



**AUSTRALIAN MEDIA
SELF-CENSORSHIP:
AN ANALYSIS OF
AUSTRALIAN MEDIA
REPORTING OF "A
THRESHOLD
CROSSED"**

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Executive Summary

This report addresses the lack of coverage of the Human Rights Watch report *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution* through analysing the use of the concepts agenda setting, framing and flak. There was very little coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* within the Australian media, with only ten articles found across the news organisations analysed. The overall framing of the reports is mixed ranging from pro-Palestinian, balanced, and pro-Israel. Due to pro-Israel lobby groups previous flak on news organisations over coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is likely news organisations chose not to cover *A Threshold Crossed* as it is easier to not report than it is to report. Furthermore, Israeli sponsored trips to Israel for editors has likely impacted the agenda setting of news organisations making them adopt a pro-Israel view. Due to the nature of *A Threshold Crossed* and its labelling of Israel as an apartheid state, it is likely they chose not to report to maintain a positive public perception of Israel.

Introduction

Australian media coverage of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution* published in April 2021 experienced self-censorship. *A Threshold Crossed*, written by Omar Shakir, labelled Israel an apartheid state for the dispossession, confinement, forceful separation, and subjugation of Palestinians based on their identity through varying degrees of intensity (Shakir 2021, p.2). The following report aims to provide an analysis of the Australian media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* through applying the concepts of agenda setting, framing and flak. A brief literature review will be provided initially to introduce these concepts. An analysis of the Australian media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* will follow. Here, a breakdown of the framing utilised by each article will take place, attempting to determine their stance, pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, or balanced, and if a “both sides” or another frame has been used. As agenda setting and flak are difficult to determine through an analysis of news media published, this analysis will be followed with a discussion which refers to interviews conducted with a former editor and two Australian journalists during the research process of the report to address these concepts.

The Concepts of Agenda Setting, Framing and Flak

Agenda Setting:

Agenda setting can be described as the umbrella of framing and priming (Sheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p. 14) hence it is appropriate to open with a discussion of it. It is important to note priming will not be a focus in this report due to its description as an extension of agenda setting (Sheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p. 11). Agenda setting and priming are described by Baldwin van Gorp, professor of journalism and communications management, as both concerned with the “shell of the topic,” (van Gorp quoting Koicki 2007, p.70). Dietram Scheufele, social scientist, and David Tewksbury, researcher of news media in democratic systems, suggests agenda setting “refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues... and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (Sheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p.11). The media therefore can influence public opinion by emphasising one issue over another (Sheafer 2007, p.20). This suggests a bi-lateral relationship between the media and the audience. The media will report what they believe the audience to be

interested in, and the audience will read the news they are interested in. Yet, the population can only become aware of an issue through media coverage of the issue, hence a reliance upon media to create an emphasis on an issue.

Framing:

Framing, as described by Eulalia Han and Halim Rane, is “the process of selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them more or less prominent than others” (2013, p.77; Entman 1993, p. 52). The way messages are conveyed, through writing and imagery, can impact how the audience comprehends and evaluates a message (Elmasry 2013, p. 753). Framing falls under the umbrella of agenda setting and is labelled as “second-level agenda setting” as it makes “aspects of an issue more salient through different modes of presentation and therefore shifting people’s attitudes” (Sheufole & Tewksbury 2007, p.15). Understanding framing is important in understanding how the public think about the Israel-Palestine conflict and from there, *A Threshold Crossed*. Han and Rane (2013) analyse framing of the conflict in *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* between January 1, 2000 and December 21, 2010. Han and Rane suggest several failures in these newspapers which impact public knowledge of the conflict including limited reference to the

historical context and origins of the conflict, lack of coverage of international law abuses and lack of depth on central issues (2013, p.95). Such failures represent a frame which neglects the full narrative of the conflict and can influence public perceptions which must be considered across all Australian news media.

