

The Problem Is The Spin

A Parliamentary Inquiry is about to report a large increase in the number of **antisemitic attacks in Britain** in recent years, which has accelerated further since the recent war between Israel and Hezbollah.

More shameful than the numbers is the fact that the character of the attacks has changed. While in the past most antisemitic attacks came from tiny fringe groups, Mark Gardner of the Community Security Trust reports that nowadays the attackers

are from across society [...]. "When it's verbal abuse, it's just ordinary people in the street, from middle-class women to working-class men. All colours and backgrounds. We hardly ever see incidents involving the classic neo-Nazi skinhead. Muslims are over-represented."

Indeed, a few days ago this violence from 'across society' spread to the normally staid House of Lords, when Lord Janner, who is 78 and Jewish, was **physically attacked** by Lord Brammer who is 82. The attack was caused by their disagreement over Israel's non-existent war crimes in Lebanon, and subsequently legitimised by Janner's colleagues, who apparently persuaded him to make no complaint.

In hate-mail to senior Jewish figures, ordinary Jewish people were being blamed for the deaths of Lebanese civilians. "There are also references to the Holocaust, saying that Hitler should have wiped out the Jews."

Mr Gardner said that the rise in attacks reflected increased hostility to Israel and Jews in the media and across society: "The number of anti-Semitic attacks reflects the mood music around Jews and Israel."

Where does this 'mood music', to which ordinary British people are responding, come from?

Jon Benjamin, of the Board of Deputies, said: "The problem is the spin that Israel is an irredeemably evil regime, and we are concerned that it may become common currency to connect British Jews with this."

But this spin that Israel is fundamentally evil cannot be separated

from the spin that British Jews are fundamentally evil and therefore legitimate targets for attacks. If Israel really were evil then the two issues could easily be separated, because the Jewish community in Britain would then certainly become active in the campaign to de-legitimise Israel. But that cannot happen because, in reality, Israel is a moral beacon to the world. The spin that it is evil and the spin that Jews are evil are the same out-and-out lie. On the grand stage of world history, this lie is part of the millennia-old and incomparably widespread and persistent evil known as **antisemitism**. But the proximate cause, today in Britain, is a powerful, self-sustaining irrationality in the subculture known as the media.

In the sidebar of the *Times* article that reports these dismal developments is the very phenomenon that is causing them. Of the six headlines linked there under the heading 'Related Stories', at least four carry the spin of Israel's alleged evil, and not one even hints at Israel's case, or even that it has one.

The mildest example is: *Annan says Syria to respect Hezbollah arms embargo*, ([link](#)). This would be much less misleading if it were *Syria claims it will respect Hezbollah arms embargo*. By reporting Syria's claim through the mouth of the UN Secretary General (who was doing nothing more than report what was said to him) *The Times* manages to attribute maximal authority to that claim. Only deep in the article, and nowhere in the headline, is there a hint that there exists an opposing point of view, namely that Syria's claim is a ludicrous and cynical lie whose main purpose is to de-legitimise Israel's self-defence.

The worst of this particular batch of headlines is *Cluster bombs leave 'toys' that kill children* ([link](#)). The casual reader will receive the impression that Israel has littered Lebanon with toy-shaped booby traps with the satanic intention of maiming and murdering Lebanese children, an impression that is, again, only dispelled deep in the article, and even then not explicitly. The spin here is the ancient antisemitic **blood libel** that Jews are child murderers. This is expressed, in the context of the Lebanon war, in the lie that Israel has targeted innocent civilians – a lie that is frequently intensified by the explicit or implicit claim that this blood lust is directed especially towards children.

In a culture that excoriates President Bush for once using the term 'crusade', even though in English that word has carried no specifically Christian or anti-Muslim connotation for centuries, there can be no excusing these antisemitic spins as accidental. They are part of a systematic phenomenon of entrenched irrationality that is poisoning our society and causing violence. Yet the cause is not (for the most part, anyway) that journalists wake up one morning and realise that it is The Jews who are responsible for all the evils in the world, any more than Lord Brammer woke up one morning thinking that Lord Janner is responsible for all *his* troubles. **Mel Gibson** thinks like that, and so do many cultures, **even in Europe**. But the antisemitic spin that is spreading through mainstream British society is not rooted in racial or religious hatred of Jews, but rather it is the other way round. (Indeed, one of the ways it entrenches

itself is that its purveyors can honestly testify, from introspection, that they are motivated by no such hatred. This, in turn, leads them to imagine that they are seeing for themselves proof that those who accuse them of bias are guilty of yet further offences, namely whining and slander.) The pathological spin originates in a pathological world view which, in itself, makes no direct reference to Jews or any other group. Yet by its inner logic it homes in on Jews, and hence on Israel. For some powerful but as yet only dimly understood reason, Jews are, as always, the canaries in the coal mine, the first to suffer the effects of poison.

Update 1: Solomonia makes the same point, but he is able to express it in just three words.

Update 2: The IDF's policy on cluster bombs.

