

**Israel and the Belgian Media:
A Mirror of the Israel–Gaza Conflict (July–August 2014)
Between Disinformation, Deformation,
and Importing the Conflict**

Joël Kotek

ISGAP Research Fellow

Professor of Political Science
Université Libre de Bruxelles
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Charles Asher Small

ISGAP | INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY
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AND POLICY

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Abstract

Focusing on the Belgian francophone media's coverage of the 2014 Gaza conflict, this paper traces the specific ways in which news reporting on the Middle East manifests an inherently anti-Israel bias that draws upon a Western tradition of antisemitic figures and motifs.

The Belgian media's systematically negative predisposition toward Israel exhibits a "deformation" concerning events in the Middle East; that is, the media remains unable to consider the Israeli–Palestinian conflict outside of the basic narrative in which innocent civilians, especially Palestinian children, are being targeted by bloodthirsty Israeli soldiers whose actions allegedly constitute a act of genocide. The media's pro-Palestinian tendency, which results in part from the hyper-mediatization of the Middle East and the professional, economic, and cultural incentives that accompany it, habitually relies upon antisemitic stereotypes and conventions—in particular, the myth of Jews as child killers and the narrative of the "Massacre of the Innocents"—in order to reinforce its central storyline. Yet even as it does so, deadly inter-Muslim conflict and shocking images of Islamist savagery are sanitized and purged so as not to discomfort readers and viewers accustomed to an anti-Israel perspective.

Given the Belgian media's anti-Israel bias, it is now urgent to investigate and question the professional ethics of journalists, and to call for the media to think through and contextualize its reporting on events in the Middle East. While some Arab intellectuals have already begun to publicly detach themselves from solidarity with Islamist resistance movements, Belgian media does not report on the Islamofascist nature of Hamas, evident in their founding texts as well as in the antisemitic accusations they routinely make (e.g., the association of Jews and ritual murder). Instead, journalists abstain from reporting in which the State of Israel is not treated as the perpetrator.

The paper concludes with two appendices that provide ample supporting evidence of the Belgian media's reflexive incrimination of Israel: first, an overview of the coverage of the 2002 Battle of Jenin, in which allegations against Israel were reported without question or context; and second, a collection of visual documentation from *Le Soir's* reporting on the 2014 Gaza conflict.

About the Author

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**Israel and the Belgian Media:
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Between Disinformation, Deformation,
and Importing the Conflict**

JOËL KOTEK

“What we see on television is the manipulation of emotions, as the Nazis did when they portrayed fat Jews with a cigar and a top hat sitting on a bundle of dollars.”

—Boris Cyrulnik, “The Jihadists Remind Me of the Nazis”¹

Introduction

“Emocracy” and the “Jeninization” of Spirits

The media treatment of the recent war in Gaza has shown once again the bias that constrains the majority of Belgian journalists when it comes to reporting on information about the State of Israel. Indeed, the moment it concerns Israel, the weight of clichés and convictions is such that the information offered to the public is at best biased and at worst controversial. What is a media bias other than a tendency to present, involuntarily or not, information, ideas, and events in a manner that has been altered by certain prejudices or convictions? As to disinformation, one rather defines it as a set of communication techniques focused on giving a false image of reality, with the objective of protecting particular interests and influencing public opinion. Let us reassure our readers that we are not trying to fall into the cracks of a new conspiracy theory. The ability to misinform does not necessarily presume a basis for conspiracy, an intentional element, or a conscious vision. Its sources can be underlying: a lack of general culture, *zeitgeist*, ideological prejudices, social demands, etc.

Perhaps one should consider here the concept of “deformation” (*malinformation*) proposed by François Heinderyckx (Université Libre de Bruxelles),² as was done in 2007 within the framework of a study, conducted by a collective of media experts, that also focused on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict:

To explain it briefly... Patrick Charaudeau, Roselyn Koren, Marc Lits, and Jérôme Bourdon notice—as does Daniel Dayan—a pro-Palestinian tendency in the French media. However, they do not qualify this as a “war” declared against Israel, nor as a voluntary manipulation. For these researchers, this

1. Boris Cyrulnik, “The Jihadists Remind Me of the Nazis,” *L’illustré* (Switzerland), interviewed by Robert Habel, August 27, 2014.

2. François Heinderyckx, *La malinformation: plaidoyer pour une refondation de l’information* (Bruxelles: Éditions Labor, 2003).

type of media coverage is linked to the functioning of the media machine and aimed at captions favoring an elementary logical narration. The logical narrative is in fact not exclusive to the conflict in the Middle East, but to the information gathering of the media in a war context. The complexity of the reality and the lack of knowledge—especially historical—leads journalists to simplify their explanations and to systematically put men into two camps: the executioners and the victims. In fact, the only positioning that journalists allow themselves in this context is expressed in favor of the victims. Patrick Charaudeau also underlines the existence of an antisemitic narrative in France and highlights that, like every individual, the journalist is influenced by narratives happening within society . . . More than a desire to misinform, it is in fact the journalistic constraints that lead the media professionals to take sides in favor of the victims. It is for this reason that Arnaud Mercier prefers to speak of “deformation.”³

We will demonstrate that the francophone Belgian media is responsible for deformation concerning events in the Middle East, and that it is systematically ill-intentioned toward Israel, just as Fox News can be toward the Palestinians. As Richard Laub and Olivier Boruchowitch have already demonstrated statistically,⁴ Belgian and, in particular, francophone journalists show themselves more often than not incapable of considering the Middle East conflict with the necessary distance and objectivity—that is, other than through a prism of which they are not even aware, concerned as they are with respecting a moral consensus that at the same time forgives Palestine, the Arab-Muslim world, and Islam. This is seen, for example, in the numerous efforts of certain journalists from RTBF or *Le Soir* to present ISIS or Boko Haram as phenomena distinct from Islam.⁵ This attitude, which can be compared to the Stockholm or Billancourt syndrome, is well known, and neither new nor classic. Let us consider the fact that our media is incapable of attributing the massacres of Sabra and Shatila to the Christian militias of Elie Hobeika, or the assassination of Naim Kader (1981) to the terrorist group Abu Nidal. But the media insanity around the Battle of Jenin (2002) is without any doubt the best example of the “heavy eyelids” phenomenon⁶ so common in our media outlets.

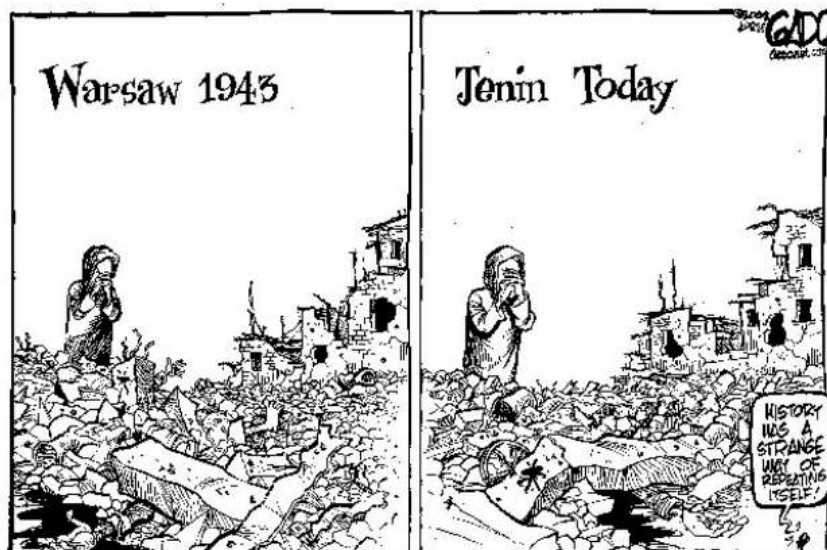
3. Yeny Serrano, “Béatrice Fleury, Jacques Walter, (dirs.), *Les médias et le conflit israélo-palestinien: feux et contre-feux de la critique*,” *Questions de communication* 16 (2009), <http://questionsdecommunication.revues.org/184>.

4. Richard Laub and Olivier Boruchowitch, *Israël: un avenir compromis*, preface by Elie Barnavi (Paris: Berg International, 2009).

5. For example, when listening to the experts consulted during the Forum de Midi, ISIS could not be considered Islamic because Islam is considered a religion of peace. To deny that a terrorist movement has an Islamic character is linked as much to Jesuitism as it is to Stockholm syndrome. Why? Because Islam first imposed itself by the sword. Indeed, it only took twelve years for the Arab armies to impose themselves from Persia to Egypt, and a decade to spread from Dar al-Islam to Spain and to central Asia. It was always through jihad that the Ottoman Empire established itself, to the detriment of ancient and Christian Byzantine.

6. The “heavy eyelids” phenomenon was attributed to progressive European intellectuals, who during the Cold War refused to criticize the Soviet dictatorship under the pretext of not wanting to discourage the working class.

Jenin: An Example of Manipulative Hysteria



Le dessin de GADO publié par le "Daily Nation" et reproduit par "Le Monde" daté du 2 mai 2002

Why does one place in parallel Jenin and its 75 dead, of which 23 were Israeli soldiers, and Auschwitz, where 1,200,000 men, women, and children were assassinated, or even the Warsaw Ghetto, with its 500,000 victims? The answer is simple: the minute that it concerns Palestine, journalists lose all sense of reality. The Palestinian tropism adopted by the moral and lazy left imposes outrage, hyperbole, and blindness. Evidently, it takes over even the best minds. Consider that one of the former presidents of the Parti Socialiste (PS) actually lists "the Jenin massacre" next to the Gulag, Hiroshima, Verdun, and even Auschwitz. With Timișoara, the myth of Jeningrad will remain in the memories of extreme misinformation.

I. A Very Singular Vision

Operation Protective Edge

The media coverage of Operation Protective Edge revealed itself as loyal to tradition. In 2014, once again (after 2002, 2009, and 2012), our media chose to have black-and-white coverage, presenting the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the way that a film review would describe a western: as the good against the bad, the Indians against the cowboys, the Palestinians against the Israelis, the innocent against the perpetrator, David against Goliath—in general, as Good against Evil. The Jewish state, with a geographical size just slightly larger than that of Wallonia (1948) or Belgium (2015) and where the majority of the *dhimmis*⁷ Jews chased from the Arab world live, was once again pictured as an intrinsically out of the ordinary

7. The Jews in the Islamic city were second-class citizens, subjected to a series of prohibitions and obligatory harassments (taxes, etc.).

state, viewed as ontologically criminal.⁸ To read or to listen to our media, there is no doubt that the Israeli–Palestinian wars involve only innocent civilians, in particular Palestinian children, against bloodthirsty soldiers. Not content to present the Palestinian youth as the main victim of the conflict (which in itself is entirely false and a fundamental part of the problem), certain editorial rooms played on the fact that this youth was the primary target of Tsahal, tracked and eliminated without pity, even in classrooms.

The Jew, Killer of Children

Interviewed by *La Libre Belgique*, Sebastien Boussois, a militant researcher, invents for the needs of the cause the crime of “youthocide” (“*jeunocide*”): “There is a desire for ‘youthocide,’ targeting the youth of Gaza. The deaths of more than 400 children may not respond to a deliberate desire; this is part of collateral damage of war. But I think there is a terrifying desire, by aiming at schools, hospitals—and not only because Hamas hides what it wants there—to cut at the core any possibility for this society to persist. I think there is a desire to preempt the future of this population by touching its core.”

Therefore, if one were to believe Mr. Boussois, the 400 children who were victims of Israeli bullets were part of an intentional “youthocide”—and if one understands him correctly, an act of genocide. The particularity of the crime of genocide is not precisely the targeting of children but does in fact mean to attack the offspring. And in all the cases of genocide, from Armenia to Rwanda, children have always been the main targets of the perpetrators. As the Belgian historian Maxime Steinberg has repeatedly reminded us, no child under the age of 13 came back from Auschwitz. Would the Israelis be taking part in a genocide because of their “targeting of Gaza’s schools and hospitals”? The question is heavy with meaning, and the answer is just as uneasy. The Gaza Strip includes around 780,000 children under the age of 14, approximately 43 percent of the total population. The tragic, troubling, and unbearable deaths of 420 Gazans under the age of 18, or 0.02 percent of the total population, reveals the absurdity of this statement. It is the grotesque accusation of a “specialist,” who evidently does not understand the concepts associated with mass crimes. If the objective of the Israelis were to preempt the future of the Palestinians, the victims under the age of 18, which would include child soldiers, would not be counted by the hundreds but by the hundreds of thousands, as in the case of the Armenian and Tutsi genocides. During the Shoah, nearly 1.5 million children were assassinated by the Nazis. The total loss of Palestinians—2,180 people, including combatants, out of a total population of nearly two million inhabitants—bears witness to the contrary, to the efforts of Israelis to save, within the limits imposed by Hamas, civilian populations. Even the tens of thousands of Syrian children killed by the Assad regime are not considered to have been victims of a specific voluntary genocide. It is only in the case of the Yazidis in Iraq where the question remains open.

8. Out of the 900,000 Jews present in 1945, there remain only 5,000 to 7,000 Jews in the heart of the Arab world.

How can one not question this tendency to present the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the exclusive perspective, repeatedly and systematically, of the “martyr” of children? Our hypothesis is that this insistence on referring, day after day, to the number of dead children killed by enemy fire is far from coincidental. That it is reserved only to the wars of Israel appears to us to be linked to a *habitus* inherent to the Christian West, which became habitually designated through the antisemitic expression of the Jew as *child killer*.⁹



Left, Pieter Bruegel the Elder instrumentalizes the myth of the Massacre of the Innocents in order to denounce in a roundabout way the execution by the Spanish of the Flemish. Right, a representation of the Massacre of Innocents, in the verse of folio 15 of the Codex Egberti (manuscript of the tenth century).

From the Massacre of the Innocents (a theme dear to the Breugel dynasty) and other ritual crimes to the alleged practice of “youthocide” by Israel, the accusations of child killing have stuck to the Jews for nearly a thousand years—or longer, if one considers similar accusations from Hellenistic times.¹⁰



These posters portray how the emphasis is put on the antisemitic myth of the Jewish child killer, children no longer used by Christians but now by Palestinians. The boycott campaigns targeting Israeli products play fully on the fantasy of ritual crimes (here against Garnier without understanding the reasons). The poster on the left is edited by the Progressive Muslims, a Belgian poster by the Belgian Muslim Brothers; the others are by BDS UK.

9. See my works on the characteristics of modern antisemitism, especially *Au nom de l'anti-sionisme: l'image des Juifs et d'Israël dans la caricature depuis la seconde Intifada*, co-written with Daniel Kotek (Brussels: Complexe, 2005).

10. During the second century, an Alexandrian Greek claimed that the Jews adorned a golden donkey head in the temple and that every seven years they sacrificed a captured stranger. It is the most ancient script of ritual murder attributed to Jews.



Brussels, 2009. Demonstration against Israel. This grotesque scene shows that the street demonstrations by “progressive” NGOs hostile to Israel use the same “evidence” used by Christian antisemitism.

It becomes evident that the antisemitic myth of the Jewish vampire and/or child killer is the central theme of Palestinian propaganda.



These images, from a Palestinian propaganda website linked to Hamas, intentionally invoke the familiar antisemitic image of the satanic Jew, killer of children. All Zionists are seen as devils, even the children, who are presented—in obligatory inversion—as child soldiers, basically as assassins. Source: Collectif Cheikh Yassine (blog), <http://soutien-palestine.blogspot.be/>

Antisemitic Myths Reused by Our Francophone Media

What really hurts is that the francophone media in our country too often takes at face value the broad (and paranoid) themes of Islamist propaganda, itself copied, as we continue to see, from the anti-Jewish Christian tradition of the Middle Ages, from the Jew as killer of God to the Jew as killer of children. Incredibly, our television, radio, and daily newspapers concentrate, emphasize, and organize their information, consciously or not, around these medieval antisemitic myths.

La Libre Belgique, 25/08/2014, page 12

Israël : "Evacuez les zones de

Proche-Orient Pour Benjamin Netanyahu, tous ces endroits sont des cibles pour Israël.

Bontemps protestaire. L'opération lancée le 8 juillet par Israël contre le Hamas, "se poursuivra jusqu'à ce qu'elle ait atteint son objectif", a dit le Premier ministre Benjamin Netanyahu à Tel-Aviv. Au moins quarante personnes ont été tuées dimanche dans les Densités urbaines, selon les autorités palestiniennes, parmi elles figurent six enfants, dont quatre d'âge inférieur à un an.

