'Bin Laden in the Suburbs': Attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians before and after 11 September

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Introduction

During the Gulf War, there occurred in Australia a spate of racially based attacks on residents of 'Middle Eastern appearance' or of Islamic faith (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission — hereafter 'HREOC' 1991; Newell 1990; Hage 1991).[1]

Numerous Muslim women wearing their hijab, or traditional headscarf, in public places, were assaulted, abused and had strangers of both genders, but mostly men, trying to rip their veil away. Most of the victims were not Iraqi; some were not even of Arab, but rather of South-East Asian background; but such confusions of the object of racial hatred are not unusual in the history of Australian racism. There was an outbreak of incidents of people in Islamic garb or of 'Middle Eastern appearance' being spat upon or more violently assaulted in the street, of incidents of arson, vandalism, threats, harassment and other racist attacks directed by 'white-thinking' people against these newly discovered enemies within. It was as if, as Ghassan Hage has recently put it, there were now manifold 'borders' internal to the nation rather than around its edges to be patrolled against the non-Christian, non-western, 'third-world looking' outsiders who might endanger the good life from within (Hage 1998, 2002). The Prime Minister's appeal during the Gulf War for 'us' to be 'tolerant' only served to underline who was in a position to tolerate and who was to be magnanimously tolerated (or not) (Hage 1991). 'Tabloid' media, and especially their 'personalities' on commercial television and talkback radio, demanded that Arab-background migrant leaders declare their allegiance to Australia and that they simultaneously renounce and apologise for the evils of Saddam Hussein.

Can these latter verbal attacks, these media discourses of what amount to racist vilification, be causally linked to the physical attacks just outlined? The case for such connections would be strengthened if a repeat cycle of this sort of media attacks were accompanied by another round of racist hate crime in the streets, shops and workplaces. The case would be further fortified if similar ideological elements could be found between the

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attacks of the tabloid and talkback rants and the attacks of the street. If this similarity were repeated in more than one cycle of xenophobia and racism, then the case would be even stronger. All of these conditions were obtained in Australia in 2001 — before and after 11 September.

A number of instances of racial vilification in the recent events were reported to have connected the terms 'Arab' or 'Muslim' with 'terrorist', a pattern observed during the Gulf War, long before the September 11 attacks (HREOC 1991; Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner 2001; Noble & Poynting 2001). This is a discourse which had been doing the rounds of recent talkback radio comment and tabloid columns, as had the connection of the notions of 'gang' and 'rapist' with Arabs and Muslims, especially in Sydney (eg *Daily Telegraph* 22/8/01:1; Toy 2001:1). The manner in which these types of ideological elements are disseminated and circulated calls for further investigation, as do their connections with the amplification of racial violence. This article presents an analysis of these ideological elements, with special reference to the racism directed against Middle Eastern asylum seekers which existed immediately prior to 11 September, which was exacerbated by these events, and which was manipulated opportunistically during the 2001 Federal election campaign and arguably contributed to the heightened level of racial vilification and racist hate crime in Australia at this time.

Having experienced the fire last time, the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural New South Wales established a bilingual (English and Arabic) Anti-Racism Hotline as early as 12 September 2001, to enable persons experiencing racial vilification to report such incidents and to be referred to other agencies as appropriate. Already by the end of September, the Hotline had logged well over 300 calls (Brown 2001:2); by the time it finished operation on 9 November, there were about 400 responses recorded.[2] It needs to be recognised that the number of incidents actually tallied in this way is a measure only of the 'tip of the iceberg': those with knowledge of the Hotline and with the most motivation and means to complain. Other official bodies, such as the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB), also received and recorded a plethora of such complaints, and community organisations, too, such as the Sydney-based Australian Arabic Communities Council (AACC) and the Lebanese Muslim Association kept logs of telephone and mail complaints of racist attacks. The Melbourne office of the Australian Arabic Council has maintained a Racism Register since the time of the Gulf War, and also reported a rapid and twenty-fold rise in the rate of incidence of anti-Arab racial vilification immediately after 11 September 2001. This organisation itself received ten threatening letters and fourteen abusive telephone calls in the aftermath of 11 September. One normally quiet community welfare office alone had 20-odd instances of racist harassment by phone (Australian Arabic Council 2001).

So just as during the Gulf War Arab and Muslim communities in particular experienced a marked rise in the incidence of racial harassment and attacks (HREOC 1991:362); community organisations across Australia reported a similar increase immediately after the airliner attacks in the United States on 11 September. This upsurge was widely reported in the media (Jopson 2001; Brown 2001; *PM* 2001; Burke 2001). In both cases, there was an intensification of existing, ongoing and everyday forms and patterns of vilification. The AAC's records of an increase of twenty times virtually overnight indicates an existing base level of incidence of such attacks and an underlying tendency waiting for an immediate cause to realise it. The range of types of racist attack, moreover, remains continuous: only the intensity surges.

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2   The Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW has commissioned a systematic discourse analysis of the racism logs kept by itself and the other organisations. This should prove a very useful exercise.

The Pattern Repeated

At the time of the Gulf War, the brunt of racial attacks was disproportionately borne by women, notably Muslim women and girls wearing the hijab (Newell 1990:21). Early indications are that this trend continued to be significant following the events of September 2001 (Burke & AAP 2001:8; Rath 2001; Jopson 2001:18; *Daily Telegraph* 16/9/01:9; *Daily Telegraph* 26/11/01:13; AACC Racism Register 2001; Poynting 2002). For instance, a middle-aged housewife recorded on the Australian Arabic Communities Council Racism Register on 17 September an attack by 'a group of Australians' on her and her daughter in a south-west Sydney supermarket. 'She had the veil taken off her and her daughter's head. Then [they] had dragged both of them to the floor and beaten them up, at the same time yelling obscenities. The daughter's arm was broken' (AACC Racism Register 2001). A number of the recent attacks were explicitly sexualised, involving, for example, indecent exposure and offensive sexual suggestions. For example, on 17 September in a south-west suburb of Sydney a young 'Australian' male on a bicycle confronted S., a woman, between 45 and 60 years old, wearing hijab.

> She was coming back from the shop when she was stopped by someone on a bike. He asked her a question, which she thought he is asking her about a place. She referred him to the shop, then he said, 'What I want is to fuck you', and he showed her his penis. The woman now [finds it] difficult to go outside the house (AACC Racism Register).

