

**Scrutinizing Justice Issues in Australia's  
Policy of Detaining Asylum Seekers:  
Public Opinion and Ethical Analysis**

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (Except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature:

Date: 28-09-2021

## **Abstract**

As the number of refugees displaced from their home countries has grown in recent years, the debate has grown over what policies liberal countries should pursue to address this crisis. This dissertation conducts a qualitative thematic analysis of the media articles regarding the Australian government's much-debated refugee detention policy. The media articles concerning refugees were analyzed from the period 2015 to 2021. Public opinion was examined to assess the extent to which the theories of global justice reflect the positions taken by the authorities.

In order to address the research questions, the viewpoints and policies adopted by the successive Australian governments were examined along with the public opinion. The term 'public' in the context of this study includes the general public, politicians, and government officials. Furthermore, the study examines specific incidents in recent history regarding refugees that started key debates in Australia. The first incident was the Rohingya refugee crisis in 2015, followed by the Medevac law repeal issue in 2019. The matter of deportation of 'Biolela' family is the last incident that is happening currently in Australia. Along with that, public opinion on refugees in Australia throughout the period under consideration was also explored.

Additionally, to answer the research questions, the views of major global justice theorists are carefully examined. The communitarian theory, along with John Rawls' theory of justice, is discussed as both theories have emphasized the rights of refugees. In addition, the viewpoints of libertarian, cosmopolitan, and liberal philosophies are also examined. The study then attempts to explore the philosophical justification for the detention policy by Australia through constructing themes from the opinions expressed in media and interpreting them. An ethical analysis part then discusses the possible alternatives for the current detention policy.

The study concludes that the Australian government's refugee detention policy does not reflect the arguments and ideologies of major philosophical schools of thought mentioned above. Even though there are exceptions, the majority of the political opinions reflected a negative attitude towards refugee resettlement. Contrastingly, the public discourse reflected a welcoming attitude towards accepting refugees and including them in the community.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The introduction chapter starts with an overview of refugees in the global context, followed by the Australian context. The gap identified after studying the literature and the relevance of the study is pointed out as well as the major research questions are also explained. The methodology and methods adopted for the study, along with the researcher's interest in the topic, are also detailed. The chapter concludes by giving a structural overview of the dissertation.

### **Overview**

Refugees, or the "refugee crisis," is a term which has been gaining global interest in recent times. Article one of The Geneva Convention of 1951, a United Nations multilateral treaty, defines a refugee as "a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution." (Lister, 2012, p. 646). This definition has broadened in the modern world, where a person becomes a refugee for reasons not stated or those that are beyond explanation.

Since the 2000s, the global refugee crisis has increased, with over 232 million international migrants as of 2015. Potential migrants affect all countries, as they are sources or destinations. The dispersion of refugees, many of whom have fled situations that threaten their lives, is a topic of great importance regarding migration. At the end of 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, henceforth UNHCR, noted that over 60 million forcibly displaced refugees were present in the world. The impact is immense on the bordering nations. Refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) in such circumstances are significant since most people have now been dispersed for years without alternatives insight into persistent circumstances (Martin, 2016). UNHCR asserts that millions are stateless worldwide and are denied access to fundamental human rights, and the numbers continue to rise over time (UNHCR, 2021).

In recent times, the number of refugees resettled by liberal countries has been at the forefront. Various countries all over the world took steps to minimize the quota of annual refugee intake, citing threats to national security. Proponents applauded and opposers ridiculed the presidential order signed in 2017 by Donald J. Trump, prohibiting all refugees for four

months from coming to the United States (USA) and suspending all immigration from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen for three months (BBC News, 2017). The newly elected US president, Joe Biden, who promised fair treatment of refugees, is facing criticism for continuing Donald Trump's harsh policies and ill-treating refugees (Sullivan & Miroff, 2021). European countries like Austria and Denmark have adopted restrictive rules to secure the borders by reducing asylum seekers' entry following the Syrian refugee crisis (Huggler, 2016). However, in the context of the recent Afghanistan refugee intake, world states seem to be divided. While the European Union is yet to arrive at a collective decision, Greece and Turkey have refused to take Afghan refugees. The United States, Britain and Canada have expressed that they would take more refugees from Afghanistan, following the procedures (Parker, 2021).

Australia has always adopted a strict, restrictive stance towards illegal refugees and immigrants with criminal backgrounds. In a recent instance, it involved the governments of Australia and New Zealand in a heated debate over resettling Suhayra Aden, wife of an Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS) member. Ms. Aden, who had dual citizenship of Australia and New Zealand, wanted to come back, but Australia opposed and canceled her citizenship. However, she was later resettled in New Zealand (Whyte, 2021). The stance remains unchanged, with the country warning Afghan refugees not to attempt an illegal entry into Australia and stating that it would consider granting asylum only to the most deserving and vulnerable (Zhuang, 2021). The Australian government's response to major incidents that triggered the refugee crisis in different periods will be discussed in the literature review chapter later in this study.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the policy justification for Australia's stance on refugee detention?
2. How can Australia's refugee policy be conceptualized in ethical frameworks of justice theories?
3. What is the public opinion about the Australian government's detention policy in Australia?

## **Rationale of the research**

This dissertation will study public opinion on Australian refugee policy over the last five years and its ethical justification within the framework of global justice theories. The main question that this dissertation seeks to answer is: to what extent and in what ways do various social justice theories reflect Australian refugee policy positions? Statements by researchers who assert a humanitarian viewpoint will therefore be analyzed to answer this question. However, it is significant to observe that this dissertation emphasizes the points made from the point of view of human rights. This is precisely because member nations of the global community respond to emergencies with a human rights viewpoint, for instance, the present refugee crisis (United Nations, n.d).

The role of modern day media in portraying refugee related issues is an area of concern. According to Esses et al. (2013), Immigration rules and how immigrants and refugees are treated are complex problems filled with ambiguity and anxiety. The media may capitalize on this ambiguity to develop a catastrophe environment in which refugees are depicted as "enemy at the gate" (p. 518) aiming to infiltrate the country. Studies by Cooper et al. (2016) and Lueck et al. (2015) point out that refugees are mostly portrayed in the Australian news media in a negative manner and as a threat to national security. As the world is facing more challenges post COVID-19 outbreak, the refugee crisis is also expected to worsen. Therefore, the researcher finds it significant to study the role of media in portraying refugees and their issues.

The researcher has chosen this topic for study for several reasons listed below.

1. A global debate is now under way about the refugee crisis and the need for more refugees to be resettled by liberal countries. The topic was selected for study since this is an extensively debated contemporary issue.
2. Being an international student and having a natural interest in working with struggling refugees, the researcher has personal regard for this topic.
3. The Australian government's refugee detention policy has been termed restrictive and against humanitarian values (Cooper et al, 2016; Killedar & Harris, 2017; Minns et al. 2018) by various scholars over the time. However, few relevant studies were found involving media analysis (Klocker & Dunn, 2003) and those

examining the policy discourse (Van Berlo, 2015) surrounding the detention of refugees. The media is not an impartial mirror of reality, but rather a center of influence that marginalises differing views by representing dominant viewpoints held by socially powerful groups (Ott & Mack, 2010). Furthermore, by reflecting 'public opinion' media permits and influences the positions that make government policies feasible (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2006). Therefore, the researcher considers it relevant to analyze the media regarding Australia's refugee policy as media discourse is significant both in terms of what it exposes about a society and in terms of what it contributes to that society's identity (Oroujlou, 2012).

Accordingly, with this dissertation, the researcher expects to contribute to academia along with the policy development regarding refugees in Australia, as there is limited research done in this area involving public opinion.

### **Structural overview**

Chapter 2: Literature Review summarizes prevailing accessible and relevant literature for this dissertation. It explores how the present literature considers refugees and the vital discussions, besides pointing out the gaps in the research and indicating possible consequences of this. It examines the situation of refugees in the global context, along with the policies adopted by the countries in dealing with them. While concluding, it also discussed the relevance of the study for future research.

Chapter 3: Philosophies discuss the different global justice theories in the context of refugee resettlement and elaborates on the concepts of various theorists. The philosophical theories serve as a background for the researcher while conducting the ethical analysis.

Chapter 4: Methodology and methods, describes and substantiates the methods selected for the research. It describes why the selected methods were employed to gather media articles and discusses the methods of data collection along with the data analysis choices. It gives the timeframe and mentions ethical considerations for this research. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the methods adopted.

Chapter 5: Results present the findings of the data analysis. It discusses the results based on the thematic analysis conducted quoting relevant public opinions in different contexts and its

reflection on the generated themes, is also discussed.

Chapter 6: Discussion discusses in detail the results of the study regarding the literature on refugee policy and global justice theories. This chapter tries to identify the justification of the opinions and the generated themes to various philosophical schools of thought. It concludes by mentioning the problems encountered while executing the entire research process.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and implications discusses the scope for further research in this area and implications of the study, followed by a conclusion of the dissertation that underlines the results and key points of the research undertaken.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed and summarized the global refugee situation in the current context. The research questions, along with the reasons for conducting the study, were also detailed. The researcher's interest in the topic was also described and a brief description of the dissertation structure was also highlighted. The succeeding chapter discusses the literature relevant to the study in detail, along with the explanation of various global justice theories concerning refugees.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **Introduction**

The chapter reviews the literature regarding Australia's treatment of refugees and the justification of its detention policy in the theoretical framework of justice theories. The chapter also describes the situation of global refugees and tries to explore their conditions in detention, with the help of available literature. This chapter starts with an overview and describes the background of refugees in Australia. The current global refugee situation and measures implemented by different countries to deal with it are discussed, followed by the Australian context. The chapter concludes by mentioning the gaps in research and stating the researcher's position.

### **Overview**

The laws and decision-making processes that govern states' responses to refugees are referred to as the global refugee regime (Keely, 1996). It consists of a collection of rules, mainly included in the 1951 Refugee Status Convention, which specify who qualifies as a refugee and the rights to which they are entitled. It also includes the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an international body tasked with ensuring that states fulfill their responsibilities to refugees. The refugee regime's ethos is based on a mutual commitment to the principle of non-refoulement, or the duty not to return a citizen to a place where they are likely to face persecution. The principle of the refugee regime, as stated in the preamble to the 1951 Convention, is international cooperation; specifically, that states commit to provide refugee security to one another. Political scholars have long argued about states' responsibilities in relation to foreign migration. Most political theorists accept a special right to refugee security in general, while communitarians and liberal theorists have different perspectives on the scope of this right (Betts, 2015).

Gibney (2015) identifies that more than 80% of the world's refugees (approximately 8.5 million) are housed in developing countries, a number that is 10% higher than a decade ago. Pakistan, Iran, Germany, Kenya, Syria, Ethiopia, Chad, Jordan, and Turkey were the top ten refugee-hosting nations, in that order. Germany is the only wealthy country found in this list. In 2012, the 49 least developed countries took in 2.5 million refugees, accounting for 24% of all refugees worldwide. One way to explain these differences is to differentiate between

the pressures of less-developed and developed countries, claiming that the former merely 'host' refugees while the latter takes on the more difficult task of integrating (or resettling) refugees into society (Gibney, 2015).

This inequitable allocation of refugee security did not happen by accident. It demonstrates the dominance of a powerful international legal standard for allocating refugee responsibilities among states. Inequalities are exacerbated by this theory of sharing obligations since the majority of refugees come from less-developed countries. It is the neighboring countries that bear the brunt of the burden since they are the easiest to access. Furthermore, policies used by Western states to restrict refugees from entering their territory, such as stringent visa regimes, interdiction, and carrier sanctions, exacerbate these disparities. These policies build a barrier around the world's wealthiest nations, confining the majority of the world's refugees to less-developed countries (Gibney, 2015).

### **Global context**

After the reunification in the 1990's, Germany continued its positive stance towards refugees. However, ethno-nationalist leaders have always stood by 'securitisation' theory, which intends to protect the country from 'existential' threats. Refugees and immigrants are considered as 'existential' threats to the core values of the country (Ilgit & Klotz, 2018). After the 2001 terror attacks in the United States, a phobia has developed globally towards Muslims, and there were repercussions in Germany too. There were periodic xenophobic attacks and current anti-immigrant rhetoric, particularly from conservative leaders in areas where right-wing populism was on the rise. Amidst different political opinions, in more recent times, the country has adopted a welcoming attitude towards refugees. Nonetheless, despite political differences, Germany's commitment to human rights remains fundamental, owing to a tenacious alliance of political parties, economic players, and human rights advocates (Ilgit & Klotz, 2018).

Wiącek (2017) identifies that Poland has one of Europe's most homogeneous societies, with 91.6% of citizens having a Polish ethnic-national identity. Poland's demographic landscape is homogeneous not only in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of faith, with Poles being predominantly Roman Catholic (88.4%). Religious minorities and atheists account for less than 12% of the population. Multiple surveys conducted in Poland demonstrate that Poles are not open to accepting immigrants. The prominent worry is about preserving homogeneity

and the threat of terrorism. For instance, the Polish government's decision to accept 6,800 refugees fleeing Syria and Eritrea at the beginning of November 2015 sparked a fierce debate that polarized Polish society. Two-thirds of Poles opposed bringing in refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, according to a survey conducted by the Polish Research Centre. In the streets, tens of thousands of demonstrators and counter-protesters gathered (Wiącek, 2017).

