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'Islamophobia Kills'. But Where Does it Come From?

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Abstract

This paper examines the global provenance of Australian Islamophobia in the light of the Christchurch massacre perpetrated by a white-supremacist Australian. Anti-Muslim racism in Australia came with British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Contemporary Islamophobia in Australia operates as part of a successor empire, the United States-led 'Empire of Capital'. Anti-Muslim stories, rumours, campaigns and prejudices are launched from Australia into global circulation. For example, the spate of group sexual assaults in Sydney over 2000–2001 were internationally reported as 'ethnic gang rapes'. The handful of Australian recruits to, and supporters of, IS, is recounted in the dominant narrative as part of a story propagated in both the United Kingdom and Australia about Islamist terrorism, along with policy responses ostensibly aimed at countering violent extremism and targeting Muslims for surveillance and intervening to effect approved forms of 'integration'.

Keywords

Christchurch massacre; Islamophobia; white supremacism; extremism; colonialism.

Christchurch, 15 March 2019

'Islamophobia kills,' intoned the Imam of Christchurch's Al Noor mosque, as he buried the dead of his congregation (Fouda 2019). On 15 March 2019, the world had received the harrowing news of that day's 'Christchurch massacre', in which an Australian white supremacist cold-bloodedly and systematically slaughtered 50 worshippers. (The 51st casualty died some five weeks later, after unsuccessful surgery.) It is essential, for perspective, to keep firmly in mind the long and atrocious history of self-appointed white Australian guardians of the ethnic purity of what they claim as 'our land', using overwhelming firepower to mass murder unarmed people in a campaign of what would later be widely understood as genocide. Scholars of the 'Frontier Wars' have told enough of the grim story to provide glimpses of the murderous intersectionality of racist supremacism, toxic white-settler masculinity and their weaponry[1]. Nor is the killing past, given the ongoing regime of early, avoidable and violent death visited on Indigenous peoples of the Australian continent.

This article is about another form of racism, although, as Ghassan Hage (2017) argued, all forms share underlying causal relations. The country that the killer designated 'our land', in the Christchurch case, was New Zealand/Aotearoa. New Zealand media quickly reported that the Christchurch massacre was the largest mass killing in New Zealand's history. It was not[2], as Australia's own 'Frontier Wars' might suggest to us. Nor was the white-settler, white-supremacist, gun-toting masculinity of the Christchurch assassin wholly an import from White Australia (see Ghumkhor 2019). The killer reportedly found fertile soil and a nourishing environment. I argue here that the phenomenon is global, but suggest that settler colonialism produces an especially virulent strain. This article will demonstrate that the 'exterminism' (Hage 2004) inherent in Islamophobia, and most visible at its 'extremes', arose in its Australian manifestation from the white-supremacist settler colonialism of the British Empire.

It was a 28-year-old white-supremacist Australian gunman, declaring 'Europa rises!', who shot dead many New Zealand Muslims—51, as it turned out—attending two Christchurch mosques for Friday prayers on 15 March 2019; many more were injured He had live-streamed the atrocity via the internet for maximum terror, and many commercial television channels obliged by rebroadcasting footage, not only from the perspective of the murderer, but literally along the barrel of his automatic weapon (*Media Watch* 2019). He also left a 74-page cut-and-pasted 'manifesto', highly reminiscent of the longer (1,518 page) 'compendium' of mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik 'book launched' (Breivik's terms) by the multiple killings in Norway in 2011. The resemblance of the murderers' manuals was not coincidence, but copy. The Christchurch terrorist, a fitness instructor resident in Dunedin and formerly of Grafton in regional New South Wales, claimed to have sought the 'blessing' of an obsessive, Islamophobic, ethnic-cleaning group proclaiming themselves as latter-day 'Knights Templar', to which Breivik belonged. Breivik's own manifesto shows influence from globally syndicated right-wing journalists such as British-based Melanie Phillips, and globetrotting Islamophobe politicians such as Netherlands parliamentarian Geert Wilders (who has twice visited Australia touting his racism on speaking tours). The murderous Islamophobia of this obsessed Australian internet warrior and firearms fanatic is thoroughly global in its provenance and terrorising effect.

