

Australian Paradoxes A Multicultural Nation in the Asia-Pacific Region

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Abstract

This is a study of three paradoxes. The first is the gap between image and reality in understanding other countries. The second is the relationship of Australia to its contradictory history and geography, European history after 1788 and Asia-Pacific geography. Is Australia an Australian, European, British, Asian or Asia-Pacific society? The third, and the major, focus concerns the character of successful Australian multiculturalism. This discussion argues that while Australia has successfully integrated a diversity of peoples, it is rather more 'Australian' than 'multicultural' even as it also resembles other liberal democratic and consumer societies in the developed world. It argues that multiculturalism is a necessary myth rather than a fundamental reality.

Significantly, the article delineates the rapid transition of the last half century. It shows how Australia has changed from a society and its values formed by its original diversity (predominantly Aboriginal, British and Irish and settler Australian) and by the Social Darwinian racial ideology of the era of New Imperialism and after to the successful society of today.

Preface

This article is a study of paradox. It suggests that Australia is and is not – simultaneously – a multicultural society and then raises two other paradoxes. One is the distance between image and reality in understanding other countries. The second is a specific Australian double paradox, how Australia is and is not part of Asia.

The images most people around the world have of Australia are, like the images of most countries, simplified and often deceptive – or even wrong. Popular visual images – in our visual era – are those of tourist sites such as what Australians jokingly refer to as 'a reef, a rock and an opera house'. Australia is essentialised in three marketed and appealing tourist sites – Uluru, sometimes called Ayers Rock, in the red centre of Australia, the Great Barrier Reef in the north east running for 1000 kms along the Queensland coast, and the Sydney Opera House, its sails seeming to fly in the breezes over Sydney Harbour. In Japan, we might add the images of two cute and cuddly animals, the koala bear (which is not a bear and is not cuddly but is cute) and the kangaroo (which is also not cuddly, but is cute when small and potentially dangerous when large).

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Despite the images of the Red Centre, the reef and the littoral – the coast – the Australian actuality is like the reality of Japan and many countries. Most Australians – over 80% - live in relatively big cities, including Sydney and Melbourne, each with around 4 million people, and three others with over 1 million people.

Is Australia is part of Asia? Here questions arise of place and distance, and of perceptions shaped by time. If you are in Jakarta, or even Singapore, you might look south and see Australia as an extension of South East Asia, even despite former Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Mahathir's long ban on Australian joining ASEAN, and its legacy today. However, if you confuse past with present and symbols with substance, you might confirm that Australia is just another British colony on the edge of Asia. The present is often erroneously confused with the 1960s when Australia still had a predominance, but not a totality, of British and Irish immigration.

In one aspect, as invasion fears focused on Asia, Australia is seen to be not part of Asia.¹ That has elements of truth. However, fear of invasion is actually an older fear, once focused by the colonial invader/settlers in the then British colony not on the region or its peoples but instead on an old English adversary – France. I have Napoleon to thank for my ancestor's arrival in Tasmania, then Van Diemen's Land, named by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642. Tasmania was invaded and settled in 1803-4 due to fear of the French. Why? A fear that the French would create a *Terre Napoleon*, a Napoleon Land in Australia or Tasmania.² My own family's Tasmanian history dates from 1804, from the second of two ships which sailed up the Derwent River at Hobart in 1803-4. I grew up in Hobart in Tasmania, a city of the same size as Yamaguchi in Japan, which has a 'Napoleon St' and a 'Mount Wellington' and a rather less impressive higher hill called 'Mount Nelson'. We might note hear in terms of image and reality that, despite my unusual name, we are not recent immigrants but amongst the many generations of Australians.

A common misperception, still, found from Bangkok to Tokyo is that Australia is British, just another British colony. Australia was a former British colony (or in fact six colonies, which federated to become the six states of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901) and it remains technically a monarchy with the Queen of Australia, the English Queen Elizabeth, as its titular head of state. However, even as it shares the English language with much of the world, its culture and society are very different from those of the old imperial power.

In this analysis I wish to propose that:

1. Australia is and is not part of Asia

2. Australia is and is not a multicultural society, and that
3. Australia has indigenous traditions despite the superficial Americanisation and globalisation manifested on television, in fast food and beyond

Much of this story will be about the gap between image and reality, a gap found inside countries as well as between them. The media distortion of Japan after the tsunami and earthquake, involved reports of people wearing masks because of radiation rather than as an aid to reducing the spread of infections, the cold or flu. A consequent popular international assumption was that the whole chain of islands was devastated, rather than certain prefectures in northern and eastern prefectures of Honshu. Such a simplification reminds us of the capacity for international misunderstanding. Is misperception of other countries arguably stronger than understanding of them? That question is difficult to answer but it is worth raising.

Image and Reality

Academic research in area studies often addresses the gap between image and reality. This gulf has contemporary as well as historical expressions. In June 2011 in Yamaguchi, separated in time and place from the Sendai and Fukushima disasters of March, relatives asked us via email in June if we faced disasters – even though Fukushima is over 800 kilometres away, and Yamaguchi is inland. Similarly, when Australia has floods or bushfires in Queensland, over 2000 kilometres north of Melbourne, we also receive anxious emails from overseas.

