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The Kosovar refugees: the experience of providing temporary safe haven in Australia

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The Kosovar Refugees:  
The Experience of Providing Temporary Safe Haven in Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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B.A. (Hons), University of Wollongong

School of History and Politics
University of Wollongong
2011
Declaration

I, Robert A. Carr, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Robert A. Carr
5th May 2011
Abstract

In my thesis I evaluate the experience of Kosovar refugees evacuated to Australia in 1999 as part of the Howard Government’s ‘Operation Safe Haven’. I investigate the experience of the Kosovars in Australia alongside the role of the media in perpetuating the notion of “acceptability” in a broader debate about immigration. The plight of the Kosovar refugees provided much of the initial impetus for the introduction of the Howard Government’s temporary protection regime. My discussion and argument raise questions about Australian politics and refugee policy. These questions include asking why some refugees have been considered worthy of Australia’s charity and assistance, while others have not. I draw on narratives of national identity while investigating popular discourse surrounding the evacuation of Kosovar refugees to Australia.
Acknowledgments

When evening comes, I return to my home, and I go into my study; and on the threshold, I take off my everyday clothes, which are covered with mud and mire, and I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate manner I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by them kindly, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born; and there I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me; and for four hours I feel no boredom, I dismiss every affliction, I no longer fear poverty nor do I tremble at the thought of death: I become completely part of them. - Niccolo Machiavelli

The words of this famous Florentine have proven both practical and reaffirming. The process of writing this thesis has been rewarding and challenging, though one sentiment encapsulates the experience from beginning to end in particular: enlightening. Chapter by chapter this thesis has taken shape, though not without the ongoing support of my family, friends and colleagues.

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especially during the Iraq War. Grandpa Woollett, who passed away during my candidature, spent many hours researching family history and demonstrated the purposeful and practical results of this kind of research, even as an “amateur”.

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Abbreviations

ABC – Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADF – Australian Defence Force
ALP – Australian Labor Party
CAT – Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment
DFAT – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DIMA – Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (Australia)
DP – Displaced Person
HEP – UNHCR Kosovar Refugee Humanitarian Evacuation Program
ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
KFOR – Kosovo Force (United Nations peacekeeping force in Kosovo)
KLA – Kosovar Liberation Army
MP – Member of Parliament (Australian Federal House of Representatives)
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSW – New South Wales
PPV – Permanent Protection Visa
RCOA – Refugee Council of Australia
SA – South Australia
TPV – Temporary Protection Visa
UN – United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK - UN Mission in Kosovo
USCRI – United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
WA – Western Australia
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Introduction

The experience of the Kosovar refugees in Australia in 1999 reveals much about the way Australian refugee policy has been conceived throughout the nation’s history. Their temporary stay in Australia provides insight into the continuities that have shaped refugee policy. Today, images of Curtin Detention Centre (located in the far northern region of Western Australia) and Christmas Island appear regularly on the evening television news. Asylum seekers continue to be housed in camp-like conditions on the mainland of Australia as well as in offshore processing centres. These camps are guarded by armed security personnel and by their remote locations the facilities provided to house refugees by-and-large deter them from mixing with the general population. These conditions are very similar to those faced by the Kosovars in 1999. The Kosovars were a “popular” group of refugees who were openly welcomed by the Australian government. Such conditions beg questions about the isolation of refugees in remote regions in Australia and why quarantine-type accommodation continues to be utilised.

The experience of the Kosovar refugees has remained largely neglected by scholarship. In my thesis I explore the plight of the Kosovar refugees. Their treatment provided much of the initial impetus for the introduction of the Howard Government’s temporary protection regime.

In late March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began a major air-bombing campaign against Yugoslav military forces inside Kosovo aimed at defending local ethnic Albanians against the violence being perpetuated by Serbian paramilitaries. By the end of the

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2 Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ‘Report on RCOA field visit to Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’, November 1999. URL: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/kosovo-visit.pdf>. Accessed 4th February 2009. The conflict had intensified in previous months as a result of fighting between the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in a dispute over the sovereignty of the Serbian province. Around 840,000 ethnic Albanians fled Kosovo, having been expelled by Serbian forces and in conjunction with the displacement caused by NATO air strikes.
following fortnight the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) formally appealed to the international community to evacuate Kosovars waiting for help at the border of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Concerned about ethnic tensions, Macedonian authorities had closed the country’s borders to the fleeing refugees. It was feared that the sudden influx of over 250,000 refugees into Macedonia would tip the fragile balance between its own ethnic Macedonian and Albanian populations. The domestic political climate in Macedonia was delicate and there were a growing number of public demonstrations against the NATO campaign. The Macedonian government’s concerns were further compounded by the argument that NATO’s bombing campaigns had caused the mass influx of refugees in the first place. Over the next two months the evacuation saw 91,000 refugees relocated on a temporary basis to 29 countries including Australia. The UN’s aim was to relieve pressure on Macedonia and to ensure the border remained open to those refugees fleeing Kosovo. NATO air strikes ended three months later alongside the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from the province.

On 6th April 1999 the Howard Government agreed that it would temporarily relocate a limited number of Kosovar refugees to Australia for three months, although it had initially rejected the UN’s request to do so. The Government announced the new temporary ‘Safe Haven’ visa scheme, establishing the first formal policy on temporary protection in Australian

3 *ibid.* See also J. Van Selm, ‘Reception in other states: information relating to other key states involved in the reception of Kosovars (Appendix 1)’, in *Van Selm, op. cit.*, p. 213. Van Selm’s assessment is that ‘Macedonia had a substantial ethnic Albanian minority already, and the political balance was already somewhat worrisome’.

4 *Van Selm, op. cit.*, pp. 212-213. It is noted here that the country was still hosting 1250 refugees from the Bosnian conflict, indicating a source of tension in Macedonian domestic politics. See also p. 213. Here, the Macedonian Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski stated that the country was in danger of political and economic collapse. His government questioned why Macedonia was expected to take endless refugees while other countries in the region had refused to open their borders. Georgievski added: ‘How many [Kosovar refugees] do we have to take to satisfy Europe and for the Kosovo people to say thank you? All this time we have been trying to get the UNHCR to take care of the refugees. The problem is they are not doing anything.’

5 *ibid.*, p. 213. See also M.W. Manulak, ‘Canada and the Kosovo crisis; a “golden moment” in Canadian foreign policy’, *International Journal*, Spring, 2009, p. 574. Here the author states: ‘Not only did Milosevic not blink, but some blamed NATO bombs for the mass exodus of Kosovar refugees.’

6 Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ‘Report on RCOA field visit to Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’, *op. cit.*
immigration history. These changes culminated in the introduction of the *Migration Legislation Amendment (Temporary Safe Haven Visas) Act 1999* (Cth) on 11th May 1999. The Safe Haven program was defined by the government as a ‘short term humanitarian’ measure, under which 4000 Kosovar refugees were to be given an initial three-month Safe Haven Visa (with a view to possible extension as required by Phillip Ruddock, the Immigration Minister). A “sunset” clause of six months also applied in which an offer of safe haven would expire if not taken up before that time. Under the arrangements the Kosovars would receive food, accommodation (at eight disused or vacated military bases), health care and other necessities, as well as an allowance of $20 for adults and $5 for children per week. The legislation refused the right of the Kosovars to apply for permanent residency or social security benefits and initially they were explicitly banned from obtaining paid employment.

The legislation empowered the Immigration Minister to shorten, extend or cancel a Safe Haven Visa at will. It denied the Kosovars the right of appeal in applying for refugee status under the UN Convention on refugees or to obtain any other type of visa. The Government would be able to use the legislation to force entire Kosovar families to be repatriated at any time. The Safe Haven legislation granted non-reviewable, exclusive powers to the Immigration Minister to determine the status of Safe Haven Visa holders, insulating the minister from external judicial review. The visa denied the Kosovar refugees the right to be treated by the Australian government with the protection afforded to them under international

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7 B. York, ‘Australia and Refugees, 1901-2002: An Annotated Chronology Based on Official Sources’, Information and Research Services, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 16th June 2003, p. 81.

8 M. Head, ‘The Kosovar and Timorese “Safe Haven” Refugees’, *Alternative Law Journal*, 24(6), December, 1999, p. 279. See also pp. 282-283. Here, Head states, under the *Migration Legislation Amendment (Temporary Safe Haven Visas) Act*, there was vague and sweeping language that entitled the Minister to refuse or cancel visas, such as ‘good character’ or ‘representing “a danger to the Australian community”’. He pointed out that Safe Haven Visas could be used to discriminate on grounds of ‘national security’ and ‘prejudice to Australia’s international relations.’ The danger, Head says, was of the refugees’ interests being subordinated to the Australian Government’s relations with Indonesia or other countries. Moreover, refusals and cancellations of the Safe Haven Visas automatically applied to applicants’ immediate family members.
human rights conventions. Not surprisingly such limits generated some criticism from the Australian Greens and Democrats in the Senate.9

Prior to the Kosovo conflict in 1999 the international community had used ‘safe haven’ as the name for a variety of humanitarian programs. For example, the United States military conducted its own Operation Safe Haven as early as 1957 in which 20,000 Hungarian refugees were relocated to the US following Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt and offered permanent residency.10 The US conducted another Operation Safe Haven to resettle tens of thousands of Iraqis to the US as recent as 2009.11 Australia’s Safe Haven program was designed, unlike these operations, to evacuate a limited number of Kosovars - whose rights and liberties would be highly restricted by the Howard Government – as a short-term temporary option.

The Immigration Minister described the Australian government’s Operation Safe Haven on 4th May 1999 as: ‘a program of evacuation to provide safe haven for people where there is an expectation they should be able to return home.’12 The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) said the intent of the operation was very clear from the start. It was the first time in Australian immigration history that refugees had been brought to Australia

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with the ‘express purpose that it be for short-term respite rather than resettlement’.  

The Kosovar refugees’ experience of temporary safe haven in Australia – including their flight from war in Yugoslavia, evacuation and then arrival in Sydney - was widely reported by the media at the time. The Kosovars’ story has in many ways been overshadowed by subsequent heated public debates about asylum seekers from the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Yet, no other group of refugees have been associated with challenging and changing the policies of a Prime Minister with such profound immediacy - and no less that of John Howard, who has since been credited with winning the 2001 Federal election while demonising refugees involved in the “children overboard” affair.

This thesis explores the story of the Kosovar refugees’ stay in Australia while, at the same time, investigating the extent to which the heavily mediatised plight of the Kosovars ultimately forced the hand of the Howard Government, causing it to retract its initial stance and provide the refugees with temporary safe haven. There was minimal negativity surrounding the arrival of the Kosovar refugees and very few public and media commentators expressed concern about the evacuation as a whole. After all, there were no boats illegally ferrying the Kosovars towards Australia’s shores and the evacuation itself was sanctioned by the Federal Government. The Kosovar refugees were even welcomed by Prime Minister Howard with ‘open arms’ at Sydney airport. This investigation provides avenues for understanding how the public acceptance of the Kosovars was reflected, shaped and influenced by the news media. It emphasises the ongoing importance of the mass media to the acceptability of refugees.

Chapter 1 of my thesis explores the Howard Government’s obligations to the Kosovar refugees under international conventions and its responsibilities towards them under Australian law. I have incorporated the

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concept of virtue into my discussion and the implications of this idea for the ways in which the Kosovars were deemed “acceptable” to the Australian public. This chapter then elaborates on the usefulness of analysing the news media as a primary source for investigating Operation Safe Haven. Finally this chapter provides historical context for the ethnic cleansing campaign carried by Serbs in Kosovo and the nationalist frenzy that occurred in Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s.

The remaining chapters of my thesis (with the exception of my last chapter) are aligned with the timetable created by the Federal Government for Operation Safe Haven. Chapters 2 to 5 investigate the evacuation of the Kosovars to Australia, their arrival at Sydney airport, residency at Safe Haven accommodation and repatriation to the Balkans. These chapters chart the narrative sequence presented by the media in its coverage of Operation Safe Haven.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have investigated the Howard Government’s plans for evacuating the Kosovar refugees to Australia in April and early May 1999. These chapters investigate the argument that developments in refugee policy at this time and the Safe Haven Visa that was given to the Kosovar refugees for the duration of their stay in Australia were the result of both domestic political influences (including populism and the media) and, to some extent, international political forces.

I then explore the ways in which the Howard Government politicised the Kosovars’ arrival in Australia and its attempts to use the evacuation program as a means of bolstering its own popular support. Chapter 3 traces the journey of Kosovars refugees aboard the initial flight to Australia, the welcome they encountered at Sydney airport and the experience of arriving at the East Hills Safe Haven. This chapter demonstrates that relations between the media and the Howard Government during the arrival were close and complementary and how there were significant limitations imposed on the media by the Federal Government during this episode. The Government attempted to tightly regulate public access to the refugees. I have explored how these limitations increased the importance of the media as a mediator between the general public and the Government throughout Operation Safe Haven.
The arrival of the Kosovars provided the media with an opportunity to celebrate and “parade” national values.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I have explored the experience of Kosovar refugees given accommodation at Singleton barracks Safe Haven and their refusal to accept the facilities on offer at the barracks. The actions of these refugees – which included those the media dubbed as engaged in the “bus sit-in” protest - generated widespread media coverage and raised significant questions about the quality of the services offered to refugees as part of Operation Safe Haven. Chapter 4 investigates the Government’s response to this question which included a heavily politicised effort to discredit the refugees’ claims.

I have then investigated the circumstances in which the Kosovars were repatriated by the Australian government. Chapter 5 examined the closure of the Safe Havens by the Immigration Minister and the repatriation of Kosovar refugees after July 1999. This chapter has explored the rationale behind the Winter Reconstruction Allowance, a monetary incentive offered by the Federal Government to the refugees to depart Australia. This is followed with an analysis of some of the more coercive means employed by the Immigration Minister to induce the Kosovars to return home. Chapter 5 re-evaluates the legal ramifications of the Safe Haven Visa program in light of the repatriation of Kosovar refugees in the period immediately following the war. Kosovars who continued to reside in Australia in the earlier months of 2000 had mixed experiences. Some mounted a High Court challenge to prevent their repatriation and some were subject to a Department of Immigration “hunt” for refugees deemed “on the run”. At this point the discourse of “compliance” shaped news reports.

In Chapter 6 I effect a change of focus. This chapter is used to, in a sense, balance the books when it comes to attitudes to the Kosovar refugee situation. I explore media representations of Serbian communities living in Australia during the Kosovo refugee crisis in March and April 1999. A great number of Serbian Australians reacted with contempt towards the Australian government’s decision to support the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia. This last chapter of my thesis has explored the effects of
media representations of Serbs and evaluated the response of that community to this discourse. It investigates the mobilisation of binaries by the media about “good/bad” ethnic Serbs in both Australia and Yugoslavia and how these played out alongside notions of “loyalty/disloyalty” within Australia during the Kosovo war. I have discussed the protests conducted by Serbian communities in Australia against the NATO campaign and media representations of these demonstrations.

The implications of providing temporary safe haven to the Kosovar refugees in Australia continue to be prominent in debates about Australia’s refugee policy. There are significant continuities evident in Australia’s refugee policy that are highlighted in my thesis. These include the influence of populism on Australia’s refugee policy, the obligations of federal government in responding to humanitarian crises and practices of the news media. The experience of the Kosovar refugees can be viewed within the broader context of Australia’s immigration history. Their story reflects the global implications of refugee policy as well. The Kosovars were individuals who experienced persecution and tragedy. They were also the beneficiaries of the compassion of the Australian community.
Chapter 1: The Howard Government’s Operation Safe Haven and Media Representations of the Kosovars

Introduction
This chapter begins by exploring the Howard Government’s obligations to the Kosovar refugees under international conventions, and its responsibilities towards them under Australian law. It has incorporated the concept of virtue into the discussion. Chapter 1 elaborates on the usefulness of analysing the news media as a primary source for investigating Operation Safe Haven. The latter part of this chapter has sought to deconstruct news media sources concerned with the Kosovar refugees in Australia. It explores the nationalist frenzy that occurred in the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s and provides historical context for how the Kosovo war was represented by the media in Australia.

1. Operation Safe Haven in the Context of the International Sphere

1.1 The Howard Government’s obligations to refugees under international conventions
Asylum seekers were, until the early 1990s, dealt with under the 1958 Migration Act which incorporated Australia’s obligations as a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter referred to as the Convention). As a signatory, Australia is obliged to offer protection to persons defined as a refugee by the Convention, including those who have a ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion … and is unable or, owing to such fear, is

unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’.\textsuperscript{16} Australia’s response to refugees under the Convention has included (and continues to include) the provision of an annual number of places for refugees to resettle in Australia pending referral by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). There was a quota of 12,000 places reserved for refugees referred to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) by the UNHCR for the fiscal year 1999-2000, under the humanitarian component of Australia’s immigration program (the ‘humanitarian program’).\textsuperscript{17} Another 3,100 places were available under DIMA’s ‘special humanitarian program’ (SHP) for persons who had suffered discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights.\textsuperscript{18} These programs were not made available to Kosovar refugees evacuated as part of Operation Safe Haven, who were instead offered a new temporary visa class named the ‘Safe Haven Visa’.

These policies must be viewed in the context of the broader restructuring of the Department of Immigration with respect to the processing of refugees. Under the Howard Government, the humanitarian program (which accepted refugees via UNHCR referral) remained the main program under which refugees gained access to Australia. Yet DIMA was increasingly tasked with more punitive roles that transformed it into an agency more concerned with border protection. While the Howard Government was not the first government to implement changes in immigration law that enhanced DIMA’s border protection responsibilities, it was instrumental in popularising the notion that refugees were to be automatically regarded with a degree of mistrust and scepticism. The Howard Government played a significant part in watering-down humanitarian engagement over the plight of refugees in public debate. The


\textsuperscript{18} The Mission of U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), ‘About Refugees’. URL: <http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?id=559>. Accessed 5\textsuperscript{th} April 2009. It is further noted here that another 900 offshore resettlement places were available to refugees under the ‘special assistance category’ (SAC) for persons who had close links with Australia and who were particularly vulnerable but did not meet the criteria of the other categories.
Government shifted the focus to the need to police Australia’s borders with increasingly tough measures.

A formal policy on refugees was first introduced in 1977 by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser to assist those displaced during the Vietnam War. By the 1990s, under Australian law, many asylum seekers were placed on Permanent Protection Visa’s (PPV) under which they were offered both permanent protection and the right to apply for Australian citizenship. Even before the Kosovar evacuation Australia had already experimented with a number of temporary visas, granted to people already in Australia and who were unable to return home (mainly from Iraq, Lebanon, China and Sri Lanka). In 1989, for instance, the Federal Hawke Government provided a four-year temporary protection for Chinese students already in Australia following the Tiananmen Square massacre, which were later upgraded to permanent visas. It was the Keating Government that first introduced a kind of good/bad dichotomy with regard to refugees; by introducing the *Migration Amendment Act 1992 (Cth)*, Keating established mandatory detention for “boat people”. The legislative changes also featured a sub-category to provide four-year temporary protection visas to particular refugees. This first attempt at temporary protection was highly unsuccessful due to the uncertainties faced by applicants and because many Australian employers found the scheme unattractive and were reluctant to provide work to these kinds of visa holders. In 1994, the Federal Government returned to offering more permanent protection and it was not until war unfolded in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 that the notion of temporary protection regained prominence.

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21 King, *op. cit.*, see footnote 3.

22 *Ibid*. King notes that some concessions of temporary protection were offered to former Yugoslav nationals between 1992 and 1997, but these were expected to leave Australia by 31st July 1997. These refugees, it must be noted, retained the ability to apply for permanent residence if they met the criteria for any other visa, including the family and skilled visa.
1.2 Refugee mobilities in a global context; Australia’s search for “skilled migrants”

Between 1984 and 2004 the number of refugees worldwide almost doubled, peaking in 1994 following the Rwanda genocide. The world’s refugee population (as specified by the UNHCR) was around 21 million people at the time of the Kosovo war. At the turn of the twenty-first century, countries in the developing world were responsible for the welfare of about ninety-five per cent of the world’s refugee population, while only five per cent of refugees were being sheltered by developed countries. Still, the context for Operation Safe Haven was one in which governments were witnessing the increasing movement of the world’s population from underdeveloped to wealthier countries. A major problem for the UNHCR was (and continues to be) an increasing reluctance by wealthier countries to accept refugees on a permanent basis. Their position has been promoted by domestic backlashes against immigrants that have sometimes been fuelled by racial overtones. This trend is further reflected in the fact that, by 2008, forty per cent of countries had implemented policies to reduce the level of immigration. The typical response by Western governments has seen a situation arise in which, ‘in the name of guarding “national” interests, immigration controls have rarely been as tight as they are at the start of the twenty-first century, aided in particular by the intensified surveillance than can be conducted using new information technologies.’

The NATO campaign against Yugoslavia can be viewed as directly linked to the regional instability that emerged after the breakdown of the Yugoslav state and the rise of the US as a sole global superpower. International, post-Cold War politics significantly implicated the ways in which the refugee situation was conceived of and dealt with by NATO and its allies. Frans J. Schuurman makes the point that during the period of the Cold War, ‘the advanced industrialised countries used the existence of the communist bloc (especially the Soviet Union) as a legitimisation to uphold

24 Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-357.
25 *ibid.*, pp. 355-357.
27 *ibid*.
the military strength of individual countries (especially the USA) and of NATO... Military interventions from both sides [of the Cold War] in their own periphery were accepted strategies.\textsuperscript{29} Schuurman goes on:

With the end of the Cold War this legitimation of the armed forces ended. The search was then on for new legitimation, which was found in a number of opportunities [including] “ethnic cleansing” in Africa and the Balkans, etc. US military power is still being wielded as the hegemonic global military force. In contrast to the previous period the legitimating discourse is now the defence of human rights, a defence against drugs, and an urge to help countries on the road to democracy and the free market system.\textsuperscript{30}

At the time of the Kosovo war, many media and political commentators in Australia regarded the Yugoslav communist regime as “backward” and archaic. Sheltering and providing safe haven to refugees from this part of the world was frequently construed as liberating by Western political leaders including Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. As a supporter of NATO, the Australian government’s response strongly reflected these kinds of judgements about the global order in the post-Cold War era.

Australia’s response to the Kosovars further reflected ongoing ramifications of the rapid breakdown of post-colonial societies in the 1960s and 1970s, and the increasing burden placed upon wealthier nations to assist in the resettlement of refugees from these countries (including in South East Asia and Africa). The Australian government resettled around 85,000 refugees from Indochina between 1975 and 1985.\textsuperscript{31} Australia’s acceptance of refugees, however, has been mediated by a culture of stringent selection procedures. Jackie Davies comments that Australia’s annual quota of 12,000 places for refugees has been rarely filled, ‘because the conditions that Australia places upon who they will accept as a refugee


\textsuperscript{30} ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Davies, op. cit., p. 358.
are too narrow to fit with the profile of many refugees needing resettlement.\textsuperscript{32} Some of these conditions included the ability to speak English, a relatively high standard of education, physical and mental health as well as an age threshold. It is little wonder, Davies argues, that an average of only 4,000 Convention refugees are actually accepted each year.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite these selection procedures, Australia’s refugee quota has been no less or more harsh than other countries in the developed world. A significant part of the rationale behind immigration policies has been the need for governments to promote a balance between population growth, the economy and the environmental capacity of a country to sustain such a population. Australian governments have continually emphasised the need for “skilled” migrants under the humanitarian program as well as offering preference to those that are not only healthy and willing to work, but who also have desirable skills relative to industry demands.\textsuperscript{34} Since 2001, the “war on terror” has often been used to justify even tougher standards for the acceptance of refugees into Western countries, with the Howard Government readily drawing on the notion that “terrorists” might enter Australia under the guise of being refugees. The irony is that Australian government policies, particularly those of Howard-led coalitions, have been hostile towards those deemed “economic refugees” - those persons, sometimes conceived of as “middle class” refugees, who leave poorer countries for rich ones in search of a better life. While the use of this terminology by governments continues to resonate with the electorate, the legal ramifications are drastic for those deemed to be “economic refugees”, as countries are under no legal obligation to grant asylum to such persons under the Convention.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} E.F. Kunz, \textit{Displaced Persons; Calwell’s New Australians}, Australian National University Press, Rushcutters Bay, 1988, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{35} Mansbach and Rafferty, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 627.
1.3 The Howard Government’s obligations towards the Kosovars

The UNHCR’s request for Australia to evacuate and temporarily provide a safe haven to Kosovar refugees as part of its Kosovo Humanitarian Evacuation Program (HEP) in early April 1999 was extraordinary in terms of Australia’s obligations under both domestic law and international conventions. The procedures did not follow the usual process of referral via which Australia would admit refugees for the purposes of permanent resettlement. The UNHCR typically administered the process whereby refugees were “screened” before being referred to the Department of Immigration. In this case, however, Australian immigration officials were dispatched by the Federal Government to the refugee camps in Macedonia to screen refugees themselves for temporary safe haven in Australia. This was because the UNHCR was unprepared and overwhelmed by the immediacy with which refugees had flooded across the borders of Kosovo and into camps hastily erected as emergency accommodation.

As noted early the Australian government implemented significant changes to immigration law in order to accommodate the Kosovar refugees by dividing protection visas into two subclasses – permanent visas and temporary visas. These measures passed both Houses of Parliament on 11th May 1999 and increased the Howard Government’s coercive powers in dealing with non-citizens. As part of the Migration Legislation Amendment (Temporary Safe Haven Visas) Act 1999 (Cth) these changes were designed to control almost every aspect of the visitors’ lives. The Safe Haven legislation granted non-reviewable, exclusive powers to the Immigration Minister to determine the status of Safe Haven Visa holders. The new powers were designed to uphold the integrity of the existing Australian immigration program, and insulate the minister from accountability via external review. They granted the minister the authority to cancel an individual’s Safe Haven Visa, and prevent the Kosovar refugees from attaining more permanent residency in Australia. The Safe Haven Visa legislation severely diminished refugees’ access to rights afforded to them under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention

Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment (CAT), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).\textsuperscript{37} One of the protections offered to refugees under the 1951 Convention, for example, was the right not to be returned (\textit{non-refoulement}) to a situation where such persons could face torture or other cruel or degrading treatment. These and other aspects of the 1951 Convention did not apply to refugees who had been given a Safe Haven Visa.\textsuperscript{38} From the start, Operation Safe Haven was designed to select particular \textit{kinds} of refugees to be evacuated to Australia that ensured their compliance with the visa program. The Safe Haven Visa legislation had ‘far-reaching provisions to extinguish the legal and democratic rights of unwanted asylum-seekers.’\textsuperscript{39} At the same time, the Immigration Minister promoted the legislation, which passed through both houses of Parliament largely unopposed, as ‘a magnanimous and humanitarian offer of haven.’\textsuperscript{40}

2. Operation Safe Haven, Australian Nationalism and ‘In the National Interest’

2.1 The Howard Government and ‘White virtue’

The opportunity to evacuate the Kosovars as part of a global humanitarian mission allowed many Australians to reaffirm a triumphal sense of ‘White virtue’ as central to their country’s conception of citizenship. It is the idea that whiteness is able to triumph over “Other” racial or cultural groups when it can be construed as ‘uplifting, noble, universal, and pure’.\textsuperscript{41} The common link between representations of the Kosovars and asylum seekers is how refugees in a broader sense have been incorporated into White national identity discourse. Richard Wazana states that, in the refugee


\textsuperscript{39} Head, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 279.

\textsuperscript{40} ibid.

discourse of the Howard era, there was a definitive re-emergence of the White Australia policy.\textsuperscript{42} Australia’s geographical position, as a bastion of “western civilization”, has had important ramifications for Australia’s sense of identity and its fears around how many “foreigners” it is ready to receive. For early British settlers, Wazana states: ‘this obsession has transformed itself into various measures meant to “protect” Australian culture and traditions, including an inhuman refugee policy [sic].’\textsuperscript{43}

Overall, popular discourse about the Kosovar evacuation is part of a broader story about how Australians have imagined the continuing history of immigration to their country, a story about the ways in which new arrivals are welcomed, and a legacy centred on the selection of migrants.

Don McMaster reflects on this period stating that Australia’s refugee policies were acts of exclusionary politics based on notions of citizenship, identity and belonging, or in most cases “not belonging”.\textsuperscript{44} He notes how the Kosovars received a much more compassionate reception than other refugee groups. The coincidental arrival of both Chinese boat people and Kosovar refugees in Australia in the first half of 1999 attracted considerable media attention, but public and official reactions could not have been more different. McMaster states, on one hand, the Chinese were decried in the media with headlines such as ‘Invaded’ and ‘Outcry over illegals’, and they were placed in detention. On the other, the Kosovars were met with headlines such as ‘Sanctuary’ and ‘Safely Into Our Arms’. Moreover, ‘They were welcomed; they were European and not the “other”. These events highlight the discriminatory manner in which Australian refugee policy and citizenship have been used to exclude its “other.”\textsuperscript{45} McMaster asserts their ‘mode of entry’ (i.e. an arrival that was “authorised”, and not via boat) into Australia played a significant part in their acceptance and legality.\textsuperscript{46} The legal changes undertaken during the Kosovar evacuation were an extension of such a mindset. They were

\textsuperscript{42} See also G. Tavan, \textit{The Long, Slow Death of White Australia}, Scribe, Carlton North, 2005.
\textsuperscript{44} McMaster, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{ibid.}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ibid.}, p. 190.
embodied in the coercive powers acquired by the Federal Government as part of Operation Safe Haven. Developments in refugee policy at the time of the Kosovo war and subsequent refugee crisis were part of a broader, culturally conservative approach to immigration that has historically reflected the anxieties of Australians.

Much of the literature surrounding refugee policy in this period makes a narrow assertion. It asserts that popular national identity discourse be demanded of refugees who might be construed as cultural and/or racial “others” and that they conform to the hegemonic mode of belonging. This discourse was part of a long-standing regulatory culture that has tended to govern Australian immigration, and is inherited from, or at least linked to, the exclusionary racial practices promoted by the White Australia policy. This discourse played an important part in the rationale and implementation of Operation Safe Haven. In many ways, the Kosovars were conceived as a threat (as “boat people” came to be) and the media was able to justify their stay by promoting it as a controlled, temporary intrusion. The Kosovars’ mode of entry and then their confinement to army camps in Australia was a notable factor in the public mindset. Undoubtedly, there are links between the coercive powers of the Safe Haven legislation and a conservative discourse that has tended to dominate Australian immigration.

Since the early 1990s, coercion has increasingly been used by Australian federal governments with the support of the dominant cultural group to dominate and overwhelm minorities (particularly asylum seekers) who are collectively identified and subjugated into more manageable subject positions. Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason, following Antonio Gramsci, assert that consensual hegemonic relations are always backed by ‘the armour of coercion’. Their study on the Australian media suggests how it is often used to signify authority by more subtle means. The media, they maintain, is central to disseminating the perception that the State should be able to police elements that are popularly felt to threaten core

morals and values. Public backlash to the *Tampa* and ‘children overboard’ refugee incidences in 2001 reflected a growing consensus in the Howard era in support of increased regulation of immigration. Popularly constructed social wrongs in the media, typified by the dominant “invader” and “queue-jumper” mentality of the period, played a substantial role in justifying the State’s acquisition of greater coercive powers – most notably the ‘temporary protection visa’ (TPV) and the ‘Pacific Solution’. Scholars have often noted the ‘moral panic’ that gripped popular identity discourse in the Howard era and the ways in which this panic legitimated the expansion of the coercive powers of the Government in its dealings with asylum seekers.48

Immigration (and its control) has also remained central to the consciousness of how Australians have constructed their identity. As Sonia Tascon says, border control has played an ongoing role in the (re)production of colonial power based on the exclusion and/or subjugation of inferior racial and cultural Others. Colonialist aspirations in Australia have continued to mobilise popular ‘binaries of opposition’ against subordinate migrant groups and those deemed popularly “undesirable”.49 They are commonly played-out alongside ‘racialised knowledges’ extending from ‘the maintenance of the coloniality of power’.50 This is despite the fragmentation of such power in the face of globalisation, which has often served to rally popular anxieties about the decline of colonialist power and traditions. Tascon asserts that these anxieties have increasingly been exploited in Australian politics with the promise of reinstating the prominence of White colonial power structures. It has produced governmental attempts to fix “borders” as a permanent marker between the *nation* and Others, offering certainty as opposed to the uncertainty that lies beyond them.51

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50 ibid., p. 240.
51 ibid.
continues to leave, certain peoples “outside” the borders that bestow benefits and privileges.\(^{52}\)

Such practices, Jupp says, must be viewed from the traditions of British empire-building and the identities that extend, both consciously and unconsciously, from this as an ongoing historical process. This is why the same xenophobias we might attribute to fears in the 1850s about Chinese goldminers, which continued to shape immigration policy for the next century, have not yet disappeared.\(^{53}\) In more recent times, Jupp observes, rather than engineering society by subsidized British migrants, it is done by exclusion and selection, via the Department of Immigration and its various branches and policies. The ability to select how and who to migrate to Australia has remained a continuing historical norm, fundamental to national cultural policies. The 2001 budget for the Department of Immigration reflected a declining concern for settlement and multiculturalism, turning instead to its increasing ‘obsession’ with control and compliance. It is reflected in the fact, for instance, that detention for asylum seekers and the Pacific Solution cost more than migrant education schemes.\(^{54}\)

Scholarly consensus on how Australians have viewed refugees and asylum seekers is varied. Many view temporary protection as reminiscent of the White Australia policy and disagree with State aspirations to increase its control of immigration by coercion. Katherine Betts urges that negativity towards asylum seekers in this period was not racism, but involved the sentiment that refugees did not fit in with the ‘Australian’ way of life. She says that public opinion on this matter revolved around doubts about asylum seekers’ \textit{bona fides}, the wish for a strong Australian community, and a ‘common sense of peoplehood’.\(^{55}\) This view supported Howard Government rhetoric about meeting its obligations to protect

\(^{52}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 251. See also Poynting and Morgan, \textit{op. cit.}  
\(^{53}\) See Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 6-7.  
\(^{54}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 65. Jupp points out, for instance, that detention in 2001 cost $100 million, while the adult migrant English program cost $92 million.  
national borders. That is, popular sentiment mandated Government officials to punish and seize refugees deemed to be “illegal immigrants”.

Such claims have been disputed and it has been noted that that a highly politised language had galvanized public opinion. The Federal Government’s implementation of TPVs was fraught with labels such as “illegals” and “queue jumpers”.\(^\text{56}\) One study describes how societally-prevalent ‘false beliefs’ – about “queue jumpers”, “genuine refugees” and “illegal” asylum seekers - were connected with false information and comments made by political leaders. This punitive language was also implicit in Department of Immigration and media commentary that linked asylum seekers with being ’queue-jumpers’, ‘terrorists’, ‘cashed up’, ‘non-genuine’ and ‘illegal’.\(^\text{57}\) The *Tampa* incident in 2001 demonstrates best how, in using these kinds of terms, the Government was able to galvanise popular accord. The demonising of boat people prior to the 2001 election helped to re-establish a legitimate claim to political leadership by the Prime Minister. The language was crucial to the election success, particularly when it was likely the Government would lose office. It is also evident that the language resonated with a much deeper resentment of non-invited refugees, as border protection has continued to remain a prominent issue beyond 2001. This is supported by a 2003 study on negative attitudes towards Baxter Detention Centre which found that seventy per cent of respondents viewed asylum seekers as ‘illegal’, ‘an economic burden’, ‘problematic’, ‘unwelcome’ and ‘ungrateful’.\(^\text{58}\)

This exclusivist, popularly-imagined criteria for national belonging were often played out with a subtext of White nationalism, prompted by official government discourse demanding tougher border control. The underlying purpose of this kind of discourse was to confirm ‘an image of

\(^{56}\) Humpage and Marston, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-76.

\(^{57}\) Pederson, Watt, and Hansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-124. See also p. 108. Here, they point out that, in Klocker and Dunn’s 2003 study, 90% of Government press releases regarding asylum seekers were negative, with politised terms (such as ‘illegal’) outweighing more neutral terms (eg. ‘asylum seekers’) in the discourse.

the White Australian as a manager of national space,59 while (re)producing the legitimacy of the State and its increased use of coercive powers against non-citizens. As Foucault has argued in relation to governmentality, while paraphrasing La Perriere: ‘government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end.’60 Attempts by the State to establish a causal link between criminality, racial or cultural identity and “mass” breaches of national space at the borders have been used increasingly to generate political consensus since the early 1990s.61

2.2 Temporary protection, sovereignty and the ‘In the National Interest’ White Paper

Refugees have often been used to promote as normative a coercive element that has continued to underpin popular constructions of Australian identity. Similar sentiments about non-British Others were prominent in anti-Chinese anxieties of the 1850s on the goldfields, and in relation to the arrival of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s. By 2001 Middle Eastern refugees had become what Poynting and Mason refer to as a “fifth column” threat within Australia during the US-led ‘war on terror’. That is, an “enemy within” who raised new questions about citizenship, identity and loyalty at times when the country of residence is in conflict with their country of origin.62 The Kosovar refugee evacuation requires a slightly different interpretation where the Australian government supported the NATO bombing of Kosovo in lieu of human rights. However, it is clear that the Kosovars, like boat people, were simultaneously imagined from the outset, albeit more subtly, as a possible threat to Australia’s border protection policies. There remained concern for the Kosovar visit to be officially regulated, producing a form of temporary protection legislation

that discarded a range of human rights otherwise available to refugees. As Head says, the Safe Haven Visa legislation introduced to accommodate the Kosovar refugees was part of continuing efforts by successive Commonwealth governments – both Coalition and Labor – to withdraw and restrict, if not abolish, access to judicial review by those people classified as ‘unlawful non-citizens’.  

The Kosovars were imagined in a more popular light during the evacuation on account of their background as Europeans and other values thought to be shared with Australians. As has been argued, there are some humanitarian crises – such as the Nazi Holocaust – that have been given high visibility not only because of the great numbers involved, but also because of their ‘Europeanness’.  

This implies that these events were so disturbing because they took place ‘within … white borders’ rather than elsewhere: in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Popular identity discourse and policy making merged during the Safe Haven evacuation program because, as has been argued: ‘belonging has the capacity to mobilise individuals … around the contentious question of citizenship rights’.  

Increasingly control-orientated refugee policies in this period reflected the Howard Government’s concern about national sovereignty, but they also pandered to popular fears that “Australian culture” and its territorial independence were under attack from refugees. As Wazana says, the ‘natural sequence of events [was such that] if one believes that one is under attack, one will naturally want to defend oneself.’ Immigration Minister Ruddock emphasised the notion of sovereignty during Parliamentary debates over the Border Protection Bill (2001), stating that new approaches to asylum seekers were due to ‘increasing threats to Australia’s sovereign right to determine who will enter and remain in Australia.’  

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63 Head, op. cit., p. 280.
64 Tascon, op. cit., p. 244.
65 ibid.
67 Wazana, op. cit., p. 89.
incident in 2001: ‘Every nation has the right to effectively control its borders and to decide who comes here and under what circumstances, and Australia has no intention of surrendering or compromising that right.’

The Prime Minister was attempting to normalise a link between the unpredictable “threat” posed by refugees and popular discontent over non-British migrant groups. This is, in more general terms, indicative of the way in which federal politics was contested in the period that immediately followed Pauline Hanson’s brief career as a Senator. Humpage and Marston comment accurately that, in the Howard era: ‘it is clear that refugees and asylum seekers have been regarded as physically embodying an external threat to jobs, living standards, welfare, and the dominance of the nation-state as the focus of social belonging.’

Political debates in such a climate frequently became contests between political parties as to who was the toughest on “illegals”.

The fundamental area of interest for the Howard Government’s foreign policy, as noted in the 1997 White Paper In the National Interest, was ‘the security of the Australian nation and the jobs and standard of living of the Australian people’. The Government promised to ‘apply this basic test of national interest’ in all of its activities associated with the field of foreign and trade policy. The Howard Government later described its approach to foreign policy as a “realist” approach. Such an approach reflected the prominence of the popular discourse of the national sphere in areas of policy that might have otherwise been dealt with as a matter of foreign affairs, including border protection. The Howard Government’s approach to foreign policy had a significant influence on the way in which the Department of Immigration operated. The international humanitarian focus within the Department’s operations was significantly watered-down

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69 Howard, as cited in Wazana, op. cit., p. 89.
70 Humpage and Marston, op. cit., p. 69.
71 ibid.
72 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), In the National Interest; Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, Australian Government, 1997, p. iii.
and was compensated for this loss by a much greater regard for national political currents. As international relations commentators Gary Smith and David Lowe note, the Howard Government’s approach to foreign policy ‘sought not only to make foreign policy in response to new regional and global agendas, but also to respond to and to seek to manage new forms of electoral challenge.’\(^{75}\) They observed that the Howard Government’s self-promoted “realist” approach saw the line between domestic and international politics become increasingly blurred. This was particularly evident following the 2001 refugee incidences involving the *Tampa* and the ‘children overboard’ affair, which demonstrated how new forms of Australian nationalism weighed-in on an incident with international consequences.\(^{76}\) The Howard Government frequently played on popular notions about “queue-jumpers” in the media and in policy statements, a term deeply offensive to many Australians’ sense of “fair play”.\(^{77}\) Responses by federal governments over the past two decades to the issue of refugees mirrors the ways in which many States have attempted to deal with increasing tension within their societies between *globality* (the influence of the extra-national sphere) and *nationality* (domestic resistance to the global sphere).\(^{78}\) In reality, Australia’s foreign policy has continued to encompass varying degrees of both local and international political influences, even while aspirations for domestic political success have encouraged governments to promote (what is purported to be) the national interest ahead of global concerns.

3. Media as Useful to the Howard Government

3.1 Promoting “acceptability”
This section elaborates on the significance of media representation of the Kosovar refugees and note the methods employed in this thesis to analyse media coverage. It discusses the role of the news media using a sceptical lens that is critical and evaluative. Here I evaluate this role alongside

\(^{75}\) *ibid.*, p. 460.  
\(^{76}\) *ibid.*  
\(^{78}\) Scholte, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
purposive attempts by the Howard Government to position itself in a favourable light throughout Operation Safe Haven. The cultural implications of mass media coverage are considered briefly in this section as well in order to provide insight into the ways in which the relationship between the corporate media, government and popular discourse is most often complementary and serves to reproduce the hegemony of the existing social order.

This investigation draws on more than a year’s newspaper coverage in *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), *The Australian* (distributed nationally) and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney). I have examined news stories, opinion columns, editorials, features, letters-to-the-editor, photographs and cartoons. My choice of these newspaper sources was based on the need to establish clear analytical boundaries for my case study. These newspapers produce daily publications and weekend editions as well - *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Weekend Australian* and *The Sun-Herald*.\(^{79}\) *The Daily/Sunday Telegraph* catered to the largest readership in Sydney throughout 1999, outselling the nearest rival (*The Sydney Morning Herald/Sun-Herald*) by a ratio of approximately 1.1 to 1, including average weekly sales of 4,097,000 newspapers.\(^ {80}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald/Sun-Herald* sold around 3,697,000 per week in this period, while *The Australian/Weekend Australian* distributed an average of 1,363,000 copies weekly to a national readership for the same year.\(^{81}\)

Newspaper evidence was gathered by utilising the electronic database Factiva and conducting keyword searches within the date range of July 1998 until December 2000. Further exploration of microfiche records of each of the newspapers allowed for a much more thorough analysis – in terms of, for example, being able to catalogue images - and involved tracing developments on a day-by-day basis. This thesis incorporates a

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\(^{79}\) I will hereafter refer to *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sun-Herald* as the ‘Herald’; *The Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* as the ‘Telegraph’; and *The Australian* and *Weekend Australian* as ‘The Australian’.


\(^{81}\) ibid.
variety of other media (such as Internet-based documents) into my analysis, although these were not included in the media content analysis of news sources. It further investigates almost two years of Australian Federal Parliamentary debates (Hansard) that discussed the Kosovar refugees, the Safe Haven legislation and Operation Safe Haven (these are cited in my bibliography). I was able to download complete proceedings of the Australian Federal Parliamentary sittings using online Hansard records, examining Hansard proceedings - from both the House of Representatives and the Senate - dated between August 1998 and May 2000. Although oral testimonies were not used as part of the investigation, my primary sources provide a broad perspective for evaluating the Howard Government’s refugee policy and the implications of media representations of the Kosovar refugees.

Newspapers are one of the most highly consumed mass media in Australia, although television, radio and “new” media content (including the Internet) are invaluable primary sources as well. The production and consumption of newspapers provides a useful avenue for understanding the reproduction of consensual relations within Australian society and the relationship that is often formed between the media and State as part of this process. Some commentators have stated that the media’s influence over populism and public opinion can be described as fickle at best, and that media discourse is merely a reflection of the prevailing social consensus.  

Those who support this position suppose that media organisations are, by virtue of good business practice, required to construct news stories around pre-existing social discourse. This grants licence to news media companies to claim to be representative of the community’s interests. They claim they have been “feeding-off” public concerns and trends. However, the news media has considerable ability to construct and shape public opinion by offering, for example, space and voice to some social, political and cultural groups while excluding others. It is often the absences in media content – what equates to the effective muzzling and marginalisation of some social

83 Ibid.
groups and ideas – that provide the clearest indication of the political leanings of a particular news organisation. By utilising these perspectives, my thesis elaborates on the links between mass media practices, the ideological leanings of the newspapers that I have drawn on and the responses of these newspapers to the Kosovar refugees.

My decision to analyse newspapers is not intended to diminish the role or the importance of other mass media reporting on the Kosovar refugees. It is evident throughout my thesis that the relationship between radio, television, newspapers and other media is an interactive one. News sources often feed off each other, reinforcing the salience of the dominant narrative. However, the different news organisations can also challenge the stories being reported by other media (as is the case in Chapter 4) when it is in their interests to do so. There is the potential for media companies to profit by taking on board alternative positions and by the controversy that is generated by not towing the popular line. Various news organisations also, at times, rely on each other for source material as well as independent news analysis to sustain representational narratives. This includes statistics from news polls produced externally to news organisations - such as by AC Nielsen and Newspoll - from which newspapers and their journalists pick and chose information to incorporate as well as ignore. There is, as such, a degree of flexibility in the production of news narratives including in the relations between newspapers and other sources of news. My main concern, however, is to evaluate the production of dominant news stories about the Kosovars, and to uncover as well as analyse the preferred stance of these newspapers in their representations.

3.2 Method of analysis; the power of representation
The analytical method that is used to analyse media texts in this thesis owes a debt to scholarship that draws on the notion media framing. Other scholars might prefer the terms spin, representation or discourse and I have chosen to employ these notions at various times as well. The intention is to

investigate the **power of representation** in the media as well as the **representative power** of the media. The task in using this method is to identify how consensual social relations are maintained through the relationships formed between governments and the media. This method provides a useful avenue for investigating ‘deliberate strategies for securing stronger consensus’ by the Howard Government as evident in its publicity campaigns surrounding Operation Safe Haven.  

It is a means for making clearer the ways in which ‘consent can be manufactured’ in liberal democracies.  

The argument of scholars using this method is that consent can be manipulated and that this manipulation occurs through the persuading, pressuring and managing public opinion. The notion of media framing allows researchers to understand how those in a ‘commanding position’ – particularly media proprietors, often in conjunction with hegemonic political groups or individuals - work to shape and transform opinion within a political schema that privileges the dominant moral or social framework. An important work in this area of media analysis is *Manufacturing Consent; the Political Economy of the Mass Media* by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. They identify how the mass media mobilise bias via patterns of news choices. They examine how the mass media ‘serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity, and that their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analysing them in such terms.’ In deconstructing the news media, Herman and Chomsky’s analysis challenges the democratic postulate that the media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth. The media goes much farther than merely reflecting the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived.

87 *ibid.*  
88 *ibid.*, p. 89.  
90 *ibid.*
What is particularly interesting about this case study is the initial tension between the media and the Howard Government over the evacuation of the Kosovar refugees. The Government at first rejected calls by the UNHCR to evacuate some of the hundreds of thousands of Kosovars from the refugee camps of Macedonia. Its policy stance was quickly overturned in-line with widespread public concern for the refugees, intense media criticism and pressure from the international community among other reasons. This study of news production provides a way of measuring (through content analysis) and rationalising why the media’s position toward the refugees shifted over the course of their stay, while predominantly supporting the strategic aims of the Howard Government.

While this work is not based on a ‘pure’ form of media framing, it does owe this approach considerable due. Media framing provides researchers with a method to explore the paradoxes in media opinion – for understanding not only the correlation between the media and the Federal Government’s ‘strategies for securing stronger consensus’, but also their need and ability to remain flexible in responding to popular views. This method of analysis opens avenues for understanding the degree to which hegemonic groups bend and shift in relation to the position from which their interests are able to benefit most. By adapting to the popular perspective as it bends and shifts, the media reproduces its own significance and remains at the centre of (and a catalyst for) popular opinion.

Research concerned with media framing is often based on both quantitative and qualitative insights. Herman and Chomsky employed content analysis to present ‘media priorities and biases’ in the US, alongside the suppression of certain issues or perspectives in news reports. Herman and Chomsky examined the ‘attention given to a fact – its placement, tone, and repetitions, the framework of analysis within which it is presented, and the related facts that accompany it and give it

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93 Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., p. lii.
meaning (or preclude understanding)." They were also concerned with ‘whether that fact received the attention and context it deserved, whether it was intelligible to the reader or effectively distorted or suppressed.’ This assisted in their aim to demonstrate clear discrepancies not only in the quantity but also ‘the quality of treatment’ of particular issues and whether some of these were given more generous treatment than others.

One of the benefits of conducting content analysis is that it provides avenues to demonstrate how an ‘observable pattern of indignant campaigns and suppressions, of shading and emphasis, and of selection of context, premises and general agenda, is highly functional for established power and responsive to the needs of the government and major power groups.’ These patterns can be observed across a range of newspaper items – in editorials, news stories, features, opinion columns, images, cartoon satire, and even the public contributions (such as letters or vox-pop articles) that are selected for publication. These kinds of media interventions work to set the boundaries of public discussion on government policy as well as the overall political agenda, via longer-term priming and the framing of content. Such patterns in the media ‘constitute the commons’, creating consent ‘intuitively – without anything being said or even in implicit opposition to what is said.’ Patterns of media framing can be viewed to ‘persist through time’ and are ‘durable’ indications of political life that ‘stand outside language’ telling us how political actors “build” and what they “make” through consent.

My analytical method provides firm though not incontestable boundaries for the study at hand. This method is useful for understanding the political power of the media, though there are critical limitations to media framing. Chomsky’s work on media analysis has been described as

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94 ibid.  
96 Herman and Chomsky, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Italics in original.  
97 ibid., p. lii.  
99 ibid.
an ‘almost conspiratorial view of the media’.\textsuperscript{100} Chomsky utilised content analysis to trace media behaviour not to state directives or backroom intrigue, but to institutional imperatives. The method illuminated the ‘nature of institutions, not the machinations of individuals’.\textsuperscript{101} It provided a framework for investigating the coalescent relationship of institutional pressures and self-censorship in the production of news.

Rai says that one of the key mechanisms in mass media processes is the recruitment of media personnel ‘who are selected by media corporations on the condition that they already possess the “right” attitude… it is the pre-selection of “right-thinking” journalists and scholars which accounts for much of the censorship in [Chomsky’s work including] the Propaganda Model.’\textsuperscript{102} Pressures to self-censor are institutionalised. The argument is that journalists who don’t conform to the discourse of the dominant media are given the options of either career advancement through conformity or taking the independent path and accepting exclusion from major publications; ‘Journalists may be led into a process of steadily adapting their judgements until they conform to the prevailing norms.’\textsuperscript{103}

There is significant contention with this theory on grounds it is premised on the assumption that the mass media simply communicate “messages” and thereby inculcate individuals with values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structure of the larger society.\textsuperscript{104} What is ‘absent from this interpretation is an analysis of the major transformations of the modern era that have altered the nature of social relations, persons, and our conscious and unconscious functioning… Absent is any systematic reference to the root features of modern life [such as] industrialization, ubiquitous technological transformation, the fragmentation of belief and morality under the influence of specialization, secularization, and bureaucratization … the segmentation and growing powerlessness of individual resistance; and the manipulation of unconscious psychological processes beyond the limits of

\textsuperscript{101}\textit{ibid.}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{102}\textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{103}\textit{ibid.}, p. 44.
any previous historical periods.\textsuperscript{105} The issue of contention is a sender/receiver framework of communication, with critics arguing that consciousness is not determined primarily by the flow of media transmitted information and misinformation: ‘As human beings we are rooted in and permeated by the economic, social, cultural and psychological dynamics which structure our lives. We are constructed not merely by ideas, but by the social forces which determine the valence and viability of our conceptual existence. In fact, the ground of media distortion is already prepared in the deep structure of social and family life…\textsuperscript{106}

While Chomsky’s analytical method has been criticised for being “simplistic”, micro-analysis through content analysis is useful for understanding the underlying social pressures of media performance. This is particularly in regards to the ideological commitments of journalists whose work is cultured in such a way as to provide ‘a picture fairly close to reality for investors and other decision-makers’.\textsuperscript{107} The institutionalisation of the dominant political ideology renders media discourse a cultural phenomenon practiced by the agents of the institution - the journalists, editors and sub-editors and other perputators of the dominant news narratives who have over time accepted the parameters set by long-term internal organisational priming. This kind of self-censorship is reinforced by the effects of external long-term agenda setting by the mass media. The radar for newsworthiness is thus subject to the mediating role of a dual-layered scope set both internally and externally.

Chomsky concedes: ‘Just how that works in the editorial offices I can’t tell you.’\textsuperscript{108} Empirical inquiry through content analysis does not provide an absolute depiction of media processes as a mediator of social and political discourse. While individual reporters learn to frame stories in particular ways as appropriate to their media organisation and the audience it “serves”, there is also an element of suddenness that needs to be recognised. It can be conceded that some events which are reported on often emerge seemingly out of nowhere, leaving questions about the

\textsuperscript{105} ibid., pp. 143-144.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., p. 144.
\textsuperscript{107} Rai, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{108} Chomsky, cited in \textit{ibid.}, p. 46.
consistency of supporters of the political economy thesis. I do not dispute this criticism in my thesis. The analytical method, however, provides useful parameters for exploring particular aspects of the case study while highlighting media bias and the prefential treatment of facts by news companies.

3.3 Content analysis
The identification of which parts of a media text to analyse via content analysis is an ambiguous and problematic process, and it is difficult for researchers to avoid questions about bias and robustness of the coding categories selected. The claim has often been made that coding categories are chosen following a “deep” or “careful reading” of the material, or by a simple acknowledgement that they “emerged from the analysis”. The selection of categories is implicated by many factors, particularly the researchers’ own subjectivities and even carefully chosen categories are, across different schools of thought, often questioned for their reliability. The problem is that researchers run the risk of extracting researcher categories, rather than media categories (or frames). Coding categories are often based on quite abstract variables that are both difficult to identify and to code in content analysis and, as a result, the process of coding commonly falls into a ‘methodological black box.’

Despite these kinds of ambiguities, content analysis provides many useful avenues for determining how particular news narratives are shaped by and infused with ideological meanings. I coded news items manually for this thesis and a different coding sheet was constructed for each chapter or relative area of investigation. The first task in constructing each coding sheet was to overcome any ambiguities in the language of the texts that were deconstructed. To do this I identified a variety of keywords as indicators - to indicate particulars in the language used to support those

110 Ibid., p. 260.
111 See similar discussion about the problems associated with identifying media frames in ibid.
112 Ibid., p. 263.
frames being deployed in news reports. These include common phrases, metaphors, emotive keywords, symbolic jargon, words that are value-laden, judgements with connotative meanings or any other frequently-used terminology which can be deconstructed because of its lexical meaning. These keywords are listed in the footnotes section throughout this thesis (where they are not cited in the body text). Via the coding of the language of the news, content analysis provides a systematic, quantifiable method for identifying the preferred position of a media source in relation to a particular issue, view or social group – in this case, to the Kosovar refugees and the Howard Government.

4. The Emergence and Breakdown of Yugoslavia
This section provides a brief overview of the history of Yugoslavia. It reflects on the period of Ottoman-ruled Balkans to the kingdom of the South Slavs (the “first” Yugoslavia). This section investigates relations between Western European powers and Balkan countries from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries and how they impacted on subsequent historical events. This includes the World Wars and the Cold War. It will then explore the organisation of the Federation of (or the “second”) Yugoslavia and the leadership role played by President Josip Broz Tito during the Cold War period. Yugoslavia’s political and economic decline in the 1980s is assessed as well as the inability of Serbia to “salvage” Yugoslavia from collapse under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic. It is argued that Serbia’s nationalist “turn” in the late 1980s hastened Yugoslavia’s decline and conflict within the federation. This overview provides useful background for rationalising ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and the NATO intervention in 1999. Yugoslavia struggled to modernise throughout the twentieth century. It was industrially inefficient and failed to maintain pace with the global economy. Even with attempts by the Tito regime to increase industrialisation, horizontal economic

planning and a vertical political structure eventuated in the collapse of the Federation. ‘Anti-modern’ tensions provided the setting for the Yugoslav ‘wars of succession’, which began in Croatia in 1991 and ended in Kosovo in 1999.\textsuperscript{115}

4.1 Emergence of Yugoslavia from the Ottomans to Tito

Slavic speaking ethnic groups initially migrated to the Balkans in the 6\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Subsequent waves of migration to the region were undertaken by ethnically diverse Slavic groups including Slovenes, Croats, Bosniaks, and Serbs, while Albanians have claimed much older lineage that pre-dates colonisation by the Roman empire.\textsuperscript{116} In 1453 the East Roman (or Byzantine) capital Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. At this time Turkish power was firmly established in most of the territories previously governed by the Byzantines. By the mid-15\textsuperscript{th} century the Ottoman sultante controlled most the Balkans, governing an ethnically diverse local population.

A large Slavic-speaking Muslim community emerged and was significantly concentrated in Bosnia. Conversions from Catholicism and other sects of Christianity to Islam were not usually forced on the local populations. The Ottoman government preserved many features of Balkan life including social and ceremonial customs.\textsuperscript{117} Conversion was attractive to many, particularly Albanians and Bosniaks. It increased career and business prospects within the Ottoman class system. In the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries Catholics were subjected to greater suspicion by the Ottoman government than Orthodox Christians. This was because the religious allegiances of Catholics lay in Rome, and to the foreign power of the Papacy. On the other hand Orthodoxy was fragmented along ethnic lines


\textsuperscript{116} Judah, \textit{op. cit.}, p.7.

and patriarchs kept office within the empire, and were able to be more greatly influenced by the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{118}

Constant military conflict in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century along the Austro-Hungarian/Ottoman frontiers, encompassing modern-day Croatia and Slovenia, rendered economic conditions unstable in these areas. Following their failed siege of Vienna in 1683 the Ottomans handed over Hungary to Austria in 1699. Serbs embarked on a mass migration to Hungary and elsewhere after fighting for Austria during the war, particularly emigrating from Kosovo where they faced punishment by Turks.\textsuperscript{119} In Kosovo the local population of Serbs and Albanians had revolted against Ottoman rule in 1689, after which Catholics were treated with hostility and many priests were killed or fled the province.\textsuperscript{120} The frontier was heavily underpopulated, and coupled with military instability this meant the growth of markets and industry was limited. It wasn’t until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century that these lands began to be industrialised (and not until the end of the Second World War for some rural areas).\textsuperscript{121}

By the early 1700s Balkan cities such as Pristina, Sarajevo, Mostar and Visegrad grew into major regional centers of trade and urban culture.\textsuperscript{122} Sarajevo ‘was exceptional among Balkan cities’, experiencing a boom in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries to develop into a major centre of international commerce.\textsuperscript{123} Bosnia played a significant role in European affairs because of mining, textiles and metallurgy, though its trade was never directed primarily at Istanbul, looking more so towards the Dalmatian ports, especially Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Split.\textsuperscript{124} Towns situated at key river and coastal ports were important crossroads for trade and cultural exchanges between the Ottoman empire and Western Europe. European political disputes, however, led to a decline in commerce and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 127.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Allcock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15 and pp. 46-47. See also Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 140-141.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Allcock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 37-39.
\item \textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 39. See also Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 103 who says most of Kosovo’s exports under the Ottomans during the 16\textsuperscript{th} century went through Ragusa on their way to Western Europe.
\end{thebibliography}
industry in Sarajevo after it was ‘demoted’ during the Austrian occupation of 1878.125

Citing these kinds of continued relations with the rest of Europe, Allcock disputes tendencies to separate the Balkans from within Europe’s sphere of influence. This is because it provides grounds for Western Europeans to disconnect themselves from the “troubles” of the late twentieth century such as ethnic cleansing and the wars of succession. Allcock says: ‘If “the Balkans” have come to signify conflict and fragmentation, this is because the region has been the arena in which the larger conflicts of European powers have been concentrated and, to some extent, conducted by proxy.’126 This thesis rejects primordial assumptions because they tend to be ahistorical. Such disconnect enables Western Europeans to separate themselves from having played an historically influential role in the affairs of the Balkans.

The popular view of 19th century Balkan history is extremely simple: ‘it is a story of people struggling to be free on the one hand, and an illiberal, autocratic Ottoman state trying to suppress them on the other.’127 By the late 19th century the idea began to circulate in Western Europe that the Balkans was “backward”. Western European powers promoted their interventions and meddling in the Balkans in the 19th century in binary terms, propagating the notion that Austria was “advanced” and the Ottoman empire was anti-modern.128 Railway lines were sparser than in Europe and it wasn’t until very late in the 19th century that industrialisation began to accelerate. However, much of the popular view, even today, has been based on many Europeans’ own xenophobia and their haste to mark comfortable boundaries between East and West.129

There are historical reasons for challenging commonplace generalisations about the Balkans in regards to slow economic development, and in particular the lack of industrialisation, of the former Ottoman provinces. The basis for these generalisations can be traced back

125 Allcock, op. cit., p. 39. See also Malcolm, op. cit., p. 103, on towns which prospered under the Ottomans.
128 Allcock, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
129 ibid., p. 8.
to the 19th century when Western European capitalists were vying for industrial contracts in Ottoman Balkan territories. The overall volume of Ottoman trade continued to grow with the industrialising countries throughout the 19th century, although cheaper, mass-produced manufactured imports from Western Europe had a considerable impact on Ottoman markets, undermining local production.\(^{130}\) Industrialisation of the Balkans was slower in comparison to wealthier Western European countries like Germany, Austria, France and Britain. Part of the reason for this, Allcock says, can be linked to Ottoman institutional conservatism and suspicion which prevented direct investment and the importation of advanced technologies until the mid-nineteenth century. This thwarted, to an extent, industrialising projects including the rapid expansion of railways, making the Ottoman empire more dependent on Western Europe for the supply of industrial products rather than establishing it as an industrial producer in its own right.\(^{131}\) Still, ‘one should refrain from overgeneralisation about the necessary or inevitable character of “Ottoman backwardness”, recognising not only that the backwardness of the empire relative to Western Europe has varied over time, but also that this process has been shaped at many points precisely by the nature of the relationship between the two.’\(^{132}\)

European powers played a significant role in limiting the development of the Balkan economy in the nineteenth century. In fact, ‘the competition between the major European powers began to act as a brake on development by creating, in effect, a mutual veto on Balkan railway investment. Austrian and German transcontinental projects competed with each other … for the compliance of the other powers.’\(^{133}\) Consequently, the main north-south rail link, which had significant potential for increasing Ottoman trade, was not completed until the 1880s. This was particularly detrimental for the development of Serbia. The lateness of industrialised

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\(^{130}\) ibid., p. 35.  
\(^{131}\) ibid., p. 36.  
\(^{132}\) ibid. See also various entries in Malcolm, op. cit.; Judah, op. cit.; and, Bieber and Dasklowski, op. cit.  
\(^{133}\) Allcock, op. cit., p. 35.
communication networks resulted in Serbia’s relative isolation and low levels of foreign investment.\textsuperscript{134}

Unable to maintain its frontier provinces and facing international pressure, the Ottomans handed over Bosnia in 1878 to the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian empire under terms of the Treaty of Berlin. Modernising reforms brought about by the Habsburgs, such as railway extensions and establishing more effective communication networks, were hampered because administration of the region was divided between Austria and Hungary.\textsuperscript{135} The uncooperative nature of these factions left Bosnia-Herzegovina without effective rail contact with the rest of the Austrian empire. Habsburg administration also meant its military interests effectively overruled local market interests. Bosnia was subsequently highly dependant on shipping and ports in Dalmatia for trade and communication with the outside world.\textsuperscript{136}

It was during the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century that Croats, Slovenes, Albanians, Serbs, Bosnians and Herzegovinans developed nationalist ambitions and were increasingly resentful of foreign influence. The idea of a unified state of South Slavs (Yugoslavia) also became popular across the region in the early 1900s. Austria’s decision to formally annex Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 generated a sense of urgency for Balkan nationalists.\textsuperscript{137} Political tensions culminated in a plot in Sarajevo which unfolded on 28\textsuperscript{th} June 1914 when Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The assassination was the catalyst for the outbreak of the First World War, setting in motion military responses by the major European powers based on the treaties between them. Russia supported Serbia’s claim to independence, Germany advocated for Austria’s claim to the Balkans, while France and Britain acted to defend Russia against German hostility.\textsuperscript{138}

With Austria’s defeat at the end of World War I, the different segments of the Balkans, corresponding still more to ethnic groups rather

\textsuperscript{134} ibid., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid., p. 49. See also Bieber and Dasklowski, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{136} Allcock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{137} See also discussion about Serbian nationalism in Judah, \textit{op. cit.}, p 83.
\textsuperscript{138} See Judah, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 95-97 for discussion on ‘Sarajevo, 1914’.
than geography, came together under the guise of mutual strength and protection from foreign powers. The result was establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, though the country was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. Unable to quell German aggression the Kingdom was invaded by Nazi Germany in April 1941. Yugoslavia’s King Peter II fled the country while royalist supporters appeased the Nazis and accepted their program to persecute Jews. Atrocities were also committed by the various ethnic groups against each other amid efforts to re-take control of Yugoslavia. Paramilitary groups were established and mobilised during this period such as Ustashi (Croatian fascists) and Chetniks (Serbian mercenaries).\(^{139}\)

In response to the Nazi invasion Yugoslav communists under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito organized a multi-ethnic resistance group called ‘partisans’ who fought against the Axis powers and the Ustashi. In November 1943 Tito founded the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia in an attempt to establish the Yugoslav federation. Upon military success the Allies recognised Tito as the leader of Yugoslavia. By 1946 the partisans had established the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. This meant there were six semi-autonomous republics within the new state - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro. There were two provinces as well – Kosovo and Vojvodina – which had limited autonomy and were administered directly by Serbia.

During the early period of the “first Yugoslavia” from 1918 to 1930 the country’s economy centred on the extraction and export of primary products. It was predominantly an agrarian society.\(^{140}\) The world depression was ‘catastrophic’ for trade, though coastal areas recovered more quickly in the 1930s due to a boom in tourism.\(^{141}\) During World War II the Nazi occupation led to the nationalising of key Yugoslav industries. Production in the Balkans was subordinated to the needs of the Nazi war effort, and then those of the partisans as Tito gained control of the country.

\(^{139}\) ibid. p. 120.
\(^{140}\) Allcock, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
\(^{141}\) ibid., p. 57. See also Judah, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.
The centralisation of resource distribution underpinned the planned economy envisioned by the Communist party under Tito. Attempts by Tito’s regime to increase industrialisation were undermined by an experiment in paradox. The experiment began in the early post-war period and combined horizontal economic management (workers’ self-management) with a vertical political structure. The outcome produced significant internal contradictions: instead of a flexible, market needs-based system of resource allocation within the federation, there was rigid, planned allocation of resources. As a result the period 1945 to 1991 was characterised by a deep contradiction between the imperatives of modernisation and the fundamentally anti-modern features of the Yugoslav ‘road to socialism’.

Yugoslavia’s slow economic growth reflected the country’s struggle to insert itself into global patterns of development. Localised strengths were often sacrificed to the desires of the Federation. Primary resource production remained central to the economy of Tito’s Yugoslavia, rendering the country dependent on imports for capital and technological advancement. The planned economy was thwarted by problems such as inefficient production and inflation as well as self-interest by republican political elites to “rescue” their own republics from the mire. The break up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s can be attributed, in this sense, at least in part to the ideological goals of its elites and their failure to adapt economically to the globalising world.

Tito’s death in 1980 was a significant factor leading to the disintegration of Yugoslavia; he was in many ways a kind of keystone holding all the republics together. Malcolm says Tito’s legacy was a ‘stultified political system and a collapsing economy’, and created the conditions under which a politician such as Slobodan Milosevic ‘could rise to power and manipulate Serbian nationalism to his own destructive

142 Alcock, op. cit., p. 63.
143 ibid., p. 69. See also Judah, op. cit., pp. 135-167.
144 Alcock, op. cit., p. 8 and p. 69.
145 ibid., p. 9.
146 ibid., p. 78.
147 ibid., pp. 8-9.
148 See Bieber and Dasklowski, op. cit., p. 17. See also Alcock, op. cit., p. 300 and p. 309.
advantage.’ In Tito’s absence, nationalism increasingly undermined relations between the republics alongside differences in economic growth which were openly politicised by Slovenia and Croatia.

In 1989 the collapse of the USSR lifted the unifying threat and pressure from the north. Russia’s political influence and military capabilities had been a major incentive for the unification of the Yugoslav republics. Economic decline, poverty, high inflation and Serbia’s heavy-handed attempts to maintain Yugoslav cohesion were immediate factors in the eventual break up of the federation. By 1990 unemployment was up to 16.4% in Serbia and 38.4% in Kosovo. In the search for explanations for their own difficulties, republican political leaders resorted to blaming other republics, creating a culture of paranoia: ‘Everyone was surrounded by enemies, although the “enemies without” of the Cold War period were now replaced by the “enemies within” of other republics and other nations.’

Diametrically opposed to Western historical thought, which is typically represented as an image of ‘ineluctable historical continuity’, has been repeated insistence on the importance of discontinuity in the histories of Balkan peoples. The history of Yugoslavia is often represented by academic and non-academic observers absolutely as ‘a series of abrupt breaks with the past’; UN military commanders during in Bosnian war made constant references to the “historical” and fanatical divisions between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Historical accounts invoke a sense of mechanisation through the use of labels such as “first Yugoslavia” and “second Yugoslavia”. These notions are fraught with generalisations about capitalism giving way to socialism, and centralist royal power to federalist republicanism. A preoccupation with discontinuity has constituted much of

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151 Allcock, *op. cit.*, p. 311.
155 Allcock, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
156 *ibid.*, p. 3.
the prevailing understanding about the history of Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{157} Use of the phrase “wars of succession” is another indication of the central role played by the notion of discontinuity in contemporary understandings of the history of the Balkans.\textsuperscript{158} “Succession” conveys an image of momentum because of discontinuities. This provides a comfortable, sequential ordered historical narrative, but reduces history ‘to the more or less constant outworking of basically fixed psychological predispositions of cultural traits’, segmenting the history of the South Slav peoples into a series of static, ordered processions.\textsuperscript{159}

Fixations with dis/continuity have reinforced the image of the Balkans as disconnected from Western Europe. In doing so the South Slavs are often construed as Western Europe’s relative “other”, uncivilised and fractured. Paradoxically, because of the interests of Western European capitalism, the Balkans is also considered to exist within the moral sphere in which Europeans are obliged to take notice of their affairs and thereby compelled to “fix” Balkan troubles. Such discourse is present in the jargon used by NATO and its allies who construed military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo as civilising missions. These were interventions into an ongoing sequence of uncivilised historical Successions.

As Allcock says, a common representation of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia depicts them as regaining their “rightful” place in the West, as opposed to the “oriental” societies further to the near and far East.\textsuperscript{160} Rather than a series of breaks with continuity, the development of the region ought to be viewed as the journey of South Slavs towards modernisation and their struggles to overcome barriers to globalisation: ‘the region is involved in essentially the same processes of development upon which we ourselves are embarked.’\textsuperscript{161}

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\textsuperscript{157} ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{159} Allcock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{160} ibid., p. 23. See also Judah on ‘historical circumstances’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. xiv.
\textsuperscript{161} ibid., p. 5.
4.2 The fall of communism and demise of Yugoslavia

This section evaluates the ‘nationalist frenzy’ that occurred in the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s and the ways in which this facilitated Serbia’s campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The aim is to establish a greater sense of depth and context to the Kosovo war by highlighting the historical implications impacting on Australia’s decision to accept ethnic Albanian refugees. This provides useful context for understanding how the Kosovo war was represented by the media in Australia and influenced the Howard Government’s decision to accommodate the refugees under the Safe Haven program.

