



## TOLERANCE IN AUSTRALIA: RHETORICAL MULTICULTURALISM



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### Abstract

This paper examines the (current) status of Multiculturalism in Australia. Uncritical application of multiculturalism in ‘policy and as a way of accommodating cultural diversity seems to have created social issues in many liberal democracies ‘with Australia being no exception to this. First I examine the history of multiculturalism in Australia. It is possible to say that *rhetorical multiculturalism* appears to be an abstract form of an idealistic societal life style, which seems to fail to fully transform into practical daily living in the Australian case. I argue that *Rhetorical multiculturalism* has been legislated as a *symbolic* norm in Federal and State Government Departments and that societal tolerance in Australia to fully accommodate cultural diversity has not yet been digested or established in real sense. In support of this argument, the paper analyses the most recent backlash against multiculturalism, which occurred in Australia post 9/11.

**Keywords:** 9/11, Australia, Rhetorical Multiculturalism.

## AVUSTRALYA’DA TOLERANS: SÖZDE ÇOK KÜLTÜRLÜLÜK

### Öz

Bu makalede Çok kültürlülüğün Avustralya’da süre gelen konumu incelenmektedir. Hükümet tarafından, ‘kültürel farklılığı uygulamak amacıyla’ eleştirilmeksizin ‘polis sekinde’ uygulanması, çok kültürlülüğün, Avustralya’nın da istisna dışı bir ülke olması kaydıyla, birçok liberal demokratik toplumda sosyal sorunlara yol açtığı görülüyor. Makale öncelikli olarak, çok kültürlülüğün Avustralya’daki tarihini inceliyor. Avustralya’daki konumuyla, çok kültürlülüğün Pratik günlük yaşama geçmekte başarısız kaldığını, bu nedenle *Sözde Çok kültürlülüğün* soyut formda, idealist bir sosyal yaşam tarzını temsilen bu ülkede belirdiğini söylemek mümkündür. *Sözde Çok kültürlülüğün*, *Sembolik* bir dizge ya da kurallar bütünü olarak Federal ve Eyalet Hükümet Birimleri tarafından yasallaştırıldığını ve Avustralya’daki toplumsal hoşgörünün kültür farklılığını tam anlamıyla sindiremediğini ya da gerçek anlamda benimsemediğini savunuyorum. Makale, bu görüşlerimi desteklemek amacıyla, Avustralya’da 9/11 (11 Eylül) sonrası zaman kapsamında çok kültürlülüğe karşı çıkan saldırı ve eleştirileri ele alıyor.

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## Introduction

Multiculturalism, as a way of living was first introduced to Australia under the Labour Government in the early 1970s (Berman and Paradies *et al* 2008: 224). According to some academics multiculturalism as a means of being tolerant towards others and addressing ‘cultural diversity’ (p. 214) has not been critically applied ‘in policy and legislation (Goldberg 2004; Solomos 1998). Therefore the tendency towards ‘racism’, as Forest and Dunn (2007) argue, has been remaining as an important social issue within Australian society. They suggest that number of Australians who have ‘racist’ ideologies is quite high and some academics such as Burnley and McDonald (2004) including Forest and Dunn (2007) further point out that a majority of Australians ‘believe’ that diversity, as in cultural, ethnic or linguistic diversity, is a threatening factor for Australian nation.

In what follows I examine the (current) status of Multiculturalism in Australia. Uncritical application of multiculturalism in ‘policy and legislation’ (Goldberg 1994; Solomos 1998) as a way of accommodating cultural diversity seems to have created social issues in many liberal democracies ‘with Australia being no exception to this rule’ (Vasta and Castkes 1996; Schech and Haggis 2001 *cited in* Berman and Paradies 2008: 214). First I examine the history of multiculturalism in Australia. According to my findings, Australian multiculturalism has a relatively brief past therefore, I argue that it [Australian multiculturalism] has not been established on a strong foundation. As stated earlier, the ‘uncritical application of Multiculturalism on policy and legislation’, I argue that has only been limited to these Federal and State legislation and seems to have been unsuccessful to influence Australian society as a way of living. For the reason that multiculturalism is only limited to Federal and State rules, I position Australian multiculturalism to be ‘Rhetorical Multiculturalism’ rather than ‘Practical Multiculturalism.’

It is possible to say that *rhetorical multiculturalism* appears to be an abstract form of an idealistic societal life style, which fails to fully transform into practical daily living in the Australian case. I argue that *Rhetorical multiculturalism* has been legislated as a *symbolic* norm in Federal and State Departments. I further argue that *rhetorical*



*multiculturalism* is an *artificial reality*, which has been and still is in use to convert or restructure Australian national identity.

