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Media Representations

Of Arabs & Muslims in
Post-Multicultural Australia

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts by Research

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Declaration

This work is the author’s own original research on the basis of sources available as of August 2013. All sources of information have been acknowledged. The author takes responsibility for any errors and omissions.

Ghassan Nakhoul
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract iv

Abbreviations v

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: 17
  **Demise of Multiculturalism**  
  *Social Inclusion or Reclaiming the Assimilatory Past*

Chapter 2: 33
  **Terror Australis**  
  *Awakening the Sleeping Cells of “Orientalism”*

Chapter 3: 63
  **The Five Weaknesses of the Newsroom**  
  *“Orientalism” Nostalgia in the Asylum Seekers’ Narrative*

Chapter 4: 104
  **The Cronulla Phenomenon**  
  *Bashing the ‘Oriental-colored’, Keeping them ‘at bay’*

Epilogue 139

Appendices 146

Bibliography 154
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Abstract

This research examines the representations of Arab and Muslim Australians in the media and political discourse on the issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla riots, during the Howard years. The research is based on analysing events, political statements, media reports and broadcasts that have negatively portrayed the Arabic and Muslim communities in Australia.

The study argues that the contemptuous depiction of Arabs and Muslims in the mainstream media was due to two factors: Orientalist attitudes and the ushering of a new post-multiculturalism era which is now being carried out under the banner of social inclusion.

I have termed the difficult times that Australia has experienced with some controversial issues concerning Arabs and Muslims, such as the issues of terrorism, boat people and ethnic tensions as the ‘Australian Trials’. I have also identified the Orientalist Aussie as the main agent, the stirrer and the cause of the Australian Trials.

While the first chapter sets the context of Australian attitudes towards multiculturalism in general, the remaining three chapters deal with the issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla events as debated in the media and political discourse.
Abbreviations

Age: The Age.
AI: Amnesty International.
AN: Annahar.
Aust: The Australian.
CM: The Courier Mail.
CT: The Canberra Times.
DFAT: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
DIAC: Department of Immigration and Citizenship.
DIMIA: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.
DT: The Daily Telegraph.
ET: El-Telegraph.
FP: Front Page.
HS: Herald-Sun.
NS: The Northern Star.
SBS RAP: SBS Radio Arabic Program.
ST: Sunday Telegraph.
WA: The West Australian.
W Aust: The Weekend Australian.
Web: Website.
WM: The Walkley Magazine.
Introduction

This research examines aspects of the Australian mainstream media representations of Arab and Muslim Australians during John Howard’s years in power (1996-2007). The study focuses on three main issues that dominated the media agenda during many years of Howard's conservative governance and did have an adverse impact on Arab and Muslim Australians. The three issues are: terrorism, boat people and the ‘Cronulla Phenomenon’. By ‘Cronulla Phenomenon’ I mean all the events that were related to the Cronulla issue, from a beach incident between surf lifesavers and young men from Lebanese background on Sunday 4 December 2005, to media incitements that came as a reaction to the incident, the culmination of the events into riots the following Sunday, and the repercussions of the riots. Together, these events make up the Cronulla Phenomenon.

I argue that the ramifications of the three contentious issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon were mainly due to contemptuous depictions of Arabs and Muslims in the Australian mainstream media. I also argue that negative portrayals of Arab and Muslim Australians in the media and deriding people from Arabic backgrounds or the Muslim faith in the discourse on terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon were not innocent actions, but rather a reflection of two key factors. The first is a tacit stirrer called Orientalism, a post-colonial Western implied doctrine studied by Edward Said. The second factor is the ushering of a new age in Australian politics, the post-multiculturalism era. In an age when Australia has entered and slowly embraced post-multiculturalism since the Howard years, Orientalism has had its impact on the public life, while negative representations are now continuing under the banner of social inclusion.

The research is mainly based on studies and media reports and opinion. While a wide range of Australian and overseas studies are referenced to support the
research arguments, media reports and articles are mainly derived from five Australian newspapers, three mainstream English and two Arabic. The English-language newspapers are one tabloid, The Daily Telegraph, and two broadsheets, The Sydney Morning Herald (in compact format since March 2013) and The Australian. The Australian Arabic newspapers are El-Telegraph and Annahar. El-Telegraph has recently become a daily newspaper. During the period under study, El-Telegraph was being published on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, while Annahar was being published on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Other media references are also used to highlight some issues, including – but not restricted to – broadcasts by Alan Jones on Radio 2GB around the Cronulla Phenomenon.

Australia is now supposed to be in the era of social inclusion. I argue that deep inside the engineering of social inclusion lies a number of troubled attitudes that have stamped and shaped the ‘Australian Trials’ throughout the years. By ‘Australian Trials’ I mean Australia's own, peculiar, challenging and confronting experiences and dealings with people from Non-English or Non-European backgrounds. The Australian Trials are the misconceptions, negative attitudes and stereotypical practices of the dominant English culture towards people from various cultural, racial or religious origins, especially Arabs, Middle Easterners, Lebanese and Muslims. The negative effects of the Australian Trials are exacerbated by media slanting, bias and sensationalism.

Many researchers and writers – such as Ghassan Hage, Ahmad Shboul, Paul Tabar, Greg Noble, David Marr, Anna Haebich, Jock Collins, Scott Poynting, Peter Manning, Samina Yasmeen and others – have researched the Australian Trials and uncovered their different aspects. I will refer to such works in the course of this research, in addition to relevant writings on issues like terrorism, violence and the media. Paranoia, fear, panic and stereotype are some of the main dynamics of the Australian Trials. They could all lead to racism and ethnic framing. Hage remarks that for Australians, ‘paranoia’ is ‘a pathological form of fear based on a conception of the self as excessively fragile, and
constantly threatened. Yet the origin of fear and panic has not always been domestic, as Marr sees it. Marr states that almost ‘all panics that gust through our politics start somewhere abroad.’ However, ‘the source and focus of Australia's disquiet about race is peculiarly our own,’ as Marr puts it. Marr's and Hage's inferences are in tune with the work of other writers such as Haebich. In Spinning the Dream Haebich indicates that Australians are vulnerable to fear as they are ‘enmeshed in today's anxieties’ so they aspire for ‘a safe place where there will be no strangers.’ The feared stranger is a key feature of the Australian Trials. The stranger is not simply any person who does not conform to the norm, but a racially framed individual or group. In Bin Laden in the Suburbs, Poynting and a group of scholars assert that the stranger in question is the ‘Arab Other’ who ‘coalesces the diverse groups that have been at the centre of waves of panic’ in Australia, including ‘terrorism, ethnic crime gangs’ and ‘Middle-Eastern asylum seekers.’

The framing of the Arab Other as the stranger is not new. It has its roots in the engagement between West and East. In his masterpiece, Orientalism, written thirty five years ago, Said explores the attitudes and thoughts of the former conqueror – Europe, America and the West in general – towards the conquered – the Orient, the East, Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, even other people from non-Western cultures or backgrounds. In the Orientalism school of thoughts, non-Western means non-English or non-European. Said demonstrates that the relationship between West and East is that of a master and a subordinate. The master is civilised and conforms to the norm while the subordinate is savage and odd. Said corroborates this view, noting that for the

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1 Hage, Ghassan, Against Paranoid Nationalism – Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society, Australia, Pluto Press, 2003, p 49.
Orientalist, the ‘strange’ is the ‘East’ which refers to ‘them’ while the ‘West’ is ‘us’, the ‘familiar’.\(^5\) Said also observes that the ‘Orient’ is a ‘European invention’ and ‘Orientalism’ is ‘a way of coming to terms with the Orient’ to help defining ‘Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.’\(^6\) Said explains that ‘Orientalism is a style of thought’ that makes a clear distinction between the East and the West,\(^7\) with a great Western authoritative position that ‘no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism.’\(^8\) Hence, the ‘relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.’\(^9\) Orientalism is not an abstract idea but ‘a cultural and a political fact,’ making its existence real, not forgotten ‘in some archival vacuum.’\(^10\) Orientalism is based on a long history of domination and power game that the West has been playing with the East. According to Said, domination and power motivate all dealings between the two entities in a way that the Occident believes that it owns the Orient and everything in it. This ownership mentality is not confined to Western governments or institutions but transcends them to ordinary Western humans.

Said sees the Orientalist as a ‘White Man’ who seeks to rule the world and take charge of it, with every human ‘expected to bend’ before his authority.\(^11\) This dominance urge is a manifestation of the West's supremacist assertion that is still being played out on the world stage since the colonial era. Said refers to a poem by the English poet and writer Rudyard Kipling published at the dawn of the Twentieth Century to underline the supremacist perceptions and practices of the white man. By idolising and glorifying the English soldiers who were at

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\(^6\) ibid, pp 1-2.
\(^7\) ibid, p 2.
\(^8\) ibid, p 3.
\(^9\) ibid, p 5.
\(^10\) ibid, p 13.
\(^11\) ibid, p 227.
the time colonising foreign lands – and exalting the ‘White Men’ who ‘tread’ the ‘road’ to go out and ‘clean a land’\textsuperscript{12} – Kipling’s lines make a good allegory of Said’s vision of the power hungry, conquest seeking, authority grabbing, chauvinist and supremacist Orientalist. Kipling’s white man chauvinism is stressed out right from the first lines of the poem. The ‘White Men’ go out ‘to right a wrong’\textsuperscript{13}. No other human race can do that but the white. The poet even eulogises ‘the cup the White Men drink,’ framing it as ‘the cup of the old world's hate’ and fancying ‘the dawn of the White Man's day!’\textsuperscript{14} That dawn is the same as that of the Orientalist era.

While Edward Said wrote in an American context, Australian Lebanese Ghassan Hage has thoroughly tackled the issue of white supremacy in Australian political, cultural and historical environments. In his book \textit{Against Paranoid Nationalism}, Hage remarks that ‘the Australian culture shares with other Western cultures the ‘orientalist’ legacy of colonialism.’\textsuperscript{15} This legacy forms the basis of what Hage calls ‘White paranoia’ that ‘has structured Australian nationalism from the time of its birth.’\textsuperscript{16} Hage argues that the Europeans believe that being ‘white’ makes them ‘civilised and superior’\textsuperscript{17} and ‘the best type of human being.’\textsuperscript{18}

In another work, \textit{White Nation}, Hage argues that ‘White supremacy’ can be displayed in two contradictory forms or attitudes, ‘White multiculturalism’ and ‘White racism.’ Both forms of multiculturalism have the same goal, to contain ‘the increasingly active role of non-White Australians in the process of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Cited in Said, \textit{Orientalism}, p 226.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Cited on http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/song_of_white_men.html
\item \textsuperscript{14} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Hage, \textit{Against Paranoid Nationalism}, op. cit., p 67.
\item \textsuperscript{16} ibid, p 47.
\item \textsuperscript{17} ibid, p 50.
\item \textsuperscript{18} ibid, p 49.
\end{itemize}
governing Australia." That is to give the dominant white culture the upper hand. Yet Hage stresses that ‘Whiteness’ does not ‘refer only to skin colour’ but rather to a ‘cumulative’ notion whereby people cannot be ‘fully White’ but they ‘yearn to be so.’ For Hage, ‘Whiteness is an aspiration’ that can be fulfilled through accumulating nationality, something even migrants can do ‘by acquiring the language, the accent, duration of residence, mastering of national-specific cultural practices, etc. – in other words, by assimilating.’ Through this concept, ‘Whiteness is an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct.’ Furthermore, ‘to yearn to be White Australian is clearly to belong to a specifically Australian variant of the dominant North European tradition of domination over ‘Third World-looking people.’ Hage summarises his theory by calling it ‘the ‘White nation’ fantasy,’ where ‘Whiteness and Australianness can be accumulated (up to a certain point) and people can be said to be more or less White and Australian.’ Despite these characteristics of whiteness accumulation, yearning and aspiration, Hage stresses that ‘White skin colour is’ still ‘certainly a valuable capital in claiming one's belonging.’ That whiteness ‘has its roots in the history of European colonisation which universalised a cultural form of White identity.’ In this perspective, Hage's theory conforms to Said's Orientalism.

Based on Said's concept of Orientalism and Hage's vision of whiteness, and in order to highlight my argument on the Australian Trials and their connection to the supremacist views in the context of the issues tackled in this research, I will

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20 ibid, pp 57-58.
21 ibid, p 20.
22 ibid, p 54.
23 ibid, p 58.
24 ibid, pp 58-59.
25 ibid, p 18.
26 ibid, p 20.
27 ibid, p 57.
28 ibid, p 58.
be using the term ‘Orientalist Aussie’ throughout this work to identify the main stirrer of the Australian Trials. Aussie is short for Australian. Dunn observes that ‘the popular image of an Aussie is an Anglo.’\textsuperscript{29} This identity of the Aussie has been confirmed by the Cronulla Phenomenon in 2005, which will be thoroughly studied in this research. Back then, mobile phone text messages addressed white youths as Aussies, as we would see. Furthermore, during the riots, ‘police struggled to control 5000 rioters yelling racist chants and “Aussie, Aussie Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi”, with many carrying Australian flags.’\textsuperscript{30} Thus the ‘Aussie’ is the Anglo-Celtic Australian.

The ‘Orientalist Aussie’ refers to ordinary Australian men and women, as well as to officials, politicians, media people and persons with any sort of power who uphold the fantasised supremacy of the English dominant culture. The Orientalist Aussie lives by the practices of the dominant culture and believes in its politics, rationale and vision of imperialistic primacy and arrogance. The Orientalist Aussie is not necessarily someone whose skin colour is white or has some degrees or shades of whiteness, but any Australian who lives by the values mentioned here, regardless of their skin colour. Thus, not every white is Orientalist Aussie, and not every non-white is non-Orientalist Aussie. In addition, the Orientalist Aussie is not only a human being but can also be an entity, organisation or establishment that upholds Anglo supremacy. The main characteristics of the Orientalist Aussie are racism, stereotyping, manipulation of truth, obsession with power and control, with an innate aversion to Arabs, Lebanese, Middle Easterners and Muslims, as I attempt to demonstrate in this study. The Orientalist Aussie wears different masks for different situations. Some masks can be more treacherous than others, showing overt support for multiculturalism while practising racism discreetly. The masks are designed to hide the true face of the Orientalist Aussie who is by nature bigot.


manipulative, obsessive and hating. The Orientalist Aussie can be everywhere; in politics, media, management, homes and in the streets. But the Orientalist Aussie is mainly lurking in the shadow or lives in sleeping phases and stays hidden and anonymous until the right time arrives. The Orientalist Aussie buoys to the surface and becomes active in times of war, turbulence, strife, ethnic tension or social malaise. Hence, the Orientalist Aussie is the main agent, the stirrer and the cause of the Australian Trials. For the Orientalist Aussie, the scapegoat is always ready, non-English and non-European strangers, including Arabs, Middle Easterners, Lebanese and Muslims, upon whom rage is vented.

Despite highlighting the concept of the Orientalist Aussie, and although Hage echoed Said's vision in an Australian context, the relevance of Orientalism to Australia needs to be supported by more tangible facts. In other words, if Orientalism is a post-colonial Western doctrine that defines the relationship and regulates the interaction between the Occident and the Orient, and since Said's study has been written years ago and in a different country, how is it then relevant to Australia today? To prove that relevance, we need to answer the following two questions: 1- Does Australia have any connection with the Orient or its people? 2- Is Australia a Western nation?

To answer the first question we need to learn more about Orientalism. According to Said, Orientalism ‘is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient,’ but ‘a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient’ and ‘is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, “there” in discourse about it.’ The visibility and clarity of the Orient that Said talks about are now more obvious and tangible due to the global village phenomenon. Orientalism is not exclusively applicable to Oriental lands but anywhere Orientals exist, live or interact with Occidentals.

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32 ibid, p 22.
The mass movements of people across continents and the telecommunications revolution through satellite and the internet have closed the distance between the Orient and the Occident. The demarcation lines between the two entities have been erased. Geography cannot alone embody the main distinction between East and West, but the culture itself, regardless of the land on which that culture is being lived, practised or celebrated. This reality is also valid, or can even be more visible or clearer when the Orientals and Occidentals live on the same land in a Western country. Nothing could be truer for Australia where Arabic is for instance the fourth spoken language other than English nationwide, and the first spoken language other than English in the country's biggest state of NSW. Hence, in Australia, the ‘Orient’ is not only ‘visible’, ‘clear’ and ‘there’, as per Said's vision quoted earlier, but rather it is very ‘visible’, too ‘clear’ and so much ‘there’. Its presence is unmistakable. This answers our first question.

Yet Said clearly referred to Orientalism as a Western attitude, practice or doctrine towards the East, or people from the East or Orientals. This brings in the second question: Is Australia a Western nation? The 2011 Census of the population has identified more than 300 ancestries in Australia. How can Orientalism be relevant to a country with such a diverse social fabric? Can we still assume that Australia is Western like America or Europe?

A closer look into the ancestry figures shows that the most commonly reported origins in the 2011 Census are ‘English (36%) and Australian (35%).’ So for a start, the 2011 Census is telling us that more than a third of Australians are of

36 ibid.
English ancestry. As for those who have claimed to have an Australian ancestry, the assumption about their far origin could be a tricky one. It is wrong to promptly assume that all those who have claimed to be of Australian ancestry are of European descent. However, an even closer look into this category of the 2011 Census participants reveals that the vast majority of those who have claimed to be of Australian ancestry are not immigrants; 98% of them have stated Australia as their country of birth. Furthermore, almost 80% of those who have claimed to be of Australian ancestry are of ‘third-plus generation’ Australians. This would make the vast majority of those who claimed to be of Australian ancestry European originally since – as indicated by Haebich – ‘it was not until 1973 that Australia formally discarded its anachronistic White Australia policy’ which was based on European migration. Now a simple calculation of those who have either claimed to be of English or Australian ancestries would indicate that almost two thirds of the population are of European descent.

In addition to the English and Australian ancestries, the Census has shown that ‘six of the leading ten ancestries reflected the European heritage.’ The other six European ancestries in the top ten of the 2011 Census are Irish, Scottish, Italian, German, Greek and Dutch. Together, the six European ancestries other than English encompass 32% of the Australian population. It should be noted that the total percentage of the ancestry question exceeds the total number of the population because the ‘2011 Census asked respondents to provide a maximum of two ancestries,’ with 32% of them claiming to have two ancestries. On the other hand, the 2011 Census has shown that 26% of the Australian population were born overseas. However, 20.8% of them were born in the United Kingdom, making them by far the highest percentage of those who were born outside Australia, followed by New Zealand as the second

37 ibid.
38 Haebich, op. cit., p 37.
40 ibid.
country of birth by 9.1%.\(^{41}\) The conclusion that these figures are projecting is that the vast majority of Australians can be classified as Westerners and the dominant culture in the country is English indeed.

The 2011 Census figures are not surprising. They take roots in a long history of biased immigration policies. Haebich remarks that Australia's 'official history that began with British discovery and settlement stamped white ownership and supremacy across the continent.'\(^ {42}\) To sustain this white supremacy, 'British migrants were the single largest national group arriving annually' in Australia until 1996, making up in most years before the 1960s 'at least half the yearly intake.' This preference of migration source went on for more than 200 years, 'from 1788 to 1996.'\(^ {43}\)

The British ancestry component of the latest population Census is the reflection of that long history of biased immigration policies that have been adopted by every Australian government until recently. 'Australia was kept white,' Haebich notes, by 'privileging' British immigrants 'through relaxed entry conditions, assisted passage schemes, generous land grants and special rights as British subjects. These privileges highlight just how crucial 'Britishness' was to immigration practices in Australia.'\(^ {44}\) Haebich argues that the 'crimson thread' of the British blood has made Australia a white nation and this whiteness has been maintained by bringing more people from 'Home' or Great Britain. This has made Australia 'a nation where whiteness bestowed citizenship, status, power and privilege.' Haebich remarks that Australia's 'core cultural, political and economic institutions and the networks of power and privilege' have advantaged the 'settlers who met the ideal racial and cultural profile.'\(^ {45}\) This long term practice has shaped 'this White Australia.'\(^ {46}\) Haebich

\(^{41}\) ibid.
\(^{42}\) Haebich, op. cit., p 67.
\(^{43}\) ibid, p 68.
\(^{44}\) ibid.
\(^{45}\) ibid.
\(^{46}\) ibid, p 67.
points out that the whiteness of the Australian society is ‘defined in terms of Anglo-Celtic culture and ancestry’ – a matter confirmed by the 2011 Census as we have seen – and ‘has determined rights of citizenship, status and belonging.’ This would make today's Australians ‘the heirs of an unequal triangulated relationship’ privileging people with ‘Anglo-Celtic ancestry’ from the beginning of the nation till our present time ‘over other immigrant groups and over Indigenous people.’

This analysis demonstrates that Australia is indeed a Western nation dominated by the English culture. The Orientalism effect is then as real and existent in its politics and as relevant and applicable to its society as it is to Europe's or America's. Orientalism is an essential part of the Australian Trials and the Orientalist Aussie is a sleeping carrier of its seeds. The Orientalism effect becomes more obvious when the Orientalist Aussie deals with issues related to Arabs or Muslims. Shboul indicates that the perception of Arabs and Muslims in the Australian media is built upon the background of Orientalism. The two racial and religious components of the social fabric– Arabs and Muslims – are the main targets of the Orientalist Aussie, as of Orientalism. According to Said, ‘the principal dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam.’ This research will show that in the Australian Trials, Orientalism is not confined to studies of Arabs and Muslims, but is translated into negative verbal and physical attitudes towards them. The Orientalist Aussie embodies those negative attitudes and shows them up particularly in times of strife. Aggression and animosity are some of the main characteristics of the Orientalist Aussie who has a belligerent spirit. The Australian Trials with terrorism for instance have let the genie of that spirit out of its bottle. Collins remarks that immediately after the September 11 Attacks and the Bali

46 ibid, p 66.
47 ibid, p 10.
49 Said, op. cit., p 300.
Bombings, Australians from Arabic backgrounds or the Islamic faith ‘were subjected to hostility, abuse and violence.’\(^{50}\)

To summarise, ‘Australia is predominantly an Anglo-Saxon secular nation-state,’\(^{51}\) as Ali puts it. Haebich stresses that this reality is due to decades of stacking the country with British immigrants, creating ‘a nation with an Anglo-Celtic core culture.’\(^{52}\) Haebich notes that government institutions and policies ‘have worked to advantage the settler Australians who fitted the ideal Anglo-Celtic racial and cultural profile’ making them ‘the citizens who truly belong.’\(^{53}\)

As mentioned earlier, this research examines the Australian media and political discourse and rhetoric around the issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon during John Howard's years, and their consequences on Arab and Muslim Australians. The research highlights the effects of the Orientalist Aussie on the Australian Trials that are related to these three controversial issues. Each of those three issues forms a chapter of the research. However, to put my argument into context, and to underline the post-multiculturalism factor, the research starts with a chapter on social inclusion, the new concept that is replacing multiculturalism.

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\(^{52}\) Haebich, op. cit., p 66.

\(^{53}\) ibid, p 10.
**Demise of Multiculturalism**

The first chapter shows that the media and political discourse on the issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon is partly due to the new post-multicultural era that Australia has silently been embracing. The chapter shows that work on phasing out multiculturalism in Australia has started as soon as Howard came to power. Furthermore, multiculturalism has slowly become an unpopular term, systematically targeted by politicians, even well before Howard came to power and prior to the Australian public becoming absorbed by the contentious issues of terrorism and boat people. Bell has observed that in the early nineteen nineties, multiculturalism appeared ‘to be changing towards an empty label.’ Multiculturalism has been grabbing the attention of the mainstream media only when negative reporting is involved. Ethnicity can only make it to the front page of a newspaper or prime time television news when there is something unpleasant to talk about. ‘Bad news about multiculturalism is good news for the media,’ as Bell puts it. The chapter demonstrates that post-multiculturalism is now being carried out under the banner of social inclusion. I argue that social inclusion is a way that leads Australia towards assimilation.

**Terrorism**

Terrorism is the focus of the second chapter that looks mainly into the impact of this issue on the Australian Arabic and Muslim communities, through a number of events including the 2001 September 11 Attacks on the USA, the Bali Bombings in Indonesia in October 2002, in addition to the notion of home grown terrorism in the aftermath of the London bombings in July 2005, and the case of the Indian Doctor Mohamed Haneef in July 2007. The chapter argues that the attacks and bombings awakened the dormant Orientalism attitudes in the psyche of the Orientalist Aussie, which lead to a series of attacks and

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55 ibid, p ix.
abuses against Australians from Arabic backgrounds or the Muslim faith. Undoubtedly, the September 11 Attacks caused the biggest shock on the world stage in this millennium. The attacks were carried out by people who came from the Orient against the Americans who, like the Aussies, came mainly from the Occident. That Orient is the same that Said pointed to as the source of the ‘deepest and most recurring images of the Other’ for the West, and for Australia, as this chapter will demonstrate.

**Boat People**

The third chapter covers the Australian media and political discourse towards boat people, focusing on the Children Overboard Affair. The latter was a politically driven fabrication that occurred five weeks before the Federal election of 2001. Back then, the Howard conservative government falsely accused a group of boat people of throwing their children into the ocean to get the attention of the Australian navy to save them and take them, along with their families, into Australian care. Subsequently, Howard won a third term in office. The Children Overboard Affair was one of his winning tickets, along with other drastic measures against boat people. The media played an essential role in this outcome as they failed to challenge the official story. They seemed to be in collusion with the government, as we would see. Mahan and Griset indicate that in the media industry now ‘the best journalist is increasingly the diligent journalist.’ This comes from the fact that media organisations are keen to impose ‘self-censorship’ as a result of their ‘complicity in government efforts to mislead the public through disseminating domestic propaganda.’

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58 ibid, p 220.
The Cronulla Phenomenon

The fourth chapter thoroughly scrutinises the inflammatory media discourse, especially the hate-mongering broadcasts of commercial radio personality Alan Jones, in the lead-up to the riots that occurred in Cronulla on Sunday 11 December 2005. The chapter looks into how Jones' on-air talks inflated the fearsome image of Arab and Muslim Australians. Alan Jones projected typical Orientalist Aussie discourse and feelings. He knew well how to use his tools to spread fear through his faceless voice. ‘Radio is the perfect medium for whipping up panic,’ Marr observes, and ‘the voice without the face brings fear so efficiently to the breakfast table.’\(^{59}\) In the lead up to the riots in Cronulla, Jones was spearheading a scare-mongering campaign against Lebanese and Muslims. As we would see in this chapter, Jones' acrid and sarcastic attacks on his fellow Australians from those communities were full of bigotry, bullying and supremacist attitudes. His on-air language confirmed Said's vision of the way Orientalism would function. It's through ‘an assumption’ by the West ‘that the Orient and everything in it’ is considered, ‘if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West.’\(^{60}\) That's how Jones treated his targets; Lebanese, Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims. They were inferior, he was superior, as we would see.

\(^{59}\) Marr, op. cit., p 8.

\(^{60}\) Said, op. cit., pp 40-41.
Chapter 1

Demise of Multiculturalism

Social Inclusion or Reclaiming the Assimilatory Past

Australia has witnessed community backlash and heated debates around a series of racially driven issues in the past two decades. The controversies I am referring to here are related to the issues of terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon. Those contentious issues will be examined in the next three chapters of this research.

The ethnic tension surrounding terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon have appeared as symptoms of a dysfunctional society and threatened the national cohesion and the Australian social fabric. For the Orientalist Aussie, whom I have identified in the introduction, multiculturalism is to blame for these confronting experiences which I have called the Australian Trials. Mansouri and Lobo observe that multiculturalism ‘is now increasingly linked in the public imaginary to risk, fear, anxiety, vulnerability and alienation.’\(^1\) With mounting concerns around national security, state sovereignty, sea border incursions and racial resentment, cultural diversity has become a source of paranoia for many Australians. Jenkins indicates that some Australians consider that multiculturalism has brought ‘a level of insecurity driven by the belief that common values are being eroded.’\(^2\) Hence a new

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socio-political concept has become a necessity, a vision that moves the country away from multiculturalism and its purported risks.

