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A short history and some research questions

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- 1 Offering a general, historical overview of the coverage of a protracted conflict is a challenge, and even more so when the conflict is question (and its coverage) have been, at different times, but repeatedly since 1967 if not before, highly controversial. Often, Academics studying the coverage sound like professional media blamers, claiming that this country/media/media outlet is blatantly in favor of one side or the other. Much research has been busy with alleged media bias, yet, bias is hard to appreciate, especially when one aims at generalizations beyond a given media outlet at a given time. Assuming Academic researchers are less biased than the journalist, they also face tricky methodological problems. Their studies can be based on a variety of methodologies which do not necessarily converge. Quantitative content analysis (in the long term) would be the safer methodology to appreciate bias, offering a way to objectify judgments. We have such content analyses, but usually in the short term. Discourse analysis is supposed to go more “in-depth”, but at the expense of localizing the examination often to a specific, short period, if not to a specific problem, e.g. a given speech act (see Kampf in this issue of the Bulletin).
- 2 I propose two ways out of this conundrum. First, I will suggest that researchers may be happy with offering relative, not absolute, appreciations of the position and the involvement of the media in a conflict. This can be done by comparative analysis of media content, of course. But we can also resort to the testimonies of the actors involved. If a “pro-Palestinian” media actor claims that his position was very difficult before the six-day war (e.g. Rouleau, 1984: 5), while a “pro-Israeli” will claim that he feels a lot more uncomfortable since, then we can assume the position of the media has changed about Israel and the Palestinians, although it doesn’t allow us to claim which position is the better, the more adequate, etc. We can tell the story of the media as an additional battlefield, as seen by the eyes of the actors, in a coherent manner. Let us move from historical to geographical differences. When a (pro)Palestinian intellectual travelling

from the US to France claims he feels a lot better with the French media (Khalidi, 2004: VIII), while a French intellectual feeling Israel is unfairly attacked in his country praises the US media (Finkelkraut, 1983), they converge, at least, on the relative appreciation of the media in each country.

- 3 Second, I will offer examples of topics which can be explored without reference to the question of political partisanship. The media have their own logic, which they may apply regardless of preferences in a conflict (or together with them: then it is the business of the researcher to disentangle professional and political logics). For researchers obsessed with bias, it may be difficult to appreciate media logics *per se*, although it is not difficult to give examples. Thus when covering the suffering of civilians, a correspondent may well express empathy, regardless of the side covered, especially if she/he is close to the people covered. The actors in the conflict are aware of this: they often use the suffering of “their” victims to the media, be they Israeli bystanders killed in a Palestinian suicide bombing in Tel Aviv or a Gaza family killed by an Israeli bombing. A second example is the media love affairs with dialogues and peace accords. It is not a specificity of the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict (see a Latin American example in Pedelty, 1985), but it grew steadily after Six-Day War (see specific section below). A third example is the “double blame”: when dealing with a (very) controversial conflict, or chapter in the conflict, many media will send both sides back to back, as violence-prone. This is a media strategy which can often be found in the US, where journalistic are more wary of balance. It is also part of the “the cartoonist’s armory” (to quote a famous article by Gombrich, 1963). Since the cartoon genres often includes comparisons and metaphors of all kind, comparing both sides as similarly guilty of violence might often be a strategy used by “moderate” cartoonists (see examples in Michel Kichka’s presentation).
- 4 With those caveats in mind, let us embark on a short historical review, which will be, at the same time, a catalogue of questions about the coverage and the ways it can be researched. I will sometimes leave the conflict, and widen the focus. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be separated from the images of the Jews/The Arabs/the Muslim World. At different times, there are interferences, comparisons, assimilations (whether they are legitimate or not from a historical point of view – which is another question). This affects, especially, the image of victims and/or perpetrators, as will see about the Holocaust (Jews as victims, which can be used both to justify and to criticize Israel) or about the rise of violent Islamism after 9/11 (Muslims as perpetrators), which affected the image of the Palestinians after 2001. Such interferences raise the stakes for researchers, but also make their work more challenging.
- 5 Regarding sources, I will freely move from minute examples (sometimes my own, such as quotes by journalists), to broader macro-data, to give a sense of the variety of materials which can be used: interview with actors, militants, professionals, opinion polls, content or discourse analysis of the media... Many of my examples will be about France, which I have researched most, but I will try to provide comparative or additional points of view. From this material, I will propose tentative generalizations which should by no means be considered as conclusions. Those generalizations will be about the Western (US and European) coverage, and not about the coverage in Israel and the Arab world, although we cannot dissociate areas that easily: as we will see, especially, some Israeli representations have travelled very well, and still do, beyond the borders of the country.