I present the most recent backlash against multiculturalism, which took place in Australia post 9/11. Targeting Muslim population with claims of home-grown (Islamic) terrorism, multiculturalism was blamed as a way of living. What I call the *Rhetorical multiculturalism* for this reason still seems to create debates, lacks critical analysis and remains to be viewed as an uncertain and ambiguous philosophical ideal through the lenses of Australian society.

The search for this new Australian national identity [multicultural identity] started shortly after the World War 2 with a massive influx of immigration. Further to this, the national identity search was not necessarily voluntary, as it did become compulsory. With the rise of the sub-identities, or in other words the ethnic identities of the immigrants, when new-comers could not synthesis their own culture with the mainstream White-Anglo-Celtic Australian culture, a significant social problem emerged. Some politicians such as Paul Keating, former Australian Prime Minister argued that multiculturalism could be seen as the strength for Australia, which it [Australia] could benefit from. On the other hand, others such as Menzies, who was also a former Australian Prime Minister argued against the tolerant view for multiculturalism and suggested that Australia must remain under one national identity.

Considering the brief history of Australian multiculturalism, which still leads to today's heated debates and challenges academics and politicians by its ambiguous nature, it is possible to say that it [Australian multiculturalism] still holds a very fragile position. This paper argues that Australian multiculturalism is *rhetorical* and has been accommodated in Federal and State policies and legislation symbolically. Therefore, considering the abstract position of multiculturalism in Australia, I argue that it is *rhetorical* and limited to government policies only. This limitation effects multiculturalism to transform itself on to a practical level [as a life-style] as for its symbolic nature, it [multiculturalist policy] does not necessarily influence the society as a whole. In the following sections, I demonstrate with examples that societal



tolerance in Australia to fully accommodate cultural diversity has not yet been digested or established in real sense.

### **Becoming Multicultural: The Beginning of Cultural Diversity**

#### ***Mono-Culturalism: the White Australia Policy***

Similar to many other countries, Australia too, has sought to develop a national identity to *impose* on its citizens a sense of belonging in order to preserve social harmony (Jupp 2007a). When formulated in 1901, the White Australia Policy articulated a series of legislative and jurisdictional dimensions directed at restricting “non-European immigration” to Australia (Tavan 2004). The White Australian Policy was designed to assure a homogeneous society in terms of race and culture first sourced from the United Kingdom, then from other European countries (Jupp 2007b; Hage 1998). However, when the British immigrants whose disembarkation was anticipated did not arrive, the immigration policy was changed and became less restrictive in 1947 to include European migrants (Tavan 2004: 112). Nevertheless, the White Australian Policy persisted as a significant part of the Australian government’s migration policy, intended to preserve Australia’s racial and cultural homogeneity (Tavan 2004: 112). Menzies, a former Australian Prime Minister,<sup>1</sup> for instance, was an outspoken and firm defender of the White Australia Policy, reasoning that in a heterogenous society the emergence of internal racial-based problems are most possible to occur:

It is one of the attributes of sovereignty that nay nation may determine for itself how far and on what principles other people may enter or become citizens.  
(Menzies 1997, 225)

Similar rhetoric to Menzies’ re-emerged in late 1980s/1990s with One Nation Party. In the early 2000s, John Howard’s government also promoted an attitude towards a broadly inclusive migration policy and multiculturalism which reflected the deeply conservative views of Menzies and drew upon Pauline Hanson’s barely disguised racialism. In the early 1990s, Hanson had strongly argued that “multiculturalism weakens Australia” (Wu 1999) and the post-9/11 geo-political climate provided a

<sup>1</sup> In Australia Menzies era is considered between 1942-1972.



suitable environment for these radical race-based ideologies to prosper in mainstream Australian politics (Tavanet *al* 2004).

### ***The Emergence of Multi-Culturalism***

In the post-Second World War period, as a result of the change in the balance of power in the world, and when the aftermath of Nazi ideologies became more apparent (Tavan 2004), discrimination against non-Europeans had become unacceptable. After the Second World War, the non-arrival of the expected influx British migrants caused a reassessment of aspects of Australia's White Australia Policy. The discourse of multiculturalism escalated. In the United States and Canada, for example, in what might be called a response to accusations of racially discriminatory policies, modifications to these countries' immigration policies were made. Being a closely aligned Western country to the U.S.A and one of the first signatories to the United Nations, "Australian governments has no choice but to gradually liberalize their policies" (Tavan 2004: 122).