The incoherent and rambling 'manifesto' of Brenton Tarrant, the Christchurch terrorist, invokes the very 'old enemies, the Saracens' that animated loyal imperialist New South Wales citizens in 1885, as we shall see. In a timeless invocation of the same crusader imagery, Tarrant referenced (2019: 26) the exhortations of Pope Urban II in 1095 for the mounting of an 'armed pilgrimage' (Crusade) to drive Muslims out of Europe, with a view to pressing on to take the 'Holy Land'. This mere reference in Tarrant's brief 'manifesto' is spelled out in several places in Breivik's (2011: 88 and passim), which is either the source or shares a common origin in the internet-circulated ideology of contemporary right-wing Islamophobes. In this perverse racist ideology, contemporary Muslim populations in Europe—both longstanding and immigrant—are

represented as 'invaders' who must be killed or expelled, else enslavement, rape and other degradation be imposed on rightful and properly belonging Europeans. It goes on, with 'our' victory ('we Europeans', if you please) at the gates of Vienna in 1683 (Tarrant 2019: 42) held up as an inspiring example of necessary sacrifice. Again and again, 'the Turk' is presented as inimical, from the Siege of Vienna in the seventeenth century to Erdogan today:

> ... if you attempt to live in European lands, anywhere west of the Bosphorus. We will kill you and drive you roaches from our lands. We are coming for Constantinople and we will destroy every mosque and minaret in the city. (Tarrant 2019: 28)

Tarrant jests darkly about ethnic cleansing, describing his work (in online in-joke racist slang) as a 'kebab removalist'. His connections with the real (as against the legendary) Vienna include a €1,500 donation in 2018 to the far-right Austrian 'Identitarian' movement (Oltermann 2019), itself using premises of the right-wing, Islamophobic Austrian Freedom Party (Besser 2019). This form of white nationalist anti-Muslim racism is quite globalised in the twenty-first century, and has strong footholds in the cultural and political 'mainstream'.

Anders Behring Breivik described his mass murders in Oslo and Utøya as 'a necessary act ... a war against the rule by Muslims'. Morgan and Poynting (2012: 1) argued that this was not mere insanity, but bore the racist and ultimately exterminist rationality of 'a revanchist nationalist politics that has gained popularity in many parts of the contemporary West. While right-wing political organizations have scurried to denounce Breivik ... it is clear that he drew on their tortured political logic to rationalize his actions'. Exactly so, also, in Tarrant's case: 'Remove the invaders, retake Europe' [all in capitals] is his slogan (2019: 50). This concept of 'Europe' is perversely geographically promiscuous. Of course, it incorporates lands claimed by British white settlement: Australia is 'a finger on the hand of the body of Europe' (2019: 18). This belief is not a million miles from those of several racist right-wing nationalist parties in Australia, including those with parliamentary representation. For a self-proclaimed 'warrior' obsessed with traditional lands, 'race' and invasion, Tarrant appears ironically oblivious to Indigenous people, in either Australia or Aotearoa (New Zealand), where he is an immigrant, but he has no problems presuming to reclaim 'our' land. It is a sort of *terra nullius* in the head. To belabour the point about empire, perhaps, the whole imaginary takes for granted European ('white') colonialism and the entitlement of its beneficiaries. In this imaginary, Muslims are not 'white', not European and do not belong.

Islamophobic exterminism did not come to Australia and New Zealand from Norway with Breivik's acts of terrorism and racist call to arms in 2011. Rather, it is circulated globally, and draws on ideologies of European supremacism and ethno-nationalism. This means that tropes propagated in Breivik's 'compendium' via his Oslo atrocities in 2011 were available to be taken up in the antipodes by Tarrant and once more distributed globally. To be clear, this does not suggest that the Islamophobia manifested in Christchurch arose in any direct way from European colonialism, let alone Scandinavian ethno-nationalism. It is important, however, to note that white supremacism was coeval with European invasion, plunder and colonialism, and its ideologies bear the bloody fingerprints of these processes. So, a white Australian obsessed with imagined 'invasion' and cultural displacement by Muslims can rant about New Zealand as 'our lands' without reference to Māori people or to the invasion and cultural displacement of Indigenous people in that land or in his native Australia, by Europeans. These processes are simply assumed in Tarrant's manifesto to be an ineluctable consequence of European superiority.

The 'invasions' by non-European, non-white, and non-Christian 'hordes' that were an object of white Australian panic in the nineteenth century (as in other white-settler societies including

New Zealand, the United States and Canada) were a projection onto the Other of colonialist fears of the very processes that they themselves had perpetrated and continued.

Islamophobia as an Ideology of Empire

Islamophobia in Australia is not just in Australia. It is part of thoroughly globalised processes that incorporate this nation into empire. These processes, from an earlier empire, predate the existence of the Australian nation state. They are celebrated in curious place names: for example, in my hometown of Sydney. The General Gordon pub was built in 1885 in inner-city Marrickville, a mile from where I am writing. Its namesake and successor exists (recently fire-damaged) today, a hundred yards away from the original. In that year, after then-popular hero Gordon was killed in Khartoum in the Mahdi uprising, the colony of New South Wales raised public funds to support a military contingent to the 'Soudan' expedition, as urged in a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* by former British army commissary officer Sir Edward Strickland, KCB: to do battle against 'England's and all Christendom's old enemies, the Saracens' (Hutchinson and Myers 1885, cited in Poynting and Noble 2007: 89). Huge crowds flocked to Circular Quay to farewell the troopship, and a bronze plaque near there commemorates this (gestural, as it turned out) colonial contribution to the Empire. There is a Khartoum Road, named after the same battle, near Macquarie University, in Sydney's north-western suburbia.