In the year 2015, Europe witnessed a major inflow of refugees, especially to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In order to limit incoming migration, new policy suggestions were developed in all three Scandinavian countries (Hagelund, 2020). The choice of policy instruments, as well as the style and content of policy players' legitimizing and coordinating discourses, differed, despite the fact that the direction of policy change was comparable; which was to restrict the refugee intake. The response of the Scandinavian countries show how a similar refugee crisis was interpreted differently in different national public spheres, resulting in varied policy responses—particularly in terms of refugees' social rights (Hagelund, 2020).

Following the refugee crisis in 2015, all three Scandinavian countries adjusted their policy to be more restricted. This includes tougher regulatory rules as well as limitations on refugees' social rights. Despite the fact that the direction of change is similar, the countries used distinct policy instruments to achieve their objectives, demonstrating path-dependency. This includes tougher regulatory rules as well as limitations on refugees' social rights (Hagelund, 2020). In view of fears that immigration politics is devolving into a race to the bottom, this observation of persisting national features, even during times of a refugee crisis and a general tendency toward restrictive policies, is intriguing. However, it also requests deeper consideration of what it is that works to develop domestically specific responses in the respective national contexts and beyond, at a time when many calls for international coordination and policy concerns appear to be transnational in character (Hagelund, 2020).

Despite many parallels in size, culture, language, politics, labor markets, and welfare systems, intra-Scandinavian disparities in immigration policy still persist. Sweden's approach to immigration and cultural diversity was relatively liberal throughout the 2015 crisis (Hagelund, 2020). While political theory disputes highlight moral parameters, they do not provide conclusive answers as to whether liberal state responses to the refugee crisis are legitimate. States clearly have responsibilities to both their own citizens and those seeking

protection. The notion that states have a moral responsibility to give protection to refugees is widely acknowledged in political theory and practice, and it is reflected in international human rights law (Newman, 2018). Sweden abided to this in 2015 and many refugees arrived in the country; newcomers enjoy the same social rights as residents, and the country's residency and citizenship rules are particularly accommodating. Until recently, immigration policy was rarely debated in the legislative arena, and the country prided itself on having a welcoming environment for cultural variety and a strong anti-racist position (Hagelund, 2020).

Denmark, on the other hand, has chosen more restricted regulations and a more evident ethno-national approach to dealing with immigration-induced variety. There have been hints of welfare dualism, with new residents receiving lower social benefits. Although the anti-immigration right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP) has backed successive conservative governments, restricting policies are not limited to the right (Hagelund, 2020). Norway is usually found in the middle of the two Scandinavian countries, while considering its refugee policy. It has never been as liberal as Sweden, but it has also never gone as far in the opposite direction as Denmark. Since 2013, the anti-immigration Progress Party has been a member of a coalition government, but it looked to be more moderate than the DPP in dealing with the refugee crisis. In Norway, an agreement between all parties was put forward to deal with the refugee crisis. Faster returns and other measures to deter asylum seekers were included, as well as various articles restricting asylum seekers' and refugees' social rights. It required the government to ensure that asylum seekers' social benefits are at a level that makes Norway less economically attractive than comparable European countries (Hagelund, 2020).

Hagelund (2020) identifies that the disparities in Scandinavian government policies are also reflected in the media articles regarding the refugee crisis. The principal problem structure looked different. Whereas Swedish media condemned European politicians for failing to aid, Danish editorials saw Europe's refugee policy's liberality as part of the problem. In the beginning, Swedish newspapers tended to portray the refugee issue as essentially an international tragedy in which all countries were required to contribute to the resolution of a humanitarian disaster. The crisis was argued in Danish publications in terms of its consequences for Danish policy, suggesting the possibility for policymakers to limit the refugee crisis' impact on Denmark. The initial reports of the refugee crisis in Norwegian newspapers were marked by a considerable focus on what steps Norway, as a distinct player,

should take to alleviate a problem that was mostly characterized as occurring elsewhere. As the crisis escalated and a large number of refugees queued up at the borders, the media started reporting on the significance of restricting refugees (Hagelund, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, post 2000's, the devastation of the agricultural sector, in turn, had an impact on companies that relied on it for inputs, resulting in the loss of thousands of formal jobs. People fled to other nations in pursuit of better economic possibilities, while some turned to the highly overcrowded informal sector for survival. Simultaneously, rising political repression prompted thousands of Zimbabweans to abandon the nation and seek political asylum in neighboring countries (Chikanda, 2017). The Zimbabwean scenario is a one-of-a-kind case study of varied kinds of migration, comprising both economic and forced migrants. The term "mixed migration" or the "migration-displacement nexus" (p. 60) has been used to describe movements in which "people with diverse goals migrate alongside one another using the same routes and modes of transportation used by smugglers" (Chikanda, 2017, p. 65). Zimbabwean refugees escaped to nations with welcoming policies for refugees and immigration, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, among the developed world (Chikanda, 2017).

The current Emmerson Mnangagwa government in Zimbabwe has been trying to bring back Zimbabweans who left the country due to adverse situations in the early 2000's. Following a meeting between Zimbabwe's foreign affairs ministry and the British embassy on June 23, 2021, it was agreed to charter a flight from London to Harare for the purpose of "returning Zimbabwean people having no permission to remain in the UK (Bulman, 2021). The decision invited widespread criticism and protests in the UK, from the public and politicians alike. Seventy-five lawmakers signed a statement produced by the all-party parliamentary group on Zimbabwe, expressing their worry over Zimbabwe's deteriorating political and human rights situation. However, despite the protests, the first deportation flight after decades left for Harare on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021. Multiple difficulties, as well as Covid-19 self-isolation, are thought to have resulted in only 14 people being on board (Taylor, 2021).

## **Australia in focus**

### ***Background***

Australia has a total of 13,750 refugee places available per year. Normally, 6,000 resettlement places are set aside for refugees from other countries that have been identified

as having a security need by the UNHCR (McAdam, 2013). The number of refugees who arrive in Australia on their own has no bearing on this figure. In Australia's "special humanitarian initiative," (McAdam, 2013, p. 437) there are also 7,750 spots available. These spots are reserved for humanitarian entrants, or people who face significant discrimination in their home country that amounts to a gross violation of human rights, such as 'women at risk'. Many refugees use this channel to sponsor family members who were left behind in their home country. However, as more refugees arrive onshore in Australia by boat and plane, fewer places for humanitarian entrants abroad become available. The term "queue jumper" derives from this situation (McAdam, 2013, p. 440).

In Australia, since the start of the so-called 'Tampa crisis' on August 27, 2001, when a boat carrying 438 unauthorized arrivals bound for Australia perished in international waters near Christmas Island, the term 'queue-jumpers' and variations on this theme have been regularly used in public discourse (Gelber, 2003, p. 25). The Migration Legislation Amendment (Immigration Detainees) Bill (No2)2001, which strengthened Australian officials' power to respond to detainee escapes and the use or acquisition of weapons by detainees, was debated in the House of Representatives on August 23, 2001. During the debate, De-Anne Kelly, a National Party MP, cited 'queue-jumpers' as people who try to enter Australia by illegal means. Senator Robert Ray, a Labor Party member, reaffirmed the idea of a queue, saying that the Labor Party wants to create an orderly refugee scheme, and allow people to queue orderly. The print media also took up the issue and published several articles (Gelber, 2003).

Tony Abbott was the Prime Minister of Australia from 2013 to 2015. He was globally criticized for his numerous decisions and his tenure as Prime Minister is considered to be one of the most contentious in Australian political history. His hardline immigration policy has been branded "shameful" and "cruel" by critics. There was widespread criticism by major media platforms. "Whatever your political beliefs, the indefinite detention of thousands of people – in conditions that made children try to kill themselves – isn't something to be celebrated," the Human Rights Law Centre's legal director, David Burke, tweeted about it (Symons, 2020).

In September 2014, Australia's Immigration Minister Scott Morrison signed a pact with Cambodia, its partner for resettling the refugees it had forcibly diverted to Nauru. Australia agreed to pay \$40 million over a period of four years as the resettlement cost. The agreement

was widely criticized by the media and sparked protests in Sydney and Phnom Penh. Human rights activists claim that it is unfortunate to "dump" refugees in a country like Cambodia without proper resettlement planning. Nevertheless, Minister Morrison stated that the deal "enables us to fulfil on the policy which says no-one will be resettled in Australia" (BBC, 2014).

### *Literature*

McAdam (2013) states that Australia's refugee detention policy dates back to 1992 when the Hawke and Keating led Labor government initiated a policy of mandatory detention. Initially intended as a temporary and atypical measure for a second wave of Indochinese 'boat people,' (p. 440) mostly from Cambodia, it was later expanded to include all 'unlawful non-citizens' for administrative efficiency. The immigration minister at that time, Gerry Hand, illustrated that the government was persistent 'that a clear signal be sent that migration to Australia may not be achieved by simply arriving in this country and expecting to be allowed into the community'. From then, politicians from both sides have emphasized the distinction between the "good refugee" (who waits for resettlement in a camp) and the "bad refugee" (who "jumps the queue" by arriving in a boat) (McAdam, 2013. p. 442).

Australia has tight immigration policies toward refugees, and multiple incidents have happened in recent times which substantiate this. In 2012, illegal immigrants were forced to stay at detention centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea with pending refugee status and an uncertain future (McAdam & Gleeson, 2020). There were instances where the Australian authorities said 'no' to Rohingya refugees in 2015 which caused public outrage in the country and international community. However, the forced migrants were forcefully directed to detention centers (Medhora, 2015). Newman et al. (2013) stated that people sent to detention centers developed serious health conditions, precisely, mental health diseases such as 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD) and 'depression'. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring basic human rights in order to avoid instances of self-harm and violence. According to Killedar and Harris (2017), children are the worst affected in Australian detention centers. Along with the threat of developing health conditions, children are subjected to abuse and assault. Furthermore, a high incidence of self-harm is also being reported. The refugees who were detained for many years believed they would be resettled in Australia. Nonetheless, the majority of them were informed by the authorities that "you are free to go now", leaving their future in darkness (Whiteman, 2020).

Refugees who obtain temporary visas and even resettlement in Australia are subjected to racism and unfair treatment, which has a negative impact on their mental health (Ziersch et al., 2020). A study among Sudanese refugees in Australia asserts that those who were subjected to trauma developed wide-ranging mental health issues and learning disabilities are prevalent among children (Savic et al., 2015). Stress factors like inability to access medical care, along with physical assault and trauma, are common among refugees in Australia and are a major risk factor for mental health conditions among them (Rees et al., 2013). Australia's approach towards immigrants could be summarized as welcoming to economically desirable and restricted to economically undesirable or to people who have 'nothing to offer' (Lueck et al., 2015).

Bleiker et al (2013) state that the Australian media have become highly selective in displaying images of asylum seekers in recent times. The print media portray pictures of large masses of refugees and avoid identifiable victims. Accordingly, photographs of a group of people are unlikely to elicit the same level of compassion in viewers as images of a single victim with clearly identifiable facial features. These psychological processes at play shed light on how images of large groups of refugees influence public perceptions and political sentiments. The dehumanization of migrants is linked to a long-standing political narrative that depicts the influx of boats and refugees as a threat to Australia's security and border control. Accordingly, Australia's refugee crisis ceases to be a humanitarian matter and instead becomes a question of sovereignty (Bleiker et al., 2013).

Hamlin (2012) argues that "state sovereignty" (p. 35) refers to a country's national borders and the government's ability to control and regulate who enters and exits the country. When an unlawful entrance occurs, refugees, as non-nationals of the state, violate the state's sovereignty. Refugees who arrive through 'illegal channels' may be perceived as a danger to national sovereignty because they enter without the state's permission, thereby infringing on its sovereignty. McKenzie and Hasmath (2013) state that Australia's immigration policy is aimed at addressing anxieties about penetrable borders and upholding sovereignty. Refugees are seen as a danger to the country's territorial integrity. This refers to the belief that a country's border should be impenetrable in order to retain territorial integrity. Refugees who are able to pass through 'holes' in the borders pose a threat to a country's sovereignty. McKenzie and Hasmath arguably state that wealthier countries like the United States and Australia should tighten their security policies to restrict illegal immigrants and thereby

uphold state sovereignty.

Bleiker et al. (2013) state that the major political parties in Australia have depicted the problem of refugees as one of border protection and sovereignty for over a decade, backed by the prevalent visual framing. Although they disagree on specific policy measures, the political parties and their leaders have tried to outdo each other in terms of promoting their abilities to strengthen Australia's borders and limit the flow of refugees. In recent years, the government has tightened its authority on photos of refugees. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship established a new media strategy in October 2011. A fundamental aspect of this policy, which is designed to control media access to asylum seekers, is to govern the use of photos and, in particular, to ban journalists from showing the faces of refugees. The explanation given for this was to protect the privacy of refugees, but it was widely criticized by human rights advocates. They strongly believed that authorities did not want any empathetic responses from the public towards refugees (Bleiker et al., 2013).

## **Review**

The topic of the research is the detention policy of the Australian government. Before writing this chapter, the researcher went through literature about refugees both in the global and Australian context. The idea was to gain knowledge about the previous research done in the same area. Studies showed the background of refugees in Australia, their history along with the recent events in Australian immigration history and the country's response to those incidents.

Many studies expressed concern about refugees' health and well-being. The search terms used to find the literature, to name a few, were "health," "torture," and "trauma" of refugees. Australian detention centers are infamous for their ways of dealing with refugees since they were established. A handful of studies have displayed the sufferings and tortures that refugees are subjected to in detention centers outside Australia (Nauru and other islands). The mental health conditions and incidents of suicide and self-harm were also noted by the researchers. The conditions were quite similar for those who managed to get refugee status in mainland Australia. Studies show the development of health conditions among refugees and identify the causes as racial discrimination, restricted access to medical care, and trauma.