HREOC (1991:362) notes that, in 1991, 'There were also reports of violence and harassment against people of Middle Eastern origin who are neither Arab or Muslim'. The recent round of attacks included assaults on people who were neither, such as Sikh men wearing turbans; and others who were not Muslim, such as painted swastikas and racist graffiti and arson attacks on Orthodox Christian churches that bore signs in Arabic script such as in Western Sydney's Merrylands (Rath 2001; *Daily Telegraph* 14/9/01:8). In Lidcombe, a Russian Orthodox church was vandalised with racist slogans, according to the *Telegraph* (15/9/01:10).

Schools, places of worship, workplaces, shops and streets were all sites of racist attack. Vilification came by Internet as well as radio, telephone and mail. A busload of Muslim schoolchildren was attacked with stones and bottles in Brisbane. An Islamic school in Adelaide at first hired 24-hour security guards and later was forced to close down for about a fortnight (ABC 12/9/01; Phillips 2001; *PM* 14/9/01). A school in Melbourne's south-east was graffitied with 'death to Muslim scum', and a 16 year old male student was verbally threatened there. The AAC's Racism Register records that a schoolboy was set upon by three men 'of Australian descent' aged 20-25, and had his legs slashed and was punched and kicked while racist abuse was shouted at him (AAC 2001). Australia was far from unique in this respect: five schoolchildren with Arab-sounding names were assaulted in Oakville, Ontario, for example; and Kuwaiti embassy workers had to counsel terrified Kuwaiti children subjected to vilification in schools across the United States. A mosque was subjected to an arson attack in Kuraby, Queensland. Another mosque in Mirrabooka, Western Australia, was defiled with human excrement (Burke & AAP 2001:8; AAP 13/9/01). Some 1000 worshippers were evacuated from a Turkish mosque in western Sydney's Auburn after a bomb threat on 14 September (*Daily Telegraph* 15/9/01:10). Similar attacks on mosques were also occurring overseas: incendiaries were also thrown at mosques in Chicago and Montreal (*Guardian Unlimited* 13/9/01; *PM* 14/9/01). While George Bush visited a Washington mosque 'to calm anti-Muslim sentiment', and Prince Charles later did the same in east London, Prime Minister John Howard declared himself 'too busy' to accept an invitation to a mosque in Sydney (Clark 2001:2; *Sunday Telegraph* 25/11/01:89). Like

former Prime Minister Bob Hawke who had called for (White Australian) tolerance towards Arab Australians during the Gulf War, Mr Howard 'appealed to Australians to show tolerance to Australian-Lebanese and other people of Arab heritage in their midst' (Grattan 2001:6).

The Internet was not immune from anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism. In a discriminatory (and probably illegal) reaction to the political climate, a number of private sector employers proscribed Muslim employees from sending or receiving emails in Arabic and from accessing Arabic websites (*Daily Telegraph* 9/10/01:7). By 20 September, the level of racial hatred expressed on 'Sydney's most trafficked Web site', Ninemsn, became so intense that its online discussion board was closed down, though a censored condolence book remained available (Needham 2001:3).

The spate of racist attacks continued long after September 2001. For example, the Melbourne Magistrate's Court was told that on 6 March 2002 a South Yarra man had threatened a Muslim taxi driver with a 26 cm knife and forced him to drive around Melbourne while he scolded him over his religion and the September 11 attacks (Calvert 2002). It bears repeating that this outbreak of racial vilification was but an upsurge, albeit a dramatic one, against a background of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racist attacks that existed in Australia well before 11 September. As Ghassan Hage (2001:241-242) puts it, with the recent racism directed at Middle Eastern 'boat people' and so-called 'Lebanese rapist gangs', '"September 11" happened right after "June, July and August 11, 12 and 13"'.

The 'Boat People' Moral Panic

In the second half of 1999, there had been a moral panic about illegal immigrants from the Middle East entering Western Australia by sea in what was reported as 'the biggest wave of boat people in the nation's history', 'lured by promises of Olympic jobs and guaranteed refugee status' (Reardon 1999). Throughout 2000 and up to August 2001, the media presented a seemingly endless and unstoppable flow of refugees and asylum seekers invariably described as 'Middle-Eastern' arriving on Australian territory off the coast of Western Australia. In fact, the numbers were well within Australia's planned immigration provision for refugee intake of 12,000 per annum; the moral outrage was supposedly directed at their purported 'queue jumping' and at the predatory industry of 'people smuggling'. Thus:

- **December 16, 2000:** Boat carrying 117 people, including 32 children, found off the Ashmore Islands. second boat had 115 people. refugees mainly Iranians, Syrians and Palestinians.
- **January 16, 2001:** 151 people of Middle Eastern origin aboard Indonesian inter-island ferry near the Ashmore Islands.
- **June 6, 2001:** 235 Iraqi men, women and children land in the Ashmore Islands. 800 km west of Darwin.
- **June 14, 2001:** Boat lands at Christmas Island with 200 asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan (*Daily Telegraph* 17/8/01:8).

Journalist Nadya Stani pointed out as early as 2000 that in reporting on the 'boat people' the media were depending on and accepting information supplied by government ministers and officials, and that this was engendering a panic about refugees (Stani 2000). Stani demonstrates how the media fixed on the means in which the asylum seekers came to Australian territory instead of reporting what they were fleeing from. Her analysis shows that stories invariably originated from 'the information given to the media by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, and its Minister, Philip Ruddock, in numerous press releases and interviews'.

> The stories concentrated on people smugglers, mafia-type operations, queue jumping, assaults on our shores, the national emergency, and the middle-class status of the refugees. ... It was also the language of fear, and, say refugee advocates, it undermined the possibility of any public sympathy (Stani 2000).

Stani enumerates that, out of sixteen main articles and editorials published over October to December 1999 in the broadsheet *Sydney Morning Herald*, a mere four presented the situation of the asylum seekers with any sympathy. The remainder were couched in the language of 'illegal immigrants', 'human cargo', 'people smugglers', 'queue jumpers', and 'invasion' (Stani 2000). This pattern was even more pronounced in the tabloids and on talkback radio. The following year, Christine Jackman in the *Daily Telegraph* attempted to 'kickstart the debate' thus: 'the so-called humanitarians screeching "racist" at anyone who questioned the right of the 438 on the Tampa to automatic entry, should explain what is so humanitarian about indulging people-smuggling'. She went on to use the term 'people-smuggler' twice more in the piece, as well as 'human cargo'. (Jackman 2001:17). Similarly, Piers Akerman managed to fit 'people smuggler' and 'queue jumper' into one sentence, and many more such into the rest of the opinion piece: 'Plucked from a people smuggler's leaky ferry, the principally Iraqi and Pakistani queue jumpers have shown little civility towards representatives of the country where they hope to settle' (Akerman 4/10/01:22).