There is nothing intrinsically Islamic about these 'old enemies' vanquished (eventually, for a time) by the empire; Islam was just part of the package of the otherness, along with non-Whiteness/non-Europeanness, of these brown or black non-Christians who stood in opposition to the empire.

Macassans

Historically, Muslims came to the Australian continent before Europeans. 'Macassan' gatherers of an edible invertebrate, trepang ('sea cucumber'), principally coming from the island of Sulawesi in what is now Indonesia, regularly visited in their 'prau' boats and worked large stretches of the northern coastline, harvesting trepang and processing it onshore: (cutting, drying by fire, and packing), for later trade with China, where the commodity was prized (Clarke and May 2013). Macassan trepang fisherman were certainly doing this by the mid-eighteenth century, but there is evidence that they came several centuries before that. They traded and otherwise interrelated with Aboriginal peoples of the north, leaving traces of their language, and indeed their religion, as well as artefacts, in local Indigenous cultures. There was some intermarriage. Most anthropological accounts indicate peaceable relations, certainly devoid of warfare. Thus, while Muslims came regularly over this time and stayed for extended periods, there was no Islamophobia. Armed British colonialism eventually put a stop to the seasonal migrations, and the trade. It also introduced Islamophobia.

Ghans

In 1860, some 20 camels were imported to Australia from Karachi, accompanied by three Afghan cameleers, to help explore across the central desert (Deen 2011: 2). These prodigious beasts of burden soon proved their superiority as a means of cargo transport in desert environments, and in the 1870s, camels were invaluable in the laying of the transcontinental (Adelaide to Darwin) telegraph cable (Kabir 2004: 42). By the 1880s, camels and their 'Afghan' drivers were widely employed, especially with the opening up of the Western Australian goldfields. Not all of the so-called 'Afghans' were from Afghanistan and its surrounds; there were also Punjabis and Bengalis and others from various parts of the Indian subcontinent (Kabir 2004: 41). Not all were Muslims (there were some Sikhs and Hindus), though the majority were. Camel trains dramatically outperformed the bullock teams in remote arid regions, and there was fierce competition

manifesting itself in racism and violence. As well as competing for custom, the camel and bullock teams competed for scarce water. Use of waterholes for pre-prayer mandatory ablution of Muslim camel-drivers, as well as supposed pollution of watering places by dirty, smelly camels (unlike clean, sweet-smelling bullocks!) led to fights and several instances of murder—with white impunity (Kabir 2004: 52–53; Deen 2011: 11–34).

Over 2,000 Afghans migrated to Australia between 1870 and the turn of the century. This period coincided with the height of British Victorian-era colonialism, along with all its assumptions of British racial superiority. The latter part of the nineteenth century also saw vigorous campaigning for a 'white Australia', and the 'Afghans', along with the much more numerous Chinese and also Pacific Islander indentured labourers, were subjected to discrimination, vilification and immigration restriction. Many Afghans remigrated, and by 1911, only 320 were recorded as remaining in Australia (Kabir 2004: 66).

The 'whiteness' of 'white Australia' took Christianity as a defining feature; the Afghans were vilified as 'heathens', 'pagans' and the like. The editor of *The Inquirer* in Western Australia, white supremacist Frederick Vosper, wrote in its pages in 1895:

> We object to servile labour of all kinds, and my reason for giving special prominence to the believers in Islam, is that they are at present the most unpleasantly conspicuous and obnoxious of all the servile races. At the same time I admit that I should regard the establishment of Islamism in this country as nothing short of a national calamity. (cited in Deen 2011: 8).

The othering as 'servile' did not prevent common disparagement of Afghans for perceived arrogance, misplaced sense of superiority and being 'uppity'. Ideological elements of their racialisation, such as supposed dirtiness, disease-bearing, criminality, sexual depravity, mistreatment of women and other 'foreign' attributes, inevitably intermingled anti-Asian or anti-coloured racism with anti-Muslim racism. The same forms of racism could be found throughout British colonisation on the Indian subcontinent. In the British white settlement colonies of Australia, they were exacerbated by campaigns (often against labour migration) to keep the country 'white'. (Aborigines were commonly assumed to be a 'dying race', with their killing not mentioned as much as practised.)

