

# News Media Complicity in 50 Years of Anti-Zionist Antisemitism

By [Eric Rozenman](#) (May 2024)



The Falling Angel –by Marc Chagall, 1923

**News media in the West** began obsessing about Israel's allegedly disproportionate response just weeks after Hamas' slaughter on October 7, 2023 of 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapping of 240 more—the worst one-day massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. South Africa, acting as Hamas and its

backer Iran's lawyer, hauled Israel before the International Court of Justice charging genocide in the Gaza Strip war. Media generally covered the allegation as plausible rather than propagandistic. Six months into the fight, a *Washington Post* April 6 headline's [subheading](#) asserted American support for the Jewish state "has left it morally compromised and politically vulnerable in the eyes of many." This when urban warfare authorities such as Prof. John Spencer at West Point emphasize Israel took unprecedented care to [limit non-combatant casualties](#).

What made such an inversion possible?

In the West, many news media no longer practice basic who, what, when, where, why and how journalism. Sebastian Junger, writing in the March 2024 issue of *National Review*, asserted that "a journalist is a person willing to destroy his own opinion with facts." To the extent that *beau ideal* was once true, or at least aspired to, it is no longer. How could it be, when academia, including journalism schools, insists we live in a "post-truth" world in which "narratives" trump facts?

Objectivity as an attitude and facts as tools enabled the pursuit of truth. The historian John Dahlberg Acton famously observed that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But Lord Acton also insisted that "truth is the only merit that gives dignity or worth to history." In which case news media, and the universities from which contemporary journalists issue, are too often worthless.

Associated Press' reporters and editors produced the gold standard of American journalism for a good chunk of the twentieth century. Their work rested on the 1914 commitment by AP's legendary general manager, Melville Stone. He put it this way: "I have no thought of saying the Associated Press is perfect. The frailties of human nature attach to it." But "the thing it is striving for is the truthful, unbiased report of

the world's happenings ... ethical to the highest degree."

Truthful. Unbiased. Ethical. How quaint. AP, one of the world's two largest news providers—the other being Reuters—continues [citing](#) Stone. But the wire service has ditched Stone's words when it comes to deeds. Since 2013, AP has refused to describe migrants unlawfully in the United States as "[illegal aliens](#)" and, helping establish general media practice, pretends biological males/transwomen competing in athletics against biological females are "women." As for its coverage of the Arab-Islamic war against Israel, former AP correspondent Matti Friedman published an oft-cited expose of AP's bias seven years before Hamas' 2023 pogrom. Friedman documented a tilt toward the Palestinian Arabs so obsessive it bordered on ludicrous. Or would have, were it not simultaneously an example of and fuel for antisemitism.

## Twisted Pattern

[According to Friedman](#), himself a reporter in AP's Jerusalem bureau from 2006 to 2011, coverage of the 2014 Hamas-Israel war "laid bare the resurgence of an old, twisted pattern of thought and its migration from the margins to the mainstream of Western discourse—namely, a hostile obsession with Jews." In his view, "the world is not responding to events in this country, but rather to the description of these events by news organizations. The key to understanding the strange nature of the response is thus to be found in the practice of journalism, and specifically in a severe malfunction that is occurring ... here in Israel."

This "malfunction" rested on a central trope "of the international media's Israel story—a story on which there is surprisingly little variation among mainstream outlets, and one which is, as the word 'story' suggests, a narrative construct that is largely fiction." According to this fiction,

Friedman said, Palestinian Arabs lack agency; the narrative's script features them as passive victims, martyrs even, to Israeli aggressors. This outlook, quite uniform across mainstream media in Friedman's view, results from newsrooms' embrace of what the late historian of antisemitism Robert Wistrich termed a secular religion of "Palestinianism."

Its worshipful nature could be seen in Friedman's tally of news staffing and coverage. When he worked at 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" and "higher than the total number of news-gathering employees in all the countries where the uprisings of the 'Arab Spring' eventually erupted."

Skewed personnel deployment produced skewed coverage. Friedman's 2016 article noted that "in all of 2013, for example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict claimed 42 lives—that is, roughly the monthly homicide rate in the city of Chicago. Jerusalem, internationally renowned as a city of conflict, had slightly fewer violent deaths per capita last year than Portland, Ore. ... In contrast, in [its first] three years the Syrian conflict has claimed an estimated 190,000 lives, or about 70,000 more than the number of people who have ever died in the Arab-Israeli conflict since it began a century ago."