Another interesting fact noted in the literature study was the response of various politicians

to the policy of detention. Multiple media reports and studies have pointed out that the opinions of politicians varied when they changed from ruling to opposition. The theme reflected in the studies and the discourse was that the majority of the politicians opposed the intake of more forced migrants, citing them as a threat to Australia's democracy and sovereignty. Adding to this, the studies also echo the censoring of media employed by government authorities. Successive laws in Australia have tried to restrict the news about refugees being published, citing security reasons. However, studies suggest that the motive behind this could be to avoid the 'sentiments' factor among the Australian public which might challenge the stance of the government. Keywords such as "stance of politicians," "government response," and "media restrictions" helped in finding the relevant literature.

### **Research gap**

Extensive research has been done on the effects of Australia's refugee detention policy. However, few relevant studies were found, involving media analysis. Media analysis constitutes 'public opinion' which itself is beneficial in assessing the 'general mood' of the public. The term 'public' in this study's context includes the politicians, government officials as well as the general public. In the age of technological resonance, the proposed study becomes relevant, considering the growing influence of media platforms in our daily lives.

### **Researcher's position**

The literature review conducted in the global and Australian context describes their treatment of refugees. By far, the research conducted suggests that refugees and asylum seekers are facing hardships in the modern era. In accordance with the philosophical positions, the researcher believes that refugees should be allowed to stay permanently in whichever country they intend as this is their fundamental right. However, the researcher also considers the fact that every country develops their policies considering factors such as national security and public system costs, as explained by various liberal scholars.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the literature regarding refugees and their present global situation, followed by the Australian context. The chapter mainly tried to explore the literature relevant to the research topic, which is the ethical analysis of Australia's refugee detention policy. The researcher's conclusion after reviewing the literature and corresponding research gaps identified were also listed. The following chapter will discuss the various global philosophies

with regard to refugeehood.

## **Chapter 3: Philosophies**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses various philosophical schools of thought and their viewpoints regarding refugees. The chapter mainly discusses the ideas of John Rawls and other communitarian philosophers. The viewpoints of libertarianism, cosmopolitanism, utilitarianism and liberalism are also analyzed. The chapter intends to explore the perspectives of philosophical scholars regarding refugees and resettling them.

### **Rawlsian ideology**

According to Rawls (1999), justice is the first virtue of social organizations, just as truth is the first virtue of philosophical systems. If laws and institutions are unjust, they must be modified or removed, no matter how efficient or well-organized they are. Rawls describes two principles in the context of justice: The first one, the Liberty Principle, establishes that all individuals have the same fundamental liberties. The freedoms of faith, cooperation, and communication, as well as democratic rights, are all part of fundamental liberty. The second principle of equality focuses on ensuring that everyone in a community has meaningful options and maintaining distributive justice. The equality principle assures that people with similar talents and motivation have nearly equal life opportunities, and that societal inequities help the least fortunate (Rawls, 1999).

Rawls asserts that even the good of society as a whole cannot overcome each person's sanctity based on fairness. The liberties of equal citizenship are taken for granted in a just society and the rights safeguarded by justice are not susceptible to political negotiations or social interest analysis. Moreover, truth and justice, as the primary qualities of human endeavors, are implacable. A social system is methodical when it is not only organized to promote the welfare of its members, but also when it is successfully governed by a universal conception of justice. In a system where everybody accepts and realizes that everyone else acknowledges the same principles of justice, and where the fundamental social institutions normally comply and are known to respect these principles (Rawls, 1999).

Carens (1987) states that a contrast between ideal and non-ideal theory is made by Rawls. In ideal theory, people would accept and mostly adhere to the principles adopted in the original stance, even after the "veil of ignorance" (p. 542) is lifted, and that there are no historical barriers to the implementation of just organizations. Non-ideal theory takes into account both

historical barriers and other people's unfair conduct. Non-ideal theory is thus more instantly applicable to practical issues, but ideal theory is more substantial, outlining the fundamental goal of social reform as well as a basis for determining the relative importance of deviations from the ideal (Carens, 1987).

Carens (1987) identifies that, in Rawls' view, liberty can be limited for the sake of liberty, and all liberties are contingent on the persistence of social order and national security, even in ideal theory. Uncontrolled immigration would wreak havoc and destabilize society. In terms of basic liberties, everyone would be worse off. Even if they took the worst-point off view and recognized the importance of liberty, individuals in the original position (the parties decide on the principles that will determine the structure of the society they live in) would support immigration controls in such situations. This would be an instance of suppressing liberty for the sake of liberty, and everyone would consent to such limits, even if, once the "veil of ignorance" (p. 542) was withdrawn, the individual right to immigrate would be restricted. Restrictions would be validated only if there was a realistic assumption that unrestricted immigration would harm social safety, and this anticipation would have to be centered on "evidence and ways of reasoning acceptable to all" (p. 546). Furthermore, restrictions would be justified only to the limited extent necessary to maintain social safety; the requirement for some restrictions would not legitimize any order of restrictions (Carens, 1987).

Carens further identifies that according to Rawls, the priority given to liberty stays true even under non-ideal circumstances. If there are restrictions on immigration for public safety concerns, this argues that people wishing to immigrate because they have been refused basic liberties should be given priority over those trying to immigrate for financial purposes. Only in the long term does liberty take precedence over all else. In non-ideal circumstances, restricting liberty for the sake of economic gain can be justified if it improves the position of the poorest and speeds the formation of conditions in which everyone enjoys equal and complete liberties. However, non-ideal theory offers more reasons to limit immigration than ideal theory, although these reasons such as non-compliance and feasibility, are virtually nonexistent. In addition, ideal theory views free migration as a necessary component of a just social system (Carens, 1987).

## **Communitarian perspective**

Communitarianism incorporates an extensive set of substantive philosophical stances as opposed to utilitarianism and liberalism, considering there are mixed views about what comprises individual and social integrity (Roberts & Reich, 2002). Who chooses what is to be regarded as a fundamental dilemma in communitarianism. Communitarians respond to this question in two ways. According to one viewpoint, each group establishes its own set of standards. Morality is seen as essentially contextual in this sort of relativist communitarianism. Relativists argue for honoring each society's unique cultural tradition since they lack a universal location to stand outside of any cultural context. Universalist communitarians, on the other hand, believe in a single authentic type of good society and the qualities that go with it. In public health, this approach is defined as the concept that particular behaviors and cultural patterns should be encouraged for all countries, regardless of local cultural norms (Roberts & Reich, 2002).

Knight (2005) states that the idea of communitarianism has looked into the topic of refugee resettlement in a generous way. In contrast to other political and social ideologies that emphasize the value of the individual, it weighed on the role of the community in social and political life. According to communitarian theorists, the government's primary responsibility is to ensure that citizens' liberties and financial capital are distributed fairly so that they may live their lives as they see appropriate (Knight, 2005). The idea of fair distribution of rights and resources applies to refugees as well. 'Liberal nationalism,' as defined by communitarian theorists, has been debated regularly. They claim that national identification has a considerable influence on people's personal identities. Furthermore, 'nationality' is the primary component that fosters solidarity among the members of a community or nation. Communitarians believe that states have a legal right to be sovereign and self-governing (O'Leary, 1996).

According to Sicakkan (2004), communitarianism points out that community belonging, people's rights in terms of dignity, identity, culture, and belonging to a historical-cultural community need to be protected. This includes historical minorities, people whose right to belong to a community is not recognized or who are discriminated against because of their belonging and loyalty to their particular community. Discrimination or persecution by a state or discrimination by non-state actors combined with state negligence makes the community vulnerable. Sicakkan also asserts that states in the affected region are primarily responsible

for the region's refugees, hence regional multilateral cooperation among states and economic aid and relief from unaffected regions should be mobilized. The policy of refugee protection should focus on regionalizing refugee problems, emphasizing the root causes; extensions of sovereignty to stateless communities; regional devolutions; temporary collective protection; creating regional safe zones and repatriation.

Orgad (2019) states that the dominant citizenship models have two basic characteristics that have an impact on the concept of refugee. The first is the assumption that people primarily choose an established life, that is; being a citizen of a state, living in a neighborhood, having a home, and so forth. This assumption is based on an ethics of establishment, which states that the best mode of being is an established existence. The second assumption is that people need and want to identify with one another and belong in certain ways. This assumption is based on an ethics of homogeneity, which states that individual satisfaction or collaborative existence is only probable if there is some level of homogeneity in the form of a collaborative individual or group identity. These two ethics, albeit they emerge in different forms in different citizenship paradigms, are the foundation of mainstream citizenship and refugeehood (Orgad, 2019; Sicakkan, 2004).

### **Libertarian perspective**

Libertarianism is a philosophical viewpoint that weighs in on the question of whether liberal states have a moral obligation to welcome refugees. Individual liberty and freedoms are the cornerstones of libertarianism. Libertarians think that human life should be built on mutual respect for each other's freedoms and rights. Individual rights to liberty, property, and life should be preserved by states, according to libertarianism, and the state must not engage in activities that infringe on those rights. Majority of the libertarians are in favor of 'open borders' for refugees as they believe it is unethical to deny individual liberties (Brennan, 2012).

Refugees have two rights, according to libertarians, in favor of refugee resettlement (Hospers, 1998). The right to move to any state if they are in jeopardy is the first. The right to take up residence in the host nation is the second right, which supplements the first. Libertarians who support refugee resettlement believe that refugees' rights should be treated the same as those of any other citizen, arguing that refugees should be given the same rights as ordinary citizens. As a result, people should not be forced to simply reside in detention

centers. They should also be permitted to participate in economic and other useful pursuits. Libertarians claim that refugees do not select their condition, but that it is imposed on them by events in their home countries. Libertarians believe that restricting refugee travel is ethically equivalent to sending them back to their countries to perish. They argue that other nations have a moral obligation to protect people in need, and that governments should not turn their backs on refugees as a result (Hospers, 1998). According to libertarians, despite the fact that refugees may bring minor restrictions such as security and economic issues such as the distribution of government funding, they also bring a considerable flow of resources in the matter of human capital and financial resources. Material goods that have been reclaimed from their original countries may be considered assets. Refugees also contribute to the host country's economy through their entrepreneurship (Jacobsen, 2002).

Hospers (1998) identifies that some libertarians echo different opinions while mentioning about refugee resettlements. Their stance is against permitting refugee migration. The majority of libertarian thinkers advocate for privately owned land and believe that the state should not be a property possessor. As a result, some theorists believe that permitting migrants and refugees into liberal democracies would be a breach of private property rights that the state does not have the authority to violate (Hospers, 1998). An open border policy will entice migrants from low-income communities to migrate to affluent liberal countries because the social welfare benefits provided will appear attractive and desirable. Some experts highlight security worries about refugees, arguing that they could destabilize the host community. They contend that, while we should not return refugees to the countries from which they fled, liberal states have no obligation to relocate them (Hospers, 1998).

### **Cosmopolitanism**

According to Haukvik (2015), cosmopolitanism is a normative view of global affairs that recognizes a moral and ethical obligation for all of humanity, not only fellow citizens. The term cosmopolitanism stands for "citizen of the world" (Horstmann, 1976, p. 1176). Political cosmopolitanism and moral cosmopolitanism are the two basic types of cosmopolitanism. Political cosmopolitanism arose from the relationship between states in which they constructed a global political order. Moral cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, defends the fundamental concept of global citizenship. Scholars have proposed that, while the existence of boundaries is necessary, they are not ethically justifiable (Haukvik, 2015). Borders, cosmopolitans believe, are unethical because we, as humans, have moral responsibility to all

people, not just citizens of one country. As a result, the majority of cosmopolitanism debates center on whether or not limits should exist, and if so, to what extent. While the famous philosopher Immanuel Kant does not advocate for a unified world system, he recognizes the moral obligation to refugees based on the principle of hospitality for all human beings (Haukvik, 2015).

Although cosmopolitanism has evolved from an intellectual philosophy to an institutionally anchored global political awareness, the asymmetrical nature of global capitalism has called into question cosmopolitanism's institutional grounding (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019). There is a misalignment between global capitalism's material connection and the degree to which global solidarities are formed. In contrast to older theoretical frameworks, some advocates of new cosmopolitanism try to separate it from universal reason, claiming that cosmopolitanism is now a collection of provisional practical stances that can lead to strategic coalitions and networks across geopolitical boundaries (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019). However, the relationship between transnational migrant experiences of universal multiculturalism and established forms of cosmopolitan solidarity is largely unexplored. The world is unquestionably interrelated, and cross-border migration is on the rise. Nevertheless, true cosmopolitanism in the substantial sense of capitalized international political communities is not inevitably generated as a result of this migration surge (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019).

### **Utilitarianism and Liberalism**

Gibney (1999) states that global liberal and utilitarian political theories represent articulations of the impartial perspective, stressing the universal moral claims of human beings to equal consideration by states. When applied to entrance policy, these theories severely restrict the grounds on which states are justified in denying admittance to foreigners. In contrast, communitarian and conservative political views are manifestations of the partial view, emphasizing the moral rights of communities. When it comes to admission, these approaches usually preserve citizen communities' rights to broad control over who joins and becomes a member of the community (Gibney, 1999).

