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Portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian Cinema

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The portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian Cinema



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Abstract

This thesis investigates the evolving portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema from the beginning of the Nakba, prior to the 1952 revolution, to the end of Hosni Mubarak's rule – a period marked by shifting political alliances and ideological transformations in Egypt. Recognizing cinema's power in shaping public opinion, this study explores how socio-political contexts, economic interests, censorship, and the agendas of producers, distributors, and the government influence the portrayal of the Palestinian cause in films.

Analyzing Factors influencing films across different eras – from the Monarchy under colonial rule, to the Pan-Arabism of Nasser, the peace initiatives of Sadat, and the complex realities of the Mubarak era during the first and second Intifada, Oslo Accords, and post-revolution – reveals a dynamic interplay between national identity, regional and Western political alliances, and cinematic narratives. While early films, often melodramas owned by the Bourgeois, were later nationalized as instruments for an Arab unity project, the 1967 defeat ushered in introspection and shifting perspectives among filmmakers. Sadat's peace treaty, though regaining Sinai, sparked debate reflected in nuanced portrayals of Palestinians. The Mubarak era saw films rejecting normalization policies while echoing public support for Palestine. This study illuminates how Egyptian cinema became a mirror, reflecting and sometimes challenging, the nation's evolving relationship with the Palestinian cause. Understanding these cinematic representations provides crucial insights into the complexities of Egyptian society's engagement with one of the region's most enduring conflicts.

Keywords; Palestinians, Egyptian cinema, economic interest, censorship, revolution, political alliances

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Abbreviations

CS1 – Cinema Support institution

PLO – Palestinian Liberation organization

VGIK - Russian state university of cinematography

PA – National Palestinian Authority

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Introduction

(A conversation between Sorrel the Jew and his friend at work)

sorrel- the Americans have found vast oil reserves in Saudi Arabia

Friend - Great! why are you sad?

Sorrel- Am not sad, but the logic says that such wealth requires a military force to guardian it

Friend- Palestine! That's why the Americans and the British are fighting for us

sorrel- Palestine, the promise land, instead of fostering peace and unity, you will turn into battleground, the brother will kill his brother, like what happened in the very beginning of life, Orshalim! The killer of the prophets and the innocents.

(Chahine,1979)

The scene from the film *Alexandria Why?* (Chahine, 1979) captures a crucial period in the Middle East during World War II, highlighting the resistance against colonialism in the region. This film, released in the same year as the Camp David Accords, serves as a poignant reminder of the fundamental roots of the Palestinian struggle (Khoury, 2008, p. 126).

In the late 1940s, Arab nations were striving for independence from colonial powers, primarily Britain and France. Egypt, in particular, was under significant British control, with British troops exerting influence over the monarchy (Smith, 1979, p. 453). Once the Balfour declaration created an opening for Europe's Jewish people to seek settlement in Palestine, which led to the subsequent uprooting of Palestinians from their homeland, introduced a central political issue to the Arab region. (Talhimi,P11). Following their newfound independence, Arab states, now separated from various nations, faced their own internal turmoil and political interests, compounded by the ongoing colonization of Palestine (Schleifer, 2014, p. 52). This was followed by confrontations between Israel and Egypt in 1956, 1967 and 1973, leading into gradual normalization of the Israeli occupation. culminating in the Camp David Accords in

1978 and the Oslo Accord in 1995, which was brokered in Taba, which thereby led to the second intifada of 2000 (Begbie, 2023, P20)

In this context, cinema, particularly in Egypt, emerged as a symbol of modernization and civilization, amidst the challenges of independence and the exploration of various ideologies. As in *The Question of Palestine*, Edward Said argues that Zionism has consistently claimed to speak on behalf of Palestine and its people, effectively preventing Palestinians from representing themselves directly on the global stage (Said, 1979, p. 39). The Palestinian struggle therefore, remained a central concern for filmmakers in third-world countries, reflecting the ongoing political and social challenges of Palestine (Youssef, 1980, p. 8). This struggle was prominently featured in Egyptian cinema, which was notably prolific in addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict—one of the most contentious and complex political issues in the Middle East (Khatib, 2006, p. 105).

In an interview with Dr. Mahmoud Abdel Shakour, (A1) the Egyptian film critic and author of Egyptian cinema, he reemphasized the significant influence of political ideologies across different eras. Dr. Shakour, who has witnessed multiple political periods in Egypt, underscores that cinema, unlike other art forms, is intrinsically linked to its audience from its inception. He cites the Lumière brothers' first film screening in Paris as a key example, highlighting the audience's crucial role in shaping cinematic trends. And further explained that Egyptian cinema initially emerged as a bourgeois experiment, driven by a desire to emulate Western civilization and capitalize on economic opportunities. Early filmmakers like Togo Mizrahi and Studio Misr founder Talaat Harb exemplified this profit-driven approach, prioritizing financial success over artistic risks. he said by Quoting Togo Mizrahi that “movies should at least return the money invested in it”. (Shakour, 2024).

Mr. Ramy Abdel Razek,(A2) another prominent Egyptian film critic, notes that this period saw a surge in pro-Palestine sentiment by the public, which led producers to make war films, such as *Girl from Palestine* (Zulfikar, 1948) and *Nadia* (Zulfikar, 1949). King Farouk, seizing on this sentiment, joined the Arab League's call for a united front against colonialism. However, the crushing defeat of the Arab armies in 1948 exposed their lack of preparedness and contributed to the end of Monarchy and the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser as a president.

Egypt's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973 has been central to its national interests and has been reflected in its cinema. Films like *Nasser Salah Dine* (Chahine, 1963) depict how art was directed towards nationalism during this period.

As Abdel Razek argues, Nasser's regime skillfully utilized cinema to promote Arab Nationalist ideology which explains Aijaz Ahmad statement, that "whether or not nationalism will produce a progressive cultural practice depends, to put it in Gramscian terms, upon the political character of the power bloc which takes hold of it and utilizes it, as a material force, in the process of constituting its own hegemony" (Ahmad, 1995, p. 79). Films such as *God is with us* (Badrakhan, 1955) and *Land of Heroes* (Mustafa, 1953) not only depicted Palestine as a symbol of Arab unity but also subtly shifted blame for the 1948 defeat onto the previous regime's corruption. This era also saw the emergence of the "fedayeen" movement, with films like *Land of Peace* (Sheikh, 1957). and *Bab el Maftouh* (Barakat, 1963) romanticizing Palestinian resistance.

The 1967 war marked a significant turning point. Abdel Razek observes that Egyptian cinema became introspective, grappling with the reasons for the defeat and exploring potential paths forward. Films like *The Sparrow* (Chahine, 1972) and *The Bullet is Still in My Pocket* (Mustafa, 1974) exemplify this shift towards self-examination. However, this inward focus often overshadowed the Palestinian narrative, since, it's not based on real stories, even sidelining contemporary Egyptian novels centered on Palestine.

The portrayal of the Palestinian struggle in films not only mirrored the political climate of the times but also played a significant role in shaping public opinion regarding Egypt's stance on nationalism and its relationship with Israel. Egyptian cinema served as a platform to reflect the perceived threat posed by Israel and the need to confront this regional rival (Mostafa, 2018, p. 137). Depicting Israel as an aggressor, Egyptian films reinforced themes of resistance and solidarity with the Palestinian people in response to the socio-political landscape. This narrative would continue to evolve under subsequent regimes and major political events, including Sadat's peace agreement with Israel in 1979 and the Intifada in the 2000s (Cordon, 2001, p. 385). Moreover, Lina Khatib stated that Arab films construct Israeli nationalism as imperialist, in opposition to the wellbeing of the Arab world, while portraying Palestinian nationalism as anti-imperialist and a reclaiming of the nation (Khatib, 2006, p. 84). During Hosni Mubarak's era, a public rejection emerged and films began to reflect this sentiment of normalization, especially as events like the Oslo accord (1993) and the Intifada (2000) unfolded. As Begbie argued "A strong sense of popular commitment toward Palestine remained within the public consciousness and was roundly expressed in Egyptian leftist circles, which openly refused the state's normalizing tactics". (Begbie, 2023, P35). Films such as *Love in Taba* (Fouad, 1992), *Girl from Israel* (Rady, 1999), and *The Cousins* (Arafa, 2009)

illustrate these themes, often depicting Israelis in a negative light and positioning women as key figures in the battleground of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Khatib highlights how these films address the issue of normalization between Egypt and Israel and the role of women in this context. (Khatib,2006, P98). Furthermore, anti-normalization sentiments were depicted in small scenes like burning an Israeli flag in the American university of Cairo in Sai'di in the American university (Hamed,1998,) or an Egyptian who falls into the trap of his Israeli colleague in the Netherlands such as “ Hammam in Amsterdam”(Hamed,1999), towards movies that mainly the story revolves around why there must be a solidarity with Palestine and Israel will always be an enemy like “Embassy in the building” (Arafa,2005) and Ashab wala business Idriss,2001). Some films were transnational, meaning internationally or self-funded, with casts and locations that reflect the Palestinian narrative and stories. such as “The dupes” (Saleh, 1071) “Naji al ali” (ElTayeb, 1992) and “Bab Shams (Nasrallah, 2005) clearly portrayed the Palestinian struggle following their stories of being away from their homeland and portraying major events such as the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967) .

Through these shifts in cinematic representation, we can underscore how Egyptian cinema has served as a mirror reflecting the country's evolving relationship with the Palestinian struggle. Even at an age where festival funding and advanced technology that paved the way for independent filmmakers to express their thoughts freely, such as the film “A century and six years (Nassef, 2023) produce only 4 months prior to the October 7th events and attack on Gaza. From early profit-driven ventures to politically charged narratives and periods of introspection.

This thesis aims to compare Egyptian films from different historical periods that address the Palestinian issue, analyzing their impact and responses to key historical events. It will explore the factors that influenced the portrayal of Palestinian cause in these films and examine how these factors were shaped by the evolution of political discourse. By investigating how these films reflect and interact with the dominant power structures and alliances of their times, the research will uncover the evolving representation of the Palestinian cause in Egyptian cinema and the complex interplay between cinema, politics, and ideology.

Research Question

The research question seeks to explore the factors influencing the representation of Palestine in Egyptian cinema by comparing shifts in political regimes, This investigation is essential for understanding how changes in political leadership and state ideologies impact cinematic portrayals of Palestine. As well as to explore how factors interact and impact the cinematic

representation of political themes, such as the portrayal of Palestine, in countries like Egypt across different historical and political contexts.

- Factors influencing these representations could include:
 1. State Propaganda and Censorship: political regimes often exert control over media and cultural outputs, including cinema. Films depicting Palestine may be subject to state censorship or propaganda efforts aimed at shaping public perception in alignment with government policies.
 2. Political Alliances and Foreign Relations: Egypt's diplomatic relations and alliances with other states, particularly regarding Israel and Palestine, can influence how the Palestinian cause is portrayed in cinema. Shifts in alliances, such as the peace treaty with Israel under Sadat, could impact the narrative framing of Palestine in films.
 3. National Identity and Pan-Arabism: Ideological currents such as pan-Arabism, which advocate for Arab unity and solidarity with Palestine, may influence cinematic representations of Palestine as a symbol of Arab resistance against imperialism and Zionism.
 4. Domestic Political Stability and Security Concerns: Internal political stability and security concerns within Egypt can also shape how Palestine is depicted in films. Regimes may emphasize narratives that promote stability or suppress those that could incite unrest or dissent.
 5. Audience Reception and International Context: Public opinion within Egypt and the broader international context can impact cinematic portrayals of Palestine. Films may be tailored to resonate with domestic audiences or to convey a specific message to international viewers and stakeholders.

- The study will address the following sub questions:
 - 1- How has the Egyptian cinema industry evolved over different political regimes?
 - 2- what were the obstacles of Egyptian directors and producers in the portrayal of the Palestinian cause?
 - 3- Are there noticeable differences in the portrayal of Palestine between transnational and commercial films?

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis suggests that 1- political cinema under Egypt state is shaped by a complex interplay of state control, political alliances, ideological perspectives, and producer's decision. 2- Cinema, as a tool of propaganda, has been used to depict the Palestinian cause primarily as a humanitarian issue rather than a pressing political matter requiring resolution. This selective portrayal has served the regime's agenda by shaping public opinion to consolidate support and maintain control over the audience, rather than fostering genuine advocacy for Palestinian rights."

Dependent Variable: Portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema

Independent Variable: state control, censorship, political alliances, societal and economic pressures.

Relevance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how the Palestinian issue, framed as an Arab concern, has been addressed and portrayed through Eastern narratives, specifically in Egyptian cinema, rather than through Western perspectives. Much academic research has focused on Egyptian cinema in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, such researches often concentrate on nationalist films or those depicting the Arab-Israeli war, rather than examining the reasons behind the complex portrayal of Palestine across different eras and the influence of shifting politics and globalization.

As Neidhart argues, "No attention is paid to the economic structures behind the co-production of movies or other forms of cooperation in the field of arts" (Neidhart, p. 47). Neidhart points out that the impact of economic factors on film production—such as funding sources, commercial interests, and market pressures—is often ignored or downplayed. This economic suppression implies that the focus tends to be on the artistic or cultural aspects of films, while the economic realities shaping their production and storytelling are not fully addressed. Therefore, studying economic mechanisms as an influence on the portrayal of the Palestinian cause in Egyptian cinema is crucial.

Joseph Massad highlights that "negotiating the terms of cultural battles ... becomes crucial for strategies of liberation" because both suppressors and the suppressed use culture as a weapon (Massad, 2006, p. 32). Massad's observation about the Palestinian liberation struggle

underscores the role of culture in both resistance and oppression, emphasizing the importance of understanding how cultural narratives are shaped and utilized.

Additionally, the development of cinema institutions in various countries, inspired by models such as the VGIK in Moscow set up by Lenin, illustrates how film has been used to advance national and revolutionary ideals. This approach also influenced Egyptian filmmakers like Youssef Chahine and Tawfik Saleh and contributed significantly to the Palestinian cause, as well as it garnered international attention from figures like Jean Genet and Jean-Luc Godard. This historical backdrop emphasizes the importance of state-supported cinema in shaping national narratives and mobilizing support, providing a valuable comparison for studying the portrayal of Palestinian issues in Egyptian cinema. (Bresheeth,2005, p.11).

Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending how films represent complex issues differently based on cultural, political, and ideological contexts. By analyzing these factors, the study will shed light on the broader impact of cinema in shaping and reflecting national and regional discourses on the Palestinian cause.

Literature Review

Although comprehensive research on the portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema is limited, there is valuable academic literature that sheds light on the factors influencing their representation. Key elements such as significant political events, influential figures, the military, and the Arab nationalist project play crucial roles. Engagement with Palestine, and by extension the Arab-Israeli conflict, is often intertwined, making it impossible to address these issues without considering their broader implications.

For example, Dalia Mostafa's "The Egyptian Military in Popular Culture" examines the Egyptian military's involvement in successive Arab-Israeli wars, providing useful references on how these conflicts influence Egyptian cinema, Mostafa argues that the realm of popular

culture in Egypt serves as the 'blood veins' which feed the nation's perception of its Armed Forces. (Mostafa, 2017).

Similarly, Olivia Harrison's "Trans colonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization" (Harrison,2015) builds on Edward Said's "The Question of Palestine" (Said, 1979) to explore the global significance of Palestine and its representation during the era of decolonization. Olivia C. Harrison argues that Palestine has come to symbolize the colonial struggle in the so-called postcolonial era. The book reorients Maghrebi studies to consider political and aesthetic exchanges across North Africa and the Middle East.

While Palestinian representation in film, particularly in relation to the Egyptian cinema industry, has received some attention, there is still much to be explored. One of the key factors that affects the representation of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema is the historical and political context in which these films are produced. Ghada Talhami's book, "Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali," examined the question of Palestine from the perspective of Egyptian newspapers and journals in comparison to its radical transformation throughout different reigns, highlighting that the press as a source of public opinion and sentiment , can move people into action. Moreover, how politics and representational culture in Egyptian newspapers and journals, can provide valuable insights into the official and popular perceptions of Palestine in Egypt before and After peace agreement with Israel.(Talhami,2010). Similarly, Ella Shohat's book, "Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation," offers a postcolonial perspective on film analysis, emphasizing how films are not just documents of fact but also registers of perceptions and perspectives on reality.(Sohat,1970).

Furthermore, Werner Ende's survey of Palestine in contemporary Arabic literature sheds light on the shifting role of censorship in this area. Ende's research explores the ways in which Palestinian narratives are constructed and presented within Arabic literature, providing valuable insights into the cultural and political factors that shape representations of Palestine in Egyptian cinema (Ende,1979). In addition to literature on the media and literature, it is also important to consider studies that examine the perceptions and attitudes of Palestinians themselves towards their representation in Egyptian cinema. One such study is the article by a range of participants, including university students, human rights activists, journalists, and NGO employees. The study focuses on the perceptions of Palestinians towards the role of Palestine TV and Al-Aqsa TV in providing a platform for open discussion and communication.

The findings suggest that these television channels are often controlled by political factions, which compromises their ability to facilitate public participation and open dialogue (Abuzanouna,2015).

Sahar Khamis's analysis of the Egyptian media landscape provides a foundational understanding of the political transformation context, urging scholars to consider new media forms and civic engagement. Her article analyzes the transformative Egyptian media landscape that shaped and reflected the equally transformative political landscape that led to Egypt's historical revolution. In his analysis, El Khachab in his book "Making film in Egypt" he offers a comprehensive examination of the Egyptian film industry, often referred to as "Hollywood on the Nile," tracing its historical development and exploring its current political and economic dynamics. He highlights the complex distinctions between commercial and independent film production in the local context. El Khachab identifies two major shifts that have significantly impacted the industry since the early 2000s. First, he notes a pivotal change in capital flow that occurred in 2010, when major Gulf satellite channels ceased providing distribution loans, which had previously been a crucial source of financing for film production throughout the preceding decade. Second, he addresses the advent of digital technologies and their transformative effects on filmmaking. Particularly relevant to his discussion of filmmaking as a socio-technical activity, he underscores the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping both the commercial and independent sectors of the industry. This analysis provides valuable insights into the evolving structure and dynamics of Egyptian cinema. (El Khachab, 2021). The National Imaginarium: A history of Egyptian filmmaking " by Magdy Mounir El Shamma delves into the portrayal of films, focusing on the development of a populist consciousness in the mid 20th century. Egypt that cut across class divisions. It examines how this consciousness eventually unraveled due to significant social, economic and political changes in subsequent decades (ElShamma,2021). In addition to that," Filming the Modern Middle East," by Lina Khatib elucidates how Egyptian cinema portrays the Palestinian issue in The Arab- Israeli chapter, fostering radical aesthetics and politically charged narratives. Khatib's exploration underscores the intertwined nature of Palestinian resistance and Arab identity within Egyptian cinema, highlighting the enduring significance of Palestine in the region's cultural discourse and cinematic expression. Khatib had analyzed various films during the Arab- Israeli presenting different constructions of various events marking the Arab and Israeli national selves. Thus, distinguishing between two kind of nationalism, the bourgeois nationalism and anti-imperialism nationalism. She argues that the representation of Palestine depends on the nature of the nation, as Egyptian cinema portraying Palestinians could differ

from the experience of Lebanon, Syria or any other Arab nation. Those films are shaped by discourses of history, memory, fantasy and narrative. This comprehensive review synthesizes diverse scholarly perspectives, offering a nuanced understanding of the depiction of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema and its broader socio-political implications. (Khatib,2006).