A “both sides” frame of the Israel-Palestine conflict is presented in academic literature of the conflict. It can be applied to Australian media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* to determine if the Australian media is attempting to detract from the claims of apartheid. Greg Shupak, PhD in literary studies, highlights two main facets of the “both sides” frame. Firstly, the media represents both Israel and Palestine as deserving equal portions of blame for the conflict (Shupak 2018, p.13). Secondly, Israelis and Palestinians are framed as experiencing comparable pain over the conflict (Shupak 2018, p.13; Mhanna & Rodan 2019). It is important to note there is a difference between providing a balanced analysis and utilising a “both sides” frame. Including the voices of both Palestinians and Israelis provides balance in an article, a central tenet of reporting (Tasseron 2021, p.5). There is an evident difference in a “both sides” frame which posits Israelis and Palestinians as equal in the conflict.

This issue of “both sides” has been raised in the *Open letter from Australian journalists, media workers, writers and commentators to improve on the coverage of Palestine* (2021). The letter was written on May 14, 2021, after the publication of *A Threshold Crossed*. At the time of writing this report, it has 773 signatories. It calls on editors and publishers to “avoid the ‘both siderism’ that equates the victims of a military occupation with its instigators”. While twelve years ago Annelore Deprez and Karin Raeymaeckers stated, “various studies of the representation of Israelis and Palestinians within the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict conclude that the coverage is incomplete and mostly favours the Israeli side” (2010, p. 106), this letter suggests the framing of the conflict is still a major issue. The letter seeks to prioritise those most affected by the violence through inclusion of their voice and reject passivity that obscures “the reality of a violence disproportionately endured by Palestinians” (Open letter, 2021). This recognition by the Australian media suggests this frame very much exists and is a reporting failure which needs to change. Throughout the report, inclusion of Palestinian voices will be analysed to determine the approach made by the media.

Flak:

The concept of flak is described by Michael Tasseron, media and conflict researcher, as an “adverse response to content published by media organisations” in the forms of letters, phone calls or legal action against a media organisation (2021, p.3). Tasseron (2021, pp.5-6) notes along with John Lyons (2021), the Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the toughest assignments a journalist can take. Stephanie Craft et al. highlights complaints over bias, lack of accuracy, and partisanship can be expected when covering any news topic (2016, p. 683). However, when flak is applied by a well-resourced organisation, like most pro-Israel lobby group (Lyons 2021), it can impact the output of media outlets (Tasseron, 2021, p.7). According to Lyons, the influence of flak regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict has also contributed to several news organisations taking a stance that it is easier to not report on it (2021, p.65). There is a level of fear regarding how pro-Israel lobby groups will react. While flak is difficult to determine in an analysis of newspaper articles, it will be discussed later in this report when recounting the experiences of media correspondents who have covered the Israel-Palestine conflict and *A Threshold Crossed*.

The idea of flak is central to understanding lack of media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* within Australia. Lyons (2021, p.82) highlights those who criticise Israel, its army, or its prime minister are labelled

as anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic. Lyons states “it’s used way too often to try and scare the media away from reporting” on the topic (2021, p.82). Through talking to “scores of senior journalists and editors” for his book, Lyons “was told words to the effect: ‘No editor wants to be accused of being anti-Semitic’” (Lyons 2021, p.82). John Richardson and Leon Barkho highlight the difficulty of reporting on Israel-Palestine within the United Kingdom quoting veteran BBC analyst Roger Hardy the “level of scrutiny from all sides is without precedent in my experience” (Richardson & Barkho 2009, p. 614). The external voices of lobby groups play a large role in influencing the media coverage of anything to do with Israel-Palestine. Therefore, the influence of flak must be considered when discussing Australian media reporting of *A Threshold Crossed*.