Leur décès, les combattants palestiniens ont été plus de 70 rapportés sur Israël, selon l'armée israélienne. Plusieurs dizaines de blessés ont été évacués au point de passage d'Erez entre Israël et la bande de Gaza, ont annoncé les paramédicaux de l'armée. Trois blessés sérieux ont été hospitalisés en Israël à Ashdod, a-t-il appris de sources hospitalières, avant d'être évacués vers le point de passage d'Erez, qui reçoit patients des blessés palestiniens pour être soignés en Israël ou encore les journalistes, sauf pour les cas médicaux les plus critiques. Une mère palestinienne et ses quatre



Le corps d'une petite fille fusillée et défilé sur un véhicule israélien, dans le quartier de Gaza.

480

ENFANTS DE GAZA TUÉS
Au moins 480 enfants ont été tués dans la bande de Gaza, selon les autorités israéliennes.

enfants ont été tués par une frappe israélienne sur leur maison dans la banlieue est de Gaza, a indiqué Ashraf al-Qudus, porte-parole des services de presse de l'armée israélienne, dans le nord de la ville de Gaza, près d'un autre quartier, un an et demi, et Méditerranée al-Khazari, 17 ans, qui ont trouvé la mort. On ignore pourquoi ces civils sont morts. Après avoir démantelé les can-



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The media loves to play on the most down-at-heel myths: here, the myth of the God killer. In a revisited piety, the Jewish Jesus finds himself transformed into a Palestinian icon. On the left, an illustration from the Libre Belgique; on the right a caricature of Latuff, a Brazilian cartoonist, both anti-globalization and anti-Jewish.

A media report by RTBF particularly shocked us, as it shows Israeli soldiers singing and expressing their joy immediately after an awful scene in which dead Palestinian children are presented (August 4, 2014). The trick is easy, as old as the cinema—specifically, the cinema of propaganda. The Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov defined a cinematic effect known as the “Kuleshov effect,” which describes the tendency of one shot to affect the meaning of the subsequent shot through editing; this in turn influences the meaning of the preceding shot, thereby provoking a “significant contamination” in both directions. The commentary accompanying the video is even more dishonest, as it associates, now through words, two clearly distinct sequences that are not related: “Some soldiers finish their mission. The feeling of having accomplished their duty [of killing children?].” Here, the Kuleshov effect no longer involves Soviet cinema but Nazi propaganda. This way of negatively depicting Jews by utilizing various cinematic techniques recalls the well-calculated efficiency of a Fritz Hippler in *The Eternal Jew* (1940) or a Veit Harlan in *Jud Süß* (1934). Then and now, Jews shown on the screen are presented not as human beings but as repulsive figures, as the symbol of absolute Evil, decked out with an inhumane mask and spineless.



“Some soldiers finish their mission. The feeling of having accomplished their duty” (sic). “Gaza: ‘trêve humanitaire’ avortée, accord sur un nouveau cessez-le-feu” (video), RTBF, August 4, 2014, http://www.rtb.be/info/monde/detail_israel-annonce-7-heures-de-treuve-a-gaza-apres-la-frappe-sur-une-ecole-de-l-onu?id=8327611.

Facilitators of Antisemitism

This biased and negative image of Israel that our media has constructed over many years contributes significantly to the unhealthy climate that can be found in our “areas”—and not just in our “areas,” unfortunately. Although the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a million times less destructive than the Syrian–Iraqi conflicts, it is a ninety-year-old survivor of Auschwitz that a Flemish doctor refuses to see because she is Jewish and therefore an assassin’s accomplice. “I will not come,” replies the doctor before cutting short the conversation. The event is reported on the *Joods Actueel* website. Preoccupied by his mother’s health, her son calls the night doctor on duty. The doctor responds, “Send her to Gaza for a couple of hours, she won’t feel any more pain.”¹¹ Here we could find ourselves in a book by Franz Kafka. The anti-Israeli obsession of our media is so strongly communicated that it turns the head of more than one reader, and more than one news viewer. By creating fire from smoke to render their anti-Israel message as strongly as possible, the media give this regional conflict the status of a global conflict. It misinforms some of its consumers to such an extent that they feel pushed, even against their wishes, to make mistakes. The mistake of our Antwerp doctor? To believe without question the media script, perfectly presented, that his television and daily newspaper serve him day after day. In this sense, it is not abusive to affirm that our media act as antisemitic facilitators. This expression and concept were elaborated by the French intellectual Jean-Christophe Rufin in his famous report on antisemitism,

11. “Arts weigert 90-jarige vrouw te helpen omdat ze Joods is—‘ga maar naar Gaza,’” *Joods Actueel*, July 31, 2014, <http://joodsactueel.be/2014/07/31/arts-weigert-90-jarige-vrouw-te-helpen-omdat-ze-joods-is-ga-maar-naar-gaza/>.

conducted in 2004 for the French Ministry of the Interior.¹² Concerning antisemitic acts, Rufin distinguishes three levels of responsibility: actors of violence, manipulators (ideologues, political networks, or terrorists), and the facilitators who, via their opinion—or their silence—legitimize the move to action.

Our hypothesis is heavy with meaning. The consequences of the fabrication of the anti-Israeli consensus by our media, for more than thirty years now, are just as heavy.



“Tant que les Israéliens ne percevront pas les Palestiniens comme des humains, rien ne changera”



“As long as the Israelis do not get the Palestinians as human beings, nothing will change.” What the Catholic Libre Belgique proposes to its readers is a reinterpretation of “The Massacre of the Innocents” dear to the Gospel according to Matthew (2:16–18) and/or the ritual crime. (Representation of the supposed ritual murder of Simon of Trent in the *Weltchronik d’Hartmann Schedel* in 1493.)

**STOP SUPPORTING
CHILD KILLERS**



BOYCOTT ISRAEL

www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html



Left, a propaganda poster calling for the boycott of Israeli products. Right, an antisemitic tract distributed in Kiev before the trial of Mendel Beilis, recommending that Christian parents watch their children during the Jewish Easter.

For if Israel did resemble the caricature that the media builds day after day, all people of good faith, from Antwerp to Brussels, could only oppose themselves to this enemy of humankind. And why not with a Kalashnikov in hand!

12. Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Chantier sur la lutte contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme*, presented to the Minister of the Interior, security interior and local liberties on October 19, 2004. The Minister of Interior had entrusted Rufin with deepening the understanding of the mechanisms that can drive acts or threats with racist or antisemitic tendencies. Aware of the existence of means to fight antisemitic acts, Rufin nonetheless questions the manner in which to develop these means in order to respond to the problems posed by the increase of violence seen in the last few years.

As the journalist Matti Friedman, former correspondent for the Associated Press in Israel, writes: “The world is not responding to events in this country, but rather to the description of these events by news organizations.”¹³ An editorial published during the conflict in the prestigious Flemish magazine *Knack* is symptomatic of the by-products created by this campaign of disinformation, perfectly orchestrated from North to South in our country. This article, countersigned by tens of well-known Flemish university professors, authors, and business people, affirms that “closing one’s eyes to a genocide makes one an accomplice.”¹⁴ Genocide: the word has been dropped! These intellectuals would have been correct to react this way, and to be indignant, if Israel were indeed responsible for genocide. However, as we have already shown, this is not the case. Whether we want it or not, the Israeli–Palestinian wars remain of low-level intensity, as Henri Goldman, an intellectual close to the UPJB (Union of Progressive Jews in Belgium), reminded us in 2009:

Since the creation of the State of Israel, the Israeli Palestinian conflict has “only” killed around 52,000 people. 52,000 too many, of course, but this only places it 49th in a morbid hit parade since 1950, far behind, for example—and to stay in the Arab-Muslim era—the various massacres in Sudan (1,900,000 dead between 1983 and 2006), the Iran–Iraq war (one million dead between 1980 and 1988), the colonial war headed by France in Algeria (675,000 dead between 1954 and 1962), or the massacre of Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran (300,000 dead between 1980 and 1990).¹⁵

Clearly, our Flemish intellectuals have incorrectly invoked—for reasons linked to a certain Flemish ethos rather than to the reality of the facts—a concept, genocide, that is totally disconnected from the wars led by the Jewish state. It goes without saying that by abstaining from condemning the mass violence against the Yazidis, described by some as genocide, these same individuals are therefore in this instance accomplices.



It is thus not surprising that the Yahudi (“Jews” in Turkish) are therefore banned from a Belgian Turkish restaurant in St. Nicolas (Wallonia, July 23). In France in 1940, Jews and dogs were banned from public parks and restaurants. In 2014, this restriction only applies to the Jews. Dog lovers would appreciate this attention.

13. Matti Friedman, “An Insider’s Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth,” *Tablet*, August 26, 2014, <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/183033/israel-insider-guide>.

14. “Oproep Gaza: ‘Belgische politici, sla hard op tafel: wie wegekijkt bij genocide is medeplichtig,’” *Knack*, August 4, 2014, <http://www.knack.be/nieuws/wereld/oproep-gaza-belgische-politici-sla-hard-op-tafel-wie-wegkijkt-bij-genocide-is-medeplichtig/article-opinion-269083.html>.

15. Henri Goldman, “L’étoile juive et la croix gammée,” *Les blogs de politique*, January 25, 2009, <http://blogs.politique.eu.org/L-etoile-juive-et-la-croix-gammee>.

Our Media Is Playing with Fire

We do not think that it is forbidden to criticize Israel or to support the theory that, as the strongest, the Jewish state should not have responded to the provocations of Hamas in the summer of 2014. It is nonetheless true that the role of the journalists is to *shed light on the present and the reality of things*, not to inflame the passions, and certainly not by means of prejudice and lies. We can only repeat over and over again: no more than the Jews of yesterday, the “Zionists” of today are not intent upon the *massacre of innocents!*

Some (Un)controllable Skids

To demonstrate the manipulation by our television networks and the hateful misunderstandings that they can cause, it is necessary to mention the malicious news report broadcast by RTL in 2012,¹⁶ and resuscitated in 2014 by *Le Vif/l'Express*, that showed Israelis from Sderot picnicking, satisfied and hungry, in front of the bombardment of Gaza. Without questioning the reality of the information, this report constructs a representation that is not at all in tune with the Israeli reality. When they have not already fled, the inhabitants of Southern Israel are condemned to shelters. They have no time to picnic as they only have 15 seconds between the announcement and the impact of one of the 8,500 missile launches of mortar rockets coming from Gaza. A doctored report, if one considers how it would be possible for the news to show scenes of crowds of Palestinians distributing cakes after each terrorist attack perpetrated on the Israeli soil. A dangerous report, if one considers the effect it produces on populations that are fully prepared to believe that Israelis, including teenagers, are estranged from the human race and prefer to find joy in the death of their enemies. Nonetheless the report did not pass unseen, as witnessed in this extract from the *Muslim Journal* (July 14, 2014): “The massacre that has occurred for the last few days in Gaza is seen as an entertainment spectacle from the Israeli side. Zionists organized a day of picnicking with a special view of the bombarded territories. Retired people, vacationers, travelers, and ordinary people come to ‘distract’ themselves. Some of them bring their armchairs, others their folding chairs. It is not unusual to see in this kind of gathering unreal scenes of children fighting over a pair of binoculars in order to follow the explosions. For each attack by the Israeli air-force, the ‘spectators’ cry out ‘woooow.’”



16. It would not concern the belief that good Belgian journalists no longer exist: Jean-Pierre Martin is one of these reporters, from Kigali to Erbil, saving the honor of the Belgian press. It is the same with Pascale Bourgaux, before his departure (logical) for Paris. The real journalists disturb.

Anti-Israeli Exhibitionism and Voyeurism vs. Pro-Arab Discretion and Constraint

Instead of establishing bridges between the different opinions in order to promote dialogue within society, the work of our press has favored Manichaeism and greater insularity. Indeed, what is obvious, however little one may be interested in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, is the incredible disparity that governs the media treatment. Whenever the media deals with Israel, their tone is accusatory, moralistic, shocked, and negative. The lack of empathy toward Israel is total. They evoke this country only to criticize it. It would be in vain to search *Le Soir* or RTBF for a single article or a single report that highlights a positive aspect of a country that is at the forefront of science, technology, and the environment. This incapacity to find a mitigating circumstance for the Jewish state probably explains why none of our media have mentioned the significant links between François Englert, our latest Nobel Prize laureate, and the University of Tel Aviv. If an event concerns cultural matters, our media always represent Israel from the darkest and most toxic angles, whether it relates to the use of its military capabilities, its embassy personnel, or the production of its fruit and vegetables.



Even the very moderate *Dernière Heure* cannot stop itself from making Israel responsible: (1) Sudinfo teaches its readers how to identify Israeli products; (2) Israel is the only country to lobby; (3) Only Israel's arms are dirty, contrary to the arms used by Belgians in Iraq, by the Russians in Ukraine, and the Palestinians against Israelis.

The correspondents of our main press organizations in Israel are paid by the line on a freelance basis. They therefore always go straight to the essentials. Why waste your time and energy in writing an article about an Israeli scientific discovery, for example, if you know that your editors will reject it and you will not be paid? Consequently, in article after article the correspondents fulfill the mission that was assigned to them: “South Africanize” the region’s only democratic state, whether we like it or not. The readers of *Le Soir* or *La Libre Belgique* might find it interesting to know that Arab members make up ten percent of the Knesset, that Israel’s Supreme Court includes a permanent judge of Arab origin (Salim Jubran) on its high council, that Tsahal enlists the Druzes and even certain Muslims in its ranks, or even, the ultimate paradox, that the granddaughter and the sister of Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of the terrorist movement Hamas, were recently treated in Israel. Oh yes! The world is more complex than it appears in certain media.



Left, “The granddaughter of Ismail Haniyeh hospitalized in Israel.” This information was of course forgotten by our newspapers. It was published in France, in the Figaro. Right, Haniyeh has less consideration for the other children of Palestine.

But this complexity is dangerous: it could confuse the story and move the goal-posts. One is of course very careful never to give a piece of information that risks presenting the Israelis as anything other than henchmen of Western colonialism. Would it be so terrible for the readers of *Le Soir* or the viewers of RTL-TVI to know that medical collaboration takes place between the Israelis and the Palestinians? In our opinion, no. On the contrary, it could reduce the passions of a debate poisoned by bad faith and a Manichean perspective, bring the antagonists closer together, and de-escalate a conflict sustained by too much hateful passion.



Belgian poster that pushes the antisemitic myth of the “Massacre of Innocents,” revisited the Battle-ship Potemkin way, by the very progressive but nonetheless antisemitic Carlos Latuff.

Over-Mediatization, Manipulation, and Magnifying Affect

If some people question the quality of the information coming out of the Middle East, everyone by contrast agrees on the infinite quantity. The Middle East is the region that counts the most reporters, photographers, journalists, cameramen, and other special envoys per square meter. Since 1982, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been the most widely covered conflict, and therefore the most viewed, on the planet. In contrast, other conflicts—not because of their lack of gravity, but owing to the lack of media interest—are ignored, erased, underestimated, or simply passed over in silence and lost to history. How many reports *in situ* on the Yazidis?

The presence in the Middle East of an excessive number of journalists from all over the world who produce a never-ending stream of copy, aside from the over-production of journalism that it generates, explains the hyper-mediatization of the Middle East conflict. One does not go without the other. This hyper-mediatization was measured, in the case of Belgium, by Marc Lits, professor in the Department of Communications at the Catholic University of Louvain and director of the Observatoire du Récit Médiatique.¹⁷ According to his study, the Near and Middle East represented 24 percent of the subjects of reports on international affairs on the television stations RTBF and RTL-TVI in 2002, while no other region of the world reached higher than 10 percent. Moreover, the presence of Israel at the heart of the mediatization is not without consequences for viewers' perceptions: viewers will naturally conclude—and we cannot blame them for this—the centrality of this conflict that has been so generously and abundantly reported. At worst, our media are uninterested in other murderous conflicts. At best, they minimize them.



“Children, Targets of the Taliban.” The photo chosen by Le Vif/l’Express (no. 51, December 18, 2009, p. 16) to illustrate the article on the massacre of 130 children coldly murdered by the Taliban in Peshawar, Pakistan, shows children who are evidently unharmed. We are far from the dramatization of Gaza, yet in this case the Taliban clearly targeted the school.

