Integration in a Diverse Plural Society
Laksiri Jayasuriya

The current unease in many countries (eg, Holland, France, and the UK) exposed to heightened Muslim immigration has brought to the fore critical issues relating to notions of multiculturalism, citizenship, and national identity. Controversies surrounding these same issues have also been apparent here in Australia, since the days of *Tampa* and *SIEV 4* ('children overboard') were vividly portrayed during the Cronulla Beach riots in 2005.[1] The cryptic nationalist slogan of the beach goers was 'we grew' here, you 'flew here'. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Prime Minister chose to make issues of Australian identity and multiculturalism the centrepiece of his Australia Day Address in 2006.[2] On this occasion, the Prime Minister forcibly defended his long held views on the need to reframe questions of Australian identity by linking · 'Australian multiculturalism ... to a common culture ... [on the] symbols we hold dear as Australians and beliefs that we have about what it is to be an Australian'.[3] Since then, the Prime Minister has reaffirmed and reiterated these views in his advice to some members of the Islamic community in Australia, where he argued that 'fully integrating means accepting Australian values'.[4] The notion of 'full integration', understood primarily as 'cultural integration', was notably characterised by the Prime Minister specifically in terms of learning the English language and respect for Australian values. These views have led to devising a citizenship test affirming the acceptance of Australian values.[5]

In the ongoing controversy, there have been varying reactions to the Prime Minister's Statement of 2006 on Australian multiculturalism and related issues One of the earliest reactions to the Prime Ministers understanding of 'full integration' was from a Muslim Community leader Dr Ameer Ali, Chair of the now disbanded Prime Minister's Advisory Body, The Muslim Community Reference Group. Dr Ali argued that this point of view when translated into public policy 'threatened to drive young Muslims into isolation and inflame racial tensions...because when you antagonise the younger generation they are bound to react'.[6] The Shadow Minister of Immigration, Tony Burke, also entered the debate, observing that from a policy perspective the Prime Minister's views were a 'synonym for "assimilation"'[7] and highly reminiscent of the migrant settlement philosophy in the pre-Whitlam era. More recently Paul Keating has joined in as well, characterising John Howard as a 'Gallipoli nationalist' in contrast to a 'Kokoda patriot' like himself.[8]

In response to these criticisms of John Howard some commentators have chided the critics for their 'politically correct' objections by pointing to Australia's remarkably successful policy of accommodating waves of migrant settlers from Europe and Asia. This successful integration of newcomers, however, was due primarily to the skilful management of post World War II policies of migrant settlement which were incorporated into the wider Australian welfare system. Although the latter is now in disarray, following the collapse of notions of social and industrial citizenship, there is no doubt that this Australian success story in the heyday of mass migration was not due to adopting a nebulous notion of 'Australian values'. Rather it was the intended outcome of the sensible implementation of a settlement philosophy, especially during the Fraser and Hawke-Keating era[9] and later identified as 'multiculturalism'.

This settlement ideology entered the political lexicon as '*Australian multiculturalism*' when John Howard somewhat reluctantly embraced the 'm' word in 1997. Importantly, this policy strategy, framed in terms of an inclusionary model of citizenship, enabled the incorporation of immigrant settlers - without denying their right to be different - into the structures of the society as full and equal members. What is more, the legal status of being a citizen or a 'denizen' (ie, a permanent resident without formal citizenship status) was guaranteed to all newcomers. This was not just a matter of civil and political rights, and procedural equality, but also one of equal access to the benefits of the Australian welfare state.[10]

From this it is clear that what Australia endorsed as 'multiculturalism' was a *conditional multiculturalism* in which the acceptance of the right to be culturally different was always subject to the acceptance by new settlers of the rights and duties governing Australian citizenship and embodied in the institutional fabric of Australian society. It was readily accepted and understood that the rights of citizenship as well as the freedom to express one's views and values also entailed a corollary, *viz*, a willingness to abide by the duties and obligations of citizenship. Accordingly, all versions of multiculturalism since the Whitlam era have maintained that the endorsement of multiculturalism as a social ideal was subject to an acceptance of the basic structures of society and an overriding commitment to Australia.[11]

What this form of *Australian multiculturalism* decreed was a pluralistic understanding of integration as 'social integration', rather than a 'cultural integration'.[12] Whereas the latter places emphasis on the acceptance of cultural values, beliefs, and sentiments, social integration is more a matter of the rights and duties linked to a common citizenship, a political as well as a social citizenship. This approach to 'multiculturalism' and citizenship underlines a sense of nationality modelled on western democracies that have sought to emulate an American or French model of a 'nation state' where all citizens are integrated into a common societal culture. This is one which involves a common language, social, and political institutions rather than a common religion or other personal life styles such as those derived from the 'culture' of the majority group. In other words, a 'common societal culture' acknowledges that in a modern liberal and secular democracy, the culture of 'life styles' is pluralistic and accommodates different religions, and other social groups.

