

Muslim Migration to Australia and the Question of Identity and Belonging

Fethi Mansouri

Introduction

The encounter between Islam and Western civilisation is not a recent phenomenon. Certainly it is not solely a product of recent migratory movements, though twentieth-century migration has accelerated the pace of Muslim migration to the West. Indeed, Muslim civilisation reached the southern parts of Europe as early as the seventh century and is still strongly entrenched within Europe today in the form of independent states such as Bosnia Herzegovina and significant Muslim minority groups in the case of France, Germany, the UK, Holland and other states. Therefore, the current negative discourse towards Islam and Muslims living in the West is not only linked to recent political developments but can be traced to a history of confrontations that stretches from the crusades in the twelfth century to Napoleon's expedition into Egypt more than five centuries later. But history and historical events alone cannot account for the current impasse that characterises the relationship between Muslims and the West. In fact, the years following the events of September 11 have witnessed a number of incidents that once again generated

strong exclusionary discourses towards Islam and Muslims in general, and those present in Western societies in particular. As this chapter will argue, in the case of Australia, this discourse has been framed in the context of local threats to Australia's national security and social cohesion symbolised by the perceived influx of the 'boat people', the spread of 'Lebanese gangs' in Australian suburbs and the associated fear of 'global terrorism'. The historical and empirical insights from recent research illustrate that these new discursive tendencies cannot be overcome by means of a strictly normative citizenship approach.¹

Despite the adoption of the policy of multiculturalism, and a general acceptance of migrant groups since the 1970s², Australia has recently been described as a country where exclusionary discourses and practices are now notable, most obviously towards Arab and Muslim minority groups.³ In fact, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) report findings corroborated the views of several studies regarding the social concerns held by Arab and Muslim Australians and the subsequent threat this poses to intercultural relations.⁴ The HREOC inquiry reported growing levels of discrimination and xenophobia experienced by Arab and Muslim Australians since the September 11 and Bali terrorist attacks.⁵ While respondents confirmed that the majority of non-Muslim Australians uphold multicultural ideals regardless of the changed international political atmosphere, the interviews conducted as part of HREOC's research exposed disturbing reports of individual acts of discrimination and/or racism in contemporary Australia. The incidents cited ranged from verbal abuse to examples of personal attacks (such as being spat upon or Muslim women forcibly having their veils removed), or the destruction of both private and public property.⁶

More recently, research on social cohesion in Australia has revealed an increased shift in negative attitudes towards immigration.⁷ The research found strong and persistent negative attitudes towards asylum seekers in the range of 60–70 per cent, as well as an increase in the negative attitudes towards immigration intake from 35 per cent in 2009 to 47 per cent in 2010.⁸ Most interestingly, and in terms of attitudes towards migrants from particular ethnic backgrounds, the study found that the negative attitudes are almost six times higher from immigrants from the Middle East (19.9 per cent)

than they are for either English-speaking (3.5 per cent) or European (3.2. per cent) immigrants.⁹

Against this backdrop, this chapter discusses the historical presence of Muslim migrants in Australia and explores their current social experiences and the impact of recent global and domestic political events on their representations in political and public discourses. This chapter uses historical accounts as well as current empirical research on attitudes towards Muslims and Islam in Australia. Drawing on pre-Federation as well as contemporary debates on national identity, citizenship and belonging, I argue that perceptions and images of Muslims in contemporary Australia cannot be viewed as solely the product of recent global politics. Instead, they are also the consequence of government social policies such as restrictive asylum seeker policies and related negative media coverage that still echo exaggerated pre-Federation anxieties about the security threats of migrants from Asia and the Middle East.¹⁰

While it is not always evident that historical continuities regarding the discursive representation of any particular group can persist across decades, even centuries, as Said shows in his influential book *Orientalism*, the Western skewed view of Islamic and Arab culture has been sustained by stereotypes, misconceptions and an assumption of cultural superiority.¹¹ Within the Australian context, recent research shows a persistent—if not increasing—level of discrimination and racial vilification experienced by Muslim Australians, in particular in the aftermath of the September 11 and Bali terrorist attacks.¹² Despite the relatively successful adoption and implementation of multiculturalism since the 1970s¹³, Australia has recently been described as a country where exclusionary nationalist discourse is increasingly prevalent, most notably vis-à-vis Muslim migrants.¹⁴