Hanifa Deen (2011: 16) recounts some of the sexualised racist epithets levelled at Afghans on the Western Australian goldfields in the 1890s. A correspondent in the *Menzies Miner* wrote, in 1897, 'Next to the dirty Chinks the Afghans take the cake … wives they have none and their morals are exceedingly questionable' (cited in Deen 2011: 6). Similar diatribes in Western Australian goldfields newspapers raged about 'lustful aliens, ready to bribe, seduce and discard their white wives, after producing scores of half caste children' (Vosper, cited in Deen 2011: 16). (The present prominent Islamophobic theme of Muslims 'outbreeding us' has been remarked by Shakira Hussein [2016], Randa Abdel-Fattah [2017], and many others, and indeed is the foremost concern of the Christchurch murderer. We shall return to this theme, among other elements of global Islamophobia to be examined.) Frederick Vosper, white-Australia campaigning editor of the *Coolgardie Miner*, asked rhetorically, 'Is there any man in Perth who would like to see his daughter in a Mohammedan harem?' (cited in Deen 2011: 16).

This account of the empire-borne origins of Islamophobia in Australia will (for space reasons) have to suffice for the present purposes. For now, we discuss the emergence, a century later, of the actual concept of 'Islamophobia', and its global context, of which Australia was very much a part.

Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Islamophobia

Iran's, eventually Islamic, revolution in 1979, and particularly the November capture of the United States (US) embassy in Tehran and accompanying hostage-taking, saw the Ayatollah Khomeini raised as a folk devil in the US and the contemporary 'empire of capital' (Wood 2003) which it leads. The Ayatollah was arguably the first in a procession of turban-wearing and long-bearded Muslim folk demons, whose faces on television would excite fear and become a symbol of the despised 'Other'. Structurally ignorant of the foregoing imperialist intervention in Iran and multinational interests in its petroleum that had led to the oppressive Pahlevi regime overthrown by the revolution, most people in the US-led empire grasped readily available folk explanations involving centuries-old common sense about the irrationality and backwardness of Muslims. The hostage crisis lasted from late 1979 to early 1981, and the ideological backlash against this forceful resistance to US imperialism, of course gave currency to widespread anti-Muslim ideology —and hate crime—throughout the global West in the 1980s. 'Islamophobia' became common currency.

The aversion among the US elite towards barbarous, brutal, benighted, 'extremist' Islamists (a formula infamously propounded by right-wing opinion-leader Samuel Huntington [1997] in his forecasting and encouraging a 'clash of civilizations') did not hinder them from covertly arming and assisting a drawn-out and ultimately successful proxy war against the Soviet Union waged by Mujahiddeen militants in Afghanistan in that same decade of the 1980s, in what Christian Parenti (2002) dubbed 'America's Jihad'. These were the progenitors of the Taliban.

The term 'Islamophobia' came into common usage in English after the Runnymede Trust's (1997) publication of its seminal and influential report, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*. That report claimed that the term had been coined in the late 1980s, and was first used in print in 1991, in a US publication. This chronology is significant, since 1989 marked the infamous 'Rushdie Affair' in which Ayatollah Khomeini declared a 'fatwa' sentencing the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Salman Rushdie to death for insulting the Prophet in his book *Satanic Verses.* The publication, occasioning huge public protests from Bombay to Bradford (the latter highly televised in the 'West'), drew international attention, and became symbolic of the purported illiberalism and unenlightenment of Muslims, and their lack of integration and assimilability in Western societies, in a common Islamophobic trope.

Further, 1990–1991 saw the US-led military intervention of the 'Coalition of the Willing' in Kuwait, following that country's invasion by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Australia was 'willing'. This country's military personnel were televised skylarking on a warship with tea towels over their heads (another Islamophobic trope). The subsequent deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis following the pursuing invasion and the years-long blockade denying foodstuffs and medicines and occasioning the deaths of innocent civilians, including children, on a genocidal scale, produced resounding unconcern in Australia. The victims were Arabs, Muslims, and over there in the 'Third World'. It should not be necessary to point out that they were victims of war crimes, of massive state crimes, and that these wrongs and the associated (imperial) impunity are properly of concern to criminologists. Of interest to us here is the racist ideology that rationalises and legitimates such imperialist crime. This ideology also inspires widespread hate crime on an everyday basis in Australia (see, for instance, Poynting and Noble 2004; Iner 2018).

Despite Muslim and Arab Kuwait being allies, there was an upsurge, contemporaneous with the 'first' Gulf War, of anti-Muslim hate crime in Australia, including tearing hijabs from the heads of women in the street (Poynting and Mason 2007). These victims included Indonesian women: white nationalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia coalesce and are bundled in contradictory and incoherent ideological baggage. Islamophobia was by this stage revived and well entrenched in both populist and elite discourses of the 'West'.

