Consenting to Orientalism when Covering Migration: How the British Media Dehumanises Migrants in the Context of the Syrian Civil War

Nina Arif

Abstract

The British vote to leave Europe rests largely upon fear of migrants. British media can be shown to have contributed to this by dehumanising migrants through news coverage. Discourse analysis of stories during the 'European migrant crisis' (2015) will show how dehumanisation occurs via Orientalist discourses (Said, 1979), presenting migrants as a threat to security, Western values and economically burdensome. Theories regarding news production and elite agency will be applied to understand the media's role in manufacturing consent (Chomsky, 1994) thus legitimising policies. This paper focusses upon online news coverage surrounding an attack at Westminster, which became amalgamated with migration. Since media discourses must be analysed to understand the devices used, philosophical and journalistic insights will be applied to answer the questions: what methods are used to dehumanise migrants? What mechanisms operate behind this? What is the result? *Suggestions for supporting university students in counteracting media influence will be made.*

Keywords: Orientalism, manufacturing consent, terrorism, media, students

1. Background: Media and Politics of Migration in the UK

We are currently witnessing the highest recorded numbers of displaced people worldwide, with estimates at around 68.5 million (UNHCR UK, 2018). Reasons for this are numerous and range from wars and conflict to environmental factors such as drought. But perhaps one of the most significant events which propelled the issue of migration to the forefront of the Western psyche was the Syrian Civil War; in addition to the displacement of 6.1 million within Syria, more than 5.6 million fled the country as refugees (World Vision), many of whom sought sanctuary in the UK and other European countries.

While the British-Somali poet Warsan Shire remarked, *'no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land'*, a less empathetic response was exhibited in much of the British media from 2011 onwards. It regularly ran stories about the large numbers of migrants en route to Europe in conjunction with frequent debates among politicians, social commentators and populist figures over what was dubbed in 2015 the 'European migrant crisis'. The then Prime Minister David Cameron spoke about a 'swarm' of migrants headed towards Britain, while the populist Sun newspaper columnist and LBC Radio host Katie Hopkins likened migrants to 'cockroaches' in her article entitled 'Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants' (Sun, April 17 2015).

Following the conception of the 'European migrant crisis', hostile attitudes and rhetoric surrounding migrants also formed part of the campaign for Britain to leave the European Union in 2016, known as Brexit. Prominent Leave campaigner and former head of the UK Independence Party, Nigel Farage unveiled an infamous poster depicting a long line of Middle Eastern and Asian-looking men with the words 'breaking point' as means of highlighting the apparent burden on the state caused by migrants.

Also noteworthy was media coverage which 'regularly conflated asylum seekers and refugees with other categories of migrant via inaccurate labelling' (UNHCR, 2015). This conflation is problematic not only from a journalistic perspective in regard to principles of accurate reporting, but also in terms of a possible result being the negation of public sympathy which might otherwise have been felt towards asylum seekers who have fled conflict. Thus, for the sake of clarity, the following definitions of the conflated categories are provided here (source: Amnesty International):

Asylum seeker: 'Someone who is seeking international protection abroad but has not yet been recognized as a refugee'.

Refugee: 'A person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations there'.

Migrant: Someone who 'moves from one country to another, often to find work'.

The subject of migration levels depicted through words such as 'invasion' in conjunction with the conflation of statistics from different categories, created the perception of an unwanted burden on the British state caused by migrants. This issue was highlighted earlier in a judicial public inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press:

> …parts of the press seek deliberately (or, at least, recklessly) to conflate statistics for asylum and immigration to imply a growing 'wave' of asylum seekers coming to the UK, despite evidence that the number of asylum seekers has fallen significantly since 2002. This view is also shared by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, which contends that the motive may be a political one… asylum debates tended to focus heavily on statistics and figures which were unsourced (The Leveson Inquiry, 2012).