A surge in ethnic-nationalism within the republics of the former Yugoslavia played a fundamental role in mobilising armed forces during the 1990s Balkan wars. Historians and other scholars have offered varying interpretations about the origins of the conflicts. Popular history attributes six centuries of Ottoman rule to producing ethnic tensions in the Balkans. Naimark disagrees with this interpretation, stating that the nationalist frenzy in the former Yugoslavia is related much more specifically to the political history of Europe in the twentieth century as opposed to centuries of Turkish rule. The rise of communism after World War II was a much more immediate influence, and ‘The breakup of communist Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s unleashed forces of national antagonism that recapitulated, in some ways, those [held by Serb Chetniks, Croat Ustashas and Bosnian SS fighters during] World War II.’

Communism not only gave way to radical ethnic-nationalism in Yugoslavia in the 1980s but its demise was made more likely because of widespread dissatisfaction with the hardships that accompanied communist economics. Throughout the 1980s Yugoslavia faced endemic economic problems such as severe inflation, high unemployment and credit strain. These factors encouraged the wealthier republics of Croatia and Slovenia

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163 ibid., p. 140.
to sever ties with the Yugoslav federation for fear of being pulled down with the “sinking ship”.¹⁶⁵ Where Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Kosovar Albanians had lived in relative peace for centuries, there emerged in the 1980s growing resentment of each other alongside mass poverty.¹⁶⁶ Naimark states: ‘With nationalism’s major enemy – Soviet-inspired communism – defeated and everywhere [in Europe] in retreat, nationalist ideologies naturally sought out other enemies, usually “other” nations, whether minorities within one’s own nation or one’s neighbours.’¹⁶⁷

While nationalism lent to escalating tensions within Yugoslavia, Allcock disputes the notion that it was a ‘congenital disease’ typical of the Balkans.¹⁶⁸ Despite the comfortable image of the Balkans being fragmented from Europe, and of hostile nationalist fragmentation within, nationality ought to be viewed as meaning different things in different areas. National identities are produced by disparate processes that are specific to the relationship between local conditions (including kinship, locality, religion and traditionalism) and global influences.¹⁶⁹ Nationality can thus be viewed as resulting from the need to adapt to the modern world, and nationalism is not in itself the reason for the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

4.3 Rationalising ethnic cleansing and the Serbian nationalist ‘frenzy’

The term ethnic cleansing ‘exploded into our consciousness in May 1992 during the first stage of the war in Bosnia’.¹⁷⁰ After the atrocities committed by Serbian military leaders and paramilitaries in Bosnia, the concept quickly became part of the international lexicons of crimes associated with Serb aggression.¹⁷¹ The Bosnian government declared the country to be a sovereign state, cutting ties with Yugoslavia on 15th October 1991. The referendum that followed on 29th February 1992 produced an affirmative result for independence from Yugoslavia. Most Bosnian Serbs

¹⁶⁵ Naimark, op. cit., p. 147.
¹⁶⁶ ibid., p. 1.
¹⁶⁷ ibid., p. 151.
¹⁶⁸ Allcock, op. cit., p. 10.
¹⁶⁹ ibid., pp. 10-11.
¹⁷⁰ Naimark, op. cit., 2.
¹⁷¹ ibid., p. 3.
boycotted the referendum out of protest. The leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared the country to be an independent state on 3rd March 1992. Bosnian Serb leaders counter-claimed the breakaway from Yugoslavia, declaring the formation of the Republika Srpska in territories located to the east of Sarajevo.\textsuperscript{172}

After a month of rising tensions, open war began with the siege of Sarajevo on 6th April 1992, even though the UN recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state. The Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) officially withdrew from Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the JNA’s Bosnian Serb members simply became members of the Army of Republika Srpska. These troops were armed and equipped from JNA stores in Bosnia and were reinforced with volunteers from Serbia. Successful offensives by Republika Srpska for the remainder of 1992 saw much of Bosnia-Herzegovina come under its control. By early 1993 about 70\% of the country was under its control.\textsuperscript{173} With Sarajevo surrounded, Bosniak Muslims maintained control of the Sarajevo airfield, enabling Bosnia-Herzegovina to withstand the siege. The international community under the auspices of the UN was able to fly in supplies to the city while snipers and artillery lined the hills overlooking the airport and the city. Most buildings in the city were either destroyed or damaged by shelling and Muslim casualties were high.

In July 1995 Bosnian Serb troops under the command by general Radko Mladic carried out the murder of 8,000 men and boys in the supposed “safe haven” of Srebenica. The bodies were buried in mass graves. The incident was captured by camera operators accompanying the Bosnian Serb army as well satellite footage of mass graves taken by the United States.\textsuperscript{174} These images and other evidence have since been used as part of war crimes trials for the Bosnian Serb leadership in The Hague. The siege of Sarajevo was lifted and the war ended officially in February 1995 when the leaders of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina agreed to

\textsuperscript{172} See Judah, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 192-224.
\textsuperscript{174} Judah, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 300-304.
Bosnia’s independence and the federation of three regions, namely Bosnia, Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.

While Naimark argues the term “ethnic cleansing” first ‘exploded into our consciousness’ in 1992, it had been used for at least a decade beforehand by the Serbian government to describe what was supposedly happening to their ethnic kin in Kosovo at the hands of the majority Albanian ethnic group. The myth that ethnic Albanians were purging ethnic Serbs was propagated by Serbian nationalists and used to justify state persecution of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.175

This myth was fanned by political leaders in Serbia to legitimate military action against insurgents in Kosovo as well as war with neighbouring countries. Ethnic cleansing was part and parcel of Serbia’s governing rationale throughout the 1980s and a dominant feature of Serbian popular psychology at this time. It had ‘the intent of driving victims from territory claimed by the perpetrators,’ though it has also been articulated as a euphemism for genocide by international commentators.176

Ethnic cleansing involves attempts to remove a particular group of people through fear and intimidation. In Bosnia, ethnic Serbs (as well as Muslims and Croats) were involved in rounding up other ethnic groups for execution followed by mass grave burials. In Kosovo, like Bosnia, Serb paramilitaries and military units raped, tortured and committed other acts intended to demoralise and humiliate ethnic Albanians with the intent of forcing them to flee.

Ethnic cleansing is not ‘a necessary corollary of nation-state building; it is a path chosen by governmental elites with concrete political goals in mind.’177 The charismatic leadership of Slobodan Milosevic was a crucial factor in the popular turn to ethnic nationalism in Serbia. Ethnic cleansing was not merely an instrument of the Serbian state; it was a central part of the political compromise that had elevated Milosevic to the leadership of Serbia’s national government.

176 Naimark, op. cit., p. 3.
177 ibid., p. 139. See also Mertus, op. cit., p. 232.
The practice of ethnic cleansing was endorsed by Serbia’s intelligentsia and political leaders. Serbia’s political elites and intellectuals ‘exploited the appeal of nationalism to large groups of resentful citizens in the dominant ethnic population. Using the power of the state, the media, and their political parties, national leaders have manipulated distrust of the “other” and purposefully revived and distorted ethnic tensions’.  

Milosevic was particularly skilful in the ‘harnessing of historical memory to national causes’, using stories of Ottoman oppression, Albanian insurrection, Serbian national greatness, loss, victimisation and retribution which readily resonated with the population. These factors, alongside Serbian Orthodox populism, were interwoven seemingly with ease by Milosevic into the popular nationalist consciousness of a country attempting to re-define itself following the demise of communism. Milosevic galvanised his constituents with the belief that Serbs have never been aggressors but instead saw themselves as “liberators” ‘who try – unselfishly and by way of great sacrifices – to help others (other Serbs) in need’.

The Serbian government steered a path to the wars of succession, contributing to and exacerbating rising tensions between the former Yugoslav republics. A key turning point in the lead up to the beginning of the wars of succession was Serbia’s persecution of Kosovar Albanians. The first major repression was in 1981 following major unrest by student protesters, leading to a declaration of a state of emergency in Kosovo. Throughout the next decade attempts by Kosovar Albanians to resist restrictions imposed on their democratic rights were met with violent Serbian countermeasures and brutality.

Serbia’s repression of the rights and liberties of Kosovar Albanians was given intellectual force and legitimated by the 1986 ‘Memorandum of

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178 Naimark, op. cit., p. 10.
179 Ibid., p. 141.
182 Clark, op. cit., p. 40. See also Naimark, op. cit., p. 148.
the Serbian Academy of Social Sciences’. In the Memorandum leading intellectuals captured the mood of the Belgrade nationalist intelligentsia who called for extreme actions to be taken against Kosovar Albanians in order to strengthen Serbia’s control of the province. In the document they recommended removing Kosovo’s autonomy and subordinating the interests of the Kosovar Albanians to those of the Serbs. By 1987 the Memorandum embodied the political consensus of Serbia, and its core principles mirrored in the elevation of Milosevic to the presidency. Milosevic would ‘ride the wave of nationalism’ until the end of the Kosovo war.

The president’s political success was largely premised on his ability to blend widely felt victimisation and Serbian aggression into a new, volatile mix of nationalism. Milosevic ‘appealed to populist slogans and antigovernment sentiments among the peasants’, and his ‘mix of Serbian chauvinism and Yugoslav integralism meant that non-Serb nationalisms were interpreted as reactionary and separatist.’ By the late 1980s, in the Serbian media and in mass rallies in Belgrade, Milosevic’s propaganda portrayed Kosovar Albanians as the natural enemy of Serbs - as dirty, primitive, nasty, rapists, and even baby-killers.

By 1989 Kosovar Albanians involved in protests were being arrested en masse and Albanian schools had been shut down. As Naimark described: ‘Serbs were openly favoured in economic policies, Albanians clearly discriminated against.’ Kosovo was effectively governed by martial law until the NATO campaign in 1999. Only Serbians were permitted to work in Kosovo’s public service. Significant numbers of skilled Kosovar Albanians left their homeland to find employment in Western Europe. The courts were placed in the hands of Serbs. Albanian-language press, radio and television were banned and Albanian ceased to be an official language of the province. Hundreds of lecturers were sacked from the University of Pristina and thousands of its students expelled. This

183 Naimark, op. cit., p. 150. See also Bieber and Dasklowski, op. cit., p. 17.
184 Naimark, op. cit., p. 152.
185 ibid., p. 155.
186 Clark, op. cit., pp. 18-20.
187 Naimark, op. cit., p. 152.
was because: ‘Intellectual, academic and linguistic ties to Albania […] strengthened Kosovars’ identity either in an independent republic or within greater Albania… Education-related socio-economic development concerns partly explain the riots and resistance that grew in the 1980s.’\textsuperscript{188} State repression of ethnic Albanian Kosovars was heavy-handed and systematic. Every government support service was unavailable to ethnic Albanian Kosovars. The Serbian government set out to make life brutally unpleasant for ethnic Albanians. The intent was to encourage as many ethnic Albanians to leave Kosovo of their own accord. For Allcock: ‘Kosovo symbolises as does nothing else the failure of the Yugoslav state to embody its own normative ideals… The state became identified with blatant repression and the prisoner of one of the most anti-modern segments of Yugoslav society – Kosovo Serbs.’\textsuperscript{189}

4.4 Perceptions and representations of Serbian cruelty in the “West”
Throughout this thesis I evaluate the response of the Australian media to the Kosovo conflict. Particular focus is placed on the ways in which Western media rationalised the war, the actions of the Serbian regime and the ethnic cleansing that led to Kosovar refugees fleeing their homeland. By the time of the NATO campaign in Kosovo the atrocities committed during the Bosnian war had already convinced many international commentators of the willingness of Serbs to resort to acts of cruelty. The Srebenica massacre carried out by Bosnian Serbs was one of the worst and most visible acts of genocide committed throughout the wars of succession. What is clear is that, by the start of the Kosovo war, Western media commentators viewed little difference between Serbs living in Serbia proper and those living in other countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Considering Bosnian Serbs carried out the siege of Sarajevo while receiving military and financial support from the Serbian government, it is not difficult to comprehend how impressions of an “evil” plan based on pan-Serb collusion gained momentum. Hammond and Herman argue that

\textsuperscript{188} W. Nelles, ‘Foundations and fractures of Kosovo’s educational system; Towards conflict or peace?’, in Knudsen and Lausten, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{189} Allcock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 208.
there was a ‘Nazification’ of Serbian atrocities at work in the media and policy discourse of NATO countries: ‘While NATO politicians were eager to push the Second World War comparison regarding Kosovo, in doing so they drew on a ready-made image of the Serbs developed by crusading journalists in Bosnia.’\textsuperscript{190} Such an impression was reinforced by the orchestration of the mass rape of Muslim women by Bosnian Serbs. Systematic rape was intended not only to drive Muslims out of the country but also to “breed” them out. At rape “camps” and “rape houses” established during the Bosnian conflict, Serbian soldiers partook in ‘sexual-sadistic fantasies’ that included beatings, gang rape and even the tattooing of perpetrators names on the skin of the rape victims.\textsuperscript{191} Rape camps received financial and logistical support from the Bosnian Serb government and the campaign was ‘organised and directed from above’.\textsuperscript{192}

Like Bosnia, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo was intended to compel all ethnic Albanians to leave without exemption - the elderly, women, children, peasants, men of fighting age, the middle class and intellectuals were compelled to flee Kosovo. Ethnic Albanians were completely disenfranchised from state protection by the time of the NATO campaign. Albanian protests were consistently met with arrests, assaults and imprisonment and even torture. Yugoslav government records show that between 1981 and 1988 there had been 586,000 Kosovars (over a quarter of the population) taken by police from the street, interrogated at police stations, and gaoled.\textsuperscript{193} By the late 1990s there was little Albanians could do to prevent ethnic cleansing as tensions began to escalate in Kosovo. Thousands of young Albanians turned to the Kosovar Liberation Army (KLA) for protection and to resist Serbian repression as armed combatants.

When Serbian forces assaulted the Kosovar village of Racak in January 1999, resulting in the massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians, the event was a major turning point for the NATO alliance and is often viewed as the

\textsuperscript{190} Hammond and Herman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{191} Naimark, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{192} \textit{ibid.}, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{193} \textit{ibid.}, p. 178.
catalyst for militarily intervention by the Western powers.\textsuperscript{194} Racak was a pertinent reminder in the minds of many Western analysts of the atrocities committed by Serbs during the Bosnian conflict. In the months that followed, Serbian military and paramilitary forces conducted a sweeping operation aimed at forcing Albanians to leave major cities including Pristina.\textsuperscript{195} It was clear to the NATO alliance that a humanitarian disaster was a looming in Kosovo. NATO’s decision to undertake a military intervention in Kosovo was purportedly to prevent further ethnic cleansing by Serbia.

\textbf{Conclusion: the Media and Operation Safe Haven}

The Kosovo refugee crisis prompted significant changes in refugee policy, and many aspects of the Safe Haven legislation were questionable as far as Australia’s commitments to international treaties were concerned. The media played an essential part in reassuring Australians during the refugee crisis that the nation’s commitment to human rights was extraordinary, while neglecting the point that the Safe Haven Visa program contravened many of the human rights of the Kosovars. As evident in the news items I analyse in this thesis, the media consistently packaged Australia’s response to the Kosovo crisis as compassionate and worthy of applause. News reports throughout Operation Safe Haven commonly reproduced the notion that Australians were the most generous people in the world and their efforts (including charity and the evacuation program) were highly commendable.

The Australian media was useful for the Howard Government in promoting the acceptability of the refugees – or at least those selected for evacuation to Australia by immigration officials – who were often deemed “white”, “clean” and “middle class” and generally not too dissimilar to Australians. It assisted in the Government’s effort to position itself in a

favourable light throughout Operation Safe Haven. News coverage commonly invoked notions of whiteness in representations of the refugees. The coverage supported the cultural platform of the Government as a defender of national hegemony and propagator of Australian virtue. The majority of editorials made little attempt to disguise their political preferences for the Howard Government throughout Operation Safe Haven. Media coverage collectively worked to make the whiteness that underpinned governmental practices invisible and to leave it unmarked in media discourse. This relates to Richard Dyer’s argument that whiteness is socially constructed and that the success of such politics is based on the consistent representation of Whites as the “norm” – as a valued, privileged and moral “mainstream” – without leaving any traces (to remain “unmarked”). That is, the power to conceal whiteness at the ‘level of representation’, in which ‘whites are not of a certain race, they’re just the human race.196

While not over-extending the nature of the media’s relationship with the Federal Government in this episode, such ties appeared (or were presented in such a way that they appeared) somewhat more accidental than symbiotically conjoined. In one sense this investigation centres on how the press “dropped” (or signified) its approval of government policy throughout the various stages of Operation Safe Haven by more subtle means – signifying its “approval”, for instance, for the process by which particular refugees were selected for the evacuation program; of the use of Government coercion to repatriate the Kosovars after their initial three-month stay; and, of the Government position that refugees who contested repatriation were “ungrateful” and “undeserving” of Australia’s assistance.

This chapter provided historical background for understanding ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and the NATO intervention in 1999. It has explored Yugoslavia’s difficulties with adapting to an increasingly globalised world economy. The fragmentation of Yugoslavia in the 1990s was underpinned by ‘the frailty of the federal state, caught in the dual processes of international and domestic social and political realignment

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after the Cold War.¹⁹⁷ The Federation of Yugoslavia inherited structural inefficiencies in industry that had limited economic growth and stability in the region since the 19th century. Still, the modernising reforms enacted by the Tito regime were impacted by paradoxical factors. Horizontal economic planning and a vertical political structure failed to maintain the unity and stability of the Federation. Economic hardship, nationalism and the end of the Cold War created conditions under which nationalist political leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic rose to power. Serbia’s grievances with Albanian Kosovars are directly linked to economic decline as well as Milosevic’s manipulation Serbian nationalism for destructive purposes.

¹⁹⁷ Chandler, op. cit., p. 20.
Chapter 2: Selecting and Evacuating the Kosovar Refugees and the Politics of Operation Safe Haven

Introduction
This chapter investigates the Howard Government’s plans for evacuating the Kosovar refugees to Australia in April and early May 1999. It explores the notion that developments in refugee policy around this time and the legal restraints imposed on the Kosovar refugees throughout the duration of their stay in Australia were the result of both domestic political influences (including populism and the media) and international political forces. The analysis also explores the influence of the media in shaping the Government’s Kosovar refugee evacuation program, and investigates the way in which the media represented public pressure to support international evacuation efforts. Extending from this is an investigation into media representations of public charity during the crisis and the implications of charity for the changes made in refugee policy at this time.

Important aspects of the Australian government’s response to the refugee crisis include the means by which immigration officials working in Macedonia selected refugees for evacuation and how the selection of refugees for the evacuation program worked alongside media depictions of the Kosovars as “acceptable” for temporary resettlement. Significantly, the language surrounding the selection process overwhelmingly promoted the refugees as a familiar and “compatible” cultural group.

This chapter evaluates how the Federal Government was able to utilise the evacuation as part of a strategy for producing stronger political consensus. Overall, I have explored not only the (re)production of conservative cultural binaries surrounding the evacuation that enhanced popular support for the Howard Government, but also provided a clearer view of how media, community and international pressure contributed to the Government’s response to the Kosovo refugee crisis.
1. Images of the Kosovo War

1.1 The media and representations of human tragedy
What is clear in media discourse surrounding the evacuation of the Kosovar refugees is the way the phrase “safe haven” promoted a sense of national goodwill as well as an obligation to shelter the refugees on humanitarian grounds. Providing a temporary haven to the Kosovar refugees was part of what the Telegraph portrayed as ‘Australia’s duty of care’ alongside the responsibility to provide a safe, secure and enclosed space to recuperate from war. By providing safe haven, Australia offered an opportunity for ‘survival’ to the Kosovars, along with a ‘new home’ and ‘Sanctuary and hope in Sydney’. The news-friendly catchphrase, ‘safe haven’, in no subtle terms, emphasised the overall emotion of the evacuation, carrying with it a sense of obligation and national “duty”.

The Safe Haven Visa, in another sense, can be viewed as a metaphor for reasonable control and compliance within a humanitarian context. The implications of the visa reveal darker aspects of Australian immigration, promoting safe haven on the rationale of temporary protection. King aptly describes the Safe Haven Visa as a ‘restrictionist policy, severely limiting the rights and opportunities of the Kosovars in Australia.’ Assessing the Safe Haven legislation, Liz Curren argues that: ‘The problem in the main is that Australia continues to deal with the issue of refugees as an issue of domestic politics... and [requiring] the preservation of an illusive largely Anglo Saxon identity’. The TPV, introduced five months after the Safe Haven Visa, was permeated with similar xenophobic connotations. The parallels between the visas,

199 See S. Gee, ‘Home away from Hell’, The Daily Telegraph, 10th April 1999, p. 4. Here, the Telegraph described the East Hills barracks in Sydney that would accommodate the refugees as a ‘Sha fenced site’, and stated that the refugees ‘will live in 52 free-standing two-storey townhouse-style buildings each containing three-to-four room dormitories.’
202 ibid.
203 King, op. cit.
204 Curren, op. cit., p. 11.
particularly the restrictions they imposed on the human rights of refugees, must be viewed alongside the re-emergence of popular xenophobia within Australian society in the Howard era. One Nation party leader David Oldfield reinforced the point, commenting that John Howard’s decision to accept the Kosovar refugees on a temporary basis was a ‘direct application’ of One Nation’s immigration policy.205

When writing this chapter I have interrogated 106 news articles published in the *Telegraph, Herald* and *The Australian* between 5th April and 7th May 1999.206 Much of the news coverage in these newspapers noted the importance of “humanitarian obligation”, “compassion” and “empathy” for the Kosovar refugees. *The Australian* offered 41 references to “humanitarian” concepts in this regard, which was similar to the *Herald* (noting 42), while the number of these terms in the *Telegraph* comprised 31. This sentiment was generally supported by a broader moral framing of the Kosovo war as a whole, although the content analysis for this section reflects only those articles specifically related to Australia’s evacuation effort.

This analysis of media portrayals of the Kosovar refugees demonstrates the way the Howard Government was able to tap into public sympathy and to reappropriate popular consensus after a brief period of backlash against its initial decision not to evacuate them. It highlights how the Prime Minister shunned utilising nationalist sentiment in re-establishing public support for the Government - something that had been otherwise commonplace for Howard during his term of office. As Judith Brett later noted, Howard’s ‘convincing consensual language’, focussed on the ‘Australian way, Australian values and identity’, was a significant

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206 The dates for the analysis extend from when the UNHCR request was issued to Western countries to evacuate and provide temporary resettlement to Kosovar refugees, to the arrival of the first evacuation flight at Sydney airport. It investigates news articles directly related to the UNHCR request to Australia, and which provided details concerning those refugees being (or soon to be) evacuated to Australia as part of Operation Safe Haven. The news articles (including editorials and opinion columns) comprised 37 from the *Telegraph*, 43 from the *Herald* and 26 in the *Australian*. The content analysis excluded photographs, cartoons and letters to the editor, although some of these elements are drawn on throughout this chapter to complement the investigation.
factor in three election victories. There remained (for the most part) a clear separation between “humanitarian” concepts and Australian “values” in the analysis with significantly fewer references to concepts such as “mateship”, “mates” and “fair go” across the newspapers. This examination affirms a strong correlation between media discourse and how the Prime Minister sought to promote the evacuation as an issue of ‘moral obligation’ and being a good world citizen. It was the idea that Australia’s part in the international aid effort was a gesture that extended beyond the interests of national community resonating in a much more global sense that connected Australians with the wider world. In the following comment I examine the development of humanitarian sentiment in the Australian news media about the Kosovo war before returning to Howard’s appropriation of such a discourse.

1.2 Massacres, women and children
The Kosovo war was depicted by the news media as a series of human rights atrocities not seen in Europe since the rise of Nazi Germany. It was repeatedly noted that the conflict had resulted in the ‘biggest humanitarian disaster in Europe since World War II.’ Images of refugees and reports from journalists in the Balkans worked to generate widespread empathy in Australia with headlines such as ‘Orwell comes true in Kosovo.’ This complemented the common representation by journalists of a “doomsday” scenario that was facing the Kosovar refugees. In the lead

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208 In the Australian, there were 3 references to “mateship”, 2 concerning a “fair go” and 0 for “egalitarianism”. In the Telegraph, there were 10 references to “mateship”, 1 concerning a “fair go” and 0 citing “egalitarianism”. In the Herald, there was 1 reference to “mateship”, 1 to “egalitarianism” and 0 to “fair go”.
up to NATO air strikes, news reports focussed on the Serb “orchestration” of massacres throughout the Kosovo countryside and the building of a case for “war crimes” against the Yugoslav regime by international human rights monitors. The Telegraph’s ‘WAR IN EUROPE’ series promoted the air strikes as both inevitable and a just, moral crusade. The Telegraph often referred to “massacres” on a mass scale, as well as “mass” or “summary executions” committed by Yugoslav forces. The newspaper relayed an image of Serbian forces using (what NATO referred to as) “rape houses” and “rape camps”, along with the “emptying” of whole city populations of their ethnic Albanian inhabitants. By early April 1999, newspaper readers were witnessing the final stages of the campaign to expel ethnic Albanians from Kosovo.

Much of the media’s coverage in the lead-up to the air strikes relayed information disseminated by the media offices of NATO, closely espousing sentiments promoted by Jamie Shea and UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. Media commentator Phillip Knightley points out that a recurring emphasis on “systematic” massacres and atrocities in the Western media was part of a well-orchestrated NATO public relations campaign. In his analysis of the Kosovo conflict Knightley says the purpose of the media campaign was to shore-up support in the UK, US and other NATO member states. NATO’s goal was to persuade Western nations of the humanitarian justification for the conflict. Even before the NATO bombing began, Western media generally referred to the Balkans conflict as “ethnic cleansing” and painted it in black-and-white terms with simply “goodies

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and baddies”, “evil vs good”, between civilisation and barbarity. NATO states needed to publicly justify the fighting, by selling war to democracies that were not being attacked, and to demonise the leader of the enemy - Slobodan Milosevic - as inhumane. Referring to the exaggeration of atrocities by NATO, Knightley asserted: ‘the public drowned in wave after wave of images that added up to nothing.’ As he further points out, there were 2700 media people accompanying NATO forces when they entered Kosovo at the end of the bombings in June 1999. This is compared to the total number of 500 correspondents for the Vietnam War.

Virtually all of the reporting about the war in the Australian media during the conflict was conducted from the sidelines. The Telegraph, promoting a humanitarian justification for the war, repeatedly emphasised civilian atrocities committed by Serbs, but often relied on explicitly partisan sources. Western journalists had been expelled from Kosovo by the Yugoslav government and relegated to the refugee camps along its borders at the beginning of the NATO campaign. There, Knightley notes, they eagerly waited to pester traumatised refugees for eyewitness accounts. Much of the information reported about life inside Kosovo was provided via the KLA news agency, the media arm of the militant group fighting against Yugoslav forces alongside NATO. No British or American correspondents were able to enter the battleground to make their own critical assessments. They reported from NATO headquarters in Brussels, or simply by peering over the borders into Kosovo.

217 ibid., p. 504.
218 See similar assessment by BBC News Monitoring, ‘World Mediawatch: Yugoslav agency sees Kosovo ‘terrorism’ spreading to media’, 4th January 1999. URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/248364.stm>. Accessed 3rd February 2009. Here, it is reported that in January 1999, according to BBC News Monitoring, the KLA had created the news agency, ‘Kosovo Press’ and the radio station, ‘Free Kosovo’. It had established offices in Western Europe and developed contacts in the Western press and with diplomats in Geneva. As noted earlier, a key aim of the KLA was to generate Western interest in expelling the Serbs and helping the Kosovar cause of independence. Its news stories were constructed to touch the hearts and minds of Western diplomats, NATO general staff and ordinary people in Western countries. Further, it aimed to enhance perceptions of horror and terror in the eyes of Western media.
219 The language adopted from KLA reports in the Telegraph used terms like “ethnic cleansing”, “systematic” and “summarily executed”. It emphasised an alleged orchestrated attempt by Serbia to expel Albanian Kosovars, which was found in the year after war to be highly exaggerated by the news agency. See, for example, reports by the KLA featured in the Telegraph during the early stages of the conflict, including L. Cika, ‘Refugees still
On 3rd April 1999, the media began to describe horrific scenes on the streets of Pristina (the capital of Kosovo). Thousands of ethnic Albanians had been forced onto over-crowded trains by Serbian police to be taken to the Macedonian border. Over the next week, life at the border camps was miserable and hopeless, a crossroads between freedom and the horrors of war left behind. Thousands of all ages congregated in an open field at Blace (a town on the Macedonian border with Kosovo). By 5th April, the Telegraph reported, thousands of Kosovar refugees had erected makeshift homes from plastic and other materials on the muddy ground. In several photographs, hundreds of these tents extended into the horizon, hastily erected from the belongings refugees had brought with them.

Paul Harris, reporting from Macedonia, depicted the scene: ‘There were so many aching bodies sprawled in the field you could barely see the ground… a small border crossing in Macedonia [turned] into a vast sea of misery yesterday. Freedom was a bare field, with no shelter or sanitation.’ Eleven refugees, including two babies, had died waiting to be allowed into Macedonia by guards who had closed the border crossing. They had been among 50,000 Kosovars, ‘herded into a valley where they have waited up to six days to be allowed into Macedonia, where armed troops bar the way.’ Aid workers at Blace complained that the Macedonian soldiers were stopping them from reaching the refugees who included many elderly Kosovars as well as small children. The refugees slept under the open skies on the freezing mud without food, water or medical treatment. In the makeshift encampment, they waited for days before the UNHCR was able to begin co-ordinating international relief...
efforts. The Telegraph, like other international media, presented an image of Kosovar refugees simply waiting for help.225

An official refugee camp in Skopje (the Macedonian capital) was quickly established by the UNHCR known as ‘Stenkovac 1’. It became the temporary home of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees who had arrived before the border was closed by Macedonian authorities. By 8th April, the remainder had been evacuated to nearby countries as an intermediary solution. Journalist Patrick Quinn, reporting from Blace, wrote of the scene: ‘All that remained today […] was a giant, smouldering pit, with garbage burning and tonnes of muddy clothing and plastic sheeting strewn about. Filthy, primitive conditions in the camp had led to an outbreak of illness and some deaths.’226 The conditions at Skopje were reportedly far less than improved. The Herald described how one convoy of refugees arriving at Skopje carried ‘a defeated people’, who entered a camp that ‘reeked of stale urine and faeces’.227

The media portrayed scenes of chaos in the refugee camps, home for the time being to thousands of Kosovar exiles. A significant portion of photographs in the Telegraph centred on Kosovar children suggesting a broader context of innocence (or the loss of) and hope (a chance to redeem and rebuild). The effect of mass media images such as these is to express the ideological commitments that generate political agency.228 Images of children as helpless victims of war are often included in news content to bolster a sense of moral urgency, promoting emotional disbelief and outrage. They work to decentre more rational understandings and are geared towards bringing disbelievers into the political fold that underlies media messages.229

The effects of Yugoslav politics on Albanian Kosovar children had long been a point of contention for international commentators. In the early

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1990s a Serbian school curriculum was imposed in Kosovo by the Yugoslav regime alongside the banning of Albanian language education. The province’s health services were largely dismantled, and the remaining public hospitals were closed to Albanians. At the time it had been alleged in the local Kosovo press that thousands of Albanian school children were being poisoned, though evidence remains disputed as to whether the Yugoslav State was involved.\footnote{Malcolm, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 346-7 and p. 349. About the poisoning of school children, see Mertus, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 187-226.} Ethnic and nationalist tensions between Serbs and Albanians within Yugoslavia had impacted significantly on the safety and wellbeing of Kosovar children. Worried about the decline in the number of Serbs in the province (mainly due to emigration to Serbia caused by poverty) Serbian leaders used the term “demographic genocide” to describe the relatively high birth rate for Albanians in Kosovo and to justify ethnic Albanian repression. Serb nationalists fantastically exaggerated Serb emigration from the province, linking it to the higher percentage of ethnic Albanians being born.\footnote{W.G. O’Neill, \textit{Kosovo; An Unfinished Peace}, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2002, p. 21. See also Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 329. Here, official censuses showed that a pattern of demographic decline was present, but not on the scale alleged by Milosevic and other radical nationalist and religious leaders. These included Archimandrite Atanasije Jevtic, who in 1984 had written that 200,000 Serbs had fled in the last fifteen years and by 1990 it was alleged that the loss in the previous two decades was 400,000. More realistic figures, Malcolm points out, from the censuses about the population of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo were as follows: 264,604 (1961); 259,819 (1971); 236,526 (1981); 215,346 (1991). Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.} (p. 332) also gives figures to support the notion that Albanian women have had a higher rate of birth in recent years than other European nations. See also Clark, \textit{Civil Resistance in Kosovo, op. cit.}, p. 13, who says that poverty was the main reason for Serb emigration from Kosovo between the 1960s and 1980s. While many in Serbia proper resented that Kosovo absorbed such a high proportion of federal development funds, Kosovo continued to fall behind the rest of Yugoslavia economically.} Ethnic Albanian Kosovars had responded by setting up local schools independently of the State along with medical clinics. Tens of thousands of children attended classrooms in houses and makeshift rooms while teachers attempted to avoid arrests, intimidation and assaults by police.\footnote{O’Neill, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21. See also Malcolm, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 349.} The context for images of refugee children was much broader than the Kosovo war, following in many ways from the Cold War. The subtext of freedom and liberty extended directly
from the US’ attempts to provide NATO with a moral premise in maintaining global order.  

Publishing images of ethnic Albanian children, the Telegraph’s ‘WAR IN EUROPE’ series presented the NATO intervention as an opportunity for the West to bring liberty and freedom into their lives. Alongside a concerted campaign by NATO to justify the war, images of children reinforced the need for the international community to protect the innocent and those oppressed by the Yugoslav regime. From a total of twenty-three images in the Telegraph depicting the crisis between 1\textsuperscript{st} April and 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1999 there were at least seventy-nine children pictured individually, and in significantly greater quantity than adults (see examples in Appendix 1).  

![Ardita Hajdini first appeared in The Daily Telegraph on 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 19](image)

The face of nine-year old girl Ardita Hajdini accentuates how the media presented the image of children during the NATO air strikes. In the image (above), Ardita is weeping. Her lips and cheeks are puffed. The

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233 See Herman and Chomsky, op. cit.

234 Contrary to earlier reports that suggested there were very few men in the refugee camps, there were many photographs of male refugees in the newspaper in this period (from 1\textsuperscript{st} April until 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1999). (The date of 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1999 was the day on which the first Kosovar refugees landed at Sydney airport.) Men were in fact more greatly represented in these pictures than women. In 14 pictures, there were at least 18 men pictured individually. Many dozens more featured in photographs of the refugee camps and in processions of refugees being forced to leave the capital of Pristina. In 11 photographs, there were only 14 refugee women pictured individually.
caption beneath Ardita’s image reads: ‘Scared and alone … Ardita Hajdini, 9, weeps as she arrives in Kukes [an Albanian town near the Kosovo border] after walking from Citak in Kosovo. She lost her parents and three sisters.’ This image eventually replaced the Telegraph’s ‘WAR IN EUROPE’ logo in June 1999 along with the caption: ‘KOSOVO – The Aftermath’. The emphasis on children continued throughout April and early May in the Australian news press and those refugees being evacuated to Australia as part of Operation Safe Haven were regularly referred to as “missing”, “orphaned” or “lost” children. The Herald emphasised the point by citing the increasing number of Australian families offering to adopt orphaned refugee children. The centrality of “childlike innocence” in news reports emphasised compassion for the plight of the Kosovar refugees and assisted in NATO’s efforts to maintain the moral support of its allies.

Kosovar women were depicted by Telegraph journalists as being the helpless victims of Serbian barbarity. Repeatedly, there were questions raised in the newspaper about the unknown whereabouts of husbands, fathers, sons and brothers who had left the women to their own defences - mainly because they had been detained by Serb police or joined the KLA to fight against Yugoslav forces. The Telegraph described recent reports of “mass rapes” against Kosovar women as ‘the most evil war crimes’. The newspaper stated that, like the Bosnian war several years earlier, ‘the Serbs are using rape as a weapon again’. These images presented the war as a tragedy for humanity, appealing to the compassion of the Australian community. They featured alongside countless descriptions that flooded

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235 In The Daily Telegraph, 19th April 1999, p. 19. Citak is in the Drenica valley, which borders Albania, and is one of the major towns through which many ethnic Albanian refugees exited the province.
236 The image was taken by Reuters’ Dylan Martinez and used in other Western media, including the Washington Post.
237 The number of times newspaper sources described the refugees – those being evacuated to Australia or being attended to by Australian officials or aid workers - as “children” (or “babies”) was 27 in the Telegraph, 20 in the Herald and 3 in the Australian.
239 Montgomery, ‘Emergence of one of the most evil war crimes’, op. cit.
240 ibid.
the Western media of women and children being harassed, beaten, murdered, raped and exiled from Kosovo.

The number of deaths (which continues to be disputed) and the scale of the Albanian exodus caused by the Yugoslav regime remains abhorrent. Media coverage of the NATO air strikes promoted strong consensus that it was Australia’s ‘duty’ to accept its humanitarian obligations in assisting the refugees by offering short-term resettlement.\textsuperscript{241} The \textit{Telegraph} compelled Australians to support the evacuation as part of the nation’s ‘duty of care’.\textsuperscript{242} The newspaper’s editor-in-chief, columnists, political commentators and war correspondents mobilised to promote the idea that humanitarian obligation was an essential component of Australian nationhood. The \textit{Telegraph}’s ‘duty of care’ campaign in the first week of April 1999 played-out alongside developments in Federal politics – contesting the Howard Government’s initial rejection of the UN request to temporarily accommodate ethnic Albanian refugees in Australia. The \textit{Herald} and \textit{The Australian} also attempted to generate moral urgency by criticising the Federal Government for not obliging the UNHCR’s request to evacuate refugees as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{243}

2. The Federal Government and the Politics of Operation Safe Haven

2.1 Ruddock maintains the party line

The plan to evacuate the Kosovar refugees was an unlikely resolution for the Australian government. On 4\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, Immigration Minister Ruddock ruled out taking any Kosovar Albanian refugees following NATO air strikes, saying: ‘Flying planeloads of refugees into Australia would not be an appropriate response.’\textsuperscript{244} The following day the Federal Government again rejected outright the UNHCR’s formal request for Australia to temporarily resettle some of the 370,000 Kosovar refugees who had fled the province at that point in time. The Immigration Minister defended the

\textsuperscript{241} See, for instance, G. Sheridan, ‘Our duty to take share of exodus’, \textit{The Australian}, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{242} See two-page feature headline, ‘Australia’s duty of care’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{243} See, for example, G. Henderson, ‘Just Not Good Enough, Mr Ruddock’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{244} Ruddock, cited in Head, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 281.
Government’s initial reluctance to offer the Kosovars temporary refuge in Australia. Ruddock noted that Australia did not have ‘a temporary residence culture’. He upheld the official stance of the Department of Immigration - that Australia only accepted refugees on a permanent basis so they could immediately begin to rebuild their lives. He stated that past experience had shown that temporary solutions had always led to permanent outcomes.

The Immigration Minister cited two incidences to support his argument - Australia’s experience with Chinese students fleeing their homeland after the Tiananmen Square massacre, and with East Timorese fleeing violence earlier in the decade. The Minister said that these incidences revealed the difficulty in sending people back home:

You have to look at what we’re able to do and if you look at our past experience with temporary location of people, it generally becomes a permanent residents outcome.[…]

…Temporary outcomes have never been successful in terms of moving people, locating them for a short period of time and then returning them.

That’s really the reason that I am hesitant about providing temporary arrangements.

Ruddock argued that it would be preferable if the Kosovar refugees were accommodated within existing programs, by adding 1000 extra refugee places from within the immigration program itself. The next day,
however, Ruddock’s proposal was overturned by senior members of Cabinet.

2.2 The public backlash and the media
Organisational pressure began to mount on the Government, with the NSW Council of Churches urging authorities to accept the refugees, ‘on compassionate grounds and humanitarian grounds.’ The Sydney Morning Herald’s editor was particularly critical of the Federal Government, saying it had a ‘duty’ to ‘Get to the heart of things.’ The editorial asserted:

It is [...] unrealistic for Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock to suggest that only another 1000 places could be found for Kosovar refugees[.] It would have been better if he had said nothing.

The editor commented that, as a member of the international community, Australians ‘must be prepared to play a greater role than Mr Ruddock proposes,’ and that it was ‘the duty of Federal Cabinet to immediately reconsider the number of Kosovar Albanians it will accept.’ The newspaper’s cartoonist Warren captured what some critics had suggested about the Federal Government being unsympathetic and insensitive (see below). With growing criticism, and while other nations were offering assistance to tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees, John Howard risked becoming unpopular by being unsympathetic.

Following the reversal of the government’s decision, many news commentators championed the way in which the Australian media facilitated public pressure to support international evacuation efforts. In the two days leading up to that decision the Telegraph cited members of the

249 NSW Council of Churches, cited in Harris and McKinnon, op. cit.
250 Editorial, ‘Get to the heart of things’, op. cit.
251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.
253 See figures shown in ‘What has happened to the refugees’, The Daily Telegraph, 9th April 1999, p. 31: The US had agreed to temporarily relocate 20,000 Kosovar refugees; Turkey would relocate 20,000; Norway had accepted up to 6000; Germany would receive 10,000 (with another 10,000 throughout other parts of the European Union); and, Canada offered to relocate 5000. Hundreds of thousands more would remain in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina.
Albanian community as well as former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser who voiced concern with the government’s refusal to evacuate Kosovar refugees. The newspaper reported that Sadik Binakaj, a spokesperson for members of the Australia-Albania Association, had ‘pleaded’ for an increase in the number of Kosovo refugees to be accepted under the existing humanitarian refugee visa program from the present figure of 4500 to about 20,000. He stated: ‘the present number is not enough. I am sure that is not enough because there is going to be at least one and a half million refugees from Kosovo.’ Malcolm Fraser, who was the head of CARE Australia, further argued on 5th April that Australia should accept 30,000 refugees from Kosovo. Fraser added: ‘We haven’t seen anything like this in more than 50 years, it is difficult to envisage the hardship and suffering involved.’ He further articulated that there was ‘no excuse’ for Australia not to accept up to 30,000 refugees, arguing: ‘We haven’t seen anything like this in more than 50 years, it is difficult to envisage the hardship and suffering involved’. Although Fraser was no longer a leading figure in the Australian Liberal Party, he nevertheless retained personal prestige and his position as director of CARE carried significant weight. His concerns were worthy of citation in the media. Mounting public pressure was also noted by the Herald’s letters editor who indicated the consensus building around the issue of the Kosovar refugees throughout the week prior to 5th April. She stated: ‘The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia has preoccupied letter writers all week, with every possible explanation put forward for the crisis in Kosovo. It has been analysed from historical, ethnic and superpower perspectives. Our readers have also expressed anguish over the human suffering caused by the conflict, especially among civilians who were feeling the effects of war…’

Howard confirmed the Government’s support for the evacuation via

255 S. Binakaj, cited in ibid.
256 M. Fraser, cited in ibid.
257 M. Fraser, cited in M. McKinnon, ‘Australia set to open doors to war refugees’, Courier Mail, 6th April 1999 (page unspecified).
a press conference on 6\textsuperscript{th} April. Announcing the Safe Haven Visa scheme, he stated: ‘This is something where a nation of Australia’s strength and wealth and comparative affluence has an overwhelming moral obligation to play a part in.’\textsuperscript{259} It is worth noting that the long-term success of John Ho-

![John Howard offering assistance to the Kosovar refugees, as drawn by Warren, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 10]

ward as leader of the Australian Federal Government was often the result of his ability to be responsive to popular undercurrents and to change policy where needed. Commenting on the ‘children overboard’ incident in 2001,\textsuperscript{260} this aspect of the Prime Minister’s approach to politics is succinctly described by David Marr and Marian Wilkinson: ‘John Howard is a master of ambiguity. His words must always be read with care.’\textsuperscript{261} The

\textsuperscript{259} Howard, cited in Farr, ‘SANCTUARY – Australia to accept 4000 from Kosovo’, \textit{op. cit.} The story also reappears in similar form in M. Farr, ‘Australia takes 4000 refugees’ \textit{The Daily Telegraph} (Afternoon Edition), 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 4. A similar comment by the Prime Minister was noted in D. Shanahan, P. Green and M. Stevens, ‘Safe Haven for 4000 souls – Howard bows to refugee pressure’, \textit{The Australian}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{260} It is widely believed that the ‘children overboard’ incident in 2001 ensured John Howard’s re-election as Prime Minister. See, for instance, D. Marr and M. Wilkinson, \textit{Dark Victory}, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003.

\textsuperscript{261} \textit{ibid.}, p. 47.
Prime Minister’s management of public relations during the early stages of the Kosovo war was timely. A ‘source’ had told the *Telegraph*, after three hours of debate, that: ‘There was a very strong feeling across the board in Cabinet that something additional had to be done’.262 This was despite Ruddock’s reservation that once in Australia the refugees would take exhaustive court action to stay permanently.263

Ruddock emerged as ‘a solitary voice’264 with the *Herald* describing how the Immigration Minister had been isolated by the episode: ‘Ruddock stood silent beside John Howard through the Prime Minister’s news conference’, at which the announcement was made on reversing Ruddock’s earlier decision.265 The newspaper added that ‘it must have been agony for Mr Ruddock’ to have held firm on the official position and be overruled in such a public manner.266 By overruling the Immigration Minister Howard was able to capitalise on growing support from within the Australian community to evacuate the Kosovar refugees to Australia. However, it further demonstrates the Prime Minister’s dominant position within the Cabinet and his abilities to direct, formulate and implement party strategy. The Prime Minister stated that he expected some criticism of the plan, dubbed ‘Operation Safe Haven’, but he was ‘not prepared to see Australia turn its back on these people.’267

Following the lead of the international community with its offer to temporarily relocate 4000 refugees, the Federal Government obliged public pressure, ensuring Australia played a part in the ‘biggest humanitarian operation’ undertaken by the international community since World War II.268

*The Australian* noted that at least 100 people had telephoned radio stations around the country throughout the week following the Government’s refusal to evacuate refugees. Most described the decision as

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262 Farr, ‘SANCTUARY – Australia to accept 4000 from Kosovo’, *op. cit.* A ‘strong view’ is also cited in Shanahan and Green, *op. cit.*
263 Farr, ‘SANCTUARY – Australia to accept 4000 from Kosovo’, *op. cit.*
264 *ibid.*
266 *ibid.*
A Herald-ACNielsen poll found that eighty per cent of Australians approved of giving support to the Kosovar refugees, which included allowing them to be relocated to Australia on a short-term basis. The editor of The Australian described Australia’s initial response to the UNHCR request as ‘niggardly and over-cautious’, urging Australia to ‘recognise its responsibility to make every effort to resettle the victims [of the war] as quickly as possible.’ The editor later added that the Prime Minister ‘must have had his eyes and ears closed’.

Gerard Henderson, writing in the Herald, described Australia’s initial response to the refugee exodus as ‘woefully inadequate’ adding that the Government’s attitude contrasted with ‘that of our traditional allies and friends in the European Union (EU) and NATO.’ He argued that the attitude of the Government toward the Kosovar refugee crisis reflected recent developments in Immigration policy as well as in Foreign Affairs, which had drifted significantly away from Asia. These policies, Henderson added, had produced ‘disturbing signs of insularity in Australia’.

Paul Kelly described the initial rejection of the UNHCR request in The Australian as providing ‘insight into [the Federal Government’s] streak of incompetence and myopia,’ adding, ‘Ruddock had misjudged the situation grievously.’ He was doubtful that the Federal Government had been sincere in its change of heart: ‘the question is being asked whether the Government’s policy reversal is inspired by the humanitarian crisis or to pacify public criticism.’ Kelly doubted the Prime Minister’s ‘credibility’, arguing that he was only compelled to change the Government’s position due to public pressure, and that: ‘if Howard was so concerned about Australia’s moral obligation, why didn’t he interfere [to overrule...
Ruddock’s decision] earlier? The Government’s approach to the Kosovar refugees was similarly criticised by Ian McPhedran in the *Telegraph*: ‘Mr Howard’s reaction on Kosovo proves he is a creature of public opinion… Ruddock held the government line only to see Howard capitulate to public opinion.’ The *Herald* applauded the policy reversal stating: ‘A continuing paltry response by Canberra would have been unpopular as well as morally indefensible.’ The policy reversal was, to some media commentators, very clearly a political response. It typifies the need for dominant political groups to maintain legitimacy by being ‘able to claim with at least some plausibility that their particular interests are those of society at large.’

One of the main immediate criticisms from ethnic and migrant welfare groups, which had voiced criticism of the initial refusal to accept Kosovar refugees prior to the reversal, was that the temporary Safe Haven program was a “band-aid” solution and “tokenistic.” The offer of temporary safe haven displeased Ethnic Communities Council of NSW chairman, Paul Nicolaou, who said that the Government must consider a ‘long-term policy’ of allowing the 4000 refugees to stay in Australia.

Kelly criticised the Government on this issue, arguing that the offer of temporary Safe Haven was a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction that reeked of ‘politics and panic.’ He stated that the decision reflected the ‘bizarre rules of today’, that the ‘logical response’ of permanent protection was overlooked because it was deemed ‘to be a concession to Milosovic’ who was seeking to eradicate ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. Federal Court judge and human-rights campaigner, Justice Marcus Einfeld, further criticised the

277 Ibid.
278 I. McPhedran, ‘Refugee footsteps lead only one way’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 10th April 1999, p. 11.
279 ‘Kosovo turnaround’, *op. cit.*
281 Shanahan and Green, *op. cit.*
282 Cited in *ibid.*
283 Kelly, ‘Knee-jerk response to Kosovo crisis’, *op. cit.*
284 *ibid.*
temporary Safe Haven program, arguing: ‘There is no such thing as a temporary refugee.’

Commentators across the Telegraph, Herald and Australian often noted that it was the public and media backlash that had swayed the Australian Government to reassess its position and oblige the UNHCR request. McPhedran, for instance, advised Ruddock to ‘watch the editorials’ in order to be more responsive to public opinion and avoid mass backlash in the future. The intensity of the criticism varied between each of the newspapers, particularly in the ways they attributed accountability for the initial “lapse” in judgement and then policy reversal. The Australian offered the most critical opinion citing 53 negative criticisms of the Government in total, while there were 26 in the Telegraph and 24 in the Herald. Further analysis revealed that the Telegraph and Herald positioned Ruddock as slightly more accountable than the Prime Minister for the initial rejection of the UNHCR request. On the other hand, the Prime Minister was more greatly scrutinised by The Australian than Ruddock for rejecting the UNHCR request, with nine direct criticisms of the Prime Minister.

Comparatively, in lieu of these figures, The Australian was least supportive of the Prime Minister and the Government as a whole, while the Telegraph and Herald produced only around half of the total amount of criticism as The Australian. Textual analysis (as noted below) further revealed much more moderate criticism of the Government in the Telegraph than the other newspapers. The analysis reflects significant differences between each of the newspapers in terms of their political leanings and sympathies for the Howard Government. It also provides a

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286 McPhedran, ‘Refugee footsteps lead only one way’, op. cit.

287 The analysis undertaken here investigates the criticisms published by each of the newspapers about the Howard Government, including those directly expressed by newspaper editors and journalists, as well as that from other sources (such as community and welfare groups).

288 The results include, for the Telegraph, there were only 4 direct criticisms of Ruddock and 2 of Howard. In the Herald, there were 2 direct criticisms of Ruddock and 1 of Howard. In the Australian, there were 8 direct criticisms of Ruddock whilst there were 9 of Howard.
clearer view of the extent of the pressure on the Government as a whole, as well as on the key figures – mainly, the Prime Minister and Immigration Minister - behind Australia’s decision to allow the Kosovars to be temporarily resettled in Australia.

2.3 Media representations of human tragedy and the implications for the Australian Government

There was, undoubtedly, a significant amount of media criticism concerning the Government’s initial refusal to evacuate the refugees to Australia. Politics within the Cabinet, along with mounting pressure to uphold international humanitarian obligations, further prompted the policy reversal. Until the morning of 6th April, as Denis Shanahan commented in *The Australian*, the Immigration Minister, ‘in the absence of any forewarning from the Prime Minister to play a cooler hand, [was] entitled to think the Government’s policy of not taking any refugees would hold firm.’ However, senior ministers in the Cabinet had endured a ‘barrage of criticism’ over the decision and were quickly ‘convinced more had to be done.’ Shanahan argued it was the spirit of the generosity shown by some ‘families [who] were prepared to throw open their homes’ to the refugees that led to the policy reversal – suggesting that Australians ‘wanted the Government’s action to enact and represent their feelings.’

The policy reversal, Shanahan noted: ‘left Ruddock on the beach, high and dry’, though Howard defended the Immigration Minister by pointing to policy consistency. Although Ruddock was ‘admired’ by Cabinet ministers for ‘the way he walked the line between giving into the Hansonites’ agenda and cleaning out the excesses … there was concern [within Cabinet] the Government was now seen as “too hard”’. According to Cabinet members, the decision made by the Government was far-removed from any direct criticism by the media. The

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289 D. Shanahan, ‘Anyone who had a heart’, *The Australian*, 10th April 1999, p. 27.
290 Shanahan and Green, op. cit.
291 Shanahan, ‘Anyone who had a heart’, op. cit.
292 ibid.
293 ibid. See also comments (as noted above) by One Nation party spokesperson David Oldfield as cited in Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, op. cit.
Government propagated the notion that it had committed to the evacuation by stressing the importance of such a “moral obligation” to Australian families. According to *The Australian*, the Easter long weekend prior to the policy reversal had allowed leading Ministers time to observe the situation at the Macedonian border on television news alongside their families. As Shanahan stated:

> [It] is a long time since the views of small children were aired in the Cabinet room. Wives, sons and daughters, some young children and other family members had a significant impact on policy around the Cabinet table on Tuesday [when the policy reversal was decided]. [The Easter holiday] had a positive effect on the decision-makers.\(^{294}\)

The human tragedy unfolding on television had prompted calls for a ‘moral decision’ from the National Party deputy leader and Transport Minister John Anderson as well as at least four senior ministers, including Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer (who played a leading role), Agriculture Minister Mark Vaile, Health Minister Michael Wooldridge and Finance Minister John Fahey.\(^{295}\) The Prime Minister also said that a moral decision was necessary after he had watched the news over the weekend, while Vaile noted that the ‘effect on families of watching the refugees’ misery unfold’ was the driving force in the Government’s decision.\(^{296}\)

The policy reversal is indicative of the ways in which hegemonic groups are often compelled to assert their legitimacy by adopting some of the values of subordinate groups.\(^{297}\) By changing its position the Government significantly capitalised on the media’s insistence to reverse its policy stance on the Kosovar refugees. Ministers received praise from *The Australian* for drawing on their ‘collective and individual souls’ and

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\(^{294}\) Shanahan, ‘Anyone who had a heart’, *op. cit.*

\(^{295}\) *ibid.*

\(^{296}\) *ibid.*

acting with a ‘generous spirit.’

The Cabinet, it was noted, wanted to ‘ensure that this decision, which would provide a palpable and highly visible moral dimension to the Government’s character, was made in that spirit.’ The Government played-down the impact of public sentiment with Downer suggesting that it was humanitarianism that had prompted the policy reversal. Downer was asked during an interview on 6th April 1999 on the ABC Television program, The 7:30 Report: ‘Was Cabinet’s response today based partly at least on public sentiment, given what Philip Ruddock was saying yesterday [about not taking any refugees]?’ The Foreign Affairs Minister replied: ‘I think it’s based, above all, on a humanitarian sentiment… there was just a strong sense that we needed to make a contribution. I think the Australian public will strongly support that.’ Although Downer argued in the media that the Government’s policy reversal was a gesture of humanitarian goodwill, there is evidence to support the notion that Australia’s foreign relations played an important role in this decision as well.

2.4 International relations, the US and the Howard Government’s policy “backflip”

A range of international influences on the Australian government during the Kosovo war require further attention. The NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo (led by the US) was undertaken without the full support of the UN and United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Surrounding the military campaign was the US and NATO’s desire to justify, on humanitarian grounds, a war that could not be sanctioned in international law.

Another major strategic dilemma for the US quickly emerged, as the NATO campaign unexpectedly produced a general state of panic in which

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298 Shanahan, ‘Anyone who had a heart’, op. cit.
299 ibid.
thousands of ethnic Albanians fled directly to the Macedonian border.\textsuperscript{302} There emerged immediate consensus within leading NATO countries to resolve the situation as soon as possible. This added pressure on the Howard Government to accept Kosovar refugees for temporary safe haven.

The dilemma foreshadowed NATO’s plans to utilise Macedonia as a launching pad for 10,000 ground troops to enter Kosovo following initial aerial bombardments. Morten Kjaerum describes the impact of the closure of the Macedonian border: ‘mass influx situations [such as these] are often considered to constitute a threat to internal stability’.\textsuperscript{303} The image of starving and dying refugees that was heavily reproduced in the Western media added pressure on the US to deal with both a public relations disaster (at home and abroad) and a significant strategic dilemma.\textsuperscript{304} Before allowing more refugees to cross the border and seek assistance at UNHCR refugee camps the Macedonian government requested international assistance and assurances that at least some of the refugees would be transferred elsewhere.\textsuperscript{305} Michael Barutciski and Astri Suhrke noted that: ‘The spectacle attracted intense international attention for days, creating strong incentives for states and organisations concerned to find a solution.’\textsuperscript{306} In order to proceed with a ground attack (which did not eventuate), the US was compelled to resolve Macedonia’s reluctance to accommodate the refugees and assist in overcoming the escalation of a ‘destabilising effect throughout the region.’\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{302} Barutciski and Suhrke, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 98. The authors argue here that the problem with Macedonia closing its borders partly resulted from the UNHCR’s belief that NATO air strikes would not lead to a mass outflow of refugees but, rather, rapidly pave the way for a political settlement of the conflict.


\textsuperscript{304} See J. Hewett, ‘Clinton Promises An Unrelenting Campaign’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 8, who says that: ‘Public outrage [in the US] at the refugee crisis has tempered the political difficulties of the [US] Administration.’

\textsuperscript{305} Barutciski and Suhrke, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{306} \textit{Ibid.} These commentators were part of a team that evaluated UNHCR’s emergency preparedness and response to the refugee exodus from Kosovo. Their role is described in these terms by T. Einarsen, ‘Refugee Protection Beyond Kosovo: Quo Vadis’ (Responses to Barutciski and Suhrke), \textit{Journal of Refugee Studies}, 14(2), 2001, p. 119. See also discussion of the Macedonian government’s concerns about Kosovar refugees in Van Selm, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 212-215.

\textsuperscript{307} ‘Kosovo turnaround’, \textit{op. cit.}
Barutciski and Suhrke state that ‘Once the border crisis occurred, the central policy challenge was to persuade Macedonia to admit a massive influx of refugees that the government initially rejected. The eventual solution was based on a “burden-sharing” scheme involving transfer of refugees to other countries, both in the region and outside.’\(^{308}\) Thus, under pressure from the US government, UNHCR committed to evacuations out of the region and ‘produced guidelines for the innovative humanitarian evacuation program that involved airlifts.’\(^{309}\) As Terje Einarsen says: ‘the international promise of airlifting refugees from the camps in Macedonia to other countries was a crucial factor in the effort to persuade the Macedonian government to keep the Blace border crossing open.’\(^{310}\) The Australian government eventually moved to support ‘the controversial United States-backed call for an “air bridge”’ for refugees to be evacuated by the UNHCR.\(^{311}\)

As Joanne Van Selm points out, the Australian government agreed to accept its quota of 4000 Kosovar refugees, on 6\(^{th}\) April, ‘even before many EU states had decided on co-operating with evacuations.’\(^{312}\) The idea of being a “good world citizen” with a sense of “moral obligation” significantly influenced the Australian government’s response to the Kosovar refugee crisis.\(^{313}\) However, the role for Australia sought by John Howard in international affairs reflected Anglophonic and US-centric interpretations of what this meant. Australia’s response was in-line with a growing consensus in powerful Western states that had largely rejected the demand for aid in Africa, and come to favour assistance for white Europeans.\(^{314}\) Moreover, unlike previous Labor governments which had promoted closer relations with Asia, Howard’s foreign policy was typified by his push to promote Australia-US relations as a kind of “special relationship”. As Douglas T. Stuart argued, upon entering office, ‘Prime

\(^{308}\) Barutciski and Suhrke, op. cit., p. 96.

\(^{309}\) ibid., p. 100.

\(^{310}\) Einarsen, op. cit., p. 125.


\(^{312}\) Van Selm, op. cit., p. 223.


\(^{314}\) Chimni, op. cit., p. 249.
Minister Howard made it clear that the cornerstone of this new Australian security policy was direct and consistent cooperation with the United States.\(^3\) Howard’s move away from Asia towards the US was in many ways predicated on the assumption that a ‘common sense of values and common traditions’ would make any clash between the two countries unlikely.\(^3\) The Prime Minister promoted the idea that the economic and military relationships formed between US and Australia during his term of office would be equally beneficial.

However, as has been said: ‘Although the US has created a liberal international economic order that is broadly supported by its allies, its dominant position means that it can flout its own normative prescriptions when it chooses to do so.’\(^3\) The Australian government’s position on the Kosovo war reflected the long-standing benevolence of the US toward Australia. The government’s back flip on denying the refugees safe haven mirrored the position of the US as the dominant world power in the post-Cold War period. Moreover, while the Prime Minister promoted the need for Australia’s foreign strategy to be closely aligned with the US’ during the Kosovo war, he was in various ways reiterating a much older policy tradition of dependence upon the US that had existed since the Second World War, both militarily and economically.\(^3\)

International pressure was played down by the Foreign Affairs Minister, although he did acknowledge the importance of international affairs in relation to the Government’s policy reversal. Downer commented on *The 7.30 Report*, following the closure of the border by Macedonia to thousands of Kosovar refugees:

\(^3\) Stuart, ‘NATO and the wider world: from regional collective defence to global coalitions of the willing’, *op. cit.*, p. 41.


\(^3\) Beeson, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

Well, we’re part of the international community and there was a feeling in the Cabinet that it would be appropriate for us to make a humanitarian contribution to this simply appalling crisis.  

Nonetheless, the influence of the US on Australia during the crisis remained strong, as Shanahan writes: ‘Although no direct pressure came from [US President] Bill Clinton before the decision [to offer temporary safe haven], there was an expectation in Cabinet that there would be.’

Barutciski and Suhrke argue that the combination of strategic and humanitarian sentiments ensured that the Kosovo refugee crisis received extraordinary attention from the powerful Western states. What is clear, however, is that in many ways Operation Safe Haven provided Australia with a more prominent role in global politics. The Prime Minister embarked on a fundamental re-assessment of Australia’s foreign and defence policies immediately on entering office, in which, ‘Canberra moved away from its traditional role as a status-quo orientated regional actor toward a more pro-active and globally-orientated posture.’

The foreign policy arrangements sought by Howard and Downer in the late 1990s not only represented the Government’s desire to forge a more significant place for Australia in world affairs, but also one that reflected the eminence of leading “Anglo” nations. The increasing independence of NATO from the UN in this period, under the leadership of the US and UK, provided Howard with an opportunity to promote stronger ties with these countries and enhance Australia’s role in the ‘so-called anglosphere coalition’. This policy reiterated the US’ desire for ‘English-speaking democracies’ to be the ‘foundation for a full unity of a democratised world’ and as the best means of giving NATO a new sense of energy and direction.

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319 Downer, in ‘Humanitarian concern prompts refugee rethink: Downer’ (transcript), op. cit.
320 Shanahan, ‘Anyone who had a heart’, op. cit.
322 Stuart, ‘NATO and the wider world: from regional collective defence to global coalitions of the willing’, op. cit., p. 41.
323 ibid., p. 33.
324 ibid., p. 42, citing R. Conquest.
3. Charity, Donations and NGOs

Operation Safe Haven provided the Australian government with an opportunity to profess (and position itself alongside popular views about) the moral importance of being charitable. Government and non-government organisations (NGOs) made important financial contributions in aid of the Kosovar refugees. The Federal Government had initially offered a $2 million aid package following NATO air strikes, which was increased to $6 million by early April, to be distributed amongst international aid agencies.\(^{325}\) By 6\(^{th}\) April, the *Telegraph* reported how Australians had ‘pledged’ $1 million to the aid agency World Vision for its campaign to assist the Kosovar refugees.\(^{326}\) Australian NGOs, the *Telegraph* noted, had set a $5 million target for public donations for the Kosovo crisis. CARE Australia donated $850 000 to Operation Safe Haven, while World Vision Australia provided $304 000.\(^{327}\) By 13\(^{th}\) April Australians had donated about $2 million to the cause over the previous ten days.\(^{328}\) By 3\(^{rd}\) May about forty-five NGOs including the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army were working with DIMA, ‘to ensure [those being evacuated to Australia] a smooth transition to Australian life’.\(^{329}\)

A considerable focus in the *Telegraph*, *Herald* and *Australian* was to make explicit reference to the kinds of offerings made by Australians to the Kosovars. The sentiment of praise that had been espoused to reports of these offerings in the media is contradicted by the reality that welfare and charity groups had faced increasing pressure in the Howard era to assist needy Australians. This is because, as Philip Mendes says, the election of

\(^{325}\) See figures quoted by R. Alston, in ‘Kosovar refugees’, *Senate: Official Hansard*, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 20\(^{th}\) April 1999, p. 3853: $3.5 million was given to the UNHCR, $1 million to the World Food Program, $500,000 to CARE Australia and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and $250,000 to World Vision and Australian Red Cross.

\(^{326}\) ‘$1m pledged for Kosovars’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6\(^{th}\) April 1999, p. 5. See also figures in Mann, ‘Sanctuary Found Amid the Chaos’, *op. cit.*

\(^{327}\) I. McPhedran, ‘$15m to provide shelter for 4000 refugees’, *The Daily Telegraph* (Morning Edition) 9\(^{th}\) April 1999, p. 8.

\(^{328}\) ‘$2m for refugees’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 13\(^{th}\) April 1999, p. 22.

the Howard Government in 1996 presented welfare organisations with enormous challenges, immediately imposing massive spending cuts on services to help the poor and disadvantaged. Howard’s social welfare policies amounted to a ‘substantial retrenchment of the welfare state.’

The analysis of “charity” in the Telegraph, Herald and Australian examined how news sources described acts, donations, costs and material objects that were undertaken or offered by both the Federal Government and the wider Australian community. The Herald publicised at least 430 charitable offerings, while the Telegraph and Australian noted around 300 and 270 respectively. A key issue is the question of how the Howard Government was able to legitimately dismantle social welfare institutions while exempting the Kosovars from this ideological practice.

Clive Hamilton et al explain this paradox by noting how the dominant political discourses of the Howard era were able to legitimate a dramatic shift in public expenditure from lower to middle income earners. They question why there was, through various schemes initiated by the Howard Government (such as Family Tax Benefit Plan B), an increasing amount of welfare and tax breaks available to middle income earners while those on lower incomes were increasingly excluded from such benefits. As Hamilton et al suggest, central to the Howard Government’s abilities to cut and then shift welfare expenditure away from the poorer sections of the Australian community was the Prime Minister’s consistent promulgation of the idea of a “crisis of the middle class”. The Howard Government’s policies substantiated this myth to the point that, ‘for every genuine battler there are three or four who imagine they fit the description.’ Hamilton et al comment: ‘That is why our political leaders keep the myth of the battler alive and exploit it for all it’s worth.’

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332 ibid., p. 133.
333 ibid.
One form of charity discussed by the media and offered by some individual Australians was billeting. The notion of inviting a stranger or strangers into the “sanctified” space of the Australian family home was symbolic, particularly in a period in which the notion of the “white picket fence” was central to popular political discourse.\textsuperscript{334} The offer to billet the refugees in Australian homes was mentioned on dozens of occasions across the newspaper sources and was repeatedly urged as an alternative mode of accommodation (instead of army bases) by Opposition leader Kim Beazley.\textsuperscript{335} The editor of \textit{The Australian} commented on the significance of billeting for the refugees: ‘That would reduce the emotional trauma for the refugees, many of them already suffering from the murderous break-up of the family unit at the hands of ethnic cleansing squads.’\textsuperscript{336} The \textit{Herald} noted the enthusiasm of one Australian resident: ‘A Mount Druitt disabled pensioner with one room to spare has offered to take in a [refugee] family.’\textsuperscript{337} Billeting was not an option explored by the Government, although there was nothing legally preventing refugees from leaving the barracks and staying with Australian families. The Immigration Minister did, however, make it clear that the Kosovar refugees would not be able to access any of the health benefits or other services available under the Safe Haven program outside of the barracks, thereby discouraging the refugees from dispersing into the community.\textsuperscript{338}

Excitement about the evacuation was captured in the \textit{Herald’s} front-page headline: ‘Australia Joins The Rescue’.\textsuperscript{339} The newspaper noted how Australia’s Governor-General Sir William Deane, patron of CARE Australia, had donated part of his ‘vice-regal salary’ to assist aid work in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{335} See references to Beazley and billeting in Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, \textit{op. cit}. See also reference to billeting in S. Lunn and S. Emerson, ‘Local Albanians offer refuge’, \textit{The Australian}, 8\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 8. The majority of terms or discussions that depicted “community excitement” centred on the notion of “billeting” across the newspaper sources. These concepts featured 14 times in the \textit{Telegraph}, 9 times in the \textit{Australian}, and 7 times in the \textit{Herald}.
\item \textsuperscript{336} ‘Milosevic shows his hypocrisy … as refugee policy is made on the run’ (editorial), \textit{op. cit}.
\item \textsuperscript{337} D. Dasey, ‘Aussies Open Arms to Refugees’, \textit{The Sun-Herald}, 11\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{338} See discussion of accommodation in I. McPhedran and S. Spencer, ‘TASBANIA – Hobart huts to house refugees’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{339} S. Mann, ‘Australia Joins the Rescue’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 1.
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refugee camps around Kosovo. Southern Cross Quilters, an organisation of 800 quilters from Australia and New Zealand, launched an appeal for hundreds of quilts as part of the Kosovo Quilt Drive which would culminate on the 15th May ‘Make A Quilt for Kosovo Day’. Sydney resident Maria Campo from Baulkam Hills delivered two bags to the Chester Hill Albanian Australian Community Centre, ‘brimming with clothes, shoes and stuffed toys, which her daughters, 10 and 4-year-old twins, had agreed to give up.’ Mrs Campo, the Telegraph wrote, said her family was heartbroken by the experiences of the refugees:

It really makes you grateful for what you have[.] I explained to the kids why they [the Kosovars] were coming here and they were happy to help. It’s just some clothes and shoes and some toys because they’ve got nothing.