Before 1967: Israel, front stage

- 6 There is little doubt that Israel enjoyed, compared to the post 1967 period, and even more the post 1980s period, a wide support in the Western World and in much of its media. If only by collecting quotes, one is struck by the enthusiasm around Israel, with sentences which seem inconceivable today (at least in the mainstream media). In 1955, a French newsreel (Bourdon, 2008), claimed: « *For the first time after 2000 years, the Jewish people went voting again* », a sense of historic revival which is exactly what the State of Israel was (and still is) trying to convey. Here is the *International Herald Tribune* on January 1st, 1951: “I have now seen the new State of Israel and I can say that a miracle has been achieved (...)”. The word miracle was currently used at the time. More remarkable, in the same article, is the fact that the author justifies the “ruthless policy”, included “acts of terrorism”, by a comparison with the US: “Every country, including the United States, has had its structure cemented by blood and tears”. Moving to the UK, one can fruitfully read the book devoted by Daphna Baram (2008) to the daily newspaper *The Guardian*, once a strong supporter of Zionism, which became, after 1967, one of the well-known critiques of the state of Israel, which was all the more noticed as it had a strong Jewish liberal readership.
- 7 Of course, a few quotes do not do justice to the whole picture. One should mention that the support for Israel was not that general. Scathing critiques, often anticipating the post-1967 ones, could be read in the media of the Communist World, which were influential in some European countries (France and Italy, in particular). As far as I know, the representation of Israel and the Arabs/Palestinians in the Communist media has not been systematically researched. In the daily newspaper of the French Communist party, denunciations of Israel as a “racist State” and a “theocracy” started as early as 1960 (Lapierre, 1968, see also Coulon, 2009).

“Exporting Zionism”: some genres and themes

- 8 In order to understand the wealth of images around Israel, and, by contrast, the paucity of images or the “Arab refugees of 1948”, as the Palestinians were often referred to, one must consider a whole gamut of genres, beyond news.
- 9 Some themes can be given as examples of successful export. Making the desert blossom: David Ben Gurion’s dream was shared by many people beyond Israel. In the early sixties, when discussions of overpopulation and lack of natural resources were rife, Israel could be seen as a place which was busy solving a problem the whole world was facing. Techniques of irrigation developed there were discussed way beyond the country itself.
- 10 Another Israeli “invention”, or, rather, institution, the Kibbutz, was also successfully exported, and way beyond the genre of news and current affairs. There is an interesting paradox at work here: that left-wing media and personalities, including communist sympathizers, could be both sympathetic to the “socialist” side of the new State, and deeply critical of its policy vis-à-vis the Arabs. More generally, I would suggest that researchers must be sensitive to ambivalent feelings towards the actors in the conflict (a point which does not sit well with the research of bias), in this case vis-à-vis the State of Israel (but, then again, it inherited some of the feelings towards Jews – both antisemitism and also philosemitism).

