

# **How the historical narrative approach shapes the interpretation of past events: In the case of Israel and Palestine**

By Nicholas Allen for HIS300: HIS300 Questioning History: Explorations in the Thinking and Practice of History

The historical narrative approach fundamentally influences the interpretation of historical events. This is shown through the narrative process of constructing historical events as a chronology of realities that are imbued with meaning, and dominant metanarratives that exclude alternative narratives. The narrative process of constructing the past orders events into sequences. These sequences are influenced by a cultural paradigm. This charges past events with moral and cultural implications. The metanarrative shapes the interpretation of past events by producing complex events as simplified explanations that serve a political telos. This involves the exclusion of alternative narratives. The influence of the historical narrative approach is shown in the construction and reproduction of historical narratives from Israel and Palestine.

The dominant Israeli and Palestinian narratives shape the interpretation of past events in order to perpetuate a status of victimhood, which in turn grants moral and political legitimacy. The historical events that showcase this include the Holocaust, the Eichmann trial and the Arab-Israeli War. The dominant Israeli narrative shapes the interpretation of the Holocaust by instrumentalising it as an event that legitimates Israel's right to exist. This removes it from a historical temporality and positions it as an eternally present threat. The dominant Israeli narrative of the Eichmann trial creates the interpretation of Eichmann as a representative for the perpetrators of the Holocaust, which imbues Israel with a moral authority. The Arab-Israeli war is explicated through the dominant Israeli narrative, the Palestinian narrative and the alternative perspective of Israeli revisionist history.

A particular way that the historical narrative approach influences the interpretation of the past is through the construction of past events into a plot that imbues such events with meaning.<sup>1</sup> The construction of events into a plot requires the structuring of relationships, which provide

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<sup>1</sup> Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980): 8.

events with a meaning of being integrated into a whole.<sup>2</sup> This coherence is achieved through narrative features such as beginnings, middles, and ends, which is not an accurate representation of the way events emerge from history because historical events do not emerge with closure.<sup>3</sup> The events of history as conscious acts are real, however, these events do not exist with an inherent ideal meaning.<sup>4</sup> The philosopher Husserl describes the presentation of properties as he states, “. . . that every originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition that everything originally offered to us in intuition is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being.”<sup>5</sup> This means that if a narrative presents past events as a meaningful sequence, then the recipients are warranted in believing that these events possess the meaningful coherence, which it appears to possess. Achieving this narrative coherence necessitates the selection and ordering of events in a meaningful framework that requires a criterion of relevance and significance.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the narrative approach requires a selection of events, as well as the formulation of information, to fill in the gaps created by a lack of historical data.<sup>7</sup> This process of construction leads to the distortion of historical events and the implementation of plot structures.<sup>8</sup> The distortion and interpretation of past events through the construction of narratives is reflexive of the social and cultural contexts from which narratives emerge.<sup>9</sup> The historian Rüsen describes this socially constructed nature as “. . . those who do this construction and negotiate it in their social context are constructed themselves.”<sup>10</sup> This shows that narratives are formed from a socially constructed context and seek to fulfil a cultural orientation.<sup>11</sup> The historical narrative casts a coherent sequence of events into a cultural paradigm that links the past to a shared mythology.<sup>12</sup> This sequence of events becomes

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<sup>2</sup> White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” 20.

<sup>3</sup> Noel Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” *The Monist* 73 (1990): 138-139.

<sup>4</sup> J. Claude Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 86.

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: A General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Fred Kersten. (Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” 138-139.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” 134-135.

<sup>8</sup> Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” 135.

<sup>9</sup> Jorn Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation* (New York: Berghahn books, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” 136.

emplotted into the narrative in order to provide society with a meaningful analog.<sup>13</sup> These emplotments influence the interpretation of past events because they reflect the cultural judgments of the author, such as the ideological and moral choices the historian makes.<sup>14</sup> Another aspect that shows the influence of narratives is the metanarrative. The metanarrative is a form through which the narrative approach influences the interpretation of past events. Metanarratives are fundamental to the creation of society because they contain stories and principles that provide a society with credibility, and justification for past, present and future actions.<sup>15</sup> The metanarrative is teleological because the main purpose is to provide political systems with legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> These metanarratives regulate the criteria of their application, which in turn enables them to determine what can be said and done in a culture.<sup>17</sup> The construction of this overarching narrative shapes the interpretation of the past because it requires a synthesis of information, which reduces complex events to simplified explanations.<sup>18</sup> This is in contrast with historical interpretations and data, which are critiqued and refined over time because grand narratives provide an oversimplified view.<sup>19</sup> This selectivity of information perpetuates the exclusion of the other through what is absent in the text.<sup>20</sup> Philosopher and sociologist Lyotard describes this exclusivity as he states, “. . . narratives of one community are exclusive of the names and narratives of the other.”<sup>21</sup> This is problematic in providing a balanced view of the past because a dominant metanarrative excludes alternative narratives, which distorts the historical view of the past.<sup>22</sup> The metanarrative serves as a foundation for dominant perspectives to distort past events in order to oppress this excluded other.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Carroll, “Interpretation, History and Narrative,” 136.

