

PALESTINE IN RUINS AND IN MASS MEDIA

REALITY CHECK

БЕЖИЦА, CHECK

>> EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THESIS <<

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TERROR-STAMP LIKELIHOOD

Swedish Television (SVT) engages in guilt by association against Palestinian victims (Echeverría 2021a). They are associated with terrorism or exculpatory circumstances are given. Nonparametric simulations show that the overall probability for a Palestinian casualty of being terror-branded is 37%. Table 1 compares probabilities for SVT and commercial outlets. Four relevant circumstances are presented: Terror-association given whether or not victims or perpetrators are given identity when mentioned, and nationality¹.

**T1 Terror-Stamp Likelihood: Swedish Television (SVT)
& Joint-Stock Newspaper Companies**

Terror-Stamp Conditional Probability	Left Wing*	SVT	Right Wing
P(Terror Stamp Palestinian)	29%	37%	42%
P(Terror Stamp Palestinian &ID)	40%	38%	42%
P(Terror Stamp Palestinian &Perpetrator ID)	67%	44%	91%
P(Terror Stamp Israeli)	0%	0%	0%

* Aftonbladet is the only nation-wide commercial on the Left.

'Terror Stamp' is the event casualties are subjected to aforementioned guilt-by-terror association. ID is the event victims are given identity such as woman or child, and the remaining is whether or not the perpetrator is given corresponding ID. The probability of a victim being terror-stamped, given it is Israeli, is zero. Thus all corresponding conditional probabilities are zero.

¹ These probabilities are computed from 10k non-parametric multivariate simulations of the distribution, yielding 320-370K data points for the outlets. Theory and earlier work on similar data shows that such simulations give narrow confidence intervals around the maximum-likelihood point estimates. Therefore, such exercises are redundant at this stage. In what follows, *victim* and *casualty* are used interchangeably.

Firstly, the propensity to use a terror stamp on Palestinian victims varies with ideological outlook, but is invariably non-existent for Israeli counterparts. Centre-left commercial journalism is least likely to associate Palestinian casualties with terror or give exculpating circumstances for their deaths. In contrast, right-wing outlets are the most likely to terror-stamp Palestinian victims. Swedish Television is with good margin in between these two camps.

Therefore there is divergence from the state line in both tax-funded and commercial outlets, but towards a far-right narrative. Notwithstanding, there is significant heterogeneity in terms of likelihood to engage in such discourse among commercial outlets. This is in line with hypothesis two, of journalism influenced by ideological outlook, among the joint-stock media companies.

As stated in the first part, and as is evident from the discriminatory rhetoric, the number of reported deaths per (reported) total deaths is not sufficient to make inferences about bias. Still, it is noteworthy that 70% of the reports on casualties are Palestinian victims in SVT and the right-wing press while Aftonbladet is closer to 50%.² The former have a much higher propensity to report Palestinian casualties as statistics with terror associations. This statement is literally true in a context where Palestinian victims are much more numerous, and thus disproportionately underreported.

Finally: do opinions differ from the state line? Logically, it may be sufficient to check one outlet in the sample as a test. The most efficient way to proceed is to check the most divergent first. Notwithstanding, it is important to underscore that such test is suitable but does of course, unlike previous procedures in this series, not give a representative picture of journalism.

² These figures are based on a complete study of SVT (73%), and random samples of the commercial press accompanied by nonparametric simulations yielding 74% and 53%.

There are two opinion pieces in Aftonbladet May 7-16 in the Retriever Research categories Politics, War & Conflict. Both diverge significantly from the state line described in previous papers of this series. The first opinion piece attacks POTUS Joe Biden for his silence on Palestinian civilian casualties and human rights, and argues that he may become responsible for more civilian casualties on both sides in the future. The second invokes Israeli apartheid against Palestinians, and proceeds from there. It is important to underscore both are larger than the median item. There are no corresponding divergent newslinks in Swedish Television under the same period. Moreover, this result is robust as it is a complete study of all items for these two outlets.

May 17-31 contains seven additional. Only two advocate the state line in a manner comparable to Swedish Television, but with more emphasis on political instability and corruption also on the Israeli side. The rest are polarised opinion pieces taking a stance on either side of the conflict. Perhaps most notably, an editorial defends its position against the Israeli ambassador in one of the exchanges.

SUMMARY

The main thesis of this paper is supported by evidence from commensurable items across outlets, ownership, audiences and official ideological outlook. The nation-wide press diverges from the state line on the Israeli occupation of Palestine in opposite ideological directions - in opinion pieces and news items - across and within particular outlets. Right-wing deviation asserts itself when Palestinian victims are associated with terror or exculpatory circumstances for their untimely deaths are given. Nevertheless, ideological outlook is still present in the likelihood of engaging in such practices. The only (centre) left outlet is least likely to do so, right-wing outlets are most likely to terror-shame victims. Swedish Television attains a pseudo-neutral position in between.

These accurate findings support Information Production Theory as proposed in Echeverría (2021a). Although related work on the subject provides a basis for more refined perspectives (Echeverría, 2020; 2021b) – four basic categories remain relevant as a way to approach, discuss and explain ideology – the elusive discussion on polarisation in particular.

In the terminology of this research, the topic of the Israeli occupation of Palestine can fruitfully be considered as a *Quasi-Partisan* topic in Sweden, allowing for a polarised debate. There is nothing like it in previous studies when master agreement and demand for ideology exists. Such cases display an astonishing homogeneity in service of the state line (See e.g. Pedro, 2011; Echeverría, 2018). This result can be conjectured to hold in other countries with similar position in the international community.

These findings and decades of research justify the following minor remark: Categorical claims of left-wing bias in media in general, Swedish Public Service in particular, remain as unsound as any unhinged conspiracy theory.

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