Liberalism is an economic and political theory that focuses individual freedom, equal opportunity, and the promotion of personal rights (mainly to life, liberty, and property). Liberal theorists believe that an individual is the most significant unit of a society and he or

she should be granted complete autonomy to make their own decisions so that they can completely develop and attain their maximum potential (Ferguson, 2016). Entrance limitations on refugees and immigrants are a severe infringement of human liberty, according to liberals functioning within a rights-based framework. They believe that the freedom of a community to construct its own admission policy is ethically restricted by the right of all individuals to reside where they desire, taking seriously the Universalist implications of liberalism. If the liberal freedom to leave one's state is to be successful, it must be accompanied by a matching individual right to enter a new state. There is also something unethical about liberal states' support for unrestricted international trade of products and services while restricting people's freedom of movement (Gibney, 1999).

According to Gibney (1999), the utilitarian approach follows a different path to a surprisingly similar conclusion. Recognizing that universal moral norms need equal consideration of all interests, they propose that in a conflict between refugee and citizen interests, the more fundamental interests should take precedence over the less fundamental. Liberal democracies are thus obligated to raise their intake of new entrants, taking into consideration both the benefits to them and the costs to locals, until an equilibrium occurs between the marginal utilities earned by both residents and potential immigrants as a result of increased immigration (Gibney, 1999).

Global liberals believe that states are justified in limiting immigration if more people would risk public order, national security, or the preservation of liberal institutions. When the costs to the state of admitting one more individual outweigh the benefit to the individual involved, utilitarians consider entry restrictions to be justified. Despite the fact that a rapid rise in a country's population caused by open borders could put pressure on the supply of public goods, impartialists remain hesitant to accord states the power to restrict entry in order to safeguard the welfare state (Gibney, 1999).

Gibney (1999) argues that the humanitarian principle, like global liberalism and utilitarianism, asserts that people and states owe specific responsibilities to outsiders as a result of their shared participation in a single human community. It argues that while the costs of doing so are low, everyone has a responsibility to help those who are in tremendous distress or suffering. The refugee is frequently used as a modern analogy for the damaged and defenseless stranger left by the side of the road. Many liberal democratic states could

certainly do a lot for a large number of refugees at little or no expense to themselves. For instance, refugees could be incorporated into the community and could have the same rights and duties as citizens. Refugees could be given legal work permits and, thereby, become taxpayers. They could benefit the host country rather than become a burden (Norman, 2018).

### **Summary**

The chapter discussed various global justice theories and other humanitarian philosophies and their concept of refugee resettlement. Various scholars from different schools of thought have viewpoints regarding refugees and accommodating them in different countries, considering factors such as multiculturalism and the sovereignty of the state. However, it shows that global justice theorists adopt a welcoming attitude towards refugees and voice support for equal rights for them as citizens of the state. The following chapter will discuss the methodology and methods used for conducting the study.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology and methods**

### **Introduction**

As evident from the literature review, multiple studies have been done on the effects of Australia's refugee detention policy. However, few relevant studies have been done, involving media analysis. Media analysis constitutes 'public opinion' which itself is beneficial in assessing the 'general mood' (p. 46) of the public (Fitzgerald, 2008). There have been recurrent discourses in the media whenever any major incidents have happened in Australia's immigration history. Nonetheless, studies that analyze public opinion are rare. In the age of technological resonance, the proposed study thus becomes relevant, considering the growing influence of media platforms in our daily lives.

This study looks at the treatment of refugees by Australian government over the years. The study focuses to what extent, the government's detention could be justified within the ethical framework of global justice theories. In this chapter, aspects of ontology, epistemology, and methodology have been defined and chosen to identify public opinion with regard to Australia's refugee policy through an interpretivist paradigm using qualitative methods.

### **Research design**

This study follows an ontology, epistemology, and research methods similar to the studies by Cooper et al. (2016) and Booth and Blake (2020), which were media exploratory studies regarding social issues. An interpretative approach was adopted in this study. Gregory (1983) states that "The interpretive paradigm directs researchers to understand lived experience from the insiders standpoint, by observing and interpreting the complexity of their interactions, relationships and cultural values" (p. 360). Ontology deals with what reality is. In particular, researchers must take a stand on what situations really are and how they actually work. The ontology connected with interpretivism is relativism, the idea that reality is subjective and changes from one person to another (Scotland, 2012). As this research examines the public opinion on refugee policy in the media and ethics, relativism is an appropriate approach. It is subjective, since every person is different and can have different ideas and ways of dealing with refugees. Qualitative research often believes that interpretive understanding is the only possible strategy by which the significance of a situation can be revealed, contrary to the positivist approach, which argues that reality is what the senses can see, smell, and touch (Gray, 2018).

Epistemology gives ethics as a basis to determine the valid and appropriate aspects of information. It is about creating, gaining, and communicating knowledge. Epistemology could comprise objectivism, constructivism or subjectivism (Gray, 2018; Scotland, 2012). For this study, the epistemology used is constructivism, which presumes that fundamental beliefs regarding being, self, and society are formed by people residing in a cultural and historical environment which is generated and replicated by their acts of speech (Fairclough, 2003). Using constructivism; thus, becomes meaningful as the opinions of the public and politicians regarding accommodating refugees in their community could be carefully studied.

This study intends to answer questions about how to better comprehend the sense and experience components of people's lives and social situations, which is a major goal of qualitative research (Fossey et al., 2002). Qualitative research is multi-methodical in nature and takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its topic. This implies qualitative researchers investigate phenomena in their natural environments, aiming to understand or interpret occurrences in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Non-numerical data, such as text, video, pictures, or audio recordings, are referred to as qualitative data, whereas quantitative research collects data in the form of numbers and statistics (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This study is a media analysis and uses texts available in the media and therefore fits into a qualitative study. This type of information can be gathered through journals, media articles, or in-depth interviews, and examined through an inductive approach or thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). In the proposed study, the data will be gathered from media articles.

Thematic analysis can be applied to a variety of qualitative research projects. It is not a single method, but rather a tool that may be applied to a variety of approaches. Thematic coding is a method used in major analytic approaches like grounded theory, rather than a distinct approach in and of itself. Thematic analysis provides a very flexible approach that may be changed for the demands of numerous investigations, delivering a rich and detailed, yet complex description of data, owing to its theoretical liberty (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is significant for this study as the data is gathered from media articles. Thematic analysis is a valuable tool for assessing different study participants' viewpoints, showing parallels and variations, and uncovering unexpected findings (King, 2004). This is critical while drawing conclusions from individual media articles with different point of views expressed by individual members.

Thematic analysis is a flexible method that is not bound by specific research philosophies or theoretical viewpoints (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a result, thematic analysis can be used for both deductive and inductive reasoning. The deductive technique involves laying out the researcher's position at the start of the study, generating hypotheses from existing research or theories, and then analyzing data to confirm or disprove these hypotheses. In contrast, the inductive method is more prone to novel analysis and ideas that emerge from facts (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). This study intends to draw conclusions from the gathered data by generating relevant themes. Consequently, an inductive method would be used here.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explained thematic analysis in six phases:

1. Familiarization with the data: This phase involves being really immersed in the available data and getting in to depth.
2. Coding: This phase consists of creating short labels for key properties of the data that are relevant to the broad research topic that guides the study.
3. Generating themes: In this stage, themes are generated which is a logical and significant characteristic in the findings that relates to the research questions.
4. Reviewing themes: This step includes ensuring that the themes are consistent across both the coded extracts and the entire data collection.
5. Defining and naming themes: In this stage, the researcher needs to analyze the themes thoroughly and ensure that the themes fit in well with the whole research process.
6. Writing up: Thematic analysis necessitates the use of writing. The writing-up process entails weaving the analytic narrative and data excerpts together to provide the reader a logical and convincing narrative about the facts, as well as categorizing it in light of previous literature.

This research aims to explore the ethical justification of Australia's refugee detention policy through qualitative methods. Therefore, an ethical analysis section is also included to strengthen the study. Ethical analysis involves the use of logical techniques of ethical evaluation in reasoning about social issues. The basic goal of ethical analysis is to outline and acknowledge the conflicting parties' preferences, principles and values, consequently describing the primary factors of the conflict (Gritten et al., 2009). Ethical philosophers state that ideal societal values regard people as active and include them in their decisions and make the system committed to ensuring the prerequisites and resources needed to be beneficial for

all community members, regardless of how privileged or underprivileged they are (Carter, 2014).

While considering different types of ethical analysis, individual philosophers often assert only one approach, yet they are often opposed to other acknowledged theories for their preferred perception. As a result, three broad types of ethical analysis formats are widely recognized: consequentialist theory, which analyzes behavior in terms of its consequences; deontological theory, which analyzes behavior in terms of certain rules; and virtue-based theory, which evaluates behavior in terms of certain virtues (Szostak, 2002).

### **Data collection**

Data was gathered online using AUT's Australia/New Zealand reference center along with the newztext database. The Google search engine was used to explore databases of major newspapers and news channels for articles relating to Australia's immigration policy. The key search words, to list a few, were, 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'illegal boats' and 'Nauru'. The data was collected from online databases of major newspapers and television channels in Australia and New Zealand that mentioned Australia's refugee policy. Credible news sources outside these countries were also searched for relevant articles along with academic journal articles which mentioned media influence and importance in dealing with refugees. The major data sources, to name a few, were The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian, The New Zealand Herald, The Guardian, BBC and Reuters. Along with the key search words mentioned before, media reports relating to other relevant incidents in Australian immigration history were also analyzed. Data were collected from media reports over the period of 2015-2021, when refugee migration increased on a large scale to Australia. Since the early 2000's, when the "Tampa affair" occurred, Australia has started tightening its already strict immigration policy and, over the years, has enacted measures to keep its borders safe. I chose the period from 2015- 2021 for my research because the events that occurred in this time period attracted widespread public attention and corresponding media discourse, even internationally. Moreover, it is evident from the literature that the global refugee crisis is worsening over time and more people are being displaced from their home countries. The time period selected thus becomes relevant as the data were collected regarding recent incidents.

## **Sample**

The researcher desired a data set of a size that would offer reasonable results without being too enormous for a lone researcher like myself, especially because I was completing the analysis and all of the reading and coding by hand. A study conducted by Booth and Blake (2020) to explore the ways that media acted in the debate about euthanasia in New Zealand, also followed the method of small sample selection. In the opinion of Rose (2016), "The sample should not be so large that it overwhelms the resources you have available for analyzing it."

The criteria for selecting the sample was that the data source/news media should have been broadcasting/publishing for at least fifteen years; and have an editor/s. The texts/stories selected had to be non-fiction and should contain the keyword/s mentioned before. Articles were selected from the time period of 2015–2021. After analyzing 95 articles related to the topic, 28 of them were shortlisted which the researcher found relevant. For each theme selected, seven to eight articles were analyzed. Some articles were used in more than one theme as they had multiple codes and keywords. The purposive sampling method was used to shortlist the articles, which indicates that the gathering and screening of information had been performed in a "conscious and deliberate manner" (Palinkas et al., 2013, p. 536). The researcher included articles that had the keywords mentioned earlier and had opinions from the public and politicians related to the topic. Articles that appeared to be biased and in support of a particular group or agenda were excluded. The major exclusion criteria for this study was the opinions of the public on social media platforms. Even though social media has outperformed print and news media in the current technological world, the researcher prefers to study only news media articles. This is primarily due to the lack of credibility and monitoring on social media platforms (Li & Suh, 2015). The researcher also considers that a portion of social media accounts with racist backgrounds (which might be fake) display hate and give biased opinions whenever a major incident happens (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Although the news media is not immune to bias, the researcher still chose them considering the fact that they are moderated by the broadcasting ministry in the majority of countries.

## **Data analysis**

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps were followed while completing the thematic analysis

as this was considered to be the most effective method for guiding analysis and ensuring the findings' validity.

### ***Executing thematic analysis***

In this first phase, all of the articles in the dataset were read twice throughout the data collection procedure, once before and after they were gathered as PDFs. The transcribing procedure was included in this phase as verbal data is being analyzed. In the next stage, every piece of content was coded. This was accomplished by analyzing each media article for the relevant keywords and then emphasizing on the textual content to keep the context intact. The next stage comprised of identifying relevant topics. Themes were built from the selected media article codes by filtering, eliminating and merging (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the next phase, the themes were reviewed. The themes are not really final, therefore this stage is all about reevaluating them and determining whether or not they "work" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase helped me to include the latest incidents involving refugees in Australia and to analyze the public opinion on the subject. Further, the themes were defined and named using the ethical framework of justice theories and were evaluated. In the final phase, the conclusions of the analysis were illustrated.

As mentioned before, this research intends to explore the ethical justification for the Australian government's detention policy. Therefore, an ethical analysis would be done following the thematic analysis. As explained by Hartman (2003), the process of ethical analysis involves different steps. Since this study is about analyzing a government policy, Bardach's (2000) eightfold policy analysis framework would be used here. Eugene Bardach's framework is frequently employed in administration, government policy and public health research. The policy analysis comprises (1) problem-setting, (2) evidence assembling, (3) alternative building, (4) criteria-selection, (5) results projecting, (6) confronting trade-offs, (7) decision-making, and (8) sharing the results of the whole process (Engelman et al., 2019). The ethical analysis section would be elaborated in the discussion chapter.