Australia's post war Australian immigration policy was designed to advance the country's population, develop the economy and increase national productivity. However, as a result of the tremendous increase in immigration, Australian governments became conflicted between the decisions of whether to continue a commitment to preserve Australia's racial and cultural homogeneity or to pursue an alternative perspective in order to maintain social solidarity. It is argued that there was an attempt to relieve tension amongst culturally distinct groups in Australian society (Fozdar and Spittleset *al* 2009). Therefore, policies were designed to "accommodate accelerated inhabitancy and assimilation of immigrants" (Lopez 2004: 44-9). Accordingly, it could be argued that the Australian nationalism although more tolerant towards non-European settlement still has a strong culturally based "sense of nationality grounded in British descent and native birth" (Birrel 1995). For these reasons the formation of the 'Other' appears to have been constructed upon this type of 'exclusivist' understanding of nationality.

Significant economic reasons to make changes to the immigration policy were also appealing for Australian decision makers. After 1945, with an improved and less





restrictive immigration policy, Australia appeared to be the beneficiary in its pursuit of cementing economic and diplomatic connections in the Pacific region (Tavan 2004: 112). As stated previously, in the post-Second World War period, following states such as the United States and Canada, Australia too made changes to its immigration policy. However, it could be argued that the changes were more imposed than based on consensus. In the 1970s, for example, in Britain, what have been termed the “Alternative Economic Strategies” were driven by the British Left’s enthusiasts who wanted to create a “new, radical, social contract” (Beilharz 1994). Similarly, it can be argued in Australia as a Western nation, immigration policies were modified based on economic reasons without taking how to establish multiculturalism into consideration. It is accurate to say then, the relaxation of immigration policies was not based solely on humanitarian reasons in the turbulent post-war era, but appealing strategic economic reasons from which Australia could benefit were also considered.

By opening national borders to non-European immigrants after 1945, Australian policies were designed to accommodate the rapid settlement of the new arrivals (Lopez 2004). When Australia became more racially and culturally diversified in the 1960s, the assimilation policies were again re-evaluated for their unsuccessful results (Fozdar and Spittles 2009: 496). Recognition of ethnic diversity and minority rights were considered in the re-making of government policies, which resulted in multiculturalism. According to Australian multiculturalism, Australians were urged to “accept a new cosmopolitan form of national identity, to embrace ethnic diversity” (Forrest and Dunn 2006).

Al Grassby, who was the Minister of Immigration in the Whitlam government in the 1970s was the first government personnel to use the term ‘multiculturalism’ (Brett and Moran 2011:195). He reasoned that Australia had to re-consider its position and national image in terms of cultural and social terms after the change of post-war immigration status (Grassby 1973; Brett and Moran 2011). The invitation to celebrate multiculturalism as a “defining aspect of Australian identity” was emphasized by Australian Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating in the early 1990s (Fozdar and Spittles 2009: 496). However, it appears the form of diversity Keating suggested was resisted by large parts of the Australian polity. It is argued by some that a “single ethno-



cultural version of Australia” (p. 496) was desired. This resistance to social and ethnic diversity resulted in the form of backlash to multiculturalism, in which “mainstream” Anglo-Australians considered themselves increasingly neglected, deprived and placed in the category of a “minority” (Joppke 2004).

### ***Resistance to Multiculturalism***

At this stage, it is important to keep in mind the assurance the White Australia Policy had provided to “mainstream” Anglo-Australians. White Australia as a “historic fact” (Smith 2005), “stands for a kind of Anglo (and colonial) racism built within the framework of the British Commonwealth before decolonization” (Beilharz 2008: 62). It was a form of official racialism that strove to maintain an exclusivist and homogenous sense of White Australian-ness. This embedded racist and culturally exclusivist attitude that since Australian Federation in 1901 was a key component of Anglo-Australian-ness did not respond well to Australia’s short history of multiculturalism. It appears the case that the clash between what remained of the Anglo-centered sense of Australian-ness and multicultural Australian-ness produced an identity crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. Tavan elaborates:

...An important break from the racial paradigms which had traditionally shaped immigration policy, acknowledging that skills and education, not race, were an appropriate measure of a person’s capacity to contribute to national life. Still, these changes were not intended to fundamentally alter the racial and cultural character of Australia, and did not remove all of the inequities between European and non-European immigrations. (Tavan 2004)