Accordingly, focus on a 'political response / policy' to deal with migration also featured extensively in the media's coverage in spite of the reality that migration, rather than being a liability, benefits the British economy: migrants constitute more than 20% of the British labour force, and a 1% increase in the migrant population creates an extra 2% GDP per capita in the long term (IMF 2016). In order to make sense of the negative portrayals of migrants which are unconducive to the facts, Spencer (2016) suggests migrants are used as scapegoats to detract from the problems created by economic and social policy.

It must be noted however that misleading information on migration is nothing new. Following the initiation of the New Labour government (1997-2010) and the introduction of various policies aimed at curbing migration and deporting unwanted migrants, news narratives echoed the same idea that migration was problematic. Similar to the present situation, the term 'crisis' was often deployed (Moore 2013), 'Throughout Labour's period in office migration issues were presented as if the system was in perpetual crisis' (Mulvey 2010: 456). It will be later shown that this impacts significantly on public opinion both at a societal level in regard to an increase in far-right sentiment and hate crime, as well as at a state level: the introduction and legitimisation of hostile government policies on migration.

In tandem with the construction of the idea that Britain is being 'swamped' by migrants, the securitisation of migrants in terms of their perceived criminality or links to terrorism was also a frequently featured theme in media coverage. In a Sky News interview following an attack at Westminster in March 2017, former UKIP leader Nigel Farage remarked, 'If you open your doors to migration from Middle East countries, you're inviting terrorism', thus associating Syrian migrants with terrorism. Such ideas point to the existence of Orientalist

notions about 'the other' (Said, 1979) so it is clearly necessary to use other sources than media itself, in order to analyse the language used by media.

2. Theories on Media and Power

Writing about the effects of media communications, McLuhan (1962) explains that culture, society and the human psyche are influenced greatly by technology and media – terms he uses interchangeably due to their interconnectedness. While his ideas about media communications was largely in reference to the telegraph, radio and television, his ideas are applicable to modern-day media: computers, mobile phones and the internet (Benson, 2011). McLuhan describes media as 'the architects of nationalism', which could have the effect of making human beings 'tribal' – a threat which looms unless we are educated about how the media operates. He warns that unless we understand media, we stand to become 'passive victims' of it. This idea of media producing homogenised or 'tribal' thought, is demonstrable in the recent example of media coverage surrounding Brexit: research into the coverage, particularly the use of nationalist rhetoric, was found to have impacted considerably on public opinion, stoking notions of 'us' and 'them', as will be discussed.

McLuhan's ideas also correlate with Marcuse's (1964) theories regarding the 'political character' of technology and accordingly the connection between technology – especially mass media communications and totalitarianism:

One-dimensional thought is systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information. Their universe of discourse is populated by self-validating hypotheses which, incessantly and monopolistically repeat-

ed, become hypnotic definitions of dictations (Marcuse, 1964: 40).

He elucidates that in an era of constant mass media communications on a global scale, the opportunity for independent thought or even the silence to be permitted the space for thought is diminished. Thus, the result is unified thought (as opposed to diverse opinions), which has profound implications on freedom: 'There is no free society without silence, without the internal and external spaces of solitude in which the individual freedom can develop' (Id., 2004: 117).

This idea also ties into McLuhan's warning about human dependency on technology, with Benson (2011) connecting this to the modern phenomenon of people being addicted to their mobile devices. Ironically, in an era of mass communication which is said to draw humans closer to one another, distance is in fact being created as *real* human contact is reduced by hegemonic digital technology. Seen within the context of media discourses around migration, this distanciation created by technology arguably becomes more detrimental, given that media is the dominant means by which the public obtain their 'knowledge' about 'the other'. Thus, media holds a monopoly on discourses about migrants, and if these discourses are unfavourable or dehumanising, as is argued by this paper, then we may be entering into the realm of necropolitics.

