the cause.

Thus, selecting the appropriate text is crucial in meme construction. Texts in memes vary in interpretative potential depending on the multiplicity of cultural and contextual

interpretations. Their interpretation must align with the meme's visual and textual codes to ensure coherence. Texts in memes often rely on three key aspects:

1. Cultural: Deriving from the cultural context and prior social knowledge of the audience.
2. Symbolic: Representing the deeper connotations carried by specific terms or phrases. For example, in a prior analysis, the term "heritage" held profound symbolic significance for Palestinians, representing their cultural identity and historical rights.
3. Interpretative: Shaped by how audiences interpret text within the broader semiotic system of the meme.

The interaction between these cultural, symbolic, and interpretative dimensions creates powerful literary effects. Yuri Lotman's assertion that "*a poem is a system of systems*" similarly applies to memes, as they operate within layered semiotic structures. Interpreting a meme requires familiarity with the social and textual codes embedded within it. As Chandler (2013) notes, "*the effectiveness of the utterance event depends on the use of a shared code among its participants.*" For example, the meaning of a seemingly ordinary word like "cheese" cannot be understood without contextual knowledge of its non-linguistic associations. Similarly, the interpretative value of memes hinges on the audience's shared understanding of cultural and semiotic codes.

#### IRONY AND CONTRADICTION AS PILLARS OF SATIRICAL MEMES

A key aspect of creating satirical memes is emphasizing contradictions—putting characters or texts in situations that challenge their usual roles or functions. This contrast generates irony, enabling a critical examination of sociopolitical matters. For instance:

- A meme showing the Palestinian president asleep, despite his duties, critiques the perceived apathy or ineffectiveness of the Palestinian Authority in tackling pressing crises.
- Another meme contrasts Netanyahu's media persona—self-assured and arrogant—with a humorous portrayal of him as a simple farmer pleading with al-Senwar, leader of Hamas, about captives. This contradiction exposes the disparity between Netanyahu's public image and the realities concealed by his political rhetoric.

Textual irony is equally significant. In one analyzed meme, the formal phrase "*I hope this email finds you well*" is paired with an image of a hand grenade above Israeli soldiers. While the phrase is typically used in formal correspondence, its placement here subverts its intended politeness, transforming it into a pointed critique of the ongoing conflict. This creative recontextualization delivers sharp commentary while relying on the audience's ability to recognize the irony.

Semiotics identifies irony as a form of "*double encoding*" (Chandler, 2013). It juxtaposes literal meanings with ascribed interpretations, layering messages within specific cultural and social contexts. Irony has long been a hallmark of postmodern texts, allowing creators to reinterpret the world through socially developed codes that adapt to the fluidity of contemporary life.

#### MEMES IN THE CONTEXT OF LIQUID MODERNITY

Bauman's insights in *Liquid Modernity* emphasize that "We can no longer tolerate anything that lasts," which reflects the fleeting nature of contemporary life. Memes, as short-lived digital creations, embody this fluidity. They capture the essence of a "liquid life," where nothing is fixed, and societal norms and realities are in constant motion. Memes uniquely

illustrate the rapid changes and contradictions that define our modern existence. A notable instance is the use of memes in reaction to the ongoing Israeli aggression against Gaza, showcasing their ability to adapt to evolving political narratives. The decisions made by meme creators, such as juxtaposing symbols of victimhood with aggressive language, align with Bauman's idea of societies in transition. In this shifting landscape, memes serve as tools for challenging established narratives, exposing inconsistencies, and fostering deeper critical reflection.

#### Visual Texts as Cultural and Semiotic Systems:

Memes operate within broader cultural and semiotic contexts, functioning as interconnected systems that derive meaning from the interaction of textual, visual, and contextual elements. As Id (2019) notes, the role of visual systems in contemporary culture has grown, underscoring our increasing reliance on images for communication. In this context, memes serve as powerful tools for social commentary, merging humor with critique while navigating cultural complexities. For example, depicting Netanyahu as a desperate farmer or placing formal text in surprising settings leverages shared cultural references to subvert expectations.

These juxtapositions foster wider discussions, allowing memes to resonate with diverse audiences and stimulate critical dialogue. The blend of text, irony, and visuals in memes highlights their unique position as cultural artifacts in today's digital environment. By employing semiotic codes and adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of modern life, memes transcend mere humor to become significant instruments for sociopolitical critique. Their ability to simplify complexities while retaining depth ensures their relevance in a

rapidly changing world, where traditional forms of communication often struggle to keep pace with the fluidity of contemporary society.

Memes serve as a dynamic form of cultural and symbolic interaction, reflecting the evolving nature of public discourse. They offer a space for critique, reflection, and engagement. With their complex design and dependence on shared cultural knowledge, memes remain a vital way to express resistance, solidarity, and humor in a rapidly changing world.