- 11 Finally, and this prepared the reversal of the Six Days War, one must remember that the fact that Zionism had a colonial aspect could be seen quite favorably, at least in countries which still controlled colonial empires. Europeans could see Israelis as other Europeans coming to “uncivilized” areas in order to bring progress (this latches on the theme of “making the desert blossom”). New implantations could be called colonies, without this being considered as derogatory. A 1947 French newsreel celebrated “the French colony of Neve Ilan” because this new Jewish implantation in Palestine was created by... French Jews (a symbolic annexation of a small part of Israel to the French colonial empire?) (Bourdon, 2008). The Western world was long blind to the Sephardic part of Israel – reflecting to a certain extent what was happening in Israel itself.
- 12 Before 1967, another trend must be noted, which is probably the main novel avenue for research. Beyond news and current affairs, a whole culture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in films (*Exodus*, 1960, being the first major example, see McAllister, 2005), in novels, in travel accounts (the trip to Israel becoming a tradition in itself, inheriting some of topoi of the voyage to the Orient), not to mention best-sellers with Mossad agents as heroes, or, more recently, comics. The successful export of Israeli culture itself, starting with literature, and moving, especially in the last ten years, to film (Schweitzer, forthcoming), has also contributed much to the representations of the conflict.
- 13 It would be worthwhile to explore this culture, especially in a comparative manner, across the 1967 divide, for history (see below), and across the US/Europe divide, for geography. A recent example of different visions of histories has been provided by Ashuri, who compared the three (American/British/Arab) versions of the “same” historical documentaries on the Israeli-Arab conflicts, broadcast on different networks (Ashuri, 2010): using the same archives and interviews materials, different histories were written and proposed to different national viewers.

The Six-Day War as turning point

- 14 Whatever the differences between countries and ideological positions, the Six-Day War must be considered as a major turning point of our history of images. In France, the lexicon of the occupation was immediately adopted, and given an official approval in a famous press conference by the President de Gaulle on November 27, 1967, who went as far as to qualify the Jewish people of “an elite people, sure of themselves, and domineering”. The word “occupation” had obvious connotations in European history, some twenty years only after the Second World War. De Gaulle also insisted that occupied civilians will resort to acts of “resistance, which others will call terrorism”. This resonated with an old debate on the use of such words, which was reactivated in the Israeli-Palestinian context.
- 15 Let us leave media and political discourses for another kind of source: the sociology of journalism, especially that of the editors and correspondents who covered the Middle East for many years. I will propose just a quote which shows very well the ambivalence and the changes which could be experienced by a journalist covering Israeli-Arab affairs:

"If shame for Britain's part in the Suez affair set off my exasperated affection for the Arab world, a far deeper, European, shame fed my passionate advocacy of Israel's existence, a passion that survived, **just**, (emphasis added) my first visit to the Middle East. My way to Israel led through the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and the gross injustice of evicted Palestinians paying for Europe's guilt (...). The scene changed after the 1967 War, a war in which Israel captured all the rest of the land that the Palestinians could call home" (Smith, 2003).

- 16 This change of sympathies can be easily corroborated with other testimonies (Bourdon, 2009), at least in Europe, as opposed to the United States, where the Six-Day War triggered a wave of sympathy for Israel (McAllister, 2005).
- 17 The group of foreign correspondents has long attracted the interests of media research (for the US a classic author is Hess, 2006) 1967 is linked to a major change regarding the populations of foreign correspondents operating from Israel. Slowly, an old guard of correspondents covering Israel mostly from Tel Aviv, often bi-national Israeli-Europeans or Americans (there are still quite a few), was replaced by another, based in Jerusalem, while the occupation became a major story, and, often, the main story, to be covered from Israel (Bourdon, 2009). The number of correspondents started growing, a growth which went on until the years 2000s.

After 1967, (media) dialogues and (substantial?) agreements

- 18 If 1967 was the major turning point of our history, each single major event, war, peace agreement, needs to be explored in comparison with others, but also in its own rights: the Camp David accords with Egypt in 1977, the first (1982) (Kassir, 1983) and second (2006) Lebanon wars, the first (1987-91) and second (2000-2005) Intifadas, to name only the major turning points. There are many interesting monographs here, too numerous to be quoted. In the Israeli media (and sometimes in the Jewish-Diasporic media, the claim has been (and still is) often made that from the 1970s onward, the Western media were against Israel, or even, following a saying (and even the name of a popular Israeli song, at some point), that "The whole world is against us".
- 19 Of course, the picture is much more complicated. For one thing, even when criticism is leveled at Israel, it does not automatically mean praise for the other (Arab/Palestinian) side. Both sides can and are criticized together (some examples later). In addition, the media like the genre of peace agreements and peace accords, of the "enemy brothers at last (or soon) shaking hands". They do to such an extent that they quickly initiated dialogues (especially in the genre of the studio programme), and were sometimes actively involved in some negotiations (Gilboa, 2005). This love affair with agreements culminates in the coverage of major peace accords which became major media events (Dayan, Katz, 1992), starting from 1977. In some cases the media hype did not always mean substantial agreement. This disconnection has probably increased over time, as the actors have adapted themselves to the media, agreeing on one thing at least: presenting themselves as willing peace partners in order to draw international sympathies.