Drawing on Foucault's concept of bio power, i.e. 'the domain of life over which power has taken control' (Mbembe, 2003: 12), in his essay 'Necropolitics', Mbembe connects power with notions of sovereignty explaining how this is utilised in dictating how people should live and die. In his view, not only is necropolitics about the right to kill, but also the right to impose civil death, political violence and enslavement. His ideas resonate when the media's generous coverage of far-right figures adverse to sending out rescue boats or allowing

migrants into the EU, is juxtaposed alongside images of dead and drowning migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Also evoked by Mbembe's ideas are images of migrants in privately-run immigration removal / asylum centres in the UK which have received criticism over factors including indefinite detentions, poor living conditions, ill treatment of detainees including children and the withholding of medical treatment (Redress, 2014). Mbembe's ideas suggest these types of practices are sanctioned by power through prescribed notions of sovereignty.

While the abovementioned theorists help in elucidating the relationships between media, power, influence and impact, this paper focusses on Said's 'Orientalism' (1979), and Chomsky's 'Manufacturing Consent' (although there is synergy amongst many of the ideas discussed). Said's theories provide a framework through which to understand how and why dehumanisation of 'the other' occurs and proves particularly applicable due to the distinctly racialised element in media coverage of migrants. Meanwhile, Chomsky's theories resonate in regard to the corporate dimensions of media: the connection between political and corporate elites and thus the propaganda function media serves to sustain elite hegemony. Focus on the role of the corporation is also apt given that neoliberalism seems to be the dominant ideology proliferated around the globe, and which (particularly through economics), achieves its far-reaching 'socially transformative' objective, disempowering the many, while profiting the few (Harvey, 2005). Amongst the few are university students, prolific users of social media and yet usually uncritical of the digital manipulation exerted upon them as we see with the recent Cambridge Analytical debacle. Students are privileged yet careless and will 'inherit' this situation that is now perceived by many older social commentators as a crisis.

3. Analysing Media with and for students

University students – as future innovators who when equipped with knowledge and understanding may herald in necessary change - are proposed in this paper as a potentially influential group who need to be supported to understand and counteract media influence. Rogers (1983), whose seminal work on the diffusion of innovation has been used in numerous programme designs and empirical studies, argues that innovation diffuses through a population as a normal distribution. Innovators and opinion leaders, making up about 2.5% of the population, take on new ideas first and assist in the diffusion of these to other parts of society. These innovators are younger in age, higher in social class, have greater financial resources, have large social networks including other innovators, and have access to scientific sources. It is clear that university students share many important characteristics with innovators: they are more flexible when it comes to activity changes than those older than them and more knowledgeable than their less educated peers. They are also freer to protest as we know from social movements in Paris and Prague 1968, for example. After establishing a family, people need more stability and have different responsibilities than their younger student selves. For all these reasons, students are an important group to reach to innovate ways in which people respond to media coverage of refugees and migrants. The role of student will therefore be addressed in the conclusion.

4. Orientalism: The 'Othering' of Migrants

In 'Orientalism', post-colonial scholar Edward Said (1979) explains that the West's relationship with the Orient has always been intrinsically connected to its usefulness to Western interests. Although rooted in colonialism, this Western-centric way of looking at the world extends far beyond armies and the physical domain, entering into the

realm of the ideological via literature, academia, anthropology, film and media narratives. Through discursive and other practices, the West tells a story about the Orient and its inhabitants, with a supposition that they cannot, or rather should not represent themselves. Thus, the Orient is homogenised and framed in fixed representations depicting it as strange and 'other'. Western narratives include portrayals of 'the other' as mysterious and exotic at best, and at worse – uncivilised, barbaric and a threat to its antithesis: the West which purportedly represents civilisation, democracy and a vast array of other virtuous principles (Said, 1979).