Popular ignorance may be inevitable. Too busy with work, family, shopping or television, including TV's appealing distractions from reality, most people have little time to take in all the details of the world map of contemporary events. Political leaders may confuse image and reality, either due to ignorance or for less noble political purposes, often based on invoking a dichotomy of 'us and them'. Consider these examples:

1. American President George W. Bush said that the French had no word for 'entrepreneur' – he did not know the English word is of French origin.
2. Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro suggested that French was not a good language for numbers.
3. The same George W. Bush did not know that Al Qaeda hated Saddam Hussein and Saddam Hussein hated Al Qaeda.

Therefore an invasion of Iraq did not benefit the so-called 'war on terror' but brought Al Qaeda to Iraq in the period of Iraqi reaction against the 'foreign', that is American, British, Australian and Polish, invasion.

Sometimes even otherwise knowledgeable academics and journalists may not know about the

nuances of international realities. Most of us did not know about the depth of the Sunni and Shi'ite divide in Iraq, which has led to a continuing conflict near to a civil war. Consider also the Australia and Japan connections in Iraq. First, Australia joined in this pointless invasion, as it has fought for the imperial powers in South Africa (the Boer War), Korea, Vietnam and now Afghanistan. Second, many people in Japan may not know that Australian and Dutch troops provided protection for Japanese SDF construction forces in Iraq.

Australia and Japan – Are we part of Asia?

This enduring question may never be resolved. Is it a geographical question, an historical question, for those with out-of-date ideologies a racial question, or instead is it a question of subjective identities? Australia is an island continent far south of Asia, whether its mainlands, or its islands: it is approximately 5517 kilometres from Jakarta to Sydney. In contrast, Japan is a linear archipelago of islands off North East Asia. In fact, they share not only their 'offshorenness' but a 'littoral' population, mainly living on or near the coasts.

History may in contrast suggest a European or a British Australia. In fact, it might be argued that Australian society and culture today is no more British than another former colony, South Korea, is Japanese. Australia has the Westminster system, some institutional influences in education, religious groups and the law, even with many variations, and the English language and, earlier in the last century, a population predominantly derived from Britain and Ireland. Even though many Australians shared in the fascinations of the 2011 English 'Royal wedding', Australia's culture and society are very different to those of Britain. The pageantry and romance of Royal weddings seems popular everywhere.

Demographically, Australia is becoming more Asian with each year. In 2011, 20% of Australia's 22 million population was born in Asia – that is from the 'Middle East' to the 'Far East' or as Australians now call it 'North East Asia', and others call 'East Asia'.³ Demography often follows trade. Since the last three decades of the 20th century most Australian trade has been with Asia, including Japan – gas, coal, iron ore and cheese, wine, soba and tourists exchanged for Toyotas and Toshibas. Australia may be moving, as former Prime Minister Paul Keating argued, from fear of Asia, from finding 'security from Asia' through a Great Power ally as 'strategic guarantor', to finding 'its security in Asia'. In 2011, Prime Minister Julia Gillard referred to both an 'Asia Pacific century' and an 'Asian century', suggesting a new level of engagement.⁴

At the same time, and despite communications which reduce the 'tyranny of distance' within and without Australia, 'Asia' remains a long way away. Except for winter sunseekers who go to Bali or Phuket, most travelling Australians only visit Asia for a Singapore 'stopover' or a

change of planes at Changi. Still, as in Japan, that small continent of Western Europe (much smaller according to the Peters map of the world than Australia) remains a beacon. Tourists go to Europe, and art galleries in Melbourne and Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra have big shows from Paris or Vienna – just like the 2011 Kandinsky and the Blue Rider show from Munich in Yamaguchi.

Australia: An Asia Pacific Nation?

As economists who study international institutions and trade patterns may know Australia and Japan were joint leaders in the creation of APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation), seeking to keep the USA in the region. Similar questions arise concerning alliances and defence. As defence experts may know, in late June 2011 Australia and Japan joined US forces for an exercise in the South China Sea near the Philippines.

The concept of APEC is broad and unrealistically 'over-stretched' – from Chile to South Korea and Australia to Canada – but it may suggest that Australia is part of the Asia-Pacific region rather than part of Asia. Again, such questions are easier to raise than to answer. They will repay further research, particularly as e-communications shrink distance in some respects.

Such suggestions may be too optimistic. For most people in Australian cities, as in Japanese or French cities or even more the American Mid-West, 'the world' in whatever version is a long way away....too far away. As a result domestic politics and immediate issues (voters and citizens' needs and wants re taxation, work and wages, consumer goods and housing) dominate public debate. They matter more to citizens than any international questions, even though their countries are engaged in overseas wars and there is a 'global financial crisis'. Arguably, the result is what one observer, an Australian returning from several years overseas, termed, in an email letter which I received, a predominant 'smugness'.

