

**Configuration of National Identity and Citizenship in Australia: Migration, Ethnicity
and Religious Minorities**

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National Identity and Citizenship

National identity is the sum of all the qualities, real or imaginary, which in the minds of Australian people distinguishes Australia (Crabb:1985,19). ‘The pursuit of national identity requires an emphasis on the features of an Australian “narrative” which identify a heritage, as well as institutions, held in common.’ Yet the dilemma that Australian narrative faces are the rights of aborigines and a variety of immigrant cultural traditions, making the idea of a single national identity implausible- unless the notion of identity is emptied of any substance(Kukathas: 1997, 178).

Identity is self-definition and confers a sense of self or personhood, usually found in daily interactions and public discourse and is a continuously evolving process of negotiation, not a rigid entity. Identity turns on the interrelated problems of self recognition and recognition by the others. It’s not a harmonious process as there remains a tendency to underestimate the struggle involved in forging identities and the tension inherent in the fact that most of us have multiple, incomplete, fragmented even conflicting identities (Calhoun: 1994, Brown: 2002). Citizenship is a concept of legal status, while identity is a relational concept, presupposing a dialogical recognition of the other. Citizenship carries legal or juridical significance while identity has social and cultural weight. Identity allows for the

effective formation of groups which sometimes leads to claims for legal entitlements (Wood: 1999, 19-20).

Ethnic identities are inherited therefore seem to remain immutable while national identity is a fluid process in constant negotiation with its constituent groups. Ethnic diversity must be understood as a social reality not as an option, and the acceptance of ethnic cultural individuality. Singular identities cannot be formed at the expense of shared national identities, though it has to be processed through unbroken negotiation not imposition of shared characteristics and shared fate (Scott: 1991, 39).

The process of assertion of ethnic identification emerges when a group believes to experience a sense of (real or imaginary) alienation, injustice, unfair exclusion from mainstream political debate of identity and nationalism (Scheff: 1994,281). Nationalism in power is often a repressive ideology demanding a strict adherence to the authority of the official embodiments of national tradition. It yields repression not just against diversity of cultural experiences but against the variety of alternative bases for personal identity, which is seen in competition with the nation (Calhoun: 1994, 325-6). Politics and demands of inclusion in a political forum cannot happen through appointments and selection; it has to come through active involvement of minority groups in the political arenas. Rather than playing victims, minority groups have to come forward as active citizens, pledging wholesome loyalty to their adopted homeland. Guarantee for equal rights is accompanied with a set of obligations as active citizen, both in formal and informal arena of politics, where all citizens are willing to promote common interest and take active steps to defend the rights of other members of political community.

The power of identity remains strong; sometimes it is very relevant while at others divisive. It is the power of association with a minority group, which confers courage to demand one's rights, or challenge the majority in its exclusive, insensitive and discriminatory practices. Borren suggests that marginalized group get a sense of empowerment through identifying with a minority and efforts to assert by maintaining that "imagined" uniqueness (2003,85). Assimilation policies created the illusion of equality; however social advancement

of a certain group as “showcase elite” offers a fantasy of similar possibilities yet marked with the permanence of collective inferiority of non-European groups (Asians, Middle Eastern among others).

Political community in which migrants or ethnic communities wish to participate has to be extended beyond cultural community. Rejection of hopes of social promotion tends to force the minority groups to display ethnic identity and mobilize around this symbolic identity. He asserts that religious labeling washes away multidimensional relationships in which cultural phenomenon takes place, reinforcing the prejudices and reinvigorates old-style discrimination through expressions of ‘cultural difference and pseudo-biological terminology’(Giraud: 2000, 65). Australian passion with European or western identity continues to create a sense of discontent among communities of non-British descent.

Australia is one of the countries that actively seek immigrant workers as well as settlers. Historically its White Australia policy controlled the formation of national identity by excluding people seen as too different. Castles (1999, 24) argues that the aim of immigration policies was to achieve the individual assimilation of non-British immigrants and renounce their distinct cultures and lifestyles. Jordens (1995, 88) adds that the task of creating bridges between new arrivals and mainstream communities and facilitating social engagement of migrants was largely left to ethnic organizations and bureaucracy. The subsequent introduction of multiculturalism was part of the recognition that the idea of assimilation is sociologically unrealistic, though migration did not necessarily mean loss of previous cultural identity in its entirety yet to sustain in a new country migrants have to make adjustments, learn new skills, even retrain themselves in many socio-economic and political aspects of life.

