Post-Apartheid South African Muslim Migration to Brisbane, Australia

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Goolam Vahed, *Department of Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban 4041, South Africa (email:* vahedg@ukzn.ac.za*) examines the migration of Indian Muslims from post-apartheid South Africa to Brisbane, Australia. The focus is on the reasons for emigration, migrants' impression of the host society, and their relationship with the broader Muslim and mainstream Australian society, especially post-9/11. Migrants emigrated largely because of concerns around violence and crime, and to a lesser extent fears of affirmative action, and political and economic uncertainty. While most found the move difficult, they gradually established the infrastructure to live 'proper' Muslim lives. Religion has been important in assisting migrants adjust to their new home even while religious practices and identities have been undergoing change. Migrants straddle several identities—Indian, Muslim, South African, Australian—which are constantly being reconfigured, although being Muslim seems to be more salient in Australia than it was in South Africa. The identity 'Muslim' is being reimagined into a 'Southern African' one. The question of a broader organic 'Australian Muslim' identity remains unresolved because of the many differences among Muslims who are only drawn together by being homogenised by outsiders.*

Key words: migration, Muslim, identity, Islamophobia

INTRODUCTION

It is often asked whether Muslim communities can really adjust to [Australia]. The question is more rarely raised as to whether the institutions and ideologies of [Australia] can adjust to a modern world of which culturally diverse immigrants are in integral part (Asad, 1997, cited in Salvatore, 2004).This paper focuses on the movement of Muslims of Indian origin from post-apartheid South Africa to Brisbane, Australia. While migration is an age-old phenomenon and most individuals are products of multiple past migrations, the context has changed in that it is now taking place in a globalised world in which everyone is aware of the plight of the many who migrate out of choice or necessity (Isaacs, 2007), and, further, in a post-9/11 context where the landscape of citizenship, belonging, and suspicion has changed for Muslim communities as influential voices are being raised in Western societies as to whether they are capable of assimilating into the political culture. The furore surrounding Muslim migration is not new in terms of Australia's historical experience with migrants. As James Jupp has shown, the intake of migrants has "been subject to consistent controversy often based on ignorance, prejudice and simple lies" (Jupp, 2007: 197). From the mid-1980s successive Labour governments permitted high levels of Asian immigration, emphasised multiculturalism and were less hostile towards refugees. John Howard and the Liberal Party sought to reverse this when they came to power in 1996, with border protection and counter-terrorism dominating discourse around immigration (Jupp, 2007). The migration of South Africans Muslims to Australia must be located within this broader Australian context of historical opposition to 'non-White' migration, coupled with the post-9/11 linking of immigration with the War on Terror which

has increased hostility to those of Middle Eastern appearance who are seen to constitute a terrorist threat (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008).

While there is a growing body of literature on Muslims in Australia, there are few studies of Muslims in Brisbane or even Queensland, and nothing specifically on South African Muslims. This is explained partially by the fact that 90 percent of Muslims are concentrated in New South Wales and Victoria. This paper is based on newspaper reports, government publications, websites dedicated to Brisbane's South African Muslims, and interviews with migrants. Twelve interviews were carried out with community leaders. Community is used very broadly to refer to those who have been taking a lead in organising public events and organisations, building mosques and madrassahs, or being trustees of such institutions. These events and organisations draw large numbers of people together. A further 12 interviews were carried out with ordinary migrants, men and women, who have lived in Australia for at least three years and were willing to share their experiences. While most arrived after 1994, three older migrants were interviewed to ascertain the changes if any of what it means to be Muslim in Australia prior and post 1994. The sample does not attempt to be representative but was indicative.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first looks at why migrants chose to leave South Africa and their experience of life in Australia; the middle section examines organisations and institutions that they are forming as they set about recreating 'community'; and the final part looks at Muslims and national identity in contemporary Australia. Important questions about the place of Muslims in Australian society remain unanswered. What does it mean to be an Australian and a Muslim? What demands do Muslims make on the prevailing notion of citizenship in Australia? What demands on Muslims does the Australian notion of citizenship make? What will the content of Australian Islam and Australian Muslim identity be? This paper will reflect on these issues, which need to be resolved "in the context of what has been described as a 'crisis of trust' between Muslims and non-Muslims, on both sides of an apparently deepening divide" (Grillo, 2004: 863).

There were some methodological problems. One was that most interviewees wished to remain anonymous. Their reasons ranged from not wanting to be identified as the source of information by fellow Muslims, fear that it may jeopardise their transnational (business) links, and simply the concern of what may happen post 9/11 if they were identified as the source of certain information. A few did not mind being cited but for the sake of consistency, unless a newspaper or official report is cited, names have been omitted. Interviews focused on trying to elicit an understanding of why migrants emigrated; their reasons for choosing Australia, and Brisbane in particular; their impression of the host society; how and why institutions and organisations were created; and how they view their place in contemporary Australia. All the interviewees were either professionals (doctors, engineers, accountants, teachers, and optometrists), or businesspersons, and included both men and women. A second problem was the difficulty in obtaining accurate data, both in South Africa and Australia. *Statistics South Africa* obtains its information on self-reported emigrations at border posts, including airports. This is an underestimate because many who leave do not record their emigration (Myburg, 2004). Further, despite communication with the Australian Bureau of Statistics since the middle of 2007, attempts to obtain detailed breakdown of family size, labour force status, and so on, have to date been largely unsuccessful.

SOUTH AFRICAN MUSLIM MIGRANTS

Most South African Muslim migrants of Indian origin have settled in a radius of about six to eight miles in Brisbane's suburbs of Kuraby, Underwood, Runcorn, and Eight Mile Plains. According to the 2006 census, there were 20,448 Muslims in Queensland. Of these, 5,872 were born in Australia and 608 did not state their country of birth. The remaining 13,968

Muslims were born in 123 different countries. Officially, 968 were born in South Africa and Zimbabwe. However, most interviewees and community leaders regard this as an underestimate. One migrant, who arrived in 1996, kept a register for five years but stopped when 'the numbers grew too large…It became unmanageable.' He estimated at least 300 families from Southern Africa. Most are from South Africa, followed by Zimbabwe, with small numbers from Botswana and Zambia. The 2006 census did show that in the three suburbs of Runcorn, Eight Miles Plains, and Kuraby, there were 1,815 Muslims altogether. The gender breakdown was 906 males and 909 females.[1]

South African Muslim migrants should also be located in the context of African migrants in Australia. There were almost a quarter of a million African-born Australians according to the 2006 census. They constitute two distinct categories. Most migrants from South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe, numbering almost 180,000, have come with capital and skills. The majority of those from South Africa (104,128), Zimbabwe (20,157), and Kenya (9,940) are English-speaking whites, while those from Egypt (33,497) comprise of Italians, Greeks, Maltese, and Copts, and those from Mauritius are French Creoles. In contrast, Black African migrants were largely accepted for humanitarian reasons and are disadvantaged because of lack of skills, capital, and command of English, which has made it difficult for them to find jobs and access social services (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008).