Is Australia a Multicultural Nation?

One question is whether Australia is 'Asian' in terms of questions of demographic and cultural diversity, to a degree reflecting the diversity which shapes 'Asia'. However, this is a complex question in a country with immigrants from over 170 countries.⁵ It is complex even if 'Asia' is conceived in a limited definition mainly as the familiar 'neighbourhood' of South East Asia, which might now be extended north - as far as Indo-China, South Asia (which shares a British Empire colonial experience) and Australia's major trade partners in North East Asia, Japan, China and South Korea. Arguably, Australia's contemporary diversity denies the argument of 'Asianness' even as much as its historical links with Britain and Europe in the past era of imperialism and racial ideology are more commonly used to query the proposition.

Australia has acquired a modern diversity of population in only the last two and a quarter centuries, despite the diversity of Indigenous peoples. That differs from the older multicultural societies of Asia. It contrasts with Sri Lanka to whose indigenous people were added several Indian migrations, particularly the Tamils, the Sinhalese and the different European empires, Portuguese, Dutch and English, and the resultant hybrid 'burger' populations. It contrasts with the 'unity in diversity', or even political unity despite great ethnic and cultural diversity, of the former Dutch East Indies, the islands which became the nation of Indonesia. Cultural, social, religious and economic diversity run far more deeply in such societies characterised by rural culture and centuries of local tradition.

How does Australian multiculturalism and society differ historically and currently? Before the invasion of 1788 the land which Europeans called '*terra australis incognita*', (the 'unknown great south land'), had over 50,000 years of Indigenous Civilisation – the world's oldest civilisation. Aboriginal culture and society was diverse in character although its societies were nomadic with oral cultures, leaving neither large built structures nor written records.⁶

In January 1788 the invaders came to Botany Bay, now Sydney. The English 'First Fleet' of 12 ships had British, Irish, Jewish, and even Africans amongst its complement of convicts and marines and their families, the first free settlers. Here is not the place to enter the ongoing debate among historians about whether the settlement was created due to British aspirations for trade and raw materials, or primarily as a solution to the problem of overcrowded jails – thus the beginning as a convict colony, a jail. Even in the first century after invasion Australia was never monocultural despite the colonial experience for settlers and subjects, in the British colonies. In the late 1840s and early 1850s German religious refugees to South Australia and Swiss Italians in Victoria established vineyards and wineries, which led later to today's major export industry. In the 1850s, the Gold Rushes brought a dramatic increase in population, attracting Americans, Canadians, Chinese and Europeans as well as English, Scottish and Irish gold seekers and/or immigrants. In the 1880s German mining engineers, Japanese wool importers (Sydney) and Japanese pearl divers (who came to Broome in Western Australia and north Queensland) added to the diversity, most of the divers coming from Wakayama.⁷

Australia in 1888, a century after European invasion, was much more multicultural than it would be a half century later in 1938. Why? How did this change occur? What caused the emergence of a more 'monocultural' society? Why, in 1938, had Australia grown closer to its British connections than in the convict, colonial and frontier eras of the 19th century when it had been shaped more by its environment and its settlers?

The world changed and Australia changed in the era from the 1870s. Communications

improved between the 'old world' and the 'new world', through the telegraph cable and the steamship. Fundamental changes occurred in this era which the American historian Carleton J Hayes termed 'a generation of materialism'.⁸ It also saw the first scramble for Africa and the 'New Imperialism' which arose as tensions between the imperial powers, mainly European, but also the USA and, regionally, Japan, grew. The rise of mass democracy from the late 19th century also had an opposite, which the intellectual historian H Stuart Hughes termed a change in 'Consciousness and Society'.⁹ Alternative modes of thinking in art, including impressionism, then abstraction, cubism and expressionism, in music (Schoenberg), in psychology (Freud), in political theory and philosophy (the Italian elitists, Nietzsche, the idealist TH Green and Marxist and Anarchist theorists and movements) all suggested fundamental change. In Australia, the 1890s Depression and the South African or Boer War (1899-1902), suggested that the 19th century liberal ideal of 'Progress' had ended. Benthamite utilitarianism and optimistic liberalism, which Victorian England had exported to its settler colonies, including Australia, whose society was actually wealthier than Britain, was now in partial retreat.