### ***Limitations of the analysis***

The failure of thematic analysis as a research tool to capture context is a recurring critique. Though thematic analysis is adaptable, it might result in inconsistencies and a lack of sense when constructing themes based on study findings (Holloway & Todres, 2003). While doing ethical analysis, this could be a drawback, as it is important to understand the context in

which the opinion was expressed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that can suffer from the flaw: samples of text are coded for analysis, while the remainder of the material is deleted. In the context of this study, an example may be a mostly good article about refugees that only uses the term "refugees" once in a single negatively-toned paragraph. Only that paragraph is then discovered and coded as a result of the search. There is also the issue of nuance and humor; understanding the whole meaning requires context. As this study is an ethical analysis, the above mentioned scenario could be a barrier to attaining the expected outcome.

This problem was resolved as much as feasible by following Braun and Clarke's instructions in stages one and two. Stage one allowed for a thorough check of the entire collection, allowing for the capture of first codes with full context information. As a result, some coded writings were only a few sentences long, while others were extended to a full paragraph. This allowed the researcher to minimize error and correctly generate the codes from the opinions expressed in the articles.

Another difficulty was the limited time and the quantity of the data. Over the selected time period from 2015-2021, only a fractional number of articles regarding refugee policy were obtained from Australian media. Because the analysis had to be done manually, the data had to be kept small. It would have been more efficient to use software to analyze a much bigger body of evidence, but this means that the conclusions of the research cannot be standardized to the same degree as data acquired over a longer timeframe.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for this study was not considered necessary since the information was publicly available. However, internet ethics has become increasingly prominent as modern researchers regard online platforms as a wealthy source of information. The data used in this study was gathered completely through online sources that are available to everyone. Nonetheless, the individual names, in certain instances, were replaced with fictitious names for ease of reading and where the researcher found it appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

This study employed methods similar to those used by researchers in the field of psychology (Dapkus, 1985), (Walsh et al., 2019), in health research (Braun et al., 2016), and for analyzing media (Andreotta et al., 2019), (Nycyk, 2020). The reason for that could be the

ease of the methods adopted and the credibility of the results. The study extensively went through the public discourse in relation to the refugee crisis in Australia. Data was categorically analyzed and results were generated. The detailed description of the results will be given in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Results

### Introduction

The major objectives of this study are to explore the policy justification for Australia's stance on refugee detention and to analyze whether the policy can be conceptualized within the ethical frameworks of justice theories. This chapter presents and discusses the findings based on the thematic analysis conducted on the data obtained from various media articles. The major portion of this chapter comprises of evaluating the generated themes carefully and making arguments in relation to each other. The results are analyzed, organized and categorized in accordance with each of the following sections.

### Theme 1: Sovereignty

The first theme identified is sovereignty which include the codes 'Border protection policy', 'Illegal entrants', 'National security risk', and 'Challenge to democracy'. This theme describes the concerns of public about refugees becoming a threat to the sovereignty of the state.

The first code generated under this theme is 'Border protection policy'. This code comprises of quotes by the public which highlights the significance of strong border protection policies in safeguarding the country and ensuring sovereignty.

'Border protection policy'

*It was a silly action, but I managed to catch one out of two. We live in a democracy and not everyone agrees with our strong border protection policies (Branco, 2015, Brisbane Times).*

*Our policy on border protection is the best in the world. Public opinion will not accept a generous humanitarian program, a substantial migration program, unless the government is seen to be in command of its borders (Karp, 2016, The Guardian).*

The first quote was said by Australian Immigration Minister Peter Dutton while a shoe was thrown at him at a refugee welcome event in 2015. The protesters claimed that it is hypocritical for the minister to take part in such an event while his government is indefinitely detaining innocent people. The minister's replies tend to suggest that everyone has a right to differ in a democracy, yet protests cannot stop the government from protecting Australia's sovereignty by implementing strict legislation.

The second quote was said by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in 2016 after Australia's offshore detention system came under scrutiny following the Rohingya refugee crisis. In his statement, the minister tends to state that Australia has a generous humanitarian program despite the criticism. Furthermore, the summary of the quote tends to say that the reason Australia is a refugee-friendly country is because it has strong border control policies and, accordingly, public support.

The next code generated is 'illegal entrants'. This code comprises of quotes that reveal what the public thinks about people entering illegally into Australia and how they become a threat to the sovereignty of the state.

'Illegal entrants'

*Nope, nope, nope, to start a new life, come through the front door, not the back door. Australia will do absolutely nothing that gives any encouragement to anyone to think that they can get on a boat, that they can work with people smugglers to start a new life (Medhora, 2015, The Guardian).*

*If you want to stop the deaths, if you want to stop the drownings you have got to stop the boats, thankfully, we have stopped that in Australia because we have stopped the illegal boats (BBC, 2015).*

The first quote was said by Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott in 2015 when the Rohingya crisis unfolded. The developed countries, including the United States, expressed their interest in accommodating Rohingya refugees, but Australia did not offer a welcoming stance. The quote by the Prime Minister tends to state that people who try to enter Australia illegally will not be encouraged and would be considered as criminals and they clearly pose a threat to the state's sovereignty. The minister also echoed that Australia supports only legal immigrants.

The second quote was also said by Tony Abbott in the context of the death of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy who died on the way to Greece in an illegal boat in 2015. The minister's statement came as advice to Europe to stop people illegally entering their territories. The quote shows the minister's attitude of simplifying a humanitarian issue which then had generated widespread responses globally. The quote could be interpreted as meaning that if illegal entries into the country could be stopped, then there would be fewer

chances of humanitarian issues happening and, thereby, the state's sovereignty could be protected.

The next code generated is 'National security risk'. This code comprises of quotes which echoes the concerns of the public about refugees becoming a threat to national security and the state's sovereignty.

'National security risk'

*The Medevac law poses a national security risk (Cousins, 2019, The Lancet).*

*The weak and bad medevac laws must be repealed in order to strengthen our national security again (BBC, 2019).*

*No refugees would be able to travel to New Zealand and thereafter return to Australia through the backdoor (Harris, 2021, The Sydney Morning Herald).*

The first and second quotes were said by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the Senate leader, Mathias Cormann, respectively. The context was regarding the Medevac law, which was passed to transport sick people in Australian detention centers to the mainland. The government opposed the law strongly as they believed human rights advocates were considering it as a loophole to bring illegal refugees to Australia. The above mentioned quotes clearly indicate the attitude of the authorities that Medevac law is a threat to Australia's sovereignty.

The third quote was said by Karen Andrews, Australia's Home Affairs Minister in 2021. Australia was considering New Zealand's long-standing offer to resettle 150 refugees from its detention centers. Australia decided to accept the offer after years of persuasion from human rights advocates and the public. However, Ms. Andrews' statement clearly indicates that she is concerned about the refugees who might get residency in New Zealand could later come back to mainland Australia and become a threat to their national security and sovereignty. It is evident from the similar articles that Australia did not consider this long-standing offer from New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern because they were skeptical about the refugees returning to their country as legal entrants.

The next code generated is 'Challenge to democracy'. The quotes supporting this code

displays the agony and concern of the public relating to refugees becoming a challenge to Australian democracy. It also shows the damage caused to certain communities by another part of the society.

‘Challenge to democracy’

*Do we reward those who would seek to stop this parliament operating by walking away from them and giving in to them? This is the exact opposite of democracy (Westcott, 2016, CNN).*

*Muslims are imprisoned at almost three times the average rate. The rate of unemployed and public dependency is two to three times greater than the national average. Muslims are prominent in organized crime with associated violence and drug dealing (Murphy, 2016, The Guardian).*

*Anti-social behavior is rampant, fueled by hyper-masculine and misogynist culture. Multiple social surveys find that neighbors of Muslim settlements are suffering from collapsing social cohesion and fear of crime (Murphy, 2016, The Guardian).*

The first quote was said by Australian labour party leader Bill Shorten following an incident that occurred in 2016. A group of thirty protesters made their way into parliament and disrupted the session, claiming that Australia’s policy of refugee detention is illegal and unethical. Mr. Shorten was among the many politicians who condemned the protest. The quote clearly indicates the anger towards the protesters and the underlying attitude that illegal refugees and those supporting them are a threat to democracy and the sovereignty of Australia. Other supporting articles also reveal that the public considers any violent protests by refugees or their supporters as a threat to democracy.

The second and third quotes were given by Australian senator Pauline Hanson in a speech at Parliament in 2016 in the context of increased immigration flows to the country. Ms. Hanson had always opposed the flow of immigrants to Australia. The above quotes made by her clearly target a specific community. The quotes clearly state that the members of that community are involved in criminal activities everywhere they are present. The summary of the quotes suggests that migrants with anti-social behaviors and a misogynist culture are always prone to committing criminal offenses and thereby posing a threat to Australian democracy and sovereignty.

## **Theme 2: Equality**

The second theme identified is equality which include the codes ‘Equal opportunity’ and ‘Inclusion’. This theme echoes the general mood of the public in including refugees in their community and considering them equivalent to citizens of the state.

The first code generated under this theme is ‘Equal opportunity’. The quotes supporting this code displays the public opinion about providing equal opportunity to refugees without any flaws and the concerns of human rights organizations on this subject.

‘Equal opportunity’

*More than 60% of the public said that no asylum seeker coming to Australia by boat should be allowed to settle in Australia. Interestingly 65% of the general public said that Australia's refugee intake should not favor Christians and other religions over Muslims (Lowy Institute, 2021).*

*It sets the tone of an inclusive Australia, committed to implementing its multicultural policies and programs and respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of all (Davidson, 2016, The Guardian).*

*Yet the cure lies ultimately with Australia, which has the responsibility to settle those from the regional processing centers who are found to be refugees. Any agreement regarding third country resettlement must be meaningful – in terms of numbers, timeliness and opportunities to rebuild – and adhere to Australia’s international humanitarian and human rights obligations (Davidson, 2016, The Guardian).*

The above opinion comes from a survey conducted by the Lowy Institute in Australia in 2017. It is not a statement but a survey opinion of the public. This was included in the data because I found it relevant to the research, and, moreover, it describes the general mood of the public. In the survey, a majority of Australians said that refugee intake should not give priority to any specific religion, and everyone should be given equal opportunity. The opinion could be summarized as that the general public of Australia does not consider people from any precise region or religion as a threat to the country’ sovereignty.

The second and third quotes were given by François Crépeau from the UN following a visit to Australia in 2016. Mr. Crépeau expressed his concerns over the treatment of refugees by

Australia. The quotes clearly suggest that the UN is concerned about the situation of refugees and the discrimination they are facing in Australia. The summary of the quotes suggests that immigrants should have equal opportunities whether they are resettled in Australia or in other countries, irrespective of any religion or race, in process of ensuring equality.

The next code generated is 'Inclusion'. The quotes supporting this code demonstrates the attitude of Australian to consider refugees as a part of their community without any discretion.

'Inclusion'

*They're one of us. They belong to Biloela (Mao, 2021).*

*This is a case involving children born in Australia who have spent years in detention... far away from a community which really wants them (Mao, 2021, BBC News).*

*It's hard to think of a more compelling case. It requires just a little act of compassion. All the minister would need to do is just sign it off. A stroke of a pen and they can come back to the community that loves them (Mao, 2021, BBC News).*

*This family are valued members of that local community. These two girls are not a threat to Australia's national sovereignty (Hope et al., 2021, The Sydney Morning Herald.).*

The first three quotes were given by the general public regarding the deportation of a refugee family in Australia. The 'Biloela family', as they are popularly known, lived for many years on temporary protection visas in the town of Biloela. The government rejected their refugee claim and asked them to leave the country. This invited widespread protests by the community and the public. The first three quotes clearly suggest that the refugee family is considered as an inseparable part of the community and the public does not observe them as a threat.

The final quote was said recently by Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese while responding to questions about the 'Biloela family'. The leader criticized the government for being unfair to the refugees by saying that the two small kids in the family are not a threat to national sovereignty. His statement also suggests that he considers the refugee family as a part of the community.

### **Theme 3: Human Rights**

The third theme identified is human rights which include the codes 'Freedom', 'Citizenship', 'Duty of care', 'Imprisonment, and 'Rejection'. This theme echoes the general public's concerns about the denial of refugees' basic human rights, particularly in detention centers, as well as the underlying views expressed in corresponding testimonials from refugees held up in detention camps.

The first code generated under this theme is 'Freedom'. The quotes under this code reveals detainee's concerns about denying freedom to refugees and their health conditions.

'Freedom'

*I cannot fully celebrate because so many people who were incarcerated with me on Manus Island are still struggling to get freedom (BBC, 2020).*

*I can't stand another day in detention, I am a sick person, I can't heal in detention. I need freedom to heal. I need your kind support. My health and condition will only improve once I have freedom (Doherty, 2021. The Guardian).*

The first quote was given by Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian journalist who was detained for trying to illegally enter Australia. Mr. Boochani escaped the detention center and reached New Zealand and was given asylum later there. In this quote, Mr. Boochani expresses his mixed feelings. Even though he is happy, he is still worried about other refugees in the detention centers who are denied freedom of movement, which is a basic human right.

The second quote was made by Kaveh, a detention refugee who was recently brought to Australia in order to receive emergency medical treatment. He is in Australian custody since 2013 when he tried to enter the country in an illegal boat. The refugee quote shows his pain and desperation, and the effects of years of illegal detention are also apparent. The quote shows that freedom is essential in order to preserve ideal health as a human right.

The next code generated is 'Citizenship'. The excerpts supporting this code displays the mixed opinion of the public regarding the concern of providing residency status to refugees in Australia.