Earlier state intervention resulting from preoccupation with racial/cultural purity as the precondition for constructing a unified national identity become a basis to collapse race into culture, to create a homogenous nation. Later the interventionist tendency continued through the introduction of multiculturalism policies, and the state continued to define national identity at the expense of imperial connection with Britain (Stratton: 1998, 141, 149). Keating articulated that Australia is a multicultural nation in Asia, signaling multiculturalism

as an integral and essential characteristic of contemporary national identity. Howard's regime witnessed demystification of symbolic artificiality of national identity and imagined political community. The current political debate has witnessed coming back of identity and citizenship question, back from the backburner to the discussion table, raising the question whether Australia is wandering in circles; or essentializing identities by expanding the scope of citizenship via recognizing ethno religious identities. Davison (2005) argues that 'For identity, whether it is of the person or the nation is always the performance we craft for the audience we imagine, not the one that's actually watching.'

Muslim 'Others' in Australia

Muslim communities are still viewed as the 'Other', despite the fact that a large number of them are Australian born and Australia is the only country that they know as homeland. The 'Other' does not necessarily have to be morally evil or economic competitor can be recognized as resembling 'Us' yet exterior to Us. Although such active 'Othering' identify actors in a polity yet it tends to include and exclude some communities from the nationhood project simultaneously (Neumann: 1999, 12, 16). Experiences of the 'Other' are suppressed, denied and devalued to an extent that they remain absent from the public narrative on historical evolution of a nation-state or nationhood (Somers: 1994, 53, 64).

Karim (1997, 163-64) asserts children are socialized in a manner (through toys, children stories, TV and videogames) that implicitly or explicitly identifies Muslim as the 'Other', primitive, uncivilized, villain, terrorist and a bad guy and by the time they are active citizens they experience severe social distance (from the 'Other') and are able to identify the 'Other', the bad guy. Socialization intermingled with media portrayal acts as a catalyst, the process Ellul illustrated as,

Propaganda cannot create something out of nothing. It must attach itself to a feeling, an idea; it must build on a foundation already present in the individual. The

conditioned reflex or a prior conditioned reflex. The myth does not expand helter-skelter; it must respond to a group of spontaneous beliefs. Action cannot be obtained unless it responds to a group of already established tendencies or attitudes stemming from the schools, the environment, the regime, the churches, and so on (1973, 36).

Karim further states that 'lack of knowledge among western audience about the relation of particular terms used in Muslim discourses allows propagandists to enhance the images of friends and foes in Muslim societies.' Muslims presented and represented as violent, innately prone to violence, sexual predator, female oppressor, and uneducated, unable to rise above their passion. Muslim minority communities having limited access and control over means of mass communication have insignificant effect on image making or even clarify and present their views to large audiences or assert the need to address the causes of the failure of modern nation state to integrate its component parts. "The desires and characteristics that one does not admit having are projected onto the 'Other'; these features are made out to be exceptions in one's own society and the norm in that of the 'Other' (170-2).

Australian political discourse owes a lot to British legacy while many migrant communities have experienced British colonialism in a different manner and share a different heritage. In their historical experience British legacies equate subjectivity and denial of rights while Australia as homeland offers hope and rights; at this juncture there exist conflicting linkages in their past and present. Colonial experiences fail to understand the colonized experiences as it makes no sense for those who enjoyed power over 'Others' belonging to different ethnic, cultural, racial and religious groups. For the colonized subjects, it becomes urgent to reconstruct their own subjectivity, experience and identity, the need majority tend to ignore, especially when the colonizer is the symbol of national pride (Brinker-Gabler: 1995, 6). However, it is imperative for the minority groups (previously colonized by the British) that Australia owes a lot to its European inheritance, apart from its settlement history, political traditions, institutions, political culture, identity and citizenship, which cannot be separated

from its origin, and that Australia is carving a niche in regional and global context, struggling with an ongoing debate surrounding its history and geography.

Earlier historical developments in Australia generated a sense of European identity among citizens which was later replaced with the urge to maintain an alliance with the US (since WWII), though for a long time the 'proper place to discuss matters with Asians was in London' (Dijkink: 1996, 91). Australia does not enjoy high levels of political, economic or military clout at the global scene; therefore policy makers participate in international institutions to enhance Australia's influence and its security-economic, military and environmental concerns (Scott: 1997, 273). Jupp is of the view that Australian culture is not under threat from the non-English ethnic cultures but from other English speaking societies such as U.S with much larger cultural and media resources. (Jupp 1991, 150, Borghino 2003) Intellectual critique on Australian Political culture raises apprehension regarding the autonomous vision of the world, as a follower of rules which are made and broken elsewhere, leaving the country in a confused state, furthering the criticism that it still has an immature sense of national identity in dire need of referring every question to 'universal values' (Dijkink: 1996, 92, 94).