How many reports in our daily newspapers or on television focus on the Turkish blockade of Armenia, the massacres in Chechnya, or the former Spanish Sahara

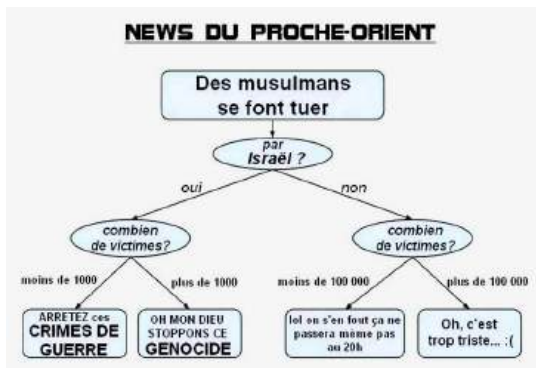
17. Marc Lits and Sarah Sepulchre, “Analyse comparée de la presse belge et française sur le conflit israélo-palestinien,” Catholic University of Leuven, August 2005.

(its wall, its colonies, the pillage of its natural resources)? Very few, in truth. These orphaned conflicts hardly arouse the interest of the media. Due to a lack of correspondents and the absence of shocking images, they do not awaken the slightest wave of international emotion or sympathy. They should, and rightly so. But they do not enjoy the rare privilege of being born Palestinian, nor of being the target of these enemies of choice, the Israelis, the Jews. Matti Friedman, former reporter for the Associated Press, recently highlighted this disturbing reality in an article recently published in the United States:

When I was a correspondent at the AP, the agency had more than 40 staffers covering Israel and the Palestinian territories. That was significantly more news staff than the AP had in China, Russia, or India, or in all of the 50 countries of sub-Saharan Africa combined.¹⁸

All of this would not be too serious, just a bit puzzling, were it not for the unacknowledged but still very real anti-Zionism of the editorial boards. Matti Friedman pays witness to this on numerous accounts where his colleagues censored themselves, refusing to suggest certain of their photos for the publication, for example, images that showed Palestinians doing the Nazi salute. “It is practically impossible to publish negative information on the Palestinians. When an agency, which provides photos to the media in all four corners of the world, decides to censor an image, this has a huge impact on the coverage of the conflict.” In his article, Friedman offers another example:

Israeli actions are analyzed and criticized, and every flaw in Israeli society is aggressively reported. In one seven-week period, from November 8 to December 16, 2011, I decided to count the stories coming out of our bureau on the various moral failings of Israeli society—proposed legislation meant to suppress the media, the rising influence of Orthodox Jews, unauthorized settlement outposts, gender segregation, and so forth. I counted 27 separate articles, an average of a story every two days. In a very conservative estimate, this seven-week tally was higher than the total number of significantly critical stories about Palestinian government and society, including the totalitarian Islamists of Hamas, that our bureau had published in the preceding three years.¹⁹



Muslims are killed By Israel?			
Yes		No	
How many victims?		How many victims?	
Less than 1,000	More than 1,000	Less than 100,000	More than 100,000
Let's stop this WAR CRIME	Oh my God stop, this GENOCIDE	lol, who cares?	Oh that's so sad... :(

This humorous graphic, posted online and perhaps shocking, is nevertheless not lacking in reality.

18. Friedman, “An Insider’s Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth.”

19. Ibid.

Believing that the media had betrayed its vocation, Friedman resigned from the Associated Press. Indeed, no other state receives the same media treatment as Israel does, not even Russia or Turkey, countries whose human and international rights records are questionable. Ankara has imposed a total blockade on Armenia for the last eighteen years, occupies one-third of a member state of the European Union (Cyprus), punishes in blood the Kurdish resistance, and exercises armed acts in Iraq and Syria, though only against the Alawites. The media remain indifferent to all of this, and it takes place with impunity. The Kurds have never benefited from the media compassion enjoyed by the Palestinians, and as a result they do not enjoy the sympathy of international public opinion. Why? Because the Kurds, like the Syrians, the Sahrawis, and the Chechens, are not victims of the Jews, which, according to the philosopher and psychoanalyst Daniel Sibony, makes all the difference:

An obvious observation: when thousands of Muslims die, killed by Muslims, there is no reaction, no funeral processions, as if these deaths did not exist; it is as if they were not men who had died. And when a Muslim is killed by a Jew during a war, his death is an event, shown on most of the Arab and European televisions, his death counts. In this sense, the Muslims are humanized by the Jews. This is what the indignant speakers do not understand: those who protest against Israel, where are they when it comes to the massacres of civilians in Syria and Iraq? Why did they not demonstrate? . . . Here, there is a novelty: the civilians of Gaza—which count rather little for the jihadists, as they use them as objects—all of a sudden are valued as humans when they are killed by Jews; because this value is marketable in the West as proof that the Jews are inhumane, and we know that Europe, previously, under Nazi rule, aligned itself with laws that forbade Jews to be human.²⁰

ISRAËL

Rivlin s'adresse aux Arabes

Le président israélien Reuven Rivlin a reconnu dimanche les torts passés et présents de son pays envers la communauté arabe, qu'il a appelée au calme devant le risque qu'elle prenne fait et cause pour les Palestiniens de Jérusalem-Est ou des territoires occupés. Rivlin a choisi très symboliquement, pour s'adresser à la communauté des Arabes israéliens, de devenir dimanche le premier président israélien à participer aux commémorations du « massacre de Kafr Qassem » perpétré le 29 octobre 1956. La police des frontières israélienne avait abattu ce jour-là 47 civils arabes israéliens. (afp, photo afp)

Heurts violents à Jérusalem



De violents heurts ont opposé dimanche soir des centaines de Palestiniens à la police israélienne déployée en nombre à Jérusalem-Est pour la 5^e nuit consécutive d'affrontements. Cette journée, placée sous haute tension, devait se conclure avec les funérailles d'Abdelrahmane Shalodi, un Palestinien de 21 ans accusé d'avoir perpétré mercredi un attentat à Jérusalem en jetant sa voiture sur un arrêt du tramway. Pour récupérer son corps, détenu par les médecins légistes, sa famille a finalement accepté de s'en tenir à un enterrement rapide, en présence d'une liste réduite de participants soumise à la police. (afp)

On the right: Each perpetrator of a Palestinian attack is given a name and the benefit of the doubt, even when caught in the act. Abdelrahmane Shalodi is completely guilty of assassinating an eight-month-old baby, yet his case generates the compassion of readers. Israel, for its part, never receives any attenuating circumstances. On the left: Just as revelatory is Le Soir's inherent hostility to the Jewish state. The exceptional act of repentance by the president of Israel, rather than being commended, as it should have been, by the foreign press, is used to further blacken the image of the Jewish state.

20. Daniel Sibony, "Septième lettre sur Gaza," August 19, 2014, <http://danielsibony.typepad.fr/danielsibony/2014/08/septi%C3%A8me-lettre-sur-gaza-.html>.

Because they are not victims of the Israelis, the Jewish victims of the Holocaust (who continue to haunt the conscience of the West, a form of secondary anti-semitism²¹), the Kurds, the Christians of the Orient, and other Syrian Sunnis are destined to remain faceless, with no real humanity. This is of course not the case with the Palestinians.

Voyeurism Here (Gaza), Modesty There (Dar al-Islam)

When it concerns mass violence committed beyond Israel's borders, the media's approach will always be modest, overly cautious, and "responsible." Clearly, our journalists, as in cases of Stockholm syndrome, engage in racial condescension and refuse to apply the same moral standards to Muslim actors of the region. They are capable of setting aside all disturbing ideas and images. Inter-Muslim conflicts are treated as scenarios, largely sanitized and purged so as not to shock; of course, there are reports, combat scenes, images of aerial bombardments, but without visible victims, either collateral or combat. The media does show tearful victims, but always within the limits of what is bearable.



Disturbing photos of Islamist massacres in Iraq, Syria (Aleppo), and Nigeria that we will never see in our newspapers, in the name of understandable and perhaps commendable interests. Unlike Israeli soldiers, the Islamist fighters do not appear in the picture. We will never see them sing after having killed children, raped, or crucified the enemies of Islam.²²

21. The concept of *secondary antisemitism*, developed by German researchers, is defined in the next section.

22. "Plongée au cœur du 'califat' des jihadistes en Syrie et Irak," AFP, August 15, 2014, <http://www.almanar.com.lb/french/adetails.php?eid=186756&cid=18&fromval=1>. CNN has chosen to publish these images to show the brutality of the extremist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The photographs were provided to CNN by the peaceful activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently. David Williams et al., "They have vicious plans for them," *Daily Mail*, August 8, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2719698/>. "The US pretend to fight its creature, Daesh-IS, while horrendous crimes against humanity are committed by these wild barbarians in Iraq and Syria," *Syrian Free Press*, August 16, 2014, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2014/08/16>. Sophie Caillat, "Attaque chimique en Syrie: si c'est un 'crime contre l'humanité'..." *Rue89* and *Nouvel Observateur*, August 23, 2013, <http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/2013/08/22/attaque-chimique-syrie-quon-sait-245112>. "Cristianos quemados vivos en Nigeria: un holocausto monstruoso ante la indiferencia internacional," *A Casa de Sarto* (blog), March 27, 2014, <http://casadesarto.blogspot.pt/2014/03/cristianos-quemados-vivos-en-nigeria-un.html>.

Islamist savagery is always fleeting or sugarcoated.



In the name of living together, all images of executions, decapitations, and acts of torture perpetrated by ISIS on Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, Shiites, and Western humanitarian workers are carefully set aside or blurred. While we may mistakenly think that we know everything about Gaza, we rarely, if at all, speak of the martyred towns of Aleppo or Kobane.

What We Don't See Does Not Exist or Stir the Emotions

In the absence of shocking photos, certain conflicts, though extremely murderous, will remain irreversibly neglected due to a lack of coverage or media interest. In an “emocracy,” the compassion generated by the popularity of a cause is never more than the sum of clichés and the reports that the media are willing to devote to it. The massacres committed in Congo, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Yemen perfectly exemplify this media “black hole,” as Laurent Gervereau describes it. Why? Because the victims of these conflicts do not interest our media. Unlike the Palestinians, they will be condemned as having neither name nor face, and thus no notoriety. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the only conflict in which we know the names of the victims down to the single individual, such as little Mohamed Al Durah, about whom we still do not know today whether he was a victim of Israeli or Palestinian gunfire. His individualized death made a hero of him and absurdly anchored further the idea of the Palestinian martyr in the conscience of the West, much more than did the three million war casualties of the conflicts in Central Africa. Three million dead is a statistic; a child killed by Jewish soldiers, who moreover bears the stigmata of Christ, constitutes a universal tragedy. The coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is characterized by a profusion of images and reports on the ground—shock on the front pages of our daily newspapers and on prime time on our news networks. Here there is no restraint or blurring: Palestinians always have a face, a voice, a name, a parent, unlike the Tamils or Sahrawis, who are represented only as statistics. Identification with the horror is further enhanced when it is accompanied by coverage of terrible suffering in the form of life stories, as was the case in Gaza, life stories that allow one to become even more intimate with the suffering. Through this systematic identification with the victims, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, although one of the least bloody conflicts in the contemporary world, is today the conflict that creates the most passion, which thus leads to the growth of terrorists. As such, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict forces us to question the function of selection, of the filters that journalists use in their role as gatekeepers. Who determines the choice of subjects? The number of journalists on the spot? Ideology? Hatred toward one of the actors? What are the criteria that determine, for example, *Le Soir*'s decision to show the individual faces of some (Palestinians) more than the faces of others (Kurds, Chechens, Sahrawians)?

Radical Anti-Zionism as a Cultural Code, the Politics of the Least Harmful, and Civic Religion

We would congratulate ourselves for this discretion if our media also used it when it concerns Israel. However, this is not the case. Here reigns the highest bidding, voyeurism, morbid exhibitionism, and exaggerated manipulation. Belgium condemns Zionism for reasons that are linked much less to the Palestinian question than to the post-'68 ethos of an active minority of its journalists and to the sociology and political history of our nation. The defense of the Palestinian cause is, in fact, absolute and cross-partisan so as not to raise legitimate questions. As had already been highlighted, in 2005, by the author of the current study, the anti-Israel obsession of Belgium is due to several factors, all of which are identifiable:

- The anti-Jewish *habitus* of Christian (e.g., the myth of the sacrificial victim) and progressive inspiration, which links the “Jewish spirit” to capitalist exploitation (Edmond Picard) and Israel to the United States
- A neurotic memory of the Holocaust, especially in Flanders (secondary antisemitism)
- Antisemitism of Arab-Islamic inspiration that drives our political elite into an electoral impasse, which one should qualify, for want of a better term, as antisemitism and/or as pragmatic anti-Zionism, in the name of politics of the least harm

Radical hostility against Israel is linked to an unexpected fusion between traditional—political and intellectual—antisemitism “from above,” originating from the extreme right as well as the extreme left, and a new antisemitism that comes “from below,” at the core of a fringe of the Muslim immigrant population. The Merah, Fofana, and Nemmouche cases will not contradict us. The radical opposition to Israel manages to unite the Belgians “from above” with those “from below” in a common “civil” and supposedly anti-racist hatred of Israel. In the Belgium of this millennium, the radical opposition to Israel not only finds a consensus but also helps serve the interests of multiple components of left- and right-leaning Belgium, Catholics as much as atheists, Flemish as much as Walloons, natives as much as non-natives. It is precisely within this context that one must view radical anti-Zionism as the civic religion of a post-national Belgium, which enables it to integrate, at the lowest cost, the immigrant populations of Muslims. Slowly but surely Belgium became passionate about Palestine, to the point of identifying itself with it, from Wallonia to Flanders. Radical anti-Zionism acts as *fantastical evidence* (Nicholas Weill) destined to serve as the expression for all sorts of rancor concerning various causes: fear in the face of globalization, cultural pessimism, anti-capitalist sentiment, the failure of integration and the fear of its consequences.²³ This situation reminds one of France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, a country anxious about a very uncertain future. The Belgian-Canadian historian Marc Angenot reminds us that French antisemitism, far from originating in a group of fanatics, was very much “a diffuse and omnipresent component of

23. See the works of Joël Kotek on the new Belgian antisemitism.

popular opinion (*doxa*).”²⁴ He insists on French society’s broad acceptance of a virulent antisemitism. “If antisemitism did not exist, you would have to invent it,” exclaimed Maurice Barrès, the eulogist of French anti-Dreyfusism. The press at that time played a crucial role in the spreading of antisemitic *doxa*. It is the same in Belgium today with radical anti-Zionism, which situates Israel as a Jew of Nations. This hallucinatory anti-Zionism, which makes the Jewish state responsible for the world’s problems, is today like a fish in water in Belgian popular opinion.

II. Ideological Laziness and Ethical Failure

Questioning the professional ethics of journalists now appears legitimate and urgent. The media constitutes the principle source of information, and acculturation, of younger generations, which gives it a certain set of responsibilities. The need for rigor and reliability, the refusal of the spectacular, the rejection of competitive bidding, and the duty of objectivity should be their only horizon and guide for conduct. Any approximation or error risks creating irreparable prejudice.²⁵

Social Responsibility of the Media

As Plato emphasized with regard to writing, the press is a *pharmakon*, which means that it is both a remedy capable of compensating for the insufficiencies or weaknesses of our thinking and, at the same time, a potentially dangerous drug with unpredictable effects. Indeed, the media can be a guarantee of liberty and pluralism as well as a vehicle for tyranny and propaganda. Occasionally it can even enlighten our minds, while at other times it is capable of confusing the judgmental capacity of individuals, even going so far as to manipulate them. The media can therefore contribute to the growth of nationalistic, extremist, and racist sentiments at the heart of public opinion. Historical examples are plentiful: without going to extremes (e.g., the Nazi and Hutu media both advocated genocide), one can recall the Hearst newspapers’ push for American intervention in Cuba in 1898, under the cover of humanitarian reasons. The press, this fourth pillar that is often regarded as the guarantor of all democracies, or at least its touchstone, can at times transform itself into a “fabricator of contentment,” thereby becoming propaganda tool. One should not forget this. And we should remain vigilant. The press watches us and judges us. It is up to us to watch the press in return, to ensure that it correctly fulfills the obligations of its role and does not waver in its mission. If journalists have the right to their opinions, they must never forget that they are also subject to strict rules and obligations. Cicero, two thousand years ago, wrote for the attention of historians: “Who does not know that the first rule of law is to never dare say something false? The second, is to dare say everything that is true? To avoid, in writing, the very smallest suspicion of favor or hate?”