'Citizenship'

*Half of the population had opinion that asylum seekers should be granted temporary protection visas which give rights to work and some welfare services but prevent permanent residency, family reunions and overseas travel (Lowy Institute, 2021).*

*If people were so upset then they would vote the government out of power and they would vote in One Nation or whoever. We would have Fraser Anning as our minister of immigration if people were so upset (Marr, 2018, The Guardian).*

The first quote is an excerpt obtained from a public survey conducted by the Lowy Institute in Australia in 2016 (Lowy Institute, 2021). Following a question regarding giving permanent residency to refugees, 53% of the participants responded negatively and observed that family reunions should also be restricted. Even though 53% is not a high proportion, this data echoes the mindset of the public against refugees' right to claim asylum and citizenship, which is a human right according to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.

The second quote was made by Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University in Australia. The quote was made in 2018 when a growing number of politicians began to express their concerns over increased immigrant flow to Australia. Markus, who is also a political analyst, echoes that the concern is only for the politicians, not the public. The quote suggests that the Australian public is not really concerned about multiculturalism and immigrants being a part of the country.

The next code generated is the 'Duty of care'. The quotes supporting this code display the concerns of the general public and international organizations about the denial of human rights in Australian refugee detention centers.

'Duty of care'

*No one died after medevac was in place. Australia has a duty of care towards asylum seekers and refugees under our jurisdiction (Cousins, 2019, The Lancet).*

*Medevac ensured that decisions about the need for urgent transfer for medical care would be made by doctors, not politicians. There is great concern among doctors that the government is prepared to sacrifice the health of adults who are Australia's responsibility (Crowe & Harris, 2019, The Sydney Morning Herald).*

*UNHCR is extremely concerned that the health situation of asylum seekers and refugees will continue to deteriorate (Crowe & Harris, 2019, The Sydney Morning Herald).*

The first and the second quotes were given by doctors while Australia repealed the much debated ‘Medevac law’ which was passed to transport sick people in Australian detention centers to the mainland in 2019. This decision drew widespread criticism from all corners of society, including the medical fraternity. The statements clearly describe the distress among doctors, and they echo that Australia is not executing the ‘duty of care’ it owes to refugees, which is a legal obligation, and are eventually denying human rights.

The third statement was issued by UNHCR when the Medevac law was repealed by Australia (Crowe & Harris, 2019). UNHCR has always been critical of Australia’s refugee detention program, and this particular statement echoes the concern of the organization regarding the denial of the right to health, which is fundamental to human rights. Corresponding literature also indicates that various internal organizations have condemned Australia’s strict refugee detention policy.

The next code generated is ‘Imprisonment’. The first quote under this code is an argument about Australia protecting the rights of refugees while the second one is a testimonial of the situation inside the detention centers.

‘Imprisonment’

*It would send a strong message that we are committed to upholding human rights (Doherty, 2021, The Guardian).*

*After 13 months locked in the Mantra prison without sunlight I was so sick they said they would take me to a better place. But that was a lie, the situation in the Park hotel was much worse. In Mantra sometimes I could put my hand out of a small window to touch sunlight with my hand, but in the Park prison, there was a dark glass facing a cement wall, I felt I was in an invisible prison. I couldn’t see trees, or wave to people outside (Doherty, 2021, The Guardian).*

The first quote was given by Australian immigration minister Alex Hawke in 2021 after the parliament passed the controversial ‘Migration Amendment Bill’ which gave the government more power and authority to indefinitely imprison refugees and people

supporting them. Supporting literature helps to conclude that the statement is specious and, ironically, the introduction of the new bill would result in a more severe denial of the rights of refugees.

The second quote was made by Azimitabar, an Iranian refugee who was in a detention center for many years and later moved into a hotel. He filed a legal case against immigration, alleging illegal detention. The quote suggests the degree of treatment the refugees in the detention centers receive. The quote clearly gives a picture of the human rights violations happening at the detention centers or prisons, no matter if it is an offshore center or a hotel in mainland Australia.

The next code generated is 'Rejection'. The first quote under this code indicates that rejecting innocent refugees is inhuman and a denial of human rights, while the second one doubts Australia's refugee resettlement plan.

'Rejection'

*We are at a point in this nation's history where we have a government, supported by the Labor party, who have said that it's acceptable for innocent people seeking our help and protection to be turned away (Westcott, 2016, CNN).*

*It shows clearly that they didn't have a plan when they went into this and certainly not a plan for what to do with the human beings who are going to be trapped up in their system (Ryan, 2020, The Guardian).*

The first quote was given by Australian Greens Party Leader Richard di Natale in 2016 after meeting the people who made it into parliament and protested against the detention policy. The Greens Party has mostly been supportive of accepting refugees. The statement above clearly criticizes the government for rejecting innocent refugees relentlessly and denying their rights. Supporting literature also suggests that the Greens party was also critical of the authorities for mistreating the refugees in detention camps.

The second quote was given by Graham Thom of Amnesty International in 2020 while mentioning Australia's refugee policy. Mr. Thom was critical of the authorities for not having a plan to resettle refugees, even after dealing with the refugee crisis for so many years. The quote echoes his concerns over refugees in detention centers who could be

rejected and may be sent back to their country of origin, which could prove critical for them.

#### **Theme 4: Stigma and discrimination**

The fourth theme identified is stigma and discrimination which include the codes 'Dangerous other', 'Intolerance' and 'Vulnerability'. This theme refers to the categorizing of refugees as a set of different people by the society and exploiting their vulnerabilities.

The first code generated under this theme is 'Dangerous other'. The first quote under the code depicts how the authorities typecast refugees as criminals or 'problem-makers' and deny their rights, while the second one expresses the harmful effects of portraying refugees as criminals.

'Dangerous other'

*Just in the past two weeks I had parents come into my office because their kids in year 11 and 12 were picked up by police and accused of stealing from a shop, because CCTV footage apparently just showed them near the area. According to them, they were not responsible (Davey, 2016, The Guardian).*

*The use of handcuffs has had a deleterious effect on the psychological health of your patients who reportedly feel like they were being paraded like criminals in public (Knaus, 2020, The Guardian).*

The quote was given by Bright Chinganya, the director of "Carers of Africa", an NGO, while describing the racial discrimination that refugees encounter in Australia. The statement is a narrative of an incident that happened, but from supporting literature (Polonsky et al., 2018), it could be summarized that refugees who reach Australia's mainland after suffering numerous hardships are subjected to discrimination and considered as a different set of people.

The second quote was given by 'Doctors for Refugees' following a series of incidents in which refugee patients were taken for medical treatment locked in their handcuffs in 2020. The quote clearly states the concerns of the doctors over refugees being paraded like criminals and the detrimental effects that this could cause to their mental health. The whole article echoes the fact that it is unlawful and discriminatory to unnecessarily handcuff refugees who might have a history of trauma, mental illness, or even torture.

The second code generated under this theme is ‘Intolerance’. The first quote supporting this code relates to the bigotry against refugees and the government’s agenda to conceal it, while the second one doubts the presence of racism among the public.

‘Intolerance’

*These books represent a reflective of pressing societal issues even though the government is trying its very best to prevent individual stories being published in the media (Delaney, 2018, The Guardian).*

*When racism and xenophobia are unleashed they can be directed from one group to another very quickly and very easily, because once it's out there people feel they have the license and permission to vent hostility and intolerance towards others (Dalzell, 2021, ABC News).*

The quote was given by Kelly Fagan, an Australian publisher, in context of the release of "No Friend But the Mountains", a memoir published by Behrouz Boochani in 2018. This was one among the many books which were published around the same time criticizing Australia’s refugee detention policy. The government's agenda of suppressing news relating to the discrimination of refugees is mentioned here. To summarize, the statement and the supporting literature narrate the stigma around refugees and the breadth of discrimination that they are subjected to by society and authorities.

The second quote was given by Tim Soutphommasane, former race discrimination commissioner and an academic, while discussing increasing intolerance against the Australian Asian community in Australia. The quote clearly suggests that the effects of racism could spread so fast and become uncontrollable. According to the supporting literature (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008), there is a hidden reality of intolerance toward non-white refugees that has kept them stigmatized and makes them feel discriminated against in society.

The final code generated under this theme is ‘Vulnerability’. The first quote supporting this code echoes the concerns of the public regarding the safety of refugees at detention centers, while the second and third quotes display the stigmatization of refugees.

‘Vulnerability’

*It's a tragedy that ad hoc decisions are being made by the Turnbull Government, we don't know what will happen to these very vulnerable people who've been kept trapped in limbo for many years now. We've seen high rates of suicide among this group and we are very concerned these latest decisions the Turnbull Government has made will increase that psychological duress these people are under and that suicide rate may increase as a result (Hart, 2017, ABC News).*

*Australia's abusive offshore processing policy has caused immeasurable suffering for thousands of vulnerable asylum seekers (Doherty, 2021, The Guardian).*

*Over its 70 years, the UN refugee agency has seen time and again the profound harmful effects of long term detention on people seeking asylum – many of them being people who have already suffered great hardship, trauma and danger (Doherty, 2021, The Guardian).*

The quote was given by Tim O'Connor of The Refugee Council of Australia in 2017. The statement was put forward when the government started rejecting a lot of refugee claims, citing minor errors. The statement suggests the stigma surrounding the refugees in Australian detention centers. Supporting literature also suggests that the discriminatory policies by the government towards vulnerable refugees are causing serious health issues, and delays in delivering justice to them will only intensify the situation.

The second quote was made by Sophie McNeill of Human Rights Watch, and the third one by the office of the UNHCR. Both the quotes display the stigma and helplessness of the refugees who are spending their lives in Australian detention centers. Human rights organizations have been urging the Australian government to remodel their detention policy for years with hardly any positive feedback. The mentioned quotes and corresponding literature demonstrate the sad reality of refugeehood in Australia.

## **Conclusion**

The study analyzed multiple media articles that included public opinions on Australian refugee detention policy. The opinions expressed were those of the general public, politicians, and government officials. Relevant codes were generated from the quotes that helped to develop four different themes. A genuine attempt was made to evaluate the themes and formulate arguments which related to one another in many contexts and aspects.

The section tried to explore the themes hidden in public opinion in Australia about the

refugee crisis. The arguably contrasting themes of 'Sovereignty' and 'Equality,' were examined initially. 'Human rights' and 'Stigma and discrimination' against refugees, were analyzed later. The researcher's overall assumption after the analysis is that the majority of the common public of Australia does not consider refugees a threat to them, while politicians express mixed opinion, but the majority of the latter's opinions display an unwelcoming attitude. More details of the analysis would be given in the discussion section.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

### Introduction

The chapter discusses the findings of this study regarding the public opinion on Australia's refugee detention policy and relates these findings to the identified themes and the relevant literature. This chapter focuses on the situation of refugees in Australia, philosophical justification of the public attitude towards refugee resettlement, an ethical analysis section and concludes with the limitations that the researcher faced while doing the study.

The central purpose of this dissertation was to explore Australia's policy basis for refugee detention, as well as its ethical justification. The major research gap identified after the literature review was that there is little relevant study involving media analysis of Australian refugee policy. As media analysis is beneficial in assessing the general mood of the public, the study is relevant, considering the growing influence of media platforms in our daily lives. Media reports undoubtedly affect the minds of the public on sensitive issues and arguably influence the framing of national policies (Cooper et al., 2016; Robinson, 2000). The study aimed to identify the ethical justification for Australian government's refugee detention policy. For this purpose, an ethical analysis was also conducted. The study demonstrates that, on a whole, the general public adopts a liberal human rights perspective concerning refugee resettlement in Australia, contrasting with the stance of the majority of its politicians. However, it is important to note that from time to time, and depending on incidents, the public alter their perspectives on refugees, and their policies reflect other justice theories. In general, it could be summarized that the attitude of the public towards refugees was welcoming, in contrast to the negative attitude of politicians.

The themes that were identified are listed in the table below and are discussed in detail further.

Code	Theme
Strong border protection policy	Sovereignty
Illegal entrants	
National security risk	
Challenge to democracy	

Equal opportunity Inclusion	Equality
Freedom Citizenship Duty of care Imprisonment Rejection	Human rights
Dangerous other Intolerance Vulnerability	Stigma and discrimination

### **Theme 1: Sovereignty**

The first theme identified was sovereignty, which was reflected in majority of the discourse on the articles. The codes generated contained phrases such as ‘Border protection policy’, ‘Illegal entrants’, ‘National security risk’, ‘Challenge to democracy’. Australia has always weighed in on the significance of protecting its borders, especially after large-scale illegal migration has escalated in recent times. A majority of politicians have opposed the idea of accepting additional refugees, and their opinions in the context of various incidents reflect this. This position is an obstacle to the principles of communitarianism, which are pro-migrant and strongly opposed to forced deportations and other measures separating families by force (Carens, 2014). According to O’Leary (1996), communitarian philosophers believe that countries have a legal right to be sovereign and self-governing. Simultaneously, they have a duty to protect refugees and asylum seekers who desire to stay in their country permanently as well. It reflected in the research that the political opinions mainly focused on the rights mentioned above and there was a suspicious silence on the duties.