Almost all of the South African Indian Muslim migrants (henceforth 'migrants') fall in the former category, having arrived with skills or finance. The stringent Australian points system for immigration and high cost of the application restricts who can apply. Professionals include teachers, engineers, doctors, opticians, and dentists. Others came with capital and have opened businesses. The decision to emigrate was essentially individual. Migrants were, in the main, seeking to maximise their well-being, and more especially that of their families. Most cited 'push' factors to explain their emigration. Generally, they welcomed political change in South Africa but were concerned about crime and violence, Aids, the perceived drop in education standards, and concern about the future of their children. This was especially the case in the later 1990s when debates emerged over the meaning of 'Black' in the context of affirmative action. This did not affect the migrants directly, but they were concerned about the ramifications for their children.

Migrants who arrived in the mid-to-late 1990s had begun the application process around the time of South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy when 'doom and gloom scenarios abounded. They made their decision less on personal experiences and more about what they had seen elsewhere in Africa (citing the 'treatment of Indians in Uganda,' 'ethnic violence,' and 'corruption'). One interviewee explained that her decision was not a knee jerk reaction but only reached after assessing her options carefully: 'I took into account the legitimate Black aspirations, and came to the conclusion that the pie was simply not big enough to satisfy everyone.'

For some post-2002 arrivals the land invasions in Zimbabwe in 2000 were the final nail in the coffin. A few interviewees indicated that after a lull from around 2004-6, family members were again enquiring about Australia. They felt that this was mainly in reaction to violence in Kenya in December 2007 and the energy problems in South Africa. 'There is an increasing feeling,' one interviewee said, 'that things are slowly falling apart.' A few cited personal factors like escaping family politics or broadening their children's outlook. They felt trapped in their family loop and wanted to get away for peace of mind. According to one respondent, this was not a 'push and pull' situation. "We felt 'pushed' from Africa and Australia was the best alternative. Though I have found Australians to be nice people and the country to be a wonderful place, there was no compelling 'pull' into the country … no El Dorado waiting for us." This is slightly different to Myburg (2004) who found that wage differentials were important in the decision to emigrate.

The choice of Australia, while voluntary, was shaped by historical and structural factors. Interviewees found Australia/Brisbane attractive because the climate was similar to home, the period to qualify for citizenship was relatively short (then two years), entry requirements

were less stringent than the USA, Canada, and UK, the presence of family/friends, and, more recently, a similar cultural environment. Some made the move without visiting Australia. "I knew nothing but what I had heard. I just came," one migrant said. One respondent explained the choice of Australia:

> "I am a methodical person and did not choose Australia on the spur of the moment. I looked at the Muslim world, the West, Africa. I felt that the Muslim world and the East were not an option because of our background. I narrowed my choice to Australia, New Zealand, the US, UK, and Canada. I had my own 30-point criteria: weather, Islamic infrastructure, work, earning capacity, freedom of speech, ease of entry. Australia came No. 1 without my even visiting. The USA did not recognise my degree, the weather was a problem with the UK and Canada. I am an outdoor person and it was Australia for me."

Australia permitted entry partly for utilitarian reasons. This included pressure from business for labour, concerns about an ageing population, and belief that a higher population was essential for economic growth (*The Age*, 24 July 2007). Those who failed to qualify for entry into Australia took the New Zealand route, qualifying for New Zealand citizenship and then relocating to Australia. A conspicuous feature of the process has been recent inter-state migration. Several families from Perth, Sydney, and Melbourne, who had arrived in the late 1970s and 1980s, have been relocating to Brisbane as the number of South African migrants grew and infrastructure developed. One interviewee who made the move indicated that 'it finally feels like home.'

Doubts about emigrating began emerging, according to a respondent, when "everything started falling into place. The visa came and we had to make the big move...book tickets, book a container, arrange housing in Brisbane, and so on. That's when we had second thoughts." Migration was stressful because migrants had to (re)start their lives, there was rupture of family, breaking of old links, and difficulties of adjusting to a new business climate. Though many were relatively well-placed due to their skills and financial resources, they stressed that migration lowered their standard of living. Business persons gave up large homes and thriving businesses, and found it difficult to establish new enterprises because of unfamiliar market conditions, competition, the difficulty of procuring loans from bank managers and goods from suppliers who did not know their credentials, and establishing a clientele. According to one, "we faced lots of challenges. The business mentality was different. But slowly most of us found our footing" by opting for relatively safe options like tobacconist shops, kebab houses, and petrol stations. The high cost of labour was also a problem. Bosses used to delegating work have been compelled to work seven days per week, with wives also entering the business.

The reaction of professionals depended very much on individual circumstances. Those who did not sit for qualifying examinations, like engineers and teachers, enthused about the laid back but highly professional attitude of colleagues and managers who, unlike at home, were not on your back. There was respect and trust in their ability to do the right thing. Those who had to undergo examinations felt that there was a lack of respect for South African qualifications, and complained of racism, particularly during the oral part of the examination. One professional with 12 years practical experience felt that he was treated like a novice and his qualification was only recognised when he threatened legal action. The move was highly stressful as migrants waited for qualifications to be accredited or tried to find the right business opportunity, and found their capital depleting. This placed a strain on family life. A respondent described this period as a "prison sentence. I felt isolated. I wondered if I did the right thing. But I was determined to ground out the rough patch." Employment/business-related factors seemed to matter less to migrants than factors like personal safety, education, service, future of the children, and political security.

Women are playing an important role in the migratory process. Due to the fact that males have business/professional interests in South Africa, in several instances wives are living in Australia with their children while husbands travel back and forth. This separation has been extended by the fact that the South African economy has performed very well since 1994, reducing the financial inducement to relocate. Interviewees who had emigrated out of fear that 'the economy would go downhill' were 'pleasantly surprised' by the economic performance. Once in Australia, women also seem more determined to remain. The absence of domestic assistance is counterbalanced by new freedoms that come with being free from the constraints of extended family. 'I can go shopping on my own;' 'I am free from family domination;' 'I have been able to break from the grasp of my husband;' 'I don't have to visit and fulfil social obligations,' were typical comments. Going to the cinema with (new-found) female friends or coffee or the gymnasium are all part of the new lifestyle.

Women are creating new spaces for themselves through, for example, involvement in voluntary projects, madrassah committees, and organisations, in the process 'construct[ing] a distinct sense of self as separate from the family' (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007: 365). Men are finding that women are more 'assertive' and 'challenging' gender boundaries in various ways. They have been compelled to take on new domestic responsibilities around housecleaning and child rearing, losing social status in the process. These changes must be considered in light of changes in South Africa itself where gender boundaries seem to be being fortified in many cases (Vahed, 2007).