The political dynamics and socio-cultural interrelations between Egypt and Palestine were significant in Malek Khoury book “The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine’s cinema” while in his book, he highlighted the works of Youssef Chahine’s political preoccupations over the course of his career, and how he treated several elements in his films related to anti-imperialism, poverty, political issues as well as the issue of Palestine (Khoury,2008). Viola Shafik “Arab Cinema, history and cultural identity” while tracing the industry’s development from colonial times to the present. Moreover, as noted in the literature on the topic, Egyptian cinema has engaged with the subject of Palestine, reflecting the shifting political sentiments and ideological discourses over time. Shafiq reflected cultural shifts in the last two decades in the Arab films, while exploring problematic issues such as European coproduction for Arab art films. Their relation to cultural identity and their reception in the region and abroad. She covered certain aspects related to Egyptian cinema evidently showing that Arab cinema marked by an imbalance in cultural and economic exchange, hence Egypt has dominated the Arab cinema industry, and on the political level Egypt was able to mirror its historical, human and cultural potential as well as its geographic position, since the years of decolonization to the 1967 defeat to camp David accord. She argues how such Arab filmmaking struggled to compete with the first world cinema as it has been dependent on western imports, technicalities and financial support. (Shafik, 2016). A significant contribution to this study is Claire Begbie on her book, “Representations of Palestine in Egyptian Cinema: Politics of (In)visibility”, it offers a critical examination of how Palestinian issues have been portrayed in Egyptian cinema across three pivotal historical periods. Originally developed from a master’s thesis at the American University in Cairo and expanded into a full-length study, Begbie’s work explores cinematic representations during the years surrounding the 1952 Revolution, the aftermath of the 1967 Defeat, and the early 21st century, when Egypt had normalized relations with Israel and integrated into a neoliberal capitalist economy. By integrating textual analysis with a politico-historical context, the book argues that the portrayal of Palestine in Egyptian films reflects shifting political landscapes and serves as a critical response to the prevailing political status quo. Begbie’s analysis of melodrama, social realism, and transnational cinema, within their commercial, state-sponsored, and transnational contexts, provides valuable insights into

the ways films have both mirrored and critiqued Egypt's evolving foreign policy and national identity concerning the Palestinian struggle.

Among Egyptian cinema critics, Mahmoud Kassem dedicated a chapter in Volume 2 of "Political Films in Egypt" to discussing how Egypt during the Arab-Israeli war reflected political events by presenting the liberation of Palestine as a primary objective (Kassem, 1970). Similarly, Doriya Sharfuddin devoted a chapter in her book "Politics and Cinema in Egypt" to exploring how Palestine has been a significant political context for Egypt internally since 1948. She highlighted comparisons between each film across different regimes and analyzed the underlying messages conveyed through them. Furthermore, Egyptian cinema is known to have created bodies of work that reflect its socio-political environment. The movements in solidarity with Palestine, and the interplay between media institutions and censorship, have contributed to how Palestinians have been depicted on the Egyptian silver screen. Walter Armbrust argued in "new cinema, commercial cinema and the modernist tradition in Egypt that modernist tradition began to decline in the 1970's due to factors like 1976 war, economic changes and the rise of a new generation, such study is crucial for analyzing the evolution of Egyptian cinema and the relationship between commercial and art films.(Armbrust,1995).

Nouri Bouzid in her journal *New Realism in Arab Cinema: The Defeat-Conscious Cinema* reflected on the characteristics of new realism in the 1967 defeat focusing on various filmmakers such as Tawfik Saleh and Youssef Chahine in confronting the defeat by understanding the reasons and against this backdrop failure and how it can be prevented. While keeping in mind that everything related Arab- Israeli war, the question of Palestine arises (Bouzid,1995) . Jane Gaffney in her book "The Egyptian cinema, Industry and Art in a changing society makes a comparison in relationship to the cinema and social change specifically in Egypt, by highlighting the factors that have shaped the Egyptian cinema as an industry and determined its product (Gaffney,2017,P35-75)). On the other hand, Youssef Youssef in his book "Palestine issue in the Arab cinema, reflects upon a variety of films from the Arab world including Egypt that depicted Palestine, through criticizing various films that were produced were highly affected by political and historical events such as the Nakba and the revolution of July 1952 in Egypt. (Youssef,1980). These studies all relate to the evolution of Egyptian cinema in various ways, with some focusing not only on the issue of Palestine but also on the broader context of the Arab-Israeli war. They contribute significantly to understanding how the Palestinian issue started and opened various filmmakers in Egypt to reflect on it.

To conclude, The Arab-Israeli conflict remains a highly sensitive and complex topic within Middle Eastern politics. As the longest-running and most intricate issue in the region, it continues to generate significant attention and debate, particularly with the ongoing conflict in Gaza during 2023. However, it's important to acknowledge that because the situation is still unfolding, there is limited research available on how Egypt will choose to portray its role in the conflict, especially within its cinema. In particular, there's a lack of analysis on how Egyptian films have depicted Palestine as a central factor in these wars and how these representations may have evolved over time. This thesis will provide a deeper understanding of the factors that fueled the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1948 and 1973, examining the historical context and analyzing the films produced during this period.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of Third Cinema originates from the theories articulated by filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the late 1960s. It was a reaction against the dominant Western-centric and the commercially driven European art, focusing on Latin American experiences. Third Cinema is associated with grassroots movements, revolutionary potential, and the desire to use film for social and political change rather than just entertainment or artistic expression. (Solanos,1969)

The postcolonial conditions by Frantz Fanon (1968) and Tashome Gabriel (1982). These theorists view Third Cinema as a politically and socially charged medium designed to engage and politicize audiences. This approach deliberately separates itself from commercial profit and entertainment, focusing instead on addressing issues such as inequality, ongoing colonization, racial politics, and postcolonial myths, thus offering a critical perspective on contemporary representation. (Ben Labidi, P 253-254).

“It was only in the 1960s when Third world people themselves started participating in cinematic exploration, that the film medium began to be used as a serious vehicle to give voice to that mass of humanity- the people of Third world – who had previously been cut off from experiencing this new art form in a positive way. For the first time, the nameless began to

receive significant recognition. Contemporary cinema is definitely marked by the emergence of a cinema of decolonization.” (Solano,1969, P9).

Nadia Yaccoub underscores that political cinema emerged in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, with early links to liberation movements evident in the 1950s. By the 1960s, independent filmmakers in Europe and the U.S. began exploring how film form could convey leftist ideologies. Latin American filmmakers in the early 1970s articulated the role of cinema in decolonization and national liberation through their Third Cinema manifestos. For filmmakers in newly independent states, cinema was seen as a crucial tool for articulating national culture and political ideology, rather than just for disseminating information (Yaccoub, p. 122)

As Solano And Getino highlighted “The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third cinema is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognizes in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, the decolonization of culture. “ (Solano, 1969, P116)

The characteristics of Third Cinema, as outlined by Solano and Gabriel, have been reflected in Egyptian cinema's portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian struggle. Key themes include: (Solano,1969, P18-19)

- **Class:** Egyptian films often emphasize the necessity for Third World nations to identify and confront their imperialist oppressors. These films highlight the division between local ruling classes who align with imperialist interests and the broader struggle for national liberation. This theme is evident in how Egyptian cinema critiques the role of external powers and local elites in the conflict.
- **Religion:** Egyptian filmmakers have used religious analogies to deepen the portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict, illustrating not just the political dimensions but also the religious aspects of the struggle. Films have explored the distinctions between Jewish and Zionist identities and the broader religious conflicts underpinning the regional tensions.
- **Armed Struggle:** The depiction of armed resistance against imperialism and class enemies is a prominent theme in Egyptian cinema, reflecting the broader revolutionary sentiments of the era. Films have portrayed the armed struggle in the Arab-Israeli war, emphasizing the fight against both colonial and internal adversaries.

These themes demonstrate how Egyptian cinema has engaged with Third Cinema principles to depict the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli conflict through a lens of class struggle, religious dimensions, and armed resistance.

The ideology of the Egyptian revolution in the third world, crystalizes around the concept of anticolonialism. The movement of the small class petit bourgeois nationalists, were united in their determination to win genuine political independence and modernize the economy. The filmmakers draw inspiration from contemporary events of the Suez Canal 1956, Palestinian war of 1948 and the Arab Israeli war. (Yaccoub,2018, P234)

In this context, while the specific movement of Third Cinema as a labeled ideology may not have been prominent, there have indeed been phases where Egyptian cinema has aligned with the core principles of Third Cinema, particularly in its engagement with national identity, social issues, and political critique. For instance, during the Nasser era, there was a nationalization of the film industry which led to the creation of movies that focused on social and political themes reflecting the revolutionary spirit of the times. The aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967, a momentous event in Arab history, saw the emergence of films that critiqued societal norms, reflected introspection, and addressed social change. This is akin to the manifesto of the New Cinema Group in Egypt, which was one of the responses to the defeat of Arab military forces and was geared towards an examination of the cultural and political status quo. Their efforts reflected a desire to retain and change the revolutionary policies introduced since Egypt's independence in 1952 (Manifesto of New Cinema in Egypt, 2018).

The representation of Palestine in Egyptian cinema can overlap with elements of Third Cinema in the sense that such films often address themes of colonization, resistance, and solidarity, which are central to Third Cinema theory. Egyptian films have tackled the issue of Palestine at various historical junctures and have been informed by the evolving political and social climate of Egypt itself.

Applying Third Cinema Theory to Egyptian political cinema involves several key aspects.

- 1- it challenges dominant narratives by examining how films present counter-perspectives to Western or state-sanctioned viewpoints on historical events, social issues, or political figures. These films critique power structures, including colonial legacies and political regimes, with examples addressing how Zionist characters and behavior is.

- 2- Egyptian political cinema centers marginalized voices by amplifying the experiences of civilians who volunteered and fought for Palestine by joining the army or a resistant group,
- 3- Egyptian political cinema connects deeply with historical moments like the 1952 Revolution, Nasser era, and Arab Spring, reflecting and responding to evolving political discourses and ideologies within Egypt. Lastly, it expresses solidarity with other postcolonial nations and contributes to anti-colonial struggles, particularly through representations of the Palestinian struggle, fostering a shared sense of resistance against oppression.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach that integrates Qualitative Research of interviews with experts in the field, scholarly literature review, and multimodal film analysis.

- 1- **Qualitative Method:** This study employs a qualitative approach, involving fifteen in-depth interviews with a diverse group of participants, including filmmakers, film critics, academic scholars, and political science professors specializing in Middle Eastern studies. These interviews will be discussed in a narrative interview method, which can give a clear insight on their personal stories as well as experiences in the field. It will be served as primary data and offer insights from various perspectives and generational experiences. By including experts from different backgrounds and time periods, the research aims to capture a broad range of viewpoints on how cinematic portrayals of Palestinians have evolved over time and across different generations.
- 2- **Scholarly Existing Literature:** Secondary data for the study will be drawn from existing scholarly literature. This will provide a theoretical framework and contextual background, shedding light on the historical, political, and cultural factors that influence the depiction of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema. Key themes, theoretical perspectives, and research findings from the literature review will be integrated into the analysis, enriching the interpretation of the primary data and offering a comprehensive understanding of the cinematic representations of Palestinians in Egypt.

3- Film Analysis – this is the main source that will carry on to depict the portrayal of Palestinians in different eras and help question the factors that are answered by the interviews as well the library source. The film analysis that this research will carry as outlined by Wildfeuer, is the multi-model discourse film analysis framework, which suggests the intersemiotic nature of film, recognizing that the meaning-making process in cinematic texts involves the interplay of various semiotic resources, including visual, auditory, and linguistic elements(Wildfeuer,2013) This approach is particularly relevant in the examination of political films from the third world, where filmmakers often employ a range of stylistic and narrative strategies to convey their messages and challenge dominant ideological frameworks. Multimodal film analysis is an approach to understanding and interpreting films that considers multiple modes of communication within the cinematic text. It's not just about what you see or hear, but how various elements like images, sounds, dialogue, music, and even silence contribute to the storytelling and the audience's understanding of the film. directors like Amro Arafa using Black comedy style like in embassy in the building to portray a serious political cause, offering a nuanced look into how multiple communicative modes are orchestrated within films to influence perceptions, affirm cultural identities, and initiate discourse on political and social issues. This can be applied as well as in Chahine's films, well known for engaging with the political and cultural issues of Egypt, provide a rich canvas for such study, examining Egypt's cinematic landscape, a comprehensive analysis would delve into how visual, auditory, and linguistic elements are employed to shape narratives and symbols that reflect and engage with prevalent social tensions. Notably, certain films subtly incorporate Palestine as a symbolic motif, particularly in the aftermath of Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. Rather than overtly addressing Palestine, it often emerges as a subtle presence, perhaps through imagery like flags or songs, revealing a palpable tension between filmmakers and audiences.

Limitation of the Research

The field research was conducted within a one-month period, constrained by financial and work-related issues, which prevented an extended stay. This limited timeframe also affected the scheduling of interviews; many potential participants were unavailable due to their busy schedules, particularly during February, when film festivals were taking place and experts in the field were engaged in preparations. Additionally, there was a scarcity of available literature

and archival materials that could have significantly influenced the research. Many crucial books and archival resources, including those by renowned Egyptian film critic Samir Fareed, were either out of print or inaccessible in digital formats and local libraries. Despite efforts to locate these materials, the unavailability of physical copies and the time constraints in Egypt limited access. However, some relevant newspaper archives of Fareed's work were obtained and used where possible.

Chapter one – The Arab Israeli war

This chapter provides a comprehensive background on the political climate surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict, with a specific focus on Egypt's involvement in the key years of 1948, 1957, 1967 defeat, and 1973. It also examines the evolution of the Egyptian cinema industry, from the colonial period to the rise and decline of Arab nationalism. The chapter includes a detailed analysis of the representation of the Palestinian cause in Egyptian cinema, with a particular focus on two significant films: *Girl from Palestine* and *Nasser Salah al-Din*.

Section 1- Background on early Egyptian cinema and the 1948 war

The premiere of "The Birth of a Nation" in Boston in 1915 sparked immediate and widespread controversy, establishing cinema as a potent medium for storytelling. As in the early 20th century, the rise of political film was closely tied to the emergence of totalitarian regimes and the use of cinema as a means of indoctrination and control. (Matic,1990, P9) The Zionist political movement recognized cinema's potential as a tool for influence long before Arab nations did, starting in the 1920s. Originating in the 1890s, political Zionism began employing cinema to promote Zionist ideology. Films "The Promised Land" (Leman,1935) portrayed Palestine as largely desert, illustrating coexistence among Arabs, Christians, Muslims, and Jews until Western Jews returned to reclaim their ancestral homeland. This transformation culminated in the Nakba when Israel was established on historic Palestine, replacing the British Mandate. The Nakba, which means "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. (United Nations, 2024).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Egyptian cinema began its journey shortly after the invention of the motion picture. The Lumière brothers introduced their revolutionary technology to Egypt by showcasing moving images to an audience in Alexandria in 1897, just one year after their first screening in Paris (Allan, 2018, P12). The trajectory of Egyptian cinema and its evolving relationship with censorship can be traced back to the early 20th century, particularly following the 1919 revolution. This period was marked by a heightened sense of nationalism and a drive to establish national industries and cultural forms. According to Gaffney, the 1919 revolution sparked a fervor to develop a national cinema, reflecting broader ambitions for economic and cultural independence (Gaffney, 2017, p. 53). After the independence of Most Arab countries from their colonial rule, The UN's 1947 partition plan in the land of Palestine incited widespread anger among the Arab public, leading to intense student protests in Egypt, where demonstrators defied a government ban and called for direct action (Shlaim, 1991; Roggan, 2008, P253). This public pressure eventually led the Egyptian government along with other Arab countries to consider intervention, reflecting how grassroots anger shaped policy. Arab writers have attributed the defeat in Palestine to the incompetence and betrayal of old regimes, arguing that more decisive and nationalist leadership might have prevented the creation of Israel (Roggan, 2008, P275). The decision to enter the conflict was marred by political and tactical failures, with King Farouk undermining Prime Minister Mahmoud Nuqrashi and the army's readiness. The ruling establishment's lack of seriousness, combined with an ill-equipped and poorly prepared army dependent on British logistics, hindered effective intervention (Morris, 2009, P45).

Criticism of the Egyptian monarchy, particularly King Farouk, centered on claims of selfishness, corruption, and betrayal which was later on portrayed in Egyptian cinema prior the 1952 revolution. The 1948 defeat was blamed on leaders who were seen as having prioritized personal interests over the Palestinian cause, leaving the Egyptian army poorly supported with inadequate weaponry. This portrayal suggests that military intervention was more about political maneuvering and absorbing public frustration than a genuine effort to win the war (Masalha,2012, P89).

1.1: History of Egyptian Cinema Industry

In the early stages of its development, cinema in the Arab world, including Egypt, did indeed serve as a form of bourgeois entertainment. The focus was more on following Western technological advancements and satisfying a form of escapism for audiences, rather than addressing pressing socio-political issues. At that time, Egypt and other Arab countries were

grappling with the effects of colonialism, which tended to suppress nationalist sentiments and hinder the growth of a public consciousness regarding self-determination and modernization. (Khoury, 2010, p 40). Colonizers viewed Egyptian cinema as both a significant threat and a source of disdain, positioning it as a new rival to French cinema, which had previously dominated the region. For audiences in North Africa, Egyptian films presented a portrayal of a world that was both intriguingly exotic and intimately recognizable, influencing the development of pan-Arab and national identities. (Ilsaket, 2024, P28).

As Hennebelle argues “Cinematic production in the Arab world ... has been held back by the traumatic effects of colonialism. One of the most lasting and pernicious results of colonialism was a rejection of Arab culture by the intellectuals. They became convinced that only an imitation of the culture of the colonizers would overcome national decline and backwardness. The result was a shallow and imitative cultural production” (Hennebelle, 1976, P52).

The Egyptian film industry gained the titles such as “Hollywood on the Nile” and “Hollywood in the Arab world” Since the 1930s, Egypt has produced thousands of films that have been widely distributed across the Arabic-speaking Middle East and North Africa, establishing a significant cultural presence and leaving a lasting impact on both domestic and international mass media. (Khachab, 2021,P22). During that era, several production houses dominated the Egyptian film industry, including Studio Misr, Founded by Talaat Harb, The Egyptian film company founded by Togo Mizrahi, along with the Lotus Company, Isis Company, Ramsis Film, and Al Mutahada Company (Waheed, 2024, p. 150).