While such stereotypes may be contradicted by the facts of history, they arguably remain prevalent and are amplified in media today. Thus Said later extended his notion of Orientalism specifically to the field of media in 'Covering Islam' (1997). As the title suggests, it is an account of media coverage of Islam and Muslims, and also implicit is the notion that the true picture is concealed through the coverage. Commenting on Western media coverage of Islam and Muslims, Edward Said remarked that,

> the sense of Islam as a threatening Other - with Muslims depicted as fanatical, violent, lustful, irrational - develops during the colonial period... The study of the Other has a lot to do with the control and dominance of Europe and the West generally in the Islamic world. And it has persisted because it's based very, very deeply in religious roots, where Islam is seen as a kind of competitor of Christianity (Said, 1997; cited in Barsamian, 2004: 454).

While Said's critics lambast him for supposedly victimising and homogenising the people of the Orient (Ahmad 1992), numerous cases of the media's coverage of migration stories gives credence to his

theory. For example, a report by King's College London (2018) identified dominant words featured in the coverage of refugees and migrants around the Brexit referendum period, as being: 'floodgates' and 'waves' in relation to dangerous water, and 'flocking' and 'swarming', reminiscent of animals or insects. The effect of language arguably creates a sense of the 'other' as being subhuman.

In synchrony with Said's ideas about the silencing of non-Western voices, the Ethical Journalism Network (Suffee 2016) noted that migration stories in the British press are rarely told from the perspective of the migrant. Additionally, a cross-European press content analysis of migration stories (LSE report), found that refugees were seldom given names in press coverage, nor were details given about their profession, gender, or age – features which humanise subjects enabling readers to relate the them. On the other hand, their nationalities were very often provided with the effect of emphasising their dissimilarity and thus their separation from European readers. The report also found that government officials and politicians were given a significant platform while the voices of asylum seekers seldom featured.

The above is indicative of the media's agency in 'othering' and accordingly dehumanising by removing voices and identities, in concurrence with parroting anti-migration sentiments of political figures and far right voices as opposed to challenging such hegemonic hatred. Such figures are often provided with platforms and not subjected to robust challenging by journalists (as will be demonstrated in the coverage analysis). Thus, the image of the migrant as 'the other' is reinforced, rather than being deconstructed. The media, Said argues, is a form of neo-colonialism, with its content fashioned by powerful commercial and political interests – an idea expanded on by Chomsky in 'Manufacturing Consent'.

5. Manufacturing Consent

Chomsky (1994) explains that when states can no longer use violence to control people (as in free societies), they strive to control opinions and thoughts instead: thus, his view is that media serves a propaganda function. He used the term 'manufacturing consent' to explain how political and corporate elites work in conjunction with media to control public opinion, ensuring the subjugation of the masses and accordingly the hegemony of elites. The term derived from 'engineering consent' – an expression attributed to Edward Bernays, a pioneer in the field of public relations and propaganda, who was also the nephew of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Bernays spoke about engineering consent as a method for elites to ensure they were not threatened by the masses.

In concurrence with Said's ideas about 'othering', Chomsky produces the categories of 'worthy' and 'unworthy' victims to explain how media seeks to evoke support and sympathy for some, while demonising others,

> … worthy victims will be featured prominently and dramatically, that they will be humanized, and that their victimization will receive the detail and context in story construction that will generate reader interest and sympathetic emotion. In contrast, unworthy victims will merit only slight detail, minimal humanization, and little context that will excite and enrage (Chomsky, 1994: 35).

Migrants arguably fall into the 'unworthy' categorisation as it has been demonstrated that their voices are seldom heard. The Ethical Journalism Network also substantiates the above idea, revealing that migration stories are often devoid of context, thus distancing readers

from the subject (Suffee, 2016). In addition, research has found that the failure to provide political context can,

> … leave audiences badly informed about the factors behind refugee flows. For instance, audience research carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2005 found that 'virtually no participant mentioned events such as the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan as potential drivers of asylum (Lewis, 2005; cited in Hatton, 2012: 22).