One fundamental ideological development emerged to shape this Zeitgeist. Rising Social Darwinism would lead Australia, in the uncertain first four decades of the 20th century, into a Social Darwinian 'Black Hole' of racial worldviews. A monocultural British Australian 'race' nationalism thrived, reinforced in Australia by the declining confidence generated by the economic stagnation resulting from two world wars and the 1890s and 1930s Depressions. In Australia, after the stresses of invasion, the dispossession of the 'natives' and the struggling convict period, the 19th century had become an era of prosperity, development and creativity. Emerging in the 1880s, Social Darwinism (significantly shaped by Herbert Spencer) enshrined the 'Survival of Fittest' biological ideology as misapplied to nations and races.¹⁰ Many countries, not just Germany, were infected with the absurd pseudo-science of race difference – based on pigment, and variants on phrenology (head shape).¹¹ Racial ideology focused on fantasies about superior and inferior races. In Australia, racism towards Aborigines constructed them as an inferior, and therefore dying, race. In contrast, racial fear of Asia and its 'teeming millions' grew. A popular Malthusian fear regarding population assumed that the small 'white' settlement of Australia was threatened in this 'survival of fittest' contest. Defence began with racial policy, the ideas of 'White Australia' and of the 'British race' and the armed defence offered by the Royal Navy, which then ruled the seas. At this time, the British Empire 'closed in' beyond Empire tariff walls, driven by economic and military fear of Germany, France, and the United States. The settler colonies were particularly infected by the ideology of Empire with its corollary of racial ideology as well as imperial pride.¹²

After four decades of declining population growth and a less diverse immigration, Australia was assumed to be even more British than it actually was. That reality was partly reflected

in the population statistics of 1947, giving the birthplace of Australians. Then, the population comprised the following components:

- Australian-born 89%
- British-born 7%
- New Zealand 1%
- Aboriginal 1% ,
- Southern Europe 1%
- Asia 1% .¹³

These statistics challenge pre-war imperial ideology which declared that Australia was '98 % British'. Demographic reductionism ignored other parental lines, such as the Norwegian father, Niels Larsen of the great short story writer, Henry Lawson. The statistical reality was that the Australian population was primarily Australian-born. Despite this reality, wartime propaganda emphasised the British aspect, particularly when Australian troops were sent to the Middle East, Greece, North Africa and England, before Japan entered the war.

Later, some academic multicultural ideologues (a minority atypical of a generally more creative multicultural movement) transformed the then disappeared myth of 'Britishness' into the term 'Anglo'. This arguably racist multicultural rhetoric compresses Australians of several generations of Australian birth into an amorphous category crudely abbreviated to 'Anglo', and fully written as 'Anglo-Celtic', with additional reference to the Irish derivation.¹⁴ In fact, contemporary Australia is not very 'Anglo'. It is very Australian, even as Australia imported social institutions from Britain, Europe and the USA, then recreated them with Australian social and cultural nuances.

Australia changed fundamentally after World War Two due to one of the largest organised migration schemes which the world has ever seen. Mass migration became a great success despite several challenges and serious difficulties as a society unused to 'foreigners' received millions of people from elsewhere over the next six decades. Migration evolved in good economic times, during the post-war boom. Migrants could find jobs and gradually move up the social ladder, and the hosts did not fear losing their jobs to imported 'cheap labour'. In the 1950s, despite predominant boom era optimism, a large cohort of immigrants, initially from Britain and Europe, engendered a popular 'fear of the foreign'. The first stage of demographic change involves a mix of attitudes to newcomers who are in the first instance 'foreigners'. Thus Australians at first used uncomplimentary terms about the new migrants, particularly those of darker appearance from southern Europe whom they described as 'Wogs' or 'Greasies' (after Greek fish n' chips shops) or 'Spags' (after spaghetti) or, re those who came from eastern and northern Europe as 'reffos' (refugees). Italians were said to smell of garlic and those who spoke

in 'foreign tongues' on buses and trains often received 'dirty looks' or even prejudiced remarks. Of Italian food, it was sometimes asked 'how can anyone could eat squid?' or 'calamari – it tastes like rubber! More politely, and officially, migrants were described as 'New Australians'. Along with such prejudice came a degree of exploitation, particularly for the unskilled immigrants and those lacking in English, a not unusual experience in large scale migration.¹⁵ 'Poms', working class Englishmen and women, also seemed odd to many Australians, as foreigners may seem odd to some rural Japanese.' Nor were the English welcomed with unqualified enthusiasm. Some thought that the English did not wash themselves enough.¹⁶

How Australia Changed 1950s-2000s

Over fifty years later Australia has changed – dramatically. The food metaphor of change is significant as it suggests acceptance as well as the decline of prejudice. Now Australia's major cuisines include Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Thai, in cities like Melbourne where the everyday restaurant table of the town is more multicultural than London or Tokyo, and Australians at home are almost as likely to cook a risotto or a stir-fry as a dish of grilled meat and three vegetables. This is the story of how Australia changed fundamentally, in population and in national social ideology. It is about the change in official population ideology, first in the 1960s from a belief in assimilation (that is, making people the same) to the idea of integration (an acceptance of a degree or diversity) and then, from a decade later, to the idea of multiculturalism, which seems to endorse, even to celebrate, cultural diversity.

Paradoxically, post World War 2 invasion fear resulted in the 'Populate or Perish' mass Immigration policy. Invasion fear led to a planned 'invasion'. One of the world's largest planned immigration schemes resulted in a total of one million new people, immigrants and their Australian-born children, by 1960. In the original plans, public opinion was persuaded of the virtue of the new schemes by suggestions that many migrants would be British, and even one official declaration said that they would include blond Aryans from northern Europe, in the last official statement of Social Darwinian-to-Eugenicist ideology in Australian public culture.