In 1927, Aziza Amir, a pioneering Egyptian actress and producer, made history with her first Egyptian film *Laila* (Rosti, 1927), this were Egypt's first feature-length film, laying the groundwork for a robust national tradition of cinematic storytelling. Amir has as well as acted in the first Egyptian films about Palestine with Mahmoud Zulfikar in the 40's, "Girl from Palestine" and “Nadia” (Zulfikar, 1948, 1949) .

film censorship in Egypt dates back to 1914 instituted by the Palace and the English embassy, initially focused on military news and eventually expanded to cover broader cultural topics including morals, ethics, and religion, reflecting the understanding of cinema as a means of mass communication and public enlightenment. (Youssef, 1970, p11).

Dina Mansour argued; “Film censorship in Egypt, was not entirely aimed at maintaining public norms and values, but was justified as a military and political necessity regarding matters of

national security, which is why it was first administered by the Ministry of Interior. This continued until the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1938, which took over this role “ (Mansour, 2012, P2).

During that period, censorship served not only to suppress political ideas critical of foreigners or inciting resistance against monarchs or colonial powers (Ali 84), but also extended to the control of Egyptian films. As Egyptians began to take control of their film industry and produce works representing Egyptian culture, some films faced censorship and even bans in the French colonies across Africa (Shafik,2016, P15–6). By 1925, the Egyptian Acting Cinema Company had been established, setting the stage for a burgeoning national cinema.

When the capitalists in Egypt realized how much the cinema can create profit came the tightening of the government in film censorship. In 1947, the Ministry of Social Affairs introduced new laws that extended beyond traditional concerns of public morality and decency (Khoury,2008, p12). The ministry of social affairs introduced new laws that banned some scenes such as demonstrations, racism against Europeans residing in Egypt, communist ideologies that are against the monarchy or even issues related to social justice. (Youssef, 1970, p13). Interestingly, it's worth noting that the early Egyptian film industry was heavily influenced and supported by its Jewish community, such like Togo Mizrahi, who owned the production house of Egyptian cinema. In an Interview with the historian and film critic Dr. Mostapha Bayoumi (A3), he stated that Jews played a vital role in the commerce and cultural life of Egypt during the first half of the 20th century. They were among the first to invest in the infrastructure and talent that laid the foundations for the later blossoming of Egyptian cinema. Their involvement ranged from production to distribution and theatre management, and they contributed significantly to the Egyptian cinematic narrative and industry development.

“These Egyptian-Jewish filmmakers and producers were not creating in a vacuum—they were part of the broader social and political milieu of Egypt, and their work both reflected and influenced the national identity and cultural discourses of the time. Although Egypt's film industry did not initially emerge from an independent nationalist movement as in some other countries, it nevertheless became a crucial cultural and social asset over time.” (Bayoumi, 2024).

Talaat Harb, the founder of Bank Misr, played a pivotal role in this movement. He championed the idea that Egypt could achieve true independence through economic development, advocating a shift from agriculture to industrialization. This vision led to the establishment of the Egyptian Acting and Cinema Company in 1924 (Gaffney,2017, P55).

“During Egypt's cosmopolitan era, prominent figures like Abdel Wahab and Umm Kulthum entered the film industry at a time when they already had established audiences. They quickly recognized that cinema could be a lucrative venture. Tony Mizrahi, one of the pioneers in the field, emphasized this sentiment, stating, “If movies didn’t bring profit, they should at least return the money invested in them.” As producers became aware of the strong connection between audience demand and film profitability, they became increasingly cautious, opting to minimize risks and focus on ensuring financial returns” (Shakour,2024).

Dr. Shakour argued that even during critical events like the 1948 war, wealthy producers focused on maximizing profits, demonstrating how financial considerations often overshadowed political narratives within Egyptian cinema.

Although some of these films achieved commercial success, producers, aware of their audience's preferences, were cautious about investing in projects that addressed the issues faced by the working class. Furthermore, a new class of capitalists emerged in the agricultural, industrial, and commercial sectors, creating substantial fortunes from supplying the British army and the absence of competitive imports during the war. These entrepreneurs viewed cinema as a profitable investment opportunity. (Gaffney,2017, P58)

In an interview with Khaled Al Balshy (A4), the head of the Egyptian Media Syndicate, he emphasized the transformative impact of this era on Egyptian cinema. According to Al Balshy, "The end of the First World War and the 1923 Constitution opened up a space for Egyptian filmmakers to explore themes that were previously considered taboo. Only some independent directors like Kamal Selim and Youssef Wahbi began pushing boundaries, reflecting the shifting socio-political climate.

Al Balshe further noted that the era’s new freedoms allowed for the emergence of diverse political ideologies and a cultural movement towards self-expression. He highlighted how Wahbi’s controversial attempts to depict religious and moral themes, such as in "Ambassador of Hell” (Wehbe,1945) represented a bold engagement with societal issues. This perspective

aligns with the broader trend of Egyptian cinema during this period, which sought to challenge traditional norms and address pressing social issues. As the first to establish realism in Egyptian cinema was the film "The will" (Saleem, 1935), a young Egyptian who rebels against the tradition of the educated to get a job in the government (Samak, 1977, P 12). Many Egyptian films effectively mirrored the style of Hollywood musicals, serving as both an introduction to Western lifestyles and a catalyst for fostering a pan-Arab identity (Ilsaket, 2024, p. 30). However, the period of World War II marked a shift away from realism in cinema. According to Samak, the war's impact led to the rise of the "nouveaux riches," who quickly amassed wealth by supplying Allied forces stationed in Egypt to counter the German advance into the Middle East. For these newly wealthy individuals, cinema became a lucrative investment opportunity. Between 1939 and 1945, low-quality, inexpensive films were produced, reflecting a new wave of writers and directors driven by a commercial mindset focused on profit maximization (Samak, 1977, p. 12). Despite the commercial success, the film industry faced significant political pressures. For instance, the film Lashin (1935) was not screened until after the 1952 revolution, illustrating the extent of political censorship. During this time, commercial interests largely dictated the industry's direction, often prioritizing profitability over substantive content, leading to a general decline in the depth of cinematic messages (Gaffney, 2017, p.56).

However, this is not to say that cinema did not eventually adopt a more socially and culturally meaningful role. Over time, as the Arab world moved toward independence, and filmmakers became more involved in national discourses, cinema began to address the themes of anti-colonialism, national identity, and social issues. Films started to reflect the aspirations and struggles of the people, serving as a medium for enlightenment, resistance, and nationalistic expression. (Khoury, 2008).

1.2 : The Nakba and Girl from Palestine

(Opening scene song of "girl from Palestine)

"What happened to you, my girl? Where are you going, and where have you come from? Oh, Palestine, we bid farewell to you. All the shops will mourn for you. We had to say goodbye to the green land as we lit its nights with red. Oh, what have the Zionists done?"

(Zulfikar, 1948)



Figure 1 – An extreme wide shot depicting a train journey from Palestine to Egypt, symbolically represents the open borders and connections that existed before the establishment of Israel.

The film "Girl from Palestine," a melodrama released in 1948, and directed by Mahmoud Zulfikar was the first film to portray the 1948 war, as it was screened on the same year, The movie is not accessible on the Internet, and most of the plot descriptions available online, as well as in book sources, are incorrect and conflated with the plot of Land of Heroes.

(See Appendix, P1), The film's plot revolves around Salma, a Palestinian woman who flees to Egypt to seek refuge with her Egyptian cousin, following her father's dying wish during the war. This narrative underscore the historical family connections between Palestinians and Egyptians. Upon her arrival, Salma Falls in Love with her cousin Adel, a military pilot, and become inspired to volunteer as a nurse in the war as she hears in the news that princess Fawziya is volunteering. Adel, later on is injured during the 1948 war, resulting in a permanent deformity of his leg and the end of his military career. With Salma's support, Adel regains his confidence and proposes marriage to her.

Dr. Shakour argued, “When the Palestinian cause emerged as a significant issue, it was met with fresh attention in cinema. Mahmoud Zulfikar's film *Girl from Palestine* represented the Palestinian struggle from the perspective of Egyptian viewers, incorporating a romantic storyline. Films of that time often depicted Egyptian protagonists as heroes who traveled to Palestine to defend it, focusing more on their personal heroism rather than the actual circumstances in Palestine” (Shakour,2024).

The film, focusing on a Palestinian woman finding refuge and romance in Egypt, arguably simplifies the complexities of the situation. As the film critic Jamal Abdel Kader (A5) highlighted “ the film, made during the unfolding events of 1948, lacks the necessary distance and analysis to truly grapple with the Palestinian experience. By focusing on a hopeful romantic narrative and neglecting to address the long-term implications of the Nakba, the film fails to capture the profound psychological and emotional toll of displacement and loss of homeland” AlQader, 2024).

This highlights the importance of thoughtful reflection and careful study when portraying significant historical events in cinema, particularly those as multifaceted and impactful as the Palestinian Nakba. While some might view early Egyptian films about Palestine as simply reflecting the crisis, Al Qader stated that they missed a crucial opportunity. “Rather than using the Palestinian situation as a backdrop for melodrama, these films should have actively challenged the Zionist narrative of Palestine as "a land without people” (AlQader,2024). It can be noted that the Arab cinema at that time was very destined from the issue ongoing with Palestine which is predictable in analyzing how the political regimes back then was and how they dealt with the cinema (youssef,2004, P6). Films like "Nadia," produced in 1949 by the same director Mahmoud Zulfikar, often prioritized Egyptian nationalism and participation in the war over a nuanced understanding of the Palestinian experience. Tarek Yekhlef (A6), A Palestinian director residing in Egypt stated that “while well-intentioned, these films often lacked geographical and historical context, failing to educate viewers on the complexities of the conflict. Without a deeper understanding of the historical and political realities in Palestine, audiences were left with a simplified narrative.

Section 2: 1952-1967

By late 1948, Israel’s decisive advantage led Egypt to seek peace. A report from Arab military leaders highlighted failures such as inadequate preparation and ineffective command. Internal

discord hindered reforms, and Egypt eventually sought a political resolution, leading to the cease-fire and armistice agreement signed on February 24, 1949. This marked a shift from collective Arab efforts to bilateral negotiations, reflecting Egypt's strategic maneuvering and broader diplomatic dynamics (Morris, 2009, P10). In his memoirs, President Gamal Abdel Nasser noted that many officers saw the conflict as a political maneuver rather than a real military engagement. The lack of troop mobilization and preparation contributed to the belief that the war was a mere political stunt, resulting in a stalemate, which led to the revolution of 1952 (Nasser, 1957).

“For me, 1952 was definitely a Revolution, because revolution is linked to the social concept. Even if the military were the ones who operated it. It brought about significant social change” (Chouman, 2024).

Hanan Chouman, (A7) A film critic and journalist emphasized that the bond between cinema and politics is powerful. She stated that both involve elements like a script, a director, and actors, all geared towards impacting society. However, while cinema acknowledges its fictional nature, politics often shies away from revealing the whole truth.

However, as Hanan Chouman pointed out, the key difference lies in the audience's perception and the inherent expectations from each field—the acknowledgment of fiction in cinema versus the expectation of truth in politics. This comparison often serves to critique the performative and sometimes deceptive nature of political action, which unlike cinema, is expected to be founded on honesty and transparency in serving the public interest.

This can be seen from a Gramscian theory, where the ruling classes maintain power not just through force, but by establishing their worldview as the dominant one, shaping cultural norms and values. Political cinema, can be a tool for this, promoting ideologies that legitimize the state and its policies. The prison notebooks emphasize the importance of "consent" in maintaining power. Political cinema can manufacture consent by shaping public opinion and presenting a particular version of reality. (Gramsci, 1935).

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Egyptian Free Officers Movement, disillusioned by the government's use of the army as a political tool rather than for genuine liberation, pushed for systemic change. This discontent led to the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, resulting in King Farouk's abdication and President Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise. Under Nasser, driven by anti-

colonialist and nationalist ideals, there was a significant shift away from Western influence and a revival of Arab culture. Although the revolution did not entirely transform society, it revitalized cultural life, with cinema becoming a vital medium for promoting nationalism and contributing to nation-building, engaging all societal segments (Roggans, 2008; Sohat, 1983, p. 27). Nasser's leadership focused on six core principles aimed at dismantling colonialism, feudalism, corruption, and capitalist exploitation. Despite Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's attempts at peace negotiations, Nasser remained steadfast in his rejection, fueled by the plight of 750,000 Palestinian refugees who had fled to neighboring Arab countries. These refugees played a significant role in the formation of fedayeen (Resistance) groups, which launched attacks on Israel which was deemed terrorism by the West. If the fifties and sixties were dominated by Gamal Abdel Nasser, it must be remembered that Nasser's ideas of Arab unity, anti-imperialism, and revolutionary struggle owed a profound debt to his Palestinian experiences.” (Said, 1977,P135)

After 1952, filmmakers dealt with issues such as capitalist exploitation, social injustice, oppression and poverty. Chouman stated that the government wanted to hold the monarchy accountable for the defeat of the Egyptian army in the war. And it was the worse period in Egypt among the Egyptians life. Movies reflected at the time that the free officers saved Egypt, hence they realized that the cinema is a tool to exploit the previous monarchy and serve the new regime, this was done through a melodrama of a romantic story with the hero fighting to serve for the Palestinian war. The 1950's specifically dealt with the issues of the previous regime of the monarchy, blaming them for the 1948 war,

As Samir Farid noted,

“During this period, an oft used expression in Egyptian cinema was alfilm – al hadif(the film with a purpose) – purpose in the sense of political propaganda for socialism. The expression of film al jad (the serious film) was also used; in this case, ‘ serious meant political propaganda. Egyptian films moved away from dealing with contemporary reality. For everything was fine in the present. Most of the films of the public sector took place in the hated past” (Farid,2002, P11)

Film critics like Ramy Abdel Razek, Jamal Abdel Qader as well as the Egyptian Director Yousry Nasrallah (A8) specified that during this period, the government used the issue of Palestinian cause to highlight about the damaged weapons more than the cause itself, instead,

they highlighted about the mismanagement of the monarchy, which Ihsan Abdel Kadous wrote about in Al Ahram newspaper". (See Appendix, P2) .

Begbie argued in her book, that films in the 50's were similar to the previous melodramas, but were considered revolutionary melodramas as a genre, as censorship laws were being eased, such films dramatize events preceding and producing the revolution through involving the representation of the Palestinian war. (Begbie,2023, P30)

The 1952 revolution drastically transformed the cinema industry. Previously banned films such as *Lashin* (Kramp, 1938) and *Mustafa Kamil* (Badrakhan, 1952) were released in 1952, celebrating the new revolutionary rulers and their military achievements. Films like *Port Said* (1956) and *Return My Heart* (1957) highlighted the heroism of the revolution and critiqued the pre-revolutionary sociopolitical order. (Gaffney,2017,P59). According to Dr. Mustapha Kamal El Sayed (A9), a professor of political science at Cairo University noted that "*Rudda Qalbi*" (Zulfikar, 1957) has been broadcast annually on state television every July 23 since its release, marking the anniversary of the 1952 revolution. This epic romance film portrays the journey of Ali, the son of a poor gardener, who, by chance, gains admission to the military academy. He later becomes a member of the Free Officers, contributing to the pivotal events of overthrowing the monarchy and expelling the British colonizers (Abul-Majed, 2016, p. 41).

God be with us in 1955, was written by Ihsan Abdel Sadouk, a novelist and journalist for Al Ahram newspaper whom as well as was the first to write about the damaged weapon scandal, which caused his imprisonment during King Farooq period. Where a young officer who participated in the 1948 war, decided to take revenge from the government after realizing that his father in law participated in selling damaged weapons to the Egyptian army, holding them accountable for the defeat, and resulting in the overthrow of the monarchy, the same issue of the damaged weapons was seen in *Land of heroes* in 1957, Nadia Yaccoub suggests that such films indicate how alienated or dissolute young men either learn to redeem themselves through political engagement or end their lives in a spectacular, depoliticized martyrdom. Indeed, in all of these films, the man always not only transitions from a character who is destined from the Palestinian cause living a lavish life to someone who become dedicated to it but as well as sacrifice in the name of nationhood (Yaccoub,2018,P55). Both of these films, were produced by studio Misr which was founded in 1934 as a part of an effort by the national bourgeoisie to achieve economic independence from the British, while the revolutionary moment of 1952, produced filmmakers who would later on contribute to Egypt's public sector in the 60's. (Begbie, 2023, p22). They feature soldiers who volunteer to fight in the war for Palestine. And

enlist believing it is their masculine duty to protect Egypt and Palestine from invaders. In "God is with us," after the 1948 defeat, the soldier discovers his father-in-law sold damaged weapons to the army. He then holds secret meetings with other officers to plot revenge against those in authority. Similarly, in "Land of Heroes," the main character learns his own father was responsible for the damaged weapons. This film was one such a taboo film that failed to clear censorship and was not screened until 1955 (Begbie,2023, P30) "Land of Peace," released several years later, focuses on an Egyptian resistance group carrying out an operation in Palestine.

However, according to Dr. Nisreen Abdel Aziz (A10), a professor in media and communication at al Shorouk university and film critic in an interview discussed that he Palestinian cause started to take a serious shape to promote the idea of unity among Arabs as well as criticize the previous reign for the defeat of 1948”, among them, Land of peace, in 1953, starring Omar al Sherif who plays the role of an Egyptian Fedaaee, a group of resistance who dedicate their life fighting for the land, who enters Palestine to perform an operation, gets wounded and is found by a Palestinian woman Salma, which is played by Faten Hamama who takes care of him and help the resistant groups in order to finish the operation against the Israeli,

In 1956, President Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal was intended to assert Egyptian sovereignty and support development. This move angered Britain and France, who saw it as a threat and, in collaboration with Israel, planned a military intervention. Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula provided a pretext for Anglo-French forces to act under the guise of protecting the canal. However, international condemnation, especially from the United States, and robust Egyptian resistance thwarted their efforts. The crisis became a significant source of national pride for Egypt and was reflected in subsequent films, such as Port Saeed (1957). The Suez Crisis marked a turning point in Middle Eastern history, highlighting the decline of Western influence and the rise of pan-Arab nationalism under Nasser. (Roggans, 2008, pp. 281-290).

When the Free Officers' movement took power in Egypt in July, it significantly influenced Egyptian cinema. The new regime established the "Supreme Council for the Protection of Art Letters" and, in 1957, the "Organization of Consolidated Cinema" to enhance the quality of dramatic art and strengthen national cinema. In 1959, the government also founded the Higher Institute of Cinema to train a new generation of filmmakers and technicians, aiming to replace the traditional profit-driven management that had dominated the industry since World War II. (Samak,1977, P12). The Cinema Support Institution (CSI) was established on June 2, 1957, in response to socio-economic upheavals in Egypt following the Tripartite Aggression. After

President Nasser's sequestration of foreign nationals and Egyptianization decrees, many foreign businesses, including those in film, left Egypt, causing a drop in movie theaters and film imports. To counteract these issues and enhance Egyptian cinema, the Ministry of National Guidance created the CSI under Law 32 of 1957. This institution marked the beginning of increased public sector involvement in the film industry, aiming to improve cinema quality and expand its reach. (Maatouk, p. 18-20). Ella Shohat also highlights that Egyptian cinema was crucial in promoting national unity and identity (Shohat, p. 61).