Chomsky also points to biased media choices in that right-wing thinkers are preselected and tend to dominate discourse. This idea is anecdotally supported by a YouGov survey (2016) which found the British press to be the most right-wing in Europe, and additionally by content analysis of European press coverage of the refugee and migrant crisis which revealed the prominence, particularly in tabloids, of right-wing and anti-migration voices,

> politicians also tended to appear early in news reports with the effect that they set the initial terms of debate. In addition, political sources were more likely than other sources to be used as definers of policy options. Overall this means that their voice has more weight… (UNHCR, 2015).

Chomsky sheds light on a range of techniques used in media such as selective and controlled coverage that forms part of agenda-setting geared at preserving elite power, rather than informing the public using a range of sources, as is widely thought to be the remit of news. And while claims of 'conspiracy' have been levelled at Chomsky for his assertion that there is collusion between elites to affect public opinion via propaganda and thus keep the masses in subordination,

many of his ideas are shared among academics in the field. Van Dijk (1993) for example, argues that media engages with other elites to reproduce hegemonic discourses shaped by ideological notions. Even Brian Henry Leveson QC, the British judge at an inquiry into press conduct 'accused newspapers of manufacturing stories to suit their anti-immigration political agenda' (Suffee, 2016), thus giving credence to the possibility of political interest being central to media reporting.

In further deconstructing the 'myth' of 'free media', Chomsky highlights that only a handful of corporations retain ownership of most of the major media outlets in the USA and asserts plausibly that this translates into the type of reporting which serves the owners' interests. Direct parallels can be drawn with the UK where 71% of national newspapers are owned by three companies, while five companies own 81% of all local newspapers (Media Reform Coalition). Responding to claims that media impartiality exists (in spite of the issue of corporate ownership), Chomsky explains that the appearance of a free press is not to be conflated with reality: 'democracies', he says, must allow enough critique and enough opposing voices in order to appear objective, balanced and fair, but not enough that will viably challenge the dominant powers. Thus, stories which contradict the dominant view will emerge but only occasionally. A good example of this is the coverage of the death of the three-year-old Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi, whose body was found washed up on a beach – the image of whom momentarily changed the tone of reporting, from hostile to sympathetic. As Chomsky argues, the obverse is much more prevalent i.e. as already analysed, the selection and telling of stories that will reinforce and perpetuate existing political interests. This can be understood clearly from an analysis of the so-called Westminster terror attacks.

6. Media Coverage Case Study: Westminster Attacks

In March 2017, a British man – Khalid Masood, drove a car into pedestrians along Westminster Bridge in London, after which he fatally stabbed a police officer before being shot dead. Six people were killed in the attack, which was described as 'terrorism' by most media reports. This story is selected for analysis here because it became associated with migration although the attacker was not a migrant. However, the incident was utilised by far-right figures as means of validating their anti-migration position. The story is an interesting example of how Orientalist modes exist in so-called liberal, or centre-left media too, which is largely regarded as more nuanced in its reporting in comparison to the tabloid press.

Two popular online news websites have been selected for analysis presentation: The Guardian (centre-left) and the Independent (liberal). It is acknowledged that the validity of the analysis is open to challenge due to its qualitative nature, as well as its selectivity. However, the analysis is to be combined with the other research findings mentioned, in order to provide a broad, general and persuasive picture of the power of British media.

1. Analysis: *The Guardian newspaper online coverage*

Headline: Anti-immigration politicians link London attack to migrant policy

Subheading: Marine Le Pen calls for tighter borders, while Nigel Farage says London attacks prove Trump's hardline policies are right

The article features a large photograph of the French far-right leader of the Front National party, Marine Le Pen, which is captioned with her words 'we must control our borders'. The article comprises almost entirely the views of eight different far-right voices. These are: 1. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen. 2. Poland's Prime Minister Beatamedia Szydło. 3. Ukip donor Arron Banks. 4. The pro-Brexit

website Leave.EU. 5. The former Ukip leader Nigel Farage. 6. Daily Mail columnist Katie Hopkins. 7. A British writer on the US 'alt-right' website InfoWars. 8. The executive editor of the UK section of Breitbart News (now one of Donald Trump's most influential advisers) James Delingpole.