One major shortcoming of Australian citizenship however has been that unlike some other leading western democracies, the rights of citizenship are not constitutionally entrenched as in the *Bill of Rights* of the United States, or built in as Statutory Acts such as the Canadian *Charter of Freedom of Rights* or the *European Convention of Human Rights* recently adopted in Britain.[13] Thus, in the United States an American sense of identity or belonging is derived primarily from one's loyalty to, and identity with, the Constitution, signifying what citizens share in common.[14] In other words, a sense of identity and belonging does not rest on a shared prescriptive set of cultural values, but in one's membership of the political community. These civic republican sentiments are clearly evident in the political credo of Obama, the rising Black African Presidential aspirant, in the USA.[15]

What this signifies is that central to building a sense of identity, of belonging and gaining social solidarity in settler societies like Australia, Canada, and United States, is adaptation to common social and political institutions; or, as some writing about sport have suggested, that the 'social superglue' which forges 'the bond of tribalism rests on a common interest and not in a shared space'. Extending this analysis, what matters in the case of a sense of identity is not shared *values* but shared *identity* derived from an

acceptance of, and identification with, a common public culture. In this sense, for social solidarity the glue of a 'common interest' lies in defending a free and open liberal political order, emboldened by a sense of democratic citizenship framed within a charter of freedom of rights.[16] In short, it is the civic culture which provides the bond and glue that binds the nation and integrates varied segments of society.

Robert Hughes[17] reinforces this approach by making the pointed observation that it is the 'civic virtues' which enable multiculturalism to serve as a bulwark against cultural arrogance, chauvinism, and the tendency to universalise the particular. It is the *civic culture* which is central to any concept of 'pluralistic integration' in an evolving and dynamic, ethnically and culturally diverse society. This standpoint of a 'civic multiculturalism' affirms that the integration of those from varied cultural backgrounds is achieved by ensuring them full and equal participation in all aspects of social and political life. What we *all* share and belong to is the public culture of the nation, its institutional culture, social and political practices, and inherent civic virtues; in short, membership of the political community.[18]

In sharp contrast, the proponents of Australian values maintain that 'unity in diversity' and a sense of an Australian identity requires integration into 'core cultural values', all derived from the core values of the Anglo-Celtic cultural heritage. Accordingly, in the absence of an institutional framework built around racial and cultural homogeneity such as in the heyday of White Australia, policy,[19] it is suggested that there is a need for a 'cultural/ethnic multiculturalism' based on cultural assimilation. This form of a 'cultural/ethnic multiculturalism' recreates a new 'identity politics' exemplified in the way Howard uses 'values and symbols in politics ... [to invest] citizenship with a deeper meaning [and reinforced by] loyalty to nation, individual responsibility, social obligation, and cultural unity'.[20] This model of citizenship finds admirable expression in the Government Discussion Paper entitled *Australian Citizenship* and the subsequent introduction of a Formal Citizenship Test.[21] In short, what this form of 'Australian multiculturalism' does is to introduce a form of 'new assimilationism' by the back door.

However, the notion of *social integration* too is in need of refinement because it fails to take account of the pluralistic nature of contemporary society as manifest in the fast changing social demographics of Australian society. Thus, for, example, ethnic minority groups in whatever way they are labelled ('NESBs' or 'CALDs') are now more differentiated and complex. This is mainly because of the extensive social and demographic transformations arising from such factors as heightened interethnic marriage and the presence of second and third generations of ethnic origins.[22] Consequently, ethnicity itself has become more fluid and second and third generations of ethnic origin are more likely to express a 'symbolic ethnicity', such as nostalgia for their parents' homeland rather than a desire for cultural maintenance. Ethnic identity is clearly not a reified fixed identity but one of 'mixed' identities operating in the political domain. This again, underscores the need for diverse plural democratic societies to have a common understanding and acceptance of the *political dimension* of a nation.[23] What is fundamental to any sense of social solidarity in a pluralistic society is the unifying commonalities of the *political nation*, stemming from a common citizenship, rather than a *cultural nation* based on elusive shared values.[24]