Recent research findings corroborated the views of several earlier studies¹⁵ regarding concerns held by Muslim Australians and the implications of this for their social integration and wider intercultural relations. These concerns included the provision of adequate legal protection from discrimination; the lack of culturally relevant education at both the secondary and tertiary levels; the problematic approach of the media to Islam and (by association) the various Muslim minority groups; scepticism regarding equitable law

enforcement practices; and the re-emergence of exclusionary media discourses.¹⁶

Muslim Migration to Australia

The earliest presence of Muslims in Australia can be traced back to fishermen from Makassar in the east-Indonesian archipelago who had been visiting the north coast of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland from as early as the seventeenth century.¹⁷ Later and during the early white settlement, 'names of Muslim sailors, convicts and settlers can be found listed in various records, however evidence of their continued settlement in Australia is absent'.¹⁸ Surprisingly, little research has been undertaken to place this early presence within the social and economic framework of nation-building that shaped post-Federation Australia. Despite the recent publication of a number of studies on Arab and Muslim Australians, early Muslim settlement in Australia remains a neglected topic in mainstream historical studies.¹⁹ This dearth of academic inquiry is further illustrated in the lack of seminal studies being carried out on early Muslim settlement along the lines of the extensive historical analyses undertaken on the representation of Chinese and Asians in Australia prior to Federation. Indeed, numerous historical studies have focused on the racialised representation of Asians and other migrants in literary and media discourses (see, for example, Walker 1999), while similar studies of Muslim migrants in pre-Federation Australia have yet to be undertaken in a rigorous way though Stevens's study (1989) of Afghan migrants remains an exception in this regard.²⁰ But given that many European explorations across the Australian outback were guided by thousands of Afghan camel drivers in the nineteenth century²¹, the issues connected to their early experiences still need to be explored in a more systematic manner to uncover the level of racial and physical abuse they endured at the time.

For example, and as a result of the economic tension arising from the introduction of cheap 'coloured' labour, 'an Afghan cameleer was shot dead by a European teamster as he was washing before performing the sunset prayers'.²² This and other concerted efforts by workers and journalists led eventually to more restrictions

on Afghan and other Muslim workers being allowed into Australia ultimately culminating with the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

Following the adoption of this legislation that became known as the 'White Australia Policy', the non-British source of migration was stopped and the Afghans, among other non-British settlers, found it increasingly difficult to secure employment and acceptance in the wider Australian society, suffering racial vilification and social isolation. Lebanese immigration to Australia similarly began in the 1870s and '80s, though early Lebanese migrants identified themselves as Syrians and were categorised as 'Asians' under the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.²³ While they passed the eligibility test for immigration, they were nevertheless excluded from applying for 'naturalisation', the equivalence of current Australian citizenship.²⁴

As recent studies have shown, Afghan cameleers were the first victims of anti-Muslim sentiments in Australia who, as early as the latter parts of the nineteenth century, endured a major negative media campaign due to racial and economic tensions with Anglo-Australian bullock drivers.²⁵ At the same time, campaigns against Indian and Syrian hawkers in capital cities along the eastern seaboard resonated with wider colonial campaigns against members of the Chinese community. For example, in 1898 the Melbourne newspaper *Leader* ran a major public campaign against Indian and Syrian hawkers, linking these settlers to a narrative of criminality, disease and the bullying of housewives. Similarly, the editor of the *Coolgardie Miner* newspaper, FCB Vosper, 'played on anti-Afghan feelings in his editorials, and in December 1884 [he] received the support of 2000 miners in his proposal to establish an Anti-Afghan League ... to exert pressure on government and local councils to have the Afghans, and other Asians, removed'.²⁶

Post-Federation immigration and citizenship legislation, reflecting these tensions, did introduce restrictions that resulted in a reduction of Muslim presence in Australia to insignificant numbers, though the target group for such restrictions were Asians in the first place.²⁷ The racial discrimination and internment of enemy migrants during World War I saw Lebanese and Syrians categorised as 'Turkish subjects' and thus were portrayed as a potential security risk to the

nation. Such racial discrimination was openly practiced under the pretext of cultural homogeneity, social cohesion and the 'national interest'.

Not surprisingly, Muslim migration did not recover until after World War II when, initially, the largest groups of Muslims to migrate to Australia were from Turkey and the Balkans and thus were not perceived to pose a major cultural challenge to the White Australia ideology. However, in more recent times, owing to civil wars and armed conflicts in the Middle East and as a result of Australia's adoption of a more flexible multicultural policy, Arab and Muslim migration from different parts of the Middle East and South East Asia has increased.

At present, across this wide spectrum of immigration intake, there are around 340,390 Muslims in Australia, representing 1.7 per cent of the total population.²⁸ The most frequently spoken non-English language used by Australian Muslims is Arabic, which indicates that the largest ethnic group within Muslim communities in Australia is of Arabic-speaking background with 243 662 speakers representing the fourth-largest language in Australia other than English.²⁹ Although Australian Muslims come from more than thirty different countries, the largest proportion (38 per cent) is Australian-born with almost 40 per cent being under the age of twenty.³⁰ Australian Muslims live mainly in the metropolitan centres of Sydney and Melbourne with the majority classified as working class.³¹ Socio-economic indicators³² suggest that Muslim Australians occupy both socially and economically marginal positions in the Australian society.³³ This can be seen in terms of employment outcomes and house ownership. Ironically, the take-up rate of Australian citizenship for Muslim migrants in general and those born in Middle Eastern and North African countries in particular has been above the national average suggesting a strong commitment to the Australian nation.³⁴