Curthoys discusses how in the Australian public sphere the discourse, policy and practices pertaining to these parallel figures have rarely been 'spoken together': 'White Australia did not address its racial others in a united or coherent discourse, but rather in separate registers at different times' (Curthoys: 2000, 25). Miller rightly suggests that, 'While national identities are thinned down to make them more acceptable to minority groups, these groups themselves must abandon values and ways of behaving that are in stark conflict with those of the community as a whole' (Miller: 2000, 36).

Ethno-religious Mix

Like colonial powers that have an embedded interest in material resources as opposed to the cultural, there exists a feeling that Australia values migrants as workers yet disregards culture

of these communities by reducing its value to a variety of cuisines. The issues of ethnic and cultural identity within mainstream national identity and citizenship discourse emerge for a variety of implicit and explicit reasons, there is a need to be engaged in the process of wider debates, a sense of submissiveness to another group that possess power or a reaction to social norms and expectations (Jackson: 1999, 6). Ethno-religious diversity needs to be incorporated rather than accommodated in the public policy making process, though it is a double edged sword - accommodation essentializes these identities while incorporation leads to integration which remains undesirable among many groups.

Migrant communities understand multiculturalism as a process of engagement, through inquiry and reciprocation, leading to mutual adjustment, convergence and reconfiguration, resulting in readjustment and mutual assimilation, and creation of a new national identity after separation from primary culture and identity. To them integration is a negotiation phase to merge different cultural indices and create a mutually agreed primary culture (Jackson: 56-58). Pluralism can no longer mean equal opportunity in socio-economic advancement for deprived groups. Instead, it must refer to political balance between the need to recognize ethnic and cultural differences at the institutional level and maintaining political and cultural cohesion throughout the nation.

Although transnational dimensions to Islamic identity symbolically remains exclusively source of political risk and international instability, religion can facilitate social integration despite modern imagination's difficulty in perceiving religion as a vehicle for cooperation. Cesari implies that young Muslims need to conceive new notion of an Australian Islam, identity and citizenship, renewing commitments on an abstract level to humanitarian values and on a pragmatic level toward making Australia a better place for Muslims and others alike. 'It can provide them with a collective narrative that celebrates the triumph of a tradition throughout the ages, thereby healing the colonial wounds that their parents bear in memory' (2002, 36-51). Radical Islamist trend among young Muslims is very recent, as growing number of young people are adhering strictly to Islamic principles. Their Islam is not an Islam of the Moroccan, Algerian or Pakistani countryside, but instead a return to the basics

of Islamic teaching through immediate contact with the sources. Their interpretation of religious text rejects their parents' version of Islam as gullible and that 'real Islam' Islam cannot be reduced to ethics or confined to privacy but inform social behavior and justify collective action, preventing assimilation in mainstream society yet providing credible alternative to the 'prospect of unemployment, drugs, alcohol or delinquency.' They reaffirm religious identity to recover some personal dignity and this phenomenon is not exclusively based on hatred for West (Cesari: 2002, 251-269).

Despite moderate and progressive religious scholars' views on loyalty to the adopted countries, the general failure to invent practical ways to deal with many conflicting situations, desire to be prosperous and share political power; further challenge their collective identity which constantly remains challenged for being anchored with Islam. Giraud views that,

Rhetoric develops into scientific pretension, which by reducing the diversity of Muslim beliefs and practices into their one 'fundamentalist' variant, and converting them into one 'eternal' Islamic expression, whose nature is supposedly anti-democratic and anti-secular, takes up the old theme of 'cultural distance' and pronounce a radical and definitive incompatibility between Muslims and republican values (1999, 80).

French paradigm on veil demonstrates that intellectual exchange between cultures would inevitably prove controversial. In the ongoing dialogue between Muslims and the government, each party must acknowledge that nothing is non-negotiable and there exists a possibility of vital changes to his/her own belief. Many Muslims seem unaware of the repercussions of this kind of involvement; they expect the regime to understand their needs without making substantial contribution in the national identity debate themselves. Paradoxically Muslims demands for various rights are articulated within the paradigms of participatory and representative models of British parliamentary democracy and legacies whose predominance they constantly complain about. The demands for inclusion have to be

in perspective, a minority groups cannot expect to change the majority group in the manner that it deems fit, ignoring the fact that the bulk of the majority shares the traditions and culture that owe a lot to its British inheritance, even the demands of the minority are formulated within the framework and traditions of Westminster model of democracy.