Australia's population went from over 7 ½ million people during World War 2 to 10 million in 1960 and over 22 million today. Despite the last phase of imperial and racial rhetoric, the reality was more complex. The 1940s – early 1950s immigrants included European refugees and significant Italian and Greek components, following the smaller migration of the 1920s after the United States put up its immigration walls against these Mediterranean peoples. In the 1950s, under the more liberal Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, the Japanese war brides of Australian members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan were allowed to come to Australia.¹⁷ In the same decade, the holes in the armour of traditional white Australia ideas became bigger, as Eurasians came from South Asia and Australian universities received

a growing number of Colombo Plan students, followed by Chinese private students who could not gain admission to Malaysian universities.¹⁸

In the 1960s, immigrants were to be integrated into the mainstream, rather than homogenised into it. In the early 1960s, as Australian trade with Asia grew and relations with the UK weakened, the never formal or official 'White Australia Policy' came to an end under the conservative, Liberal Party government. Quietly, non-discriminatory migration began to emerge in the 1960s, when some Japanese immigrants arrived. In the 1970s the progressive Whitlam Labor government formally enacted a universal migration policy.

Despite the end of the long boom in the 1970s, after President Nixon devalued the American dollar leading to the 1973 OPEC oil price shock, and the first contractions of protected post-war manufacturing, at first migration grew and diversified. It continued to be successful. In the 1970s-80s Australia took large numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees, mainly from the Vietnam War in which Australia had long been an active American military ally. They were accepted with bipartisan support from the conservative (Liberal) and progressive (Labor) parties. Only a minority opposed this significant migration of Indo-Chinese and Vietnamese boat people and others from the refugee camps of South East Asia.¹⁹ Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, African and Middle East refugees, and then Chinese after Tiananmen Square came to Australia with only minor experiences of prejudice and little political opposition. In the early 2000s, Australian universities became leaders in the international education market. Large numbers of South Asian and Chinese students came, most seeking permanent residence visas by undertaking studies in areas of skills shortages.

Eventually, key moments of negative sentiment changed 'the ball game'. Local level and politically organised prejudice resulted in opposition to the newest waves of foreigners, particularly the 'boat people' refugees, who came via Indonesia but originated mainly in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Historical change challenged the harmony of Australian post-war migration. The era of globalisation and industry restructuring, with consequent employment instability, exacerbated political tensions even amidst rising affluence. However, most Australians prospered, in spite of the early-mid 1990s recession and the stock market fall during the ongoing Global Financial Crisis; Australia was affected, but less than most developed nations, by global economic difficulties.

Several dramatic events challenged Australia's multiculturalism and tolerance. All led to exaggerated adverse publicity for Australia in Asia. One significant event was the 1996 election

of 'One Nation' MP, the Queenslander Pauline Hanson, with her criticisms of immigration, multiculturalism and Indigenous policy, including absurd suggestions that multicultural policies were very expensive. While she was the only One Nation MP ever elected to the House of Representatives (despite some temporary success for her party in Queensland state elections) and her party eventually disintegrated, the international media was tempted to suggest, erroneously, that Australia was returning to 'white Australia'. Like New Right nationalist/populist parties elsewhere (Austria, Denmark, even France and Italy) she had indirect impact. Conservative Prime Minister John Howard's Liberal governments, from 1996 to 2007, initiated 'tough on refugees' policies as a device to hold the prejudiced minority of voters who might ensure that his party stayed in power.²⁰ Older voters and voters like America's 'Reagan Democrats' in the 1980s or *Daily Express* 'working class Tories' in the UK (working class voters who voted conservative on certain moral or cultural values issues) were attracted by this stance.

A percentage of Australians were particularly afraid of refugees by boat ('boat people') even though most of their own ancestors were 'boat people', albeit of a different kind. While more refugees came by plane, as did most later illegal immigrants (usually overstayers), many Australians felt threatened by the 'invasion' of Australia's offshore islands by refugees in leaky boats. The image was greater than the numerical reality, the fear more powerful than any larger logic. Australia actually received less refugees than most developed countries, while most of the 'illegals', as they were popularly dubbed, were eventually granted refugee status.²¹

Image and Reality Fears

These developments had political implications for the major parties. Generally, the Labor Party has maintained a 'me too' policy of 'tough on refugees' for fear it will lose those swinging voters from its working class and marginal seats. That fear of losing 5-10% of voters, and therefore the election has meant that, except for a brief period, the Rudd and Gillard governments have signed up to the new negative bipartisanship, feeding whatever legacies remain of a fear of foreigners.