Muslim Australians and the Politics of Multiculturalism

Discursive representations of migrant groups in Australia have often tended to be manifested in diametrically opposed directions.³⁵ Migrants are either virtually ignored in the mainstream media coverage, which effectively denies their membership among the urban citizenry, *or* their activities are presented as irrational,

negative or violent, which frames minority groups as collectively problematic and, therefore, inherently un-Australian. A good example here is the recent debate about banning the *burqa* in Australia.³⁶ This is partly why it may appear contradictory that many Australians simultaneously appear to take pride in the culturally diverse nature of their society while giving political support to more conservative policy approaches to multiculturalism and national identity debates.

The ambiguous and sometimes difficult intersection of such fluid notions as identity, nationalism and multiculturalism can create particular instances of exclusionary discourses and practice, if not government policies. Some have argued that this is an outcome of a new globalised politics of neo-capitalism that has played a role in eroding society's capacity to generate care for others and distribute hope for a better future.³⁷ This is because states have become 'managers' of national economies to the detriment of the wellbeing of their citizenry, whose feeling of economic vulnerability results in a public discourse dominated by a language of worry, insecurity and defensive border policing. This fear about oneself and the nation then manifests as a form of paranoia and total indifference to the suffering of those excluded from the national imaginary on the basis of their cultural difference.³⁸

Little wonder then, that any perceived targeted policy (*a la* affirmative action) towards migrants or other minority groups rarely garners popular support from a majority of the Australian public. This is evidenced, for example, in the heated debates about Indigenous land rights or economic support directed at particular ethnic groups.³⁹ Yet a liberal discourse on equality and equal opportunity has been commonly supported and openly preferred by policy makers, many groups within civil society, and the general public. The Whitlam-led Labor Government officially enacted multiculturalism in Australia as a policy in 1973 though it was not incorporated into the national agenda until the Fraser years and its humane approach to the 'boat people' crisis when thousands of Vietnamese refugees were settled in Australia. Yet, more than thirty years later the former Prime Minister John Howard dismissed the very term 'multiculturalism', when he expressly favoured 'cultural diversity' instead: '[Multiculturalism is] not a word I use a lot, but there is no other

word. I mean I tend to talk about cultural diversity. I tend to talk about people's different heritage'.⁴⁰ As indicative of this kind of general retreat from multiculturalism in public policy, in 2007 the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs changed its title to the 'Department of Immigration and Citizenship'.

The retreat from using the term 'multiculturalism' in favour of the more normative term 'citizenship' has become a symbolic basis for generating a new form of political nationalism. Overall, new policies of citizenship as a basis for Australian national identity encourage a discourse of shared values as contributing to social cohesion rather than promote the intrinsic value of cultural diversity and anti-racism. The policies of any Australian government, often supported by certain sections of the media, have the capacity to shape public attitudes and views towards Muslim and other migrant communities.⁴¹ For example, one of the outcomes of the reduced emphasis on cultural diversity and anti-racism has been a growing editorial acceptance of racist comments directed towards Muslim Australians in Australian media. Such anti-Muslim sentiments flared most recently during December 2005 when Anglo-Australian whites attacked Lebanese Australians at Sydney's southern Cronulla Beach in a bid to 'reclaim the beach'. Signs and t-shirts worn by the nearly 5000 rioters, most of Anglo Celtic background, read discriminatory phrases such as 'Kill the Lebs', 'no more Lebs', 'get Lebs off the beach', 'F...k off, Lebs' and 'F...k off wogs'.⁴² Indeed, many Australian newspapers openly criticised Muslim heritage, categorised Lebanese youth as 'un-Australian' and upheld notions of a white Australia through their images, online discussion sites and sensationalised headlines.⁴³

At such a difficult time for multicultural Australia when strong leadership is needed to correct such racist and discriminatory attitudes, the political leadership opted to remain largely silent, treating these events as a law and order issue, and in the process contributed to undermining further intercultural relations and social harmony.

Notwithstanding the Cronulla riots and their aftermath, signs of a weakening support for multiculturalism in Australia, at the level of policy enactment at least, have been most evident in the gradual retreat of multicultural services from government agencies to the voluntary sector. The Australian government has in recent years

channelled funds to a select cohort of community groups and local NGOs, allowing them to control settlement and support services that affect newly arrived migrants and refugees. One of the problems of shifting settlement services that were once provided through state-endorsed policies of multiculturalism to NGOs and community groups is that small community groups are not always fully equipped or resourced to cope with the systemic problems that immigrants face in terms of anti-racism, social exclusion and discrimination.⁴⁴ Whereas once multiculturalism included support for cultural diversity, anti-racism legislation and social inclusion, now—post-September 11—multiculturalism in Australia is almost exclusively synonymous with a new emphasis on tributary citizenship rights, socio-economic integration and social cohesion.