Analysis of Australian Media Coverage of “A Threshold Crossed”

Using the discussed concepts of agenda-setting, framing and flak, an analysis of the Australian media coverage of the HRW report will take place. Newspaper articles from *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review*, *ABC*, *SBS News*, *Channel 9*, *Channel 7*, *The Advertiser*, *The Courier*, *The Age*, *The Herald Sun*, *Northern Territory News*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The West Australian*, *The Mercury*, *Michael West*, *Pearls and Irritations* and *The Guardian* were analysed. A total of thirty-three articles were read, of which ten related to *A Threshold Crossed* directly. The remaining articles covered the Israel-Palestine conflict resurgence in May 2021 and the Amnesty International report which also labelled Israel an apartheid state in February 2022. These articles were used to determine media stances of the conflict and will not be included in this report.

Flak received for previous coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict suggests media organisations opted to not cover *A Threshold Crossed* as it was easier for them to not report than to report. The lack of coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* is highlighted by Lyons:

“many media outlets... largely ignored HRW’s landmark report ‘A Threshold Crossed...’” (2021, p.74). Lyons (2021, p. 74) highlights that a journalist can simply be attacked for using the word “occupation” in coverage of the conflict. Lyons quotes former morning editor of *The Saturday Paper* Alex McKinnon’s letter to his former editors of his time at Schwartz media in saying “there was an unofficial but widely known editorial policy of avoiding coverage of Israel and Palestine, especially any coverage that could be perceived as being critical of the Israeli government’s ongoing human rights abuses of Palestinians” (Lyons 2021, p.67). This suggests the media have opted to not cover *A Threshold Crossed* extensively due to labelling of Israel as an apartheid state throughout the report because of the flak previously received from covering the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The lack of coverage from an agenda setting perspective could also suggest a believed lack of interest from the Australian public within the Australian media (Weaver 2007, p. 145). It could also suggest the Australian media does not want the Australian population to think about apartheid in Israel-Palestine (Weaver 2007, p.145).

Furthermore, Mark Day, former editor of the *Sunday Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and *The Australian*, stated in an interview “a job of an editor is to sell his or her product... you’re in the business to attract readers,

listeners, or viewers” (personal communication, 14 May 2020). This lack of coverage of the labelling of Israel as an apartheid state by HRW suggests editors throughout Australia did not believe it would draw the attention of readers to cover the topic significantly. Unfortunately, no current editors contacted responded to interview requests to be able to investigate this regarding the actual coverage. Therefore, this is an assumption made with the information obtained. However, given the amount of coverage of flak from academic sources and its wide acknowledgement from media personnel, past flak received can be assumed to have impacted editorial decisions to not cover *A Threshold Crossed*.

Figure 1: Table showing the political leanings of the news organisations which covered *A Threshold Crossed*.

Left-wing	Central	Right-wing
The Conversation	The Age	The West Australian
	Pearls and Irritations	
	SBS News	

It is also important to note the political standings of the organisations analysed that published articles covering *A Threshold Crossed*. Figure 1 shows these organisations and their political standings. As will become evident below, whether they were left, central or right leaning, they each took different approaches to covering *A Threshold Crossed*. Several of the articles analysed were written by non-Australian media organisations, yet the inclusion in Australian media still warrants their analysis due to the exposure to the Australian public. These organisations were Associated Press (AP), Agence France-Presse (AFP), and Human Rights Watch (the publisher of *A Threshold Crossed*). Of these ten articles, one was an opinion piece by Josh Feldman, and two were analyses by Maher Mughrabi and Leonie Fleischmann. Political leanings of each organisation did not take a significant role in reporting on *A Threshold Crossed* and were varied, however it is difficult to determine due to the lack of reporting from each organisation what exactly their stance was towards *A Threshold Crossed*.