This chapter examines the new post-multiculturalism model of Australia today. Australia is ‘now in a ‘post-multicultural’ era.’ Multiculturalism is being phased out on the official level. The mere fact that Australians have come from various backgrounds, speak different languages and eat a variety of food is not what multiculturalism is about. Multiculturalism is rather the incorporation of this diversity into the political, social and educational systems, and above all its admission into the national conscience. That would make diversity appreciated and its benefits valued. This vision of multiculturalism puts all people from all backgrounds on equal footing with the dominant culture in making up the Australian image, identity and values. But Hage believes that multiculturalism in Australia has never gone that far. He talks instead about a ‘White multiculturalism’ through which ‘the White nation fantasy operates to reproduce itself.’ Bell points out that the media see multiculturalism as ‘a bureaucratic-administrative issue, with the economic arguments of experts as a principal factor.’

I argue that the Orientalist Aussie reproduces multiculturalism by re-assessing cultural diversity through the prism of the Australian Trials. Multiculturalism in Australia has never been taken seriously enough to forge a well-knitted, strongly-bonded, genuinely-incorporated and firmly-inclusive society. The events of the Australian Trials in the next three chapters will confirm this reality. Mansouri and Lobo remark that ‘multiculturalism as a state policy has

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4 Hage, White Nation, op. cit., pp 138-139.

5 Bell, Multicultural Australia in the Media, op. cit., p 81.
failed to integrate ethnic minorities and provide communal harmony. ’6 This would necessitate the abandonment of multiculturalism and the move to a new political and social vision. The post-multiculturalism policy in Australia today is known as social inclusion. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how social inclusion is aiming at eliminating multiculturalism and rendering it invisible to take the country back to the era of assimilation.

**What is social inclusion?**

Inclusion is often identified as a counter measure to exclusion. Yasmeen describes exclusion as ‘a state, outcome or condition in which individuals and communities across generations may find themselves in a position that is characterised by relative or absolute denial of resources.’ Inclusion, on the other hand, ‘focuses on countering and correcting the negative impact of exclusion.’7 Yet it is not enough for the government to declare a policy of social inclusion to make it viable. Nelson and a group of writers identify two prerequisites to make such policy achievable and successful, ‘motivation to belong as well as acceptance.’ This process involves, as Nelson and others explain, a desire to be included and a willingness to include. ‘Acceptance of minorities’ in Australia however, as Nelson and others notice, ‘has been less prominent in recent policy discussion.’8 Levey indicates that both inclusion and belonging are important elements for the building of a cohesive society.9 Furthermore, Markus highlights that exclusion, inclusion and cohesion are

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6 Mansouri & Lobo, op. cit., p 4.
terminologies that ‘are interrelated and overlapping’ and ‘refer to the same phenomenon.’

In a nutshell, inclusion is a desire to be included and a willingness to accept the excluded and make them belong.

On the official level, the ‘Australian Government’s vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in our society.’ This can be achieved through four key areas that the government has identified: learning, working, engaging and having a voice. We will come back to the social inclusion policy of the Australian government at the time of writing, later in this chapter.

**Under Howard**

Social turmoil and political dissatisfaction have made the headlines several times in the past two decades. In the next chapters we will take a close look into such headlines and news. The usefulness of multiculturalism has been debated over and over again with many voices calling to put an end to it. Ercan notes that multiculturalism has been losing its popularity as ‘a long-sought solution to the problems of culturally diverse societies.’

The process of disassembling multiculturalism in Australia started well before the September 11 Attacks, although multiculturalism was not promptly replaced by social inclusion. Chiro remarked that as soon as Howard was

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12 ibid.

13 Ercan, op. cit., p 75.
elected, he ‘began to dismantle the multicultural apparatus.’ Press reports and research indicated that Howard's measures to abolish multiculturalism included demoting the portfolio of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs ‘from the Cabinet to a junior ministry,’ and subsuming the once ‘very powerful’ Office of Multicultural Affairs, along with the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, in the Immigration Department. Howard then established the National Multicultural Advisory Council which he later abolished after he launched its report *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness*. Subsequently, the government adopted a new multicultural policy that included four principles: ‘civic duty; cultural respect; social equity; and productive diversity.’ Howard also committed himself to a Council for Multicultural Australia, which he later abolished, and changed the name of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and introduced the ‘Australian citizenship test.’

The test for the would-be citizens was Howard's most peculiar step towards the gradual elimination of multiculturalism. Immigrants who wanted to become naturalised Australians had to sit a test in English on the history and geography of Australia and on other Australian topics and themes including sports. Fozdar indicated that new citizens were also asked to ‘embrace the values of Australia.’ The values in question were those of the dominant culture. Fozdar

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17 Chiro, op. cit., p 25.
18 ibid, p 25-26.
19 Fozdar, Farida, ‘Constructing Australian Citizenship as Christian: Or How to Exclude Muslims from the National Imagining’, in *Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural Relations –*
observed that the test was ‘a mechanism for exclusion within a discourse of social cohesion.’ Through the new requirements for citizenship, Howard was invoking the spirit of White Australia Policy, denying the citizenship to people who would not embrace the Australian values. Those values, as Chiro pointed out, were ‘spearheaded by the shared need to preserve Anglo-Australian cultural heritage and to maintain social cohesion and national security in the face of rising numbers of non-British (non-white) migrants.’ Hage argued that the ‘sheer presence of non-Whites ends up either deliberately or accidently undermining’ the British culture.

Howard's measures to demolish multiculturalism did not come out of the blue. They were the expression of his longing to see Australia re-embracing assimilation. Years before Howard was elected, he wrote in a letter to a constituent in May 1991 that ‘Australia made an error in abandoning its former policy of encouraging assimilation and integration in favour of multiculturalism.’ Chiro saw that Howard's election in 1996 ‘heralded the reassertion of the traditional national popular scepticism on matters of immigration, multiculturalism, links with Asia and national security.’ Interestingly, the work that Howard had started to move Australia away from multiculturalism did not stop after his government lost the election in 2007 and Howard quitting politics as a result of him losing his own seat of Bennelong. It rather continued under the Labor Party.

__Looking through the Lens of Social Inclusion, Mansouri, Fethi & Lobo, Michele (eds.), England, USA, Ashgate, 2011, p 38.__

20 ibid, p 35.
22 Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism, op. cit., p 53.
After Howard

The Labor opposition led by Kevin Rudd won the election in 2007. Rudd was ousted by his Deputy Julia Gillard before the next polls. Chiro noted that both Labor governments of Rudd and Gillard ‘followed the social policies they inherited from the Howard’ era. The Rudd Government conducted a review of the citizenship test and subsequently decided to retain it but shifted the focus to the ‘civic aspects of Australian citizenship, such as ‘democratic beliefs,’ laws and rights rather than history and values.’ Rudd, however, went a step further than Howard in bringing the country towards inclusiveness; an aim cited by the disbanded Advisory Council mentioned earlier. Rudd took the initiative and established in 2008 the Australian Social Inclusion Board. Through this board, the Labor government identified the four key areas mentioned earlier in this chapter – learning, working, engaging and having a voice – as the main points of its social inclusion policy. A comparison between these four key areas and Howard's four principles mentioned earlier as well – civic duty, cultural respect, social equity and productive diversity – would reveal that in the formula of conservative Howard, words reminiscent of multiculturalism such as ‘cultural’ and ‘diversity’ were still kept in, while under the Labor's vision, multiculturalism disappeared completely.

A visit to the Social Inclusion Board's website at the time of writing showed that while many of the ten board members claimed in their short curricula vitae posted online to have worked with communities in general, none of them – except for two Indigenous Australian members – was claiming knowledge of, connection or work with ethnic communities. None of the ten board members declared to have worked with immigrants or refugees, or to have any interest in multiculturalism. None of them was of Middle Eastern or Arabic background, while one young member was of Indian extraction. One former member, Ahmed Fahour, was an Arab Muslim. On its website, the board identified six

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27 See http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au
priorities for its social inclusion agenda in 2012-2013, three of them new, dealing with broad and pompous themes such as advising the government on matters like ‘the emerging issue of older women and homelessness,’ ways ‘that may improve employment outcomes for very disadvantaged job seekers’ and strengthening ‘knowledge around improving the financial capability of disadvantaged Australians.’ In addition, the board stated that it would ‘continue its current work’ on issues such as ‘how services can meet the needs of the most disadvantaged,’ providing ‘measurement and reporting of social inclusion indicators’ and ‘place-based interventions to assist disadvantaged people.’

But who are those ‘disadvantaged’ who have been mentioned as a target group over and over again? Are they young people living in families with difficulties? Youths at risk? Indigenous Australians? Vulnerable women? Immigrants? Refugees or boat people? Or perhaps all of them? The theme is so wide and vague that it is hard to make up the groups that are the real target of the Australian Social Inclusion Board.

In a previous set of priorities, the Board named six similar key areas. However, underneath the final priority, there was this paragraph that was written independently from the six-dot-points: ‘In implementing these priorities, the Government is also committed to helping vulnerable new arrivals and refugees. These groups remain central to the social inclusion agenda, with the Government monitoring progress via the social inclusion measurement and reporting framework.’ This paragraph has not been included in the 2012-2013 agenda. It is gone, although the issue of boat people and refugees is one of the most pressing social matters in Australia today.

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The Board has issued the 2nd Edition of its report Social Inclusion in Australia – How Australia is faring. In a synopsis on its website, the Board remarks that its report ‘tracks Australia's progress against a range of social inclusion indicators. It looks at how we're performing in relation to health and disability, employment, financial stress, education, access to services, housing, feelings of safety and engagement in community activities.’ The Board's report describes Australia as ‘a thriving prosperous nation with high rates of employment, good health and high educational attainment,’ but admits that there are people ‘at risk of being left behind.’ The report however, does not refer to Australia as a multicultural society. Furthermore, a photograph depicting six women is published on the report's cover, four of them appear to be white or have shades of whiteness, while one is Asian and another is donning the hijab. In addition to the six women, a blond toddler and an Asian little girl are also in the picture. All women look happy, smiling or laughing, on a greenish suburban background with a large one-level building in the farthest back. The photograph invokes the Australian Government's propaganda of the 1950s, an issue well researched by Haebich. Back then, the government was promoting ‘its new vision of an assimilated nation’ as Haebich observed, with ‘images of happy families – British, European and Aboriginal – all joining in the Australian way of life,’ with ‘the veneer of unity covering over the mass of tensions, contradictions and inequalities that characterised’ Australia at that time.

The propaganda's images of the 1950s ‘were widely used in public campaigns to conjure up the government's vision of an assimilated nation.’ Today's picture on the cover of the social inclusion report is a nostalgic return to the old days of assimilation fantasy through a new style of propaganda mechanism that depicts Australia as a prosperous, healthy, happy and united nation, enjoying

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31 Haebich, Spinning the Dream, op. cit., p 27.

32 ibid, p 86.
high employment rates, with no divisive, ethnic or racial issues. With the assimilation propaganda of the 1950s, the special needs of the new comers could not be seen. It was rather all about happy families. In the new policy of social inclusion, the special issues and needs of immigrants and refugees have disappeared. In the 114 pages of the Social Inclusion Board's report, there is no mention at all of refugees, asylum seekers or boat people. Migrants however, are referred to in a couple of spots either to talk about their numbers, to state that their employment opportunities may improve with better English, or to discuss their acceptance in the wider community. Here the report discloses that the least accepted migrants are those who have come from Iraq and Lebanon. The report does not mention how to deal with the issue of acceptance.

Based on this analysis, the social inclusion policy in Australia today is far from being a natural sequence to multiculturalism. It is rather a social agenda that is dragging the nation backward to the old days of assimilation. Haebich believes that ‘the current public debate on national identity and nationhood’ and on issues such as race, ethnicity and immigration are being haunted by ‘nostalgia for an assimilated nation.’\(^3^3\) While inclusion is opposite to exclusion, it appears that with the current social inclusion policy, the included must exclude all their specific needs, heritage, traditions, customs and cultural background so they can fit the government's vision, and be accepted, then included into its policy of social inclusion. This approach, which is imperative to the current social inclusion agenda, spells assimilation. As shown in the introduction, over 300 ancestries have been identified in the 2011 Census of the Australian population. The census has also revealed that more than a quarter of ‘Australia's population was born overseas’ with a further one fifth having ‘at least one overseas-born parent.’\(^3^4\)

\(^3^3\) ibid, p 7.
The social inclusion policy seems to disregard these facts by rejecting all ethnic distinctions and needs, and rendering cultural diversity invisible. This is political spin that ignores the composition of the Australian social fabric and tickles the nostalgic longing to the pre-multiculturalism days. Haebich notes that if ‘today is the age of political spin then the 1950s mark its birth.’\(^{35}\) The social inclusion agenda of modern Australia is a legacy of the Howard era with its origins deeply rooted in the past. The Howard Government worked on instating what Haebich described as ‘a form of retro-assimilation that harks back to Hasluck's policy.’\(^{36}\) As a Federal Minister for Territories during the 1950s, Paul Hasluck was considered a champion of assimilation.\(^{37}\) ‘Retro-assimilation,’ Haebich explains, ‘mixes 1950s dreams of an assimilated nation with current ideas of nationhood using today's spin to create an imagined world based on shared values’ where all people ‘will be treated equally’ when they ‘agree to cast off their differences and become the same.’\(^{38}\)

It seems that retro-assimilation is now being sold to the public as social inclusion, and is seen by decision makers as the solution to all the issues that have caused trouble under the banner of multiculturalism. ‘Retro-assimilation has strong appeal in today's climate of social turmoil,’\(^{39}\) Haebich says. Like in the old days of assimilation, as Haebich further explains, when the government used pictures of happy families to promote the Australian way of life, promotional campaigns are now using similar scenes ‘against the bogeymen of war, terrorism and other alien ‘isms’ encapsulated in such expressions as ‘of Middle Eastern appearance.’’ With retro-assimilation, ‘the past is a grab bag of clichés used to sell the present. Nostalgic memories peddle solutions for current issues or camouflage unpalatable political agenda.’\(^{40}\) Furthermore, Haebich indicates that in order to restore ‘the hegemony of settler Australian

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\(^{35}\) Haebich, op. cit., p 87.

\(^{36}\) ibid, p 388.

\(^{37}\) ibid, p 194.

\(^{38}\) ibid, p 8.

\(^{39}\) ibid.

\(^{40}\) ibid.
ideals and culture,’ the Howard government ‘devised opportunities to emphasise the alienness of refugees’ and gave ‘its implicit consent to campaigns of demonisation against ‘people of Middle Eastern appearance.’’ With the current climate of divisions around issues involving ethnicity, as Haebich remarks, some Australians are ‘seeking a return to the cultural homogeneity promised by assimilation.’ Yet Haebich argues that there is a public denial of any move towards assimilation; a word ‘rarely mentioned’ although ‘more than a trace of its essence remains in official pronouncements’ on various issues including Australian ‘values’ and ‘citizenship.’

The social inclusion policy is one of the treacherous masks of the Orientalist Aussie. Although the principles that the policy is championing are important and valuable, they ignore diversity and the various special needs of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, taking the nation back to the time of assimilation. In essence, the social inclusion agenda assumes that the dominant culture can absorb all other cultures and encompass the aspirations of all ethnic minorities. This rhymes with an assumption described by Huntington as the ‘belief in the universality of Western culture.’ Huntington, however, warns against such approach, noting that it ‘suffers three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous.’

Multiculturalism has been manifested in the Australian Trials as a threat to the Orientalist Aussie whose grip on power seems stronger under the social inclusion agenda where cultural distinctions are ignored to the benefit of the dominant culture. Chiro observes that ‘Australia's prevailing ideology remains firmly tied to the cultural and political values of the dominant historical bloc which was forged mostly under the British flag.’ It is the same dominant bloc

41 ibid, p 393.
42 ibid, pp 7-8.
44 Chiro, op. cit., p 17.
of the Orientalist Aussie. Orientalism implies, as Said notes, that the ‘Westerner’ engages ‘in a whole series of relationships’ with the aim of never losing their ‘relative upper hand.’ In the face of the instability presumably brought in by multiculturalism, the Orientalist Aussie has had to reassert the dominant culture's position of supremacy to maintain its upper hand. This should not be difficult. It is a part of life for the Orientalist Aussie whose will must be obeyed. ‘Being a White man’ as Said points out, is ‘a way of taking hold of reality,’ and of its ‘language and thought.’ That is mainly because ‘Orientalism’ is the expression of ‘the strength of the West and the Orient’s weakness – as seen by the West.’ It is a matter of ‘inerradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority,’ a distinction that has been ‘deepened and even hardened’ by the ‘development and subsequent history’ of ‘Orientalism.’ That distinction could not be achieved through multiculturalism, but through mono-cultural policies such as social inclusion. The current policy of social inclusion is a modernised form of assimilation; a reaffirmation of the supremacy of the Orientalist Aussie.

**Are you Arab?**

In the era of social inclusion, a new state-sponsored discriminatory issue has emerged. To apply for a visa to Australia, one of the documents that must be submitted is Form 80. The document allows the Australian security agencies to run a character check on the applicant and any person accompanying them. Checking the records of people who want to travel to Australia is a valid requirement especially in the current international security and political environments. The Australian authorities need to make sure that people who are entering the country have not been involved in crime, illegal activities,

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48 Ibid, p 42.
illicit trades or terrorism. There is no question about the need for such measure. However, it seems that there are other hidden purposes for Form 80.

Question 6 in Form 80 asks ‘Are you of an Arabic descent?’ (See appendix 1). If your answer is ‘no’, then you are safe as you can proceed to the next question. If you say ‘yes’, then you have a new task to perform. You will have to write the full name of your grandfather. Another nationality is mentioned in Form 80; Chinese. Question 5 asks ‘Do you ever use a Chinese Commercial Code Number for your names shown in the passport/travel document at Question 1.’ If the applicant's answer is yes, then they will have to write their ‘Chinese Commercial Code Number’ in full. While the question related to Chinese applicants can be justified on the ground of checking if the Chinese person who is applying for a visa has used other names or identities – in this case a commercial code number – the reason for the question directed to Arab applicants is difficult to comprehend. The Chinese applicant is judged on his/her own name or identification number, while the Arab applicant is judged on other people's names, his or her grandfather's, in addition to his/her own name. In other words, the Chinese applicant, like all other applicants, is judged on their own deeds and records, with the Chinese Commercial Code Number added in to confirm the identity of the person. The Arab applicant, on the other hand, is not only judged on their own deeds and records, but also on someone else's deeds and records as well. Out of all nationalities and races on earth, Arabs have been singled out in a weird measure if they wish to travel to Australia. An Arab applicant is not only judged on their own identity but also on their nationality.

Question 6 in Form 80 is stark discrimination against people from Arabic descent. Wakim describes it as ‘a declaration of an anti-Arab foreign policy.’ He observes that while ‘nationality is a characteristic of a person’ it cannot ‘define the character.’ Wakim notes that the question appears to be ‘a hangover from the Howard era “alert but not alarmed” Arabophobia.’ It simply implies that ‘anything Arabic must be of suspicious character or the antithesis of the
Australian character.’ There is nothing about inclusion in Question 6 of Form 80, but exclusion. It is xenophobic. Chiro remarks that Australia has been experiencing for many years ‘the re-emergence of xenophobic, not to say racist, national discourses.’ Singling out Arabs for scrutiny of ancestry is the novelty of the Orientalist Aussie. This action has its roots in the ‘Orientalist reality’ that Said describes as ‘antihuman and persistent. Its scope, as much as its institutions and all-pervasive influence lasts up to the present.’

**Conclusion**

Australia is in a new post-multiculturalism era. The main theme is now social inclusion. The latter is a newly adopted policy that serves as a melting pot for diversity, dissolving all distinctions and peculiarities into one clearly defined set of priorities that conforms to the Western values. Social inclusion is diversity fusion into which the special needs of people from as many cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds disappear. The assimilation fantasy is an inextinguishable desire of the Orientalist Aussie. Hage notices that ‘Australia’s debates about multiculturalism’ have been shaped by ‘White paranoia’ and have always been centred ‘around the construction of an ‘un-integrated other’’ and the need to integrate them. Australia is now making its way back to the old days of assimilation. Social inclusion and assimilation are two sides of the same coin. They both mean the containment and dissolution of minorities into the values of the dominant English culture. The ‘legacy of assimilation’ as Haebich indicates, dates ‘back to the early colonial times, from reforming convicts’ to assimilating ‘ Aboriginal people and immigrants in the 1950s.’ Today's social inclusion agenda is a fulfilment of that legacy in modern time. The legacy of what Haebich has described as 'an assimilated White

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51 Chiro, op. cit., p 29.

52 Said, op. cit., p 44.


54 Haebich, op. cit., p 66.
Australia,55 a country ‘unified by cultural homogeneity rather than racial exclusivity,’ forming a ‘uniform cultural landscape’ under ‘the dominant Anglo-Celtic settler culture.’56 The current social inclusion policy is a road map to this end.

The social inclusion policy is a way to tighten the grip of the Orientalist Aussie on the nation and to manage its people and resources. Through such policy the Orientalist Aussie is reinstated as superior, can make rules and dictate them in accordance with the values of the dominant culture. The social inclusion policy has been built upon Howard’s work in dismantling multiculturalism and has been developed in the aftermath of the Australian Trials that we are going to study in the remaining three chapters of the research, starting with the issue of terrorism.

55 ibid, p 83.
56 ibid, p 81.
Chapter 2

Terror Australis

Awakening the Sleeping Cells of “Orientalism”

The destruction of the World Trade Centre’s twin towers in New York by hijackers who ploughed aircrafts full of civilians into the buildings on September 11 2001 was a turning point in modern history. Immediately after the attacks, American President, George W. Bush, declared that ‘America and its allies were in a war with terrorism’; an anonymous, conceptual and intangible enemy. In his first reactionary speech to his nation, President Bush stated that the attacks were directed to ‘our way of life, our very freedom’ because ‘we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.’ White saw in Bush's statement ‘a rhetorical reaction’ to the tragic events that claimed the lives of thousands of people.

It did not take long before the rhetoric was materialised. Two wars followed, with the first immediately after the attacks. The new bellicose conflict that Bush first called ‘war on terror’ and became also known as ‘war on terrorism’ was a polarising issue. Bush stated clearly: ‘Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’ Subsequently, the US troops and their allies invaded Afghanistan to eradicate the Taliban rulers who were purportedly protecting

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5 White, op. cit., p 8.
6 Cited in Tuman, op. cit., p 139.
the perpetrators of the September 11 Attacks; Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network. Less than two years later, in March 2003, another country, Iraq, was swamped by US troops and their allies to topple its ruler, Saddam Hussein, and to rid the world of his alleged – never proven to exist – weapons of mass destruction. In the meantime, a series of terrorist attacks occurred in many countries and places, including the Indonesian town of Bali in October 2002. A mecca for tourism, Bali was mainly frequented by Australians. In his book Australian Jihad, Chulov described Bali as ‘the playground of Aussies for 30 years.’ This would explain why the Australian casualties were the highest among the victims from other nationalities; 88 out of 202 dead.

This doomed start of the millennium was crunch time for Australian Arabs and Muslims. It left deep imprints on the Australian Trials and brought out the wrath of the Orientalist Aussie. This chapter examines the ramifications of the war on terrorism and its consequences on Australian Arabic and Muslim communities, through analysing press reports on the issue. I argue that identifying the Middle East as the source of terrorism and exporter of terrorists made Arabs and Muslims in Australia easy targets for an already hostile mainstream society and its media and for politicians who were vying for votes through fear sowing tactics. This will be examined in this chapter. I also argue that expressions muttered by Bush which were mentioned earlier, such as ‘our way of life’ and America being ‘the brightest beacon for freedom’ are indicative of a sub-conscious fantasy of self-gratifying feeling of superiority. The latter is a characteristic of the Westerner, including the Orientalist Aussie. Whilst not condoning any type of violence, attacks or acts of terrorism, I argue that concepts like ‘war on terrorism’ find their roots in the Orientalism school of thoughts, as researched and presented by Said, almost a quarter of a century prior to the September 11 Attacks. As indicated in the introduction, Arabs and Muslims are the principal targets of Orientalism. Said identifies the origins of such attitude. ‘On the one hand,’ Saïd remarks, ‘there are Westerners, and on

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7 Chulov, Martin, Australian Jihad – The Battle Against Terrorism from Within and Without, Sydney, Pan Macmillan Australia, 2006, pp 221.
the other there are Arab-Orientals.’ The Westerners are ‘rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion,’ while Arabs are ‘none of these things.’

In other terms, in the Orientalist mind, Arabs are not peaceful, nor liberals or logical, but violent, intolerant and illogical. They have no real values, but they are of lowlife and suspicious by nature. These characteristics are in fact similar to those of a terrorist. In other words, in the Orientalist view, the characteristics of an Arab are those of a terrorist. For an Orientalist, and the Orientalist Aussie as such, there is no difference between an Arab and a terrorist.

Before we go into the ramifications of the war on terrorism on Arab and Muslim Australians, we need to define two key issues: 1- Who are the Arab and Muslim Australians? 2- What is terrorism?

**Who are the Arab and Muslim Australians?**

Australian Arabs are not all Muslims, and Muslim Australians are not all Arabs. People from Arabic backgrounds have come to Australia from twenty two different Arab countries and from other parts of the world forming Muslim and Christian communities. Furthermore, there are non-Arab minorities that have come to Australia from Arab countries, such as Kurds who are Muslim and Assyrians who are Christian. These two non-Arab minorities have come mainly from Iraq, an Arab country, and from other non-Arab countries like Turkey and Iran. According to the 2011 census, there are over 287 thousand ‘Arabic speakers in Australia, representing 1.3% of the entire population.’ The Census has shown that the Australian population stands at nearly 22 million.

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8 Said, Orientalism, p 49.
According to the census, almost 52% of Arab Australians are Muslims.\textsuperscript{11} The total Muslim population in Australia accounts for a bit over 476 thousand people, that’s 2.5% of the population.\textsuperscript{12} This makes Muslim Arabs less than one third of the followers of the Islamic faith in Australia. The rest of the Muslim citizens of Australia have come from non-Arab countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and others.

This shows that Arab and Muslim Australians form a diverse mosaic landscape. Let’s take another close look into the Iraqi community for instance. Iraq is an Arab country with the majority of its population Muslim Arabs. As explained earlier, there are also Arab Christians, non-Arab Christians and non-Arab Muslims who have come from Iraq. The Lebanese community is another example. There are eighteen different religious confessional minorities in Lebanon, as well as non-Arab Lebanese like the Armenians who are Christian and the Kurds who are Muslim. On the other hand, Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic non-Arab Muslim country with more than a dozen ethnic minorities including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, in addition to a very small minority of Arabs. India is neither Muslim nor Arab, yet a Muslim Indian medical practitioner in Australia, Mohamed Haneef, was easily mistaken for a terrorist, not only by the media or the politicians, but also by the Australian policing system. Haneef’s case will be referred to in this chapter.

Despite this mosaic of nationalities, religious affiliations and cultures, Arabs and Muslims, along with other ethnic minorities who have come from the Middle East, have been depicted by the Australian mainstream media as one homogenous group. Collins and a group of academics point out that media reports use terms such as ‘Middle Eastern,’ ‘Lebanese’ and ‘ethnic’ to

\textsuperscript{11} Anonymous, ‘Census Explorer’, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{12} Anonymous, ‘Reflecting a nation: stories from the 2011 Census’, op. cit.

reinforce ‘myths of ethnic homogeneity.’ Yet ‘there is none.’ Furthermore, Shboul remarks that there is ‘a tendency’ in the Australian media ‘to overlook the fact that not all Arabs are Muslims’ and that ‘Christianity has been very much an Arab religion since early Christian times.’ Tarbush notes that Arabs and Muslims are taken by the West as ‘interchangeable terms, despite the fact that the majority of Muslims live outside the Arab world, while there are many Christians and other non-Muslim communities in the Middle East.’ I argue that all Orientals in Australia are viewed as one melting pot because they are all considered by the Orientalist Aussie as the source of the same threat. In Orientalism, Said takes note of the melting pot myth. ‘Orientals’ Said writes, are ‘almost everywhere nearly the same.’ This sameness comes down to all Arabs and Muslims being put on equal footing with the feared terrorists. In another work, Covering Islam, Said analyses the religion factor in the West’s suspicion of Orientals. Islam, Said notices, ‘has always represented a certain menace to the West.’ For Western countries, as Said further indicates, Islam ‘is “news” of a particularly unpleasant sort.’ Esposito ascribes such views to the fact that the West regards Islam as generally ‘antimodern and retrogressive.’ Against this background, the backlash of the war on terrorism on Arab and Muslim Australians can be better understood.