The conservative backlash against multiculturalism is a trend detected in other multicultural societies in the West such as the UK and Canada. There are widespread fears that the presence of a large number of newcomers and their claims for recognition will inherently corrode solidarity and economic conditions of the majority groups. Fears of this kind have led to more restrictive immigration policies and tighter controls on access to citizenship. The general argument has been that multicultural policies emphasise and support ethnic culture, which undermines the sense of a common national identity, and a common national identity is necessary for a robust welfare state.⁴⁵ Such ideas reflect a widespread perception of immigration as a threat and a burden to émigré societies that must be managed, contained or minimised. In general, Australia's acceptance of non-white migrants has been fragile with an early record of a tendency towards exclusion and assimilation as evidenced in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. The following section examines how these cumulative historical developments have affected the lives of Muslim migrants in contemporary Australia.

The Social Experiences of Muslim Australians

Anti-Muslim sentiments and actions are often reproduced through a racialised discourse that is sustained by corrupted understandings and articulations of national identity and political belonging. Like other non-European early settlers, Muslim migrants to Australia have historically faced considerable cultural and political obstacles in

their attempts to access equal citizenship rights and fully integrate into mainstream Australian society. These historical obstacles have become all the more challenging in the current political climate that emphasises social cohesion and raises concerns about the potential divisive nature of cultural diversity. Within this policy approach to diversity, external conflicts in the Middle East often have a negative impact on Muslim Australians, some of whom have fled these very conflicts for a more secure future in Australia. Muslims are, therefore, caught up in exclusionary representations about their communities often portrayed as a possible threat to social cohesion in Australia. This representation has led to a more prominent discourse of demonisation, misrepresentation, mistrust and exclusion aimed at Australians of Muslim and Arabic backgrounds.⁴⁶

Recent research has highlighted a high level of antagonism and intolerance towards Muslim Australians in the way they are perceived by the broader mainstream society. One such study surveyed over 5000 residents in Queensland and New South Wales in December 2001, and found that anti-Muslim and anti-Middle Eastern sentiments were very strong, with both communities mentioned most commonly as groups that respondents believed did not fit into Australian society.⁴⁷ Moreover, non-Muslim women were more concerned about marriage of a non-Muslim woman to a Muslim man than vice versa, suggesting that 'Muslims suffer quite dramatically from the stereotypes of Islamic misogyny/sexism'.⁴⁸ Not only did the findings show that high degrees of hostility are felt towards Muslim Australians, they also indicated that spontaneous, non-formal types of racism are experienced frequently by many Australians, such as disrespectful treatment, mistrust and labelling or name-calling. The survey suggested that a significant proportion of Muslim Australians experienced these types of racism through everyday social interaction.⁴⁹ More specific accounts of attacks and vilification of Muslim Australians, particularly women, can be widely located, though these tend to be second-hand accounts.

A number of recent reports of Muslim Australians' social experiences seem to support such accounts including specifically: being subjected to verbal and physical assault; women being intimidated and patronised; receiving hate mail, obscene phone calls and death threats; the firebombing of mosques and the inciting of hate in the

media, particularly on talkback radio.⁵⁰ Muslim women in particular appear to be targeted for two main reasons. First, those who wear a *hijab* tend to be individuals who are the most physically and visibly identifiable with Islam.⁵¹ Second, Muslim women are sometimes viewed by some Australians as subservient, complicit in their own oppression by a patriarchal religious and cultural order, and consequently are patronised if not openly despised.⁵²

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the media coverage of these issues is that many commentators seamlessly fuse events in the Middle East together with outbursts of discrimination and racism against Muslim Australians.⁵³ The correlation seems, to some media commentators at least, to be obvious; however, it is worth exploring more deeply how these members of the Australian community have come to be implicated in events that in reality are far beyond their control. This might be understood through the conflation of Muslim and Arab, the lack of understanding of Islam in Western cultures and the presentation of Islam as a homogenous entity that is now associated with terrorist targeting of Westerners.⁵⁴ As previously argued, it might also be regarded as part of a more general conservative backlash against multiculturalism, reviving fear and deep suspicion of Australians with multiple cultural and national allegiances, particularly those who are visibly different. Ironically, the isolation that has been almost forced upon some members of the Muslim Australian communities has been interpreted as a rejection of and dissociation with 'Australianness' and as evidence of loyalty to religious and political orders that are thought to represent the 'enemy' of the West.⁵⁵ Xenophobic rhetoric towards Muslim Australians, however, cannot be solely viewed in the context of recent world events, as these communities in Australia have suffered exclusion and prejudicial treatment that is also reflective of a broader problematic Western discourse on Islam.⁵⁶