Mughrabi, a Palestinian reporter, provides an analysis of *A Threshold Crossed* and does not apply a “both sides” frame, but provides contextual background to the information supplied within the media, aiming to fill what Han and Rane highlight is a limitation in media reporting, lack of context (Han and Rane, 2013). Mughrabi (2021)

highlights the labelling of Israel as an apartheid state by HRW and the position of Israel in the global narrative prior to this labelling. The article, while not explicitly stating it, does frame the issue in a pro-Palestinian frame ending the article on the question of where the Palestinians can go outside of Israel (Mughrabi 2021). Mughrabi mentions the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem's report to signify that HRW is not alone in its conclusion that Israel is an apartheid state. However, the content of the analysis is built upon explaining *A Threshold Crossed* and its call for sanctions if apartheid is to continue based upon Israel's place in the world. It can be best described as filling in the limitation of lack of depth on central issues, a limitation highlighted by Han and Rane within the Australian media (2013, p.95), therefore provides a pro-Palestinian analytical frame of *A Threshold Crossed*.

Outside of Mughrabi, *Pearls and Irritations* provides a pro-Palestinian frame with articles from HRW themselves about the report and Ali Kazak, a Palestinian reporter like Mughrabi. The HRW written article (2021) details what is included in *A Threshold Crossed* and explains the research process. It is a republished report from Human Rights Watch, and does not provide any Israeli or Palestinian voices, only what the report details which takes a Palestinian perspective. This Palestinian perspective of *A Threshold Crossed* has been criticised

by Israel supporters such as Colin Rubenstein, executive director of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, and Gilad Erdan, Israeli ambassador, as will become evident below. Meanwhile Kazak (2021), former Palestinian diplomat and founder of the Australia-Arab Affairs Council and Palestine Publications, in his article quotes Yossi Saird, “former Israeli cabinet minister, ex-leader of the opposition, and member of the Knesset for 32 years” (Kazak 2021), “what acts like apartheid, is run like apartheid and harasses like apartheid, is not a duck – it is apartheid” (Kazak 2021). Kazak acknowledges B’Tselem, Israeli leading human rights group, published a report that stated Israel is committing apartheid and further included the voices of Israelis statements supporting the HRW claim of apartheid (Kazak 2021). *Pearls and Irritations* enable a Palestinian to publish and give their perspective of *A Threshold Crossed*, giving voice to Palestine. *Pearls and Irritations* provides a pro-Palestinian frame towards *A Threshold Crossed* while showing bias to Palestine and acknowledging *A Threshold Crossed* is not the first to call Israel an apartheid state.

Three of the ten articles include a pro-Palestinian voice in their coverage along with pro-Israeli voices, suggesting their aim was to attain a balanced frame in their coverage. *The Australian*, using a report from AFP (2021), discusses the findings of the report, include

Israeli and Palestinian voices, and quote Shakir, the author of *A Threshold Crossed*. Anthony Galloway (2021) includes Rubenstein, and Nasser Mashni, vice-president of the Australian Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) along with reporting on what was included in *A Threshold Crossed*. Lastly, Edith Lederer's article (2021) from AP is included in *The West Australian* and uses interactions from the UN Security Council between Palestinian envoy Riyadh Mansour and Israeli Ambassador Erdan. Lederer does not address *A Threshold Crossed* specifically but the discussions of apartheid can be attributed to the claims made in it as well as the report published by Amnesty International. Lederer includes Mansour's quotes on the description of Israeli actions which have led to apartheid. Meanwhile Erdan attacks HRW along with the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry, Amnesty International and other rights groups. These articles do not provide a "both sides" frame but maintain a balance of each actor's views, even if there is a direct lack of Palestinian voice in the AFP and Galloway article.

An SBS News In Depth radio coverage (2021) lacks any inclusion of Palestinian voices, suggesting a bias towards Israel. Quotes from *A Threshold Crossed* are included, mentioning the forceable transfer, mass land expropriation and severe restrictions on freedom of

movement for Palestinians. Israeli spokesperson Jamie Hyams from the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council is quoted saying typical responses as highlighted by Lyons in *Dateline Jerusalem* - security concerns - along with the Israeli response which calls the report a “a fabrication of fantasy, misstatement, and misrepresentation which is fundamentally antisemitic because its designed to delegitimise the Jewish state” (Sarumpaet 2021). The article addresses rebuttals made by Israeli defenders using *A Threshold Crossed* quotes. Any inclusion of Palestinian voices is left out suggesting a bias towards Israel, and hence a pro-Israel frame.