<sup>14</sup> Megan Moore, *Philosophy and Practice in Writing a History of Ancient Israel* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 412.

<sup>16</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Historical Truth Historical Criticism and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a new Comparative Perspective* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 137.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Gelina Harlaftis, Kostas Sbonias, and Nikos Karapidakis, *New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath*, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Differend* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 157.

<sup>22</sup> Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 222-223.

<sup>23</sup> Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath*, 125.

philosopher Vattimo describes the limitations of a unified narrative of history as he states, “There is no single history, only images of the past projected from different points of view.”<sup>24</sup> This shows that a universal metanarrative is limited in reflecting historical realities because there are multiple interpretations of the past. This results in the metanarrative representing an unbalanced view of the past because it only portrays the universal dominant narrative, and excludes other narratives through the selective process of its construction.<sup>25</sup> The influences of the historical narrative approach are shown in the narratives present in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The historical narrative approach has influenced the interpretation of the Holocaust by taking it out of the historical temporality and producing it as an active memory.<sup>26</sup> The narrative that Israel was given to the Jewish population as an expression of reparation for the Holocaust gained domestic credence as a justification for statehood.<sup>27</sup> This occurs through the ideology of Zionism, which positioned itself as the representative of the state of Israel and shaped the narrative of Israel’s right to exist through utilising the Holocaust as a foundational myth.<sup>28</sup> This dominant narrative combines the past with the present to create an interpretation of past events as continually existing.<sup>29</sup> This projects the Holocaust as an event that may be repeated.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the dominant narrative positions another holocaust as an ever-present threat, which legitimates the need to safeguard the Jewish population.<sup>31</sup> This is shown as the ideologically charged narrative instrumentalised the Holocaust in order to showcase the need for a Jewish state.<sup>32</sup> This historical narrative creates a moral continuity with the past that imbues the state

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<sup>24</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Derina Holtzhausen, *Public Relations as Activism: Postmodern Approaches to Theory & Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 128.

<sup>26</sup> Irene Levin, *The Holocaust as Active Memory: The Past in the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 95-96.

<sup>27</sup> Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (New England: Brandeis University Press, 2014)

<sup>28</sup> Aukje Kluge and Benn Williams, *Re-examining the Holocaust through Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 99.

<sup>29</sup> Levin, *The Holocaust as Active Memory: The Past in the Present*, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Schilling, *Emotional State Theory: Friendship and Fear in Israeli Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 44.

<sup>31</sup> Schilling, *Emotional State Theory: Friendship and Fear in Israeli Foreign Policy*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Emanuel Adler, *Israel in the World: Legitimacy and Exceptionalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 41.

of Israel with the moral status of being perpetual victims.<sup>33</sup> This narrative produces the Holocaust as an object of knowledge and influences the Israeli population into a relationship with the event.<sup>34</sup> This influences the interpretation of the Holocaust through producing the traumatic event in the present instead of the past.<sup>35</sup> The narrative interpretation of the Holocaust as disconnected from its historical context is highlighted in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Memory of the Holocaust provided the Arab-Israeli conflict with significance because it evoked the Israeli identity of victimhood and the desire to achieve security through military power.<sup>36</sup> This conflict resulted in the consolidation of the Holocaust as an eternally present myth in the dominant Zionist metanarrative.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the narrative approach in the dominant Zionist narrative influenced the interpretation of the Holocaust by detaching it from a historical temporality and instrumentalising it as a legitimating myth of the state and a continuous threat.