It was only after 1956 that Egyptian authorities recognized cinema's potential as a propaganda tool. This realization followed the Tripartite Aggression, when films and documentaries effectively mobilized public opinion against foreign encroachments and supported the military junta's challenge to colonial control (Maatouk, 2017, p. 15).

In the early 1960s, political tensions led several Arab countries to ban Egyptian films, starting with Iraq and Syria, and followed by Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco due to concerns about political content. This boycott resulted in a significant decrease in the export of Egyptian films (Maatouk, 2017, P39). In response to political and economic pressures, including the need to reduce dependence on large private companies and the impact of regional film boycotts, the Egyptian government significantly expanded its role in the film industry. The socialist laws of 1961 and the National Charter of May 1962 were driven by the desire to reclaim production resources from what was perceived as exploitative private control. To address these challenges and ensure a steady cash flow, the government increased its involvement by taking on multiple roles within the cinema sector, including that of producer, distributor, exhibitor, and occasionally, even a spectator. This expansion of the public sector aimed to liberate the film industry from private dominance and stabilize its operations amidst a turbulent economic and political landscape (Maatouk, 2017, P42). The entrance of the cinema industry into the public sector began by 1963 with the nationalization of Studio Misr. All studios were placed under the Egyptian Public Agency for the Support of the Film Industry. (Gaffney, 2017, P59). This era saw the production of politically and socially relevant films, such as Youssef Chahine's *Al-Nasir Salah ad-Din* (1963). Given his background, it was natural for Chahine to support the 1952 Nasser Revolution, which initially was a bourgeois nationalist movement without a fully developed ideology. Nasser's objectives were focused on overthrowing the monarchy, eliminating British influence and control, and implementing limited agrarian reforms to reduce the power of traditional landowning classes. This spirit of national renewal and patriotism led

to a flourishing film industry, which embraced a more serious tone and engaged with contemporary issues (Armes,1981, p14).

While driven by Nasser's vision of a centralized socialist state, as articulated in the 1962 National Charter, the era was also characterized by negotiation and compromise. Leftist groups, including publications like *Al-Tahrir* magazine, likely engaged in internal debates about the implementation of socialist ideals. Prominent figures like filmmaker Youssef Chahine, known for his leftist views and involvement in the peace movement, reflected the intellectual dynamism of the time. (Waheed,2023, P108).

2.1 : Nasser Salah Dine and the Arab Unity Project

Egypt marked by two developments at that time: the formation of the concept of Arab socialism and Nasser's emergence as a symbol and a leader for the Arab unity (Armes,1981, P9) and witnessed and evolution in the Egyptian cinema twitch the change of the art industry and the state sectors to what was shaped into Arab socialism (Samak,1977, P13).

Egyptian government's involvement in the film production and distribution had become larger and more widespread. With the creation of the public sector, more and more of the private producers and companies were being pushed out. While private film producers continued to make films, albeit in increasingly limited numbers. (Khoury,2008, P54). The public sector also offered a chance to filmmakers and actors trained abroad primarily in France and in the Soviet Union (Samak,1977, P13).

Released in 1963 and produced by Lotus Films, *Al-Nasir Salah al-Din* (Chahine, 1963) was partially financed by the public sector. The film portrayed the Crusades as a secular conflict between Arab nationalists and European colonialists, drawing a clear parallel to the contemporary Egyptian leader. It was produced shortly after the failure of the United Arab Republic (UAR), which had collapsed following a separatist military coup in Syria in 1961, delivering a significant setback to Nasser's revolution and his pan-Arab ambitions. Despite these political changes, Arab unity and Nasser's support among Arabs remained intact. (Khoury, 2008, P14). For Chahine, national unity is integral for Arab efforts to fight the colonial domination (Khoury,2008, P46).



Figure 2 - extreme wide shot of the Muslim Pilgrimage in Jerusalem before the crusaders attacked them

The opening scene in Figure 2 depicts discomfort of an event coming up. Muslims were dressed in white, when the crusaders arrived, this wide shot transitioned into close ups showing bloodstains on their white clothes and their blood covered faces in pain. Between these shots, there's a fast-circular motion of white and red, used as a transition of a disorienting rotating shots. Then cuts to close ups of a red cloth, then a white cloth and finally a blood-stained cloth, all set to dramatic music, this kind of abstract quality of the transitions and the symbolic use of colors is a surrealism which often seek to disrupt reality and create a dream-like, sometimes nightmare atmosphere to represent the horror of war. the kind of montage did was influenced by Sergie Eisenstein. Whom was famous with the rapid succession of images. this can be seen in his iconic film "Odessa steps". (Eisenstein, 1925)

This attack lead Saladin, the ruler of the region around Jerusalem, to launch a campaign to reclaim the city from Crusader control. Dr. nisreen Abdel Aziz stated that Nasser Salah al-Din highlights themes of religious acceptance and Arab unity, affirming that Jerusalem is an Arab city. At the beginning of the movie, a messenger from Jerusalem, Hesamuddin, informs Saladin that "Jerusalem is experiencing its darkest hour. all hope rests on you Saladin, and the city yearns for your response". The soldier personifies Jerusalem, describing the crusaders' brutal treatment of its inhabitants – the elderly and children – who were forced into exile, scattered far from their ancestral land. Chahine masterfully employs flashbacks to juxtapose scenes of the suffering endured by Jerusalem's Arab population. The Flashback (see P4) depicts the

exodus of refugees' mirrors scenes from the Nakba, where Palestinians were tragically expelled from their homeland. Another scene when Saladin was having a conversation with the crusaders, who told you that Saladin, believer in all holy books persecutes Christians and defiles Christ's grave? Jerusalem belongs to the Arabs; the holy shrines are open to those of all religions." This scene According to Khoury depicts how did Chahine envision the Arab unity, the crusader's occupation of Jerusalem and send a message of hope to Arabs and the Palestinians (Khoury,2008,P48)

Nasser, just like in the film of Salah Dine, had a remarkable string of success that propelled him to a position of dominance in the Arab world. His anti-imperial credentials and calls for Arab solidarity made him the champion of Arab nationalists across the region.

2.2: 1967 Defeat

The 1967 defeat to which Nasser called gave its Arabic name the Naksa created a sense of disappointment in the Arab public. Israel was able to occupy a vast Arab territory, The whole of Egypt's Sinai, The Palestinian Gaza strip, the west bank including Arab- East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan heights. (Roggan,2008, P340). The defeat of 1967 set a whole basis of the country's social and political life which led filmmakers to produce critical films, some were given limited showing after Nasser's death and some never saw the light" (Samak, 1977, P14)

After the June War, Nasserism, Baathist, the Arab nationalist movement, Islamic fundamentalism, and many left-wing parties experienced a dramatic decline. Although some of these movements continue to maintain a privileged status, they have not fully recovered from the defeat. (Said,1977, p218). The 1967 defeat acted as a wake-up call, stirring the dormant Arab consciousness from its prolonged state of inertia. It jolted the Arabs from their illusions, leading them to question the validity of nationalist slogans and the capability of military regimes to deliver on their grand promises. This defeat also cast doubt on all belief systems and ideologies, replacing the people's confidence with doubt and skepticism. In this context of failure and disintegration, the Arab intellectual, including the Arab filmmaker, strove to create works that reflected this new reality. (Bouزيد,2017, P242). Dr. El Sayed along with Al Balshy stated that one of the best films produced was a song on the Passage (AbdelKhalek,1972), which depicted five soldiers defending their position to the last bullet and breath during the Israeli invasion. This film was inspired by Ali Salem's play. The film's plot

centers on an Egyptian infantry unit defending a strategic pass in Sinai during the 1967 war. It delves into the soldiers' emotional experiences during the siege, their memories, personal struggles, and hopes for survival.

Filmmakers, Like Yousef Chahine and Tawfik Saleh were among the directors, who were born in the 40's, witnessed the defeat of 48 war, the 1967 defeat were inspired by New Realism, in Italian its called Neorealismo, which allowed them to express their opinion freely, refusing to adhere to censorship rules. (Bouزيد, 2017, P246),. The Sparrow (Chahine,1972) is regarded as a film that delves into the underlying causes and roots of the defeat, examining not just its military dimension but also its social implications. The film presents the defeat as a natural consequence of the unfolding events.

According to Dr. Shakour, he stated that this collective trauma prompted filmmakers to critically analyze the reasons behind their failure and explore measures to prevent future setbacks. While most of the experts interviewed shared a common concern about understanding the defeat and finding ways to avoid similar outcomes.

Dr. Shakour highlighted that the filmmakers' reflections were motivated by a desire to address the fundamental issues that led to the national setback. This period of introspection among Egyptian filmmakers played a crucial role in shaping the cinematic response to national trauma. Youssef Chahine who was influenced by this defeat asserted "Confrontation-there must be confrontation; confrontation with the self... Where has all this started? How have we come to this? How have we been deceived and put in the wrong?" (Bouزيد, 2017, P245).

The Arab world grappled with the shock of defeat, leading to political introspection and eventually, a shift towards a negotiated peace with Israel, exemplified by the 1978 Camp David Accords. However, the unresolved issues of territorial disputes, settlements, and the status of Jerusalem continue to fuel tensions and impede lasting peace in the region. The 1967 war, therefore, serves as a stark reminder of the complexities and enduring nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with its legacy shaping the political realities of the Middle East even today.

Chapter Two– Normalization and Neoliberalism

This chapter examines three key aspects: the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel and its impact on shifting political alliances; the transition from Arab nationalism to neoliberalism; and the evolution of the cinema industry. It will explore these themes through films that express public objection to normalization with Israel, the rise of transnational cinema, and the emergence of new players in the film industry who operate beyond national borders. Main films that will be analyzed in this chapter are *Alexandria why?* That was released during Camp David accord, *Naji al Ali* and *Bab Shams* during the Oslo Agreement and *Intifada* and *the Dupes*. To analyze how transnational films made in different stages portrayed the Palestinian case.

Section 1: The end of Arab Nationalism

The death of Nasser in 1970 marked a turning point in Egyptian politics and a decisive shift away from the Nasserist ideology. While Nasser left Egypt in the midst of rebuilding its military after the Six-Day War and the decline of Pan-Arabism and Arab Socialism, his successor, Anwar Sadat, had a drastically different vision for the country. (Taha, 2021, P78).

The June 1967 war resulted in a devastating defeat for the three Arab armies involved. Syria, having lost the Golan Heights, rejected UN Resolution 242 of 1967, which advocated for peace negotiations between the conflicting parties. While Israel, Egypt, and Jordan accepted the resolution, no agreements were reached between Israel and Egypt despite Egyptian efforts. As a result, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat aligned with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to launch the October 1973 war against Israel (Barari, 2009, p. 44).

1.1: 1970-1979

The 1973 Yom Kippur War, launched by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan against Israel, must be understood within this context of shifting alliances. While the war had complex origins, Sadat's realignment with the U.S. and reliance on Western support were key elements in his strategy. He depended on Saudi Arabia to supply fuel for his military efforts and sought to cut off fuel supplies to countries friendly with Israel. Sadat recognized that achieving victory required not only military strength but also strategic alliances and diplomatic planning to reclaim Sinai,

understanding that success could not be achieved solely on the battlefield. (Roggan,2008, p366- 371).

Sadat's administration marked a significant shift in the relationship between the state and religion. To counter the influence of left-leaning Nasserists and communists, he strategically released imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood members, who had been repressed under Nasser (Weber, 2012, p. 18). By aligning with this Islamist group, Sadat sought to incorporate Islamic principles into governance, moving away from Nasser's secular socialist vision. This realignment was encapsulated in his establishment of "The State of Science and Faith" (Taha, 2021, p. 78).

In foreign policy, Sadat dramatically shifted Egypt's stance by mending relations with Saudi Arabia, which had sheltered exiled Muslim Brotherhood members during Nasser's regime. This rapprochement, supported by Saudi financial aid to institutions like Al Azhar, emphasized Sadat's willingness to align with Islamic states and counter communism and atheism (Taha, 2021, p. 79).

According to Dr. Nisreen Abdel Aziz, she stated that filmmakers sought to understand the reasons behind their previous defeat, its consequences, and how they ultimately triumphed, sometimes attributing blame to previous regimes.

The impact of the 1973 victory has continued to inspire filmmakers, both during that period and in more recent productions. For instance, the 2019 film "Al Mamar" addresses the war in Sinai, highlighting the challenges faced by Egyptian forces due to the distant conflict in Yemen, which led to significant losses and a decline in public confidence in the military. Similarly, The films revolving around the October war like hours in Israel, Road to Eilat, Mission in Tel Aviv, execution of a dead man and Road to Eilat mainly depict Egypt as a glorified leader whose acts have been especial for Arab victory. (Khatib,2006, P135) This era was the start of fictional intelligence operation, as Dr. Shakour stated “ during that time most films portrays the Egyptian spy who travels to Israel or is hired to obtain information” . such films are like 48 hours in Israel, which shows triggers of the October war. Mission in Tel Aviv, the Egyptian spy gathering information on Israel weapon development prior to the war. And Execution of a dead man set in 1972, an Egyptian – Israeli spy who is captured by the Egyptian secret services. Dr. Bayoumi reflected that such films always portrayed that the Israeli intelligence are dump, cowards, or weak in operations, its always the Egyptians who are stronger and win at the end,

if we wanted really to face our enemy, we should have portrayed them rightly. We all know how the Israeli intelligence are powerful, these films were not realistic.”

Moreover to openly critique bureaucratic corruption and political abuses, reflecting Sadat’s efforts to distance his administration from his predecessor’s policies. Noteworthy films from this time include *The bullet is still in my pocket* which criticized governmental corruption and its role in the 1967 defeat, the movie is written by Ihsan Abdel Qaddous, in it the hero of the October war, having carried out his duty, Saves one bullet left by the enemy, portrays the Egyptian people’s mockery of the army. In one scene, the soldier played by Mahmoud Yassin, traveling home in his military uniform, is overcome with despair and shame. When a passenger questions his departure, another passenger remarks, “Just leave him be; he’s accustomed to giving up,” provoking laughter from those around him.

In the movie, a man who is taking control of the land the hero comes from, rapes his woman, he belongs to the Arab Socialist union, gives detailed account on the Nasserist period (AlSamak, P15). In the end of the movie, the final scene, The hero returns back from the 1973 war, claiming back his dignity and victory from the previous defeat. He reaches the village and was told that this man left the town, a new liberal person who cares about freedom replaced him. Which clearly shows they were pointing out to the era of al Sadat.

Mrs. Nahed Saleh an author of the book *the films of war and love*, and film critic (A11), she stated that during this period, we weren’t experts in doing war movies back then, production wise, its different than historical films. Most of the footage back then were taken from real footage of war.

Mrs. Safaa Al Lithi, (A12) an Egyptian film critic pointed out “Despite ongoing normalization with Israel, there has been persistent commercial propaganda suggesting that Palestinians sold their lands to the Jews”. However, films such as *Alexandria and The Dupes* by Tawfik Saleh have debunked these myths by showcasing the true Palestinian narrative. Similarly, *Bab al-Shams* (both parts) has powerfully illustrated the real events of the Palestinian struggle.”

Filmmakers Tawfik Saleh and Youssef Chahine, both of whom emerged during Gamal Abdel Nasser’s era with leftist and revolutionary ideals, significantly shifted their cinematic perspectives during Anwar Sadat’s presidency. This transition is reflected in their notable works produced during Sadat’s era, such as Saleh’s *The Dupes* (1972) and Chahine’s *Alexandria... Why?* (1979). Whom both can be an interesting case to study about their anti-imperialism, anti-colonialist and social justice and the Palestinian question in their work.

According to Nasrallah, he recited that In Egypt, discussing Palestine has often felt like a moral obligation, a way to show opposition to normalization with Israel. Despite this, the focus of Egyptian cinema has often been more on the broader conflict with Israel rather than the Palestinian issue itself. For instance, Egypt's fight against Israel in 1956 was tied to the nationalization of the Suez Canal, not directly to Palestine. The 1967 defeat was related to the closure of the Strait of Tiran by Israel, which led to the war. Consequently, Egyptian cinema from that era primarily depicted spies, the conflict with Israel, and the sense of defeat.

Begbie noted that The Muslim Brotherhood, which had been suppressed during the Nasser era but existed before his rule, began to gain power and visibility as they invested in commercial ventures. Their members reaped material benefits from Egypt's neoliberal reforms, with state-owned assets being sold to businessmen, many of whom were affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf. At the same time when the Dupes was created. (Begbie,2023, P122).

1:2- The Dupes and the Question of Palestine

“I’m not overstating when I say I feel like an outsider in my own country. When darkness falls, I need to find a glimmer of hope. I yearn for a place where I can make a meaningful impact, and after October 1969, I chose to settle in Damascus.” (Saleh, 2014, P175).

In his book “Cinema of Tawfik Saleh”, Wefy details Saleh's challenges in making the film, noting that after Nasser's death, Saleh recalled a novel he had previously written as a script but which had been rejected. Faced with the burgeoning public sector in cinema, Saleh decided to flee to Damascus. Wefy also mentions that a key figure in Syrian film authorities advised him to avoid Ghassan Kanafani's novel. Al Qader, in an interview, pointed out that the film was not released in Egypt due to specific political reasons, particularly in light of the new alliances with the Gulf.

The Dupes was produced in Syria, by the national film organization, this movie was inspired by the novel men in the sun written by Ghassan Kanafani (1963), about 3 Palestinian men from different generations , dispossessed from their homeland, met in Iraq to find a safe passage to Kuwait, the land of oil and where they can achieve their dreams.

According to Begbie, "The Dupes" is a pioneering film in the post-Naksa Arab cinema, breaking the conventional national cinema framework and reflecting a more radical, materialist form of pan-Arabism. The film portrays a diverse group of Palestinian exiles, united in their pursuit of economic improvement through migration to the Gulf states, which symbolizes the broader trend of oil migration driven by neoliberalism. Through its narrative and symbolic elements, the film critiques the prevailing socio-political and economic systems, revealing distrust towards corrupt leaders. The film's ending, in particular, alludes to the shift towards autonomous armed resistance that would define the Palestinian struggle in the ensuing decades. (Begbie, 2023, pp84, 86)

The film relied on flashbacks to tell the story of each man, Abou Qais, who recalls a question he learned in school: "Where is the Arab Sea located, from the Euphrates to the Nile?" This question symbolizes his quest for a sense of belonging and stability. This is based on the flashback before the Nakba when the instructor of his Son Qais, who died in the Nakba, used to tell him to repeat the phrase "when the two big rivers meet with each other, Al Dajla and Al Fourat they form a bigger river, called the Arab sea. Abou Qais when he had to escape to Basra to reach Kuwait. Was sitting on the edge of the sea and asked "is this the Arab sea?". The other character is a 16 year old boy, whom had to quit school since their father and older brother abandoned them, to go to Kuwait and work and sustain a living for his mother and younger siblings. Abou Khazayran, the truck driver, who has lost his sense of honor and is driven only by profit, encounters Kuwaiti border guards. The guards question him extensively, and the harsh conditions inside the tank result in the death of the three men from heat exhaustion. According to Shafik, "The film portrays the harsh reality of their plight and the betrayal they face in their desperate quest for a better future". (Shafik,2016 P197).