*Memes as Evolving Codes in Liquid Modernity:*

Viewing memes as complex codes within the context of liquid modernity requires recognizing that these codes are not static; they are fluid systems that evolve over time and carry historical, social, and cultural significance. Encoding is a process that adapts based on context and the passage of time. For instance, the meaning of a character in a meme can shift as societal norms, historical events, or cultural perspectives change. As Chandler (2013) notes, "The translation of change in the daily world by reverting to less variable codes makes our environment a text to be read like any other text." This perspective highlights the importance of flexibility in meme creation, as the codes within a meme need to resonate with the audience's current social and cultural landscape while remaining open to ongoing transformations.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE MEME CREATION

To ensure a meme effectively communicates its message and achieves its goals, creators should focus on three key factors:

1. **Social Codes:** Memes are made up of interconnected visual and textual elements that work together to convey a nuanced message. Understanding these elements is crucial for grasping their intended meaning. The audience's familiarity with relevant social and textual codes is essential for effective communication. When the audience recognizes these codes, the meme's ability to convey its message improves, ensuring accurate delivery.
2. **Creative Work and Characters:** Memes should incorporate elements that aid in effectively communicating their message. A vital aspect is the selection of characters that fulfill specific roles. Characters should represent elements that are pertinent to the meme's analysis and interpretation. For example, comedic characters can introduce humor, while political figures might serve as symbols for critique or irony. The thoughtful choice of characters ensures that the meme resonates with its target audience, aligning with its cultural and social context.
3. **Strong Literary Messages** The interplay of cultural, symbolic, and interpretative elements creates significant literary effects. These connections enhance the meaning of the meme and strengthen its ability to convey complex ideas. To interpret any image or text effectively, one must be well-versed in the relevant social and textual codes. A solid understanding of these codes ensures that the meme's message is both clear and impactful.

Memes are lively and constantly evolving cultural artifacts that showcase the combination of visual and textual elements in our fast-paced modern world. Their ability to adapt to changing social contexts and cultural norms makes them a powerful means of conveying complex messages in a simple and engaging manner. For those who create memes, grasping the nuances of social codes, the significance of character choices, and the literary effects that emerge from the blend of cultural, symbolic, and interpretative elements is essential. By mastering these aspects, they can craft memes that not only entertain but also provoke thought, challenge societal norms, and promote meaningful public discussions. Ultimately, memes underscore the power of visual and textual storytelling in a rapidly changing world, enabling individuals and communities to navigate and reinterpret the complexities of modern life through humor, irony, and creativity.

Liquid Modernity and the Public Sphere:

Simplification in Liquid Life (Bauman, 2000): In the context of liquid modernity, complex issues are simplified to align with the rapid changes and instability that characterize this fluid environment. This fluidity is especially evident in memes, which are quickly created and shared in response to current events, embodying the essence of liquid modernity by continuously adopting and integrating new ideas. Furthermore, memes rapidly adjust to social and political changes, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful amid ongoing transformations. These traits enhance their role as tools for cultural critique and social expression.

Dynamic Identity: Memes reflect the constantly shifting nature of identity in liquid modernity, capturing the diverse and evolving identities of their audiences. They serve as instruments to either reinforce collective identity or satirize it, highlighting how identities

develop and interact with various cultural and social contexts. Through their adaptability, memes underscore the fluid process of identity formation.

**Memes in the Public Sphere:** Memes are vital in expanding public discourse by enabling individuals to express their opinions and ideas in clear, accessible ways. This democratization of expression enhances access to public dialogue, making the public sphere more inclusive and encouraging greater participation. Additionally, memes foster digital democracy by allowing individuals to engage in public discussions without relying on traditional intermediaries like conventional media. This empowers people to shape narratives within a democratic society.

**Redefining the Public Sphere:** In today's rapidly changing world, the public sphere is continually shaped by new tools like memes. These tools blur the boundaries between private and public spaces, creating new opportunities for interaction, participation, and discussion. By enhancing communication, memes transform how we engage with the public in the digital age.

In summary, memes are crucial in connecting the concept of liquid modernity with the public sphere. Their quick adaptability to social and political changes, ability to broaden public discussions, and contribution to digital democracy highlight their significance as instruments for social and cultural expression. By encouraging active involvement and closing traditional communication gaps, memes enable individuals to influence societal narratives in innovative ways.

#### A. TEXT

**Texts in Memes:** text plays a crucial role in a broader vision, with all components linked within a common interpretive framework. Memes are crafted with a specific intention in mind by their creators.

**Use of Language and Dialects:** The language and dialects used in memes differ based on context and the intended audience. For instance, casual dialects can create humor or a sense of connection, while more formal language might appeal to a wider, global audience.