Some Empirical Insights

The specific forms that racialised practices and representations towards Muslim migrants take and how they may be accounted for vary considerably. One recent study shows that negative sentiments vis-à-vis Muslim Australians remain at high levels.⁵⁷ This study included a sample of 584 participants with 262 respondents to the

internal survey within the Darebin local council, representing approximately 33 per cent of the total staff numbers; 300 interview-style community surveys of 10–15 minutes duration among a stratified sample of Darebin community residents; and twenty-two individual interviews with Council employees, community leaders (including religious leaders and spokespersons of relevant NGOs in Darebin), local business owners and general community members. The interviewees were selected according to four types of variables: demographics, connection to Muslim communities, gender and geographic location. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an in-depth qualitative perspective on the views and attitudes of community and business leaders vis-à-vis multiculturalism, Islam and Muslim Australian communities.

The study's findings show that the majority of the respondents felt empathy towards Australian Muslim communities and acknowledge that they have been targeted because of recent international events. There is nevertheless evidence of misperceptions, stereotypes and some negative views of Muslims within the community. These views are directly related to the international security context post-September 11 and have translated into both direct and indirect forms of discrimination. Many Muslim Australians reported incidents of verbal harassment and social avoidance and in some cases outright discrimination and physical attacks. There is a feeling among members of the Muslim community that they have been deliberately singled out by the Australian Government and consequently are increasingly viewed with suspicion by mainstream society and media. The incidents of harassment and discrimination were described at length in the individual interviews held with Muslim leaders of the local community who complained about lack of understanding and knowledge of Islam in Australian society.

The table below summarises the levels and sources of mainstream knowledge of Muslim Australians. Participants were presented with a range of responses from '*I don't know anything at all*' about Muslims, to statements that indicated that they had '*learned about Islam from family and friends*'.

Table 1: General Knowledge of Muslim Australians

General knowledge of Muslims comes from....	Community respondents	Staff	(Difference)
a) I don't know anything at all	0	2.7	-2.7
b) My family or extended family	15.0	8.4	6.6
c) Friends	43.0	27.4	15.6
d) Books I read	38.3	31.4	6.9
e) My own life experiences	54.7	44.7	10
f) Observing people in the neighbourhood	43.7	55.3	-11.6
g) The media (TV, Press, Radio)	71.3	79.2	-7.9
h) Other	17.0	10.6	6.4
Total (N)	(300)	(262)	

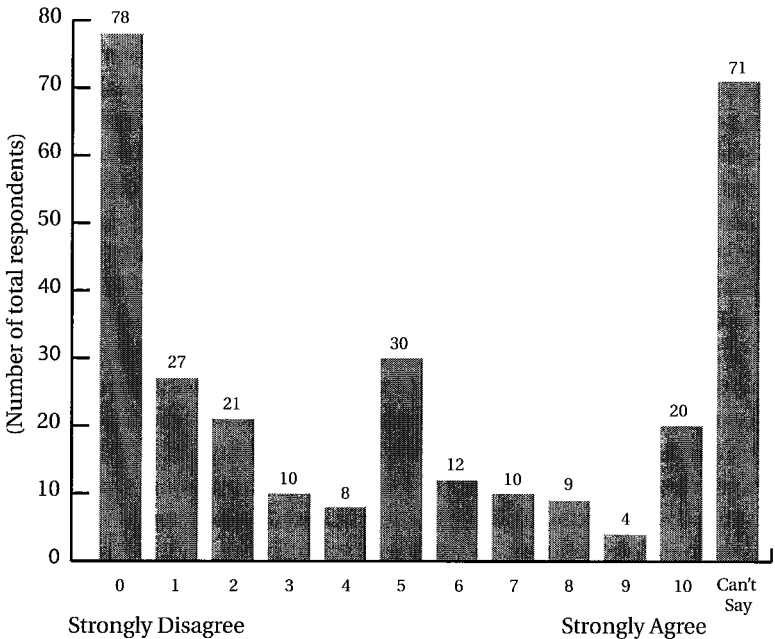
Only 2.7 percent of the staff respondents and no community respondents stated that they had no knowledge about Muslims. More than 70 percent of the community respondents and 80 percent of the staff respondents stated that their knowledge of Muslims came primarily from the media. This may explain why the role of the media has been such a concern to Australian Muslim leaders in their attempts to promote a positive image of Muslim communities in Australian society.