According to the Howard government, multiculturalism was characterized as *Australian Multiculturalism*, which was meant to accommodate Anglo-Australian-ness as a central or core culture. Put simply, the dominant Anglo culture was designed in a framework in which the multicultural identity was confined and “shared values” would be based on the British heritage (Fozdar and Spittles 2004). In time, there has been a return to the ideology of pre-multicultural Australia, as the Howard government began to impose more assimilationist imperatives (Tate 1998; Forrest and Dunn; Hage; Johnson; Howard 2007). As I stated earlier, resistance to multiculturalism would be considered appropriate assuming the strictly “White Only”



state policies that had been encouraged until quite recently. The attitude of Howard Government might also be considered as an indicator of the symbolic nature of *Australian Multiculturalism*, which is an *interpretation* of the term *multiculturalism* that has never been embraced fully on a social and practical level and has maintained rhetorical. With a particular portrayal of Muslims and Islam post 9/11, the backlash against multiculturalism appears to be on the rise. This almost *effortless backlash*, indicates the fragile status of multiculturalism, which I argue to be nothing more than rhetorical. In the following sections, I examine multiculturalism in Australia post 9/11 in terms of Islam.

### ***Multiculturalism, Islam and the discourse of terrorism***

As is historically evident multiculturalism was resisted and almost discarded by the Howard government, even prior to 9/11. The rise of the “Anti-Muslim sentiment”, Islam as the ‘Other’ and the rampant Islamaphobia in the post-9/11 environment accelerated and strengthened this resistance to multiculturalism (Hocking; Jupp and Ponyting 2006: 85- 92; Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). In Australia, critics of multiculturalism traditionally cast it as responsible for dismantling the core Anglo-Australian culture. It has also been suggested that the tolerance and cultural diversity encouraged by Australia’s multicultural policy, have led to the pre-conditions of possible home-grown [Islamic] terrorism. As Fozdar and Spittles articulate:

More recently a growing public discontent with diversity has been sharpened by Anti-Muslim sentiment aroused by terrorist attacks in New York, London and Bali; by the linking of multiculturalism to terrorism. (Fozdar and Spittles 2004: 511)

The rise of Islamaphobia and the representations of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism have significantly impacted on the embrace of cultural diversity in Australia (Jupp *et al*; Ponyting 2007). In the heated discourse over Islam’s so called inherently violent nature, terrorism has also been linked to multiculturalism and in this climate of public and even academic debate, strongly nationalistic arguments began to re-emerge, reminiscent of the rhetoric, the ideology of the White Australia Policy: “Australia made an error abandoning its former policy of encouraging assimilation





and integration in favour of multiculturalism” (Errington and Van Onselen 2005: 222).

The Citizenship Test that was introduced in 2007 represents as a step closer to John Howard’s vision of an Anglo-Saxon centered Australia that was imagined (Tate 2009: 117). My aim is not to discuss the level of need for the Citizenship Test; however, it is strongly suggested that the test’s roots lie in concerns about a possible Islamic threat posed against Australia post 9/11 (p. 118). Drawing attention to what then Federal Treasurer Peter Costello stated supports this argument. Costello, whose concerns seemed to be explicitly associated with Islamic problems such as terrorism, the growing Muslim population within Australia and the Australian Citizenship Test stated in 2006:

There are countries that apply religious or sharia laws. Saudi Arabia and Iran come to mind. If a person wants to live under sharia laws, these are the countries where they might feel at ease. But not Australia [...] ...There are some beliefs, some values, so core to the nature of our society that those who refuse to accept them refuse to accept the nature of our society. If someone honestly cannot make the citizenship pledge, they cannot honestly take out citizenship... No one is going to respect a citizenship that is so undemanding that it asks nothing. (Castello 2006)

In Costello’s speech there is clear linkage between multiculturalism, Islam and terrorism. Post 9/11, it is accurate to say that the backlash against multiculturalism increased, and, as a concept that already was in jeopardy, the position of multiculturalism worsened. I argue that rhetoric sense of multiculturalism was made evident by repetitive statements of what real Australian values are. It is clear that Howard government retreated from multiculturalism and defended a *mainstream* core culture grounded in the British heritage as the central essence of Australian national identity. As stated initially, the introduction of the Citizenship Test in 2007 was suggested to be a product of Howard government’s “nationalistic project” opposing to multiculturalism. In support of this argument Fozdar and Spittles state that “the Citizenship Test [functioned] as a means of fostering integration and social cohesion...in the context of...the challenge of global terrorism but also in the context of the “failure” of multiculturalism”. Multiculturalism was even seen as a ‘failure’



and blamed by conservative ideologues, mainly for political expediency, as providing one of the conditions of possibility for global terrorism.