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14 ibid, p 10.
17 Said, Orientalism, op. cit., p 38.
19 ibid, p 136.
What is terrorism?

There is no simple definition of the term “terrorism”, but rather a lack of agreement on how this concept, with which the USA and its allies, including Australia, have been at war, should be defined. Coady remarks that ‘there are well over one hundred different definitions of terrorism,’ with many of them containing the use of, or the threat to use violence, by illegal groups. 21 Various writers and scholars see different problems with the definition of terrorism. For Dingley, the term is ‘contentious.’ 22 Napoleoni describes it as ‘elusive.’ 23 For Mahan and Griset, the definition of terrorism is ‘subjective.’ 24 Napoleoni notices that the difference between a freedom fighter, for instance, and a terrorist ‘depends on the angle from which one is looking.’ 25 For Dingley, that angle hinges on the different interpretations of a given act by the attackers and victims alike. 26

Understanding terrorism involves another factor: ‘analyzing the intentions of the terrorist’ and ‘the emotional reactions of the audience,’ 27 as Crenshaw explains. Yet according to President Bush, a terrorist is simply a person who commits ‘evil acts.’ 28 This simplification of such a complex matter complicates the issue even further. With Bush's view, a new need emerges; the definition of ‘evil acts’. What are they and who is responsible for them? Is detonating a

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24 Mahan & Griset, op. cit., p 3.
26 Dingley, op. cit., p 32.
28 Cited in Tuman, op. cit., p 130.
bomb in a foreign military patrol by militiamen in a worn torn country like Afghanistan an act of terror while killing dozens of civilians in a wedding party in that same country by a US drone is considered a military action? The idea of good versus evil in the war on terrorism is a myth. To assume that there are innocent players in that war is absurd. Dershowitz writes that almost all nations and causes have either used, supported or benefited from terrorism. Even on the individual level, as Dershowitz further clarifies, many people give an implicit consent to the actions of some terrorist groups while denying it to others.\(^{29}\) Hence, efforts made to define terrorism are full of hypocrisy, as Dingley sees them.\(^{30}\)

Disagreement over defining terrorism is also common in law. Mahan and Griset note that even in the USA, which is the leading country in the war on terrorism, two different legal definitions of terrorism can be found. The US Code which codifies all American laws, states that terrorism is a ‘premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.’\(^{31}\) This would make an attack on a US military patrol in Afghanistan, for instance, a non-terrorist act, since the military patrol is a combatant target. On the other hand, terrorism is defined by the US Code of Federal Regulations as ‘the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.’\(^{32}\) The inclusion of the word government in this definition may cover the government's arms including the military force. In the Australian law, attacks on governments are included in the description of terrorism and the legal discourse does not confine the ‘terrorist act’ to an ‘action’ only, but also to a ‘threat of action’ which is ‘done with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause and with the intention of coercing, or influencing


\(^{30}\) Dingley, op. cit., p 31.

\(^{31}\) Cited in Mahan & Griset, op. cit., p 3.

\(^{32}\) Cited in ibid.
by intimidation, the government of the Commonwealth or State or Territory or foreign country or intimidating the public or a section of the public.\(^{33}\)

Using terrorism as a legal term is problematic, in some views. Hocking argues that this usage triggers ‘an uncertain counter-terrorism mandate.’\(^{34}\) Hocking notes that in Australia, under the banner of counter-terrorism, laws adopted in 2003 would see children from the age of sixteen and non-suspect adults detained indefinitely and interrogated, without having access to their lawyers. They could be imprisoned for up to five years, if they are thought to be holding information that the authorities are seeking.\(^{35}\) This would eventually make every Australian citizen a potential enemy of the state. The harsh laws created to counter terrorism are actually a win for the terrorists. ‘One of the goals of terrorism,’ as Dershowitz observes, ‘is to frighten citizens into surrendering their civil liberties and welcoming a police state.’\(^{36}\) Hocking goes even further and sees that ‘the lawlessness of terrorism is being met with the lawlessness of counter-terrorism.’\(^{37}\)

There are other problems with the definition of terrorism. Disagreement over the identity of the opposing parties in the war on terrorism is another issue. Fukuyama depicts the conflict at hand as a ‘struggle between Western liberal democracy and Islamo-facism,’\(^{38}\) while Barber considers it as ‘Jihad Vs.


\(^{34}\) ibid.

\(^{35}\) ibid, p 230.

\(^{36}\) Dershowitz, op. cit., p 191.

\(^{37}\) Hocking, op. cit., p xii.

McWorld.\(^{39}\) On the other hand, Huntington attributes the woes on the world stage to a clash of civilisations. That clash is not strictly between the West and Islam, but between what Huntington calls ‘the West and the rest.’ By the rest, He means the Muslim world and the Asian countries as well. Huntington warns of looming serious collisions arising from the interaction of what he describes as ‘Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness.’\(^{40}\)

Another issue with the definition of terrorism is the overlooking of acts of violence committed by governments. Ignoring government involvement in violence against civilians does not deny its existence. Government atrocity is not even new. Mahan and Griset indicate that ‘state-sponsored terrorism is deeply rooted in the story of human civilization; it is as old as the history of military conflict.’\(^{41}\) Disregarding state sponsored violence from the definition of terrorism is hypocrisy and double-standard. Coady urges to stop ‘using terrorism to combat terrorism,’ portraying attacks on innocent people as ‘illicit when used by non-state groups’ and ‘wrong when used by states in response.’\(^{42}\)

Regardless of how terrorism is defined, it is difficult to predict when the war on terrorism will end. Dershowitz believes that such war may even ‘never end’ as ‘terrorism will persist because it often works, and success breeds repetition.’\(^{43}\) Another reason why the war on terrorism will probably keep going. It is a war on a concept. White likens the war on terrorism to many conceptual wars declared by various American presidents like the ‘war on poverty’ or the ‘war on drugs.’\(^{44}\) It has been so long since such wars have been

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\(^{40}\) Huntington, op. cit., p 183.

\(^{41}\) Mahan & Griset, op. cit., p 88.

\(^{42}\) Coady, op. cit., p 20.

\(^{43}\) Dershowitz, op. cit., p 6.

\(^{44}\) White, op. cit., p 8.
declared, but nothing suggests how they will end, if any. For instance, half a
century has passed since the US President Lyndon Johnson declared war on
poverty in his State of the Union address in 1964, yet, as Nader remarks,
‘thousands of people die daily from hunger.’ 46 By the same token, the war on
terrorism is abstract, although tangible enemies have materialised here and
there, and in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. After more than a decade of
American and Western military intervention, security in both Afghanistan and
Iraq is still a very serious issue and terrorism is thriving. This outcome
contradicts President Bush’s vision that ‘the only way to defeat terrorism as a
threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it
grows.’ 47 Like the situation with other wars on concepts, whether the world has
really been transformed into a better place since the launch of the war on
terrorism is questionable. Day has been able to perceive such outcome, even
before the launch of the military operations in Afghanistan. Questioning how a
war can be waged on an idea, Day writes ‘bombs and missiles will not pierce
the armour of the minds of Bin Laden’s followers.’ 48

The September 11 Attacks

Australian Prime Minister John Howard lived the unfolding events of the
attacks on America first-hand. He was on a visit to the USA and was due to
address the Congress on that same day of September 11, 2001, when the planes
hit the Twin Towers in New York. Howard had plans to fly to New York the
next morning. The Prime Minister was evacuated from his hotel, along with his
visiting party and Australian journalists to the Australian embassy in
Washington for safety. Initial reports put the number of casualties to ten

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45 Cited in Sanburn, Josh, ‘Top 10 state of the union moments – LBJ delivers “War on
Poverty” State of the Union’, Time, Tues 25 Jan 2011,
http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2044176_2044193_2044204,00.html
47 Cited in Tuman, op. cit., p 139.
thousand dead. A year later, the figures were revised down to 2819 dead,\(^49\) among them ten Australians.\(^50\) Howard's first reaction was to describe the attacks as ‘dreadful, just appalling, awful.’\(^51\) This would later translate into a strong commitment to military retaliatory actions that the USA was about to take. As soon as he returned home, Howard held a marathon meeting with his cabinet and invoked the ANZUS treaty.\(^52\) It was the first time the fifty-year-old pact was put into action. The ANZUS treaty was forged between Australia and the USA after World War II. It stated that both countries ‘would act to meet the common danger’ in the case of an armed attack on Australia or the USA.\(^53\) Analysts argued that ANZUS did not ‘require formal invocation to take effect,’ but Howard wanted ‘to make Australia's position clear.’\(^54\) That was a strong sign of Howard's resolve and determination to play an active role in the new world conflict. Australia would subsequently commit troops to the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the Australian community at large, the repercussions of the September 11 Attacks were disturbing. An enemy within was almost instantly created. Anti-Muslim and anti-Arab attacks and threats broke out across the country.\(^55\) Mosques and community centres were firebombed.\(^56\) A hotline set up by the Community Relations Commission of NSW ‘received hundreds of calls’ about


\(^52\) Allard, Tom & Seccombe, Mike, ‘We'll follow you into battle: PM’, SMH WE, 15-16 Sep 2001, p 2.


\(^54\) ibid.


attacks on Arabs and Muslims.\textsuperscript{57} The Commission's Chair Stepan Kerkyasharian described the incidents as ‘very disturbing manifestation of hatred.’\textsuperscript{58} In Sydney, the Lebanese Muslim Association advised Muslim women to stay home after incidents of hijab snatching.\textsuperscript{59} In Brisbane, a Muslim school bus packed with children was stoned,\textsuperscript{60} and a mosque in the city was attacked.\textsuperscript{61} The circle of hatred grew bigger to reach non-Muslim Arabs. A Lebanese Christian church in Sydney was attacked.\textsuperscript{62} The Lebanese church was identified by \emph{Annahar} Arabic newspaper as Our Lady church for the Christian Orthodox in the western Sydney suburb of Merrylands. The newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Anwar Harb, called for measures to uphold harmony between people and to tighten security in the country.\textsuperscript{63}

The backlash was not confined to the street. There were reports of police and intelligence officers raiding homes in Sydney, targeting ‘suspected terrorist sympathisers,’ but no arrests were made.\textsuperscript{64} The raids prompted mixed reactions in the Australian Arabic press. \emph{El-Telegraph} columnist Maurice Obeid criticised the ‘raids on innocent people’ describing them as ‘unacceptable.’ Obeid likened the raids to measures taken a month earlier in Beirut by the Lebanese Security Forces against people who were objecting the Syrian military presence in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{65} On the other hand, \emph{Annahar}'s Anwar Harb supported the raids, describing them as precautionary measures aimed at

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{58} Cited in ibid.
\bibitem{59} ibid.
\bibitem{60} AAP, ‘Race-hate attacks target Muslim communities’, op. cit.
\bibitem{62} ibid.
\bibitem{63} Harb, Anwar, ‘A mosque, a church and a responsibility’ (\textit{masjid wa kanisa wa mas’uliyya}), \textit{AN}, Tues 25 Sep 2001, FP.
\bibitem{64} Cornford, Philip, ‘Counter-terrorist squads make raids’, \textit{SMH WE}, 29-30 Sep 2001, p 27.
\end{thebibliography}
uprooting terrorism, but cautioned against transforming Australia into a police state.66

In the wake of the September 11 Attacks, editorials and opinion pieces in the Australian press were expecting a retaliatory action as severe as the incidents themselves. ‘Someone, somewhere is about to have a terrible retribution visited on them,’67 wrote The Sydney Morning Herald, a broadsheet back then, in its Editorial. Tabloid newspaper, The Sunday Telegraph, was expecting the ‘time for pussyfooting around’ to be ‘over.’68 Its sister, The Daily Telegraph, considered that the 'horror of downtown Manhattan is as much as our horror as it is that of New Yorkers.’69 The national broadsheet, The Australian, demanded hard and unrelenting retribution ‘to send a message reasserting the primacy of civilisation over bastardy.’ The newspaper stressed that no place would be ‘safe if terrorism on this scale’ could ‘be achieved with impunity.’70 Tabloid columnist Piers Akerman asked ‘Muslim residents in Australia’ if they ‘differ in their views from those of the Taliban or others capable of ordering’ the September 11 Attacks.71 Through this question, Akerman seemed to be making two points, the first was to frame Muslim Australians as terrorists, and the second was to refer to his Muslim compatriots as residents not citizens, denying them their belonging to Australia. In another column, Akerman reinstated his stereotypical image of Muslim people as fanatics. He called on ‘Muslims’ to ‘show tolerance to others’ in Australia ‘and in other Western nations.’72

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66 Harb, Anwar, ‘Raids and rules’ (mudahamat wa usul), AN, Tues 2 Oct 2001, FP.
70 Editorial, ‘Strike hard to win the war against terrorism’, Aust, Thurs 13 Sep 2001, p 18.
71 Akerman, Piers, ‘Price has to be paid’, DT, Thurs 13 Sept 2001, p 33.
The Australian reactions to the September 11 Attacks came on the background of repeated broadcasts of the twin towers destruction by the hijacked planes, and the live pictures of the horrible moments and the calamity that followed beaming through satellite television networks over and over again. Day saw in what was happening on the airwaves as ‘the ultimate reality TV.’ The ‘day of terror’ in the USA became ‘a night of horror’ for the Australians who were mesmerised in front of the screen to follow the unfolding events. At daybreak, it wasn’t hard for them to identify an internal enemy. It was all about ‘the usual suspects’ as an editorial in The Sydney Morning Herald put it. The usual suspects were the same culprits who were being assaulted in Australian cities and suburbs. Derian observed that in times of turbulence, ‘the first images stick.’ The footage and images of the attacks became well stuck in the minds of Australians. For Manning, the problem was much deeper. It was in the way Arabs and Muslims were being portrayed. Arabs and Muslims were being stereotyped ‘as violent, irrational terrorists.’ This was the right time for the sleeping Orientalist Aussie to wake up and become active. The repercussions would fit the characteristics of the Orientalist Aussie who dwells on racism, stereotyping and hatred towards Arabs and Muslims.

Although the backlash seemed to be out of spontaneous reactions to the September 11 Attacks, scratching the surface would show a different reality. Well before the September 11 Attacks, Australian Arabs and Muslims had been in the bad books of the mainstream media. Tabar and a group of academics noted that throughout the decade that preceded the attacks on New York and Washington, and since the first Iraq War in 1991, a series of incidents and

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74 Editorial, ‘The world after America's terror’, SMH, op. cit.
issues caused moral panics over ‘the Arab Other’ in Australia. They were issues related to asylum seekers – mainly Iraqis and Afghans – making their way to Australia via people smuggler boats since the early 1990s; a gun attack on the police station in Lakemba in 1998; and a series of gang rapes committed by young Australians from Lebanese background in 2000, targeting specifically ‘Anglo Australian girls.’ Tabar and others remarked that these issues had all combined to depict the young Australian Arab male as ‘someone to be feared’ and must ‘be closely policed and controlled.’

This perception was built upon negative media reporting on Arabs and Muslims for years. Negative framing in the media would have a long lasting effect. Agha pointed out that through adverse media reporting a ‘distorted image of the Arab people’ became ‘ingrained in Western culture.’ Negative media reports on Arab and Muslim Australians contributed to the incubating environment for hatred that had been created by the controversial issues of boat people and youth behaviour. When the September 11 Attacks occurred, the Orientalist Aussie was ready to identify the enemy within, Arabs and Muslims. A ‘Muslim necessarily implied the threat of committing a terrorist act,’ as Tabar and others put it.

Some scholars argue that the media should ignore acts of terrorism or minimise the attention that is usually given to them, as a way to lessen their impacts. Nacos states that the media provide terrorists with ‘their “lifeblood” or

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79 Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism, op. cit., p 67.
80 Tabar, & Noble & Poynting, op. cit., p 103.
82 Tabar, & Noble & Poynting, op. cit., p 78.
“oxygen” in the form of publicity when they widely report their actions. Nacos quotes views that believe that if such coverage is denied terrorism may end. Others see the matter differently. Weimann and Winn indicate that blackout on acts of terror ‘may engender ignorance and even denial.’

It is impossible for the media to ignore acts of terrorism or to even lessen the attention that is given to them. Journalists need to inform the public about every issue that may affect their lives. There is however a problem in the way acts of terror are being covered. Reality suggests that terrorists and journalists seem to be in need of each other. Terrorists need journalists to guarantee the biggest possible impact for their actions, while journalists need terrorists to produce big stories that allow their organisations the high rating they constantly seek to survive. When journalism is seen or practised through this prism or approach, it cannot be objective. This interchangeable relationship between journalism and terrorism is curious and weird, yet it is real. Nacos notices that terrorists and journalists have forged ‘a symbiotic relationship.’ In a sense, a terrorist and a journalist seem to work in tandem, like a good pair of tools or a perfect human couple, especially when it comes to scare-mongering. Besides destruction and death, Weimann and Winn observe that terrorism strive to sow ‘the tension of anticipation, fear, anger, grief,’ while Marr sees that the media are ‘the friends of panic.’ A careful look into the September 11 Attacks uncovers many traits and signs of that symbiotic relationship. For instance, it seems that the assailants did meticulously plan their action to guarantee the widest possible media exposure. Wainwright wrote that the second plane that hit the South tower of the World Trade Centre

85 Nacos, op. cit., p 22.
86 Weimann & Winn, op. cit., p 104.
'was delayed to ensure maximum television coverage.'

Exposure is as important for the success of any act of terror as the operation itself, especially when the intention is to create mass scare and panic. Nacos stresses that terrorists seek to spread ‘fear and anxiety among their target audiences,’ with massive repercussions that cannot be overlooked by governments. Nacos also highlights the fact that terrorists are aware that politicians in democratic countries are unable to ‘ignore press coverage and public opinion,’ so they work on stirring ‘public emotions’ to ‘influence what decision makers can and cannot do.’

The symbiotic relationship between terrorists and journalists is not coincidental but has a binding effect. Weimann and Winn write that when planning their actions, terrorists have ‘journalists in mind.’ They cannot cause as much panic and emotional harm without their symbiotic partners.

The symbiotic relationship between killers and messengers is a bizarre rapport that creates mess, and Arabs and Muslims in Australia – and in the West in general – are bearing the brunt of its consequences. Yet I argue that this rapport cannot be easily eradicated because it is deeply rooted in the weaknesses of the newsroom – a concept that I will be discussing in the next chapter – and because such attitudes can be traced back to Orientalism. Said argues that ‘contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization.’ The Orientalist Aussie has a similar attitude. Hage observes that ‘White paranoia’ in Australia sees ‘Muslims’ as ‘a community of people always predisposed towards crime, rape, illegal entry to Australia and terrorism.’ Hage argues that the September 11 Attacks have ‘sealed the position of the Muslim as the

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89 Nacos, op. cit., p 54.
90 Nacos, op. cit., p 152.
91 Weimann & Winn, op. cit., p 95.
92 Said, Orientalism, p 108.
93 Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism, pp 66-68.
This is confirmed by the repercussions of the September 11 Attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians.

Terrorism is extreme violence and covering an act of terrorism is reporting on the worst type of brutality. There is a growing need to adopt a new approach to restore credibility and dignity to the profession of journalism when reporting on violence. Lynch and McGoldrick suggest ‘Peace Journalism’ as an alternative paradigm. This can be achieved through choices that journalists make to ‘create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.’ Lynch and McGoldrick stress that Peace Journalism does not mean ignoring acts of violence or not reporting them. On the contrary, they acknowledge that a ‘journalist would not be journalist without the instinct to rush scoops’ which can be mostly achieved ‘when covering violence.’ But Lynch and McGoldrick envision instead a ‘17 points’ plan or ‘strategy to re-balance the reporting of conflicts’ through avoiding common negative practices or concentrating on divisions, blame, ‘victimising language,’ or ‘demonising adjectives’ or ‘labels.’ Through Peace Journalism, as Lynch and McGoldrick explain, the audience and readers will have the opportunity ‘to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.’

**The Bali Bombings**

Australia seemed to be always on the radar of terrorism. The Daily Telegraph believed that Australia’s leading role in the peace keeping force in East Timor in 1999 angered hardliners in Indonesia, ‘well before’ the September 11 Attacks. An Indonesian militant group, Jemaah Islamiyah, worked on

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94 ibid, p 67.
96 ibid, pp 57-58.
97 ibid, pp 28-31.
98 ibid, p 5.
establishing a branch for its followers in Australia. Neighbour wrote that the
Indonesian Islamist group appointed Abdul Rahim Ayub as its local leader in
Sydney. According to press reports, the group’s supreme leader, Abu Bakar
Bashir, visited Australia several times under different names. Other key
regional figures of Jemaah Islamiyah paid similar visits to Australia. A few
weeks after the September 11 Attacks, as Chulov observed, Bin Laden named
Australia for the first time as a target for his network’s operations. Chulov
attributed this development to Australia’s links to the USA and to its role in
East Timor. It did not take long before the threat was materialised. On 12
October 2002, two bombs were detonated, within a minute of each other, by
suicide bombers, in the touristic district of Kuta in Bali. 202 people were
killed, among them 88 Australians. Jemaah Islamiyah, which had close ties
with Al-Qaeda, was behind the attacks. The Australian newspaper saw in the
bombings a ‘wake-up call’ to the ‘civilised world’ to come together and defeat
terrorism. The Sunday Telegraph described the Bali Bombings as Australia’s
September 11.

In a déjà vu scene of the reactions to the September 11 Attacks, the Bali
Bombings awakened the old dormant hatred, animosity and antipathy of the
Orientalist Aussie towards Arabs and Muslims and put them in full motion.
The repercussions on the community were very bad. In Sydney alone, more
than forty ‘anti-Muslim attacks,’ especially on women, were reported.

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100 Neighbour, Sally, In the Shadow of Swords – on the Trail of Terrorism from Afghanistan to
103 Chulov, op. cit., p 60.
104 Anonymous, ‘Transnational terrorism: the threat to Australia’, DFAT, 2004,
107 Morris, Linda, ‘Call for calm after Sydney Muslims suffer attack’, SMH, Tues 29 Oct 2002,
p 4.
Imam and his family were driven out of their home by a mob of twenty men.\(^{108}\) Similar attacks took place in Melbourne.\(^{109}\) Some media admitted that the attacks were ‘an outburst of religious bigotry, monoculturalism, racism and xenophobia’ and that Muslims were being ‘abused in public for no other reason than their faith.’\(^{110}\) Poynting and others remarked that ‘Bali made Muslims in Australia feel as if they were the enemy of the Australian nation.’\(^{111}\) The Bali Bombings inflamed an already paranoid Australian mainstream society. For the Orientalist Aussie, the bombings confirmed the mistrust and suspicion towards Arabs and Muslims. The attack on Bali was taken as a direct assault on Australia. Chulov explained that for the Australians, Bali was ‘their home away from home.’\(^{112}\) Poynting and others noted that the Bali Bombings came to cement, along with ‘the airborne attacks’ in the United States and ‘a number of other incidents’ the ‘ideological connection’ between ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and high scale attacks on civilians.\(^{113}\) While the Indonesian authorities were still looking for suspects in the attacks, the Australian government ordered its security agencies to dig for clues inside Australia. A number of homes in Sydney and Perth were raided, but no arrests on terrorism charges were made.\(^{114}\) *The Sunday Telegraph* wrote that ASIO was ‘accused of heavy-handed behaviour’ and that the government was criticised ‘for allegedly inflaming a witch-hunt against Muslim people.’ But the newspaper rejected such statements and claimed that ‘if there was ever a case for critics to be called misguided, this is it.’ The tabloid justified the raids

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\(^{112}\) Chulov, op. cit., pp 221-222.

\(^{113}\) Poynting & Noble & Tabar & Collins, op. cit., p 28.

\(^{114}\) Cameron, Deborah & Goodsir, Darren & Morris, Linda & Kremmer, Christopher & Banham, Cynthia, ‘Bombers revealed as raids hit home’, *SMH*, Thurs 31 Oct 2002, FP.
saying that Australians were living ‘in a climate where terrorist attacks’ were ‘very real.’  

Denouncing the bombings in Bali by the Australian Muslim community was not enough for some columnists. Akerman doubted the credibility of the community's condemnations which he reported in an opinion piece on the issue. Linking past attacks in various parts of the world to the Bali Bombings, Akerman considered that his Muslim compatriots' denunciations were flying ‘in the face of the growing charred mass of evidence now accumulating in Bali’s makeshift morgues, and in the historical record of the flattened World Trade Centre site, the rebuilt Pentagon, bombed Indonesian churches, holed ships and dead French, Germans, Kenyans, Tanzanians and others.’ As if his Muslim compatriots were responsible for all those atrocities, Akerman demanded assurances from ‘the silent majority of Australian Muslims, who claim to be moderates’ that the Australian way of life ‘is not under attack.’ The tabloid columnist went further to ask the Muslim community to ‘assist the authorities’ in the search for people who might sympathise with Jemaah Islamiyah. Akerman wanted guarantees from Muslim Australians that they had ‘no desire to forcibly impose their religion upon others and that they would oppose those who might.’

This long list of demands put forward by the tabloid's columnist was a sign of ignorance of the real facts. Most of the victims of terror acts committed in the world, including countries mentioned by Akerman, were Muslim. Shboul noted that the ‘extremists see the world as divided in abstract confrontational, more or less apocalyptic terms, between their own version of “Islam” on the one side,’ and ‘the rest of humanity, including all other Muslims, on the other.’

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As a result, Muslims who would not conform to the extremist views would be the target of fanatics like the rest of the world.

Akerman's discourse would fall within the framework of what Mahan and Griset called the manufacturing of news about terrorism in different ways, one ‘is to inflate the menace’ based on ‘real actions,’ and ‘the false transfer of responsibility for a terrorist act to a convenient scapegoat.’\(^{118}\) But according to Hage's vision, such writings were not new. Hage remarked that ‘the appearance of White paranoid views in tabloid newspapers and on some radio stations has always been a part of Australian culture.’\(^{119}\) Stereotyping Arabs and Muslims would go even further back in the history of mass communication media. Said noticed that Arabs had been associated, in the Western film and television industry, ‘either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty,’ while some of the traditional roles of an Arab in the cinema would be a ‘slave trader, camel driver, moneychanger, colorful scoundrel.’\(^{120}\)

**Mohamed Haneef**

In the world of the post September 11 Attacks democracies hinged closer to security states. Aggressive policing strategies and stringent counter-terrorism measures were put in place. For the Australian Trials, Bali was crunch time. The press reported that the government ordered a review of terrorism laws that had been recently strengthened.\(^{121}\) Subsequently, draconian laws were adopted, as indicated earlier in this chapter. Hocking described the new laws as ‘a Trojan horse, within our democracy.’\(^{122}\) The counter-terrorism laws were soon

\(^{118}\) Mahan & Griset, op. cit., p 225.


\(^{120}\) Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., p 287.


\(^{122}\) Hocking, op. cit., p 211.
to be tested on a knee-jerk exercise against a foreign physician, turning a supposedly terror case into a scandalous embarrassment for the government.

In early July 2007, the Australian authorities arrested Mohamed Haneef, an Indian doctor who had been working in a Gold Coast hospital, after linking him to failed bomb attacks in London and Glasgow in the UK. After holding him for several days, Haneef was charged with giving ‘reckless support’ to terrorism. According to *The Daily Telegraph*, Haneef had been trying to leave Australia via Brisbane airport at midnight with a one-way ticket to his country when he was arrested. The Indian doctor was the cousin of Sabeel Ahmed, one of three people charged in the UK over the failed attacks. Ahmed had used Haneef’s mobile SIM card and internet access after the Indian physician moved to Australia ten months earlier. The measures against Haneef were swift, tough and excessive. After his arrest, the Indian physician was subjected to many sessions of interrogation, ‘a total of twenty-four hours’ questioning. His work visa was cancelled. Marr observed that this was the first time the Australian authorities used their anti-terror law which allowed security agents to hold suspects ‘without charge during lengthy police investigation.’ However, the charges against Haneef could not be sustained. They were dropped ‘due to flawed evidence.’ Marr noted that Haneef emerged from the long interrogation sessions ‘as a nerdy guy with fractured English who has done little in the past decade but study.’ The prosecutors later ‘admitted bungling the case and an independent inquiry cleared Dr Haneef

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125 Anonymous, ‘Dr Mohamed Haneef’s case’, op. cit.
129 Marr, op. cit., p 85.
130 Anonymous, ‘Dr Mohamed Haneef’s case’, op. cit.
131 Marr, op. cit., p 86.
of any wrongdoing.  

