

# THE FREE PRESS?

A MONTHLY JOURNAL AND TEACHING TOOL EXPOSING PROPAGANDA IN THE MASS MEDIA

A news resource which is **not:**

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Beholden to **advertisers**  
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Unlike other journals we **declare our interests:**

No **profit motive**  
No **cronyism**  
An interest in exposing **media bias** by applying the **propaganda model**

**What is the propaganda model?**

The vast majority of “headline news” providers in the UK are profit-driven corporations, affiliated to even larger corporations, who make most of their money from selling advertising space to other businesses.

The propaganda model predicts that such media will generate a view of the world that is overwhelmingly favourable to the interests of big business and marginalises, ignores or attacks opposing views.

A wealth of evidence supports the model. Head to [www.the-free-press.co.uk](http://www.the-free-press.co.uk) for an overview.

Wondering why you’ve never heard of the propaganda model?

Perhaps you’ve been getting your news from...the news.



Image: The Gaza Strip Under Israeli Control

## ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Journalists love to talk of politicians “flip-flopping” or being “forced into a U-turn”. No politician would recover from conducting the comedy U-turn, wearing flip-flops, carried out by The Independent this month.

The paper carried a wide-ranging interview with actress Maxine Peake in which she mentioned that “the tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd’s neck, that was learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services.”<sup>1</sup>

Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey retweeted the article and a storm duly erupted. Long-Bailey was sacked from the front bench by Keir Starmer “because the article contained antisemitic conspiracy theories”<sup>2</sup>.

The Independent initially stood firm and linked to a 2016 report by Amnesty International describing both “taxpayer funded” and “privately funded” trips in which hundreds of US law enforcement officials “travelled to Israel for training”<sup>3</sup>.

The following Saturday they hung Long-Bailey and Peake out to dry. “In retransmitting a plain antisemitic conspiracy theory,” the paper’s editorial read, “Ms Long-Bailey showed a serious lack of judgment...She had to go”<sup>4</sup>.

Critical observers of the mainstream media may wonder why The Independent published a “plain antisemitic conspiracy” in the first place. They may also wonder how linking to an article containing a sentence on potential links between police in one nation state and another is anti-Semitic!

For the record, we should state at this point that anti-Semitism, like all forms of racism, is a poison that should be condemned and eradicated. However, is it correct to label those who criticise the policies of Israel anti-Semites?

Israel is, after all, a state. It was created inside the borders of Palestine in 1948 - a process in which, according to Al Jazeera, “over 80 percent of Palestinians in what became Israel were expelled”<sup>5</sup>.

The remainder of Palestine was divided into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, geographically separate areas that were subsequently occupied by Israel in 1967. In response to this invasion the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 in which they called for “the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories”<sup>6</sup>.

The UN Security Council repeated the call for Israel to withdraw in 1973 (Resolution 338) and have also repeatedly ruled that the building of Israeli settlements in occupied territory is illegal<sup>7</sup>.

Israel has been able to sustain occupation and settlement programs with the support of the US, the UK and other Western states. The United States repeatedly uses its veto powers at the UN to block resolutions saying things like: “Condemning Israeli Killing UN employees of World Food Programme”, “Demanding Immediate Cessation of Israeli-Palestinian Violence” and “Urging Israel to Abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention”<sup>8</sup>.

The BBC, in a rare moment of context, confirm that “the US has traditionally sheltered Israel from condemnatory resolutions.”<sup>9</sup>

A 2004 article<sup>10</sup> by Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group highlights just how rare this moment of MSM context is. A study in which “800 people were interviewed and researchers examined around 200 news programmes” found that “there is almost nothing on the news about the history or origins of the conflict and viewers are extraordinarily confused”.

*(Article continues over page...)*

**How does the propaganda model work in practice?**

Critics of the propaganda model claim that it is a “conspiracy theory.”

This, perhaps purposefully, misses the point of the propaganda model.

A conspiracy will not happen of its own accord. People must gather in rooms and have meetings to instigate a conspiracy.

The beauty of modern media propaganda is that it simply **follows from the institutional structure of large media companies.**

Consider someone at the bottom of this structure: a young journalist at Rupert Murdoch’s Sun newspaper: **Will this journalist have to be told, in a conspiratorial manner, not to pursue stories about unrest in the News International boardroom and corporate malpractice by one of the paper’s leading advertisers?**

Not likely. Do **you** try to earn job security by going against the values of the institution that employs you?