Multiculturalism, which has a short history in Australia's policy-making and its social life, is already at risk. Australian multiculturalism is argued by some scholars to undermine social harmony. The Muslim population in Australia is seen as a product of cultural diversity, encouraged by multiculturalism. Australia's Muslim population has also been presented by a number of academics in the popular and even public media as fertile ground for home-grown radicalization or as a threat to homeland security (Watson; Bendle; Tavan; McKnight). Before I conclude this particular discussion, I want to examine another implication of the pervasive discourse of Jihad and the underlying Islamophobia; this is the invention of the 'Other'. As I argued earlier, the academic discourse of Jihad which is mainly based on the Islamists'/terrorists' interpretation of Jihad, aggravates the problematic issue of Islamophobia. I contend the lack of understanding the true nature of Islam, as well as mis/interpretations of both Islam and Jihad creates another social problem: the emergence of the 'Other', in the form of the 'Muslim Other' or the 'Arab Other', the 'Middle Eastern Other' which qualify all as divisive identities, finally becoming a substantive social problem.

### **Summary**

As this discussion is intended to make clear, after the less-restrictive post-war immigration policy and even the acknowledgment of values such as minority rights and cultural diversity within the framework of multiculturalism, a socially divisive internal conflict *within* the identity forming and assuring processes of Australian identity formation were occurring. At the start of the second decade of the Twenty First century it is accurate to say that the embedded sense of Anglo-Australian national identity still has not digested the notion of an Australian identity that is now, more rather than less, multicultural in nature.

This problem of ambiguity in Australia's national identity likely occurred as a result of the sudden shift from a strictly designed British/European Only White Australia Policy to racially and culturally diverse multicultural Australia Policy in the post-Second World War period. Even in the short history of multiculturalism in Australia,



it had faced a backlash. In the 1990s, the largely submerged resistance to and resentment of multiculturalism began to surface into mainstream discourses. Its emergence displayed a renewed revilement of Australia's Indigenous peoples and a tendency towards the exclusion of certain ethnic/racial groupings, such as Muslims. This tendency towards exclusion can be understood as an expected reaction resulting from the sudden shift in Australian immigration policy and the appearance of multiculturalism. The first Gulf War of the early 1990s and the emergence of an increasingly radicalized and aggressive Islamist front throughout this decade, culminating in the 9/11 and Bali Bombing attacks in the early 2000s, in a sense **confirmed** the exclusion of Muslims in Australia as the loathsome 'Other', a tendency that already had been emergent since the late 1980s.

***The loathsome 'Other': Western Muslim identity in a post-9/11 world***

Due to the increase in the focus on Islam and the concept of Jihad, the post-9/11 discourse of terrorism in Australia as well as in the U.S.A and the U.K, has contributed to the emergence of social identity issues. Increasingly, Muslims have been characterized as the 'Other(s)'. Even prior to 9/11, terms such as "thick accents" and "Arab appearance" (Adams 2001) were used to describe the [Arab or the Muslims] 'Other' to Anglo-Saxon Western Australian society (Hall 1997; Oliverio 1998). The events that took place on the September 11 "changed the world" along with "the characteristics of mainstream terrorism discourse" (McMillan 2004: 380). It is clear that contemporary terrorism has come to be very closely associated with Islam. In alignment with this outcome, McMillan points out that the attacks were "understood as a warning of an external danger" (p. 385). McMillan's overall argument is about how 9/11 has affected the national identities of both the USA and Australia. Although, he argues the American national identity was targeted specifically and 9/11 did not affect the Australian identity directly. As a result of being a "closely-aligned" Western liberal state, Australia still sought to consolidate, to reaffirm its international identity (p. 381). What McMillan means is that the terrorist attacks were considered as an "external danger". Consequently, within the national borders, the exclusion of the 'Other' [which in this case the Arab, the Muslim or the



Islam(ic) ‘Other’] has been sought. The differentiation of the ‘Other’ has been illustrated in Australia in a racialized approach to issues such as immigration and multiculturalism (Campbell 2002). A number of social theorists suggest that the structure of the societal identity is based on the “spectacle of the Other” (Hall 1997, see also Fuery&Mensfield 2000; Young 1996a). By this, they mean the illustrated version of the ‘Other’ as well as consequential exclusion, avoidance or “ostracism” are seen as necessary tools to demonstrate or to maintain the identity of the ‘Other’ to the rest of the community (Fuery& Mansfield 2000; Hall 1997) and thereby reaffirm group or national identity.