When Fred Nile, a clergyman-member of the New South Wales parliament, called for another ban, on Muslim women wearing chador robes, claiming they could be terrorists hiding weapons; most political leaders quickly dismissed the proposal. An exception was John Howard, the prime minister, who said, 'I like Fred and...you know Fred speaks for the views of a lot of people.' Howard regime avoided any debate for imposing a ban, but his equivocation provoked a storm of protest from Australia's Muslim leaders, who accused him of fostering religious division (The Economist 2002, 365). Goulbourne rightly points out that, 'People sharing a common territory, but holding a variety of moral and ethical percepts embedded in cultural norms, are likely sooner or later to become antagonistic when the only thing they are presumed to share is their difference.' (Goulbourne 1999, 77)

Despite the enmeshment with Asia and consideration of Asian communities as integral part of Australia's ethnic mix, the cultural status of Asians and relationship remains fragile (Holten: 1997), they are still collectively racialised whenever a wave of moral panic about Asian immigration flares up, reinstating the old collusion of race and culture. (Stratton 1998,159) Intellectual debates in the current regime are less intense than the Blainey debate of the 1980s, (Collins: 1988, 212) as academic were quick to respond and discredit the arguments made Andrew Fraser (Macquarie Uni. Professor) asserting that his remarks that, Africans Australians as having low IQs and 'significantly more testosterone', makes them a crime risk, have no scientific basis. Yet part of his comments that Australia is becoming a Third World colony by allowing non-white immigration were supported by majority (85% of nearly 40,000 calls) of respondents in an opinion poll (Duffy 2005).¹ However, for the

¹ A number of academics have supported Fraser's views, stating that these are based on research and any such ban amounts to restricting academic liberty. (Letter to the editor, The Australian, April 12, 2006)

purpose of an academic discussion, it remains imperative to give credence to some of his views, when he expressed that:

Members of other ethnic and religious groups are very interested in their particular racial or ethnic identity, and had no hesitation whatever in identifying themselves as members of particular ethno-cultural groups and promoting the interests of those groups. So, in short, what's going on here is everybody else is playing the game of identity politics, and white Australians are willy-nilly being forced to play catch-up in that game (Duffy 2005).

Ethnic distinctions can be employed in a positive and culturally creative ways or in a negative and destructive spirit - depending on the manner in which a particular text or discourse is analyzed (Smolicz: 1991, 48). The demand for recognition of ethno-religious identities need to go a little further by suggesting ways in which equal recognition of multiple identities can be validated in current political settings.

Two centuries of racial policies and sentiments against indigenous and migrants laid a firm foundation of a racist sentiment in the society, yet these prejudices still remain at the level of individual attitudes and have not been organized and mobilized in a significant political manner. Jupp is of the view that claims of huge spending on divisive ethnic groups are misleading (1991, 139, 141). Labour's economic mismanagement squeezed the white collar job market for a large number of Anglo-Celtic people (Australian born, older with low income) and pushed them into small businesses (Wilson: 2001, 384, Holten: 1997). The economic sphere crowded by Southern European, Asian and Middle Eastern Australians, who were left out of the system due to their unmatched and unrecognized skills for alternative economic opportunities. When the job market squeezed and more people were in business, then the question of favors to Asian (third world workers) at the cost of "real" Australians found sympathizers in every quarter (Suter 2002). Hanson has been able to legitimately situate the category of the 'white Australian' as victim of 'the politically correct multiculturalists'.

The achievement of Hanson's promised rebirth for the Australian community is consistently predicated on removing the rights of those who challenge the reassertion of 'mainstream' dominance in the public/political space. Since racial labeling is embarrassing, therefore the arguments found new terms and frame of reference while the underlying themes remained the same. Hanson was damned for igniting racial debate while neo-liberals enjoyed the fruits of her efforts (Newman: 1998, Galligan: 2003).

Citizens; Illegal Asylum Seekers; Potential Terrorists, and a Security Threat

Australia has about 300,000 Muslims, their presence was hardly an issue until politics and terrorism made it one. Howard and his ministers snatched another victory by demonizing mainly Afghan and Iraqi boat refugees as a threat to security. But since the terrorist bombings in Bali (Oct. 2002), some people are questioning whether Australia, which previously felt insulated from terrorism, may have invited its own problems through the government's support for American policies. (Tough on Muslims, 365) Islamic fundamentalism, Muslim Terrorist, Radical Islamists have become synonymous and Muslims have become a monolithic group in media representations. Hardly there is any effort to understand the diversity in culture, ethnicity and political orientations or religious beliefs and practices among Australian Muslims (Van Dijk: 1997, 56). Political talk seldom acknowledges the economic, social and political contributions of immigrant communities or minority resident communities though the inability of immigrant communities generally makes headlines. Policies having negative impact on minority communities are justified as 'for their own good' (Riggins: 1997, 36).