**Symbolism and Interpretation:** The interplay between cultural, symbolic, and interpretive elements produces strong literary effects, as understanding texts depends on existing social knowledge and cultural context. A shared comprehension of texts is vital for effective communication, enhancing the impact of memes across diverse audience groups.

**Simplification in Text:** In a fast-paced society, breaking down complex issues and terminology is essential for clear communication and wider reach. However, it's important to distill intricate ideas into straightforward messages without losing their core meaning. This approach ensures clarity and accessibility while preserving intellectual richness.

- **Function of Satire:** Satire in memes goes beyond mere humor; it acts as a means to deliver critical and purposeful messages that reflect a deeper understanding of reality and connect various events. This intentional use of satire facilitates meaningful critique and engagement.
- **Social Codes:** For audiences to grasp texts and memes effectively, they must be acquainted with the relevant social codes and contexts. This understanding enhances the effectiveness of communication, ensuring that messages are delivered accurately and impactfully.

B. VISUAL ELEMENTS IN MEME DESIGN: COLORS, FONTS, LIGHTING, AND COMPOSITION:

1. Understanding the impact of colors, fonts, lighting, and composition is crucial, as these elements significantly influence how viewers perceive and feel about a meme. Using bold or contrasting colors can effectively highlight important features, while less critical details can be toned down to minimize their visibility. Lighting also plays a vital role in setting the mood or conveying the message of the meme. For example, in a meme that features a Mexican filter, the lighting captures the dusty, dry environment typical of Mexico, which can contrast with what the creator aims to express.
2. When it comes to composition and layout, the arrangement of elements should focus on the most important parts. This might mean placing key elements in the center or positioning them in a way that aligns with how viewers naturally look at images. Additionally, small details like the direction characters are looking or the use of strong lines can enhance the storytelling aspect of the meme, blending visual hints with the text.
3. By merging colors, fonts, lighting, and composition, meme creators develop a unified visual story. This thoughtful combination ensures that every aspect adds to the overall message, making the meme more impactful for its audience. Such careful design and symbolism highlight the meme's power as a tool for cultural reflection and social commentary.

### Recommendations:

This section offers practical advice derived from the findings of this research. The aim is to assist meme creators in grasping the essential components of successful meme design, highlighting the importance of crafting content that not only grabs viewers' attention but also maintains cultural and contextual significance.

#### First: How best to Create a Meme?

1. It's recommended to use memes that feature easily recognizable images and symbols, as these can cross language and cultural boundaries, effectively delivering messages to a wide audience. This involves paying attention to the components that make up the meme, such as the characters, the story they tell, and their expressions to enhance meaning. For instance, consider the difference between a gaze within the image and one looking out toward the horizon, along with the choice of language, text, colors, and their implications.
2. Focusing on shared social and political events when creating memes is advised, as these are more relatable for the target audience and require less explanation. In the Palestinian context, historical and political symbols serve as powerful tools for reinforcing national messages and narratives.
3. It's suggested to create memes that are straightforward and direct, as these are more likely to be shared quickly and widely. Humor and sarcasm work well in delivering clear messages, especially by highlighting the contrast between a symbol's actual meaning and its portrayal in the meme. These techniques improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the messages.

4. Meme creators should devise strategies that utilize digital codes and ambiguous symbols to navigate the limitations set by social media algorithms. This ensures that messages can continue to spread without censorship. This is especially crucial in the Palestinian context, where digital media needs to operate freely without oversight or suppression.
5. This is vital to share their experiences and effective techniques for using symbols and visual codes. This collaboration would enhance the global influence of memes,
6. Scholars and content creators are encouraged to leverage Palestinian memes as a more impactful way to express the Palestinian narrative and reinforce cultural identity. This involves incorporating strong visual elements and national cultural symbols that resonate with the emotions of both local and international audiences. Furthermore, memes should be creatively utilized to raise global awareness of Palestinian issues, with content regularly updated to reflect current events and political shifts.
7. Scholars should undertake studies to understand how Palestinian audiences engage with memes. This includes examining the most prevalent meme types and their dissemination on social media platforms, particularly within the Palestinian context. Research should emphasize influential linguistic, cultural, and political factors.

Secondly: Viewing Memes from the Perspective of Liquid Modernity and Public Space:

1. Memes should be visually straightforward to match the essence of liquid modernity, which demands quick and adaptable responses to social and political changes. This

strategy helps ensure that memes stay effective and engaging in an ever-evolving environment.