In its ground-breaking intervention in the United Kingdom (UK), the Runnymede report (1997) set out eight facets of Islamophobia, presented as a 'closed' disposition towards Islam and Muslims, with enmity aroused by prejudice arising from lack of understanding. Though many shortcomings of this paradigm have been criticised (including in post-9/11 works cited below), it did reflect a social reality and laid groundwork for a deeper understanding of this. The basic elements were: Islam as monolithic, static and backward-looking; Islam as alien to non-Muslim cultures and separatist in reaction to them, lacking any commonality or intercultural exchange with the West; Islam as inferior to Western societies and culture—barbaric, irrational, primitive and uniquely patriarchal; Islam as inherently violent, aggressive, supportive of terrorism and intent on civilisational confrontation; Islam as an improperly political ideology disguised as religion; refusal to entertain any Muslim critique of the 'West'; the deployment of hostility towards Islam to rationalise discrimination against Muslims and their social exclusion in 'Western' societies; the taken-for-grantedness and normalisation of anti-Muslim hostility.

We can find all these elements to be pervasive in Australia over the last two decades, and still. My point is that they are far from exclusive to this country. Local ideologues take them up, from the globally circulating Islamophobia, and also launch Australian instances and variants into that global circuit. In the contemporary international upsurge of right-wing nationalist, nativist and anti-Muslim populism as the 'war on terror' meets the Global Financial Crisis (Vieten and Poynting 2016), a renewal of the concept of Islamophobia has been called for. Arun Kundnani (2016) rightly identified the shortcomings in the early Runnymede approach, through its liberalism, individualism and lack of structural understanding of the roots and functions of anti-Muslim racism. Too often liberal commentators characterise anti-Muslim racism as mere prejudice, an aberration of wrong-headed individuals, to be corrected by better information and convincing argument (Hage 2017).

A New Definition and Analysis

The UK parliament's All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (in late 2018) produced the following definition of Islamophobia, which has been adopted by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB): 'Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness'. This is glossed by the MCB (2018) as follows:

- Islamophobia is a form of racism.
- Islamophobia is more than just anti-Muslim hatred or bigotry; and
- Islamophobia does not incorporate criticism of Islam as a faith but some people may hide behind 'criticism of Islam' when engaging in Islamophobia.

I want to underline here that this racism that is Islamophobia, like most modern racisms, arises from colonialism, from imperialism: it is rooted in empire (see, in the Australian context, Al-Asaad 2014; Abdel-Fattah 2017; Lentin 2017; Morsi 2017). Though the empires may be different and structured in new forms, this is as much the case contemporaneously as it was in 1885. Deepa Kumar, in *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, distils five 'myths' about Islam that have become hegemonic in the present US-led empire: that Islam is monolithic; that 'Islam is a uniquely sexist religion'; that Muslims are 'incapable of reason and rationality'; that Islam is 'inherently violent'; and that 'Muslims are incapable of democracy and self-rule' (2012: 41–60). The first of these can be found continually in Australia in the paranoia that a monolithic, infiltrating and usurping Islam seeks to impose a uniform canon of mediaeval, misogynist backward and brutal 'sharia law', which would render unlawful practices currently lawful in the West, and uphold the legitimacy of practices commonly illegal in Western nation states. This was evident among the violent, Islamophobic Cronulla rioters in 2005 (*Four Corners* 2006; Hussein and Poynting 2017); it can be found, for instance, in the propaganda of the Australian Liberty Alliance, and is

prominent in Pauline Hanson's speeches and her party's policies. It is articulated by right-wing columnist Andrew Bolt, and by globetrotting Islamophobes Geert Wilders and Milo Yiannopoulos (among others) when they tour Australia and are fawned upon by aggressive culture warriors of the right.

This first myth is related to the second: that Islam is, supposedly uniquely among world religions, hyperpatriarchal (and indeed homophobic)—and of course, uniformly so. The unlawful imposition of veiling, wife-beating, child marriage, female genital cutting, persecution of homosexuality, one-sided divorce laws, inequitable rules of evidence in rape cases and criminalisation of sex outside of marriage: these are just among the more common Islamophobic nightmares about this demonised 'sharia law'. The purported incapacity for reason is held to be criminogenic, especially in combination with the supposedly culturally inherent tendency towards (especially male) violence. Together, these two mythical qualities are taken to lead to the common resort to terrorism in asserting political Islam. Thus, the 'war on terror' is legitimised by these myths; when Osama Bin Laden was not to be found there, the 2002 invasion of Afghanistan was, as argued forcefully by Shakira Hussein (2016), belatedly and cynically rationalised as a benevolent Western effort to liberate Afghan women from oppression by the Taliban.

Kundnani's (2016) list of ideological elements of Islamophobia begins with 'Muslims are prone to terrorism'. He stressed that the elements are not mutually exclusive, nor is the list exhaustive. Inspired by Hall et al. (1978), Kundnani insisted that this 'lay ideology' provides the 'common sense' that, with its monopoly of primary definers, sets the horizon of intelligibility of public discussion and popular understanding about Islam—and terrorism—in the contemporary West. Understandings beyond these horizons are rendered irrelevant to the 'debate', or inconceivable. The other 'traces' that he distils are: 'Muslims are *extremists*'; 'Muslim men engage in *oppression* of women, children and minorities'; 'Muslims engage in *infiltration*'; and 'Muslims are *sexually dysfunctional*', leading to sexual predatoriness, 'grooming' and rape by Muslim men, and the 'demographic threat' of giving birth to 'too many children' by Muslim women in nations to which they have immigrated (Kundnani 2016: 3–4, original emphasis). These last two 'traces' of Islamophobia can be found repeatedly in right-wing populist discourse in Australia, including from parliamentarians and media 'personalities'.