Haneef sued the Australian government and won, years later, a substantial compensation, reportedly estimated at around $1 million.  

Haneef’s story proved a crucial point; the risk that authorities might go overboard and exceed the logic when dealing with a terror case. Years before Haneef’s case, Bandura pointed out that ‘extreme counterterrorist reactions may produce effects that are worse than the terrorist acts themselves.’  

With Haneef’s case, Australia saw some of those effects. Besides ruining the life of the Indian doctor, taxpayers had to foot the bill for the government’s mistake.

It wasn’t the first time that panic over potential acts of terrorism reached Australia from Britain. Two years earlier, on 7 July 2005, more than fifty people were killed and hundreds were wounded when four suicide bombers targeted public transport facilities in London. Three of the bombers ‘were Britons of Pakistani backgrounds’ while the fourth ‘was a black convert to Islam.’ In other words, the attackers did not come from abroad but they were a group of young men who had spent most of their lives in England. Humphrey noted that the bombings, which were also known as the ‘7/7 London terrorism attacks,’ placed ‘integration at the top of the political

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132 AAP, ‘Haneef compensation ‘about $1m’”, SMH, Wed 22 Dec 2010,  
133 Ibid.  
137 Maley, op. cit., p 270.
management of Muslim communities."\(^{138}\) Aly argued that the London bombings triggered a long debate about the notion of ‘homegrown terrorists’ and introduced it ‘into the media discourse.’\(^{139}\) The debate over the London bombings transcended nations and crossed borders to reach Australia. In the wake of the attacks, Howard summoned a meeting with a group of selected Muslim leaders. The meeting was described as a ‘summit’ but did not exceed two hours, as Maley observed. Maley wrote that the meeting ended with a ‘Statement of Principles’ through which the attendees pledged their loyalty and allegiance to Australia and its values and rejected ‘all forms of violence or terrorism.’\(^{140}\) Once more, an event abroad imposed a moral duty on Arab and Muslim Australians to present yet another political blood test to their government and co-citizens, to appease their fear. It seemed that the notion of homegrown terrorism and the radicalisation of young Muslims living in a Western society alarmed the Australian authorities far more than the September 11 Attacks and the Bali Bombings. Humphrey argued that the London bombings were the real factor that put Muslims in Australia and ‘their potential threat’ under scrutiny.\(^{141}\)

When Mohamed Haneef came to the attention of the Australian authorities for his alleged involvement in the London and Glasgow failed attacks in 2007, the Orientalist Aussie press did already have inciting materials in its luggage to pump up the issue with sensationalism and scare-mongering, mainly because of the London bombings two years earlier. The stereotype and negative perception had already been there. That was especially obvious with the tabloid


\(^{140}\) Maley, op. cit., p 270.

\(^{141}\) Humphrey, op. cit., p 59.
press. The Daily Telegraph splashed a headline over its front page that read ‘London: The Australian Connection,’ and underneath two words in much bigger and bolder characters: ‘Enemy Within.’¹⁴² ‘Within’ could encompass many people, including citizens, not only someone living in the country on a working visa like Dr Haneef. To make it more sombre, the tabloid opened its news front page story with the following paragraph: ‘Thousands of foreign doctors working in Australia will be the subject of an emergency security review after stunning revelations two Queensland medicos are being questioned in relation to the UK terror plot.’¹⁴³ For the tabloid, there were suddenly thousands of suspects around, all foreign medical practitioners. All those were the enemy within, as the headline would imply.

The next day, the same tabloid ran a story on its front page again, further defaming foreign and Muslim doctors through an alleged threat attributed to Bin Laden who had purportedly said ‘those who cure you will kill you,’¹⁴⁴ insinuating that Muslim doctors were in the West on a mission to kill. In another article, the tabloid columnist, Akerman, made a mockery of the contribution of Muslim and Arab scientists to humanity. ‘In the politically-correct revisionist view of fanatical Muslims,’ Akerman wrote, ‘the modern world must acknowledge a debt to Islam for all manner of scholarship in the fields of mathematics and medicine.’ Going further in his scornful tone, Akerman added that the ‘wily Greeks, and later Romans, it is claimed, shamelessly stole the intellectual property developed by followers of the tent-dwelling warrior Prophet's message of universal love and tolerance.’ Linking his argument to the issue of Haneef, Akerman commented that the doctor's oath was to heal the sick, not to ‘attempt to cause harm to innocents through acts of

¹⁴³ ibid.
random violence.’ He then saw in the detention of the Indian doctor the ‘sweeping extent of the global links of international terrorism.’

Ironically, in a column he had written in the aftermath of the Bali Bombings, almost five years earlier, Akerman had this question to ask: ‘If poverty was the problem, why aren’t there Indian terrorists at the top of the World’s Most Wanted?’ Certainly, Akerman could not foresee the Indian physician’s case. He definitely would not foresee his innocence.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how fragile and volatile the Australian society can be. The Australian Trials are prone to fear, paranoia and racism, especially when they are related to the contentious issue of terrorism. The characteristics of the Orientalist Aussie can be in full motion almost immediately after a tragic act of extreme violence like the September 11 Attacks or the Bali Bombings, regardless of the fact that such events have occurred somewhere abroad. Orientalist Aussie attitudes and discourse become obvious in society, politics and the media, as soon as terrorism becomes an issue. In the case of Mohamed Haneef, the Australian government has acted according to a perceptual observation by Dershowitz who says that in times of emergency and upheaval, it is ‘far less controversial to go after “them” than “us”’. Yet this has appeared to be a costly choice, as we have seen. Furthermore, terrorism has transformed Western democracies, including Australia, into political systems that can tolerate much more than any time in the past the co-existence of strong security organisations with freely elected parliaments.

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147 Dershowitz, op. cit., p 192.
The chapter has highlighted a covert relationship between media and terrorism, exposing the role this factor plays in framing Arabs and Muslims as the usual suspects. There is an unholy association between journalists and terrorists. While journalists strive for scoops through extreme events to guarantee high rating, terrorists need the media to inflict as much psychological impact and damage as they can on the targeted group, people or country. Bandura stresses that if it wasn’t for the media's ‘widespread publicity, terrorist acts can achieve neither of these effects.’\textsuperscript{148} Mahan and Griset point out that ‘terrorism is cultivated and spread by media coverage.’\textsuperscript{149} In this sense, terrorists seem to have managed to exploit the media's hunger for drastic events to their own benefit, promoting their agenda of fear and hatred sowing. The core issue in the terrorism-media association is framing. Aly notes that the September 11 Attacks have been framed ‘as a global battle between good and evil,’ and through that framing ‘subsequent news reports on the “war on terrorism” can be presented and understood.’\textsuperscript{150} Shboul warns that the extremists ‘may continue to demand media attention, often disproportionately, for some time to come.’\textsuperscript{151}

This makes a new approach to terrorism coverage well warranted. The Peace Journalism paradigm can be a good alternative. One of the key issues in this regard, as Lynch and McGoldrick explain, is to avoid ‘stark distinctions between ‘self” and ‘other’.’\textsuperscript{152} Aly remarks, for instance, that the framing of the Bali Bombings has legitimised ‘the discourse of ‘us’ versus ‘them’.’\textsuperscript{153} Humphrey notices that some of the adverse outcomes of the media coverage of terror acts are that ‘events relating to Islam and Muslim immigrants are viewed through prisms of the ‘cultural backwardness’ and ‘violence paradigms.’\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{148} Bandura, op. cit., p 172.
\textsuperscript{149} Mahan & Griset, op. cit., p 224.
\textsuperscript{150} Aly, op. cit., p 80.
\textsuperscript{151} Shboul, ‘Islamic Perspective’, op. cit., p 63.
\textsuperscript{152} Lynch & McGoldrick, op. cit., p 28.
\textsuperscript{153} Aly, op. cit., p 82.
\textsuperscript{154} Humphrey, op. cit., p 67.
Saeed observes that when terrorism strikes, ‘a concerted effort in certain sections of the Western media’ works relentlessly ‘to present Islam as a religion of violence and terrorism.’\(^{155}\) This was the case with the Australian Trials with terrorism. The reactions of the Orientalist Aussie to the bombing attacks in America, Bali and London, made Arab and Muslim Australians the scapegoat.

After the waves of hatred, prejudice and abuse that swamped Australia in the aftermath of the September 11 Attacks and the Bali Bombings, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission published a survey in 2004. The survey included 1400 Arab and Muslim people who spoke about their experiences with racism. The survey was conducted in 69 consultation sessions around Australia. Some of the main findings were:

- The majority of the participants ‘reported experiencing various forms of prejudice because of their race or religion.’
- The prejudice increased after international incidents such as the September 11 Attacks and the Bali Bombings.
- The prejudice was exacerbated by local issues such as the asylum seekers debate and gang rapes.
- Most of the assaults ‘were unprovoked, ‘one off’ incidents from strangers,’ while ‘participants also reported experiencing different forms of prejudice from people known to them in the workplace, at school, universities or colleges and from neighbours.’
- Arabs or Muslims could easily be identified ‘because of their dress, physical appearance or name.’
- Women were specifically ‘afraid of being abused or attacked.’
- Young people ‘felt that they were particularly at risk of harassment which has led them to feelings of frustration,'

alienation and a loss of confidence in themselves and trust in authority.\footnote{Anonymous, \textit{Listen (Isma')}: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians, HREOC, 2004, p 3.}

The survey recommended addressing those issues through six key areas: ‘improving legal protections; promoting positive public awareness through education; addressing stereotypes and misinformation in public debate; ensuring community safety through law enforcement; empowering communities and fostering public support and solidarity with Arab and Muslim Australians.\footnote{ibid, pp 4 & 5.}

These are reasonable recommendations, yet they seem quite ambitious, especially with regards to ‘addressing stereotypes and misinformation in public debates’ in which the media play an essential role. The problem is so deep that awareness campaigns cannot make it disappear. The issue of terrorism has exposed the fragility of the Australian social fabric. Terrorism has awakened the sleeping cells of Orientalism in Australia. What Said has expressed in the USA in the 1970s seems so relevant to Australia in the Third Millennium. ‘In any event,’ Said has observed ‘the new Orientalist took over the attitudes of cultural hostility and kept them.’\footnote{Said, \textit{Orientalism}, op. cit., p 290.} That is even more obvious in the Australian Trials with boat people and the Orientalist Aussie attitude towards them, as the next chapter will show.
Chapter 3

The Five Weaknesses of the Newsroom

“Orientalism” Nostalgia in the Asylum Seekers’ Narrative

Boat people have been generating heated debates in Australia for many years. In this chapter, I argue that most of the controversies surrounding their issue emanate from framing them as a menace. Manning observes that boat people, also known as asylum seekers, have been represented ‘as threats to Australia.’

This chapter focuses on one specific controversy related to boat people, the Children Overboard Affair. I argue that the Children Overboard Affair takes the Australian Trials of negative attitudes and stereotypical practices towards asylum seekers to the extreme, and unveils the extent of slander the Orientalist Aussie is willing to employ to demonise would-be refugees and frame them as heartless and irresponsible people. While I will be examining reports around this issue that were mainly published in The Daily Telegraph, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian, I will also look into articles by other newspapers to uphold my argument. In addition, the chapter analyses the dynamics of the newsroom where facts are supposed to be researched, checked, supported and properly attributed before the story could be presented to the public. I argue that the newsroom in the Australian mainstream press failed its duty when it did not scrutinise the government claims over the Children Overboard Affair, as we would see. There were two facts behind the poor

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performance of the newsroom: a series of innate weaknesses, intrinsic to the
dynamics of the newsroom in media organisations; and the Orientalist Aussie
mentality that would dictate the news agenda in the Australian mainstream
media. But first we need to clarify two matters; who are the asylum seekers?
What is the Children Overboard Affair?

Asylum seekers

McNevin uses the terminology ‘irregular migrants’ to describe ‘noncitizens’
who cross ‘state borders or remain in state territory without the host state’s
explicit and ongoing sanction.’ But according to the Australian Human Rights
Commission, an ‘asylum seeker is a person who has fled their own country,’
due to fear of being prosecuted on grounds such as race, religion or political
opinion, and has applied ‘for protection as a refugee.’ Janet Phillips, from the
Department of Parliamentary Services draws a line between an asylum seeker
and a refugee. The first has a claim for refuge that has not yet been tested while
a refugee is recognised as such in accordance with the 1951 Refugee
Convention. Phillips notes that the Australian law considers people who arrive
without a valid visa as ‘unlawful non-citizens.’ The Department of
Immigration refers to asylum seekers as ‘unauthorised arrivals.’ The
Department states that ‘Australia provides protection for asylum seekers’ only
when they ‘meet the United Nations definition of a refugee,’ or when they ‘are
owed protection under other international human rights treaties and

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2 McNevin, Anne, Contesting Citizenship – Irregular Migrants and New Frontiers of
3 Anonymous, ‘Asylum seekers and refugees’, AHRC,
4 Phillips, Janet, ‘Asylum seekers and refugees: what are the facts?’, Parliamentary
Library, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011,
5 Anonymous, ‘Fact Sheet 74a. Boat arrival details (on Australian Mainland),’
conventions." Hence, until their status is determined, people who come to Australia seeking asylum remain in limbo until further notice.

This outline does not make the expression ‘asylum seeker’ free from further negative connotations. Whittaker points out that the ‘meaning the term is given in common parlance is vague, ambiguous, often censorious, and its implications are hotly debated.’ In the Australian media and political discourse, asylum seekers have been derided as ‘aliens,’ ‘illegal aliens’ and ‘gate crashers.’ Akerman has called asylum seekers ‘opportunistic queue jumpers’ who queue ‘to pay people smugglers to ferry them illicitly into Australian waters.’ Poynting and others observe that asylum seekers have been described as ‘human cargo.’ O’Neill notices that the ‘abusive language towards asylum seekers’ has included terms such as ‘illegals, designer label refugees, economic opportunists, rich, accomplices in organised crime and manipulative liars.’ Australians have taken boat people as ‘rich for paying people smugglers for the journey’ to Australia, as Marr and Wilkinson put it. Furthermore, in the year 2000, the management of Curtin detention centre labelled asylum seekers, in a statement written in Arabic and distributed to

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7 Whittaker, J. David, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the Contemporary World, USA and Canada, Routledge, 2006, p 1.
8 Steele, Peter, ‘Refugees always deserve fair go’, CT, Mon 1 Jan 2001, p 9.
15 I acquired a copy of this statement while working on a story about a mass breakout by Curtin detainees for my radio program in June 2000. The statement was written in poor Arabic and seemed to have been translated from an original text in English.
the detainees as ‘extremist Muslims seeking to undermine the safety of the Australian society.’

There is another interesting point about asylum seekers. According to Phillips, the majority of asylum applicants in Australia have arrived by air not by boat. Most of those arriving by plane ‘are not found to be refugees’ while the success rate for a protection visa amongst asylum seekers who arrive by boat ranges between 70 to 97 per cent. Yet Australians worry ‘far less’ about air arrivals who seek asylum, as Marr and Wilkinson observe, although they are ‘jumping the same queue’ with much more of them coming in, and ‘about half as likely as those’ who have come ‘by sea to be genuine refugees.’ According to Marr and Wilkinson, the attitude towards the two different types of asylum seekers is certainly not the authenticity of their cases, but the tool that people in the most feared category are using to gain access to Australia, the boat. A sea vessel is ‘the symbol of Australia's old fears of invasion.’

As soon as they reach Australia, boat people are held in detention centres. Amor and Austin indicate that the mandatory detention policy has been introduced by the Labor government in 1993, locking up would-be refugees ‘without trial, until their claims for asylum could be determined.’ The lack of a timeframe to determine asylum claims means that people can be detained for an unspecified period of time, for years possibly. Although mandatory detention has started under Labor, Amor and Austin believe that the worst part of that policy has come about with the election of the Howard government in 1996. Manne points out that the ‘Howard government treated asylum seekers

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17 Phillips, op. cit.
20 ibid.
with suspicion and undisguised hostility.’ He notices that boat people ‘were consistently described as both wealthy and insolent’ who ‘on arrival demanded ‘orthodontic treatment’ for their children and ‘two-in-one shampoo’ for themselves.’

Detention centres are an essential part of the government’s tough policy towards asylum seekers. O’Neill remarks that the centres are ‘the most visible domestic weapon’ against boat people, making the voters feel that their government is ‘in control of these so-called ‘illegal’ intruders, punishing them, deterring others.’ Maley sees that detention centres ‘signpost a dark episode in Australian history.’ Detention centres have mostly been built in remote areas to avoid community backlash. Amor and Austin note that the centres’ locations are in ‘inhospitable parts of the country,’ while banning the media from accessing them on privacy grounds makes them more isolated. An editorial in The Weekend Australian has admitted that asylum seekers ‘are treated like criminals or worse’ and ‘are detained under stricter rules than most prisons. No questions. No exceptions.’

Hage labels the detention of boat people as ‘ethnic caging’ with its images of ‘people behind fences, hands clutching wires, guards.’ He draws similarities between those pictures coming out of Australian detention centres and images of ethnic cleansing in the Bosnian war. ‘The concentration-camp-like images it fosters,’ as Hage points out, ‘make ethnic caging appear closer to ethnic

24 Amor & Austin, op. cit., p 185.
cleansing than anything remotely linked to multicultural appreciation and tolerance.”

**The Children Overboard Affair**

On 6 October 2001, the Australian navy intercepted a boat with 223 people on board, among them 60 women and 56 children. Press reports identified the passengers as being ‘of Middle Eastern origin,’ or ‘believed to be Iraqis.’ The boat was named *Columba* and dubbed *SIEV 4.* The sea vessel became involved in what was known as the Children Overboard Affair. But before we proceed into how *SIEV 4* became an issue and explain the Children Overboard Affair, we need to establish the full context of the situation. There were four synchronistic facts that preceded or coincided with the interception of *SIEV 4* and contributed to the exacerbation of the matter. They were consecutively: the *Tampa* issue, the *Pacific Solution*, the September 11 Attacks and the launch of the American-led military operation on Afghanistan. The latter occurred as soon as the Children Overboard Affair started to unfold. While the September 11 Attacks were thoroughly tackled in the previous chapter, the *Tampa* issue and the *Pacific Solution* should be outlined to see the full picture.

In late August 2001, a Norwegian freighter, *MV Tampa*, rescued more than 430 asylum seekers from their sinking fishing boat while on its way to Australia.

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26 Hage, *White Nation*, op. cit., pp 105-106.
29 Peake, Ross, ‘Children on boat thrown into sea’, *CT*, Mon 8 Oct 2001, FP.
30 Anonymous, ‘Fact Sheet 74a.’, op. cit.
31 Every asylum seekers boat intercepted after August 2001 was given a number preceded by the acronym *SIEV* for *Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel*. The boat involved in the Children Overboard Affair was the fourth in that series.
The rescued passengers were reported to be from the Middle East.\(^{32}\) In a decision described as ‘historic,’\(^{33}\) the Australian government refused *Tampa* to unload on Australian soil. During the standoff that followed, the *Pacific Solution* was introduced.\(^{34}\) Corlett stressed that one of the core components of the newly adopted *Pacific Solution* was to deny asylum seekers access ‘to the Australian judicial system’ by redirecting their boats to detention centres established on the neighbouring island of Nauru and on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. ‘The navy was sent out to physically prevent boats landing in Australia and turn them back.’\(^{35}\) It should be noted that the *Pacific Solution* was adopted a few weeks before the Federal election. Grattan pointed out that up until the conservative Government embraced its tough line towards boat people and the issue of terrorism, Howard and his Coalition government had been trailing the opposition and its Leader Kim Beazley in opinion polls.\(^{36}\)

Weeks after the *Pacific Solution* came into force, *SIEV 4* was intercepted. The navy boat involved in the operation fired shots over the vessel and ‘officers were on alert in case the boat tried to re-enter Australian waters.’\(^{37}\) The government claimed that asylum seekers threw their children into the sea to pressure the navy personnel to rescue them and take them into Australia.\(^{38}\) Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock described the alleged action of the *SIEV 4* passengers as a ‘disturbing and premeditated act,’ while Howard declared

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33 ibid.
34 Amor & Austin, op. cit., p 75.
that his nation would not be ‘intimidated by this kind of behaviour.’ \(^{39}\) Defence Minister Peter Reith who was spearheading the government claims, published photographs of children and adults in the water with navy personnel as rescuers to support his allegations, but refused to release a video tape on the incident he had labelled as a proof that children had been thrown overboard. \(^{40}\)

A year later, and well after Howard had won the elections, a Senate inquiry found, in a majority report, that no children were thrown overboard and that Reith ‘deliberately mislead the public.’ The inquiry concluded that Howard, Reith and their offices were told ‘at least 27 times that initial reports of asylum seekers throwing their children overboard were false,’ yet they ‘failed to correct the public records’ before the elections. \(^{41}\) Reith had refused to appear before the committee and the latter declined to summon him. \(^{42}\) Saunders wrote that the ‘truth was covered up’ and described the affair as ‘a permanent stain on the Coalition’s third term election win.’ \(^{43}\) The whole issue of the Children Overboard Affair was mere fabrication and all the claims, statements and commentaries made by government figures were based on a lie.

How did the media react to the government's allegations? Journalists simply took the bait, toeing the official line and adopting the government's propaganda as fact, as I would demonstrate next. The mainstream media took this stance in news reports, commentaries and editorials.

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\(^{42}\) Ibid.  
In news reports. On 8 October 2001, The Daily Telegraph opened its news story on SIEV 4 with the following lead: ‘Desperate parents yesterday threw their children overboard from an Indonesian people-smuggling boat which had its passage to Christmas Island intercepted by the Royal Australian Navy.’

As we can see, the alleged action of the boat people was reported as fact, without attributing the original claim to any source. The tabloid adopted the allegation and built its story upon it, treating it as the ultimate truth. The people involved in the alleged incident were also described in the lead as ‘desperate parents.’ The asylum seekers were seemingly depicted as such to portray them as people who were determined to enter Australia at any price, even if they had to sacrifice the lives of their own children. This description gave even more weight to the government’s claim about children being thrown into the water. From the second paragraph, the tabloid started to quote government officials about the alleged incident. Ruddock portrayed the purported deed of the asylum seekers as a ‘clearly planned and premeditated’ action ‘to reach the Australian territory.’ He added that ‘it would be unfortunate’ if this would ‘lead to a loss of life.’ He depicted the alleged scene as ‘some of the most disturbing practices’ he had ‘come across’ since he had been ‘involved in public life.’ The Immigration minister described the action of the asylum seekers as ‘shocking tactics,’ vowing not to change his government’s ‘tough stance against people smuggling.’ The same report quoted Howard saying that his government ‘would not be bullied into changing its refugee policy.’ Howard condemned the asylum seekers for allegedly throwing their children overboard, labelling their purported action as ‘a sorry reflection on their attitude of mind.’ The elaborated quotes from Howard and Ruddock reinforced, even further, the framing of asylum seekers as heartless people who valued nothing, not even their offspring, but themselves.

The Australian opened its story on the issue on 8 October 2001 with the following paragraph: ‘A boatload of asylum-seekers throwing children
overboard 150 nautical miles from Australian territory as the navy fired over their heads became pawns in the election campaign yesterday.\(^{45}\) Here again, the allegation was taken as fact.

Except for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and its Fairfax Melbourne sister, *The Age*, which both attributed the claim right in the lead to the government, most of the major mainstream press adopted the allegation about children being thrown into the sea, and treated it as fact. Their leads were similar to those of *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Here are samples of the opening paragraph in some mainstream newspapers:

‘Asylum seekers threw children into the sea and sabotaged their own vessel in a desperate bid to get to the Australian territory of Christmas Island last night.’\(^{46}\) (*The Courier Mail*)

‘Boat people who threw children overboard in a shock tactic to force their way into Australia will not be allowed into the country.’\(^{47}\) (*Herald-Sun*)

‘The Federal government would not be bullied into changing its policy to turn back boat people after some threw children and themselves overboard yesterday.’\(^{48}\) (*The West Australian*)


\(^{46}\) Ludlow, Mark, ‘Children hurled into sea – Asylum seekers sabotaged vessel’, *CM*, Mon 8 Oct 2001, FP.


‘Asylum seekers trying to reach Australia adopted a
desperate new tactic yesterday, throwing children
overboard when their boat was turned back by a Navy
warship.’\(^49\) (*The Northern Star*)

the headline ‘proof refugees threw children overboard.’ The tabloid's so-called
‘proof’ was an accompanying photograph depicting a female sailor, a child and
a woman in the sea. ‘This is one of two dramatic photographs the Navy was
forced to release yesterday after accounts of boat people jumping into the open
sea were challenged.’ That was the article's lead. The wording of the lead
clearly suggested that the photograph was irrefutable evidence that asylum
seekers did throw their children into the water. The report quoted Howard
saying ‘Australia would never accept people who treated children this way.’
Yet in a bizarre line, and in stark contrast to the spirit of the article's headline
and lead that referred to the photograph as a proof, the tabloid stated that while
‘the pictures don't establish that the children were thrown overboard, the
lifejackets they were wearing indicate they were in the sea as part of a
deliberate plan.’\(^50\)

**In editorials.** *The Daily Telegraph*\'s stance displayed in its news reporting was
further bolstered in its editorial. The newspaper seemed to have taken every
claim made by the government about the incident as fact. On the same day of
its first news report quoted earlier about the alleged incident, the tabloid wrote
in its editorial ‘we now have the disgusting practice of children being thrown
from a smuggler's ship in the hope a Royal Australian Navy craft will rescue
them.’\(^51\) Using the expression ‘we now have’ was more than a definite
assumption by the newspaper that the incident did really occur. It was rather an


\(^{50}\) Farr & Madigan, ‘Proof that boat people threw children into sea’, op. cit.

\(^{51}\) Editorial, ‘Evil traders demand a harsh reply’, op. cit.
assertion that would leave no shred of doubt about the authenticity of the alleged incident. Furthermore, describing the purported act of children throwing into the sea as a ‘disgusting practice’ would further confirm the framing of the boat's passengers who came from Iraq or the Middle East, as mentioned earlier, as heartless people whose deeds were disliked. In addition, the word ‘practice’ would imply that what had allegedly happened was fact, giving yet again more weight to the government’s claim that asylum seekers did throw their children overboard. For the newspaper, what happened was fact because the government said so. The Daily Telegraph used a harsh verb to describe the alleged incident. ‘Hurling children into the sea’ the editorial said, ‘runs the risk of their drowning, being attacked by sharks or being struck by any of the vessels involved.’ According to Macquarie Dictionary, ‘hurling’ is an act of throwing violently or ‘with great force.”52 Using that particular verb to describe the purported action of the asylum seekers – throwing violently their own children from the deck of a ship into the ocean – would deny the alleged culprits any sense of humanity. The Daily Telegraph urged the government to ‘stand firm’ in its tough policies against asylum seekers and called on the opposition to ‘maintain support for the broad policy of keeping these gate crashers out.’

The Australian newspaper did not challenge the Howard government’s account in its editorial on 8 October 2001, but tried to justify the purported action of the boat people. Although the editorial was critical of the government’s tough stance towards boat people, it gave credibility to the official line on the incident and implied that children were indeed thrown into the sea. The national broadsheet saw that Howard was ‘right to condemn in the strongest terms anyone who would put the lives of children at risk, for any cause.’ The newspaper considered that the Prime Minister was analysing ‘the thought of children being thrown overboard by their boatpeople parents as “a sorry

reflection on their attitude of mind’.’ But *The Australian* added, in the same editorial, that Howard was blind ‘to the sense of desperation that would drive a parent to this sort of behaviour.’ This line was again another assumption that the incident of throwing children overboard did take place out of a ‘sense of desperation.’

*The Sydney Morning Herald*, tried to justify the action of the parents through an editorial that was also basically critical of the government's policies. By doing so, the newspaper gave credibility to the government's story line. ‘Such is desperation,’ the Sydney newspaper wrote in its editorial on 10 October 2001. ‘The actions of the Iraqi asylum seekers who threw their children into the Timor Sea over the weekend and then jumped in themselves have been described’ by Ruddock, ‘as one of the most “disturbing practices” of his almost three decades in politics.’ The newspaper added that ‘Ruddock's comments highlight the short-term view the Howard Government is determined to take on the wider problem of asylum seekers. There is no doubt that the pitching of children into the sea, even wearing life jackets, is distressing.’ In this line, there's yet another colourful verb used by a newspaper to describe the alleged act of throwing children into the sea, ‘pitching’, a term usually used to describe ball throwing in games such as cricket in a way that ‘it bounces on a certain part of the wicket,’ as explained by *Macquarie Dictionary*. *The Sydney Morning Herald*’s usage of the word ‘pitching’ was a good allegory of transforming the incident into a point scoring exercise.