Brian Dickey assesses the motivations of charity and welfare groups throughout Australian history, saying that the acts of these organisations intend to be universal ‘expressions of the dignity of human beings wholly admirable in intent.’ He urges caution towards those who may appear to have altruistic intentions, arguing for the need to recognise processes of objectification in acts of charity. That is, to identify how charitable groups have ‘treated the objects of action: the people being offered social welfare.’ Understanding charitable acts in this way provides an avenue for identifying ‘the dominant social and economic forces in society’; how hegemonic groups define who is deserving of assistance (often colloquially defined as the “deserving poor”); and the implications of that understanding for public offerings of assistance.
In varying degrees, the charity offered by Australians to the Kosovars was motivated by popular sentiments about Australia being the “most compassionate country in the world”. The evacuation very clearly allowed the Australian government to parade a positive image of the nation internationally and in the local media as “charitable” and “caring”. There is, however, an element of continuity in both the ways in which charity was offered to the Kosovars and the kind of assistance that has been offered to refugees, particularly those from the former Yugoslavia, since the Second World War. Australia had accepted 180,000 displaced persons (DPs) at this time for permanent resettlement, largely due to the leadership of Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell.347 The language employed in official resettlement policies to sell those refugees as “acceptable” to the Australian public in the late 1940s has continued to shape popular perceptions of Balkan groups in a variety of ways. The acceptability of these migrant groups was often achieved by accentuating their usefulness to the national economy. Most of those who came were contracted to undertake priority work schemes that required rigorous manual labour. Even when the migrants had high educational skills these were rarely recognised and they had a non-threatening class status as low-skilled workers.348

A similar feature in the media coverage surrounding the Kosovar evacuation was that the refugees did not appear to challenge popular notions about the racial superiority of British Australians. Of the post-war era, Egon F. Kunz says: ‘Australian insularity and xenophobia made it almost inevitable that to continue the [DP labour] program, charity had to be served up as utilitarian gain, and calculated gain as charity.’349 What developed was,

dogma that newcomers are “lucky to be here” [which] absolved the community from the responsibility to help the New Australians in any meaningful way. Indeed, it put the onus of contented

347 Kunz, op. cit., p. xvii.
348 ibid., p. 256. See also p. 164.
349 ibid., p. 256.
gratefulness on the immigrant, and ensured that any criticism from
them be rejected as ingratitude.\textsuperscript{350}

As evident in public discussions concerning the Kosovar evacuation,
notions of gratitude and egalitarianism in the Calwell era promoted the
ability of dominant Australian social groups to categorize who might be
considered worthy or unworthy of their assistance. These notions
strengthened perceptions held by these groups that they were members of
“valued” social and cultural categories. They also created, in this sense,
moral grounds for dominant groups to withdraw their offer of charity to the
Kosovars when they were no longer viewed by the public to need it.\textsuperscript{351}

Anne Summers, commenting in the \textit{Herald}: ‘found it heartening,
and affirming, last week when the rage and shame of talkback radio callers
forced a change of heart in the Government’.\textsuperscript{352} However, she questioned
the way ‘We can congratulate ourselves on our considerable compassion
quotient.’\textsuperscript{353} She cited figures showing how Australians had ‘dug deep’ on
a regular basis since the Vietnam war in support of a variety of
humanitarian crises, yet: ‘When put into perspective against other appeals,
our response to Kosovo while not stingy, is certainly not outstanding.’\textsuperscript{354}
The amounts given to some agencies in those cases still exceeded
donations for the Kosovo refugees. This brings to the fore questions about
the distribution of charity in Australia in light of the broader economic
climate typified by continuous growth in national wealth and falling
unemployment since the mid-1990s.\textsuperscript{355} As Summers says: ‘many of us

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\textsuperscript{350} \textit{ibid.}, p. 257. \\
\textsuperscript{351} See discussion on language, identities and social discourse in T. Purvis and A. Hunt,
\textsuperscript{352} A. Summers, ‘We Can Afford Much More For The Kosovars’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 15\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 15. \\
\textsuperscript{353} \textit{ibid.} \\
\textsuperscript{354} \textit{ibid.} She notes that in 1979 Australians had donated $11.25 million to the post-Pol Pot
Kampuchea appeal, and a similar amount to Rwanda five years before the Kosovo refugee
crisis. Australians had also ‘dug deep’, she points out, in support of the Papua New
Guinea drought and tidal wave in 1998. \\
\textsuperscript{355} M. Lyons, M. McGregor-Lowndes and P. O’Donoghue, ‘Researching Giving and
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have far more to give. The day the Government did its backflip on the Kosovo refugees, the Australian Stock Exchange hit an all-time high.\textsuperscript{356}

My analysis provides a clearer view of the ways in which the Howard Government attempted to appropriate popular empathy for the Kosovars as a means of developing political consensus. It demonstrates the response of the Federal Government in repositioning itself in line with public interests and re-establishing popular legitimacy following a growing backlash. The political discourse implicated in the Safe Haven program reflects an attempt by the Government to organise and naturalise a particular consensus ‘in which one class dominates another, becomes accepted as inevitable and desirable by most people.’\textsuperscript{357} However, the analysis accentuates the limitations of the assistance offered to the refugees, both in popular discourse and under the Safe Haven program. The context for popular empathy was heavily premised on the notion that the Kosovars were non-threatening along class, cultural and racial lines. The motivation behind these kinds of charitable offerings, albeit highly conditional, becomes much clearer when I examine the language surrounding the selection of the refugees for the evacuation program.

4. Selecting the Kosovars: Appropriate Candidates for Evacuation

4.1 The work of Australian Immigration officials at Stenkovac 1
The Federal Government created an operational task force on 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999 headed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), which included the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Health, Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet. Collectively these departments would determine the most suitable ways of proceeding with the operation and accommodating the Kosovars on their arrival. A team of eight DIMA officials working alongside the UNHCR were given the task of selecting potential candidates for evacuation to Australia, via a series of interviews with refugees at Stenkovac 1. Locating such persons was reportedly a simple process. DIMA officials conducted a

\textsuperscript{356} Summers, \textit{op. cit.}
‘door-kicking campaign’ of refugees’ tents. DIMA spokesperson Stewart Foster, who was also director of the department’s Public Affairs unit, told the Telegraph that those selected had been asked to meet several criteria. Firstly, abandoned or unattached women, especially those with children, were given high priority, followed by entire families. The team then concentrated on those who had not expressed any wish to be reunited with relatives in nearby European countries. Each family and individual refugee was required to sign a declaration in Albanian, indicating they understood the terms. That is, as stressed during the screening process, they understood that they would only be in Australia until able to return home. The Telegraph wrote: ‘It is understood that the main selection criteria for the refugees were health, fitness and a willingness to be moved out after three months.’

The selection of the Kosovars was promoted as an important part of Operation Safe Haven in the media. Much of the media coverage reassured the public that only the most desirable kinds of refugees would be selected for the evacuation program. It often appeared as though DIMA officials were far less concerned with evacuating those refugees who were perhaps most in need than those (who could be represented by the media as) persons who were healthy and willing to be compliant with the arrangements offered by the Federal Government. The Safe Haven Visa was designed, as stipulated in the Migration Legislation Amendment (Temporary Safe Haven Visas) Bill 1999, so that it could be granted at short notice by DIMA staff working in Macedonia with the UNHCR – in situations where Kosovar refugees had been stripped of their credentials by Yugoslav forces, and more extensive character checking was not possible. The paradox is that DIMA officials provided significant detail in the media about the kind of refugees being evacuated to Australia. They

359 ibid.
360 Gee and Skotnicki, op. cit. The reference to ‘three months’ relates to previous statements made by the Federal Government about the duration in which the Kosovar refugees would be allowed to stay in Australia under the proposed Safe Haven program.
often described the refugees in terms of those attributes that appealed to Howard voters - middle-class, family values, cleanliness and generally not too dissimilar to “mainstream” Australians.362

4.2 Media representations of the refugees selected for evacuation: constructing the “Other”
Sweeping assumptions were evident in media and Federal Government statements about the Kosovars prior to “getting to know them” through the evacuation program. The refugees, it was commonly assumed, were somewhat backward, uneducated and docile, ignorant of the world and particularly Australia. Media reports over the past year about the spiralling Kosovo conflict had consistently portrayed an image of the locals as farmers and villagers exiled from rural Kosovo, or living as dispossessed hill-folk attempting to evade the violence. The Telegraph often reported on “remote villages” being attacked by organised Serb military units, and “villagers” fleeing on tractors, carts and horses.363 Indeed, Balkan countries have been susceptible to some of the lowest educational and economic growth rates throughout the twentieth century.364 What was severely lacking before the NATO air strikes began, particularly in the Telegraph, were stories about how life was being experienced in the capital Pristina. Telegraph readers were given an overwhelming impression that Kosovars were industrially inept, living under primitive economic and political systems that were inefficient and sub-standard.

Government officials were somewhat startled to discover that Australia was to provide safe haven for refugees mainly from the provincial capital of Pristina, rather than the villages and backwaters of the Balkan countryside. According to ALP Senator Chris Schacht, who visited the Macedonian refugee camps as part of a parliamentary study mission in mid-April 1999:

362 See Brett, op. cit.
363 See for example J. Flieshman, ‘Go in and you’ll die; Tanks clear Kosovo villagers’, The Daily Telegraph, 6th July 1998, p. 21: ‘Serbian offensives to rout [the KLA] have skipped from village to village, as hundreds of families flee on tractors and horse carts.’
364 See, for instance, Kunz, op. cit., p. 117 and 133. He provides figures concerning the poor educational standards and literacy rates in Yugoslavia at the time when refugees from Balkan countries departed Europe for Australia in the late 1940s.
you are dealing with people who are well educated in the middle class/upper middle class who had comfortable lives and had very good houses in places such as Pristina. You are dealing with people who are tertiary educated – I met doctors, psychiatrists, school teachers, technicians and tradespeople – and even those from the farms are well educated and are running successful farms. You are not dealing with a Third World population of illiterate peasants.\footnote{C. Schacht, in ‘Migration Legislation Amendment (Temporary Safe Haven Visas) Bill 1999; In Committee’, Senate: Official Hansard, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 30\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, pp. 4639-4640.}

The image that the refugees were middle class was reaffirmed by various news reports. \textit{The Australian}, for instance, described how ‘the middle-class nature of the Stenkovac refugees’ had created ‘particular problems’ for staff providing aid there.\footnote{M. Stevens and S. Farrell, ‘Lost Jehona, 5, finds her place amid the exodus’, \textit{The Australian}, 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 1.} For Jo Hutton, an Australian citizen coordinating CARE Australia’s aid effort at Stenkovac, these problems included the range of items the refugees desired whilst awaiting resettlement: ‘Ms Hutton has to deliver some of the basic necessities of a middle-class life… “We need scissors to cut their hair, the men want razors, we need toys for the children, something for the teenagers to do. We are taking a table tennis table up there tomorrow”.’\footnote{J. Hutton, cited in \textit{ibid.}} DIMA’s Stewart Foster, speaking to the media at the Stenkovic 1 refugee camp, commented: ‘Of course, we have had people with a sense of adventure… One man told us he had always wanted to see the Australian Open tennis. Who knows? Maybe he will.’\footnote{In Wilson, ‘Happy to be on the plane out’, \textit{op. cit.}} He emphasised the point that some of those selected included nurses, a computer expert, businessmen and (the more expected) agricultural workers. As the \textit{Telegraph} described, generally, officials were ‘dealing with people of sharp intelligence.’\footnote{\textit{ibid.}}
Foster further commented: ‘Most of them understand that it’s two days in the plane’. 370

DIMA officials were susceptible to circumstantial pressures and opportunities during the selection process. The UNHCR reported abuse of its evacuation program by some Kosovars as ‘a rapid way of obtaining tickets to the West’. 371 According to one NGO: ‘UNHCR concedes that refugees have bought and sold places on departing planes, and falsified their identities.’ 372 UNHCR further reported that some refugees were deliberately seeking evacuation to particular countries. It is unclear whether Australian immigration officials participated in this kind of abuse of the UNHCR evacuation program. What is evident, however, is that the evacuation ‘allowed some governments to score public relations points by appearing “humanitarian” in receiving a limited number of “popular” refugees.’ 373 The significance of the Government’s political investment in the Safe Haven program - including a highly organised public relations campaign - presented staff from the Department of Immigration with opportunities to further their own careers. This is reflected in the language utilised by DIMA officials to describe evacuees in the media - one that promoted the “acceptability” of the Kosovars to the Australian public, and which emphasised “acceptable” qualities possessed by evacuees (such as high intellect and middle class credentials). The use of this type of language was criticised in The Australian by commentator Ramona Koval, who wrote: ‘And while hearts go out to refugees from Kosovo, who look like us and have middle-class clothes and mobile phones, in January an even bigger refugee crisis emerged from Sierra Leone… But those people are black, aren’t they? And they don’t have mobile phones.’ 374 This criticism is supported by figures that emerged in August 1999 in which Kosovar refugees had received 21 times more in humanitarian aid from the international community than those in Africa. Around 800,000 Kosovar refugees were given an average of $US13 per day in food and medical aid.

371 Barutciski and Suhrke, op. cit., p. 104.
372 ibid.
373 ibid., pp. 104-105.
374 R. Koval, ‘Come Over and Taste the Prejudice’, The Australian, 17th April 1999, p. 25
since the NATO intervention, while Africa refugees continued to receive only US$0.60 per day.  

Kunz notes the existence of similar sentiments in the methods employed by immigration officials dispatched to Europe to select immediate post-war refugees for resettlement in Australia. Much of the focus was on ‘Australia’s stringent health criteria’, resulting in the acceptance of predominantly younger age groups. The ‘search for quality’ consisted of recurrent references to ‘high quality’ and ‘finest quality’ in the migration officers’ vocabulary, and the ‘overeagerness to please Canberra by recruiting “high quality immigrants”’. Kunz adds, ‘the selection missions imposed a uniformity of youthfulness and health, which became the hallmark of Australia’s DP scheme’, and often meant ‘the rejection of illiterates’.

While Government and immigration spokespersons often promoted evacuees as acceptable, there remained an element of xenophobia in media discourse surrounding the evacuations. Ethnic “caging” is reflected in some of the language used to describe the Safe Haven evacuees in the media. That is, attempts by journalists to categorise (or “cage”) the Kosovars with patronising language and to represent them as unintelligent (both directly and by implication). Bruce Wilson’s article, ‘Kosovo refugees take off for Sydney’, was based on interviews with Kosovar refugees on their bus trip from the Stenkovic 1 camp to Skopje airfield before departing for Australia. Noting the refugees’ ignorance and emotional trauma, Wilson described how one man tugged on his sleeve, asking: ‘In Australia… will we be put in a house, or a hut? Will we have a roof? Will there be water?’ The journalist asked one of the women what they knew of Australia; she replied through an interpreter: ‘Nothing’. After a long pause, the woman went on: ‘Kangaroo.’ Such representations of the Kosovars

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376 Kunz, op. cit., p. 47.
377 ibid., p. 49 and 52.
378 ibid., p. 131.
379 Hage, White Nation, Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society, op. cit., p. 113.
381 ibid.
reflect similar sentiments publicised elsewhere by the *Telegraph* about the level of ‘intelligence’ displayed by the refugees.\(^{382}\) This patronising perspective of the Kosovars before their arrival is captured by columnist Ray Chesterton who surmised the potential for Australians to benefit from the cultural exchange brought by the evacuation. Noting the menu arranged for the refugees at East Hills barracks on their first day in Australia, he commented: ‘There could also be a jar or two of Vegemite on breakfast tables. Perhaps the cultural exchange will be both ways.’\(^{383}\)

Despite the Howard Government’s efforts to promote an image of the refugees as intelligent, “middle-class” people, there remained tension within news reports with long-standing stereotypes about Balkan migrants. Stereotypes about Balkan migrants have historical connections with the xenophobia embodied in the White Australia immigration policy, as well as the migrant labour programs introduced at the end of the Second World War. Jock Collins describes the experience of Central Eastern European refugees at this time who, after fulfilling their labour contracts with the Australian government, suffered substantial downward employment mobility in coming to Australia. One study emphasised ‘the devastating effects of loss of professional, vocational and social standing among East Central European intellectuals’.\(^{384}\) As Collins notes, university professors, surgeons, lawyers and artists were to be found on the production lines and undertaking a variety of manual labour work. He recognises the frustrations of one of these refugees who was unable to find more appropriate employment, citing: ‘The Australian migration policy does not allow the use of my intellectual values; the Australian society does not accept us at equals.’\(^{385}\) These migrants were inhibited by ‘a history of racial antagonism and xenophobia’ against refugee workers, labelled popularly as “reffos”.\(^{386}\) Central Eastern Europeans along with other

\(^{382}\) Wilson, ‘Happy to be on the plane out’, *op. cit.*
\(^{385}\) *ibid.*, p. 57.
\(^{386}\) *ibid.*
groups of “reffos” were acceptable to Australians as long as they remained in their “second class” roles.\textsuperscript{387}

The positioning of the Kosovars within Australian political discourse is not limited to the national sphere. Larry Wolff says that, in much of Western thought, the Balkans (which he views as part of Eastern Europe) have tended to assume the role of Western Europe’s internal “other”. He comments: ‘It was Eastern Europe’s ambiguous location, within Europe but not fully European, that called for such notions of backwardness and development to mediate between the poles of civilization and barbarism. In fact, Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century provided Western Europe with its first model of underdevelopment, a concept that we now apply all over the globe.’\textsuperscript{388} As K. E. Fleming says, for Wolff: ‘the Balkans provided Europe’s first experience of the other (and thus concretized the Western category of “Europe”)’.\textsuperscript{389}

In Australia, however, popular discourse has tended to promulgate precisely where Balkan refugees ought to be situated – as worthy of humanitarian assistance, though largely because of their supposed non-threatening class and cultural status. The experience of the Kosovars highlights the continuance of this humanitarian/racial superiority binary within Australian immigration history. This is noted by Kunz in his account of Australian attitudes towards refugees in the post-war era: ‘[The pressures to assimilate] often exerted with an air of generous naivety by well-meaning Australians ready to share their “superior culture” with the newcomers, were a potent cause of anxiety and resentment [for many refugees].’\textsuperscript{390}

\textsuperscript{387} ibid. See also Kunz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{389} Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1230.
\textsuperscript{390} Kunz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
4.3 Representations of the familiar

Summers was sceptical of the way in which the Kosovars were identified by relief agencies in their attempts to elicit financial support from the Australian public - as they competed for the ‘compassion dollar’.391 She wrote, ‘Agencies report a high degree of identification with the refugees: “People can really associate with them, they wear clothes like ours, they really feel for them”, says World Vision’s Ian Neil.’392 Despite the prevalence of negative stereotypes, “othering” and ethnic “caging”, those Kosovars selected for evacuation were overwhelmingly represented in the media as possessing what was typified as core Western lifestyles and social roles. The central role of the family in Kosovar life was commonly emphasised, as were the tastes and trends they shared with their host country.

The Telegraph mainly described the Kosovars, in relation to those involved with Operation Safe Haven, as “family people”, making 61 references to mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, aunts and uncles (and other family roles). These were the people who required Australia’s assistance. The newspaper referred to the refugees in a more general sense as “Europeans” (or “like us”) twice, while eliciting 11 references to the Kosovars as significantly “dissimilar, alien or “Other”, noting the language and cultural barriers they were likely to face upon coming to Australia.393 The Herald produced similar reports about the Kosovars, describing them in terms of their “family” titles on 56 occasions. The newspaper depicted the Kosovars as significantly “different, alien or Other” 11 times, while they were viewed in a much more general sense as “Europeans” 25 times. The Australian produced much less commentary about the Kosovars in this regard, describing them as “family” types on 21 occasions, and as “Europeans” and “dissimilar, alien or Other” six times respectively.

391 Summers, op. cit.
392 ibid.
393 Phrases and terms used to represent the Kosovars as “dissimilar, alien or Other” include an emphasis in news articles on the supposed linguistic, cultural, customary, political, physical, educational, economic, social and geographical differences between Kosovars and Australians. Terms used to describe the refugees as more generally “European” include references to ‘Europe’, ‘Europeans’, the refugees’ links to European places, as well as indicators of supposed similarities (such as wearing “clothes likes us”, some types of popular pastimes, films, TV shows, occupations, owning mobile phones, and “student” lifestyles).
The ideological purpose of these kinds of binaries in the media works to remove the Other from the bounds of the dominant moral community, while strengthening the appearance of the dominant group as superior within the discourse.\textsuperscript{394} Instances where the Kosovars appeared morally or culturally compatible with Australians, by the same measure, make implicit judgements about the hegemonic categories assigned to and used to displace less desirable social groups. Male refugees, teenagers Prindon Sadriu and Gent Prokshi, interviewed by the \textit{Telegraph} at Stenkovac 1 before their departure to Australia, were noted to be fans of the Australian television series \textit{Heartbreak High}.\textsuperscript{395} Labelled, ‘The new best mates’, Sadriu and Prokshi were depicted as typical teenage boys (pictured below). Wearing baseball caps and giving a “thumbs up” in the photograph, they were said to be ‘excited adventurers to a land that until a week ago had seldom entered their minds’.\textsuperscript{396} Sadriu, along with his parents, brother and sister, had fled from Gjilan (eastern Kosovo). It was also reported that Prokshi had urged his family of five to go to Australia, having fled Pristina at the height of Serbian atrocities. The \textit{Herald} further noted the importance of \textit{Heartbreak High} to Kosovar youths in the article ‘Flight to land of Heartbreak High’. One young refugee, who had informed the \textit{Herald} that his relatives had disappeared, honed-in on how ‘All the kids in Kosovo love that movie’.\textsuperscript{397}

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\textit{‘The family’, ‘The teenage girl’ and ‘The new best mates’ at Stenkovac 1, in The Daily Telegraph, 6\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 4}

\textsuperscript{394} S. Dagistanli, “‘Like a pack of wild animals’; Moral panics around “ethnic” gang rape in Sydney”, in Poynting and Morgan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 194.

\textsuperscript{395} ‘The new best mates’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 6\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{396} ibid.

\textsuperscript{397} E. Leqiei, cited in B. Lagan, ‘Flight to land of Heartbreak High’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 5.
Seventeen-year-old Valmira Abazi (pictured above), interviewed before her departure to Australia, was depicted as a *typical* teenage girl, ensuring that the *Telegraph’s* photographer avoided capturing her ‘baggy pair of camouflage combat fatigues.’ Describing Ms Abazi as ‘Clothes conscious’, the article stated: ‘Refugee camp or not, girls want to look their best for the camera.’ It was reported that Pridon Sadriu was Abazi’s ‘new boyfriend’ who she met at Stenkovac 1. Abazi’s father had been an economist in Pristina, and, along with her brother and sister (aged 16 and 14), had ‘lived a comfortable life in Pristina’. It was reported that her father’s telecommunications company had been stormed by Serb forces - thought to be used by Albanian activists – along with the family home. Media portrayal of the Kosovars in these ways affirms Sharon Pickering’s study on the Australian media and discourse about refugees. Pickering found that the ‘ideal refugee’ was typically represented as passive, invited and visibly grateful. Abazi was not only submissive for the cameras, she also professed strong family-ties, and was willing to work with the *Telegraph* in its attempts to position her as “acceptable” for the evacuation program.

Families of a variety of shapes and sizes were pictured in the *Telegraph* patiently waiting at Stenkovac 1 to be evacuated to Australia. These descriptions reinforced the idea that family-*type* people had been selected by the Department of Immigration for temporary relocation to Australia. The symbolic weight of the *family* in reports about the evacuation is linked to the prominent position of family politics during the era of the Howard Government. Popular notions of the “traditional” Australian family were central to many of the Howard Government’s policies. The *Telegraph*’s emphasis on “family” values reaffirms its place, compared to the *Herald* and *Australian*, as most supportive of the broader political agenda Howard Government – one that was highly geared towards

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399 *ibid.*
400 *ibid.*
401 Pickering, *op. cit.*., p. 177.
402 See, for instance, Wilson, ‘Smiles that say thanks’, *op. cit.* The focus here is on the sixteen-member Rasimi family.
upholding the sanctity of the “traditional” Australian family. This kind of media discussion promoted consensus for the Government’s Safe Haven program. It was not only useful for the Howard Government in re-establishing support after considerable backlash, it further supported the way Howard had mobilised cultural conservatism, a crucial factor in successive election victories for the Prime Minister.

Further to this are the continuing historical ramifications impacting on refugee policy which have tended to pander to an element of xenophobia. Kunz notes that politicians attempting to sell the post-war migrant and refugee intake from Europe were compelled ‘to cater to pressure groups and flatter the egos of their constituents’ in order to sustain their political careers. He adds:

Those few, like [Immigration Minister] Calwell, who tried to do better, could only counter the prevailing xenophobia by portraying the [displaced persons] as patient, willing to take anything, eager to learn anything, happy New Australians who were perennially smiling into cameras and ever ready to change into national costumes… This reassuring presentation of so many foreigners, up until then resented and feared, helped to disarm opposition to the [migrant labour work] scheme, but at the same time made the hosts smug in their belief that they and their government had done enough for the refugee. Hence, if an immigrant had any complaint, he must have been exceptional: an ungrateful person, badly selected.

**Conclusion: Humanitarianism, Politics and the Implementation of the Temporary Safe Haven Visa**

The evacuation of the Kosovars to Australia was co-ordinated alongside a dramatic new direction for Australian refugee policy based on the rationale

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403 See discussion of Howard’s “family values” in Hamilton and Deniss, *op. cit.*, p. 142. See also Maddox, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

404 Kunz, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

405 *ibid.*
of temporary protection. As Jupp commented in *The Australian People*, the
Kosovo refugee crisis not only mobilised the Australian community behind
charitable activities, ‘[it] also marked an important shift in refugee policy
towards temporary protection rather than permanent settlement.’
Kelly commented on the significance of these changes, describing the Safe
Haven program as ‘a significant and historic change in Australia’s
immigration policy, which, presumably, was neither recommended by
Ruddock or his department.’ In this sense, the Safe Haven program was
implemented in conjunction with a variety of strategies for appropriating
popular consensus following a dramatic policy backflip undertaken by the
Federal Government.

The politicking surrounding the implementation of the Safe Haven
program reflects a populist response from the Howard Government. The
editor of *The Australian* aptly described the early stages of the
development of the Safe Haven program as ‘policy on the run’, as the
Howard Government scrambled to formulate a strategy that would regain
public favour. This chapter has demonstrated how, in each of the
responses made by the Howard Government to the Kosovo refugee crisis, it
worked to maintain the position from which it was able to retain popular
support. The initial refusal to oblige the UNHCR evacuation request
denotes the deployment of popular xenophobia by the Howard
Government. Under other circumstances - such as, for instance, the arrival
of Chinese “boat people” in 1999 - a “tough” stance on refugees remained
popularly desirable. The reversal of this decision was a symbolic attempt to
re-establish a perception of the Howard Government as compassionate and
in-line with popular interests.

The Safe Haven policy was the result of a highly successful
political compromise by the Howard Government. It embodied the
conservatism of the Government and demonstrated the ability of leading
Cabinet members, particularly the Prime Minister, to capitalise on popular

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406 J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and
407 Kelly, ‘Knee-jerk response to Kosovo crisis’, *op. cit.*
408 ‘Milosevic shows his hypocrisy … as refugee policy is made on the run’ (editorial), *op.
cit. See also Lyons, ‘Take A Bet On Our Generosity’, *op. cit.*, who also describes the Safe
Haven program as ‘policy on the run.’
sentiment. The Government significantly benefited by pandering to public pressure and acting compassionately towards “popular” refugees. This image was bolstered by an emphasis on the kinds of refugees selected for evacuation in the media - those deemed middle class, family-types and White Europeans.

The Howard Government’s refugee policy changes in 1999 were, in no small measure, impacted upon by international forces, particularly in relation to the US’ lead role in the NATO military campaign against Yugoslavia. The Government undertook these changes with an eye on both the national political arena and how Australia was being perceived internationally as a “good world citizen”. The Government’s response was heavily influenced by a policy of compliance with US foreign strategy.
Chapter 3: The Kosovar Refugee Arrival and its Politicisation in the Media

Introduction
The first group of Kosovar refugees arrived in Australia on 7th May 1999 suffering from experiences of war, personal loss and State-sponsored atrocities. When the first refugee flight landed at Sydney airport the Kosovars encountered significant media interest. They were formally greeted by the Prime Minister. This chapter explores the ways in which the Howard Government politicised the Kosovars’ arrival and attempted to bolster support for its response to the refugee crisis. In particular, the aim is to show how aspects of the media worked to legitimate the leadership of the Howard Government, and analyse the implications of this approach for Operation Safe Haven.

This chapter traces the journey of the refugees aboard the initial flight to Australia, the emotional welcome they encountered at Sydney airport and the experience of the first Kosovars to arrive at the East Hills Safe Haven. The media presented the Howard Government in a favourable light throughout the arrival. Significantly, there were a range of limitations imposed on the media by the Federal Government during this episode. The Government tightly regulated access to the refugees which increased the importance of the media as a mediator between the general public and the Government. The news coverage underlines the importance of the media in reproducing the agenda of powerful political groups.

The arrival provided the news media with an opportunity to celebrate and “parade” Australian national values. The newspaper media frequently portrayed the Kosovars as relinquishing the lives they had known in Yugoslavia for a “new” and “better life” in Australia. Media sources analysed in this chapter positioned the Howard Government as central to this parade. They portrayed the Prime Minister as an exemplary political leader. The analysis demonstrates how the news media supported perceptions about the moral qualities of the Howard Government, its
nationalist platform and the appropriateness of the temporary Safe Haven Visa program.

In this chapter I examine news reports from the Telegraph, Herald and Australian. This includes content analysis of news (general), features, opinion columns and editorials drawn from the first five days following the landing of the first plane of refugees in Sydney (7th to 11th May 1999). The intention is to analyse media representations of the first plane landing - a highly co-ordinated and pre-planned media event - and the ways in which it generated publicity for the Howard Government over the course of the week that followed. This chapter has also drawn attention to images and letters to the editor that accompanied or responded to these articles. Newspaper reports assisted in the Government’s attempts at gaining consensus on the changes to refugee policy.

1. The Initial Plane Ride to a Safe Haven
The Howard Government embarked on Operation Safe Haven as a plan for temporary resettlement, responding to international obligations and growing pressure from within the Australian community. Despite having formally requested Australia’s assistance to evacuate refugees on 5th April 1999, the UNHCR’s humanitarian evacuation program (HEP) stalled for several weeks. This was mainly due to the concerns of some of the organisation’s members over the legal rights of refugees being granted temporary protection in Convention countries around the world. Under pressure from the US, the UNHCR resumed the evacuation program despite being what Barutciski and Suhrke describe as a ‘hesitant participant’.411

409 This included 13 in the Australian (including Weekend Australian), 17 in the Telegraph (including Sunday Telegraph) and 16 in the Herald (including Sun-Herald).
410 The dates beyond this were excluded from the content analysis due to the fact that the first group was transferred out of Sydney to Brighton barracks in Tasmania on 11th May.
411 Barutciski and Suhrke, op. cit., p. 99. The program was halted on 10th April and resumed on 17th April 1999. Australia was not officially asked to evacuate the refugees it had selected for evacuation over the past month until 1st May 1999. It is noted here, quoting UNHCR, that the HEP was a ‘source of dissention among the protection staff’, that ‘Non-HEP protection staff question the compatibility of HEP with our core function to promote the right to seek asylum in a Convention signatory State.’
The UNHCR formally renewed its request to the Australian Federal Government for assistance on 1st May 1999, asking for the evacuation of the refugees to commence. The first refugee flight to Australia departed on 5th May 1999, in which 414 exiled Kosovars were flown from Skopje to Rome, Bangkok and then finally to Sydney. The Telegraph published a photograph of smiling refugees on its front-page as they boarded a Qantas aeroplane (see Appendix 2), alongside the headline, ‘Sanctuary and hope in Sydney’. It was implied that the refugees were happy to be relinquishing their former lives for the protection and opportunities offered to them in Australia.

On the evening of 7th May 1999, the refugees landed at Sydney airport after a 22-hour flight from Rome aboard a Qantas Boeing 747. It was the first of ten chartered flights arranged by the Federal Government to temporarily relocate almost 4000 Kosovar refugees to Australia. The group comprised 216 males and 194 females – 27 under the age of two – and eight over the age of 60, including a 95-year-old man. The refugees had watched Patch Adams during the flight, a popular American film that the Telegraph called ‘emotionally safe viewing’. The image given by the newspaper portrayed operational workers as treating the Kosovars with significant amounts of care and caution.

Journalists from the Telegraph, Australian and the Herald obtained access to the flight from Rome to Sydney, situated alongside ‘refugees jam-packed into economy class’. Journalists Doug Conway and John Hamilton relayed their account after being aboard the refugee flight from Bangkok to Sydney. Some students among the refugees were browsing a map, the journalists said, who took note of ‘the longitude and latitude of

412 The original plan was to evacuate 440 Kosovars. However, some of the refugee families had decided not to fly to Australia.
413 See Jones, op. cit., p. 1 (continued p. 4).
their Australian landfall and possibly a new life. As the newspaper suggested, for Australians, the ‘landfall’ offered to the Kosovars was something special, not to mention highly irregular for a country with a history of tough immigration policies. There was no question, at least for the Telegraph, that the “compassion” shown by Australians to the refugees was paramount in their survival. 

In reports about the flight, it was said that the Australian cabin crew were, in no small measure, going to extraordinary lengths to assist the evacuees. The Kosovars were served ‘specially prepared’ halal food provided by cabin crew aboard the flight and the children were kept busy ‘playing with new toys given to them by Qantas staff and drawing furiously in colouring books.’ The Herald pointed out: ‘There was even a caretaker brought from Australia to clean toilets in flight.’ There was the underlying sense in these reports that it was Australians who would benefit most from the exchange by vindicating their innate altruistic character. As the Telegraph (and the Herald) highlighted: ‘Many of the Qantas crews on each sector volunteered for the privilege of serving the refugees.’ Noting the efforts of the flight crew, the newspaper seized the opportunity to present Operation Safe Haven as exemplary and indicative of the moral fortitude of the Howard Government.

Conway and Hamilton described how, for those refugees who spoke English aboard the flight, the questions posed to the journalists ‘never stopped’. Some of these included:

What was our money like? How long would it take for a letter posted in Australia to reach Europe? Would they be allowed to go to school? Would they be allowed to go to University? What would Australians think of them? How big was Australia? What were its

417 J. Hamilton and D. Conway, ‘Cheers, tears as refugees touch down to freedom’, The Daily Telegraph, 8th May 1999, p. 4.
418 ibid.
420 Hamilton and Conway, op. cit. See also Lagan, ‘Politics triumphs over comfort in Kosovo flight’, op. cit.
The Kosovars were portrayed as excited and inquisitive travellers who were anticipating some of the freedoms that might be available to them in Australia. A tension emerged in the *Telegraph*’s narrative, which would continue throughout its coverage, between the idea that the Kosovars were somewhat backward and poor and indications of their social status as middle class and educated. In one sense, for the *Telegraph*, the flight to Australia offered a world of opportunity to the Kosovars unlike anything they had been able to explore while living in Yugoslavia. It was the perception that Operation Safe Haven had allowed the refugees to experience a more democratic system of government and a better way of life in general by being temporarily relocated to Australia. This was despite the reality that the Safe Haven program - which resulted in the refugees being largely dependant on (and hence confined) to army bases - significantly limited the opportunities for the Kosovars to travel, obtain education and experience Australian life without restrictions imposed by the Australian government.

For Shefshet Kaqkini, one of the refugees interviewed during the flight, Australia offered the chance of a “new life” and to start over. It was noted that Mr Kaqkini’s son had been decapitated and his wife had been ‘stabbed in the heart’. Mr Kaqkini stated, through an interpreter: ‘I want to show Australia the reality of what is happening in Kosovo. I love my family. But I must accept what has happened. I must live. I am going to live again. I think I am going to find myself in Australia. You are peaceful people, kind people.’ Australia’s generosity was described as overwhelming for Mr Kaqkini who was worried that Australia was spending too much money helping Kosovo’s refugees. An interpreter for

421 Hamilton and Conway, *op. cit.*  
422 *ibid.*  
423 *ibid.*
Mr Kaqkini said: ‘He feels you are now his family. He is worrying about you.’ The interpreter added, ‘This man [Mr Kaqkini] is incredible.’

The *Australian* published four images captured by Grant Turner, a photographer aboard the flight from Rome. The central figure of the photographs (see Appendix 4) was: ‘An elderly woman, travelling alone, [who] sat silently for the entire 22-hour journey.’ The woman, wearing a headscarf, was consistent with many images of Kosovar Albanians depicted as village-peasants which had been published in the media over the previous few months. The newspaper was surprised to find, as the caption read: ‘they were well-educated and many had good English.’ In the photographs the refugees appeared excited about coming to Australia. In one photograph, ‘Passengers scramble[d] to portholes to gain their first glimpse of the Australian coastline’. It was the sense that a world of freedom awaited them.

The *Herald* emphasised two aspects on the morning before the arrival, including the ‘rush’ by Kosovar refugees to sign up to come Australia, and the similarities between Kosovar and Australian youths. A photograph on the front page of the *Herald* (below) depicted this “rush” as somewhat aggressive, with the caption: ‘Next stop, Sydney’. It further described how: ‘Kosovar refugees in the Stenkovac camp in Macedonia crowd around the noticeboard listing those chosen to fly to sanctuary in Australia.’ The *Herald* contrasted this desperate image with the excitement expressed by several youths about being able to see the country in which the Australian film *Heartbreak High* had originated. The 18-year old male refugee, Eashkim Leqie, told the *Herald* that he knew nothing of Australia except for this film which was ‘his favourite movie’. Leqie stated: ‘All the kids in Kosovo love that movie’. Another young man,

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424 ibid.
425 ibid.
427 ibid.
428 ibid.
430 ibid.
431 Lagun, ‘Flight to land of Heartbreak High’, *op. cit.*
432 E. Leqie, cited in ibid.
25-year old Niti Arianit, commented that he had seen *Heartbreak High* three times. The idea was that Australians ought to extend their compassion to the refugees because they were just “like us”.

The newspaper media presented the Kosovars as extraordinary survivors during the flight. They had overcome the persecution suffered under the Yugoslav regime. These reports are indicative of the effects of the media discourse used, particularly by the *Telegraph*, to mobilise public support for Operation Safe Haven. The refugees were portrayed by the *Telegraph* as highly deserving of compassion and overwhelming in their gratitude for the Australian government’s offer to evacuate them. More importantly, the refugees were positioned on one side of a binary that highlighted everything that was “good” about Australia (its compassion and values), as opposed to all that was “wrong” with Yugoslavia.

Even before the Kosovars had arrived in Australia, there was a significant aspect of media coverage that represented them as coming from an alien, backward world much different to Western European societies. Fleming says that the perception of Southern Europeans as somewhat alien or “Others” extends from a general historical disconnect between colonial (and post-colonial) European cultures and the Balkans. Assumptions in both the popular media and intellectual literature over the last several hundred years have resulted in the development of fears in the West about
Balkan cultures as “unstable” and that such an influence might bring the “uncivilised” to the “civilised” world. Fleming says: ‘The Balkans’ liminal status – at the interstices between worlds, histories, and continents – is tantamount not so much to marginality as to a sort of centrality. To be “liminal”, after all, is to be between (and overlapping) two (or more) domains, while to be marginal is merely to be at the edges of one.’\(^{433}\)

There has emerged, Fleming argues, in much of Western thought the notion that Southern Europeans constitute an “inside other”. This is due to ‘Western Europe’s uncertainty as to where to place them’.\(^{434}\)

The media have played an important role in the dissemination of these kinds of conceptions of Balkan peoples in Australia. Mass print media assert significant powers by working to legitimate a particular agenda about the popularly conceived nation, as well as its culture and interests. This is often undertaken in a process of juxtaposition: by exemplifying and parading a particular set of ideal national traits and denoting symbolic national boundaries in depictions of the national “Other”. This juxtaposition can be viewed in how the Kosovars were simultaneously constructed to embody White national traits, whilst being used to depict “otherness” as a marker of national boundaries. As stated by Zlatko Skrbis, Loretta Baldassar and Scott Poynting, national belonging has the capacity to be ‘enacted, displayed, paraded, exaggerated and frequently articulated in the jargon of essentialism and authenticity.’\(^{435}\)

The excited tone of the in-flight reports indicates how the news press utilised the arrival as an opportunity to parade Australian, including White Christian, national values as morally praiseworthy. This binary about the Kosovars continued throughout the media’s coverage of Operation Safe Haven.

2. The Arrival as a Media Event
There was a large media presence at the arrival of the first evacuation flight at Sydney airport. The landing was attended by high-profile government

\(^{433}\) Fleming, *op. cit.*, p. 1232.
\(^{434}\) *ibid.*, p. 1231.
\(^{435}\) Skrbis, Baldassar and Poynting, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
representatives, including John Howard, Philip Ruddock, and Opposition Immigration spokesperson Con Sciacca. As DIMA stated, the sizeable media presence was an important part of the landing ceremony and a highly coordinated affair:

The [DIMA] Public Affairs team was responsible for managing the immense media interest the Operation generated in [the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia] and Australia. More than 120 media representatives were present for the arrival of the plane carrying the first group to Australia. Public Affairs Officers were temporarily located in [Macedonia] and at each safe haven to manage the continuing strong media interest.\footnote{Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), ‘Annual Report 1998-99; “Operation Safe Haven”.’ URL: <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/1998-99/html/safe.htm>. Accessed 4\textsuperscript{th} February 2009.}

The public was shut out of the media event, as The Australian wrote: ‘Media security was tight, with journalists and photographers required to show two forms of identification. While Sydney radio stations had earlier in the week been encouraging Sydneysiders to be at the airport to welcome the refugees, no public access was permitted.’\footnote{J. Scott, L. McIlveen and J. Hamilton, ‘Safely Into Our Arms – 7.16pm – Deliverance for 410 Kosovars’, The Australian, 8\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 1.} The fact that the public was not allowed to greet the refugees, however, was not publicised by the Telegraph which attempted to position the Prime Minister as surrounded by public acolytes. When the refugees exited the plane, the newspaper described how they were met with ‘clapping’, ‘cheering’, and a barrage of camera flashes, welcoming speeches and ceremonial pomp.\footnote{Hamilton and Conway, op. cit. See also references to ‘clapping’ and ‘cheers’ in Scott, McIlveen and Hamilton, op. cit.} Documenting each moment, the Telegraph promoted the arrival as a way of demonstrating unity between the goodwill of the Australian people and the moral standing of the Howard Government. The Federal Government had experienced significant media backlash a month before the arrival of the Kosovars when it rejected the UNHCR’s request to temporarily relocate some of the refugees waiting for assistance along the border of
Macedonia. The official welcoming offered by the Prime Minister allowed him to assume a central role in media coverage of the event. It was an attempt to regain public support.

Broadly favourable media coverage of the Prime Minister was a likely outcome because the Immigration Department carefully managed public relations surrounding the Kosovar refugees. I noted earlier how the media was granted limited access to the refugees during their arrival. The *Herald* commented on this situation, noting how the Immigration Department was ‘keeping the media away from the refugees for a few days.’  

Ruddock stated this was because of concerns for the psychiatric welfare of the refugees: ‘They are not circus animals to be dealt with as a matter of perverse interest’. Nonetheless, a handful of journalists did gain access to the East Hills barracks over the next few days. Their reports shaped the image of the Kosovars in a particular (though highly regulated) light. Evident here were attempts by the Government to mobilise popular acclaim via the media behind particular shades of truth. As Nicholas Rose states, in assessing the mobilisation of consent what matters is ‘analysing what counts as truth, who has the power to define truth, the role of different authorities of truth, and the epistemological, institutional and technical conditions for the production and circulation of truths.’

The *Telegraph’s* choice of language and imagery supported the Howard Government, capturing the determination of the Prime Minister to be perceived as welcoming the refugees “with open arms”. In newspaper reports ‘words and language used are deliberate choices… the choices are not just about accuracy but about portrayal, imagery and representation.” The *Telegraph* consistently represented the Prime Minister in a favourable light throughout its coverage of the Kosovar refugees because the populist sentiments promoted by Howard supported the ideological platform of the newspaper and its readership. The *Telegraph* highlighted the central role

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439 Stephens and Darby, op. cit.
440 Ruddock, cited in *ibid*.
played by the Howard Government in Operation Safe Haven in its coverage of the landing ceremony. It noted how the refugees participated in a formal ceremony to be welcomed by the Prime Minister, before being delivered to the safe haven that awaited them at East Hills. Tracing the ceremonial procedure, the event was represented by the Telegraph with ‘deliberate choices’ of imagery that lent moral weight to the leadership of the Prime Minister and produced favourable publicity for the Howard Government in a more general sense.443

The next morning, the front-page of the Telegraph described how the refugees had arrived ‘SAFE IN OUR ARMS’. Coverage of the landing was dominated by the theme of tears - of sadness, relief and elation. Photographs depicted the Kosovars leaving the Qantas jet, stepping onto the tarmac and into the terminal overwhelmed with tears and wiping their eyes (see Appendix 3). Ray Chesterton commented in his front-page

![Image of young Kosovar refugee with toy plane](image)

This image of a young Kosovar refugee with a toy plane in his hand dominated the cover of The Daily Telegraph on 8th May 1999

443 ibid.
report: ‘Australia’s newest visitors broke down and cried last night as they embraced freedom in a new country far away from war-torn Kosovo.’\textsuperscript{444} Even the Prime Minister, who attended the arrival, ‘was close to tears himself as he welcomed the Kosovars to Australia.’\textsuperscript{445} Chesterton wrote: ‘The journey from the insanity of Kosovo to the compassion of Australia is beyond measurement.’\textsuperscript{446} The moment was summarised as: ‘Feelings of relief, apprehension and joy jumbled around the turbulent atmosphere as Sydney opened its heart to the Kosovars. Men and women wiped tears from their tired eyes as they left the plane while children embraced trauma teddies and other gifts with wide smiles.’\textsuperscript{447}

The Kosovars were portrayed as “overwhelmed” and “emotionally fragile” in a majority of \textit{Telegraph} articles, while in lesser degrees they were depicted as “relieved”, “excited” and “crying”. The crowd and government officials were described as overwhelmed by the emotion as well and the number of times “tears” was mentioned or implied (29) is indicative of the weight the image carried for the arrival for \textit{Telegraph} readers. The emotional climax of the entire airport being a scene of tears bolstered the perception that Operation Safe Haven was the result of the moral resolve of the Australian government to assist the refugees. For the most part these linguistic choices were similar in the \textit{Herald} and \textit{Australian}, although “tears” featured much less in \textit{The Australian} (five times) and was mentioned only three times in the \textit{Herald}.\textsuperscript{448} The \textit{Herald} focussed more on the refugees being “relieved” to have landed in Australia, while \textit{The Australian} centred more on the Kosovars being “emotionally fragile” rather than “crying”.

A major difference between each of the newspapers’ coverage of the arrival was the emotive images used to capture the scene at the airport. The \textit{Telegraph} pictured the Kosovars wiping tears from their eyes with

\textsuperscript{444} Chesterton, ‘SAFE IN OUR ARMS: Sydney greets refugees’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1. He also described how 21 year-old refugee Fatima ‘wept’ as she said: ‘I think Australia is a beautiful country.’ Fatima’s ‘eyes filled with tears’ and she ‘wept openly’ as she remembered two brothers and a sister left behind in Kosovo.
\textsuperscript{445} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{446} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{447} \textit{ibid.}, p. 1 and p. 4.
\textsuperscript{448} See ‘It’s not the homeland, but it is a homely land’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 11\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 6.
their heads front or down and looking very tired (see Appendix 3). On the other hand, *The Australian* captured on its front page an image of a smiling child refugee giving a peace sign with his forefingers, surrounded by dozens of others holding their heads up and patiently waiting (see Appendix 4). The caption read: ‘A symbol of love and a victory sign from a small child’.\(^{449}\) By comparison, *The Australian* captured a less grief-stricken image of the refugees at the airport than the *Telegraph* which reflected broader stylistic differences between the newspapers in discussing the issue.

The images of the Kosovars’ arrival presented a view that all those involved in Operation Safe Haven had been “carried away” by the emotion of the landing, despite the stylistic differences between the newspapers. Responding to this sentiment, the *Telegraph*’s coverage of the arrival focussed significantly on the idea of the Kosovars being offered a “new home” by the Australian government. It was, the *Telegraph* suggested, Australia’s goodwill and compassion that had delivered the Kosovars to a “new life” and “freedom”:

> Teenagers threw their arms into the air in delight and waved to the crowd as they clambered down the stairs to a new life, free of pain and suffering.\(^{450}\)

The image was one of relief and elation, reinforcing the perception that the Australian government had delivered the Kosovars to a new life motivated by a sense of compassionate obligation. Chesterton noted how the refugees regarded Australia as a ‘safe country’ without enemies where they could relax from the horrors of war ‘without having to look over their shoulder’.\(^{451}\) The *Telegraph* described in one headline how ‘Life starts anew for hell’s exiles’, with the evacuation presenting an opportunity for the refugees to start over.\(^{452}\) It was noted, though exhausted by the long

\(^{450}\) Chesterton, ‘SAFE IN OUR ARMS: Sydney greets refugees’, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
\(^{451}\) *ibid.*
\(^{452}\) Harris and Westwood, *op. cit.*
journey, ‘the refugees’ relief and gratitude was palpable’ for being offered such an opportunity.453

3. Media Representations of the Temporary Safe Haven Policy

The political response of the Howard Government was a deliberate attempt at mobilising ‘the domains or entities to be governed: to govern one must act upon [a range of] forces, instrumentalize them in order to shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions.’454 The kinds of images that dominated media coverage of the Kosovar arrival complemented the Federal Government’s attempts at generating favourable publicity, particularly the notion that it had acted compassionately and generously. There were significant differences between the Telegraph, Herald and Australian’s treatment of the arrival, particularly in relation to the level of emotive verbiage. Analysis of the Telegraph’s use of the terms “new home” and “temporary home” around the time of the arrival revealed preferential treatment of the former. The concept “new home” was used at least 14 times during the first week of the arrival, about one-and-a-half times more than “temporary home”. This preferred position of the newspaper is in clear contrast to what various other studies have revealed about media representation of refugee policy during the era of the Howard Government.455 The idea of the Kosovars being offered a “new home” in Australia conflicted with the aims of the Safe Haven program and the rationale of temporary protection on which it was premised.

The idea of “temporary home” was retained by the Herald, in which the idea of “new home” was mentioned only twice, while “temporary home” was noted 12 times. The Herald was adamant: ‘the Howard Government was right to provide temporary sanctuary … But it is also right that the refugees be prepared to return home when conditions

453 ibid.
454 Rose, op. cit., p. 4.
The Herald cited, uncritically, Ruddock’s comments about the possibility of accepting any further refugees from the UNHCR under the temporary arrangements: ‘We want to be generous, but the responses we take need to be appropriate.’ The idea of a “new home” was only drawn on by the Herald in making the distinction between the “lesser” life the Kosovars has known and the “better” life they were being offered in Australia: ‘For [refugee] Valmira Abazi, the contrast between a bleak existence as a refugee on the Macedonian border and a new life in Australia could not be more jolting… She is desperate to see Sydney while she is in Australia – to visit sights like the Opera House and Taronga Zoo which she knows only from picture books.

The Australian also favoured the idea of “temporary home”, which was drawn on seven times, while “new home” was only mentioned twice in the first week of arrival coverage. The Australian’s use of “temporary home” was less emotive than the Telegraph’s, resisting the popular inclination to become carried away by the emotion surrounding the Safe Haven program and focussing more so on policy suitability and the obligations of the Federal Government to assist the refugees on arrival. Although The Australian tended to support the notion that Australia was obligated to provide a temporary rather than permanent home, the newspaper encouraged a sensitive response by the Australian government under the obligations set out in the Safe Haven policy. As the editor of The Australian wrote:

Australia’s duty of care and respect extends beyond material comforts… they are not in custody. They should be allowed to make contact, if and when they want, with the Australian Albanian community and beyond… Australians must also recognise that our

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456 ‘Haven and a Reason to Hope’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 8th May 1999, p. 44.
commitment to Kosovar refugees extends beyond three months…

The Federal Government, with tact and sensitivity, should realise this and allow for the possibility [to stay in Australia] sooner rather than later.\footnote{1}

This is further reflected in a report by Matthew Stevens, published on 8\textsuperscript{th} May. He cautioned that: ‘Australian immigration workers at Stenkovac understand the Government’s policy. Privately, many of them also know the desperate reality that faces the refugees… [Australia is] a nation that has accepted the challenge of a multicultural future and rejected the cause of ignorance and racism. How can it justify images of Kosovars […] being dragged against their will back on to the jumbo jets which brought them to Australia?’\footnote{2}

This indicates a significant disjuncture in the narratives employed by the newspapers in supporting the Howard Government during the Kosovar refugee arrival. The \textit{Telegraph} was to promote a punitive stance against the Kosovars over the next three months. Its momentary adoption of “new home” is viewed critically as a means of corroborating the broader human-interest story unfolding in the newspaper’s arrival narrative. While the \textit{Telegraph}, Sydney’s most popular newspaper, went to some lengths to promote the notion of “new home”, the \textit{Herald} and \textit{Australian} were much more reserved in their attempts to galvanise an emotional audience response.

The contrast is made clearer in comparing the editorials of \textit{The Australian} and the \textit{Telegraph} following the arrival. While the editorial of \textit{The Australian} (8\textsuperscript{th} May) focussed on the ‘Freedom’ of the refugees upon landing in Australia, commenting on government policy, the \textit{Telegraph} (9\textsuperscript{th} May) centred on ‘our hearts’ and ‘Aussie mateship’.\footnote{3} The \textit{Telegraph} orientated the focus of arrival coverage via a particular brand of popular, nationalist discourse and iconography. On the other hand, \textit{The Australian} presented a more sophisticated, rational response with some consideration

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{1} ‘Freedom a basic need for refugees’ (editorial), \textit{The Australian}, 8-9\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 18.
\footnote{2} M. Stevens, ‘Longing to leave, return in doubt’, \textit{The Australian}, 8\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 4.
\footnote{3} See ‘Freedom a basic need for refugees’ (editorial), \textit{op. cit.}; and ‘Opening up our hearts’ (editorial), \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 9\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 52.
\end{footnotes}
for the humanitarian implications of the Safe Haven legislation being introduced at the time.

The point here is to recognise that there are important implications in terminological choice for media representations. As Peter Manning says: ‘The choice of adjectives and nouns can turn the reader’s sympathies one way or another.’\(^{463}\) While the media often remain “open” (in a Gramscian sense) to public opinion,\(^ {464}\) the effect of terminological choice on “ordinary readers” is that they are often drawn to ‘natural conclusion[s]’ about who may be deemed deserving of compassion and assistance.\(^ {465}\) The political implications of this are clear, considering the power of the mass media to introduce or enhance a particular agenda that is favourable to hegemonic groups. This kind of media discourse is ‘highly functional for established power and responsive to the needs of the government and major power groups.’\(^ {466}\) The \textit{Telegraph}'s preferred use of “new home” must be understood as part of an agenda that was adopted by the newspaper for its news value. This is particularly because these representations of the Kosovars served to naturalise the appearance of unity between the moral standing of the dominant cultural group and the Howard Government.

The \textit{Telegraph}, \textit{Australian} and \textit{Herald} further publicised the arrival with consistent references to Kosovar children. On the morning before the arrival the \textit{Herald} described how ‘Bibs for 26 babies will be waiting’ for those refugees arriving in Sydney, along with ‘jumping castles for children’.\(^ {467}\) Attending the arrival at Sydney airport, the \textit{Telegraph}'s Ray Chesterton described how, when the doors of the aeroplane finally opened, younger Kosovars ‘ignored their weariness and came tumbling and running down the stairs.’\(^ {468}\) Children leaving the plane were said to have ‘eyes wide in wonderment’ and were pictured holding signs of thanks that they had drawn in crayon.\(^ {469}\) One of these hand-drawn signs stated, as cited in the

\(^{463}\) Manning, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 52.
\(^{465}\) Manning, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 68.
\(^{466}\) Herman and Chomsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. lii.
\(^{467}\) Stephens and Darby, \textit{op. cit.}
\(^{468}\) Chesterton, ‘SAFE IN OUR ARMS: Sydney greets refugees’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4.
\(^{469}\) \textit{ibid.}
Telegraph and The Australian, ‘NATO 1949-1999’, celebrating the organisation’s recent 50th anniversary (see Appendix 3).

Another boy had drawn a sign that read, ‘I love Australia’, in bright red crayon.

The impact of the media’s coverage of the NATO air strikes on Australians had been profound. A month before the arrival, the Telegraph had compelled Australians to support the UNHCR evacuation as part of the nation’s ‘duty of care’. The newspaper had actively promoted the notion that compassion and humanitarian obligation were essential components of Australian national identity. Following the arrival, the newspaper once again centred on the idea that Australia’s role was important for the restoration of child-like innocence. These images also linked to the barrage of photographs used to justify the NATO bombing in the Telegraph during the month beforehand – a campaign propagated to save the innocent and children from systematic persecution. As Philip Knightly states, the Western media overwhelmingly propagated the official view of NATO and its goal to persuade Western nations of the humanitarian justification for the conflict.

By focussing on children and innocence, the main purpose of propagating moral discourse for the media is to ‘set about persuading by first separating “correct” from “incorrect” views. The rhetoric of correctness cast an aura of intellectual implacability and moral urgency around even the most naïve assertions of opinions.’ Peter Murphy adds, in this kind of media coverage: ‘The mix of truth and morality in politics generates huge pressure to agree. The “how could you think otherwise?” factor quickly rises to the surface.’ He concludes: ‘Get into a nation’s soul [in this way], and you have strong consent.’ In this light, the image of children exiting the plane corresponded to a broader narrative about moral restoration in which the Howard Government was to play a central

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470 See Scott, McIlveen and Hamilton, op. cit.; and, picture in The Daily Telegraph, 8th May 1999, p. 5.
471 ‘Australia’s duty of care’, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
472 See Knightley, op. cit., p. 501 and p. 507.
473 Murphy, Communication and Self-Organisation: Why the Manufacture of Consent Has Always Been a Sunset Industry, op. cit., p. 90.
474 ibid.
475 ibid., p. 98.
role. This kind of coverage was, moreover, the culmination of a variety of political factors beyond the national sphere. The subtext of freedom and liberty extended in many ways from the US’ attempts to provide NATO with a moral premise in maintaining global order. Operation Safe Haven inevitably catered to the Australian Government’s desire to forge a more central role for the nation in global politics and its support for US ambitions to instil in NATO a new sense of energy, direction and independence in determining world politics.476

The unification of moral and popular consensus has far-reaching implications for the politics of the modern nation-state. Core to the (re)production of consensual relations is the idea that: ‘Once political power takes as its object the conduct of its subjects in relation to particular moral and secular standards, and takes the well-being of those subjects as its guiding principle, it is required to rationalize itself in particular ways.’477 The moral and political consensus brought about by the arrival was confirmed by the Federal Opposition Immigration spokesperson Con Sciacca in debating the Safe Haven legislation in the Lower House on 11th May. Having attended the landing, Sciacca stated: ‘The sight of those people … left little doubt in my mind about our decision to support their relocation. At that time, all the political debate in the world about the wisdom of bringing people to such a faraway country like Australia did not even come close to looking into the eyes of those hundreds of men, women and children as they marched down the stairs smiling, crying and thanking us for possibly saving their lives.’478 He later added, about the evacuation program: ‘The opposition has been very glad, very happy, to go along with the government. I think this is something that the country can be proud of.’479

The Safe Haven Bill passed both houses by 11th May with bipartisan support. The main opposition to the legislation was expressed by

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477 Rose, op. cit., p. 7.
479 ibid., p. 5028.
senators from minor parties (Democrats and Greens). Parliamentary discussions on the 7th May arrival at Sydney airport confirmed bipartisan support for the Bill as far as the major parties were concerned. Sciacca’s comments indicate the way both the media and the mainstream parties largely avoided offering significant criticism of the radical changes being made in refugee policy. This was affirmed in Ruddock’s comments during the Safe Haven legislative debates about the consensus formed by the evacuation. He noted the ‘cooperation that we have seen between the government and the opposition, … the Commonwealth and the states, and … between the Commonwealth and the voluntary sector.’

The moral consensus was not enough, however, to dissuade Ruddock’s self-confessed ‘sense of realism’ towards the Safe Haven refugee policy.481 As he argued in the debates: ‘Our international obligation is to provide [these] people with protection. The obligation is not to provide permanent resettlement; the obligation has only ever been to provide protection.’482 The “realist” approach reflects the broader program of the Howard Government which, unlike the international relations strategies of previous governments, was highly responsive to both international and domestic influences. Successive Howard governments ‘sought not only to make foreign policy in response to new regional and global agendas, but to respond to and to seek to manage new forms of electoral challenge’.483 Ruddock’s “realist” position indicates that he was committed to maintaining the conservative party line. Perhaps this also explains his relative absence in media coverage, allowing the Prime Minister to take most of the credit for Operation Safe Haven.484

4. Representations of the Prime Minister
John Howard was positioned as a major star in the media’s landing coverage and a central figure in Operation Safe Haven. The Prime

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480 Ruddock, in *ibid.*, p. 5038
481 *ibid.*, p. 5040.
482 *ibid.*, p. 5041.
484 Between 7th and 11th May, there were two references to Philip Ruddock in the *Australian*, two in the *Herald* and one in the *Telegraph*.
Minister’s face-to-face meeting with the first planeload of Kosovars added to a sense of anticipation in the newspaper. He was portrayed as caring and compassionate in the *Telegraph* and quoted or referred to directly eight times in coverage following the arrival of the first refugee plane. This is similar to *The Australian*, which quoted or referred to John Howard at least seven times in this period. Howard featured much more in reports about the arrival in the *Herald*, referred to at least 22 times. He was a central figure for the *Herald*, and on the morning before the landing the newspaper had noted the importance of ‘the welcoming presence of the Prime Minister and Mrs Howard’. There was only one newspaper report about the arrival that was critical of him. It was published in the *Herald* (discussed below).

Both the *Telegraph* and the *Herald* published photographs of the Prime Minister shaking hands with the Kosovars upon their arrival at Sydney airport. The caption underneath the *Telegraph* photograph read: ‘Our home is your home … Prime Minister John Howard last night.’

The Immigration Minister, a crucial player in Operation Safe Haven, was comparatively absent in newspaper coverage of the arrival.

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485 Stephens and Darby, *op. cit.*
486 See Lagan, ‘Politics triumphs over comfort in Kosovo flight’, *op. cit.*
Howard was adept at utilising the media to promote favourable coverage of his policies and individual persona throughout his term as Prime Minister. Gwynneth Singleton describes how Howard ‘engaged in populist and pragmatic politics in playing the political game whenever he has deemed it necessary to do so.’489 She further depicts Howard as a ‘very astute, pragmatic, practical politician who reads the political “tea leaves” very well.’490 The Telegraph noted how John Howard, ‘reacting to the delight of the plane’s safe arrival, started waving at faces in the windows as it pulled into the hangar.’491 The article described how two families, including three children, representing the refugees were ‘presented to Mr and Mrs Howard.’492 Chesterton went on, the Prime Minister ‘embraced them all warmly, later paying tribute to the bravery of all displaced ethnic Albanians of Kosovo.’493 John Howard said: ‘We admire your courage’, and ‘we extend our open arms in welcome.’494

Once again, The Australian differed slightly from the Telegraph’s “new home” theme, assuming a more reserved approach and maintaining perspective on the landing as a matter of refugee policy. It noted: ‘The Prime Minister told the refugees he hoped they would soon be returned to their homeland but, in the meantime, the Australian people would do whatever they could to make their stay a happy one.’495 However, The Australian did touch on the emotional investment that typified Telegraph coverage, citing John Howard: ‘As you prepare to spend your first night under the stars of Australia, we want you to know this is a very happy country that extends its arms in welcome to all of you.’496

The Herald applauded the Prime Minister’s behaviour at the airport, providing significant details concerning his interactions with the refugees. Tony Stephens wrote, after the plane landed: ‘the Prime Minister then stood at the bottom of a gangway, shaking hands with all those who

490 ibid.
492 ibid.
493 ibid.
494 Howard, cited in ibid.
495 Scott, McIlveen and Hamilton, op. cit.
496 Howard, cited in ibid.
descended, hugging some of them and tickling the cheeks of a couple of children. Mr Howard then addressed the refugees from a dais, in front of an Australian flag, welcoming them on behalf of the Australian people.497

By contrast, another, less flattering image of the Prime Minister appeared in the 8th May edition of the Telegraph. A cartoon by Warren reproduced the same visual stereotypes about Southern and Eastern Europeans to convey an image of the Kosovars as backward and poor. As Jock Collins states, this relates to how Eastern European refugees and migrants in post-war Australia were inhibited by ‘a history of racial antagonism and xenophobia’ against refugee workers.498 What is interesting, however, is the fear and mistrust being expressed by the Kosovars about the Prime Minister. Frightened, and pointing at John Howard as they exit the plane, the refugees ask: ‘Is Koala? Is Wombat? Is Crocodile? Is Black Snake? Is Blue Bottle? Is Red Back? Is Funnel Web?’499 While the cartoon satirises the notion of “safe haven” being provided in an “unsafe” country, it further depicts the Prime Minister capitalising on the media event, alluding to his antagonism to a more open border policy for refugees.500

Another cartoon that appeared in The Australian on 10th May made a subtle comment about the media event at Sydney airport. The cartoon by Nicholson depicts the refugees alighting the Qantas jet and facing a camera crew before having even stepped onto the tarmac. A reporter is shown asking one refugee: ‘Enjoy the flight?’, who replied, ‘Yes… but I still call Kosovo home.’ The refugee’s comment was a pun on the Qantas advertising theme song (‘I Still Call Australia Home’), a popular tune regularly performed at major Australian sporting events. Evidently, the image was commenting on the promotional value of the event, particularly
Frustration about the media spectacle was expressed in a letter by Paul Kleywegt of Lindisfarne (Tasmania), published by The Australian. The author described the episode as ‘selfcongratulatory back slapping at what a warm, giving nation we are’ and connects with the satire drawn on by the Warren cartoon but otherwise unmentioned directly by the press. He makes the point: ‘The repetition of clichés such as “safe haven” and the use of headlines such as “Safely in our embrace” and “Deliverance…” [in The Australian] is cringing given the magnitude of the situation. Imagine suffering the indignity of stepping off a plane on the other side of the world to have a bright light and a camera shoved in your face and being expected to smile and tell the world in a foreign language how grateful you are.’ The author adds: ‘No one is spared the humiliation of the inevitable media circus.’ The author was correct in emphasising the media’s attachment to the arrival, particularly its promotion of the idea that the refugees were indebted with gratitude for Australia’s assistance – a theme that was reproduced throughout the Kosovars’ stay. Each of the newspapers concerned noted the thankfulness of the Kosovars upon their arrival.

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502 ibid.
503 ibid.
504 For the Herald, see ‘Kosovo’s kids safe at last in Sydney; NO WORRIES’, Sun-Herald, 9th May 1999, p. 1. Here, it was noted: ‘They thanked Australia for giving them basic necessities’.
Both the *Telegraph* and *The Australian* cited some of the refugees as saying, through an interpreter, ‘thank you, thank you, thank you’.

The only direct criticism of the event was published by the *Herald*, written by journalist Bernard Lagan who had travelled with the refugees aboard their flight from Rome to Sydney. Lagan noted the frustration of the refugees forced to endure a broken air-conditioning system while the plane was stationary - a problem known by Australian officials since the plane departed from Rome causing several hours delay. He described how the Kosovars waited aboard the plane on the Sydney tarmac while the Prime Minister prepared for the media ceremony. As Lagan says, the refugees ‘were made to wait and wait and wait aboard the stinking, stationary, airless, broken aircraft.’

The support given to the Howard Government across the newspapers is only differentiated by Lagan’s reproach on the arrival media event. The exclusion of critical content challenges, as Herman and Chomsky assert, the ‘democratic postulate’ that ‘the media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived.’

Lagan went on to describe how the plane then had to be towed into the hangar: ‘Why? Well, that was where a dais had been erected for the [Prime Minister] so he could greet some of the refugees in front of the waiting media.’ The refugees waited another 20 minutes, Lagan explains, while ‘officials outside fussed over arrangements for selected refugees to be greeted by Howard’.

When the refugees disembarked the plane they ‘were given little stuffed koalas to hold – so nice for the television cameras.’ Lagan mimicked Howard’s words during his welcoming speech. He argued that ‘any other free and happy country would have long before let the refugees

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505 Scott, McIlveen, and Hamilton, *op. cit.* See also Hamilton and Conway, *op. cit.*
506 Lagan, ‘Politics triumphs over comfort in Kosovo flight’, *op. cit.*
507 Herman and Chomsky, *op. cit.*, p. xlix.
508 Lagan, ‘Politics triumphs over comfort in Kosovo flight’, *op. cit.*
509 *ibid.*
510 *ibid.* There were no other articles in the *Herald, Telegraph* or *The Australian* that documented the experience of the refugees waiting aboard the plane for the Prime Minister’s welcoming ceremony to begin.
do what they most wanted: have a shower and go to bed’. The journalist concluded: ‘as the dazed refugees were delayed behind the fences for more media pictures, you couldn’t help but think these people were being used for domestic political purposes. Why couldn’t the Prime Minister instead have visited the East Hills base … over the weekend (after they were bathed and rested)?’ Apart from Lagan’s article, there was no direct criticism of the Government for the welcoming ceremony at Sydney airport, despite its obvious attempts at politicising the event.

5. “Fundamental” Australian Values and the Arrival

Following the arrival media event, busloads of refugees departed the airport in a 20-police motorcycle motorcade bound for Sydney’s East Hills army barracks. According to the Telegraph, they were flanked by onlookers, television cameras, journalists and photographers and despite strict security:

Sydney turned on a rousing and compassionate welcome. Outside the airport, handfuls of Australian-based Kosovars waved national flags and cheered as their countrymen were driven past in buses.

… The refugees attracted media attention usually reserved for rock stars and royalty, with an army of photographers around the hangar.

The attendance of the Prime Minister at the arrival of the first evacuation flight was more than simply a public relations exercise in the national media. In some ways it was also part of an attempt by the Federal Government to show that it was taking its foreign policy obligations seriously. As the editor of the Telegraph suggests, international as well as domestic concerns were an important part of the Prime Minister’s agenda, commenting on 9th May 1999: ‘This [Operation Safe Haven] is the sign of

511 ibid.
512 ibid.
a nation which recognises its responsibilities as a good world citizen.'

*The Australian* too had written: ‘If ever evidence were needed that
Australia was an international citizen, a caring, generous, charitable
community – this was it.’

Although the Federal Government had a
month earlier cited broader humanitarian concerns that “something had to
be done”, Barutciski and Suhrke recognised that the UNHCR’s
evacuation program ‘probably allowed some governments to score public
relations points by appearing “humanitarian” in receiving a limited number
of “popular” refugees.’

Particular “fundamental Australian values” provided an important
subtext to John Howard’s motivations for participating in the evacuation
which is most heavily reflected in the *Telegraph*, although this sentiment is
somewhat evident in the *Herald* and *The Australian* as well. The Howard
Government’s foreign policy was typified by a nostalgic blend of ideas
about the “British world” and an Anglo-nationalist vernacular. In Howard’s
idealised concept of moral order and cohesion in international affairs the
Prime Minister viewed himself and his fellow Liberal Party members as
‘standard bearers of accumulated wisdom from the British world.’

In an address in 2004 at the Australian National University, the Prime Minister
commented that there should never be a sense of ‘disconnect between
foreign policy and national values’, and those national values that flow
from Australia’s identity as ‘a Western country’.

In capturing vernacular nationalism – often drawing on the notions of “mateship” and “battlers”,
for instance – Howard was able to ‘build popularity for a society that gives
priority to values with lineage rather than bold social or cultural
innovation, and for government management of “national interests” ahead

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514 ‘Opening up our hearts’ (editorial), *op. cit.*

7th May 1999, p. 2.

516 See Downer, cited in ‘Humanitarian concern prompts refugee rethink: Downer’
(transcript), *op. cit.* As cited previously in this thesis, Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander
Downer stated on 6th April 1999: ‘I think it’s based, above all, on a humanitarian
sentiment... there was just a strong sense that we needed to make a contribution. I think
the Australian public will strongly support that.’


519 *ibid.* Original text of this speech is no longer available online.
of sectional ones.\textsuperscript{520} The underlying rationale behind a range of Howard’s foreign policy strategies – including Operation Safe Haven - was a reverence for British-Australian nationalism in responding to international obligations.\textsuperscript{521}

In domestic policy, the symbolism of the arrival corresponded to Howard’s vision of “fundamental Australian values”. Howard’s official speeches regularly promoted ideas about ‘persistence, mateship, voluntary effort and optimism’, the ‘primacy of family values’, ‘strong and enduring communities’, ‘equality’, and ‘tolerance and harmony’.\textsuperscript{522} Hage expressed concern over Howard’s use of these ideas, referring to as the fundamentalist ‘causal essence’ that the Prime Minister commonly assigned to particular nationalistic acts and values.\textsuperscript{523} It is the idea that these values were “uniquely” and “exclusively” Australian, ‘making the ludicrous claim that other people in the world are less committed to them or actually committed to opposing values’.\textsuperscript{524} Howard’s insistence on these values popularised the notion that, to truly possess humanitarian virtue, one had to accept a particular view and live as Australians supposedly did.