After 1967: the rise of the Palestinians

- 20 From a media point of view (and without entering the debate about the substance of the change, although both phenomena are related), another key evolution started in the media after the Six Day War, the transformation of the Arab refugees of 1948 into a national group, the Palestinians. The question of which images were dominant, and at what times, cannot be summarized quickly. I will discuss three dominant representations: the refugee, the fighter and the terrorist.
- 21 Unlike 1948, 1967 was covered by television, and television offered images of refugees living what would become the occupied territories, including forcefully expelled. A lot remains to be done here, including international comparisons. There is no doubt that the American media covered the 1967 War with, overall, much sympathy for Israel (McAllister, 2005), which delayed the arrival of the Palestinians in the US media. In Europe, or at least, in France (Bourdon, 2009) and the UK (for the *Guardian*, Baram, 2004), the empathy towards the Palestinians as a newly occupied people appeared much more quickly. The Palestinian refugees came at the forefront of some coverage, with special reports in refugee camps (including, of course, the camps born from 1948). The Black September 1970 massacre of Palestinians by the Jordanian army was a key moment. In 1982, the expulsion of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut to Tunis triggered some sympathy. But the massacre of Sabra and Chatila by the Christian Phalanges supported by the Israeli army was a much more shocking event, which would remain, to some extent, in the collective memories (plural intended) of various actors involved in the conflict.
- 22 The second image is that of the fighter, which cannot be dissociated from that of the long unique leader of the Palestinians, Yasser Arafat. He became the president of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1969, one year after the battle of Karameh which he led, against the Israeli army. The event received much media attention, and Arafat, for the first time, reached the cover of *Time* magazine. Arafat was much more than the president of the PLO. He became, for many years, **the** Palestinian, the rival to the gallery of Israeli leaders who were much covered by the Western media (Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Rabin, Golda Meir). His 1974 speech at the UN general assembly was a peak of his career.
- 23 The Palestinian guerilla fighter became a romantic figure, part of global constellation, somewhere between Latin America and Vietnam, emigrating from news to other cultural genres. The first and the second Intifadas added the image of the child as fighter. The first Intifada, especially, brought the children to the forefront. The Palestinian child facing an Israeli tank, with a stone in the hand, became the icon of the first intifada. Some Palestinian leaders, taking their cue from Arafat, were much aware of the power of images. Witness, early in 1988, the representative of the PLO on French TV, referring to the “stones of the thousands of our Palestinian David”, (Bourdon, 2008) – using a classic Biblical metaphor, against Israel.
- 24 The third image is that of the terrorist. The word itself is heavily loaded, and its use in the media a complicated topic. There is no agreed upon definition, and people who oppose the use of the word are prompt to mention the fact that blind violence against civilians is part of the strategy of many regular, state armies. Beyond the controversies, there is no doubt that the word has a strong negative connotation. Everybody will agree that novelist Doris Lessing chose the title *The Good Terrorist* for her 1985 novel, as a powerful oxymoron. This connotation explains much of the dispute over the word. From a

historical/communicational point of view, the Palestinians as “terrorists”, or as “air pirates”, emerged with the wave of plane hijackings in the seventies, which could, especially if there were no civilian victims, gain them some sympathy, and, in all cases, extremely high visibility. The massacre of the Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic game, on the other hand, drew widespread condemnation (in France, then again, one clear exception was the daily newspaper of the Communist Party – Coulon, 2009).

- 25 Twenty years later, the image of the Palestinian as terrorist has changed. The suicide bomber has added a new image. The use of the word “terrorist”, in this case, is not always present. The French and Spanish media have resorted to the word “kamikaze”. At any rate, the suicide bombing in the midst of a crowd of civilians has drawn much media attention, especially since the late 1990s, and the second intifada, when it became part of a systematic strategy.
- 26 Another series of events, not directly connected to the Palestinians, affected their image: the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, and, the following years, the rise of radical, violent political Islamism. The perception of Palestinian suicide bombings could not be the same after this (see an example for French television in Blanchard, 2003). In addition, the victory of Hamas (officially listed by the US and the EU as a “terrorist” organization) and the division of the Palestinian territories into two distinct policies, also played a negative part.