Migration has not been a one-way process. Many migrants have gone back and forth, unable to decide firmly where home is. Initially, some businessmen and professionals came with a view to becoming Australian citizens and returning to South Africa. An Australian passport was seen as security in case South Africa took the 'Zimbabwe turn.' While many prospective returnees found the laid-back' lifestyle irresistible and have been putting off their return, some have done so but found (re)adjustment difficult. Some interviewees made four or five return trips, and still remain unsure about the future. Some returned to Brisbane because they found life in South Africa 'fast-paced' and 'excessively materialistic.' Another plus, several interviewees pointed out, was that in Australia, children 'learnt important values through formal employment and household chores.'

While migration has been costly in financial (cost of moving and delays in securing income) and psychological terms (leaving family and familiar surroundings), the overall impression of migrants was that the move was worth it because their quality of life had improved. 'Quality of life' was an intangible that included many things. 'The crime rate is low and negligible. It is not talked about as a normal part of conversations;' 'I value the freedom for my wife and children. We do not have to worry all the time;' 'Who wants to witness cash-in-transit robberies, live behind electric fences and high walls, and be patrolled by private security guards?' 'Efficiency' was what struck another.

> "This is a First World country. Things happen as they are expected to. My house was built in 16 weeks, without contacts. I got my telephone line in 24 hours. My electricity was connected over the phone. There was no need to resort to bribery and anything underhand."

While there was reference to service, the overwhelming concern seemed to be the high incidence of violent crime. While such crime has always afflicted townships, in the post-apartheid period, it is more prevalent in urban areas and former Indian and white suburbs (Horowitz and Kaplan, 2001).

The weather and natural attractions like the Gold Coast, Barrier Reef, and other places for hiking, swimming, sport and fishing, was a huge bonus. 'It's nice to be able to walk in the neighbourhood without fear;' 'There is a good stress here. I am busy in a positive way. Not just chasing and competing;' 'it is socially more fulfilling. At school we meet parents from different backgrounds, unlike South Africa which is claustrophobic.' For later migrants, the existence of infrastructure for an Islamic community was a major attraction. There were

some negatives. Even though technological advances like the telephone, faxes, e-mail, low-cost flights, mobile phones, video conferencing, and Skype have made contact with family in South Africa easier, this did not make up entirely for the loss. The greatest pain was felt by those with ageing or ill parents, who were concerned that they may not see them again or felt guilty that they were unable to share in the responsibility of taking care of them.

Some lamented the fact that with the growth of community rivalries emerged as people naturally splintered into small social groups. But as one interviewee explained, 'we sometimes have differences, but just as you don't break your relationship with your sister or brother following a dispute, so too we overlook problems.' One interviewee felt 'intellectually stifled. There are few people in my field. We mostly make light-hearted conversation.' A few nostalgic professionals missed the fact that their patients/clients in South Africa were of a similar background and they could make 'small talk' around things like Eid, Ramadaan, or a community wedding, whereas in Australia the conversation was more business-like.

Transnational ties are maintained with 'home' through continued business links, migrants keeping their homes, mainly for sentimental reasons, regular visits, and marriage. According to one migrant, "when I came I said that I would return to South Africa for two reasons, if my children were losing their Islamic way of life and to get my children married. The former is not a problem but the latter is. My eldest daughter recently married in South Africa but I have four more children. We'll see." Marriage has maintained links with 'home' in two ways, either with sons marrying partners from South Africa and living in Brisbane, or daughters marrying and living in South Africa, creating a dilemma, especially when grand-children are born. 'It is a wrench,' said one interviewee. 'I put up a brave face when I am leaving [South Africa] but cry uncontrollably on the plane.' As the community matures, we can expect more marriages among local partners.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY

While Islam has a 'strongly inherited tradition,' the religious identities of migrants have both achieved and ascribed aspects (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007: 363). The achieved dimension refers to the extensive infrastructure that migrants have been establishing to lead a proper Islamic life—mosque, madrassah, cemetery, burial services, *halaal* (kosher) butchers and food outlets and, increasingly, Islamic banking and finance. While many Muslims are concentrated within a small radius, they are not living in a religious enclave. A large number are concentrated around the Kuraby mosque but as Moran points out, the absence of 'large ethnically defined areas' distinguishes Australia's ethnic diversity from that of the USA or UK. An exception would be Lekemba in Sydney where many Lebanese Muslims live (Moran, 2005). Muslims constitute at most five percent of the population in the suburbs mentioned. Further, by attending secular private and state schools, their children socialise with peers from various backgrounds, even if their immediate social circle mostly includes Muslims. The presence of so many co-religionists of a similar racial, national and ethnic background, however, has influenced practices and identities.

Kuraby Mosque

The first 'preoccupation of early Muslims,' according to an interviewee who arrived in the late 1970s 'was to have a musjid of their own and that is what they were preoccupied with…for the best part of the first 20 years. It is only after that that they felt the need for other institutions for the benefit of the community.' Muslims in Brisbane congregated in south-eastern suburbs as the first mosque was established in Holland Park in 1908 by Indian and Afghan migrants. As the number of Muslims increased from the 1970s so too did mosques. Most Muslims from Southern Africa are attracted by the Musjid Al-Farooq in Kuraby, which was built and controlled by Southern Africans who employed Imams from South Africa. The mosque is an excellent illustration of efforts to establish community as

well as divisions among Muslims. The mosque was established by migrants from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia who began arriving from the late-1970s, mostly to escape turmoil in their home countries as a result of the defeat of the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique, ongoing war in Zimbabwe, and armed struggle in South Africa.

The 'founding fathers' had modest objectives. There were approximately 30 Muslim families in Eight Mile Plains in the mid-1980s and they were looking for premises to hold madrassah (religious) classes for children. An Anglican Church was purchased at the corner of Besline and St Georges Street in 1985 with funds contributed by 13 donors from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. This rudimentary building was renovated and (re)opened in 2001 as *Masjid al-Farooq*. There was little opposition from the local (non-Muslim) community, probably because the area was semi-rural and sparsely populated, with few Muslims in the vicinity of the mosque. This stands in marked contrast to Victoria and New South Wales where Muslims have resorted to political or legal campaigns to build mosques.