The article simply reproduces the views of each of the above regarding their linking of the attack at Westminster with migration. With the exception of Breitbart News' James Delingpole, direct quotes are provided from each of the mentioned persons, accompanied with occasional paraphrasing of their comments. The only instance of the Guardian's offsetting of the far-right narratives, is the remark that Le Pen made the connection 'despite the attacker being British'. The only other comment which casts doubt on the validity of the views is the word 'xenophobic' to describe Farage's language. Aside from this, the article provides no challenge or criticism either in the form of alternative/opposing voices, or its own comment.

Within the views expressed, there are recurring themes that can be categorised as 'far right' because they are exclusionary, discriminatory and framed implicitly around threats to supposedly autochthonous peoples. These threats include: the link between migration and terrorism/security and controlling borders, criticism of pro-migration politicians and EU migration policies which demand that countries accept refugee quotas (this is also an example of the conflation of the categories of 'refugee' and 'migrant'), the idea of a clash of cultures caused by migration and a threat posed by Islam to the West; the article ends with the view from Breitbart News: 'James Delingpole, the executive editor of its UK section, wrote a column declaring that Islamic terror attacks could end western liberal values'.

There is poignancy in ending the article with the above quote, particularly as it follows a tirade of emotive far-right rhetoric with words such as 'illegal', 'terror', 'radicalisation', 'extremism'. On the

topic of the language and terrorism discourse, Scott-Baumann (2017) provides textual analysis to demonstrate that within the UK government's counter extremist strategy, definitions of extremism are unclear and thus its ideology is 'unstable'. This, when compounded with the media's prolific use of emotive terrorism-related vocabulary becomes problematic as it subliminally creates an association between groups of people, i.e. Muslims and the notion of a threat. For example, in the use of the words 'Islamic'/ 'Islamist' or 'Muslim' preceding 'extremism', which consequently encourage prejudices that threaten to typecast innocent people as a risk to national security and thus increase the likelihood of their referral to counter-extremism divisions.

In spite of the Guardian being a centre-left leaning publication, no real challenge is provided to the abovementioned views and ideas which encompass orientalist notions. This is particularly apparent in the sections which suggest that migrants and Muslims, i.e. 'the other' constitute the enemy within, for example, Farage's reference to a 'fifth column' and references to 'culture' and 'multiculturalism' as being problematic.

The views expressed in the Guardian article encapsulate Said's theories about the West's construction of Muslims as threatening and violent. His ideas are particularly potent in illustrating media discrimination against migrants and autochthonous 'others', since many of the (non-white/European and thus identifiable) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers covered in media have been of Muslim descent. Mass displacement from the Syrian and other wars also thrust the Muslim identity factor (i.e. the 'otherness') into the foreground, particularly when the issue was merged with the subject of Isis terrorism. Hence it evoked the notion of a 'clash of civilisations' as envisioned by the orientalist historian Bernard Lewis and which was then further exploited by another orientalist thinker – Samuel Huntington. This continuity of such ideas is in synchrony with Said's assertion that

the West's domination has persisted from the colonial period to the present day through 'knowledge production' methods – the media being an important part of this.

2. Analysis: the Independent *newspaper online coverage*

Headline: Nigel Farage blames multiculturalism for London terror attack

Subheading: 'I'm sorry to say that we have now a fifth column living inside these European countries,' says former Ukip leader

Beneath the headline and subheading, the Independent provides a video featuring a clip from Nigel Farage's Fox News interview about the Westminster attacks, during which he made the connection between terrorism and migration. Within the clip, Farage also blames 'multiculturalism' and the apparent failure of policies from the previous Labour government which he says invited migrants to Britain.

Below the video, the first two sentences reproduce the word 'multiculturalism' twice, reiterating the message of Farage and the remainder of the story consists predominantly of his comments paraphrased as well containing quotes. Farage's message is that there is a threat posed by migrants who are the enemy within ('fifth column'), that culture of the 'other' is problematic ('diving communities') and there is a focus on migration policy with reference also to Donald Trump's policy of 'increased vetting' of migrants.