The editor of the \textit{Telegraph} utilised similar sentiment in describing Australia’s contribution to the Kosovar refugee crisis, stating on 9th May: ‘So Australia’s willingness, its near-insistence that we lead the global effort to help the Kosovars, is a comforting sign of this nation’s compassion, maturity and downright kindness… [W]ho could deny that the very best aspects of Aussie mateship has [sic] been on show in helping the Kosovars?’\textsuperscript{525} For the \textit{Telegraph}, mateship was a defining feature of why the Kosovars had been evacuated to Australia and would now shape how they were to be treated by the Australian community as they arrived at safe havens around the country. The larrikin “Aussie mateship” focus was further reproduced by the \textit{Herald} in a feature article that was addressed to

\textsuperscript{520} ibid.
\textsuperscript{521} See ibid. The authors discuss Howard’s East Timor strategy, as well as the implications of these kinds of sentiments for the “war on terror”.
\textsuperscript{522} Hage, \textit{Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society}, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{523} ibid., p. 71
\textsuperscript{524} ibid., p. 73
\textsuperscript{525} ‘Opening up our hearts’ (editorial), op. cit.
the Kosovars entitled: ‘Feel at home with us, mate’.

The author, Terry Smyth, proclaimed mateship to be an educational tool for the Kosovars, a ‘code of mutual respect, demonstrated in rituals we call “bonding sessions”, which is why you [refugees] will need to learn the word “shout”.

Mateship has often been tied with broader conceptions in popular discourse of Australian national identity as predominantly white, egalitarian, masculine and democratic. The concept was drawn on in the media to promote the idea that the Australian national paradigm offered a world of opportunity for the Kosovars, albeit from within the confines of army barracks.

6. Changing Clothes: a “New Life” for the Kosovars Beginning at East Hills Safe Haven

Media reporting of the arrival at Sydney airport was complemented by post-arrival news reports centred on the ‘Sanctuary’ provided for the refugees in Australia. As noted in the Herald: “The Sanctuary at Voyager Point” says the sign at the road turnoff to the East Hills Army Barracks… After two days in Sydney, the barracks have become just that, a sanctuary.

What the Herald did not mention was that ‘Sanctuary’ was the name of a housing estate near the barracks.

The Kosovar arrival was consistently accompanied with news headlines including ‘Sanctuary’ and ‘Into Our Arms’. It was a much different reception than that accompanying the Chinese “boat people” who had arrived in recent months with headlines such as ‘INVADED’. In their ‘sanctuary’, the Kosovars were not allowed to leave the barracks. They would only ‘be allowed to roam free within the compound’.

527 ibid.
529 Harvey, ‘Hot reception turned on for new arrivals’, op. cit.
532 Harvey, ‘Hot reception turned on for new arrivals’, op. cit.
Newspaper reports presented two opposing scenarios to readers following encounters with the Kosovar refugees after their first day at East Hills - the Kosovar way of life, and the Australian way of life. The *Telegraph*, in particular, depicted the Kosovars shedding their Balkan “otherness” in favour of the opportunities provided by Australia. On 9th May journalists Sarah Harris and Sasha Westwood made comparisons between the life Kosovars had known and the “better life” offered to them in Australia. They wrote that toddlers, teenagers and even ‘bent old women in headscarves and the precious menfolk who had survived the holocaust of Kosovo’ had made the journey from Macedonia. They went on, referring to those who had arrived aboard the first evacuation flight:

Four hundred and fourteen souls dressed in the mismatched costume of refugees providing stark contrast to the crisp uniformed police, ambulance officers, paramedics and official greeters who flanked the plane.

It was, a colleague observed, like the scene from the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind. And, indeed, these people are alien to us.

‘Most Australians’, the article went on, ‘have never experienced the kind of hardship and horror that unite the Kosovars.’ In turn, it commented, the refugees ‘have little knowledge of the far-away land that has become their temporary home and haven.

The *Herald* further noted the divides between Australians and the Kosovars accentuating the need for the refugees to be educated about the Australian “way of life”. Upon arriving at East Hills, the Kosovars would undergo not only health checks but also ‘a broad Australian familiarisation course.’ The newspaper cited Federal Finance Minister John Fahey, who

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533 Harris and Westwood, *op. cit.*
534 In *ibid.*
535 *ibid.*
536 *ibid.*
537 Stephens and Darby, *op. cit.*
said, defending the government’s refusal to allow the refugees out of the East Hills compound: ‘Outside of this complex there is a world that they don’t know; no-one out there knows them.’\textsuperscript{538} This was reinforced by the juxtaposition: ‘Refugees who on Friday night were bedraggled, tired and unkempt [on their arrival] were, at breakfast [the next morning], clean shaven, refreshed and no longer hungry.’\textsuperscript{539} The representation of the Kosovars as ‘alien’ in this context (as opposed to being familiar, or “like us”) supported the subtext in these reports that the refugees were transcending the barriers of their former existence for a “better life” in Australia.

The significance of the compassion promoted by the Australian government was further noted in the \textit{Telegraph} as more personal aspects about the refugees’ lives began to emerge. For some of these refugees, hopes for a “new life” were more apparent for those about to give birth in Australia. The \textit{Telegraph} noted that three pregnant women were aboard the first evacuation flight with one of these taken immediately to hospital. She was due to give birth within two weeks time.\textsuperscript{540} According to Dr Jo Karnaghan (manager of NSW Health Services Australia), most of the refugees had arrived in good health. The main issues, she explained, included ear infections and sore throats for some of the children and blood pressure in older refugees. For others, the “new life” began with more standard medical checks at the East Hills barracks and ‘the first hot showers in months’.\textsuperscript{541} As one of the refugees noted, many had not showered for several months. They were afraid of being raided by Serbian police. ‘Behind the barbed-wire fence of their temporary home at Sydney’s East Hills army barracks’, the newspaper reported, the Kosovars ‘had their first taste of a decent existence in recent memory.’\textsuperscript{542} The \textit{Herald} noted the significance of the showers for one of the refugees, Mr Fitim Konjufca,

\textsuperscript{539} ibid.
\textsuperscript{540} See B. Lawson, ‘Farewell, friends; Refugees leave Sydney on final leg of journey’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 11\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 3. One of the women, who was 37 weeks pregnant, was taken to Liverpool hospital upon landing in Sydney.
\textsuperscript{541} K. Parsons and N. Vass, ‘Baby alert as mother-to-be steps off plane’, \textit{The Sunday Telegraph}, 9\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{542} ibid.
who said: ‘I lost myself in the shower’, which lasted for one hour.\textsuperscript{543} High on the agenda was ‘the chance to brush their teeth’, as some had been unable to do so having spent the last ‘twelve months’ hiding in the hills of Kosovo.\textsuperscript{544}

As part of official “processing” procedures at East Hills, the refugees had number tags placed around their necks, proceeding to have their photograph taken for identification purposes (see Appendix 2).\textsuperscript{545} After filling out personal details on official forms, the Kosovars were sent into the next room where there were rows of tables piled with second hand clothing. As the \textit{Telegraph} described it, there was:

\begin{quote}
everything from underpants to brightly coloured Bananas in Pyjamas raincoats. There they could choose new clothes for their new life.\textsuperscript{546}
\end{quote}

\textit{The Australian} described how the refugees were given three changes of clothes, “plus socks and jocks”, one pair of shoes, one coat and some baggage to transport their belongings to Tasmania when they leave Sydney.\textsuperscript{547} On passing through processing and clothing rooms at East Hills, the refugees were allocated a room to sleep. Their time at East Hills was, the \textit{Telegraph} and \textit{Herald} indicated, a comfortable experience. According to \textit{The Australian}, the refugees had proclaimed East Hills a ‘paradise’, enjoying their time ‘Under flowering gums’.\textsuperscript{548} With ‘lots of smiles’\textsuperscript{549}, wrote the \textit{Telegraph}, the refugees’ first breakfast had included cereal, eggs and sausages. The breakfast was further described as a ‘hearty

\textsuperscript{543} F. Konjufca, cited in Sutton, Kogoy, West, Neilson and Patty, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{544} J. Ellicott, ‘From gunpoint to gum tree – darkness to light’, \textit{The Australian}, 10\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{545} Jacobsen and Brown, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{546} In Parsons and Vass, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{547} Harvey, ‘Hot reception turned on for new arrivals’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{548} ‘First days in Camp Kosovo’, \textit{The Australian}, 10\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 1. The phrases ‘paradise’ and ‘Under flowering gums’ are also used in Ellicott, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{549} Captain S. Straud (officer in charge of East Hills barracks), cited in Parsons and Vass, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4.
selection’ by the *Herald* that included ‘hash-browns’, ‘pancakes’, ‘toast’, ‘orange juice’, ‘tea and coffee’.550

The first dinner provided for the Kosovars, according to the *Telegraph*, was a seven-course meal that included chicken, fish and lamb dishes, soup and casserole, ‘with some dishes prepared halal style for devout Muslims’.551 A major concern for the refugees was getting in touch with relatives at home via Internet and telephone services available at the East Hills barracks. As noted on 10th May, an immigration official told the *Herald* that most of the telephone calls ‘were getting through and there had been many happy faces’.552 The generosity of Australians was further highlighted in the actions of members of Sydney’s Albanian community. The *Herald* noted: ‘A member of the Albanian Cultural Centre was handing out Mother’s Day roses to the mothers in the camp while refugees were being given a briefing about Tasmania as a promotional video played in the background.’553 One refugee (unnamed) informed *The Australian* that travelling to Australia was a journey from ‘darkness to light’, although the ‘gums and new flora played havoc with their sinuses’.554 It was further noted: ‘Children were ecstatic at their Australian surrounds, with computers [providing] entertainment… Albanian music bellowed from a CD player. Kosovar male youths took up a game of soccer… Those who had been given army fatigue-style clothing boasted the most about their new clothes and shoes.’555 The nationalist sentiment in *The Australian* was clear, with the reference to ‘flowering gums’ featuring alongside a photograph of a child refugee laughing with (and wearing the hat of) a female Australian Army soldier at the barracks (see Appendix 2).

The refugees had been shown a video aboard their flight to Australia consisting of ‘aerial shots of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Ulura Rock’.556 The media had viewed the operation as an opportunity to promote Australia’s natural and man-made tourist sites. However, after

550 Sutton, Kogoy, West, Neilson and Patty, *op. cit.*
552 Jacobsen and Brown, *op. cit.*
553 *ibid.*
554 Ellicott, *op. cit.*
555 *ibid.*
only a short-term visit to Sydney, and without being able to explore the city itself, the first group of Kosovars were taken to Brighton barracks in Tasmania on 11th May 1999.\textsuperscript{557} For the \textit{Herald}, the refugees had no complaints about not seeing the city. One of the Kosovars informed the newspaper that he was simply surprised by how ‘green’ Australia was: ‘I thought we were coming to a desert.’\textsuperscript{558} The media did not note any significant concern about how quickly the refugees had been relocated to Hobart by the Federal Government and kept away from the public eye.

\textbf{7. Trading-up: a “Better Life” Beyond the Initial Arrival}

The theme of a “better life” continued to feature prominently in news coverage for several more weeks. The second evacuation flight landed at Sydney airport on 12th May 1999, although without the same level of media attention as the initial plane arrival. Repeating the procedure undertaken only five days beforehand, the second group of refugees were transported to East Hills Safe Haven for processing. Evacuation flights

\textsuperscript{557} See also G. Bearup, ‘Tears of Relief for Normality’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 12th May 1999, p. 10. Bearup notes how Sydneysiders had expressed discontent on talkback radio that the first group of Kosovars had not been taken via the ‘scenic route’ to Sydney airport before disembarking for Hobart.

\textsuperscript{558} \textit{ibid.}
were thereafter scheduled to arrive every three to five days. The refugees would stay at East Hills for several days before heading for army bases around the country.\textsuperscript{559}

In the first two weeks of the refugee arrival in Australia the \textit{Telegraph} consistently portrayed how the Kosovars were trading-in the lives and culture they had known in Yugoslavia for the Australian way of life. This is captured on 20\textsuperscript{th} May when the \textit{Telegraph} reported on the cultural exchange unfolding following the arrival of the third “rotation” of refugees at East Hills barracks. As part of the welcoming celebrations organised by camp staff, the Sydney Army Band played an Albanian folklore tune for the refugees, arranged after hearing an elderly refugee play the song on an electronic keyboard. Journalist Will Temple wrote: ‘the tune had the Kosovars dancing into the afternoon before trading their traditional goulash for an Aussie barbecue.’\textsuperscript{560} The implication was that the refugees were upgrading to a freer, better life and shedding themselves of the political repression they had endured before their arrival in Australia. This sentiment was affirmed by \textit{The Australian} which cited Albanian migrant, Kola Nikolaj, a professional chef and former president of the Albanian community centre in Chester Hill (Sydney): ‘It is a better life for [the refugees] here, we should thank the Australian Government.’\textsuperscript{561}

The idea that Australia offered a better alternative to the repression and violence of Yugoslavia is, at least in the media discourse surrounding this episode, linked to a variety of stereotypes in Western societies about Eastern and Southern Europeans. Fleming says, for some outside observers, it is difficult ‘for Balkan peoples themselves to stop making distinctions between themselves, and to stop killing one another senselessly over those distinctions. “Killing one another” is not just a sort of “national hobby” but an intention or imperative that must be obeyed, and that can only be exhausted, not avoided.’\textsuperscript{562} Fleming goes on, there has been a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Lawson, \textit{op. cit.}
\item W. Temple, ‘A little girl again; Kosovars taste freedom, goulash and an Aussie-style barbecue’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 20\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 20. It is noted that the menu for the barbecue consisted of ‘20kg onions, more than 1000 sausages, green salads and coleslaw.’
\item K. Nikolaj, cited in C. Harvey, ‘Chef will offer taste of home’, \textit{The Australian}, 8\textsuperscript{th} May 1999, p. 5.
\item Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1219. Italics in original.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
tendency in Western countries to lump all Southern Europeans together and
to overlook any differences that might exist between countries, regimes,
peoples or even names of countries. It is commonly proclaimed in the
language of the West that to “Balkanise” means ‘to divide, or fragment,
along absurdly minute and definitionally obscure grounds’.\(^{563}\) Many in the
West continue to insist upon using stereotypes that the peoples of the
former Yugoslavia constitute a kind of “outsider within” and come from an
“unstable” and “abnormal” part of Europe.\(^{564}\) Echoing European colonial
confrontations with new, foreign or “Eastern” lands, Fleming surmises:
‘The Balkans stand as Europe’s resident alien, an internal other that is an
affront and challenge by virtue of its claim to be part of the West, as well
as its apparent ability to dramatically affect Western history.’\(^{565}\)

These kinds of stereotypes are evident in several letters to the editor
congruent about the arrival. B. M. Welfare from Curl Curl wrote to the
Telegraph criticising the cartoon (above) that portrayed the Prime Minister
capitalising on the landing. The letter, published on 11\(^{th}\) May 1999, plays
on assumptions about Balkan peoples being violent and unstable:

> The Prime Minister played a big part in getting the Kosovar
> refugees to this country. He further showed his compassion by
greeting them at the airport. Your cartoonist drew a tasteless and
>vile image on the subject [date given]. If this had been done in
>Kosovo it would have brought out a firing squad.\(^{566}\)

Welfare’s letter indicates several factors at work in the Telegraph’s
representation of Operation Safe Haven. In one light, it suggests that the
public was significantly concerned about the safe arrival of the refugees in
Sydney and was comforted by the way the Prime Minister embraced this
responsibility. The passionate support given to the Prime Minister by the
author indicates the success of the Government’s media strategy to

\(^{563}\) ibid.
\(^{564}\) ibid., p. 1220.
\(^{565}\) ibid., p. 1229. Fleming cites how, according to one commentator, World War I began
upon the assassination of the Archduke of Austria in ““a mud-caked primitive village
[called] Sarajevo””.
\(^{566}\) Welfare, op. cit.
mobilise a positive reaction to its response to the refugee crisis. It further suggests that the Safe Haven program resonated with popular preconceptions about the status of Balkan peoples as a violent and unstable national “Other”, needing to be provided with the opportunity for a “better” or “new life”.

In another letter published in the *Telegraph* shortly after the initial arrival, there is further evidence of the assumption that Balkan peoples are inclined to be violent and unstable. Stuart Cant from St Helens Park, describing his time as a soldier, wrote:

No doubt the Kosovar refugees are delighted to be safe and alive. When the crisis is over, they will take home many happy memories of Australia and its people.

What will happen next? If Kosovo becomes dominant, there will be another wave of ethnic cleansing and a flood of Serbian refugees as the Kosovars take back their homeland.

I hope not; I wish the two races could live in harmony. I fear that may be too much to ask. The Kosovars cannot be expected to forget being expelled at gunpoint from their homes and losing everything. Nor can the Serbs be expected to forget the bloodshed in Croatia and Bosnia.

At least different groups can live together in Australia. To be members of the defence forces, they have to be Australian citizens, and I served with a Serb, second-generation Croatians, a Hungarian refugee and the grandson of a Nazi, which proves people can leave all this behind them.\(^{567}\)

These letters to the editor reinforced the overall picture being constructed by the *Telegraph* about the Kosovars. They lent weight to the idea that

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Balkan peoples were being given an opportunity to experience a “better” and more harmonious way of life in Australia. In a more general sense, the letters page of a newspaper provides an avenue for the public to engage in a dialogue with each other through the media about their national identity. These letters indicate the way the Telegraph’s readership discussed and “acted out” particular conceptions about national identity by adopting preferred meanings in relation to the refugees. As Anthea Taylor states: ‘Letters to the editor, as a form of social action, can be seen as an important performance, not just of self but also of mediated citizenship.’

By including these letters, the Telegraph reinforced the notion that Operation Safe Haven was a responsible course of action and that the Australian government was “rescuing” the refugees from an undesirable way of life. In media coverage there was much to suggest that, by trading-in their old lives for the Australian way of life, the Kosovars might achieve the status most desired by Western (white) Europeans. That is, that the Kosovars might not only aspire to be but also succeed at becoming “civilized” and achieve a ‘decent “civilized lifestyle”’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the Howard Government’s politicisation of the Kosovar refugee arrival in Australia and its attempts to gain popular support for Operation Safe Haven in the media. The Australian government hastily implemented the Safe Haven program, having embarked on a plan to temporarily resettle Kosovar refugees at the request of the UN which was itself under significant pressure from the US. The Howard Government’s response was shaped by a broad range of demands, most notably popular nationalism, party conservatism and media and

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international pressure to act responsibly under the guise of humanitarianism.

The Howard Government received widespread acclaim for its response to the humanitarian crisis. The Prime Minister utilised media coverage of the arrival to promote the Government in a favourable light as compassionate and supportive. This can be viewed as an attempt by John Howard to regain public support after the media backlash that occurred a month earlier when he rejected the UNHCR request for assistance. The media positioned the Prime Minister in a popular light as a political leader. He was commonly represented during the arrival as a responsible leader and a good world citizen. There was very little criticism of the Government for its policy towards the Kosovars giving the impression of mass popular consensus for the way the arrival was represented in the media.

Media coverage of the Kosovars’ arrival and their interactions with the Australian community supported the cultural and political standing of the Howard Government. News consumers were drawn to the notion that the Kosovars were worthy recipients of compassion and assistance, even so far as advocating (at least in the *Telegraph*) during the arrival for Australia to become the “new home” of the Kosovars. However, the media (re)produced popular nationalist binaries in attempts to control representations of the Kosovars. The Kosovars were not completely dissociated from notions that refugees presented a threat to long-standing, highly regulated immigration procedures in Australia, despite the popular sentiment that was aroused by the evacuation program. News coverage of the arrival in the *Telegraph* can be viewed in relation to broader refugee discourses of the Howard era by playing on the binary of “good” established Australian citizens and “bad” Others. In this sense, conceptions of the Kosovars in the media reflected a continuing imagining of refugees as “Other” or “alien” and ‘a threat to … western, core values or democracy itself’.  

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570 Gale, ‘The refugee crisis and fear; Populist politics and media discourse’, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
Chapter 4: Accommodating the Kosovar Refugees and the ‘busniks’ of Singleton Safe Haven

Introduction
In mid-June 1999 over eighty Kosovar refugees who had recently arrived in Australia refused to accept the accommodation provided for them by the Federal Government at Singleton army barracks. They generated significant media coverage and questioned the quality of the services offered as part of Operation Safe Haven. The Government’s response to this question was to take an overtly and highly politicised approach. It mounted a campaign to discredit the refugees’ claims. This chapter evaluates several aspects of the Singleton episode, including the validity of the refugees’ claims, the Government’s attempts to manage public relations over the weeks that followed and the media’s response to the Government’s agenda during this period.

This chapter is arranged in three sections, with the first investigating the Federal Government’s plan for accommodating the Kosovars. It includes an assessment of the concerns noted by various commentators about the use of army bases during the planning stages of Operation Safe Haven. I then analyse media portrayals of (what was often referred to by the media as) the “protest” or “bus sit-in” that occurred at the Singleton army barracks. Further explored are representational themes used to depict the Kosovars staging the protest. The investigation then turns toward media coverage of the Salihu family who continued to refuse the offer of accommodation at the Singleton barracks for the longest period of time.

The latter two sections of this chapter explore news articles published in the Telegraph, Herald and Australian between 16th and 30th June 1999.571 The breakdown of articles (including editorials and opinion

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571 This only includes articles primarily concerned with those refugees who were in or coming to Australia, rather than those living in camps in the Balkans or elsewhere. The content analysis did not include photographs, cartoons and letters to the editor. These aspects, however, are drawn upon throughout this chapter to complement the textual analysis. The dates for the content analysis begin the morning after the refugees initially refused to leave transport coaches that had delivered them from East Hills to Singleton.
columns) comprised 24 from the *Telegraph*, 15 from the *Herald* and 32 in *The Australian*.\(^{572}\) I examine how the language used by the media to describe the refugees during the protest was fraught with contradiction and inconsistency. It differed considerably from earlier coverage concerning the evacuation and initial arrival of the Kosovars. Much of the coverage drew significantly on notions of chauvinism, aggression, and claims about affluent, “designer” refugees who were “ungrateful” for Australia’s assistance. Broadly, this chapter evaluates the extent to which the refugees were supported by the Federal Government and whether this was only if they remained compliant, passive and unheard in media coverage. It examines a concerted effort by the Federal Government to discredit those refugees who were viewed as non-compliant and the Government’s attacks on the character of those involved in the Singleton protest.

1. The Accommodation Debate in April and May 1999

1.1 Location, location: the distances imposed between the Kosovars and the Australian population

In 1953, a supporter of Australia’s post-war resettlement program for European refugees reacted to recent criticism: ‘According to [this criticism], Australia is herding honest, cultured Europeans into concentration camps’.\(^{573}\) Similar sentiments came to the fore in debates over where to house the Kosovars in April and May 1999. Debate centred on the moral ramifications of placing them into camps and the re-hashing of a decades-old policy that involved isolating DPs from the Australian community. The ways in which the Kosovar refugees were accommodated as part of Operation Safe Haven further reflected the broader immigration

\(^{572}\) Six articles in the *Telegraph*, that are similar in form to or reprinted as articles in the afternoon edition, are included in the analysis. This includes three articles appearing on 16\(^{th}\) June (see articles by Williams; Gibson; and, the editorial), two on 17\(^{th}\) June (see articles by O’Shea and Williams and by Devine) and one on 21\(^{st}\) June (see article by Albert). Although a few articles are near identical, they have been incorporated to provide a more accurate reflection of the frequency and intensity of the *Telegraph*’s coverage as a newspaper that published two daily editions.

\(^{573}\) Kunz, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
agenda of the Howard Government and its rationale of temporary protection. As Jupp points out, there was an increasing reliance after 1999 upon exclusion and selection that came to embody the role of the Department of Immigration and its various branches and policies.\textsuperscript{574} Both the Prime Minister and Immigration Minister were careful to note that the provision of Safe Haven for the Kosovars was only a temporary measure. The Government assured the Australian public that the Kosovars would not have access to the means (legally or financially) to overstay their three-month welcome. As noted by the \textit{Telegraph} on 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, John Howard was ‘at pains to assure Australians’ that the Kosovars would ‘have to leave when the Government says so’.\textsuperscript{575} The \textit{Herald} added, ‘The Government has been careful to insist [the Kosovar refugees] will not be able to apply for a change of status’, from temporary to a more permanent form of protection.\textsuperscript{576}

There were two issues regarding accommodation to be resolved by the Australian government in the early stages of Operation Safe Haven. These were the type of accommodation provided to the Kosovars and the locations of the Safe Havens and their proximity to where most of the Australian population was concentrated. The choice of army barracks limited the ability of the Kosovars to gain independence from the Federal Government and some of the locations chosen to accommodate the refugees would isolate them from the general community. Although the option of billeting the refugees within Australian homes was promoted by the Federal Opposition, Ruddock effectively ‘ruled out’ the idea,\textsuperscript{577} stating:

\begin{quote}
We won’t be encouraging people to leave [the Safe Havens] but we won’t be building walls around them so that they can’t… We’re not going to imprison people… Any long-term billeting arrangements
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{574} Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{575} McPhedran, ‘Refugee footsteps lead only one way’, \textit{op. cit}. See also A. Lyons, ‘Take A Bet On Our Generosity’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 8\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 15 where it is stated: ‘the Prime Minister has been at pains to stress the special and temporary nature of the welcome to be offered.’
\textsuperscript{576} M. Grattan, ‘Kosovo’s “temporary” Refugees May Have To Stay Here’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 8\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{577} As described by McPhedran, ‘Jumbo Fleet to Pick Up Refugees’, \textit{op. cit.}
are very difficult to manage and it is for that reason that we will not be providing financial support for people who do go out.\textsuperscript{578}

Ruddock said the refugees would be ‘free to move’, but the Government was not keen to have them spread throughout the community.\textsuperscript{579} Some concern about this policy was noted by ALP Senator Jim McKiernan (Western Australia) in parliamentary debate, when he stated:

A military establishment might not be an appropriate place for persons who are traumatised in the way that these people have been… it might be better if they were placed in a more integrated part of society. I am sure there are those in our community, including the church groups, who could handle that number of 4,000.\textsuperscript{580}

In terms of the location of the Safe Havens, initially Ruddock said that it was unlikely, but did not rule out the possibility, that refugees would be sent to remote barracks.\textsuperscript{581} However, on 9\textsuperscript{th} April it was reported that John Howard - overruling Ruddock for the second time within the space of a week – had rejected a proposal that the refugees be placed in remote areas.\textsuperscript{582} Very remote barracks - such as Woomera, which is in the South Australian desert – were excluded as an option by the Federal Government. It was decided that accommodation be provided for the refugees at eight barracks, including at Brighton (Tasmania), Puckapunyal, Bandiana and Portsea (Victoria), Leeuwin (Western Australia), Singleton and East Hills.

\textsuperscript{578} Ruddock, cited in McPhedran and Spencer, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{579} Ruddock, cited in Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{581} McPhedran, ‘Jumbo Fleet to Pick Up Refugees’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{582} McPhedran, ‘$15m to provide shelter for 4000 lost souls’, \textit{op. cit.} There is no indication given by McPhedran as to why the ‘Prime Minister John Howard yesterday rejected a proposal that the refugees be housed in remote areas, the second time he has overruled Mr Ruddock in a week.’
(New South Wales) and Hampstead (South Australia). Despite Howard’s initial rejection of the proposal to place the Kosovars in remote barracks, several of the Safe Havens would be located at a considerable distance from the general population.583

1.2 The appropriateness of the facilities provided at the army bases
The plan was to operate the East Hills Safe Haven (also known as Holsworthy barracks) as the initial reception centre for all Kosovars. The barracks had catered to refugees since World War I.584 There, the refugees would spend an average of three to four days undergoing medical checks, before being issued with travel documents and identification cards. The Kosovars were then to receive new clothing, phone cards and their first weekly cash allowance.585 The plan recognised a range of needs that would be required by the refugees while living at the Safe Havens, including transport, health care, education and proximity to Albanian Australians.586 DIMA explained the official view that service provision would be more practical and efficient by being delivered at the barracks, including medical, dental, education, recreation, specialised torture and trauma counseling, and language services.587 A Defence forces spokesperson told the Telegraph, regarding the East Hills army barracks being converted into a Safe Haven, that: ‘The reason the barracks was chosen was because it’s secure and provides a safety haven for the displaced persons.’588 The Telegraph described the East Hills barracks as a ‘5ha fenced site’, within

583 Singleton barracks is 140 kilometres from Sydney in rural NSW. Bandiana barracks is over 300 kilometres from Melbourne, near Albury on the Victoria/NSW border. Puckapunyal, in rural Victoria, is 136 kilometres from Melbourne, while Portsea barracks is 100 kilometres from the city at the tip of the Mornington Peninsula. East Hills, the processing centre for the Kosovars (before being shipped to other parts of the country), was one of four Safe Haven’s within accessible distance to a major city (about 35 kilometres from the centre of Sydney). The others were Hampstead barracks (in Adelaide), Leeuwin barracks (about 20 kilometres from the centre of Perth) and Brighton barracks (26 kilometres from Hobart).
588 Gee, ‘Home away from Hell’, op. cit.
which the refugees ‘will live in 52 free-standing two-storey townhouse-style buildings each containing three-to-four room dormitories.’

In accommodating the Kosovars, barracks staff recognised that the refugees had suffered greatly from systematic violence and displacement from their homeland. It was thus decided by operational officials, in responding sensitively to the circumstances, that there only be a minimal number of armed military personal at the base upon the arrival of the refugees. Nonetheless, over the next three months, the location, age and facilities of the barracks would have a significant impact on the quality of welfare provided to the Kosovar refugees.

It was clear that the Immigration Minister did not want the Kosovars to become comfortable with the idea of living in Australia. As the ALP’s Con Sciacca noted during the Safe Haven legislative debates: ‘These measures seem quite drastic and seem designed to discourage these people from leaving the camps.’ The allowance of $20 offered by the Australian government to the refugees effectively rendered them to be dependent on the Safe Havens from the beginning. This was heavily criticised by some commentators, who noted how other countries offered substantially more to the refugees. Germany, for instance, had provided an allowance of $80 per week for adults. Friar Adrian Lyons, Chair of the Jesuit Refugee Service Australia Council, demanded in the Herald: ‘No internment camps, please. We owe the Kosovar refugees better than that.’ Lyons criticised the Government’s plans to provide only (quoting the Prime Minister) the ‘basic necessities of life’, and described the temporary arrangements as ‘mean-spirited’ and ‘hurtful’. The allowance was later increased on 1st July (which would take effect by the end of the month) to $27 for adults and $10 per child. The Kosovars would further be allowed to work for up to 20 hours per week after this time, though the allowance would be taken away.

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589 ibid.
590 Sciacca, op. cit., p. 5026.
591 See Green and Montgomery, op. cit.
593 As cited in ibid.
594 ibid.
595 ibid.
Throughout the planning stages of Operation Safe Haven, Ruddock promoted his desire for the refugees to be concentrated together and confined to the army barracks, having determined that a refugee’s benefits would be unavailable on leaving the Safe Havens. However, the location of and services provided at the Safe Havens remained the main concern for a number of critics. These included Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett who stated that Australia could do more harm than good to the refugees if it simply offered shelter without an extensive support network: ‘You can’t bring in a large number of people and isolate them.’

Health experts and ethnic leaders, reported the Herald, had warned the Government that the use of remote army barracks to accommodate the refugees was a ‘serious mistake.’

Albanian-Australian National Council chairperson Erik Lloga, who was involved in Operation Safe Haven as an adviser and interpreter for the Federal Government, deemed the option of remote military bases as inappropriate.

The editor of The Australian asked, on 8th April 1999, in reference to the location of the proposed Safe Havens: ‘Why is remoteness an important criterion?’ The editor added that depriving the Kosovars of ‘contact with mainstream Australia, and members of the Albanian community, will only add to their trauma,’ rendering the refugees to be ‘unwelcome outcasts.’ The Australian’s Greg Sheridan criticised the locations of the military bases offered as accommodation, saying that instead the Government should ‘treat [the refugees] decently and avoid the mentality of punishment and control that has characterised so much of our recent refugee policy.’ The journalist further added that the refugees should be placed in the major cities rather than in ‘isolated military facilities’, preferably in Melbourne, which had the largest Albanian population in Australia.

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596 J. Kennett, in Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, op. cit.
598 In Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, op. cit.
599 ‘Milosevic shows his hypocrisy … as refugee policy is made on the run’ (editorial), op. cit.
600 ibid.
602 ibid.
detail-absent, incoherent way in which this decision was arrived at and announced by the Government inspires no confidence.  

The Immigration Minister announced on 9th June 1999 that “patrons” (Members and Senators) would be appointed to the Safe Havens with the purpose of ensuring that the Kosovars had full access to a representative of the Federal Government and made as welcome and comfortable as possible. Patrons, he said, were expected to visit their designated Safe Haven every two to three weeks. Initially, the appointment of patrons to each of the Safe Havens by the Immigration Minister was based on several factors, including the electoral region of Members and Senators (and hence their proximity to the army bases), and membership of the Liberal Party. The role of patrons provided a more direct point of access between the refugees and the Federal Government. However, any concerns expressed by the Kosovars would only be managed and acted on by Liberal Party politicians. It was only after the Singleton protest (see below), on 22nd June, that the Immigration Minister announced that members of the Opposition would act as co-patrons to the Safe Havens, heeding the advice of Con Sciacca, the shadow Immigration Minister.

603 ibid.

604 York, op. cit., pp. 84-85.


606 ‘Australian Government: Co-Patrons for safe havens’, M2 Presswire, 23rd June 1999. See also Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), ‘Annual Report 1998-99; “Operation Safe Haven”’, op. cit. The patrons after 22nd June 1999 were, for Leeuwin, Senator Sue Knowles (Liberals, WA) and Senator Jim McKiernan (ALP, WA); at Bandiana, Lou Liebman (Liberals, Member for Indi) and Michael Danby (ALP, Member for Melbourne Ports); in Brighton, Senator Eric Abetz (Liberals, Tasmania) and Dick Adams (ALP, Member for Lyons); at Singleton, Senator John Tierney (Liberals, NSW) and Joel Fitzgibbon (ALP, Member for Hunter); for Portsea, Senator Kay Patterson (Liberals, Victoria) and Senator Jacinta Collins (ALP, Victoria); in Puckapunyal, Fran Bailey (Liberals, McEwan) and Steve Gibbons (ALP, Member for Bendigo); in Hampstead, Christopher Pyne (Liberals, Member for Sturt) and Senator Chris Schacht
2. A Wintery Tale: Singleton Barracks in Central NSW

2.1 The Singleton community
Singleton barracks had been an army barracks for over 50 years when the first Kosovars arrived there in early June 1999.\textsuperscript{607} It is in rural NSW, and 140 kilometres from Sydney. The base is approximately 6 kilometres from the township of Singleton, which had a population of around 20,000 at the time. Five busloads of Kosovar refugees arrived at their accommodation at Singleton Army barracks on 1\textsuperscript{st} June 1999, coinciding with the start of the winter season in country NSW. Temperatures drop to an average of less than 7 degrees Celsius at this time of year.\textsuperscript{608} In total, the Singleton community was preparing for the arrival of 800 refugees who would be able to access the township via a free shuttle bus service. The refugees were staying in ‘renovated dormitories’, and the Telegraph reported: ‘A professional soccer player, nine pregnant women and 22 toddlers are among the first group of Kosovar refugees to be housed in NSW [at the Singleton Safe Haven].’\textsuperscript{609} The newspaper report went on, with only the clothes and toiletries they had received at East Hills, ‘some families as large as 11 had nothing but a plastic bag between them, which held all they had left in the world.’\textsuperscript{610} It was noted by the co-ordinator of the ‘Samaritans’ emergency relief program in Singleton how the refugees’ spirits had lifted since arriving:

[When they arrived on Friday night] many of them were crying and traumatised[.] By Saturday morning the children were running around and you could already see the change in them.\textsuperscript{611}

\textsuperscript{607} The age of 50 years is given in M. Devine, ‘Confusion of a town that gave everything’, The Daily Telegraph, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{610} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{611} P. Saunders, cited in \textit{Ibid}. 
Initially, media coverage concerning the arrival of the refugees at Singleton was supportive of the operation, depicting the reception of the refugees by the local community as both a positive and highly anticipated response.

A team of local doctors, counsellors and a translator were on hand to assist at the Singleton barracks, while the Samaritans had recently begun to collect donations from the community. Samaritans director Cec Shevels said, in the *Telegraph*, the organisation was appealing for teddy bears, warm clothing and bicycles for the children to play with.\footnote{612} Singleton had not previously dealt with a population influx brought by the organised relocation of refugees, unlike some other barracks made available to the Kosovars. The community at Bandiana (near Albury-Wodonga), for instance, had accommodated over 300,000 refugees in the decades following World War II.\footnote{613} This is significant, particularly considering that Singleton would eventually house the largest number of refugees of any of the barracks (alongside Puckapunyal).\footnote{614}

2.2 *The refugees and their gripes*

The Singleton incident centred around two aspects: the initial “bus sit-in”, which began on 15\textsuperscript{th} June and ended on 16\textsuperscript{th} June, and stories about the Salihu family who continued to reject the Singleton accommodation for another day afterwards. On 15\textsuperscript{th} June, three coaches transported Kosovar refugees who had recently arrived in Australia from Macedonia from the East Hills barracks to their designated temporary Safe Haven at Singleton. The 83 refugees involved in the initial two days of the protest - some had

\footnote{612} *ibid.*

\footnote{613} See Department of Environment and Water Resources, ‘Australian Heritage Database; Places for Decision; Class: Historic’ (Bonegilla Migrant Camp), Australian Government, Nomination Date: 6\textsuperscript{th} July 2004. This report cites how more 300,000 people, mainly from Europe, came through Wodonga between 1947 and 1971. They were temporarily settled at the Bonegilla (just outside Wodonga) migrant reception and training centre. More than half the DPs from war torn Europe, the report goes on, who came to Australia were ‘sent to Bonegilla where they were given courses in English and the Australian way of life’. 

\footnote{614} See figures cited in the table ‘Where they are; Kosovar refugees in Australia’, *The Australian*, 16\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 2. At 16\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, the figures were as follow: East Hills, 470; Singleton, 600; Brighton, 400; Puckapunyal, 830; Portsea, 400; Leeuwin, 385; and Hampstead, 150. The total number of refugees in Australia at this point was 3235. However, on 18\textsuperscript{th} June, it was noted by the *Telegraph* that Singleton was home to 800 refugees. For this figure, see N. Williams and A. Stevenson, ‘Kosovar rebels taxi to Sydney’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 4.
conducted a brief inspection of the facilities, while others had spoken to Kosovars already at the barracks via mobile telephone - re-boarded the transfer coaches where they slept for their first night. The main concerns expressed by spokespersons for the refugees were a lack of running water inside the accommodation huts, no baths for children, inadequate heating and wind protection from mid-winter winds and the absence of privacy for family groups. There were also reports of electrical cables, light bulbs and piping being dangerous exposed. The ‘stand-off’, wrote the Telegraph, continued over three days, but by the third night, only three Kosovars were left ‘barricaded in a bus’ outside the Singleton Safe Haven. They were members of the Salihu family.

On the 16th June the news media reported on the objections expressed by “leaders” of the protest. The refugees’ grievances included, as stated by The Australian, the ‘substandard accommodation and kangaroos and snakes in the NSW Hunter Valley “jungle”’. They argued that the accommodation offered in Singleton was too cold and that the toilets were too far away from the sleeping huts, claiming they were hundreds of metres away. Spokespersons for these refugees said that Australian government had misled them over accommodation standards. Some asked to be relocated back to East Hills barracks, while others asked to be returned to the Balkans. According to The Australian, one of the protesters, 19-year old Elvana Muqaj, stated that Singleton was ‘just like [the camps in] Macedonia.’ The Kosovars, the media reported, were afraid of the local wildlife, with refugee Adrian Kastrati commenting: ‘It’s like a jungle here[.] Everywhere is kangaroos, snakes and everything. We just want

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615 The number of refugees involved in the “protest” at Singleton Safe Haven varies in news reports, with figures usually numbering the protesters at either 80 or 83.
616 Head, op. cit., p. 281.
617 ibid.
620 ibid.
elementary comfort \[sic\].\textsuperscript{622} The refugees at Singleton barracks were confronted with a sign placed near the sleeping huts that stated, in both Albanian and English language, ‘No Unauthorised access’, followed by ‘Snakes’. The sight, according to some reports, had frightened both children and adults alike, unaccustomed to Australian wildlife. Mr Kastrati further ‘complained’, wrote The Australian, that the $20 allowance offered by the Australian government was not enough to spend at local towns, saying that ‘$1000 would be better.’\textsuperscript{623} The group ‘demanded’ to be relocated back to East Hills Safe Haven where they had enjoyed more acceptable accommodation and facilities.\textsuperscript{624}

Responding to the refugees’ claims, manager of the Singleton Safe Haven, Tricia Flanagan, said the accommodation was basic, but not substandard and was being improved with more heating and comforts.\textsuperscript{625} Likewise, the Federal Government quickly refuted some of the negative publicity developing around the Safe Haven program. Singleton Safe Haven patron, the 53-year old NSW Liberal Senator John Tierney, along with DIMA officials, attempted to ‘negotiate’ with the protesters.\textsuperscript{626} This was a situation which quickly broke down as the Government refused to

\textsuperscript{622} A. Kastrati, cited in ibid.
\textsuperscript{623} A. Kastrati, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{624} ibid.
\textsuperscript{625} ibid.
\textsuperscript{626} Niesche and Zubrzycki, op. cit.
relocate the group back to East Hills. The Immigration Minister immediately ‘ruled out’ settling the protesters at East Hills. Ruddock said that, at this stage, it was not possible to return the refugees to Kosovo because the province was unsafe and that East Hills was filled to capacity. East Hills was only being operated to house refugees for a few days as they waited in transit before moving on to other Safe Havens around Australia. It was impractical to return the protesters to East Hills, at least while other refugees continued to arrive aboard evacuation flights, and their request conflicted with the operational timetable. Senator Tierney’s description of the protesters aboard the bus was unsympathetic. He stated that the group was being led by six men who had ignored pleas to at least allow the women and children to spend the night indoors. He refuted their claims about the standard of the accommodation, arguing that ‘the only viable option is that they get off the bus and enter the facility’, and adding, ‘They can’t really criticise the facilities. They haven’t even been in them.’

2.3 Media empathy for the Singleton “bus sit-in”
Some of the media coverage of those involved in the initial protest was sympathetic towards their concerns. The Herald described, in the 16th June article, ‘Cold, hungry refugees shun new home’, the ‘fear’ and ‘distress’ of the refugees. It depicted ‘an elderly woman, her head tightly wrapped in a kerchief, […] shivering with cold.’ The image contrasted with a comment about Senator Tierney, the ‘so-called patron of the safe havens’, and depictions of operation staff as heartless in denying the refugees aboard the buses food and other requests. A photograph presented the

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627 ibid.
629 Niesche and Zubrzycki, op. cit.
630 Tierney, cited in ibid.
631 ‘Cold, hungry refugees shun new home’, op. cit.
632 ibid.
633 ibid.
The image: ‘one of the younger Kosovar refugees finds some comfort at the wheel of the bus at Singleton.’ The newspaper went on:

A new mother is trying to breastfeed her daughter, but milk won’t come. “She can’t make milk, because she hasn’t eaten”, says [one of the other refugees]. “They won’t give us milk or juice for the children, or sugar for the tea. We are hungry and cold. The warmest place is on this bus.”

The Herald further described the conditions on the bus as ‘terrible’ and reported that: ‘The most crowded [bus] smelt like one might expect a bus with 60 people, 17 of them infants, to smell after 24 hours.’ The image of children was central to depictions of the refugees’ suffering aboard the buses. As the Herald noted, 3-year old Hyrije had been ‘sucking on a baby’s bottle full of water, taken from a tap in a concrete bathroom because the barracks staff would not give milk or juice to her mother unless she left the bus.’

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See image and caption in ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid.
The refugees were reportedly suffering from hunger, having not eaten for 24 hours since they had departed East Hills Safe Haven the day before. This was because, the Herald stated: ‘Australian officials in charge of the camp refused to provide food, saying the people would be fed only if they got off the bus.’

The Herald reported how two refugee men had walked into the food hall to ask for milk and juice for the infants on the bus, and for tea, milk and sugar for themselves, but the request was refused. An Australian staff member working in the food hall repeated the position, that: ‘There’s plenty to eat if they get off the bus.’

Imagery and scenes of sadness added to the media’s narrative of the Singleton protest, providing greater depth to a story about human tragedy as it unfolded (albeit much closer to home). Nonetheless, most media commentary disagreed with the refugees’ claims that the Singleton barracks was unsuitable or “worse than Macedonia”. Textual analysis further indicated that, as Pickering says, the ‘ideal refugee’ is usually ‘very young or very old, afraid’. They are supposedly unable to retain this kind of innocence when they seek to represent and speak for themselves - a perception that was typified by the shifting media stance on the Kosovars.

2.4 Evaluating the refugees’ concerns

The Australian provided a breakdown of the facilities provided at each of the barracks being used to accommodate the Kosovars. In Singleton, it
stated that the refugees were given rooms to sleep three to six persons, communal bathrooms up to 80 metres from the sleeping huts and a dining room up to 80 metres from the sleeping quarters. Each family accommodated at Puckapunyal, the Safe Haven catering to approximately the same number of refugees as Singleton, were given their own hut, with some rooms partitioned with dividers, and toilets and showers ‘a few metres’ from the huts.\textsuperscript{642} Comparatively, at least on paper, the Kosovars at Singleton were offered similar conditions to those accommodated elsewhere. Nonetheless, complaints about the facilities at Singleton barracks are worth investigating further.

Some reports presented an image of the refugees using Superloos (portable toilets) rather than toilet blocks. There were concerns about modesty expressed by some of the Kosovars, the lack of privacy and the inappropriateness of males and females from the same family sharing rooms.\textsuperscript{643} In one article, the \textit{Herald}, having gained access to the Singleton barracks despite Federal Government restrictions, provided a detailed account of the facilities offered to the Kosovars: ‘After permission to view the site was officially denied, [one of the refugees reported to be leading the protest] led the \textit{Herald} on a surreptitious tour: in the shower block, the cubicles are made from fibro cement. There is no door, and no shower curtain.’\textsuperscript{644} The newspaper vindicated some of the refugees’ concerns, reporting that, inside the bathrooms: ‘There are no baths for the children. There is, however, a pile of plastic potties, stacked near the door. Hot water

\textsuperscript{642} See table in C. Niesche, ‘Barracks cold comfort for Kosovar who’s lost it all’, \textit{The Australian}, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 4. It describes how at East Hills, which was only being used as processing centre for a maximum of several days, the Kosovars were given two-story townhouses each with three to four dormitories, with a dining room up to 150 metres from the townhouses. At Bandiana, refugees arriving shortly would be accommodated in ‘soldiers quarters’ with communal bathrooms on each floor and dining facilities were located 50 metres from the sleeping area. Those in Brighton were offered cabins that could sleep up to 10 people, five outdoor bathrooms and a dining area 150 metres from the cabins. In Hampstead, the refugees would sleep in rooms for four to six persons, with bathrooms on each floor, showers for around 45 people and dining facilities about 100 metres from the bunks. At Portsea there were to be four to five persons per family room, with showers in each unit block for up to 55 people and a dining room up to 100 metres away from sleeping quarters. In Leeuwin there was an average of four persons per room, with toilets shared by around 42 people and dining area about 50 metres from the sleeping quarters.

\textsuperscript{643} See E. Wynhausen, ‘Promises and reality a world apart’, \textit{The Australian}, 19\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{644} ‘Cold, hungry refugees shun new home’, \textit{op. cit.}
pipes, light bulbs and electrical cables are exposed. Water from the sinks drains straight into a concrete trough dug into the floor. There are no toilets, just Superloos.\footnote{ibid.}

Senator Tierney admitted that Singleton barracks was built for single people,\footnote{ibid.} though it is uncertain at what point he or other operational officials acquired this knowledge. It is further unclear, as such, with the program mainly designed to accommodate families, why the Government proceeded to use Singleton army base to house Kosovar refugees. Recognising the problem, Tierney stated without elaborating in the \textit{Telegraph}: ‘But we can get it to a level that will be quite comfortable.’\footnote{ibid.} The \textit{Herald} described a situation where, in some areas of the barracks, Kosovars were sleeping up to six in a room with families kept separate by temporary partitions. The newspaper report went on: ‘In one of the worst, there are three single beds, but no glass in the windows. There is a sink, but no water comes from the tap.’\footnote{‘Cold, hungry refugees shun new home’, \textit{op. cit.}} Ardian Frusina, a photojournalist from Pristina, commented that, after living in a Macedonian camp for three months, an Australian official presented him with a piece of paper, which described what the facilities would be. However, he went on: ‘they have made us feel like we are living on an animal farm, in a zoo.’\footnote{A. Frusina, cited in \textit{ibid.}} Another refugee, Fisnik Hoti, stated in the \textit{Telegraph} that he felt misled: ‘They said we would have our own building and bathrooms. There’s nothing to do here. At East Hills we could play tennis, volleyball, basketball, but here all we can do is go into Singleton. Singleton is quiet, it’s for old men, it’s boring.’\footnote{F. Hoti, cited in J. Albert, ‘Three reject “boring” haven’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph} (morning edition), 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 4. Hoti is also cited in J. Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph} (afternoon edition), 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 4.}

The \textit{Australian} confirmed some of these claims, describing its inspection of a family’s room at the Singleton barracks. The room, accommodating four persons, was one of four in a yellow fibro building. The newspaper went on: ‘On the floor was cracked, discoloured linoleum,
but authorities said the room would soon be carpeted. It was 80 metres from the toilet.'  

The father of the family occupying the room, who spoke no English, pointed at the small heater on the floor and mimed being cold. As *The Australian* observed: ‘He pointed to the foot of the door to show where the wind rushed in at night.’

A significant problem that emerged at Singleton barracks was that the military did not cease artillery exercises once the refugees had arrived at the Safe Haven. Parachute infantry completed the two-week training exercise during the week of the ‘sit-in’ involving field guns and other weapons at Singleton Army training area, about five kilometres from the refugee haven. According to the *Herald*, local Singleton residents ‘talked about how insensitive it seemed’. One farmer had heard the exercises from his property 30 kilometres away. Defence Minister John Moore, whose Department was part of the team organising Operation Safe Haven, had authorised artillery exercises at Singleton, Puckapunyal and Holsworthy (East Hills) army bases. A military source stated that a recent audit of the sound found that 80 per cent of the noise failed to register or registered minimally at the Singleton Safe Haven. Lloga said that he was ‘concerned as a matter of principle’, although he also was aware that the exercises were scheduled to take place.

*The Australian* indicated that the core of the dispute was a misunderstanding between the refugees and Australian immigration officials in Macedonia. At the Stenkovac camp immigration workers had instructed Kosovar refugees to sign an agreement that was printed in both English and Albanian. The Singleton situation was centred, *The Australian* asserted, around the misuse of a particular word in that paperwork. The agreement stated, in English, that ‘rooms will be furnished with basic beds, furniture and cupboards’.

However, as Lloga explained, the Albanian

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651 Niesche, *op. cit.*

652 *ibid.* Several photographs of the rooms featured in the *Herald* and *The Australian*, depicting facilities offered to the refugees in Singleton (see Appendix 5).


654 *ibid.*

655 *ibid.*

656 E. Lloga, cited in *ibid.*

657 Wynhausen, *op. cit.*
word chosen for “room” was more correctly interpreted by the refugees as “dwelling”. Lloga stated, after speaking with refugees aboard the buses, that they had understood that they were going to be offered a house or an apartment in Australia, and they ‘felt Australia had not fulfilled its end of the bargain’. Director of public affairs at DIMA, Stewart Foster, informed the Telegraph that the Australian government had divulged information accurately to the refugees about the kinds of facilities they would be offered. A copy of the form provided to the refugees, as cited by the Telegraph, read: ‘the centres have running water, toilets and bathrooms which you may have to share with other families.

2.5 The “showdown”, headlines and “voice”
The language used by the media to depict the protest was, at times, scathing and severely critical, particularly in the Herald and Telegraph. On 16th June the Herald depicted the situation as a matter of compliance, and no longer one of understanding and empathy, constructing a “showdown” between DIMA officials and those aboard the buses; ‘the protest, which began on Monday night, weakened about 7pm [last night] when at least 34 refugees backed down and entered the barracks… “Reality is beginning to set in”, said an Immigration Department spokeswoman.’ Newspaper headlines presented a similar scenario. In the Telegraph, these included: ‘Ingratitude of the five-star whingers’, ‘Ungracious act’, ‘THANKS A LOT’, and ‘Rebel refugees to be sent home’. In The Australian, which was much more supportive of the protesters, headlines read: ‘Creatures and no comfort: refugees’, ‘Barracks cold comfort for Kosovar who’s lost it all’, and ‘Refugees are entitled to complain’. For the Herald, headlines included: ‘They survived Kosovo, but won’t hack Singleton’, ‘Cold, hungry refugees shun new home’, and ‘Kosovars “ashamed” of protest leader’. Headlines, like all newspaper content, provide an opportunity to

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658 ibid.
659 Lloga, cited in ibid.
elaborate the themes and meanings presented in the meta-narrative of the news. However, this is always a deliberate and selective process where headlines remain relative to both public issues “of the day” and broader hegemonic interests.662

This situation relates similarly to the selection of “voices” used to complement media representations of the Singleton incident.663 A point made by Pickering is, in her study on media representation of refugees in Australia: ‘what is absent from the press examined is any consideration of seeking asylum from the point of view of the asylum seeker.’664 The refugees involved in the Singleton incident were granted some voice in media coverage, with The Australian, Telegraph and Herald quoting or referring to their statements 52, 16 and six times respectively. This contrasts with the much larger number of statements made by Government officials – mainly Ruddock, Senator Tierney and various DIMA representatives – which numbered at least 71 in The Australian, 55 in the Telegraph and 38 in the Herald. As Richard V. Ericson et al state, a common element in news content is how individuals tend to defer to experts and officials of the administered society who parade before them in the news media.665 The reality is that the idea of a free market of opinion in the media is as fictional as a free market economy and that individuals have ‘little effective opportunity to answer back’.666

Pickering’s assessment of the Australian press is that priority is given to ‘the deviant problem that asylum seekers and refugees constitute, and how a strong state is required to regulate this problem: preferably keeping the problem out.’667 This ideology is reflected in the regulations imposed on the media in relation to the Safe Haven program which is supported by the data on “voice”. One explanation for the variance in figures is related to the notion that journalists were not generally permitted

662 Ericson, Baranek and Chan, op. cit., p. 56.
663 This was evaluated by considering the range and frequency of sources (or “voices”) drawn on to shape news articles about these events. This includes persons directly quoted and/or whose statements were referred to in the news article.
664 Pickering, op. cit., p. 183.
665 Ericson, Baranek and Chan, op. cit., p. 18.
666 ibid.
667 Pickering, op. cit., p. 183.
to engage with the refugees due to the restrictions imposed by the Immigration Minister at the beginning of Operation Safe Haven. Another variable is that, for The Australian, many of the quotes from those refugees involved in the events in Singleton were made by Sabit Salihu after departing the town - because The Australian had offered to provide a taxi and accompanied the Salihu to Sydney.\(^{668}\) The lack of insight given as direct statements made by the Kosovars parallels Pickering’s conclusion, that: ‘views that undermined the stability of established relations of power and subordination in society were curtailed or excluded.’\(^{669}\) The limited voice offered to the Kosovars reinforces the criticism that refugees have often been ‘put on trial by the media without the power to narrate their own stories, their own account of their crimes.’\(^{670}\)

The media granted some “voice” to members of the general Australian population. Offering voice to individuals who “represent” the “community” works to naturalise the perception that news narratives are shaped by and recognise the importance of “commonsense”, “public” input. One Nation Party leader Pauline Hanson gained some exposure for her comments that the Singleton protesters ought to be sent ‘home’, that ‘charity begins at home’, and authorities should ‘put them on a plane and wave them hooray’.\(^{671}\) Hanson’s effect on popular politics was immense in this period, and her impact is captured by Saunders: ‘What still remains both elusive and fascinating is why a poorly educated, inarticulate, gaudily attired woman could mobilise such fervent devotion and attention.’\(^{672}\)

\(^{668}\) Other, non-Government commentary was given from people involved with these events as well, comprising at least 33 of these statements in the Australian, 32 in the Herald, and 64 in the Telegraph. The far majority of these “outsider” statements in the Australian were made by Eric Lloga the Albanian-Australian lawyer from Melbourne who acted as a “negotiator” on behalf on the Federal Government. His role, as noted throughout this media coverage, was to attempt to convince the “protesters” to leave the bus and enter the Singleton barracks. For the Telegraph, most of these “outsider” statements (at least 29) came from workers and refugees living at Brighton barracks in a single expose about the refugees’ lives in Tasmania.

\(^{669}\) Pickering, op. cit., p. 183.

\(^{670}\) ibid., p. 185.


In *The Australian*, four local Singleton residents were cited, whereas none appeared in the *Herald*. By contrast, there were 33 statements made by local Singleton residents (including police and shopkeepers) that featured in the *Telegraph*. Being interactive with the “public”, allowing it to be both a consumer and a producer of news, provides a means by which the mass media is able to develop the authority of its own political opinions. The media’s semi-transparency and interactivity is one way in which consent for corporate hegemony is reproduced. News consumers often function as news sources by calling in story ideas, and by being the subject of ‘person in the street’ segments that demonstrate reaction to news stories. In this way news reports are able to make a firmer claim to authenticity and authority by incorporating what is purported to be popular public perception.

A particular concern for the *Telegraph* was how the Kosovars’ ‘welcome was wearing thin as [Singleton’s] shopkeepers told of isolated incidents of shop lifting, refusal to pay for goods and the “rudeness” of the refugees. Shopkeepers and residents believe “enough is enough” - declaring that if the refugees are not happy in Singleton they should go home.’ The *Telegraph* said that ‘simmering discontent’ had emerged within the Singleton community, as noted by local shopkeeper Kaye Cartwidht: ‘The Singleton community was so excited about them coming here and they all worked hard to make their stay as comfortable as possible[.] Now, it seems, their attitude is negative. They seem to think they can have everything for nothing.’ *The Australian* noted the transition in media focus and was sceptical of the timing of the negative exposure. The newspaper was critical of other media coverage attempting to *localise* the incident, writing, in reference to the family who stayed the longest aboard their transfer coach: ‘The Salihu’s imagined sins stained a community.’ The emphasis placed by the *Telegraph* on the opinions of

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673 These voices from the community do not include the great volume of letters published in each of the newspapers in relation to the Singleton “bus sit-in”.
675 *ibid.*
676 O’Shea and Williams, *op. cit.*
677 *ibid.*
individuals representative of the Singleton community must be viewed as strategic and deliberate. As Ericson et al state, the hegemony and authority of media institutions are reinforced by the strategic placement of individuals in the news. Individuals tend to appear in the news when there is no specific implication of an institutional arrangement or questions of status. In this sense individuals do not “speak” for the majority in any sense of the word “public”, but they do represent a kind of public when they do appear. At best the individual presents the fiction of “the public” that is central to mass democracy.679

Najdim Sejdim, designated by the Telegraph as one of the protest “leaders”,680 commented that the refugees were not coping well with the near freezing conditions at the camp.681 Mr Sejdim said that it was ‘500m to the showers and toilets from the barracks’ and ‘there is no hot water in the accommodation and it is very cold’.682 Site manager of the Singleton barracks, army officer Larry Tanner, responded simply: ‘Well, it’s cold in Singleton. We’re all cold.’683 Ruddock’s response, which was repeated in a number of articles, was that Australia had never promised 5-star hotel accommodation.684 As the Herald stated, the Immigration Minister ‘would not be dictated to by those refusing to get off the buses’.685 Ruddock commented, on 16th June:

These people came from tents where running water is not available, where toilet facilities were built for an emergency situation in which there was significant overcrowding and risk of disease.686

There was no indication in the Herald as to whether Ruddock’s refusal to “negotiate” with the refugees was affected by a concern for providing the

679 Ericson, Baranek and Chan, op. cit., p. 15.
680 See O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit.; and, Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, op. cit.
681 O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit.
682 N. Sejdim, cited in Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, op. cit.
683 L. Tanner, cited in O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit.
685 O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit.
686 Ruddock, cited in ibid. Ruddock also cited in Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, op. cit.
optimum care available. Rather, his comments indicated that he was willing to provide only what was immediately on hand and convenient for the Government - a sentiment expressed throughout Operation Safe Haven.

During the Safe Haven legislative debates, for instance, Ruddock reiterated comments by the UNHCR High Commissioner that the evacuation program was not intended to be nor was it suited to being a permanent resettlement program. He suggested that such a program was not designed to offer options available to other categories of refugees, arguing instead: ‘It could not be clearer. That is what the UNHCR was seeking.’ Ruddock indicated that his perspective on the matter was not extraordinary, that the UNHCR had other, more important concerns to deal with than the protests of few dozen Kosovars evacuated to Australia. On 29th June, he speculated about the lack of interest displayed by the UNHCR about the Singleton protest, describing: ‘The UNHCR’s priority is with the hundreds of thousands of people living in camps on the Kosovo border.’

As is consistent with similar statements made by the Immigration Minister throughout Operation Safe Haven, Ruddock was unwilling to explore alternative accommodation options for the Kosovars. The Herald emphasised how the Government was ‘prepared to wait out the impasse.’ The newspaper pointed out, supporting the Federal Government and ridiculing the protesters: ‘Immigration officials trying to resolve the protest said the sit-in had taken on farcical proportions, with those on board the buses leaving to use toilet facilities, even having meals, before returning to their seats.’

Initially, Lyndall Sachs from the Australian branch of the UNHCR expressed support for the protesters, pointing out the arrangements were ‘inappropriate’, and the bathroom facilities (portable “Superloos”) were 500 metres from the wooden-hut sleeping quarters. Moreover, she commented: ‘having to take the kids to the toilets at night would be a very

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689 O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit.
690 ibid.
frightening experience for anyone.’ Sachs quickly retracted her comments, however, saying the Australian government’s response had been generous. One journalist noted how: ‘The whole [Singleton accommodation] situation is an absolute shambles. Even one UN official said so, too, before being forced to retract her criticisms presumably for fear of us throwing a tantie and sulking off from the international aid effort.’ There was no other criticism of the Singleton affair offered by the UNHCR, although there were clear political motivations for the silence imposed on its staff. It is plausible to suggest, too, that the main strategic issue for the organisation had been resolved - to relocate refugees from Macedonia, and thereby assist NATO with its plans for launching a land-assault from that country against Yugoslavia. Staff from the UNHCR had indicated concern at the beginning of the evacuations about the conditional (i.e. temporary) basis of the program. It is likely that these concerns included the flexibility the evacuation program afforded to national governments in setting out the protection arrangements as well as the inability of refugees to determine their own standards of living, although these concerns are not directly specified. The Federal Government, nonetheless, was bound by no formal obligations to provide better quality Safe Haven facilities under the UNHCR evacuation arrangements.

2.6 Masculinity and aggression
News reports were further shaped by the idea that the “bus sit-in” was being conducted at the insistence of, at first, several male refugees and then later by Mr Sabit Salihu. These men were often set apart from the remainder of the Kosovars in Singleton in media coverage. They were described as coming from a male-dominated society, whereas the other refugees who had accepted the conditions at Singleton were commonly depicted as rational and reasonable. These kinds of representations of male Kosovar refugees were used at least 10 times in the Telegraph, nine times

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693 Barutcki and Suhrke, op. cit., p. 99.
694 An exception is in O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, op. cit. Here, the authors claim the refugees ‘are believed to be under the direction of eight male refugees.’
in *The Australian* and four times in the *Herald*. As D.D. McNicoll wrote, in a highly critical commentary piece about the protest in *The Australian*, it was the ‘blokes who ran the protest’, further noting how ‘women have very little say in Kosovar society’. Gendering of the issue served to undermine the motivations of those asking for better quality accommodation and facilities by denigrating supposed aspects of Kosovar culture. As Kate Lyons, spokeswoman for DIMA, explained: ‘Because their society is very patriarchal a small group have organised the sit-in and the others won’t budge.’ Senator Tierney repeatedly asserted that it was the male-dominated culture of the Kosovars driving the refugees’ protest, stating: ‘It is a patriarchal society and five men are leading this group. What they say goes – the others are falling into line.’

There were a variety of descriptive terms employed by critics, conveying an image of the refugees as aggressive, violent and agitators in their ‘stand’ against the Federal Government. These kinds of references were produced at least 147 times in the *Telegraph*, 34 times in *The Australian*, and on 20 occasions in the *Herald*. *The Australian* continued to draw on many of these terms to describe the actions of the refugees, despite the support offered by the newspaper to the protesters’ perspective and its rebuff of Government criticism about the incident. This complements Pickering’s findings that, not only were refugees more likely to be represented by the media as a significant “problem”, but there was the quite “common sense” assumption that they were a “deviant” problem. Frameworks of deviancy can be viewed as part of broader attempts at orchestrating consent by the media by routinely criminalising subordinate groups. This is often undertaken when the State appears to be losing control of subordinates and when there are actual or symbolic challenges to its legitimacy. The response of the State has commonly been to attempt to

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696 K. Lyons, cited in O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, *op. cit*.
697 Tierney, cited in Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, *op. cit*.
698 O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, *op. cit*.
699 This included the use of terms such as “stand-off”, “barricaded”, “demands”, “intransigent”, “dummy spit”, “recalcitrant”, “crazy”, “abusive”, “rebels”, “rebellion”, “ringleader”, “petulant” and “uprising”.
701 *ibid.*, p. 184 and p. 185.
naturalise and make popular the links between “criminal” or “deviant” behaviours and insubordinates. This is usually achieved in conjunction with campaigns that identify entire minority communities as the “whole problem”, especially considering Australia’s history of popularly excluding those deemed to be culturally different.

These kinds of depictions of the protesters affirmed growing perceptions of the refugees as irrational, tricky and ungrateful. It was in such a light that the Telegraph reported about Kosovars shoplifting in Singleton, noting how, according to a shopkeeper, one refugee demanded two packets of cigarettes even though he only had enough money for one. The man reportedly ‘got angry and abusive and left’. A local police source described the refugees as ‘cunning as rats’, although admitting there had only been ‘two or three instances where Kosovars have been stopped in the process of attempting to shoplift’. One Kosovar reportedly told staff at a local supermarket: ‘We are Kosovar. We don’t have to pay’ and

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703 See esp. Poynting and Morgan, op. cit. See also S. Poynting, P. Tabar and J. Collins, Bin Laden in the Suburbs; Criminalising the Arab Other, Sydney Institute of Criminology Series No. 18, University of Sydney Faculty of Law, Sydney, 2004.

704 See esp. Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, op. cit.

705 O’Shea and Williams, op. cit.

then left after making an ‘offensive gesture’. The cost of cigarettes severely depleted the weekly allowance of $20 offered to the refugees under Operation Safe Haven. This kind of detail was ignored by the Telegraph. It was later noted by The Australian that the Government, at the insistence of Ruddock, had recognised that a lack of ‘access to cigarettes’ in some centres had led to ‘anti-social behaviour’. The main reason Ruddock wrote to John Howard, urging Cabinet to allow the Kosovars to work up to 20 hours per week, was because most of the males were heavy smokers. Ruddock stated that giving cigarettes to the Kosovars would contravene the Government’s public health policy. Instead, he said: ‘Certainly, the Government thought it would be inappropriate to be buying cigarettes to give away just because people were finding it difficult to break a tobacco-related addiction [sic].’

The image of the aggressive and irrational nature of the Kosovars was again highlighted in a Telegraph article published almost a week after the protest had began. The article, entitled ‘100 armed refugees in brawl’, highlighted how: ‘More than 100 Kosovar Albanian refugees, some armed with cricket bats and road barriers, were involved in a brawl at the Singleton safe haven… The battle […] was sparked by two women over [loud] music.’ One of the refugees reportedly suffered a broken nose and another man’s arm was injured when struck by a teenage girl wielding a cricket bat. As I noted earlier, there were around 800 refugees sharing the facilities at Singleton at this time. Social life at the barracks was understandably tense, considering the circumstances. Refugee Najim Sejdim indicated how one of the reasons for the ‘brawl’ was that Singleton ‘can be boring, and we are all stuck in here together day after day.’

707 ibid.
709 ibid.
711 The figure of 800, as noted earlier, is given in Williams and Stevenson, op. cit.
2.7 Comparative agendas: editorials and opinion columns

Editorials and opinion columns, while not always complimentary of one another, provide insights into the ideological position of a newspaper. The editorial performs a “flagship” role within the assemblage of a newspaper. It is also the point from which the interests of the proprietor are expressed via the commanding position of the editor. Editorial positions on the Singleton protest varied dramatically between each of the newspapers. The *Australian* noted its support for the Singleton protest in three separate editorial pieces and granted direct support for the Salihu family in one of these articles. The *Telegraph* was heavily critical of the refugees involved with three editorial pieces dedicated to criticising the “sit-in”. The *Herald* maintained some perspective and distance only publishing one editorial piece about the Singleton episode and offering both a degree of support and criticism of the refugees involved.

The editor of the *Telegraph* expressed personal outrage at the incident. In the first editorial piece, entitled ‘Ungracious act’, the editor described the actions of the refugees aboard the buses as ‘lamentable’, juxtaposing the ingratitude of those involved with Australia’s generosity:

> Australia is a generous country, offering sanctuary to these people and 4000 of their countrymen. Even if conditions at the camp were spartan, the protest was inappropriate and ungracious.\(^{713}\)

The following day’s editorial, entitled, ‘When a fair go is not enough’, articulated that the most pressing concern about the protest was ingratitude. The editor wrote that, with Australia’s ‘rich, compassionate heritage’ of the ‘fair go’, it ‘is difficult for us to understand the reluctance of a group of Kosovar refugees to accept our outstretched hand’.\(^{714}\) The protesters were described as doing ‘their countrymen a disservice with what can only be viewed as a petulant display of ingratitude’.\(^{715}\) The editor’s point was supported by a Warren cartoon depicting a drought-stricken “battler”, who

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\(^{714}\) ‘When a fair go is not enough’ (editorial), *The Daily Telegraph*, 17\(^{th}\) June 1999, p. 10.

\(^{715}\) *ibid.*

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says: ‘If things are too rough – they can bunk with us.’ This editorial reflects the populist, tabloid style typical of the Telegraph, catering to a readership different to newspapers such as The Australian. It is this formula that is most clearly affiliated with the Howard Government, in its consistent attempts to vindicate the concerns of “battlers”.

On 17th June The Australian editorial, ‘Refugees are entitled to complain’, expressed outrage at the ‘meanness’ of the response by Australian officials to the refugees’ concerns about Singleton army barracks. The editor criticised Ruddock, who ‘could offer no more understanding than a snide remark that Australia had never promised five-star accommodation.’ The piece further described the anger felt by some Australians toward the protesters as revealing ‘a sour and poisonous underside’ to ‘our national character’. The editor wrote: ‘The vicious response has revealed some Australians to be ungracious and selfish. One

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716 Brett, op. cit.
717 ‘Refugees are entitled to complain’ (editorial), The Australian, 17th June 1999, p. 12.
718 ibid.
719 ibid. See also Ericson, Baranek and Chan, op. cit. for further discussion on the ideological role of editorials.
man said he felt like “punching (a refugee) in the face.” The piece went on: ‘Such meanness suggests that the primary motivation for bringing these people halfway around the world was salving our conscience, not attending to the welfare of people in desperate need.’