"News organizations have nonetheless decided that this conflict is more important than ... the ongoing erasure of Tibet by the Chinese Communist Party, the carnage in Congo (more than 5 million dead as of 2012) or the Central African Republic, and the drug wars in Mexico (death toll between 2006 and 2012: 60,000)." Friedman counted "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" in one seven-week period in 2011. There were "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.”

Friedman’s reflections on media bias in reporting the 2014 Hamas-Israel fighting would be confirmed by the 2024 war: “Hamas’ decision in recent years [pre-2016] to construct a military infrastructure beneath Gaza’s civilian infrastructure would be deemed newsworthy, if only because of what it meant about the way the next conflict would be fought and the cost to innocent people. But that is not the case. *The Hamas emplacements were not important in themselves, and were therefore ignored*” [emphasis added]. “What was important was the Israeli decision to attack them.” Hence, the attention to Hamas-controlled Gazan health ministry’s inflated civilian death counts and nearly immediate media pivot from the bestiality of the October 7 attacks and continued war crimes of hostage-holding to Israeli-caused destruction and deprivation as it fought the terrorists in the Strip.

## **Journalism Dies in Dogma**

Thereby, tens of thousands of marchers in Berlin, London, Paris and Washington, D.C. decrying Israel’s “genocide” in Gaza had news accounts, with photographs and videos, to affirm superficially their allegations. The genocide accusation, like the “racist Zionist” and “colonialist Israel” charges, amount to modern maledictions equivalent to the medieval “Christ-killer!” They stem from and fuel anti-Zionist antisemitism, the “new”-old Jew-hatred.

Friedman focused on the result for the craft of journalism. But he did not examine the academic malpractice behind journalism’s Israeli-Palestinian “malfunction.”



In 2002—the depth of the Palestinian second *intifada* terror war that eventually would murder 1,100 Israelis and visitors—Harvard University President Lawrence Summers tentatively approached that malfunction. Referring to a faculty-backed petition calling on the school to join the boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) campaign against Israel, Summers said, “where antisemitism and views that are profoundly anti-Israeli have traditionally been the primary preserve of poorly educated right-wing populists, profoundly anti-Israel views are increasingly finding support in progressive intellectual communities.” He [added](#) “serious and thoughtful people are advocating and taking positions that are antisemitic in their effect if not their intent.”

Summer’s restrained but truthful conclusion stimulated an existing campaign by leftist faculty to drive him from office. The effort succeeded three years later, confirming once again the viewpoint if not exact statement attributed to George Orwell that “there are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, primary responsibility for news media’s obsessive-compulsive Israel derangement disorder—which afflicts academia in general and thereby seeps into popular culture—lies with the French. They had a theory: critical literary theory or deconstructionism, to be specific. It spread from literature departments through the humanities. In Middle East studies it fixated on Israel. It used the “three D’s” identified by Natan Sharansky—double standards, delegitimization and demonization—to socially-culturally ghettoize the renewed Jewish state as medieval Jews had been physically ghettoized, labeled a threat and rendered vulnerable.

Corrupt from the start, French critical literary theory sprang from the need to rationalize failure of both an intellectual elite and largely a nation to resist Naziism. *Mon Ami*, the collaboration, it wasn’t as bad as it looked, and anyway,

who's to say he would have behaved differently? Hence came the "indeterminacy of texts." Not even the author could be relied on to explain the meaning of his or her work. And if trees fell in the forest and one wished the few actual Resistance fighters hiding behind them to ambush the *Reichswehr* actually amounted to an army, could anyone really say otherwise?

According to Victor Davis Hanson of Stanford University's Hoover Institution and professor emeritus of California State University (Fresno), leaders of French post-modernism included the four horsemen Jacques Lucan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Paul DeMan. "They refashioned an old philosophical strain of relativism found as far back as the Greek sophists and Plato's discussion of *the noble lie* [emphasis added]. ... The utter collapse of France in six weeks in May and June, 1940 and the shame that most of the nation was either passive or collaborated with the Nazi occupiers rather than proving brave resistance fighters made the idea of empiricism and [truth an especially bitter pill](#) to swallow for the post-war French post-modernists."