*In columns. The Daily Telegraph*’s columnist Piers Akerman resorted to his quiver of harsh vocabulary to comment on the issue. ‘Would-be illegal immigrants queuing to pay people smugglers to ferry them illicitly into Australian waters do themselves a disservice with their publicity-seeking

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stunt,’ Akerman wrote. Giving the purported incident a more dramatic tone, Akerman saw that ‘tossing little children into shark-infested waters is not a practice likely to win friends among the locals.’ According to Macquarie Dictionary again, ‘toss’ is a verb used to describe throwing something ‘with irregular or careless motions.’ Using this verb in the context of the alleged incident, would depict asylum seekers as heartless people. By suggesting the presence of sharks in the water into which children were allegedly being tossed, boat people were portrayed as beasts. Describing the asylum seekers as ‘opportunistic queue-jumpers,’ Akerman stressed again the wild environment of the ocean to emphasise the risks faced by the children who had allegedly been thrown into the water. The tabloid columnist wrote that Australians ‘do not, on the whole, applaud those who risk the lives of their offspring by throwing them off boats, with or without life-jackets, into deeper parts of the Indian Ocean known to be home for giant man-eaters.’

The Sydney Morning Herald’s commentator, Mike Seccombe, tried to justify the alleged action of the asylum seekers. Presuming that the incident did really happen, Seccombe tackled the issue with a patronising tone, giving the government’s claims even greater credibility. ‘Among the essential elements of human nature that transcend time and place, culture, class and faith, the most powerful is parental love,’ he wrote. ‘Who would challenge the immutable truth that parents, the world over, love their children and would sacrifice almost anything, sometimes including themselves, for the future of their offspring?’ He asked. Seccombe added that when ‘parents, fleeing the fundamentalist horror with which the civilised world is in conflict, threw their children into the Timor Sea in the hope that it would see them picked up and taken to a better future, the Prime Minister called it an attempt to intimidate Australia.’ Although Seccombe was here criticising Howard for challenging

58 Seccombe, Mike, ‘Watch your pleas and queues: this is a war of words’, SMH, 9 Oct 2001, p 6.
the ‘immutable truth’ of parenthood, his writing would give credibility to the government's allegations.

It took the mainstream press a whole month to realise that they had fallen for the government's propaganda machine. On 7 November 2001, The Australian quoted unnamed ‘naval officers’ telling ‘different residents’ on Christmas Island that ‘they should not believe what was being reported about the incident.’

**The politics of framing**

As mentioned earlier, a Senate Committee found in October 2002 that children were not thrown overboard. Simply, this did not happen. All the allegations, political stunts and media rhetoric were based on fabrication. The Children Overboard Affair was nothing but political fiction made real by the media. It was a ‘clearly fabricated’ story, as Slattery indicated, with the ‘deliberate confusion of dates and images in a government attempt to frame the asylum seeker ‘other.'”

That ‘other’ was being framed in the Children Overboard Affair as inhumane, barbaric threatening stranger. ‘Those who are denied humanity are seen to be essentially Middle Eastern or Arabic or Muslim,’ Poynting and a group of academics noted, ‘and their lack of humanity is shifted to a whole community.’ The threatening stranger came from the same land that had been under international sanctions, Iraq, where a feared ruler, Saddam Hussein, was claimed to have been stocking weapons of mass destruction. The framed ‘other’ came also from Afghanistan, the same country that had just been subjected to a newly launched military operation by coalition forces,

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61 Poynting & Noble & Tabar & Collins, op. cit., p 44.
including Australian troops. The newly launched war was targeting the Taliban regime for giving refuge to the most wanted man at the time, Osama Bin Laden, whom the Americans had accused of planning the September 11 Attacks.

Boat people were being framed as the embodiment of the West's worst and most despised enemies. The Children Overboard Affair was a typical piece of work of the Orientalist Aussie. It took the Australian Trials to a new level of political cynicism, with the media embracing government propaganda and adopting it in their news agenda. Imagination worked its magic. Mirage became real and a big lie helped a government to be re-elected. Above all, scaremongering was consolidated as the main real matter that could impact Australians.

Fear had always been part of the framing game. Marr noted that with the *Tampa* issue, the government wanted to give the impression to its citizenry that ‘Australia was under attack and Australia was saved.’

With the Children Overboard Affair, the fear element was constructed around demonising asylum seekers, portraying them as a cruel mob that did not even care about their own children. Labor politician Carmen Lawrence wrote a few years later, that the government did not want Australians to ‘see asylum seekers as human beings, as precious lives to be valued as we value our own’ but ‘as a threat.’

Notwithstanding Lawrence’s comment, both sides of the Australian political spectrum were promoting, on different occasions, the difference between “us” and “them”. Marr indicated that both coalition and Labor ‘indulge fears’ about issues ‘they haven't the courage or the will to contest.’ Scare mongering and the government propaganda around asylum seekers were so efficient that when

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64 Marr, op. cit., pp 7 & 8.
a major catastrophe unfolded with the sinking of the boat dubbed SIEV X, less than two weeks from the Children Overboard Affair, Australians couldn’t care less. 353 lives were lost when SIEV X foundered on 19 October 2001. Crock and others observed that the tragedy of SIEV X was ‘the largest single loss of life at sea in the region since the Second World War.’ Yet it went ‘initially virtually unnoticed and un-mourned in much of Australia.’ This revealed how deep ‘the animosity’ was towards ‘would-be asylum seekers.’

While I was looking into the framing of asylum seekers as people who would throw their children off a ship, the story of SIEV X survivors Sadek Razzak and his two-year-old daughter came to mind. Razzak managed heroically to save his toddler by keeping her head above the water for twenty hours. Like Razzak, SIEV 4 passengers were fleeing the same harsh conditions in their country of origin to provide their children with a better future. How could this type of parents be accused of throwing their children from the deck of a ship?

Even before the Children Overboard Affair and the September 11 Attacks, hostility towards boat people was in full motion. Crock and Saul revealed that in mid-2001, an advertisement calling for the formation of militia ‘to prevent asylum seekers entering Australia attracted’ a remarkably high number of respondents, thirteen thousands. Crock and Saul noted that the advertisement turned out to be ‘a hoax.’ The huge response to the advertisement was mainly due to the fear incubating environment. ‘You cannot have a politics of fear unless you have a culture of paranoia,’ as Poynting and others put it.

68 Poynting & Noble & Tabar & Collins, op. cit., p 213.
Slattery noticed that framing would often involve ‘the use of specific language, symbols and stereotypes.’\textsuperscript{69} That specific language was widely employed by politicians and the media alike in the Children Overboard Affair. The vocabulary utilised to define the alleged act of throwing children off the ship, such as ‘tossing’ and ‘hurling’ are some examples of stereotyping asylum seekers as heartless desperate beings whose actions could amount to a crime. Words uttered by Howard and his ministers to state that they would not accept ‘people of that type’\textsuperscript{70} in Australia were another example. That ‘type’ was a menace, a security threat.

The connotation of menace was not new in the discourse on asylum seekers. In the wake of the September 11 Attacks, boat people were linked to terrorism. In its editorial of 14 September 2001, the \textit{Herald-Sun} drew a connection between them and the terrorists, claiming that the attacks on America should ‘reinforce the need for the Howard Government’s tough stand on illegal immigrants.’ The newspaper implied that ‘would-be immigrants’ were infiltrating ‘target countries,’ waiting ‘to strike in the name of their masters' murderous agenda.’\textsuperscript{71} Two days after the attacks in America, columnist Akerman considered in \textit{The Daily Telegraph} that ‘in light of these horrific events the limited actions Australia has taken to prevent the unauthorised entry of illegal migrants seem minimal in the extreme.’\textsuperscript{72} In another column published in the same tabloid a few days later, Akerman declared that the ‘terrorist attacks on the US should provide a wake-up call to Australia to examine its policy of multiculturalism.’ He asked his fellow Australians whether they wanted their country to be what he described as ‘a collection of monocultures, exclusive and divisive, in a society rent by hatred and violence.’\textsuperscript{73} Like Akerman, radio broadcaster Alan

\textsuperscript{69} Slattery, op. cit., p 102.
\textsuperscript{72} Akerman, Piers, ‘Evil took aim at the beacon of freedom’, \textit{DT}, Thurs 13 Sep 2001, p 33.
\textsuperscript{73} Akerman, Piers, ‘Opening our doors to a wave of hatred’, op. cit.
Jones, made direct references to boat people in the context of terrorism. Jones described the September 11 Attacks as ‘almost an act of religious war’ and the attackers as ‘sleepers’. By ‘sleepers’ he meant agents who were waiting for the right time to strike. Then Jones asked ‘how many of these Afghan boat people are ‘sleepers’?’.

The connection between asylum seekers and terrorism was also made in the political discourse. Defence Minister, Peter Reith, saw boat people as potential terrorists, adopting a similar position taken by the US Assistant Secretary of State, Jim Kelly, towards the so-called illegal immigrants in his country. Reith said that Australians ‘should be able to manage these people’ so their country would not become ‘a pipeline for terrorists’ who could use Australia ‘as a staging post for terrorist activities.’ In another report, Reith stressed that ‘dealing with terrorism’ would involve the capacity to control Australia’s borders.

Furthermore, the link between terrorism and boat people in the political discourse in Australia was made well before the September 11 Attacks. In mid-2000, Ruddock was reported saying that ‘at least one in 10 illegal immigrants would be of interest to anti-terrorist authorities.’

Asylum seekers were being linked to terrorism by the media and politicians alike, as we have seen. McNevin observed that the ‘threat posed by asylum seekers was systematically linked to the broader challenges of the new security environment.’ Boat people were likened to the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Centre. Hocking noticed that the alleged connection between asylum seekers and terrorism were ‘further fuelling racist sentiment and

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77 Cited in Metherell, Mark, ‘Revealed among the boat people: mass murderers’, SMH, Fri 16 Jun 2000, FP.
78 McNevin, Contesting Citizenship, op. cit., p 78.
endangering Australia's successful multiculturalism.'

Lygo pointed out that the ‘Australian tabloid media needed a local angle to the story with asylum seekers being the connection to the New York tragedy.'

Yet drawing an analogy between terrorists and boat people was baseless. Minns stressed that there was no evidence that any boat person ‘had a connection to terrorism.' Nevertheless, the Australian Trials were constructing a different picture. The framing had already been done and asylum seekers had been equated to terrorists. That was again the work of the Orientalist Aussie in politics and the media.

With purported terrorists trying to infiltrate Australia under the guise of boat people, a strong challenger, an ‘uncompromising leadership,’ as McNevin described it, was needed, along with a ‘return to the territorial frame that was under siege elsewhere.’ Howard's leadership was assertive. In the heated debate over the Tampa crisis, Howard coined one of the most controversial patriotic slogans in Australian politics: ‘We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.’ The government's slogan was designed to awaken the tribal instincts of its citizens so people would rally behind their leadership. The territorial frame was a crucial component of the day. The Pacific Solution – and the Children Overboard Affair for that matter – revolved essentially around the territorial notion and the right to access Australia. It was about sovereignty and keeping asylum seekers out.

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79 Hocking, Terror Laws, p 9.
82 McNevin, op. cit., p 78.
83 Cited in Minns, op. cit., p 118.
noted that Howard's political success was mainly due to ‘his skill in creating a
new story about Australia's identity.’\textsuperscript{84} That ‘identity had become a new
political battleground, and Howard's ability to take control of the debate on the
subject was crucial in shaping voters' response.’\textsuperscript{85} Identity would need a clear,
unambiguous definition so it could serve as a motivation for the protection of
the nation and its territories. The most efficient weapon was to awaken the
sense of patriotism in people, reminding them of their identity.

To maintain territorial sovereignty and integrity, entities must be well defined.
McNevin indicated that a clear line must be drawn ‘between citizen and
“alien”.’ This would help to ‘define the nature of the “us” supposedly
threatened by “them”.’\textsuperscript{86} Garran pointed out that another ‘aspect of Howard's
new nationalism was to define outsiders as disloyal and unpatriotic.’\textsuperscript{87} The
threatening ‘them’ or ‘other’ were easy to find. The ‘threatening other,’ as
Morris-Suzuki highlighted, was drawn ‘on images from recent news and
current affairs – images of Arab suicide bombers.’\textsuperscript{88} For the Orientalist Aussie,
the boat people were coming from the same part of the world where
international terrorists and Sydney ethnic youth trouble-makers had come from.
McNevin stressed that in the ‘panic-stricken climate’ of the September 11
Attacks, ‘the religion and nationalities of asylum seekers arriving by boats
became significant.’\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{84} Garran, Robert, \textit{True Believer – John Howard, George Bush & the American
\textsuperscript{85} Garran, op. cit., p 59.
\textsuperscript{86} McNevin, op. cit., p 81.
\textsuperscript{87} Garran, op. cit., p 8.
\textsuperscript{88} Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, ‘Drawing the Line – Migrants, Frontiers and Values in a
Global Age’, in \textit{Seeking Refuge – Asylum Seekers and Politics in a Globalising
World}, Coghlans, Jo & Minns, John & Wells, Andrew (eds.), Australia, University of
\textsuperscript{89} McNevin, op. cit., p 78.
This allegorical imaging was captured by journalist Mark Day in the height of the Children Overboard Affair. Day lamented the way the debate on asylum seekers was going. ‘Many factors have combined to make our debate over refugees and immigration policies short-sighted, furious, abusive, and destructive to our social fabric.’ Day wrote. Among the factors that affected the debate ‘a series of gang rapes of girls allegedly selected because they were “Skips”, that is, white, Australian and Christian.’ After the September 11 Attacks, Day added, ‘Muslim terrorism, Muslim boat people and Muslim youth gangs in our midst were all entwined in the public mind on the eve of an election.’ Those issues were lurking somewhere in the back of the mind of Australians during the Children Overboard Affair. Yet, as Lygo stressed, there ‘was no logical basis to draw these stories together.’ The Australian Trials in the asylum seekers discourse were manifestations of the Orientalist Aussie attitude towards Australians who came from the Middle East.

In exceptional times, logic takes a back seat. Illogical and unusual practices become the norm, instead. When the media turn a blind eye to unfair labelling and hard ball politics, they take a stand against the reason for their own existence; to look for the truth, scrutinise decision makers and make politicians and public figures accountable. In the Children Overboard Affair, reporters, commentators and editors did not bother checking their facts. Instead, they were accomplices in the unfair labelling and demonisation of boat people. Reporters seemed to be working for the government’s propaganda machine, relieving the Prime Minister and his cabinet from accountability. It was journalism malpractice at its worst degrees. In many cases, the media went even further to the extreme. While the majority of ‘politicians avoided linking terrorism and asylum seekers’ for fear of ‘electoral consequences’ the ‘tabloid media did it for them,’ as Lygo pointed out. This would rhyme with what

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92 ibid, p 46.
Said observed in another work, *Power, Politics, and Culture*. ‘Journalists internalize government norms to a degree that is quite frightening.’

**The Five weaknesses of the newsroom**

Based on this analysis, I argue that journalists did not question the government's claims in the Children Overboard Affair because the official allegations were fitting and cementing the stereotypical image of Arabs and Muslims that the journalists themselves and the media industry as a whole had been constructing for years. I also argue that framing Arabs and Muslims is further exacerbated by a fact seldom noticed by the public; a series of innate weaknesses of the newsroom where the stories are prepared and processed for publication. The newsroom weaknesses are most destructive when the news agenda involves Arabs and Muslims, due to preconceived stereotypical ideas and attitudes towards them. The Orientalist Aussie exploits the newsroom's weaknesses to take advantage of them.

Media organisations are big information machines that have the ability to make, shape and/or manipulate the public opinion. Street, however, argues that media organisations ‘are not simply machines either for reporting events or for making profits; they are also bureaucracies with their own internal political orders.’ Their product is highly influenced by the way ‘they are organized’ and ‘how the power is distributed within the organization.’ This makes media organisations vulnerable entities. Drawing on my own long experience as a journalist for more than thirty years, I can see how vulnerable those entities can be. Some of their organs are more susceptible than others. One of the most sensitive parts of any media organisation is the newsroom. It is the heart of the

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media outlet, a newspaper, television, radio or website. If the heart is in trouble, the whole being is at risk. Yet that heart is never really sound or healthy even at its best condition. The newsroom has chronic illnesses, or at best, weaknesses. This is mainly because it is inhabited by journalists. Street sees journalists as pawns in a game of influence between various stakeholders. He describes the journalists as ‘lapdogs of partial interests, not the watchdogs of the public interest.’

What’s peculiar about the newsroom’s weaknesses is the fact that they are essential to its nature, intrinsic to its dynamics, inter-related by causality, and form an innate vulnerability. In other words, the newsroom suffers from inherent frailties. That is its nature. There are five weaknesses in the newsroom. They become more problematic when the ethical side of the work is forgone or compromised. That was the case with the Children Overboard Affair. The five weaknesses of the newsroom can be summarised in the deadline bugaboo, the space game, sensationalism, the rating war and the objectivity myth.

1. The deadline bugaboo. Deadlines control the rhythm in any media organisation. Time is the biggest player there. Time is both the master of news making and its enemy. It is a feared spectre that sends people scrambling. If a newspaper has to be delivered to the printers by 2 am, it cannot be there one minute later. If a news bulletin must be aired at 2 pm, it cannot start one second later. In a way, it is a good thing for the production line. However, this fact creates many disadvantages. One of the inconveniences of the deadline factor is the changing nature of information in a situation that is being developed, professionally referred to as a breaking story. When the newsroom is pressed because of rapidly developing events, its accelerated rhythm becomes too fast to handle and too hectic to control. There won’t be much time to contemplate or think. The agenda has to be quickly set. Stories need to be promptly assigned

95 ibid, p 146.
and reporters are expected to get onto their tasks as swiftly and as efficiently as possible, and to file back their reports with the same speed.

In the case of the Children Overboard Affair, the pressure was even greater, more irritating and almost impossible to sustain. Within hours of the alleged incident, the Americans and their allies started bombing Afghanistan. For the Australian media, it was a situation of multi-developing stories. Yet the new war was the most important. In such circumstances, choices had to be made. The most important must come first, as it would be more newsworthy. A review of the newspapers of the day would show that the Children Overboard story was certainly not the most important issue. The new war was occupying most of the space, getting most of the attention. The newsroom was extremely stretched out, much busier than expected. If others, such as politicians, set the news agenda in such times of speedy multi-developing issues, then let it be. Fact checking would become less important. Editors would not have much choice left. Remember the time factor. Editors and reporters need to make it on time for the print. They either rash it out or risk lagging behind their competitors, even if that means just grabbing what is available and offer it to their audience. The latter would care less as long as they are being informed. Tuman remarks that the public has a ‘consumption demand’ that needs to be constantly ‘refilled.’

This natural weakness of the newsroom, the deadline issue, worked well to the advantage of the government's Orientalist Aussie approach that was reflected by the official discourse in the Children Overboard Affair. Journalists were busier with the other big issue, the newly launched war. They took the government's claim at face value.

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96 Tuman, op. cit., p 173.
The official narrative of the Children Overboard Affair was part of the government's long standing policy towards asylum seekers. Howard and his ministers had been doctoring the news on asylum seekers for a long time. Pietsch stated that the government was ‘able to set the agenda on the refugee issue, by keeping control of the media’s perceptions and the language they employed.’ Pietsch added that the government was allowed ‘to convey its presentation of asylum seekers to the public even more effectively.’ Amor and Austin observed that one of the most damaging images that the government persistently wanted to convey was ‘to demonise asylum seekers, to portray them as subhuman.’ Through the Children Overboard Affair, the media helped the government to market this idea and to promote that image.

2. The space game. The second weakness of the newsroom is the space game. People tend to forget that any medium outlet is, in its core entity, a surface or a signal that needs to be filled up. Tuman describes the media as formats that are ‘limited by time and space.’ In print media, including web pages, the space is worked out by lines or millimetres. In radio, television and online broadcasting, the space is calculated by the seconds. The space must always be filled up. Something needs to be there all the time. More importantly, the blank spots must be covered within the deadline frame. The combination of time and format makes the space factor more strained. The existence and continuity of the media outlet depend on satisfying the space needs. A newspaper, for instance, cannot appear the next morning with blank spaces. In countries ruled by dictatorships, this would be taken as censorship. In democracies like Australia, it would put the newspaper in an awkward situation towards its readers and shareholders. The same rule applies to the broadcasting world. The blankness or emptiness there would even be more obvious and more worrying.

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98 Amor & Austin, op. cit., p 185.
Just a few seconds of silence in radio for instance would sound like eternity. Yet the space game in itself is not wrong because it cannot be avoided. It is a part of the media fabric. But filling that space must be carried out in good faith and sound judgment. Otherwise, the fact-checking element would be compromised. The media organisation would then be prone to running propagandist material.

During the Children Overboard Affair, the space pressure reached its peak, while there was no apparent effort to stick to the ethics. Lygo indicated that the ‘reporters demonstrated incredibly poor judgment declaring fourth hand statements made by government ministers as absolute truths.’100 There was no apparent effort to fill the space with independent sources. The war on Afghanistan that was concurrently launched with the unfolding story of the Children Overboard Affair complicated the space game even further. The quantity of the materials and stories published about the war would suggest that most of the journalists were assigned to the new international conflict in which Australia was involved. This would mean less people for the local news. Hurst and White noted, in a different context, that with smaller staff in a media organisation it would be ‘impractical to check out everything in a release.’101 But Lygo argued that ‘the failure to attribute the government’s claim about the children overboard ‘incident’ was inexcusable.’102

Although there was so much material coming out from Afghanistan, the local issues had to have a good chunk of the space in a newspaper, radio, television or website. The Children Overboard Affair was the most important local issue at the time. The media were hungry for materials on that story. But they only resorted to one source to fill up the space; the government. Space in newspapers was transformed into platform for the government propaganda

100 Lygo, op. cit., p 61.
101 Hurst, John & White, A. Sally, Ethics and the Australian News Media, Melbourne, Macmillan Australia, 1994, p 52.
102 Lygo, op. cit., p 61.
machine. It was like a big political bazaar, offering the public everything that the government was trying to sell. There was some kind of a partnership between the press and the authorities. The effects of the Orientalist Aussie were so obvious. Journalists played the role of accomplices. Many government policies were up for sale. Lygo observed that the border protection bill that came at the height of the debate around asylum seekers was sold ‘to the Australian people by Howard and the popular press, in a much more effective way.’

3. Sensationalism. The third weakness of the newsroom is sensationalism. It is the most dangerous of all the five weaknesses. It is fabrication disguised as fact, or even worse than that. Hurst and White explain that sensationalism in a news story ‘is more pernicious and harder to detect than the outright fabrication’ because it ‘looks like the truth but it often is misleading, damaging and unfair.’ When ethnics are involved, sensationalism takes more effect. Larson remarks that when the news is about minorities, ‘cultivating certain assumptions, setting agenda, priming audience, and framing stories’ become a part of shaping the ‘public opinion.’ Sensationalism causes great injustice as the public may mistake it for fact.

With the Children Overboard Affair, sensationalism reached its peak, as the reports quoted earlier in this chapter would have shown. The public opinion was being shaped by mere allegations. The government rhetoric over the alleged act of asylum seekers throwing their children overboard was all about sensationalism. Expressions uttered by government figures that we have examined – like ‘disturbing practices’, ‘shocking tactics’, ‘desperate parents’ and ‘Australia would never accept people who treated children this way’ –

103 ibid, p 40.
104 Hurst & White, op. cit., p 45.
were all part of sensationalising the issue to shape the public opinion in a way that would suit the government's agenda.

In analysing the *Tampa* issue that preceded the Children Overboard Affair, Lygo noted that ‘journalists were often too quick to accept the government's version of events.’\(^{106}\) That was the case with the Children Overboard Affair as well. The more shocking and inciting, the more sensationalist the material would be, and the greater effect it would have on the public.

Although reports on the Children Overboard Affair in both forms of the press – broadsheet and tabloid – could be classified as sensationalist, it was obvious that the tabloid press was more at ease with it. Sensationalism is a part of the tabloid culture. Lucy and Mickler note that tabloid journalists ‘are less obliged than others to observe professional standards of fairness and accuracy in their reporting.’\(^{107}\) Even before the *Tampa* issue and the Children Overboard Affair, the tabloid press had a ‘long-established anti-asylum seeker editorial policy,’\(^{108}\) as Lygo noticed. He pointed out that the tabloid's attitude towards boat people was ‘hugely beneficial’ to the government.\(^{109}\)

Tabloid newspapers feed on sensationalism and feast on it. They are always on the lookout for something big, strange, drastic or scary. Hurst and White attribute this trend in the tabloid press to an ‘unrelenting pressure to bring out a product that arrests the audience's attention,’ regardless of the fact that this type of journalism ‘can weaken the ethical resolve of most journalists.’\(^{110}\) Yet

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\(^{106}\) Lygo, op. cit., p 37.

\(^{107}\) Lucy, Niall & Mickler, Steve, *The War on Democracy – Conservative Opinion in the Australian Press*, Crawley, Western Australia, University of Western Australia Press, 2006, p 87.

\(^{108}\) Lygo, op. cit., p 78.

\(^{109}\) *ibid*, p 47.

\(^{110}\) Hurst & White, op. cit., p 45.
sensationalism is not confined to tabloid. Lucy and Mickler believe that the ‘distinction’ between the tabloid and ‘the so-called quality press’ is far from being ‘clear cut.’\textsuperscript{111} This has been demonstrated in the articles quoted in this chapter over the Children Overboard Affair. Napoleoni sees the general tendency of the press towards sensationalism as an ‘unquenchable thirst for “frightening news”’ based on false information, on facts that have been altered by politicians and can be presented by the media.\textsuperscript{112} Sensationalist reporting has been widely practiced in the issue of boat people. Manning remarks that press reports have played a major role in presenting the asylum seekers as ‘ungrateful and undeserving’ and therefore they ‘should be sent away.’\textsuperscript{113} The sensationalism factor is further exacerbated by the Orientalist Aussie that is embedded in the mainstream media.

4. The rating war. Sensationalism is strongly connected to the fourth weakness of the newsroom, the rating war. High rating can guarantee good revenues for the media organisation through healthy flow of advertisements. Media outlets, whether they are print or electronic, tabloids or broadsheets, have no choice but to keep chasing the advertisers' dollar. They need to maintain their share of the market and work hard to acquire new territory. Entman indicates that media organisations have to ‘compete for the audiences and advertising revenues necessary to maintain profitability and stay in business.’\textsuperscript{114} So like any factory, bank or company, media organisations have to make money to survive. But the lack of revenues is a chronic problem. The media industry is seldom lucrative, especially for newspapers. There has never been enough money in the market to feed everyone. This makes rating a crucial element of the organisation’s performance. It becomes like an ongoing struggle for survival.

\textsuperscript{111} Lucy & Mickler, op. cit., p 87.

\textsuperscript{112} Napoleoni, op. cit., p 120.

\textsuperscript{113} Manning, Dog Whistle Politics, op. cit., p 39.

The rating war has a great impact on the priorities of the media organisation. ‘Ratings and circulation figures,’ as Lygo notes, ‘are furiously scrutinised,’ along with other market observation practices, ‘so editors and production staff can determine what sells.’ Furthermore, experts believe that journalism, ‘once considered the oil of democratic machinery has become mere entertainment measured by ratings and profits, with serious journalism dependent on charitable funding,’ as Banham reports. When serious journalism survives on charity, the newsroom is in trouble. It will run on skeleton staff with fewer seniors involved in the process of news making. Yet the newsroom is the flagship of the media organisation. Whatever is cooked there can decide the size of the audience or readership. But pressure to achieve high rating leads to inaccurate reporting or stories based on fabrication.

The rating war was present in the background of the discourse on the Children Overboard Affair. The fact that the story involved accusations against Iraqi or Middle Eastern boat people made it convenient for the press to gain readership. It was a good story to sell. Lygo argued that the tabloid press took ‘a commercial decision to demonise asylum seekers and Muslims.’ In the Children Overboard Affair, the aggressive market environment was partly responsible for the outcome while the Orientalist Aussie was behind its exacerbation.