The editor said that the refugees ‘have some justification for their complaints’, linking the issues raised in Singleton to concerns expressed during the planning stages of Operation Safe Haven:

despite concerns that they should be housed close to each other, to the Australian Albanian population and the wider community, the Federal Government has instead housed them in army barracks scattered across the country. Authorities even had to fly an Albanian community leader from Melbourne [Erik Lloga] to Singleton to communicate with the protesters, underlining the extent of their isolation.

One of the most pressing concerns, the editor later wrote, was that the Kosovars were ‘housed in army barracks away from the eyes of most people.’ The Federal Government’s reaction to the Singleton incident, the editor stated, demonstrated ‘the flint-hearted control of the bureaucracy,’ as ‘Ruddock played to the morally indignant gallery by suggesting that if they did not accept his rules they could go home.’

Opinion columnists, as evident in this analysis, do not always coalesce with the purported editorial position. However, they perform an important political role in upholding the ‘democratic postulate’ of the media. By including “diverse” opinion, newspapers are able to reproduce the appearance that the news media is committed to a variety of public (rather than corporate or private) interests. The Australian, in seven

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720 ‘Refugees are entitled to complain’ (editorial), op. cit.
721 Ibid.
722 Ibid.
723 Ibid.
724 ‘Refugee plan needs a heart, not control’ (editorial), The Australian, 19-20th June 1999, p. 18.
725 Ibid.
726 Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., p. xlix.
opinion columns, provided a diverse range of commentary concerning events in Singleton. The newspaper’s columnists were both supportive and critical of the “sit-in” (generally) at least once, while offering direct support to the Salihus at least five times and only being critical of the family on one occasion. The Telegraph published five opinion pieces that discussed the Singleton protest, with four of these being severely critical of those involved, and one that was somewhat supportive (though not explicitly). The Herald only published two opinion pieces about these events, being critical of the “sit-in” on one of these occasions, while offering support for both the “sit-in” and the Salihus in another.

The Telegraph’s Miranda Devine was scathing toward the protesters informing readers of the efforts of the women of the Singleton Quilters who had hand-made quilts for each of the refugees. She argued: ‘Australia, it seems, just can’t do enough to help the refugees. So it’s no wonder that their seeming lack of gratitude has inspired much anger.’

This was followed by commentary in support of Senator Tierney’s description of the Singleton barracks, noting that the barracks had been ‘standard accommodation for soldiers and reservists for 50 years.’ Of course, the refugees were not soldiers (at least under their present circumstances) and comprised families with small children as well as the elderly. I have noted in Chapter 2 that the Safe Haven program was initially intended to cater to families and mothers with children. Stewart Foster had stated regarding the selection of refugees for evacuation to Australia that the Department had ‘put an emphasis on women at risk, those who are alone or with young children. But because the Albanians have strong family links we’re also bringing a lot of family units, mum and dad, their children and in some cases grandparents so they can provide each other with emotional support.’

Telegraph columnist Mike Gibson supported the position of the Immigration Minister and Senator Tierney, labelling the sit-in

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728 ibid.
‘outrageous’. In his opinion piece, entitled, ‘When doing all we can is not enough’, Gibson argued that Singleton barracks was better than ‘Those stinking hell-holes [in Macedonia], in which Kosovar Albanians dropped in their tracks, without food, without toilets, without heating, seemingly without hope.’ Much of the article centred on the notion of gratefulness and whether the Singleton Kosovars deserved the assistance and generosity that had been offered to them by Australians. Gibson cited one refugee who had arrived in Australia many years before, who stated how ‘thankful’ she was ‘to be here’. He summarised his view of the protesters, describing them as ungrateful, ‘five-star whingers’, while pointing out that the conditions at Singleton were ‘met with the approval of their more grateful colleagues’. The columnist promoted the idea that those who did not voice any concerns must have simply been content with the services provided by the Australian government.

2.8 Culture and class
A Warren cartoon accompanied Gibson’s attack on the protesters depicting them as tourists aboard the ‘Kosovar Accommodation Reviewers World Tour’. In the cartoon, four male refugees sit at the back of a bus as it drives at pace away from Singleton barracks. The ‘Reviewers’ hold their thumbs down as they sign a discontented ‘X’ on a clipboard checklist. The refugees in the image are all men which supported other claims by the media that the style of protest was typical of persons from a chauvinistic, patriarchal Balkan culture. The physical appearance of the men, too, is connected with images drawn earlier by Warren depicting the refugees as

730 M. Gibson, ‘Ingratitude of the five-star whingers’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 16th June 1999, p. 10. See also article reprinted in M. Gibson, ‘When doing all we can is not enough’, *The Daily Telegraph* (afternoon edition), 16th June 1999, p. 10.
731 *ibid.*
732 Anonymous former refugee, cited in *ibid*. The woman (unnamed) went on: ‘We were so grateful for the opportunity to come to this country and start a new life. These people in that bus at Singleton … you know what we should do with them? We should drive them back to Sydney, put them on one of those leaky, smelly boats, and send them back to China with all those illegal immigrants. Let them see what sort of welcome they’d receive over there. They are so ungrateful, these people. We should kick them out.’
733 *ibid.*
734 *ibid.*
staunch, wearing stereotypically Balkan clothes (including the fur hat), and sporting a long moustache and slightly unshaven face.

A second cartoon by Warren published on 18th June and titled ‘The Kosovars Lament’, depicted male Kosovars in a similar light. The use of these kinds of images to depict the Singleton protesters had significant implications for the broader representation of Kosovar culture by the media throughout Operation Safe Haven. The Kosovars were generally referred to as “Europeans”, identifiable by their Western “European-ness”, on 18 occasions by the Telegraph, 20 times in The Australian and not at all by the Herald. However, there quickly emerged contention in news reports following the protest about whether the Kosovars were to be viewed as Western Europeans (and thus, “like us”) or as significantly different. For the most part the willingness of the Kosovars to be satisfied with the accommodation at Singleton was significantly linked to their ability to

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735 This included references to keywords including: European/s, the ability to speak German, being “like us”, being white, clean and nice, and being sophisticated enough to use mobile telephones. They were, further, often described as “family people” or in terms of their family titles or family units, with the Australian making 220 references to “the Salihus”, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, aunts and uncles (and other family-orientated roles). The Herald used these terms 46 times, while the Telegraph referred to them as such on 122 occasions. One story depicting the Kosovars as “family-types”, published in both the Telegraph and the Australian, reported on the wedding of two refugees at the Singleton army base ten days after the protest had begun. See D. Tanner, ‘Refugees flee to the haven of love’, The Australian, 26-27th June 1999, p. 11. See also J. Albert, ‘A love that blossomed from the fields of hate’, The Daily Telegraph, 26th June 1999, p. 3.
adapt to (or ‘hack’) Australian conditions and values.\textsuperscript{736} Pickering notes the importance of representational binaries, particularly those denoting a clear sense of familiarity/otherness. She says that it is through ‘binary oppositions [that] difference is established’ which includes ‘the infinite discursive possibilities for talking about “us” and “them”.’\textsuperscript{737} The Australian cited at least 55 references to the Kosovars as significantly “dissimilar, alien or Other” noting the language, religious and cultural barriers they were supposedly facing (among other issues) upon arriving in Australia. The Australian mainly cited these notions, however, in relation to discussions taking place about the refugees, rather than suggesting the Kosovars were significantly different to Australians. The Herald and the Telegraph described or referred to the refugees in these terms on 12 and 28 occasions respectively.

Some of these comments included references to how the Kosovars were intimidated by flora and wildlife in Singleton, including “snakes”, “kangaroos” and the refugees’ descriptions of the Australian bush as a “jungle”. On many occasions, the newspapers were very patronising towards the refugees on this point, suggesting they should be able to “hack” Australian conditions - including the below zero temperatures in Singleton at this time of year – particularly when compared to those from which they had come.\textsuperscript{738} Ramona Koval, writing in The Australian, commented on the representational paradox:

Hark back to a few months ago when refugees first started streaming into Macedonia and all the talk was about how like us they were. They had mobile phones. They had Reeboks. They had stylish jackets… They were easy to feel sorry for because they were white and clean and nice.\textsuperscript{739}

\textsuperscript{736} O’Reilly, Kennedy and Edwards, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{737} Pickering, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{738} See reference to ‘hack’ in O’Reilly, Kennedy and Edwards, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{739} R. Koval, ‘Forget politics, think compassion’, \textit{The Australian}, 26\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 20.
In reference to the recent events in Singleton, Koval makes the point sarcastically: ‘The refugees were so much like us that they preferred not to freeze at night in a room with no privacy.’

As Pickering says: ‘Representations of asylum seekers and refugees in the press have been underpinned by concerns for the integrity of the nation state… validating and invoking repressive state responses.’ Shifting representations in the media is related to Gramsci’s notion of consent as well as Hall’s ideas about representational power. Gramsci asserts that consent is (re)produced via the ability of hegemonic interests to bend and shift in relation to social trends and to do so on an ongoing basis. Attempts at utilising and controlling the power of representation, in this sense, can more accurately be defined as a representation of power, available for scrutiny and dissection by scholars. Representational power in the media is sustained by those in control of media production - who are able to undermine the abilities of subordinate groups to determine their own public persona. This process provides a vehicle for displacing and dislodging the power of self-representation from the hands of subordinates and to define such groups as unpopular and outcasts without significant challenge.

Pickering articulates that news discourse, ‘as a site of the reproduction of hegemonic relations is an important locale to understand the orchestration of consent.’ This is because representations of refugees in the news media ‘have the potential to tell us about the “normality” of prevailing social orders.’ As refugees routinely disrupt established national/spatial orders, the view of refugees as “rebels” and “deviants” emerges somewhat naturally from the perspective of those attempting to support the existing consensus – from governments, to the media and any other powerful institution. Government empathy for the Kosovars rapidly declined as an authoritative, symbolic response to their dissent. It set the

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740 ibid.
742 Purvis and Hunt, op. cit., pp. 492-495.
743 These can be measured and accounted for via content analysis and discourse analysis.
746 ibid.
standard for the public to follow suit, as is further signified by the way both the Government and popular conceptions of the refugees (as portrayed in the media) resorted to denigrating Kosovar culture. Negative representations of the protesters were enhanced by the deployment of popular stereotypes that existed prior to the sit-in – that, the Kosovars were unable to communicate properly in English or share Australian “values” and thus ought to be treated differently, patronised and have less expected of them than “normal” people.

This process is linked to how minority social groups become subject to intense “ethnicisation” in the media, “caged” by cultural representations and stereotypes over which they have very little control. Media discourses perform an important ideological function in reaffirming the potency of negative stereotypes as “common sense” racial and ethnic categories. Pickering describes, further, how ‘Ethnic communities can be quickly rendered homogenous, unfamiliar and strange within such discourses.’ Stereotypes provide journalists with useful analogies in constructing their stories. An untimely description of the Kosovars in The Australian was provided by Luke Slattery, who referred to the protesters as ‘busniks.’ The Serbian chetniks (mercenaries or militiamen) who had fought during the Yugoslav civil war (1991-92) had been hired by the Yugoslav regime to fight in Kosovo against the KLA, expelling many ethnic Albanians from the province. Such a generalisation about Balkan migrant groups resonated with pre-existing stereotypes in Australia easily deployed by the dominant cultural group attempting to keep the dissenting refugees in check.

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749 Pickering, op. cit., p. 179.
751 Chetniks were originally Serbian nationalist partisans fighting alongside the Allies in World War II. Their loyalties were transferred to the Yugoslav communists under the Tito regime. The name was also popularly applied to Serbian militia forces in the Yugoslav civil war (1991–92).
The earlier status bestowed upon the Kosovars by the news media as acceptable, “middle class” refugees further became the basis of much criticism and resentment. The *Telegraph*, in particular, repeatedly reinforced the point that the refugees involved in the Singleton incident were not genuinely “in need” of assistance because of their supposed affluence and education levels. The analysis revealed that the *Telegraph* made references to the Kosovars as “middle class” on 13 occasions. A similar trend was evident in *The Australian*, with these kinds of references numbering 11 times, while there were zero “middle class” descriptors used in the *Herald*. *The Australian* did not actively dispute this perception, stating that the frustrations expressed by the refugees, many of whom were middle class and used to living in cities and towns, were compounded by the fact that they had been dispatched to a ‘bleak army camp hours from Sydney – and the nearest Albanian community.’ Lloga, speaking to *The Australian*, said the refugees felt they were in the middle of nowhere in Singleton. Several of the men he had spoken to on the buses were teachers and one was a doctor. He claimed: ‘They had nice cars, they had nice things, they would have gone out for cappuccinos, much as you and I.’ The notion that the protesters were middle class, however, provided a firm basis for criticisms expressed by columnist Miranda Devine. As she wrote in the *Telegraph*, referring to comments made by an interpreter working at the barracks: ‘He says the refugees who staged the sit-in are sophisticated middle-class urbanites from the equivalent of Kosovo’s Double Bay – designer refugees.’ Devine added: ‘The story doing the rounds of the East Hills refugee centre yesterday was that the ringleader of the holdouts,

752 These terms include references to terms such as “middle class” and the refugees’ former employment roles in Kosovo (such as teachers or doctors, as well business managers). These terms are not always exclusive, as “middle class” may also be indicated by levels of affluence and other factors. However, “middle class” is conceived in more explicit terms here. This has been done for the purposes of establishing much clearer coding categories. Moreover, this is because “affluence” is the basis of another coding category, as noted below.
753 Wynhausen, *op. cit.*
754 Lloga, cited in *ibid.*
755 Devine, ‘Confusion of a town that gave everything’, *op. cit.*
a charismatic man who “speaks like an American politician”, has “never even been in the Macedonian refugee camps.”756

The income levels of the refugees were a significant focus in media coverage, with the number of terms depicting the refugees as “affluent” comprising 44 in the Telegraph, 16 in The Australian but only one in the Herald. The main target of criticism in this regard was Sabit Salihu, with some reports referring to him as a “wealthy” man demanding a “five star hotel” for his family from the Australian government. Senator Tierney and the Immigration Minister both made these kinds of accusations. As Tierney stated, on 16th June:

Some of them wanted a few stars accommodation more than we could give them.757

Ruddock, playing down the refugees’ concerns, commented that the accommodation provided was ‘appropriate’:

We don’t keep apartments available for thousands of people who might need them or require them at any point in time.

We have appropriate accommodation in an emergency situation which certainly is not five-star hotel accommodation, nobody said it would be.758

A variety of criticisms were further made across the newspapers claiming the Kosovars were “designer” refugees, who were “sophisticated” and wore quality brand-name clothing.759

756 ibid.
757 Tierney, cited in Williams, ‘Camp no better than Macedonia’, op. cit.
758 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
759 Descriptions of the refugees as “urbanites”, coming from cities and large towns, numbered 12 in the Australian, two in the Telegraph and zero in the Herald. Representations of them as rural, poor or village “folk” comprised five in the Australian, one in the Telegraph and zero in the Herald. This does not include representations of the refugees in cartoons, which, on several occasions, continued to depict those Kosovars delivered by the Australian government to Singleton as poor, rural villagers fleeing on tractors and wearing peasant clothing. One such cartoon by Nicholson published in the
The shift from news articles being overwhelmingly supportive of
the refugees to a stance that was severely critical of them was significant. It
paralleled a major decline in popular empathy, while there was an increase
in descriptions of the refugees as wealthy, demanding, not genuinely in
need of assistance and exploiting Australia’s hospitality. As Pickering
notes concerning shifting representations of the Kosovars, at first, ‘the
inviolability of the nation state was sidelined as the rhetoric changed [from
a punitive, anti-refugee stance] with altered political imperatives…
however, only inasmuch as the objects of representations (refugees and
asylum seekers) remained passive.’ For Pickering, the Kosovars were
acceptable only in the context in which they were deemed “ideal” refugees,
including: ‘[the] very young or very old, afraid; persecuted by an
internationally proclaimed oppressive state; present in Australia only by
invitation of the Australian government; they originated from “wars” and
“conflicts” in which Australia had a current political and publicly
proclaimed interest; and, they were visibly grateful to be in Australia.’

2.9 Gratefulness and charity
According to Pickering’s analysis of the Singleton protest, there was a
swift return in media reports to ‘more conventional devalued
representations of refugees’ as ‘ungrateful, aggressive, demanding,
draining and different.’ Pickering’s conclusions, however, are only
accurate as far as the tabloid media was concerned. The idea that the
Kosovars were “ungrateful” numbered 55 times in the Telegraph, 20 in The
Australian, and seven in the Herald. According to a Rehame radio poll,
60 per cent of all callers expressed similar, negative sentiments about the
protesters. Popular talkback radio host John Laws proclaimed on-air on

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*Australian* depicted the protesters piled on to a tractor, fleeing Singleton barracks for

760 See also McNicoll, *op. cit.*


762 *ibid.*, p. 177.

763 *ibid.*

764 These kinds of descriptions include the use of concepts such as “ungrateful”,
“whingers” and “ingrates”.

765 ‘Is “no thanks” no thanks?’ (The Rehame Report), *op. cit.*
16th June that the refugees had ‘thrown our hospitality back in our faces in a very discourteous fashion.’\cite{766} Such anger reflects the way unpopular cultural and social groups throughout Australian history are routinely sacrificed ‘for the sake of normality’\cite{767} which in turn legitimates the incarceration or expulsion of such persons when they break or challenge symbolic rules of exclusion. Prime Minister John Howard voiced his opinion on the protest, linking it to the binary of un/gratefulness:

\begin{quote}
I would imagine the great bulk of the refugees who are immensely grateful for the safe haven that Australia has provided would be extremely embarrassed about the behaviour of a small number[…]. I think they would be a huge embarrassment to their fellow countrymen.\cite{768}
\end{quote}

Gratitude was a central concern for Senator Tierney as well, who stated that it was unfortunate that the incident ‘has tended to have an effect on the attitude of the Australian people towards [Operation Safe Haven]. But they should not judge the overall gratitude of the people who have come out from Kosovo by the actions of a few.’\cite{769} Tierney’s account of the Singleton protest in the Senate positioned the refugees’ gratitude and the ‘enormous generosity’ of Australians as central to the program. He emphasised the importance of ‘pay[ing] special tribute to that generosity’,\cite{770} despite ‘the actions of one man [Sabit Salihu] who may have soured the taste of some of the very generous people in Australia’.\cite{771} Only The Australian resisted the Government’s emphasis on gratitude and generosity. The newspaper deplored how, in relation to the protesters:

\begin{flushleft}
\scriptsize \cite{766} J. Laws, cited in ibid.
\cite{767} Pickering, op. cit., p. 184.
\cite{770} ibid., p. 5832.
\cite{771} ibid.
\end{flushleft}
‘word of their ingratitude spread, tainting the wider refugee population in the process.’

On the other hand, Australian “charity” – involving offerings, acts, responses, monies, materials given or undertaken by Australians for the benefit of the Kosovars – was noted at least 349 times in the Telegraph, 142 times in The Australian, and on 60 occasions in the Herald. The Herald pointed out how one of Sydney’s most prestigious private schools, Trinity Grammar, had transferred its annual cadet camp from Singleton barracks to make room for the refugees. An article in the Telegraph noted, while accentuating the criminal behaviour of refugees shoplifting in Singleton, that local Lions, Rotary and Apex clubs had collectively raised $20,000 and purchased cots, potties and babies bottles for the refugees.

Hunter Valley coal miners had donated a further $10,000 to the Singleton Safe Haven. As one local shopkeeper stated, noting the generosity of the community: ‘What more can we do?’

Evident is an attempt, particularly by the Telegraph, to establish clear contrasts between the compassion and generosity of the Australian public and “unappreciative”, “undeserving” refugees. This type of coverage paralleled Tierney’s account of the Singleton protest in the Senate where he described the efforts of local Hunter Valley residents as ‘overwhelming’ while criticising leaders of the protest. The discourse worked to demonise the refugees as ungrateful for Australia’s efforts, support the Government in its efforts to control the image of the Safe

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772 Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, op. cit. See also ‘Refugees are entitled to complain’ (editorial), op. cit. Here the editor pointed out: ‘Despite inconceivable sufferings, most of the refugees to have arrived in Australia have been courteous and eager to express their thanks. A few have expressed dissatisfaction… We might hope for thanks from our guests but we cannot demand obeisance as a condition of their stay… we cannot expect refugees to suddenly forget their traumas or their dignity thanks simply to Australian hospitality… we have done them no favours, only that which could decently be expected of human beings. Our hospitality should include a generosity of spirit as well as physical comforts but this sorry episode has shown that, as a nation, we are not as generous as we like to believe.’


774 O’Shea and Williams, op. cit.

775 ibid.

776 Anonymous ‘shopkeeper’, as cited in ibid.


778 ibid., p. 5831. Here, too, Tierney provides a description of the protesters as rebels and conniving, as those who had ‘hatched this plan that the 80 would stay on the bus.’
Haven program, and silence or discredit critics (especially from within the refugees’ ranks) by occupying a moral high ground. As Pickering says, affirming Hall’s ideas on the role of the media in constructing social categories of deviance: ‘The seductive and material power of language in the representation of deviance can be seen in the binary logic deployed in relation to asylum seekers and refugees: bogus/genuine; refugees/“boat people”; law abiding/criminal; legal/illegal; good/evil.’ Such logic ‘insists on the polarisation of the subject and provides communal comfort in removing ambivalence through the forced choice of either/or.’ Crucially, it has tended to be these kinds of punitive binaries that have come to inform responses by the State, which in turn advocate the need to combat deviance as the foremost goal.

However, the charity/gratefulness discourse reveals much more about the close and complementary relationship formed between the media and Federal Government in their responses to the protest. The nature in which charity is offered, in conjunction with how charitable sentiment is deployed after assistance is given, presents a particular picture of the net gain that is desired by the group offering it. Within media discourse, it is possible to recognise how the recipient group becomes the object of good intentions – to view the point at which they are completely overlooked as subjects, grouped together and no longer identifiable by more niche, individual needs. Moreover, collectivising the refugees into two distinct binary groups - such as un/deserving, un/grateful, rebels/dignified – performs a symbolic political function that is easily understood by the public. The politicisation of the protest in this way provides a clearer picture of the strategic objectives of the Government. That is, it undermines negative press coverage of Operation Safe Haven, and maintains the appearance of a compassionate refugee program while imposing a tightly regulated and inhumane form of protection.

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779 Pickering, op. cit., p. 172. See also Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, op. cit.
780 Pickering, op. cit., p. 172.
781 ibid.
782 See reference to the ‘objects of action’ in Dickey, op. cit., p. xiv.
One of the refugees residing at Singleton Safe Haven, referred to by *The Australian* as Selvet, a mother of four children, said that before the family’s arrival all she knew about Australia was that it is ‘end of the world’. As *The Australian* commented: ‘Now she knows Australians expect newcomers to act as if they have just been let through the gates of paradise.’

Despite widespread claims about the ingratitude of the Kosovars in Singleton, the incident challenged the idea of Australia being the “most generous country in the world.” During Safe Haven legislative debates Ruddock applauded the prominence of ‘compassion fatigue’ within the Australian community and the support the nation had shown in assisting the Kosovars. He argued that Australia continued to be ‘out in front’ in responding to requests made by the UNHCR, noting how the country already had ‘the largest [permanent refugee intake] in per capita terms in the world.’

In Senator Tierney’s explanation of the Singleton incident to the Federal Parliament, he noted how, per capita, Australia’s efforts in accepting 4000 refugees was five times that of the US (which had accepted 20,000). He thanked the broad cross-section of the Australian community – the Government, Department of Defence, DIMA, community groups and individuals – who had ‘given so generously to this program.’

The Singleton episode revealed the extent of the Australian government’s generosity, and exposed the self-congratulatory appraisal surrounding the evacuation program as cleverly manufactured political rhetoric. *The Australian* argued: ‘Until [the Singleton incident], in fact, we were still clapping ourselves on the back for our hospitality, after admitting the Kosovars, to keep them on ice for three months, living in a sort of legal limbo in isolated army barracks where they have to sign in and

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783 Selvet, cited in Wynhausen, *op. cit.*
784 ibid.
786 ibid. p. 5040.
787 ibid., p. 5039. The number of permanent refugees accepted at this time was 12,000 *per annum*.
789 Herman and Chomsky, *op. cit.*
In the end, the Government’s response to the questions posed in Singleton was to repatriate the family who had carried on the protest, refusing to be ‘dictated to’ by refugees asking for better quality services.

3. An “Ungrateful” Lot: the Salihu family

3.1 The Salihu family: from the bus to a hospital bed

By 17th June media reports about the Singleton barracks protest began to shift some of the focus to three members of the Salihu family, the only refugees remaining aboard their transfer coach. *The Australian* wrote that the Salihu, which included Sabit (47 years of age), his wife Shaha (48 years) and Sabit’s elderly mother, Elmaze, refused to leave the bus because Sabit was trying to ‘save face’.

Lloga, who had arrived the day before to be a liason between government officials and the protesters, said: ‘We do not want to force him to lose face, he has lost everything’.

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790 Wynhausen, *op. cit.*
791 O’Reilly, Kennedy, and Edwards, *op. cit.*
792 Niesche, *op. cit.* The ages of Sabit and Shaha are given in Williams and Stevenson, *op. cit.*
793 See Niesche, *op. cit.* The author refers to Erik Lloga as an Australian-Albanian community ‘elder’.
Lloga recognised the importance of taking Sabit’s concerns seriously: ‘Staying on the bus is a way of saying “I do exist, take notice of me”’. He said: ‘This man is deeply traumatised. He has shut down and we need to reach him.’

Sabit Salihu’s concerns were not unreasonable, particularly considering the medical needs of Elmaze, who was 74 years of age (pictured above). Lloga stated that Sabit demanded better facilities for his mother and wanted to be taken back to East Hills for this reason. Elmaze was suffering from seizures, had respiratory problems, was incontinent and required a toilet in her room. Sabit later stated in *The Australian* that he had spoken to the captain of Singleton barracks on arrival at East Hills. The Captain had assured him that facilities were good enough for his sick mother. However, he added: ‘when we got there the toilets and baths were 500m away[,] I could not let my mother stay there.’ The tragic scene was captured by the *Telegraph*, noting how Elmaze had slept on the pull-down bunk bed at the rear of the bus while a portaloo was set up behind the bus which ‘the aged woman frequently alights to use’.

Senator Tierney was scathing in his criticism of the family, particularly Sabit, despite his assertion that he had a PhD in social psychology and was more than capable of dealing appropriately with the situation. Tierney described Sabit as the ‘total problem’ and the

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794 Lloga, cited in *ibid*.
795 Lloga, cited in *ibid*.
796 Lloga, cited in Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, *op. cit*.
797 See Niesche, *op. cit*. This source says that the elderly Elmaze Salihu was 84-years of age, though most others state she was 74-years old. Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, *op. cit.*, also says Elmaze was 84 years of age.
798 *ibid*. See reference to ‘respiratory problems’ in Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, *op. cit*.
800 Albert, ‘Three reject “boring” haven’, *op. cit*.
801 See Tierney, cited in Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ night ride back to the hills’, *op. cit*. As Tierney told the *Australian*: ‘I’ve got a PhD in social psychology so I can understand. People who have been through that war-strife situation, they’re not necessarily going to behave rationally. But Immigration has bent over backwards to meet [Mr Salihu] needs.’
stumbling block to moving his family into the Singleton barracks. The Senator added that Sabit Salihu had ‘lost support in the camp’ and that he was acting ‘irrationally’. The Herald supported Tierney, declaring Sabit ‘is behind the bus protest which has tested the patience of the Government and public and riled his fellow refugees’ who were ‘ashamed’ of him. The newspaper cited a suspicious member of the Albanian-Australian community who was at the barracks to reinforce the point: ‘We should send him back… Australia has supported and helped our people, yet he shames us. Perhaps he was sent here by the Serbs to cause trouble for us’. This supported Tierney’s description of Sabit as ‘intransigent’, implying his demands were absurd and unreasonable.

This criticism was juxtaposed with Tierney’s story of having spent an evening sleeping at the Singleton barracks. The Senator told The Australian the evening had been a ‘very comfortable night,’ and noted in the Telegraph that ‘the rooms are well-built and insulated from the cold.’ He further disagreed with the protesters claims about the bathrooms, stating that the distance to the amenities block was just 20 paces for women and 50 for men, adding: ‘It’s just like in a caravan park.’ Tierney was reportedly photographed patting his bed at the base and commenting that he had discarded blankets during the night because he was so warm. As The Australian’s Frank Devine stated, however: ‘the senator did not have to share his room with half a dozen strangers or get up during the night to take children to the outside toilets. He did not face an hour’s walk into town and was not a modest woman dreading the communal showers…

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805 ‘A member of the Australian-Albanian community’ (unnamed source), cited in ibid.
806 Tierney, cited in Niesche, op. cit. Sabit Salihu is also described as ‘intransigent’ by Erik Lloga in Marsh, ‘Kosovars “ashamed” of Protest Leader’, op. cit.
807 Tierney, cited in Niesche, op. cit.
for Tierney to pretend he was sharing [the refugee’s hardships] was fraudulent and foolish.\footnote{ibid.}{811}

On the evening of 17\textsuperscript{th} June, the Salihu family heeded the advice of medical officers at the base. They agreed that their transfer coach should drive Elmaze to the Singleton Hospital. The officers had been concerned about Elmaze’s deteriorating condition which included signs of pneumonia.\footnote{Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, \textit{op. cit.}}{812} Sabit later told reporters that his mother was diagnosed with five separate illnesses and that doctors wanted to keep her in the hospital.\footnote{Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ night ride back to the hills’, \textit{op. cit.}}{813} The family spent less than a day at the hospital and during that time they were offered a private room. On 18\textsuperscript{th} June, Tierney told \textit{The Australian} that the family had been offered, but rejected, a room with a balcony, kitchen, ensuite and French doors opening to a veranda with enough room to sleep three.\footnote{Tierney, cited in Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, \textit{op. cit.}}{814} He informed the reporters that the family had been offered first-rate accommodation at Singleton Hospital, noting the generosity of the staff: ‘The hospital was incredibly co-operative… [They offered Mr Salihu] all the things he said he wanted for his mother.’\footnote{Tierney, in ‘Kosovo Safe Haven Program’, \textit{Senate: Official Hansard}, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 21\textsuperscript{st} June 1999, p. 5831.}{815} As Tierney noted the following week in the Senate: ‘I really take my hat off to Singleton District Hospital for the generosity of their treatment of this family.’\footnote{Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, \textit{op. cit.}}{816} Sabit was reported to have refused the hospital room because a maximum of only three members of the family were permitted to remain with Elmaze overnight. He stated that it would be preferable to keep to family together, even though other family members were permitted to visit during the day.

The family departed Singleton Hospital via taxi, arriving at the local train station at around 4pm. \textit{Australian} reporters David Brearley and David Kennedy noted how the family would have to wait three hours in the night cold before the next train to Sydney arrived in Singleton. The episode came to a ‘sad coda’, they wrote, when the Salihu family ‘huddled on a

platform at Singleton in the cold waiting for a train to return them from the Hunter Valley to Sydney’s East Hills refugee base’. The family members were joined by Sabit and Shaha’s two daughters (Valbona and Mergim) and a son (Hysnije). Another son, 16-year old Adnan, decided to remain at the Singleton barracks. As noted by The Australian, Sabit ‘was so concerned about getting away from Singleton that he had spent $150 on train tickets.’

Brearley and Kennedy, documenting their eyewitness account of events at the train station, reported how Senator Tierney, ‘trouble-shooter for Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, paced the adjacent carpark insisting that the Government had “bent over backwards to meet the family’s needs”’. The reporters described how Tierney, waiting at the station for the family to depart for Sydney, at no stage offered them alternative transport. Brearley later commented: ‘At no stage between 3.30pm and 6.30pm did I see [Senator Tierney] approach the family, although he did speak with them earlier. His plan was to see them safely onto the train.’ It is very clear that The Australian, unlike the Telegraph or Herald, was pursuing a much more inquisitive perspective, one that ultimately challenged the Government’s view of the Salihu family.

3.2 “Making” the story: interventions by The Australian and evaluating the role of the Government
One of the most contentious issues to arise from the Singleton affair was when Australian journalists Brearley and Kennedy offered to hire a taxi to

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817 Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, op. cit.
818 Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, op. cit. says the children were all aged in their 20’s. However, Williams and Stevenson, op. cit. state that Valbona was 25, Mergim was 18 and Hysnije was 19. Interestingly, it is not until much later that the Herald revealed how two of the seven children (Adnan and Hysnije) who had travelled to Australia with Sabit Salihu were those of his deceased brother. This is reported in S. Mann, ‘An “ungrateful Ringleader” Who Has No Regrets’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 17th August 1999, p. 10.
820 Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ night ride back to the hills’, op. cit.
822 ibid.
823 Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, op. cit.
take the Salihu's to Sydney at the expense of $570.\textsuperscript{824} It was, as a former editor-in-chief of *The Australian* later remarked, ‘a very tabloid thing for a broadsheet that claims the quality high ground [as *The Australian* does]’.\textsuperscript{825} Defending their actions, the reporters stated simply that the refugees were ‘free to move about as they please’\textsuperscript{826} and that the actions of the Salihu ‘were entirely legal’.\textsuperscript{827} Under the terms of the refugees’ stay, as recognised by *The Australian*, they were entitled to travel anywhere in Australia, though at their own expense, if they rejected the Government’s accommodation.\textsuperscript{828} The reporters’ actions, however, were viewed as a direct challenge to the Safe Haven program by Tierney and Ruddock. The reporters defied Government restrictions imposed on the media, having secured just a few hours alone with the Salihu. Brearley and Kennedy circumvented Government media spin and Departmental controls over public relations concerning Operation Safe Haven.

The reporters, having spoken to an immigration official, confirmed that the Salihu would be allowed to gain short-term access to the East Hills centre. The family was greeted the next morning at 12.30am by staff at the base, who were waiting with a wheelchair for Elmaze.\textsuperscript{829} The *Telegraph*, which subsequently labelled the family ‘rebels’,\textsuperscript{830} had been highly supportive of the Government throughout coverage of the incident, describing how Senator Tierney had even ‘maintained a vigil at Singleton base hospital’ alongside the family as they slept in the casualty waiting room.\textsuperscript{831} The response by the *Telegraph*, however, corresponded to a broader populist backlash against the protesters. It reflected the results of a poll conducted by Melbourne-based tabloid *Herald Sun* in which 96 per

\textsuperscript{824} G. Leech, ‘MELBA – Australia fare’, *The Australian*, 19\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{826} Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, *op. cit.*
\textsuperscript{827} Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, *op. cit.*
\textsuperscript{828} McGregor, ‘Kosovar family can go - Ruddock’, *op. cit.*
\textsuperscript{829} Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ exodus ends back at East Hills’, *op. cit.* See also D. Tanner, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’, *The Australian*, 18\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 4, where Ruddock confirms that the family would be allowed to reside at East Hills under ‘temporary arrangements’, though he doesn’t specify the length of time.
\textsuperscript{830} Williams and Stevenson, *op. cit.* See also reference to the Salihu as ‘rebels’ in M. Farr, ‘Rebel refugees to be sent home’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 19\textsuperscript{th} June 1999, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{831} Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, *op. cit.*
cent of participants were against the protesters. As Mark Day, a former editor of *The Australian*, observed, *The Australian* was ‘swimming against the tide on the story of the Kosovo refugees,’ and, ‘By doing so the paper took a robust stand against populism.’

*The Australian* supported the actions of its reporters, as indicated by the headline, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’. Ruddock argued that the newspaper had compromised DIMA’s accommodation arrangements, and that: ‘Those who assume responsibility for relocating evacuees also assume a duty of care for them.’ The Immigration Minister stated that such ‘Undermining’ of the Department’s arrangements ‘puts seriously at risk our ability to manage further arrivals due within days.’ There were a further 410 refugees due to arrive at East Hills from Macedonia on 20th June, while another 100 refugees were currently residing there. Ruddock said, on 18th June, while the accommodation at Singleton would remain available to the Salihu family, it is regrettable that one family has stood out from all the others in so far refusing that hospitality. He viewed the Salihu rejection of Singleton barracks as simply a matter of compliance, describing those who had moved into the Safe Havens without protest as having ‘accepted Australia’s hospitality with grace and dignity’. By 19th June, Ruddock stated that, having rejected the Singleton accommodation: ‘there is no option [for the Salihu] but to give them their other choice to return home.’ The Immigration Minister added: ‘Staying at East Hills is not an option’ and that ‘the Kosovars do not have the option of picking and choosing accommodation’. The position of the Government was to regard compliant Kosovars as graceful and dignified, while the protesters were to

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832 Day, *op. cit.*
833 ibid.
834 Tanner, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’, *op. cit.*
835 Ruddock, cited in *ibid.*
836 Ruddock, cited in *ibid.*
837 Farr, ‘Rebel refugees to be sent home’, *op. cit.*
838 Ruddock, cited in Tanner, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’, *op. cit.*
840 Ruddock, cited in McGregor, ‘Kosovar family can go – Ruddock’, *op. cit.*
841 Ruddock, cited in Farr, ‘Rebel refugees to be sent home’, *op. cit.* Ruddock is also cited on this point in Murphy, ‘Go home, Kosovar family told’, *op. cit.*
be were viewed as demanding and ungrateful – there was no middle ground recognised by the Government, nor “special treatment” to be offered to any of the refugees.

The response of *The Australian* to the Singleton protest extended from a particular editorial agenda that set it aside from the *Herald* and the *Telegraph*. Campbell Reid, sub-editor for *The Australian*, stated that there was unanimity expressed at a recent editorial conference in which staff were ‘appalled that the collective charity of the nation survived only until one family among 4000 people crossed a line on accommodation standards.’ From the beginning of Operation Safe Haven, he explained, *The Australian’s* editorial team very firmly claimed to advocate a human rights agenda. Reid confirmed a week after the Singleton incident that *The Australian’s* approach to the story had indicated its ‘willingness to take a pro-active position on the issues confronting Australia’, that ‘We want to be a voice of leadership.’ Despite claims about compassion, the newspaper actively catered to a more niche, ‘intellectual’ (as opposed to populist) readership. *The Australian*, being the ultimate benefactor, generated its own story as well as reader interest, but also crossed the line between reporting events and creating news.

*The Australian’s* editor-in-chief, David Armstrong, ‘rejected’ Ruddock’s claim that the newspaper had ‘undermined’ the refugees’ accommodation arrangements. Armstrong said that the journalists had acted out of compassion towards a family clearly disturbed by its experiences. As another *Australian* reporter, David Tanner, wrote: ‘the Immigration Department was prepared to let the group […] wait on a cold railway platform for a journey that would have required them to change trains at least twice and arrive in a city completely foreign to them late at night.’ Tanner added: ‘Once there they would have had to walk carrying

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842 C. Reid, cited in Day, *op. cit.*
843 Reid, cited in *ibid.*
844 Reid, cited in *ibid.*
845 Tanner, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’, *op. cit.*
846 *ibid.*
847 *ibid.*
heavy luggage for more than a kilometre in the dark to the barracks, including crossing a footbridge over the Georges River.\(^848\)

As noted by Brearley, the response by the Immigration Minister and Senator Tierney reflected a politicised transformation of the image of the Kosovars in the media from ‘wretches to whingers’.\(^849\) The reporter argued that the Government’s response, along with critical backlash in other media, supported the notion that ‘any charity we offer Kosovo’s refugees is conditional: a beggar’s gratitude is the prescribed response; anything less renders the whole deal suspect.’\(^850\) Brearley went on: ‘Ostensibly […] the facilities fail to meet the needs of their ailing grandmother Elmaze, but there’s more to the story.’\(^851\) He criticised Tierney for attempting to ‘put the government spin on proceedings’, and for stating that Sabit Salihu was ‘totally unreasonable’, that Elmaze’s condition was ‘something they’d normally treat at home’ and that the Government had ‘bent over backwards’ to accommodate them.\(^852\)

Other media outlets and government spokespersons denounced the actions of the reporters claiming they had breached the media’s code of ethics. On 21\(^\text{st}\) June, Tierney announced a senatorial inquiry into the incident and threatened to lodge a complaint with the Australian Press Council arguing that it was not the role of news organisations to create news; rather, they were to simply report and stay out of it.\(^853\) He stated: ‘This is the case of a reporter crossing the boundary, and instead of reporting the news, actually making the news’.\(^854\) The Telegraph supported Tierney, deciding not to become involved due to ethical concerns. The Telegraph’s editor-in-chief, Col Allan, commented: ‘If the story was an interview with the family, fair enough[.] But the story here was the family’s travels, and if you interfere with that, you’ve changed the course

\(^848\) Ibid.
\(^849\) Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, op. cit.
\(^850\) Ibid.
\(^851\) Ibid.
\(^852\) Ibid.
\(^853\) Comments by Tierney, cited in ibid.
\(^855\) Tierney, cited in McGregor, ‘Kosovar family can go – Ruddock’, op. cit.
of the story.’ The *Telegraph* claimed to have maintained the moral high
ground on the matter (as opposed to *The Australian*), although its response
very clearly indicates the political and populist leanings of the
newspaper.

Day dismissed the criticism, describing how other media had
merely suffered ‘an attack of sour grapes because they, too, saw the story
being taken on a new course by the intervention of a rival reporter. They
were quick to invoke the position that reporters should not be
participants.’ Most significantly, it was not only competing media
organisations that feared they had lost control of the narrative. The story
was no longer under the direction of public relations officers within the
Department of Immigration. The controls imposed by the Department on
the situation are implicit in statements later made by Sabit Salihu after
arriving home in Ferijaz: ‘no one could speak to us, not television people.
Even the Albanian people were frightened to speak to us [sic].’

Frank Devine accurately depicted the kind of control the Government had
attempted to impose on the media: ‘Before the first refugee set foot in this
country, Ruddock declared war on the media… [he] was afraid parts of it
wouldn’t look good.’ Devine added: ‘Immigration officials flooded into
the camps as guards […] to hold nosy parkers at bay… Ruddock’s guards
made the Kosovars feel at home by warning them to have nothing to do
with the western press.’ Television coverage, he noted, was taken from
‘guided tours for television crews of “authorised” areas of safe havens’.

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855 C. Allan, cited in Day, *op. cit.*
856 See Tierney, cited in P. Akerman, ‘Case for the press’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 27th June 1999, p. 63. Here, Senator Tierney told *AAP* news service that the *Australian* had ‘crossed the boundary between independent commentator and have become activists… That’s against the code of practice… This incident is a classic example of unethical practice.’ See also Tierney, cited in McGregor, ‘Kosovar family can go – Ruddock’, *op. cit.* Here, The Senator referred the ‘unethical’ behaviour of the newspaper to the Senate Select Committee on Information Technology, of which Tierney was a member, which was in the process of reviewing the powers of the Press Council. See also similar sentiments expressed by Tierney in Saunders, ‘Senator to press his case’, *op. cit.*
857 *Day*, *op. cit.* See also criticism of *The Australian* by Akerman, *op. cit.*
859 Devine, ‘Bungling leaves behind a busload of rancour’, *op. cit.*
860 *ibid.*
861 *ibid.*
As The Australian’s editor indicated, at the core of the Government’s concerns was the desire to dictate media spin concerning Operation Safe Haven; ‘we had committed a cardinal sin: we helped a family escape, for a time, the bureaucrats’ control.’862 He rebuffed Tierney’s threat of a Senate inquiry, noting that: ‘Last night, he had the dumb honesty to say we had acted unethically because we had opposed the Government’s line.’863 This was in reference to the comments made by Tierney, that: ‘This incident is a classic example of unethical practice. The Government has taken a particular line and what News Limited has done is facilitate the opposite.’864 As Day observed, underlying Tierney and Ruddock’s criticisms of The Australian was the sentiment that the Government was ‘miffed because it was seen as hard-hearted, uncaring, and having lost control of the situation.’865

3.3 “Facts” about the Salihu family
The media provided a range of insights about the Salihus, particularly Sabit, who was commonly reported to be the spokesman and head of the family – and, according to the Telegraph, was the ‘ringleader’ of the bus sit-in.866 However, depictions of the Salihu family in the media were inconsistent, raising significant questions concerning the accuracy, credibility and political leanings of the newspapers under investigation. It was commonly reported that the Salihus had resided in their family house in the town of Ferizaj in southern Kosovo, a town with 50,000 residents before the war and located 40 kilometres from Pristina.867 However, there were a number of variations, elaborations or details missing across the Herald, Telegraph and Australian concerning aspects such as where the

862 ‘Refugee plan needs a heart, not control’ (editorial), op. cit.
863 ibid.
865 Day, op. cit.
866 Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, op. cit. Sabit Salihu is also described as the ‘ringleader of the Kosovar refugee revolt’ in ‘Rebel Kosovar family flies out of Australia’, op. cit.
867 See for instance these details in ‘Macedonian option for stay-put Kosovars’, The Australian, 21st June 1999, p. 2. See also the investigative report by Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, op. cit., which states that eight family members had fled to the Macedonian border during the conflict earlier in 1999. Seven family members were evacuated to Australia, while a third son had been evacuated to London.
family had stayed in Macedonia before coming to Australia, as well as Sabit’s occupation. The use of facts about the family was often consistent with whether the article and more broadly the extent to which the newspaper at hand had advocated support for the Singleton protest.

Some articles questioned whether the family were “genuine” refugees and had been sincere in their intentions in coming to Australia. Pickering describes how the choice of vocabulary reveals the ways in which language that challenges the status of refugees is used by the press. The effect of this, in her analysis, was that it cast doubt on the ‘legitimacy and genuineness’ of refugees ‘without questioning the assumptions upon which debatable terms such as “phoney” and “bogus” are based.’ A point of ambiguity was whether the family had actually been living in the Macedonian Stenkovac refugee camp when they had applied to be evacuated to Australia. The Telegraph speculated, without confirmation and citing rumours circulating at the Safe Havens: ‘this wealthy man stayed in a private home’. The links made here between affluence and whether the family were genuine refugees corresponded to Senator Tierney’s explanation to Federal Parliament, which emphasised: ‘It was reported by the people who took the cab fare and the station fare that he had plenty of money with him.’ In The Australian, Sabit had informed reporters initially that, while he had stayed in the camp with his wife, daughters and sons, his elderly mother had been staying in a private home in a Macedonian village near the camp. Later, The Australian reported that the family had ‘enjoyed the hospitality of an Albanian family in Tetovo, Macedonia’s second city,’ while also spending time at Stenkovac. The Herald, citing a member of the Australian-Albanian community working with the refugees on the bus (who wished to remain anonymous): ‘He is wealthy. I was told he did not spend a single day in a camp in Macedonia.’

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868 Pickering, op. cit., p. 183.
871 Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ night ride back to the hills’, op. cit.
872 Stevens, ‘Robbed, jobless but home happily’, op. cit.
In relation to Sabit’s employment background, according to earlier reports in *The Australian*, Sabit had been a truck driver but was unemployed when Serb police told his family to leave the province or ‘be decapitated’.\(^{874}\) Later, the newspaper described Sabit as a ‘trader’, importing clothes for sale at local markets.\(^{875}\) The *Telegraph* described Sabit as a truck driver as well,\(^{876}\) though elsewhere it was said he had been a limousine chauffeur for 21 years.\(^{877}\) In most cases media reports suggested that Sabit was different to most Kosovars - somehow more selfish, wealthy and tricky – with the effect of isolating him and his claims as extraordinary and unreasonable. The accumulated effect is reflected in the links that emerged between the notions of genuineness and gratefulness. Such connotations propagated anger and a sense of betrayal as a “common sense” reaction, alongside the “common sense” resolution to deport the rebels as soon as possible. As Pickering says, ‘Genuineness and gratefulness become a newsworthy question’, particularly when popular identity discourse in Australia is founded on principles of exclusion and exclusivity.\(^{878}\) She goes on: ‘It is with relative ease that such rule breakers are necessarily expelled from the community’.\(^{879}\)

Points of contestation in media narratives - particularly in relation to the embellishment or exclusion of certain details - have the effect of casting serious doubt over the credibility of the subject. These ambiguities provided an unstable view of the Salihus with the potential of generating suspicion and undermining any claims they may have had to being “genuine” refugees. The shift from empathy to outrage in the media is reflected in how some sources attempted to represent Sabit Salihu as wealthy, middle class and thus as undeserving of Australia’s assistance. As *The Australian* wrote, capturing other media’s depictions:

\(^{874}\) S. Salihu, cited in Brearley and Kennedy, ‘Kosovars’ night ride back to the hills’, *op. cit.*
\(^{875}\) Stevens, ‘Robbed, jobless but home happily’, *op. cit.*
\(^{876}\) Porter, ‘Family protest ends in hospital’, *op. cit.*
\(^{877}\) Williams and Stevenson, *op. cit.*
\(^{879}\) *ibid.*, p. 184.
the media’s image of the family was changing: their wallets bulged with crisp Australian banknotes, and Sabit was a wealthy man who lived in a big house and made his fortune in the unlikely field of chauffeuring. They were, one account suggested, ‘designer refugees’.880

The newspaper went on, saying that the family had paid a ‘high price’ in the media for its ‘middle class credentials, which have not even been established’.881 Disputing these kinds of representations, *The Australian* added: ‘Sabit wears a Nike jacket but there is nothing flash about him. And his mother, wizened and weary, looks like she’s straight off the back of a tractor.’882

Descriptions of the personal character of Mr Salihu comprised the basis of much of the criticism of his actions. He was occasionally described in news articles as the ‘patriarch’ of his family, a term that was used at least seven times in *The Australian*, though it was only used once by the *Herald*.883 Although the *Telegraph* did not describe Mr Salihu as a ‘patriarch’, it did utilise the term ‘patriarchal’ at least two times to suggest that the protesters’ behaviour was supposedly reflective of Kosovar culture. The descriptor ‘patriarchal’ was cited only once by the *Herald* and while *The Australian* quite clearly supported the actions of its reporters to assist the Salihu family, constant description of Sabit as the ‘patriarch’ of his family reinforced negative sentiments that Kosovar culture was somewhat chauvinist and male-dominated.884

From the range of public figures interviewed about the Singleton protest, Senator Tierney most often used these kinds of negative, “patriarchal” descriptors. As he explained to the Senate, describing the earlier part of the protest: ‘We should understand that they are coming from a very patriarchal society, and what these six leading men said

880 Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, *op. cit.*
881 *ibid.*
882 *ibid.*
883 Erik Lloga refers to Sabit Salihu as the family’s ‘patriarch’ in Marsh, ‘Kosovars “ashamed” of Protest Leader’, *op. cit.*
884 See for instance Tanner, ‘Ruddock attacks Good Samaritan gesture’, *op. cit.*
actually went and people did follow what they said."\textsuperscript{885} Such language was part of attempts by the Senator to defuse criticism of the Singleton Safe Haven and undermine Sabit Salihus’ claims. The central focus on Tierney in media coverage underscores his importance as an authority on the matter and for public understandings of the protest. Noting this, ALP Senator Robert Ray (Victoria) criticised Tierney’s public relations efforts during parliamentary debate. A major problem that emerged during the protest, as Ray identified, was immense politicisation of the Safe Haven program by the Immigration Minister from the beginning. Ray criticised the Immigration Minister’s ‘very poor form in appointing only coalition members to be patrons of the Kosovar refugees in Australia,’ describing how the appointments ‘fit a pattern of sleaziness and pettiness’ that was consistent with other areas of policy.\textsuperscript{886} Ray added: ‘That is not a bipartisan approach. That is to do with petty, political-scoring in this country.’\textsuperscript{887} Ray commented: ‘I wonder what Senator Tierney thought when the acid dropped on him [as sole patron of the Singleton Safe Haven]. He would have loved to have a co-patron […] to assist him at Singleton.’\textsuperscript{888} It was not until eight days after the protest began that a co-patron representing the Labor Opposition was appointed to the Singleton Safe Haven.

Tierney’s role as sole patron to the Singleton Safe Haven (until 22\textsuperscript{nd} June) and as Government spokesperson for the barracks was crucial to public perceptions of the incident. His view was significantly influenced by party conservatism, pressure from the Immigration Minister and the need to uphold a positive public image of the Government while discrediting the claims of the protesters. Writing in \textit{The Australian}, Brearley argued: ‘Constrained by both law and Coalition policy, Senator Tierney kept his distance [from the Salihu at the train station].’\textsuperscript{889} The public relations dilemma for Tierney was two-fold. On one hand, the Senator was obliged

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\textsuperscript{887} \textit{ibid.}, p. 6880.
\textsuperscript{888} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{889} Brearley, ‘From wretches to whingers’, \textit{op. cit.}
\end{flushleft}
to adhere to the party line. He would be acting against official policy by assisting the Salihus in their efforts to return to East Hills, “undermine” DIMA’s planning efforts and contradict the Minister’s position on the matter. Moreover, the pressure placed on Tierney as the Singleton patron and Government spokesperson was amplified by media coverage. As Leech notes, one could only imagine ‘the shame [the Federal Government] would have worn if Elmaze Salihu had caught pneumonia.”

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated debate about the quality of the accommodation facilities provided by the Australian government to the Kosovar refugees. It is evident that Kosovars who were dispatched to quarters in Singleton had legitimate concerns about the quality of the Safe Haven program. I have evaluated the concerns of those refugees offered accommodation at the Singleton barracks, as well as the position of the Federal Government in upholding its obligations to UNHCR. One of the

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890 Leech, op. cit.
foreseeable problems at Singleton – as had been expressed by various commentators during the planning stages of Operation Safe Haven – was the distance imposed by the Federal Government between the majority of the Australian community and the refugees. This was further noted by critics of the Government during the Singleton protests. The accommodation plan effectively isolated the refugees from the majority of the Australian population as well as from Albanian communities capable of assisting the Kosovars during their temporary stay. Under the Safe Haven Visa program the Kosovars were “free to leave” (as Ruddock suggested) the shelter of the Safe Havens, but faced foregoing Government protection and support.

This chapter has discussed the relationship formed between the media and the Federal Government in responding to the Singleton protest. The isolation of the Kosovars was overlooked by the media (excepting, to a degree, *The Australian*), as was consideration for the traumatic experiences the Kosovars had endured. Moreover, debate about the suitability of using army barracks was overshadowed by the refugees’ supposed insult to Australian hospitality and popular outcries concerning their “ingratitude”. The majority of media coverage supported the Federal Government in these matters, frequently adopting the Immigration Minister’s and Senator Tierney’s account of the Singleton protest. This coincided with a dramatic transformation of popular conceptions of the Kosovars from welcomed to ungrateful and the deployment of negative stereotypes by the media including notions that the refugees were patriarchal, violent, suspect and intransigent.

A close and complementary relationship between the tabloid press and the Howard Government was clearly evident on these issues. Only *The Australian* resisted the Government’s attempts to politicise and undermine the refugees’ requests for better quality services. This was further demonstrated by the activist role of the newspaper where staff intervened directly to assist the Salihu family, producing scathing criticism from the Government. The Singleton incident captures the way popular refugee discourse has continued to be shaped by an expectation that refugees ought to be grateful for the opportunities provided to them by Australia. It further
denotes that questioning of the country’s refugee programs and its compassion is readily offset by popular campaigns to demonise refugees as deviant and undeserving. The Singleton incident reveals the extent to which Australia’s media institutions have been willing to support hostility to refugees when they have asked for better quality protection and treatment.
Chapter 5: The End of Operation Safe Haven; Repatriation and the High Court Challenge

Introduction
The aim in this chapter is to investigate the circumstances in which the Kosovars were returned to their homeland by the Australian government. Chapter 5 is set out in three parts. The first part examines the closure of the Safe Havens and the repatriation of most Kosovar refugees between July and the end of 1999. This section explores the rationale behind the Winter Reconstruction Allowance, a monetary incentive offered by the Federal Government to the refugees to leave Australia. It investigates the Immigration Minister’s threats to detain the Kosovars, as well as the legal ramifications wherein the Safe Haven Visa program enabled sending the refugees home in the period immediately following the war.

In the second part of this chapter I examine a range of issues facing Kosovars still residing in Australia in the early months of 2000. The main focus is on the High Court challenge posed by some of the refugees to prevent their repatriation together with media representations of this episode. A secondary focus is on the removal of Kosovar refugees by the Federal Government and the incarceration of those who continued to refuse to leave Australia voluntarily. This section also explores media coverage of the Department of Immigration’s “hunt” for refugees deemed “on the run”, and the implications of the discourse of “compliance” that tended to shape news reports.

The final part of this chapter elaborates on the circumstances facing Kosovar refugees once they returned home in early 2000. The main concern here is the extent to which the media supported both the Federal Government’s “tough” stance on repatriation, as well as the humanitarian concerns of the UNHCR.
1. Sending the Kosovars Home and the Closure of the Safe Havens

1.1 Declared safe: What awaited the Kosovars upon their arrival home?
A peace agreement was reached between NATO and Yugoslavia on 9th June 1999, eleven weeks after the beginning of NATO air strikes against Serbian forces.891 The agreement was followed by the withdrawal of Serbian troops and the division of peacekeeping duties in the province between US, British, Italian, German and French troops.892 Kosovo became a NATO protectorate and was directly administered by the UN until a formal declaration of independence from Serbia was announced in 2008. The withdrawal of Serbian troops and the rapid return of refugees from border camps generated an atmosphere of panic for thousands of ethnic Serbian Kosovars, many of whom fled to Belgrade in fear of reprisals by the KLA.893

Although systematic persecution had ceased, the security and economic situation of Kosovo was far from stable when the Australian government began to repatriate ethnic Albanian refugees to the province in July 1999. By mid-July, the UNHCR regarded much of Kosovo safe for return. Canada and Germany had begun repatriating some Kosovar refugees on 9th July,894 while a total 628,000 had returned home in the month after the peace settlement.895 A UNHCR staff member in Canberra stated that: ‘Our assessment is that while conditions remain precarious in Kosovo, the situation is sufficiently secure for UNHCR to co-ordinate and manage the return of refugees who are volunteering to return.’896 The organisation stated that 64 per cent of housing had been damaged or destroyed in the war, while ‘food was scarce, water contaminated and health facilities severely damaged.’897 A concern for the RCOA was the

894 C. Ho, ‘Kosovar Refugees Turn Eyes On Home’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 10th July 1999, p. 13. This comprised about 5000 in Canada and 15,000 in Germany.
895 ibid.
896 ibid.
897 E. Hansen, cited in ibid.
898 in ibid.
speed at which refugees were returning, citing the ‘enormous challenge for aid providers in Kosovo.’

The situation remained unsafe for about 800 refugees who had lived in Eastern parts of Kosovo before the war, a region that had become part of Serbia proper as part of the NATO-Yugoslav peace agreement. There was an obvious danger to these refugees if they were to be repatriated by the Australian government. Australian-Albanian National Council chairman Erik Lloga stated: ‘We can’t deliver them to Milosevic only to have them again thrown across the border.’ He described how some of the refugees never wanted to see the Balkans again, arguing: ‘There should be an option for permanent residency for those who cannot go back or aren’t willing to go back.’ Many refugees wanted to remain in Australia and rebuild their lives because they had no home to return to. As Lloga commented: ‘Probably a large portion who have no connection with Kosovo proper as it is now constituted, they have no country to return to – but Australia does not offer an option of applying for refugee status.’

Opposition immigration spokesperson Con Sciacca commented that it made economic sense to allow the refugees to apply to stay in Australia while they were in the country. Moreover, he added: ‘Even if as many as 50 per cent wanted to stay, that adds up to 2000 people, and that represents only 2-3 per cent of Australia’s total (immigration) intake.’ Sciacca (along with the Democrats) called on Ruddock to amend the Safe Haven legislation to allow those who wanted to apply for residency to do so.

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898 M. Piper, cited in ibid.
900 Lloga, cited in McGuirk, op. cit. See also ‘Back Home’ (editorial), The Sydney Morning Herald, 15th July 1999, p. 16, which states how the Australian-Albanian National Council ‘now insists that the Federal Government change the status of all the 3,900 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo to allow them to remain in Australia permanently.’
902 Lloga, cited in McGuirk, op. cit.
onshore rather than after they had gone home.\textsuperscript{904} An immigration spokesperson responded by stating that it had been made clear to the Kosovars that they would have to return home before being granted more permanent visa status.\textsuperscript{905} This sentiment was reinforced by Senator Kay Patterson who had been appointed patron to all the Safe Havens. She noted that: ‘We made sure before the refugees came that they were very clearly counselled that it was a temporary arrangement, and they signed an agreement indicating they were aware of that.’\textsuperscript{906}

The \textit{Telegraph} and the \textit{Herald} were, for the most part, supportive of the Federal Government’s position on repatriation. The \textit{Herald} attacked Sciacca for ‘abandoning the pretence of bipartisanship on the refugees.’\textsuperscript{907} The argument presented in the newspaper went on: ‘For the sake of some easy politicking within the ethnic communities in Australia… He [Sciacca] has undermined the UN efforts to restore community life in Kosovo. And he has promoted a false hope among the refugees. A retraction is needed to clean up the mess he is trying to make.’\textsuperscript{908} The newspaper later cited Liberal Senator Eric Abetz, who called for an end to Labor politicians ‘cruelly’ raising false hopes about long-term settlement.\textsuperscript{909} This issue re-emerged in April 2000 concerning the procedures in which Kosovar refugees were able to return to Australia after being offered permanent protection. It was noted by the \textit{Herald} at this time how one family who had already gone back to Kosovo would soon be allowed to migrate to Australia. A DIMA spokesperson responded to criticism by denying that sending the family back was a waste of money.\textsuperscript{910}

\textit{The Australian} was more concerned about the human rights of the Kosovars, describing on 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1999 how the Howard Government was beginning to face pressure from state leaders to allow the refugees to

\textsuperscript{904} Green, ‘Kosovo refugees want to stay here for good’, \textit{op. cit.} See also P. Green, R. Eccleston and C. Pryor, ‘Olsen plea – let Kosovars stay – Pressure on Howard, Ruddock’, \textit{The Australian}, 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1999, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{905} Trute and Kamper, ‘Kosovars preparing to go home’, \textit{op. cit.} The source is unnamed.

\textsuperscript{906} K. Patterson, cited in Green, Eccleston and Pryor, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{907} ‘Back Home’, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{908} \textit{ibid.}


\textsuperscript{910} A. Clennell and S. Mann, ‘Kosovars Face ‘Level Of Force’ In Deportation’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 12\textsuperscript{th} April 2000, p. 5.
remain permanently if they wished. South Australian Premier John Olsen wrote to the Prime Minister, stating that up to eighty per cent of the refugees being accommodated at Hampstead (Adelaide) and around thirty per cent of those at Leeuwin barracks (Perth) wished to stay.\footnote{Green, Eccleston and Pryor, op. cit. See also commentary by refugees at Leeuwin in R. Eccleston and C. Pryor, ‘Fearful Kosovars reach point of no return’, \textit{The Australian}, 17\textsuperscript{th} July 1999, p. 3.} The following day \textit{The Australian} reported that immigration officials had begun to deny phone access and information to Kosovar refugees at Leeuwin barracks. It was recognised that immigration officials had been ‘intent on keeping the media out and a lid on the number of refugees wishing to remain in Australia.’\footnote{C. Pryor, ‘Tight lid kept on refugee safe haven’, \textit{The Australian}, 17\textsuperscript{th} July 1999, p. 3.} One of the refugees at Leeuwin told the newspaper that immigration staff had stopped supplying phone cards after some of the refugees had expressed a desire to stay in Australia. Amid a more general tightening of media access to the Kosovars, a journalist and photographer from \textit{The Australian} were refused permission to enter the barracks, despite having been given clearance two days prior.\footnote{ibid.} An immigration spokesperson denied any increase in restrictions being imposed on the media and stated that new phone cards would be issued to families on a monthly basis.\footnote{Unnamed source from DIMA, cited in \textit{ibid.}}

On 23\textsuperscript{rd} July, the first chartered-flight from Australia to Macedonia was boarded by 294 Kosovars following the UNHCR’s recommendation for some of the refugees to return. The \textit{Herald} described how the refugees would simply be ‘bussed’ to Kosovo following their 30-hour flight to Skopje.\footnote{J. Marsh, ‘Kosovar Refugees Just Happy to Be Going Home’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 24\textsuperscript{th} July 1999, p. 4. See reference to ‘30 hours of flight and bus rides on their journey home’ in M. Videnieks, ‘Joy and tears as Kosovars begin long trek home’, \textit{The Australian}, 28\textsuperscript{th} July 1999, p. 7.} Ruddock addressed the refugees at an official farewell at Sydney airport before their departure to Skopje. The Immigration Minister insisted during the farewell that the refugees had left ‘on a voluntary basis’ as consistent with UN guidelines and said that he hoped the refugees’ stay had been ‘uplifting and hospitable.’\footnote{Ruddock, cited in J. Porter, ‘Kosovars head for home’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1999, p. 2.} Ruddock noted how the Kosovars were
‘eager to be reunited with their families and friends and to begin rebuilding their lives.’ He added: ‘I hope that your experiences in Australia have been to see how successfully people can live together in harmony, constructively building lives and futures together.’ Ruddock stated that he hoped the Kosovars were able to see how ‘people from different backgrounds can live together in harmony.’ As I have noted elsewhere this kind of statement worked to reaffirm a triumphant sense of Australian superiority. This was consistently the case in media coverage that paraded the success of Operation Safe Haven and was also congratulatory of the Australian government and Australian “values”.

As the Kosovars left the Herald reported that: ‘Where they are going courts, hospitals and schools are struggling to reopen, water and gas supplies are unreliable at best, and everywhere there are piles of rubbish. But the Kosovars at Sydney airport yesterday did not care. They were going home.’ The newspaper’s description of life in Kosovo was accurate in relation to the periods both under Yugoslav rule and following the war. Prior to the conflict there had been a drastic shortage of public services provided for Kosovar Albanians by the Yugoslav State. Nonetheless, there was a broader cultural subtext at work. Stereotypes about poverty and underdevelopment in the province had continued to inhibit media representations of the Kosovars throughout their stay in Australia. The departure of the Kosovars at Sydney airport was, for Herald readers, a scene of excitement and a harmonious narrative transition. The Herald described how one refugee couple ‘could not wait to get home’ stating the desire for their first baby to be born in Kosovo. These images reinforced the perception that the departure was part of an expected sequence of events, and that no other option (such as permanent protection) was possible or needed to be offered by the Australian government.

917 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
918 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
919 Ruddock, in Marsh, ‘Kosovar Refugees Just Happy to Be Going Home’, op. cit.
920 See Ingram, op. cit., p. 158.
The position of the Federal Government at this time was consistent with statements made during the initial evacuations of Kosovar refugees to Australia in one important respect. That is, that the refugees would need to return home ‘when the Government says so’. It was inconsistent, however, with comments made earlier by the Prime Minister and other officials that the Kosovars would be welcomed to their “new home” with ‘open arms’. There was an ongoing tension between media representations of the Government as compassionate, punitive and suspicious of the Kosovar refugees. The Government’s position on repatriation was, thus, a continuation of the contradictory rationale upon which the Safe Haven program had been implemented from the beginning.

Prime Minister Howard indicated on 3AW Radio on 24th July that some of the refugees might be allowed to stay in Australia permanently. He noted, however, that each case would be considered on its own merit. Howard said the position of the Government continued to be that the Kosovars were in Australia on merely a temporary basis, adding: ‘We’re reluctant to alter that, but in all of these things we’ll try and behave in a sensitive sense, sensible fashion [sic].’ Asked on the radio program if some of the refugees would be allowed to stay, Howard said ‘Well, yes. But I would prefer they went back[.]’ As described by the Herald, the Prime Minister had caused ‘a few raised eyebrows’ with his suggestion that the Government would consider applications from Kosovars who wanted to live in Australia. A spokesperson for the Prime Minister said shortly afterwards that Howard’s remarks referred to refugees who wished to apply for a different refugee visa after they had returned to Kosovo.

An important concern for the Prime Minister was, he argued, to be consistent with humanitarian behaviour and not change the basis on which

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924 As described by McPhedran, ‘Refugee footsteps lead only one way’, op. cit.
925 John Howard is quoted as stating ‘we extend our open arms in welcome’, for instance, in Chesterton, ‘SAFE IN OUR ARMS: Sydney greets refugees’, op. cit., p. 4 (from page 1). See analysis of the sentiments “new home” and “temporary home” in Chapter 3.
the refugees had come to Australia. He commented that, otherwise, other refugees applying to come to Australia could be disappointed. Howard maintained that providing the Kosovars with temporary safe haven was the right thing to do; ‘It demonstrated to the world that Australia had a heart and we made the lives of 4000 people who emerged from the tragic situation that much more bearable.’

In this regard, the Prime Minister’s position on returning the refugees to Kosovo remained consistent with that expressed during media coverage of the arrival at Sydney airport – they were welcomed, as long as they remained compliant with official procedures, particularly in view of the media. It signified the ways in which the refugees’ plight had been incorporated into DIMA’s strategic public relations campaign from the beginning which provided the Prime Minister with a platform to promote the Government as compassionate and caring.

The Immigration Minister, responding to Howard’s radio comment, downplayed the possibilities of the Kosovars being granted permanent residency. The main concern for Ruddock was whether the Kosovars were ‘genuine’ refugees, stating: ‘If someone is a genuine refugee and their circumstances warrant consideration there is provision … for that to be articulated, but I can’t see how somebody will be able to mount a claim for persecution.’

Ruddock said that, in the context of the new administration in Kosovo, supervised by the international community, it would be difficult for the Kosovars to ‘satisfy the criteria’ of proving persecution. He added that the Kosovars would struggle to qualify for permanent protection under the international refugee convention under these circumstances.

The differences between the views of the Prime Minister and Ruddock on repatriation reflected a pattern of tension, as The Australian suggested, that extended back to April when Cabinet had overruled the Immigration Minister in allowing the refugees to come to Australia. The Government’s reluctance to allow the Kosovars to stay in Australia ignored

930 Ruddock, cited in Niesche and Green, op. cit.
931 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
932 P. Green, ‘Refugees long to make lucky country their own’, The Australian, 4th August 1999, p. 11.
933 Niesche and Green, op. cit.
the fragility of the peace in their home country. As The Australian noted, several months after the war had finished: ‘The Kosovo situation remains fluid because of Milosevic’s hold on office and the reluctance of Kosovo Liberation Army guerrillas to give up their weapons.’\textsuperscript{934} As columnist Andrew Fraser described the situation: ‘Shelter has to be provided, homes have to be rebuilt, commerce has to be re-established and good order achieved.’\textsuperscript{935}

1.2 The legal implications of sending the Kosovars home
The Kosovars were provided with no legal protections to challenge their repatriation, though the drastic implications for their human rights were well known to critics of the Safe Haven legislation from the beginning. The temporary Safe Haven Visa imposed stringent limitations and removed – as critics in the Safe Haven legislative debates had argued - “natural justice”. The legislation denied the right of the Safe Haven Visa holder to legally challenge a decision by the Immigration Minister to cancel that visa and then forcibly repatriate them (and their families) from Australia. The purpose of the visa was twofold (as stressed twice in the first reading of the Safe Haven Bill in the Senate) – to maintain the Government’s commitment to the UNHCR to temporarily protect 4000 Kosovar refugees; and to ‘maintain the integrity of Australia’s migration and humanitarian programs.’\textsuperscript{936} Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett (the party’s spokesperson on immigration matters) was concerned that the Bill would create a ‘class of visa holders who can be removed easily with minimum cost and with no regard for the opportunity for appeal. The legislation seeks to do this by insulating the minister from the fetters of the rule of law.’\textsuperscript{937} ALP Senator Barney Cooney (Victoria) commented, similarly:

\textsuperscript{934} ‘Good news is tarnished by Milosevic’ (editorial),\textit{ The Australian}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1999, p. 12. See also references to the KLA in M. Fraser, ‘Let no one impede the hands that feed’,\textit{ The Australian}, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1999, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{935} Fraser, \textit{op. cit.}
‘why is it that we do not have provisions that allow the decision making to be overseen by a process, either quasi-judicial or judicial?’

Sciaccia had, moreover, been concerned with the way the Government had created a visa class that denied the opportunity for appeal and individual choice and discarded the principles of natural justice. He stated: ‘[T]o draft a piece of legislation with such latitude can create a dangerous precedent.’

Sciaccia noted that similar concerns had been expressed by organisations such as Amnesty International, RCOA, the International Jurists Association, the Law Council and many others. As Curren states, judicial review ‘can only help prevent abuse and errors by immigration officers and the Minister, whose determinations may involve the life or death of safe haven recipients.’