Respondents were then asked (on a scale of zero to ten) about their level of agreement with a range of specific statements formulated to test their perceptions of Muslim groups in the Darebin community and their knowledge and understanding of Islam. The sentiment of each of these statements, both positive and negative, was taken from opinion pieces published in *The Age* and *The Herald Sun* shortly after the London subway bombings in July 2005. They touched on various issues ranging from the question of whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy, the perception of Muslim women who choose to wear a *hijab* and the logic of blaming all members of a particular group for the actions of a few extremist individuals. These fifteen statements can be divided into four broad

categories: statements about the behaviour of individuals, statements about the rights of Muslims, statements about Muslim groups and statements about international terrorism and safety. Given the scope of this paper, the following discussion will only focus on the statements addressing perceptions of Muslim Australians and Islam.⁵⁸

The survey data show that the majority of respondents are comfortable having contact with, interacting with or employing Muslims. Respondents overall agreed that they would live next door to a Muslim with a community ratio of 8.39 and a staff ratio of 7.9 out of a possible 10. Even more respondents were comfortable with the idea of visiting a Muslim home, with this statement receiving a community ratio of 8.64 and a staff ratio of 8.3. However, the data also shows that there were societal limits to what people viewed as minority rights. For example, staff and community respondents were extremely divided over whether Muslim families should have the

Figure 1: Islam is Not Compatible with Australian Values



right to keep their children out of classes for religious reasons, with a ratio of 5.08 and 5.6 for community and council employees respectively.

The negative statement, '*Islam is not compatible with Australian values*', similarly received a community mean of 3.19 and a staff mean of 3.5. The aggregate of responses are categorised in Figure 1.

The significant number of responses selecting the '*can't say*' option could suggest a number of underlying issues: that respondents were uninformed about Muslims in general; that they were unwilling to give support for a negative statement about Muslims in a face-to-face survey; or that respondents were unwilling to generalise about Muslims and that different interpretations of Islam could have different degrees of compatibility with Australian values. Similarly, it could also reflect an unwillingness to generalise about the meaning of Australian values.

While the research showed an overall high level of support for Muslim Australians, it nevertheless highlighted some problematic negative findings in relation to the understanding of Islam (and the sources of such understanding and knowledge) and the simplistic association of Muslim Australians with international Islamist groups such as terrorist organisations.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The political discourse in certain Western countries in relation to conflicts in the Middle East has led to a problematic association of Islam with 'extremism, intolerance and violence'.⁶⁰ Such a causal association between the creeds of Islam and Arabs on the one hand, and political violence and oppression on the other, has not been constructed solely as a result of September 11 and subsequent events.

Certainly the negative discourse has been heightened in the aftermath of the recent terrorists attacks, though it must be emphasised that it is by no means a new addition to the continuum of Western discourse on Islam and the Arabs. Within a social context of claustrophobia about multiculturalism and the slow loss of 'Australianness', malicious generalisations about and denigration of Islam have become acceptable in Western media and public discourse. The '*clash of civilisations*' thesis epitomised by Samuel P

Huntington, where Islam is portrayed as a 'single, coherent entity', posits that Islam is forever and inevitably on a path towards violent conflict with 'the West'.⁶¹ Huntington writes:

So long as Islam remains Islam (which it will) and the West remains the West (which is more dubious), this fundamental conflict between two great civilisations and ways of life will continue to define their relations to the future even as it has defined them for the past fourteen centuries.⁶²

Such essentialist generalisations deny Islam its diversity in terms of character, practices and beliefs, and present Muslims as having intrinsic natures that are mostly discussed pejoratively. This shows that well before September 11 the Western imaginary constructed an Islamic totality that is essentially and unavoidably in conflict with the West. The social and psychological impacts of global politics and security events on Muslim- Australians, therefore, need to be understood as being a continuation of a history of antagonism and misunderstanding towards Islam by many sections of Western society.

This discussion of the experience of Muslim Australians post-September 11 recalls the monolith of derogatory and stereotypical images of Islam that Said describes, and places anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia within this historical perspective. Contemporary global political events involving Muslims have undoubtedly contributed much to Australia's fortress mentality. However, whatever we might say about our diverse background, the Anglo-Celtic cultural influence in Australia is still the most dominant of the historical and local factors outlined. Negative attitudes towards Muslim Australians must be understood in light of these inter-related factors which include: media (mis)representations; social policies (in the form of a folkloric version of multiculturalism in its view of ethnic culture); Australia's historical alliance with the West; as well as the deep influence of orientalist discourse on perceptions of Islam and the East. In Australia, the situation for Muslims and Arabs is further compounded by current political debates about 'national security' and ongoing public division over the detention of asylum seekers, many of whom are Iraqi and Afghani. As Said proposes, the mere use of the term

'Islam' to either explain or indiscriminately condemn the diverse Islamic world is an irresponsible over-generalisation that is problematic, counterproductive and one that would be unacceptable if applied to any other cultural or demographic group.⁶³

The empirical evidence reported in this chapter shows a high level of anti-Muslim views within Australia in response to recent international events. The literature on this matter supports the view that Muslim Australians have experienced an increase in levels of discrimination in response to specific terrorist attacks and the 'War on Terror'.⁶⁴ Media and policy views that are directly or indirectly hostile to Muslim communities have the potential to influence a population characterised by heightened anxieties and feelings of insecurity in the context of the current international security environment.