The trio are convinced by Abu Khayzaran, who is motivated solely by financial gain, to smuggle them through the desert to Kuwait. They agree to his condition of hiding inside an empty water tank, despite the extreme heat. dangerous journey is fraught with risk, as many smugglers take the money and abandon their passengers midway through the desert.



Figure 3 – End scene, the camera tracks Abou Khayzaran with a background of oil factory. The camera moves to the right at the end to show the 3 Palestinian men dead while background is on fire.

As they near the border, Wefy describes the film's final scene where Abou Khzayran reaches a checkpoint in Kuwait. He has only six minutes to get his papers stamped in order to reach a location where he can open the truck containing three men trapped in extremely hot conditions, described as "hell." Meanwhile, the officers in the office, comfortably seated under air conditioning, waste time listening to Abou Khzayran's account of his activities in Basra, refusing to stamp the papers. The contrast highlights the officers' indifference as the men inside the truck suffer.. (Wefy, 2014. P175) According to Dr. Shakour, the film has been heavily criticized for highlighting the failure of Arab nations to effectively support refugees. This criticism is particularly evident in the final scene, where three men are shown dead at the Kuwaiti border, near the oil wells”.

While Sadat initially enjoyed immense popularity after the 1973 war, his economic policies triggered significant social and political upheaval. His Infitah policy, launched in 1975, marked a decisive shift from Nasser's socialist model towards a capitalist system. (Taha, 79) This was not merely an economic strategy but a deliberate ideological move, aligning Egypt with the United States and its free-market principles.

Sadat's economic reform policy, known as Infitah, was framed as "openness to all knowledge," marking a shift from socialism to a market-driven economy (Waheed, 2023). However, Infitah largely benefited Sadat's close allies, increasing inequality and squeezing the middle class that had thrived under Nasser's policies (Taha, 2021, p. 80). The policy's failure led to the January 1977 riots, sparked by skyrocketing food prices and widespread frustration over economic disparities. Sadat's 1977 visit to Israel and the subsequent 1979 peace treaty further fueled domestic and regional outrage, with accusations of betrayal of the Palestinian cause leading to Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League (Taha, 2021, p. 80).

In the 70's, the Egyptian film industry faced significant hurdles. The reduction in public sector involvement led to a lack of alternative funding sources, and the state's control over film distribution left the industry struggling with both domestic and international marketing. Lebanese distribution companies, filled this void, capitalizing on the Gulf's economic boom following the 1973 oil crisis. (Gafney,2017, p61).

According to Khatib, Egyptian cinema remains Egypt's most successful cultural export. The Arab Israel conflict has proven to be a delicate issue for Egyptian cinema. In detaching itself from the rest of the world through camp David accord. (Khatib,2006, P122).

1.3: Alexandria why? and Camp David

Sadat had been pursuing peace with Israel for five years but faced difficulties due to conflicts with Arab and communist allies. To maintain Egypt's Arab standing, he often denied engaging in direct peace talks with Israel. In November 1977, Sadat's high-profile visit to Israel aimed at peace negotiations ended in failure and damaged relations with his Arab allies. Despite these challenges, Sadat's main goals included addressing domestic issues, reclaiming the Sinai Peninsula, reviving Egypt's economy, and reducing Soviet influence in the Middle East. (Roggan's,2008, pp 388-392).

Alexandria why? Marked a significant shift in the examination of Arab national identity, showcasing a bold celebration of social and cultural diversity. Chahine's film vividly portrays the multi-cultural fabric of Alexandria, highlighting its Jewish and Christian communities alongside its Muslims population. Mrs. Nahed Salah, stated that this film was done From Yousef Chahine's perspective, the political change was deeply personal, shaped by his emotions and his experiences in the cosmopolitan environment of a diverse, multi-regional society. Mahmoud Darwish, however, criticized the film, reflecting a different viewpoint on the representation of these changes. She was in high school when she read his article in Youm

7 newspaper in London. He reflected in the end scene when Yehia was on top of a huge ship boarding to new York while his mom looking at him and said while the ship is sailing, “Yehia is too small for the big ship”, Mahmoud Darwish ended up his article by writing” The Palestinian cause is too big for you Chahine”.

Alexandria was influenced by Gilles Deleuze's conceptualization of "hybrid cinema," which provides a nuanced understanding of the medium's political potential. Deleuze argues that cinema can act as a "critical analyzer," capable of illuminating the tensions within a conceptual modernity where the "power of the false" blurs the lines between truth and falsehood, and reality and imagination. (Marks, 1994, P244)

Set before 1948, during World War II, as the Nazis advanced towards Egypt's western front, the film reflects on resistance against colonialism and its profound impact on the social, political, and demographic realities of the Arab world, including Palestine. Chahine explores the period's political struggles through a variety of unlikely relationships: the friendship between three Egyptian boys of different faiths (a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew), a love affair between a Muslim and a Jewish woman, and the internal dilemmas faced by an Egyptian Jewish family during the final phase before the creation of Israel.

This film, released in the same year as the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, serves as a poignant reminder of the roots of the Palestinian dilemma. It highlights how Arab countries were often used as battlegrounds for international and colonial powers.

The narrative also includes a subplot involving leftist radicals who plot to kidnap British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, believing this act might end British occupation. Additionally, the film features a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who refuses to engage in the struggle against the British.

In one of the scenes, Yehia, who is passionate about acting, prepares a play and invites the British Ambassador. Yehia and his friends, depicts Allied and Axis powers chasing each other across an Arabian desert. In this scene, some Arab characters, holding a sign reading "No one is allowed to pass through here," are ignored by the European armies, amidst the larger geopolitical conflicts. Two Arabs who look Bedouin wanted to cross by, But Yehia states that they need to pay to enter. The British and the Italians and Germans paid, but as an Arab you can pay half the price.



Figure 4 – Yehia in the play mimicking Hitler

The theme of oil's central role in colonial Middle Eastern politics and its implications for Arab national liberation is underscored in this scene as well as in the scene where the Jewish Egyptian old man has a conversation with his friend, that the western power were able to detect oil in the region, which means there should be a guardian. Chahine used versus from the bible "Orshalem" the killers of the prophets and the innocence" an old versus to show that history repeats itself reflecting how the Zionist are treating Palestinians.

The final scene when the Jewish woman played by Najlaa Fathi meets her Muslim lover, Ibrahim in the prison after was forced to flee with her dad during world war 2 to Haifa escaping from the Nazi. The camera takes us into a flashback on war taking place in Palestine. As she narrates to Ibrahim, "when I thought that Palestine is safe from the Nazis, I faced another hell. As the war will take one more 100 year to end. dad promised to show the perfect society, but Judaism turned into a nationality of blood and violence. Every Jew around the world have a nationality that is different than his original one. The camera zooms in to her father as he rides the car leaving Haifa stating "I condemn terrorism and I refuse to take anyone's land on the expense of someone else".

According to Khoury. "The film represents a critical period in contemporary Arab history alludes to the many political and social issues impacting on the struggle around Arab identity. It reflects upon the resistance against colonialism" (Khoury,2008, P26).

Section 2- Into Neoliberalism

During President Hosni Mubarak's tenure, the Egyptian media landscape underwent notable changes. Key developments included the rise of media privatization, the launch of private satellite television channels, the proliferation of privately-owned opposition newspapers in both print and online formats, and increased access to the Internet (Khamis, 2011).

Following Sadat's death and throughout Mubarak's presidency, Egyptian society experienced a period of political stagnation. In the early 1980s, Mubarak focused primarily on legitimizing his presidency, given his lack of popularity despite his previous role as Vice-President (Al Awadi, 2014, p. 2). Hesham Al Awadi, in "The Muslim Brothers in Pursuit of Legitimacy: Power and Political Islam in Egypt under Mubarak" argues that at the start of Mubarak's rule, he sought to stabilize his regime amid the turmoil that followed Sadat's assassination. During this period, Mubarak displayed a degree of tolerance toward opposition groups, particularly since his primary concern was combating Islamic extremists. (Awadi,2014, p.4),

Egypt's "path towards moderation" became evident under Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) with the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, marking the first accord between an Arab country and Israel. Although Sadat was initially celebrated for regaining the Sinai Peninsula in 1973, the peace treaty sparked significant controversy, particularly from the PLO, due to the lack of Palestinian leadership involvement (Bauer, 2012, p. 2). Edward Said commented on the Camp David Accords, noting that the deal was perceived as more beneficial to Israel than to Egypt and the Arab world, and criticized the lack of consideration for the Palestinian cause (Said, p. 192).

Mubarak (1981-2011), relations with Israel evolved into what was described as a "cold peace" (Bauer, 2012, p. 2). Mubarak maintained the peace treaty while positioning Egypt as a key mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This role was evident during the Oslo Accords of 1993, which led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PA),

The Oslo Accords of 1993 were a bilateral agreement between the PLO and Israel, marking a new phase in the Palestinian struggle. This agreement promised limited autonomy for Palestinians residing in the occupied territories under the Palestinian Authority (PA). (Begbie, 2023,P127).

and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which Egypt endorsed (Arab Peace Initiative, 2002). However, Mubarak's presidency also saw increasing tension, particularly with Hamas's

takeover of Gaza in 2006, leading to a shift in Egyptian diplomacy. Actions such as relocating the Egyptian embassy from Gaza to Ramallah and countering Islamist political elements reflected Mubarak's support for the PA and a cooling of diplomatic relations with Israel (Arab Peace Initiative, 2002). Notably, events like the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the 1996 tunnel opening near the al-Aqsa mosque, and Ariel Sharon's 2000 visit to the Temple Mount led Mubarak to withdraw Egypt's ambassador from Israel on multiple occasions. Despite these tensions, the peace with Israel persisted, largely due to Egypt's benefits from U.S. economic and military aid. Mubarak also worked to restore Egypt's relations within the Arab world and reclaimed sovereignty over Taba through international arbitration (Barari, 2009, p. 7).

2.1: 1980-2011:

During this period, the dismantling of nationalized industries led to cinema houses being returned to their original owners or sold to new investors. Additionally, the quality of films was affected by changes in the filmmaking process. Studios, no longer under the control of their former owners, were transformed into joint government-private stockholding companies managed by former public sector bureaucrats (Gaffney, p. 62). A new wave of Egyptian filmmakers emerged, focusing on the country's socio-economic issues. As Taha notes, this new wave of Egyptian neorealist cinema directly reflects socio-economic realities rather than relying on symbolism (Taha, p. 87).

The shift in cinema audience composition was another notable development. Traditionally, the majority of viewers in more expensive seats were middle-class families, but by the end of 1970s, a new group of "affluent workers," including skilled craftsmen and relatively well-paid laborers, began to dominate these seats (Gaffney, 2017, p. 63). Begbie argued that With Egypt adopting neoliberal policies and deepening diplomatic relations with Israel, including official media campaigns, artists critical of these policies faced the challenge of navigating Egypt's evolving political and economic landscape. They needed to find ways to highlight the Palestinian struggle despite these shifting dynamics (Begbie, 2023, P118)

Abdel Razek, Dr. Shakour, and Al Qader stated that 1980s introduced a period known as "Aflam al Mouqawalat" (contracting films), where films were produced quickly by investors *for* commercial purposes. In recent decades, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Gulf distributors have dominated the industry. The Rotana Group, led by Saudi Prince Al Walid Bin Talal, has been

a significant player, acquiring the rights to numerous old Egyptian films and investing in production through private Arab satellites (Shafik, 2016, p. 217).

As Lina Khateeb argues, “ The Arab films construct Israeli nationalism as imperialist. Poised against the wellbeing of the Arab world, the films construct Palestinians nationalism as anti-imperialist , attempting at reclaiming the nation and replacing the existing Israeli power”. Israel is thus always associated with spies, betrayals, rape, vicious and people who would spread diseases. Such as *Love in Taba*, *Girl from Israel*. (Khatib, 2006, P84).

Both films tackle normalization the issue of Normalization between Egypt and Israel . According to Khatib, both films tackle how women are set at the battleground in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

During Hosni Mubarak’s era, a public rejection emerged and films began to reflect this sentiment of normalization, especially as events like the Oslo accord (1993) that was followed by the first Intifada (1987) and second Intifada (2000) unfolded, Abdel Razek during the interview remembered when he was in University back in the early 90’s , he said we used to do demonstrations supporting Palestinians during the intifada, from that event we came to know about the term (Atfal al Higara) stone children, which we witnessed only 15 years later in the film *Embassy in the building*. While Safaa Lithi stated that public protests frequently voiced strong support for the Palestinian cause. A notable slogan from that time was "They jailed Taba because they said Palestine," highlighting the passionate solidarity with the Palestinian issue.”

Egypt also began producing films that resonated with the new generation, achieving success both domestically and throughout the Arab region. The new millennium brought a variety of genres and stylistic approaches marked by moral conservatism. This trend, including both new comedies and fiction films by emerging directors, is often described as "clean cinema" (al-sinema al Nazifa) due to its conservative content (Shafik,2016, p. 220). Films such as "*Sai'idi in the American University*" (Hamed, 1998), "*Hammam in Amsterdam*" (Hamed, 1999), "*Embassy in the Building*" (Arafa, 2005), and "*Friends Without Business*" (Idriss, 2001) illustrate the focus on solidarity with Palestine and portray Israel as an enemy.

This has led to cinema serving as escapism rather than a medium for serious social critique. The suppression of genuine societal issues by conservative forces, as noted in the paragraph, further illustrates the challenges that filmmakers face in addressing real-world problems, including those related to Palestine. As Hennebelle argued,

“Arab cinema has long been criticized for its tendency to either ignore reality or address it superficially, often relying on stereotypes. This approach has fostered problematic viewing habits, rendering cinema as a form of escapism for audiences rather than a tool for social reflection. Consequently, it has distracted viewers from pressing real-world issues, dulling their critical awareness and conscience. Although there have been noteworthy efforts within Arab cinema to confront and depict genuine societal problems, these initiatives have frequently been suppressed by conservative forces resistant to any transformative changes in the cinematic landscape”.(Hennebelle p7-8).

Dr. Abdel Aziz stated that In Saidi in the American University and Hamam in Amsterdam, Palestinian characters are portrayed as part of a broader struggle for Arab unity. In these films, the role of Palestinian character playing Helm El-Arabi as a music to stop the fight between his Arab friends, emphasize the idea of solidarity and shared nationalism among Arabs. She even stated that the depiction of Palestinian women in cinema often highlights their roles as symbols of resistance, whether as daughters or wives of martyrs such as the role played by a Palestinian woman called Dureen in the movie the cousins. This film, introduced the symbol of the key to a Palestinian house, clarifying to the public that Palestinians did not sell their homes but were displaced. One notable film is The Embassy Building, where Adel Imam, known for his work in black comedy, addressed normalization with Israel. The film portrays a Palestinian child named Iyad who, despite living in the Gulf, yearns to return to Palestine to fight for its cause. The transition in Imam's character is marked by Iyad's death in Palestine, symbolizing the martyrdom of Palestinian children and their right to live. This film had a significant impact and sparked a trend among Egyptian audiences.

Dr. Abdel Aziz noted that her generation had little knowledge of the Palestinian struggle and learned about symbols like Hanzala and the key that Palestinians hold onto in their homes, as well as the concept of martyrdom, through films. In an interview with Claire Begbie (A15), she shared that while studying a course on Palestinian cinema at the University of Cairo in 2016, she, as an English speaker, was the only foreigner among 22 Egyptian students. When asked by the instructor if anyone knew of films depicting Palestine, no one could recall any except for “The Cousins” and “Ashab Wala Business” (“Friends, Not Business”). However, this was different in terms of interviewing experts who come from a different generation, According to Yousry Nasrallah, Director of Bab Shams commercial films such as Ashab Wala Business did portray the Palestinian lives under occupation but in a shallow way, through the

idea of being a martyr. That the Palestinians are just characters who lives to martyr with no ambition, we didn't know what the Palestinian character do in life, while *El Hob Fi Taba* and *Mission in Tel Aviv* leaned towards paranoia, focusing on Israelis as threats who could bring harm to Egypt, such as through a disease like the HIV. These films, he argues, failed to address the fundamental aspects of the Palestinian problem.

As Egyptian cinema faced a significant financial crisis in the late 1990s, it was compelled to adapt and transform. The surprising success of low-budget comedies marked a shift towards escapism and commercialism, moving away from socio-political critique. However, recent films have experienced a resurgence of direct social critique, addressing contemporary issues and challenging societal taboos (Mansour, 2012, p. 5). Despite these efforts, censorship continues to significantly hinder the accurate depiction of real-life events, with filmmakers navigating regulations that are often vaguely defined and subject to discretion (Goerg, p. 29; Mansour,2012,p.6). This shift has significantly altered the focus of Egyptian cinema, steering it away from reflecting socio-political and cultural realities. Faced with widespread poverty and a sense of helplessness, the public has increasingly turned to cinema for distraction and comfort, leading to a trend towards commercialism and escapism rather than addressing the harsh realities of their lives (Mansour,2012, p.9).

By the 1990s, transnational co-productions became more prevalent due to economic dependencies fostered by international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. This period of neoliberal globalization aligned with Egypt's *infitah* (open-door policy) and normalization with Israel. Economic and military support during this era often required Egypt to form alliances with countries supportive of Israel, such as France, Germany, and Saudi Arabia, or those acting as proxies for Israel, like the United States (Begbie,2023,P119). Yekhlef pointed out that “ the only 2 films in Mubarak period that depicted the Palestinian struggle was *Bab Shams* and *Naji al Ali*, as most of the films were commercial based and never discussed the core of the Palestinian question”. While Yousry Nasrallah, the Egyptian filmmaker, remarked that starting in the 1980s, new Palestinian filmmakers like Michael Khalifa and Elia Suleiman emerged, effectively expressing the Palestinian struggle through their films. Nasrallah in the interview questioned why it should be the responsibility of Egyptian directors to depict the Palestinian struggle when Palestinian filmmakers themselves are now able to tell their own stories.

2.2: Transnational Egyptian Films and Oslo Accord

2:1:1 *Bab Shams*

“Bab Shams was not a movie about the Palestinian cause. It was about the Palestinians. However, Palestinians in Egyptian cinema was just a slogan, a slogan that we want to portray for our political purpose. Nothing more.”
(Nasrallah, 2024).

As mentioned earlier, The Oslo Accords, signed between the PLO and Israel in 1993/5, marked a significant shift in the Palestinian struggle by initiating a new political phase. This bilateral agreement offered a promise of “limited autonomy” for Palestinians residing in the Occupied Territories, under the governance of the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Begbie, 2023, P117).