Two other events have been blots on Australian tolerance, even though their significance has been overrated. One was the December 2005 'Cronulla riots' in Sydney and the other the assaults and robberies experienced by Indian students in Melbourne in 2008-9. The former involved conflict between young men of Lebanese extraction who came from the Western Suburbs to the beach at Cronulla and their opponents, partly recruited by a shock jock radio broadcaster and by SMS, who declared 'We grew here, you flew here'. Although this mass confrontation involved some violence, mainly scuffles, intellectuals have overstated its significance as a symbol of racism and cultural tension. The Cronulla locals have never liked

'Westies' invading their beaches, even when they shared ethnicity, as captured in the 1975 novel *Puberty Blues*.²² Since there has only ever been one 'Cronulla', it remains the exception which proves the rule. Similarly, the attacks on Indian students in Melbourne reflected young male behaviour and class tensions, especially as the unskilled working class males of the outer western suburbs faced diminishing economic prospects in the era of globalising deindustrialisation. While sometimes motivated by prejudice (although similar patterns have not happened with the resident young Indo-Chinese and Chinese or Chinese international students), there were other causes. A temporary rise in public transport crime, and in robberies of all night petrol stations and convenience stores, where many young Indian students worked, disproportionately impacted on Indian students.²³ Overall, Melbourne and Australia, have had a successful Indian migration with many Indians established in business and the professions.

Is Australia Multicultural? I want to argue, via evidence drawn in part from personal experience, that it is and it is not. This continuing story is in two parts which confirms the themes of image and reality and paradox. The first concerns the gap between personal 'opinion' or ideology and actual social cultural practice.

I live in Melbourne, a city of 4 million people, in which 25% of people speak a second language, as well as English, at home. In contrast, consider a relative, living in Hobart in Tasmania in the 1980s, with a similar population to Yamaguchi, where only 5 % speak another language. She often criticised 'the Greekos', yet she did her everyday shopping at a Greek convenience store and had a Greek hairdresser – a powerful decision for a woman. A paradoxical gap exists between stated opinion and behaviour.

The second story concerns seven professionals. It is about my doctor, dentists, hairdresser and tax accountants. It is accompanied by a complementary tale about our local restaurants and supermarket. My doctor is David Fong. My dentists have included Maria Guida (Italian), Greg Kasdan (Russian) and Luan Ngo (Vietnamese). My tax accountants are Frank Veigent and Phuoc Nguyen – Frank's parents are Czech, Phuoc's Vietnamese boat people. My hairdresser 'Twiggy' is Slovak. The businesses in my local small shopping centre confirm this picture. Consider the restaurants in my Kensington, a modest inner suburb lacking the high status of Kensington in London. It shares in the story of the hybridised 'Sushification' of the world (often without good sushi, and run by chains or Chinese), we have been more fortunate. Our nearest restaurant is Cafe Sori – Korean and Japanese – its Korean owners do good sushi, almost Karato market standard. Then there is the restaurant 'Thai by Night' (by day it is an Italian-inflected café, run by an Italian and Thai married couple), the Italian pizza parlour, other 'general' restaurants and the small local supermarket run by East Timorese Chinese.

Consider an even more complex definitional question. Is it arguable that Australia is more 'Australian' or 'Multicultural'? Yes, it is multicultural because it has a diversity of ethnic origins in its population. Yes, it is multicultural, because it has ethnic restaurants and festivals. No, it is not. My 'ethnic professionals' are all Australian-trained and educated and most are Australian-born and we all sound the same. This leads to two questions. What do we mean by 'Australian'? What do we mean by 'ethnic'?

Arguably, what is Australian is a different hybridity. Consider that most 'ethnic comedians' (Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Lebanese) have a very working class Australian male (known as 'ocker') style and/or accent. Hybridity is central to Australianness. It is not just Indigenous Aboriginal culture, which a few misguided multiculturalists once assumed to be no different from their own diversities. In fact, Australia's Aboriginal heritage, Indigenous culture, which is 50,000 years old, remains fundamental. Australia's society and culture have been formed by the land and the climate over several generations after invasion as well as by the different 'imported raw materials', from convicts and overseers to merchants and graziers, from English and Irish to Greek and Chinese immigrants. Australia has been significantly influenced in formal institutions by its British legacy, even if their character is usually different, and by American capitalism and popular culture. However, the result, as much as any modern liberal democratic capitalist consumer society can vary, is subtly different to other developed world societies. In fact, Australian culture is characterised by pragmatism, with good and bad results, and openness to other people, to 'treating them as you find them', to everyday friendliness of manner, which has made its multicultural society work.²⁴ It lacks the deep and fundamental historic and religious divisions of older multicultural societies (Sri Lanka, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Indonesia) which can fracture in times of difficulty. Australians share a commitment to materialism and progress, and an everyday social democracy of manners. Australia's peoples also work as a people because of the diversity of origins. This harlequin quilt multiculturalism contrasts with the lesser diversity of Germany.