24. Marc Angenot, *Ce que l’on dit des Juifs en 1889: antisémitisme et discours social*, preface by Madeleine Rebérioux (Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1989).

25. All powers generating abuses, it could not be otherwise of the Fourth Pillar. As reminded in 2012, in a completely different register, the Human Rights League (LDH): “If the liberty of the press is indispensable for all democratic societies, this liberty, as most liberties, suffers from legal limits that have to be interpreted restrictively.” The LDH notably questions itself on “the regular recourse to sensationalism” of certain media and in addition that “this research goes hand in hand with work of which we can legitimately query the ethical and journalistic relevance.”

We do not ask journalists to conform to an ideal of total neutrality, which is probably impossible to attain, but they should at least refrain from deforming reality or inventing it from scratch, even when it is in the name of a supposedly just cause. It is not without reason that members of this noble profession have progressively endorsed codes of ethics. Here is one adopted in 2013 by the francophone journalists in Belgium:

Article 1

Journalists look for and respect the truth in view of the public's right to know the truth. They only disseminate information whose origin they know. They verify its veracity and report it with honesty . . .

Article 2

Journalists carry out research and investigations and freely inform on all the facts of general interest in order to enlighten public opinion . . .

Article 3

Journalists do not deform any information and do not eliminate any essential information presented in text, image, sound, or other formats. During the transcription of interviews, they respect the content and spirit of the statements made.

Article 4

Urgency does not absolve the journalists of quoting (see Article 1) and/or verifying their sources, nor of carrying out a serious investigation. Journalists observe with the greatest care the way that they disseminate information, avoiding all approximations.

Article 5

Journalists make a clear distinction in the eyes of the public between facts, analysis, and opinions. When they express their opinion, they highlight it.

Article 6

Editorial boards explicitly and quickly correct erroneous facts that have been reported.

Article 7

Journalists respect their code of ethics, whatever the support may be . . .

Article 8

All adaptations must be done in the service of clarification of information.

The fact remains that the commitments to which francophone journalists adhere, as noble and commendable as they may be, do not constitute an absolute guarantee, nor are they an effective defense against the excesses and other intellectual misdirection that so often appears in their *papers* with regard to Israel and the Middle East conflict. Focusing on this same problem in 2005, but from the French side, the sociologist Daniel Dayan,²⁶ former assistant of Roland Barthes, already observed a transgression of professional rules, notably that of balance and

26. Daniel Dayan, "Pour une critique des medias," interview with Béatrice Fleury and Jacques Walter, *Questions de communication* 8 (2005), <http://questionsdecommunication.revues.org/4816>.

representation, and drew attention to the “vocabulary crusade” (vis-à-vis Israel). In analyzing the treatment of the second Intifada by the leading press and television programs, Dayan dissected two “pathologies of readability,” both unfavorable toward the image of Israel. First, the process of *obfuscation*, which he defines as a process that creates illegibility, such as the inversion of a cause and its effect. For example, a missile is launched from Gaza and it is presented as a response to an Israeli military intervention, although this intervention is itself a response to the deliberate violation of a truce. Second, the process of *misappropriation*, which consists of creating fallacious illegibility, a way of describing an interaction in language that perverts the reality. For example, dead children are shown just before images of soldiers in prayer. The least one can say is that these two professional illnesses were rife, and with much virulence, during Operation Protective Edge.



L'hôpital Al Shifa de Gaza, au bord de l'explosion

En raison de la responsabilité de son...
 C'est de la responsabilité de son...
 L'hôpital Al Shifa de Gaza, au bord de l'explosion...
 Les responsables de l'attaque...
 L'hôpital Al Shifa de Gaza, au bord de l'explosion...
 Les responsables de l'attaque...
 L'hôpital Al Shifa de Gaza, au bord de l'explosion...
 Les responsables de l'attaque...



The Gaza and Iraqi conflicts viewed by La Libre Belgique: modesty versus voyeurism. However threatened by being sold, converted, or assassinated, the young Christian Iraqi girl (left) smiles, in contrast to the young Palestinian girl (right), martyred and—quite incorrectly—threatened by genocide. The concept of genocide is evidently, and absurdly, mobilized only in the case of Gaza.

Hasty judgments, absence of analysis, displays of bad faith, clichés, and stereotypes thrived in the summer of 2014. Most of our journalists once again took up their earpieces, and cameramen, ordered to use long-focus lenses, filmed only the chosen parts of the battlefield: this is interesting for those who want to manipulate information so as to rewrite reality by carving it up, reworking it according to one's wishes by disassociating different constitutive elements. Thus, during the summer of 2014, the images of the streets of Gaza that were made available to the public never showed, apart from a few exceptions, armed combat. The instructions of Hamas were very clear regarding on this point: only show streets ravaged by enemy fire, hospitals targeted by assassins' bombs, suffering civilians, women crying, weak children, or bodies injured by shrapnel. At all costs never make visible the armed combatants who nonetheless operate in the midst of civilian populations. (To this end the technical arsenal at the disposal of the modern-day propagandist is mobilized, from the choice of the selective lens to the use of *intelligent editing*.)

Our media systematically, deliberately, and shamefully privileged the emotional element at the expense of the rational element. This was done simply by choosing the most shocking images among many disturbing photos: the poor children not only scared but martyred, mothers not only angry but desperate in front of the inhumanity of the enemy: “But why are they doing this to us (Israelis listen)? We have done nothing to them.”

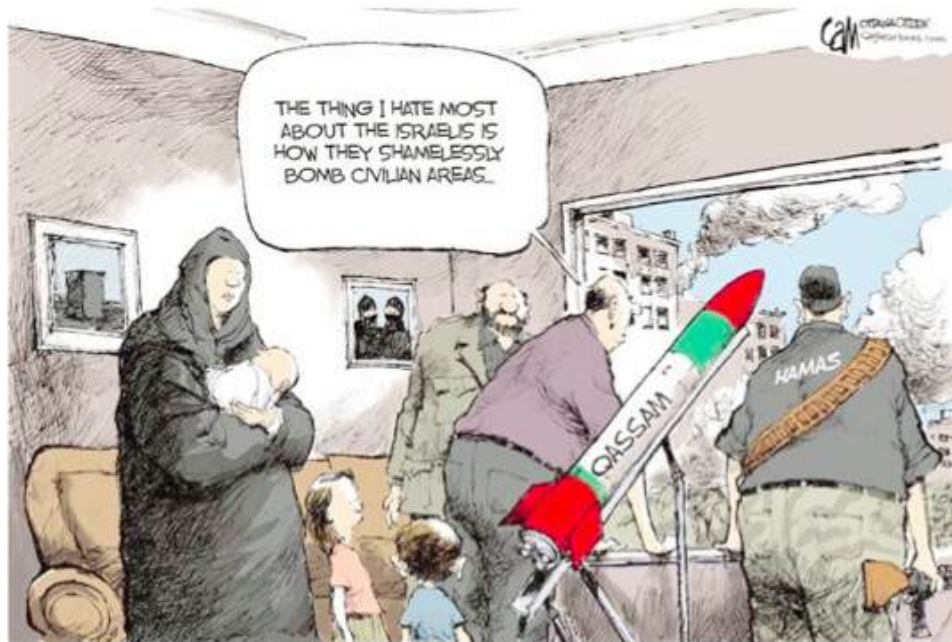


RTBF, July 24, 2014: Israel bombs a school. “But why are they doing this?”



RTBF, August 4, 2014 “Carnage at Gaza. Israel on trial. . . . Erdoğan compares the methods of Israel to those of Hitler. . . and talks of vengeance.” Why believe the voice of a leader of a state that targets Kurds and Greek Cypriots, a state that has still not recognized the Armenian genocide perpetrated more than a century ago?

As if Hamas had not started the hostilities and launched approximately 14,000 missiles at Israel’s civilian population since 2005, as if Hamas were not a terrorist movement opposed to any possibility of peace with Israel, as if Hamas did not push its civilian population to become martyrs, as if Hamas had not cynically refused six Egyptian proposals for a truce precisely to aggravate the humanitarian situation and, by doing so, amplified the anger of the world’s public opinion toward Israel. As if the journalist, present on the scene of these operations, had not ignored all of this as well.



The reality is certainly more complex than this caricature tries to show, but it at least has the merit of placing Hamas at the heart of the conflict.

Let us be clear: in Belgium, when they hear the word “Israel,” the respectable journalist or the one lacking respectability takes out his gun... and pulls the trigger. In contrast to their French, British, and Italian peers, who without becoming pro-Israeli showed themselves for once more prudent and circumspect in their coverage of the events, our media demonstrated yet again their inability to report on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in measured terms, i.e., to *think* it through.

**Thinking through the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict:
Truth below Par, Errors above All**

“Thinking” of an event means having the will and the ability to put it into context, that is, to compare it to other events, situations, and undertakings that, although distant in time and space, nevertheless provide analogies. This in turn allows the attentive observer to reconstitute the event under scrutiny in both its global historical context and its internal specificity. How, without contextualizing, can one avoid the trap of partiality, of double standards, of two weights and two measures, which leads us to judge one and the same thing differently according to the nature of the actors, the circumstances, and the interests of the times (e.g., ISIS and Hamas, the Palestinians and the Kurds)? This game of double standards is even more serious and disconcerting when it comes from media accredited with a high standard of confidence, with a specific credibility, as with public television stations (RTBF) and quality weekly and daily newspapers (*Le Soir, La Libre, le Vif*).

A Conflict Totally Decontextualized

The Israeli–Gaza conflict of the summer of 2014 would have appeared less singular to the media if the journalists sent to report on the ground, the commentators, and the other analysts of international affairs had bothered to judge it in relation to other conflicts that were bloodying the region at the time, and to compare it to past wars. The *exceptional criminality* of Israel took a serious hit. If one deigned to consider the civilian losses caused by the Israeli army in comparison to the wars in Iraq or Syria, it would be clear that these latter wars were a thousand times more deadly. If we were to compare the conflict’s collateral damage to that caused by the Allies during the Second World War, the two thousand Gaza deaths would have to be weighed against the 30,000 civilians killed in Dresden (an enemy city, let us remind ourselves) and the 20,000 civilians (friends) of Normandy (and these only during preparation phase of D-Day). Do these figures exonerate Israel of all criticism? Clearly not, but they should not make us forget that all wars, even those that are considered just, are by definition atrocious. These statistics should in fact highlight the efforts of Israeli leaders to limit as much as possible the collateral losses. How can one deny that Israel adopted exceptional measures—literally unprecedented in the history of armed conflict—to avoid civilian deaths? Which other army has warned the population, by telephone and flyers, of an imminent bombing?



The Hamas speech to the Arab world is clearly very different: they congratulate themselves on “consented” sacrifices by the Palestinian population, including women, children, and the elderly.

Arab Intellectuals against Hamas

This umpteenth episode of the hundred-year war between Israel and the Palestinians was, without doubt, one episode too many for certain intellectuals at the heart of the Arab world. For the first time since 1948, voices of discontent were heard: not in support of Israel, far from it, but detaching themselves from the solidarity of the Islamist “resistance” and judging Hamas for what it is, a terrorist movement that terrorizes its own population first.

The Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud, in an article for *Le Monde*, wrote the following, with much courage:

No, the columnist is not in “solidarity” with Palestine. The word solidarity is in quotation marks. Because it has two meanings. First, no to a selective “solidarity.” . . . This easy “solidarity” that closes its eyes to Hamas and its nature in order to cry out in indignation at the Palestinian divisions, at their incapacities and weaknesses, out of respect for the “combatants.” In the name of the pro-Palestinian orthodoxy that we should never think about nor question. . . . If the columnist is in solidarity, it is another solidarity. . . . A lucid solidarity also: that we stop moaning: the world known as “Arab” is the dead weight of the rest of humanity. How can one claim to help Palestine with countries that are weak, corrupt, ignorant, with no knowledge assets and power, without influence on the world, without creators or freedoms? How can we allow ourselves to be vain about “solidarity” when we are incapable of playing the game of democracy: to have elected Jews “in our midst,” as there are elected Arabs “in their midst,” presenting condolences for their dead while Israelis present their condolences for the young Palestinian boy burnt alive, to show that we are sensitive to the death of children while we are not sensitive to humanity. . . . What Israel is doing to Gaza is an abject crime. But our “solidarity” is another one that knifes the Palestinians in the back. That the fans of stoning then stand up: it is proof that, apart from the throwing of stones, they can do nothing else.²⁷

One can imagine the hostility with which this severe criticism of Hamas was met. Kamel Daoud was subjected to the worst attacks, to the point that one of his compatriots, the playwright Mohamed Kacimi, was also forced to come out of the woods. On July 24, 2014, in an article entitled “Being United with the Palestinians without Giving Way to Tribal Reflexes,” the Algerian intellectual, known for his unequivocal support of the Palestinian cause, does not hesitate to dismantle a few pro-Palestinian myths:

“Collaborator, harki, Zionist, dirty Jew, kfir, non-believer, infidel, swine, yid, traitor, bastard, r’khis, coward, dirty rabbi, filth, servant of BHL, henchman of Israel. . . .” These are the terms that are used to denounce Kamel Daoud, the Algerian columnist and novelist, in the forums. What crime has the author committed to be dragged through the mud? In the first days of the attack on Gaza, he wrote a column in which he announces that he is not united with Palestine. . . .

Is it not the right of each and every one of us to feel concerned about a cause or not? Are we not free to be indignant or not, concerned or not? Has the Palestinian cause become the sixth pillar of Islam? Are we free to close our eyes to the massacres in Syria and Iraq but obligated to showcase, loudly and clearly, our solidarity with the Palestinian people, under the threat of being fed to the pack?

In recent days, all minds have been worked up to an extreme by Al Jazeera. This channel lives off the marketing of death. It has a passion for the morgues,

27. Kamel Daoud, “Ce pourquoi je ne suis pas ‘solidaire’ de la Palestine,” *Le Monde*, June 13, 2014.

its cameras never stray from the ambulances and the tombs... Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, the Arab street stands as a single man behind Hamas, and the Islamist movement has become in the eyes of the left-wing Arab intellectuals a liberation movement...

Of course, Al Jazeera, the non-stop production line of Islamists, brings out the heavy artillery. It broadcasts looped images of child victims, of explosions in the city hospitals...

Al Jazeera Lies 24 Hours a Day

And in the households of Ramallah, Beirut, or Rabat, families are jubilant. Al Jazeera lies twenty-four hours a day, as the Qatari news channel knows that the Arabs are big dreamers. In 1990, they dreamed of seeing Saddam Hussein's missiles razing New York. In 2006, they baptized "Saladin" the Shiite enemy Nasrallah, because he had promised to wipe out Tel Aviv, while in fact he was participating in the destruction of Lebanon. *And here they are again, placing their hopes in the fireworks of a fundamentalist movement that has plunged Gaza into the Middle Ages.*

Instead of announcing to its millions of souls that they live in countries submissive to regimes, which are totalitarian, religious, obstructionist, without freedoms, parked day and night in mosques, where they are taught to hate freedom, women, life, and others, the Qatari channel prefers to rail against Israel, the Zionist enemy, because it is easier. It simultaneously works as an antihistamine and an antidepressant. To the peasant from Rif to the "ghetto boy" from the "9-3," everyone keeps on taking more. We have to be frank. Israel sometimes takes the blame! *Since 1948, if it did not exist, the Arab regimes would have invented it to justify the failure of this world that, from Rabat to Baghdad, is just a vast gulag with mosques as watchtowers and the bearded in the place of kapos...*

As Kamel Daoud says, the Palestinian cause has been so misused by the Arab regimes and by the Islamist parties that it has lost its value in the eyes of the young generation. *Far from being a political cause, Palestine has become a collective escape valve, we harbor its name, we shout it in the Arab streets and in the mosques when we feel the Arab virility is being questioned. Because in this imaginary collective, corrupted by religion, the word Palestine is linked to neither geography nor history, but to a collective frustration.*

And let us stop with this Arab solidarity, and here I align myself with Kamel Daoud. Once in a while you need to sweep in front of your own doorstep. *Since 1970, there have been 100 times more dead Palestinians in the prisons of Arab kingdoms and republics than in the cellars of the Israeli army.*

A Segregationist Regime for the Arabs

But let us take things further. Sure, Israel is a democracy for its own people, the Jews, and a segregationist regime for the Arabs, which imposes a colonialist, barbarian, criminal, and absurd policy. *Nonetheless, to be honest, it should be said that it is better today to be a Palestinian in a camp in Khan Younès or in Balata, where we have an identity, an enemy, a part of land that we believe is ours and for which we are ready to die, than to be a Palestinian*

in a camp in Beirut or in Damascus, where, there, we are not supposed to exist since 1948.