In the wake of September 11 and the Bali bombings, the Australian Islamic community is undergoing an identity crisis, struggling with the meanings of being a Muslim in 21st century Australia and ways to separate themselves from the fallacies and ideologies of Islamic extremists. Radical Islamists are posing more threat to Muslim communities living in Western countries, though there is a potential that imposition of binaries like 'us and they' can

produce an environment to turn moderate Muslims into radicals. Muslims need to reassure the wider Australian community that they oppose extremism. Their inability to productively communicate their position on a range of issues has contributed to confusion in the broader Australian community as to who truly represents Muslims in this country. For Muslims blaming media, police and politicians for the poor community perceptions is not going to help unless they come forward and actively engage in a debate to transform the situation. Despite certain negative stereotypes, Muslims have to acknowledge that a lot of social problems exist, as they do in the wider community, and that there is an urgency to address and redress these problems (Kerbaj: 2005). They need to respond to the urgency and abandon their traditionally defensive attitude, interact with civil institutions and media; otherwise the inward looking attitude and blame game will alienate them more feeding into social problems within the community (Jamal: 2003).

Younger Muslims are in a better position to construct a new Muslim identity in Australia, one that breaks out of the sometimes closed world of Islamic community politics and engages with Australia's mainstream political processes, community groups and the media. One way of countering Islam's negative reputation would be for Australian Muslims to adopt an agreed statement of values which promotes harmony. Some of its aims would be to foster an open and outgoing Muslim youth culture and to promote understanding and interaction with all Australians (Jamal: 2003). Some surveys suggest that younger Muslim's generation considers themselves Australian first; yet shy away from publicly declaring their religion particularly after 9/11 (Kerbaj: 2005). Many young Australian Muslims feel that Islamic extremists aren't solely to blame for tainting the image of Islam, and take part of responsibility for this image, such views are reflected by a Muslim women, as

[We] can't stay silent ... but [at the] same time it gets frustrating when you're continuously seen as defending your views and defending who you are and defending your rights to live in this country [we belong to]. It's hard because you feel like you want to be a part of this community, you want to fit in, you want to be

accepted, but you stick out. [And when] people say: “Go back to your own country”, if I go back to Lebanon, I'm not really going to feel at home. And Australia is my home. I feel that I couldn't call any other place home except Australia (Kerbaj: 2005).

The Tampa Saga

Australian role in the US coalition has been firmly criticized by human rights activists, civil libertarians, yet Muslim communities tend to view such cooperation in the paradigm of U.S versus Muslims/Islam, criticizing national policies by viewing them aimed against Muslims and asserting their identity with an imagined community (Ummah) residing somewhere else, casting doubts to their loyalty to their homeland /adopted country. Post 9/11 War on Terrorism and Australian participation in US alliance witnessed coming back of many issues in political debate.

Since he became prime minister in 1996, Howard has renewed Australia's reputation in Asia for European exclusivity. Many critics believe that Howard's bellicose security alliance with US, 'liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq' is putting human security of Australians at risk at home and abroad and would be a catalyst for recruitment of those willing to murder westerners in 'sin places'. Howard's treatment of asylum issues, (supported by labor) is not about numbers but symbolic significance, involving an attack on Australian values of egalitarianism and 'fair go' as well as rationalizing a strategic linkage with 'war on terrorism';

When I speak of national security I don't just speak of the way in which this nation has properly and honourably responded to the terrorist attack of the eleventh of September ... National security also importantly includes effective protection of our borders....the fundamental right of this country to protect its borders, it's about this nation saying to the world we are a generous open hearted people ... But we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come (Howard 2001).