2. Memes that feature cultural symbols familiar to the audience can improve communication and encourage participation in the public sphere. This expands public discourse and bolsters the dynamics of social and political involvement.
3. Humor is a powerful tool for delivering political and advertising messages. The researcher suggests using humor judiciously to keep the message inclusive and avoid alienating specific audiences, especially in a flexible and open public space.
4. Memes should reflect the fast-paced trends in public spaces within the framework of liquid modernity. They need to be designed with flexibility to promote interaction without creating excessive polarization that could obstruct democratic dialogue.
5. A well-integrated mix of text and images boosts the ability of memes to communicate quickly and effectively. This approach ensures that messages are clear and resonate deeply with the target audience.
6. Researchers are encouraged to leverage memes for social and political communication in the face of ongoing changes. By adapting to shifts in the public sphere and drawing on familiar cultural symbols, memes can create a sense of community and promote active engagement.
7. Scholars and content creators should keep using memes to share the Palestinian story. This involves incorporating strong visual elements and cultural symbols to emotionally connect with audiences and raise global awareness of Palestinian issues.

### Third: Memes, Decision-Makers, and Advertisers:

1. Decision-makers should consider memes as a powerful tool in electoral campaigns because they can quickly grab public attention and spread messages effectively. These memes ought to focus on issues that matter to voters while being straightforward and easy to understand.
2. Advertisers and marketing experts should creatively incorporate memes to boost brand identity. Memes should be woven into the brand's visual identity while being mindful of cultural and social sensitivities to ensure they are well-received.
3. Decision-makers and advertisers can use memes to create emotional bonds with their audiences. For example, politicians can connect their campaigns to popular topics like improving living conditions, while advertisers can highlight products by addressing relatable issues.
4. Memes should be customized to resonate with the interests of specific groups. In electoral campaigns, memes can be directed at particular age demographics or social classes, such as young people, while in advertising, they can enhance brand connection through cultural or aesthetic relevance.
5. Researchers and meme creators should consider the ethical dimensions when employing symbols of suffering, ensuring a balance between using satire as a form of resistance and maintaining respect for the dignity of victims—avoiding simplification or entertainment at the expense of real pain.
6. Future researchers are encouraged to analyze audience comments and reactions to Palestinian memes in order to understand how such content is received, interpreted, and circulated within the digital sphere. This investigation should adopt

multidisciplinary approaches that encompass ethical, social, political, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The ultimate aim is to uncover the impact of this form of visual expression in shaping collective Palestinian and Arab consciousness, and in reinforcing counter-narratives of resistance within the broader context of occupation, suffering, and identity.

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## المخلص

تناولت هذه الدراسة الموسومة بـ " الآليات البصرية البارزة في محتوى الميمات الفلسطينية: تحليل ثقافي وبصري، إحدى أشكال التعبير الرقمي المعاصر، ممثلة في الميمات الفلسطينية الساخرة، باعتبارها أداة رمزية تعبيرية مقاومة تُوظف في الفضاءات الرقمية، خاصة في سياق الواقع الفلسطيني تحت الاحتلال. وقد سعت الدراسة إلى استكشاف الكيفية التي تُستخدم فيها الميمات كوسيلة لإعادة صياغة الخطاب السياسي والاجتماعي، من خلال السخرية البصرية والرمزية، وذلك عبر تحليل محتوى صفحة **Palestinian Memes** على منصة إنستغرام.

هدفت الدراسة إلى تحليل الرموز البصرية واللغوية التي تتضمنها هذه الميمات، والكشف عن الرسائل الضمنية التي تنقلها، بالإضافة إلى فهم علاقتها بالبنية الثقافية والسياسية الفلسطينية، وآليات تأثيرها على الجمهور في ظل الرقابة الرقمية والقيود المفروضة على حرية التعبير.

تتبع أهمية الدراسة من تركيزها على وسيلة غير تقليدية في التواصل الرقمي، تعكس تحولات لافتة في التعبير الشعبي الفلسطيني، وتسلط الضوء على إمكانيات توظيف الميمات في إنتاج خطاب بديل يسهم في مقاومة الاحتلال وإعادة تأطير التجربة الجماعية في قالب بصري نقدي.

اعتمدت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، مستندة إلى أدوات التحليل السيميولوجي، ودرست عينة قصدية من أكثر المنشورات تفاعلاً خلال فترة العدوان الإسرائيلي على غزة في أكتوبر 2023. وقد أظهرت النتائج فاعلية الميمات في تجاوز القيود الرقمية المفروضة على المحتوى الفلسطيني، وفي تقديم خطاب بصري مقاوم يتسم بالسخرية والعمق الرمزي.

أوصت الدراسة بضرورة دمج تحليل الميمات في مناهج الإعلام الرقمي، وتطوير مدونات سلوك تنظم إنتاج وتداول هذا النوع من المحتوى، بما يضمن احترام كرامة الضحايا وتعزيز الأثر التوعوي والمقاوم للميمات في سياقات النزاع.