Both the Safe Haven legislation and Operation Safe Haven were designed to deal with the collective rather than individual needs of the Kosovars. The Safe Haven Visa, in other words, did not recognise the Kosovar refugees as individuals with distinct needs under the law. Curren notes how the visa sat uneasily with the basis of common law:

that is, that the law is to be applied to the individual facts and circumstances of each case, rather than uniformly applied irrespective of the individual circumstances of the case.

Curren states how ignoring the fact that different cases raise different issues can run the risk of injustice, ‘or in case of refugees fleeing persecution, a risk of return to the country where they will be exposed to personal danger.’ Petro Georgiou (Liberal Party Member for Kooyong) had also been concerned about aspects of the Safe Haven Bill that signalled

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940 See also Curren, op. cit., p. 16: ‘This provision therefore places significant limitation on the capacity of safe haven recipients to seek review.’

941 ibid., p. 40.

942 ibid., p. 6.

943 ibid.
a major departure from previous immigration policy that guaranteed human rights protection. He noted the implications the Bill would have for entire families holding the Safe Haven Visa following the cancellation of an individual’s temporary Safe Haven status by the Immigration Minister. Georgiou went on: ‘While we are all aware that there are reduced rights for non-residents, the imposition of what seems to be a form of collective sanction is something that, as a matter of principle, we should be very concerned about.’

As I have noted, the Safe Haven program obviously limited the independence of the Kosovars while resident in Australia. The limited weekly allowance, the establishment of control-orientated accommodation and the location of the Safe Havens (four of which were in remote areas) meant that the Kosovars were highly dependent on the Federal Government throughout their stay. The $20 per week allowance was much less than that available to Kosovar refugees evacuated to other countries. Germany, for instance, had granted $80 per week for adults and $40 for children. The Government discouraged the Kosovars from residing with friends or family in Australia by tying the allocation of benefits to the condition of staying at the barracks. It inhibited the refugees’ ability to attain any reasonable independence by denying (at first) and then significantly limiting the amount of paid employment they could obtain. The Federal Government used these measures to control the Kosovar refugees and dictate their terms of residence without being subject to external checks on those powers. Effectively, the Kosovars had very little economic incentive or legal right to remain in Australia under the terms of the Safe Haven Visa, nor any capacity to challenge their repatriation.

1.3 The Australian Government’s Winter Reconstruction Allowance
To encourage the remaining Kosovars to return, the Australian government offered $3000 to each adult and $500 per child under-18 years of age as

945 In Gee and Skotnicki, op. cit.
part of its offer of a Winter Reconstruction Allowance on 24th August.946 This would assist individuals in re-establishing their lives back home, the Federal Government argued, as well as assisting them in restocking businesses, and buying seeds for farms, building materials and furniture.947 Ruddock issued a two-month deadline for the remainder of the Kosovar refugees to depart Australia in order to receive the Allowance (an offer valid until 30th October 1999). This was despite recent figures produced by the UN that an average of at least five people were injured or killed by landmines each day in the province.948 It was further reported that up to thirty per cent of NATO’s cluster-bombs had failed to explode on impact, with many still scattered throughout the countryside.949 Refugees at Singleton Safe Haven said that the money was not enough to persuade them to leave Australia. Nexhat Bajrami, 24 years of age, had been residing at the Singleton base with his wife when he stated: ‘I don’t care about the money. I look for work everyday in Singleton. I want to stay.’950 Fadil Bllaca, whose farm near the Southern Kosovo town of Gjilan had been destroyed in the conflict, said he wanted to remain in Australia and that the money would be better offered to his friends who had already left for home but were ineligible for the money.951

Ruddock assured the Telegraph that those who had already returned would be given aid from the international community.952 The allowance offered by the Australian government was, he argued, in line with the UNHCR’s request to assist Kosovars in returning home. The Winter Reconstruction Allowance eventually cost the Federal Government $4.1 million with the Immigration Minister later commenting that: ‘The allowance made good economic sense as the amount of the allowance was

946 See L. Martin, ‘Kosovars To Be Paid $3,000 To Aid Return’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 25th August 1999, p. 5. Here, it is stated that the money was planning to be disbursed to the refugees in the form of travellers’ cheques.
947 York, op. cit., p. 88. See also Martin, ‘Kosovars To Be Paid $3,000 To Aid Return’, op. cit.
949 ibid.
951 See comments by F. Bllaca, as cited in ibid.
952 ibid.
offset through savings in accommodation and other support costs of the safe havens. Sciacca criticised the Immigration Minister. He concluded that the allowance made economic sense but said it did not address the question of the Kosovars’ safety once they returned. He stated that: ‘Economically, it makes sense to spend around $6 million to encourage these people to go back, given that currently, the operation is costing Australian taxpayers around $10 million a month.’ The fact remained, he stated, that just below one thousand of the Kosovar refugees in Australia were from Eastern Kosovo, the area now under Serbian control.

The Australian government’s Winter Reconstruction Allowance was comparable to the post-war assistance offered by other countries to repatriated Kosovar refugees. By August 1999, Switzerland had given cash and materials valued at around SUS3000 to returnees. Germany had offered SUS300, while Norway provided kit homes. A concern for the UNHCR, however, was that the amount of money given by foreign governments to returnees remained susceptible to a highly unstable economy. A UNHCR spokeswoman in Geneva stated that, while the Australian government’s offer was generous and welcome, prices in Kosovo were rising fast and changing every day. Adding volatility to the situation was that many of the refugees, the spokeswoman added, would not have jobs to return to. Some media reports described how black-market operators were taking advantage of the situation and the expense of returning to Kosovo at this point in time seemed illogical to many refugees still in Australia.

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954 Sciacca, cited in Way and Kamper, op. cit. See also discussion on Switerland’s Kosovar refugee evacuation and repatriation program in Van Selm, op. cit., pp. 221-222.
955 Martin, ‘Kosovars To Be Paid $3,000 To Aid Return’, op. cit.
956 ibid.
957 ibid.
958 ibid.
959 See, for instance, D. O’grady, ‘Slimming Food And Marble Wax For Refugees In Tents’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 4th September 1999, p. 29, which describes how ‘smuggling between Italy and Montenegro is rife.’
960 See comments by refugee Selman, Nexhat, as cited in G. Timbrell, ‘Kosovars Want to Stay’, The Sun-Herald, 12th September 1999, p. 37. As one of the refugees residing at Singleton Safe Haven, Mr Selman (described as a university lecturer), said that the money offered by the Australian government to return home was ‘nothing’, speculating that: ‘It will cost us about $500 to buy one electrical appliance. Most of us are going back to
Almost half of the Kosovars who had been evacuated to Australia had returned home by 9th September and the Safe Havens at Singleton, Puckapunyal and Hampstead were closed by the end of the month.960 East Hills Safe Haven had officially closed for the Kosovars by 29th September as well, and most of those remaining at the base (468 in total) were transferred elsewhere to make way for 1438 refugees evacuated from East Timor under a different temporary protection scheme.961 One of Ruddock’s concerns, The Australian noted, was that the Kosovars might contract ‘tropical diseases’ from the East Timorese and that there was no way to separate the groups due to communal dining and recreation rooms.962 Ruddock reiterated that the Kosovars must leave Australia by the end of October 1999 (when the Safe Haven Visa was set to expire). Afterwards, the Immigration Minister began to reduce the medical and other types of support previously made available to the Kosovars.963

Between August and October 1999, 2268 refugees had accepted the offer of the Winter Reconstruction Allowance. Ruddock noted that the Allowance was equivalent to two years’ (pre-war) earnings for the average Kosovar worker.964 The generosity of the Government in this regard accorded with the image that the refugees were low skilled, impoverished people. We have no idea how we are going to start to rebuild and it is so expensive to live there compared with Australia.’

960 York, op. cit., p. 89. See also ‘Refugee havens to close’, The Daily Telegraph (Afternoon Edition), 10th September 1999, p. 15. See also Timbrell, op. cit. See also T. Plane, ‘Kosovars take the money and fly home as camps close’, The Australian, 11th September 1999, p. 9.


962 D. Brearley, ‘Kosovars agree to exit for East Timorese – Howard presses “Australian values” as tensions escalate in region and at home’, The Australian, 1st October 1999, p. 2

963 King, op. cit. See also Taylor, ‘Protection or Prevention? A Close Look at the Temporary Safe Haven Visa Class’, op. cit., p. 79. See also R. McGregor, ‘Kosovar refugees urged to move out’, The Australian, 30th September 1999, p. 9. McGregor describes how, on 29th September 1999, Ruddock ‘made a special trip to East Hills’ where he told ‘280-odd Kosovars in the camp that they would lose their living allowances and other privileges like phone cards unless they moved [to another barracks] within a week’ and make room for the East Timorese refugees.

peasant workers. This was a stereotype that the Government continued to deploy at various times during Operation Safe Haven, despite the fact Government officials had previously described the refugees as white-collar, “middle class” people from Pristina.

1.4 Closure of the Safe Havens and the threat of incarcerating Kosovar refugees

The Federal Government extended the visas held by the 1800 Kosovars remaining in Australia in late September. Around 800 Kosovars were permitted to remain in Australia until early 2000. Many of these were from Eastern Kosovo (the area now under Serbian control), while others required ongoing medical treatment or wished to avoid the difficulties of the winter season at home. Ruddock had initially said that the other 1000 refugees must leave on the chartered flight of 26th October or be considered ‘unlawful non-citizens’ subject to detention and removal.\(^965\) The RCOA was concerned about the increasing pressure being applied to Kosovar refugees to leave Australia, stating that the Immigration Minister’s approach amounted to ‘bullying tactics’.\(^966\) While having their visas extended for one month, these 1000 refugees were again threatened with detention by the Immigration Minister if they refused to leave Australia by 30th November 1999. Ruddock’s view on their repatriation was that it was simply a matter of “fairness”. He stated that: ‘It gets down to this question as to what is fair… There are many people who would like to stay and they have gone.’\(^967\)

Around ninety per cent of the Kosovars had returned home or to the refugee camps of Macedonia by early November.\(^968\) A month later there were only 498 refugees remaining in Australia, with 366 residing at Bandiana Safe Haven, 71 at East Hills and 61 residing at various Safe

\(^{965}\) York, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
\(^{966}\) Darby, ‘Kosovar Refugees Pressured to Leave’, *op. cit.*
Haven centres. Some Labor politicians attempted to sway the Immigration Minister away from pressuring Kosovar refugees into leaving Australia. Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon (ALP) said it was unfortunate that such pressure was being applied and that he had tried to change Ruddock’s mind. He went on: ‘There is plenty of room for them in Tasmania, although the Commonwealth has the constitutional responsibility to deal with these matters.’

1.5 Comparison with the response of the international community to the issue of repatriation

From the beginning the Immigration Minister had been reluctant to accommodate Kosovar refugees under the temporary arrangements sought by the UNHCR. Ruddock had proceeded with Operation Safe Haven only at the insistence of public backlash, the Cabinet and international pressure. In line with the interests of the Cabinet he had promoted the notion that Australia’s humanitarian refugee resettlement program was the most generous (per capita) in comparison to other countries. Nonetheless the agreed figure to accept 4000 evacuees was significantly less than the intakes of other nations. The US and Turkey had agreed to relocate 20,000 Kosovar refugees each temporarily; Norway had accepted up to 6000; Germany received 10,000; and, Canada accepted 5000. Hundreds of thousands more remained in neighbouring Balkan countries such as Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina. The Australian government’s reluctance to accept a greater number of refugees was compounded in its haste to repatriate the Kosovars at the end of the initial three-month stay period.

King compared the response of the international community to the assistance provided by the Australian government. Her assessment was that

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970 Darby, ‘Kosovar Refugees Pressured To Leave’, *op. cit.*
971 J. Bacon, cited in *ibid*.
973 See figures shown in ‘What has happened to the refugees’, *op. cit.*
the Canadian government accommodated the Kosovar refugees much more willingly and, unlike the Australian government, recognised the need to account for their international human rights. The Australian government, by comparison: ‘having to further the interests of the Australian people and take domestic social and economic factors into account, merely accepted the minimum responsibility under its international obligations to appear to be playing a fruitful role in the containment of this human tragedy.’

King aptly describes the Safe Haven Visa as a ‘restrictionist policy, severely limiting the rights and opportunities of the Kosovars in Australia.’ Overall, Canada’s program was far more humanitarian, recognising the long-term interests of the Kosovars and offering the choice of permanent resettlement.

The Australian Safe Haven legislation did not provide the Kosovars with an individual determination process in Australian law. This was in breach of Article 34 of the UN Convention on Refugees. On the other hand, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed the human rights of Kosovars granted Safe Haven, whereas no such law exists in Australia. King also notes that the accommodation arrangements provided to the refugees in Canada were much more appropriate and sensitive to their needs. Although both countries housed the refugees in army barracks, Canada allowed for greater freedom and mobility and did not (unlike Australia) penalise those who chose to leave the accommodation. Moreover, the Canadian accommodation program granted priority to locations where there already were Albanian communities and support services available. By contrast, the Australian Safe Havens were ‘disused and semi-used military barracks’ and so were far more insensitive than the accommodation provided by Canada. The situation was further exacerbated, as I noted in Chapter 4, by the notion that nearby several of the Safe Havens army training exercises continued to be carried out. These

974 King, op. cit.
975 ibid.
976 ibid. See also discussion of Australia’s international obligations in Barutciski and Suhreke, op. cit.
977 King, op. cit.
978 ibid.
exercises involved the use of live explosives. In many ways King’s assessment is correct: ‘the real Australian motivation [behind its response to the situation in Kosovo] was clearly self-interest and the desire to be seen as acting as a responsible international citizen… [T]he intention of the Australian response was clearly […] to limit the rights and abilities of those Kosovars selected to remain in Australia in any capacity.’

Several organizations, including the RCOA and Amnesty International, expressed doubts about the legal implications of the Safe Haven Visa. They question whether the Kosovars truly understood the process in which they were participating. As I have noted, recipients of the visa, before being evacuated to Australia, had been forced to sign a declaration that they understood and agreed with the Australian government’s offer - that temporary safe haven was for a limited period and would leave when the government required them to. Savitri Taylor describes how the Kosovars were not provided with any official information about the criteria against which their requests to remain in Australia would be assessed and like other commentators she noted official arrangements were not put in place for the provision of legal advice, free or otherwise, to the Kosovars.

The only avenue for gaining a different form of refugee protection in Australia under the Safe Haven legislation was via the personal assessment of the Minister. There was considerable doubt raised over whether the Minister had used these powers fairly. In November 1999 Ruddock agreed to receive personal submissions from those Kosovars fearing persecution. Among those thought to have applied, The Australian noted, there were mainly adults of mixed-marriages, gypsies,

979 ibid. King also notes the criticisms of Operation Safe Haven made by the Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) of NSW in relation to ‘Sending traumatised victims of war to military bases, isolated from the Albanian communities’.
980 ibid.
those likely to be accused of collaboration with Serbia and those whose homes were now in Serbia proper.985 Those Kosovars who had applied in writing to the Minister to be considered for more permanent status did not, Taylor points out, receive equal opportunity to have their claims assessed. DIMA officials conducted interviews with the ‘head of family’ in assessing which of these claims proceeded to the Minister. Taylor goes on: ‘the fact that only heads of family were interviewed raises serious concerns about the extent to which facts relevant to the making of treaty-based protection claims by other members of the family emerged through the interview process.’986 This would have had significant implications for women, for instance, subjected to sexual violence and who might have been too ashamed to reveal the fact to other family members.

Assessing the Safe Haven legislation, Curren says: ‘The problem in the main is that Australia continues to deal with the issue of refugees as an issue of domestic politics… and [requiring] the preservation of an illusive largely Anglo Saxon identity’.987 The creation of Safe Haven status was very purposefully a means of stemming the flow of refugees in the long term whilst enabling Australia to respond to an immediate need to grant a haven;

and thus serves the dual purpose of appeasing the calls for a humanitarian response by the electorate whilst limiting the degree to which those who hold safe haven status can apply for some longer term of protection.988

Citing journalist Richard McGregor of The Australian, Curren says that Australia’s immigration program continued to resemble a ‘defensive rather than positive ethos… [in which] politicians are now following what they believe is an entrenched antagonism to newcomers’.989 This correlates to Jupp’s view that Australian immigration has in recent years come to value

985 ibid.
987 Curren, op. cit., p. 11.
988 ibid., p. 13.
989 R. McGregor, cited in ibid., p. 11.
compliance at the expense of more flexible, humanitarian arrangements.\textsuperscript{990} The concept of safe haven, as Curren notes, is ‘a good one in theory’ but (in Australia’s case) created broader problems for the people of Kosovo.\textsuperscript{991} As noted by the RCOA in November 1999, there remained lack of effective rule of law and an atmosphere of general instability in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{992} The Australian government potentially contributed to instability in the region by repatriating the Kosovars without proper legal restraint and a sense of precaution.

2. The High Court Challenge and the Removal of the Remaining Kosovar Refugees

2.1 Detention of the Kosovars at Bandiana and the High Court challenge

By March 2000 the cost of the Kosovar Safe Haven program for the Federal Government had amounted to $100 million.\textsuperscript{993} On 16th March, the \textit{Telegraph} recorded that the Immigration Minister had begun to re-assert pressure on those Kosovars remaining in Australia, most of whom were residing at Bandiana barracks.\textsuperscript{994} He ordered refugees with ‘no valid reason to be in Australia to leave’ and to board a chartered flight for home on 8\textsuperscript{th} April.\textsuperscript{995} (The scheduled flight was eventually postponed to the 9\textsuperscript{th} April, 2000.)

\textsuperscript{990} Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration}, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{991} Curren, op. cit., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{992} Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ‘Position on Return of Kosovar Evacuees’, op. cit. The Council recommended the Federal Government take account of humanitarian implications, stating: ‘Aside from those people who have well founded fears about returning to Kosovo, there are those who want to go back, but not yet. Any Kosovar whose home has been destroyed and/or who has no prospect of obtaining employment, would be justifiably reluctant to return to the province so close to winter. The reconstruction program is seriously behind schedule and tens of thousands of people will be facing winter in tents or other substandard accommodation. Returning such people at this time would simply add to the already considerable burden faced by the aid agencies in the province.’ The RCOA added: ‘This reluctance would be compounded if the individual or family had been subjected to intensely painful experiences while in Kosovo as many of the population were. Some people need longer to heal and to regain the strength necessary to rebuild their lives.’
\textsuperscript{993} York, op. cit., p. 95. This included the expenses paid for chartered flights, accommodation, food, allowances and services such as counselling, laundry and medical assistance.
\textsuperscript{994} Way, op. cit. There were 71 Kosovar refugees residing at East Hills and 61 others were spread around the country.
\textsuperscript{995} Ruddock, cited in M. McKinnon, ‘Kosovars to go in April’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 16\textsuperscript{th} March 2000, p. 7.
following technical problems). A spokesperson for the Immigration Minister said the Government hoped there would be no need for any forced removals, but threatened the use of chemical tranquillisers against those who refused to leave. The spokesperson stated: ‘if people refuse to cooperate with the departure order we would expect appropriate and reasonable action would be taken[.]’ The Immigration Minister, the *Telegraph* noted, said that it was now an appropriate time for the remaining Kosovars to return home with the Kosovo winter coming to an end, adding:

Clearly, those who are too sick to travel – along with their immediate family – will remain in Australia until they are well enough to leave. But I expect families who have no valid reason to be in Australia to leave on the return flight[.]“

This was despite that fact, wrote the *Telegraph*, that many Kosovar refugees had ‘begged’ to be allowed to stay in Australia. Many were afraid to return because their homes were in the Eastern border region and because Southern Serbia had ‘become a flashpoint in the recent weeks [sic].” The RCOA was a vocal critic of the way the Government was handling the issue of repatriation, arguing that its process of determining whether it was safe to return was too simplistic.

On 5th April, around 120 Kosovar refugees residing at the Bandiana Safe Haven protested against the Government’s decision not to allow them to stay. It was several days prior to their scheduled refugee flight from Australia to the Balkans. Immigration officials said that 223 of the 370

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996 ‘Plane glitch delays Kosovars’ return’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 9th April 2000, p. 3. See also F. Cumming, ‘Late Hitch Grounds Kosovars’, *The Sun-Herald*, 9th April 2000, p. 15, which states that the problem was twofold. A delay caused by bus failure at Bandiana pushed the scheduled flight beyond the allocated time slots in the Balkans, which made the plane and its crew unavailable. A replacement plane was found by the Government for the next day.
997 Department of Immigration spokesperson (unnamed), cited in McKinnon, ‘Kosovars to go in April’, *op. cit.*
998 Ruddock, cited in *ibid.*
1001 ‘Kosovars beg to stay’, *op. cit.*
refugees housed at the barracks were on the flight departure list. Over a hundred of the refugees, as described by the *Telegraph*, marched in protest for four kilometres along the Kiewa Valley from Bandiana to Wodonga, seeking a last minute reprieve. The NSW Albania Association’s Catherine Ordway described on 8th April how some of the refugees ‘are suicidal, they so desperately don’t want to go. I don’t think you’ll find many people on the plane tomorrow.’ The *Herald* revealed how two young female refugees – who were sisters staying at the Bandiana barracks - had attempted suicide the previous week. As the *Herald* wrote: ‘The attempted overdoses … came on the night Mr Ruddock addressed refugees at the camp whom he had ordered home.’ The sisters were reportedly recovering in the local Wodonga hospital. Ruddock’s response was void of empathy or a willingness to acknowledge the sisters’ trauma. He stated that: ‘It’s unfortunate people are taking this action when they have been given assurances it’s safe to return to Kosovo.’ He later commented that the suicide attempts were part of a plan by the teenager girls to pressure him.

The Prime Minister responded to questions about the attempted overdoses, emphasising on a Melbourne radio program the temporary nature of the Kosovars’ stay: ‘I am very conscious of the emotion of all of this. But they came here on a certain basis and, difficult though it is, that basis has to be adhered to.’

The subtext to Howard’s position on the repatriations was symbolic, stating that if the Kosovars did not leave it would create an ‘enormous headache’ in relation to future claims, as

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1003 *ibid.* See also York, *op. cit.*, p. 95. It is noted here that a total of 259 of those Kosovars remaining in Australia had been singled out to leave at this time. It is stated elsewhere that, following a day’s delay on the flight from Melbourne, thirteen refugees did not take the flight home and were granted extensions on their visas. These included seven on medical grounds and two families of three who were allowed to apply for a different kind of refugee protection. See ‘Plane glitch delays Kosovars’ return’, *op. cit.* See also the figure of 259 cited in ‘Migrant Mix’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7th April 2000, p. 14.
1005 *ibid.*
1006 Ruddock, cited in *ibid.*
‘everybody in the future who wanted to short circuit the procedure would invoke the example of the Kosovars to do so.’

Ruddock had in early April implemented changes to immigration policy that involved severely limiting welfare benefits available to the parents of migrants, scaling down humanitarian refugee intake due to a rise in the number of boat people, and placing an emphasis upon “skilled” migrants. Labor leader Kim Beazley deplored Ruddock’s attacks on “illegal immigrants” and, alongside his decision to remove the remaining Kosovars from Australia, accused the Immigration Minister of playing wedge politics. Ruddock reacted furiously to these criticisms. The Herald reported him asking: ‘Have you ever been to a refugee camp? … Go to Kenya … The circumstances are appalling[.] You might say, it doesn’t matter how many people you bring through in the refugee program. But it does. It’s $21.5 million per thousand over five years. I have to go in and argue for [extra refugee places] in the Budget process, I don’t get it.’ Ruddock added: ‘If you had to judge them against the person sitting in the refugee camp … you would take the person in the camp, every time… Why should I take 500 places out of the program for the Kosovars; 1,600 places out of the program for East Timorese asylum seekers; 6,000 for unauthorised boat arrivals and then take as many more that keep on coming and then see we have no refugee program… It’s not wedge politics. It’s about consistency and it’s about fairness.’ Ruddock’s view was in line with those sentiments being propagated by the Government about a “flood” of applications for refugee protection. However, it also reflected both the conservatism that typified many of his official statements as well as the “checks and balances” style of the Howard Government.

1012 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
1013 Ruddock, cited in ibid.
Extending from this rationale, the Kosovars who chose to stay in Australia were described by Ruddock as acting on ‘bad advice’,\(^\text{1015}\) which culminated in a High Court challenge that was heard on 7\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) April. Melbourne lawyer Basil Nuredini and barrister Andrew Flower challenged the Federal Government on behalf of 81 Kosovar refugees from the Bandiana Safe Haven.\(^\text{1016}\) The refugees’ counsel argued that the group should be exempted from repatriation because, in accordance with international refugee conventions and UNHCR guidelines, they feared returning home, had witnessed atrocities and their homes (for at least 64 of the refugees) were in areas now dominated by Serbs.\(^\text{1017}\) They stated that the Immigration Minister failed to consider the UNHCR report when considering their request for protection visas. The report, the refugees’ counsel went on, stated that most Kosovars could return safely from their temporary relocation in foreign countries except for those in certain categories - including those who had witnessed atrocities and others whose homes were in areas now dominated by Serbs.\(^\text{1018}\) The refugees won a reprieve from repatriation on the first day of proceedings pending the outcome of the challenge and were able to avoid boarding the 9\(^{th}\) April chartered flight home.\(^\text{1019}\)

The Federal Government ultimately ignored international legal obligations designed to override any laws (including the Safe Haven legislation) to protect the human rights of refugees. As the UNHCR’s

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\(^{1015}\) York, op. cit., p. 91.
\(^{1016}\) ‘Kosovars in court’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7\(^{th}\) April 2000, p. 17. See also Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, op. cit. It is stated here that there were only 72 refugees involved in the court case, though most other sources state the number of 81. The figure 81 is also given in M. Saunders and A. Croswell, ‘Refugees fight to stay’, *The Australian*, 10\(^{th}\) April 2000, p. 1. See also Cumming, op. cit.

\(^{1017}\) M. McKinnon, ‘81 Kosovars win reprieve from return’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8\(^{th}\) April 2000, p. 16. The UN human rights category, ‘at risk’, was argued to have applied to the Kosovars. See also Taylor, ‘Protection or Prevention? A Close Look at the Temporary Safe Haven Visa Class’, *op. cit.*, p. 96, who criticised the Federal Government for ignoring UNHCR guidelines regarding the return of refugees to Kosovo. That is, the Kosovars were repatriated by the Australian government despite their ‘at risk’ status. It is stated that 64 of the refugees had homes in Presevo in ‘Most Kosovars expected to leave Australia’ (Transcript), 7.30 *Report*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 12\(^{th}\) April 2000. URL: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/stories/s118275.htm>. Accessed 11\(^{th}\) October 2010.

\(^{1018}\) McKinnon, ‘81 Kosovars win reprieve from return’, *op. cit.*

\(^{1019}\) Clennell and Wade, ‘Kosovars Win Short Reprieve’, *op. cit.*
Director of the Division of International Protection commented, in relation to the Safe Haven Visa program:

at law, the [UN Refugee] Convention cannot be made unavailable for persons for whom it was intended, even while its application can be delayed.1020

RCOA cited those groups considered to be at risk if returned to Kosovo (according to UNHCR guidelines), which included ethnic minorities; draft age males who could be considered to have evaded KLA conscription; people who could be perceived as having supported the Serb regime (or Serb sympathisers); female headed households without male support; people from areas in which ethnic Albanians were a minority (including Southern Serbia); and victims of extreme violence. The organisation stated that, among those recently told by the Minister to leave Australia, there were many Kosovar refugees who fitted into these high-risk categories.1021

The Government maintained a punitive position towards the refugees throughout the proceedings. On the network Ten Meet the Press program, Ruddock argued: ‘I’m satisfied that they have no claims that would single them out over and above any other Kosovo Albanian for persecution.’1022 The Telegraph defended the Government’s frustrations, stating:

Taxpayers will spend $500,000 to send a two-thirds empty 747 jet back to Europe today after 81 Kosovar refugees won a weekend reprieve from repatriation.

1021 ibid. See also S. Mann, ‘Doors Slam On Kosovars’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 15th April 2000, p. 25. This article describes how people who deserted from the KLA expected to face recrimination upon returning home.
1022 Ruddock, as cited in Saunders and Crosweller, ‘Refugees fight to stay’, op. cit.
… Under a UN agreement, if the Kosovars’ court challenges fail, the Federal Government will have to charter another 747 to send them home.1023

A spokesperson for Ruddock informed the Telegraph that those refugees involved in the High Court challenge would become unlawful non-citizens after the case and would be held in detention. The Telegraph’s Michael McKinnon emphasised the point in support of the Government: ‘The Kosovars are here on safe haven visas … and signed agreements they would leave the country.’1024

On 9th April, the Immigration Minister commented in the Telegraph that he did not ‘expect problems’ at the Safe Havens following the outcome of High Court proceedings. Bestowing on the refugees merely a “guest” status, Ruddock said:

For most Kosovars, it’s safe to return home. My expectation is in relation to guests – and these people have been guests for more than nine months – when it’s time to ask the people to go home, they should avail themselves of the opportunity. [sic]1025

However, the Immigration Minister was a little premature when it came to the ‘problems’ the case would stir. That day, more than 100 refugees residing at Bandiana Safe Haven refused to board their scheduled flight home and instead conducted a hunger strike at the barracks.1026 The Immigration Minister’s response was punitive and that evening the Bandiana Safe Haven was reclassified as a detention centre. Bandiana would thereafter hold the non-compliant refugees in detention until they

1023 McKinnon, ‘81 Kosovars win reprieve from return’, op. cit.
1024 ibid.
1025 Ruddock, cited in ‘Plane glitch delays Kosovars’ return’, op. cit. Ruddock is also quoted in Cumming, op. cit.
1026 ‘A bitter way to remember’ (editorial), The Daily Telegraph, 10th April 2000, p. 29. It is noted here that only 168 Kosovars (out of the anticipated 259) boarded the flight. See also reference to the hunger strike in F. Farouque and M. Brown, ‘Despair Finally Breaks a Little Girl’s Courage’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 10th April 2000, p. 1. See reference to the hunger strike in Saunders and Croswell, ‘Refugees fight to stay’, op. cit.
could be transferred to another detention centre or be deported. The refugees were further informed via a Department of Immigration leaflet that they would have to pay for their detention and removal.

Only 21 out of the expected 100 refugees from Bandiana had boarded the transfer coach headed for Sydney airport. The remaining Kosovars protested, refusing water and food and demanding that the Minister reconsider their status. The Telegraph described how one male refugee was taken to hospital after collapsing during the incident. Lloga urged the refugees to abandon their hunger strike. He was sympathetic, stating that amongst the refugees were war crimes witnesses, ethnic-Albanians from Serb-dominated areas, defectors from the KLA and former high-ranking officials in the Serbian government. Greens Senator Bob Brown, in support of the protesters, had asked the Transport Workers Union (TWU) to delay the Kosovars’ flight and undertake industrial action on the refugees’ behalf. While some delay was caused by strike action in Tasmania, it did not have the effect of preventing the refugees’ departure.

A decision on the High Court challenge was handed down the following day. It found in favour of the Federal Government. All 81 refugees were subsequently ordered by the Department of Immigration to leave Australia. DIMA spokesperson Phil Mayne, who was working at Bandiana barracks, promptly stated in the Herald that ‘an appropriate level of force’ would be used against those still unwilling to return home. The Government was unperturbed by calls from within the Australian community to reconsider its decision. The NSW Ecumenical Council, for

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1027 See Bartlett, in ‘Refugees: Kosovo’, Senate: Official Hansard, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 10th April 2000, p. 13732. See also comments by an Immigration Department spokesperson (unnamed), cited in N. Tsavdaridis and A. Probyn, ‘Stayput Kosovars to be held in detention’, The Daily Telegraph, 10th April 2000, p. 5. Here, the spokesperson warned that these refugees were likely to be placed in permanent detention centres at Woomera, Port Hedland or Curtin and then flown home. See also D. Lague, ‘New Detention For Defiant Refugees’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 10th April 2000, p. 2.
1028 Saunders and Crosweller, ‘Refugees fight to stay’, op. cit.
1029 Tsavdaridis and Probyn, op. cit.
1030 Ibid.
1031 P. Mayne, cited in Clennell and Mann, ‘Kosovars Face ‘Level Of Force’ In Deportation’, op. cit. As cited here, Mayne confirmed any forcible removal would be carried out by government contractors Australian Correctional Management.
instance, representing Catholic, Anglican, Uniting and 12 other religious groups wrote to the Prime Minister and Phillip Ruddock urging them to allow the Kosovar refugees to stay.\textsuperscript{1032} Amnesty expressed further reservations about Ruddock’s handling of the repatriation issue. The organisation threatened to revoke Ruddock’s membership if he continued to wear his Amnesty badge while performing his ministerial duties.\textsuperscript{1033} The Government refused to reconsider its position on the matter and the refugees’ legal counsel stated that there would be no appeal to the decision.\textsuperscript{1034}

The Immigration Minister promised on $13^{th}$ April that refugees who left voluntarily on the next flight would be given application forms to migrate to Australia to fill out on the plane. These would be part-processed by Australian migration officials when they landed in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{1035} Those refugees would be making applications for the special humanitarian migration scheme which was designed for persons in situations of discrimination, displacement or hardship.\textsuperscript{1036} The Federal Opposition accused the Government of making a ‘cosmetic offer’ to ‘convince them to leave’ and called for the refugees to be processed onshore.\textsuperscript{1037} The Minister refuted criticism about the whole process being a “waste of money” saying that it would set a bad precedent to allow people to apply onshore.\textsuperscript{1038}

The following day the Federal Government toughened its stance on the Kosovar refugees residing at Bandiana, ordering security personnel to restrict all visitors from entering the barracks. The move prevented the refugees from accessing legal counsel provided by non-Government

\textsuperscript{1032} M. Scala, ‘Refugee gives up his fight’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 14\textsuperscript{th} April 2000, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{1033} Amnesty cited accumulated grievances against the Immigration Minister, the Safe Haven legislation, the nature of the latest repatriations of Kosovar refugees and recent developments concerning the detention of boat people. See A. Clennell, ‘Amnesty Threatens To Expel Ruddock’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 18\textsuperscript{th} April 2000, p. 5. Here, Amnesty’s Australian branch president, Kathy Kingston, argued that the organisation was seeking legal advice, stating: ‘When he’s acting as or being interviewed as minister, his membership of Amnesty International shouldn’t be referred to.’
\textsuperscript{1034} Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1035} A. Clennell, ‘Kosovars “Conned Into Leaving”’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 14\textsuperscript{th} April 2000, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{1036} \textit{ibid.} The scheme further required that applicants needed relatives, a relationship or employment prospects in Australia in order to qualify, or be sponsored by community groups. See also discussion about the special humanitarian program in Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{1037} Cited in \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1038} \textit{ibid.}
Phil Mayne confirmed that all visitation rights had been withdrawn so detainees could make decisions free of ‘external influences.’ The Australian described how the refugees were instructed to ‘pack their bags’ and, according to Kosovars inside the barracks, were subjected to increasing pressure from DIMA staff to sign forms agreeing to leave the country. Refugees told The Australian, speaking via mobile telephone, that ‘two truckloads of security guards had surrounded their living quarters’ before they were ushered into one building. They were not allowed to leave. Two days later 116 Kosovars were repatriated and 21 others were relocated from Bandiana to Port Hedland detention centre.

Those departing for home had refused to sign an official declaration for the Australian government stating their return was voluntary. Taylor notes that DIMA considered the repatriations ‘voluntary’ on the basis that no physical coercion was used by the Australian government. This characterisation, however, was not accepted by the UNHCR which defined the returns as ‘induced’ rather than voluntary. The Australian government’s handling of the situation was a serious breach of the UNHCR’s repatriation criteria which stipulates the importance of ‘voluntariness’ (an absence of physical, psychological or material pressure) in the returning of refugees. The Immigration Department later defended its repatriation of the Kosovar refugees in the Senate, arguing that none of the refugees had been forced to leave Australia. As Immigration Department deputy secretary Andrew Metcalf stated: ‘They did volunteer.

1041 ibid.
1042 ibid.
1044 Taylor, ‘Protection or Prevention? A Close Look at the Temporary Safe Haven Visa Class’, op. cit., p. 83. This is confirmed in Hodge, ‘Kovovars fly out leaving defiant 21’, op. cit., which states that the refugees ‘were defiant to the end in their refusal to sign government consent forms to leave’.
1046 ibid., p. 98.
They did agree to get on that plane[.] There was absolutely no force whatsoever used to secure their departure from Australia.¹⁰⁴⁷

Many of the refugees repatriated from Australia in April 2000 faced immediate problems on landing in Skopje. On 6th April, the ALP’s Michael Danby (Member for Melbourne Ports) read a UNHCR document to the Lower House, which had informed Kosovar refugees returning home that: ‘No resources will be provided to you after you are distributed to the various towns from which you come.’¹⁰⁴⁸ Danby warned Federal Parliament that: ‘We will be leaving these people without accommodation, perhaps even without food.’¹⁰⁴⁹ Senator Andrew Bartlett expressed concern to the parliament on 12th April, noting that some refugees - who were originally from areas now part of Serbia proper - were being repatriated by the Australian government to other places in Kosovo. This was in response to Ruddock’s comments the day before, in which the Immigration Minister had stated that no-one would be forced back to Southern Serbia, but instead would be taken to other parts of Kosovo.¹⁰⁵⁰ Bartlett pointed out that this was contrary to the repatriation objectives of the UNHCR.¹⁰⁵¹ The UNHCR had made it clear, according to the RCOA, that it was not appropriate to send people from Southern Serbia into Kosovo. The Head of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) had recently appealed to governments not to forcibly return refugees.¹⁰⁵² In this way, RCOA argued, the Australian government could not legally justify the forced return of the Kosovars. RCOA commented: ‘They have a right to have their subjective fears examined to determine whether these are well founded and if they are, to receive Australia’s protection.’¹⁰⁵³

By April 2000, there were distinct differences in the way the various countries involved in temporarily relocating Kosovar refugees were

¹⁰⁴⁹ ibid.
¹⁰⁵⁰ Clennell and Mann, ‘Kosovars Face ‘Level Of Force’ In Deportation’, op. cit.
¹⁰⁵² Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ‘Media Release (Return of the Kosovars)’, op. cit.
¹⁰⁵³ ibid.
handling the issue of repatriation. Initially offering temporary haven, New Zealand by this time had allowed 600 Kosovar refugees the right to seek permanent protection. Canada offered permanent protection and maintained a policy of voluntary repatriation. Canada allowed 5000 refugees to decide for themselves when to return. About 2500 had returned voluntarily out of those evacuated to the US. The remainder were free to remain in the US with an offer of permanent protection on the condition they pay the $US750 cost for the initial evacuation flight within four years. The UK, however, which had offered a 12-month visa to Kosovar refugees in June 1999, was looking to repatriate those 3000 Kosovars still in Britain. The stability of Kosovo in early April 2000 had in fact been downgraded by the UN, and the UNHCR Commissioner had recently informed countries looking to repatriate refugees to do so very slowly given the worsening security situation in Kosovo. Circumstances were further volatile considering NATO had promised to have 6000 police on the ground in Kosovo at this time, when instead there were around 300.

The RCOA appealed to the Prime Minister, expressing concern about the way in which the Government was attempting to justify the returns - by citing the documentation signed by the Kosovars stating that they would return and by citing advice from the UNHCR that it was safe to do so. The RCOA’s view was that these documents were signed at a time when ‘the NATO offensive was still underway and there was no clarity

1056 See references to US and Canada’s offer of permanent protection in Green, ‘Refugees long to make lucky country their own’, op. cit.
1059 ibid.
about the future shape of Kosovo nor about any potential risks on return.\textsuperscript{1060} The organisation went on, making the point that: ‘The undertakings were signed by highly traumatised people who had just been forced from their homes and who were residing in a very crowded and ill-equipped camp in Macedonia. It is understandable both that they would have signed anything that would take them as far away as possible from the trauma and that at that time, their vision of the future would have been return.’\textsuperscript{1061} Another concern was how the Immigration Minister had ‘selectively quoted’ advice from UNHCR to argue that it was safe to return.\textsuperscript{1062}

Following the High Court challenge the UNHCR advised that Kosovar refugees should have their cases comprehensively reviewed.\textsuperscript{1063} The UNHCR’s Peter Kessler, based in Kosovo at the time, stated on SBS Radio that he had concerns about refugees being forced back to areas now part of Southern Serbia, particularly towns such as Presevo and Mitrovica. He added: ‘if they want to come back, that’s another matter… we think there should be a definite go-slow.’\textsuperscript{1064} Kessler commented on the 7:30 Report, as well, saying that: ‘We do think it’s premature people are forced back to Kosovo, a place where they don’t even originate from… So we think there should be a definite go-slow until these people can possibly be returned to their actual place of origin, which would be, in this case, Presevo.’\textsuperscript{1065} A UNHCR official in Geneva, Jacques Franquin, made the point that, although Australia was not alone in pushing for the repatriation

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\textsuperscript{1060} Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ‘Media Release (Return of the Kosovars)’, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{1061} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1062} See ibid., which says: ‘UNHCR’s advice has been that it is safe for the majority but there are particular groups who may have ongoing protection needs. The Minister’s assessment of the Kosovars has resulted in the bar to applying for refugee status being lifted in some cases but not all of those in the identified risk groups. The Minister has maintained his assertion that UNHCR says that it [is] alright to return people claiming fears, including those who come from Southern Serbia.’
\textsuperscript{1063} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1064} P. Kessler, cited in Clennell and Mann, ‘Kosovars Face ‘Level Of Force’ In Deportation’, op. cit. It is also noted here that major concerns for the UNHCR about those Kosovars remaining in Australia included two people of mixed-marriages (Serb and Albanian), two women who had been sexually assaulted by Serb paramilitaries and one family from Presevo. Peter Kessler is also quoted similarly in ‘Most Kosovars expected to leave Australia’, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{1065} P. Kessler, cited in ‘Most Kosovars expected to leave Australia’, op. cit.
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of Kosovar refugees, it was ‘the only country in which the courts have rejected claims of vulnerability.’  

2.2 Media representations of the court case and deviance

The following analysis is based on media coverage concerning the High Court challenge. I have drawn on a total of 63 newspaper articles published between 1st and 30th April 2000. There were two editorials concerned with the Kosovar refugees in the Telegraph, two in The Australian and one in the Herald. Editorials in the Telegraph and Herald were against the Kosovars staying in Australia, while The Australian was much more supportive of the idea. Both editorials in the Telegraph supported the Federal Government’s handling of repatriation, as did the editorial piece in the Herald. One of the editorials in The Australian was critical of the Federal Government on this matter, while the other was only somewhat critical. Editorials provide insight into the ideological position of the newspaper. They are often the point at which the interests of the proprietor are expressed via the editor. Editorials do not always reflect the opinion being expressed by journalists and other contributors. They do, however, signify ideologies around which the various components of a newspaper are assembled.

By the same measure, opinion columns perform a democratic function within the assemblage of a newspaper. Where they occasionally do not agree with the purported position of the editor, they are often

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1067 This included all news items, editorials and opinion columns covering issues related to the Kosovar refugees in Australia and in the Balkans. These articles numbered 18 in the Telegraph, 20 in the Australian and 27 in the Herald. This includes the Sunday Telegraph, Daily Telegraph (only morning editions), The Australian, Weekend Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald and Sun-Herald (Sydney). All articles were retrieved from Factiva and none were in hard copy format.
1068 The coding for ‘Editorial stance on Kosovars staying in Australia’ was divided into the following categories for greater clarity: supportive, somewhat supportive, indirectly supportive, somewhat against and against. In the Telegraph, both editorials were against the Kosovars staying in Australia, expressing the idea that the refugees had benefited from Australia’s charity for long enough. The Herald editorial piece was against the Kosovars staying in Australia. One editorial in the Australian was supportive of the Kosovars staying in Australia, while another was only indirectly supportive.
1069 The coding for ‘Editorial stance on Federal Government handling of repatriation issue’ was divided into the following categories for greater clarity: supportive, somewhat supportive, somewhat critical and critical.
1070 See Ericson, Baranek and Chan, op. cit.
included to uphold the notion that the media is committed to a balanced representation of public affairs.\textsuperscript{1071} There was only one opinion column that addressed the Kosovar refugees in the \textit{Telegraph}, while there were two in \textit{The Australian} and six in the \textit{Herald}. The \textit{Telegraph} opinion piece was against the Kosovars staying in Australia, while opinion on the matter in the \textit{Herald} was varied.\textsuperscript{1072} The opinion pieces in \textit{The Australian}, however, were much more supportive of the refugees staying Australia.\textsuperscript{1073} In another light, opinion in the \textit{Telegraph} typically supported the Federal Government’s handling of the repatriation issue, while it was varied in the \textit{Herald}. Opinion pieces in \textit{The Australian}, though, were more critical of the Government on this matter.\textsuperscript{1074}

As reflected in the content analysis, the \textit{Telegraph}’s coverage of the High Court case clearly favoured the position of the Federal Government. The newspaper’s editor was highly critical of the Kosovar refugees for protesting at Bandiana and the High Court challenge. Referring to a recent poll, the editor noted how 43 per cent of the \textit{Telegraph}’s readers thought the Kosovars should be forced to leave Australia following the UNHCR’s suggestion it was safe to return.\textsuperscript{1075} ‘Public sympathy for the refugees’, the editor stated, ‘who have been guests in this country for more than nine months would probably be greater if some of them had not become such assiduous litigants.’\textsuperscript{1076} The editor depicted one refugee allowed to remain in Australia, Nagir Zairi, as tricky and ungrateful. This was because Zairi was suing the Australian government after his 4-year old son had fallen

\textsuperscript{1071} Herman and Chomsky, \textit{op. cit}, esp. p. xlix. \\
\textsuperscript{1072} The coding for ‘Columnist stance on Kosovars staying in Australia’ was divided into the following categories for greater clarity: supportive, somewhat supportive, indirectly supportive, somewhat against and against. In the \textit{Herald}, two opinion pieces supported this notion, one was somewhat supportive, two were indirectly supportive and one was somewhat against the idea. \\
\textsuperscript{1073} Only one opinion column in the \textit{Australian} was clearly supportive of the refugees staying in Australia for humanitarian reasons, while another was indirectly supportive of the idea. \\
\textsuperscript{1074} The coding for ‘Columnist stance on Federal Government handling of repatriation issue’ was divided into the following categories for greater clarity: supportive, somewhat supportive, somewhat critical and critical. The opinion piece in the \textit{Telegraph} supported the Federal Government’s handling of repatriation. For the \textit{Herald}, one opinion column supported the Federal Government’s handling of the repatriation issue at this time, while two were somewhat critical and three were critical. In the \textit{Australian}, one opinion piece was critical of the Government on this matter while another was only somewhat critical. \\
\textsuperscript{1075} ‘A bitter way to remember’ (editorial), \textit{op. cit.} \\
\textsuperscript{1076} \textit{Ibid.}
from a bicycle at the East Hills centre and broken his leg.\textsuperscript{1077} The editor went on: ‘Sadly, the bulk of the Kosovars who have already gone home, presumably grateful for the hospitality extended when they most needed it, are not the ones we will remember.’\textsuperscript{1078}

The notion of “gratitude” was deployed in varying degrees by editors and in general media coverage throughout April 2000. In the \textit{Telegraph}, the Kosovars were referred to as “grateful” six times, while they were represented as “ungrateful” on seven occasions.\textsuperscript{1079} It is significant, however, that descriptions of the Kosovars as “grateful” in the \textit{Telegraph} were predominantly used to depict those refugees who had returned home (or had agreed to), and juxtaposed to representations of the “ungrateful” who continued to resist repatriation. Other print media were less occupied with this issue, with \textit{The Australian} referring to the Kosovars as “grateful” three times, while they were depicted as “ungrateful” only once. In the \textit{Herald}, the Kosovars were portrayed as being “grateful” once and “ungrateful” twice.

On 11th April 2000, the \textit{Telegraph}’s editor was again severely critical of the refugees involved in the High Court case. The editor mimicked Ruddock’s own words (noted earlier), referring to the actions of those refugees as ‘ill-advised bids to gain public support’.\textsuperscript{1080} The piece described them as a ‘recalcitrant group’ and deplored their ‘defiance of the laws of the country in which they want to remain’.\textsuperscript{1081} The editor went on:

\begin{quote}
The anguish displayed by the Kosovar refugees remaining in Australia and their stubborn refusal to leave with good grace belies the truth of their circumstances and the efforts of the Australian Government to assist them.\textsuperscript{1082}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1077} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1078} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1079} Notions of un/gratefulness include instances where the newspaper directly described the refugees as “ungrateful”, as well as where they were viewed in this light by others (such as politicians or operational staff).
\textsuperscript{1080} ‘Generosity cannot go on forever’ (editorial), \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 11th April 2000, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{1081} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1082} ibid.
\end{flushright}
The editorial piece typified the shift in the *Telegraph*’s narrative - from being highly supportive of the refugees a year beforehand, to highly critical commentary of those who had overstayed the Government’s welcome. Almost one year ago, the editorial stated, ‘Australia offered an outstretched hand and opened its heart to their plight. Most have now returned home to rebuild their lives, grateful for the sanctuary Australia was able to offer during what had been described as one of the worst humanitarian crises of recent times.’\(^{1083}\) Those who remained in Australia, the piece went on, ‘are doing themselves a disservice and have not kept faith with agreements they signed with the Australian Government.’\(^{1084}\) The editor noted that the refugees’ visas had been extended several times already, arguing that the group who had lost the High Court challenge ‘should honour its agreements and accept it is time to go.’\(^{1085}\) The piece further described the situation in Kosovo:

> Kosovo has been declared safe by a neutral umpire, the [UNHCR]. Despite claims to the contrary, no member of this group will be endangered by their return. Each case has been reviewed by the Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. None are of mixed marriages, were members of the KLA or held government positions which could place them at risk.\(^{1086}\)

Noting the individual protection agreements signed with the Australian government, the editor stated: ‘It is impossible for them to remain [in Australia] under these circumstances and should leave of their own free will, acknowledging the generosity of the people of Australia.’\(^{1087}\)

Conservative columnist Piers Akerman added to the *Telegraph*’s criticism of the Kosovar refugees remaining in Australia. He cited portions of the agreement signed by each of the refugees before arriving in Australia. He argued that the case was simple:

\(^{1083}\) *Ibid.* See discussion about the ideological and political role of the newspaper editor in Ericson, Barankek and Chan, *op. cit.*

\(^{1084}\) *Generosity cannot go on forever* (editorial), *op. cit.*

\(^{1085}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{1086}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{1087}\) *Ibid.*
Importantly, they [the Kosovar refugees] agreed and confirmed that ‘acceptance of the offer of temporary stay is voluntary on my part’, ‘my stay in Australia is for no more than three months’, ‘the period may be extended if the Australian Government considers circumstances require it’ and ‘I will not be able to extend my stay in Australia unless permitted to do so by the Australian Government and will leave Australia when the Australian Government requires me to do so’. Which part of this agreement have they now decided they did not understand?1088

Akerman added: ‘Sadly, those who opened their hearts may find it difficult to do so in the future if their honest approach is not reciprocated by the beneficiaries of their charity.’1089 The underlying subtext for these sentiments in the Telegraph was the issue of compliance. The newspaper focussed heavily on a binary of compliance/deviance, frequently demonising those refugees unwilling to return and depicting them as “overstayers”.

For the Telegraph, the implication was that the refugees were deviant and unworthy of Australia’s ongoing protection. In the Herald, the Kosovars were described as “uncompliant” on 39 occasions, although they were depicted as “compliant” three times.1090 The refugees were depicted as “uncompliant” 69 times in The Australian, while they were described as “compliant” on six occasions. The Telegraph, however, referred to the Kosovars as “uncompliant” on 199 occasions, while they were viewed as “compliant” only 15 times. Descriptions of the refugees as “compliant” in the Telegraph were typically used in conjunction with those Kosovars who

1089 ibid.
1090 This includes all references made to the notion “un/compliant” by the newspaper directly, or as the refugees are described in quotes from political leaders, operation staff and others. The category of “uncompliant” included notions such as “defied”, “refused”, “hunger strike”, “unlawful”, “on the run”, “forced removal”, “pressure was applied”, “force”, “deadline”, “unwilling to go”, “forcibly deported”, “negotiations with the refugees”, “hiding”, “crunch time”, “rallied in protest”, “challenged”, “will now be held in detention”, “order/ordered to leave”, “court challenge”, “time to go”, “detainees”, “failing to turn up to the flight”, “reluctance”, “stubborn”, “missing” and “barred”.

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had already returned home (or had agreed to return home). Overall, there was much more focus on criminalising the Kosovars in the Telegraph, with 26 terms used to depict them as “deviant”. By comparison, there were just four descriptions of the refugees as “deviant” in both the Herald and The Australian. It is not uncommon for news stories that focus on “deviance” to offer compelling “human struggle” narratives alongside a broader discourse aimed at criminalising socially unpopular groups. The result is to produce stories centred on the value of “human interest” that are also capable of shifting the focus away from the coercive disposition of the State to police dissidence. These processes disguise punitive activities conducted by the State, neutralising the appearance of coercion within the everyday life of the community. As noted by Adam J. Berinsky and Donald R. Kinder, individuals respond with greater understanding to news events that are presented as a narrative, in sequences and as a coherent story. Such news reports perform an ideological function, because a ‘good [media] frame is at its heart a good story.’

2.3 On the run: DIMA and the “hunt” for overstayers

Around the time of the High Court challenge, there were 10 Kosovar refugees listed by DIMA as “on the run” in Sydney as well as one man in Tasmania (Akif Lutfiu). Twenty-one others were also listed as missing from the Bandiana Safe Haven after failing to take their seats on a chartered flight home. According to a DIMA spokesperson, not turning

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1091 The category of “deviance” was limited to notions of deviance related to unlawfulness and criminality, and where the refugees were described as evading authorities. For example, these include “illegals”, “detainees/detention”, “criminal”, “hunted”, “dishonest”, “manipulating to situation”, “hiding”, “eluding” and “avoiding authorities”. Some of these phrases also appear in the data for the category “uncompliant”.


1093 Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, op. cit.

1094 The refugees listed by DIMA as “on the run” included, according to the Telegraph, Artan Ajeti, a male refugee who had eluded authorities in Sydney. The other Kosovar refugees listed as missing by authorities included two families and a couple who had been living in the Liverpool and Campbelltown areas. Adnan Neuhiu, his wife and two children, as well as the couple, Hamza and Safeta Sadrija, failed to take their seats on a chartered flight home. See M. Scala, ‘I’m being treated like a criminal’, The Daily Telegraph, 11th April 2000, p. 4. See also M. Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, The Daily Telegraph, 12th April 2000, p. 10. See also Clennell and Mann, ‘Kosovars Face ‘Level Of
up to the 9th April flight arranged by the Government rendered those refugees illegal.\textsuperscript{1095} The Immigration Minister announced that those Kosovars who did not turn themselves in to DIMA officers by 12th April would be sent to an immigration detention centre. He warned those refugees who refused to leave Australia voluntarily that they would be banned from applying to return for three years.\textsuperscript{1096} Ruddock said those who were compliant with the Government’s plans to repatriate them would, however, be allowed to apply for humanitarian visas to return to Australia. The Immigration Minister further threatened that those 81 Kosovars who had lost their High Court appeal would be forced to pay costs if they did not agree to leave. He assured the \textit{Telegraph} that none of the Kosovars would be sent back to Serbian controlled areas.\textsuperscript{1097} Despite his assurances, Ruddock ignored the claims of some refugees that they did not have any homes to return to as a result of the conflict, and the prospects of those whose homes were in Serbian controlled areas were not at all good. His motivations were simply to repatriate the refugees to Macedonia, and sooner rather than later.

In the \textit{Telegraph}, there was significant focus on the refugee “hunt”, a narrative underpinned by the idea of “compliance and capture”. The \textit{Telegraph} on 12th April described the situation in the following manner: ‘Immigration officers have begun their hunt for illegal Kosovars, with a Department of Immigration interpreter’s residence one of the first places targeted.’\textsuperscript{1098} The home of Sevdail Ramadani, who had worked as an interpreter for DIMA at the East Hills Safe Haven, was raided by immigration officers looking for Kosovars “on the run” in Sydney.\textsuperscript{1099} Earlier, an immigration spokesperson told the \textit{Telegraph}: ‘We’re not going

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\textsuperscript{1095} Scala, ‘I’m being treated like a criminal’, \textit{op. cit.} See also Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{1096} Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, \textit{op. cit.} See also similar comments by Ruddock in ‘Most agree to return home’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 13th April 2000, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{1097} All references to Philip Ruddock in Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{1098} Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, \textit{op. cit.} See also Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{1099} Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, \textit{op. cit.}
to have a Kosovar hunt; they will turn up.” However, according to several media accounts, Ramadani’s experience indicates otherwise. Immigration officials arrived at his Sydney home with a search warrant, searching in wardrobes and under beds throughout the home, including in his 8-year old son’s bedroom. Mr Ramadani informed the *Telegraph* that he was disappointed at being treated with suspicion. A spokesperson (unnamed) for the Australian Albanian Association said the raids had upset quite a few people: ‘They are hunting for families with children who will eventually give themselves up anyway [. ] We don’t know how far the Immigration Department will take this.’ The spokesperson also told the *Telegraph* that the refugees did not deserve to be treated like criminals.

An immigration official emphasised that the Kosovars would be arrested during ‘normal compliance operations’ which had been successful in capturing over 13,000 illegal immigrants in the previous year. Ruddock, addressing the Australian Albanian Association, stated that those still “on the run” would be treated compassionately if they turned themselves in. He continued to resist calls, however, from various community and church groups calling for the Minister to allow the refugees to remain in Australia. The Immigration Minister stated that the raids were ‘standard action given these people are now staying … unlawfully [sic].’

One of the refugees evading immigration officers at this time was 21-year old Artan Ajeti whose story was told by the *Telegraph* and the *Herald*. The refugee was ordered by the Federal Government to leave Australia, despite claims that his home was in Presevo. Ajeti stated in the *Telegraph* that it was his desire to remain in Australia: ‘I have a job, I

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1100 Scala, ‘I’m being treated like a criminal’, *op. cit.*
1101 See Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, *op. cit.* See also Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, *op. cit.*
1102 Spokesperson for the Australian Albanian Association (unnamed), cited in Scala, ‘Kosovar ultimatum’, *op. cit.*
1104 Scala, ‘Refugee gives us his fight’, *op. cit.*
1105 Ruddock, cited in Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, *op. cit.*
1106 See also Clennell, ‘Kosovars “Conned Into Leaving”’, *op. cit.*
1107 The town is occasionally referred to by the media as ‘Presheva’, which is the correct spelling of Presevo as it is pronounced by Kosovar Albanians.
speak English and every day it’s getting better. I am getting better at my job and finding friends." Ajeti’s family (including parents and younger brother and sister) had stayed in Kosovo, he stated, adding he had fled after being forced to fight alongside Serbian forces. He said that, if forced to return home, it was likely that he would have to spend the next twenty years in a Serb prison. Ajeti was unsure about where the Australian government was going to send him: ‘Maybe they are just going to send me into Kosovo and I will be forced to knock on doors.’

Ajeti’s story was shaped by two perspectives in the Telegraph: as a narrative centred on “compliance and capture” and notions of illegality; and, as a human-interest story concerned with the idea of survival. Broadly, these factors signified and supported the authority of the Government to uphold the integrity of the State via punitive and coercive measures. His request for permanent refugee protection in Australia had already been rejected by the Immigration Minister. The Telegraph described how Ajeti had evaded authorities after running away from East Hills Safe Haven, hiding in a bathroom at a friends’ house (unnamed) for over a week. He stated in the Telegraph that he felt the Federal Government was ‘running after us as if we are criminals’. On 14th April 2000, it was reported by the Telegraph that Ajeti had turned himself in to immigration officials at East Hills Safe Haven. He realised there were few options available to him. He was repatriated shortly afterwards.

In July 2000, the Department of Immigration continued its search for Kosovar refugees “on the run”. The Telegraph, however, was not the only newspaper insisting on the idea of “compliance and capture”. The 19-year old male refugee, Akif Lutfiu, had eluded authorities for three months

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1108 A. Ajeti, in M. Scala and A. Ajeti, ‘When home is hell on earth’, The Daily Telegraph, 8th April 2000, p. 22. It is noted here that Ajeti had been working for six months in Australia in the building industry as a gyprocker.
1109 ibid. Ajeti stated here: ‘I am confused and I do not know what to do… I am going back to nothing. I have a house in the city but the problem is, how can I risk going there? I was speaking with my parents two weeks ago and they didn’t ask me how I was. The first thing they said was “don’t come back, please” … [My family] want me to stay as far away from Serb jails as possible… [My family] told me to stay where I am.’
1110 ibid.
1111 See Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, op. cit.
1112 A. Ajeti, cited in Scala, ‘I’m being treated like a criminal’, op. cit.
1113 Scala, ‘Refugee gives up his fight’, op. cit.
in Hobart. The Australian, which had interviewed Lutfiu in April 2000 while hiding from DIMA officers, described the refugee as ‘highly agitated’ and noted that he was used to running from Serbian authorities who had been trying to arrest him for some time back home.\(^{1114}\) On 16th July Lutfiu was finally arrested in the early hours of the morning at a Hobart nightclub. The refugee had fled Kosovo during the 1999 conflict without his parents (who had been deceased for several years).\(^{1115}\) He had been one of the first Kosovars to arrive in Australia in May 1999, residing at the Brighton Safe Haven for six months until being offered a room at the home of the barracks’ bus driver.\(^{1116}\) Shortly after his arrest Lutfiu moved to lodge a claim of racial discrimination against Ruddock with the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commission. The Immigration Minister responded by denying racial discrimination and noted that federal law would override state law on immigration matters.\(^{1117}\) Lutfiu hoped the claim would delay his deportation. However, before the claim was lodged, he was deported on 23rd August, along with 11 other Kosovars being held at Port Hedland detention centre.

The Hobart-based support network, ‘Friends of Akif’, had raised $1300 to assist and provide shelter for Lutfiu the hope of delaying or avoiding his repatriation.\(^{1118}\) A spokesperson for Greens Senator Bob Brown, Steven Chaffer, had spoken to Lutfiu prior to his departure. Chaffer commented on ABC Radio: ‘Akif was very low and very anxious and frightened about going back to nothing because he has nothing to go back to, no family to support him, no job, no money, nothing.’\(^{1119}\) Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon (ALP) had offered to sponsor Lutfiu (as well as another

\(^{1114}\) B. Montgomery, ‘I’m never going back, says fugitive refugee’, The Australian, 12th April 2000, p. 4. See also B. Montgomery, ‘Hunted Kosovar can’t come in from cold’, The Australian, 10th June 2000, p. 5.


\(^{1116}\) Montgomery, ‘I’m never going back, says fugitive refugee’, op. cit.

\(^{1117}\) ‘Attempt to delay man’s deportation’, The Daily Telegraph, 26th July 2000, p. 22.


family) for a permanent visa, which Ruddock had initially agreed to. However, the Immigration Minister was subsequently overruled on the matter by the Prime Minister. As Don Wing, the independent President of Tasmania’s Legislative Council, stated: ‘John Howard vetoed it’. The racial discrimination claim was lodged in November 2000 with Tasmania’s Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Jocelynne Scutt, taking court action against Ruddock on behalf of Lutfiu. The Immigration Minister contested the writ and Lutfiu has not been allowed to return to Australia. As the Herald noted in 2007, Lutfiu was ‘Still homeless and on the run… Akif Lutfiu – or “Our Keith”, as Hobart friends nicknamed him - has shuffled around Europe for seven years.’

2.4 Ruddock allows some Kosovars to remain in Australia
On 29th May 2000, having personally considered individual circumstances, Ruddock announced that 28 Kosovar families (121 people) had been allowed to apply onshore for permanent protection and a further 39 families (170 people) had their temporary stay extended. By the end of June new special long-term temporary visas (‘temporary humanitarian concern’ visas) were created for 150 Kosovars who were undergoing treatment for trauma. The visas provided the refugees with three years’ temporary stay in Australia, allowing them to receive ongoing medical attention. The decision meant that 150 places would be taken away from the total allocation of 12,000 spots available under the humanitarian

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1120 Premier Jim Bacon offered to sponsor the Sopjani family, comprised of two teenage boys and two parents. Mr Sopjani had worked in a paper mill in Tasmania and the family was renting their own home when they were taken into custody on 10th April 2000. See Wade and Clennell, ‘Kosovars On Run As Court Rejects Their Last Chance’, op. cit. See also references to the Sopjani family in A. Clennell, ‘More Kosovars To Go Peacefully’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 13th April 2000, p. 4. See other references to the Sopjani family in Hodge, ‘Push comes to shove for 34 Kosovars’, op. cit., which describes how the Sopjani’s had ‘become local celebrities in Hobart’.
1121 Darby, ‘Frightened man’s dream: to call Australia home’, op. cit.
1122 D. Wing, cited in ibid.
1124 Darby, ‘Frightened man’s dream: to call Australia home’, op. cit.
1126 York, op. cit., p. 97.
category for the coming year. A year beforehand, the RCOA had expressed reservations about ‘pinching’ places from the humanitarian category, advocating the Government instead create an extra reserve of places in ‘emergency situations’ such as Kosovo.

In August 2000, there were 30 Kosovars remaining illegally in Australia. Twelve were deported at this time while 18 others remained in Port Hedland detention centre. They claimed they had no homes to return to. On 31st October, after being ‘appraised of further claims, of an individual character’, Ruddock allowed the Kosovars being held at Port Hedland detention centre to apply for bridging visas which would release them from custody. The Minister announced in February 2001 that, on the basis of new information provided to him, a Kosovar family who had illegally overstayed their Safe Haven Visa would be allowed to apply for permanent residency.

3. Experiences of Return

3.1 Media representations of repatriation: morality and humanitarianism

Concerns over the Kosovar refugees shaped much of the content produced by Australia’s broadcast media throughout 1999. According to the Rehame monitoring agency, out of more than 3 million monitored items on radio and television, Kosovo ranked third in the most talked-about category ahead of the Sydney Olympics, the republic referendum and the Goods and Services Tax (GST). As I have noted, the first Kosovar refugees to return home departed Australia on chartered airplanes on 23rd and 26th July 1999. Refugees residing at the Brighton barracks had been the first to

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1128 RCOA cited in Green, ‘Refugees long to make lucky country their own’, op. cit.
1130 York, op. cit., p. 98.
1131 ibid., p. 101.
1132 J. Este, ‘Melba – Setting the Agenda’, The Australian, 20th December 1999, p. 11. East Timor was first, followed by ‘daylight’ in second. No other details are given on ‘daylight’.
1133 See Ho, op. cit. Here, it is stated that exceptions to this were 26 refugees who had already departed for Kosovo for reasons not stated. These included seven members of the Salihu family who returned to Kosovo in June 1999 after a dispute over the quality of services provided at Singleton Safe Haven (see Chapter 4). See also Marsh, ‘Kosovar
arrive in Australia and were among the first to leave. An emotional farewell was described by the *Telegraph* when 81 Kosovars staying at the Brighton barracks departed for Melbourne airport. The newspaper noted, covering the farewell event held at the Safe Haven, ‘There were tears all round’ with the Tasmanian Premier declaring the Kosovars ‘honorary Tasmanians.’ Media coverage of Brighton Safe Haven throughout the refugees’ stay had been overwhelmingly supportive of the Kosovars. The Brighton refugees were frequently depicted by government officials as friendly, clean and “middle class” people throughout the early stages of Operation Safe Haven. None of the Brighton refugees had caused any major difficulties for the Immigration Minister and their compliance with regard to the quality of barracks accommodation met with positive media coverage on their farewell.

The Brighton Kosovars were consistently depicted in media coverage in a way that reinforced a positive image of the Safe Haven program. The effect of these kinds of representations was to applaud the Federal Government for offering a world of opportunity and freedom to those facing persecution. The reality, however, was that this arrangement remained temporary, a paradoxical scenario that was whitewashed by the heightened emotion of the farewell of the Brighton refugees. The *Telegraph* focussed in particular on the emotional departure of teenage refugee Vedat Bajrami, reportedly an acting student from Pristina. A resident at Brighton barracks, Bajrami stated that he had welcomed the chance to come to Australia, and did not want to return to Kosovo.

Bajrami’s friend, Bashkim Zeqiri (who had been interviewed by the media many times) commented similarly: ‘If I stayed here it would be great, it would be my dream’.

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1135 Trute and Kamper, ‘Kosovars preparing to go home, *op. cit.*
1136 B. Zeqiri, cited in *ibid.*
The Kosovars’ departure generated some charitable efforts by the Australian community. In August 1999, the *Telegraph* reported that the Southern Cross Quilters had organised the donation of 3000 quilts to the Kosovar refugees remaining in Australia. The donation was part of the organisation’s ‘Kosovo Quilt Drive’ that I have mentioned previously. The drive had the aim of providing every Kosovar refugee with a handmade quilt to take home. Nevertheless and despite some instances of charity and goodwill, many Kosovars who returned home after October 1999 were left ‘stranded in […] miserable conditions without any material assistance from Australia. They were not even put in touch with aid agencies able and willing to help.’ As the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) notes, television news bulletins showed the returning refugees with all their possessions in plastic bags being left at their homes with no means to repair them. They were without food or money and those with Australian dollars were reportedly unable to exchange them.

Analysis of media coverage of the repatriations in April 2000 indicates varied use of moral and humanitarian sentiment in each of the newspapers concerned. There were at least 98 references and descriptors urging empathy for the refugees in the *Telegraph*, while in the *Herald* and *Australian* there were at least 152 and 181 respectively. There were only three notions related to humanitarianism in the *Telegraph*, while there were 44 in the *Herald* and six in *The Australian*. Descriptions of the

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1141 The category “humanitarian” included references to notions of humanitarian obligation, humanitarian aid or programs and human rights concerns. For the *Herald*, 19 “humanitarian” references were in J. Dunn, ‘UN Criticism Should Not Be Misunderstood’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st April 2000, p. 49. This piece was not explicitly about the Kosovar refugees, though it does mention the Kosovo conflict and is a more so a general commentary on the Howard Government’s increasing reluctance to take
Kosovars as “children” or “babies” featured much less in comparison to coverage in the month prior to the arrival of evacuees at Sydney airport a year before. This paralleled a broader decline in media empathy for the refugees in recent months.\footnote{1142} Images of children can be viewed as part of an attempt by the media to persuade the public of the moral motivations of a particular political cause (such as during the evacuations and arrival at Sydney airport). This kind of emotive content in news reports has the ideological effect of extinguishing the doubts of disbelievers and appropriating dissenting views into the dominant political order.\footnote{1143} Unlike coverage of the evacuation, references to children or babies numbered only two in the \emph{Telegraph}, eight in the \emph{Herald} and 13 in \emph{The Australian}. The \emph{Telegraph} was by far least supportive of the idea that the refugees should be able to remain in Australia on grounds of “compassion” or for moral reasons.

Analysis of earlier media coverage of the Kosovar refugee crisis (see Chapters 2 and 3) revealed that moral or humanitarian sentiments were occasionally (though not always) drawn on to supplement “national values” such as “mateship”. Where humanitarian sentiments were referred to, it was often in juxtaposition to the kinds of charity being offered by Australians to the Kosovars, rather than in relation to “national values”. The effect was to signify the moral standing of the Australian community. In the \emph{Herald}, there was only one reference to notions of “mateship/equality/fair go”,\footnote{1144} while there were 40 terms describing “charity” by the Australian government and community to the benefit of the Kosovars.\footnote{1145} There were at least 99 references to “charity” in the

\footnote{1142} ‘human rights standards and their international responsibilities seriously’. Even so, the frequency of references to “humanitarian” concepts in the \emph{Herald} more than doubled those drawn on by both the \emph{Australian} and \emph{Telegraph} which tended to invoke more emotive concepts (such as ‘compassion’).

\footnote{1143} This category included all references to “children, babies or childbirth”.