DeMan's career epitomized the worm at post-modernism's heart and its American influence. After the war, he immigrated to the United States. DeMan earned a Ph.D. at Harvard and taught at Bard College, Johns Hopkins and Cornell universities. He became the father of deconstructionism in America, helping induce not just English departments but humanities faculties in general to displace factual debate with "discourse" and historical truth with "narratives."

## **Literary Criticism as Self-Justification**

Four years after DeMan died in 1983, Belgian scholar Ortwin de Graef revealed that between 1940 and 1942 the deconstructionist had contributed approximately 170 articles to two pro-Nazi Belgian dailies. Then, in 2014, Prof. Evelyn

Barish of the City University of New York published *The Double Life of Paul DeMan*. Turns out he also was a bigamist with two distant wives and families. To trump the still small voice of conscience, not to mention morality, truth must be a social construct imposed by the privileged to maintain themselves in power. Of course, then, texts must be “indeterminate” rather than specific works of their creators and individual biography or national history must be “narratives” instead of factual accountings.

Since, as Hanson observed, “every bad new idea in America today can ultimately be traced to the university” and “it seems to take only about 30 years for academia’s nihilism to filter through the elite institutions and make its way into popular culture” the lie of Palestine replaced the truth of Israel. No self-proclaimed revolutionary movement benefited more from the devaluation of truth than the anti-Israel terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and later competitors like Hamas (Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement). If DeMan promoted post-modernism among American literature faculty, Edward Said became the spider at the center of its much larger intersectional web.

A Palestinian American and Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, Said captivated late 20th and early 21st century intellectuals, diplomats, journalists and students. A member of the PLO’s national council, Said—a virtuoso of abstruse academic jargon—dealt less in facts and truth and rather more in theory and polemics. In doing so, he produced the holy grail of “Palestinianism,” his hugely influential 1978 work of Middle East revisionism, *Orientalism*. As journalist Lee Smith, a former student of Said’s, has written, the professor became “one of the early Anglophone advocates of French post-structuralism.” In *Orientalism*, Said asserted that every European 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the Middle East had held stereotypical views of Arabs as “the Other,” and so must have



viewed the latter through racist, imperialist and ethnocentric lenses. Talk about stereotyping. Nevertheless, as Smith also noted, Said's work helped undergird a new academic field, post-colonial studies. Not to mention President Obama's 2009 Cairo [pledge](#) to "fight against" derogatory portrayals of Islam. Thanks to Said and his acolytes, one person's terrorist indeed could be another person's freedom fighter. So, as more than 30 Harvard University groups informed us immediately after October 7: All violence was Israel's fault.

Palestinian terrorism in the 1970s and '80s served as the gateway drug to the Islamist terrorism of al-Qaeda and ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in the 1990s and beyond. So, the anti-Zionist antisemitism of the Soviet Union and Arab League, endorsed in the U.N. General Assembly's 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism—using post-truth deconstructionism as its pusher—became the gateway drug that re-energized and increasingly renormalized Jew-hatred.

If the theory sounds abstract, a first glance far removed from the media's assault on the Jewish state should clarify. In 2006, a strip-tease dancer (and student at North Carolina State University) who worked an off-campus party hosted by members of the Duke University lacrosse team accused three players of raping her. The dancer being black, the athletes white, 88 Duke faculty members attacked the lacrosse team in the campus newspaper. Mobs gathered outside the party site, home of the team captains. A national news media circus ensued, baying about racism. The county prosecutor charged the three team members with rape.

A year later, the case collapsed due to lack of evidence. The prosecutor was disbarred. Duke eventually settled the players' lawsuit out of court, reportedly paying millions of dollars. But the professors [never apologized](#).

Economist and philosopher Thomas Sowell wrote in 2007 that the Duke faculty "who promoted a lynch mob atmosphere" were not

naïve. “Most were from departments promoting the ‘race, class, and gender’ vision of victimhood. The case served their purposes. That trumped any question about whether the charges were true or not.” And, warned Sowell, this embrace of the noble lie (well-seeded with regard to Israel and Palestinian Arabs by Said) was “common on elite college campuses from coast to coast,” “a time bomb with the potential to destroy” whole societies. The noble lie insists America is systemically racist and so must be fundamentally transformed. It asserts Israel is racist and colonialist, renormalizing Jew-hatred in the process. Since Palestinian Arabs epitomize post-modern, post-colonialism’s “people of color,” victimhood’s poster children, Israel—the Duke lacrosse team of the Middle East—must be destroyed.