Of course, like us, journalists are unlikely to reflect on the institutional parameters that confine them. Far easier to subconsciously adopt these values and *believe* that you believe them.

If 90-95% of mainstream journalism positions are filled by people who share the same framework of values, know which stories to pursue and which to ignore, what can be said and can’t be said, that makes for a robust propaganda system.

You will, of course, have a hard time convincing journalists that this is what they’re doing. Then again, as Upton Sinclair famously said:

*(...Article continued from previous page...)*

Viewers are so confused, according to Philo’s study, that some “believed that (the Palestinians) were simply being aggressive and trying to take land from the Israelis”. Considering that “the research found that Israelis were interviewed or reported more than twice as much as Palestinians” and “Israelis were said to be responding to what had been done to them about six times as often as the Palestinians” this is an understandable mistake for viewers to make.

The propaganda model predicts that the corporate press will generate a picture of the world favourable to the interests of a wealthy elite. Israel is a key Western ally in an oil rich part of the world, the second largest purchaser of arms from the UK (behind Saudi Arabia)<sup>11</sup> and supported by powerful organisations like Conservative Friends of Israel. The pattern observed by Philo and co should come as no surprise, but the increasing use of “anti-Semitism” as a slur on those who question Israeli state policies is alarming.

A recent article by The Daily Mail illustrates the close links between accusations of anti-Semitism against Jeremy Corbyn and his activism for Palestinian rights: one of the comments listed as “anti-Semitic jibes” by paper was “Corbyn supports Palestine”<sup>12</sup>

According to The Daily Mail, simply to ally yourself with Palestine is to take an anti-Semitic position!

This is far from an isolated incident. Zoe Strimpel of The Spectator wrote of “Black Lives Matters Anti-Semitism Blind Spot”<sup>13</sup>. The evidence for this? A tweet from the BLM account saying “As Israel moves forward with the annexation of the West Bank, and mainstream British politics is gagged of the right to critique Zionism, and

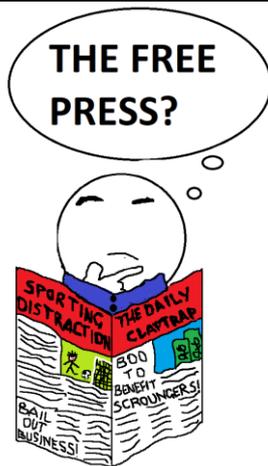
Israel’s settler colonial pursuits, we loudly and clearly stand behind our Palestinian comrades. FREE PALESTINE’.”

Once again, a statement expressing solidarity with one nation state under illegal occupation by another (as per the UN) is somehow anti-Semitic. It’s true that the use of “Zionism” could be construed as going further than criticism of a state. Equally, only the corporate media can bend the boundaries of language enough to link it to criticism of all Jews.

Zionism is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “a political movement that had as its original aim the creation of a country for Jewish people, and that now supports the state of Israel”<sup>14</sup>. Not inclusive of all Jews then – as confirmed by countless high-profile Jewish groups and figures such as the Jewish Voice for Labour, Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein and Seth Rogen<sup>15</sup> who have been critical of Israel state policy and attempts by the press to frame any criticism as anti-Semitic.

Maxine Peake and Rebecca Long-Bailey are the latest victims of a form of Establishment shorthand for silencing criticism of capitalism and state violence. It is sinister beyond words to misappropriate one form of oppression to silence those seeking to stand up against other forms of oppression, but now par for the course in UK media and political circles.

**“Whoever controls the media, controls the mind”  
Jim Morrison**



**“It’s difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon him not understanding it.”**

**HOMEWORK!**

*Search for a BBC article reporting on violence in Palestine and look closely at the “balance” in the article – the amount of text devoted to the Israeli and Palestine perspective.*

*Consider the word choice and the framing of the story. Does the text, for example, humanise victims of one side more than the other (providing details of their life) or use more emotive language for one side than the other (condemning aggression or emphasising pain and loss)?*

*Finally, research the respective death tolls in the Israeli-Palestine conflict (significantly more Palestinians than Israelis are killed each year).*

*On balance, do you think the article you read (and the pattern reported by Professor Philo) provides readers with an accurate perspective on the Israel-Palestine conflict?*

\* Visit [www.the-free-press.co.uk](http://www.the-free-press.co.uk) for a list of sources, an online version of the main article and more information on the media and propaganda