\footnote{1144} In this instance the notion of “fairness” was used in the context of being an important trait underpinning the Immigration Minister’s assessment of those refugees who had applied to stay in Australia and amidst debate about recent changes to Immigration policy. See Clennell, ‘Opening Doors’, \emph{op. cit.}

\footnote{1145} “Acts of charity” included any actions, acts, offerings, gifts, donations or monies offered to the Kosovars by the Australian government and/or community. Examples are flights, transport, visits by the Immigration Minister to the Safe Havens, accommodation, facilities used by the Kosovars and opportunities offered to them.
While there were no terms explicitly related to “mateship/equality/fair go”. In The Australian, there were at least 69 references to “charity” while there was no explicit mention of concepts related to “mateship/equality/fair go”. The relatively non-existent use of “national values” in the repatriation coverage is explained by the ways in which media organisations consistently attempt to position news narratives in relation to popular national causes. In this case, it is plausible to suggest that media coverage had the effect of watering down the significance of the Kosovar refugee plight as a “national” interest.

Moral sentiment was further implicated by cultural commentary that emerged in coverage of the repatriations in April 2000. Gender, unlike the Singleton incident, was not a significant concern in this coverage. The refugees were viewed as “chauvinist/coming from a male-dominated culture” on one occasion in the Herald though none of these descriptors were used by the Telegraph or Australian.\(^{1146}\) In the Herald, the refugees were identified as “family people” or referred to by their family titles on 56 occasions.\(^{1147}\) The Telegraph used “family” descriptors on 23 occasions, while these kinds of terms numbered 39 in The Australian. There was no explicit mention in the Telegraph or the Herald of the notion that the Kosovars were “dissimilar, alien or Other”.\(^{1148}\) There were, however, three descriptions of the Kosovars in this light in The Australian.\(^{1149}\) The Kosovars were not referred to as “Europeans” in a more general sense in any of the newspapers, which is interesting considering the amount of attention given by the media to this fact during the evacuation and arrival periods.

\(^{1146}\) See S. Waldon, ‘We Sent Them Back To This’, Sun-Herald, 16\(^{th}\) April 2000, p. 45. Here, the male head of a Kosovar refugee family is described as the ‘patriarch’.

\(^{1147}\) This includes descriptions of the refugees in their family roles, as family units or as “uncle/aunt”, “brother/sister”, “sibling”, “son/daughter”, “niece/nephew”, “mother/father”, “grandparent” and the like.

\(^{1148}\) The category “dissimilar, alien or Other” includes any references to tensions existing between Australian culture or values and those of the Kosovars (including religious or ethnic differences).

\(^{1149}\) An explicit reference to the ‘ethnicity’ of the Kosovars is noted in Hodge, ‘Kosovars fly out leaving defiant 21’, op. cit. References are also made to the notions ‘different culture’ and ‘Muslim’ in R. Curtis, ‘Home free among the ruins’, The Australian, 13\(^{th}\) April 2000, p. 13.
Those refugees who had departed Australia on 16th April 2000 were flown to Skopje from where they would be bussed to Pristina and then taken to other towns and villages by the UN. Senator Bartlett described how those who were repatriated at this time were under ‘enormous coercive pressure’ to leave Australia.\(^{1150}\) This was affirmed by refugee Veli Dodi (described as an economist) who had resisted his removal from Australia. Dodi, in a manner similar to other refugees quoted by the *Telegraph*, stated that he did not feel he had been forced to return home. However, he went on: ‘There was a sort of pressure[.] We were in detention for a week.’\(^{1151}\) Dodi added: ‘The people supported us in every way possible. Only the immigration minister was against us.’\(^{1152}\)

Several other refugees informed the *Telegraph* that their homes had been destroyed or damaged, and they therefore had nowhere to live. Samie Thaqi described by the *Telegraph* as a 37-year old housewife, had been removed from Australia along with her five children. She commented that it would be up to international agencies to decide where her family would live. Their home had been destroyed.\(^{1153}\) Thaqi was asked by the *Telegraph* if she felt resentment towards Australians for the way the refugees had been treated, to which she replied: ‘Not against Australians but against the Australian Government. The Australian people were very good and very supportive.’\(^{1154}\)

3.2 The situation faced by returnees in early 2000
In January 2000 the UNHCR’s Paul Kessler described the situation on the Serbia-Kosovo border as ‘extremely tense’. He cited multiple incidences of murder, arson and violent clashes between Serbs, Albanians and Slavs in recent weeks.\(^{1155}\) He stated that the ‘time is not yet right for large-scale return of non-Albanian refugees… security cannot be guaranteed.’\(^{1156}\) The

\(^{1151}\) V. Dodi, cited in ‘Refugees say thanks’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18th April 2000, p. 3.
\(^{1152}\) Dodi, cited in *ibid*.
\(^{1153}\) Gray, ‘Refugees arrive home in Kosovo’, *op. cit*.
\(^{1154}\) S. Thaqi, cited in *ibid*.
\(^{1156}\) Kessler, cited in *ibid*. 265
UNHCR had also reported that the influx of returnees to Kosovo was putting pressure on households who were already trying to make room for returning family members and as aid agencies attempted to match growing housing demands with under-resourced rebuilding programs. More than 60,000 homes had been destroyed in the war and the UN was hoping to have completed the construction or rebuilding of 30,000 homes by the end of the year.\textsuperscript{1157} UNHCR spokesperson Paula Ghedini urged continued caution and restraint by the international community. She then added: ‘We understand the political imperative of sending [refugees] back. We’re not asking countries to hold off forever just to give us warning and some time to deal with the problems.’\textsuperscript{1158} Ghedini further described how ethnic tensions were beginning to escalate in the province and that increasing numbers of returnees would contribute significant instability to the situation.\textsuperscript{1159} Shopkeepers complained of being forced to pay protection money to various KLA factions and there was a general air of violence and hostility despite the presence of NATO and a new local civilian police service (the Kosovo Protection Corps).\textsuperscript{1160}

As Taylor notes, the majority of those Kosovars who were reluctant to return home even after the European winter was over fell within the ‘at risk’ category outlined in the UN refugee Convention. The security situation remained volatile and the province still did not have a functioning police force, court system or prison system.\textsuperscript{1161} Civil infrastructure, including telephone, postal and banking services remained inadequate, and there remained a serious shortage of housing. After a decade of economic underdevelopment, a virtually non-existing public service, and with 65-per cent of people unemployed, Kosovo was ‘hardly able to look after its residents, let alone an inrush of half-starved newcomers.’\textsuperscript{1162} In March

\textsuperscript{1157} S. Mann, ‘Almost Home, And Devoid Of Hope’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} April 2000, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{1158} P. Ghedini, cited in \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{1159} Ghedini, cited in \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{1160} \textit{ibid}. The article says that there were 10 murders, 16 attempted murders and 26 arson attacks in the province in the last week.
\textsuperscript{1161} Taylor, ‘Protection or Prevention? A Close Look at the Temporary Safe Haven Visa Class’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{1162} D.J. Whittaker, \textit{Asylum Seekers in the Contemporary World}, Routledge, Milton Park, 2006, p. 88.
2000, the ALP’s Dick Adams (Member for Lyons) described to the House of Representatives how he had ‘made inquiries through the postal systems and the United Nations and I have found that letters go to Belgrade and no further. There is no mail or contact system set up in Kosovo.’\^{1163} He stated that many refugees were still living in tents and temporary accommodation at this time and that many ordinary services simply did not exist. As Taylor comments, for up to a year after the war, few Kosovars had access to legitimate sources of income, and struggled to feed themselves and their families. By mid-April 2000, Bernard Kouchner (head of UNMIK) ‘pleaded for governments to stem the flow [of returning refugees] for fear that Kosovo’s brittle peace and fledgling post-war infrastructure could crumble.’\^{1164} Ruddock responded by speculating that there was an ‘expectation’ that Kosovo refugees returning home ‘are going to have homes rebuilt for them, hot and cold water and provisions for services’, which were not even available in many other, non-European countries.\^{1165} The Immigration Minister’s position was in clear contrast to his earlier claims about Australia’s humanitarian record and its reputation as the most generous country in the world.\^{1166}

### 3.3 Erik Lloga’s experience in Kosovo

Those Kosovar refugees who returned home on 16\textsuperscript{th} April 2000 were accompanied by Lloga whose experience was discussed in the Federal Senate. On Melbourne’s 744 ABC radio Lloga had described how he sat on the plane with the refugees to Skopje. He noted that there were no Australian immigration officials aboard the flight, nor any on the ground to

\^{1163} This is confirmed by the Member for Lyons (Tasmania), Dick Adams in ‘Migration Legislation Amendment Bill; Second Reading’, \textit{House of Representatives: Official Hansard}, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 6\textsuperscript{th} March 2000, p. 14002.

\^{1164} Mann, ‘Doors Slam On Kosovars’, \textit{op. cit.} See also Denney, \textit{op. cit.}, where Erik Lloga describes ‘chronic electricity shortages’ and a shortage of housing across Kosovo.

\^{1165} G. Henderson, ‘Hard Sell For PM’s Softer Side’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 18\textsuperscript{th} April 2000, p. 19.

assist the Kosovars.\footnote{1167} Lloga stated that he had personally taken refugees to police stations, even feeding some with his own money because the Australian government had not given them any.\footnote{1168} It was noted that those refugees who had worked and earned money in Australia were unable to exchange any Australian currency in Pristina. Lloga further described how he had attempted to take some of the refugees to aid agencies in Kosovo who had not even been advised of their arrival.\footnote{1169}

Robert Manne, referring to an interview with Lloga (speaking from Pristina) on ABC Radio, described how the Federal Government ‘had not supplied [the refugees] with the addresses of agencies to which they might turn. It made no arrangements for their accommodation. It had not even assured that on arrival the Australian Kosovars would have food to eat.’\footnote{1170} Manne said that even ‘the cautious Lloga’ who had worked closely with DIMA throughout Operation Safe Haven, ‘could not disagree’ with comments that the Australian government had ‘washed’ its hands of the Kosovars.\footnote{1171} Following Lloga’s interview the Immigration Minister downplayed Lloga’s concerns. The presenter, Terry Laidler, asked Ruddock if he thought the Australian people would be ‘fuming’ about the “abandonment” of the refugees. The Immigration Minister replied that Laidler should not look at the situation from such a ‘Eurocentric’ perspective.\footnote{1172} Manne described how immediately afterwards, ‘the switchboard was alight’ with angry callers: ‘Every caller was ashamed. Unlike the minister, none appeared to find it difficult to distinguish between common decency and the Eurocentric point of view.’\footnote{1173} According to the Rehame media monitoring service, in the week after

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1168] ibid.
\item[1169] As described in M. Danby, ‘Refugees: Kosovo’, House of Representatives: Official Hansard, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 29th May 2000, p. 16433. See also p. 16432, where Danby says: ‘These people were not even allowed to change their money – the pathetic $50 that they had managed to earn working in their local communities [in Australia]. No bank in Pristina changes Australian money. It is monopoly money in Pristina. So they had no money even of their own to buy food or to get accommodation.’
\item[1170] Manne, ‘Nowhere To Run Or Hide’, op. cit.
\item[1171] ibid.
\item[1172] Ruddock, as cited in ibid.
\item[1173] ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Lloga’s radio interviews there was a ‘massive swing’ in caller opinion, indicating that many Australians had reconsidered their support for the Federal Government’s stance on the recent repatriations.\textsuperscript{1174} Support for Ruddock’s decision to return the refugees fell from 39 to four per cent, with many callers stating they felt “ashamed” and “embarrassed”.\textsuperscript{1175} The majority of those who had called radio talkback programs after the Kosovars had left ‘felt they should never have been sent back.’\textsuperscript{1176}

There was a significant breakdown in communication between the Australian government and the UNHCR that added a sense of confusion and chaos to the repatriations. As Senator Danby stated, those refugees who wanted to return to Australia were given no indication by the Government as to the availability of Australian immigration officials in Kosovo, nor when or how to contact them in order to apply for visas.\textsuperscript{1177} Danby noted how the ABC’s 7.30 Report had raised significant questions about the safety of Kosovars returning to Serbian-controlled areas. He further suggested that the repatriations were somewhat paradoxical, citing a warning issued by DFAT that Kosovo was too dangerous for Australians travelling in the region. 60 Minutes’ reporter Richard Carleton had also returned with some of the refugees to their homes in Presevo (which was under the control of Serbia). He described how the town was literally occupied by Yugoslav tanks. Senator Danby noted how the refugees ‘were crying with [Richard Carleton], wishing that they could return. We just dumped them there. We just put them on a plane to Skopje and did not give them any money or food or even alert the international aid agencies that they were coming.’\textsuperscript{1178}

\textsuperscript{1174} ‘No refuge for Ruddock – The Rehame Report’, \textit{The Australian}, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 2000.\textsuperscript{1175} \textit{ibid.}\textsuperscript{1176} \textit{ibid.} The figures cited here show that 62 per cent of male callers and 88 per cent of female callers were against the repatriations in the week after Lloga’s radio interviews.\textsuperscript{1177} M. Danby, ‘Refugees: Kosovo’, \textit{House of Representatives: Official Hansard}, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 29\textsuperscript{th} May 2000, p. 16433.\textsuperscript{1178} \textit{ibid.}
Conclusion

The Australian government’s response to the issue of repatriation was cautious and politically conservative. Despite government claims to the contrary it ignored the human rights of the Kosovar refugees as otherwise guaranteed by international conventions. The Federal Government retained the legal right to return the Kosovars to their homeland under the powers it had obtained under the Safe Haven legislation. The Immigration Minister was, as noted by the UNHCR, able to conduct an induced return of the refugees without being subject to external checks on his powers. The Federal Government’s response to the issue of repatriation was shaped by an element of coercion and much more punitive towards the refugees in comparison to most other countries.

The experiences of many of those refugees who returned to Kosovo in the year after the war reflects an unwillingness by the Federal Government to continue to promote their human rights. The Government’s response was consistent with both statements it had made during the early stages of Operation Safe Haven and the rationale behind the legal restrictions imposed on the Kosovars under the Safe Haven program. Under the legislation, the refugees were required to return when the government said so. It further provided a means by which the Immigration Minister maintained rigid control over all aspects of the lives of Kosovar refugees offered temporary safe haven in Australia. The Government’s response was, however, inconsistent with sentiments expressed earlier by the Prime Minister during the arrival ceremony at Sydney airport, when the refugees were “welcomed” with “open arms” (at least in front of the media). As a contributor to the Herald noted, following the repatriations that took place after the High Court case: ‘I didn’t see John Howard at the airport, making speeches and handing out soft toys to the children. He seemed so interested in their welfare just a few months ago.’

Media coverage predominantly supported the Federal Government’s response. There remained, for the most part, a close and complementary relationship between the objectives of the Federal Government and media representations of the Kosovars during the High Court case. The *Telegraph* and *Herald* were very critical of those refugees that wanted to remain in Australia, although *The Australian* largely objected to the Government’s treatment of the Kosovars. A significant portion of media coverage represented those refugees involved in the High Court challenge as unworthy of Australia’s ongoing protection. The *Telegraph*, in particular, was critical of those refugees, depicting them as uncompliant, “illegals” and deviant criminals. The overwhelming effect of the media’s portrayal was to reproduce an image of the Kosovars as undeserving of the charity that had been offered to them by the Australian community. The media most frequently supported the Federal Government’s repatriation program while demonising those Kosovar refugees who refused to leave Australia voluntarily. In my next chapter, I elaborate the role of Australian media in influencing public perceptions of the Kosovo war and in representing Serbs as the “enemy”.
Chapter 6: The Kosovo War and Australia’s Serbian Communities

Introduction
In this thesis it has been shown how ethnic Albanian Kosovar refugees were predominantly constructed by the Australian media as worthy of humanitarian assistance. That is, until the refugees raised questions about the quality of the Safe Haven program. My aim in this chapter is to balance this scenario by taking time and space to explore media representations of Serbian communities living in Australia during the Kosovo refugee crisis in March and April 1999. Many Serbian Australians reacted with disdain toward the Australian government’s decision to support the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia. Serbs in Yugoslavia were commonly depicted in media coverage as the “enemy”, and were subsequently tarnished with a negative stigma in the Australian media. This chapter explores the effects of these representations on Serbian Australians. It investigates how the media was useful for the Howard Government by supporting its nationalist platform during the Kosovo war.

This chapter is set out in two parts. First, it examines the way the Australian media demonised Serbs alongside NATO’s military efforts to subdue the Yugoslav regime led by President Slobodan Milosevic. The discussion investigates the representation of “East/West” divides in media coverage and the notion that there were opposing cultural and political boundaries between NATO-allied countries (such as Australia) and Yugoslavia. The second section of the chapter investigates the mobilisation of binaries by the media who referred to “good/bad” ethnic Serbs and how this approach played out alongside notions of “loyalty/disloyalty” within Australia during the Kosovo war. This section explores protests conducted by Serbian communities in Australia against the NATO campaign and media representations of these demonstrations. The media analysis in this chapter is based on an examination of a total of 328 newspaper articles published in the period 1st March to 30th April 1999. These articles numbered 131 in the Telegraph, 88 in the Australian and 104 in the Herald
and my analysis incorporates news items, editorials and opinion columns. My investigation is primarily concerned with issues affecting Serbian Australian communities during the first month of the NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia which began on 24th March.

1. The Yugoslav Foe

1.1 Background: the Serbian military campaign

The Australian’s foreign editor, Greg Sheridan, described Serbia as ‘an impoverished dictatorship of 8 million people.’ The population of Serbia in 1999 was actually closer to 7.5 million people. Serbia’s GDP was $US17.63 billion and its GDP growth had declined rapidly in the previous two years to -11 per cent. By contrast, the global average rate of GDP growth was 3.19 per cent and Serbia was facing significant economic strain. There were approximately 100,000 persons claiming Serbian ancestry living in Australia at the time of the NATO campaign in Kosovo. Australia had become a major destination for migrants from Yugoslavia in the post-war period. It has been estimated that there were around 100,000 dual Yugoslav-Australian citizens living in Australia by

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1180 This includes the Sunday Telegraph, Daily Telegraph (morning and afternoon editions), The Australian, Weekend Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald and Sun-Herald (Sydney). All articles were retrieved from Factiva, except afternoon editions of the Telegraph, which were retrieved via microfiche. Duplicates in both editions of the Telegraph were ignored.

1181 The media analysis incorporated news articles specifically focused on protests conducted by members of the Serbian community in Australia. It further analyses those newspaper articles concerned about Kosovar Albanian refugees and the NATO campaign. The content analysis excluded most articles specifically concerned about Australian aid workers Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace, who were arrested during this period by Serbian authorities on suspicion of espionage. It did, however, include articles concerned about the aid workers where the emphasis was also on the NATO campaign, Yugoslav Serbs, Australian Serbs and Kosovar Albanian refugees.


2002 which included many descendants of Yugoslav immigrants who identified themselves as Serbs. There were, moreover, around 5000 Australian dual citizens in Yugoslavia at the time of the Kosovo war.

Australians had witnessed ongoing conflict in the former Yugoslavia presented in the media throughout the decade prior to the Kosovo war. Nicholas Procter notes, in *Serbian Australians in the Shadow of the Balkan War*, how ‘Television and newspaper images of the conflict [between 1991 and 1996] sent shock waves through the world and these have included the most horrific scenes of carnage, incarceration and massacre.’ News reports about the horrors of “ethnic cleansing” in the Balkans were commonplace throughout coverage of the Bosnian war. The names of Serbian leaders in Bosnia - such as President Radovan Karadzic and military commander Ratko Mladic - and in Serbia-proper became synonymous with the notion of war crimes. Procter’s ethnographic study about the effects of the war on Serbian Australians notes how they were ‘a group which was, and felt itself to have been, stigmatised internationally.’

The “shadow” of these images, Procter says, has been ‘global in outreach’ and has had a very real impact on migrants from the former Yugoslavia now living in many parts of the world. A commonality for Australian Serbs, Procter found, was the sense that the world resented them for being the instigators of the Balkan wars of the 1990s. He argues that: ‘what was significant in the Balkan war experience among Serbs around

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1188 ibid., p. 2. It is noted here that the War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague deemed Karadzic and Mladic personally responsible for the execution of up to 8000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys as they attempted to escape from Srebenica in 1995. Note that Bosnian Serbs were part of the newly formed Republika Srpska, established as a break-away republic in response to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs received military support from Yugoslavia during the Bosnian conflict.
1189 ibid.
1190 ibid.
1191 ibid.
the world was that they were the group seen by most Western nations and commentators as the main perpetrator of the conflict.\textsuperscript{1191}

Tension had been escalating for several years between the Yugoslav government and the KLA in Kosovo. Serbian forces were dispatched to Kosovo to subdue violent resistance by the KLA in mid-March 1999. The “unofficially” elected Kosovar Albanian leader, Dr Ibrahim Rugova, was taken into custody by Serbian police shortly afterwards - despite not being affiliated with the KLA. The political movement led by Rugova had sought an independent State for Kosovo via diplomacy and opposed the use of violence by the KLA.

The Yugoslav military campaign was conducted on two fronts – one fought against the KLA and the other against NATO air strikes. Various mercenary units, including ‘Chetniks’ and ‘Tigers’, were also employed by the Yugoslav government to accompany the Serbian army. The main objective of the militias was to force ethnic Albanian civilians to leave Kosovo by “clearing” villages, towns and city sectors in which ethnic Albanians had resided. Commentators have stated that the purpose of the panic created by the non-military units was twofold: to secure Kosovo politically by removing or downsizing the Albanian majority; and, to destabilise the region forcing NATO-allied countries to relocate refugees.\textsuperscript{1192}

As the \textit{Telegraph} described the Yugoslav campaign on 1\textsuperscript{st} April 1999: ‘European leaders cited accounts – some documented, some not – of “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo, of burned villages, murders of civil rights and political leaders, internment of fighting-age men and systematic destruction of ethnic archives.’\textsuperscript{1193} It was commonly reported by much of the Australian news media that intellectuals and journalists were being ‘systematically killed off’.\textsuperscript{1194} The situation was typically represented by

\textsuperscript{1191} \textit{ibid.}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{1192} See M. Cameron and M. Kilian, ‘NATO allies committed to toppling Milosevic’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 29 (continued from p. 28). Here, an American Pentagon spokesperson, Kenneth Bacon, said that Milosevic had created a crisis that had destabilised surrounding countries. See also G. Cook, ‘Clinton fears widening conflict’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 13\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 23. Here, Bill Clinton makes the comment that NATO was compelled to take action before the conflict ‘destabilises all of Europe’.
\textsuperscript{1193} Elgood, ‘Albanians identities erased’, op. cit., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{1194} \textit{ibid.}
pro-NATO countries as the worst humanitarian disaster since the ‘Nazi Holocaust’. It had generated widespread panic in which 850,000 Kosovar Albanians fled (or were forced to flee) to neighbouring countries as refugees. The media’s representation of these issues can be viewed in relation to the notion that, in the news media: ‘Symbolic contests are waged with metaphors, catch phrases, and other symbolic devices that mutually support an interpretive package for making sense of an ongoing stream of events as they relate to a particular issues.’ Overwhelmingly, coverage of the NATO intervention in The Australian, Herald and Telegraph depicted the war as a conflict between West and East, democracy and communist Yugoslavia, and morality and evil. The prominence of these issues fluctuated throughout coverage of the conflict. However, they remained the dominant subtext to the media’s representation of the refugee crisis and the NATO campaign.

On 20th March 1999, the Australian government authorised the departure of all Australian staff and their dependants from Yugoslavia. Foreign Affairs Minister Downer stated that no Australian Defence Force (ADF) units would be involved, though a small number of ADF personnel on exchange with British and American units in the region ‘could be deployed with their units’. He said: ‘These attacks by NATO on Yugoslavia are, of course, deeply regrettable, but the Australian government supports the NATO air strikes against military targets in Yugoslavia. We do regret that this action has become necessary… The international community cannot simply stand by and watch as President Milosevic’s forces continue to perpetrate the sort of human rights abuses that have recently been perpetrated in Kosovo. It is an unreasonable proposition to expect NATO leaders to sit on their hands in that situation

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1195 ibid.
1196 ibid. Various sources state that between 840,000 and 850,000 refugees fled Kosovo at this time although the exact figure varies.
1199 ibid.
and do nothing.’¹²⁰⁰ Downer emphasised the point, though, that ‘our argument here is an argument with President Milosevic, with his government and with the instrument of his government, his armed forces. It is not an argument with the Serbian people as a whole. The tragic situation rests squarely with President Milosevic himself.’¹²⁰¹ The main contribution made by the Australian government to the war effort was in the form of money offered to Australian and International Red Cross, CARE Australia, World Vision Australia and other aid agencies. However and as I have shown, by early April, the Australian government had complied with the UNHCR’s request to evacuate refugees from the region.

This chapter explores and evaluates the effects of media representation of the Kosovo war on Australia’s Serbian communities. It will also critically assess their reactions to the NATO air strikes. I have recognised ethnographic factors when attempting to rationalise the issues that emerged in media coverage. Procter notes that: ‘For many Serbian Australians there is a symbolic past that lives very much in their present situation. This past can be traced to recent and distant events in the Balkans that are memorialised through a variety of cultural and religious means.’¹²⁰² While the historical links between Serbs and the geographical region of Kosovo remain contested, the historical connections emphasised by many Serbs in relation to their homeland were crucial to shaping their reactions to the NATO campaign. Many Serbs view Kosovo as the “birthplace” of Serbian nationalism, following their military defeat near Pristina by the Ottoman Turks in the 14th century. The defeat has remained central to the national identity of many Serbs. This was particularly so during the period in which Slobodan Milosevic was Yugoslav President. His rise to power is often viewed as directly related to his ability to promote the tragic plight of Serbs as a means of generating national unity.¹²⁰³

¹²⁰¹ ibid., p. 4424.
¹²⁰³ See Kuhle and Lausten, op. cit., p. 28. See also p. 39.
For Serbs living in Australia, the tragic events in Serbia’s history ‘may be seen as elements that transcend nations and communities where people live.’ They have often worked to reinvigorate symbolic traditions that remain central to the way many Serbs imagine their cultural identity, particularly in diaspora communities whose sense of homeland nationalism sometimes reflects a strong sense of nostalgia. The radicalisation of Balkan ethnic nationalism in the 1990s can be rationalised ‘as an attempt to maintain or to recreate a sense of identity and community in the face of the threat of cultural assimilation or annihilation.’ The resurgence in Serbian nationalism around the world in the 1990s can be understood as a consequence of decades of political disintegration between the various republics of the former Yugoslavia. It is related to how these countries – Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia - failed to overcome unequal economic development within the Yugoslav Federation.

1.2 Personalising the war: Slobodan Milosevic and Arkan’s Tigers
Two days before the NATO air strikes began, the Telegraph described how ‘Armed Serbs wearing black masks and white jumpsuits drove thousands of ethnic Albanians from their homes.’ Several weeks later, one headline depicted how ‘The last village falls to the men in masks.’ The media consistently depicted a scenario in which various militia groups, including ‘Arkan’s Tigers’, had been hired as mercenaries by the

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1205 ibid.
1208 Sly, op. cit.
1209 More detail is given about ‘Arkan’ (also known as Zeljko Raznjatovic) in G. Kitney, ‘How The West Is Losing: Milosevic Sacks Another Witness’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 5th April 1999, p. 6. Raznjatovic was listed as wanted at this time by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague for the actions of his ‘private army’, the
Yugoslav regime to conduct ‘summary executions’ and ‘purge’
ethnic Albanians. The role of the militias, according to many media
reports, was to systematically “flush out” and brutally execute young
Albanian men of fighting age in various rural villages and towns. Armed units were, the Telegraph wrote, ‘preying on ethnic Albanians’ in a
campaign of ‘genocide’. In one headline The Australian depicted the
tactics of Arkan’s Tigers as: ‘Death stalks dispossessed’. These ‘men
with masks’ carried knives, according to some of the refugees, wore the
symbol for ‘Arkan’s Tigers on their arms’ and conducted their roles with
‘terrifying consistency’.

Repeated reference to the “men in masks” was a potent use of
imagery. It presented Australian news consumers with clear indication of
the barbarity of Serbs. The notion of concealment signified the predatory
nature of these armed units as they carried out atrocities without moral
restraint. Such an image was a purposeful manipulation of the power of
visual imagery and metaphor, establishing a clear symbolic division
between the “evil” disposition of Serbs and the righteousness of NATO’s
allies. This sentiment is captured in one story that depicted the ‘most evil
war crimes’ in which ‘a Serb in a ski mask picked [a] tall, lovely girl from
the masses, shoved her into a dark garage and, along with three other
masked men, inflicted a final humiliation.

By early April, the militias began to move into Pristina alongside
Serbian police. They were reportedly using tactics of fear and panic to
expel the entire ethnic Albanian population of the capital which was home
to around 350,000 people. Media reports discussed how many ethnic Albanians were forced at gunpoint to leave their city apartments and board trains departing for the Macedonian border. Pristina’s Albanians were often described as being ‘herded’ *en masse* to the train station as if they had been livestock. The *Telegraph* noted how Serbian soldiers knocked on the doors of ethnic Albanians in the capital, informing residents: ‘You have 15 minutes to leave.’ One headline in *The Australian* described the arrival of Serbian police at the homes of ethnic Albanians living in Pristina as ‘Civilisation’s death knock’. The capital had virtually been “emptied” of its ethnic Albanian population within the first week April. Many of those expelled were urban, middle-class professionals, with some reports indicating that their higher level of education was a major catalyst for their expulsion.

Those who arrived at the Macedonian border faced checkpoint guards who had been instructed to prevent refugees from entering the country by the Macedonian government. (I have discussed media coverage of the situation facing refugees in “no man’s land” between the Macedonian and Kosovo borders in Chapter 2). As the *Telegraph* described it: ‘To make it harder, Serb guards warned them not to step outside the [train] tracks where the walking was easier. The edges were mined, they said grinning.’ It was commonly reported that Serb units had looted the personal belongings of refugees *en route* to the Macedonian border, that ‘Serb thugs’ had ‘seized’ documents and valuables, ‘leaving

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1217 See ‘No one dreamed Pristina would be like this’, *op. cit.* See population figure cited in B. Demick, ‘Serbs make a bid for capital prize’, *Daily Telegraph*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999, p. 28.
1221 See descriptions of the refugees from Pristina as ‘middle class’ in Stevens and Farrell, *op. cit.* See also S. Mann, ‘Bordering On Despair’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1999, p. 27. Here, one of the refugees says that Serbs ‘are targeting our best people, our doctors, our lawyers, our professors.’
1222 Jahn and Mouland, *op. cit.* See also references to landmines being installed by Serbian troops at the Macedonian border in Hillman and Jahn, *op. cit.* See also discussion about landmines being planted near the Albania-Kosovo border by Serbian troops, in G. Jahn, ‘NATO steps up attacks on 25<sup>th</sup> day’, *Daily Telegraph*, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999, p. 18.
the victims with only the clothes they stood up in.\textsuperscript{1223} There were reports of Serbian forces taking advantage of the refugee column making its way along the road to the Macedonian border. Serbian troops blocked the road, one report stated, and only ‘For a price, the road was opened’.\textsuperscript{1224}

The image of Serbian military and militia units intimidating “innocent” Kosovar Albanians was prominent, marking a point of departure between the morals and values of media consumers in pro-NATO countries and Serbs. There were several instances in which newspaper reports cited Serbian officers intimidating new mothers, who had given birth during the forced exodus, by saying: ‘Name the baby NATO’.\textsuperscript{1225} Others described how Serbian soldiers had ‘mocked’ refugees in Pristina. They told them ‘to enjoy their “free ride to Macedonia” and that the trip was a “gift from the [Serbian] Government” [sic].\textsuperscript{1226}

Media reports pointed out that such tactics were designed to force the Albanian population of Kosovo to ‘flee’ the province by generating panic, fear and terror.\textsuperscript{1227} There was much coverage in the first month of the NATO campaign concerning Serbian police who were reportedly using torture. Some victims had testified in news reports that Albanians were being branded with ‘lumps of red-hot iron on their bare skin. The iron was shaped like a Serbian cross with four Cyrillic letters S.’\textsuperscript{1228} The symbol stood for ‘Only Unity Saves The Serbs.’\textsuperscript{1229} This kind of coverage significantly developed a personalisation of the ‘atrocities’ conducted by Serb units in the Australian media.\textsuperscript{1230} The use of ‘Serbian commando assault’ units by the Yugoslav regime to coerce the Albanian population into leaving Kosovo was often denied by Slobodan Milosevic and other

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item\textsuperscript{1223} ‘Milosevic launch pad emptied out’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 12\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 22. See also descriptions of looting in Stevens, ‘Civilisation’s death knock’, \textit{op. cit}. See further descriptions of looting and destruction of documents by Serbian police in S. Mann, ‘No More Tears Left On March Of Misery’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} April 1999, p. 7.
\item\textsuperscript{1224} Stevens, ‘EXODUS – on the Macedonian border’, \textit{op. cit}.
\item\textsuperscript{1225} ibid.\textsuperscript{1224}
\item\textsuperscript{1226} ‘Journey of The Dispossessed: 25,000 Herded Into Trains And Sent Packing’, \textit{op. cit}., p. 1.
\item\textsuperscript{1227} Montgomery, ‘Village of Death – Killers Seek Out All Young Men’, \textit{op. cit}.
\item\textsuperscript{1228} ibid.\textsuperscript{1225} A similar interpretation of the four-‘S’ symbol (‘Samo Sloga Srbima Spasava’) is also offered in Procter, \textit{op. cit}., p. 98.
\item\textsuperscript{1229} Montgomery, ‘Village of Death – Killers Seek Out All Young Men’, \textit{op. cit}.
\item\textsuperscript{1230}\textsuperscript{ibid.}, p. 98.
\end{thebibliography}
The Yugoslav ambassador to the UN, for instance, denied that rape and murder was being conducted by Serbian troops, stating: ‘If something of that kind were done there it [was] done by some irresponsible individuals not belonging to our security forces [sic].’ Such repeated emphasis on the brutality of the police and militia in the media and denials of such activities by Serbian leaders served to reinforce an impression of the Yugoslav State as deceptive and morally bankrupt. These kinds of images in the Australian media strongly correlated to the global political order maintained by NATO. This is because an ‘observable pattern of indignant campaigns and suppressions, of shading and emphasis, and of selection of context, premises, and general agendas, is highly functional for established power and responsive to the needs of the government and major power groups.’

The notion that Milosevic was working alongside the militias (as their employer) established a clear moral binary for Australian news consumers, significantly personalising the idea that the President was “evil” and that ethnic Albanians and the actions of NATO were “pure” and “just”. NATO spokespersons, such as Jamie Shea (and others), emphasised how Milosevic was ‘re-engineering the ethnic makeup of the province’ - by, as the Telegraph described, simply ‘murdering its inhabitants’. Media coverage frequently reproduced descriptions of Milosevic offered by US President Bill Clinton. The descriptions were typified by the argument: ‘If we don’t do anything … it will be interpreted [by the Yugoslav leader] as a license to continue to kill. There will be more massacres, more refugees, more victims, more people crying out for

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1231 Schork, op. cit. See also F. Devine, ‘The truth will be televised’, The Australian, 12th April 1999, p. 13. Here, the Serbian Foreign Ministry denies any knowledge of ‘burning of villages’ and other activities by Serbian troops or police. See also M. Stevens, ‘Australia still on standby for refugees’, The Australian, 14th April 1999, p. 11. Here, the Yugoslav Ambassador to the UN is quoted, having ‘rejected [the US’ claims that Yugoslavia was committing atrocities], saying that “human shields [are] not something which is practised by our Government.”’ See also reference to ‘a big lie… Nobody is ethnic cleansing’ in G. Kitney, ‘Solidarity In The Square Of Freedom’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 2nd April 1999, p. 7.


1233 Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., p. liii.

1234 See reference to Milosevic as ‘evil’ in ‘Fighting evil carries a fearful price’ (editorial), The Australian, 17th April 1999, p. 18.

revenge \[sic\].\footnote{K. Kratovac, ‘Order To Bomb Serbs – NATO forces to launch air strikes on Kosovo’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1999, p. 1.} This was the position endorsed, as the \textit{Telegraph} stated, by leading NATO countries including Britain, France and Italy.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} See also L. Freedman, ‘Five ways the war can run its course’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 3\textsuperscript{1st} March 1999, p. 28.} This sentiment was adopted by the Australian Prime Minister who blamed the ‘stubbornness’ of Milosevic for the NATO campaign.\footnote{Trute, ‘It won’t flare up here, local Serbs pledge’, \textit{op. cit.}} As Howard stated on 26\textsuperscript{th} March: ‘It became unavoidable because of the intransigence of Milosevic[.] There has been plenty of opportunity to accommodate the ethnic Albanian position in Kosovo.’\footnote{Howard, cited in \textit{ibid}. The Prime Minister is cited similarly in Garran, \textit{op. cit.}} Downer added, speaking in the House of Representatives, that it was Milosevic’s ‘further intransigence which has brought about NATO’s authorisation of air strikes. Responsibility for that situation lies squarely with Mr Milosevic, who at every stage has thwarted peace efforts… [and committed] atrocities against Kosovo civilians… Mr Milosevic and the Serbian leadership should now be in no doubt of the international community’s resolve to end the suffering in Kosovo.’\footnote{Downer, in ‘Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’, \textit{House of Representatives: Official Hansard}, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 24\textsuperscript{th} March 1999, p. 4235.} This sentiment mirrored the discourse of international media in supporting the NATO campaign in Kosovo, which focussed ‘laser-like on crimes of selected enemies, at the moment Serbian devils.’\footnote{N. Chomsky, \textit{The New Militarism; Lessons From Kosovo}, Common Courage Press, Monroe, 1999, p. 39.}

Various components of the Yugoslav State were commonly depicted as a direct extension of the personality of Milosevic. This included constant references to his “military machine” - the Serbian Army, police and militias that were orchestrating atrocities against ethnic Albanians.\footnote{References to ‘military machine’ and ‘Milosevic’s war machine’ are given, for example, in G. Kitney, ‘End of Milosevic Is West’s Goal’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 8\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 7.} The State itself was commonly represented as an undemocratic, ‘hard-line’ regime.\footnote{See, for instance, references to the ‘hard-line Serbian official’, vice-Premier Vojislav Seselj, in ‘Greeks intercede for captive GIs’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 9\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 30.} The President was frequently regarded by the media as untrustworthy (in relation to his interactions with both ethnic Albanians and NATO officials) and often depicted as
deliberately deceiving his own Serbian constituents through misinformation and a crackdown on political dissidence. It was regularly noted how, for instance, ‘Yugoslavia’s government-controlled Tanjug news agency’ was being used to disseminate falsehoods about NATO’s intentions, and deny (or at least play down) the scale of the atrocities against ethnic Albanians.1244

A point of contention, however, is how Australian newspaper reports about atrocities committed by Serb police and militias cited “eyewitness” accounts given by the KLA news agency. Newspaper reports concerned about “massacres” and mass executions in Qirez, Orahovac and Podujevo, for example, were uncritical of the reliability of KLA reports.1245 One of the major problems faced by journalists attempting to verify details about the war was that the international media had been expelled from Kosovo at the beginning of the NATO air strikes.1246 The great majority of reports about atrocities being committed in the province were based on testimonies offered by traumatised ethnic Albanians fleeing the conflict as they arrived at the Macedonian and Albanian border.1247

On the other hand, there was consistent emphasis across the Telegraph, Australian and Herald on how “government-controlled media” was being used to manipulate Serbs into supporting Milosevic’s military campaign.1248 The Australian reported, for instance, that the Milosevic regime had ‘moved quickly to silence any opposition, shutting down Belgrade’s independent radio station.’1249 The consistent focus on the

1244 Kratovac, op. cit.
1245 See KLA news reports cited in, for example, Jahn, ‘Savage strikes batter Belgrade – Dogfight over Bosnia broadens the showdown’, op. cit. See also Cika, op. cit.
1248 See ‘NATO infiltrates Belgrade homes’, Daily Telegraph, 7th April 1999, p. 29. See also reference to ‘State-run Tanjug news agency’ in Hillman and Jahn, op. cit. See also reference to Milosevic’s ability to ‘manipulate Serb nationalism’ in Sheridan, ‘What’s the plan’, op. cit. See also reference to ‘Milosevic is seeking a propaganda victory’ in ‘Milosevic shows his hypocrisy … as refugee policy is made on the run’ (editorial), op. cit. See also discussion about ‘State-run media’ in Kitney, ‘Belgrade Braces For Blitz’, op. cit.
Yugoslav government’s rigid control of Serbian media bolstered perceptions in the Australian news media about the freedoms enjoyed by citizens in pro-NATO countries.

Despite these claims about the lack of democratic freedom within Yugoslavia, there remained clear evidence signifying NATO’s ability to dictate media discourse in its allied countries. Statistics and facts about the war and the refugee crisis given by NATO officials were overwhelmingly reproduced without question by the news media. The war was fought by NATO as much from the air as it was over the airwaves broadcast to the homes of ordinary citizens in member and allied states.\textsuperscript{1250} One of the few news articles that questioned the role of the media in NATO-allied countries argued that: ‘it is really quite understandable that the Serbs should try to prevent journalists from filming the results of the air strikes. Those images that photojournalists and camera crews have transmitted to the West are clearly being used in the West for propaganda purposes.’\textsuperscript{1251} The author went on to state that media reports in the first week of the war were ‘vague and sketchy … These details, like the images of the weapons of war, clearly come from military sources.’\textsuperscript{1252}

The Herald’s Geoff Kitney asserted that ‘the [Serbian] state media present an unending diet of nationalist propaganda. Half-truths, censorship and distortion are its hallmarks.’\textsuperscript{1253} A similar perception was evident in NATO’s military strategy to defeat Yugoslavia. The manipulation of the media by Milosevic was such a concern for NATO that the organisation attempted to “tap into” Serbian television frequencies to address Serbs directly as they watched coverage of the war in their homes. On 6\textsuperscript{th} April, NATO broadcast a television signal in which a woman, speaking in Serbian but with a foreign accent, attempted to enlighten Belgrade residents by saying: ‘If only you knew the ethnic cleansing campaign was going on down there [in Kosovo], you would be stunned [sic].’\textsuperscript{1254} On 22\textsuperscript{nd} April, it was reported that NATO jets had bombed Milosevic’s

\textsuperscript{1250} See M. Ignatieff, \textit{op. cit.} See also Knightley, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1251} Wark, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1252} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1253} Kitney, ‘Serbs Against Rest Of The World’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{1254} NATO infiltrates Belgrade homes’, \textit{op. cit.}
governmental headquarters which was also the location of a television and radio station that was ‘owned by people close to the authorities’.\textsuperscript{1255} Serbian television was ‘hit chiefly’, a Pentagon spokesperson stated, ‘because [it was] part of President Slobodan Milosevic’s military and political base.’\textsuperscript{1256}

Milosevic was commonly viewed as ‘defiant’ towards NATO, relentlessly pursuing a ‘brutal campaign to force ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo.’\textsuperscript{1257} Bill Clinton commented during the early stages of the war that Milosevic would rather ‘rule over rubble than not rule at all.’\textsuperscript{1258} A NATO declaration vowed to continue bombing Yugoslavia ‘as long as it takes… [and] until President Milosevic accedes to the demands of the international community’.\textsuperscript{1259} That is, to achieve a ‘democratic transition in Serbia’ and overturn ‘belligerent tyranny’.\textsuperscript{1260} The Yugoslav President refuted such criticism. He referred to NATO as ‘aggressors’ and ‘criminals’\textsuperscript{1261} and, as reported by the \textit{Telegraph}, ‘brushed off the continued barrage, defiantly promising to rebuild bomb-damaged structures’.\textsuperscript{1262}

The Australian media produced the image of a contest of wills between NATO’s allies and Yugoslavia, and one that would test the resolve of all 19 NATO member countries. The resolve of Milosevic to resist NATO, however, was often depicted in the media to be both pointless and irrational indicating that NATO would easily and inevitably obtain its objectives. A spirit of irrational defiance was, according to various newspaper reports, a common trait that the Yugoslav President shared with Serbs living in Australia as they conducted their anti-NATO protests. As the \textit{Herald} noted, citing a Macedonian cab driver: ‘The Serbs

\textsuperscript{1255} V. Toshkov, ‘Jets aim for Milosevic’s high-rise HQ’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} April 1999, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{1256} K. Bacon, cited in C. Aldinger, ‘Serbs powerless’, \textit{Sunday Telegraph}, 25\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 49. See also discussion on Serbian media in Chomsky, \textit{The New Military Humanism; Lessons From Kosovo}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{1257} Hundley, \textit{op. cit.} See also description of Milosevic as ‘defiant’ in C. Jackman, ‘Milosevic must pay a heavy price’, \textit{Sunday Telegraph}, 4\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{1258} B. Clinton, cited in Cameron and Kilian, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{1259} A. McKinnon, ‘No let up in bomb strikes’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 13\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{1260} B. Clinton, cited in Taylor, ‘Accidental deaths test allies’ grit’, \textit{op. cit.} See similar discussion in Kitney and Mann, ‘Sign of Belgrade Bending As Air Attacks Stepped Up’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1261} S. Milosevic, cited in Cameron and Kilian, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{1262} In \textit{ibid.}
are orang-utans and Milosevic is a gorilla. There is no logic about those people. They are mad.' The irrationality of Serbian national unity during the NATO air strikes was purported by the news media to transcend both Yugoslav and Australian Serbs.

This sentiment was reportedly the motivation for a number of street demonstrations, vigils and concerts staged by Serbs in Belgrade. On 10th April the Telegraph described how ‘thousands chanting “Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia” gathered on two major bridges in Belgrade and one in Novi Sad to serve as volunteer “human shields” against [NATO] attacks’. Initially, it had been intellectuals and academics that began the protests by linking arms to form a chain over the river Sava (which runs through the city). The protests had ‘grown dramatically’ over the next few nights with more than several thousand people occupying various bridges around the capital. Those involved held signs that stated, ‘Clinton and Blair are Nazi’s’, while concerts were also held on some of the bridges. A symbol used by those conducting a candlelight vigil in Belgrade – printed on t-shirts and placards – was the “target” (see image above). This was

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1264 Hillman and Jahn, op. cit.
1266 ibid.
intended to both antagonise NATO supporters and unify those who chose to remain in the capital city. The *Herald* stated that the target was a ‘solidarity badge of honour’ and the Belgrade protests had ‘become a symbol of defiance … which remains undiminished by NATO bombs’.\(^{1267}\) This sentiment was further typified in reports about the annual Belgrade marathon which proceeded in mid-April despite the bombings. As one of the competitors commented: ‘The tradition of the Belgrade marathon has not stopped. Even if they continue to bomb us, the race will continue.’\(^{1268}\) Kitney reported, ‘Singing and dances as the NATO bombs fall: to the outside it must be reinforcing the view that the Serbs are mad.’\(^{1269}\)

### 1.3 East/West divides

The front page of *The Australian* proclaimed, on the launch of the NATO campaign: ‘West prepares swift, severe strikes against Milosevic.’\(^{1270}\) As the *Herald* reported: ‘The prospect of war plunged East-West relations into crisis.’\(^{1271}\) Sheridan declared in one headline: ‘Fight the West must win.’\(^{1272}\) *The Australian*’s Terry Plane depicted the NATO campaign as the ‘US’s rampant determination to mould the world in, if not its image, at least its thought patterns in what appears to be a global video game where America is always good and great.’\(^{1273}\) Russia remained ‘steadfast’ in its opposition to the NATO intervention and had been against any US-led military action in the region for several years.\(^{1274}\) As the *Telegraph* reported, on 11th April: ‘Russian President Boris Yeltsin got tough with the West yesterday, warning NATO not to drag Russia into Kosovo because it could spark a world war.’\(^{1275}\)

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\(^{1267}\) Kitney, ‘Solidarity In The Square Of Freedom’, *op. cit.* This article further discusses the ‘thumping rock music’ being played at protest concerts in the city centre of Belgrade.


\(^{1269}\) Kitney, ‘Serbs Against Rest Of The World’, *op. cit.*

\(^{1270}\) Stevens, ‘NATO SIGHTS 60 TARGETS – West prepares swift, severe strikes against Milosevic’, *op. cit.*


\(^{1274}\) Stevens, ‘NATO SIGHTS 60 TARGETS – West prepares swift, severe strikes against Milosevic’, *op. cit.*

\(^{1275}\) ‘Don’t push us, Yeltsin warns’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 11th April 1999, p. 47.
The NATO campaign in Kosovo was represented by the media in pro-NATO countries to be a direct consequence of post-Cold War political alliances that had not yet stabilised.\textsuperscript{1276} The conflict was frequently said to be an extension of divisions that continued to exist between the “West” and “East”, Washington and Moscow (which supported Serbia’s control over Kosovo) and “civilisation” and the “uncivilised” Balkan countries. The \textit{Herald} noted that Russia’s post-war plans would involve an attempt to establish the hegemony of ‘Eurasianists over Atlanticists’.\textsuperscript{1277} Sheridan warned of a ‘hyper-nationalist reaction in Russia’\textsuperscript{1278} while elsewhere \textit{The Australian} commented that ‘The Russians have clout and cultural bonds with the Serbs.’\textsuperscript{1279} The NATO campaign was frequently represented as a conflict between the “old” dictatorships of Eastern Europe and the modern, democratic international order. It was on many occasions depicted as a campaign that would finally “lay to rest” the “long decayed” system of Yugoslav “authoritarianism”. This perspective was reproduced in the \textit{Herald}, which stated: ‘NATO’s bombing campaign in the Balkans is the end-game in the forcible dismemberment of Yugoslavia.’\textsuperscript{1280}

This emphasis on the East/West divide featured in 90 references in the \textit{Telegraph}, 79 in \textit{The Australian} and 114 in the \textit{Herald}.\textsuperscript{1281} Notions of East/West that appeared in media coverage of the Kosovo war were ambiguous. There was rampant and often unqualified use of the term “the West” in many news articles. Common phrases included repetition of a variety of vague terms, such as “the West”, “Western leaders”, “Western allies”, “Western European countries”, “Western officials”, “pro-Western”, “a Western-dictated peace”, “Western media”, “East-West confrontation”,

\textsuperscript{1276} Herman and Chomsky, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1277} A. Saikal, ‘Russia Confronts A No-Win Situation’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1999, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{1278} G. Sheridan, ‘All power to NATO, naturally’, \textit{The Australian}, 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1999, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{1279} D. Campbell, ‘Aid workers become bargaining chips’, \textit{The Australian}, 14\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 13. See similar comments in Saikal, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1280} A. Mitchell, ‘Olympic City Notebook; Once Were Heroes’, \textit{Sun-Herald}, 28\textsuperscript{th} March 1999, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{1281} Common phrases included repetition of a variety of vague terms, such as “the West”, “Western leaders”, “Western allies”, “Western European countries”, “Western officials”, “pro-Western”, “a Western-dictated peace”, “Western media”, “East-West confrontation”, the “West” as “civilised”, and the “moral righteousness of the West”. Some indicators were more US-centric, such as “Washington” or the “US consulate”. Indicators of those depicted as “Eastern” includes references to the role of Russia (and occasionally China), “Moscow”, the “Cold War”, the “Warsaw pact”, and “communist Europe”.

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the “West” as “civilised”, and the “moral righteousness of the West”. In one article, for example, *The Australian* stated that the NATO campaign had resulted from the notion that ‘The West finally decided it could no longer do business with Milosevic.’ It could be assumed that the author is implying that NATO member States ‘could no longer do business’ with Milosevic. This demonstrates, more importantly, the ways in which the news media frequently adopted the notion of “the West” in place of the political and military interests of NATO (or the US). These kinds of reports encouraged the development of ideological unity and supported NATO’s interests in maintaining global order.

The ambiguity in the way in which the term “the West” was adopted by the media is further demonstrated in descriptions of Balkan countries during the Kosovo war. Shifting and efficacious markers of “Western European” and “non-Western” were at times utilised to make clear the distinctions between Kosovar Albanians (those “we” are helping) and Serbs (those “we” are at war with). By the same measure, though, the notion of “Balkanisation” as “fragmentation” tended to underpin these kinds of representations. The *Telegraph*, citing retired British Major Charles Heyman, emphasized the “inevitable” and continuing divisions that existed between the Balkans and the rest of the world: ‘[Former Yugoslav President] Tito’s master plan was to turn Yugoslavia into the sort of fortress that no one would want to meddle with. He succeeded against both the West and the Warsaw Pact.’ The editor of *The Australian* adopted this view of the Kosovo war, stating that it was the somewhat inevitable result of the ‘tribal conflicts of the Balkans’.

Historians have often viewed the Balkans as a “tinderbox”, shaped by continued clashes between ethnic groups for several hundred years. As Fleming says, it is typical of Western European commentators ‘to lump [all the Balkan countries] together’ while simultaneously stipulating that they...
are helplessly embroiled in conflict and fragmented (or “Balkanised”) ‘along absurdly minute and definitionally obscure grounds’.\textsuperscript{1286} That is to say, that ‘one of the primary characteristics attributed to Balkan lands and peoples is the paranoia … of small differences.’\textsuperscript{1287} This view was frequently promoted in news reports of the Kosovo war.\textsuperscript{1288} It is the view that, ‘What people [from the various Yugoslav republics] once had in common with each – their \textit{geographical} belonging along citizenship lines – had become obsolete, as “south eastern Europe had become split along ancient lines separating Catholic from Orthodox, Rome from Byzantium … neighbour from neighbour” \textit{[sic]}.’\textsuperscript{1289} What was often overlooked were the long term causes of the conflict, such as economic underdevelopment, which are related to the effects of global capitalism and centuries of Western European imperialism.\textsuperscript{1290}

News coverage of the Kosovo war further demonstrated how the media is able to personalise and \textit{nationalise} conflicts for an audience by focusing on injustices inflicted by an enemy on its citizens. It has been noted elsewhere how ideological divides within a nation tend to be dwarfed by the differences \textit{between} nations through journalistic practices of ‘domestication’.\textsuperscript{1291} Through these processes, an enemy is easily rendered uncivilised and barbaric when it is directly seen as harming persons who are held in high-esteem in their country of origin. These sentiments are typified in coverage of events involving CARE Australia aid workers Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace who were taken into custody by Yugoslav border guards on 1\textsuperscript{st} April and accused of participating in espionage against

\textsuperscript{1286} Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1219.
\textsuperscript{1287} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1288} An exception to this is Sheridan, ‘What’s the plan’, \textit{op. cit.} The author criticises the simplicity of assertions that the war was simply based on “ethnic conflict”.
\textsuperscript{1289} Procter (citing Ascherson), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{1290} Danforth, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11. See also L. Stankov and G. Knezevic, ‘Amoral social attitudes and value systems among Serbs and Australians’, \textit{Australian Journal of Psychology}, 57(2), August 2005, p. 117. Here the authors state that there was a noticeable rise in crime and a breakdown in law-and-order in Serbia throughout the 1990s. However, these factors can also be attributed to economic sanctions as well as the effects of the various wars that unfolded as the Socialist Yugoslav Federation fractured.
The aid workers were taken into custody while attempting to cross from Yugoslavia into Croatia near the town of Lipovac. Much of the media coverage concerning the incarceration of Pratt and Wallace was highly emotive, promoting the situation as an injustice to all Australians. The Australian Prime Minister responded by stating that the Federal government would do all it could to ensure that the CARE workers were released; ‘I can say to their families … that we care about them and we’re trying very hard, using every means at our disposal to get them back. And … we pray that they will be safely returned.’ Through the incident dominant assumptions emerged within political discourse that Yugoslavia ought to be treated with caution. It was to be regarded as an unlawful State carelessly incarcerating “innocent” aid workers taking part in a non-partisan, humanitarian mission. In this light, the claims of espionage made against Pratt and Wallace were commonly viewed by media commentators as ‘preposterous’ and they were presented as coming from a ‘preposterous source.’

While the allegations against Pratt and Wallace were disputed by commentators in the Australian media, an investigation aired by the SBS program Dateline on 2nd February 2000 revealed that CARE had been involved in espionage activities in the Balkans which implicated the two men.

1.4 Moral support for the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia

News articles commonly referred to the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia as a moral cause with significant implications for international human rights. They undoubtedly - at least in the minds of Western news

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1292 S. Spencer, ‘Aid workers alive but held captive’, Daily Telegraph, 10th April 1999, p. 5. Although it is unclear from the sources exactly when the aid workers were taken captive, in this article the Telegraph states that they had been ‘missing for 10 days in Yugoslavia’.
1294 Howard, cited in Spencer, op. cit.
1295 Campbell, op. cit.
1297 The coding category “Terms used in representations of the NATO campaign” was divided into the following sub-categories: compassion/empathy for ethnic Albanian plight; humanitarian obligation; children, babies or childbirth mentioned; plight of ethnic
consumers - set ‘the stage for intervention … all in a noble cause.’

Yugoslav Serbs were consistently depicted as a deviant and “lesser” moral people, an image that bolstered the urgency and righteousness of the NATO campaign. Terms used to describe the circumstances faced by ethnic Albanian refugees that signified “compassion” or “empathy” numbered at least 1029 in the Telegraph, 842 in The Australian and 817 in the Herald. The use of “humanitarian” descriptors, including references to the work of aid agencies, charities, universal human rights and moral sentiments, featured 197 times in the Telegraph, on 322 occasions in The Australian and 242 times in the Herald. The broader implication of this was, as the Herald pointed out, that the ‘international community sees only one people – the ethnic Albanians – as victims and ranks their suffering above that of the Serbs.’

Herman and Chomsky’s study of mass media representations of the Kosovo war supports these claims. They note how the media established a clear binary between Serbs as “immoral” and “unworthy” victims of the war, while depicting ethnic Albanians as victims of NATO’s enemy and thus “worthy” of humanitarian assistance. This kind of mass media bias was ‘politically advantageous to U.S. policy-makers, for focusing on victims of enemy states shows those states to be wicked and deserving of U.S. hostility; while ignoring U.S. and client-state victims allows ongoing U.S. policies to proceed more easily, unburdened by the interference of concern over the politically inconvenient victims.’

The Australian media’s coverage of the Kosovo conflict overwhelmingly supported the sentiment that the victims of NATO’s enemies were worthy of Australia’s best efforts to assist them, and ranked the hardships endured by Kosovar Albanians higher than those experienced by Serbs.

There are significant political, cultural and religious implications in the ways the mass media produced moral edicts on behalf of NATO. There

Albanian women (including references to rape); plight of ethnic Albanian men; references to war crimes by Serbs/Yugoslavia; and tensions between the powers of the “West” and “East”.

Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., p. liii.

Herman, ‘Serbs Against Rest Of The World’, op. cit.

Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., pp. xx-xxi. See also p. 34.

ibid., p. xx.
was a consistent subtext played out in media coverage that a Western European brand of Christian morality was driving the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia. It was pointed out in the media that NATO was determined to ‘move heaven and earth’ to ‘flatten the Yugoslav war machine’.\textsuperscript{1302} The refugee crisis was frequently described as ‘an exodus’ of ‘Biblical proportions’, and purported to be a scene from the Old Testament: ‘An entire race on the move at the gunpoint behest of their Serbian rulers.’\textsuperscript{1303} One \textit{Herald} headline depicted the refugee flight as ‘The Escape From Hell’.\textsuperscript{1304} The Vatican, noted a report in the \textit{Telegraph}, had failed to dissuade the Yugoslav leadership from its military campaign and had ‘denounced’ the ‘ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, calling it an atrocity that “disgraces and bloodies Europe.”’\textsuperscript{1305} These kinds of media representations emphasised the ‘saintly glow’ of American foreign policy as it ‘shines through’, particularly as the NATO campaign was conducted at the dawn of ‘the third millennium of the Christian era’.\textsuperscript{1306}

Adding to this situation was the consistent depiction of the NATO campaign as a fast, efficient “crusade” in which the US-led Western military operation was highly superior and sweeping into the Balkans to eject an evil and morally bankrupt dictatorship. Supreme NATO commander, US General Wesley Clark, described his military plan as a ‘swift and severe’ campaign of air assaults involving over 400 aircraft from the US, Britain, France, Germany and ten other countries.\textsuperscript{1307} The planes were launched from air bases in Italy, England and aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean sea. Coverage of NATO air strikes launched across the Adriatic Sea from Italy presented the image of American fighter jets moving rapidly over Yugoslavia, dropping their payloads, and of the pilots

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\textsuperscript{1302} ‘Clad in clothes of fear’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1303} Jahn and Mouland, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5. The term ‘biblical deluge’ is used to describe the ‘exodus’ of refugees from Kosovo in ‘A city’s heart burns’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 4. See also description of ‘the almost biblical throng of humanity at Blace’ in Stevens and Farrell, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1304} Lague, ‘The Escape From Hell’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1305} ‘Vatican gets angry’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{1306} Chomsky, \textit{The New Military Humanism; Lessons From Kosovo}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{1307} W. Clark, cited in Stevens, ‘NATO SIGHTS 60 TARGETS – West prepares swift, severe strikes against Milosevic’, \textit{op. cit.}
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returning to recuperate in their own sleeping quarters just hours later.\textsuperscript{1308} Images in the\textit{ Telegraph} depicted ‘NA\textsc{t}O’S PERFECT SCORE’ and successful bombing runs by ‘US B-1, B-2, F-117, F-16, and F-17 warplanes.’\textsuperscript{1309} The newspaper provided computer graphics and maps showing the targeted areas around Serbia alongside pictures of military headquarters and an oil refinery that had been successfully destroyed.\textsuperscript{1310} This kind of representation supported a moral subtext in which Serbs were an enemy that could only be dealt with through overwhelming force.

\textbf{‘NA\textsc{t}O’S PERFECT SCORE’, from Daily Telegraph, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 29}

\begin{quote}
NATO’s plans to resolve the conflict ‘must have looked commendable … as they were etched thousands of miles away.’\textsuperscript{1311} In\textit{ Virtual War; Kosovo and beyond}, Michael Ignatieff says the Kosovo conflict marked a new phase in global politics because of the central role played by the mass media in legitimating the NATO intervention. It was the first ‘virtual’ war that ‘looked and sounded like a war… [for] the civilians and soldiers killed in air strikes and the Kosovar Albanians
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1308} See also Ignatieff, \textit{op. cit.}; Knightley, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1309} See ‘NA\textsc{t}O’s PERFECT SCORE’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{1310} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1311} Whittaker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 83.
murdered by Serbian police… For the citizens of the NATO countries, on the other hand, the war was virtual… The war was a spectacle: it aroused emotions in the intense but shallow way that sports do.\textsuperscript{1312} Ignatieff adds: ‘Technological mastery removed death from our experience of war. But war without death – to our side – is war that ceases to be fully real to us: virtual war.’\textsuperscript{1313} The virtuality of the war extended beyond representations of the NATO campaign by the media to the very role of the combatants. While there were 40,000 Serbian soldiers fighting on the ground, only around 1500 NATO air-crew actually went to war.\textsuperscript{1314} As Ignatieff says: ‘For NATO combatants the experience of war was less visceral than calculative, a set of split-second decisions made through the lens of a gun camera or over a video-conferencing system. Those who struck from the air seldom saw those they killed.’\textsuperscript{1315} An important element of mass-media depictions of the war, then, was a post-Cold War subtext denoting the techno-superiority of the countries supporting the NATO alliance. Technology thus provided supporters of NATO with another binary used to conceive the Yugoslav foe - as economically, technologically and politically backward.

The purported historical significance of the NATO campaign was frequently emphasised in media reports. Comments by Prime Minister Howard typified this sentiment, denoting a connection between the Nazi Holocaust and Yugoslavia’s campaign of “ethnic cleansing”. He noted that: ‘History has told us if you sit by and do nothing, you pay a much greater price later on.’\textsuperscript{1316} As the editor of the \textit{Telegraph} described matters: ‘Not since World War II has there been a more tragic exodus on the scale that is occurring in the former Yugoslavia.’\textsuperscript{1317} Repeated links were made between the atrocities committed by the Nazi’s in World War II and the Yugoslav campaign in Kosovo, ‘one of the largest human catastrophes in

\textsuperscript{1312} Ignatieff, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{1313} \textit{ibid.}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{1314} \textit{ibid.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{1315} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1316} Howard, cited in Trute, ‘It won’t flare up here, local Serbs pledge’, \textit{op. cit.} The Prime Minister is also cited in Garran, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1317} Editorial, ‘Get to the heart of things’, \textit{op. cit.}
modern history’. Sheridan described the conflict as the result of Milosevic’s 1989 policy in which he ‘instituted an effective apartheid system between Serbs and Albanians.’ The implication was that Milosevic’s policies had continued to develop since that time in polar opposition to contemporary standards for international human rights. They defied the logic of what had become a major symbol for human rights (at least in wealthy Western European countries) in the latter 20th century - the abolition of apartheid in South Africa. The Minister for the Environment and Heritage (representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Senate), Senator Robert Hill, commented similarly in Federal Parliament. He called for President Milosevic to ‘adhere to internationally accepted human rights standards in relation to all of the people of Yugoslavia, withdraw his forces from Kosovo and cease the barbaric acts that he is inflicting upon ethnic Albanians in Kosovo’.

Bette Denich elaborates on the ways in which Holocaust iconography has been adopted in contemporary historical discourse by Western European countries as part of a ‘symbolic revival of genocide’. She notes how, during the summer of 1992, ‘the world was shocked by reports of so-called “ethnic cleansing”, and by photographic images of emaciated people held captive in detention camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The resemblance to World War II Holocaust images alerted international public opinion to the occurrence of a specific kind of violence, employed to remove whole populations on grounds of their ethnic identity.’ The shock of similar images presented by the media depicting “genocide” during the Kosovo war is related to the way in which the term has become

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synonymous with the Nazi persecution of Jews. The notions of genocide and Holocaust have come to sanctify with profound immediacy the moral position of those who invoke the terminology.

Media representations of the “humanitarian disaster” unfolding at the Kosovo-Macedonian border in the first week of April 1999 often referred to the same statements and evidence produced by NATO’s media offices in Brussels and elsewhere. The supposed universality of the claims made by NATO is reflected in comments by The Australian’s Greg Sheridan who described Yugoslavia as an ‘appalling humanitarian cauldron’. This is echoed in Senator Hill’s description of events, that ‘NATO is fighting oppression; it is fighting an appalling situation’. Serbs, it was commonly implied, ought to be thought of as “different” to NATO’s allies and thus treated accordingly, because Yugoslavia was determined to follow its own “rules” rather than those set out under universal human rights conventions. The notion of humanitarian crisis played a significant role in media coverage, supporting NATO’s moral claims to be protecting ethnic Albanians from Serbian aggression. The image of Serbian troops using ethnic Albanian men as “human shields” to protect themselves exacerbated concerns for the human rights of the refugees even more greatly, lending weight to the notion that human rights violations were being conducted by a deviant, sneaky and tricky enemy.

The frequent use of images of the plight of ethnic Albanian children and women further reinforced the idea that the NATO campaign was a moral crusade. As Procter says, these kinds of images work as ‘a sort of “photographic headline” designed to attract and retain a worldwide audience and, if possible, to agitate them into some sort of response.’

Mention of the plight of children and women numbered, respectively, 136 and 94 in the Telegraph, 44 and 75 in The Australian and 73 and 53 in the

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1324 Sheridan, ‘All power to NATO, naturally’, op. cit.
1326 See, for instance, ‘Men used a human shields’, Daily Telegraph, 7th April 1999, p. 29. See also ‘Kosovo refugees used as human shields’, Daily Telegraph, 14th April 1999, p. 33.
Herald. A significant focus, as well, was the violence inflicted against ethnic Albanian men. Representations of the plight of ethnic Albanian men, including the abuse they endured at the hands of Yugoslav authorities, military or militia, featured 73 times in the Telegraph, on 69 occasions in The Australian and 36 times in the Herald.

The drastic moral implications posed by the “rape” of Albanian women were described by the US President as ‘truly chilling’. Annie Crowe argued in The Australian that rape was ‘being used as a tool of degradation and demoralisation’ by Serbs as part of their ‘war strategy’. She stated that it was a form of ‘genetic imperialism’ in which women would be giving birth to babies as a result of their brief encounter with Serbian soldiers. Other women who fled to the Macedonian border held babies in their arms that had died while awaiting assistance in “no man’s land” between the borders. There, families slept under the open sky without food, water, shelter or medical help for several days before the border was re-opened by Macedonian authorities. The effect of these kinds of images, particularly as they were utilised so widely across the media, was to extinguish any disbelief over the moral credentials of the NATO campaign. Australian media coverage supported the global political agenda of the US and Britain in which they viewed themselves as freed from the ‘old-fashioned constraints of world order’, and as ‘enlightened states [which] can dedicate themselves with full vigour to the

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1328 This included representations of “children, babies and childbirth” and “plight of ethnic Albanian women (including references to rape)”.

1329 B. Clinton, cited in Cook, op. cit. See also discussion about “systematic rape” of ethnic Albanian women in Montgomery, ‘Emergence of one of the most evil war crimes’, op. cit. See also discussion about the impact of the war on refugee women in N. Stott Despoja, ‘Despair drowns the echoes of fairground fun’, Daily Telegraph, 19th April 1999, p. 19. See also discussion about assaults against refugee women and children in Stevens, ‘Civilisation’s death knock’, op. cit. See also S. Peatling, ‘Senator Hears of Rape And Its Aftermath’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 23rd April 1999, p. 11.


1331 ibid.


1333 Mann, ‘War Now On Two Fronts’, op. cit.

mission of upholding human rights and bringing justice and freedom to suffering people everywhere, by force if necessary."\(^{1335}\)

2. The Response of Serbian Australians

2.1 The Serbian community protests in Australia

The moral position of NATO - as portrayed in media images of the Kosovo war - frustrated, hurt and riled many Serbian Australians. Their Yugoslav kin had been tarnished with the stigma of being uncivilised, immoral, corrupt, deceitful and inhumane. The protests staged by Serbian Australians around Australia were an expression of their outrage against this stigmatisation in the international media, as well as against the Federal Government’s publicly declared endorsement of NATO’s actions.

The first major protest discussed by newspapers occurred in Martin Place in Sydney on 28\(^{th}\) March 1999 outside the offices of the US consulate. Media estimates of the crowd size ranged from 5000 to 7000.\(^{1336}\) The majority of news commentators did not mention that the demonstration consisted of many families, children and the elderly. It was not noted, either, in media reports whether members outside of the Serbian community had participated. Some of the protesters conducted violent acts, with various reports confirming that several police had been injured by those who threw rocks, bricks and chunks of concrete (see image in Appendix 7).\(^{1337}\) Two news camera operators were also injured during the demonstration as well as a *Herald* photographer.\(^{1338}\) A Channel 7 cameraman reportedly suffered bruised optic nerves and impaired vision.\(^{1339}\)

\(^{1335}\) Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism; Lessons From Kosovo*, op. cit., p. 4.


\(^{1337}\) For instance, see Minogue, *op. cit.*

\(^{1338}\) See *ibid.*, and Brown, Jacobsen and Cornford, *op. cit.*

\(^{1339}\) S. Spencer and C. Mira, ‘Serbs will help, Church leaders say they will identify offenders’, *Daily Telegraph*, 31\(^{st}\) March 1999, p. 2.
Vesna Grubisic, secretary of the Serbian National Defence Council in Australia, informed the *Herald* that organisers of the demonstration in Sydney, which included leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church, had planned a peaceful protest. She commented: ‘If there was any violence, it was not done by our people[.] We cannot control someone who happens to be passing in the street.’\(^{1340}\) Grubisic added that the organisers and priests had asked Serbian Australians to show self-control and suggested that any acts of violence might have been carried out by supporters of Kosovo.\(^{1341}\)

Ilija Glisic, one of the organisers of the demonstration and President of the Serbian National Federation of Australia, informed ABC television’s *7.30 Report* that while there ‘were some hotheads there’, ‘We condemn [their reactions] … and hope that those hotheads that were creating the disturbance are dealt with accordingly. We were unaware that was happening because there were so many people there yesterday. That was happening on the fringe of that demonstration. The demonstration by and large was comprised of families.’\(^{1342}\)

Later that day demonstrators in Sydney relocated to the Opera House where the Prime Minister was addressing members of the public as part of Greek national day celebrations. The *Telegraph* reported that ‘The Serb protesters jeered Mr Howard when he took the podium’ demanding that he withdraw Australia’s support for the NATO air strikes.\(^{1343}\) The Prime Minister responded to the crowd, stating that ‘the argument of the NATO countries is not with the people of Serbia but rather the government of Serbia.’\(^{1344}\)

Around 6000 members of the Serbian community protested against the NATO air strikes in Melbourne on the same day. The *Telegraph* described how the demonstrators broke windows at the US consulate, lit fire-crackers, burned an American flag and then ‘spat on the ashes.’\(^{1345}\)

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\(^{1341}\) In *ibid*.