Furthermore, an SBS News article (2021) with no listed author fails to represent a Palestinian perspective outside the findings of *A Threshold Crossed* suggesting a bias in favour of Israeli voices. The article also quotes Hyams who states, *A Threshold Crossed* “is a textbook example of an organisation coming to a conclusion and then writing a report to support that conclusion” (SBS News 2021).

Furthermore, Hyams quotes the repetitive reasons provided by pro-Israel lobbyists of security for the restricted freedom of movement and that the report is attempting to undermine Israel’s reputation (SBS News 2021). The article does include the recommendations made by HRW in *A Threshold Crossed* at the end of the article with the subheading “International community ‘has turned a blind eye’”.

This enables the audience to garner what the report was stating the international community should be doing. However, it is important to note, again, the lack of inclusion of a pro-Palestinian voice suggesting a bias toward Israel's perspective and a pro-Israel frame.

Josh Feldman's opinion piece is an example of the "both sides" frame. As highlighted by Shupak, the "both sides" frame employs both sides as deserving equal portions of blame for the conflict and Israelis and Palestinians share comparable pain over the conflict (Shupak 2018, p.13). Feldman achieves this in two sentences:

In a conflict that has seen Israelis mourn almost 24,000 soldiers and more than 3000 victims of terrorism, the report is notably silent on Palestinian terrorism's effect on Israelis, which has, in turn, had tragic consequences for Palestinians. While it mentions the West Bank "separation barrier" – viewed by Israelis as a safeguard against Palestinian terrorism – more than 30 times, it neglects to mention the very Palestinian terrorist attacks that promoted the barriers construction (Feldman 2021).

Feldman applies criticism to *A Threshold Crossed* through its lack of coverage of the causes of Palestinian suffering. Throughout the article there are comparisons to South African apartheid and the

“suffering” of Palestinians. Feldman (2021) makes sure to avoid use of the word “apartheid” when relating to Palestinians, even labelling it a lie in his title “Israel’s ‘apartheid’ is a lie: a son of South African Jews responds to Human Rights Watch”. Feldman does acknowledge there is suffering but uses the Israeli perspective of defence to ensure the apartheid label is a “lie” (Feldman, 2021). While an opinion piece, it is evident throughout the article of the use of both sides being at fault for the causes of the issues and hence utilises a both sides frame.

Lastly, Fleischmann, provides an analytical frame of *A Threshold Crossed*. Fleischmann (2021) does not take a stance on the report, but instead provides insights into the origins of the terms apartheid and discusses if the term matters in a legal context. Fleischmann does not include the views of anyone that is pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel. It is important to note Fleischmann is a lecturer in International Politics at the University of London, therefore her analysis holds the weight of someone with experience in studying international relations. Fleischmann also emphasises “it is important to determine the accuracy of the report”, suggesting the report alone is not solely enough to act on the accusation of apartheid. Fleischmann achieves a balanced analytical frame with no bias towards Israel or Palestine.

It is important to note the frequency of some articles published across different news media organisations. The AFP written news article, analysed above from *The Australian*, titled “Israel committing ‘crime of apartheid’ against Palestinians: HRW” was found in *The Australian*, *The Courier*, *Herald Sun*, *NT News*, *Daily Telegraph* and *The Mercury*. Furthermore, the same articles analysed from *The Age* were found in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. van Gorp suggests this publication of the same articles in different papers “enhances the persuasive power of the frames, because the media appear to address the audience with a single voice” (2007, p.68). This suggests these organisations were attempting to provide a balanced frame in their coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* due to the balanced nature of the article.