5. The objectivity myth. The rating war leads to the fifth weakness of the newsroom, the objectivity myth. Reality reveals that there is no such thing as sound objectivity in media, regardless of the fact that most journalists strive indeed to do their utmost to be objective. Journalists are only pawns in a

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complicated system. The ‘financial pressures’ compel news organisations to favour their interests, as Larson explains. It is a tough survival game; own interests first, then the rest. From top to bottom where reporters sit, every staff member in a media organisation is expected to comply with this mostly implicit rule. Hurst and White emphasise that journalists ‘have obligations and duties’ to their employer, they are a part of the business. The interests of the business set the agenda, not editors nor reporters. Marr remarks that even if journalists ‘pursue refugee issues’ – and they ‘are much keener’ to do so than their ‘editors and proprietors’ – their stories won’t be published because they ‘don’t sell paper; they don’t boost ratings.

Objectivity is a myth. ‘News is not a mirror of society or the events that occur,’ as Larson notes, but ‘a business’ that strives to ‘get the attention of people with money to buy their products.’ Making news correlates with making money. News organisations are not welfare associations but big businesses. They are aggressive marketeers as well. Larson points out that the media sell their ‘audience to advertisers.’ When objectivity clashes with their interests, it can be easily sacrificed. This sits well with the Orientalist Aussie rules that seek to achieve the interests of the dominant culture. Entman and Rojecki believe that media organisations do not ‘seek to promote racial antipathy,’ but rather, the problem lies in ‘the interaction of the dominant culture with the market pressures.’ This makes bias the real thing, not objectivity. The latter is rather aesthetic. It is there to make things look better. Yet regardless of the real motives of media organisations to produce biased materials, it is the end result that counts, favouring the dominant culture.

118 Larson, op. cit., p 85.
119 Hurst & White, op. cit., p 5.
120 Marr, op. cit., p 59.
121 Larson, op. cit., pp 84-85.
122 ibid, p 84.
This favouritism becomes more obvious when the issues at hand are linked to national security. Here objectivity is non-existent. When national security is involved, high rating is achieved through the promotion of patriotism. Media organisations put themselves in the service of their country when sovereignty or security are at risk. Said uncovers what he describes as a ‘common center’ or ‘consensus’ that all American media keep in mind when reporting on foreign issues in which their country has an interest. Said notes that the US media are ‘corporations serving and promoting a corporate identity – “America” and even “the West”’.  

By the same token, the Australian media are serving their own corporate identity, Australia. Aly believes that the mainstream media in Australia replicate what the American media present to their constituent in relation to ‘the discourse of national identity for an Australian audience’. “Australia” is the brand for the Australian media. They do their utmost to serve that brand. They have fashioned their own consensus around how delicate issues should be reported. The Children Overboard Affair gives an idea about how that consensus is constructed. It is similar to what Said envisions about the US media. Any issue, or angle, that falls ‘outside the consensus definition of what is important is considered irrelevant’. Selection is then part of the job. In the Children Overboard Affair, the selected materials that went to print were favouring the government, as we have seen, and serving therefore the mainstream media brand, “Australia”. Furthermore, stories are not only shaped by the consensus, but also by the general environment. Reporters are citizens who are affected by what is happening around them. Huntington remarks that in the mind of every human being, there ‘are hidden assumptions, biases, and

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prejudices that determine how we perceive reality, what facts we look at and how we judge their importance and merits." Journalists are no exception.

An obvious example of the hidden biases in regard to the Children Overboard Affair was the issue of the photographs that the government released to claim them as proof that asylum seekers had thrown their children into the water. Marr and Wilkinson observed that the photos grabbed first ‘the attention of the bureaucrats’ in government departments because they ‘confirmed the warnings they had been given: determined boat people would go to any lengths to play on the Australian navy's obligations to rescue drowning people at sea.’ The newspapers published the photographs in accordance with their own understanding of the objectivity factor, and within the lines of their own corporate identity or brand as Australians, although the pictures did not really show the action at stake which was the act of throwing a child or more from the boat in question into the sea. The selection of the materials in that story, and the angle of coverage, made the objectivity myth even more obvious. Entman and Rojecki indicated that the choices that journalists make would depend ‘upon their congruence with dominant professional norms and organizational routines.’ The conformity of the journalist with the principles of the dominant culture might generate inaccuracy in reporting on controversial issues especially on matters that would be considered by the dominant culture as outside the norm. For such situation, Said had this to say: ‘Inaccuracy is bad enough, but reporting that is based on assumptions about the status quo are worse.’ The worst is when inaccuracy and assumption become a routine. The Children Overboard Affair shows that the Orientalist Aussie has this habit.

127 Huntington, op. cit., p 30.
129 Entman & Rojecki, op. cit., p 72.
Reforming the newsroom

Although the five weaknesses of the newsroom are innate, their negative effects can be minimised or eliminated. It is vital for the media industry to fix its weaknesses, otherwise they won't be trusted. White notes that the confidence in the media is already lost. White sees that authorities in the West believe that journalists are ‘generally not trusted.’"\textsuperscript{131} Napoleoni regrets ‘the public's lack of skepticism’\textsuperscript{132} when false and sensationalist reports fly around. More importantly, the credibility of the journalists is on the line. As I have argued previously, the ‘essence of journalism is evaporating’ with distortion being ‘shamelessly practiced’ and media becoming factories for phobia. These are symptoms of a decaying profession.\textsuperscript{133} Lygo laments the fact that ‘quality journalism’ is being eroded. Journalists who take an in-depth view on issues rather than jumping to the ‘race angle’ are portrayed as radicals, supporters of minority rights, and are often labelled ‘un-Australian.’\textsuperscript{134} Lygo observes that the coverage of the disturbances in detention centres for instance, ‘seemed to follow a standard format; what happened, who rioted, how much damage was caused, how much will it cost the taxpayer and what will happen to the “ringleaders”.’\textsuperscript{135}

There are a number of measures that may be used to reform the newsroom. Lygo believes that one of the required changes is the ‘introduction of subjects about reporting racial issues’ and making those subjects ‘mandatory in all journalism courses.’ Lygo stresses that there is a need for a basic understanding of ethnicity and culture, to protect ‘the next generation of journalists.’\textsuperscript{136} But Lynch and McGoldrick point out that it is not enough to encourage ‘journalism

\textsuperscript{131} White, \textit{Terrorism and Homeland Security}, op. cit., p 338.
\textsuperscript{132} Napoleoni, op. cit., p 115.
\textsuperscript{134} Lygo, op. cit., p 87.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid, p 98.
\textsuperscript{136} ibid, p 188.
students to ‘collect’ interesting theories’ but ‘to give them tools to apply a critical self-awareness to their own journalism.’ \(^{137}\)

Another key solution can be an exchange program between newsrooms in Australia and Third World countries, especially in the Middle East. This will be a life learning experience for the news makers. One more step could be the employment of more journalists from ethnic backgrounds in the mainstream media. Yet this fact is not seen by some as a remedy for the newsroom's woes. Larson indicates that diversifying the newsroom will probably not solve the problem ‘because of journalistic norms and procedures’ \(^{138}\) that every media worker has to follow. Poole notes that as soon as they join a media outlet, journalists from minority groups are incorporated ‘within the system on the basis of learned professionalism.’ \(^{139}\)

**Conclusion**

Quoting government officials in news reports and commenting on their statements in editorials and columns is certainly an essential part of journalism. Attributing allegations to their sources is also a must. However, the media's approach in the Children Overboard Affair did not respect these principles all the time. In many occasions, the press seemed to have adopted the government's claims and took them as facts. Furthermore, newspapers constructed the leads of their news reports, and composed editorials and opinion pieces, around the assumption that the alleged incident of asylum seekers throwing their children into the sea did really happen, while this was not the case.

\(^{137}\) Lynch & McGoldrick, op. cit., p 228.

\(^{138}\) Larson, op. cit., p 93.

The political and media discourse over the Children Overboard Affair, and asylum seekers in general, makes a good reading into the mindset of the Orientalist Aussie. This discourse takes its roots from the Orientalist vision and attitudes as explored by Said. For the Orientalist, ‘the apocalypse to be feared’ is not ‘the destruction of Western civilization’ by terrorism or other means, ‘but rather the destruction of the barriers that kept East and West from each other.’ Destroying the barriers is a blunt challenge to the Orientalist rules. Barriers are there to stay. Said notices that there exists ‘a willed imaginative and geographic division made between East and West, and lived through during many centuries.’ For the Orientalist Aussie, boat people are barrier demolishers and boundary violators. They have no respect for the division and distinction between East and West, both in geography and imagination. Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners are expected to keep distance. Hage sees that the ‘queue’ that boat people are being accused of ‘jumping’ is in fact ‘nothing other than the manifestation of the national will.’ Bypassing the queue means that asylum seekers ‘have literally tried to subvert the national will,’ as Hage stresses. ‘Otherness must not be allowed, under any circumstances, to show this national will to be weak.’

In the Children Overboard Affair, the Australian Trials were based on invoking past practices and linking the concurrent environment of fear and paranoia to the issue at hand. ‘Earlier racial stereotype,’ as Morris-Suzuki remarked, could always be ‘recycled and recirculated.’ The recycled old Australian fears, as Marr pointed out, ‘work their magic over and over again’ and people ‘don't

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140 Said, Orientalism, 263.
141 ibid, p 201.
142 ibid, p 201.
143 Hage, White Nation, p 113.
seem to learn.’

Boat people were linked to terrorism. That was not the first time fear and panic were used in politics. ‘Big political careers,’ as Marr observed, ‘have been built’ in Australia ‘on little more than a talent for whipping up fear.’ Marr considered Howard as ‘the most professional politician,’ and ‘nothing was more professional than his manipulation of fears.’ Marr added that Howard ‘is a genius of sorts: he looks this country in the face and sees us not as we wish we were, not as one day we might be, but exactly as we are.’ Harb saw Howard as a ‘skilled hunter’ who knew how to ‘exploit’ the boat people issue and the war on terror to his political advantage. Howard's method in demonising asylum seekers won him a third term in office. ‘Fear sells and it gets people elected,’ as Lawrence noted. Fear, panic and elections were a strong mix. ‘Panic is a rallying cry for power,’ as Marr put it.

Yet it was not about any fear but, as Collins and a group of academics pointed out, it was about the ‘racialised’ fear of the ‘other,’ of people who came from abroad who ‘are widely seen as the perpetrators of fear.’ Panic and fear have been essential components of the Australian Trials. They have always been there, sometimes in full alert sometimes dormant. Collins and others saw fear as ‘a part of the fabric of the current age of uncertainty,’ while Marr noticed that panic had 'been with us from the beginning. It's so Australian.' The Howard government's fear and stereotypical discourse in the Children

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146 ibid, p 3.
147 ibid, p 9.
148 ibid, p 33.
149 Harb, Anwar, ‘Elections on the beat of war’ (intikhabat ‘ala waq’ al-harb), AN, Thurs 27 Sep 2001, FP.
150 Lawrence, op. cit., p 71.
151 Marr, op. cit., p 4.
152 Collins & Noble & Poynting & Tabar, Kebabs, Kids, Cops & Crime, op. cit., p 70.
153 ibid, p 69.
154 Marr, op. cit., p 1.
Overboard Affair seemed to be tailored to certain people. Pietsch observed that what Howard and his ministers were saying about the asylum seekers ‘could be interpreted as desired by a racist audience.’ Pietsch argued that the ‘most overt racialisation of asylum seekers came during the Children Overboard Affair.’ The discourse was prejudice ‘officially sanctioned, indeed encouraged,’ as Lawrence saw it. What made the racialisation and prejudice more serious was the fact that there was no incident of children being thrown overboard. It was all fabrication, a hoax, a lie. What made it even worse was the media’s involvement in spreading the fabrication. The media swallowed the bait and took up the spin on behalf of the government. That was Orientalist Aussie material through which the media serve their identity or brand, “Australia”.

On the other hand, media organisations are neither objective nor passive carriers of information, but big businesses with a chronic avidity for money. Furthermore, media organisations in Australia – and elsewhere – are political players or pawns. This exposes them to bias, misinformation and sensationalism which are exacerbated by the effect of the Orientalist Aussie. This effect emanates from the fact that the identity or brand that the Australian media serve is that of the dominant culture. This is made easy by the composition of the newsroom. Poole stresses that ‘many media workers come from the elite groups’ so that ‘the ideology they produce is believed to be natural and common-sensical.’ It is also about what people want. Entman remarks that the mainstream media machine in the USA manufactures news in a way that suits the ‘public tastes.’ Entman and Rojecki note that ‘the mainstream culture,’ in America, ‘considers Whites the normal, and prototypical, human.’ In Australia, the public conforms to the taste of the dominant culture; the same culture of the Orientalist Aussie.

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156 Lawrence, op. cit., p 68.
157 Poole, op. cit., p176.
The Children Overboard Affair is sheer Orientalist Aussie invention, a novelty that has blended paranoia, fear and panic with boat people and terrorism, and has teamed up the press with the government against asylum seekers from the Middle East. In the Orientalist imagination, as Said observes, “‘East’ has always signified danger and threat.” In Orientalism rules, the West must dominate the Orient and make statements about it and have authority over it. That is because, as Said highlights, the Orient and its people and their descendants are there ‘for the West.’ It's the West that matters, along with its interests, power, thoughts and cultures, because it is the West that is in charge, unlike the East or the Orient which is the subject or a property of the West. The latter is – in the Orientalism vision – ‘rational, developed, humane, superior’ while the Orient ‘is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior.’ This makes the attitudes of the Orientalist towards the Orient ‘either paternalistic or candidly condescending.’ Ultimately, Orientalism is ‘a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”).’

The tacit consent of the mainstream audience to the government's and media's labelling, framing and stereotyping of the boat people is a reflection of Orientalism nostalgia and a longing to the self-gratifying sense of superiority that re-emerges over and over with every occasion in the Australian Trials. This goes back to the roots of Orientalism. Except for Arabs and Muslims, as Said indicates, ‘no other ethnic or religious group’ can have anything ‘written or said about it without challenge or demurral.’ The issue of the Cronulla

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161 ibid, p 3.
162 ibid, p 5.
163 ibid, p 300.
164 ibid, p 204.
165 ibid, p 43.
166 ibid, p 287.
Phenomenon is another example of this Orientalist Aussie discourse, as I argue in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

The Cronulla Phenomenon

Bashing the ‘Oriental-colored,’ Keeping them ‘at bay’

The racially charged discourse on terrorism and asylum seekers, as analysed in the two previous chapters, set the course for a decade of unease and suspicion towards Arabs and Muslims in Australia. Poynting and a group of academics noted that, besides terrorism and boat people, other controversial issues that had been intensifying since the late 1990s, such as ‘ethnic crime gangs’ and ‘race rapes,’ caused ‘moral panic’ that had been ‘centered around those of Arabic-speaking background.’¹ These were crimes that spread fear. Collins and others saw that fear of crime was ‘constructed through the racialised prism of fear of the ‘other.’”² The ‘Arab Other.’³ This environment was a fertile ground both for patriotism and paranoia.

I argue that this was an important epoch for the Orientalist Aussie to thrive since the days of White Australia Policy. It was a time when the ballot box produced some of the most bigots in parliament. Collins and others observed that by 1998, the ultra-conservative anti-immigration party of Pauline Henson, One Nation, ‘became Australia’s third most popular’ force in politics ‘after the Coalition Government and the Labor Opposition.”⁴ With One Nation, the Orientalist Aussie made a strong impact on the public life, and the Australian Trials were marked by extreme politics where radicalism overruled tolerance. Chiro pointed out that 1998 saw the end ‘of bipartisan political support for immigration and multicultural policies in Australia.”⁵

³ Poynting & Noble & Tabar & Collins, op. cit., p 38.
⁴ Collins & Noble & Poynting & Tabar, op. cit., p 16.
This climate of apprehension and racial vilification that began since the mid-nineteen nineties created a hostile environment towards immigrants and made Australia vulnerable to ethnic tension and prone to community friction. Collins and others remarked that although One Nation vanished from the political scene, its ‘legacy of seeing immigration and immigrants as ‘problems’ remains.6 But there was a twist in defining the fearsome ‘other’. Instead of fear from being swamped by Asians, as One Nation had originally been propagating, Hage indicated that ‘White paranoia’ shifted towards Muslims.7 That was a typical Orientalism environment. Lamenting the situation of the Palestinians back in the nineteen seventies, Said wrote that the ‘web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology’ that was directed to Arabs and Muslims became the Palestinians’ ‘uniquely punishing destiny.’8 I argue that with the Cronulla Phenomenon, the Orientalist Aussie made the ‘punishing destiny’ exclusive to Lebanese in Australia.

This chapter examines how the media discourse in the Cronulla Phenomenon caused ethnic tension. As explained in the Introduction, the Cronulla Phenomenon encompasses all the events that are related to the Cronulla issue, from a beach incident between surf lifesavers and a group of young Lebanese Australians on Sunday 4 December 2005, to media incitements throughout the week that followed the incident, and the culmination of the events into riots on Sunday 11 December, and the reactions that followed. I argue that if it was not for the media’s overreaction and over sensationalism, the Cronulla riots might have not happened.

Noble noticed that the original incident on Cronulla sands was not ‘uncommon on beaches.’9 Furthermore, Wise uncovered that on Cronulla beach itself, and ‘from the mid 1950s until the early 2000s,’ the local newspaper reported dozens of violent incidents and ‘anti-social behaviour.’ Wise stressed that those incidents were

6 Collins & Noble & Poynting & Tabar, op. cit., p 16.
8 Said, Orientalism, op. cit., p 27.
seldom attributed to perpetrators with ‘a named ethnicity.’ Noble confirmed that rarely did any incident on any beach ‘lead to large-scale protest or ethnically-defined violence.’ With that particular incident, however, the repercussions were different. I argue that the reason for the incident on Cronulla beach had different consequences was due to three factors. The first was the general mood of tension that had been brewing in the country for years, as mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter. The second factor was that the incident involved people from an ethnic community that came from the Middle East. It was the right time for the Orientalist Aussie that was still relatively enjoying their peak to make a move. Whenever Orientals were screened in an event, stereotype would follow and the politics of framing would be reinforced. Said pointed to an ‘aspect of the electronic, postmodern world’ where there had been ‘a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient’ – and the Orientals for that matter – were ‘viewed.’ The third factor was the role of the media. By pumping up the issue, the media confirmed the views of Miles who noticed, in a different context, that in today's world, 'the media is too often an agent of recrimination and hate.'

Although they were the product of long simmering community unease in Australia, the riots in Cronulla were triggered by a week long campaign by the mainstream media against Lebanese, Arabs and Muslims. As this chapter will demonstrate, the media created vigilante patriotism and brought out some of the worst characteristics of the Orientalist Aussie. The veiled and hideous role of Orientalism scarred the Australian Trials in the Cronulla Phenomenon. The discourse employed in the week that preceded the riots was similar to that of a civil war.

The chapter looks into how the tabloid newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, and the two broadsheets, The Australian and The Sydney Morning Herald, tackled the

11 Noble, op. cit., p 1.
Cronulla issue. It also scrutinises the role that talk-back radio host Alan Jones played in inciting violence. In addition, the chapter shows how the mobile phone became the ‘new media’ as Noble described it, serving as a dangerous weapon by spreading animosity, marshalling youths from rival clans and mobilising them on the ground. On the other side of the media spectrum, this chapter looks into the Australian Arabic press coverage of the issue, examining reports and editorials published by the two oldest community newspapers, *El-Telegraph* and *Annahar*.

**Facts and fiction**

Riots swamped Cronulla on Sunday 11 December 2005, a week after an incident involving safe lifesavers and young Australian Lebanese. Thousands of ‘mostly White, English-speaking background youths’ went on the rampage around the beach, the local train station and nearby shops, attacking people of ‘Middle Eastern Appearance’. As Marr put it, ‘anyone swarthy enough to pass for Lebanese’ was bashed. The incident of the previous weekend proved to be ‘the last straw’ as Noble noted, before the big row broke out. It was an unusual scene in Australia. Tabar described it as ‘a momentous event in the history of community relations’ in this country. Dozens of people were injured and many were arrested. Young people from ‘the western suburbs counterattacked, leaving one man stabbed and 100 cars damaged on the waterfront’. It was a serious and awkward development in a normally peaceful society. Poynting exclaimed that ‘it was sheer luck that no-one was killed’.

Throughout the Cronulla Phenomenon, the tabloid bungle was remarkable, as we would see. Facts and fiction were mixed, making the narration misleading. On

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14 Noble, op. cit., p 1.
15 ibid.
17 Noble, op. cit., p 1.
19 Marr, op. cit., p 62.
Tuesday 6 December, *The Daily Telegraph* reported the original beach incident that had occurred two days earlier – and five days before the riots – in a news report under the title ‘Fight for Cronulla: we want our beach back.’ The lead and the ensuing paragraph appeared as follows:

“Get off our beach. This is our beach.

*We own it.***

*These are the fighting words a group of thugs spoke to three North Cronulla surf lifesavers before bashing them on sunny Sunday afternoon.*

The simple rule of journalism is to never editorialise a factual news story. Fact is fact and opinion is opinion. The lines above fit an editorial or an opinion piece not a news story. Expressions like ‘a group of thugs’ were used by the journalist who did not seem to be quoting anyone but herself. The aim here was to frame, rather than to inform people of what had really happened. The framing involved depicting the attackers as a ‘group of thugs’ who had attacked ‘surf lifesavers’, whom Noble described as ‘an Australian icon famous for protecting citizens.’ Facts about the incident appeared towards the end of the report, yet there too, the attackers were described as ‘four men of Middle Eastern appearance’ who were later joined by eight to ten others. The headline mentioned above sounded like war drums, a call to reclaim a beach that had allegedly been taken over by ‘thugs’ or ‘men of Middle Eastern appearance.’ A big picture splashed over four columns was published with the article did not depict victims of the incident or surf lifesavers but two white young women. Underneath the large photo, a smaller picture depicted a young man referred to as one of the victims of the attack. In the same issue, the tabloid ran an editorial entitled ‘Attack on us all’ complaining about an ‘infestation of idiots’ in Cronulla. Under the Editorial's headline, the newspaper published yet another

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22 Noble, op. cit., p 3.
picture of female beach goers. Now a new dimension for the story was shaping up, slanting the facts even further. There were no women involved in the original incident itself, yet girls were brought into the picture and became the focus of the issue.

The next day, *The Daily Telegraph* published a feature under the headline ‘Gangs turn Cronulla beach into war zone,’ with women as the main focus of the story. White females were again the focal point of text and picture. Expressions such as ‘thugs of Middle Eastern descent’ were also used in the feature. The war now seemed to be between defenseless young white women and ruthless Middle Eastern gangs.

To uphold its distortion, the tabloid ran an opinion piece by Luke McIlveen two days later under the title ‘A beast surfaces – battle of the beach,’ claiming that, unlike Cronulla, Maroubra beach could not be ‘swamped by Middle Eastern gangs’ because it was protected by the *Bra Boys*. McIlveen was quoting Koby Abberton, a surfing champion and leader of the *Bra Boys*, a surf group in the Eastern suburbs. Abberton called on women – presumably white girls – to go to Maroubra beach where his group was in control so ‘nothing happens to them.’ Interestingly, the leader of the *Bra Boys* did not offer to protect surf lifesavers who were supposed to be the target of the gang attacks, but women who wanted to spend time on the beach.

Despite a recent court conviction, McIlveen referred to Abberton as a ‘star.’ The opening paragraph read: ‘Surfing star Koby Abberton had said nothing since his conviction last month for lying to get his older brother off a murder charge – but the extraordinary events at Cronulla Beach compelled him to break his silence.’ Only heroes, stars, victims and good people would usually be compelled to break their silence. Although his conviction was for perjury in a murder case, Abberton was pictured as an idol. Had Abberton been an Abdullah, he would have been taken

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differently. Had his conviction been for a man from an Arabic background, his whole community would have suffered. That was actually the case with this very issue. A few Australian Lebanese youths had a fight with a group of surf lifesavers. A week later, riots broke out and the rampaging Orientalist Aussie mobs were targeting people on their look, those who fitted the media's description of ‘Middle Eastern appearance’.

Furthermore, the headline warned against a ‘beast’ surfacing on the beach. Although the intended ‘beast’ could be that of racial tension, favouring Bra Boys over Middle Easterners, as we have seen, would give a different connotation or impression. ‘Beast’ could be a reference to the framed Lebanese. They were the ones in question. Taking human beings for beasts would deny them humanity.

Throughout the week that followed the beach incident on 4 December and preceded the riots on 11 December, the tabloid published provocative and inciting articles about the issue. Just one day before the rioting Sunday, the newspaper ran an opinion piece by Anita Quigley, further slanting the story. Under the headline ‘A stand on beach thugs,’ Quigley started her article by quoting a young woman complaining to a TV crew about ‘the intimidation she has experienced on Cronulla beach’ when she overheard young men saying she was ‘not worth doing 55 years for.’ Quigley went on to explain for ‘those unsure of what these lowlifes are referring to, it's the length of the prison sentence which was given to one of the Sydney's infamous gang rapists.’ Quigley then spoke about ‘a deep cultural problem that exists with some of the second generation young men of Middle Eastern descent who live in this country.’

In his study on ethnic conflicts and terrorism, Soeters observes that ‘stereotypes are applicable to groups with a social identity,’ and that ‘stereotypes are firmly rooted

27 Quigley was referring to Bilal Skaff, the leader of a group of young Australian men from Lebanese background who was sentenced for a series of gang rape in Sydney in 2000. His original sentence was 55 years in jail before it was reduced in appeals. Sakff is eligible for parole in 2033
– they hardly change and cannot be changed.  

The Cronulla Phenomenon was all about stereotyping and framing. Lebanese, Arabs and Muslims were described as thugs. Their whole communities were framed as such. Their framing was there to stay. The Daily Telegraph and its writers worked on spinning the story to remould it around a fabricated imagery, white girl victims facing thugs and beasts. This would make the story more appealing to the tabloid’s readers. Noble remarked that ‘the ‘facts’ were being made to fit a narrative on national belonging.’

Broadsheet newspapers, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian, published fewer articles on the beach incident itself, reserving their wide coverage to the riots and their aftermath. What appeared in the broadsheets before the rioting Sunday on 11 December was less tense than the materials published in the tabloid, yet still quite provocative. In its weekend edition, The Sydney Morning Herald published an article by Neil McMahon on ‘beach etiquette.’ The author wrote about ‘an aggressive invasion of youths of Middle Eastern background’ that had angered the locals who were now saying ‘they have had enough.’ McMahon quoted a local saying that what was happening was war that had ‘been brewing for years.’ In an earlier article, the newspaper quoted an 18-year-old girl complaining about ‘a group of ethnic people’ coming down ‘as usual and try to start a fight,’ although she confirmed that she did not ‘actually see the fight’ with her own eyes. The Sydney Morning Herald ran an editorial under the title ‘Let’s take back our beach,’ warning against resorting to vigilante actions. The Australian indicated in one of its few articles that had been published before the riots that ‘suspicions continued to simmer’ on the beach, quoting a 16-year-old local girl happily talking about the increased police presence on the sand, and saying that she was hoping that this fact would ‘stop trouble between the Aussies and the wogs.’

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29 Soeters, op. cit., p 80.
30 Noble, op. cit., p 3.
32 Malkin, Bonnie & Tadros, Edmund & Kennedy, Les, ‘Bad blood boils in the Cronulla stomp’, SMH, Thurs 8 Dec 2005, FP.
33 Editorial, ‘Let’s take back our beach’, SMH WE, 10 Dec 2005, p 32.
The Jones connection

Sensationalism around Cronulla's original incident on Sunday 4 December was not confined to the press; it was also the work of the airwaves. Talk-back radio host Alan Jones spearheaded the campaign against the Arabic and Lebanese communities by his own admission. Three days before the riots, Jones was reported saying ‘I'm the person that's led this charge here. Nobody wanted to know about North Cronulla, now it's gathered to this.’ Jones was described as ‘one of the most energetic panic-mongers of our time.’ In Jones Town, which exposed many aspects of Jones' life, Chris Masters remarked with regards to Cronulla, that the radio broadcaster ‘let slip the genie, allowing provocative commentary to go to air. When I hear him unwind about Muslim clerics I can feel I am in the presence of an Australian fanatic.’