This was common sense circulating at the time of the Cronulla riots, picked up and rearticulated by opinion-shapers. Riot participant 'Mark', in Liz Jackson's (2006) remarkable 'Riot and Revenge' *Four Corners* documentary, worried that 'they' are going to 'outbreed us'. Western Sydney MP and former Howard government minister Danna Vale said exactly the same thing in February 2006, just after the Cronulla riots. It persists. The same trope was circulated in online commentary around the 2015 launch of the Australian Liberty Alliance, as well as by Roger French, an interlocutor on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's national television *Q & A* program in 2018, and by Reclaim Australia in February 2019. Now, of course, it is right up front in Tarrant's (2019: 3) disturbed rave: 'It's the birth rates! It's the birth rates! It's the birth rates!'. The same demographic paranoia can be found in Breivik's *2083* (2011: 87 and passim).

The notion of Muslim men as deviant and sexually predatory is also a stock element of globalised Islamophobia. The notorious 'ethnic gang rapes' in western Sydney in 2000 and 2002 were widely represented as resulting from cultural predispositions among Muslim communities that had failed to integrate into 'Western' society. These representations were peddled by right-wing, anti-multiculturalist Australian journalists such as Janet Albrechtsen, Paul Sheehan, Michael Duffy and Miranda Devine. Of course the story went around the world—and back again—picked up and circulated by their ideological counterparts on various continents. Albrechtsen misrepresented French and Danish sources about a similar, supposedly Muslim immigrant phenomenon, in Continental Europe, as was shown by *Media Watch* (2002) and is detailed in *Bin Laden in the Suburbs* (Poynting et al. 2004: 140–152) and perceptively analysed by Dagistanli and Grewal

(2016: 119–142). The point is that the journalistic telling of the story in Australia, with its morals about violent Muslim misogyny of young immigrant men, was inflected by (distorted and falsified) accounts from the other side of the world, while conversely, the Australian crimes were reported in Europe as an object lesson for threatened ethnic majorities. In Britain and North America, they were taken up and syndicated by the likes of ideologues such as Melanie Phillips and Mark Steyn, from where they quickly found their way into white supremacist and anti-immigration hate sites online. Breivik's manifesto quotes from these, and Tarrant's (drawing on Wikipedia) cites the group sexual assault cases some 18 to 19 years on, as reason for ethnic cleansing of Muslims. The anti-Muslim racialising of the crimes in Australia was a seamless part of a global process; this continues to circulate and resonate on the web.

The 'gang rape' crimes in Sydney were heinous, violent, callous and degrading, as such offences usually are. The point is that the Islamophobic accounts of them depicted them as arising from Muslim culture (or, in some versions, Muslim immigrant subcultures), and attributed these qualities to Muslim culture. Some Aboriginal commentators rightly pointed out that gang rape had been perpetrated by white Australians since colonisation, and that there was nothing inherently Muslim about it.

There were in fact two groups of perpetrators and two sets of crimes—the first set committed in 2000 by those who became known as the 'Skaf gang' and the second set in 2002 by perpetrators known by their trial identity as the 'K' brothers. The former were largely second-generation Lebanese immigrant young men, and the latter were mostly first-generation Pakistani immigrant young men from one family (with one Nepalese friend). To the anti-Muslim ideologues, they were all essentially Muslims, acting out the inherent deviancies of Muslim culture, perceived as monolithic from Lebanon to Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province to Sydney suburban Bankstown or Ashfield.

The story of these gang rapes as exemplar of the sexualised violent deviance of Muslim young men in 'Western' societies continues to circulate a generation later. In the context of anti-Muslim moral panic over Sydney's Martin Place massacre, by a deranged serial perpetrator of domestic violence with a licensed rifle, in 2016, *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Paul Sheehan later, gullibly and irresponsibly (at best), reported a completely fictitious account of 'Middle Eastern rape culture' said to be terrorising Sydney, supposedly informed by a former nurse, 'Louise' who falsely claimed to have been subjected to violent group sexual assault by Muslim men in the streets of central Sydney (Hussein and Poynting 2017: 339–341). The account was far-fetched and did not ring true in many respects, and yet the prominent journalist Sheehan found it plausible. To the extent that it resonated with current common sense, the once respectable broadsheet newspaper saw fit to run the uncorroborated story (later easily proven false) on its front page.