Lebanese law prohibits the buying of property by all “citizens originating from countries not recognized by Lebanon.” A convoluted formula to designate the Palestinians. Other laws forbid the Palestinians from practicing about 73 different trades, some prevent Palestinians from having a passport, traveling, trying to forget the Promised Land in exchange for a normal life. Which goes to show how the Arab “fraternity” has its limits. . . .

Finally, I come back to Kamel Daoud, who, for a while now, has been a lone soldier, which is why he disturbs and is dragged through the mud: he does not think like the others! . . . Finally, he is an individual, an intellectual, an author who escaped from the claws of the tribe, who does not care about the words of the tribe because he has his own words and he can say “damn!” to the tribe. He can take the road in the opposite direction, he can think against the grain. *Everyone hates him. So be it, it proves that he is right.* That he is on the right path. He is free, Kamel, and we who read him are as well.²⁸

If the words of Mohamed Kacimi are harsh with regard to the Arab world, this does not, however, make him an admirer of Israel. Far from it. He does not hesitate to characterize Israel as a “segregationist” state. Whether he is right or wrong, what is important is, following the example of Kamel Daoud, he commits to *thinking* about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, unlike the crushing majority of Belgian journalists who, forgetful of or hardly concerned with their code of ethics, remain consenting prisoners of partisan ideological certainties. The unconditional support of our press for the cause in Gaza (and not of Palestine) is close to religious thinking. A way of thinking that our two Algerian intellectuals have managed to confront and from which they have liberated themselves. For them—and it is an enormous feat to write it—the hell of Gaza is largely the responsibility of the Islamic movement and the logical outcome of a strategy initiated in 2005.



Photos that say a lot about Hamas’s culture of peace.

28. Mohamed Kacimi, “Être solidaires des Palestiniens sans céder au réflexe tribal,” *Le Monde*, July 24, 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2014/07/24/etre-solidaires-des-palestiniens-sans-ceder-au-reflexe-tribal_4462458_3232.html (emphasis added).

Hamas: A Totalitarian Islamist Movement

The image of Israel would have undoubtedly been quite different if our journalists had agreed to elucidate the real face of Hamas, its ideological roots, its modes of functioning and of governing—that is, if they had clarified the Islamofascist nature of its DNA. If it had been analyzed for what it is, which indeed it does not conceal, this Jihadist and millenarist movement would have appeared more like a little brother to ISIS or the Somalian Shabaab than an heir of the French resistance. To convince oneself, it is not necessary to find some secret documents, contested and inaccessible. It suffices to consult the internet, to consult the charter of this movement and to read its first few introductory lines. The totalitarian and antisemitic character of Hamas is already quite explicit:

This is the Charter of the Islamic Resistance (Hamas)... Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious. It needs all sincere efforts. It is a step that inevitably should be followed by other steps. The Movement is but one squadron that should be supported by more and more squadrons from this vast Arab and Islamic world, until the enemy is vanquished and Allah's victory is realized.²⁹

One would have better understood the measure of Israeli anxiety and fear if journalists had deigned to enlighten the readers of our daily newspapers, the listeners of our radio stations, and the viewers of our TV stations about the genocidal content of Article 7 of the first chapter of the Hamas Constitution:

...the Islamic Resistance Movement aspires to the realization of Allah's promise, no matter how long that should take. The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said: "The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Muslims, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him. Only the Gharkad tree (evidently a certain kind of tree) would not do that because it is one of the trees of the Jews." (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)³⁰

The Hamas Charter roots itself simultaneously in the most unfavorable Jewish interpretations of the Koran and in the worst pages of European antisemitism. Entire passages of the Charter are directly inspired by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a pamphlet created by the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police, which itself was an inspiration for Adolf Hitler. The Jews—not the Israelis—are presented as the instigators of all wars, all of the world's revolutions:

They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist revolution, and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about, here and there. With their money they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, the Lions, and others in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests... There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it.³¹

29. Hamas Covenant (1988), *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale University, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

With just one exception (an intern at *Le Soir*!), our media—because they did not bother to learn about the founding texts of Hamas, or they read them without understanding them, or they read them but found nothing to condemn in them, or they read them but were too embarrassed to acknowledge their existence—our media made sure not to inform their audience of the texts’ antisemitic nature.

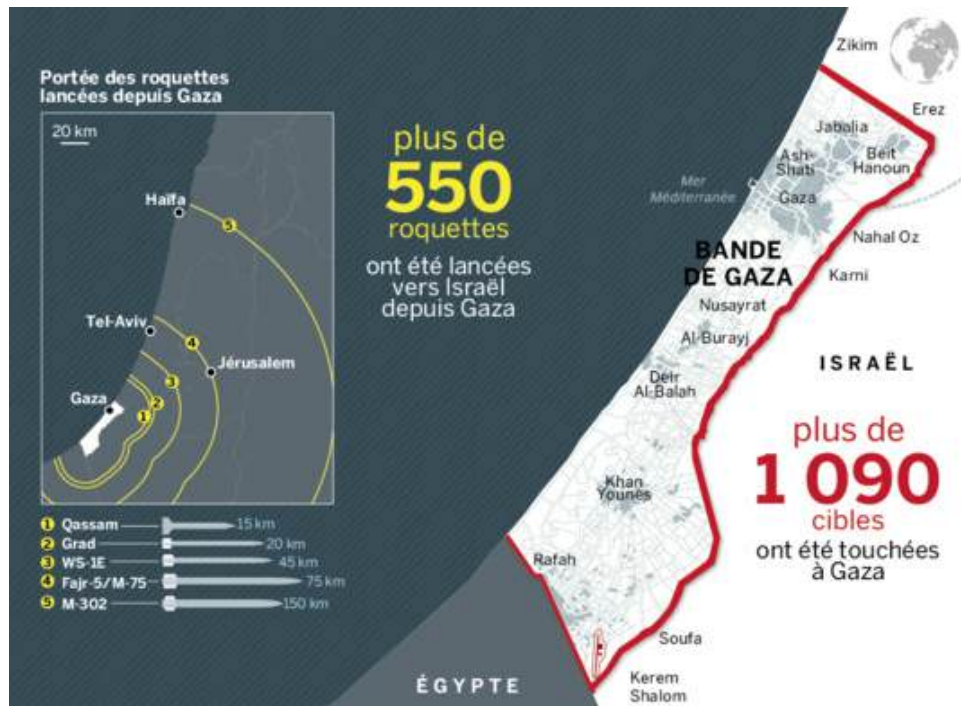


Islamic organizations such as the Islamic Jihad do not hesitate to reproduce the worst antisemitic accusations, obviously including the ritual crime. Why are these realities, which in no way undermine the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause, systematically ignored?

If our media had done their work honestly and presented the Islamist movement for what it really is—a known terrorist, totalitarian, homophobic, antisemitic and anti-Masonic movement—then perhaps they would have allowed their viewers, readers, and listeners to comprehend more clearly the complex realities of the Middle East, a mission that is part of their responsibility. As with several Arab intellectuals, it would have meant that they had to think, take off their blinders, and momentarily set aside their anti-Israeli presumptions. Unfortunately, they showed themselves to be incapable of doing so.

A War Provoked on Purpose by Hamas

That Hamas is clearly at the center of the latest armed conflict with Israel, everyone knows. With the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the rupture with the different Syrian, Libyan, and Iranian Shiite movements, and the growing power of the Sunni movements now hostile to the Islamist movement in Gaza for its privileging of Hezbollah as an ally, Hamas has suddenly found itself in a situation of severe weakness. Unwilling to consider the slightest accommodation with the Zionist entity whose total destruction they still demand, the Jihadist movement did not have any other choice but to flee forward. Its political leaders, based in Qatar, held the view that the military option provided an opportunity to rekindle the flames of a movement contested even at the heart of Gaza. A conflict to the end with Israel, implying significant civilian losses, appeared to Islamist leaders as the best way to re-legitimize itself to a population exhausted by the partial Israeli–Egyptian blockade. Let us just remind ourselves that Gaza is an enclave administered solely by Hamas, without any Israeli presence since the unilateral retreat in 2005, and that the Israeli blockade will be lifted the day that Hamas recognizes the Oslo Accords and agrees to demilitarize. Since its bloody takeover, Hamas has played the card either of war or, at least, of provocation. How otherwise are we to understand the sequence of events that followed the kidnapping of three young Israeli teenagers (immediately categorized as “settlers” by some of our media, as if to better explain their assassination), a kidnapping that they celebrated before even announcing that they were the perpetrators, and after which they bombarded Israeli territory with thousands of rockets and missiles?



A map proposed by Le Monde on July 11, 2014: objective information

Confronted by this avalanche of missiles, what should Netanyahu have done? Abstain from responding and accept civilian casualties, which would have resulted from such a situation? Or respond, as any other state leader would undoubtedly have done in the face of such aggression? Asking the question evidently means answering it. Rare were the times when journalists acknowledged the right of Israel to defend itself, as did Laurent Joffrin, the editor-in-chief of *Libération*:

No government—that of Israel no more than any other—can tolerate its territory being targeted by missiles, even if there are only a few that reach their target. Admittedly—what the pro-Palestinian organizations forget to tell you—the State of Israel is faced with an adversary, Hamas, that continues to call for its destruction, and its deadly strategy consists of exposing its own population in order to gain political advantage.³²

Naturally most of our national media abstained from this type of consideration. To profit from these moments of uncertainty, they needed to furnish a list of charges, immaterial as well as imprecise, that should be avoided at all costs:

- Showing images of Hamas combatants, dead or alive, in addition to abuses committed by the Islamists
- Addressing the cases of child soldiers, child shields, or exploited children who died from suffocation as they built the tunnels that penetrate inside Israeli territory in order to allow the killing of its citizens
- Denouncing the rockets launched from densely populated areas, including areas with mosques
- Reporting that the UN denounced twice, in an official communiqué, the stocking of armaments in schools that it administered
- Highlighting the fact that Hamas leaders were in Qatar, in a vast shelter, smartly placed under the Alshifa Hospital
- Dwelling on the gray areas of the conflict. For example, not informing the Belgian public that Israel, after it had destroyed the electric power station in Gaza, continued to provide electricity and food to the people of Gaza
- Warning readers, listeners, and viewers that their journalists were being taken care of by Hamas or were victims of its intimidation
- Highlighting the fact that the Gaza blockade would be lifted the day that Hamas agrees to demilitarize the Gaza Strip
- Minimizing the isolation of Hamas on the Arab-Islamic scene

For two months our main media played with their audience by presenting measured, biased, and loaded information. They stated the number of deaths in each camp, comparing them daily but never thinking of commenting on them, as if losses during wartime did not also depend on the will of each party to expose or

32. Laurent Joffrin, “Cessez-le-feu,” *Libération*, July 21, 2014, http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2014/07/21/cessez-le-feu_1067917.

protect its civilian population. The small number of Israeli losses is not a credit to Hamas, whose rockets aimed to kill a maximum of Israeli civilians, but rather is explained by the measures taken by the Israeli authorities (shelters and Iron Dome) and by civilians themselves. In the summer of 2014, more than one million Israeli civilians fled the south. The civilian Palestinian losses are due to Tsahal's bombardment, sure, but also to the cynicism of Hamas leaders who, not content with never having built shelters for their population, did not hesitate to launch missiles from heavily populated areas, nor did they hesitate to use civilians as human shields. The issue is not so much whether Tsahal is the most moral army in the world but rather that it is the army under the most intense surveillance and, therefore, is obligated to act in the most circumspect manner. Contrary to the Russian or Turkish armies, it knows that it does not have the right to err, and that each Palestinian death has a face, an identity, and a history, unlike the anonymous victims of all the other murderous conflicts on the planet.

The Counteranalysis of Véronique Chemla

“The children of Gaza are highlighted by Palestinian propaganda and its movement, as well as by demonstrators who show photos of supposedly Palestinian children alleged to have been killed by Tsahal, and who even carry a fake child in a fake white shroud... These images have strong emotional power. The aim of this is to defame the Jewish state. In addition, these demonstrators pass around photos of Jewish Israeli children killed by Palestinian terrorists or of dolls painted with red stains for those Gazan children victims—real or fake—of this defensive war led by the State of Israeli.

“Curiously, no journalist evokes the child laborers—at least 160—who died while building the dozens of tunnels in the Gaza Strip. Nor do they mention the financial chaos of Hamas, which prefers to invest in these tunnels in order to invade the Jewish state, dressed as Israeli soldiers, and to smuggle profitable gasoline and other sensitive goods, instead of investing in improving the lives of the people of Gaza. Nor the actual number of terrorists killed by Tsahal. Nor the false statistics—names of terrorists repeated under slightly different spellings on the official list of the Gaza Ministry of Health, imputations to Israeli of Gazans suspected of collaborating with Israel, etc.—of supposedly civilian Gaza victims. Nor the over-representation of male adults and the under-representation of women—12% of victims, although they represent half the population—and children—the median age of Gazans is around 15 years old; boys under the age of 15 represent 13% of the total number of Gaza's victims, although they represent half of the male population in Gaza—in the official list of victims in Gaza, which proves that Tsahal proceeds to eliminate targets by aiming only at terrorists. Nor do they mention the instrumentalization of civilians, notably children, used as human shields, forced to stay in combat zones in order to increase the number of victims, of ‘martyrs’... Why? Lack of curiosity? Lack of knowledge of the English language?”

From Véronique Chemla, “Des ‘Blacks, Blancs, Beurs’ antisémites attaquent les Juifs à Paris (2/2),” blog of Véronique Chemla, September 24, 2014, <http://www.veroniquechemla.info/2014/07/des-blacks-blancs-beurs-antisemites.html>.



The main mistake of our media is to have kept hidden all the facts susceptible to shedding light on Israel's position. By remaining silent on the divisions at the heart of the Arab world, they did not understand, or were unable to make comprehensible, the discredited status of Hamas on the eve of the conflict in 2014. Apart from Qatar and Turkey, two countries allied to the Muslim Brotherhood, no state or Arab movement, except for a terrorist one (Hezbollah), backed the war waged by Hamas; this includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the Palestinian Authority. If this war had been between Israel and the Palestinians, and not just Hamas, then Mahmoud Abbas would not have had any difficulty in kick-starting the third *intifada*, given the obsessive fear of the Israeli leaders. Yet this did not happen. The Palestine Liberation Organization wanted to contain any vague desire for revolt within its territory. Another essential fact hidden by our media concerns the rallying of the international community toward the Israeli position, which included support from the European Union, ordinarily so prompt in criticizing Israel, and some parts of the Arab world. Paradoxically, this latest Gaza war broke Israel's diplomatic isolation to a degree not seen since 1948. Witness the European Council's conclusions on July 16, 2014, which grant Israel the full right to protect its population against the blind bombardments:

The European Council is following with great concern the continued violence in Israel and Gaza. The European Council condemns the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians. Israel has the right to protect its population from this kind of attacks.³³

In the clearest possible manner, the European leaders underlined the total responsibility of *Hamas* in starting the conflict. This information was kept quiet by our editorial boards, which only retained from this document the legitimate injunction given to Israel to “ensure the protection of civilians [i.e., Palestinians] at all times,”³⁴ as if the *jus ad bellum* (right to war) was not distinct from the *jus in bello* (just in war).

Actualité › L'info en continu Publié le Vendredi 18 Juillet 2014 à 18h43

L'UE «très préoccupée» par «l'escalade» à Gaza

internet@lesoir.be (Avec les rédactions du Soir en ligne, du Soir, d'AFP, d'AP et de Belga)

L'Union européenne s'est déclarée vendredi «très préoccupée» par «l'escalade» à Gaza, qui rend «plus urgent que jamais» la recherche d'un cessez-le-feu. «Nous sommes très préoccupés par l'escalade à Gaza, avec la reprise des tirs vers Israël et l'opération terrestre israélienne», a affirmé le Conseil européen, représentant les 28, dans une déclaration. «Nous appelons toutes les parties à s'entendre immédiatement sur un cessez-le-feu» et à permettre «un accès total et sans obstacle à l'aide humanitaire», a-t-il ajouté. Les troupes israéliennes, appuyées par l'aviation et les chars, ont lancé jeudi un assaut terrestre dans la bande de Gaza, qui a coûté la vie à 30 Palestiniens.