Jones' attacks on the Lebanese community were planned. Marr noted that ‘Sunday's trouble did not come out of the blue. Jones had been thundering about Lebanese men for months.’ He was a highly influential talk-back personality. Politicians and corporates alike were striving to keep him on their side. That was mainly due to his style in dealing with issues at hand, including through intimidation. Masters wrote that ‘Alan Jones harassing and haranguing, on air and in writing, intimidates others into submitting to the belief that he really does represent public opinion.’

Jones thundered about the 4th of December incident on Cronulla beach on his morning talk-back show on Radio 2GB several times. He made a series of derogatory and inflammatory comments against Middle Easterners, Lebanese, Arabs and Muslims in the week preceding the rioting Sunday. This section of the

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35 Cited in Marr, op. cit., p 60.
36 ibid, p 8.
38 Marr, op. cit., p 60.
39 Masters, op. cit., p 432.
chapter analyses three of Jones' most offensive broadcasted segments. The first was aired on Monday 5 December 2005, the day after the incident involving a group of young Australian Lebanese men and surf lifesavers. That was six days before the riots. In this extract, Alan Jones was talking to a listener called Bill.

Alan Jones: *What kind of grubs? Well I’ll tell you what kind of grubs this lot were. This lot were Middle Eastern grubs.*

Bill: *There we go!*

AJ: *And we're not allowed to say it but I'm saying it.*

In this extract, Jones made a contemptuous reference to immigrants who came to Australia from the Middle East. The derogatory term ‘grub’ is usually used to depict people as being dirty or filthy. In colloquial use, the word ‘grub’ refers to a person ‘covered with dirt’ or someone ‘with poor personal hygiene’ suggesting that they rarely wash up. When we put this comment in the context of Jones inflammatory statements during the week leading to the riots, we could see that the talk-back host was saying that people who came from the Middle East were dirty. Furthermore, the claim ‘we're not allowed to say it’ implied that the media were being muzzled and the public gagged. Yet no one stopped him saying what he wanted to say despite his bigotry comments. Jones was portraying himself as a hero for defying the alleged censure.

The next day, the insulting tone of Jones' distortion, fabrication and vilification became even sharper, gloomier, nastier and more offensive. In this second extract from his broadcasted materials on the Cronulla incident, the radio host claimed that he was reading from a letter by another listener, Greg. This was aired on Tuesday 6 December.

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40 All Alan Jones broadcasts quoted in this chapter were acquired from the ABC’s Media Watch website [www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s1574155.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s1574155.htm)

AJ: Greg says here I go again. Sitting there in your studio you should visualise North Cronulla Beach. It's not just a few Middle Eastern bastards at the weekend it's thousands.

Cronulla is a very long beach and it has been taken over by this scum, especially North Cronulla. It's not a few causing trouble it's all of them. It's an attitude that you feel. Whenever you go there it's just straight out racism, it will not go away. The police have their hands tied.

Reduced numbers, reduced powers […]

The only answer is to run away or hope for a governing body with backbone. […] and my daughter was even stalked by Bilal Skaff before he went to prison. I would like to send you some digitals of the human pollution on the beach. I would like to know where to send them. […]

I'm grateful I'll be in touch with you.

‘Middle Eastern grubs’ became ‘Middle Eastern bastards’ and ‘scum.’ The purported letter that was read out by Jones was not talking about ‘just a few’ of them but ‘thousands,’ all of whom were ‘causing trouble’ not just some of them. That was sheer stereotype and racial profiling. Dershowitz wrote that ‘racial profiling of an impermissible nature occurs when all members of a particular race become suspect because of their race, ethnicity, or nationality alone.’ That was the case in Jones' read out. Whole Middle Eastern communities were being labelled, framed and vilified. They were all ‘causing trouble.’ Everyone was considered mischievous not just ‘a few’. Furthermore, the ‘Middle Eastern bastards’ were likened to an invading army as they had allegedly ‘taken over’ the beach. Jones was referring to co-citizens as invaders.

In another context, Tabar and others noted that Australians who were the descendants of Lebanese immigrants were ‘being denied their belonging in the country of their birth.’ Jones was denying Australians from Middle Eastern background their belonging to Australia. The Middle Easterners had ‘taken over’

42 See the explanation in reference 27.
43 Dershowitz, op. cit., p 209.
Cronulla beach while the police were helpless, outnumbered and powerless. There wasn't even ‘a governing body with backbone’ in place, as he claimed. This was war vocabulary. It was designed to irritate the national psyche and submerge it with painful memories from the past. Australians had not had an army raiding their territories since the Japanese assaults in World War Two. Jones stopped short of calling to form a militia to defend the beach and knock back the invaders since the authorities seemed hopeless. He went on to touch another chord. He evoked the name of convicted gang rape leader Bilal Skaff. Coupled with his stereotype of the Middle Eastern people as ‘bastards,’ ‘scum’ and ‘causing trouble,’ the inclination for invoking Skaff’s name was that, in their turn, those thousands of Middle Eastern people who took over the beach, were all rapists. By the end of this extract, the ‘Middle Eastern bastards’ were even reduced to a much more despicable object; ‘human pollution on the beach.’

That was Orientalist Aussie haughtiness. Said remarked that in the Orientalist imagination, ‘Orientals are inveterate liars, they are “lethargic and suspicious,” and in everything oppose the clarity, directness and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.’

According to Jones' fantasised world, Middle Easterners could not have any degree of nobility. They were trash, ‘human pollution.’ The Orientalist Aussie was the owner of the land. The Middle Easterners were invaders. Jones' language was an expression of the core perception of the ‘White nation fantasy’ as argued by Hage. Jones' attitude rhymed with what Hage described as the ‘White belief in one's mastery over the nation.’ It was ‘a fantasy of a nation governed by White people, a fantasy of White supremacy.’

Jones' supremacist views were reinforced in the following extract. Here again, Jones claimed to be reading from a letter sent by a listener, John. This extract was aired on Wednesday 7 December.

AJ: John has a good answer, he says that it seems that the police and the council are impotent here. All rhetoric, no action.

46 Hage, White Nation, op. cit., p18.
My suggestion is to invite one of the biker gangs
to be present in numbers at Cronulla railway station
when these Lebanese thugs arrive.

The biker gangs have been much maligned but they do a lot of good things.
It would be worth the price of admission to watch
these cowards scurry back onto the train
for the return trip to their lairs.
And wouldn't that be brilliant if the whole event is captured
on TV cameras and featured on the evening news,
so that we, their parents, family and friends
can see who these bastards are.

Australians old and new shouldn't have to put up with this scum.

In another show of Jones’ supremacist views, the radio broadcaster went on with his
dehumanising labelling and racial profiling, read out from a letter. His ‘Middle
Eastern grubs,’ ‘bastards’ and ‘scum’ evolved into new lows and were given new
names, ‘Lebanese thugs’ and ‘cowards.’ They did not come from homes or families
but ‘lairs’ like wild animals. Lairs would be found in the wilderness not in urban
areas. This would bring in the Orientalism discourse again. Said wrote that in the
Orientalist imagination ‘Orientals cannot walk on either road or a pavement.’ For
Jones the ‘Lebanese thugs’ were living in holes or dens that could not be reached
through properly paved roads. Jones wanted ‘biker gangs’ to await the ‘Lebanese
thugs’ at the train station before they could get to the beach. The beach was now, in
the imagination of Jones and his audience, forbidden territory to the presumed
assailants. He was reminding the bikers that the beach was “our” turf not “theirs”.
The ‘Lebanese thugs’ should not be allowed to come to the beach but forced to
retreat into their ‘lairs’ where they belonged. Jones was also implying that his gangs,
the bikers, were a disciplined lot who would only fight for a good cause, namely a
patriotic one, to defend the nation. His ‘biker gangs’ were the right force that could
properly deal with the ‘Lebanese thugs,’ since the police had ‘their hands tied’ and
they did not have enough ‘numbers’ or ‘powers’, as he claimed in the previous
extract. For Jones, the bikers were militia ready for war. He wanted the potential

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47 Said, op. cit., p 38.
battle documented on ‘TV cameras’. That was what Australians ended up seeing on the screen when the riots broke out a few days later. Although bikers were not in the picture, vigilante squads and angry mobs draped with the Australian flag did the job. Many of them might have been Jones' listeners who heeded his repeated call of duty and messages. That was the magic of talk-back radio. Manning described talk-back radio as ‘racist, inaccurate, trouble-making, fear mongering and often defamatory.’ Many people would form their views on current issues by listening to talk-back radio, which, as Bell puts it, functions as an ‘aural wallpaper’ that might ‘perpetuate ethnocentric prejudice and ignorance’ when discussing ‘ethnicity, immigration and related issues.’

Sixteen months after the Cronulla events, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), found that Jones, and for that matter his employer Radio 2GB, breached twice the commercial radio code ‘by broadcasting material that was likely to encourage violence and brutality.’ Acting upon complaints from listeners against Jones' comments in the lead up to the riots, ACMA found that the first breach was related to Jones inviting ‘biker gangs to be present in numbers at Cronulla railway station when these Lebanese thugs arrive.’ The second breach was ‘by broadcasting material that was likely to vilify people of Lebanese background and of Middle Eastern background on the basis of their ethnicity.’ But Jones continued on with his job as a talk-back host. After ACMA’s findings, Prime Minister John Howard defended Jones by describing him as ‘a person who articulates what a lot of people think.’

Like the tabloid press, Jones' broadcasts reflected the racist and belligerent spirit of the Orientalist Aussie. That spirit would be soon tested on the ground to mass people for rioting, dragging the Australian Trials even deeper into trouble.

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51 Cited in Marr, op. cit., p 63.
The new weapon

With the Cronulla Phenomenon, a new medium of mass communication emerged, the mobile phone. Through text messaging, the mobile phone played a crucial role in mustering thousands of people on the beach and counter-mustering the other clan, inflaming the situation even further in Cronulla. Mobile phones became weapons in the hands of civilians, weapons that could mobilise mobs and cause social upheaval. The most interesting aspect of that new weapon was the fact that it was legal and it could be in everyone’s hand.

From 8 December, three days before the rioting Sunday, there were media reports about mobile text messages urging ‘every Aussie’ to rally on Cronulla beach. The main message read:

‘This Sunday every Aussie in the shire,
get down to North Cronulla to help support
Leb and wog bashing day...
Bring your mates and let’s show them that this is our beach
and they’re never welcome back...
Let’s kill these boys.’  

Marr observed that Jones read that message ‘right through on air half a dozen times.’

Other similar mobile phone messages were also reported in the press. Some had the rude ‘f…’ word included. One of the messages had a different ending, ‘Let’s claim back our shire.’ The fight seemed inevitable. The lines in the sand were being drawn. The messages sounded like war drums. The mission was to ‘show them that this is our beach’ and to ‘claim back our shire.’ It was a turf war. The notion of the Middle Easterner or Lebanese invaders was reinforced. The message

circulators wanted to stress that those whom they saw as the assailants were ‘never welcome.’ They must be driven out and defeated. This could only happen through a ‘bashing day’ of ‘Leb and wog.’ People were urged to gather in big numbers to ‘kill these boys.’ It was ‘us’, ‘every Aussie’ against ‘them’ the ‘Lebs’ and the ‘Wogs.’ The identities were being drawn along with that of the clans. Herbst noted that feeling as part of a community would strengthen ‘one's sense of identity. We know who we are, in part, because of the groups to which we “belong”’. Huntington stated that human beings would always be ‘tempted to divide people into us and them.’ In a week of high media agitation, the situation was to be set ablaze. Soeters remarked that in times of crisis, people would rally ‘behind the identity of the group.’ It was the rallying factor that gave the text messages their significance, especially that they were coming out from the youths themselves, the most volatile and vulnerable section of the community. They were coming from the people who would march to fight in a struggle. More than five thousand youths heeded those text messages. When they did, riots occurred.

After the rioting Sunday, the mobile text messaging method did not stop. Instead, it was copied by the other side of the racial divide. Young Australians from Arabic backgrounds circulated this message.

‘all arabs unite as one
we will never back down to anyone
the aussies will feel the full force of the arabs as one
brothers in arms unite now
let's show them who's boss
destroy everything
gather at cronulla 18/12/05 midday
spread the message to all arabs

57 Huntington, op. cit., p 32.
58 Soeters, op. cit., p 80.
meet up at the lighthouse." 59

In their turn, the Aussies circulated this new text message to their supporters.

‘Aussies: good work for the effort we put in at nulla
But the wogs came back and stabbed one of OUR people
F...ing dogs they are
We’ll show them!
It's on again Sunday. 60

The Cronulla Phenomenon uncovered a new reality; the mobile phone became the new graffiti wall. Scholars and social workers used to analyse graffiti walls to read into the youths mind. Hage studied such wall in the 1990s at an university campus. He observed that the scribbling exchange on the graffiti wall became an ‘extension’ of ‘immigration debates’ that Australia was witnessing at the time. ‘Go back to your own country, you bloody wog,’ 61 one of the graffiti read. The graffiti wall was a forum for bold messages. The Cronulla texting proved that mobile messages could be even bolder. While the graffiti wall would sit passively on the side of the road and await a passerby to take the initiative and scribble something on it, mobile phones were a faster form of inter-active exchange. Racially driven messages became more effective with technology as they could reach everyone everywhere instantly. The old graffiti wall shrunk to a small, clean, cute and portable screen, with the effect of rallying thousands of people in a short time. Mobile text messaging and media sensational reporting on the Cronulla issue were a deadly mix. Racism was in action everywhere. It was coming out from all sides, as the text messages would confirm. Hage indicated that racism ‘is hardly the monopoly of one group or another.’ 62 The retaliatory approach was soon to translate on the ground and action generated reaction. A quick flick through the pages of newspapers of Monday 12 December would reveal the magnitude of hatred that

60 ibid.
62 Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism, op. cit., p 117.
was sweeping Sydney. The published reports and photos could only be seen in countries torn by ethnic tension or civil war.

**The riots in the mainstream press**

There’s no way we could possibly analyse everything that was written on Monday 12 December 2005 in the mainstream press on the Cronulla riots and their repercussions, in just one chapter, not even half of what was published. The Daily Telegraph for instance devoted nine pages to the event. Along with its various articles, the tabloid splashed pictures of the violence that had taken place all over its pages. The two broadsheets, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian had an abundance of coverage as well, whether in the form of news, features, opinion or commentary. It was the news of the day. The ethnic tension element made the story even more interesting. Bell, who studied the media’s interest in stories involving ethnicity, noted that ‘bad news about multiculturalism is good news for the media.’

Looking now into what happened back then would create a sense of disbelief. Did Australia really go through such a nasty experience?

To simplify the study, I will only examine the front page of the three mainstream newspapers mentioned above. The front page is where “pure news” – as I would like to call it – should appear. Although there’s always a scope for some colorful writing in the headlines, to make them punchy, eye catching and interesting, and in the lead to make the story appealing as much as informative, the front page is where objectivity should be clearly reflected since it is supposed to be dealing with facts. But was this the case with the Cronulla riots?

News on the front page of the three newspapers in question were slanted and distorted to varying degrees, as we would see in this analysis. The focus of the reports shifted from the main issue – the riots by thousands of white young people – to the retaliatory reaction of youths from the targeted community, the Lebanese. This slanting technique was not new in journalism. Entman remarked that there had always been ‘camouflages codes and conventions that journalists use in making

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their news choices. These selections do impart a slant to the news.\(^{64}\) Some headlines reflected the belligerent spirit of the Orientalist Aussie discourse thrown out in the week that preceded the riots by the tabloid press and Alan Jones' broadcasts.

‘OUR DISGRACE,’\(^{65}\) *The Daily Telegraph* shouted through its large all-column front page headline sitting on top of two pictures of the riots, with one of them – depicting a group of ‘Aussie’ youths pack-attacking a young black haired passenger on a train – splashed over most of the page (*see appendix 2*). ‘Beach race riots shame Australia's values,’ the smaller line above the main headline read (as if the whole thing was about shaming Australia's values not an all out racist rage that seemed to have descended into an ugly experiment similar to a real-life-simulated civil war). Yet, readers who might think that the ‘OUR DISGRACE’ statement was directed to the Cronulla rioters, the white Australian youths, as one might imagine at the first glance especially after seeing the accompanying photographs, would soon be disappointed. That was how the lead of the front page story was written:

\[\textbf{SYDNEY'S Eastern Suburbs erupted in violence and vandalism last night after gangs of youths of Middle Eastern descent retaliated to a day of racist-driven hatred at Cronulla.}\]

Those lines appeared right underneath the picture that depicted a different reality. That was sheer distortion. The main issue became the ‘gangs of youths of Middle Eastern descent,’ not the racist attacks that were spawned by the rioting youths. Tabar noted that ‘Cronulla was possibly Australia’s biggest racist protest since the vigilante miners killed two Chinese at Lambing Flat in 1860.’ They came ‘more than 30 years after the implementation of multiculturalism.’\(^{66}\) For *The Daily Telegraph*, however, the riots in Cronulla on Sunday were not as serious as their repercussions, although the rioting was, as the tabloid itself admitted, ‘racist-driven.’ Furthermore, the lead was slanted to make the Middle Eastern ‘gangs of

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\(^{65}\) McIlveen, & Lawrence, ‘Our disgrace’, op. cit.

\(^{66}\) Tabar, op. cit., p 233.
youths’ the real issue in the rioting news story. The Cronulla mob would be left instead to the second paragraph of the tabloid's front page article:

‘Rampaging thugs at Cronulla, fuelled by alcohol and fury after last week’s attack on lifesavers, had earlier bashed men and women of Middle Eastern descent on the beach suburb’s streets and at its train station.’

Although this second paragraph of the story was mainly about the Cronulla rioters, another slant could be easily detected. ‘Rampaging thugs at Cronulla’ were acting the way they did because of ‘alcohol’ and out of anger at the previous week’s incident, the ‘attacks on lifesavers.’ The tabloid was almost condoning the actions of the mob in Cronulla, justifying their deeds. This justification was upheld in paragraph four by adding to the blame list of alcohol another factor, the infiltration of some extremist elements:

‘There was also evidence that extreme right-wing groups had infiltrated the crowd. “It's time for a war, so join the army of hardcore,” one man said.’

The slanting did not stop there. In the third paragraph, the tabloid was back on to the ‘Middle Eastern’ youths, giving an account of the damage they had caused in their retaliatory actions.

‘Then last night, carloads of young people drove into Maroubra to take revenge for the Cronulla violence, damaging 100 cars, breaking their windows and throwing molotov cocktails.’

Interestingly, unlike this account on the damage caused by the Maroubra assailants, the tabloid did not give on its front page a similar account of the victims of the rioting white mob. That was left for reports published on the inside pages, as if the victims of the ‘racist-driven hatred’ were not as important as the ‘cars’ that were damaged by the ‘Middle Eastern’ youths. The only damage caused by the white rioters and mentioned in the front page article was the number of paramedics injured in the riots. Moreover, although the attack on the police by the Cronulla
mob was a significant development, the tabloid left the matter to its last paragraph of its front page story:

‘Police were pelted with beer bottles and had to use capsicum spray and batons([...].’

Had the police been attacked by the ‘Middle Eastern’ youths, the whole story would have changed again. Surely, this would not have been left to the very end. In fact, it would have made the headlines.

Like its tabloid Murdoch press sister, the national broadsheet *The Australian*, took the same slanting approach. Under the main headline ‘Revenge attacks in race war,’ the frenzy by the big crowd in Cronulla did not seem to be the real issue, but the retaliation of the other side. Apart from mentioning the rampage in the lead to uphold the notion of the ‘revenge attacks,’ Sunday's riots were not properly addressed until quite late in the front page story, the eighth paragraph. The spirit of the lead itself was about the revengeful reaction. The riots in Cronulla were treated as old news, although it was the first time that the press had the chance to report on them since they occurred around twelve hours earlier. Interestingly, this was in contradiction to the two front page photographs accompanying the article. Both photos depicted Cronulla rioters in the street and on train (see appendix 3). The consequences of the riots, in terms of damages and victims, were not brought up until even later. In the lead, those involved in the retaliatory actions were described as ‘gangs of youths’ while the rioters were referred to as ‘mobs’, giving the impression that the revenge attacks were committed by groups involved in organised crimes – ‘gangs’ – while those who rioted gathered spontaneously – ‘mobs’. The spontaneity inclination was upheld by describing the crowd as a protest gathering by ‘locals’ against beach ‘visitors of Middle Eastern decent after an attack on a lifeguard’ a week earlier.

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King, David & Box, Dan, ‘Revenge attacks in race war - Lebanese bashed as mob rampages through beach’, *Aust*, Mon 12 Dec 2005, FP.
It is important to emphasise that the mustering of the crowds in Cronulla was not spontaneous, but planned and fuelled by racism, as demonstrated earlier in the chapter through the analyses of media articles, broadcasts and mobile text messages. The front page story of *The Australian* was a slanting exercise. Slanting would emerge, as Entman indicated ‘from choices that journalists must make in constructing their narratives.’ It was the choice of angle, the choice of words and the choice of priorities that created the slanting. Here is an extract of the front page report of *The Australian* newspaper about the Cronulla riots, comprising the first nine paragraphs:

‘Gangs of youths embarked on a series of “hit and run” revenge attacks across Sydney’s beachside suburbs last night after a day of racial violence that saw mobs rampage through Cronulla, in the city’s south, bashing anyone of Middle Eastern appearance.

A man was stabbed near Cronulla and more than 100 cars in the eastern suburb of Maroubra had their windscreens smashed and tyres slashed in what police fear are signs of retaliation by members of Sydney’s Muslim community.

Police said the 23-year old was stabbed, reportedly in the back, after being confronted by two car loads of men of Middle Eastern or Mediterranean appearance in the suburb of Woolooware, west of Cronulla, at about 10.25 pm.

Earlier, Maroubra MP Michael Daley said the suburb was hit by youths wielding baseball bats and sticks after “a cavalcade of hotted-up vehicles” arrived.

“They smashed cars and everything they could lay their hands on,” he said. “I never thought I would see the day this sort of damage hits this city.”

Police, who said it appeared the men were of Middle Eastern descent, said the convoy of up to 50 cars then moved to the Maroubra beachfront, where several people were injured in an “altercation”.

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68 Entman, op. cit., p 36.
In Brighton-le-sands, on Botany Bay, riot police made several arrests as they dispersed groups of brawling men and women. There were reports late last night of the convoy heading back towards Cronulla being tailed by police.

Hundreds of police remained on alert after a day of violence that started when as many as 5000 locals gathered in Cronulla to protest against increasing number of visitors of Middle Eastern descent after an attack on a lifeguard last week.

The crowd at North Cronulla started by drinking beer and waving Australian flags. But, fuelled by alcohol and an SMS and email campaign to “bash” anyone of Lebanese appearance, the crowd started chanting racist slogans.’

As mentioned before, the narration above did not match the accompanying pictures. The photos that were published with the article depicted Caucasian youths attacking people identified as of ‘Middle Eastern appearance,’ not the other way around. Although the police officer in the main picture appeared to be trying to shield a young person from his attackers, the mob seemed to be acting freely. No one was trying to stop them. In other words, the photos were showing a different reality, not ‘gangs of youths’ attacking eastern suburbs, but ‘mobs’ attacking Middle Eastern looking men in the street and on train. This was all part of the same slanting game. If ‘reporters and editors often participate willy-nilly in slanting the news to favor one side or another,’69 as noted by Entman, then in this case, the favoured side was obvious, the so-called ‘mobs’ that rioted, not the ‘gangs’ that attacked the Eastern suburbs. Furthermore, a smaller title appeared above the main headline of The Australian read ‘Lebanese bashed as mob rampages through beach suburb.’ The expression ‘Lebanese bashed’ was a form of slanting and provocation. Slanting because the mobs’ target were Australians of Lebanese background not just Lebanese. It was provocation because the statement ‘Lebanese bashed’ would rhyme with the incitements that were flying around the week before. It seemed that Alan Jones’ call of duty was heeded.

69 ibid, p 37.
Reporting on the issue on its front page, *The Sydney Morning Herald* was the closest of the three newspapers to objectivity, clearly attributing most of the allegations or unconfirmed reports to their sources (*see appendix 4*). Under the main headline ‘Race riots explode,’ the newspaper tackled the Cronulla violence in the early stages of the story. Yet much more weight was given to the retaliatory actions than to the original riots. In addition, the article was not totally free of clichéd derogatory terminology. ‘Around North Cronulla beach and the surrounding streets,’ the newspaper said, ‘drunk teenagers communicated with each other on walkie-talkies about rumoured sightings of Lebanese gangs.’ That was a reinforcement of the ‘gangs’ notion. In addition, the victims of the Cronulla rioters were left to the seventh paragraph, well after mentioning how many cars in the mainly white suburb of Maroubra were damaged by an ‘influx of nonlocals.’

The reporting of the mainstream press on the Cronulla Phenomenon proved another point in the Orientalism discourse. The ‘Oriental-colored,’ Said observed, was an ‘object studied by the Occidental-white’ who was ‘in a position of power.’ Being in a position of power, the Orientalist Aussie could dictate the narration that suited their interests and circulate it as the ultimate truth. This position of power would give them a free upper hand. Because ‘only an Occidental could speak of Orientals’ and could ‘designate and name the coloreds, or nonwhites,’ as Said notes, the Oriental would only be an object of study. For the Australian media, the object was not as important as the materialistic damages in suburbs inhabited by Aussies. Furthermore, the call to the ‘Leb and wog bashing day’ in the mobile phone text messages, and the subsequent newspaper headline about ‘Lebanese bashed,’ were expressions of the position of power of the Orientalist Aussie. This would be yet again in line with Orientalism as envisioned by Said. It was ‘a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves were expected to bend.’

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72 *ibid*, p 228.
73 *ibid*, p 227.
‘Oriental-colored’ bashing was necessary in the media and in the street to keep ‘the coloreds at bay,’\textsuperscript{74} to borrow from Said.

\textbf{The riots in the Australian Arabic press}

News stories, according to Street, ‘are written for a particular group, and the way they are written assumes a particular set of responses or values.’\textsuperscript{75} This approach, as Jacobs indicates, limits the access to mainstream media. The access becomes ‘stratified,’ tending ‘to favor dominant over subordinate groups.’\textsuperscript{76} This was obviously the case in the Cronulla Phenomenon. There was an abundance of reports and articles in the mainstream press about the views, values and concerns of the dominant culture, compared with limited reflections on the Lebanese community. But would the community press fill the vacuum?

The Arabic press in Australia has been around since the 1950s.\textsuperscript{77} The original idea behind their existence is to cover the community’s issues. The Arabic community press can be classified as part of what Jacobs defines as ‘alternative media.’ Jacobs remarks that minority groups turn ‘to alternative publics and alternative media as a way to compensate for their exclusion from the dominant publics.’ He indicates that through their own forums, minority groups hope ‘to capture the mainstream public attention and shift public opinion.’\textsuperscript{78} In other words, the ‘alternative media’ are there for legitimate purposes, to compensate for the alienation of the community and to supposedly bring the community’s issues to the attention of the mainstream society. Larson describes the community newspapers as ‘parallel press’ through which minorities seek ‘empowerment’ and make up for their exclusion ‘from the mainstream mass media.’ Larson believes that through ‘the parallel press, racial minorities contradict’ and challenge the ‘dominant messages’ put out by the dominant culture to maintain ‘the status quo’ and to legitimate ‘the white

\textsuperscript{74} ibid, p 228.
\textsuperscript{75} Street, \textit{Mass Media, Politics and Democracy}, op. cit., p 53.
\textsuperscript{77} Indari, Boutros, ‘The Arabic press in Australia’ (\textit{As-sihafa al-'arabiyya fi Australia}), (from a lecture at Marrickville Library), Fri 30 Nov 2001.
\textsuperscript{78} Jacobs, op. cit., p 28.
majority.\textsuperscript{79} This concept may work well if we assume that the ‘alternative media’ or the ‘parallel press’ have financial resources, social influence and political powers similar, or close to those of the mainstream press or media.