On 26 August 2001, an indeed leaky ferry the KM Palapa, carrying over 430 asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan, began to sink in the Indian Ocean. Those on board were rescued by the MV Tampa, a Norwegian freighter, about 75 nautical miles from Australia's Christmas Island and almost four times that far from the Indonesian port of Merak (Marr & Wilkinson 2001; Burnside 2002; Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident 2002). The Captain, Arne Rinnan, decided to head for Christmas Island, as many of the asylum seekers were ill and in poor condition; he radioed Australia for medical assistance, but none was provided. Having entered Australian territorial waters, Captain Rinnan was abruptly threatened by an officer of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs with the punishment meted out to people smugglers under the *Migration Act* — including the possibility of huge fines and confiscation of the vessel — if he did not turn around and head towards Indonesia (Marr & Wilkinson 2001; Burnside 2002). With an election fast approaching, the government had apparently resolved to stop these asylum seekers from reaching Australian land. As Julian Burnside puts it, 'This odd decision has never been explained, except with the rhetoric of "sending a clear message to people smugglers and queue jumpers that Australia is not a soft touch"'. Burnside infers that the Prime Minister was calculating that 'a show of toughness against helpless refugees would be electorally popular amongst the large number of Australians who had responded positively to aspects of Pauline Hanson's unattractive [anti-immigration] platform' (Burnside 2002).

The ship was stopped four miles from Christmas Island. It was boarded and taken over by Australian SAS forces, and communications were strictly limited by the Australian military. Rinnan and others later characterised this as an act of piracy. Eventually after more than a week of stand-off, the asylum seekers were transferred to an Australian naval vessel, for eventual transportation to the impoverished Pacific island of Nauru, with which a multi-million dollar deal had been done that they be detained and processed there, allowing the Prime Minister to keep his promise that the asylum seekers aboard the Tampa would not set foot on Australian soil.

This populist venture immediately registered in the opinion polls, and election campaign headlines began to reflect messages like 'Howard's Tampa-led recovery' and 'Tough time for Labor as nation rallies to PM'. News reports and images of the asylum seekers were tightly controlled via the Australian military. Julian Burnside QC, who argued the case for the asylum seekers' challenge in the Federal Court to the government's actions, later wrote:

> The press were not allowed anywhere near the ship. Despite repeated requests from lawyers and others, no Australian was allowed to speak to any of the refugees. The physical circumstances meant that no images of individual refugees were available. At best, film footage showed distant images of tiny figures under an awning on the deck of the ship. By the same technique, the stories of the refugees were suppressed. ... Although the misery of the refugees' situation was obvious enough none of them could be seen as human beings (Burnside 2002).

Burnside's analyis of this, expressed in January 2002, was that by prohibiting media contact with the asylum seekers, 'the Government was able to advance its cynical objectives with dishonest rhetoric, wholly unimpeded by facts. ... Howard's crucial aim was achieved: the refugees were not seen publicly as individual people for whom Australian citizens could have human sympathy' (Burnside 2002). The accuracy of this judgment may be assessed in the light of the revelation on 17 April 2002 at the Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident, by Brian Humphreys, Director General of Communications Strategies in the Government's Public Affairs and Corporate Communication: 'Immigration had concerns about identifying potential asylum seekers and so we got some guidance on ensuring there were no personalising or humanising images.' The refugees were not to be seen by the Australian people as human beings, as individuals with life stories.

Other crucial images were doctored and misrepresented during the election campaign, in the now infamous 'children overboard affair'. On 6 October, another unseaworthy vessel, a fishing trawler laden with 223 Middle Eastern asylum seekers was intercepted by the Australian naval frigate, HMAS Adelaide, in Australian waters off the west coast. Shots were fired across its bows and it was boarded. Over the following day, Navy personnel tried in vain to prevent the vessel from sinking, so that it could be towed out of Australian waters. As the boat finally did sink, asylum seekers, including children, had to be rescued from the water. A video was taken by navy personnel. That very day, a Canberra bureaucrat told the People Smuggling Task Force that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard in an attempt to prevent the Adelaide turning their vessel back (Wilkinson 2002:23; Ramsay 2002:35). The assertion was repeated publicly many times by the Defence Minister, the Prime Minister, and those campaigning for them, and it was echoed in tabloids and talkback and taverns and tearooms across the continent. It has now been shown to be false (Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident 2002). It has, moreover, been demonstrated that images from the video depicting children in the water, shown on national television by the Defence Minister during the election campaign, were cut down so as to exclude the view of the boat sinking in the background, and were misrepresented as being of the previous day when the incident of tossing the kids into the seas was supposed to have taken place. It has also been amply proven that the Prime Minister's office and that of the Defence Minister were warned soon afterwards by Navy personnel conveying firsthand knowledge, of the falsehood of the story they were presenting, which they nevertheless continued to defend as true until well after the election (Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident 2002).

Prime Minister Howard repeated, 'I don't want, in Australia, people who would throw their own children into the sea. I don't' (*Four Corners* 15/4/02). He told Alan Jones's commercial radio audience on Sydney's highest-rating talkback program on 8 October, 'I don't want in this country people who are prepared, if those reports are true, to throw their own children overboard' (Wilkinson 2002:28). One of the oft-repeated and obviously successful slogans of the election campaign became, '*We* will decide who can come to this country'.

As commentator Hugh Mackay put it, 'the "children overboard" incident ... show[s] us just how vulnerable Australians have become to political spin.' He argues that 'we *wanted* to believe the kids had been thrown overboard, because we had already been worked over by a slick propaganda machine that had created a "refugee crisis" out of a couple of hundred people rescued by the Tampa' (Mackay 2002:31). 'We' were helped in that belief by those tabloid column-writers such as Piers Akerman who, in rival columnist and radio talkback host Mike Carlton's less than charitable words, 'swallow and regurgitate the Government's deceit, all the while denouncing the gullible bleeding hearts of the chardonnay-swilling liberal media elite' (Carlton 2002:24). Carlton was (in vain) anticipating contrition from Akerman after the 'children overboard' misrepresentation was revealed, since at the time Akerman had written:

> As for those who threw their children into the sea on Sunday and the malcontents who trashed the Manoora – it must be made absolutely clear that not only is such behaviour totally unacceptable but will in fact mitigate (sic) against any future consideration for admission into Australia (Akerman 2001:16).