Greg Noble is a scholar who draws particular and critical attention to the visualization of the ‘Other’ (as an Arab, a Muslim or an Islamic/ Middle Easterner looking person) who is allegedly prone to be “violent” and therefore, must be excluded or distinct from the rest of the [Australian] society (Noble 2008). He refers to the term “Arab Other” as inclusive of all ‘Lebanese, Muslim, Arab and Middle Easterner’. As he argues, there is no term to embrace them all (p. 31N:1). Noble points out that Arabs and Muslim men are all portrayed as lawbreakers and quite often visualized with certain images usually through the media. Since 9/11 and the declaration of the ‘War on Terror’, Noble argues that the conception of the “Arab Other” as “uncivilized, animalistic and evil” (p. 14) is defined through a “moral panic” (see also Warner 2004: 345; Cohen 1980; Thompson 1998).

Similar to McMillan, Noble suggests that “visualization of the ‘Other’” helps to define the dominant Anglo-Australian culture. “The face of evil” as he argues refers to the ‘Other’, which is designed to establish a moral categorization for the public identifying the ‘Arab Other’ (Noble 2008: 29). In the event of this categorization, it makes it easier to create a “cultural panic” around Arabic or Muslim men (Noble 2008: 16). As a result, the identity of the ‘Other’ moves from an individual to a whole community. What Noble suggests is that this “new racism”, is cultural rather than physical. The Middle Eastern appearance or Arabic speaking background (Collins; Noble; Ponyting; Tabor 2000) is an “ethnic descriptor is in use in offender profiling” (Warner 2004: 359). Warner (p.344, 345) points out that the “ethnic crime gangs and terrorists” were closely linked to one another immediately after the “ethnic gang



rapes” in Sydney in 2000 and 2001. As is evident; the presentation of the visual of the “evil” [or the ‘Other’] often leads the public to link the bad or the evil to the alleged ‘Other’. Noble suggests the development of the “language of the good and the evil” differentiates the self from the ‘Other’ on a moral level (Noble 2008: 25). So to the logic of the “good and the evil” goes as follows: Rape is bad, if it is bad, it must be the work or crime of the ‘Other’.

I believe in agreement with Noble, Kabir also suggests that following the events such as Bali bombings, September 11, Gulf Crises in 1990 and 1991, the world is allocated to two distinct groups: “evil” Muslims and “good” Christians. He argues that the ‘Other’ness is intentionally invented by the media for commercial reasons (Kabir 2006: 313). Anti-Muslim sentiment follows in the discourse of “Islam equals terrorism” and the “nature of ‘Muslimness’ is violence” (p. 316). The Australian popular media’s continuous effort has been to keep focus on the ‘Other’, to draw attention to nationalistic discourses (Saxton 2003; Turner 2003). By establishing the Muslim identity on a distinct, “evil”, uncivilized” religious fundamentalists, Muslims as the ‘Other’s have been “presented as evidence of Islam’s incompatibility with the values of liberal democracy” (Aly 2007: 28). As a result, *Muslimness* and *Australianness* as identities caused heated debates and have been “presented in Australian nationalist discourses” (Celermejer; Yasmeen; Saeed 2007: 3). Western societies, including Australia have constructed “an ideational link between Islam and political violence and threat” (p. 3). This “ideational link”, of course, has also emerged in the analysis of scholars in discussion of major socio-political issues including identity problems, debates about multiculturalism, inclusive and exclusive government policies and even social –community- behaviours (e.g: Gang rapes and criminal profiling). It is also possible to say that ‘ideational link’ is a result, or at least a by-product of the symbolic nature of multiculturalism.

Heated debate over the expanding Muslim population in Australia has consequently been followed by strong criticisms of multicultural policy. Over the past decade or so, especially following the 9/11, Bali and London bombings, as well as the Sydney Lebanese rape cases, violent acts that can in some way be connected to an



Islamic/Muslim context are being represented through the discourse of Muslims as the barbaric ‘Others’, as belonging to a social and cultural world that is actively intolerant and devoid of cultural diversity (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2009: 34). It is accurate to conclude that anti-Muslim Sentiment has been on rise in Australia as well as in the most Western countries especially since 9/11 (HREOC 2004). In this heated milieu, perhaps almost inevitably – certainly unsurprisingly-- Muslims [or Islamic belief] have been [is] made the ‘Other’ and the Muslims are seen as “outgroups as instances of ‘strangers in our midst’” (Forest and Dunn 2006: 167).