The opinions included phrases such as "dangerous", "illegals", "criminals", "opposite to democracy" and "right responses". The factors that influence public opinion on refugees are related to their framing by media reports, politicians, and interest groups, together with the influence of socioeconomic and demographic components. Inclination towards an anti-refugee approach was clear in the majority of the political opinions. The stance adopted by Australian ministers at the time of the Rohingya refugee crisis and similar situations was that

illegal immigrants are a threat to the country's well-being. The recurrent statements given by authorities about protecting the borders and sovereignty against criminal activities are found to have caused confusion among the public about refugee resettlement. This is parallel to an analysis by van Berlo (2015) on the public discourse about Australia's border protection policy. Ironically, opposition political parties have given statements in favor of accepting refugees from time to time, but it is believed to be more for political gains rather than out of empathy towards refugees. However, human rights activists and the public have displayed a positive and welcoming stance towards refugees while expressing their opinions.

## **Theme 2: Equality**

The second theme identified was equality. The codes generated were 'Equal opportunity' and 'Inclusion'. A significant proportion of the public has always stood by refugees whenever any major incidents have happened in Australian immigration history. The study reflects that the Australian common public has the opinion that refugees should be given an equal opportunity to enter the country and should not be discriminated against based on religion or geographical differences, whereas, majority of the politicians have opposed this. The public also argue that once the refugees reach the country, they should be included in the community and given rights equal to those of citizens. This relates to the communitarian ideology, which upholds the ideas of equality for all and community relationships (Avineri & De-Shalit, 2011).

There were instances when the authorities had to revoke their decisions to deport refugees, mostly due to public protests. The public opinion on these incidents reflects the theme of equality and a sense of inclusion in the community. This positive attitude could have been because of the involvement of local media in developing meaningful communities and the humanization of local refugees, as news reporters seek acceptability by building connections with refugee experiences. Communitarians believe that the functioning of consultative democracies requires certain levels of mutual trust and understanding between individuals in the community (Sicakkan, 2004). However, government authorities have always observed that people who reach Australia illegally will not be incorporated into the community and would be resettled elsewhere. This conclusion was drawn from the opinions in multiple contexts of immigration issues. Accordingly, this unwelcoming attitude towards refugees was found prominently in conservative political discourse, in similarity to a study by Canetti et al. (2016) regarding the threats faced by asylum seekers in Israel and Australia.

### **Theme 3: Human Rights**

The third theme identified was the human rights of refugees. The codes generated were 'Freedom', 'Citizenship', 'Duty of care', 'Imprisonment', and 'Rejection'. This theme identified the concerns about the fundamental rights of refugees who end up in detention centers in the process of entering Australia. The theme explores that basic human rights of refugees are at stake in many detention centers, and the "duty of care" that Australia owes to those in custody is not carried out perfectly. Opinions expressed by different channels show the concerns of the medical fraternity, the public, and organizations such as the UNHCR. A study by Killedar and Harris (2017) reflects similar findings regarding the denial of health rights of refugees at Australian detention centers. Cooper et al. (2016) contend that in recent years, leading Australian news organizations have been portraying refugees more positively and advocating for their rights. This transition happened following the riots and deaths that occurred at the detention centers. However, during this study, it was found that the coverage of certain specific incidents was absent from Australian media platforms, but was detailed in international media. This could be part of a hidden agenda to protect Australia's status as a "good international citizen" (p. 81), a terminology that its government officials use regularly. Earlier research highlighted the influence of governments on refugee media attention (Bleiker et al., 2013; Klocker and Dunn, 2003). Nonetheless, there is scope for further study, including regional and urban media, to substantiate this argument.

The public opinion in general could be interpreted as in favor of the refugees, parallel to the concepts of John Rawls, who had a positive attitude regarding the right to life and to freedom for burdened people (Wilkins, 2007). Contrastingly, the research also found some data about the concerns of the public about refugees attaining citizenship in Australia. A significant proportion of the public opined in a survey that refugees should be allowed to work and live in the country, but had mixed opinions on giving them permanent residency. Even though no visible opinion was found supporting the denial of human rights, specific instances suggest that there is a 'do not care' attitude towards this matter among certain sections of society.

### **Theme 4: Stigma and discrimination**

The fourth theme identified was stigma and discrimination against refugees. The codes generated were 'Dangerous other', 'Intolerance' and 'Vulnerability'. This theme examined the intolerance refugees are subjected to, both in detention centers and also when they reach mainland Australia. The discourse presented many instances where authorities were skeptical

about the refugees just because of their color or religion. Rawls considers that the dominance of public values such as equality, freedom and fairness serve as the foundation of a liberal country (Wolin, 1996). This thought itself suggests no individual should be discriminated against in a just society. In the research, it was reflected that, in many instances, this Rawlsian concept of a just society is not mirrored in the attitude of the authorities.

The theme also identifies the stigma surrounding refugees and their exclusion from society. There were testimonials which displayed the trauma that refugees are going through in detention centers. Contributors also discussed the vulnerable conditions that refugees encounter in detention centers due to long periods of indefinite imprisonment. The media have a privileged social role that enables specific realities to be legitimized and public sentiment to be shaped (KhosraviNik, 2010). Consequently, the reports on the sufferings of refugees are found to have influenced public opinion. It reflects in the study that years of stigma have resulted in the development of mental health conditions among refugees, and suicide rates have increased accordingly. It may draw a general conclusion that the attitudes of Australian authorities towards refugees are substantially unwelcoming and discriminatory, and contrary to Rawlsian ideals of a society without racial preferences. In Rawls' view, an individual would not be discriminated against because of his economic or race status in a just society. If it were the opposite, society would be unjust (Nagel, 2003).

### **Ethical analysis**

As explained in the methodology part, an ethical analysis process was done with the available data to explore the ethical justification for the Australian government's detention policy within the framework of global justice theories. Plante (2004) introduced five principles to consider while doing the analysis: competence, concern, integrity, respect and responsibility. These five principles, while significant, provide a solid platform for studying how a focus on ethics could support good practices among academic researchers. Asgary and Mitschow (2002) add additional principles, including honesty, respecting individual freedom and human rights, respecting the sovereignty of the state, fairness, and trust. The researcher used these principles as a background while evaluating the detention policy of the Australian government, at each step in the process.

Eugene Bardach's (2000) eightfold policy analysis framework was used to conduct the study. This framework is frequently employed in administration, government policy and public

health research. The steps of the process include (1) problem-setting, (2) evidence assembling, (3) alternative building, (4) criteria-selection, (5) results projecting, (6) confronting trade-offs, (7) decision-making, and (8) sharing the results of the whole process (Engelman et al., 2019).

*Problem-setting:* The process of defining the problem has already been done in the literature review part. However, a quick summary is given here. The refugee detention policy of the Australian government is the focus of this study. According to the UNHCR, Australia's average intake of refugees is around 13000 and the numbers change every year considering specific situations and incidents. The number of 'illegal entrants' (as mentioned by the Australian government) who try to enter the country has also increased in recent times. The government intercepts the majority of boats and sends the refugees to detention centers as part of their globally criticized detention policy. The study explored literature, opinions by politicians and the public, along with the concerns of the international community regarding the conditions and sufferings of those refugees. Ironically, the Australian government justifies the policy by citing that it is critical for them to safeguard their borders and state sovereignty. However, in the process, the government is arguably failing to comply with basic human rights, and the policy appears contrary to the concepts of global justice theorists.

*Evidence assembling:* Multiple scholars have criticized the detention policy adopted by the Australian government, which has been discussed in the literature review section. Significant information and articles were noted in the literature review that were critical of the policy. Studies conducted by Newman et al. (2013), Killedar and Harris (2017), Savic et al. (2015), Rees et al. (2013) explained the health issues and concerns regarding refugees in the detention centers. Literature also describes the history of the Australian government's detention policy (McAdam, 2013) and the associated concerns. The restrictions imposed by the government on the media in reporting news about refugees (Bleiker et al., 2013) were also noted. Along with this, the opinions expressed by the politicians, public and the international community were also gathered from media articles and analyzed.

*Alternative building:* After reviewing the literature and opinions of the community and stakeholders, it reflects that the detention policy of the Australian government is a threat to the human rights of refugees. However, it is a fact that states have the fundamental right to protect their borders and uphold sovereignty. Considering these facts and the findings of the

study, along with UNHCR's (1999) guidelines regarding resettlement of refugees, the proposed alternatives to the policy would be:

1. Accommodating refugees at a place in the mainland rather than in offshore detention centers
2. Report to the authorities at specified places and at specific intervals.
3. Providing a guarantor (Australian citizen)
4. Access to timely and appropriate healthcare
5. Exploring options other than deportation

*Criteria selection:* Accommodating refugees on the Australian mainland would definitely foster their mental health, as this would provide a different kind of freedom to them. The precise idea of the proposal is to accommodate refugees in specific places where the authorities could easily monitor them (could be individual houses). This could increase the financial costs but would provide freedom and dignity to the refugees along with the simplification of administrative procedure.

The idea of periodic reporting would ensure that there is constant communication between refugees and the authorities. If this idea is applied rightly, it averts the worry of absconding as well as the authorities would be alerted if the refugee does not present themselves at the required time. From the refugees' point of view, they would always prefer to comply with this idea rather than staying in a detention center. Furthermore, if the refugee has a guarantor, it would be beneficial for the refugee as well as for the government. The guarantor could be a friend and guide and a bridge to the community for the refugee, and at the same time, the person could report to the authorities if there is non-compliance with the law by the refugee (UNHCR, 1999). This would improve efficiency and administrative simplicity.

The major concern reflected in the research was the health of the refugees. Restricted or denied access to healthcare would increase trauma and deteriorate mental health. Given this, the proposed alternative may be advantageous, as access to timely and appropriate healthcare would address a wide range of issues that have resulted in suicides and riots in detention

centers in the recent past. Moreover, this promotes equity, fairness, and would uphold the dignity of refugees.

The final alternative proposed is an open suggestion of finding a substitute for the deportation of refugees, which is unethical and contrary to all justice theories. For instance, many countries in the Middle East do not follow a policy of giving asylum or permanent residency to non-citizens (Abella, 1995). Similarly, a two year work visa may be granted and after the completion of the issued visa, if the refugee reapplies with a good character certificate from the authorities, the process could be continued. It is a reality that non-residents will not have the same rights and privileges as citizens, yet this alternative will prove far better than deportation (Wicker, 2010).

*Projecting results and confronting tradeoffs:* As noted by Bardach, this is the most challenging step in the process. The feasibility of the alternatives proposed would be detailed here. The first proposal, the transfer of refugees from detention centers to mainland Australia, might appear to be an increase in the financial burden for the government. This may spark debates about the importance of border security, but the researcher assumes that the proposal is feasible given that the country spends \$812 million per year on its detention policy (Doherty, 2021).

Given the modern workforce's multitasking ability and efficiency, reporting to authorities on a regular basis is feasible. Since Australia is a large country, considering the fact that there are currently fewer than 2000 people in the detention centers (Doherty, 2021), they may be relocated to different states of the country, and this would make the task feasible for local authorities. However, there is this risk of absconding. This could be averted to a considerable extent by implementing the next alternative of allotting a guarantor. Even though the practicability of assigning a guarantor for each refugee is challenging, this could be overcome by consulting with human rights advocates and Australian citizens with similar cultural backgrounds to the specific refugee.

Providing timely and appropriate healthcare is a fundamental obligation of all governments. A general concern expressed by all researchers in the literature review was regarding the health, precisely the mental health of refugees in detention. Global states arguably spend a large portion of their annual budget on covering the health care costs of their citizens. However, the researcher would like to take the liberty of prioritizing this alternative, based

on the values of fairness, justice and equity. Moreover, this proposal is feasible considering the amount of money spent by the government on operating the detention centers. The final alternative of exploring other options rather than deportation is also viable considering the fact that issuing work visas is less complicated compared to running detention centers or the complex permanent residency processing. However, this would involve a lot of procedures and policy discussions within the government, so the researcher would like to keep this alternative as the last priority.

*Decision making:* As explained in the previous step, the alternatives put forward in this study consider both ethical values and practicability. It is reflected in the literature review that the detention policy of the Australian government is arguably a failure considering the human rights violations and the huge cost. The researcher assumes that the proposed alternatives would help to reduce the financial burden of the government and would also contribute to forming a humane policy. The alternatives are prioritized and listed in ascending order below.

1. Access to timely and appropriate healthcare
2. Accommodating refugees at a place in the mainland rather than in offshore detention centers
3. Report to the authorities at specified places and at specific intervals.
4. Providing a guarantor (Australian citizen)
5. Exploring options other than deportation

*Sharing the results:* The researcher would like to share the proposed alternatives with the Australian government as the study has recommendations for a robust and humane policy. The focus of this study was to ethically analyze the Australian government's detention policy. After reviewing the literature and media articles, the study proposed five alternatives or additions that could improve the effectiveness of the policy. The alternatives were re-evaluated and prioritized, considering both their practicability and ethical values. However, the findings of the thematic analysis part should also be read together with this section.

The study proposes timely and appropriate healthcare for refugees as the primary alternative. As evident from the literature review, the current procedures in detention centers are causing delays or denials of healthcare for refugees. Considering this, the second alternative becomes

relevant as accommodating refugees in mainland Australia would lighten the procedures and accommodating them in communities will ensure their fundamental rights are ensured. The question of security and national sovereignty arises here, but it could be addressed to a considerable extent by implementing the following alternatives. Periodic inspections by authorities and organizing a guarantor for each refugee would address the safety and security concerns that may arise regarding these alternatives. This could continue while the refugees' plea for asylum is under consideration by the government. The final alternative proposes the idea of issuing short-term work visas as an alternative to deportation of refugees, considering the ethical values. If the government considers a specific refugee as a national threat or burden to the public system, by practicing the above alternatives, the person could be given a short-term visa and this could be extended by considering character reports. This proposal is both ethical considering refugees and beneficial to the government of Australia as the refugee would add to the workforce of the country and be a taxpayer also.