'The PM Stole My Boat People'

On the day the Tampa departed from Australian waters, an 'e-talk' letter to the editor of the *Telegraph* by a reader from Queensland quipped, 'Sorry, Pauline, we don't need you any more, John Howard is doing your job' (*Daily Telegraph* 4/9/01:19). Expelled former Liberal Party candidate Pauline Hanson was elected to the Federal Parliament in 1996 as an independent MP on an anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism platform, and later formed the assimiliationist One Nation party, which drew enormous media attention and gained up to ten per cent of the vote in several elections, two state and one federal, rearticulating the racism of the old White Australia policy. One Nation blames immigration policy and multiculturalism for unemployment, crime, disease, and a host of other social ills.

> Inappropriately high levels of immigration combined with the policy of multiculturalism has led to a serious breakdown in the social cohesion of Australia.

> For many reasons, in particular the problems of unemployment, a lack of integration and fellowship amongst the population, increasing costs of infrastructure, services and environmental impact, the issue of immigration and population must be urgently addressed in the interests of our future as one people, under one flag and with one set of rules (Pauline Hanson's One Nation 2001).

> Criticism is not racism, equality is not racism. Having a difference of opinion is not simplistic, but more times than not, regarded as a common sense approach. I see many of my fellow Australians facing loss of job security, suicide, family unit breakdowns, unemployment, drugs, escalating crime, their way of life and right to a decent standard of living in this great nation of ours, stripped away because of present and past governments legislation imposed upon Australians (Hanson 2001).

The party espouses a zero net migration policy and links this ideologically with stopping illegal immigration:

> Economically immigration is unsustainable and socially, if continued as is, will lead to an ethnically divided Australia. Current policy is encouraging large numbers of illegal migrants and it is time Australia, while recognising the contribution made by migrants in the past, send to the world the message that mass immigration has passed its use by date (Pauline Hanson's One Nation 2001).

One Nation and their supporters oppose immigration from 'non-Christian countries', and rail against immigrants who keep to themselves, remain different and form enclaves in 'ethnic ghettoes'. They claim that immigration produces increases in crime, that many immigrants are lawless, and that alien lawbreakers should be deported.

> It is no good having a rich country if it is falling apart because of violence, gang warfare and ethnic separatism. We do not want little ethnic islands separated from the rest of the Australian community. We do want migrants who can integrate into Australian society, not congregate in just a few areas.
>
> If I am allowed to decide who can come into my home, we Australians should be allowed to decide who can come and live in our country. Migrant crime gangs have flourished over the last 20 years, with drugs and money laundering, something we rarely used to hear about.
>
> ... The present situation is just not good enough. Criminals convicted of serious crimes should be deported if not Australian citizens and, if they are, there should be harsher penalties to deter this sort of crime (Hanson 1996).

It is One Nation policy that refugees be offered only temporary protection, rather than given the right to immigrate (Pauline Hanson's One Nation 2001). Amnesty International argued in 1999 that the federal government's Border Protection Bill and new refugee visa regulations introduced at this time in fact 'mirror ... Pauline Hanson's policies and receive the support of the Opposition and the press' (Head 1999).

During the 2001 election campaign, Ms Hanson herself claimed that the Prime Minister had embraced her policies, in turning away boats of asylum-seekers and sending 'boat people' to other countries. 'I am pleased to see they have listened to what I've been saying. ... A lot of people are actually saying I'm John Howard's adviser because he's picking up a lot of the policies and issues I have raised and spoken about over the years' (Clennell 2001).

As well as being stridently opposed to immigration policy, Pauline Hanson and One Nation have, since 1996, mounted high-profile attacks on indigenous affairs policies, notably indigenous land rights and moves towards reconciliation with Australia's indigenous population. These have been conterminous with increasing racial attacks on indigenous groups. The repertoire of punitive and draconian policies with which the State has repressed indigenous people in Australia over many years has been extended and legitimised since Pauline Hanson's intervention in ways which parallel the anti-immigrant, anti-refugee racism analysed in this paper. There is a need to examine racist attacks in the everyday and in moments of crisis in indigenous communities, and how populist politics and manipulated media have contributed to these attacks as well as those on immigrant communities, but that is beyond the purpose of this paper.

The 'Ethnic Gang Rapes' Moral Panic

From August 2000 to August 2001, there were eight serious group sexual assaults in the Bankstown area of south-west Sydney, according to the Bankstown Police Local Area Commander (cited by Bankstown City Council 2001; *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* 2001:1). This is an area with one of the highest concentrations of Lebanese-background

immigrants in Australia, and one in which there had been a virulent moral panic over so-called 'ethnic crime gangs' in the previous few years (Collins, Noble, Poynting & Tabar 2000). Police informants fed the story to the tabloid press that there was an ethnic dimension and racial motivation involved in these instances:

> Almost one year ago, when the youths were first charged with this crime, a *Daily Telegraph* court reporter was telephoned by police contacts and told of their upcoming court appearance.
>
> She was told that the rapes were being perpetrated on Australian women and the victims were asked if they had Arabic blood or Arabic boyfriends and that this was part of an increasing trend (Wockner 25/8/01:4).

By the time the predictable spiral of hysteria and hyperbole had gone into operation, the tabloids were frontpaging, '70 girls attacked by rape gangs' (Kidman 2001:1). Commercial radio compere Philip Clark mentioned an alleged 30 such offences, and broadcast an interview with the purported father of a victim, who asserted that his daughter was raped by a refugee (Clark 30/9/01). The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research was moved to issue a press release to counter this panic, informing that:

> … the recorded rate of sexual assault in Bankstown has remained stable since 1995, mostly remaining under 10 offences per month.
>
> The only change to this pattern occurred in the month of June 1999, when 70 incidents of sexual assault were recorded by Bankstown police.
>
> These offences were not committed by members of a gang. Police advise … that they were mainly committed by a single individual (Lesley Ketteringham) who has since been charged, convicted and imprisoned for committing a number of wilful and obscene exposure offences (Weatherburn 2001).

Bureau Director, Don Weatherburn, pointed out that the rate of sexual assault was nearly twice as high in the state's Northern, and over twice as high in its North Western, Statistical Division. Very few Arab-background or Muslim people live in these areas. Weatherburn (2001) also recognised that many sexual assaults are not reported to the police, but stated, 'There is no reason to believe … that victims of sexual violence are any more reluctant to report that violence to police in Bankstown than they are in any other area of the State.'

One Nation leader, Pauline Hanson, 'wade[d] into the ethnic crime debate' with a call for rapists to be flogged (Doherty & Jacobsen 2001:7). 'You can't have gangs going around and committing these offences. And especially what's happening of raping of women. White women on the streets because in their opinion, white women are worth absolutely nothing to them, to their race, their cultural background' (*Insight* 23/8/01).