The Holocaust and its implications for Israel's image

- 27 History, of the ways our reading and memories of history change, also affect media representations of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs/Palestinians. The most powerful example is provided by the changing images of the Holocaust. Although the Holocaust as historical event has been much researched, its media representations have attracted, relatively to the mass of documents, little attention. The 1961 Eichmann trial was a turning point. It is well known for its part in the history of Israel and the way it became part of a project to incorporate the Holocaust into Israeli/Jewish collective memory (Segev, 1991; Yablonka, 2004). Less well known is the fact that it was also heavily covered by the international press. The work of a particular *New Yorker* correspondent, Hannah Arendt has been widely discussed, but not as a part of a global effort of reporting for the media. The Eichmann trial cannot be dissociated from another figure in Israeli culture (but also, nowadays, in global culture), the rise of the witness, coming from the past to verbalize, publicly, his/her suffering (Feldman, 1991; Wieviorka, 2006).
- 28 The Holocaust would later be heavily represented in fiction (the eponym American mini-series, in 1978, which was successful in much of Europe), and in documentary (the key work being Claude Lanzmann's 1985 documentary film *Shoah*, which contributed to popularizing the Hebrew word for the Holocaust, especially in French). These two genres have been studied, but much more cinema (major reference here: Insdorf, 2003). There is much less on a genre which is crucial for television, documentary (see, however, the recent work by Maeck, 2009, with an interesting comparison between France and Germany). The Holocaust has also been given global political prominence by recent events and celebrations, to the extent that some researchers have claimed there is a “cosmopolitan memory” of the Holocaust (Levy, Sznajder, 2002).

- 29 One thing is clear, however, images of the Holocaust have become the images of the victims par excellence, and it is impossible to deny their political implications in a global “competition of victims” (Chaumont, 1997) unfolding on the global media scene(s). “Our” conflict is connected to a change in public culture, and in the media culture of conflicts.
- 30 It is hard to draw a clear balance of the effects of the diffusion of Holocaust images. On the one hand, the diffusion of an image of the Holocaust may be considered as reinforcing the status of the state of Israel as a shelter for the Jews. And the State of Israel has been active in promoting images of the Holocaust. On the other hand, the very diffusion of those images cannot be dissociated from hostile reactions: here the whole history of Holocaust denial comes into play. Finally, another process is at work, no so much the denial than the trivialization of the Holocaust through increased references into culture, especially as metaphors and comparisons for other kinds of conflict.

Comparisons and metaphors

- 31 Ever since, at least, the first Lebanon war, the partial or more developed comparison of the conflict with the genocide, with the Palestinians as Jews, and, much more controversially, the Israeli side as Nazis as a long history. It is certainly an indication of a form of anti-Zionism, if not anti-Semitism. Then again, we reach another sensitive area of research: the overlapping between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, which is probably the area where researchers of representations of the conflict most often disagree. Claiming that anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism are closely related will be correlated with a relatively pro-Israeli position, while denying any connection might well be correlated with the opposite position.
- 32 However, this comparison (or “amalgam”, see here Koren’s text) is not the only one made between the conflict and other historical situations. Whether the Israeli occupation has some similarity to the apartheid has also been suggested by some media, and some authors (famously Jimmy Carter), drawing much flak from supporters of Israel. Part of the journalistic lexicon is also metaphoric, through the use of words with certain historical denotations and connotations (not necessarily known to the audience), like “kamikazes” (used in French and Spanish for suicide bombers, as noted above), “colony”, “refuzniks” (for Israelis refusing to serve in the territories or in the Israeli army).
- 33 The meaning and the use of those comparisons also change over time and space. A good example is provided by Dan Berkowitz (2005) is his study of the “Middle East as Wild West” comparison. This is a typical American reference, in a double sense. Not only does it connect with American culture, but it also provides a sense that there is no responsibility, or that both sides are involved in a violent conflict without clear starting point. Thus, metaphors and comparisons be related to wider characteristics of journalistic discourse.