Contestation over the Kuraby mosque, however, underscored differences among Muslims. By the early 1990s, reflecting divisions at home, Muslims split into two groups, broadly termed Tabligh and Barelwi (Vahed, 2003). The latter, prevented from observing some practices in Kuraby, opened their own mosque at Algester. These differences have simmered in recent years. Although the Trust of the Kuraby mosque continues to be controlled by Southern African Muslims, the attendance is cosmopolitan, with Muslims from the Middle East, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Sudan and elsewhere outnumbering Southern Africans. This has resulted in tension over practices like offering communal invocation after prayer, the appropriate way to stand during prayer, format of the Friday Jumuah *khutbah*, and observation of 'big' (religiously significant) days. Muslims from an Indo-Pakistan background formally mark significant occasions through communal lectures and special invocations, a practice rejected by other (mainly Arab) Muslims as *bidah* (innovation), and are irate because Trustees forbade them from observing these practices. Some of these same trustees, ironically, attended the Algester or Holland Park mosques on these occasions.

From 2003 to 2007 trustees did not formally appoint an Imam. The reason, according to one trustee, was that because of the diverse Muslim population no appointment would have satisfied everyone and it was deemed best to adopt a minimalist approach. The rapid growth in numbers attending the mosque has resulted in opposition from non-Muslim residents in the area who complain about congestion, especially on Fridays and during the month of fasting. During the Eid prayer on 21 December 2007, for example, complaints were laid that the 7am sermon was too loud. Police allowed the prayer to proceed when the volume was turned down.

Education

Education, Islamic and secular, is a priority for parents. The mosque serves as venue for three different sets of classes. It is abuzz with activity every afternoon when around 120 children are taught the rudiments of Islam by qualified teachers. Initially, teachers were imported from South Africa, but from 2003 to 2005, a number of teachers were trained locally, a full time principal who held a degree in Islamic Studies was appointed, and there were specialist teachers for each grade. The madrassah is funded partly through fees, but mostly through fundraising. Classes are also held for reverts, youth, and those wishing to learn the Quran by rote.

Closely related are Islamic secular schools. The Islamic School of Brisbane, established in 1995, and Brisbane Muslim School, opened in 2002, offers classes to grade 12. The latter has a strong South African connection. However, South African Muslims prefer state schools like Warrigal, MacGregor, Runcorn, and Brisbane State High Schools, or private schools like Jean Paul College. Having grown up in South Africa, interviewees said that they were wanted their children to have a good secular education and integrate into the wider

society. They remain concerned about the academic standard and discipline at Islamic schools.

Crescents of Brisbane

Migrants who had been members of Crescents Sporting Club in South Africa formed a Brisbane chapter in July 1998 in front of the City Botanical Gardens when a small group of dedicated runners met for a social run. Crescents of Brisbane (CoB) became internationally known. An electronic mailing list was begun on 27 November 1998 to keep migrants 'informed of the activities, events, lectures, programmes and functions that take place in our community.' CoB became an umbrella body coordinating various social, sporting and educational activities. It petered out after a few years but was reconstituted in 2004, as was the newsletter which exists to this day. The 29 January 2008 issue was number 168. It is an important means by which family members in South Africa keep in touch with developments in Brisbane. Early issues were filled with information on South Africa; the 'Brisbane Arrival and Departure Lounge' section published a list of arriving and departing visitors and migrants; while the 'Hatch, Match, and Dispatch' column carried information about births, weddings, and deaths. With time, a larger section is devoted to Brisbane happenings. The activities of CoB include indoor and outdoor sports, Quiz/Trivia night, golf day, 'Day-In-The-Park' which includes a picnic and games for families, and table tennis tournaments. CoB's chief activity is an annual fun run called Creswalk which has been held since 2002. Over 600 runners lined up on 20 May 2007, for example, for the run along the Brisbane River. Participants were given t-shirts, water bottles, and caps, while post-race activities included a barbecue. The majority of participants are from Southern Africa, though Muslims from other parts of the world are gradually becoming involved. There are virtually no non-Muslim participants even though the race is open to all.

There are other all-Muslim sporting activities. An Islamic Outdoor Soccer League was launched in early 2003 to promote 'brotherhood and foster the spirit of friendship amongst the Muslim youth and general community. The league provided an environment for Muslims to display their sporting skills and unite. Teams like Bosnia, Iraq, Bafana Bafana, Dynamos, Indonesia, Yathrib Horsemen, and Brotherhood reflected national/ communal identity. The Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY) periodically organises indoor five-a-side tournaments. An Islamic Rugby League, comprising five teams, was started in January 2007 with the first game between Deen Machine and Brisbane Islamic Brothers. Organisers point out that because of racism in the wider society, they have no option but to involve Muslims in all-Muslim activities. The alternative is that they would not play at all.

Eid Festivals

The dominant theme during the annual Muslim festival of Eid is unity. In practice, however, the festival has served as much to cement community as to expose the notion of Muslim unity. There is no consensus, for example, on the correct day to observe the festival. One dispute surrounds whether science could be used as an aid to determine the lunar calendar. Another is whether Muslims in Australia should follow the sighting of the moon locally or in their home countries. Thus, for example, Eid in December 2007 was observed on three days: mainly Middle Eastern Muslims celebrated on 19 December with Saudi Arabia; European Muslims observed the festival on the following day in synchrony with Europe, while most other Muslims observed the festival on 21 December following sighting of the moon in Australia. The festivity traditionally begins with communal prayers offered in the morning as a show of unity. It was originally organised by the Islamic Council of Queensland at the Mt Gravatt Show Ground in Logan Road; and subsequently at the Islamic School in Karawata in 2003 and 2004, and at the Brisbane Muslim School in 2005.

The various aspects of the prayer were assigned to representatives from different mosques to make the occasion inclusive. Differences over the duties assigned to each organisation led to the Eid prayer being offered at five venues across Brisbane in December

2007, underscoring division. Traditionally, in their countries of origin, Eid is an occasion for families to get together. The absence of family prompted migrants from South Africa to organise a communal lunch from 1998. Each national group has its own lunch. The South African lunch is attended by around 500 people. Annually, there are debates around whether new converts to Islam should be invited, whether there should be a joint lunch with Zimbabweans, or whether the lunch should be cancelled altogether since the number of migrants has grown so large.

An EidFest has been organised since 2005 in an attempt to rise above these differences. The theme 'Celebrating Muslim Cultures' captures the attempt to forge unity. This all-day event on the Saturday following Eid includes cultural acts, clothing and craft stalls, a fun fair for children, hot rod cars, cooking demonstrations representing various ethnic foods, camel rides, and an interfaith tent. MP's and other (non-Muslim) dignitaries are invited. The aim, according to an organiser, is not only to unite Muslims across nationalities but also to 'showcase' Islam positively to the wider Australian community. Both EidFest and Eid lunch are organised almost entirely by women, something that would not be tolerated back home.

Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ)

Formed in 1991 by volunteers from various parts of the world, including South Africa, IWAQ has attempted to cross ethnic and national borders. The Management Board includes women from Zimbabwe, Fiji, Egypt, Bosnia, and elsewhere. IWAQ was started to cater for the welfare of newly-arrived Muslim women and the elderly, but has expanded to include assistance to refugees; Community Aged Care Programme (CACP) for the needs of aged Muslims; respite services for men and women; Home and Community Care (HACC) for individuals with a functional disability; social gatherings for lonely Muslim women; and a Sister's Learning Programme. Fundraising includes an annual Fashion Extravaganza where the latest fashion is modelled by local Muslim girls and ladies; Trivia Night which includes games, prizes, and supper; Ladies-only camps and Girls Day Out to encourage young Muslim ladies to participate in sport. The aim of these activities, according to one member, was to provide an opportunity for women to have fun like men, promote Muslim women, and network across cultures in an environment where they would feel empowered. IWAQ's growth is reflected in the fact that it purchased a building in 2001 and employs around 40 full-time and part-time workers. Younger women have been forming their own groups in recent years. The Islamic Female Association was formed to build 'unity and fraternity' among young women and provide intellectual stimulation. MY UNITY (Muslim Youth Unity) was formed 'to amalgamate the various different Muslim youth groups in Brisbane and work together towards the common goal of serving the community.' [2]

MUSLIMS IN THE MAKING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Current debates about the place of Muslims in Australian society must be seen in the context of debates about 'Anglo' Australian and multicultural ideas of national identity which became pronounced over fears that the country was becoming Asianised. Seventy-three percent of respondents in one survey in 1991 regarded the intake of immigrants as 'too high' (Betts, 2005). Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party captured a sizeable vote in 1996-7 by arguing that Asian immigration was changing the character of the Australian population (Jupp, 2007). To many, it seemed that the country was regressing to the days of 'White Australia' under John Howard who was prime minister from 1996 to 2007. Howard stated publicly in 1988 that 'it would be in our immediate-term interests in terms of social cohesion if we could slow down [Asian immigration] a little' (Moran, 2005; Jupp, 2007). John Howard's government played an active role in defining new migration policies and mediating compromises between different interests (Boswell, 2007: 75).

The Asianisation debate was partly defused by economic prosperity, the tough stand on illegal immigrants, strong emphasis on border control, a tightly-regulated, skills-focused

migration policy, and restricted access to welfare for new immigrants. By 2001, the proportion who thought that the immigration intake was too large had fallen to 41 percent (Betts, 2005). The government issued temporary three-to-five year visas instead of permanent residence visas to ease the labour crisis and 'control the numbers more effectively in accordance with the needs of industry (Jupp, 2007). Immigration debates resurfaced after 9/11 around the suitability of Muslim migrants.

While migrants from Asia and South Asia are distinct from the general receiving Australian society in terms of religion, culture, language, physical features, even dress styles, international geo-politics have added an extra edge in the case of Muslims, who constitute less than two percent of the Australian population but are creating nervousness. The number of Muslims increased from 148,096 (0.9 percent of the population) in 1991 to 281,578 (1.5 percent) in 2001, and 340,390 in 2006. They come from many countries but the largest number are of Lebanese and Turkish background. The majority (82.9 percent) are concentrated in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, with just 5.3 percent in Queensland in 2001. Most Muslims arrived between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s when Australia's need for labour resulted in the White Australia policy being modified in 1956. Government policy shifted from assimilation to integration in 1966 to multiculturalism in 1972 (Kivisto, 2002), partly to accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity and partly because of the emergence of a politics of recognition (identity) in Western democracies (Moran, 2005).

Mainstream Australian public acceptance of Islam and Muslims is low. The general perception of Muslims is negative because of watershed national and international incidents such as the controversy over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1989); the first Gulf War (1991), the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York (1993), attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, the Bali bombing (2002) which resulted in large numbers of Australian casualties, London and Madrid bombings, arrest of alleged Muslim terrorists in Sydney and Melbourne during November 2005, and anti-Lebanese riots in Cronulla (2005).

Muslims in Australia, like their counterparts in other Western countries, have faced increased verbal and physical harassment (see Deen, 2003; Kabir and Moore, 2003; and Saeed, 2003). Some women wearing the *hijab* and men of non-Caucasian appearance have been verbally and physically abused, while mosques, Islamic schools and colleges were vandalised, and Islamic Centres received hate mail. On 22 September 2001, the (old) mosque in Kuraby was burnt down. The warning appeared on IWAQ newsletters, to every Muslim and Muslimah not to react to any provocation by people who criticise Islam and Muslims underscored the extent of the problem and concern among Muslims. International tensions sparked vigorous debate about the place of Muslims in Australian society. To non-Muslims they were seen to threaten the 'Aussie way of life' and challenge the borders of Australian national identity. September 11 was a defining moment, according to one interviewee:

> "After September 11, I think the media played a significant role, also our parliamentarians and our representatives in the political field, had a significant role in creating a negative biased opinion towards Muslims as Islam is linked to terrorism and terrorist acts and violence. Prior to 9/11, I would say that there wasn't major differences between Muslim Australians and non-Muslim Australians; post September 11 the gap widened dramatically, fuelled by statements made by senior parliamentarians and people in strong influential positions."

Some politicians even called for an end to Muslim migration. Former National Party Senator John Stone, for example, had the 'gravest reservations' about further Muslim immigration because they [are] incapable of assimilating into Australia's Judeo-Christian culture. Stone (2006) felt that the Islamic cancer in our body politic not only remains untouched, but continues to grow—stealthily, unobtrusively, even unknown to many Australians busy about their daily lives. One day, however, we shall experience a terrible national pain—awakening,

for example, to the equivalent of the London bombings of July last year, or the French riots of last October; and we shall ask ourselves, 'How did it come to this?'. This was reinforced by letters to newspapers by ordinary Australians as well as right-wing columnists in newspapers like *The Telegraph* and *Courier-Mail*, who often refer to the Islamic invasion of the Western world and blame Australia's multicultural immigration policy for bringing terrorism much closer to home.

As was the case in Europe during the Cold War when countries were unsure whether immigrants from Eastern Europe were fleeing communism or using their refugee status to spy, there is concern that Muslim immigrants fleeing 'fundamentalist' regimes may be 'sleeper' members of terrorist organisations (Isaacs, 2007). The Australian dilemma, as Jupp points out, is that the country is inextricably bound to the Muslim world as a neighbour of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, defence partner of Malaysia, supplier of wheat to Egypt, and cars and sheep to Saudi Arabia. In the context of a globalising world, how does the government make race and religion-based exclusions tenable? (Jupp, 2007).

Treasurer and then aspiring Prime Minister Peter Costello's raised the bar in the debate when he stated in February 2006 that 'before becoming an Australian, you will be asked to subscribe to certain values. If you have strong objections to those values, don't come to Australia.' He condemned 'confused, mushy, misguided multiculturalism' and warned that Muslims should be stripped of their citizenship if they did not subscribe to Australian values (*Sydney Morning Herald,* 25 February 2006). As Salvatore points out, such attacks mark the 'implosion and slow death of the first wave of American-style multiculturalism, which was based on naïve notions of coexistence and soft interaction among different cultures' (Salvatore, 2004). Even ordinary Australians felt that when prospective migrants decided to settle in Australia, they had to become 'Australian' (Moran, 2005).