### **Limitations**

Even though this research provides several meaningful insights into the area of Australia's treatment of refugees, there are still some limitations that need to be acknowledged.

First, this study used qualitative research methods and the backward snowball technique. Information was left with limited data available from Australian media platforms, hence information was collected from international media articles which mentioned the refugee crisis in Australia. The study sample was relatively small for this reason. The limited timeframe available for the research also could have affected the quality of results.

The design of the study, therefore, may have affected the findings, in particular the selection of relevant articles and collecting the data. Media articles selected were from the time of 2015-2021. It was found in the research that Australian media had softened their stance on refugees and represented them in a more humanizing manner after 2015. This could have led to the omission of certain relevant news from being published. Subsequently, the researcher might have missed some relevant information and corresponding opinions.

Second, the information was collected, analyzed, and transcribed by a single researcher. The researcher's lack of experience in doing the methods adopted for the study might have affected the results. As mentioned above, due to the time frame, only limited articles were selected for the study, which were relevant, according to the researcher. Selection bias was

avoided to the maximum and the choice of the articles was solely based on the research questions and key search words.

Finally, as the majority of the data was obtained online using search engines, the researcher might have missed some reports and photographs that were available only in the printed editions. Access to certain articles was also denied by particular news portals and the researcher could not overcome these obstacles due to monetary and time limitations.

Taking into consideration the above limitations, this study still provides very useful information about public opinion on Australia's refugee policy. However, this analysis focuses primarily on the study of general trends; the direct characteristics of the study are outside a more comprehensive and meaningful discussion on the wider relevance of these patterns for refugee debates and insight with respect to the Australian government's refugee policy.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in detail. The study analyzed the refugee crisis in Australia and the country's response to it considering the theories of global justice. The results were obtained after the thematic analysis were discussed and the themes were related to corresponding ideas of justice theorists and the relevance they had to the topical literature. An ethical analysis section discussed the alternatives for the current detention policy considering the values and feasibility. Finally, the limitations of the study were discussed. The implications and directions for further research will be detailed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **Summary of the study**

The fundamental purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the policy basis for Australia's refugee detention policy, along with its ethical implications considering global justice theories. The public opinion on refugee resettlement was analyzed in this study, focusing on Australian media from the period of 2015-2021. This study began with an overview of the present worldwide refugee crisis in the first chapter. The chapter then went through the reasons for conducting the research and the study's objective. Research design was next detailed, with an emphasis on qualitative content analysis and case selection concerns.

The significant incidents that caused political controversy among the public were thoroughly analyzed to help answer the research questions and obtain a better understanding of the Australian refugee policy. The Rohingya refugee crisis, which drew the country's attention in 2015, was the first instance. Following that, there was a debate in Australia in 2019 about the Medevac law repeal. The matter of the deportation of the 'Bioleta' family, which occurred lately, was the last instance. All three events sparked heated debate and discussion among the Australian public over the country's refugee resettlement policies. Besides these three particular incidents, the discourse on refugees in Australia and New Zealand throughout the time period under consideration was also explored. Political parties shifted from opposition to governance during the selected time period. As a result of altering views between government and opposition, the parties' stances on these incidents have occasionally diverged. Consequently, most parties' policy shifts reflected a variety of views, some of which were contradictory. The general population also had opposing viewpoints on each incident.

The research then looked at the history of international refugee resettlement. It also looked at some of the most significant instances involving refugees around the world. The refugee crisis that occurred in Europe as a result of a series of civil conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, for instance, was studied. The UNHCR's long-term solutions for resettling refugees, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration, and relocation to a third country, were also investigated. It also looked at Australia's current refugee resettlement policies as well as the country's history of refugee resettlement. A detailed explanation of the circumstances of each

of the incidents examined followed this.

The next section looked at the viewpoints of global justice theories that apply to immigration and the relocation of displaced refugees in order to answer the research questions. John Rawls' theory of justice and communitarianism were the two major theories explored. Different experts' opinions were examined, including those of John Rawls, Joseph Carens, and David Miller. This chapter examined the theoretical underpinnings of which the dissertation's research questions may be solved by focusing on these broad schools of philosophy.

In the next chapter, the data gathered was analyzed by coding using the Braun and Clark method and relevant themes were generated and results were discussed. The discussion section looked at the policy stances taken by politicians and the public in response to the incidents discussed earlier. This chapter closely reviewed what social justice theories were represented in the attitudes of the public regarding the major immigration incidents and to what degree the theories were represented in their positions. An ethical analysis section closely evaluated the detention policy and discussed the feasible alternatives considering the findings of the study.

## **Findings**

This study reflects that, in most instances, the public adopted and embraced the arguments made by proponents of the liberal human rights perspective. For instance, with 'Bioloela family', which is an ongoing issue in Australia, the public opinion reflected a humanitarian approach and the majority opined that the family should be resettled in Australia. The public discourse reflected the fact that Australia, being an international citizen, has the duty to protect refugees who seek to stay in the country. This mirrors the thoughts of major humanitarian philosophers who support the rights of refugees. Contrastingly, the majority of the politicians contradicted this and called for the deportation of the family even though there were some exclusions.

While analyzing the backdated events in Australian immigration history, a similar approach as mentioned above was reflected in the opinions. For instance, when the Medevac law was repealed, the public and the medical community opposed the decision and opined that it was a denial of fundamental human rights of refugees. Their opinions reflected a humanitarian approach, and the majority of the discourse reflected that Australia is disregarding the duty of

care that every nation has towards refugees as a signatory to The 1951 Refugee Convention. In contrast, the government officials reflected that the repeal of the law would ensure that the nation's sovereignty would be protected as the government gained the decisive power over transportation of unwell refugees from detention centers. This viewpoint does not complement any philosophical schools of thought and is a direct denial of justice to refugees. This trend was noticeable in opinions whenever any major incident happened in Australian immigration history, even if there were some exclusions.

Overall, it may be summarized that the common public in Australia has a welcoming attitude towards refugees, even though there are some concerns regarding safety and mixing of culture. The concerns about multiculturalism were reflected in some discourses, yet this could not be considered as a general opinion, as the majority of the public was in favor of including refugees in the community. Therefore, it may be stated that the public opinion and mood in Australia are in favor of accepting refugees and mirrors the thoughts of liberal philosophers with a human rights perspective. Conversely, it could be concluded that the government and a large fraction of politicians do not have a welcoming attitude towards refugees. The study could hardly detect any opinions that favored refugees from government officials and politicians, except some countable ones from opposition parties. The researcher assumes this is more for political gains rather than out of compassion towards refugees. Political opinions reflect that immigrants could pose a threat to national sovereignty and the public system. This viewpoint does not reflect any humanitarian ideologies and is totally against the concept of justice. The study concludes that there is no justification for the unique refugee detention policy of the Australian government and it does not mirror any of the global justice theories.

### **Directions for further study**

As mentioned in the limitations part, this study was carried out in a narrow time frame and with limited literature. The researcher believes these factors are crucial while studying a policy adopted by any government. However, these limitations could prove to be an inspiration for subsequent research to add on to the implications of this study. For further study, the research could be broadened in several ways. First, a comparative study could be done involving countries like the United States and Poland. The policies involving refugees in these countries are comparatively similar to those of Australia, so it could be useful to analyze public opinion about the policies adopted.

Second, a broader study, including a survey, could be done involving a larger population, as this could prove helpful in attaining a considerable amount of information. The research in this area, including this study, has gathered data from the media articles, analyzed them, and has drawn conclusions. In addition, surveys could broaden the information and both qualitative and quantitative analysis could generate more significant results. The researcher assumes this method would provide robust results and would add value to the literature in this area.

Finally, this study could be used as a tool for studying New Zealand's refugee detention policy. New Zealand also follows detention procedures for refugees who arrive in the country. However, limited study involving this area and especially including public opinion was found by the researcher. Therefore, this study could be used as a stepping stone and guide for future research on this relevant topic.

## **Conclusion**

The growing number of global refugees is a concern for all liberal states around the world. It is reflected in the research that countries that initially adopted a welcoming stance towards refugees have since closed their gates, citing multiple concerns. It is a matter of debate whether refugees should be resettled in a geographical area near their country of origin or in a developed state. However, this study reflects that there is divided opinion on resettling refugees in a different country and even on returning them back to their country. Therefore, more research is necessary regarding this concern to gain knowledge about public opinion and also to understand the ethics behind refugee policies adopted by liberal states. In the researcher's opinion, a refugee should be allowed to stay permanently in a country they want to, as it is their fundamental right, provided they do not pose a threat to that country.

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# Appendix

## Detention policy in media articles and developed themes

Theme 1: Sovereignty

Code – Border protection policy

Shoes thrown at Immigration Minister Peter Dutton in Brisbane| [Brisbanetimes.com.au](https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au)  
(2015, June 14)

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/shoes-thrown-at-immigration-minister-peter-dutton-in-brisbane-20150614-ghnl1t.html>

Turnbull claims Australian border policies 'best in world' despite widespread criticism| [Theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/18/malcolm-turnbull-australias-border-protection-policy-the-best-in-the-world) (2016, September 17) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/18/malcolm-turnbull-australias-border-protection-policy-the-best-in-the-world>

Code – Illegal entrants

'Nope, nope, nope': Tony Abbott says Australia will take no Rohingya refugees| [Theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/21/nope-nope-nope-tony-abbott-says-australia-will-take-no-rohingya-refugees) 2015, May 21) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/21/nope-nope-nope-tony-abbott-says-australia-will-take-no-rohingya-refugees>

Migrant crisis: Australia PM says stopping boats key for Europe| [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-34148931)| (2015, September 4) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-34148931>

Code – National security risk

'Medevac' law: Australia denies medical evacuations for refugees| [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-50653195)| (2019, December 4) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-50653195>

Limbo could end: Karen Andrews eyeing off New Zealand asylum-seeker deal| [SMH.com.au](https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/limbo-could-end-) (2021, June 2) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/limbo-could-end->

[karen-andrews-eyeing-off-new-zealand-asylum-seeker-deal-20210602-p57xf7.html](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/14/pauline-hanson-first-speech-senate-calls-for-immigration-ban)

Code – Challenge to democracy

Protesters armed with superglue shut down Australia's parliament| Edition.CNN.com| (2016, November 30) <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/30/asia/australia-protest-parliament-gallery/index.html>

Pauline Hanson calls for immigration ban: 'Go back to where you came from'| Theguardian.com (2016, September 14) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/14/pauline-hanson-first-speech-senate-calls-for-immigration-ban>

Theme 2: Equality

Code – Equal opportunity

Australia's humanitarian policy options| Lowyinstitute.org (2021) <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/australias-humanitarian-policy-options>

Australia's politicians have promoted xenophobia: UN expert| Theguardian.com (2016, November 18) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/nov/18/australias-immigration-policies-have-promoted-xenophobia-un-expert>

Code – Inclusion

Biloela family: Locked up by Australia for three years| BBC.com (2021, May 10) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-56768529>

'Consequences of blinking': Cash warns about taking softer line on Biloela family| SMH.com.au (2021, June 9) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/biloela-family-unaware-of-option-to-resettle-in-nz-or-us-20210609-p57zj3.html>

Theme 3: Human rights

Code – Freedom

Behrouz Boochani: Refugee author granted asylum in New Zealand| BBC.com (2020, July 24) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53522251>

UN urges Australia to release dangerously ill refugee who has ‘given up on living’ after eight years| Theguardian.com (2021, August 11) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/aug/11/un-urges-australia-to-release-dangerously-ill-refugee-who-has-given-up-on-living-after-eight-years>

Code – Citizenship

Attitudes to immigration| Lowyinstitute.org (2021) <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/attitudes-to-immigration>

Politicians may be panicking about immigration. Australians are not| Theguardian.com (2018, December 3) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/dec/04/politicians-may-be-panicking-about-immigration-australians-are-not>

Code – Duty of care

Medevac deal with Lambie clears ground for New Zealand solution| SMH.com.au (2019, December 5) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/medevac-deal-with-lambie-clears-ground-for-new-zealand-solution-20191204-p53gx8.html>

Code – Imprisonment

New law allows Australian government to indefinitely detain refugees| Theguardian.com (2021, May 13) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/13/new-law-allows-australian-government-to-indefinitely-detain-refugees-with-criminal-convictions>

Kurdish refugee sues Australian government for alleged unlawful imprisonment in Melbourne hotels| Theguardian.com (2021, July 29) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/30/kurdish-refugee-sues-australian-government-for-alleged-unlawful-imprisonment-in-melbourne-hotels>

Code – Rejection

Revealed: 1,500 people in limbo under Australia's 'bizarre and cruel' refugee deterrence policy| Theguardian.com (2020, December, 9) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia->

[news/2020/dec/10/lives-in-limbo-more-than-1500-asylum-seekers-still-face-uncertain-future](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/dec/10/lives-in-limbo-more-than-1500-asylum-seekers-still-face-uncertain-future)

Theme 4: Stigma and discrimination

Code – Dangerous other

African migrants in Australia report worst discrimination, diversity study reveals|

Theguardian.com (2016, August 23)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/african-migrants-australia-report-worst-discrimination-scanlon-report>

Handcuffed asylum seekers 'paraded like criminals' in Australian hospitals, doctors say|

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