Dynamics of images among the public (or publics?), and the transatlantic divide again

- 34 We have alluded, several times, to the impact of coverage on public opinion. How can we appreciate, or even measure this? Here it is important to start with an analytic

distinctions between specific publics, involved in the conflict for reasons of ideology and or/identity, and public opinion at large, the mass of the public, less involved.

- 35 The first category includes “diasporas” (*lato sensu*) of Jews, Arabs, Muslims, who are, for different reasons and in different ways, “stakeholders” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is little doubt that images of Israel, the conflict, Palestinians, not to mention Jews and Arabs, are watched by those publics with particular attention. They react in many ways, especially by activities of media monitoring which started before the Internet, but has received a decisive push through the global network. Media researchers, but sociologists of such diasporas cannot ignore the impact of the media, and, specifically, of the conflict, on such publics. For example, being Jewish in a media world has become increasingly connected to the way Jews, in general, and Israelis, in particular, are represented in a media, especially as individualism among Jews, just like any other religious and cultural communities, has been growing.
- 36 Among militant publics, the whole question of the value of the conflict for the (radical) left, which has a long history, is the topic most debated. For much of the liberal left in Europe, (and the radical left only in the U.S.), how and why did the Palestinian cause become “the good fight” after 1967, and, even more, after the end of the Vietnam War and other colonial conflicts? How this reinforced the reading of the conflict as a colonial situation, a term which is refused by some, and accepted partially by other, or as a form of “apartheid” (this comparison/metaphor being even more controversial)? There is a number of questions to be posed, and it seems that Academics find it difficult to treat them without passing judgments on the media.
- 37 Regarding public opinion at large, the questions, and the research methods, are quite different. Here we will discuss opinion polls only. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a huge number has been published. Their systematic collation and study could be quite fruitful. Two problems should be mentioned, which communication scholars know well. Do we have series with the same question, formulated the same way, to allow comparisons between countries, and periods? Often opinion polls are isolated, and their interpretation is limited to a major headline, about sympathy or antipathy for the Palestinians/Israel. A second problem is the choice of timing. An opinion poll in the midst of an Israeli attack in the occupied territories, or right after a Palestinian suicide bombing, is bound to have a very different signification than the answer to the same questions after, say, a peace accord.
- 38 For Europe, we will propose a single, particularly interesting example of a recurring opinion poll over the years. For the years 1967-2002 in Denmark, the following Gallup table¹, gives the answers to the question: who do you think is mostly right in the conflict between Israel and the Arabs? In black: the Israelis. In white: the Arabs (not the Palestinians). In grey: don’t know or think both sides are right. This table confirms the idea that 1967 was a watershed, and a high point of sympathy for Israel. The most striking result is the decline of the support for Israel. But this decline is not automatically converted into political sympathy for the Arabs, although this has grown from 2% to 21%. The number of people without opinion, or thinking both sides are right, has steadily grown.

- ³⁹ Since 2002, the same question has no longer been asked on a regular basis. However, a poll published in the *Jyllands-Posten* on May 11, 2008 suggests that the clear trend which started in 1967 might have been broken, or at least, blurred. This being Denmark, we must bear in mind the impact of the 2005 affair of the Muhammad cartoons. The sample was asked which side they sympathized with the most. In 2002, 20% sympathized with the Palestinians, 14% with Israel. In 2008, 14,2% with the Palestinians, 20,2% with Israel. We have similar data for France (Bourdon, 2009). In short, European public opinion(s) may enter a new era of “zigzagging sympathies”.
- ⁴⁰ When considering the evolution of measured public opinions, the US/Europe divide which we have mentioned many times, appears most clearly. The contrast between this European example, and the US, is vivid. Consider another Gallup table, below. Israel garners the sympathies of a majority of the American public for almost the whole of the 1988-2011 period. The Palestinians never received more than 20% of the sympathies. Even more strikingly – and quite remarkably for an international conflict – the percentage of people who do not take sides tends to go down.