One major qualification to this progress and diversity concerns Islamic migrants and refugees since the terror attacks of September 11 2001 in New York and the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002 which killed 88 Australians and 38 Indonesians in a total of 202 dead. This fear of Islam pervades the Western world, with origins in the Christian crusades and the Turkish invaders at the door of southern Italy and Vienna. It has been revived after 9/11. Australia shares with other developed nations the fear that Islamic migrants are outside the pale. Popular opinion, as in Europe, asks whether Islam, with its fundamentalist tendencies, is acceptable cultural baggage for migrants in liberal democratic and secular countries such as Australia. Perhaps, even in second or third generations, Muslims will not 'marry out' as other groups have done.²⁵

Images and Names: Multicultural Australia and Australian Culture

Consider the big picture of multicultural success. Here, names drawn from different aspects of Australian life, politics and culture manifest the diversity of Australia while at the same time demonstrating its social and cultural harmonies. Consider three state governors (a largely ceremonial position): Sir James Gobbo, Professor David de Kretser and Marie Bashir of Italian, Sri Lankan and Lebanese extraction respectively. Consider the distinguished photographers Wolfgang Sievers and Helmut Newton, the fashion designer Akira Isogawa and the Hollywood star, Eric Bana. Names drawn from sport, in a country of immigration and an era of talent migration, confirm the pattern. Prominent Australian tennis players in recent years have included not just Lleyton Hewitt, but Samantha Stosur, Mark Philippoussis and Jelena Dokic, while rising players today include Bernard Tomic and Jarmila Gajdosova. I research Australian Football, a creative indigenous game, created by the settlers in 1858, arguably a more exciting game than other football codes. In July 2011, the AFL (Australian Football League) had a 'themed' multicultural round of matches. Many of the top players, with common given names and ethnic family names, and deriving from Aboriginal to immigrant origins, and the latter from Europe, Africa, the Pacific and North America, demonstrate the ethnic diversity which has become part of a common culture. Such names include: the 1970s star Alex Jesaulenko (from Canberra, but also in the Ukrainian Hall of Fame); and, more recently, Matthew Stokes, who has a Chinese as well as Aboriginal background, Peter Bell, footballer, lawyer and businessman, who was adopted from Korea to Perth, Western Australia; the dreadlocked Nick Naitanui, who was born in Fiji; Jason Porpilyzia, with a Ukrainian heritage; Matthew Pavlich, from a Croatian family background; Karmichael Hunt, with Pacific islands family origins; Brad Ebert, with an old South Australian German name; the blonde Nick Riewoldt, whose parents migrated from Germany to Tasmania in the 1950s; Mark Le Cras, with a French heritage; and the Indigenous Liam Jurrah, who speaks the Warlpiri language and grew up in the central Australian desert.

How does 'Multicultural Australia' work?

Those names, fusing common given names with ethnic family names, suggest a successful integration of diverse peoples. I call it the 'Big River' theory of social change. Many small rivers run into the big river and change it slightly. Some social and cultural 'islands' of traditional derived cultures appear; heritages which may also influence the majority who join the flow through intermarriage and working together across all industries. The big river is the reality even given the qualifiers. Newcomers take longer to ride the 'escalator' of social mobility. However, the elite is not simply 'Anglo'. It is largely class-based and also drawn mainly from the social elites of the major cities. Even in a society which values achievement, wealth and status more than 'breeding', such circles have only limited openings for outsiders. Those outside their world of 'people like us' include people from the regions, from the country or interstate, and many of the old working class and lower middle class as well as those with different

cultural or national origins.

Despite some specific qualifications, Australia works as an integrating society. It works for three reasons. One, because intermarriage happens easily in a secular, uprooted, urban society (and over 80% of Australians live in big cities). Two, because of its diversity of migrant source countries. Three, because of a dominant culture of pluralism, 'Many cultures, many things', my definition, includes the styles expressed in a superficial diversity of fashion boutiques, as well as in ethnic diversity. While a dominant paradigm of academic multicultural discourse assumes the centrality of 'ethnic identities', social reality is more complex. The normative social philosophy of academic commentators and some advocates of multiculturalism does not always reflect the social reality. The idea that Australia is deeply multicultural, rather than integrated and relatively homogenous, is a 'Dusty Springfield definition', as in her Sixties song, 'Wishing and Hoping'.

Australian society today is a complex reality shaped more by contemporary culture, generational change and social interaction than by inherited and maintained 'ethnic' traditions. That reality is comprised of intermarriage, footy and other sports, shopping malls, peer groups, urban tribes, commercial TV, suburban materialism, secularism and global consumer culture. These social interactions and cultural forms are refracted through two of the global languages of today, the visual culture of consumer society and screen culture and the English language. The result is Australian multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism as an Ideal

Although Australia is not in fact deeply multicultural by comparison with Indonesia or India, I simultaneously argue that Multiculturalism is a necessary Ideal, encouraging tolerance and acceptance. If it was not a popular national myth, a generally, if not completely, endorsed ideal, Australia would not work so well. Despite the gap between ideal policy and lived practice, one other important reality underpins the policy's positive social and economic role, particularly government services: translators and interpreters in hospitals and courts and government forms and pamphlets in several languages. Such services facilitate a degree of equity in social provision and assist upward mobility. Multicultural broadcasting similarly profiles diversity, even as the predominant programs on SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) television reflect some mainstream values. SBS is a 'multicultural' broadcasting service, with several languages and English sub-titles, but its most popular programs are French films and *Inspector Rex*, the Austrian series starring the Alsatian police dog.²⁶