J'aime Partager 0
Tweeter
+1 0

“The EU is ‘deeply concerned’ by ‘the escalation’ in Gaza.” The support from the international community toward Israel was of course hidden by our media. Once again they violated their code of ethics, which requires them not to hide anything that they know to be true, even if this truth disturbs.

33. European Council, “Special Meeting of the European Council (16 July 2014): Conclusions,” EUCO 147/14, p. 5, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/143992.pdf.

34. Ibid.

Guilty Silences, If Not Criminal

All efforts are made to present the Gaza Strip as the most devastated area in the world. The fact that it is provided with food and electricity by its own enemy is hidden. The fact that it has a common border with Egypt, which thus shares responsibility for the “unfathomable blockade,” is never mentioned. The fact that the population of Gaza is the most subsidized in the world is another bit of information that the media prefers not to share.

25/08/2010

PALESTINE/ CONGO 40 À 1

Le journal *La Croix* a publié récemment [un article](#) commentant le [rapport d'Oxfam France](#) du 19 août 2010 : **Conflits et protection des populations - Baromètre de la protection des civils 2010**

« Un rapport publié jeudi 19 août à l'occasion de la journée humanitaire mondiale, met en évidence des disparités dans le traitement des crises »
« Pourquoi le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies ne se penche-t-il que sur certains conflits, et pas sur d'autres, tout aussi voire plus meurtriers ? », s'interrogent les rapporteurs.

Le diagramme publié par *La Croix* a éveillé ma curiosité, je suis donc allée aux sources, et ai lu plusieurs pages du rapport d'Oxfam France, organisation non suspecte de complaisance à l'égard d'Israël et proche du pro-palestinisme militant.

(Les diagrammes proviennent du rapport. On peut cliquer pour agrandir. J'ai ajouté le cadre rouge.)

A. Extraits du rapport concernant l'aide au développement :

- Action de la **communauté internationale** (page 2)

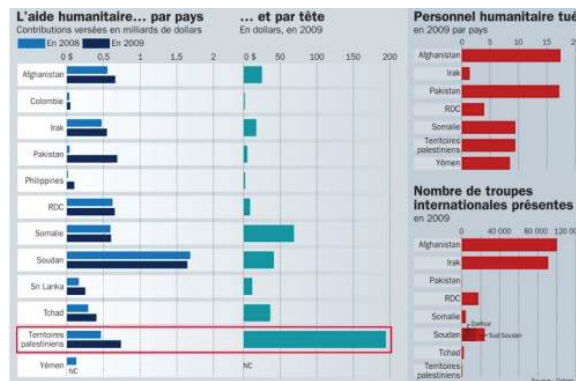
"En termes d'APD (aide publique au développement) par habitant, un Afghan a reçu en 2008 179 dollars d'aide, un Irakien 340 dollars, un Palestinien 682 dollars, un Congolais 25 dollars, un Pakistanais moins de 10 dollars.
Un Congolais a bénéficié de 27 fois moins d'aide au développement qu'un Palestinien, de 7 fois moins qu'un Afghan ;

- **De la part de la France**, un Congolais a reçu 0,49 dollar en 2008, un Irakien près de 11 dollars, un Palestinien 20 dollars." (page 45).

Je traduis :

De la part de la France un Palestinien a donc bénéficié de 40 fois plus d'aide au développement qu'un Congolais !

(diagramme également publié par le journal La Croix)



Palestinians received forty times as much development aid than the Congolese. Source: "Palestine/ Congo 40 à 1," L'avis sauve à condition d'éclairer (blog), August 25, 2010, <http://lavissauve3.blogs.nouvelobs.com/archives/tag/congo/index-4.html>.

In other words, everything is done to liken Gaza to the ghettos of Eastern Europe, to the Nazis concentration camps. This is a daunting “Waterloo of thought” if one thinks of the tens of firearms of the Warsaw Ghetto combatants and of the few machetes of the insurgents of Sobibór. In its quasi-independent emirate, Hamas has managed to amass one of the most formidable terrorist arsenals of all time, with the exception of those of ISIS and Hezbollah!

Conclusion

“Deformation” or “Disinformation”?

How does one interpret the Belgian media’s anti-Israeli outburst during Operation Protective Edge? How does one explain the recourse to often contestable journalistic practices whenever the topic turns to Israel? In a 2005 interview that caused a debate in Europe as well as the United States, the semiologist Daniel Dayan showed how the French media had regularly reported both incorrect and incomplete information about Israel due to the negative disposition that many journalists had toward the Jewish state.

Dayan presented examples of how this was done and detailed the arguments used to criticize Israel, the “pathological” nature of reports, “poor in informational content but rich in representing hostilities,”³⁵ which had the effect of “refusing the humanity” of Israelis, in itself already a form of antisemitism. He also denounced the Christ-like association with Palestine:

Should a conflict between two populations be treated in a fervent manner? In the context of war, sympathy or pity or compassion responds to situations of terrible suffering. . . . Such suffering is easily manipulated. We are in a situation of conflict. Whose suffering do we choose? Which of the dead or the dying will be given a face? Who will have to content themselves with dying in uniform and from a general perspective? Should the job of television confuse itself with the managing of pity and wrath? Let us think of the *mater dolorosa*, running with open arms toward a child who has fallen. . . . The story of the Middle East has allowed a large mural of victims with a religious dimension to be built. It is no longer a question of simply understanding the suffering—real, unquestionable—of the Palestinians, but of inventing new forms of piety in relation to it. This devotion slowly develops into neo-Sulpicianism: Saint-Sebastian’s stone throwers, Christs recrucified, King Herod’s destroyers of ambulances and killers of newborns. I sometimes had the impression that, like those praying with joined hands in the triptychs of the fifteenth century, you had to receive the news while kneeling. This is how Palestine engaged in daily acts of devotion. We were invited to live, one foot in the common calendar, the other in the Intifada. A television program proposed to share with its viewers the daily lives of the inhabitants of Ramallah, three minutes a day, for at least one month.³⁶

35. Daniel Dayan, “Les escaliers d’Odessa, les médias français et le Proche-Orient,” in *Le conflit israélo-palestinien, les médias français sont-ils objectifs* (Paris: Observatoire du Monde Juif, 2002), pp. 156–70.

36. Dayan, “Pour une critique des medias.”

Dayan also comes back to the question continually resurrected during editorial meetings: “Whose suffering do we choose? Which of the dead or the dying will be given a face?” And he wonders why, in response to this central question, it is nearly always the Palestinians who are chosen, whose faces are shown, whose suffering is displayed (in preference to the Syrians, the Iraqis, the Chechens, the people of Darfur, and others).

Why the Palestinians and so rarely the other victims of armed conflicts that are sometimes more deadly? How does one explain that everything that involves Palestine is clearly and systematically privileged, as if touched by the media grace and given an often favorable predisposition? In contrast, what could explain the almost systematically unfavorable predisposition toward Israel? Should one accuse the media world of being antisemitic? It would perhaps be too hasty a conclusion. Should we then talk of political manipulation? Should we invoke other reasons, such as intellectual laziness, the lack of general knowledge of journalists, and their ideological biases? Or, more simply, is this unfavorable predisposition one of the pernicious effects of the hyper-mediatization of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?

1. What We Don’t See Does Not Exist

The hyper-mediatization of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a fact that cannot be disputed. More often than justified, it makes the headlines of daily newspapers and magazines, and it occupies a disproportionate place on television, on the radio, in the streets with posters and slogans, in family discussions, and during dinners in town. Everyone feels that they need to form a personal opinion on the subject and, of course, to express this opinion in private and public. As we have seen, the handkerchief-sized space taken up by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is also the part of the world that has the highest density of journalists per square meter. This concentration explains why the Israeli–Palestinian conflict receives such extensive exposure and why it is given such a huge amount of media coverage. This begs the question: why is there such a surprising concentration of journalists? The duration of the conflict alone cannot explain it; there are other conflicts (e.g., India–Pakistan) that have lasted much longer and yet have not generated as much interest on the part of the leading media agencies. Could it be the number of accumulated deaths? If one were to assume this, then the African Great Lakes region would be paramount. Is it because the region that the Palestinians and Israelis so fiercely fight over is considered sacred, and therefore central, by the tenants of the three monotheistic religions? Does it carry such symbolism that the world’s attention is automatically, culturally and atavistically, focused on it? Maybe. Or is it because this part of the world, though subject to troubles and chronic violence, is maybe not as dangerous as we think it is. In Tel Aviv or Ramallah, in Jerusalem or Jenin, no journalist risks beheading as in Syria, or being kidnapped as in Yemen, or being assassinated as in Chechnya. Bomb attacks are less frequent and less deadly than in Iraq or Pakistan. It is far less dangerous for leading correspondents to exercise their craft in Israel, the West Bank, and even Gaza, where they know they are protected by Hamas, as long as they conform to the strict propaganda imperatives of this movement. If, in general, Israel does not restrict the work of journalists, this is not the case of Hamas. What our media refuses to recognize is

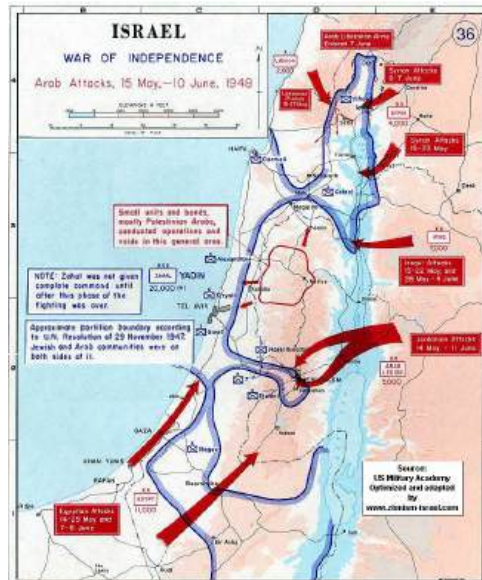
that Hamas exercises strict control over the reports and TV broadcasts created on its small territory. The terrorist organization imposes on them a real code of (bad) ethics, which for example forbids the filming of armed combatants or obliges the reporters to state, day after day, the number of injured and dead. This may explain why the majority of the big media companies and the international press agencies publish figures, which are always unverifiable and therefore subject to caution, filtered by Hamas. If a journalist grumbled, showing himself more scrupulous than his colleagues and stating that he could not put up with the daily feed of propaganda from his masters, then he would immediately be expelled. If we know, moreover, that the majority of cameramen and photographers are Palestinians, who thus stand on one side of the conflict and remain unaccountable in the case of obvious special effects or gross manipulation, then we understand more clearly the excesses that characterize the media reporting in this part of the globe.

2. What We Have No Knowledge of Leads to Conformism

In our view, the inability to recognize the complexity of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict reveals an intention to discredit the Jewish state as much as it does a simple lack of training—when one is incapable of questioning the natural tendency of a *unique thought* inherited from post-Marxism. For these reasons, certain authors, such as Arnaud Mercier, without denying the anti-Israeli media bias of the French press, prefer to consider the concept of *disinformation* rather than *deformation*, as coined by François Heinderyckx in 2003. At the heart of the enumeration of the symptoms that betray a deformation, Heinderyckx highlights the concept of “passive journalism,” which results from the time constraints faced by journalists, leaving them too little opportunity for in-depth analysis: “The journalist, himself badly informed, is weakened in his role as critical observer and sees himself dragged along, in spite of himself, in a passivity that does not suit his job at all.” Arnaud Mercier confirms: “The former heads of training at the Center for the Professional Training of Journalists (the training section of the school at the Rue du Louvre) spoke in public of their disappointment in the lack of interest in their foundational lectures, and they face repeated demands, in an emergency, to create short training courses on themes that had suddenly become hot news.”³⁷

Rare are the journalists today who are able to master the history of the conflict. How many of them know that in 1947 Israel accepted the partition plan for Palestine, contrary to the Arab-Muslim nations, which decided to eradicate the Jewish state from the map? How many of them know that half of Israeli citizens are originally from the Arab-Muslim world that rejected them, that the Jewish state is in fact a pure product not of colonization but of decolonization?

37. Arnaud Mercier, “Journalistes et conflit israélo-palestinien: malinformation, mais pas forcément désinformation,” *Questions de communication* 9 (2006), <http://questionsdecommunication.revues.org/7933>.



Contrary to the map's legend, it was only by a whisker that Israel was not destroyed after 1948 by the armies of the five Arab states that invaded the Jewish state following its proclamation.

From the perspective of deformation, the anti-Israeli bias can be explained by a kind of follower or conformist logic. Journalists will much more readily criticize Israel in a public arena that is already sold on this criticism, i.e., they will be able to “relay without creating the impression of giving their personal point of view.” In the case of Israeli policy, these official views exist (Belgian political parties, the NGOs, the Arab street), and therefore it is easy to subscribe to these views without too much thinking, without exerting oneself too much, and without ever breaking with the consensus, which one can rightly describe, for lack of anything better, as “the ideology of good sentiments.” As Arnaud Mercier observes:

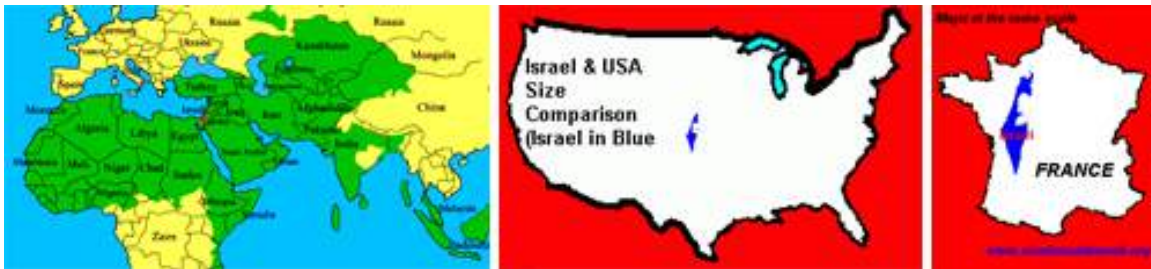
In this context, the defense of the small against the large is a “master narrative” that is commonly mobilized. However, the inequality of forces in this conflict is obvious: tanks and warplanes against stones and suicide attacks. This explains an often observed tendency to highlight the Palestinian suffering, in particular that of women and children, who, justly, emblemize the dominated status of Palestinians.³⁸

3. A Moral and Cultural Post-Marxist Left

If we do not obviously contest the right of the progressive journalists to support the Palestinian cause, we can only contest that, for a number of them, this defense consists of a denunciation, often hateful, sometimes hallucinatory, of the State of Israel. At the heart of the different progressive movements—whether they are neo-Christian, Marxist, humanitarian, or anti-globalization—is the idea that if Israel represents absolute evil, then the Palestinian Authority represents the new ideological El Dorado. It is the oppressed Muslim who today incarnates the Christ-like figure of the Savior of Humanity, a role assigned in the previous century to the working class. This version of the revised humanitarian and progressive mystic belief is at the origin of the recent alliance—from our point of view, *unnatural*—between the Flemish branch of the PTB, a Leninist-Marxist orthodox party (let us

38. Ibid.

remind ourselves), and the European Arab League, an Islamist party with ultra-conservative theories close to the Lebanese Hezbollah. As Pierre-André Taguieff emphasizes, it is the disappearance of the revolutionary models that leads some on the left to mystify new “figures of resistance.” The Palestinian and the Islamist militant would then alone represent the synthesis of the despair of all the world’s oppressed and humiliated people, subjected to an iniquitous world order dominated by America and its indestructible ally, Israel. For those on the left, Israel would represent all the faults of this “ultra-liberal” globalization and “neo-colonialism.” Today, the strong, or the one who seems strong, is necessarily in the wrong. A narrow-minded, compassionistic ideology.



Left, a map of the Muslim world. Center and right, comparative maps of Israel and the United States and France. The real size of a supposedly expansionist state would apparently stop the world from turning.