In the context of this study, the Arabic newspapers are considered as ‘alternative media’ or ‘parallel press.’ However, an analysis of the Arabic press coverage of the Cronulla riots shows that these particular alternative or parallel forums did not perform the roles prescribed earlier by Jacobs or Larson. There was no real compensation for the community's alienation, no genuine challenge to the dominant culture's perceptions and no efforts to seek the attention of mainstream Australia. There was instead a huge gap between the mainstream media and the community's alternative or parallel forums in terms of coverage. While the mainstream press run an abundance of texts and photos on 12 December, the morning after the riots in Cronulla for instance, the Arabic press suffered a severe drought. There was nothing on the actual riots at all the next day, literally nothing – just a short story on the Cronulla issue, but not on the riots the day before or their repercussions. Any observer would be puzzled by this fact. Yet this had its reasons, which I explain below. But first, it should be noted that only one Arabic newspaper was being published on Mondays, \textit{El-Telegraph}, which was also appearing on Wednesdays and Fridays, while \textit{Annahar} would fill the other two weekdays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, as mentioned in the introduction.

On Monday 12 December 2005, \textit{El-Telegraph} had eight stories and one editorial on its front page (\textit{see appendix 5 with English explanation}). The three main stories were, consecutively, the Iraqi elections which were also the subject of the editorial, Syria's position on the international investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the upcoming soccer game between Australia and Brazil for the 18\textsuperscript{th} World Cup qualifiers. The other issues on the front page of \textit{El-Telegraph} were, from right to left as per the sequence of the Arabic writing, Miss World an Icelander, Schapelle Corby in a photo with a drug smuggler and NSW Premier Maurice Iemma denying news about an imminent ministerial reshuffle. Together they would make seven stories. The eighth though, was on

\textsuperscript{79} Larson, op. cit., pp 92-93.
Cronulla. It was one of the shortest stories on the front page. But it was not about the riots. Here is a translation of that story:80

*Calm reigns over Cronulla Beach*

*Calm prevailed over North Cronulla Beach on Saturday with 40 police officers, aided by a helicopter, monitoring movements on the beach.*

*No clashes were reported after Australian youths had threatened to challenge young Middle Eastern people on Cronulla beach.*

*Also, there was no rush of citizens to the beach on the previous day, because people were scared of possible riots or because they were busy shopping for Christmas.*

*Political and Islamic leaders have called on young Australian residents of Cronulla and Middle Eastern youths not to resort to revenge and to keep away from the beach. In the meantime, the state government decided to impose a 25-year-sentence on those who would attack surf lifesavers. This came after an assault by Middle Eastern youths on surf lifesavers in Cronulla. The new law would also cover volunteers.*

As we can see, there was nothing on the front page of *El-Telegraph* of Monday 12 December on the riots in Cronulla that had occurred the day before or their repercussions, but a short story describing something completely different. On page four, the newspaper ran an opinion piece for its columnist, Hani Elturk, which also seemed to have been written before the riots. In his article, Elturk attributed the problem of youths in the Arabic community to an identity crisis.81

Certainly, *El-Telegraph* was not shying away from an issue of such a magnitude. Neither was it an oversight or negligence from its part not to cover the serious events that took place in Cronulla and other beach suburbs the day before. In fact, the Arabic newspaper tackled the issue of Cronulla on Friday 9 December, two days before the riots, in a main story and in its editorial, both published on its front page. Unlike *The Daily Telegraph* and *Radio 2GB*, *El-Telegraph* did not make

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80 Anonymous, ‘Calm reigns over Cronulla beach’ (al-hudu’ yakhayyim ‘ala shati’ Cronulla), *ET*, Mon 12 Dec 2005, FP.

racist comments against non-Arab youths in those two articles. Rather, the Editor-in-Chief Antoine Kazzi reproached in the editorial ‘the few’ young people from Lebanese background who were causing trouble, urging them to appreciate the freedom they were enjoying in Australia. Kazzi warned against more violence in Cronulla and implored the older people in the community to tell their adolescent sons or relatives to behave on the beach. The warning of a potential ‘security and racist’ escalation was also repeated in the headline of the story that appeared next to the editorial.

The lack of reports in *El-Telegraph* of 12 December on the riots that had occurred the day before was not a professional issue, but a financial one. Monday's issue of the newspaper would be printed on Saturday. This would explain why the article translated above was referring to events that had taken place two days earlier. Printing on Sunday would cost much more than the standard rate. Simply, the newspaper could not afford it. This was a good example of how inconvenient the lack of financial resources could be. Thus the balance of power between the alternative or parallel press and the mainstream media would be grossly tipped towards the latter. Not only one Arabic newspaper was being published on Mondays, but also the Monday issue was being printed quite early because of financial strains. According to a study by the late Australian Lebanese journalist Boutros Indari, the Arabic press in Australia is always forced to tighten the belt due to its low revenues from advertisements and the lack of financial assistance. The publishers have to spend wisely to survive. Indari, who himself published two newspapers, said that more than one hundred Arabic newspapers were published in Australia since 1957. Only a few of them have survived.

The other Arabic language newspaper, *Annahar* – published on Tuesdays and Thursdays – tackled the Cronulla issue on its front page of Tuesday 13 December. The riots and the ensuing reactions formed its main story. They were also the topic of its editorial, published on the front page as well (*see appendix 6 with English*

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82 Kazzi, Antoine, ‘Cronulla beach’ (*shati’ Cronulla*), *ET*, Fri 9 Dec 2005, FP.
84 Indari, op. cit.
In its main article, the newspaper drew similarities between what had happened in Cronulla and the ensuing revengeful violence in Maroubra on the one hand, and the riots that had taken place in France a few weeks earlier on the other hand. Editor-in-Chief Anwar Harb asked in the editorial, whether Australia had entered an era of gang warfare. He questioned the relevance of multiculturalism, wondering if the latter had failed and whether racism had ‘two heads, one brown Middle Eastern and one white Anglo Saxon.’ Harb described Sunday's events as the ‘worst racist war in the Australian society.’ While the writer called on mainstream Australians not to monopolise the beach, he also criticised the abundance of people pausing as spokespersons for the Arabic community, challenging their claim to represent the community with ‘empty statements’ that would cause more trouble.

Wednesday 14 December was another publishing day for El-Telegraph. It was the newspaper's first chance to deal with the issue at length. However, a glance at the newspaper of that day would uncover yet another adverse reality, something quite peculiar to the ethnic press, a reality hardly experienced by the mainstream media. We will come back to it. But first, El-Telegraph did of course tackle the issue of the riots and the ensuing events, right on its front page. In the editorial, Kazzi urged the Lebanese community to remember their long and positive contribution to Australia for more than 150 years. Under the title ‘That's how you can be victorious,’ Kazzi called on the community to act wisely and to be patient and grateful to Australia. In a story published next to the editorial, the newspaper said that new extremist elements had emerged in the streets of Sydney. Like in its previous reporting and those of Annahar, the story was mostly factual.

Yet although it was covered in a front page report and the editorial, the Cronulla issue did not seem to be the main story on the news agenda for the newspaper. It

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85 Anonymous, ‘France's dramatic events are repeated in Sydney […]’ (ahdath faransa al-ma’sawiyya tatakarrar fi Sydney […]), AN, Tues 13 Dec 2005, FP.
86 Harb, Anwar, ‘War and spokespeople’ (harb wa natiqwn), AN, Tues 13 Dec 2005, FP.
87 Kazzi, Antoine, ‘That's how you can be victorious’ (hakadha tantasirun), ET, Wed 14 Dec 2005, FP.
was not deemed as the most important issue of the day for the Arabic community, particularly for Australian Lebanese. The main focus shifted to an overseas development, the assassination of famous anti-Syrian politician and journalist in Lebanon, Gebran Tueni. That was the story that appeared to be occupying the top place of the news agenda, not the riots in Cronulla, the revengeful acts in Maroubra or the ensuing escalation (see appendix 7 with English explanation).

This reveals yet another factor that further weakens the interaction of ‘alternative media’ or ‘parallel press’ with the mainstream society, a factor that distracts the ethnic press from the national pre-occupations. Besides the financial difficulties that have been examined before, there is also what I would call the “headaches of the homeland”. They are some of the most common woes of the ethnic press, whether representing the Arabic community or other minorities. These issues are peculiar to the ethnic media, and the Arabic press is no exception. This is no surprise though. Like the mainstream media, the ethnic press serves its own audience or readership. That audience has different needs to those of the mainstream society. But those needs are being met or fulfilled according to a set of values or priorities that may sometimes clash with pressing issues in the adopted country; in this case Australia. The headaches of the homeland may isolate the community from its own environment and distract people from serious issues that they, or their children, are facing. Furthermore, the community needs or concerns about any issue are being addressed in the community language which is not understood by the dominant culture, a factor that further weakens the vulnerable position of the ethnic press in national matters. Annahar and El-Telegraph are both published in Arabic. There is hardly an article in any of them in English. Excluding the dominant culture from their readership is not in their best interest. As mentioned earlier, one of the main purposes of the ethnic press is to bring the community's issues to the attention of the mainstream society.

**Trespassing on the edges of civil war**

The Cronulla Phenomenon should not be underestimated. It exposed Australia's ugly face; racism. Hage considered what happened in Cronulla as a ‘pogrom’ that took the shape of ‘a racist festival of self-indulgence,’ a matter that could not have happened ‘without the broad legitimisation by government and pro-government
media of the White politics.\textsuperscript{89} These were the same politics of vigilante patriotism of the Orientalist Aussie. The legitimised media role imperilled Australia with the danger of social strife that could eventually lead to civil war. It has been argued that ‘civil wars have been fought for all kinds of reasons,’ some of them would be ‘differences of ascription’ such as ethnicity or religion.\textsuperscript{90} Ethnicity was a major factor in the Cronulla Phenomenon. It was a time where tolerance was lacking. Soeters wrote that ‘tolerance for one another’ would take a back seat when there were ‘clearly defined group boundaries between people.’\textsuperscript{91} In Cronulla, some of the main catalysts for the tension were boundary definition and turf issues. The involvement of a handful of Lebanese Australians in a fight with a group of surf lifesavers on the beach generated a blanket mob ban on whole Middle Eastern communities from accessing the area. In an environment of brutality, violence would become a part of the norm. Soeters highlighted that violence would ‘definitely not’ be ‘a passing phenomenon. Conflicts follow one after the other, wave after wave.’\textsuperscript{92}

Coming from a country that was ravaged by civil war, Lebanon, I could see what waves of violence that followed each other could cause. But here I argue that, in the Cronulla Phenomenon, violence was not the only ingredient of civil war that could be detected. The most dangerous factor was the media discourse that had been loaded with incitement, hatred and racism, especially in the lead up to the debacle, as demonstrated earlier. Hurst and White noted that the mere reporting on issues with racial or ethnic dimensions, in a multiracial society, might increase the ‘incidence of harassment of innocent people.’\textsuperscript{93} This would put more pressure on the media to handle stories on ethnic tension wisely, a practice that was lacking in the Cronulla Phenomenon. The press pages and the airwaves were crammed with explosive, defamatory and inflammatory materials as shown in this chapter. The

\textsuperscript{91} Soeters, op. cit., p 22.
\textsuperscript{92} ibid, p 2.
\textsuperscript{93} Hurst & White, op. cit., p 71.
late Lebanese thinker and journalist Ghassan Tueni warned of such schools of journalism. He described them as ‘media of the barricade’ (*I’ilam al-mitar*) which would be based on ‘ignorance.’ According to Tueni, in times of strife, the free media would become weak while the media of the barricade would prevail. In the Cronulla context, after years of fostering fear and panic, exacerbated by controversies around the issues of terrorism and boat people, the Orientalist Aussie discourse in media and politics sharpened the Australian Trials and made them susceptible to the slightest trigger, incurring the wrath of 5000 rioters on a peaceful beach.

Other elements of civil war could be detected in the Cronulla Phenomenon, including:

- Calls to go to one place and avoid another. For instance, the *Bra Boys* were encouraging women to come to Maroubra instead of Cronulla so they would protect them. Collins and others notice that the ‘places that are feared and become ‘no-go’ areas for locals are often associated with the presence of a particular racial/ethnic or socioeconomic group.’ Fear from going somewhere, or restricting people to certain areas because of ethnic related issues, could lead to closed or segregated zones, a common reality in civil war.
- The creation of exclusive territories for one group, Maroubra for the Bra Boys.
- Banning a certain group from a certain place, no Lebanese in Cronulla.
- The call of duty and vigilante action, the mobilisation of bikers by Alan Jones. When such calls are heeded, armed militia are formed.
- Mobilisation of people on the ground through media and text messages.
- Action and reaction attitudes. This gives the civil war its absurdity. ‘Tit-for-tat skirmishes’ as Nader indicates, ‘will lead us nowhere.’
- Denial of racism among the dominant culture and blaming the minorities for the trouble. Levey and Moses remark that the ‘reluctance of Australians to acknowledge racism among themselves tends to be based or defended’ on assumptions ‘that we – a tolerant, easy-going, and peace-loving people’ as

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96 Nader, *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People*, op. cit., p 408.
Howard liked to say,’ are not ‘capable of such dastardly prejudice.’ 97 Howard ‘pointed instead,’ as Dunn observed, ‘to a handful of law breakers’ and to ‘Lebanese anti-social behavior’ as the cause for the riots in Cronulla. 98 The justification of the riots was a discourse of the Orientalist Aussie. Racism, as Entman and Rojecki noted, would have ‘its origins in the ideology that justified domestic repression, domination, and enslavement.’ 99

Causing a civil war, however, would need other factors that were missing from the Cronulla Phenomenon, especially the political will to start one. None of the political, religious or community leaders were ready to provoke such a terrible strife. A positive political will would keep the nation together, strengthen the status of the state, enabling it to impose the rules of law. A dysfunctional state would be susceptible to social friction and an easy target for civil war; which was not the case. El Khazen saw a number of factors that would keep the state together, among them ‘its control over the legitimate means of coercion.’ 100 The swift enforcement of law and order in the Cronulla events played a big role in diffusing the tension. In a way, the state asserted itself. ‘Mobilising resources in support of the state,’ as El Khazen suggested, would ‘make the population comply with the rules of the state rather than the rules of the clan, community and other groups in society.’ 101

Conclusion

The Cronulla Phenomenon came in an apprehensive environment that was incubating paranoia towards immigrants, and in an atmosphere that was still lingering from the legacy of terrorism, boat people and crimes attributed to young people from the Lebanese community. News stories on the Cronulla events,

101 ibid, p 91.
particularly in the tabloid press were, before and after the riots, opinionated and slanted. Many were rather editorials marketed as facts. Lebanese Australians were framed, in talk-back radio and the press, as ‘gangs’, ‘grubs’, ‘scum’, ‘beasts’, ‘pollution’, ‘trouble makers’ and ‘invaders’, in addition to other derogatory adjectives or connotations.

Framing is a powerful tool designed to mislead people. It makes the audience believe what the media want them to accept as the truth. Herbst states that the media ‘influence public dialogue and public attitudes through framing issues, and interpreting them for us,’ while they are playing their role as ‘powerful shapers of the communication environment.’ Framing involves the selection of a certain vocabulary. Entman notes that media organisations ‘actively select the information they transmit’ to suit their audience. This is mainly due to the fact that stories are ‘written almost exclusively from the perspective of the Anglo-Australian majority,’ as Bell notices. Poynting and others observe that the ‘choice of language and image in dealing with complex social events is crucial because it organises the ways we think about and respond to them.’

Framing is also another element of Orientalism. Said points out that the ‘Orient’ is ‘viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual.’ The ‘Orient’ is framed as such ‘for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing.’ Orientalist framing of the Oriental does not stop there. It plunges into a game of comparison. Said indicates that for the West, the ‘Oriental is irrational, depraved’ and ‘childlike,’ while the Occidental is ‘rational, virtuous, mature’ and ‘normal.’ This supremacist attitude gives the Orientalist an upper hand and the right to take initiatives. ‘A certain freedom of intercourse was always

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107 ibid, p 40.
the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate,’ give shape and meaning to others.\textsuperscript{108}

In the Cronulla Phenomenon, the Orientalist Aussie had the upper hand, on the ground and in the media, and the privilege to ‘penetrate’ – to borrow Said's terminology – and to chase out those identified as ‘Lebanese’ from Cronulla after framing them as inferior. With the Cronulla Phenomenon, the Orientalist Aussie was shaping the Australian Trials of the day. The Oriental materialised mainly as Lebanese who were then targeted and vilified. One of the reasons for framing Lebanese was to propagate the concept that crime had ethnicity. Collins and a group of academics remarked in a work published well before the Cronulla Phenomenon, that there was ‘no evidence to support the notion that immigrants’ were ‘more criminal than the rest of the population.’\textsuperscript{109} Furthermore, there was no ‘criminology data’ in Australia that could establish ‘with any statistical confidence a link between culture, ethnicity and crime.’\textsuperscript{110} Collins and others highlighted that the general feeling within the Lebanese community was that Lebanese Australians were being ‘scapegoated as a community for unsolved crimes.’\textsuperscript{111}

The Cronulla Phenomenon was an elaborate chapter of the Australian Trials, in which the Orientalist Aussie came out in full force in the press, on the airwaves, through communication tools and in the street. The mainstream media exacerbated the issue by exaggerating the original incident and inciting people by reminding them of it over and over again. ‘Over-reporting’ as Lynch and McGoldrick indicate, ‘may lead people to suppose the issue at hand is bigger and more important than it really is.’\textsuperscript{112} That was the case with this issue.

\textsuperscript{108} ibid, p 44.
\textsuperscript{110} ibid, p 69.
\textsuperscript{111} ibid, p 172.
\textsuperscript{112} Lynch & McGoldrick, op. cit., p 127.
Epilogue

In this research, I have argued how the discourse in the Australian Trials has been marred by vilification and racism. Mainstream media have played a stereotypical role, promoting the myth of the fearsome Middle Easterners, Arabs, Lebanese and Muslims, who have been framed and reframed, over and over again, as terrorists, illegals, gangs and criminals. I have further argued that framing Arabs and Muslims is deeply rooted in the imagined world of the Orientalist Aussie who holds preconceived ideas about immigrants, particularly Arabs and Muslims, as people who cannot integrate in mainstream society. Shboul points out that some ‘journalists seem to deliberately perpetrate an image of Islam as a potential danger and of Muslims as misfits in Australia.’ 1

As Northcote and Casimiro have noted, ‘Muslim Australians have not yet crossed the threshold of social approval.’ 2

The framing discourse has had negative impacts on the debate about multiculturalism. I argue that there are many misconceptions around cultural diversity mainly because of the way multiculturalism is being discussed in the public arena. Tanner remarks that the debate about multiculturalism ‘is marked by subjectivity, prejudice and myth.’ 3 One of the problems is that the arguments over multiculturalism are not balanced. The mainstream media are devoting more platforms to negative views. Collins and others observe that a significant space has been granted to ‘critics of immigration and multiculturalism’ who ‘help shape the social construction of immigrants as ‘others’ who have problems and create problems for Australia and

3 Tanner, Lindsay, Open Australia, Australia, Pluto Press Australia Limited, 1999, p 34.
While Australia is seemingly exiting multiculturalism in favour of social inclusion, as we have seen in the first chapter, there are calls for a recommitment to multiculturalism. As Collins has argued, there is now a ‘need for a revitalisation of Australian multiculturalism, not an abandonment of it in the face of a racialised discourse about immigrant crime.’

To end my research on a positive note that refutes the stereotypical image, ethnic profiling and framing of Arabs and the myth of Middle Easterners and Muslims not being able to integrate, I am presenting four young men and women from Arabic Muslim backgrounds who have made valued contributions to Australia. The case studies are based on interviews with the four young people on my radio program. These young people are either from the first or the second generation of migrants, the same generations that have been the centre of fear in the discourse on terrorism, boat people and the Cronulla Phenomenon. One of them was a child detainee in an asylum seekers detention centre. Their experiences prove Levey’s observation that most ‘Muslims living in Western countries have successfully integrated or seek to do so.’

Samah Hadid

At the time of writing, the 24 year-old hijab-clad Bankstown girl, Samah Hadid, was the Australian Director of the Global Poverty Project. In 2008, Samah was selected to participate in the Prime Minister's 2020 Summit. She also sat on the National Youth Roundtable. And as a human rights activist, Samah worked on a variety of community and ethnic issues.

One of Samah’s most important roles was to reflect the image of young Australians on the international stage. At the age of 22, Samah was the 2010

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Australian Youth Representative at the United Nations. In my interview with her on SBS Radio's Arabic Program in February 2011, Samah said that she was able to represent all young Australians with the International organisation. Before assuming her position, Samah held a six-month consultation process in Australia to listen to the needs of young people. ‘It was a national listening tour which went to every state and territory’ Samah explained, ‘speaking to young people from rural, regional and metropolitan centres.’ She met youths from all walks of life and different backgrounds, including ‘young people at the margins of our society.’ Samah said that she gained some attention from SBS and the ABC for her role at the United Nations but not from the print media. Asked if this had concerned her given that most of the adverse coverage of issues related to Arab and Muslim Australians was in newspapers, Samah said that her role with the UN ‘was actually about letting the voices of young Australians channel through, and me representing their issues and concerns. I wasn't focused on my own media attention as such.’ Samah would like to see more involvement of young people in public life, especially youth from minority groups. ‘There is a need for more inclusion and participation of voices of young people from indigenous and refugee backgrounds,’ she said in the broadcast, ‘and hopefully I'd like to work on improving that.’

The hijab was one of the most tangible symbols stereotypically linked to terrorism. Muslim women donning the veil were subject to assaults during the Australian Trials covered in this research, a fact confirmed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's survey quoted in the second chapter.

Samah told me that the hijab was her own choice. She was not forced to wear it. Her mother chose not to don the hijab, but Samah did. I asked Samah if her head scarf hindered her task to connect with young Australians, she confirmed

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7 Nakhoul, Ghassan, ‘Meet the Aussie youth representative at the UN’, SBS RAP, Mon 28 Feb 2011.
that this was not the case. ‘I actually had quite an overwhelmingly positive experience. You know, if people were curious or they didn't quite understand why I was wearing the veil they were happy to ask me, and I was happy to discuss that with them. So if anything, it actually opened up further lines of communication and dialogue around wearing the veil or the hijab, and around Australian Muslims and the Australian Muslim community.’ She said in the interview.

In a co-authored article published in *The Age* newspaper, Samah wondered about the concurrence of the controversy in some European countries around the *niqab* or *burqa* which would cover the whole woman's body including the face, and the arrest of a woman in Sudan for wearing trousers. ‘Why should any state determine what women should wear?’ Samah asked. She saw a commonality between what was happening in Europe and Sudan and the debate that was raging in Australia about the *niqab*. ‘The common thread in these cases is the attempt at state intervention in the personal spheres of women's clothing and expression,’ she explained in the newspaper article. As for the *hijab* which would cover the head only, Samah asked ‘why a piece of cloth has become the centre of a cultural war in societies with a small number of veiled Muslim women?’

Sam Almaliki

Sam's story exposes the myths about asylum seekers and their alleged association with terrorism.

Sam's first taste of Australia was a childhood behind barbed wires. He was nine when he arrived in Australia as an asylum seeker with his parents. The family was transferred to Villawood detention centre. While a young boy there, Sam

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watched Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi detainees playing cricket. He fell in love with the game. This love affair left positive prints on his life after detention. Sam founded the Sydney Junior Winter Cricket Association which is now organising competitions involving up to 1500 young people from Sydney Metropolitan area every year. Sam, 23 at the time of writing, had an amazing set of public life commitments and tasks. Besides being the President of the cricket association he founded, Sam was a member of the Cricket Australia Multicultural Reference Committee, Youth Commissioner with the NSW Community Relations Commission, Festival Director of Southern Sydney Diwali Festival, committee member of Abhinay School of Performing Arts, board member of St George Workplace Learning Partnerships Inc, member of the 2010/11 University of Wollongong Faculty of Law Committee and Chairperson of New England Regional Advisory Council.

‘Ignorance and lack of education about other people generate racism,’9 Sam said in his interview with SBS Radio in November 2011. He saw multiculturalism as ‘a big benefit to the society especially economically.’ But he believed that multiculturalism needed ‘some adaptation to create a harmonious society where people feel free to integrate.’ This adaptation could be achieved ‘through education, sports, arts, intercultural dialogue and interaction between people,’ so Australians ‘can reap the benefits of multiculturalism.’ The young former asylum seeker would like to see better services for refugees. ‘Any delay in assisting them will hinder their integration,’ he said. Sam encouraged young immigrants to get involved in sports, especially cricket, because sports can ‘help them to integrate in the society and to build up their character and confidence.’

Mecca Laalaa and Suheil Damouny

At the time of writing, Mecca was a health promotion officer working with school children and Suheil was a journalist with SBS. Mecca and Suheil were in their late teens when the Cronulla events occurred. One of the initiatives that were put in place to help build bridges between youths from Arabic-Muslim and Anglo-Celtic backgrounds was a program for young Arabs and Muslims to train as surf lifesavers. Mecca and Suheil put their hands up and joined the initiative. Their story was rebuttal of the myths about young Arabs not being able to integrate. Interestingly, while Mecca would stand out as a Muslim girl with her hijab, Suheil could be mistaken for an Aussie with his blond hair and blue eyes. Their contrasting features would yet make another refutation of the ‘Middle Eastern Appearance’ myth.

Mecca had a few challenges at hand to become a surf lifesaver. ‘I used the burkini to overcome the barriers that I may have faced in joining the team,’ Mecca said in a debate on SBS Radio's Arabic Program in February 2010. The burkini, a women's swimsuit that would cover the whole body except for the face, hands and feet, had been designed by Australian Lebanese Aheda Zanetti. In the beginning, ‘we were scared to join’ she said, ‘but I think we surrounded ourselves with positive people and we were trying to overcome the fear because we understood what greater good was there and how it would affect the community. I'm just like any other girl. I'm not any different to anybody else. If I can do it, then anybody else can do it. We've overcome the barriers and if you put your mind into it you can definitely achieve it.’ Asked if she was now more accepted after she had joined Surf Life Saving, Mecca was not sure. ‘I don't know if it's a matter of acceptance or not,’ she said, ‘it's just the ignorance out there which somehow rises to the top.’ Then she added ‘there is a bit more understanding but there's definitely more to be done. The work we have been doing has been great and we definitely built the bridges that have

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10 Nakhoul, Ghassan, ‘Cronulla four years on’, SBS RAP, Thurs 4 Feb 2010.
brought two communities together.’ Mecca pointed out that her contribution to Surf Life Saving, along with Suheil's, made a difference. ‘I believe that the most important thing is that we've built the bridges and hopefully, inshallah (God's willing), the bridges stay there.’

Suheil participated in the SBS Radio's debate as well. ‘We joined Surf Life Saving and we went there, we spoke to people, we talked to the media to say that everything was fine,’ he explained. ‘Cronulla is good, Bankstown and Lakemba are good, and we are all Australians.’ Suheil stressed that any participation in such activities should come out of passion, not as a PR exercise. ‘Without real passion, we cannot build bridges,’ he said, ‘if someone has a good idea and feels that this idea can make a difference, he should bring it up and put it into action.’

After Surf Life Saving, Mecca went on a journey through the Kokoda Trail with a group of Arab and Anglo Australians including parliamentarians. ‘It was an amazing experience,’ she said in the broadcast. ‘I can't really begin to describe how we all felt. We learnt from each other, regardless of our backgrounds. That's a bond you can't really ever break. It's a lifelong bond. It's something that you take with you for ever.’
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<th>Question</th>
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<td><strong>4</strong> Did you use the passport/travel document at Question 1 to enter Australia?</td>
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<td><strong>5</strong> Do you ever use a Chinese Commercial Code Number for your names shown in the passport/travel document at Question 1?</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong> Have you ever been known by other names or spellings of your name? Examples of the types of other names: name at birth, name before or after marriage, adoptive or foster name, alias or pseudonym, cultural or tribal name or clan/subclan name, preferred name, other spellings of names</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong> Have you ever had a different date of birth?</td>
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Beach race riots shame Australia's values

OUR DISGRACE

5000 hoodlums in Cronulla rampage
One man stabbed, dozens beaten up
Carloads of thugs attack Maroubra

Appendix 2
Lebanese hashed as mob rampages through beach suburb

Revenge attacks in race war

Howard woos top Asian students

Anger management to avert would-be terrorists

Youths too stoned, too fat to join forces

Appendix 3
Race riots explode
Editorial

That's how you can be victorious. Lebanese should remember their long and positive contribution to Australia. They must act wisely and be patient and grateful to this country.

Extremist elements appear in streets for the first time

Mobs hit Sydney and reveal the ugly face of racism

NSW parliament gives more powers to police today

Gebran Tueni a Martyr

Opinion on Tueni's assassination

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