Australian citizenship became an exclusive and moral category to be defended from an inferior cultural system, 'There's something to me incompatible between somebody who claims to be a refugee and somebody who would throw their own child into the sea, it offends the natural instinct of protection and delivering security and safety to your children' (Howard: 2001). Dyrenfurth (2005) suggests that by interpreting citizenship as an exclusive category...the illegitimate actions of the asylum seekers excluded them from the application of the moral realm of the Australian citizenship, and constructing the citizen within a dominant language, adhering to the paradigm of rhetoric over substance - of legalism over defined rights. The narrative of Tampa manifested in four identities: the invader; the criminal-actor; the wealthy queue-jumper; the potential terrorist. Many proponents of Howard's policies agreed with Peter Slipper (Liberal MP) that there was an undeniable linkage between illegals and terrorists, legitimizing particular concerns to be wary in dealing with Muslims, stating that 'these [Tampa refugees] are Muslims whose values are so different there can only be tension and problems' they would 'seek Australian compassion and still live their culture here without assimilating.' Alexander Downer expressed a firm policy on punishing traffickers or human cargo: 'We don't want to be inhumane about it but we need to be firm.' Australia had 'to try to do something to stamp out this illicit and ugly people trade that's going on basically out in the Middle East.' Howard's statement that, 'You don't know who's coming in and you don't know whether they do have terrorist links or not' reaffirmed fears in public imagery and linked them with terrorism.

Since most of the asylum seekers were Muslim, the separateness of their culture and the connections between Islam and 9/11 engendered cynicism towards multicultural policies (Dyrenfurth: 2005). The panic was instantaneous among Australian communities, as suggestions were made: that Australian were gullible in 'inviting an Islamic fifth column' into Australian life: 'unnecessarily' laying the seeds of 'sabotage, spying and treachery' and that boat people are '[terrorist] sleepers' or 'Bin Laden appointees.' Vanstone claimed that, 'All the past brainwashing to the contrary notwithstanding, all cultures are not equal. After 9/11, it

was "dangerous to keep insisting that they are. Islam, September 11 and the Tampa became symbols of cultural separatism' making an association between criminal conduct and Muslims with ease, linking the situation with rape crimes in Sydney.² There were critical opinions (Radio National host Philip Adams) suggesting that had these asylum seekers been white farmers from Zimbabwe, the issue would have been tackled in a humane manner (Kampmark: 2002). After Tampa, the subsequent year's homeland security, Tampa, controlled immigration; race relations reignited the national identity debate. Despite the fact that immigrants from a particular race or ethnic origin were not target of the policies yet every incident involving an ethnic Australian [Cornelia Rau, Vivian Alvarez- (Carrick: 2005)] made a headline.

Reigniting National Identity Debate

Irving argues that, from the nineteenth century onward, Australian citizenship developed as a social construction, rather than a formal political or legal category (Irving: 2000, 10). Howard has reignited the identity debate (1996 election campaign) by wittingly talking about Australian values, battles and legacies of the past, though his fondness for the imperial legacies and connection is shared by a large number of Australians.

Australia and the United Kingdom have important interests in each other's regions - whether we are geographically part of them or not...It is also evident, of course, in the enduring ties that will continue to bind peoples: the shared values and aspirations, the historical and institutional associations, the ties of family and community, and the links established by cultural, educational and sporting exchanges (Howard 1997).

² Jane Albrechtston – suggested that Muslim criminal immigrants were already operating in Australia's suburbs, and a small but insidious group of young [Muslim] Lebanese boys are raping young white Caucasian girls in Bankstown and other Sydney suburbs.

He has been a staunch critic of multiculturalism as well as policies of growing Asian immigration (costing him Party Leadership-1989). His regime has been blamed for seizing Hansonian agenda and incorporating it in immigration, social welfare, Industrial relations and anti-terrorist laws. Ghassan is of the view that,

...recently heightened Australian fears of invasion-an invasion surreptitiously brought about by the uncontrolled immigration of racially foreign others. His words offered ...vision or fantasy of a restored national wholeness and the strengthening of explicit white control over the nation's borders.... Howard's policies and rhetoric have effectively eclipsed One Nation, co-opting its energies and converging its discourses with those of respectable mainstream party politics (1998, 198).

Howard has been accused of pursuing wedge politics with particular effect in race politics, immigration and social welfare by paying focused attention to conservative white working class voters, as 'Battlers' (forgotten majority) politicizing distinction between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. 'Howard Battlers' were central to the election campaigns in 1996 and 1998. He appealed to the socially conservative, outer-metropolitan working class voters by targeting immigration, welfare and the unemployed in particular, promising that they will benefit under a future Coalition regime. His slogan, "For All of Us", appealed superficially to the ideals of inclusion but still managed to tap into the binary of 'us and them' undercurrent present in Australian society (Wilson: 2001). Howard claims that the voters supported his strong leadership and economic agenda, while his critics claim that he won because of racism, xenophobia and war. They claim that his opportunistic use of Afghani asylum seekers, enabled him to present a stem image against yet more 'boat people', threatening the Australian standard of living. Howard's critics claim that he got rid of the Hanson menace by implementing her policies, thereby making her redundant, as One Nation's Ian Hale, said: 'Mr Howard is our man in Canberra' (Sutter: 2002).