She 'blamed the problem on a lack of respect for Australian culture', according to the *Herald*, which quoted her as saying, 'A lot of these people are Muslims, and they have no respect for the Christian way of life that this country's based on.' Hanson boasted, 'before I came on the scene, this was all politically incorrect' (Doherty & Jacobsen 2001:7). This is quite accurate, though when Pauline Hanson 'came on the scene' in the 1996 federal election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers (now Prime Minister and government ministers) and numerous right-wing columnists and commentators joined with alacrity the attack on so-called 'political correctness' and welcomed what they euphemistically called the 'debate' on immigration policy and multiculturalism which Hanson helped open up. Seeing its sweeping popularity, some Labor Party leaders did as well, with only slightly less alacrity. In the context of the alleged 'ethnic rapes', Ms Hanson 'called for stricter sentences by the judiciary' (Doherty & Jacobsen 2001:7). The tabloid *Daily Telegraph* and *Sun-Herald* and numerous of their opinion-writers subsequently campaigned stridently for such, and NSW Labor Premier Bob Carr made significant

populist concessions to these demands (Wainwright 2001:9; *Daily Telegraph* 31/8/02:6; *Daily Telegraph* 1/9/01:22; *Australian* 20/9/01:8, *Express* 13/9/02:19; Ackland 2001:10). 'True justice', trumpeted the front page of the *Sunday Telegraph*, celebrating that 'The NSW Government has bowed to public pressure by increasing the maximum sentence for gang rape to life' (Vass 2001:1). Its editorial on the same day, headed 'Our community demands justice' referred to 'community concerns' including 'the vexed question of the relationship between crime and ethnicity; the terrifying stories of gangs of youth pack-raping Sydney teenagers; and lenient sentences being dished out for a range of serious crimes' (*Sunday Telegraph* 26/8/01:87).

With political correctness duly disposed of, vehemently anti-multiculturalist columnist Paul Sheehan revealed that ethnic gang rape in fact emanates from Muslim and Arab culture and showed that it was a global phenomenon, because it had been perpetrated earlier in the year in France by 'urban immigrant poor' from these backgrounds (Sheehan 2001:20). The *Australian* made clear where the problem came from in its frontpage headline, 'Rape menace from the melting pot' (Chulov 2001:1). In this story, NSW Police Commissioner Peter Ryan stated that 'a particularly defined cultural group of attackers' were attacking 'a very clearly defined cultural group of victims'. Premier Bob Carr was adamant in rejecting any 'paroxysm of political correctness' which objected to such definition (Chulov 2001:1).

Yet such clear ethnic identification of victims and perpetrators, and public apportionment of blame by political leaders, police spokespeople and media opinion-makers did not apply to 'retributive' attacks on Muslim and Arab immigrants, including reported sexual assaults. Muslim community leaders reported that 'after Mr Carr had blamed Lebanese gangs for a series of rapes there had been an increasing number of attacks on Muslim women' including the rape of an 18 year old Muslim girl (Walker 2001:10). Hind Karouche, a member of the Supreme Islamic Council of NSW, complained that women wearing the hijab 'had become targets' because of the reporting about the supposedly race-based sexual assaults being blamed on Muslim and Lebanese communities. She told how 'They are abusing them, they are threatening to rape them' (Morris 2001:6). The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 'Muslim women and girls have become the targets of threats and abuse in Sydney's south-west following police reports that blame Middle-Eastern men for recent gang rapes of European women'. Keysar Trad, Vice-President of the Lebanese Muslim Association, said, 'They have been receiving threats of rape and also some ladies in our community have been spat on in the street.' He reported that an anonymous telephone call to a western Sydney Islamic school had threatened to abduct and rape pupils (Kennedy 17/8/01). This is quite typical of the pattern of attacks and threats which existed prior to 11 September, but which increased steeply after that date. As the *Australian* reporter, Melyssa Fyfe put it, 'Like Pauline Hanson revisited, it was a week of racist bile over Sydney's airwaves and in the pages of its tabloid press' (Fyfe 2001:4). Surely enough, Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party moved to exploit the situation by calling a meeting for 6 September in the Bankstown Returned Services League Club on 'Rape in Bankstown — Ethnic Based Crime — Law and Order' hosted by David Oldfield, the One Nation Member of the NSW Legislative Council (Morris 7/9/01:4). A caller to Sydney's commercial radio station, 2UE, who identified himself as 'Steve', a 'white working executive from the suburbs' was one of many speaking of vigilante style threats on talkback radio: 'We are not a soft touch, you can't rape our girls. There will be — and I'm certainly not trying to inspire it here – massive vigilante reaction to that. ... I certainly would not like to be walking down the road as a girl in that headdress' (Fyfe 2001:4). It is noteworthy that exactly the same phrase about being 'a soft touch', and the inference that multiculturalism had been a policy of the soft touch, pervaded the moral panic about 'boat people' and the 'children overboard affair'.

'Boat People' = Middle Eastern = Arab = Criminal and Terrorist

In August 2001 there was a meeting between New South Wales Premier Bob Carr and the federal Minister for Immigration Philip Ruddock after Mr Carr 'had called for tightening of immigration policies to reduce ethnic crime on Sydney's streets' (O'Malley, Jacobsen & Kennedy 2001:3; Wainwright 2001:2). Mr Carr said, 'One of my main concerns has been with people with military experience and seemingly no other skills ending up in Australia'. He remarked that ethnic crime gangs were 'causing mayhem on the streets' and announced that the federal-state plan devised at the meeting was to address 'problems ... because of decisions about immigration made decades ago' and was 'about making it harder for criminals to get into Australia and about making it easier for us to kick them out' (O'Malley, Jacobsen & Kennedy 2001:3; Morris 2001:8). Boxed in by the *Herald* article on this was another piece, headed, 'Authorities brace for more arrivals as ailing asylum seekers end horror voyage' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 17/8/2001:3). The *Telegraph* story on the same day was more strident, and on the other side of the page from the military migrants story and another one about a new police anti-gang squad (Miranda 2001:8) — something the *Telegraph* campaigned for over more than nine months of moral panic about 'ethnic crime' (Poynting 2002:328). Its headlines read, 'Leaky boat lands 348: Human cargo arrives with more on way' and 'The illegal armada keeps coming' (*Daily Telegraph* 17/8/01:8). The literal sense of 'armada' could not but reinforce the notion of immigrants armed with weapons — earlier in their homelands and later in Australian streets — especially in the context of continual reporting about the crime-ridden suburbs being a 'war zone' with the 'grim echo of Beirut' and the like (Noble & Poynting 2001).