Ramy Abdel Razek emphasized that while many Egyptian writers have passionately portrayed the Palestinian cause in their novels, this rich literary resource hasn't been utilized by Egyptian filmmakers to depict Palestinian life on screen. He highlighted “Bab Shams” is an exceptional film because it was adapted from a novel written by Elias Khoury, offering depth and authenticity. When I met Yousry Nasrallah, I asked why Bab Shams in specific, He answered in written with personal connections to Lebanon, as well as Friendship with Elias Khoury, the author of Bab Shams novel, he visited Palestinian camps and experiences during the Lebanese civil war. Nasrallah felt a deep resonance with the novel and believed it deserved cinematic adaptation, but initially hesitated, feeling only Palestinians should tell their story. However, when given creative freedom by the production house in France, he chose Bab Shams, seeing it as a reflection of his own experiences and convictions. “I received a call from ART France Cinema, informing me that they were willing to fund a film project. I stipulated that if I were to make a movie, it should be based on an Elias Khoury novel, as he was a dear friend of mine. During my time working in Beirut, I collaborated with Khoury and used to work in al Saffir newspapers with Naji al-Ali, they agreed to my condition.” (Nasrallah,2024). Bab Shams had two parts, Al Awda (the return) and al Raheel (the leave) .

Bab Shams explores the relationship between Palestine and the broader Arab world through three distinct historical periods. The first stage, set in 1948 at the film's beginning, features a camera close-up of a rock inscribed with “Long live the Arab rescue army,” illustrating how the Arab army was seen as saviors. (Khatib, 2006, p158).



Figure 5.– The Arab soldier arriving to the village informing the Palestinian about their faith

In this scene, the Arab soldiers' commander was stationed in a specific zone and was not authorized to engage in combat. When the resistance group encountered them, Younes questioned the officer about why he didn't break the orders and fight. The officer responded that, as a soldier, he adhered strictly to the rules, unlike the resistance fighters who could take such liberties. Later, in a moment of desperation, the officer ordered his team to bomb the Zionists. This act of defiance sparked renewed hope among the Palestinian people for a return to their village. However, the officer's despair culminated in him entering the village and declaring that the Arab soldiers had abandoned their posts, betrayed both the villagers and themselves. Overwhelmed by defeat, he then took his own life in front of everyone.

In Younes' story in the first part of the film, Bab al-Shams holds a pivotal role. Situated close to his home village in the Galilee, The movie depicts events from the time before the Nakba, When Younes at an early age had to marry Nahila who was only 12 at the time, Younes joins at a later stage the resistant group to fight the occupation, Nasrallah portrayed the events of the first Israeli occupation and forcing Palestinians to leave from their homeland, Nahila will have to flee with his parents to the borders and meet Younes secretly from time to time in a cave. According to Begbie's analysis, "it is the secret meeting place where, as revealed through various flashbacks, he would visit his lover, Nahila, after returning from his guerrilla missions in occupied Palestine to the hills of Southern Lebanon. Their romance serves as a symbolic subplot in the film, with the cave embodying a sacred Palestinian space. This intimate setting represents a reservoir of shared memories and aspirations, symbolizing that, much like their love, it will endure beyond the film's conclusion." (Begbie,2023, P128).

The second stage portrays the refugee experience in Lebanon, highlighting how Syrians captured Palestinians and the Lebanese dispersed them. The third stage focuses on the confrontation and evasion during the civil war, depicting the events of that tumultuous period. (Khatib, 2006, p158).



Figure 5, A scene where Khalil meets Shams after the PLO were forced to Leave Lebanon

In her book, Lina Khatib explores the involvement of women in the resistance movements, as depicted in both *Road to Eilat* and *Bab al-Shams*. One striking example is Shams, who, after enduring abuse from her husband, learns to handle a gun and joins the Fedayeen resistance following a massacre. She eventually aligns herself with the PLO in Tripoli. (Khatib,2006, P112).

Yousry Nasrallah’s film does more than recount the events of the Nakba and Naksa; it presents a broader narrative about the Palestinian struggle for identity and resilience amidst defeat. One poignant scene features Umm Hassan, a character who takes care of Khalil whom have been abandoned by his mother living in Ramallah. After visiting her home in the West Bank, where she sees a lemon garden, she brings back oranges to the camp. Upon her return, she presents the oranges with a profound statement: “These are not for eating; the oranges are Palestine.” This gesture is symbolic, underscoring the deep connection between the land and the Palestinian identity.

The scene where Younis and Khalil eat these oranges captures the essence of their struggle and hope. The oranges, brought from the land of Palestine, symbolize not just sustenance but a connection to their homeland and a reminder of what they are fighting to reclaim.



Figure 6, A close up shot of Um Hassan touching the oranges from her Backyard when she visits her house in the occupied West Bank

2:1:2 The case of Nour Sherif and Naji al Ali

The film *Naji Al Ali* depicts the Palestinian Diaspora collective identity defined by its relation to the homeland. , the film reflects the lives of Palestinian refugees in Ain al Helwe, as one of these refugees, Naji Ali Ali bravely expresses his opinion opposing the Arab leaders thus by using the caricature Hanzala, whom Naji Al ali, defines him as an Arab, a 10 year old child who fled Palestine during the war, A small barefoot cartoon turning his back from oppression and colonialization. (Khatib, 2006, 148).

The film *Naji Al-Ali*, directed by Atef El-Tayeb and starring Nour El-Sherif, serves as a potent narrative not only of the life and struggles of the Palestinians, but the idea that they want to reclaim their home. (Khatib,2006, P49) The controversy surrounding the film, including the opposition from Yasser Arafat and the intense criticism Nour El-Sherif faced in Egypt, highlights the deep political and emotional tensions tied to the Palestinian issue and its representation in Arab media.

The film's release in 1992 coincided with a period of intense political sensitivity around the Palestinian question. According to the 10 experts interviewed, they stated Yasser Arafat, as a leader of the Palestinian cause, likely saw the film as a potential threat to the unity of the Palestinian struggle or feared that it might spark unwanted political debates. His request to Hosni Mubarak to prevent the film from being screened indicates the level of concern among Palestinian leadership regarding how their narrative is portrayed. The Egyptian media and public's labeling of Nour El-Sherif as a traitor (See appendix P3) also reflect the complex dynamics within Arab societies regarding Palestinian representation—where supporting certain narratives could be seen as undermining others. Al Qader, who is currently writing about Nour Sherif, noted that Sherif was deeply committed to the Palestinian cause.



Figure 7 – Naji al Ali character watching the Nakba taking place before his eyes, turns around and give his back to the oppression.

Naji Al-Ali, known for his politically charged cartoons, is portrayed in the film as a symbol of the Palestinian struggle. His most famous creation, Hanzala, is an iconic figure—an eternal 10-year-old child who seems to turn his back on the people, because he is looking at Palestine and people have turned their back on Palestine”(Khatib,2008, P162).

When Naji Al Ali created *Hanzala* in the film, he had a dream, a flashback of his time during the Nakba, which was portrayed in the beginning of the film when Naji, who was 10 years old at the time was looking from top of a cliff witnessing the massacre and people fleeing their homes, turned back and walked away. The same behavior of Naji was shown when he went to a party made by one of a rich Palestinian business man at his home, who made everyone get outside to his garden and see the olive trees that were shipped all the way from Palestine to Lebanon. Naji felt frustrated, turned his back to everyone and peed on one of the trees claiming that one who plucks trees from their homeland can never free their homeland.

Represents the innocence and perpetual victimhood of Palestinians, especially those who fled during the Nakba in 1948.

The film's coverage of the Nakba (1948) and Naksa (1967) periods is critical. Which are central to understanding the Palestinian refugee crisis. The film uses Naji Al-Ali's life—his forced migrations from Palestine to Lebanon, Kuwait, and finally London, where he was assassinated—to illustrate the persistent dislocation experienced by Palestinians. This narrative underscore that the Palestinian experience is not merely one of being a refugee but one of enduring statelessness and continual movement without ever finding stability or security. The film implicitly argues that the Palestinian struggle is not just about land or political sovereignty but also about identity and existence. The only Egyptian character that was found in the film was played by Mahmoud el Gendy, a drunk man whom Naji Ali finds in the street during the 1982 Israeli invasion in Lebanon, He asks Naji if the Arab army are coming to help? Naji answers The Arab Army are not available. The man asks for the reason; Why? Are they fighting somewhere else? Why the Arab governments did not interfere until now?

2:1:3 September 11 Attack

During the events of September 2001, festivals provided funding for directors to produce films on terrorism. In response, Yousef Chahine, in collaboration with Nour Sherif, created a film focused on Palestine. Khoury also discussed this in his 2002 anthology titled *09 11 01* (also known as *Eleven Minutes, Nine Seconds, One Image: September 11*). This project, initiated by a French producer, featured eleven filmmakers, including Chahine. In his short film, Chahine portrays an American soldier's ghost, who had died in an attack in Beirut in 1980. The ghost meets a filmmaker who takes him on a journey to visit a Palestinian preparing for a suicide attack in Israel.



Figure 8 – The filmmaker trying to explain to the American soldier ghost about the aggression of the USA in third world countries.

When the Ghost soldier asks if it was the Palestinians right to do a suicidal attack. The filmmaker replied “America and Israel are democratic, , the citizens choose the political system which suits them . for the suicide bomber he feels that those citizens are responsible. Do you know how many people died because of the USA’s violence? 4,000,000 in Vietnam, 1,000,000 in Salvador, 1,200,000 in Iraq, Millions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and an incalculable number in Palestine..”

Through this journey, Chahine uses the narrative to explain how American policies have fueled anti-American sentiment in Palestine and beyond over the years. The film faced criticism from Western critics, as Chahine aimed to address the questions prevalent in American popular discourse: “Why did they attack us, and why do they hate us?” (Khoury, P202-203).

2.2: 2011 Post Revolution

The 2011 revolution that ended President Mubarak's 30-year rule highlighted the significant impact of new media, particularly online social networks, in fostering a dynamic and active civil society. This was crucial in a context where the government had repressed religious and political groups and exercised both direct and indirect control over mainstream media. The influence of these new media outlets can be likened to the concept of "public will mobilization," as defined by Salmon, Fernandez, and Post. They describe it as a social force capable of organically, or with external support, transforming into a political tool for social change. If properly resourced, organized, and mobilized, this force can drive substantial societal transformation. (Khamis, 2011,P5).

According to Khachab, investors' concerns about economic instability increased, partly because satellite television channels, once a primary source of funding through distribution loans, had begun to falter in their financial support even before 2011. Despite this shift, the Revolution did not substantially alter labor hierarchies, production practices, or technological methods within the industry. Rather, the Revolution is seen as a contentious narrative that highlights recent Egyptian history and prompts ongoing debate among filmmakers about its impact and significance. (Khachab, 2021, p.4-29)

The concept of censorship as a means of moral regulation by the Egyptian state has only recently faced limited challenges. This dynamic extends beyond film to other areas, such as religious freedoms and sexuality. Content deemed obscene, offensive, or problematic often mirrors not only what Egyptians prefer not to see onscreen but also what they wish to avoid encountering in their daily lives (El Adel, 2014, p. 54). Recently Egypt's reliance on financial support from Gulf Arab states has shaped its foreign policy to be opportunistic and transactional. Analysts note that Egypt's shifting power dynamics reflect a broader move towards a multipolar world (Sharp, 2017, p. 14).

Egypt has also played a significant role in mediating between Israel and Hamas, facilitating ceasefires and negotiations during conflicts (Adachi, 2024, p. 44). However, Egyptian authorities have provided minimal support for sustainable development policies, including funding for the film industry, which operates almost entirely on a private basis. The film industry depends on the recovery of production costs through distribution (Shaik, 2016, p. 216). Khaled Al Balshy has highlighted the monopolization of the industry by Al Mutahada Production Company, which funds the majority of films, creating significant competition challenges. While Director Tarek Yekhlef points out that the issue lies not only in funding but

also in distribution. If distributors are uninterested in a film or if it poses potential issues, it will struggle to find a market. Dr. Mahmoud Shakour notes that the emergence of new platforms like Netflix and Shahid, registered in Dubai, has introduced new challenges. These platforms often impose their own visions on the content, affecting how films are executed and funded. Tarek Yekhlef has criticized Netflix, owned by Jewish-American businessman Reed Hastings, for its selective acceptance of Palestinian films. Yekhlef recounts his experience with his 2015 film *Paradise and Fire*, based on a Palestinian novel written by his father Yehia Yekhlef which, despite having secured funding and preparation, struggled to find a distributor due to its politically sensitive content. He noted that he held a meeting with one of the major distributors in the gulf, who clearly told him, that is a good movie, but it's not the time for it, it can create issues. He went on explaining today, it is possible to make a film without relying on the support of traditional production houses, thanks to advancements in technology, including AI tools and mobile phones, which are now widely accessible. This technological progress allows for greater freedom of expression, even on political topics. However, the challenge remains in finding appropriate venues for screening these films.

In an interview, Mrs. Rania Barghout,(A14) a former presenter and executive producer, discussed the challenges faced by filmmakers in the Arab world regarding funding. She noted that government-backed entities often prioritize projects that align with national narratives and cultural values, leading to censorship and reduced opportunities for films that challenge the status quo. Barghout contrasted this with Western independent cinema, where funding mechanisms are more flexible, allowing for riskier projects and greater creative freedom. She also highlighted the emerging trend of Arab independent filmmakers using international collaborations and festivals to explore politically charged narratives. Nasrallah further pointed out that Palestinian-themed films face varying levels of support and acceptance depending on their political angle and content, “does it speak from Hamas Angle?, Arab failures, normalization, or humanitarian aspects” (Nasrallah,2024). This determine not only its potential funding but also its acceptance by different countries which significantly influences their funding and reception. Rania asserted that societal norms still exert a strong influence. This was backed Dr. Bayoumi believes that what's worse than the “governmental censorship” is the “society censorship”. What he meant is that sometimes a movie may pass through the censorship and can meet its rules and regulations, but what we need to worry about is if the society may accept such kind of movie.

2.2.1: A century and six years – A self-funded film

“There is not much use today in lamenting such a statement as the Balfour Declaration. It seems more valuable to see it as part of a history, of a style and set of characteristics centrally constituting the question of Palestine as it can be discussed even today.” (Said, 1977,P16)

An illustrative case is the short film *A Century and Six Years*, directed by Mohammad Nassef. Produced on a minimal budget of \$200, the film explores a fictional prophecy related to the Balfour Declaration. It features a humorous narrative involving characters from opposing historical backgrounds discussing a fictional agreement between their grandfathers. In an interview, Mohammad Nassef (A13) highlighted that despite winning international awards, his film encountered rejection from Germany and Israel. Additionally, the film faced anti-Semitic criticism from Israeli newspapers. He also mentioned receiving interview requests from Israeli journalists, which he declined. Furthermore, the film was rejected at the Ismailia Film Festival in 2024. Nassef explained that the movie was screened at the Spanish embassy right after it declared Palestine as a state prior the ongoing Gaza war that started in 2024.

The narrative centers on a fictional meeting between Hareth, the grandson of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, The Mufti of Jerusalem back in 1948, and the grandson of Adolf Hitler, who runs an antique shop. The film imagines a scenario where these two characters discuss a supposed agreement between their grandfathers from the 1940s, which allegedly involved recognizing Palestine as a state. Hareth persuades the grandson of Hitler that with his recognition of Palestine, there will be a distraction to international governments while a Palestinian resistance group plans a liberation effort.



Figure 9 – meeting between the grandsons' of Hitler and mufti of Jerusalem

The film concludes with both characters drafting an “agreement” in their respective languages—German and Arabic—without understanding each other’s writings. This final scene is a comedic commentary that both didn’t trust each other while mocking each other in their agreement, with hareth at the end of the film narrating, “I failed, but who knows? Someone else will come and try again”. Released in 2023, prior to the October 7th conflict in Gaza, A Century and Six Years won three international film awards but was not accepted in Germany and received anti-Semitic criticism from Israel. (Alsharqia film festival , Qairun film festival, Festival du cinema realite, Hurghada youth film festival).

Chapter Three – Discourse Analysis of Films

This chapter focuses on commercially produced films by Egyptian production houses for two main reasons. First, significant films addressing Palestinian issues—such as *The Dupes*, *Bab el-Shams*, and *Naji al-Ali*, which were discussed in detail in previous chapters—are transnational in nature. Despite having Egyptian elements like filmmakers or actors, their funding sources and storylines are not framed from an Egyptian perspective. Second, experts interviewed have noted that these films are among the few that specifically address Palestinian topics, whereas the majority of commercially produced films are driven primarily by commercial interests rather than a focus on Palestine. This chapter aims to highlight the differences between the transnational films covered in Chapters 1 and 2 and those produced by Egyptian production houses or funded by the government. The analysis presented here will explore how Palestinians are portrayed in these films, both before and after the peace agreement with Israel.

Nadia, 1948 , Directed by Mahmoud Zulfikar



Figure 10- Nadia is curing Cohen(The communicator) whom has been injured due to the Egyptian forces attack in the settlement

The events of “*Nadia*” take place during the 1948 Palestine War, as the Arab armies enter the battle against the Zionist militias. The Egyptian officer Munir (played by Shukri Sarhan) is

martyred in the fighting, and his sister Nadia, a teacher who dedicated her life to raising her siblings with strong morals and a love for their nation, decides to devote herself to the Palestinian cause. She volunteers to work on the front lines as a nurse to support the Egyptian and Arab soldiers. During this time, she meets Officer Medhat (played by Mahmoud Zouheir), a friend of her martyred brother, and falls in love with him.

Medhat later disappears during one of the operations he was leading. Determined to find him, Nadia and two other friends in the army attempt to cross the border to search for Medhat but are captured by the Zionist army and held hostage. When Medhat learns of this upon returning to his military base camp, he decides to rescue them as part of an operation ordered to attack the camp where they are being held.

Scene 1

[INT, Classroom, Day]

Nadia is standing in the classroom facing students and giving them a lecture,

Nadia – We cannot abandon Palestine and leave them to fight alone. It goes against the morals of Arabs to remain silent in the face of injustice and to leave our neighbors under occupation.

Student 1 – Will the war take long?

Nadia – No matter how long it takes, we will continue to fight and resist until we free Palestine and return it to our brothers, the refugees who were forced from their homeland.

Student 2 – But if the war lasts a long time, won't many soldiers from the army die?

Nadia – I am embarrassed that my sister speaks in this way.

Student 3 – Yes, she's worried about her brother.

Nadia – On the contrary, families with members in the battle should feel pride. And if one of them becomes a martyr, their sacrifice will be remembered forever, as they will have given their life for the liberation of our sacred land.

Student 4 – My uncle fought in the Battle of Dier Salam.

Nadia – Let's now focus on our history lesson.

Student 5 – forget about history, let's focus about Palestine

Scene 2

[INT, Prison, Night]

Nadia: Tell me if you can, do you know of any war pilot called Medhat?

Communicator: No, not at all. Don't mind me, this is just a simple dinner.