In regards to multiculturalism and immigration policies, research is suggestive of a hierarchy of immigrants’ cultural backgrounds. According to this, potential migrants from New Zealand and Britain are most desirable, opposed to Arabs, Muslims and Lebanese who are among the least liked groups. (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2009: 44). Furthermore, negative attitudes towards Muslim immigration usually are accompanied by negative attitudes to multiculturalism as well as negative expectations of the “consequences of cultural diversity and immigration” (p.44). According to the argument of an imaginary link between Islamic terrorism and multiculturalism, it may be concluded that Jihad, Muslims and terrorism are being perceived “in the context of the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism” (Fozdar and Spittles 2009: 512) and, almost certainly, *vice versa*. Due to the limitations and the scope of this paper, I cannot fully explore concepts such as the imaginary link between Islam and terrorism or the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism in detail. However, in the following section, I outline the impacts of social exclusion.

### ***(Un)Intended Consequences: the impacts of marginalization***

Identifying Jihad as a core element of Islam in close association with terrorism (especially under the influence of the media and minority Islamist terrorists’ interpretations of Jihad) would be taken as offensive by Muslims. This is unhelpful in terms of ensuring tolerance for ‘cultural diversity’ and cultural communication. Secondly, the moral panic and Islamaphobia which have impacted on critiques of multiculturalism significantly affect the formation of Muslim migrant identity in





Australian society. y concern here is linked to the formation of Muslim identity of those Muslims already currently residing in Australia.

Post 9/11, Australia similar to many other Western countries, invented “an ideational link between Islam and political violence” especially linked to Jihad (Celermejer and Yasmeen, and Saeed 2007). This has encouraged set of nationalistic discourses (Celermejer; Yasmeen and Saeed 2007). Consequently, Muslimness and Australianness could not be imagined as two identities which may harmonize. The establishment of Islam as detestable and hateful as well as the situating of Muslims as the ‘Other’ to authentic Australians [or to ‘mainstream Anglo-Australia as well as to secular Western states] have caused them to be particular targets of “racism and xenophobia” (Dunn and Salabay 2007: 575). The misinterpretation of Islam, which is highly encouraged by the media and political rhetoric and sadly reflected in some elements of the recent Australian academic discourse of Islam and terrorism, accommodates amplifying hostility towards Islam (Celermejer and Yasmeen, and Saeed 2007). This outcome may have a significant impact on the capacity of Muslims in Australia to successfully harmonize their identities as Muslim Australians in terms of their social integration (Dunn, *et al* 2007). An ironic and perhaps not entirely unintended consequence of this dislocation and disharmony for Muslims in Australia is that the conditions of possibility for home-grown terrorist activities are expanded due to the sense of frustration and even outrage among young Muslims in particular at being constantly rejected as the Other in mainstream and sometimes even academic discourses of Australian identity.

In spite of the diverse and developing arguments about Islam and Jihad’s relation to terrorism, there seems to be a entrenched resistance to Muslims and Islamic culture in many Western countries. For instance David Pryce-Jones’ thesis draws particular attention to a “monolithic” “Arab culture” which is inherently prone to violence. According to this viewpoint, Arabs are portrayed as the “arch-opponents of an understanding and progressive West” (Saniotis 2004: 574). This type of ‘Othering’, of course, is more likely to position the West and the ‘Other’ [Arab Other/ Muslim Other] on a test of the balance of power in which they would both strive in order to define their identity through the scholarly literature, the media as well as political



discourse. However, at this stage, it is pertinent to remember the fact that Muslim migration to Australia which grew rapidly in the 1970s due to the Lebanese Civil War (Batrouney 2001), Gulf War and then recently Iraq, Afganistan and Africa - is “ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse” (Brett and Moran 2011:195). Yet, as Bouchat argues, “Australia’s fears and misunderstandings of Islam make it appear as if fundamentalists are united and threatening to gather the Muslim nation in a war against the West” (Del Carmen 2003: 102).

As Muslims in Australia are not even united in terms of culture, race and language, the moral panic that is being created which suggests Muslims may gather to conquer Australia (Watson 2002) is highly grotesque. Again, whether Muslim values are compatible with what are perceived to be official Australian values, is not what I am discussing here. Rather, I am focusing on a possible identity problem that may occur amongst Muslims who are already Australian citizens. The dichotomy of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ reflects as a social anxiety both on Muslim communities and the rest of the Australian society. The creation of the ‘Other’ imposes isolation as it encourages identity crisis amongst Muslims. It also inflicts the idea of the evil Muslim ‘Other’ as an outcome of multiculturalism, which is responsible for global terrorism.