The Christchurch killer's manifesto (Tarrant, 2019: 31–20) lists URLs to Wikipedia items on both the 2000 and 2002 sets of Sydney gang rapes, under the heading, 'The rape of European women invaders' (sic). Under the same heading, he lists a number of notorious cases of 'grooming', sexual exploitation of minors and child sexual assault that have occurred in recent years in the UK, notably in Rochdale and Rotherham in England's north. The linking of the two spates of crime in the two countries has been widely circulated in racist discussions on the web, and in the media columns and programs of those for whom blatant Islamophobia has become a profitable commodity. There is not room here to discuss these UK cases; suffice to note, there is ample evidence that such egregious crimes are not unique to Muslim communities in Britain, and that there is nothing inherently 'Muslim' about them. The Islamophobia of the public discussion of these cases has been well analysed by Tufail (2015, 2018), Salter and Dagistanli (2015) and Patel (2018). It is demonstrable that the racialised reporting of both the Australian and the British cases motivated repeated instances of Islamophobic hate crime, including murder, in both

hemispheres. Even when an instance is local or national, accounts draw on an international repertoire of Islamophobia, and are circulated globally, augmenting and reinforcing that repertoire.

'War on Terror', Imperialism and Islamophobia

As we have observed, the story of rescuing Afghan women from Islamist misogyny was a handy propaganda device in rationalising the US invasion, and through it, continuing Australia's commitment to the US military alliance. In what other ways do the traces of Islamophobia, such as the myth of Muslim male sexual violence referred to above, arise from and contribute to the US-led empire?

The 'Muslims are prone to terrorism' trace that Kundnani (2016) placed up front has underwritten imperialist adventures of the 'war on terror', from Iraq (where transnational corporations have had key interests in oil for a century), to the Sahel in Africa (where oil and other commodities are an important consideration, along with geo-strategic and military ones, as in Yemen). The geo-strategic significance of Israel, and the manipulation, to sustain it, of racialised propaganda about Palestine and terrorism and Islamism, is obvious and ongoing. 'Democracy' is fine as a Western export, through military might; it is not so congenial when the people democratically elect Hamas! Neighbouring Syria is left devastated after the failure of US-led 'regime change' for 'democracy' in Iraq gave rise to ISIS, and the US disposition towards the 'Arab spring' meant that genuinely democratic popular impulses in Syria were allowed to be crushed, as they were in Libya, as they were in Egypt with much more obvious manipulation of the ideological Islamism-terrorism nexus. Australia's military plays its bit part in these imperialist interventions—in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, for instance—but as a minor allied state in the US-led empire, its political and ideological leaders draw upon and reinforce the role of Islamophobia in the 'global war on terror'.

Bringing Empire Back In

Deepa Kumar (2017: 49–50), in referring to the burgeoning of literature on Islamophobia, drew attention to the fact that only one per cent of these works explicitly references Orientalism:

> If Orientalism is understood as a mode of understanding and explaining the 'Muslim World' that comes into being in the context of European colonialism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then only a minority see fit to examine either the continuities or discontinuities within this colonial past. This is a part of a general trend in scholarship which has eschewed the discussion of empire. Here we see the erasure of empire, particularly US imperialism, as a structuring reality of contemporary anti-Muslim racism.

This paper, in its focus on Australia as a minor contributory to, and beneficiary of, two global empires—first the British Empire and after World War II, the US-led empire—has attempted to write empire back into the Australian context of Islamophobia. Kumar (2017) rightly noted the two-way transatlantic exchange of state modes of Islamophobia between the US and the UK in their alliance in the 'global war on terror'. However, if we consider the striking similarity of the anti-terrorism laws in each of these countries, and the close copy between theirs and Australia's, it becomes clear that Australia is integrated into this interchange—not least in the modes of 'counter-terrorist' interventions by the state and their surveillance, disruption and suppression of their Muslim communities. Australia exports such policy initiatives to the imperial metropoles, as well as importing them. For example, the Australian model of incarcerating (predominantly Muslim, as it happens) asylum seekers offshore has attracted interest in the UK and indeed, Continental Europe.

At the level of ideological apparatuses, the Murdoch press differs little in its Islamophobic treatment of politics in, say, Palestine, Israel or Iran in its Sydney organs, from its New York or London ones. There is of course circulation and exchange between these outlets, just as there is on the internet. At the level of populist politics, Donald Trump proposed a 'Muslim ban' on immigration to the US, while Australian Islamophobes have raised a similar demand for Australia, just as British right-wing nativist and nationalist ideologues mobilised anti-immigration reaction to garner support for Brexit.