### **Like a Broken Record**

Inability to see Israel otherwise leapt from an egregious *New York Times* example. Background: Soon after the 1967 Six-Day War, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 called on Israel to withdraw from territory—not *all* the territory, its authors made clear—gained in the fighting. This was to occur following a negotiated end to the conflict. The territories included the previously Egyptian-occupied Gaza Strip, Egyptian Sinai Desert, Jordanian-occupied West Bank (Judea and Samaria) and Syrian Golan Heights.

In its July 11, 2000 edition, the *NYT* erroneously reported that 242 “calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of *the entire* [emphasis added] West Bank and Gaza Strip ...” The paper ran a correction.

In its August 19, 2000 edition, it made the same mistake. It ran a correction.

On September 6, the *NYT* made the mistake a third time. After the third correction, Executive Editor Joseph Lelyveld

convened his staff. He told them the mistakes and corrections provided “great cheer and sustenance to those readers who are convinced we are opinionated and [not well-informed](#) on Middle East issues.” As this author wrote later, “If by ‘opinionated’ he meant biased against Israel and by ‘not well-informed,’ he meant in thrall to the Palestinian narrative, then yes, those convinced readers were on to something, as countless *Times*’ errors ... testified then and since.”

Two years later *NYT*’s double-Pulitzer Prize columnist Thomas Friedman made the same mistake. Associated Press also has. The errors always claim Resolution 242 requires total withdrawal of Israel rather than territorial compromise by all parties to the conflict. Like a creeper vine choking a host tree, the Palestinian narrative squeezes truth.

In 2002, during the bloody second intifada, Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat told CNN of a mass grave near Jenin on the West Bank, containing the bodies of 300 of the 500 Palestinian Arabs murdered by Israel. In keeping with Mark Twain’s observation that a lie flies around the world while the truth gets its boots on, Erekat’s fabrication did so. The [reality](#)? Fifty-six Arabs, nearly all combatants, killed in house-to-house fighting during which 23 Israeli soldiers also died, partly because Israel avoided aerial bombing in the built-up neighborhood.

The subsequent 22 years have featured virtually endless additional examples of similar miscoverage. Call it pro-Palestinian—or better, because few media ever campaign for Palestinian freedom from corrupt and brutal PLO or Hamas rule—anti-Israel information dominance. They bring us to press accounts of the 2023-2024 Hamas-Israel war, perhaps exemplified by the *Washington Post*.

On December 23, the newspaper published a lengthy report headlined “Israel has waged one of this century’s most destructive wars in Gaza; The damage in Gaza has outpaced

other recent conflicts, evidence shows. Israel has dropped some of the largest bombs commonly used today near hospitals.” *Washington Post* [asserted](#) that Israel had “destroy[ed] more buildings, in far less time, than were destroyed during the Syrian regime’s battle for Aleppo from 2013 to 2016 and the U.S.-led campaign to defeat the Islamic State in Mosul, Iraq and Raqqa, Syria in 2017.”

Meanwhile, on December 12, Reuters reported that Russia’s war against Ukraine had resulted in an estimated 315,000 Russian troops killed or wounded, and between 25,000 and 70,000 Ukrainian dead, combatants and non-combatants. Of course, Israel’s counterattack to destroy Hamas looked more destructive: It was confined to the Gaza Strip, an area only twice the size of Washington, D.C., but with nearly three times the latter’s population. And Hamas had turned the largely built-up Strip into its *de facto* fortress, including bases near and under hospitals. Ukraine, on the other hand, had a pre-war population estimated at 44 million spread over territory nearly the size of Texas. But Palestinianism afflicting its editorial judgment, the *Post* counted Gaza buildings, not casualties.

That mattered. If, as Hamas claimed, by early March 30,000 Gazans (from a population estimated at 2.2 million) had died, and, as Israel said, roughly 13,000 have been combatants, then the non-combatant to combatant fatality ratio is less than 1.5:1. As military analyst Col. Richard Kemp (U.K., Ret)., noted in a Middle East Forum podcast Jan. 22, 2024, this is “[significantly lower](#) than the UN average of collateral damage incurred in global conflicts.” That is the objective truth, a category the *Washington Post* and many other news media cannot recognize or report in the post-truth, which is to say, post-journalism, era.

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