The Views of Journalists

It is important to understand the views of reporters and editors outside of their newspapers. Understanding the implications of reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict, and through that, reporting on *A Threshold Crossed*, can only be understood best by involving the views of reporters and editors. To achieve this, a total of 30 editors and reporters were contacted for an interview to discuss coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* or the Israel-Palestine conflict. People contacted were from *Australian Financial Review*, *ABC News*, *SBS News*, *The Guardian*, *7 News*, *9 News*, *Northern Territory News*, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Michael West*, *The Advertiser*, and several independent journalists who had reported in newspapers analysed above and previous reporters and editors involved in coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Of these thirty, five agreed to an interview, one editor and four reporters. Of the four reporters one wished to remain on background. Another was not an Australian reporter, and while his views have been considered will not be directly referred to due to being outside the scope of this section of the report. Here, the opinions of independent journalist

Antony Loewenstein and freelance journalist Jamie Seidel will be covered, along with Lyons from his book *Dateline Jerusalem*. The editor, Mark Day, has already been included earlier within this section of the report. Here, the aim is to expand upon the concepts of agenda setting and flak which have so far mostly been ignored throughout this report due to the difficulty in establishing them in media analysis.

Most people contacted for interviews never responded, however some simply did not wish to comment or had previously had bad experiences in discussing the topic via interview and did not wish to participate. Several assumptions can be made around lack of responses, the first of which is the possible flak one could receive for participating in an interview and having their views placed in this report. Ed O'Loughlin, former reporter and Middle East correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, supports this assumption when he declined an interview by stating "I still work as a news reporter, so it is professionally inappropriate for me to take public positions on issues like Israel and apartheid, however strong and well-informed my opinions might be" (personal communication, 13 May 2022). Other assumptions that are also reasonable are that they did not see the emails, felt they would not have time to fit an interview into their schedule due to the ongoing federal election in

Australia at the time of research for this report, or believed they could not offer anything of value to the research process. Some editors did respond to interview requests but claimed they were not involved in the editorial process regarding *A Threshold Crossed* or the conflict and hence declined to be interviewed. The lack of responses is a limitation of this section of the report and has resulted in a limited capability to properly assess agenda setting and flak.

The minimum coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* can be best applied through the agenda setting concept and the use of Israeli sponsored trips to Israel. Loewenstein noted that while he had not directly been on an Israeli sponsored trip, he knew of both editors and journalists who had been on those trips. Loewenstein stated, “I think they’re fundamentally unethical for journalists to take those trips... most of those journalists and politicians who come back from those trips are seemingly open to being brainwashed, they spend five seconds in Palestine, if that” (personal communication, 4 May 2022).

Loewenstein believes these trips are a contributing factor as to why much of the Australian media and politicians are pro-Israel, stating “I think they have been a very important strategy for the Israel lobby and Israel itself to put across a very blatantly anti-Palestinian agenda for decades” (personal communication, 4 May 2022). Such openness

to participating in Israeli-sponsored trips undoubtedly impacts editors and journalists by seeing only an Israeli perspective.

These Israeli sponsored trips are not solely based on the experience of Loewenstein but throughout the media. Lyons comments on them saying they are “damaging because [they fill] the heads of influential editors with a distorted reality” (2021, p.25). Jamie Seidel, a freelance journalist, acknowledges his “colleagues have had those invitations” and his colleagues were “aware its very much a political exercise and most media reporters are aware of that. Of course, it comes down to individuals as to how they address that” (personal communication, 4 May 2022). It appears that most articles provided a balanced frame, therefore in terms of *A Threshold Crossed* it can be assumed editors and journalists chose to not allow Israeli bias to enter their coverage. This also speaks volumes on the lack of media attention given to *A Threshold Crossed*. However, it is unknown whether any journalists or reporters who were involved in the media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed* ever went on one of these tours. This is, as mentioned earlier, due to an inability to interview editors and journalists involved in the coverage of *A Threshold Crossed*. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if such tours could have impacted the coverage and therefore the agenda setting of media organisations.