Sat, 09/02/2006 - 20:12 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

'In a culture that excoriates

'In a culture that excoriates President Bush for once using the term 'crusade', even though in English that word has carried no specifically Christian or anti-Muslim connotation for centuries'

Since you mention it, the first crusade didn't do the Jews a lot of good either but note the lack of people arguing that Bush is an anti-semite who wants to burn them all in their synagogues because of the 'crusade' comment.

by [Leigh](#) on Mon, 09/04/2006 - 20:22 | [reply](#)

Re: 'In a culture that excoriates

Indeed.

by [Editor](#) on Mon, 09/04/2006 - 20:36 | [reply](#)

History of England Conspiracy Theory

As I read British History it strikes me that the Brits via their pompous ideas of Empire could be blamed for causing almost everything wrong with the world, including fomenting mistreatment of Jews by almost every country and culture where the Brits meddled for centuries. Lord Brammer might rightly attack himself proclaiming mea culpa, mea culpa for the sins of his forebears rather than feebly making an ass of himself by attacking an apparently much younger, nobler man.

I could blame the Brits but I won't. It would be another easily refuted conspiracy theory. Rather I'll leave it to the media to exploit that one knowing that a reporting opportunity is never missed wherever public blame and the possibility of innuendo presents itself. Besides, noone ever refutes the media, not really.

by a reader on Mon, 09/04/2006 - 22:39 | [reply](#)

Cluster bombs

I don't understand your point about cluster bombs. Israel clearly has left a lot of cluster bombs in Lebanon, and they certainly will kill a lot of children. So I assume you are objecting to the implication that that was the *intention* rather than an unfortunate side effect. Is that right? If so then I think the article would not give a casual reader that impression, rather they would get the impression that Israel acted with casual disregard for the lives of others. Do you think that the use of cluster bombs was justified?

by GS on Tue, 09/05/2006 - 17:08 | [reply](#)

Disregard

Israel acts with the most regard for life of all countries. It is most hesitant to do anything that would might put civilians at risk. Even guilty ones (ie, children who retrieve weapons are not shot). Israel has sent commandos instead of bombs, at great risk, because of its regard for life.

Saying, or implying, that Israel acts with casual disregard for human life is an awful slander and completely indefensible.

Also note there does exist fierce internal debate in Israel about life and collateral damage, so implying *casual* disregard is unforgivable.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Tue, 09/05/2006 - 19:27 | [reply](#)

Thank you so much

Thank you so much for your words. They are very much appreciated.

One thing I have realized is that fascists never stop with one group. Their hatred and aggression is never content with lashing out at one group. They seek domination and use fear and violence to achieve this. Sound familiar?

I am very surprised that Europe has not learned this lesson. Throughout the Arab-Israeli(muslim-Jewish) conflict, Europe has sold Israel out countless times, coming to the aid of those who wish to destroy her, silent when when she is attacked, and condemning her when she defends herself. Israel's enemies, or I should say the Jews enemies are not rational. They are fascists.

By the way Europe has dealt with this conflict, they have given the green light to muslims and have basically told them that this behavior is acceptable.

Now, when these fascists who believe that this behavior is

acceptable arrive in your country, and the only way they know how to deal with things is through violence, what do you think will happen when you make these people angry? What do you think they will want if you try to appease them? They will want more.

Europe has told the muslim world that this fascist behavior is acceptable, now the Jihad is on their doorstep.

I really like your blog. Keep up the good work.

Justin from Canada

by Justin on Tue, 09/05/2006 - 20:00 | [reply](#)

To see the difference between

To see the difference between Muslim and Jew, one only has to compare the palestinian national anthem to the Israeli one.

One is about hate, the other about love.

Palestinian:

My country , my country

My country , the land of my grandfathers

My country , my country

My country , my nation , the nation of eternity

With my determine, my fire and the volcano of my revenge

The longing of my blood to my land and home

I have climbed the mountains and fought the wars

I have conquered the impossible , and crossed the borders

My country , my country , the nation of eternity

With the resolve of the winds and the fire of the guns

And the determination of my nation in the land of struggle

Palestine is my home , Palestine is my fire , Palestine is my revenge

and the land of eternal

My country , my country , the nation of eternity

I swear under the shade of the flag

To my land and nation , and the fire of pain

I will live as a guerrilla , I will go on as guerrilla ,

I will expire as guerrilla until I will be back

My country , my country , the nation of eternity

Israeli:

As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning deep in the heart,
With eyes turned toward the East, looking toward Zion,
Then our hope - the two-thousand-year-old hope - will not be lost:
To be a free people in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Justin from Canada

by Justin on Tue, 09/05/2006 - 20:08 | [reply](#)

Re: Thank you so much

Justin from Canada: Thanks.

by **Editor** on Wed, 09/06/2006 - 10:49 | [reply](#)

Cluster bombs

So Elliot, can you answer my question. Do you believe that the use of cluster bombs was justified?

by GS on Wed, 09/06/2006 - 16:44 | [reply](#)

Re: Cluster Bombs

GS wrote:

I don't understand your point about cluster bombs. Israel clearly has left a lot of cluster bombs in Lebanon, and they certainly will kill a lot of children. So I assume you are objecting to the implication that that was the *intention* rather than an unfortunate side effect. Is that right? If so then I think the article would not give a casual reader that impression, rather they would get the impression that Israel acted with casual disregard for the lives of others.