To pan out briefly, recapping on the wider context of Empire: the end of the Cold War ushered in a 'new world order', in which the US-led 'empire of capital' was no longer constrained by confrontation with another global superpower. In this era, challenges to the hegemony of this empire, especially in relation to energy resources and regions that secured control of them, would increasingly be ideologically conflated with terrorism. The Gulf War of 1990–1991 followed the fall of the Berlin wall by less than a year. With the demise of the 'Evil Empire' of Ronald Reagan's propaganda, other civilisational enemies had to be found to rationalise US exceptionalism. A preponderance of these were discovered in anti-imperialist resistances of postcolonial, predominantly Muslim societies. Saddam Hussein may have led a secular dictatorship, but once that was 'regime changed' (in the next war on Iraq, instigated over non-existent weapons of mass destruction, that was to supposed finish the job over a decade later), it paved the way for politics that were quite otherwise. In Afghanistan, sponsorship of religious fundamentalists (and warlord guerrillas) as a proxy against the Soviet Union produced the 'blowback' of the Taliban mentioned previously, though the pretext for war on them was non-existent complicity in the 9/11 attacks. Crudely put, the red scare was supplanted by the green scare; 'The Muslims are Coming', Arun Kundnani (2014) quipped.

How Islamophobia functions within the political economy of empire is well grasped by Kundnani (2016: 7), who insisted on a structural conception of Islamophobia, and presented a mode of analysis that is highly perceptive and forceful in its explanatory power. In Kundnani's analysis, Islamophobia operates as:

> … an imperialist ideology of racism rooted in a capitalist political economy … Islamophobia is a 'lay ideology' that offers an everyday 'common sense' explanatory framework for making sense of mediated crisis events (such as terrorist attacks) in ways that disavow those events' political meanings (rooted in empire, racism, and resistance) and instead explain them as products of a reified alien culture. Thus Islamophobia involves an ideological displacement of political antagonisms onto the plane of culture, where they can be explained in terms of the fixed nature of the 'Other.' This maneuver is also an act of projection in the psychoanalytic sense: the racist and imperialist violence upon which US-led capitalism depends cannot be acknowledged in liberal society so it is transferred onto the personality of the Muslim and seen as emanating from 'outside' the social order. Imperial violence is then only ever a proportionate response to the inherently aggressive and threatening nature of the fanatical Muslim enemy.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate, along lines congruent with these, that it is from British colonialism and racial supremacism that Islamophobia first came to Australia. Further, it is from Australia's subordinate part in today's US-led 'empire of capital' and its 'war on terror' that contemporary Islamophobia is aroused and ideologically deployed. The foregoing account been a modest, if broad-brush attempt to show that Islamophobia has acted throughout its existence in Australia, to project the fears arising from European supremacist white-settler colonialism onto racialised Others. In doing so, it invoked a sort of ideological inversion in which the aggressor becomes the aggressed against, the violator becomes the victim. It is 'Western' civilisation that is

refracted in this 'camera obscura' as being under threat: the notorious 'clash of civilisation' is raised as a defence of the West and its racially inscribed values. There is no doubt that Tarrant, and before him Breivik, with all their Knights Templar mythologising, and all their attacks on the unarmed and innocent, viewed themselves as warriors in this defence.

For all that they may be represented as lone lunatics in mainstream media and other ideological apparatuses in which this folk explanation serves hegemonic interests, Tarrant and Breivik were not; their deadly hatred was not minted anew in individual madness. While not all proponents and beneficiaries of anti-Muslim racism take up automatic weapons and explosives against innocent and unarmed civilians, these terrorists' motivating stories of Muslim enmity and danger are widely shared, both in the mainstream of the global 'West', and in some violent and more or less organised, if minority, ex-streams.

As this article approaches completion, Tarrant is standing trial on multiple charges of murder, and on (tardily proffered) charges of terrorism. He has pleaded not guilty to these charges. If his 'manifesto' can be taken as a guide, he will seek to cast himself as a defender and a soldier, and likely attempt to use his trial defence, like his manifesto, as a recruitment device for the anti-Muslim total war that he argues is necessary for the protection of European-origin culture and the white 'race' that for him embodies it. It remains to be seen whether he will be allowed to use the trial in this way. Nevertheless, if we are to search for the causes of these crimes, we should treat seriously (though critically) his own written account of the causes he espouses. Indeed, Islamophobia kills.

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[1] A compilation of known records, in a striking interactive graphic presentation of the massacres of the 'frontier wars', at this stage concentrating on Australia's east, has been produced by Lyndall Ryan, Jennifer Debenham, Mark Brown and William Pascoe and can be found at: https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php

[2] See contemporaneous comment by Khylee Quince, Maori scholar and criminal justice expert at Auckland University of Technology, that the New Zealand 'This is not us' sentiment in the aftermath of the Christchurch murders, though well meaning, is 'misguided and naive': 'You have not listened to minority peoples, to Indigenous peoples, to immigrant peoples, who have been saying, in the case of Maori for more than 180 years, this is exactly who we are and you just don't want to face that' (cited in Ryan 2019).

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