Muslim leaders who intended appealing to Prime Minister John Howard were stunned by his response that multiculturalism too often 'stupidly meant a federation of cultures.' And yet as recent studies in New Zealand have shown, a general acceptance of multiculturalism and practices that promote a national identity that includes diversity, enhance intercultural/ interracial relations. If the contact is 'under favourable circumstances, that is, intimate, cooperative, positive, and equal-status contact with shared common goals,' it can 'lead to a range of positive outcomes. The school and the workplace are important contexts for these activities' (Ward and Masgoret, 2008).

Howard further stated that most Australians found the *burqa* (full head-to-toe covering worn by women) 'intimidating.' He was supported by then leader of the opposition Labour Party, Kim Beasly. Muslims, like immigrants in most settings, found that they became convenient targets of discrimination, in this case religious and perhaps even racial, for those representing the majority Christian 'native' population. The *Sunday Telegraph* reported on 14 October 2007 that Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews was consulting with airport security staff about banning headscarves that covered women's identity. Ameer Ali of the Federation of Islamic Councils called it a racist stunt by the government to boost flagging support. 'If they say that the Muslim women are trying to hide something…I am asking the same question with the other people that dress up, the turban… the priest, the Christian nuns.' Adam Patel of Australian Federation of Islamic Council (AFIC) issued a circular that the government wanted to 'win some extra votes by using anti-Muslim sentiments…We believe this is simply a scare tactic by the Federal government who are trying to address a particular voting group and may be aided and abetted by some in the media.'[3]

There is pressure to ban the veil, as in Europe where it is 'perceived as a *de facto* tool of proselytising or at the very least as a symbolic colonisation of the public space, which is supposed to be free of religion' (Salvatore, 2004: 1017). According to Moran, many Australians believe that Muslims, by definition, cannot be 'patriotic because their religion says so…Religion comes before anything else in the world. So if they're a naturalised Australian …if the religion side of it says you will kill Australians, they will do it. That's

where their patriotism is, to their religion' (Moran, 2005). Islam is seen as an aggressive faith that encourages terrorism.

This debate raised two issues. The first, as one interviewee asked rhetorically, aside from "Fair Go", what are these [Australian] values? Francis Fukuyama argues that the 'rise of relativism has made it impossible for postmodern people to assert positive values for which they stand, and therefore the kinds of shared beliefs they demand as a condition for citizenship.' While celebrating diversity, there is little consensus on 'Who are we?' Many Muslims believe that there is no contradiction between being Muslim and Australian, and, like Fukuyama, want a definition of 'what it means to be a member of the larger community' (Fukuyama, 2006: 18-19) so that they know which aspects of Australian values are contrary to their own.

Interviewees did, however, distinguish between integration and assimilation. Integration, several explained, 'meant working within mainstream Australia...I study everyday, even with non-Muslims... I catch public transport with them, we pull together ... that's integrating. Nevertheless, when it comes to assimilating and being like them with regards to things that contradict my religious beliefs or even my moral beliefs then I cannot assimilate,... such as drinking alcohol, going to the nightclubs, being an adulterer or fornicator, whatever it is ... I will not assimilate in that sense. I will integrate with everyday life but not assimilate in that sense.'

The experience of South African migrants has been mixed. Many remarked that they were 'pleasantly surprised' at the 'friendly approach of White Australians.' Their impressions of Australians as racists, most said, were formed from watching Australian cricket teams. They were treated well most of the time and enjoyed cordial relations with neighbours, work colleagues, and business associates. Some speculated that this may be because they were 'different' to other Muslims in that they spoke English and were familiar with western ways, having lived as a minority in a predominantly Western country, and were not concentrated in low status/pay work or low-income areas. But they discovered all too soon that they were 'Muslim' from the perspective of the wider society and singled out after incidents like 9/11 and the Bali bombings. They felt 'under the public gaze' at shopping malls, work, and in the neighbourhood.

Most overlooked this until the 'Haneef incident' of 2007, which encapsulated the vicissitudes of life in the West post-9/11. Mohamed Haneef was a young Indian-born registrar at the Gold Coast Hospital who was arrested on 2 July 2007 at the Brisbane Airport on suspicion of involvement in the 30 June 2007 attack at Glasgow International Airport. Haneef was the second cousin of Kafeel and Sabeel Ahmed who carried out the attacks. He was the first to be detained under the 2005 Australian Anti-Terrorism Act and the first to have his detention extended under the Act. He was detained for 12 days without being charged. 'How jihad network led to Australian raids' and 'Mad doctor cell- Sydney link' were the kinds of headlines that followed the arrest. On Sunday 22 July, newspapers carried police misinformation about Haneef planning to blow up a Gold Coast skyscraper and that he had expressed interest in the operations of planes in Queensland.

When the matter went to court on 16 July, Haneef was granted bail because of the flimsy evidence against him. The Immigration Minister cancelled his visa, he said, based on evidence that could not be disclosed to the public because of security concerns. A Federal Court judge described the timing of the cancellation as 'suspicious' and suggested that it may have been aimed at circumventing the magistrate's decision. Charges were dropped on 27 July 2007 by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. *The Australian* carried reports of serious errors and misstatements by prosecutors and the Australian Federal Police. Haneef's passport was returned and he left Australia voluntarily on 29 July 2007. The cancellation of Haneef's visa was overturned by the Federal Court on 21 August 2007, a decision reiterated by the full bench of the court on 21 December 2007. The new Labour government decided not to appeal the decision (Shanahan, 2007). There was legal outrage and concern among Muslims at this blatant act of Executive interference in proceedings

before the court. While the case was a disaster for the government, it was equally so for Muslims. While terrorism had been a 'Sydney' or 'Melbourne' Muslim problem previously, it was now a reality for many in Brisbane as well.

The response of the Australian people and government had a negative impact on Muslims. A Newspoll survey for *The Australian* on 9 August showed 49 percent approval for the handling of the case and 36 percent disapproval (Lill, 2007). Interviewees were perturbed that the Howard Government was using 'scare tactics' and racist politics to boost support. More disturbing was that the opposition Labour Party supported the Government. The Muslim Business Network (MBN) issued a statement calling government interference 'totally unfair,' 'biased' and 'victimising people of the Muslim faith,' who were 'hurt and upset':

> "The man has not committed a terrorist act as such. The man has not been found guilty in a court of law or anything. This kind of action by the government, we think, is very high-handed, it is out of proportion, and it is again creating a fear of Muslims and we think this is not justice. We have no sympathy for terrorists. We are against that. But this man hasn't been proven to be a terrorist.[4]

Muslims saw themselves as convenient targets and prey to victimisation when it was expedient. Several expressed disillusionment in the immediate aftermath of the Haneef incident. Descriptions like dispirited, disheartened, and disconsolate were used. One interviewee said that he would rather be a victim of violence in South Africa, which was mostly random, than be humiliated because of his religion. Another said that it seems that the honeymoon is finally over.