The dominant Israeli historical narrative approach has influenced the interpretation of the Eichmann trial by using the trial to consolidate the existence of the state of Israel into a transcendental mythology that extracts further legitimation from the Holocaust.<sup>38</sup> The dominant Israeli narrative interpreted the 1960s trial of Adolf Eichmann as contextualising anti-Semitism within the Nazi ideology, through the prosecution portraying Eichmann as a monster that sought the destruction of Jewry.<sup>39</sup> This resulted in the construction of the trial into a show, with Eichmann representative of the Holocaust.<sup>40</sup> This constructed an Israeli narrative that influenced the interpretation of the Eichmann trial because Israel was positioned as the sole representative of the victims.<sup>41</sup> Eichmann, in contrast, came to represent the Holocaust and the evil actions of anti-Semitic ideology.<sup>42</sup> Within this narrative, the prosecution's

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Braun, "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation," *History and Theory* 33 (1994): 196.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: the Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 103.

<sup>35</sup> Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: the Demands of Holocaust Representation*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 167-168.

<sup>37</sup> Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 167.

<sup>38</sup> Braun, "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation," 183.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 56.

<sup>40</sup> Jennifer Nedelsky, *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 261.

<sup>41</sup> Shoshana Felman, "Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust," *Critical Inquiry* 27 (2001): 213.

<sup>42</sup> Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, 56.

proposed explanation for Eichmann's actions attempted to account for the actions of all the perpetrators.<sup>43</sup> An alternative interpretation was proposed by political philosopher, Hannah Arendt as she argued that this portrayal of Eichmann as a monster in the Israeli prosecutorial narrative was not accurate.<sup>44</sup> Arendt argued that Eichmann and many of the perpetrators of the Holocaust were bureaucratic instead of mythically evil.<sup>45</sup> She argued that this narrative influenced the interpretation of the Eichmann trial because it created a politically charged memory of Eichmann as a monster. Arendt went on to state that this subsequently forced a society to see themselves as fundamentally different from him, instead of recognising that all people have the potential to engage in these acts.<sup>46</sup> The Israeli narrative constructed the Eichmann trial as an event that provided empowerment and legitimation for the state of Israel to exercise jurisdiction over their enemies.<sup>47</sup> The perception that the reappearance of a crime was more likely after the initial emergence meant that the crimes committed by Eichmann appeared more likely to be repeated.<sup>48</sup> This charged the Eichmann trial with a historical-political meaning because it positioned the state of Israel as having a moral responsibility to ensure that such actions did not recur.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the Israeli narrative approach shaped the interpretation of the Eichmann trial into an event that provided Israel with a moral authority. This approach further posited that Israel then used this authority for the purpose of political legitimation, through the positioning of Eichmann as a monster that represented the perpetrators of the Holocaust.<sup>50</sup>

The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 resulted in the formation of an autonomous Jewish state which showcased the ability for Israel to defend itself against neighbouring Arab states.<sup>51</sup> The Zionist narrative shaped the interpretation of the Arab-Israeli War, through presenting the conflict as

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<sup>43</sup> Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), 269.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*, 269.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Tumolo, *Just Remembering: Rhetorics of Genocide Remembrance and Sociopolitical Judgement* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 52.

<sup>47</sup> Felman, "Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust," 236-237.

<sup>48</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), 267.

<sup>49</sup> Braun, "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation," 184.

<sup>50</sup> Braun, "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation," 184.

<sup>51</sup> Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 269.

a heroic struggle for Israel's national survival and excluding the alternative Palestinian narratives.<sup>52</sup> This Zionist narrative shifted the blame for the violence towards the Palestinians.<sup>53</sup> This narrative drew on the Jewish collective memory of victimisation in order to perpetuate an Israeli sense of victimhood.<sup>54</sup> The status of being a victim served a moral function that attributed the cause of the conflict and the successive violence to the enemy.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, it supplied the Israeli population with a perceived moral authority to oppose the enemy, which served to legitimise the use of harmful acts such as destruction.<sup>56</sup> This influenced the interpretation of the war by positioning the Arabs as the cause of the conflict, and Israel as the heroic defender of the homeland.<sup>57</sup> The image of the war as a David versus Goliath conflict was continually evoked in the Zionist narrative, in order to contextualise Israel as bravely succeeding against superior forces.<sup>58</sup> This mythical perception functioned as a mechanism that unified the Israeli population through a recognisable Jewish myth, and highlighted the numerical superiority of the Arab forces.<sup>59</sup> This constructed an interpretation of the war as a 'few against the many' scenario, which characterised Israel as having achieved a miraculous triumph.<sup>60</sup> Israeli textbooks perpetuated the Zionist interpretation of the war as a desperate fight for survival.<sup>61</sup> This is shown by Ahiya and Harpaz, as they suggested the objective of the Arab states was to destroy the Jewish population. They went on to argue however, that Israel had the advantage of cultural superiority.<sup>62</sup> This narrative demonised the enemy and therefore

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<sup>52</sup> Moshe Noar, *Social Mobilization in the Arab/Israeli War of 1948: On the Israeli Home Front* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 175.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflict: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 161.