The Australian multiculturalism that evolved from Whitlam and Fraser through to the Hawke–Keating era has been critical to the absorption of several waves of migrant settlers in the post World War II period. The experience of settler societies like Canada and Australia clearly demonstrates that liberal political theorising is able to

accommodate diversity and pluralism in the polity without recourse to notions of assimilation of an earlier era. It is a mistaken belief that 'assimilation' – explicit or hidden – is a prerequisite for integration and maintaining social solidarity in a diverse and plural society. Furthermore, this model of multiculturalism has survived without any disruption of social solidarity for over three decades.[25]

In this context it is instructive to look at the social dynamics of 'integration' in France which presents a not too dissimilar context to that of the current Australian scene. This relates to the social turmoil in recent years surrounding ethnic and religious tensions in the French housing estates. One of the main explanations offered has been that this social turmoil is mainly due to the failure of young Muslim youths on these housing estates to 'integrate'. In the French context this has been understood as a failure of the processes of cultural assimilation or the absence of 'cultural integration'. This explanation, however, has been challenged by those who point to the conflicting evidence which shows that these young settlers were quite adept in quickly absorbing the culture of the mainstream bourgeois youth of Paris.
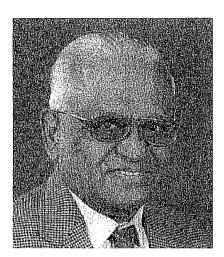
In this light, the French sociologist, Denis Duclos, in a perceptive piece on the 'crisis of integration' in the housing estates observes that 'culture, especially in hard times, is not a top down process but may rise, phoenix like, from suffering'.[26] And, importantly, Duclos goes on to argue that a genuine integration policy can succeed, among other considerations, only if there is 'a radical shift in attitude and [a willingness to] discard any paternalism or unconscious denigration [and] acknowledging that the *Other* has a right to his or her place in a more unified world'. Hence, the need to acknowledge that 'when a society is socially differentiated, then citizenship must be equally so'.[27] This is primarily a question of how we conceptualise a liberal citizenship, one that guarantees full and equal membership in the political community.[28] We need, therefore, to reclaim the notion of a 'pluralistic integration' along the lines advocated by a former British Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins in the 1970s, as, 'equal opportunity with a clear recognition of "differentiations" accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'.[29]

The challenge of pluralism, arising form cultural diversity is to confront the paradox of cultural pluralism, of having to straddle difference with sameness, by discarding the outmoded *identity politics* of culturalist multiculturalism. However, this quest for a 'visible statement of separation *and* difference', according to Kurshid Ahmed, a British Muslim leader, requires 'a definition of an integrated society, not within a model of cultural assimilation as in France',[30] but as a democratic pluralistic citizenship incorporating 'equality plus engagement'.

This approach to multiculturalism and integration is well articulated in the 'civic multiculturalism' model adopted by the West Australian Government's recent *Charter on Multiculturalism*. This model of multiculturalism enshrines a radical view of a liberal citizenship which posits a 'differentiated citizenship and the politics of difference'. The WA Charter, while being firmly anchored to liberal citizenship theorising, particularly to such notions as equality and citizens rights and duties, is not blind to particularity and difference.[31] Furthermore the Charter, with its four 'principles', *viz*, civic values, fairness, equality and equitable participation, espouses three key themes: *participation*, *recognition*, and *representation*.[32]

Citizenship, in this sense, acts as a powerful integrating factor, and has a bearing on the *political* nation, rather than the *cultural* nation characteristic of an 'ethnic' identity model of citizenship based on shared values, as advocated by John Howard and

others. Accordingly it has been argued that 'the political culture must serve as the common denominator for a constitutional patriotism which simultaneously sharpens an awareness of the multiplicity and integrity of the different forms of life which co-exist in a multicultural society'.[33] From this point of view, social solidarity, normally associated with culturally homogeneous societies, may equally be found in multicultural societies committed to a civic identity and a liberal multiculturalism. The civic solidarity in a well ordered society with a common political culture derives from the civic virtues in the public and political culture linked to a radical view of citizenship that serves to integrate and contribute to nation building within 'a collective political identity, or political peoplehood'.[34]

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