\(^{1343}\) ‘He’s up to no good’, *Daily Telegraph*, 29\(^{th}\) March 1999, p. 1.

\(^{1344}\) Howard, cited in *ibid*.

\(^{1345}\) In *ibid*.
Protesters reportedly ‘erupted in wild cheering when [they were] told Serbia had downed a stealth fighterbomber.’ A smaller demonstration was staged by around 400 members of the Serbian community outside the US Embassy in Canberra. They reportedly threw eggs at police, although no officers were injured. It was further reported that smaller demonstrations in Adelaide, Perth and Hobart were ‘largely peaceful.’ Members of the Serbian community protested at least two more times outside the office of the US Consulate General in Melbourne. Around ‘500 angry Serbs’ demonstrated outside the Melbourne office on 4th April, reportedly smashing windows with ‘bricks and other items’ although there were no arrests made by police.

A second Sydney demonstration against NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia was organised by members of the Serbian community. It was held on 11th April. The number of protesters was much less than the first rally with around 3000 people demonstrating at Sydney’s Domain arena. Again, it was not noted in media reports whether any persons from outside of the Serbian community attended the rally. There were no reports of violence or injuries suffered by police during the second demonstration in Sydney. Around 850 police officers had been placed on duty by the Police Commissioner to monitor the crowd. By dispatching so many police officers to monitor the protest, the Commissioner had initiated a symbolic display of force. The presence of the police officers, which comprised around 30 per cent of the crowd at the Domain, was a visual reminder that aimed to ensure protesters conducted themselves without resorting to violence.

2.2 The Serbian National Federation of Australia
The emotion of the first Sydney protest for Serbian Australians was significantly compounded by the nature of the main group behind the

1346 ibid.
1347 Cole-Adams, op. cit.
1348 ‘He’s up to no good’, op. cit.
demonstration. The Serbian National Federation of Australia was described in Procter’s ethnographic study as ‘a powerful nationalist group in command in Australia’. Procter was informed by the Federation that many Serbian Australians were ‘hurt and upset by the treatment they had been given by the Australian government and international media’ and he noted that ‘the Federation was sensitive to this issue’.

The motivations behind the Sydney rally were a continuation of frustrations noted by members of the Federation throughout the early-mid 1990s who felt that the Serbian community had been “abandoned” by the Australian government. Ilija Glisic had stated in 1994 in a Serbian National Federation of Australia newsletter that Serbian Australians had been betrayed and abandoned by the conduct of the Australian government during the Bosnian conflict. Such included the notion that Australian military personnel had been involved in UN bombing campaigns against Bosnian Serbs without official approval being given by the Australian government. Glisic accused the Australian government of treating Serbian Australians as “second class citizens”. He noted that this had made many people within the community very angry.

The Serbian National Federation of Australia played an important political role for the Serbian community by the time of the Kosovo war. It provided an avenue for Serbian Australians to channel their anger and frustrations over conflict in their homeland and challenge the Howard Government’s decision to support the NATO air strikes. Loring Danforth makes the point that: ‘Well-organized and politically mobilized diaspora communities can, therefore, play an important part in a triadic set of relationships involving diaspora communities themselves, their host countries, and their homelands.’

On the other hand, while diaspora organisations ‘serve as sources and mediators of ethno-national identification’, they may also be ‘rather

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1351 Procter, op. cit., p. 59.
1352 Ibid., p. 60.
1353 Cited in Ibid., p. 140.
1354 Danforth, op. cit., p. 81.
prone to antagonisms’ from factions within their memberships.\footnote{1355} In this sense, there has been stringent need within some ethnic organisations to assert strong, symbolic leadership in their attempts to maintain cohesiveness. The activities of ethnic organisations can reflect ongoing struggles between members over the authenticity of those identities and their links to homelands. For the Serbian National Federation of Australia, the organisation’s internal dynamics were further aggravated by the dominant political discourse of the period about non-British migrant groups and increasingly unpopular views towards multiculturalism.

Developments in the fields of communication and transportation in the later twentieth century have undoubtedly enabled immigrant communities to remain much more deeply involved in the national struggles of their homelands than they ever could before.\footnote{1356} The Serbian National Federation of Australia played a significant role as a mediator for Serbian Australians as they attempted to rationalise the Kosovo war. In addition to this, as Procter concluded, ‘Serbian bonding and belonging in Australia’ is often mediated through ‘the Serbian Orthodox religion, local sport and recreational settings, politics at a federal level, and family grief’ and ‘guided by global and local pressures and frustrations.’\footnote{1357} Organisations and activities co-ordinated by Serbian Australians in the early-mid 1990s provided avenues for members of this ethnic group to engage ‘a new ethnic Serbian consciousness’ as the ‘old verities of “Yugoslav” identity fell apart’.\footnote{1358}

What is clear is that the demonstrations organised by the Serbian National Federation of Australia symbolised growing resistance by ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia to the disintegration of homeland bonds. It reflects how, ‘in the contemporary world, ethnic and religious pasts are being uprooted and old cultural traditions updated and recast into a highly emotive and sensitive force.’\footnote{1359} A common trait within the Serbian Australian community, moreover, has been a strong attachment to

\footnote{1355}{Z. Skrbis, \textit{Long-distance Nationalism; Diasporas, homelands and identities}, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, p. 58 and p. 59.}
\footnote{1356}{Danforth, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 80.}
\footnote{1357}{Procter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104.}
\footnote{1358}{\textit{ibid}.}
\footnote{1359}{\textit{ibid.}, p. 67.}
‘Cultural and historical events regarding perceived wrongs against Serbians in the recent and distant past… Serbian Australians have a belief, thought and feeling structure that informs their understanding of themselves as demonised and misunderstood by the West and others.’ A sense of ‘long distance devastation’ can be seen in the ways Serbian Australians reacted to the Kosovo war. That is, ‘the unpleasant experience of watching from afar as homeland people and places are being destroyed…. [and] not having contact with friends and family and/or not being able to help and comfort family’. This kind of response, Procter says, has been typified by the actions of those who are ‘completely absorbed by feelings of anger, frustration and powerlessness… emotional exhaustion, sadness, withdrawal and a feeling of being “hurt” by what a person saw and heard from the electronic and print media.’ Zlato Skrbis describes the effect of this kind of long-distance nationalism as all consuming, as ‘a group-based phenomenon which pervades both public and private spheres of life.’ He adds, it is an increasingly more common phenomenon in which ‘nationalist processes … transcend a relatively strictly limited locality.’

2.3 Media representations of the protests: editorials and opinion columns
In this section, and throughout the remainder of this chapter, I more closely explore and evaluate the implications of the media’s presentation of the Serbian community protests in Australia. That is, I have set out to consider the ‘attention given to a fact - placement, tone, and repetitions, the framework of analysis within which it is presented, and the related facts that accompany it and give it meaning (or preclude meaning).’ The total number of newspaper articles that discussed the Serbian protests in Australia was (at least) 23, which included 14 in the Telegraph, six in The Australian and three in the Herald. There was only one editorial that

\[\text{1360} \quad \text{ibid.}, \text{p. 93. See also Danforth, op. cit., p. 80.} \]
\[\text{1361} \quad \text{Procter, op. cit., p. 108.} \]
\[\text{1362} \quad \text{ibid.} \]
\[\text{1363} \quad \text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 111-112.} \]
\[\text{1364} \quad \text{Skrbis, op. cit., p. 10.} \]
\[\text{1365} \quad \text{ibid.}, \text{p. 6.} \]
\[\text{1366} \quad \text{Herman and Chomsky, op. cit., p. lii.} \]
discussed the Serbian protests. It was published by the *Telegraph*. The *Telegraph’s* editor was highly critical of the demonstrators and predicted a pattern of insubordination and violence emerging within Australia’s problematic “ethnic communities”. He noted that: ‘For the second time in five weeks Australians have been subjected to violent ethnic protests prompted by events in Europe over which Australia had no control.’

The actions of Serbs were viewed as similar to those carried out by Kurds two months earlier when they ‘ransacked’ the Greek consulate in Sydney. The protests were condemned by the editor who mimicked Premier Carr by describing both incidents as ‘not the Australian way.’ The editor criticised Serbs in Sydney and Melbourne who ‘broke away’ from the main protests to participate in ‘displays of gratuitous and unlawful violence’. The piece went on: ‘these tragic circumstances [of war] do not give migrants the right to break laws and attack police in the country that has provided a sanctuary from the turmoil of their homeland.’

There were two opinion columns that discussed the Serbian protests in the *Telegraph*, while there were none in either *The Australian* or the *Herald*. Both opinion columns in the *Telegraph* were highly critical of the protests. As Michael Duffy stated, conflating the scenario: ‘Last Sunday more than 5000 Australians rioted in Martin Place in support of the genocidal regime in their country of birth, Serbia [*sic*],’ Duffy constructed links between descriptions of those involved at the protest and the image of Serbian militiamen as “masked thugs” that was frequently reproduced across the media. He argued that: ‘They are tough guys, these Serbs. One of those in Sydney wore a black T-shirt with the words “Serbian Republic Born in Blood”. Shopfronts were smashed. Six police were injured by flying stones and lumps of concrete.’

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1368 B. Carr, cited in *ibid.*
1369 In *ibid.*
1370 *ibid.*
1371 The coding for “Columnist stance on Serbian protests in Australia” was divided into the following categories for greater clarity: supportive, somewhat supportive, indirectly supportive, somewhat critical and critical.
1372 Duffy, *op. cit.*
1373 *ibid*. See also Procter (citing one of his subjects), *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93, who explains that symbols used by Serbian Australians to signify ‘blood and belonging’ represent ‘an all
not, however, take note of the families and individuals who had demonstrated peacefully. Exclusion of these details added weight to Duffy’s suggestion that multiculturalism was responsible for providing Serbs with a license to commit crimes. Duffy had even added: ‘As you would expect in a tolerant society like ours, no arrests were made.’

The Telegraph’s Mike Gibson, similarly, dismissed the protesters as irrational ‘Serbian sympathisers’ and “un-Australian”.

He stated: ‘If these demonstrators sincerely believe in a fair go, if they truly believe in the Australian way, why don’t they get down there and protest to the Yugoslav Ambassador to Australia[?] Why don’t they add their voices to those millions of voices of the people of Australia, calling for the release of their fellow Australians, Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace?’

The aggression demonstrated by several “hothead youths” (as claimed by organisers of the rally) towards police is related to Procter’s conclusion that: ‘[the] process of younger Serbian Australians being drawn into the vicarious effects of the [early 1990s] Balkan war appeared motivated by the anger and frustration arising from long distance nationalism and local and global hurts. In addition to this, there was a mix of symbols, memories and traditions passed down from generation to generation, woven into contemporary Serbian Australian social life, that were being destroyed.’

The range of “sources” used in news articles has significant implications for the way public opinion is formed. The inclusion of a diverse range of “voices” allows the media to claim to be representative of consuming belief that inhabits the living and the dead … “[that the land of Serbia] represents people’s life and blood”.

Duffy, op. cit.


ibid. The content analysis further investigated “Columnist stance on police response to the protests”. One of the opinion columns in the Telegraph directly addressed the response of the police to the Serbian community protests in Australia. It was somewhat critical of the notion that no arrests had been made during the initial demonstrations in Sydney. The coding for “Columnist stance on police response to the protests” was divided into the categories: supportive, somewhat supportive, somewhat critical and critical.

Procter, op. cit., p. 130.

The category “Sources on the protests” was divided into the sub-categories: police (state or Federal); Serbian community (general, not protesters); Serbian community protesters; general Australian community (other than members of the Serbian Australian community); John Howard; Philip Ruddock; Bob Carr (NSW Premier); other government officials/politicians; international officials (US consulate, for instance); and, independent politicians.
a wide spectrum of interests and perform an important social-democratic function.\textsuperscript{1379} Statements by figures in authority – government politicians and police - featured most in media coverage concerned about the Serbian community protests in Australia. In the \textit{Herald}, police sources were directly quoted once, while John Howard was cited five times. By contrast, spokespersons from the Serbian community involved in the protest were cited only three times. In \textit{The Australian}, a representative from the NSW state police was cited once, while members of the general community (callers to talkback radio) were cited five times. There were, moreover, five references to (or quotes from) members of the Serbian Australian community who were directly involved in the protests, as well as one Serbian Australian who was not involved in the protests. In the \textit{Telegraph}, quotes from sources in positions of authority featured most frequently. The Prime Minister was quoted 15 times about the protests, while Premier Bob Carr was cited eight times. Police sources on the protests numbered 14 times, while the Serbian community (general, not specified as protesters) were cited on 23 occasions. Protesters were quoted in the newspaper only five times, while other members of the Australian community were cited 14 times. The \textit{Telegraph}'s support for the Premier is typified by the comment, ‘Mr Carr was unequivocal: “You are not entitled to pursue a violent protest on Australian soil about old struggles overseas. It is not permitted. It’s not on. It’s not the Australian way.”’\textsuperscript{1380}

2.4 The elusive binary: Serbs as “White” and “Other”

Representations of Serbs in Australian newspapers during the Kosovo conflict frequently asserted that significant divides existed between Western-European or “White” Australian culture and that of the Serbs. Explicit references were made to ethnic Serbs as “dissimilar, alien or Other”. These numbered 16 in the \textit{Telegraph}, 10 in \textit{The Australian} and 31 in the \textit{Herald}.\textsuperscript{1381} On the other hand, the notion that Serbs were

\textsuperscript{1379} Ericson, Baranek and Chan, \textit{op. cit.}, esp. p. 18.

\textsuperscript{1380} B. Carr, cited in ‘Our laws must be respected’ (editorial), \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{1381} The category “dissimilar, alien or Other” includes any references to tensions existing between “White” Australian culture, morals or values and those of Serbs (including
“identifiable by their European-ness or as White” only featured three times in *The Australian*, once in the *Telegraph* and was non-existent in the *Herald*. This is in clear contrast with the analysis presented in Chapters 2 and 3 in which ethnic Albanian refugees were more commonly depicted as “White” or “Europeans”. Such a binary supported and worked to naturalise the assumption that Serbs represented a major threat to the “innocence” and “purity” of those being persecuted by the Yugoslav State. Much of the focus was on the deployment of oppositional categories used to mark and make more visible the “moral” standing of ethnic Albanians and the “immorality” of Serbs.

Another point of contrast between these findings and those I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 is the lack of representation of Serbs as “family” types. In the earlier chapters, I noted how ethnic Albanians were constantly referred to in terms of their family roles or titles. Procter recognised the effects of the Balkan wars (1991 to 1996) on Serbian Australian families by noting that: ‘While many of us have been loungeroom spectators of the conflict, people with cultural and emotional ties to the region identified completely with the pain and anguish of what they saw night after night on the television screen.’1383 Yet, there were no references to Serbs as “family” people in the *Herald*. However, there were 42 instances in *The Australian* where Serbs (predominantly Australian Serbs) were referred to by their family titles. These types of titles were only used on eight occasions by the *Telegraph*.

*The Australian* focussed on one Serbian Australian family in particular, discussing (in three separate articles) the migration of Miroslav and Sandra Mlinar from Yugoslavia to Australia several years

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1382 Indicators for this category include “sophisticated”, “cosmopolitan” and “Europeans”. All of these terms featured in the *Australian*, while only the notion “Europeans” appeared in the *Telegraph*.

The headline of one article concerned about the Mlinar’s described how, ‘Half a world from Kosovo, families are torn apart’. The report commented: ‘The tearing apart of the Mlinar family is just one identifiable impact in Australia of the war escalating half a world way.’ Miroslav was a dual Australian and Serbian citizen and ‘one of many Serbians returning from Australia to protect their spiritual homeland’. He noted that his responsibilities to Yugoslavia were simple: ‘I’m a Yugoslav citizen, it’s my obligation.’ The Australian, unlike the other newspapers, provided insight into some of the concerns facing Yugoslav Serbian families living in Australia. Sandra described how, for example, for some Serbian families, ‘it is harder to stay [in Australia] than to go.’ The newspaper presented an image of the Mlinar’s as “just like us”, as similar to “mainstream” Australians whose lives centred on the importance of “family”. It was reported that Mr Mlinar’s motives for returning to Belgrade were not simply to take up arms against NATO, but also ‘to be with his family’ who were still living there. These articles represented the protests as a way for families to express their concerns, noting how Miroslav had been one of the speakers at the initial Sydney protest. The Australian provided Sandra with an avenue to dispute media representations of the protest as violent. As she stated: ‘Do you think I would take my seven-year-old son along if I thought it would be dangerous? [...] Television just showed a couple of hotheads – it did not show the babies and grandmothers in the crowd.’

Signifiers of the status of Serbs as Other include references to them (including the Serbian Government) as animalistic and outcasts. The
*Herald* promoted this view, asserting that the NATO campaign only served to deepen perceived divides between Serbs and the wider world; ‘It has reinforced in the national consciousness [of Serbs] the idea that Serbs are the outcasts of the world, the untouchables of Europe, despised and excluded simply because they are Serbs’.

There was at least one instance in which Australian Serbs were described as “European”, although this was secondary to the notion that they were childish and irrational. As stated in the *Telegraph*: ‘some Europeans never grow up. It used to be that they expressed their hatred of each other at suburban soccer matches … Make no mistake, there are households of hate throughout Australia where the chants of ancient enmities obviously replace Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’.

The connection between soccer matches as a forum for Balkan ethnic groups to express their “mutual hatreds” extends, in one sense, from events that occurred in the early 1990s. In one instance in 1991 there was a protest conducted by an estimated 12,000 Croatians at a Sydney soccer stadium. There were further protests conducted in Melbourne at this time, including one in which 7000 Croats and Slovenes massed in the city square. In both instances these groups declared their support for independence from Yugoslavia and denounced President Milosevic. It can be construed that media representations of Balkan migrant groups as “violent” and “radical” during the NATO campaign in Kosovo were related to incidents that occurred in Australia several decades before. In 1978, for instance, the Fraser Federal Government introduced new legislation and employed law enforcement agencies to crackdown on anti-Yugoslav paramilitaries operating and training combatants in Australia, including the Croatian fascist group Ustashi.

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*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24th April 1999, p. 36. Here, Milosevic was referred to as a ‘mad dog that is mauling everything in sight’.
1393 Kitney, ‘Serbs Against Rest Of The World’, op. cit.
1396 *ibid.*
It can be concluded that these episodes contributed to media discourse on the “radical” and “violent” nature of Balkan migrants and there were clear continuities in media representations of both the 1991 protests and those conducted by Serbs in 1999. As Procter notes: ‘Along with the television news of the [1991] conflict were the street protests, media releases and other “activity” of and by the various groups from the former Yugoslavia living in Australia.’\(^{1398}\) Media discourse throughout the 1990s repeatedly emphasised the susceptibility of Balkan groups to their passionate hatreds of each other. Much of this coverage linked the issues of war, ethnicity and migrant community politics within Australia without specifically dealing with each of them. Procter states that there is little doubt that: ‘Whenever Serbian Australians gather at the soccer ground, customs, language and lifestyle, came together to form a kind of unity which was the result of shared similar background \([sic]\).’\(^{1399}\) Symbols used by Serbian Australians at these soccer matches – such as the Serbian national flag, three-fingered salute or slogans about being “born in blood” – were commonly utilised as ‘symbols of unity, belonging and bonding … [that are] more readily experienced than explained.’\(^{1400}\) Danforth played down concerns about “blood” slogans being used by ethnic groups, stipulating that national identity commonly ‘constitutes a natural or spiritual essence often identified with a person’s blood or soul.’\(^{1401}\) Criticism by the tabloid media about soccer matches - commonly depicted as an “ethnic” sport in Australia - was very clearly an ideological attack on the organisational capacities of Serbian Australians, construed in media discourse as a threat to Australia’s hegemonic norms.

2.5 Violence, aggression and compliance
My analysis has identified a range of descriptors used to represent Australian and Yugoslav Serbs in a negative light.\(^{1402}\) Descriptions of

\(^{1398}\) Procter, op. cit., p. 8.
\(^{1399}\) Ibid., p. 97. See also discussion about Australian soccer in Danforth, op. cit., p. 171.
\(^{1400}\) Procter, op. cit., p. 98.
\(^{1401}\) Danforth, op. cit., p. 109.
\(^{1402}\) These were divided into the followed types of representations/categories to provide greater clarity in coding: unlawful or uncompliant; deviant; aggressive, agitators or
ethnic Serbs as “unlawful or uncompliant” numbered 147 in the *Telegraph*, 55 in *The Australian* and 84 in the *Herald*.\textsuperscript{1403} Descriptions of this ethnic group as “deviant” numbered 86 in the *Telegraph*, 69 in *The Australian* and 40 in the *Herald*.\textsuperscript{1404} More common, however, was the notion that ethnic Serbs were “aggressive, agitators or violent”. There were consistent depictions of Yugoslav Serbs as the *source* of violence and agitation against both ethnic Albanian Kosovars and NATO.\textsuperscript{1405} Ethnic Serbs were represented as “aggressive, agitators or violent” at least 707 times in the *Telegraph*, 330 times in *The Australian* and on 398 occasions in the *Herald*.

The effect of this kind of repetition in the media overwhelmingly reinforced an image of Serbs (generally) as violent agitators and compelled to aggression by virtue of their ethnicity. This is particularly in light of the notion that positive representations of Serbs were by comparison almost non-existent. The power to “name” or label Serbs in this way ‘is one of the elementary forms of political power precisely because it involves the power to bring into existence that which is being named.’\textsuperscript{1406} In this sense, the power to name is also signified by the ability of dominant groups to displace minorities by mobilising unpopular labels referring to them.

\textsuperscript{1403} The category “unlawful or uncompliant” specifically focuses on the legality of ethnic Serbs in relation to international law or Australian law, or where they were viewed as being uncompliant with the wishes of NATO (including the US and UK) or with the wishes of the Australian government or police. The term “dictator” was also included in this category where President Milosevic was inferred to be a leader who had taken power with force, rather than via lawful consent. This category is different from that of “deviance”; which is explained further below, although some terms were coded in both categories where their meanings overlapped.

\textsuperscript{1404} The category “deviant” accounts for all terms in which ethnic Serbs were generally deviant, and included representations of them as or explicit mention of the terms: “tricky”, “evil”, “secretive”, “sneaky”, “suspicious”, “troublemakers”, “prey”, “hiding”, “manipulative”, “wicked”, “biased”, “twisting facts”, “taking advantage of situations”, “betray”, “ploy”, “confiscating identification documents of refugees”, “using refugees as human shields”, “plotting” and “demonic”. It includes references to Serbian “propaganda machine” and the Yugoslav regime’s crackdown on Serbia’s media.

\textsuperscript{1405} This included all violent or coercive actions undertaken by Yugoslav/Serbian government, Slobodan Milosevic, Serb civilians as well as Yugoslav/Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries.

\textsuperscript{1406} Danforth (citing Bourdieu), *op. cit.*, p. 154.
Lazar Stankov and Goran Knezevic, in their comparative study on social attitudes and values systems among Serbs and Australians, point out that: ‘It is sometimes assumed that normal political behaviour in any society (democratic or otherwise) is influenced by perceptions and attitudes that differ from the extremes only in degree, not in terms of quality. This provides justification for those holding particular stereotypes to label a whole nation, or some other large group of people, as being prone to terrorism and radical actions or represent “forces of evil”.’\(^\text{1407}\) The impression that Australian Serbs were disposed to violent behaviour like their Yugoslav counterparts was reinforced by media representations of the Sydney protests. The *Telegraph* also depicted the first Sydney protest as a scene of chaos and lawlessness:

Windows were smashed and police pelted with rocks and chunks of concrete when about 7000 local Serbs protested in Sydney yesterday… The demonstration … turned violent [when] protesters moved on the MLC building… One man brought down the American flag which was later burned while other protesters threw missiles, set off firecrackers and smashed the building’s windows… The protesters were armed with Serbian flags…\(^\text{1408}\)

Even *The Australian*, which was least critical of the protests overall, described how (in relation to the first Sydney demonstration): ‘Protesters in the 7000-strong crowd pelted police with pieces of concrete and torched a US flag.’\(^\text{1409}\) As the *Herald* described the scene: ‘Fifty police reinforcements with riot shields, and the dog squad, were called to Martin Place to support 50 colleagues under attack from Serb demonstrators trying to enter to MLC Centre… [they were] Backed up by 30 security guards and 30 officers from the NSW Protective Security Group’.\(^\text{1410}\)

The *Herald*, moreover, later noted how ‘Police put on their biggest turn-out since the anti-Vietnam marches’, as ‘950 police – one to every


\(^{1408}\) *He’s up to no good*, *op. cit.*

\(^{1409}\) Riley, *op. cit.*

\(^{1410}\) Brown, Jacobsen and Cornford, *op. cit.*
three or four protesters – monitored the protest and guarded the United States Consulate-General offices … at Martin Place’ during the 11th April demonstration.1411 The newspaper described how the major increase in police presence was a direct response to ‘the scene of a violent protest’ that emerged during the initial protest ‘in which police were pelted with eggs, vegetables and rocks, and cars and windows were smashed.’1412 There were 200 police posted in front the MLC building and ‘large teams of police also patrolled underground railway stations and Hyde Park.’1413

No violence occurred during the demonstration and Police Commissioner Ryan ‘applauded’ the peacefulness of the protesters, stating: ‘If I had not had enough [police] here today and a few windows in this street were smashed, could you imagine the criticism we would be getting then?’1414 This kind of representation reassured the public that all measures were being taken to prevent “lawlessness” and the violence that emerged during the initial protests. Media coverage reinforced the impression that the initial protests had been “out of control” and worthy of a major police crackdown on the way Serbian Australians conducted their demonstration. Glisic commented that the heavy police presence was a waste of taxpayers’ money. He argued that the violence at the previous protest was the work of a small minority. Glisic added: ‘[The police] knew it was only four youths last time. It’s not a consensus in the Serbian community and I think that the Premier and the Police Commissioner overreacted.’1415

The symbolic weight of the heavy police presence at the 11th April rally in Sydney was articulated across many news articles. One Telegraph headline described the 28th March protest as a ‘riot’ with the accompanying article reporting on the charges brought by police against one of the protesters.1416 The report emphasised the criminality of those involved in the ‘riot’ describing how a 25-year old man had stolen the US flag that had been hanging outside the embassy. The man was charged with ‘malicious

1411 Kennedy and Metherell, op. cit.
1412 ibid.
1413 ibid.
1414 P. Ryan, cited in ibid.
1416 Minogue, op. cit.
damage to the flag pole’. The arrest was the ‘first from the Serbian community-led demonstration’ which resulted in damage to other property and assaults on police and representatives from the media. The Telegraph blanketed all of the protesters with the violence that occurred at the rally, representing the event as disorderly and “out of control”; ‘The crowd [of around 7,000 protesters] had been demonstrating against the NATO attack on Yugoslavia when the protest turned violent [at] about 2pm … The protesters were carrying Serbian flags … Riot police were called in when demonstrators began throwing lumps of concrete at police.’ The newspaper emphasised the injuries inflicted on police, with one officer ‘hit in the head by a chunk of concrete, another struck under the eye by a rock and one suffered ear injuries when a fire cracker exploded close to his face.’ The Serbian community had been called on by police to ‘help … identify some of the more violent demonstrators.’

The ‘destruction’, it was reported, had cost a local restaurant around $20,000 worth of damage. The Telegraph further linked the Serbian community ‘riot’ to the actions of other ethnic groups who were “out of control”. Referring to demonstrations by Australian Kurds outside the Greek consulate the newspaper stated that: ‘It was the second time in five weeks Australians were subjected to violent ethnic protests prompted by events in Europe over which Australia had no control [sic].’ The following day, the Telegraph published the article, ‘Violence shatters city haven’, describing the ‘violence and lawlessness’ of the protesters (see image below). The report centred on the owner the Criterion restaurant, located next to the US Consulate MLC building, which had been ‘trashed

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1417 ibid.  
1418 ibid. For further discussion on the relationship between the media and notions of criminality, see Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, op. cit.  
1419 Minogue, op. cit.  
1420 ibid.  
1421 ibid. A similar description is offered in ‘He’s up to no good’, op. cit. See also C. Miranda, ‘Arrest squads for Serb protest’, Daily Telegraph, 9th April 1999, p. 8. Here, it was reported that a 30-year old man had also been arrested and charged with assaulting police during the demonstration, although no one had been arrested for damage to property.  
1422 Minogue, op. cit.  
1423 ibid.  
by an angry brick-throwing mob. The owner Farah Habib criticised the way police had ‘[stood] back and allow[ed] these acts of violence to happen’. Habib challenged NSW Premier Carr to ‘make these streets safe’, deploring those ‘who [use] our streets as battlefields’. Adjacent to this article was an expose on how police were planning to deal with the 11th April protest in Sydney. ‘Arrest squads’ of around 850 officers were being mobilised to prevent any more ‘emotionally charged’ violence. On radio 2UE Premier Carr reportedly ‘appealed to the Serbian community to respect the law and know that violence was not the way to protest.’

There were a variety of other kinds of negative descriptors utilised to signify the “ignorance” of Serbs and as “backward, poor or uneducated” (in relation to those living in both Yugoslavia and Australia). These kinds of descriptors were used two times in the Telegraph, on seven occasions in

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1425 ibid.
1426 H. Farah, cited in ibid.
1427 Farah, cited in ibid.
1429 ibid.
The Australian and three times by the Herald. The main religion of ethnic Serbs, Orthodox Christianity, was occasionally drawn on to depict them in a negative light. Negative depictions of Serbian Orthodox Christianity numbered two in The Australian and one in the Herald, while there was no criticism of the religion in the Telegraph. This added some weight to representations of the ethnic group as somewhat different or irrational because of their “Eastern” preferences. Procter provides insight into one reason why the Serbian Orthodox church was not subjected to more intense scrutiny by the media during the Kosovo war. As he noted, during the earlier Balkan wars in 1990s, ‘Serbian Australians were encouraged by the Serbian Orthodox Church to avoid physical clashes, property damage and violent acts towards other former Yugoslav groups living in Australia through the spiritual qualities of suffering, self-sacrifice and forbearance to tolerate others… Clearly, the role of the Church in helping to create informal, calming networks, designed to achieve restraint, was instrumental in helping people to cope with their hardships.’

There was no gendering of representations of Serbs in any of the newspapers and there were no descriptions of Serbs as coming from a “chauvinist/masculine culture”. The protesters were depicted or inferred to be “un-Australian” on three occasions in the Telegraph, while there were no such depictions in the other newspapers. An opinion piece in the Telegraph criticised the decision by some people with dual Serbian-Australian citizenship to return to Yugoslavia to fight against NATO, stating: ‘what patriot would betray his own country so willingly?’ The columnist went on to argue that these people needed ‘a lesson in citizenship.’

As noted earlier in this chapter, the majority of newspaper reports condemning Yugoslavia repeatedly centred on a binary that depicted, on the one hand, the rational and moral position of NATO, and, on the other, the illogical and irrational nature of Serbs. The latter sentiment was

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1430 Procter, op. cit., p. 144.
1431 See B. Carr, cited in ‘Our laws must be respected’ (editorial), op. cit. Here, NSW Premier Bob Carr, for instance, responded to the violence that emerged at the first Sydney demonstration, stating: ‘It’s not the Australian way’.
1432 Egan, op. cit.
1433 ibid.
emphasised when newspapers cast doubt on the concerns of Serbian leaders in Australia who had stated that ‘Atrocities in Kosovo including mass murders were a product of Albania’s own terrorists and US propaganda’.\textsuperscript{1434} Serbian community spokespersons had claimed that ‘the air raids were continuing because of an American agenda to dominate Europe’ and that ‘the dismembered Kosovo Albanians and mass graves were the result of terrorist activity by the [KLA]’ rather than Yugoslav military activity.\textsuperscript{1435} News coverage emphasised the refusal of Serbian community leaders to accept the “truth” about the campaign of persecution being perpetuated by Yugoslav forces. Within the context of the broader media discourse these notions supported the idea that the organisers of the Serbian community protests in Australia were “blind” to the official position of NATO that most “rational” people believed. Such a process worked to segregate or “cage” Serbian Australians as “irrational” and to position them as somewhat abnormal and “misled.”\textsuperscript{1436}

Prime Minister Howard deplored the protests organised by Serbian communities. His comments played an important leadership role in legitimating the popular view of Serbs as an Other that was promoted by the media. As Savage and Tiffen confirm: ‘The institutional power with which politicians are authorised gives their words a status that conforms to newsworthiness and demands publication. The words and actions of ministers, particularly the prime minister or premiers, regularly receive attention regardless of the potency of the action proposed.’\textsuperscript{1437} The Prime Minister stated (in both the Herald and Telegraph) that the violence that occurred at the initial anti-NATO demonstrations in Sydney and Melbourne should be ‘utterly condemned’.\textsuperscript{1438} Howard said that Australians of Serbian descent had every right to peacefully demonstrate against NATO action, but the violence that caused injury to police was

\textsuperscript{1434} Miranda, ‘Albanians The Real Terrorists’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1435} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1436} See discussion of ethnic “caging” in Hage, \textit{White Nation, Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{1438} Howard, cited in Cole-Adams, \textit{op. cit.} Also cited in the ‘He’s up to no good’, \textit{op. cit.}
unacceptable. He went on: ‘Australians of Serbian descent are a respected part of the Australian community. They have contributed much to our country. I am sure that the violent behaviour of a few will be strongly condemned.’ According to the Telegraph, the Prime Minister ‘warned Australians of Serbian descent to leave their hatred in their homeland.’ As one Telegraph headline stated: ‘PM condemns riot’. Howard had reportedly ‘warned people of Serbian background that there was no sympathy in Australia for violent demonstrations’ and that Australia had ‘no tolerance for violent protest’. The reaction of the Prime Minister signified that the Serb protests presented a sudden and unanticipated threat to the hegemonic norms of White Australia. What is clear are the ways in which the presence of a major, seemingly well-organised ethnic group had produced a degree of alarm, generating a heavy-handed response by those in positions of authority. The actions of organised ethnic groups have frequently been contested by established Australians because they comprise a significant challenge to ‘aristocratic White dominance’.

One of the protesters wrote to The Australian to contest media reports about the 28th March protest in Sydney. The author, Borislav Erceg, provided a different interpretation of the violence perpetrated against police. He stated that a policeman had provoked the incident when the officer ‘addressed the crowd as “barbaric people”’, after which several youths reacted with anger. Erceg expressed ‘outrage regarding the media treatment of the Serbs’ attending the protest, stating that ‘the presence of whole families with children and elderly people speaks for itself.’ The purpose of the demonstration, he said, was to allow John Howard to recognise the disapproval of the Serbian community for the Federal Government’s support for the NATO air strikes.

1440 McPhedran, ‘Jumbo Fleet to Pick up Refugees’, op. cit.
1442 ibid.
1443 Hage, White Nation, Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society, op. cit., p. 192.
1445 ibid.
1446 ibid.
A majority of news articles further supported a discourse about Serbs as “alien” to the Australian “way of life”. *The Australian* pointed out that coverage of refugees fleeing Serbian forces and the NATO bombings was ‘by far the biggest news story’, generating over 3000 items in the electronic media.\(^{1447}\) The newspaper cited recent polling by Rehame media researchers, stating that: ‘The Australian community’s perception of events, as reflected by talkback radio [over the past week], demonstrated that as a nation we have little understanding of an issue so alien to the Australian way of life.’\(^{1448}\) The article went on: ‘Nowhere was this more evident than in callers’ responses to the protests in Australia by members of the Serbian community against NATO’s bombing of Serbian targets.’\(^{1449}\) Statistics revealed that half of the 207 calls about Kosovo focused on the protests, with the majority of callers – 67 per cent – ‘voicing their disgust.’\(^{1450}\) Callers typically viewed the protesters as “ungrateful”, and strongly believed that ethnic conflicts should not be aired in Australia. One caller to 4BC radio stated: ‘don’t these Yugoslavians realise that they are now Australians? [sic]’\(^{1451}\)

Some callers demanded that the protesters be deported while others ‘demonstrated a deep-seated discomfort with multiculturalism’.\(^{1452}\) There were no direct concerns raised in the *Herald* about Serbian community responses to the Kosovo war in relation to either multiculturalism or Australia’s immigration program. The *Telegraph* cited concerns about multiculturalism eight times. The concerns linked the Serbian protests to the “failure” of multiculturalism. There were three concerns cited by *The Australian* about multiculturalism, though only two of these were in direct reference to the Serbian protests.\(^{1453}\) As noted in *The Australian*, another

\(^{1447}\) ‘Resort to Deport’ (The Rehame Report), *The Australian*, 8\(^{th}\) April 1999.

\(^{1448}\) ibid.

\(^{1449}\) ibid.

\(^{1450}\) ibid.

\(^{1451}\) Cited in ibid.

\(^{1452}\) ibid.

\(^{1453}\) In Garran and Green, ‘Agreement remote on housing refugees’, *op. cit.*, One Nation party leader David Oldfield referred to the ‘multicultural mafia’. He was discussing the way the Safe Haven temporary protection program was a ‘direct application’ of One Nation policy. He noted when One Nation’s temporary protection policy was introduced, the party was attacked by the ‘immigration lobby and multicultural mafia’. 
caller on 6WF radio stated: ‘the protest underlies the fact that multiculturalism never works anywhere’.

These callers disputed the way multiculturalism supposedly ‘encouraged immigrants to continue to define themselves in terms of their ethnic or national origin.’ They attempted to challenge the freedoms offered by this policy for ethnic groups to organise themselves, contest power and ‘become actively involved in the educational and religious activities of [their] diaspora.’ Only a handful of callers voiced more moderate views, pointing out that protesting was a democratic right, no matter how recently the protesters had migrated to Australia. The Australian analysed the issue, noting: ‘While there was an obvious public interest in the conflict, the coverage also revealed a “not in my backyard” mentality and a sense of fragility about Australia’s ability to remain separate from such events.’

2.6 Positive representations of Serbs
Very few newspaper articles represented Serbian communities in Australia in a positive light. The analysis did, however, identify a variety of positive descriptors used to represent Australian and Yugoslav Serbs. Serbs were described as “lawful or compliant” on 14 occasions in the Telegraph, seven times in The Australian and four times in the Herald. They were depicted as “decent” four times in the Telegraph, 17 times in The Australian and on six occasions in the Herald. For the Telegraph, 1458 indicators that Serbs were “lawful or compliant” include references to them as “peaceful protesters” and as treating foreigners within Yugoslavia “humanely”. Other references describe how it was not individual Yugoslav Serbs that were guilty of “war crimes” but the State and in particular Slobodan Milosevic. It is further noted by various sources how representatives of the Serbian Orthodox church in Sydney were compliant in assisting the police in apprehending violent protesters.

1454 Cited in ‘Resort to Deport’ (The Rehame report), op. cit.
1455 Danforth, op. cit., p. 81
1456 ibid.
1457 ‘Resort to Deport’ (The Rehame report), op. cit.
1458 These were divided into the followed types of representations/categories to provide greater clarity in coding: depicted as lawful or compliant; portrayed as “decent”; portrayed as “ordinary Australians”; and Orthodox Christianity portrayed in a positive light. This includes representations of ethnic Serbs living in both Yugoslavia (including political leaders, soldiers, police and ordinary Serbian citizens) as well as those living in Australia.
1459 Indicators that Serbs were “lawful or compliant” include references to them as “peaceful protesters” and as treating foreigners within Yugoslavia “humanely”. Other references describe how it was not individual Yugoslav Serbs that were guilty of “war crimes” but the State and in particular Slobodan Milosevic. It is further noted by various sources how representatives of the Serbian Orthodox church in Sydney were compliant in assisting the police in apprehending violent protesters.
1460 This includes descriptions of Serbs such as “valiant”, “respected”, “contributors” (to Australian society), “intellectuals”, “loyal” and “generously hospitable”.

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Australian Serbs were depicted as “decent” when leaders of the Sydney Serbian community had ‘pledged the violence would not spill on to Australian streets’.\(^{1461}\) Ethnic Serbs living in Australia were represented as “ordinary Australians” on two occasions in the *Telegraph*, four times in *The Australian* and only once in the *Herald*.\(^{1462}\) As Police Commissioner Peter Ryan said of the second protest in Sydney on 11\(^{th}\) April: ‘In the end they made their point without violence – that is the Australian way.’\(^{1463}\) Sir Ronald Wilson, described by the *Telegraph* as a ‘Human rights critic’, deplored opponents of the protest who failed to recognise that ‘these were Australians who were demonstrating’.\(^{1464}\) He criticised ‘a leading member in our government’ (suggested by the newspaper to be either John Howard or Bob Carr) for saying that the ‘demonstrators’ conduct was unacceptable’.\(^{1465}\) There were no explicitly positive representations of Serbian Orthodox Christianity in the *Herald* or the *Telegraph*, although *The Australian* depicted the religion in a positive light at least three times.\(^{1466}\)

One article in the *Telegraph* proclaimed that ‘not all [Serbs are] war criminals’ and cited concerns by Australia’s Ambassador to Yugoslavia about calls ‘to bomb the Serbs’.\(^{1467}\) The Ambassador, Christopher Lamb, criticised media coverage of the fighting in Kosovo, which he said often led to all Serbian people being branded war criminals. As Lamb stated: ‘There’s no basis for that, the media have used the ethnic word very loosely for a long time[.] We have to distinguish between Serbs and the situation their government has put them in.’\(^{1468}\) He went on: ‘I’d like

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\(^{1461}\) Trute, ‘It won’t flare up here, local Serbs pledge’, *op. cit.*

\(^{1462}\) An indication that Serbs were “ordinary Australians” includes references to former Serbian soldiers marching in the annual ANZAC parade, as noted by the *Australian* and the *Herald.*

\(^{1463}\) P. Ryan, cited in Harvey, ‘5000 protest – one arrest’, *op. cit.*

\(^{1464}\) R. Wilson, cited in ‘Anger at Serb support’, *Daily Telegraph*, 3\(^{rd}\) April 1999, p. 4.

\(^{1465}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{1466}\) See examples in the *Australian* in Niesche and Riley, ‘The conflict that wounds from afar’, *op. cit.*


\(^{1468}\) Lamb, cited in *ibid.*
people to understand that Serbia is a multi-ethnic state and Serbs within it are not by themselves guilty of war crimes.\textsuperscript{1469}

There were positive depictions of Serbs offered in several opinion columns, all of which were in \textit{The Australian}. As James Murray stated: ‘The wholesale demonisation of the Serbs seems a gross injustice, despite the constant theme that the grievance is solely with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.’\textsuperscript{1470} Sheridan was also critical of increasingly negative perceptions of Serbs, saying: ‘We are in danger of demonising the whole Serb people, a manifestly ridiculous thing to do, when it is really their President, Slobodan Milosevic, and some of their military commanders who alone deserve condemnation.’\textsuperscript{1471} Robert Miller provided similar insights as well, describing Serbs as ‘Pawns in a Western Game’, and criticising NATO’s attempts at bombing Serbia into submission.\textsuperscript{1472} He went on, in \textit{The Australian}: ‘The Serbs are a proud people, even to the point of suicide when they consider themselves to be unjustly treated. Some would call their traditional view of the tribulations they have suffered over the centuries a form of collective national paranoia. But anyone in Serbia who isn’t paranoid over the current wave of NATO bombings and the systematic demonisation of Serbs by the international media simply doesn’t understand the situation.’\textsuperscript{1473} Despite these criticisms, the dominant focus on Serbs in the media, as disposed to violence and aggression, supported the image that Serbia was little more than a nation of war criminals.

\subsection*{2.7 Citizenship and loyalty}
Two days after NATO air strikes began the \textit{Telegraph} emphasised the need for Serbs living in Australia to declare their national loyalty. The article, ‘It won’t flare up here, local Serbs pledge’, centred on moves by Sydney-based Serbian community leaders to promise ‘the violence would not spill

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\textsuperscript{1469} Lamb, cited in \textit{ibid}. \\
\textsuperscript{1470} J. Murray, ‘Heavenly peace is elusive’, \textit{The Australian}, 9\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 13. \\
\textsuperscript{1471} Sheridan, ‘Kosovo races can live together’, \textit{op. cit}. \\
\textsuperscript{1472} R. Miller, ‘Pawns in a Western Game’, \textit{The Australian}, 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1999, p. 20. \\
\textsuperscript{1473} \textit{ibid}. \\
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on to Australian streets.\textsuperscript{1474} Glisic affirmed that, while Australian-based Serbs would protest, there would not be violence on the streets or targeting of Albanian groups in Sydney.\textsuperscript{1475} There had, moreover, been a broader public backlash against Serbs in other news mediums, evident in the views expressed on talkback radio following the first protest in Sydney. Many of these demanded that Serbian communities demonstrate their loyalty to Australia. One caller stated that the protesters ought to be deported, saying on radio 2GB: ‘these people have no right to be in our country if they are going to act like this … I’d deport the lot of them [sic]’.\textsuperscript{1476}

The notion of loyalty is typically prominent in mass media coverage of war. Debates about the loyalty of Australia’s Serbian communities had taken place alongside a much broader discussion about ethnicity, multiculturalism and the maintenance of White governmental power. They related, too, to the ways in which multiculturalism has been used by Federal governments as a means of governing cultural diversity in Australia. It can be viewed that multiculturalism is the organisation of society so that ethnic segments are incorporated and dominated by other groups. Ethnic segments would otherwise be separate societies not bound by the State.\textsuperscript{1477} Hage says, too, ‘some even assert, in a matter-of-fact manner, that the whole point of multiculturalism is to avoid ethnic concentrations or ethnic ghettos… Once “they” start concentrating […] they could become an alternative will and the national will has to go in and disperse them.’\textsuperscript{1478} An element of coercion extending from popular discourse has often been adopted as a means of reproducing dominant interests and the dominant mores of society. It can be viewed in the way the Australian news media has frequently produced “scapegoat” campaigns based on popular fears about ethnic deviance, promoting coercive measures

\textsuperscript{1474} Trute, ‘It won’t flare up here, local Serbs pledge’, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1475} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1476} Cited in ‘Resort to Deport’ (The Rehame Report), \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1478} Hage, \textit{White Nation, Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 112.
through which the hegemonic cultural group is able to police dissidence.

The mass media performs an ideological role in purporting to expose ethnic deviance, and plays an important function in sustaining political loyalty to the State. Such can be viewed in representations of policing during the 11th April demonstration in Sydney, dubbed by some critics as “overkill” and reactionary. These images are related to popular manifestations of the “fifth column” threat within Australia in recent decades. That is, an “enemy within” who raises new questions about citizenship, identity and loyalty at times when the country of residence is in conflict with their country of origin. The media analysis provides strong evidence, as well, to support the notion that the media tends to parade dominant White cultural values as a means of legitimating coercive measures against those deemed “disloyal”, ethnic Others.

The *Telegraph* was punitive towards those involved in the first Sydney protest, questioning their loyalty as Australian citizens. At least three articles (including one editorial) emphasised the breach of Australian laws by the protesters, with one stating: ‘Serbs will help, [Serbian Orthodox] Church leaders say they will identify offenders’. The *Telegraph* frequently focussed on “scapegoating” those responsible for violence at the protest, while criticism of the violence was expressed much more indirectly by the other newspapers. The *Telegraph* was much more emotionally invested in publicising efforts to locate violent protesters and punish the offenders, for (allegedly) breaking the law and their disloyalty to Australia. There was a clear attempt by the *Telegraph* in articles concerned about the first Sydney protest to blanket the entire Serbian community with a sense of shame for the actions of a minority of protesters. A coercive discourse was adopted by the *Telegraph* which required the Serbian community as a whole – from religious leaders to community organisations – to perform a self-policing role and demonstrate

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1481 Spencer and Mira, op. cit.
“proof” of their loyalty in order to be “accepted” back into Australian society. The means by which Serbian Orthodox Church leaders were required to prove their allegiance in this instance was to ‘hand over those responsible for [the] violent demonstration in Sydney to police’. These practices of ethnic profiling by White Australians are typical, particularly in the construction of ‘the web of moral panic [about “ethnic crime”] and ethnic stereotyping’. The immense pressure placed on Serbian leaders extended from the ideological practices of the dominant cultural group, as ‘certain types of immigrant cultures (and their children) [are held] responsible for social conflict and hence not deserving of belonging.

It was reported in the *Telegraph* that at least 15 Australian men of Serbian ethnicity had recently flown to Yugoslavia to serve with the Serbian military during the Kosovo war. One columnist, Carmel Egan, denounced Australians with Serbian citizenship who had decided to fight against NATO. Egan ignored the issues and obligations facing those with dual Australian and Serbian citizenship. The declaration of a state of emergency by the Yugoslav government at the outbreak of NATO bombings obliged all male Serb citizens of fighting age to take up arms.

Egan accused Serbian men who had returned to Yugoslavia of ‘Hiding behind the Australian flag’, ‘taking advantage’ of the freedoms offered under Australian law to be combatants ‘against our national interests’. Egan demonised these men, linking notions of disloyalty with barbaric acts, such as committing ‘unconscionable, unthinkable, even unpunishable acts upon the Albanians of Kosovo’. The columnist denoted the supposed disposition of Serbs to act violently and uncivilised; ‘These are citizens who once sought sanctuary in our tolerant, benign land or were born and educated here but have too easily reverted to the familiarity of relic hatreds.

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1482 ibid.
1485 Miranda, ‘Albanians The Real Terrorists’, *op. cit.*
1486 Egan, *op. cit.*
1487 ibid.
1488 ibid.
against NATO. Djokic had declared earlier that he was returning to ‘defend my country from anyone who is threatening the peace, stability and sovereignty of my State.’\textsuperscript{1489} Egan asked how Djokic would be able to return freely to Australia after the war and ‘perhaps even [to] the security of our generous taxpayer-funded welfare system.’\textsuperscript{1490} The columnist stated: ‘Perhaps it is time the Federal Government did more than mumble about what it means to be Australian… what patriot would betray his own country so willingly? Australia stands for justice, peace and freedom in Kosovo alongside the forces of NATO… Mr Djokic needs a lesson in citizenship. He either joins with us as Australians or we should dispatch him, and everyone who would spill blood for tyrants like Milosevic, back to their “homelands”.’\textsuperscript{1491}

One of the implications that Egan did not note, however, was that Serbian-Australians have tended to maintain higher levels of direct engagement with the activities of the Yugoslav state than dual citizens from other migrant groups. As Greg Brown points out, for instance, ‘unlike the Italian and Croatian examples, [Yugoslav] citizens must normally return to Yugoslavia to vote and engage in homeland politics.’\textsuperscript{1492} This supports the idea that, for Serbian dual-nationals, the notion of returning to Yugoslavia for the war was expressly an act of national service and was quite separate from the issue of loyalty. A major subtext to Egan’s concern is the ongoing struggle between migrant groups and members of the host society to construct a common national identity, particularly in the wake of shifting global alliances and occurrences that transcend national and geographical borders.\textsuperscript{1493}

At the core of these issues is the notion that ‘dual citizenship within immigrant communities raises awkward questions that gnaw at the bone of what it means to be Australian and a citizen.’\textsuperscript{1494} Brown adds: ‘Though officially tolerated, dual citizenship has traditionally been a target of scorn and derision associated with suspicions of fifth columns and threats of

\textsuperscript{1489} R. Djokic, cited in \textit{ibid}. Djokic is also cited in Riley, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1490} Egan, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1491} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1492} Brown, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{1493} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1494} \textit{ibid.}, p. 71.
subversion.\textsuperscript{1495} The popular response towards dual citizenship is typically that it ‘strengthens incentives for migrants to retain homeland fealty, potentially hinders immigrant integration into the receiving society, and encourages natives’ suspicions of divided loyalty.’\textsuperscript{1496} The notion of dual citizenship ‘challenges Australians’ sense of “boundedness” in troublesome ways’ and as such popular fears have the potential to be exacerbated because these discussions usually take place at intersections between ‘concerns about loyalty and national identity’.\textsuperscript{1497} These kinds of fears are played out in recognition of the reality that national identity is not necessarily the same as the passport one holds.\textsuperscript{1498}

**Conclusion**

As discussed in this chapter, media coverage demonised Serbs as the “enemy” during the Kosovo war while sanctifying NATO air strikes as a noble and moral crusade. The media’s criticism of Serbs was littered with descriptions of them as evil, irrational, agitators, violent and inhumane. News reports overwhelmingly reinforced the impression that all Yugoslav Serbs, by virtue of their ethnicity, had contributed to the systematic persecution of ethnic Albanian Kosovars. Media coverage worked to naturalise a direct line of accountability between the actions of the Yugoslav government, army and military units, and the solidarity expressed by Serbs during the war.

The effect of this kind of media coverage was immediate and profound for Serbian Australians. It generated an emotional response that culminated in a series of major protests around Australia against the NATO campaign. The protesters contested these media images, disputing the notion that Serbs were somehow naturally disposed to violence, agitation and aggression. The Australian media’s response to the protests was to blanket the entire Serbian Australian community with a sense of shame for

\textsuperscript{1495} ibid. See also Scholte, op. cit., p. 172.
\textsuperscript{1496} Brown, op. cit., p. 71.
\textsuperscript{1497} ibid., p.72 and p.73.
\textsuperscript{1498} ibid., p. 74.
the violence conducted by a handful of protesters. Media discourse was coercive and demanded the protesters undertake measures to publicly reaffirm their loyalties to Australia.
Conclusion

This thesis has outlined the experience of the Kosovars in Australia alongside the role of the media in perpetuating the notion of “acceptability” in a broader debate about immigration. The evacuation of the Kosovar refugees to Australia highlighted a number of important and contemporary issues and raised questions about the conditions under which refugees have been accepted into the Australian community. Klaus Neumann made the point that recent debates over refugee policy have tended to lack an ‘informed historical perspective’, and ‘point[s] the finger at politicians and journalists, and at historians.’ He noted that:

Count the number of books written about the history of immigration in the past fifty years, and compare it to the number of books written about Australian military history, political history, social history or cultural history. Or count the number of articles about immigration and refugee topics published in the main journal in the field, *Australian Historical Studies*. Or the space accorded to immigration and refugee issues in general histories of postwar Australia. Neumann called for a more constructive debate about refugee policy, and identified several key areas that remain heavily under-researched. This thesis has covered several areas nominated as research priorities by Neumann.

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1500 ibid.

1501 ibid., p. 8. Neumann called for a more constructive debate about the historical implications of refugee policy, and identified six key areas that remain under-researched: ‘anti-alienism and refugee advocacy, the institution of asylum, engagement with the international refugee regime, the intersections between refugee and immigration policy, the evolution of the category of the refugee, and the admission and rejection of refugees’. See also p. 7, where he says: ‘A narrative that includes those six elements would, I hope, be one that foregrounds the complexity of the past.’
It has been shown that while the experience of the Kosovar refugees has remained largely neglected by scholarship, their plight played an important role in effecting the changes brought about in Australia’s refugee policy in 1999. The evacuation of the Kosovar refugees to Australia provided the initial impetus for the introduction of the Howard Government’s temporary protection regime.\textsuperscript{1502} The Howard Government’s Safe Haven program has been described with some accuracy as policy-making ‘on the run’.\textsuperscript{1503} The Government implemented this policy as a strategy to regain public favour - after having initially rejected the UNHCR’s request to assist Kosovar refugees. The Safe Haven program was hastily conceived and implemented as a response to the UNHCR’s sudden need to accommodate hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees waiting for help in Macedonia. The program also embodied an important and historical shift in Australian refugee policy from permanent to temporary protection.

A number of continuing practices have been central to the development of refugee policy in Australia. An example of a continuing practice is the public relations strategies employed by federal governments and the Department of Immigration. I have noted the work of immigration scholars such as Jupp, Kunz and Collins and identified a link between the way post-Second World War DPs and the Kosovars were “sold” to the Australian public by government officials. My thesis has demonstrated that the safe haven refugee policy had a strong undercurrent pandering to popular conceptions of which migrant/refugee groups qualify as “acceptable”. While the evacuation of the Kosovars to Australia was part of a global humanitarian mission, as was ostensibly the acceptance of the DPs after the Second World War, both instances allowed many Australians


\textsuperscript{1503} As noted in ‘Milošević shows his hypocrisy … as refugee policy is made on the run’ (editorial), \textit{op. cit.}
to reaffirm a triumphal sense of national virtue as central to conceptions of Australian citizenship.1504

Much of what has been outlined challenges the dominant representation of refugees in the media today. As Sharon Pickering observed: ‘what is absent from the press … is any consideration of seeking asylum from the point of view of the asylum seeker.’1505 I have discussed how the range of sources used in news media had a significant affect on the way public opinion formed in relation to the Kosovar refugees.

The arrival of the Kosovars at Sydney airport provided immediate positive publicity for the Howard Government. The Prime Minister, positioned on a ceremonial dais in front of the Australian flag, capitalised on an opportune moment for his government. At the same time, the Australian news media, which was given exclusive access to the event, reproduced a perception of the Howard Government as caring and compassionate. This thesis has showed that the media played a crucial role as mediator of the public’s understanding of the Safe Haven policy.

News reports commonly focussed on the notion that Australians saw themselves as the most generous people in the world and that their efforts in assisting the Kosovar refugees were highly commendable. However this same media coverage overlooked concern about the paradox that, while Australians may have supported compassion towards the refugees’ plight, the Government had introduced a new visa category that was highly restrictive. It trespassed on the Kosovars’ human rights.

This thesis has considered the quality of the accommodation facilities provided by the Howard Government to the Kosovar refugees. I discussed the impact of the isolation that was imposed by the Government on refugees offered accommodation in rural areas. The analysis of the Singleton barracks focussed in particular on protests by Kosovar refugees

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1505 Pickering, op. cit., p. 183.
who argued that the conditions at the army base were unsuitable for children, families and the elderly. I paid particular attention to the Government’s dealings with the Salihu family and the Immigration Minister’s efforts to demonise them in the media for not complying with the Safe Haven program.

My thesis has emphasised the importance of the relationship formed between the media and the Howard Government in responding to the Singleton protest, and how debate about the suitability of using army barracks was overshadowed in media coverage by the refugees’ “insult” to Australian hospitality. The Singleton incident generated significant public backlash to the Kosovars and popular outcry over their “ingratitude”. It was a crucial media event that transformed popular conceptions of the Kosovars from worthy and welcomed to complaining and ungrateful.

The Federal Government’s response to the issue of repatriation at the end of the Kosovo war was shaped by an element of coercion and a much more punitive attitude towards the refugees in comparison to most other countries. I documented the High Court challenge brought by Kosovar refugees against the Federal Government in April 2000 in an attempt to prevent their repatriation. It was also noted how media coverage worked to support the Federal Government’s repatriation program and its efforts to generate the consensus that those Kosovar refugees who refused to leave Australia voluntarily were “criminals” and “illegal” non-citizens which was a legitimate description of them in the wording of the Safe Haven legislation.

The final chapter of this thesis revisited some of the concepts I had discussed previously about popular Australian nationalism, identity and conceptions of migrants from the Balkans. It highlighted consistencies in the ways the media reproduced notions of the “Other” in relation to both ethnic Albanian Kosovars and Serbs living in Yugoslavia and Australia. I explored the relationship between the mass media, NATO and NATO-aligned countries (such as Australia) and evaluated the role of the media in facilitating support for the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia. It was noted how the news media worked to reproduce an image of Serbs as
“evil” and “uncivilised” and provided the subtext to popular criticism of anti-NATO protests staged by Serbs living in Australia.

My thesis has raised issues that continue to occupy a central place in discussions about Australia’s refugee policy. The influence of populism on Australia’s refugee policy remains strong. There are ongoing debates about the obligations of federal government to individual non-citizens who have been persecuted and sought Australia’s protection. The news media continues to play an important role in generating public consensus on asylum seekers.

The individual circumstances faced by refugees have often been overlooked within Australian political discourse. Many refugees who have experienced persecution and been granted protection in Australia have benefited from the compassion of the Australian community. The mutual benefits of this situation are often forgotten.

By conducting a prolonged study on the experience of the Kosovar refugees in Australia, I have increased my own understandings of the complexities and contradictions within Australia’s refugee policy. The study has allowed me to gain a clearer view of paradoxes in popular identity discourse in Australia, and how those aspects have come to determine changes and developments in refugee policy. This study has provided a window into what drives the generosity and compassion expressed by Australians when confronted by a humanitarian disaster. It has allowed me to understand their experiences of generosity as well as mean-spiritedness.

Through this study I acquired a greater appreciation of the notion that historical inquiry cannot substitute the authenticity of the lived experience. It is impossible as a researcher to fully grasp the emotional and physical impact of the lived experiences of the Kosovar refugees. It was difficult to engage these events through the study while endeavouring to remain objective and distance myself from the refugees and their circumstances. Still, the study has allowed me, in a sense, to bear witness to the journey of the Kosovars after they fled their homeland and were ferried to Australia, and my hope has been to convey part of this journey to the reader.
There are many aspects of the experience of the Kosovars that remain unexplored, but which I was unable to accommodate due to the analytical confines and time restraints of the study. As the thesis evolved the primary focus of the study and its sources centred on media and policy analysis. This was at the expense of oral testimonies and in-depth interviews such as those I had considered conducting with key government officials and former refugees.

There are many avenues that remain in terms of expanding the focus of this study outside of the policy and media-centric view of the story that I have presented. There is much need to incorporate the oral testimonies of the Kosovars and to allow for an appreciation of the voice of the Kosovars unmediated by government and media spin. In future research one aim is to incorporate oral sources into my existing analysis of Operation Safe Haven. I hope to conduct interviews with evacuees, NGOs, operational staff and government officials. These interviews are an important final step in my research for this case study. The approach will be to compare and contrast the testimonies of Operation Safe Haven evacuees with the narrative presented by the Australian media about them. This will be important in challenging the lack of voice offered to refugees in public debate.

As shown in this thesis public perceptions of Operation Safe Haven were significantly mediated by the Howard Government. Some Kosovar refugees were interviewed by the Australian media and featured in heavily stylised news pieces that supported the public relations strategy of the Department of Immigration. Some of the Kosovars were warned by immigration officials not to speak to journalists, though a number of refugees commented in the media about their experiences in Australia after being repatriated. They commented on the strictness of the regulations imposed on them by the Howard Government.

By incorporating oral testimonies into my analysis of Operation Safe Haven, the intention is to evaluate the salience of media representations of the Kosovar refugees alongside the Government’s purported stance toward them. This research will enable me to produce
new evidence about Operation Safe Haven from the perspective of the refugees.

It is not the role of researcher to make recommendations to governments on what they ought to do if and when they are faced with similar circumstances in the future. However, governments and policy makers would benefit immensely by taking into account the Howard Government’s experience with the Kosovars refugees. The Government’s response to the Kosovar refugees was paradoxical. This is because the Safe Haven program simultaneously advocated compassion and mean-spiritedness. It promoted both the need to fundamentally guarantee human rights as well as a legal paradigm in which refugees were no longer protected by the international human rights and refugee conventions. If anything else, governments and policy makers ought to consider avoiding these kinds of paradoxes which can (and did) lead to legal challenges and the legalising of a moral oxymoron.

Another aspect of the study that Australian federal governments ought to recognise is that they are obliged to respond to more than simply the desires of their national constituents. In a globalising world one of the roles of federal government is to act as a responsible global citizen and recognise the existence of and reasons for conventions on international human rights. National governments should strive to demonstrate an awareness of the international implications of their policy responses to humanitarian issues, and whether those responses reflect a national character that is forward-looking and capable of accommodating the changes brought about by developments in the modern world.
Post-Script: “I’d rather live in a tent, Mr Ruddock”

This thesis concluded by arguing for the need to restore the “humanity” of refugees (including their internationally recognised human rights) in Australian political discourse. I recognise the importance of moving beyond the victimisation of refugees in scholarship and acknowledging their agency as human beings.

The story of the Kosovar refugees does not end with their repatriation. Indeed, some of the Safe Haven Kosovars stayed in Australia and permanently re-resettled, though most of the refugees have moved on. In many ways, their lives continue to be shaped by Australia’s role in offering temporary Safe Haven and in facilitating their return home.

The shared experience of Kosovars is currently reflected in efforts to establish an independent, democratic system of government in the recently formed Republic of Kosovo. Cultural life in Kosovo is beginning to flourish twelve years after the end of the rule of the Serbian-Yugoslav regime. Vedat Bajrami, one of Kosovo’s best-known screen actors and comedians, continues to pursue a career in performance – which may well be related to his brief stint as a DJ on Hobart community radio in service of the Brighton Safe Haven refugees.1506

Australia’s treatment of the Kosovar refugees has had ongoing consequences for their lives. The Kosovars’ continuing story is one of significant human interest. Recognising the need to provide refugees with a “voice” and “face” in the debates that impact on them, I have decided to include an anecdote from Sabit Salihu and a description of his family’s arrival home after departing Australia. The Salihu family departed Sydney airport for Rome on the morning of 22nd June 1999. From there, the family told The Australian that they planned to fly to Macedonia, with the intention of then driving to their hometown of Ferizaj.1507 The town had suffered

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1506 See A. Barbeliuk, ‘No place like home’, The Daily Telegraph, 26th June 1999, p. 121.
heavily from Serb attacks and bombardments, although the fighting had ceased and the town declared safe by UN observers.\textsuperscript{1508}

*The Australian* documented the Salihu family’s home remained intact but most of their property was taken by Serbian troops.\textsuperscript{1509} It was further described how imported clothes worth around $US50,000 had been stolen from the Salihu residence which Sabit had planned to distribute at local markets. Sabit told *The Australian* that the family’s life savings had been invested in the clothes. He said he did not know how the family would be able to survive because there were no other forms of employment available in the current climate.\textsuperscript{1510}

A great number of homes in Ferizaj had been destroyed in the war. Reporting from Ferizaj on 28\textsuperscript{th} June, Matthew Stevens from *The Australian* stated that there was no longer any major tension in the town between ethnic Serbs and Albanians. He stipulated that this was probably because most ethnic Serbs had left when NATO forces arrived. UN staff commented that Serbs would eventually try to return. However, as Sabit Salihu suggested, local Albanians would find it difficult to ‘be friendly’.\textsuperscript{1511}

*The Australian* also shed new light on aspects of the Salihu experience in Australia. The elderly Elmaze Salihu told the newspaper of her concerns about staying in Australia, that with her extremely poor health she feared she would die in a place other than Kosovo.\textsuperscript{1512} *The Australian* described how, for Sabit, ‘getting Elmaze home was what all the bitterness in Australia was really about’.\textsuperscript{1513} Sabit further commented: ‘This is her place, her home. She should be here. We all should. It doesn’t matter that there is little food or no doctor. This is where we must be.’\textsuperscript{1514}
On 17th August 1999, the *Herald* depicted Sabit as much more relaxed and comfortable since returning home with his family. The newspaper described Sabit as the ‘Kosovar refugee who quit Australia after 17 days and became a media pariah’, who was ‘regretful but not repentant’. The *Herald* depicted Sabit as casually ‘chain-smoking’ while offering thanks to the Australian Government: ‘I thank them because I know it’s a problem when you take a crowd of people into a civilised state, because there is another mentality operating there, a different mentality from the one that operated where we had come from.’

The *Herald* confirmed reports about the lack of employment available in Kosovo, and described how ‘looters’ had ‘ransacked’ many homes in Ferizaj. However, the Salihu ‘3-bedroom house, unlike the homes of several neighbours, escaped the torches of retreating Serb forces’. Sabit informed the *Herald* that he had recently obtained employment as a translator for the Polish troops serving in Ferizaj with the UN peacekeeping force.

The *Herald* further noted the manner in which Sabit, sitting in ‘his neat, but austere, loungeroom’, recalled ‘the conversation that probably

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1515 Mann, ‘An “ungrateful Ringleader” Who Has No Regrets’, *op. cit.*
1516 S. Salihu, cited in *ibid.*
1517 *ibid.*
1518 *ibid.*
sealed his return to postwar Kosovo’. As Sabit commented: ‘[Ruddock] said to me through an interpreter: “So, you want to go back even though your home has probably been destroyed?” And I replied: “I will go back just to live in a tent in the backyard.”’ The Herald added: ‘He can see the humour in it now.’

In October 2010, Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard followed through on her promise to the Australian Greens (who formed an integral part of her minority Government) to allow a moral debate about the war in Afghanistan. Both sides of the House used this as an opportunity to make their defence policies known and to justify their support for the war from a moral perspective.

A similar debate might be allowed over the moral implications of some of the mainstays of Australia’s current refugee policy. These include the moral implications of housing refugees in isolated, quarantine-like camps that are typically manned by armed personal and located either offshore or in remote desert towns. One of the reasons for this is to prevent refugees from mixing with the general population. This fear of refugees being “let loose” into the community often emerges quite subtly in political and media discourse, and few politicians will publicly challenge this popular mindset.

These kinds of fears dominated media coverage of a Woodside (near Adelaide) town meeting as recently as 3rd November 2010, when Liberal Party leader Tony Abbott turned out in support of the panic-stricken view of the local community. Abbott continues to be one of John Howard’s most vocal supporters. While admitting that refugees had to be housed somewhere, Abbott emphasised the grievance that locals were not consulted before Immigration Minister Chris Bowen announced refugees would be housed in the local community. Abbott also commented that the housing to be offered to refugees was too good for them. He argued that asylum seekers were being given the “red carpet” treatment. He had, as

1519 ibid.
1520 S. Salihu, cited in ibid.
1521 In ibid.
Bowen noted, taken a punitive approach to the issue of housing quality when it came to refugees.

Politicking and the vexed question of appropriate housing for refugees aside, Abbott presents a strong case in calling for more dialogue with communities about this issue. The furore over the placement of refugees in local communities has provided the Federal Government with an opportunity to promote the moral implications of refugee policy and win community support for the placement of refugees in non-isolated conditions. The question is whether they will take up this opportunity. Lacking more assertive leadership in the current political climate, the national community has not seemed to be able move beyond its fear of refugees living “among us”. The Prime Minister’s approach to refugee policy ought to encourage Australians to imagine themselves as global citizens with international responsibilities.

The most significant development in refugee policy in recent times was the High Court decision on 11th November 2010 to allow refugees being held in offshore detention the right to appeal rejections of their applications for asylum by the Department of Immigration. This was a major step forward in terms of dismantling the temporary protection regime established by the Howard Government. The extent to which the Gillard Government will eradicate the policy of temporary protection, however, has been brought into question. In April 2011 Bowen showed a willingness to reintroduce temporary protection visas and stated that he was considering issuing Safe Haven Visas after asylum seekers had protested at Villawood detention centre in Sydney.
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2. Governmental and Organisational Reports


3. Doctoral Theses


4. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)


5. **International Conventions and Treaties**


6. Digital Media Sources


Appendix 1: Images of Kosovar children, April to early May 1999

Appendix 2: Images of the Kosovar refugees before and after their arrival in Australia

Above: smiling refugees board a Qantas jet during a stopover in Bangkok, from The Daily Telegraph (Afternoon Edition), 7th May 1999, p. 1

Above: photographs of Kosovar children at East Hills Safe Haven, from The Daily Telegraph, 9th May 1999, p. 5; below, female Australian Army Private with refugee boy at East Hills Safe Haven, from The Australian, 10th May 1999, p. 2
Appendix 3: Images of the first Kosovar refugees to land at Sydney airport in the *Telegraph*

Appendix 4: Images of the Kosovar refugees in *The Australian*

Appendix 5: Media images of the Singleton Barracks

From *The Australian*, 16th June 1999, p. 2 (left); and 17th June 1999, p. 4 (below)
Appendix 6: Media images of the Salihus

Photographs of the Salihus in *The Australian*: boarding a taxi at Singleton Hospital (left), 18th June 1999, p. 4; stopping at a McDonald's restaurant on the way to Sydney (bottom left), 18th June 1999, p. 1; and, arriving at East Hills Safe Haven (below), 19-20th June 1999, p. 6.

Left: Elmaze and Sabit Salihu arriving at East Hills barracks, from *The Daily Telegraph*, 18th June 1999, p. 4
Appendix 7: The Serb “riots” as depicted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*

From *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29th March 1999, p. 6