In the midst of this moral panic, tabloid columnist Mark Day declared that 'Tolerance needs a reality check'. Asserting that gang crime in Sydney was mainly 'an ethnic phenomenon', he argued that: 'Tolerance does not extend to pack rape, home invasions, heroin pushing, extortion, fraud, smuggling, shoot-ups and standover gangs'. 'We are importing the problem', he said, whether it be in the form of 'immigration officials ... welcoming members of the Southern Lebanon Army ... with no qualifications other than being trained to use machine guns', or 'Pacific Islanders, who know nothing other than how to wield a machete' (Day 2001:27). A raft of replies arrived the very next day, and the heading of the *Telegraph*'s letters column echoed the opinion piece: 'Tolerance wearing thin'. One such correspondent from Queensland's Currumbin Waters, far from any concentration of immigrant populations and close to Pauline Hanson's heartland, wrote, 'It is a fact that gangs of Asians, Pacific Islanders and Arabs are terrorising Sydney' (*Daily Telegraph* 9/8/01:30). In this account, not only was 'war' being imported, but also 'terror'. All this was before 11 September.

After the interdiction of the MV Tampa, an opinion piece by Michael Duffy railed against the captain of this ship, rhetorically declaring that 'we' should sue him. He added a swipe at the 'human rights industry' to his customary attack on 'the multicultural industry' as the indulgence of 'elites' — a favourite formula of One Nation — identifying himself as one of the 'rational' 77 per cent with 'concerns about refugees'. This concern was explicitly connected to crime:

> The elite gets all the benefits of refugees and poor immigrants and none of the drawbacks.
>
> To take an example: areas of western and southwestern Sydney for years have been suffering from criminal ethnic gangs.
>
> But the elite of Sydney lives far away, in predominantly Anglo-Celtic enclaves, so they are rarely victims of the crime and social problems caused by their continuing advocacy of more poor immigrants from cultures very different to our own (Duffy 2001:23).

This argument was repeated exactly two months later (and two days before the election) by columnist Miranda Devine in the same newspaper, railing against inner-city, elite 'wankerati' who do not have to suffer the purported crime wave of western Sydney, which she mentioned alongside 'boat people'. She quoted approvingly an opinion pollster, David Chalke, as saying:

> I would suspect that the recent events in outer Sydney, particularly the gang rapes, the drug problems and the most recent bashing of the small boy, will not only play on the above concerns [of inner suburb elites not addressing their fears], but will also deeply offend Australians' sense of decency and honesty. In fact, it is our belief that the backlash against the Tampa illegal immigrants was founded on anger at their breaking the rules (Devine 8/11/01).

'Act of War'

The bold headline, 'Act of War' emblazoned on the front page of the *Telegraph* on 12 September 2001 was exactly the same phrase that headed that page on 2 November 1998, when the tabloid reported the shooting of bullets at Lakemba police station allegedly by an 'ethnic gang'. For days after 11 September, articles on the events in the USA and their consequences were captioned 'Act of War'. Three days after the 11 September airliner attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, David Penberthy wrote an opinion piece which he saw as 'extending an olive branch to Australian Muslims', though this was 'contrary to instinct'. It is worth quoting at length, precisely because it presents itself as an exercise of rational tolerance, and for what it nevertheless cannot help conveying. It also gives a quite accurate account of the mood of intolerance, irrationality and blurring of issues sweeping across Australia.

> Whatever tiny shred of goodwill that still existed in this country towards Muslim Australians probably disappeared at the same time the first hijacked passenger jet smashed into the World Trade Centre.

> Those who seek to portray John Howard as a bigot for his stand on the Tampa now find themselves in something smaller than a minority; equally those who accuse Premier Bob Carr of flirting with race politics through his stand on crime are free to meet in a telephone booth and talk among themselves.

> This galvanising of public opinion is not rational. ...

> In the minds of most Australians, all of these issues have merged into one.

> A series of events has overlapped, the result of which is blanket, unprecedented hostility to anyone who would seek to defend Islam and its adherence.

> It explains why, as the Lebanese gang rape scandal started to unfold, there was such acrimony directed towards [Mufti of Australia] Sheik Hilaly, over his call for a seat in State Parliament to be found [via the Labor Party preselection process in the electorate of Auburn with many Turkish immigrants] for a Muslim, not to mention his absurd suggestion that because the gang rapists were Australian born, their criminal actions reflected more on their new homeland than on their ancestry. ...

> It explains why, when the Tampa arrived in Australian waters, carrying 434 people from Muslim Afghanistan, most Australians did not want to hear any stories from those on board. They just wanted them to go away (Penberthy 2001:27).

There it is, in one equation, recognised as irrational and yet endorsed as understandable: terrorism, ethnic crime gangs, Islam, misogynist violent crime, Muslim ethnic-religious leader, Middle-Eastern asylum seekers. A letter-writer to the *Herald* put it humourously, while conveying quite clearly the ideological links which had been current in popular discourse:

Only two weeks ago, the idea was being circulated that the illegal immigrants taken from the Tampa and transferred to an Australian warship were all possible rapists.

Now we hear these people are terrorists with the knowledge to fly Boeing aircraft.

As there has been no other contact by these refugees with educational facilities, could the Government please explain why it is allowing our defence personnel to train rapists to become pilots (Seller 2001).

In October 2001, as the United States mounted war in Afghanistan, right-wing tabloid columnist Piers Akerman lauded the Australian military 'preparing to go to sea in the service of their country'. The enemy in each case was equated:

Some are going to the Middle East, to provide back-up to the civilised world's war against terrorism; others are going to the edges of our territorial waters to dissuade people-smugglers from bringing their cargoes of illegal immigrants to our shores (14/10/01:95).

The *Daily Telegraph* on the previous day had printed in its editorial column stories, since discredited, about rescued asylum-seekers in custody aboard an Australian Navy ship threatening to harm their children. Sententiously, it proclaimed, 'Criticism that Australia lacks compassion since the introduction of the Border Protection Act should not foster guilt over our revulsion at those who care so little for their own children'. It continued, 'While on board, SAS members were able to place under surveillance a suspected agent of the Osama bin Laden terrorist network' (*Daily Telegraph* 13/10/02:24). The letters to the editor, reflected similar concerns. The same letter-writer from Currumbin Waters who had fretted from 1000 km away about Sydney's 'ethnic gangs' in August now asked, 'What uncivilised barbarism is this? ... placing children's lives at risk'. The *Telegraph* pointedly headed this letter section 'Terrorism on the seas' (*Daily Telegraph* 11/10/02:27). As there was never a subsequent report about the suspected Al Qaeda terrorist being arrested or tried, we can only assume that the suspicions or the report were as unfounded as the inventions about parents harming their children.