Since coming to power, Howard has been condemned for reversing many policies that benefited new arrivals as well as introducing new measures of exclusion, such as access to English Language Skills, eligibility for Social Security Benefits (extended from 6 months to 2 years), powers to deport naturalized citizens and anti-terrorist laws (Irving: 1997, 143, Betts: 2003). The critique often revolves around the assumption that migrants are pushed into low-paid, semi skilled professions by leaving them to fend for themselves when they are in need of socio-economic support. Due to little support for social inclusion, the primary social interaction remains within the ethnic groups, essentializing sub-identities and increasing social distance from imagined Australian nationhood and at the same time 'confronted by institutions and practitioners constructed by and for the English speaking population and usually well trained in ethnocentrism'. (Bottomley: 1991, 104) Zubrzycki (1991, 121; 2007) asserts that ethnic migrants are trapped in a catch 22, they are expected to assimilate without access to enough language support or social security benefit, struggling to survive in a tough job market, facing new laws that has the potential to force them to remain in low-paid insecure jobs. State even has the capacity to interfere and control their private lives by using its power to allow them to establish or join family members as settlers (Bottomley: 1991, 106). Many link these policies with a reminder to White Australia policies, when immigrants (aliens) were not qualified to for social security and related benefits.

Coupled with Howard's nostalgia for 1940's, Hanson's prophecies raised fears that national unity created by White Australia is in danger of being fractured by Asianisation, also increased anxiety for multiculturalism. The dichotomy native-born/ immigrants of non-English-speaking background are more significant, as NESB is an officially formulated category. Minority communities want a recognition and existence of their contribution to the larger project of nationhood while majority seems to be more inclined to get an overt commitment for Australia displayed through abandoning of their heritage. For the minority, it's a question of cultural rights and not the prerogative of the majority to give a verdict that minority has lost their right to inherit and cultural values- if these are not Anglo-Celtic values.

Since his election as prime minister, Howard has consistently challenged the application of the term racism by political opponents and sections of the media, particularly in discussions of Pauline Hanson and native titles. Howard has contested the accusation that he or Hanson is racist on the basis of a traditional definition which sees racism as an expression of racial hierarchy, a position which neglects the extent to which overtly racist sentiment can be masked by expressions of cultural incompatibility and difference. Howard effectively authorized her views by criticizing previous policies of 'political correctness'. In this newly-defined public space of anti-censorship, Howard was willing to gain political capital from Hanson's expression of racist sentiment, since it worked to legitimate policies of cutting immigration, migrant welfare, and ATSIC funding. Like Hanson, his notion of democracy not only insists on the rights of the majority at the expense of 'minority' groups, but actively works by mobilizing sentiment against these groups. Political expressions on race had become publicly acceptable by coalition's endorsement. The defense of a newly discovered 'free speech' has taken precedence, and beneath the coding of such speech is a more subtle attack on the public/political presence of 'different' racial groups. While Hanson has disappeared from the political arena, the ideas largely have been absorbed and incorporated into the neo-liberal political tide that has overtaken Australia (Kapferer: 2003). Hanson was one expression of critical shifts in the social order, and a perceived threat to Anglo-Celtic dominance. However, Hansonism was one expression of popular resistance to changes due to globalization, who have been the major casualties of rapid economic change. These were Anglo-Celtic Australians who had not adapted to contemporary realities and were unwilling to share political and social power with 'Other' communities.

For Howard, 'the designer forms of discrimination in the 1990s ... race, gender and sexual preference' were peripheral discourses, devised and encouraged by cosmopolitan new class elites, unnecessarily dividing Australians. To him, 'the true identity of an Australian citizen ... was forged long before 1949' (Howard: 1999). For him, mateship and identity saw its fiery birth in the ANZAC legend (fighting for, not against, the Empire) and any disassociation with the monarch would sever one of his links with the imagined past: the

service of his own father and grandfather during the first world war. Howard believes the national character of the people is built from the experience, his speeches are full of references to his personal experiences, to encounters with people, to his own beliefs and feelings (Brett: 2003). Australian identity is being most profoundly expressed through military service- citizen-soldier.

Australia will forever be in debt to Britain for her gifts of language, literature, law, and political institutions....Citizenship and its related rights and responsibilities were commonsense developments derived from equally commonsense traditions of Westminsterism and transplanted British political thought (Howard 1998).