While it can be argued that the article is largely a reflection of what was said, the impact of simply regurgitating Farage's messages upon a media platform arguably serves to endorse them (Chomsky 1994), especially given that no scrutiny is offered, nor is an alternative voice available. The only exception is the Independent's sentence: 'The UKIP MEP failed to mention the fact many of the victims of the attack were in fact foreigners themselves', along with the nationalities of the victims provided. The article ends by explaining that

the Metropolitan Police are deploying extra patrols 'to provide protection and reassurance in the aftermath of the tragedy, which investigators are treating as an Islamist-inspired terror attack'.

It is proposed here that the terminology connecting criminal acts to variants of the word 'Islam' or 'Muslims' (commonplace in media coverage) is problematic in that it creates an association between the religion and its followers, and violence. It is notable that violent attacks which do not involve Muslims contain almost no mention of the attacker's faith: a study by the University of Alabama revealed that attacks by Muslims receive an average of 105 headlines, compared to others which receive just 15. This is in spite of the reality that right-wing and white terrorists carried out nearly twice as many terrorist attacks as Muslims between 2008 and 2016 (Guardian 2018).

7. Media, Public Opinion and Policy

In 2017, the British public voted to leave the EU after a viciously fought campaign during which migration debates dominated. A King's College report (2018) concluded that most of the media's coverage of Brexit was framed by Leave campaign leaders and that it was 'acrimonious and divisive' and 'overwhelmingly negative'. The potency of negative stories arguably manifested themselves in the final vote for Britain to exit the EU, as post-Brexit opinion polls revealed migration to be a key concern of most leave voters: one poll revealed 73% of leave voters worried about migration (Independent, 2017).

A Pew Research Center survey (2016) revealed that most Europeans think an increase in the number of refugees across Europe equates to an economic burden threatening their jobs and social benefits. This is in spite of the fact that migrants actually benefit the British economy as mentioned previously. The survey also showed that most Europeans think an increase in migration raises the terror threat. This is in spite of a UN report concluding there was no evi-

dence of a connection between the two, and which also warned that anti-refugee laws (such as building fences and carrying out push-back operations) could drive people smuggling and 'may ultimately assist terrorists and lead to increased terrorist activity' (Emmerson, cited in UNOHR, 2017). Similarly, a Europol report (2016) concluded there was no evidence that ISIS used the refugee crisis to smuggle fighters into Europe, following the prevalence of far-right voices forging a connection between migration and the terrorist attacks in France in 2015.

There is clearly an iterative relationship between the prevalence of anti-migrant sentiment among the population in Britain and the negative and inaccurate press coverage of crimes and migration issues. Perhaps the primacy of negative attitudes towards migrants among Britons can then be connected to the British media's coverage of the 'migrant crisis', which was among the most aggressive in Europe (UNHCR, 2016). However, the views alone may not appear problematic until the societal impact and other (political policy) repercussions are realised: according to Amnesty International's briefing paper 'Tackling Hate Crime in the UK', there was a notable increase in reported hate crimes in England and Wales during the Brexit referendum period, which was suggested as being connected to the divisive and anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric:

> The language used – 'taking our country back', 'breaking point'– may have sent signals that emboldened those who would perpetrate hate crimes, encouraging them to think that these views are acceptable and opening the door to more extreme rhetoric and actions (Amnesty International UK, 2017).

The rights group Amnesty International also reported an increase in hate crimes targeting asylum-seekers, Muslims and foreign nationals. Furthermore, it suggested that the topic of immigration seemed to be a catalyst for, and the legitimiser of hostility towards minority ethnic and faith communities. It also mentioned the British government's 'hostile environment' campaign, which was geared at making unwanted migrants feel unwelcome, with Home Office commissioned advertising vehicles carrying the message: 'go home' and a threat of arrest. Government propaganda also encourages members of the public to report suspected illegal migrants, leading one immigration barrister to remark,

> we now effectively have in-country immigration controls, carried out by private citizens on each other… Black and ethnic minority people are disproportionally affected too – a landlord will ask for your papers if you look or sound foreign. We know this is happening in practice (Guardian, 17 April 2018).