On 12 October, the *Telegraph* frontpage headline screamed, 'TERROR AUSTRALIS: Bin Laden groups in our suburbs' and the article detailed raids on homes of Arab and Muslim immigrants in Western Sydney by the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. It reported that 'More than a dozen men from Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia currently applying for refugee status, have been identified as having connections or membership with radical Al-gama Islamiya, Al-Maqdesi, Al-Dawa and Al-Nahda groups' (Miranda 12/10/01:1,4). The editorial of that day headlined 'Entry is a privilege not a right', and warned of 'up to a hundred operatives in Sydney' suspected of raising funds for 'bogus charities that have been found to have links to terrorist networks'. It urged 'firm and immediate action', and cautioned that 'the existence of these groups should sound a warning over the standards required to gain entry to Australia (*Daily Telegraph* 12/10/01:20). Five months later, there has still not been a report of any charges, let alone a trial, for any related unlawful activity. Of course, inadequate law always can be blamed as the reason: a Warren cartoon in the *Telegraph* showed a judge in his wig sitting on the sofa between four bearded, turban-wearing Taliban-like figures drinking cups of tea with five such visitors while saying to his wife, bearing the tea tray, 'I'm sorry dear — I told them it was okay to stay' (Warren 12/9/01:33).

If the turban or the veil become the symbol for the 'uncivilised barbarism' imagined by writers of letters to the editor and opinion leaders in the tabloid press, it is reasonable to conjecture a causal connection with the fact that these become targets for the acts of racial hatred outlined earlier in this article. Piers Akerman's column, entitled 'Opening our doors to a wave of hatred', was accompanied by Löbbecke drawing of a women in a chador with

a brick wall instead of human eyes showing through the gap. Akerman began by marshalling the September 11 events for an attack on Australian multiculturalism: 'The terrorist attack on the US should provide a wake-up call to Australia to re-examine its policy of multiculturalism.' He concluded:

> When we look within Australia we find a separatist clique unsure whether it follows religious or cultural practices.
>
> A beard, a scarf, a headdress or the length of a sleeve or dress are all important to some of these people and the supporters of multiculturalism tell other Australians that they are the ones who must exhibit tolerance when they are spat upon or cursed for wearing ordinary clothing in keeping with the dominant culture.
>
> It is the Muslims who must show tolerance to others here and in other Western nations otherwise they will always be separate (Akerman 18/9/2001).

In a remarkable camera obscura, it becomes the 'ordinary' practitioners of the dominant culture in Australia being spat upon by the Muslims, and the latter who evince intolerance. Yet the same newspaper recognised, in two small column inches ambiguously headed 'Muslim backlash', that it was Muslims being 'abused, threatened and attacked, with one mosque alerting police to a firebomb threat. Many reports have come from women, targeted because of their head scarves' (*Sunday Telegraph* 16/9/01:9). The *Sun-Herald* recognised that it was 'women with veils' being spat upon (Devine 16/9/01).

Australian politicians, of both major parties as well as One Nation, linked asylum seekers with terrorism and crime during and after the 2001 election campaign. On 14 September, Defence Minister Peter Reith warned that Indonesia could serve as a 'launching pad' for terrorism against Australia and other countries: 'the clamp down on border protection against boat people went "hand in hand" with efforts to combat terrorism' (Allard 2001; *PM* 14/9/01; Farr 2001:8). Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock warned on 17 September that boat people entering Australia were a potential security risk, and that some of them had criminal records (AAP 19/9/01). Prime Minister John Howard said much the same in a commercial television interview on *60 Minutes* the previous evening.[3] Attorney General Daryl Williams called for closer surveillance of immigrants, and Queensland Liberal MP Peter Slipper asserted 'an undeniable linkage between illegals and terrorists'; it was undeniable because 'many refugees came from Afghanistan' (Phillips 2001). In early November just prior to the election, as opinion polls indicated Opposition Leader Kim Beazley narrowing the margin once more, Mr Howard intensified the politics of fear: 'You don't know who's coming,' he said, 'and you don't know whether they do have terrorist links or not' (Mydans 2001).

Nor was such ideology confined to the conservative Coalition and One Nation. During the 2001 election campaign, a Labor Party leaflet headed *Fighting Terrorists Today* listed '10 things Australia needs to do and Labor's commitment to them'.[4] Among these were:

- Put the issue of fighting terrorism high on the agenda in Australia's regional security dialogues ...
- Establish an Australian Coast Guard to conduct Australia's coastal surveillance, including in relation to illegal immigration and drugs issues
- Completely overhaul our border protection laws as they relate to vessels, persons and goods entering Australia to make sure they can deal with contemporary threats. ...
- Establish an integrated national security policy by broadening the focus of our Cabinet National Security Committee so that it also covers strategic law enforcement policy (drugs, terrorism, border protection ...) (Australian Labor Party National Office 2001)

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3   Thanks to Mark Bahnisch for drawing my attention to this interview.
4   I am grateful to Colin Hesse for providing the copy of this leaflet.

It continued well after the election. Australian Broadcasting Corporation reporter Tony Jones asked Foreign Minister Alexander Downer in February 2002, '... if Malaysia starts beginning to react as Australia did — if it starts referring to these hundreds of thousands of [illegal immigrant] Indonesians as "illegal boat people", as we did, that will create a regional crisis won't it?' Downer's answer linked the 'boat people' issue with terrorism:

> The Malaysians themselves have become very concerned about the issue of terrorism and other transboundary crimes, which they perceive could be associated with illegal migration. ... it's a very big issue for Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and so on. ... Here is Australia with Indonesia doing something about addressing the broader context of these issues (*Lateline* 27/02/02).

'Will Dad Blow Up Australia?

Just as during the Gulf War, journalists and opinion-leaders in the media again called upon Arab and Muslim Australians to demonstrate their loyalty to this country: 'Australian Muslims will have to decide whether they are Australians first ...' (Akerman 16/12/ 01:109). Five years earlier in parliament, Pauline Hanson had called upon her fellow Members to 'ensure that migrants are prepared to give this country their undivided loyalty'. She asserted, 'We should start making people earn their citizenship as they should understand that they have to give their loyalty to Australia before all else' (Hanson 1996).