Nadia: Thank you so much. It seems that you are a kind man.

Communicator: I love Egyptians. I was raised in Egypt.

Nadia: That's why you are fluent in Arabic.

Communicator: Do I know any language other than this? I used to sell fabric in Saeed. No one ever attacked me with words. But they tricked me. I am in hell now; they barely give us food and water. If the Jews knew that Zionism is a prank, they wouldn't have come to Palestine.

Nadia: Tell them.

Communicator: When I meet poor people like me, I tell them. Is there anything better than living in peace? Like our neighbor who lives on Al-Azhar Street in Egypt, and my brother who used to live in Al-Quds among Arabs. Why did they have to create a state and separate us?

Symbol	Meaning
Nadia's determination	Represents moral resolve and leadership in the fight for Palestine.
Classroom settings	Symbolizes the educational role of women and the transmission of national values.
Nadia's Defiance	Represents national pride and resistance against oppressive forces.
Communicator's Role	Acts as a neutral mediator, highlighting cultural connection and understanding
The IDF Officer's authority	Symbolizes the oppressive regime and the methodical pressure used to break resistance.
20 million fighters	Emphasizes the strength and unity of the Egyptian people against the enemy.
Nadia's bold remarks	Demonstrates resolve and national integrity.
The communicator's background	Reflects a shared cultural history and personal disillusionment with political ideologies.
Disillusionment with Zionism	Highlights the failure of Zionist promises and the shared victimhood of displaced populations.
Shared Language and Memories between Nadia and the Communicator	Symbolizes common humanity and the potential for peace despite conflict.
Analysis	From a Third Cinema perspective, <i>Nadia</i> exemplifies key elements of revolutionary cinema as outlined by Solanas and Getino. The film addresses class struggle by highlighting the socio-economic divides influenced by imperialist interests, emphasizing the broader national liberation struggle through the protagonist, Nadia, who transforms from a teacher to a nurse and then a hostage. This portrayal critiques both external imperialist forces and local elites, underscoring the need for confronting oppressive powers. The film also uses religious and cultural references to explore the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly

	through the character of a Jewish Egyptian who becomes disillusioned with Zionism, challenging simplistic narratives and reflecting shared victimhood among different affected communities. Additionally, <i>Nadia</i> vividly depicts the personal and societal burdens of armed struggle, aligning with Third Cinema's focus on revolutionary resistance and the impact of conflict on individuals. Through these themes, <i>Nadia</i> integrates class, religion, and armed struggle into its narrative, reflecting the broader revolutionary ethos of Third Cinema.
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Land of Heroes , 1953 , Directed by Niazi Moustafa

Adel is a young man living a privileged, shallow life, completely reliant on his father. His world is turned upside down when he discovers that the woman he wishes to marry, a dancer, is actually involved with his father. This personal betrayal and failure lead him to make a dramatic decision: he volunteers to fight in the Gaza Strip, despite having the option to avoid military service thanks to his father's connections. For Adel, the Gaza Strip becomes a place of self-discovery and redemption, where he seeks to escape his previous life and find a higher purpose.

In Gaza, Adel meets Aza, a strong Palestinian woman who captures his heart. Tragically, he learns that Aza was killed along with her father in an Israeli airstrike. However, while fighting on the desert borders, Adel discovers that Aza survived the attack and had been hiding with a group of refugees. He rescues her and brings her to safety with the Egyptian army.

Meanwhile, Adel uncovers that his father was involved in a shady deal where damaged weapons were sold to the army at low prices. These weapons were then used in the war, leading to the deaths of his friends and the loss of his own sight during a military operation. Confronted with the moral corruption of his father's actions, Adel decides to abandon him and start a new life. He marries Aza, seeking to leave behind his past and dedicate himself to a more meaningful cause

Scenel : The Danger and the Hostage



Figure 11. A wide scene Tracking Azza captures one of the Israeli Soldiers

[EXT. WELL – DAWN]

Aza fills her pot with water from the well. The night is beginning to fade, and the first light of dawn is breaking through. Suddenly, an Israeli soldier emerges from the shadows, aiming to shoot at her. Aza reacts quickly, throwing a grenade at him. Aza returns to the camp later than expected. Despite her exhaustion, she is focused. The Officer and the soldiers are waiting for her. To their surprise, she has an Israeli soldier handcuffed beside her.

Symbol	Meaning
Aza's Determination	Represents self-sacrifice and commitment to the soldiers' well-being.
Israeli Soldier	Represents the external threat and the enemy forces in the conflict.
Handcuffed Israeli Soldier	Symbolizes a small victory and the triumph of a mission
Analysis	Aza, a Palestinian character shows courageous act of carrying water across a minefield, becomes a symbol of resilience, selflessness, and resistance against oppression. The scene depicts the Israeli soldier as vulnerable, even when the zone is dangerous, Azza was able to walk openly carrying a gun and holding the soldier captivated.

Land of Peace, 1959, Directed by Kamal El Sheikh

The film revolves around Egyptian freedom fighters carrying out a series of fedayeen operations within a Palestinian village. Three young men begin the mission, two of them are martyred, and the third, “Ahmed,” survives. He seeks refuge with a family in the village to recover from his wounds. “Salma,” a young Palestinian woman who protects the Egyptian fedae “Ahmed” and helps him evade the enemy. She assists him in carrying out resistance operations. Their relationship begins as a friendship and eventually blossoms into love. The film portrays the battles fought by the fedayeen for the liberation of Palestine and the bonds of friendship and love that develop between them and the villagers. It also highlights the resistance efforts of children, elders, and women against the occupation.



Figure 12. Ahmad Carries Adel into his village

Scene 1 – Resistant group meeting

(INT.NIGHT. HALL)

(A wide low angle tracking shot of Groups of men is standing in line while the officer speaks loudly)

Officer: We are fedayeen, and we know why we are fighting Israel. We are here for a holy purpose. The existence of Israel is a threat to all Arabs. It has turned many of our people into refugees without a country. We have an operation that must be done quickly. It is dangerous and suicidal. We will attack the gasoline warehouse that supplies the Israeli army. For this purpose, we must reach our objective, even if it means our lives

Scene 2: Adel Death

(EXT.NIGHT. VILLAGE)

Adel and his brother were trying to provide food for a woman in the village who is sick, they steal a gun from one of the Palestinians in order to hunt a rabbit at night. An Israeli soldier sees them and shoots one of the children, Adel. Adel before he dies shoots back at the soldier.
brother – Adel, let’s go , lets run, you killed the Israeli soldier.

The child looks at Adel and finds him filled with blood.

The brother runs away to seek help in the village

Ahmad, the fedayee runs with salma to help Adel

Adel – I killed the Zionist

Ahmad– didn’t I tell you are still a child

Adel – I emptied the bullets at him

Symbol	Meaning
Officer’s speech (Dramatic mode)	The officer’s speech creates a dramatic sense of urgency and solemnity, highlighting the stakes and justification for the mission. The gasoline warehouse symbolizes enemy power, and the holy purpose represents ideological and moral justification.
Adel’s Death (Tragic mode)	Adel’s death symbolizes innocence lost and martyrdom, highlighting the personal cost of the conflict. The gun represents desperation and the personal struggle.
Low angle shot in the officer’s speech	The wide shot captures the entire line of soldiers, which visually reinforces their collective presence. The low angle accentuates the scale and seriousness of the operation being discussed, suggesting that the mission is of great importance and requires a significant, coordinated effort.

Analysis	<p>The film depicts Egyptian freedom fighters carrying out fedayeen operations in a Palestinian village, highlighting the broader struggle against colonial and imperialist forces. This portrayal aligns with Third Cinema's emphasis on exposing the dynamics of class struggle and the fight for national liberation. By centering on the armed resistance of both Egyptian fighters and Palestinian villagers, the film reflects revolutionary sentiments and the broader struggle against oppression. Although it does not explicitly use religious analogies, it engages deeply with cultural and nationalist sentiments through its depiction of solidarity and resistance. The tragic death of Adel, a young boy, underscores the personal and collective cost of conflict, emphasizing the severe impact on vulnerable populations and aligning with Third Cinema's focus on the human toll of imperialism and war. Through its depiction of resistance and sacrifice, <i>Land of Peace</i> captures the essence of Third Cinema by addressing the complexities of revolutionary struggle and the broader societal impacts of conflict.</p>
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Ashab Wala Business, 2001, Directed by Ali Idriss

The story follows two friends, Kareem and Tarek who enter the media and journalism world driven by ambitions of fame and wealth. Their friendship deteriorates when they start working at Network 2000, where Adham, their manager fosters a fierce rivalry between Kareem and Tarek. This competition intensifies as Adam sends Kareem to Palestine to cover the Intifada.

In Palestine, Kareem initially struggles with resentment and alienation but is profoundly affected by witnessing the harsh realities faced by Palestinians. He films Jihad, a local who sacrifices his life for the cause, and this experience transforms Kareem's perspective. Upon returning, Kareem is psychologically scarred and disillusioned by his previous work on a superficial entertainment show. He wishes to air the video of Jihad's martyrdom but faces resistance from Adham.

The conflict between Kareem and Adham escalates, resulting in Kareem's dismissal. Tarek, informed of the situation, decides to support Kareem by revealing the truth behind the dispute and airing the poignant footage of Jihad's martyrdom. This broadcast becomes a significant and emotional moment on television, highlighting the harsh realities of the conflict and the sacrifices made by Palestinians.



Figure 13- Kareem is video recording the suicidal attack of Jihad



Figure 14- A wide medium shot of Jihad facing Israeli soldier during the Egyptian media team arrival

Scene 1 : Saeed's Martyrdom

[EXT.SAEED HOUSE – DAY]

The crew is interviewing Saeed's father.

Saeed's father: On the night before he martyred, we were sitting, and chatting, he said, how can we be Muslims and Christians and believers of god and we leave Jerusalem like this? Tomorrow I will join the protest with my friends, I told him but the shop needs you, and we

have loans that we need to pay back, he answered, but the land needs me dad, let me go, I beg you, I did accept.

Jihad explaining to the group: Our goal is to draw attention so our comrades from another area can kidnap three IDF soldiers and negotiate the release of Palestinian hostages. During the battle, we threw stones, and they shot back at us. When we realized the kidnapping might fail, Saeed decided to take on the IDF directly. He was attacked and died. When we returned, the Israeli news announced that Saeed had died, but also that the operation was successful. We chanted and sang for Palestine, knowing Saeed's blood was not in vain.

Scene – the show

[Ext – DAY]

Kareem, the presenter, addresses the camera.

Kareem: Hello everyone, welcome to our show from Palestine. How is life here?

Attendees: Good!

Kareem: [holding a paper in his hands] And now, you're watching the TV show "Dollars, Dollars.". and our first question to win money is , Who is the real Palestinian leader? Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, or Yasser Arafat?

The attendees laugh at the question.

Kareem stops the show

Kareem: [Turning to the director] These questions are not appropriate for this context.

Director: But we always ask these kinds of questions.

Kareem: Not here, not in Palestine, and not with these people.

Jihad: [Intervening] Let's take a break and entertain the audience. We'll bring a child from the audience to sing a traditional Palestinian song.

A young child from the audience starts singing "Ya Rabeeye 3al Rabeeye," and everyone joins in chanting.

As the song continues, Israeli soldiers start shooting at the protestors. People scatter, and the protest turns into a battle. Kareem watches the scene unfold, initially shocked by the violence.

As the protestors chant, “With our soul and blood, we sacrifice ourselves for Palestine,” Kareem joins in.

Kareem: [Chanting with the crowd] With our soul and blood, we sacrifice ourselves for Palestine!

In the chaos, the young girl who was singing gets shot. Kareem picks her up and runs to the ambulance.

Scene 4

Jihad suicidal operation

(EXT-DAY-CHECKPOINT)

Jihad walks in towards a checkpoint with explosives with him, Kareem at the cliff tries to capture the martyrdom scene as requested by Jihad. While the IDF are checking him out. A close-up shot is taken on Jihad’s face turning to Kareem and smiling and explodes himself

Symbol	Meaning
Checkpoint	Physical and psychological barriers imposed by occupation
Camera	Media’s role in documenting and revealing the reality of occupation.
Saeed’s Sacrifice	The ultimate personal sacrifice for a greater cause.
Martyrdom	Heroism and sacred duty in the struggle for liberation
Martyr’s Choice	The spiritual and ideological commitment to the cause.
TV Show Questions	Superficial and exploitative nature of media portrayals of political issues.
Stopping the Show	Rejection of trivial representations of serious conflicts.
Singing and Chanting	Unity and collective resolve in the face of oppression
Close up shot on Jihad	viewers to connect deeply with the character’s internal struggle and commitment, fostering empathy and understanding of their motivations and the gravity of their choice.
Injured Child	Innocence caught in the crossfire and the human impact of conflict.

<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Kareem's transformation from a person accustomed to a comfortable life to a journalist embedded in a conflict zone, eventually evolving into someone willing to join the protest and make the ultimate sacrifice for the cause after witnessing the struggles of others. Second, it underscores the tragic reality that often the innocent suffers the most, exemplified by the shooting of a young girl by a soldier, which conveys a powerful message about the nature of martyrdom.</p> <p>Scenes of intense conflict, such as the checkpoint inspection and Jihad's suicidal operation, underscore the brutal impact of the struggle on both individuals and communities, reflecting Third Cinema's focus on the human cost of resistance. The film's critique of superficial media portrayals and its emphasis on authentic representation of Palestinian suffering and resistance align with Third Cinema's goals of challenging dominant narratives and advocating for the oppressed.</p>
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Embassy in the Building, 2005, Directed By Amr Arafa

The film addresses the issue of normalization with Israel through the story of an Egyptian engineer who returns from working in an Arab country to find that the Israeli embassy has taken over the apartment next door to his. The film portrays his daily struggles with the security restrictions imposed to protect the embassy and its staff, which generates in him a deep hatred for the embassy despite his unawareness about politics.

Seeking freedom and driven by his love for romantic adventures, he decides to file a lawsuit demanding the relocation of the Israeli embassy from the building where he lives. The lawsuit becomes a public issue, In response, the embassy officials put pressure on him to withdraw the lawsuit, especially after they succeed in photographing him in compromising situations with a

prostitute. Faced with this challenge, he began to accept his life having the embassy next door, until he learns that his friend, a Palestinian child that he knew for years when he was in the gulf, went back to Palestine to resist the occupation, and became a martyr, he decides to change his approach and begins participating in demonstrations against the presence of the embassy in Egypt.

Scene 1: Conversation Between Iyad and Sherif

[Ext, street, Day]

Iyad, always wearing a Keffiyeh is taking a walk with Sherif

Iyad: I want to go back to Palestine to join the Intifada.

Sherif: What Intifada are you talking about? Your father gives you the best life and education, and you want to leave it all behind?

Scene 2: Sherif's Birthday Party

[INT, Sherif house, night]



Figure 15., a medium wide shot of Sherif Birthday, an Israeli, a liberal and communist Egyptians sitting in the same frame.

(Sherif's friends are celebrating his birthday when the Israeli Ambassador arrives with a cake.)

Ambassador: I'm Mr. Sherif's neighbor.

Shohdi: Why don't you file a complaint against the Israeli Embassy?

Ambassador: I can't file a complaint.

Shohdi: Don't worry, we'll support you.

Ambassador: (Smiling) I'm David Cohen. The Israeli Ambassador.

(The room goes silent as everyone realizes who he is.)

Everyone: Why are we celebrating with a colonialist settler?!

Ambassador: (Calmly) We're all cousins in this region.

Everyone angrily leaves the party, the Ambassador is left alone, he grabs the cake and leaves the house.

Scene 4: Iyad's Death

Sherif leaves his apartment, which is filled with Israeli guests as requested by the Israeli Ambassador, who needed to host them due to the large number of attendees. As Sherif walks down the stairs alone in despair and frustration, the camera tracks his movements through one take. He finds security guards watching a news broadcast of Iyad's funeral.

Security Guard: (Watching TV) This is Iyad, a martyr for the cause.

Sherif: (Horrorified) No! Iyad is my friend. He's a hero, a symbol of hope!

(Sherif storms back up to his apartment and kicks out all the Israeli visitors.)

Scene 5: Protest



Figure 16 : Wide shot of the protest, Sherif is chanting on top, slogans behind that says “No normalization with children killers .

[EXT, STREET, DAY]

(Sherif joins a protest aggressively, leading it while chanting with others.)

Sherif: (Chanting) Down with the Israeli occupation! Down with the killers of children! Down with the enemy of peace!

Symbol	Meaning
The Israeli Embassy	Represents foreign intervention and diplomatic tension
The Koffiyeh	Symbolizes Palestinian resistance and identity.
Yasser Arafat’s Picture	Represents the historical struggle for Palestinian statehood
The Ambassador’s Cake	A superficial gesture of peace and diplomacy.
Taking Back the Cake	Highlights the failure of diplomatic efforts and mocks opposition.
The Protest	Represents grassroots resistance and a call for justice.
Normalization with Israel	The film explores the issue of Egypt’s diplomatic and political relationship with Israel.
Engineer’s Daily Struggles	The engineer’s daily life is disrupted by the security measures of the Israeli embassy

Personal Freedom vs. Political Activism	The protagonist's shift from personal dissatisfaction to political activism
Legal Battle and Public Attention	The lawsuit to relocate the embassy turns into a high-profile public issue
Blackmail and Compromise	The embassy officials use compromising photos to pressure the engineer into withdrawing his case.
Activism and Protest	The engineer's evolution from a passive individual to an active participant in anti-embassy protests.
Long angle shot tracking sheriff moving down the stairs.	Stairs are often associated with progression or elevation, so going down them can signify a regression or the feeling of losing one's upward momentum. This movement can symbolize the character's sense of being trapped in a situation that's worsening, reflecting a loss of hope or agency.
Analysis	<p>The protagonist's journey from apathy to political activism underscores Third Cinema's focus on personal awakening and political engagement. The Egyptian engineer's lawsuit against the Israeli embassy symbolizes a shift from individual freedom to collective political action, mirroring the Third Cinema emphasis on confronting and challenging oppressive systems</p> <p>Iyad, representing the spirit of the Intifada, is depicted as rejecting material comforts for the sake of national resistance. His keffiyeh and the picture of Yasser Arafat serve as potent symbols of Palestinian identity and resistance, aligning with Third Cinema's use of symbolic imagery to convey political and ideological messages.</p> <p>The birthday party scene, where gestures of friendship by the Israeli ambassador are depicted as mere facades, critiques the superficial nature of peace agreements and political complicity. This aligns with Third Cinema's critique of imperialist and neocolonial practices, which often mask deeper conflicts and injustices.</p> <p>Iyad's death and Sheriff's subsequent evolution into an active protestor reflect the film's emphasis on grassroots activism and</p>

	the transformative power of collective resistance.
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The cousins, 2009, Directed by Sherif Arafa

In the film, an Egyptian woman, played by Muna Zaki, faces a terrifying ordeal when her husband, portrayed by Sharif Muneer, reveals himself to be an Israeli spy. Forced to flee Egypt, he kidnaps his wife and children, taking them to Tel Aviv. Determined to rescue the Egyptian citizen and her children, the Egyptian intelligence agency dispatches their top operative, played by Karim Abdul Aziz, to infiltrate Israel, extract the family, and neutralize the traitorous husband. The film weaves a narrative of suspense and espionage while also touching upon the complex dynamics between Arab and Jewish identities. It juxtaposes images of Israel's development and modernity with scenes depicting the destruction of Arab homes, highlighting the ongoing conflict and the contrasting narratives that fuel it. Within this setting, the Egyptian protagonist finds herself caught between these clashing ideologies as she fights to protect her family and return home.