The most difficult aspect for South African migrants was that they had no control over the situation. Their treatment by the wider society was contingent on the actions of others and developments elsewhere. They felt that their loyalty was unfairly questioned and that they were subjected to undue stress to counter pervasive stereotypes. Many felt alienated that the wider society associated terrorism with the ethnically and nationally heterogeneous but homogenised Muslims and regarded them as guilty even when they [Muslims] themselves condemned terrorist actions. Muslims, in fact, have to renounce violence and terrorism more than any other group. No matter what they do, they felt, it would be hard to convince the wider public because mainstream Australians, like Europeans, see Islam as 'an essentially inferior civilisation, or at least as a culture in a state of either infancy or decadence deep enough to justify civilising missions by Europeans, religious or otherwise' (Salvatore, 2004: 1021). Boswell (2007) suggests that governments need to secure legitimacy over time and one way to do this is to protect what citizens' regard as sociocultural stability. This accounts for the 'general restrictionist bent of political discourse on migration issues in democratic welfare states' (Boswell, 2007: 80). Some Muslims have come to the conclusion that to overcome this mindset, they need to engage with the wider Australian society to break barriers and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

For some Muslims, domestic and international tensions post-9/11 emphasised the need for Muslims to 'participate in [Australian] society. Civic actions are generally voluntary, not aimed at reaping economic profit, and are often concerned with improving some version of the common good' (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007: 366). Scholars of civic engagement generally agree that civic ties create opportunities for economic mobility, allow distinct voices to be heard, and provide an opportunity for input in government decision-making. The problem is that certain groups are underrepresented in civic participation structures for reasons such as religion, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, and are therefore disadvantaged (Stoll and Wong, 2007: 880-1). South African Muslims, it may be argued, do have certain advantages

relative to other Muslims: command of English, experience of participation in non-ethnic, non-religious associations, experience of lobbying, and familiarity with the democratic process, to name a few, and they have been attempting to engage the wider Australian community.

During 2005, IWAQ, for example, obtained funding from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) to publish a book on the history and contribution of Muslim women in Queensland and organised an exhibition on Muslim life and business in Brisbane. The theme was 'Beneath the Veil Expo: Underneath We Are the Same.' Inter-Faith Forums have become fairly regular. Typical was one held on 5 December 2007 by the Aspley Uniting Church in cooperation with the Bald Hills Mosque, where the guest speaker was television presenter George Negus, who also authored *The World from Islam.* A Multi-Faith Centre has been opened at Griffith University, while a Queensland Forum for Christians, Jews and Muslims was set up in 2004 as a bridge-building of the Abrahamic Faiths. The mosque in Kuraby holds an annual Open Day, where members of the surrounding community are invited to observe the prayer, the rudiments of Islam are explained, and a barbecue lunch is organised. Similarly, visits are also arranged for members of the fire department, police, and schools.

At state schools like Warrigal, parents are actively involved in fundraising. As a result of their active participation in all aspects of the school's activities, Muslim parents have struck an excellent relationship with the principal who accommodates Muslim children by providing facilities for them to pray at school and allowing boys to go to the mosque on Friday. Likewise, at MacGregor High, students are allowed to pray at school. CoB regularly organises fundraising events for Kuraby State Special School, while some Muslims are involved in Rotary clubs. At most community events, MPs and other (non-Muslim) dignitaries are invited. Also noticeable is the public affirmation of being 'Australian.' This is reiterated during speeches at weddings and public functions organised by Muslims, while at the Friday sermons, one is often reminded of the freedom in Australia relative to Muslim countries.

MBN, the brainchild of Muslims from Southern Africa, was officially launched at Queensland Parliament House on 24 August 2006. Membership is open to Muslim men and women in business, profession or trade, irrespective of nationality. MBN provides a forum for members to interact and network; actively engage with media, influence decision-making by engaging with politicians, business leaders, community leaders of ethnic and religious organisations; and collect funds for patriotic and charitable causes. MBN has held breakfast and dinner meetings with members of parliament, mayors, economists, and influential businessmen to build relationships and trust. The media in general has done a good job in portraying Muslims in a bad light. We cannot sit back—we have to do something to show the positive sides of the Muslim Community.'[5] One of the first acts of the MBN was to contribute AUS$10,000 to the Cyclone Larry Relief Fund following the 2006 cyclone that affected northern Queensland. This is part of an attempt by Muslim to embrace mainstream Australian society. To address media bias, the Queensland Muslim Times (QMT) was launched in November 2004 to provide an appropriate common platform for the Muslims for the purpose of presenting their positive contributions to the Ummah and to the State of Queensland.

Politically, Prime Minister John Howard's summit with Muslim community leaders on 23 August 2005, a (Muslim) Reference Group was formed to work with the Australian Government and Muslim communities to create communication and support networks that will promote understanding between the Muslim community and the wider Australian community'and to combat terrorism. There was a legitimacy crisis from the beginning because of the dominance of members of the AFIC, who are seen as conservative because of their association with the Saudis. When a Saudi delegation visited Australia in 1974, it recommended the establishment of Islamic Councils in each state and their organisation into a national federation. The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) was thus formed in 1976. The Saudis recognised AFIC as the sole representative of Australian Muslims and

gave it exclusive authority to certify that Australian meat exported to Saudi Arabia was slaughtered in accordance with Islamic rites. This provided AFIC with important revenue.