According to Noble (2008: 16) the creation of ‘Otherness’ is a useful tool in order to contrive a social concern or to enunciate a range of social anxieties. Noble elaborates:

...the ‘enemy within’, dissolving natural and cultural borders, exarcebating the tendencies to ‘neurotic citizenship’ and fears of ‘homo grown’ terror (Isin, Engin 2004). The Arab Other is portrayed as animal, barbaric, uncivilized, inhuman and the essence of evil. This characterization of the Arab Other as evil is mostly clearly registered in the representations of terrorism...by a series of complex connections, the portrayal of young Arab and Muslim Australians involved in gang crime and rape has been framed by the same meaning...‘appearance’ of the Middle Eastern male, beyond the argument that it is a form of racist stereotyping based on simplistic assumption about phenotypical and cultural homogeneity. (Noble 2008)

What has also emanated as a result, is the “enemy within” as the ‘Other’. This is, I argue, what has caused most of the backlash against multiculturalism in Australia. The ‘Other’ as the “enemy within” is portrayed as the “arch-opponent” of the West.



### Summary

To sum up then, the embedded exclusiveness of a predominantly **White** Australia still appears to be the case. It has mostly portrayed that Islam is the ‘Other’, to be uncivilized and barbaric and most importantly intolerant. It is very clear that in the 21st Century, in Australia, multiculturalism is still a contested idea in Australia. I argue that Islam in the challenge of [Islamic] terrorism has been presented as the ‘barbaric’ religious identity which is hostile and possibly posing a threat to rest of the Australian society.

### Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the current Australian multiculturalism through the scope of recent major events such as 9/11 that had a significant impact on Muslims and how they are situated in a multicultural Australia. According to my findings, soon after 9/11, the nationalistic rhetoric in Australia contributed to the collective and ontological insecurities of Muslim populations in Australia.

The unfortunate tension that had been created by the fear of terrorism had a major effect on cultural tolerance. It is possible to say that the sudden backlash against multiculturalism and intolerance towards a certain ethnic group may indicate the existence of what I call Rhetorical Multiculturalism. In this paper I argued that *rhetorical multiculturalism* is an *artificial reality*, which has been and still is in use to convert or restructure Australian national identity after the World War 2 with a major flux of immigrants. Although multicultural policy can be argued to be one of necessity in order to establish societal harmony, based on recent examples such as 9/11, it is also possible to argue that multiculturalism has still not been fully embraced by the Australian society.

However, due to the scope of this paper, I have been unable to further examine the issues in regards to Islam, multiculturalism, inclusive and exclusive state philosophies. The issue of the expanding Muslim population in Australia remains of great importance to studies of Australian multiculturalism. Enlightenment as to the distinctiveness of cultures throughout society on a practical level, rather than



imposing a multicultural policy in a philosophical and abstract way would help establishing bridges of communication among all Australians.

Nevertheless, I am not seeking to persuade of the potentiality of Muslims and their compatibility with Western values. Nor am I evaluating Islamic culture on a ‘good and evil’ or a ‘civilized and barbaric’ level. Rather I am focusing my argument on the identity formation of Muslims who are already inhabitants of Australia. I suggest the ongoing association of Islam and terrorism has caused and may continue to cause offense to Australian Muslims, which may contribute to significant internal conflict in the long run by completing the isolation of this group from the rest of Australian society. I also argue that in the discourse of Islam and Muslims, it is pertinent to keep in mind the fact that Muslims do have various sects and most of them do come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and speak different languages. Therefore, arguments which promote the view that terrorism might be caused by Australian Muslims need to be evaluated on different terms. It is surely more productive not to consider Muslims and Islam as a whole. Indeed, a more insightful conversation may be conducted on the range of different sects or particular Muslim groups who have a tendency to radicalize according to their specific belief systems. Gathering a more insightful understanding of the diversity and nuances of a culture may result in better analysis of the outcomes that could present in the future.

Ongoing research could also examine in more detail the question of Islam and terrorism in consideration of the Muslim population in Australia. Additionally, establishing bridges of communication between diverse cultures might not only invalidate rhetorical multiculturalism but also help build a practical one on a social level. Doing so, may lead to envisage a more steady multiculturalism and the type of society that is possible in Australia.



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