

An Analysis of Intergroup Relations, Identities, Conflict Dialogue and Diversity Narratives on Digital Platforms from the Past Decade. Imagefare and Polarization in YouTube Commentary on the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, 2014–2023

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This presentation examines how digital publics negotiate identity, memory and legitimacy around the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through YouTube commentary on Vice News coverage from 2014 to 2023. Using the concept of imagefare, the study treats online comment spaces as arenas where spectators and self-identified stakeholders participate in conflict dialogue beyond the battlefield. The analysis draws on a manually curated corpus of 10,000 highly visible comments from the top 33 threads across 20 randomly selected videos in a 37-video Vice News playlist. Through inductive qualitative content analysis, the findings are reported thematically through seven content categories. Four categories are interpreted as central to polarisation: empathy and affective positioning; rights to existence and the ethics of violence; historical, religious and politico-cultural interpretations; and settlements as a focus of legality, dispossession and moral argumentation. The presentation shows how commenters rework contested histories into present-day claims, reproduce in-group and out-group boundaries and frame violence through victim and defensive logics. It concludes that platformed commentary can amplify conflict narratives while also revealing possible spaces for dialogue, recognition and de-escalation.

Presenting author

Julian Pavel

Primary author: Mr PAVEL, Julian (University of Latvia)

Presenter: Mr PAVEL, Julian (University of Latvia)

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