The difference between intentional killing and killing with casual disregard for the lives of 'others' is not very relevant here. For any users of force, both are viciously immoral. Presumably, then, you do agree with us that the headline gives the reader the impression that Israel is viciously immoral.

Do you think that the use of cluster bombs was justified?

Yes. Cluster bombs were used only in cases of military and moral necessity - for instance, where Hezbollah missile crews were

literally in the act of firing volleys of missiles into Israeli cities and,

because of the location and terrain, other means of attack would not have stopped them. The other means of attack, which *were* attempted where they could work, included, as Elliot pointed out above, ones that risked the lives of Israeli soldiers. Had Israel had callous disregard for the the lives of others, they would not have done that, and they would have used far more destructive weapons and thereby saved the lives of many Israelis.

That fact that, in this way and in many others, Israel's actual tactical decisions routinely include compromising important military objectives, and risking Israeli lives, in order to spare enemy civilians, is simply incompatible with the accusation you have made, and which you rightly attribute to *The Times* as well. (Incidentally, in Israel's case, 'military objectives' are themselves confined exclusively to those that are necessary to prevent the murder of Israelis.)

Perhaps you are opposed to the use of cluster bombs in principle. Perhaps you have profound moral objections to all explosive weapons, or to any military tactics that might harm civilians, or whatever: we can't tell. If so, we disagree, and so do the military planners of virtually every nation that fights wars. But even if you were right about that, that would still in no way justify imputing to them such vile states of mind as *having casual disregard for the lives of others*. Far less does it justify imputing such states of mind to a whole nation, as you do.

by [Editor](#) on Wed, 09/06/2006 - 18:48 | [reply](#)

BBC antisemitism

We mustn't forget that grandmother of all institutionalised antisemites, the BBC. Virtually every news item that can be slanted against Israel, is slanted against Israel.

Just 2 examples out of thousands (incidentally, they also demonstrate that the BBC doesn't understand the difference between news reporting and editorial comment):

1. Lebanon 1982, a BBC reporter stands in front of bombed buildings in Tyre, and says:
"Once again, Israel has decided to cock a snook at world opinion". This would be despicable as an editorial, but as so-called 'reporting'??? The hack knows what Israel has 'decided' to do? And moreover, that its decision involves naked aggression even though the peaceful world has tried to stop the war? And of course, that there's been no aggression by the Arabs that triggered this war?

2. On the BBC website 2006: Maale Adumim is described, supposedly factually, as an 'illegal' settlement. There is a tiny comment to the effect that Israel disputes this.
Note well: not 'Some people/governments/what-have-you claim that it is illegal' but 'it is illegal'. The BBC is now the arbiter on this fact, not an unbiased commentator - and of course, it is judge/jury/executioner (well, it would love to be, so great is its puffed-up self-importance) on this issue AGAINST Israel.

The fact that Maale Adumim is not illegal by any sane criteria is neither here nor there in this case: it's the BBC's constant bias that is important.

by **Yoni** on Sat, 09/09/2006 - 20:24 | [reply](#)

war

Hi Justin

I like many others know that Israel is the victim of the area but also the power. How can I with all humility express a sentiment towards the people of Lebanon who have no control over their fate. I do not wish to denigrate the state of Israel but I also see injustice to the innocent Lebanese (not all) who have suffered. I do wish the whole area a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Best wishes to all.

by a reader on Sat, 09/16/2006 - 19:10 | [reply](#)

Innocent Lebanese

It is a terrible tragedy that many innocent Lebanese were harmed. And I agree with you that responsibility is important. That's why we must make sure Hezbollah is destroyed entirely so it can never hurt people again.

The innocent Lebanese were hurt through a combination of

- 1) Hezbollah's immoral, aggressive initiation of a war
- 2) Hezbollah's use of innocent Lebanese, including children, as human shields
- 3) Hezbollah's intentional tactic of maximising Lebanese casualties
- 4) Israel's moral, defensive actions that carefully tried to minimize Lebanese casualties

Israel's actions were only necessitated because of Hezbollah's actions, and I'm sure you'll agree that Israel should have defended itself -- it's better that way. So the real problem that caused all this suffering is purely Hezbollah's decision to start the war.

For balance, you may want to consider what the causal lists look like for the innocent Israeli casualties.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 09/16/2006 - 19:40 | [reply](#)

"Did President George W Bush'

"Did President George W Bush's Invasion Of Iraq Contribute To Causing The 9-11 Attack?"

Are you intending that to be a trick question? Anyone who answers

yes has got a head full of sand, with 9-11 occuring way before the invasion of iraq.

Justin

by Justin on Mon, 09/18/2006 - 06:40 | [reply](#)

Copyright © 2008 Setting The World To Rights