In Queensland, in theory, Islamic Associations affiliated to the Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ) which, in turn, are affiliated to AFIC. While the ICQ at state level and AFIC at national level represent the official 'Muslim voice,' they are seen as conservative and self-serving by many Muslims. Comments such as 'the Chairman will use this as a vehicle to strengthen AFIC'; 'I can't believe the names on that list,' and 'the majority of that group are nothing but a bunch of YES-men!' point to the problem of legitimacy. The Muslim Reference Group's recommendations did, however, lead to what some consider positive developments. An organisation called An-Nisaa was formed to examine issues surrounding Muslim youth and ways to get them involved in broader aspects of Australian social life; two Muslim coordinators were employed by Access Services to establish barriers preventing Muslim jobseekers from obtaining and sustaining employment; and Griffith University launched the Griffith Islamic Research Unit in July 2005 to undertake research on contemporary issues surrounding Islam and Muslims in the Australian context. It offers courses for developing the knowledge of health workers, police and government employees, and improving Imams' understanding of the historical, cultural, constitutional and legal contexts in Australia. The Australian government allocated AUS$8 million in July 2006 for a National Institute of Islamic studies as part of its programme to fight 'extremism.' In all, $35 million was to be spent over four years to promote social cohesion and harmony by helping Muslims become integrated and connected to mainstream Australia [by] breaking down barriers between Islamic youth and authorities, tackling discrimination and building mutual confidence.'[6]

Government is hoping that the liberal democratic tradition and Australian values will produce an Australian version of Islam with a Western normative base and in harmony with secular constitutions. This may also lead to the 'individualisation of religion' (Salvatore, 2004: 1022). Emanating from the 'widely shared fear of essentialising the 'other' amongst scholars of Islam,' it is now argued that Muslims 'are capable of integration into European societies, if only exposed to the normal mechanisms of social solidarity and discipline…' (Salvatore, 2004: 1022). It remains to be seen how successful this attempt to transform Muslims traditions and practices will be.

CONCLUSION

Muslim migrants from South Africa mostly left because of crime and violence, and to a slightly lesser extent because of fears of affirmative action, economic uncertainty, or concern that South Africa could become the next Uganda. While most initially found the move difficult and missed home, they are settling into their new home and have gradually established the infrastructure for Muslim community—education, mosques, and sports events have assisted new migrants to settle-in. Religion has been important in assisting them to adjust to their new home even while religious practices and identities are undergoing change. While migrants move between being Indian, Muslim, South African, and Australian, Islam is significant and being Muslim seems more salient in Australia than it was in South Africa, where many migrants were largely Indian in relation to the wider society. The community being forged is an important source of social support, and may very well 'mitigate the possible negative effects of discrimination [and] provide the necessary emotional, material, and social supports required to live a fulfilling life' (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008: 51). The conundrum, of course, is that the more Muslim they become, the greater is the need for social support in the present climate.

There is informal contact with (non-Muslim) South African Indians, but no formal organisations. Many migrants watch Indian movies, Bollywood shows and annual Indian festivals, and have non-Muslim South Africans as close friends, but by and large their involvement in organisations and institutions is as Muslims of a Southern African variety.

The question of a broader organic Australian Muslim identity is unresolved because of the many (ethnic, national, sectarian, linguistic, racial) divides. Muslim migrants from different parts of the world are still trying to work out how they should relate to each other effectively. The process, ironically, is given impetus by the fact that they are drawn together as Muslims by being homogenised and subjected to similar social policies because the relationship of Muslims with mainstream Australian society has come under increasing strain as a result of international geo-political tensions post 9/11 as well as the increased 'piety' of Muslims which has amplified their public visibility (see Saeed, 2006). Factors like the occupation of Iraq, war in Afghanistan, and ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians are also producing cohesion.

Studies of international migration suggest that perceptions of threat and competition, which come to the fore when they are exploited by politicians and others at specific conjunctures, are often at the root of negative attitudes toward immigrants. Threat has both realistic and symbolic domains. The realistic refers to natives perceiving migrants as a threat to employment opportunities or believing that resources allocated to immigrant 'outgroups' are at the expense of the native-born 'ingroup.' Due to the Australian economy's excellent performance over the past decade, migrants are not seen as an economic threat; increasingly the threat is associated with international terrorism and the symbolic domain, which refers to 'differences in norms, beliefs, and values' of Muslims, which are seen to constitute a threat to mainstream Australia's worldview (Ward and Masgoret, 2008). While the security anxieties and public rhetoric may be disproportionate to the actual problems, as they are largely built on 9/11 and the War on Terror, South African migrants find, ironically, that having only recently emerged from decades of political suppression based on race, they are now marked out as the 'other' on the basis of religion. While there is a distinction in that the latter is not (yet) institutionalised, the result, many feel, is the same, degradation and humiliation.

Many (non-South African) Muslims are at a disadvantage because of their short period of stay in Australia, lack of English language skills, lack of integration, and the persistence of structural racism. This is compounded by militant Islamic activities worldwide. Cumulatively, this has affected the present apparent discriminatory treatment of Muslims (Kabir and Moore, 2003). But even Muslims who regard themselves as moderate, who have a good command of English, who are attempting to integrate by actively engaging in civic structures, and play according to the rules, are made to feel unwelcome and forced to defend their place in Australia over and over again. Mainstream discourse on Islam is dominated by politicians, journalists, and scholars with questionable agendas, and little awareness of the complexity of Australian Muslim society. This makes it difficult for ordinary Muslims to 'become actors on an equal footing in society' (Salvatore, 2004: 1027).

Negative media messages and anti-Muslim political rhetoric only serve to heighten the sense of threat associated with Muslims as far as the wider society is concerned. This makes many South African Muslim migrants feel that the wider society is not tolerant of their cultures and religion, and they are troubled about that their future because they remain vulnerable targets of xenophobic discrimination at strategic moments, ironically from groups (Catholics, Greeks, Italians, Jews) who at various times in Australian history were subject to similar vilification. Ultimately, of course, the crucial difference may be that these other groups are white. This is causing some Muslims to remain ambivalent about their place in Australian society, and the question 'where is home'? is still to be resolved for many. Vilification, while on the one hand causing degradation and humiliation, as alluded to above, is also leading to a vindication and strengthening of belief. Under these circumstances, many Muslim migrants feel that despite its many other problems, it is considerably easier to live as a Muslim in South Africa than it is in Australia. Policymakers, government ministers, media, and other stakeholders would do well to consider this as they seek to make the most of the country's human capital, achieve maximum social cohesion (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008), and live up to the Australian ideal of 'Fair Go.'

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NOTES

1. The author would like to thank Andrew Middleton, whom he met at the African Studies Conference in Canberra in January 2008, for this data.
2. See http://www.myunity.org/modules/newbb/. Accessed 27 January 2008;
3. http://www.livenews.com.au/Articles/2007/10/14/Airports_to_ban_Islamic_headscarves; ('Airports look to ban Islamic headscarves,' Michelle Rafferty, 14 October 2007. Accessed 6 December 2007); and http://www.afic.com.au/Muslims%20Australia/ (Press Release 'Muslim Outrage at Dirty Politics,' 22 November 2007. Accessed 10 December 2007.
4. Based on newspaper reports in *The Age*, *Courier-Mail*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, and *Sydney Morning Herald* and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamed_Haneef Accessed 4 January 2008.
5. The MBN consists of an Executive Committee of nine members from a mix of nationalities. There is only one woman on the Executive. http://www.qmt.org.au/news+article.storyid+35.htm. 29 January 2006. Accessed 15 January 2008.
6. http://www.qmt.org.au/news+article.storyid+143.htm 19 July 2006. Accessed 30 November 2007.

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