Chomsky's notion of manufacturing consent is relevant here: while anti-immigration policies point to political agendas, the media holds agency in reiterating as well as propagating the same ideas. Thus, they arguably create consensus within the public psyche for an acceptance of hostile migration policies which might otherwise have seemed unreasonable and unjust. Incidentally, Britain's policies towards refugees have been criticised for being among the harshest in western Europe, as it

> takes fewer refugees, offers less generous financial support… forces people into destitution and even homelessness when they are granted refugee status due to bureaucratic

delays… A recent home affairs select committee report into asylum housing said the quality of accommodation provided to asylum seekers was 'disgraceful'... (Guardian, 2017).

Moreover, the King's College London report into Media coverage of EU referendum concluded with a connection between the divisive rhetoric from politicians and media, and government policy:

The implications of a divisive, antagonistic and hyper-partisan campaign – by the campaigners themselves as much as by many national media outlets – is likely to shape British politics for the foreseeable future (King's College London, report 2018: 168).

8. Conclusions and Proposals for Change: Media Literacy

In straits like these, the wrestler with destiny is tempted to look for bugbears and scapegoats to carry the burden of his own inadequacy (Toynbee, 1947: 190).

Arnold J. Toynbee spoke about scapegoating as being one of the indicators of a civilisation in decline. While this notion may seem grandiose, it has been conceded that at a time when the British government's popularity is waning significantly (Ipsos Mori, July 2017), deflecting attention towards 'the other' seems apt rather than focussing on economic and social policy as being the cause of public dissatisfaction (Spencer, 2016). Regardless of the validity of this idea, it remains incontrovertible that an undue focus has been placed on migration through media coverage aligned with the rhetoric of political figures. Chomsky's 'manufacturing consent' provides a useful framework through which to view the media's agency in propagating par-

ticular ideas about migrants in terms of the media's association with political and corporate elites which shape its discourses. His thinking also sheds light on some of the forces which dictate the remit of news such as ownership of press outlets.

The evidence presented and analysed here has highlighted some dominant modes of dehumanisation which allude to Said's Orientalism theory. Research and analysis have revealed that 'othering' of migrants occurs through the media's coverage by: providing platforms to anti-migration views unchallenged while silencing migrant voices, removing context which would provide an increased understanding and possible sympathy towards migrants, using derogatory words and phrases to portray migrants as unworthy victims, conflating statistics from different categories to create the false impression of an influx and citing migration in terrorism/crime stories. Collectively the media discourse creates the impression that migrants pose a threat thus implicit justifying their securitisation. The discourse also insinuates that migrants are an economic burden and that their culture is strange and incompatible with British culture.

If we are to use our democratic agency to act upon Chomsky's theories about the hegemony of elites in media, politics and corporations, then, rather than seeking to bring about change within the hegemonic media industry, it seems more realistic and effective to equip people with the knowledge which will allow them to deconstruct false narratives. Thus, I propose that there is an urgent need for media literacy workshops which inform students about the mechanisms in operation within media and news production, which extends beyond media textbook descriptions about the political orientation of different outlets. Instead, students must be informed about corporate interests connected to media ownership and other forms of controls by interest groups as well as private donors and editorials. Additionally, media literacy workshops will also equip university students with

the ability to identify dehumanisation strategies employed in media coverage. After developing a heuristically powerful mode in universities, a long-term proposal for change is the introduction of this type of education into the school curriculum especially given that in a fast-paced digital era, children and young people are more exposed to a vast array of information than their elders. Thus, it is essential that young people are involved in developing such programmes so that they understand the modes through which this information has been filtered.

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