The repeated claim that a sense of national identity is lacking in Australia suggests that once some common link was there which is no longer shared and which has not been replaced by other common links. The only strong common link that has so disappeared was racial and cultural descent from the inhabitants of the British Isles (Jupp: 1994, 74-92). He illustrates that typical Australians did not believe in the equality of women or of races and ethnic groups, resented social inequality but equally resented intellectuals who criticised such inequalities and sought social liberalisation. They believed in democratic processes but not in the freedom of expression necessary to move beyond formal democracy to effective citizenship (Jupp: 1994, 74-92). Larger majority of elected politicians are native-born Australlans of British or Irish descent, and the *typical Australian* is always assumed to be of similar origins. His understanding of community is influenced by his adherence to a neo-liberal economic agenda, and views it as an agent of government and the dominant economic philosophy (Everingham: 2001).

Ghassan classifies Howard's politics as fundamentalist, suggesting that no politician is as systematic in deploying the concept, of usage of a notion of 'Australian values' and no one positions it as the cornerstone of a holistic political vision of Australia as he does; weaving political discourse around an explicit notion of Australian values. He elaborates that some of these are: 'mate ship; voluntary effort and optimism; primacy of family life; decency, fairness,

tolerance and harmony; treating people fairly on the basis of their contribution to society; and Great European values of liberal democracy'-referring to 'the great Australian values that bind us together' and about being 'united' by 'a common love of Australian values'. Ghassan argues that Howard's is an archaeological fundamentalist - on a mission of recovery and restoration (social and psychological) - who wants to bring back to light these core values and the people living by them. He further implies that this fundamentalism encourages a discourse of confirmation rather than a reflexive critical discourse. This tendency has developed into a pathological inability to listen to any voice other than one's own, insisting that, 'You don't indulge in some kind of intellectual exercise in trying to enumerate Australian qualities and Australian values, you practice them' (Ghassan: 2001). Critical reflexivity has been on many occasions explicitly dismissed by Howard as 'navel gazing':

We spend an enormous amount of time in this country navel-gazing about what kind of society we are. It seems that, on some occasions, we engage in a form of public fretting about what it really means to be an Australian. It always strikes me as rather unnecessary and rather odd and rather unproductive ... **You don't write down what it means to be an Australian. You feel what it means** to be an Australian (Emphasis added) (Ghassan: 2001).

Australian Muslims are at a historical juncture to understand who they are, a race, ethnic group, religious entity or typical Australian. They are confronting identity as well as multi-layered labeling. It's time to reassess their identity in a reflexive mode and engage in mainstream debates of national identity. These sporadic incidents do not qualify a country to be labeled as racist, yet outright denial leaves communities in a limbo, since serious efforts to deal with a situation can only be negotiated if it finds legitimacy in the corridors of power. Despite ethnic (Middle Eastern and Anglo-Celtic) labeling during riots and continued problems at Cornulla the larger issues would not be racial hierarchies. Denial of racism or discrimination is not only a form of self-serving impression management but also an attack on

the 'Other' whose insight, knowledge and experiences are marginalized and even seen as a threat to national identity formation (Van Dijk: 1997, 53). Muslims need to examine their situation beyond Victimhood and renegotiate their identity. The dilemma of difference and contemporary cultural diversity has to be negotiated through dialogue between older traditions and newer development (Holten: 1997) Regardless of criticism of coalition policies, it is commendable that the current regime has provided Muslims with an official platform (Advisory Council) to present their insight, they need realize the urgency of the situation and other than mere engagement should consolidate its links in the wider nationhood project. Miller rightly invites us to,

Consider the position of disadvantaged groups in contemporary liberal democracies, especially ethnic minorities with the history of material and cultural disadvantage. Their members typically have fewer resources and fewer opportunities than people in the mainstream. They have comparatively little economic bargaining power, nor do they have much political clout if they form conventional pressure groups and engage in lobbying. Threats to engage in political disruption or violence are largely empty: when minority groups take to the streets they usually inflict more damage on their own communities than on outsiders. For groups in this position, deliberative model seems to provide the best chance of using political power to counteract social disadvantage. Yet even here their only real resource is their capacity to invoke the sense of justice of their fellow-citizen, and use this to win policies that work in their favour. If a democratic forum is reduced to a talking shop in which each person has their own story to tell, but discussion is not constrained by the need to find practical solutions that are acceptable to all, then the strongest weapon a disadvantaged minority has- indeed almost the only weapon that it has - is blunted. Individuals may have the satisfaction of hearing their stories voiced on a public stage, but nothing is done to compensate for the huge inequalities of wealth and power that disfigure liberal democracies (Miller: 2000).

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