Inter- or Out-marriage Statistics: The Social Fusion of Australia

In an immigrant society first generations often stay within their society and culture. They

provide support, and new arrivals at first flock together. However, change comes quickly in a New World country. Soon, their children marry out of their group and then move, ideally buying a house, which they buy or rent in mixed suburbs. Such changes are apparent in the history of Greek migration to Australia in the post-war era. In marriage, once Greeks would not marry out due to their Greek Orthodox religion. Now, in contrast, 65 % of Greeks do marry out, in many cases marrying other Mediterranean or other immigrant children and grandchildren with whom they share immigrant and generational experiences. Outmarriage is the most important demographic trend in Australia. Most 'ethnic' groups marry out even more than the Greeks.²⁷

Why 'Multiculturalism' Succeeds

Multiculturalism works because of the homogenising culture of today – the shopping mall, the commercial TV channel and the Internet. Like the culture of the modern office and factory, it is omnipresent in all developed societies. In Yamaguchi, the suburban shopping mall, with suggestions in Japanese of the 'dream' offered by consumerism, 'YouMe Town', as in the Japanese word 'yume', has similarities with shopping malls in Australia or the USA. In fact, an Australian company is one of the two largest shopping mall owners in the United States, confirming the international nature of capitalist consumerism today. Modern culture is powerfully homogenising. It has its tribal, regional and generational variations, as in that new Japanese word which many older Japanese do not know, '*kosawee*' –or 'cool', or 'awesome', words used around the world by younger generations.

Indigenous Culture and a Global World

All countries have powerful local traditions. In Australia, they are not British, not Asian, but Australian. As in all contemporary societies in the developed world of trade, communications and the internet, to them we add other cultures. If Australian cuisine at its best is an Asian-Pacific and Western hybrid, we might also make comparisons with Japanese fusion cuisine. We might note the Australian designer at Honda and the movement the other way - the conductor Hiroyuki Iwaki, the long time conductor of the Melbourne Sympathy Orchestra, after whom the ABC theatre in Melbourne has been named.

This analysis does not exclude other economic and social-cultural realities. All cultures, in the era of Disney and Hollywood, Microsoft and McDonalds, are in danger of Americanisation – McDo culture. In the 2000s, in the era of the rise of Chinese economic power, will other social and cultural influences follow, creating an era of Sinification?

Exported Diversity Imported: Oz Culture to the World

While Australia is an isolated island nation, it has another international dimension beyond

immigration. It is more international than countries like the USA in which only a limited number of national politicians have passports. One reason is that nearly 1 million Australians live overseas, or 5 % of the population. Since Australians travelled the world in uniform in World War I and II, Australians have been great travellers, arguably the inventors of tourist backpacking, in Europe, and in pioneering the hippie trail, through South East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East to Europe. Some of those Australians who live and work overseas have come to Japan. While less famous than the Australians in Hollywood (such as Nicole Kidman, Mel Gibson, Russell Crowe and Eric Bana), they include the playwright and author, Roger Pulvers, the commentator on Japanese affairs Gregory Clark and the former pitcher with the Hanshin Tigers, Jeff Williams. In small ways, Australian talent and culture are now exported to the world, from Australian films and music to chefs in Tokyo's top restaurants. On a smaller scale, Australian Football has come to Japan; in August 2011, the Japan Samurais national team played in the International Cup in Australia - against USA, France, China and New Zealand in a total of 18 countries. In Japan, there is a Japanese Australian Football League, an amateur competition which includes the expatriate team, the Tokyo Goannas and the mixed team, the Osaka Dingoes. This image is of the two captains, Ron Mitchell and Genki Tanaka, ready to play at Maishima Sports Island, Osaka on 5 April 2008 before a footy match between the Tokyo Goannas and the Osaka Dingoes:



Two Football Captains

It shows the large and the small, the two captains, which may suggest a stereotype. However, image and reality are not always identical. Ron Mitchell, the 'big beefy Australian' of the

Goannas has a PhD in carbon capture and works for Mitsubishi while Genki Tanaka, the smaller Dingoes captain, is a salary man.

Yes and No

A common English linguistic usage today is the response 'Yes, but', and more generally 'Yes, no'...or 'Yeah, no'. Therefore it is appropriate, in the paradoxical world of the 21st century, to note the 'Yes, no' conclusions. It can be confidently asserted that:

- Australia IS and is not in Asia although it is in the Pacific
- Australia IS and is not an Asian society although it has a growing Asian population
- Australia is and is not a multicultural society although its peoples have diverse origins

and my first general conclusion, that Australia is an integrationist society with multicultural ingredients. The exact nature of that mix – the contents, texture and taste of the 'stir-fry' or 'risotto' – may change over time. Second, all studies of society and culture need to recognise and then transcend the gap between image and reality.

* * *

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