Conclusion

- ⁴¹ The reader expert in one single area will probably feel that a lot is missing, and that this panorama has been painted with very wide brush strokes. However, my ambition has not been to discuss the fine grain of events, but to give some major head chapters, and, if I may insist, without actually taking sides. I know quite well that this is impossible (and can even be contested as a starting point for sound research, see Koren's article here). For example, some people might consider that refusing to use the word "terrorism" as a simple descriptive term (as I did in this paper), is a way of taking sides. Beyond these controversies, I do hope that I have suggested a number of research questions for everybody interested in the part played by the media (broadly speaking) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To speak just like some journalists I have met while researching the coverage: I claim to be honest, and also to consider all data, whether it suits my needs or not; objectivity, or neutrality, are words which I consider very difficult to use in a conflict still unfolding in front of the eyes of so many diversely involved actors, media professionals, and media users.

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NOTES

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ABSTRACTS

This paper puts the representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Western world into historical perspective, while also evoking the international differences between the media and public opinion in the U.S, on the one side, and in Europe, on the other side. It starts from the favorable image which Israel has enjoyed until the Six-Day War, with the notable exception of the Communist world and its media. This can be explained mostly by the post-war discovery of the genocide, the identification of Israel with a European state in a zone still to be “civilized”, and diplomatic alliances. From 1967 onwards, the media have gradually adopted a more critical stance about Israel, but while this started right away in Europe, it took more time (and remains more subdued) in the US. The Palestinian cause has gradually become a major “good fight”, among left-wing circles, especially radical ones, previously closer to Israel. Israel has become a nation of settlers in occupied territories and a more religious nation, a problematic image in a post-colonial and highly secular Europe. For foreign correspondents, the occupation (televising a powerful army facing civilians) has become the central “story” – in lieu of the heroic narrative of the new State. The “return of the (anti-Semitic) repressed” and its conversion into radical anti-Israeli sentiments must also be considered. It might be that we have entered, since 2005, a third phase. The image of the Palestinian is blurred by the connection with an Islamic world increasingly perceived as a threat, which may create more support for Israel, or, at least, detachment or increased “compassion fatigue”. The US-Europe rift is growing: the American

public shows much support for Israel, while in Europe, some data suggest that, except for militant or diasporic publics involved in the conflict for specific reasons (and passionately monitoring the media), it is becoming increasingly difficult for the public at large to take sides.

Cette présentation propose un parcours historique des questions majeures que pose l'étude des représentations du conflit israélo-palestinien dans le monde occidental, en évoquant aussi les différences internationales, singulièrement entre les médias et les opinions publiques américaines d'une part, européennes d'autre part. Elle part de l'image favorable dont Israël a longtemps bénéficié dans le monde occidental après la création de l'État en 1948, à la notable exception du monde communiste et de ses médias. Cette "israélophilie", au moins apparente, peut s'expliquer par la vague de sympathie née après le génocide, par l'identification d'Israël à un État européen dans une zone du monde "à civiliser", par des alliances diplomatiques... À partir de 1967, les médias occidentaux ont adopté une position plus critique. L'occupation des territoires, identifiée à la colonisation désormais condamnable, la sympathie pour la cause palestinienne devenue peu à peu le "bon combat" pour la gauche et singulièrement la gauche radicale, la montée du fondamentaliste religieux en Israël (spécialement pour une Europe très laïque) constituent des facteurs explicatifs. Le retour du refoulé antisémite sous forme d'anti-israélisme doit aussi être considéré. Pour les correspondants, l'occupation, avec ses images de civils palestiniens face à une armée puissante, remplace le narratif héroïque du nouvel État. Enfin, peut-être sommes-nous entré, depuis 2005, dans une phase plus incertaine. Certains facteurs sont défavorables aux Palestiniens : ainsi la montée internationale de l'Islam radical associés aux attentats suicide, la division entre Gaza et la Cisjordanie. Israël recueille toujours la sympathie américaine, mais en Europe, l'étude de l'opinion publique à long terme suggère que la part des indifférents au conflit s'accroît, même si les minorités de public militants et diasporiques continuent de suivre le conflit (et de surveiller les médias) avec passion.

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