Since 1997 and Pauline Hanson's corrosive influence on national politics at the time, cultural unity has been perceived by conservatives to be under threat from multiculturalism, which was painted as potentially 'divisive', and the recognition of different cultural groups, in particular Muslims and Asians, presented as threatening to 'integration and pride in being [an] Australian'.⁶⁵ Within such conservative populist thinking about multiculturalism and immigration, 'the existence of difference within a community is strongly coded as disunity, as a pathogen or weakness'.⁶⁶ It is within this political and social climate that immigrant Islam in Australia, because of its cultural difference and pronounced visibility in a predominantly secular society, has been constructed as a threat to social homogeneity, and increasingly as a potential risk to national security in the age of 'war on terror'. What is needed, therefore, is not only an emphasis on a normative construction of citizenship and belonging but also a more strengthened focus on grassroots approaches to moral universalism and cosmopolitanism.⁶⁷ Within such an approach, classical understandings and applications of citizenship can be augmented by a new emphasis on a discourse of human rights that transcends the nation-state boundary and its limiting emphasis on political membership and tributary citizenship rights.⁶⁸ Multicultural societies in the twenty-first century still need to come to grips with the notion that national identity and local belonging can no longer be dependent on primordial attachment as

globalisation intensifies transnational movements and practices at all levels.⁶⁹ This is why Muslim Australians living in any Western émigré city can and should be empowered to articulate a global identity within an Islamic value system while remaining politically engaged and socially active within their local communities.

Notes

- 1 F Mansouri, S Kenny and C Strong, *Promoting Intercultural Understanding in Australia: An Evaluation of Local Government Initiatives in Victoria*, Deakin University: Geelong, 2007.
- 2 S Castles and E Vasta, *The Teeth Are Smiling: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia*, Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 1996.
- 3 A Saeed, *Islam in Australia*, Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 2003; B Cleland, *The Muslims in Australia: A Brief History*, Islamic Council of Victoria: Melbourne, 2002.
- 4 G Hage, 'Postscript: Arab-Australian Belonging after September 11', in G Hage (ed.), *Arab-Australians Today: Citizenship and Belonging*, Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 2002, pp. 241–8; Saeed; F Mansouri and C Makhoul, 'Arab-Australians in Victoria: Needs Assessment and Capacity Building', Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights (CCHR), Deakin University: Geelong, 2004.
- 5 HREOC, Isma – *Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians*, Australian Human Rights Commission: Sydney, 2004.
- 6 HREOC; Saeed, pp.188–93; Cleland.
- 7 A Markus, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys Summary Report 2010*, Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements, Monash University: Melbourne, 2010.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 2.
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 10 C Stevens, *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Camel Drivers in Australia*, Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1989; D Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*, University of Queensland Press: Queensland, 1999.
- 11 E Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin Books: London, 1978.
- 12 Markus; A Wise and J Ali, *Muslim-Australians and Local Government: Grassroots Strategies to Improve Relations between Muslims and Non-Muslim Australians—Final Research Report*, Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University: Sydney, 2008; Mansouri, Kenny and Strong; K Dunn, *Racism in Australia: Findings of a Survey on Racist Attitudes and Experiences of Racism*, paper presented at The Challenges of Immigration and Integration in the European Union and Australia, University of Sydney: Sydney, February 18–20, 2003; HREOC.
- 13 Castles and Vasta.

- 14 E Porter, 'Security and Inclusiveness: Protecting Australia's Way of Life', *Peace, Conflict and Development*, no. 3, July 2003, pp. 1–7.
- 15 Stevens; Hage.
- 16 HREOC, pp. 12–14.
- 17 Wise and Ali.
- 18 S Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Voices: Hopes, and Aspirations of Muslim Australians—Report for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, Monash University: Melbourne, 2009, p. 3.
- 19 Stevens; Hage; Cleland; Saeed; N Kabir, 'Muslims in Australia: The Double Edge of Terrorism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 33, no. 8, 2007, pp. 1277–97; M Humphrey, 'Australian Islam, the New Global Terrorism and the Limits of Citizenship', in S Akbarzadeh and S Yasmeen (eds), *Islam and the West: Reflections from Australia*, UNSW Press: Sydney, 2005, pp. 132–48; F Mansouri (ed.), *Australia and the Middle East: A Front-line Relationship*, IB Tauris: London/New York, 2006; F Mansouri and S Percival-Wood, *Identity, Education and Belonging: Arab and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Australia*, Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 2008; Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Voices*.
- 20 Stevens.
- 21 MJ Cigler, *The Afghans in Australia*, AE Press: Melbourne, 1986; Stevens.
- 22 Stevens, p. 145.
- 23 T Batrouney, 'Arab Migration from the Middle East', in F Mansouri (ed.), *Australia and the Middle East: A Front-line Relationship*, IB Tauris: London/New York, 2006, pp. 37–62; F Mansouri, 'Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Australia', in S Akbarzadeh and S Yasmeen (eds), *Islam and the West: Reflections from Australia*, UNSW Press: Sydney, 2005, pp. 114–32.
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 Kabir; Stevens; Cigler.
- 26 Stevens, p.144.
- 27 Walker.
- 28 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006, '2006 Census Data'. <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/PopularAreas?collection=census/period=2006> (viewed 31 October 2009).
- 29 *ibid.*
- 30 *ibid.*; R Hassan, 'Social and Economic Conditions of Australian Muslims: Implications for Social Inclusion', *NCEIS Research Papers*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1–13.
- 31 Saeed, p. 2.
- 32 ABS.
- 33 Hassan.
- 34 HREOC, 'Fact Sheet: Australians of Arab, Middle Eastern and North African Birth and Ancestry', *Australian Human Rights Commission* March 2003. http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/consultations/facts/fact_arab.htm (viewed 12 May 2010).
- 35 K Dunn, 'Re-thinking Ethnic Concentration: The Case of Cabramatta, Sydney', *Urban Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1998, pp. 503–27.