That Israel is a ridiculously small and isolated state facing an Arab-Muslim world changes nothing in the order of things for these “progressives”; it is anti-colonialism that serves as a unique interpretive key for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This conflict has the advantage that it allows for the recycling of a whole arsenal of images inherited from colonial battles, images even more resonant as they often dismiss their own historical guilt as products of a country with a colonial, and sometimes even a collaborationist, past. The amnesia toward Belgian violence in Central Africa is compensated for by a deep sense of guilt toward the Third World. The temptation is strong for them to divert this emotional charge, which is at the limit of what is bearable, into radical criticism of the State of Israel, presented as the last avatar of white colonialism (indeed, this game of passing the blame allows them to relieve themselves of the no less intolerable emotional burden, born from the passivity of their parents or grandparents, with respect to the tragedy of the extermination of Jews by the Nazis). What they do not want to see is that the creation of the State of Israel proceeds not from colonialism, as they want to believe or feign to believe, but on the contrary from anti-colonialism. Zionism accomplishes a Jewish revolution on all the fronts: cultural, political, and societal. In the context of the ending of the British Empire, the State of Israel was born from a Jewish revolt against the power of the British Mandate. The British supported the Arab state aggressors of the young Jewish nation. It was, for example a British officer, Glubb Pacha, who commanded the Jordanian Arab legion. The Israeli was a liberal Jew, from the Christian ghetto or from the Muslim *mellah*. For evidence, it suffices to read Albert Memmi, an intellectual Tunisian Jew and an advocate of decolonization who, to be close to Bourguiba and Jean-Paul Sartre, was no less of a Zionist:

Dov Maimon: Zionism is not, you have sufficiently demonstrated, a colonialist phenomenon but rather a movement of national liberation. However, how do you explain that the criticism of Israel, particularly in Europe, seems to be increasingly inspired by an anti-imperialist ideology, so much so that it is incarnated today through the movement that some people, such as Pierre-André Taguieff and Alain Finkielkraut, justly describe as neo-leftism?

Albert Memmi: Because the left in Europe remains permeated by the Stalinist and Soviet Manichaeism. The Arabs, having been dominated by the West and having not yet gotten out from under the Western grip, seem to remain victims. This is the same in Israel. We are deadlocked with Arab feudalism (which miraculously became progressive) and especially on oil money, which will weigh more and more on European politics.

Dov Maimon: As a real decolonization militant, what view do you have of the evolution of North African societies, especially concerning the menace of fundamentalism?

Albert Memmi: I am not reassured, not only for the Maghreb but also for the entirety of the Arab world. In fact, the Arab world is passing through this stage that I have named as the swinging back of the pendulum. As long as the memory of colonialism and its ramifications, and the socio-historic decline of the Arab-Muslim world have not sufficiently been erased, the balance risks going as far as possible: which explains the temptation to be backward-looking, nationalistic, and the attempts to capture power, where violence and terrorism serve as the most useful tools. Instead of turning courageously to democratization and to the adoption of contemporary beliefs.³⁹

Our journalists, whether or not they are progressive, often find themselves incapable of observing the Middle East with a calm eye; they are prisoners of a certain Western paternalistic and condescending vision of Islam, the product of their white Western former colonialist complex. This attitude, once denounced by Edward Said under the general concept of Orientalism, clearly explains the Western reticence for condemning the crimes committed in the Arab world (a “subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab–Islamic peoples and their culture”). Let us remember François Mitterrand, who refused to condemn the inter-ethnic massacres in Rwanda under the pretext that “in these countries, this is not too important.”⁴⁰ In this manner, the crimes in the Middle East do not count, or count less, because they are committed by Muslims. The barbaric Middle East cannot be submitted to the same moral standards as the Israeli . . . whites.

4. A Difficult Relationship with Jews

If anti-Zionism is not necessarily confused with antisemitism, it is clear that classic antisemitism has been redeployed under the cover of anti-Zionism. For the French sociologist Didier Lapeyronnie (Sorbonne), there is no doubt that “the focus on the events of the Middle East comes from the fact that people are antisemitic, not

39. Interview of Albert Memmi by Dov Maimon, *Covenant*, vol. 2, no. 1 (May 2008), <http://www.covenant.idc.ac.il/en/vol2/issue2/interview-m-albert-memmi.html>.

40. François Mitterrand, quoted by Patrick de Saint-Exupéry in his preface to Gérard Prunier, *Rwanda, 1959–1996: histoire d'un génocide* (Paris: Dagorno, 1999).

the opposite.”⁴¹ The failures of the peace process will only reinforce and/or justify ancient hostile sentiments. This thesis, while audacious, seems to be confirmed by studies done by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), formerly the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Supported with research from German universities, these reports address the notion of *secondary antisemitism*,⁴² a prejudice that affects Europeans due to a pathological culpability with respect to the Shoah; they deflect this antisemitic sentiment onto Israel in the hope of appeasing their guilt. Anti-Zionism is therefore a practical way in which to rid oneself of a fair part of the guilt felt by the West toward the Third World and the Jewish people without having to pass through never-ending and difficult collective therapy sessions. The idea that Jews themselves are capable of committing genocide, which means that they become the perpetrators and are thus assimilated to Nazis, makes it possible to discharge the sentiment of general guilt that a number of Belgians and Europeans feel toward Jews. The FRA reports, which focus on antisemitism in the European states from 2001 forward, describe “the use of anti-Zionism as a way of circumventing the antisemitism taboo” just as much from the extreme left as from the extreme right.⁴³ In this regard, the thesis of the Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan appears rather enlightening: “It is time, high time, for a fair, balanced, and sympathetic criticism of Israel and Palestine. But for some, that is not enough. These people believe that the mistakes of Israel concerning the Palestinians mean that Israel has forfeited its place among the nations.”⁴⁴ And he adds: “Criticizing Israel is not easy for a European. There is always a hesitation to overcome. But once the first step has been taken, a sense of relief suddenly follows. The accusations are unleashed, and their rhythm becomes faster. Anti-Israeli enthusiasm breaks out.”⁴⁵

Every new Israeli war stirs up antisemitic discourse, evident in the thousands of emails, commentaries, and editorials that were posted here and there during the summer of 2014. Under the heading “In Which Camp Can We Find Barbarianism?” the following letter to the editor from M. Willems appeared in the *Dernière Heure* on August 21, 2014:

The Israeli army completely ignores all the international recommendations. With impunity, it bombards the UN buildings where human beings are seeking refuge, thinking they are safe. Faced with this massacre, let us dare take

41. Catherine Coroller, “L’antisémitisme cimente le groupe,” interview with Didier Lapeyronnie, *Libération*, April 29, 2009, www.liberation.fr/societe/2009/04/29/l-antisemitisme-cimente-le-groupe_555229.

42. “There is some research evidence that European antisemitic stereotypes have in recent decades gradually been adopted by sections of Muslim communities around the world and have to some extent acquired a presence independent of underlying national conflicts. Major aspects of post-1945 antisemitism are the emergence of so-called ‘secondary antisemitism’ and the transformation of antisemitic discourse and expressions through the existence of the Israeli State.” *Antisemitism: Summary Overview of the Situation in the European Union 2001–2005*, working paper, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), April 2011, p. 4, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1655-FRA-2011-Update-Anti-Semitism_21032012.pdf.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Abram de Swaan, “Anti-Israëlische enthousiasmes en de tragedie van het blind proces,” *De Gids* 168, no. 5 (2005): 349–67; here, p. 359, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_gid001200501_01/_gid001200501_01_0045.php.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

our responsibilities, let us boycott all the products made or coming from Israel. Fruit, vegetables, electrical equipment. Let us ignore the Antwerp diamond lobby controlled by the Jews, holidays in Israel. The only language that this community understands is when we touch what they hold most dear: money.⁴⁶

Primary antisemitism is never so far removed from the so-called anti-racist criticism of Israel. A number of Belgians will always bear anger toward the Jews for the hurt that they (the Jews) experienced. The following interview of former Minister of State Willy Claes provides an example of this hidden guilt, of this return of the repressed that characterizes a certain European spirit. The questions as much as the answers reveal this “shameful joy” (*Schadenfreude*) in the ways that they confront the Jews through a *right-thinking* criticism of Israel. Criticism of Israel seems to clear all the slates, even the heaviest:

The government of Netanyahu talks of a “defensive operation” in Gaza. This seems rather Orwellian.

Claes: In view of the actions undertaken in Gaza, I cannot escape the impression that in the circles of power we have forgotten the two-state concept. I fear that more and more Israelis find that they must drive the Palestinians out of what is left of the autonomous territories. Said in a cynical way: the Jordanians should deal with their “new” Palestinians immigrants. I do not say that all Israelis wish this, but I fear that this is the wish of a new majority that is being established in the country.

Even the heads of the United Nations denounce Israel’s disproportionate violence.

Claes: The criticism of Israel is more alive than ever, and this time not only in the Arab countries but also in the West. Israel must keep in mind that the gigantic historical credit built after the Second World War is nearly depleted. Netanyahu and his associates should take into account that the situation risks becoming uncomfortable in the short term. Everyone is aware that the position of the United States and Europe is weakening and that they have less and less to say. I do not know who the powerful defenders of Israel will be in twenty years.⁴⁷

In believing this moral logic of Willy Claes, the 2,000 deaths of Gaza would quite simply wipe out the six million Jewish victims of the Shoah. One would have expected some prudence from a former minister who played a role in the withdrawal of the blue helmets from Rwanda, an indispensable preamble to the genocide of a million Tutsis. Reading this interview allows us to better understand the mechanism by which the guilt of the “criminal” is transferred onto its victim, which too often underlies the West’s anti-Israeli sentiment. The Flemish

46. M. Willems, “In Which Camp Can We Find Barbarianism?” letter to the editor, *Dernière Heure*, August 21, 2014, p. 17.

47. Walter Pauli, “Israël moet beseffen dat reusachtige historische WOII-krediet stilaan is uitgeput,” interview with Willy Claes, *Knack*, August 6, 2014, <http://www.knack.be/nieuws/wereld/israel-moet-beseffen-dat-reusachtige-historische-woii-krediet-stilaan-is-uitgeput/article-normal-269609.html>.

nationalists, a large part of the local, political, and intellectual elite that were nudged into collaboration during the Second World War, reappropriate a kind of “virginity” at the expense of those, in this case Jews, who would be entitled to make a claim against them.

Return to the Massacre of Innocents

With respect to the question of antisemitism, it is evident that the emphasis put on the supposed martyrdom of Palestinian children causes concern. How else are we to understand the media’s relentless efforts to make Israel a child-murdering state other than as a parade: “We did not do everything that we could have done, everything that we should have done to save the thousands of Jewish children assassinated by the Nazis. But the Jews of today do the same.” This process originates in the lowest form of manipulation. From the first days of the conflict, internet users, wishing to give life again to the myth of the Jewish child killer, did not stop flooding social media platforms with the photos of bodies of dead children. It soon became apparent that many of these photos not only were not taken in Gaza but were in fact old pictures from other regions. This was revealed in July 2014 by the BBC and, here, the *Nouvel Observateur*:

À LA UNE ● Abbas accuse le Hamas de "détruire" la réconciliation pa

Actualité > Vu sur le web > ISRAËL. "Gaza Under Attack" ou l'intox en images

ISRAËL. "Gaza Under Attack" ou l'intox en images

Par Amandine Schmitt [Voir tous ses articles](#) Publié le 11-07-2014 à 19h36 A+ A- 🖨

PHOTOS. De nombreuses images sont partagées sur les réseaux sociaux visant à dénoncer les frappes israéliennes. La plupart sont reprises d'événements antérieurs en Irak, en Syrie ou à Gaza.



Des photos anciennes prises en Irak, en Syrie ou à Gaza circulent sur les réseaux sociaux comme étant de 2014 (montage Obs/AFP).

The social and political demand requires pictures of martyred Palestinian children. Hence, the use of pictures from other conflicts.



The Gaza conflict seen from the Arab world



The Gaza conflict seen from the extreme right-wing. Eric Buzin and a cartoonist close to French national-socialist Alain Soral. The mentor of Dieudonné, Buzin does not hesitate to talk about ritual crimes, "as the Talmud requires."



The Gaza conflict seen from the extreme left-wing. Three Israeli politicians—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister Tzipi Livni, and former President Shimon Peres—violently attack different Walt Disney cartoon characters, each of whom lies in a puddle of blood and holds a Palestinian flag. These three drawings forcefully portray the myth of the ritual crime by using figures familiar to and loved by the young and old. On the Saint-Hoax website (www.sainthoax.com), we can see even more shocking animations of these scenes: Netanyahu hits Pinocchio with full force. These three drawings are part of the series entitled “Once Upon a War,” which “questions the destiny of the most beloved characters in the world if they were born in occupied Palestine. They represent these icons of hope in hopeless situations like those in which Palestinian children live every day.”



The cartoonist yAce repeatedly returns to the legend of infanticide.

In the face of these representations, as false and scandalous as they are illuminating in terms of antisemitism, how can we not understand the shift of public opinion toward the camp with the reputation for being the weakest, receiving in this light the worst of treatments? In light of these examples, above all, how can one not denounce the corporate media’s peddling, day after day, of truncated news reports, unfounded rumors, and even pure antisemitic fantasies? Do they not understand,

our media leaders, that by reporting just about anything, by playing too much with fire, they create a climate conducive to outbreaks of violence? Are ignorant to the point that they do not know that all genocides and war crimes begin with words and images?



“The children of Gaza: forbidden to live.” After his return from Syria and its 200,000 dead, Pierre Piccinin, a militant Catholic with anti-Masonry and pro-Gaddafi views, does not find anything better to say than to denounce “the Zionist horror.” These images, which come from the legends of Western Christianity, are, whether we like it or not, just as incendiary.

All the specialists of genocide studies are clear in this regard: “Hateful discourse will feed the emotion, fear, and sentiments. They invade and gnaw at spirits like a poison” (Zygmunt Bauman). In this regard, the Jews of Belgium have every reason to worry. As noted by Philippe Braud: “The daily behavior of contempt, the discourse of hate, the exhibition of arrogant and superior headlines over time put in place an ‘authorization’ of violence against victims designated as scapegoats.”⁴⁸ How else is it possible to understand the way that this conflict is capable of mobilizing thousands of people, some of whom do not hesitate to shout loudly and clearly, “Death to the Jews!”

48. Philippe Braud, “Violence symbolique, violence physique: éléments de problématisation,” in Jean Hannyoy, dir., *Guerres civiles: économies de la violence, dimensions de la civilité* (Paris/Beyrouth: Karthala/CERMOC, 1999), pp. 40–41.



Gaza worse than Auschwitz. Images taken during the two “anti-Israeli” demonstrations in 2009 and 2014. As Gil Mihaely writes, “the description of Israeli soldiers... as child killers does not find its origin in heuristic thought, but in demonization.”⁴⁹ Why be surprised that someone eventually wishes the death of Jews?

Does it therefore follow that the *Good* would be Israeli and the *Bad* Palestinian? Definitely not. We know it only too well: in the Middle East, there are victims and no real innocents! Israelis and Palestinians share the responsibility of a hundred-year-old conflict, which will end only when each of the parties recognizes

49. Gil Mihaely, “Le nom Israël empêche de penser, même les meilleurs penseurs,” *Figaro*, August 6, 2014, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2014/08/05/31002-20140805ARTFIG00296-gil-mihaely-le-nom-israel-empêche-de-penser-meme-les-meilleurs-penseurs.php>.

the plain legitimacy of the other. It is as true of the Palestinians as of the Israelis, even if since the Oslo Agreements numerous efforts have been made. Should we point out again that Israel, presented as a bully state *par excellence*, in order to free itself from all the rules of international law, withdrew from Sinai, Lebanon, Area A of the West Bank, and all of the Gaza Strip?

Globally, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict poses the question of the responsibility of journalists. The surrealist and militant reporting that they impose on our civilians is a source of danger. An ethical audit is considered urgent.

Appendix 1: Jenin as Viewed by the Belgian Media

The media coverage of the recent events in the Middle East demonstrates an emotional aspect in the treatment of information concerning the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This characteristic is not new. In view of the many examples, let us look briefly at the case of Jenin during the second Intifada.

Following a particularly deadly suicide attack in the Park Hotel in Netanya on March 27, 2002, the Israeli army launched a large military operation in the West Bank on March 29. Operation Defensive Shield, which has as its official objective the destruction of the terrorist Palestinian infrastructure, started with an incursion in Ramallah, which was then broadened to Tulkarem, Qalqiya (April 1), Bethlehem (April 2), as well as Jenin and Nablus (April 3).