Scene 1 – The Siren (EXT-DAY-STREET)

The SOUND OF SIREN is heard across an Israeli town.
Mustafa and Mr. Victor rushes out to the sound

Mustafa – what is the matter. Mr. Victor

Mr. Victor – It's the holocaust remembrance
Hitler's massacre against the Jews in Europe
Every year on the same day, the siren plays. To remember what happened

Mustafa – when you remember what happened, do you as well as remember what you did to the Palestinians, the exact same what happened to you

Mr. Victor – by the way, I am a Jew not a Zionist. Do you know the difference?
Mustafa – I do

Scene 2 – Mostafa saves Dareen from suicidal attack

(INT-NIGHT-PUB)

Mostafa saves Dareen from suicidal attack

Mostafa Looks for Dareen at a night club being aware she is doing a suicidal operation to kill someone there. Grabs her as the security guard sense there is something wrong and saves her life by hiding inside a car.

Mostafa: I saved your life multiple times. I deserve to know.

Dareen: The person who killed my brother was at that party.

Mostafa: you should not die for revenge?

Cut to a different location

Dareen takes out a necklace from her neck and gives it to Mostafa after he guides her on how to leave the town.

Mostafa: What is that?

Dareen: This is the key to our home in the West Bank. Every Palestinian who was forced to leave their home keeps the key since the Nakba because they hope to return one day.

Mostafa: And if he dies, the key goes to his sons, friends, or loved ones.

Dareen: I have no one. I wanted to die and take it with me, but keep it with you. Once your operation is done, you can return it.

Scene 3

(EXT-DAY-VILLAGE)

Demolishing Palestinian Houses



Figure 17: The wide shot scene of Palestinians being forcibly expelled from their villages

A Palestinian man is speaking to a group of Palestinian workers. They have been hired to demolish houses in a village to help build a separation wall between Israel and the West Bank.

Palestinian Man: Listen to me—we will demolish some houses; they want to complete the wall. I don't want any trouble. I will pick some people to come and work with me, or else I will shoot them.

The Palestinian man picks Mostafa as one of the groups to join him in a car.

Palestinian Man: Are you Egyptian?

Mostafa: Yes.

Palestinian Man: Egyptian? What are you doing here? Couldn't you find a job elsewhere?

Mostafa: Why didn't you look somewhere else?

Palestinian Man: Where should I go? This is our homeland, and we deserve it more.

Mostafa: Nobody should seize another's livelihood.

Palestinian Man: But men like you take our wages. Egypt has abandoned the entire cause, and now it sends its rubbish to share our bread.

Mostafa: And what are you doing right now? Freeing Palestine? You want to build a wall between you and Israel. You haven't just sold the cause; you've ruined it.

The Palestinian man attacks Mostafa, and they begin to fight. Once they reach the destination, Mostafa watches as people are being forcibly removed by Israeli soldiers, who are bombing the area. People are leaving their homes on foot. Once the area is cleared, Mostafa's group starts demolishing one of the houses angrily. Unable to bear the scene, Mostafa is visibly distressed.

Symbols	Meaning
Siren	Represents collective trauma and historical remembrance of the Holocaust.
Holocaust Remembrance	Symbolizes the ongoing impact of historical suffering on collective identity and memory.
Zionism vs. Judaism	Highlights the ideological and political distinction between cultural/religious identity and political ideology.
Necklace/Key	Represents hope, connection to a lost homeland, and the enduring aspiration to return.
Separation Wall	Symbolizes the physical and emotional barriers imposed by the conflict and the division of land.
Demolished Houses	Represents the destruction of homes, erasure of community presence, and the impact on daily life.
Palestinian Worker's Wages	Illustrates internal conflict and perceived betrayal among Palestinians.
Analysis	the confrontation between Mostafa and Mr. Victor serves as a critique of religion, moral and historical inconsistencies in the portrayal of suffering. The discussion about the Holocaust and Israeli actions against Palestinians highlights how Third Cinema challenges dominant narratives and exposes the selective empathy of powerful entities. This scene underscores Third Cinema's commitment to addressing the complexities of historical and political injustices, revealing how the suffering of Palestinians is often marginalized or overlooked in

	<p>mainstream discourse. Dareen as a vulnerable fugitive, emphasizing themes of displacement and personal loss. Her plea for refuge and the symbolic nature of her belongings. Scene 4 presents Palestinian men hired to demolish his own community's homes, reflecting the harsh realities of displacement and internal conflict driven by economic and external pressures. This portrayal is emblematic of Third Cinema's exploration of the contradictions and complexities faced by individuals in oppressed communities.</p>
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Findings

The portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema has evolved significantly across different political regimes and has been influenced by various factors including funding, censorship, and societal attitudes.

Influence of Filmmaker Identity and Distribution: The depiction of the Palestinian cause varies greatly depending on the filmmaker's identity and distribution interests. As Dr. Shakur notes, the film industry is profit-driven, which impacts how Palestinian narratives are portrayed. Filmmakers such as Tawfik Saleh and Youssef Chahine, influenced by Leninist film schools and Third Cinema theory, emphasize anti-imperialist themes and often draw from personal experiences or literature to address the Palestinian cause. Chahine's "Alexandria... Why?" is deeply personal, while Saleh's adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's novel reflects his commitment to Palestinian issues. Similarly, Youssef Nasrallah's "Bab El

Shams,” based on Elias Khoury’s novel, represents the Palestinian struggle through a transnational lens, with international funding and production across the Middle East. These films aim to present authentic depictions of Palestinian experiences, both before the Nakba and in exile. However, they also critique the role of Arab armies in the Palestinian struggle, as seen in Bab El Shams, Naji al-Ali, and The Dupes, which highlight the perceived failures of Arab nations to support the Palestinian cause. In the third chapter, Egyptian commercial films that ranged from melodrama to neorealism and black comedy were examined. A recurring theme in these films is the portrayal of children suffering or being killed in the conflict. For instance, in Land of Peace, Adel is killed, while in Embassy in the Building, Iyad becomes a martyr. Similarly, Ashab Wala Business depicts the tragic shooting of a young girl. Additionally, the role of women as protagonists and symbols of resistance is evident in earlier films, such as Azza and Salma. The idea of suicidal attack theme was different in he Cousins, and Ashab wala Business, the idea of sacrificing oneself for the nation like what Saeed and jihad did is considered heroic versus Dareen, a Palestinian woman, contemplates a suicide attack—not for the cause of Palestine but in revenge for her brother’s death. She struggles with her desire for a hero to rescue her from this tragic decision. Lastly, we can depict that in films throughout Egyptian history such as Nadia, Alexandria why, and the cousins, Egyptian filmmakers tried to establish a difference between political movement and religion. Their enemies are the Zionists and not the Jews. Lastly, figure 18 below depict scenes of Palestinians being forcibly displaced from their homeland as a wide shot which is similar to the original Nakba event have been portrayed in different films through different eras by not necessarily speaking of that special event. Such as in the movie the cousins, Bab Shams and Naser Salah dine. This can depict that transnational and independent films were based on real stories that made them more authentic, however, that does not side commercial movies from representing issues like the Palestinian cause through different genres including black comedy. Hence, we can depict similar outcomes between them.



1- Nasser Salah dine



2- Bab Chams



2- The Cousins

2- Before Peace Agreement

The portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema has been shaped by several interconnected factors. Initially, the burgeoning Egyptian film industry, influenced by Western technological advancements and colonial constraints, focused more on bourgeois entertainment and escapism rather than addressing political issues (Khoury, 2010). The socio-political climate, particularly after the 1919 revolution, emphasized nationalism and economic independence, which often translated into films that prioritized national identity over nuanced political narratives (Gaffney, 2017). Additionally, censorship played a significant role; from its inception in 1914, it sought to suppress political dissent and maintain public norms, eventually extending to control over cultural content (Mansour, 2012,P13). The commercial interests of producers, especially in the wartime and post-war periods, further influenced film content, often favoring profitability over critical engagement with Palestinian issues (Shakour, 2024). Finally, the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including the Jewish community in early cinema, and the shifting socio-economic landscape, contributed to the industry's focus on profit-driven narratives, which sometimes overshadowed a more authentic representation of the Palestinian experience (Bayoumi, 2024; Samak, 1977).

Films like “Girl from Palestine” (1948) and “Nadia” (1949), directed by Mahmoud Zulfikar, reflect the era's heightened political awareness but often prioritize Egyptian nationalism and romanticized narratives over a nuanced depiction of the Palestinian struggle (Shakour, 2024). This focus on melodramatic and heroic elements, rather than the complexities of the Nakba, resulted in a simplified portrayal that overlooked the profound psychological and emotional impacts of displacement (Al Qader, 2024). The political and social context of the time also played a crucial role; films were shaped by governmental and societal pressures that often led to sanitized or superficial representations of contentious issues. Additionally, commercial interests drove filmmakers to focus on profit, which frequently overshadowed the depth and accuracy of political and historical content (Tarek Yekhlef, 2024). As a result, early Egyptian films about Palestine missed opportunities to challenge prevailing narratives and offer a more authentic representation of the Palestinian experience, reflecting broader trends of political and economic influence on cinematic storytelling (Youssef, 2004).

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the subsequent political and military reassessment, Egyptian cinema began to reflect the government's new narrative, focusing on the failures of the monarchy and promoting the revolutionary ideals of the 1952 regime. The new government used films to bolster its legitimacy, often romanticizing the Palestinian cause to align with its nationalist and anti-colonialist rhetoric. Censorship played a crucial role, as

filmmakers had to navigate political sensitivities and avoid direct criticism of the regime, resulting in portrayals that served broader political goals rather than presenting an authentic Palestinian perspective. Additionally, the nationalization of the film industry and increased public sector involvement allowed for tighter control over film content, shaping how Palestinian issues were represented. This period saw cinema becoming a significant medium for advancing Egyptian and pan-Arab identity, influenced by political, economic, and cultural factors that framed the portrayal of Palestinians in a manner that supported the government's ideological agenda. Particularly following the 1967 defeat. This loss prompted a critical reassessment of Arab nationalist and military ideologies, as filmmakers grappled with their national trauma and sought to address the causes of failure. The defeat revealed the shortcomings of previous regimes and ideologies, leading to a period of intense self-reflection among Arab intellectuals and filmmakers. Directors like Youssef Chahine and Tawfik Saleh, influenced by the principles of Italian Neorealism, began producing films that confronted the harsh realities of defeat and sought to explore underlying social and political issues. Films from this era, such as *The Sparrow*, emphasized themes of identity, land ownership, and national struggle, reflecting a shift towards more critical and introspective narratives. The increased involvement of the Egyptian government in film production and distribution during this time also played a significant role, as the state used cinema as a tool for promoting its vision of Arab socialism and grappling with the aftermath of the 1967 war. This era of Egyptian cinema thus represents a complex interplay of political ideology, national trauma, and artistic expression, shaping the representation of Palestinians and reflecting broader socio-political currents.

The transition from Nasserism to Sadat's era. The death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970 marked a turning point, as his successor Anwar Sadat redefined Egypt's political and ideological trajectory. Sadat's realignment with the U.S. and the integration of Islamic principles into governance represented a stark departure from Nasser's secular socialist vision. This shift was evident in Sadat's strategy during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which involved forging new alliances and leveraging international support to reclaim Sinai. Cinema from this period reflects these changes, with filmmakers exploring themes of national pride and military heroism while grappling with the legacy of defeat and corruption.

3. After Peace Agreement

During Hosni Mubarak's presidency, the Egyptian media and cinema landscape underwent significant transformations, including privatization and heightened media competition. The

transition from state control to privatization led to a focus on commercial success rather than political critique. This shift resulted in a rise in escapism and superficial portrayals of political issues, including the Palestinian cause. The normalization of relations with Israel further influenced this trend, making genuine political critique less common in films. As a result, depictions of Palestinians often became superficial, concentrating more on the political context of normalization rather than the complexities of the Palestinian struggle.

The commercialization of the film industry under Mubarak's regime emphasized profit-driven content, leading to films that aligned with popular trends rather than engaging deeply with political issues. Censorship and pressures to conform to state policies also limited the scope of films addressing the Palestinian cause, resulting in portrayals that were either shallow or avoided controversial subjects.

The shift in audience composition and the rise of "clean cinema," characterized by moral conservatism, marked a further departure from serious social critique. This trend included new comedies and conservative films that often sidestepped detailed portrayals of the Palestinian struggle, focusing instead on entertainment and escapism.

International distributors and co-productions, influenced by economic dependencies and political alignments, also impacted the portrayal of Palestinians. The need to cater to international markets and adhere to global economic pressures sometimes led to compromises in depicting sensitive issues, including the Palestinian cause.

In the late 1990s, Egyptian cinema faced a financial crisis, leading to an adaptation towards low-budget comedies and further escapism. Despite this, recent films have seen a resurgence in direct social critique, addressing contemporary issues and challenging societal taboos. By the 1990s, transnational co-productions became more common due to economic dependencies fostered by international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. This period of neoliberal globalization, aligned with Egypt's *infitah* (open-door policy) and normalization with Israel, often necessitated forming alliances with countries supportive of Israel, such as France, Germany, and Saudi Arabia, or those acting as proxies for Israel, like the United States.

Few films engaged deeply with the Palestinian struggle, with notable exceptions being "Bab Shams" and "Naji al-Ali." Most films of the period were commercially driven and did not address the core issues of the Palestinian question.

Government-backed funding often imposes constraints on films, particularly those that challenge the status quo or present controversial themes such as the Palestinian cause. This can result in censorship or reduced funding, while societal norms further influence the acceptance of such films, leading to societal rejection even if official censorship is bypassed

(Bayoumi, 2024). In contrast, Western independent cinema benefits from greater creative freedom due to private funding, grants, and festivals, which allows for more exploration of controversial subjects. In the Arab world, independent filmmakers are increasingly leveraging international collaborations to address politically charged narratives, although they still face strict constraints (Rania Barghout,2024). The 2011 Revolution emphasized the role of new media in fostering civil society and providing a platform for critical discourse, but it has not substantially altered traditional production practices or resolved issues of economic instability within the film industry (Khamis, 2011; Khachab, 2021). Censorship in Egypt often reflects societal preferences, avoiding content that challenges prevailing moral or cultural norms, including those related to Palestine (El Adel, 2014). The monopolization of the industry by entities like Al Mutahada Production Company impacts competition and distribution, making it difficult for films on sensitive issues to find a market (Khaled Al Balshy). Streaming platforms like Netflix and Shahid impose their own content guidelines, influencing the portrayal of politically sensitive subjects, while technological advancements offer new production opportunities but also complicate distribution (Dr. Mahmoud Shakour, Tarek Yekhlef,2024). These factors collectively result in films that often avoid or superficially address the Palestinian struggle due to funding constraints, societal norms, and political pressures.

Conclusion

My research question on the factors affecting the portrayal of Palestinians in Egyptian cinema investigates on comparing transitioning to different political regimes and the political events that took place in relation to Palestine. The core hypothesis posits that political cinema in Egypt is shaped by a complex interplay of state control, international relations, ideological perspectives, and producer decisions. Additionally, it suggests that cinema has been used as a tool of propaganda, portraying the Palestinian cause more as a humanitarian issue rather than a pressing political matter requiring resolution. This selective portrayal aligns with regime agendas, aiming to shape public opinion and consolidate support rather than fostering genuine advocacy for Palestinian rights.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how the Palestinian issue, framed as an Arab concern, has been addressed and portrayed through Eastern narratives, specifically in Egyptian cinema, rather than through Western perspectives. While much academic research has focused on Egyptian cinema in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, it often emphasizes nationalist films or those depicting the Arab-Israeli war. This study delves into how Egyptian cinema's portrayal of Palestinians From King Farouq reign to Abdel Fatah Sisi has been

shaped by factors such as filmmaker influence, shift in generations thoughts economical and societal pressures, and shifting political ideologies, Initially, films focused on nationalistic themes and avoided critical engagement with the Palestinian cause. Over time, the evolution of regimes and increased commercialization led to superficial or politically sanitized portrayals of Palestinians highlighting how individual filmmakers like Atef al Tayeb, Tawfik Saleh and Youssef Chahine have used their work to critique the Palestinian cause and Arab support. It emphasizes the evolution of these portrayals from the Nasser era to the Mubarak era, focusing on the impact of commercialization and censorship on the depth and authenticity of the representation. It also addresses recent changes in the film industry and the need for further investigation into contemporary portrayals, filling gaps in existing research. The limitations of my research include a focus on Egyptian cinema that may not fully account for the broader regional and international influences on the portrayal of Palestine. Additionally, the study may not capture all nuances of how economic factors specifically influence film production and representation. Future research should explore and examine the role of new media and digital platforms such as Netflix, Shahid as well as independent fund festivals like AFAC in contemporary portrayals which could also provide valuable insights into evolving representations of the Palestinian cause.

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Appendix

List of Participants

A1	Dr. Mahmoud Shakour	Film critic and Author
A2	Mr. Ramy Abdel Razek	Film critic

A3	Dr. Moustapha Bayoumi	Film critic and historian
A4	Mr. Khaled al Balshy	Head of media syndicate
A5	Mr. Jamal Abdel Qader	Film critic
A6	Mr. Tarek yekhlef	Palestinian Filmmaker
A7	Hanan Chouman	Film critic
A8	Yousry Nasrallah	Egyptian Filmmaker of Bab Shams
A9	Dr. Mostapha Kamal El Sayed	Professor of Political science at Cairo university
A10	Dr. Nisreen Abdel Aziz	Film critic
A11	Mrs. Nahed Salah	Film critic
A12	Mrs. Safaa Lithi	Film critic
A13	Mohammad Nassef	Egyptian Filmmaker /A century and six years
A14	Mrs. Rania Barghout	Executive producer and former MBC presenter
A15	Claire Begbie	Author /PHD student at Concordia university

Questionnaire

- 1- How do you assess the current state of Egyptian cinema?
- 2- How has Egyptian cinema distinguished itself in portraying the Palestinian cause compared to other Arab countries from the 1940's to the present day?
- 3- What influences have contributed to the depiction of the Palestinian cause in Egyptian films, and what obstacles they faced?
- 4- How was transnational films different from Egyptian production or government funded films?
- 5- What obstacles do filmmakers, screenwriters, and producers face when creating a political film targeting the Palestinians.
- 6- How different shift in alliances affected producing films in Political cinema especially when it comes to the Palestinian issues.

P1