Divided or questionable loyalties can become tantamount to treason in times of war or crisis. In late September 2001, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), accompanied by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and NSW police with 'intimate local knowledge', raided 30-odd suburban households and workplaces in south-western Sydney. Some of the families raided stated that they brought the media with them (Trad 2001; Kidman 30/9/01:4-5).[5] Certainly, the front page of the *Sun-Herald* of 30 September had a large frontpage colour photograph taken over a suburban paling fence of such a raid being conducted, with two uniformed federal policemen talking to a man and a woman, apparently residents, while a man in a dark suit talked on a mobile phone. The page carried the banner, 'War on Terror Exclusive' and the headline, 'Sydney raid: Suburban home searched as ASIO and police hunt Bin Laden connections' (*Sun-Herald* 30/9/01:1). The faces of the residents and the besuited officer were pixelled out, but not in the identical but smaller photograph, which additionally identified the suburb, accompanying Miranda Devine's column in the same newspaper on 11 November. Headed 'Where security counts, tolerance goes two ways', this opinion piece encouraged Muslims to cooperate with authorities in 'having to contend with their homes being invaded at dawn by armed police' for it 'helps make us all a little safer' (Devine 11/11/01:28).

Devine explains eloquently why it is those targeted who must pay 'the price of such vigilance'. Citizenship does *not* go 'two ways':

> The perpetrators of the September 11 attacks were young Middle-Eastern Muslim men. Bin Laden's followers are young Middle-Eastern Muslim men. So it is young men of Middle-Eastern Muslim background who will be targeted in Sydney, many of them Australian citizens, who were born here (Devine 11/11/01:28).

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5   The author has been provided by Keysar Trad, Vice President of the Lebanese Muslim Association, with detailed written statements describing four such raids, taken from interviews with the families raided This is gratefully acknowledged and is referenced as Trad (2001)

Whatever other purposes were intended, the raids were clearly meant to be a public gesture. They were also plainly designed to intimidate. In one case, 'five heavily armed officers stormed the house', forced a man to lie on the floor at gunpoint, and conducted a body search. His wife was escorted downstairs by a male and a female AFP officer, without time to cover her body adequately according to her religion. The house was thoroughly searched. The man was told, 'You have small children, you would not like for them to not see you for ten years.' (Another man was similarly told, 'You have a beautiful daughter, I believe that you want to keep your daughter happy.') He was told that they would be back and would be searching again. The family was traumatised by the incident. The photograph of the wife appeared in the newspaper, and the couple found this picture stuck on their window, and the windows of their house were spat upon over the next few days. At the time of the interview, they were seeking to rent a house elsewhere, but fearful of not being able to do so, now that their pictures had been published in the press (Trad 2001).

The *Sun-Herald*, in pages tagged with the 'war on terror' caption, dutifully characterised the raids as 'the first proof that the US's global anti-terrorist campaign has reached Australian shores' (Kidman 30/9/01:4). The reporter affirmed that his newspaper was on hand to observe one of the raids at a home unit in Lakemba. The woman resident, a mother of two young children, complained (as did others raided) that a gun was put to her head and she was made to lie on the floor. She said 'police turned the residence "upside down" and interrogated her in front of her family'. 'Senior government staff' denied that the firearm had been 'used' (Kidman 30/9/01:4; *ABC News Online* 2/10/01). The *Sunday Telegraph* added that the raids were 'backed by armed teams of the State Protection Group' and that there were dozens such raids around the country (Watson 2001:15). The article was similarly signposted, 'War against terror', accompanied by a little picture of the United States flag.

The reasons people were targeted for the raids, apart from the 'ethnic profiling' suggested by Devine, may have included, according to those raided in various cases: spending two and a half months in Pakistan the previous year when returning from a haj; spending five months at a Qur'an school in Pakistan many years ago when learning the Book by heart, not having left Australia since; travelling to Syria to visit a sick father after his stroke six weeks earlier, and staying for one week, not having exited Australia for years prior to this; and simply being active in Muslim organisations (including youth organisations) and having to answer questions about whether one could fly a plane or had studied aviation (neither of which was the case) (Trad, 2001; *Daily Telegraph* 5/10/01:9).

To this day, there has not been a single arrest or charge arising from these raids. Computers, papers, bank records, passports and mobile phones were confiscated. Cash was also taken. None of these has been returned, and officials do not answer phone calls at the number they left (Trad 2001; Kremmer 2002). In terms of intelligence-gathering, such methods can only be seen as ham-fisted. In terms of intimidation, social control, repression, they may well prove quite functional. One ASIO officer left an interrogated man a card with a contact name and number, in case he should come by 'any information as to who is behind the bombing'. This was after his home was 'visited' and he was obliged to be interviewed at his workplace in front of colleagues, during which interview his daughter was mentioned in what the man took to be thinly disguised threats. One Muslim community member, after his home was raided, said to the ASIO officer, ' I thought you had come to discuss ways to protect the Muslim community, as the Muslim community has been attacked, mosques have been damaged ...' and so on. The officer replied that this was a secondary concern (Trad 2001).

'This is going to exacerbate problems the community has been facing since the terrorist attacks.' said Ahmad Ali Mehboob, Chief Executive of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (Labi 2001:3); and so it did. We have canvassed quite extensively above, the ideological processes by which this exacerbation proceeds.

Conclusion

This article has detailed a number of different cycles of attacks on Muslim and Middle-Eastern background people in Australia. These included racist media panics which criminalise whole communities, racist vilification for political advantage, physical assaults and property damage such as arson which are arguably provoked by the foregoing, and police and security service raids which trample on civil rights, just as the human rights of refugees are being quashed with the aid of cynical political opportunism and the manipulation of the media.

Racism is not a 'clean' or rational phenomenon. Just as unemployment and insecurity can become joined ideologically with non-White immigration in the incoherence of the racist imagination, so Arabs can become conflated with Muslims, Muslims with terrorists, 'boat people' with Middle Eastern, Middle Eastern with Arabs, Arabs with terrorists, and so on in interminable permutations. So the logics of racism are profoundly difficult to disentangle. Yet this article has presented, by the use of comparative method, striking parallels between ideological constructs of Middle-Eastern, crime-prone immigrants, of Middle-Eastern queue-jumping, people-smuggler paying 'boat people' with no respect for orderly waiting lists and civilised rules, of violent Middle-Eastern Muslim rapists and terrorists.

The burden of this article has been to demonstrate the common ideological patterns and to infer the existence of causal connections, however complex, multi-causal and indirect, between populist politics exploiting xenophobia; in symbiosis with manipulated and largely supine media; and repressive arms of the state responding to and dependent upon both of these. Thus raids at dawn are conducted by secret services in conjunction with tabloid journalists. Politically opportunist and sensationalist paper-selling 'attacks' in headlines lead to and give ideological licence to racist attacks in shops, streets and workplaces. Both these types of attack took place in Australia before 11 September, which marked but a dramatic upsurge in such incidents. Nor was this the first such rise. While ever the underlying causes of racism remain at work, it will not be the last.

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