During this operation an intense battle took place in the refugee camp of Jenin from April 3 to 11. This episode united international criticism of Israel. Allegations of massacres and genocide were announced by the Palestinian Authority and then relayed by the media, politicians, and certain international organizations.

Even before verifying their information, the press reported on four to five hundred dead Palestinians in articles with provocative headlines, such as “In Jenin, amidst the Smell of Death,”⁵⁰ “The Dead of Jenin Accuse Israel,”⁵¹ or even “Ruins Transformed into Vaults.”⁵² We can read witness accounts affirming, for example, that “the Israeli soldiers may have committed a ‘massacre’ by indiscriminately killing combatants and innocent civilians. Between four to five hundred people were apparently killed, and their corpses were strewn across the streets before being buried in communal pits by bulldozers.”⁵³ Among other accusations, there are some that suggest there were executions of prisoners or that people were buried alive: “It appears that the bodies of terrorists or those presumed to be, were thrown into a large pit dug by bulldozers, dead and injured mixed together.”⁵⁴ Although the Israeli denials generally accompanied the Palestinian allegations, the articles’ headlines orient the reader’s opinion in a certain way.

On April 15, 2002, although access to the Jenin camp was only just being re-established, the UN Human Rights Commission adopted the 2002/8 resolution accusing Israel of massive killings, which included the following point:

13. *Expresses its grave concern* at the deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and particularly at acts of mass killing perpetrated by the Israeli occupying authorities against the Palestinian people.⁵⁵

50. Serge Dumont, “A Jénine, dans l’odeur de la mort,” *Le Soir*, April 12, 2002, p. 11.

51. Serge Dumont, “Les morts de Jénine accusent Israël,” *Le Soir*, April 13, 2002, p. 9.

52. Serge Dumont, “Des ruines transformées en caveau,” *Le Soir*, April 15, 2002, p. 7.

53. Dumont, “Les morts de Jénine accusent Israël.”

54. Colette Braeckman, “Au-delà des tractations diplomatiques, la guerre laisse derrière elle son cortège d’atrocités,” *Le Soir*, April 15, 2002, p. 7.

55. United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, Resolution 2002/8, April 15, 2002, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DF9CAA26E9BEB10485256BAB00666603>.

Forty countries (including Belgium, France, Spain, Sweden, Austria, and Portugal) voted for the resolution, while five voted against it and seven abstained. This vote is significant because of the presumption of Israel's guilt: even before the facts were established, the blade had already fallen.

These allegations created, at the very least, doubtful comparisons with other past events. For example, André Flahaut, then minister of defense, announced himself in favor of an international force of intervention, which he regarded as the "only means to stop the massacres from being prolonged."⁵⁶ Although he confessed that a diplomatic solution was preferable, he affirmed that "at a certain point, one has to think of other things. We did it in Yugoslavia with Milošević, who would not listen either. I am not making any parallels, but slowly this becomes the same thing."⁵⁷

Another comment illustrated this comparative dimension: "In the Arab memory, Jenin is already inscribed in letters of blood, alongside Deir Yassin, Sabra, and Shatila. And here, even if the will to conduct a massacre is not established, the operations were not conducted by militias or uncontrollable groups, but by an army proud of its discipline, of the quality of its chain of command. For Sharon, the victory will be bitter: although the victims are not yet counted, Jenin has entered into the Palestinian martyrdom, the myth has already won over the complexity of the facts. The rubble of this Middle Eastern Ground Zero will be the basis of a reinforced nationalism."⁵⁸ In a speech, Yasser Arafat alluded to the Battle of Stalingrad by naming the camp "Jeningrad." These comparisons, as well as the different allegations relayed by the media, had a significant influence on the European perception of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is why Michel Grodent asked the following questions: "Do the Israelis feel a genocidal hatred for the Palestinians and do the Palestinians feel a genocidal hatred for the Israelis? Is there a concerted plan by one and the other to seek out reciprocal annihilation? But instead of writing 'the' Israelis and 'the' Palestinians, should we not, as an elementary precaution, write 'some' Israelis and 'some' Palestinians?"⁵⁹

From then on, what happened exactly? On May 7, 2002, the General Assembly, by the ES-10/10 resolution, obliged the Secretary-General to present a report, with the aid of different available sources and information, on the recent events that took place in Jenin and in other Palestinian towns.⁶⁰ The report, dated July 30, 2002, indicates: "By the time of the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] withdrawal and the lifting of the curfew on 18 April, at least 52 Palestinians, of whom up to half may have been civilians, and 23 Israeli soldiers were dead. Many more were injured. Approximately 150 buildings had been destroyed."⁶¹

56. Alain Lallemand, "Envoi de soldats belges?" *Le Soir*, April 8, 2002, p. 9.

57. Ibid.

58. Colette Braeckman, "La tournée du secrétaire d'État américain se solde par un échec d'apparence cinglante," *Le Soir*, April 18, 2002, p. 10.

59. Michel Grodent, "Le mot de la semaine: génocide," *Le Soir*, April 13, 2002, p. 2.

60. United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution ES-10/10, May 7, 2002, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/72DA83FF10657C9985256BC2005B8D23>.

61. United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution ES-10/186, July 30, 2002, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/FD7BDE7666E04F5C85256C08004E63ED>.

While every death is regrettable, we are far from a massacre and even further from a genocide. Concerning the destruction, it is principally confined to an area in the center of the camp and therefore not comparable to what was experienced in Stalingrad. This media treatment indicates a clear propensity to hastily judge Israeli actions, whatever the facts. This tends to reinforce a mechanical perception where the Israelis are the eternally guilty faced with the innocent Palestinians. Another characteristic of the media coverage of the events is the lack of information concerning the measures taken by the Israeli army in order to limit civilian losses.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight the durability of such a judgment at the heart of public opinion. Although the allegations of massacres were subsequently refuted by the UN as well as by various humanitarian organizations, the impression nonetheless remained the same in the public mind. We can witness this long-term effect in Guy Spitaels's *L'improbable équilibre* (*The Improbable Balance*), published in 2003: "Today, in the historical memory of an advanced nonagenarian—there is one close to me—thirty-some names are connected: Verdun, the cemeteries of the Somme, Dixmude, the Armenian genocide, Guernica, the Battle of London, the trials of Moscow, the Gulag, Pearl Harbor, El Alamein, Stalingrad, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Normandy, Dresden, Hiroshima, Algeria, Dien Bien Phu, Saigon, the Khmer Rouge, Beirut, Kuwait, Baghdad, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Rwanda, Congo, Manhattan, Jenin, Kabul. So many marks of folly of man that affected the last ninety years have to leave the pontiffs of the God of Progress dumbfounded."⁶²

62. Guy Spitaels, *L'improbable équilibre: géopolitique du désordre mondial* (Brussels: Éditions Luc Pire, 2003), p. 23.

Appendix 2: Operation Protective Edge as Viewed by *Le Soir*

Not content with its overstated and overanalyzed status, the conflict was once again staged for emotional effect. For evidence, one simply needs to examine the semantics of the photographs chosen by the daily newspaper *Le Soir* to illustrate the Gaza conflict. The results are revealing. The main daily newspaper of francophone Belgians proved itself incapable of making the distinction between opinion and information, in short, of adhering to its own code of the ethics. The clichés and stereotypes were abundant in a Manichean universe where everything was done to denigrate the Israeli positions and to magnify the Palestinian tragedy. Everything was done, consciously nor not, to present the conflict as a Zionist version of the Massacre of Innocents! With one exception, do not even think of looking for a photo of a Hamas combatant.



July 24, 2014



July 25, 2014

acceptée par Israël mais rejetée par le Hamas.

16 juillet
Quatre enfants sont tués sur une plage de Gaza par des frappes israéliennes, sous les yeux de journalistes.
© REUTERS.

17 juillet
Après les offensives aériennes, l'armée israélienne lance une opération terrestre pour « frapper » les tunnels du Hamas.

20 juillet
La journée la plus sanglante : plus de 140 Palestiniens tués, dont au moins 74 à Chajaya (est de la ville de Gaza). Côté israélien : 13 soldats tués. © REUTERS.

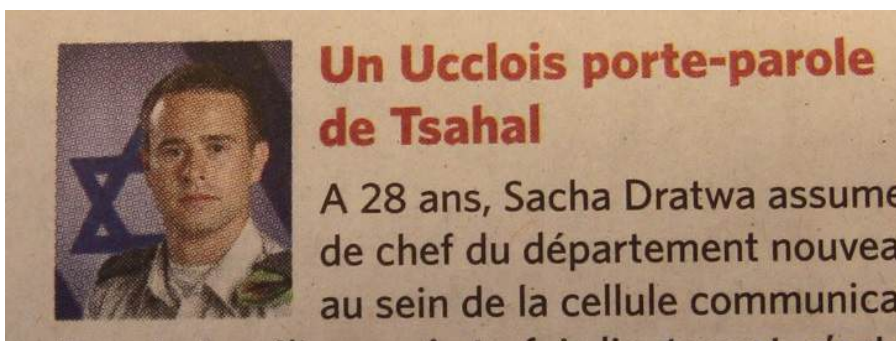
23 juillet
L'ONU appelle à une enquête sur de possibles « crimes de guerre » israéliens à Gaza et dénonce les attaques aveugles du Hamas en Israël.

24 juillet
Au moins 15 Palestiniens tués dans une école de l'ONU, à Beit Hanoun.
© REUTERS.



Le père de cette Palestinienne est mort dans la chute d'un obus sur une école de l'ONU à Beit-Hanoun, dans le nord de la bande de Gaza ce jeudi après-midi. Il y aurait eu 15 morts, dont 7 enfants. © MICHAEL O'NEILL/EPH.

July 26–27, 2014



July 28, 2014



July 28, 2014 (continued)



De trêve éphémère en reprise des hostilités, le cauchemar semble sans fin pour les civils, principales victimes du conflit. © PHOTO NEWS.



Les partisans d'Israël avaient rendez-vous devant l'ambassade, à Uccle.

© REUTERS.

July 29, 2014



L'armée israélienne a fait visiter l'un des tunnels récemment neutralisés à Gaza. © EPA.

July 30, 2014



July 30, 2014 (continued)



A l'extérieur de l'hôpital de Khan Younés, mardi: les blessés non plus ne sont pas à l'abri des frappes israéliennes. © HANA TELAWI/ AFP



François Dubuisson, chargé de cours et chercheur à l'ULB. © DR.



L'usine de Sodastream (dont l'égérie est l'actrice Scarlett Johansson) est située dans la colonie de Maale Adumim. © D. R.

July 31, 2014



Gaza, en 2012 : des militants de la branche armée du Hamas appelée « Ezzedine al-Qassam », l'aile la plus dure du mouvement. © ALI ALI/EPA.

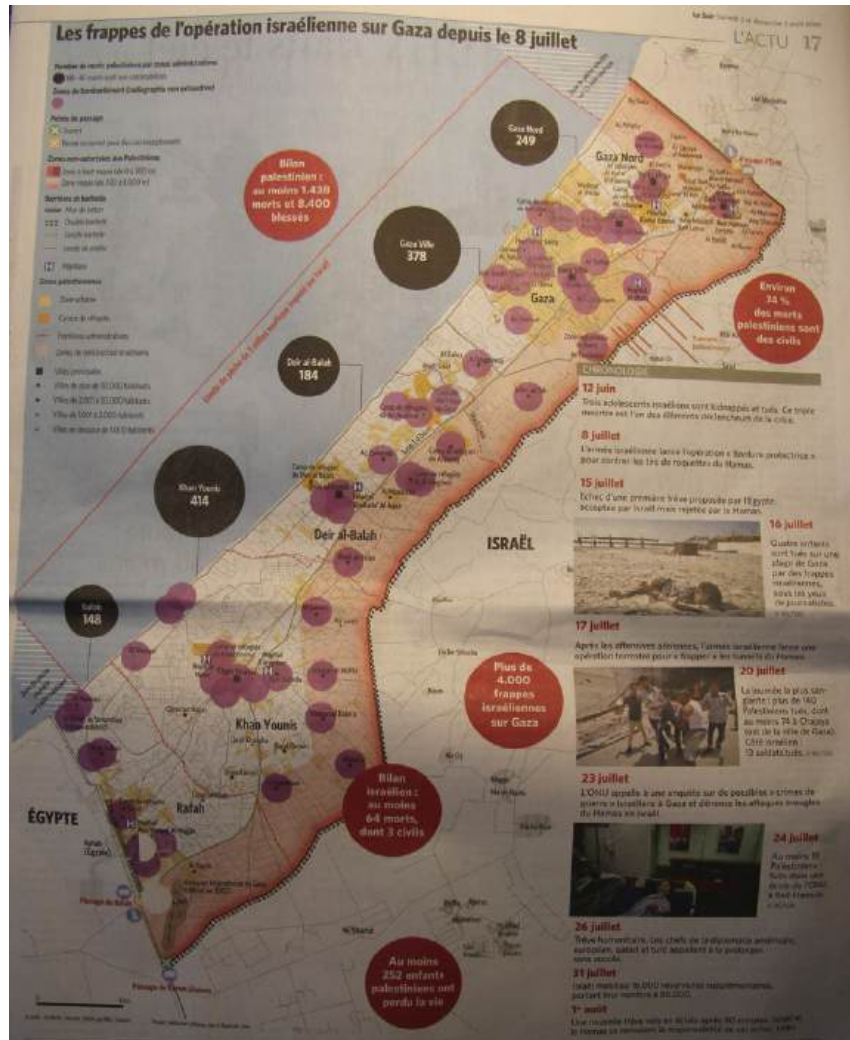


Scènes de détresse et de panique après le bombardement de l'école de l'UNRWA transformée en centre d'accueil pour réfugiés : une mère palestinienne tente de rassurer sa fille. © REUTERS.

August 1-3, 2014



August 4, 2014



“While leaving the Gaza Strip Sunday, some Israeli soldiers saluted with the ‘V’ for victory.”

August 5, 2014



“At least ten Palestinians were killed in a bombing that hit a UN school in Rafah.”



“The Yedioth Ahronoth: not kind to Benjamin Netanyahu”

August 6, 2014



Attack in Jerusalem



"The fear of bombings, Monday in Beit Lahia, north of Gaza. Three Palestinian children have their eyes riveted on the sky."

August 6, 2014 (continued)



"What is the future for Abbas?"



"Back to Israel for this tanker."



"Back to Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza. This was the home of this Palestinian."

August 7, 2014



Demonstration in favor of the military operation in Gaza, July 29 in Tel Aviv. The “different” voices have been stifled.



“One of the many children that were shooting victims of the Israeli military during the Gaza offensive.”

August 8, 2014



"In Gaza, wounds are dressed, as with this little boy, a year and half old."

August 9, 2014



"Not much remains any longer in Khuza'a, a village southeast of the Gaza Strip, where many civilians shelled by the Israeli army were killed in July."

August 11, 2014



"The Israeli army resumed its air strikes on Friday, here in the north of Gaza City. The respite did not last long for the civilian population."



"The body of Ibrahim."

August 12, 2014



“Hamed Abu Chabab at the grave of his son Abdullah, 21, killed in an Israeli air strike on July 30. They had fled the war in Syria...”



“While the Israelis and Hamas resume talks, life gradually reemerges in the ruins.”

August 13, 2014



“The Lebanese lawyer Amal Alamuddin, fiancée of actor George Clooney, has already thrown in the towel.”



August 14–16, 2014

No photographs

August 18, 2014



“American opinion is also divided. Against the powerful pro-Israeli lobby, many citizens protested the latest Israeli offensive against Gaza. Here, a demonstration last Saturday in Los Angeles.”



Demonstration in Brussels (no caption)

August 19, 2014

No photographs

August 20, 2014



“Israeli air raids on the Gaza Strip plunged the Palestinian population into fear of a resumption of war.”

August 21, 2014



“The funerals of Mohamed Deif’s wife and son took place amid high tension on Wednesday at Jabalia Camp.”

August 22, 2014



*An injured Belgian
(no caption)*

August 23, 2014



“ Hamas held several public executions of ‘traitors’ on Friday in Gaza City.”

August 25–26, 2014

No photographs

August 27, 2014



“Until the announcement of the cease-fire, rocket and air strikes continued. Here, an Israeli missile (top left, on the right side the photo) ‘targets’ the house of Islamic Jihad leader Nafez Azzam, in Rafah.”