<sup>54</sup> John Bunzl and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Psychoanalysis, Identity, and Ideology: Critical Essays on the Israel/Palestine Case* (New York: Springer, 2002), 66.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal et al., "A sense of self-perceived collective victimhood in intractable conflict," *International Review of the Red Cross* 91 (2009): 244.

<sup>56</sup> Bar-Tal et al., "A sense of self-perceived collective victimhood in intractable conflict," 244.

<sup>57</sup> Jo Roberts, *Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel's Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), 217.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, *Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel's Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe*, 217.

<sup>59</sup> Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 102.

<sup>60</sup> Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000*, 102.

<sup>61</sup> Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Ahiya and Moshe Harpaz, *History of the Jewish Nation: The Rebirth of Israel, from Centuries of Yearning for Zion until the Fulfilment of Zionism and the Establishment of the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Sheravrak, 1959), 200.

excluded the atrocities committed by the Israelis.<sup>63</sup> This represented the Arabs in delegitimising terms, and as responsible for the immoral acts, while Israel, as the only victim of the war, viewed their goals as justified and perceived themselves positively.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the dominant Zionist narrative influenced the interpretation of the Arab-Israeli War by drawing on a shared history of oppression, which perpetuated a collective sense of victimhood.<sup>65</sup> This portrayed the Arabs as immoral and Israel as a heroic defender of their homeland, and constructed the war as a miraculous event.<sup>66</sup>

The Palestinian narrative constructed a vastly different interpretation of the Arab-Israeli War, which was referred to as the Nakba. Nakba means ‘catastrophe’ and has been used by the Palestinians since 1948 to describe the establishment of Israel, with an emphasis on the violence and the forced removals carried out by the Israeli military.<sup>67</sup> Part of this violence involved the destruction of Palestinian villages, expulsion of people from their neighbourhoods and the creation of a mass refugee population.<sup>68</sup> The Palestinian narrative of the Nakba contains two main themes: the loss of homeland, and war.<sup>69</sup> This constructed an exilic narrative that interpreted the Nakba through the collective Palestinian memory of victimisation.<sup>70</sup> Using Nietzsche’s concept of our world consisting of several worlds, the Palestinian interpretation of the event explicated the destruction of the economic, political and psychological worlds in which the Palestinians lived, along with the potential futures of the nation.<sup>71</sup> The Nakba, therefore, became a focal point for time in the Palestinian narrative because it marked the beginning of catastrophic changes and oppression, which provided past, present and future

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<sup>63</sup> Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 405.

<sup>64</sup> Bar-Tal et al., “A sense of self-perceived collective victimhood in intractable conflict,” 244.

<sup>65</sup> Mira M. Sucharov, *The International Self: Psychoanalysis and the Search for Israeli-Palestinian Peace* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 64.

<sup>66</sup> Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crises: Reflections on Israel’s War against the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket books, 2010), 65.

<sup>67</sup> Gillbert Achar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> Abigail Ward, *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ihab Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

<sup>70</sup> Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Ahmad Sa’d and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9.

events with significance.<sup>72</sup> The structure of this narrative was paralleled by the Israeli collective sense of victimisation and homeland from the Holocaust.<sup>73</sup> Professor Gur-Ze'ev argued the parallel nature of these narratives, as he stated, “. . . the disagreement as to who is the victim and who is the victimizer and the power to construct and represent the identity of the Israel/Palestine have become inseparable.”<sup>74</sup> On both sides, there was the perception that granting recognition of the catastrophe of the other would justify their moral legitimacy.<sup>75</sup> From the Palestinian perspective, accepting the Israeli interpretation meant an acceptance for the moral justification for Israel's right to exist.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the Palestinian narrative influenced the interpretation of the Nakba by highlighting the violence and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian population. This provides a moral status of victimhood to past, present and future events, similar to the Israeli interpretation of the Holocaust.