- 36 *The West Australian*, 'Australian Lawmakers Vote Down Burqa Ban,' 20 May 2010.
- 37 S Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, Cambridge University Press: Leiden, 2004; Hage.
- 38 Hage.
- 39 B Hindess, 'Multiculturalism and Citizenship', in C Kukathas (ed.), *Multicultural Citizens: The Philosophy and Politics of Identity*, The Centre for Independent Studies Limited: Sydney, 1993; S Benhabib, I Shapiro and D Petranovic (eds), *Identities, Affiliations and Allegiances*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007.
- 40 G Megalogenis, 'Multicultural Australia Examined: The Full-text of the John Howard Interview', *The Australian*, 6 February 2002.
- 41 I McAllister, 'Border Protection, the 2001 Australian Election and the Coalition Victory', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2003, pp. 445–63.
- 42 C Overington and D Warne-Smith, 'Countdown to Conflict', *The Weekend Australian*, 17–18 December 2005, p. 20.
- 43 C Due and DW Riggs, "'We Grew Here You Flew Here": Claims to "Home" in the Cronulla Riots', *Text, Theory, Critique*, vol. 16, Monash University: Melbourne, 2008, pp. 210–28.
- 44 J Salaff and P Chan, 'Competing Interests: Toronto's Chinese Immigrant Associations and the Politics of Multiculturalism', *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, pp. 125–40.
- 45 W Kymlicka and K Banting, 'Immigration and the Welfare State', *Ethnic and International Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2006, pp. 281–304.
- 46 Due and Riggs.
- 47 Dunn, Racism in Australia.
- 48 *ibid.*, pp. 2–4.
- 49 *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 50 Saeed, pp. 182; 189–92.
- 51 *ibid.*
- 52 Mansouri, Kenny and Strong; Dunn, Racism in Australia.
- 53 E Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Pantheon Books: New York, 1981.
- 54 N Chomsky, *Power and Terror: Post-9/11 Talks and Interviews*, Seven Stories Press: New York, 2003.
- 55 SP Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster: New York, 1996.
- 56 Said, *Covering Islam*.
- 57 Mansouri, Kenny and Strong.
- 58 Compared with *ibid.*
- 59 Said, *Covering Islam*.
- 60 Saeed, p. 184.
- 61 Said, *Covering Islam*, p. xii.
- 62 Huntington, p. 212.
- 63 Said, *Covering Islam*.

- 64 Mansouri, Kenny and Strong; F Mansouri, 'Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Australia'; Hage; A Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict and Cooperation?*, Palgrave Macmillan: Hampshire and New York, 2003; HREOC, Isma; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Access, Services, Support, Respect: Local Government's Response to Cultural Diversity in Victoria*, 2003. <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/news/items/Analysis%20of%20Local%20Government%20Areas.htm> (viewed 3 August 2006).
- 65 One Nation, 'Policy Statement'. <http://onenation.com.au/Policy%20document.htm> (viewed 31 October 2009).
- 66 M Leach, 'Hansonism, Political Discourse and Australian Identity', in M Leach, G Stokes and I Ward (eds), *The Rise and Fall of One Nation*, University of Queensland Press: Queensland, 2000, p. 51.
- 67 Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*.
- 68 BS Turner, 'New and Old Xenophobia: The Crisis of Liberal Multiculturalism', in S Akbarzadeh and F Mansouri (eds), *Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West*, Tauris Academic Studies: London, 2007, pp. 65–86.
- 69 Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*; Benhabib, Shapiro and Petranovic, *Identities, Affiliations and Allegiances*.