On the concept of flak, Seidel's editors have been contacted over articles he has published meanwhile Loewenstein knows of many editors and publishers who have been contacted and has been informed literary festivals have had pressure to not have him from pro-Israel lobbies. Seidel noted editors had been contacted regarding his coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Generally, it was regarding mistakes he had made which would be used as leverage to modify the story (personal communication, 28 April 2022). Seidel would be sent a list of changes recommended to be made which enabled him to determine what was fact and merely a point of view. Loewenstein states he has not been contacted by anyone from a pro-Israel lobby group "but I know many editors and publications that I have worked for have. To complain, to put pressure. I know for example a number of literary festivals that I have appeared in over the years in Australia, there has been pressure from pro-Israel groups to not have me on" (Personal communication, 4 May 2022). While flak is a part of the Australian media, it appears to be directed towards editors, which can be used to influence agenda setting of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Therefore, it can be assumed previous flak based on reporting of the conflict impacted editors' decisions to include limited coverage of "A Threshold Crossed in their news organisations.

Conclusion

Unlike previous media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, a “both sides” frame has not been applied throughout coverage of *A Threshold Crossed*. *The Australian* and the *West Australian* provided both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian voices in their coverage, along with Galloway from *The Age*. In addition to Galloway, Mughrabi utilises his position in the media to include an analysis of where the report left the international community and provides a pro-Palestinian analytical frame. *Pearls and Irritations* also show a pro-Palestinian frame through Kazak’s article and the use of HRW’s reporting on *A Threshold Crossed*. The position of Mughrabi and Kazak as Palestinians reporting on *A Threshold Crossed* gives voice to the Palestinian case and does not include any Israeli voices in their reporting. Meanwhile, *SBS News* excludes any inclusion of Palestinian voices and Feldman’s opinion piece in *The Age* is a case of a “both sides” frame which denies Israel is committing apartheid but does acknowledge Palestinian suffering. Furthermore, Fleischmann provides an unbiased analysis of *A Threshold Crossed*, addressing the meaning of apartheid, and suggesting *A Threshold*

Crossed is not enough for the international community to act. Overall media framing of *A Threshold Crossed* is mixed.

The agenda setting of *A Threshold Crossed* has been difficult to determine due to current editors involved in reporting on *A Threshold Crossed* not participating in interviews. However, with the information obtained from Loewenstein and Seidel, along with Lyons' *Dateline Jerusalem* it is reasonable to assume past flak received from covering the Israel-Palestine conflict has led to many media organisations choosing to not cover *A Threshold Crossed* in depth or at all. An element of self-censorship has occurred when it came to the coverage of "A Threshold Crossed. The flak received in the past has contributed to the loud silence of Australian media coverage of *A Threshold Crossed*.

Recommendations

Given the research of this section has focussed solely on the Australian media, it is worthwhile to propose some further research which could be conducted.

The *Open letter from Australian journalists, media workers, writers and commentators* signifies a growing recognition within the Australian media that there has been a bias towards Israel in reporting of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Since the signing of the letter there has been the release of the Amnesty International report which also labelled Israel as an apartheid state and once again the Al-Aqsa Mosque has been the centrepiece of an increase in tensions according to Al Jazeera headlines on 30 May 2022. It would be worthwhile to investigate if there has been a change in Australian media reporting of Israel-Palestine since the signing of this letter through these events.

A poll conducted by APAN (2022) with a sample size of 1013 adults suggested the Australian government is out of touch with Australians on Palestine. 33% of respondents believed Australia should engage with human rights organisations and determine a suitable course of

action in addressing the apartheid claim (APAN 2022). Another 23% believed Australia should call on the Israeli government to end its apartheid (APAN 2022). Such statistics are of note and should be investigated following the agenda setting concept. An important question to ask would be “do Australians deem apartheid as important as other global issues?” and “how has the media reporting of other global issues compared to Israel-Palestine contributed to Australian beliefs of what is an important issue to solve?”.

Such research would assist in addressing the lack of media coverage of Israel-Palestine within the Australian media and develop a further understanding of the implications of Australian media reporting.

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