Israeli revisionist historians engaged in the rewriting of the history of 1948, which constructed a different interpretation that challenged the mainstream Zionist narrative.<sup>77</sup> The ideological paradigms through which the Zionist narrative constructed and disseminated historical interpretations began to be challenged in the 1970s, with the new historiography of the Arab-Israeli war.<sup>78</sup> The revisionist historians aimed to construct an alternative narrative that was critical of the dominant Zionist historical narrative.<sup>79</sup> These historians published new findings to show that the dominant Israeli narrative was largely distorted and warped through political influences.<sup>80</sup> The claim proposed by the revisionist narrative was that the Arab armies did not

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<sup>72</sup> Sa'd and Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Neil Chaplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 139.

<sup>74</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 41.

<sup>75</sup> Dan Bar-On and Saliba Sarsar, “Bridging the Unbridgeable: The Holocaust and al-Nakba,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 11 (2004): 65.

<sup>76</sup> Bar-On and Sarsar, “Bridging the Unbridgeable: The Holocaust and al-Nakba,” 65.

<sup>77</sup> Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 149.

<sup>78</sup> Ilan Pappé, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26 (1997): 31.

<sup>79</sup> Eerez Casif, *Why Was the State of Israel 'Really' Established?* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 1.

<sup>80</sup> Ephraim Nimni, *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Fundamentalist Politics in Israel* (New York: Zed Books, 2003), 98.

present the level of danger to the Israeli side that was often claimed in the Zionist discourse.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the revisionist narrative attempted to undermine the claim that the Jewish population was under threat of annihilation during the war.<sup>82</sup> The revisionist works portrayed a fragmented Arab military incapable of supporting Palestinian groups throughout the war.<sup>83</sup> This new history also challenged the Zionist perception of the voluntary evacuation of Palestinians by highlighting the massacres conducted by the Israeli military.<sup>84</sup> Israeli revisionist historian Pappe described the exclusion of Palestinian experiences from the dominant Zionist narrative, stating, “. . . not only because the previous stages in Palestine’s ethnic cleansing went unnoticed, but mainly because, with time, the Zionist whitewash of words proved so successful . . .”<sup>85</sup> This shows that the revisionist narrative attempted to make visible the Palestinian narratives that had been silenced. The creation of this revisionist interpretation was made possible through the release of new documents and information about the 1948 war after a thirty-year period of declassification.<sup>86</sup> Overall, the narrative of Israeli revisionist history influenced the interpretation of the Arab-Israeli War through the inclusion of Palestinian perspectives that had been made invisible by the dominant Zionist narrative.<sup>87</sup> This created an interpretation of a perceived historical reality that described the nature of Israeli behaviour and misbehaviour towards the Palestinian people.<sup>88</sup>

Overall, the historical narrative approach fundamentally influenced the interpretation of past events through the process of its construction and the utilisation of events within metanarratives. The process of constructing the narrative required the ordering of past events into a meaningful sequence. The basis of this selection was a criteria of significance that

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<sup>81</sup> Casif, *Why Was the State of Israel ‘Really’ Established? 2*.

<sup>82</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 33.

<sup>83</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 33.

<sup>84</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 34.

<sup>85</sup> Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 259.

<sup>86</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 32.

<sup>87</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 33.

<sup>88</sup> Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique of Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” 33.

determined the relevance of past events to successive events. This was not reflective of the way historical events emerge. This ordering was influenced by the social context surrounding the construction of narratives, which imbued the narrative with the cultural judgments of the author. The metanarrative influenced the interpretation of past events through portraying an unbalanced view of the past because it excluded alternative narratives and only represented the dominant narrative that provided political systems with legitimacy. The influential nature of the historical narrative approach was shown in the Arab-Israeli conflict, through the dominant Israeli interpretations of the Holocaust, the Eichmann trial, and the Arab-Israeli War. The narrative approach influenced the interpretation of the Holocaust by placing it as an eternally present event and an active memory. The interpretation of the Eichmann trial was influenced by the portrayal of Eichmann as a monster that represented the actions of all the perpetrators of the Holocaust. This provided Israel with moral authority and drew further legitimation from the Holocaust. The Arab-Israeli War was interpreted through the Israeli narrative as an heroic struggle that glorified the actions of Israeli soldiers while vilifying the Arabs. The Palestinian narrative of the Nakba offered a different interpretation, which used the themes of the loss of homeland and war to highlight the tragedy caused by the establishment of the state of Israel. The revisionist history of Israel showed an alternative interpretation of the war by attempting to include the discourses of Palestinian suffering that had been made invisible by the dominant Zionist narrative.

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