

**AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM  
[1972 TO 1998]**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**MS. INUMULU JAYA BHARATI**



**DIVISION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN AND SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES  
CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTH EAST ASIAN  
AND SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
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2000**



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CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTH EAST ASIAN  
AND SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**CERTIFICATE**

Certified that the dissertation entitled "AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM [1972 TO 1998]" submitted by MS. INUMULU JAYA BHARATI in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.PHIL)** of the University, is her own work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

*Man Mohini Kaul*  
Dr. MAN MOHINI KAUL  
(Supervisor)

*Nancy Jaitley*  
Prof. NANCY JAITLEY  
(Chairperson)

*Dedicated*

*to*

*my parents*

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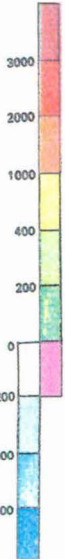
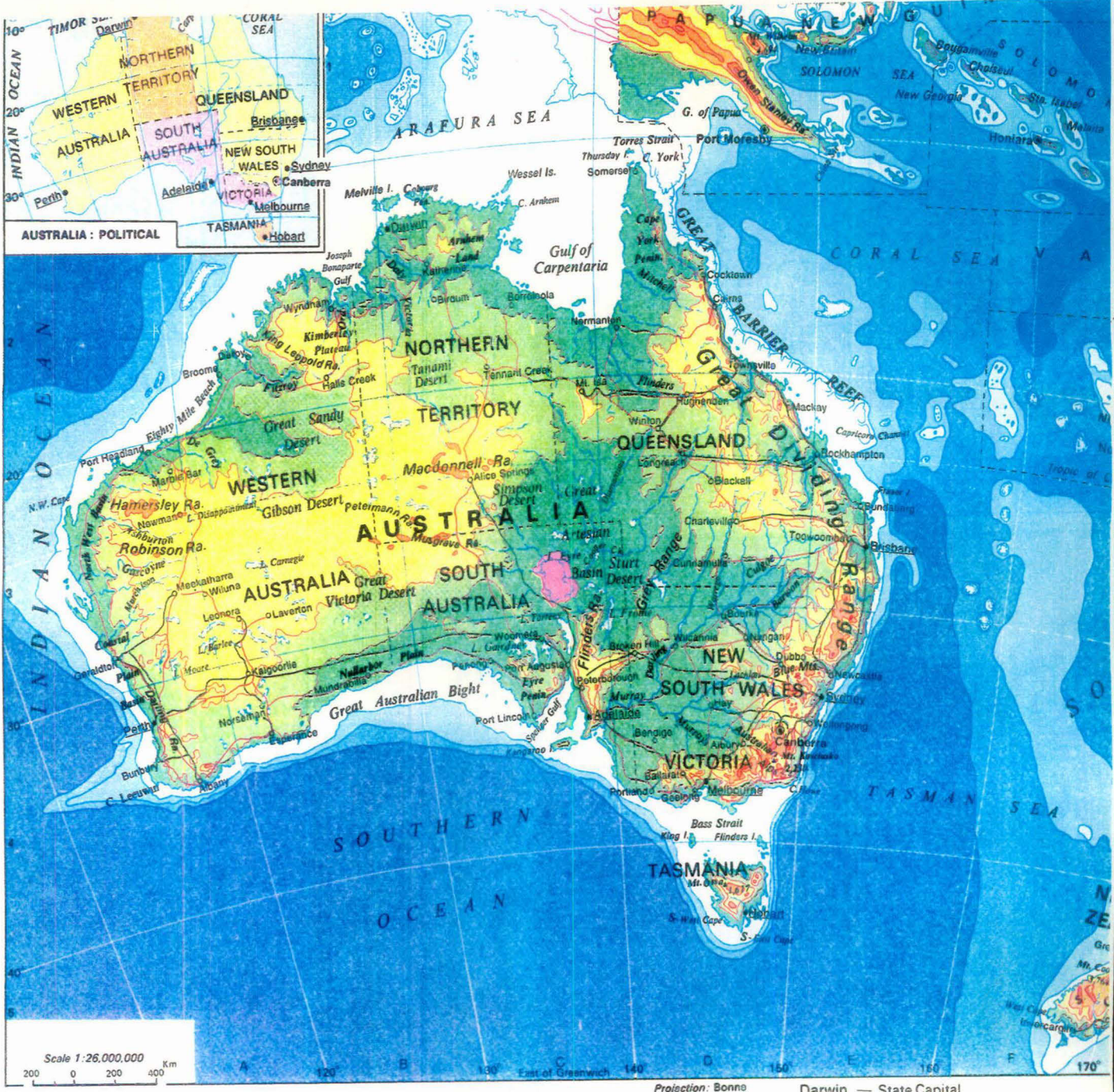
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*And above all I owe my parents and brother more than what can ever be said.*

New Delhi  
21st July 2000

*J. Jaya Bharati*  
MS. INUMULU JAYA BHARATI



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## **Preface**

*In contrast to Russia, Turkey and Mexico, Australia has from its origins been a western country. Throughout the twentieth century it was closely allied with first Britain and then the United States; and during the Cold War it was not only a member of the west, but also of the US – UK – Canadian – Australian Military and Intelligence core of the west. In the early 1970's, however, with the advent of Gough Whitlam's government that the White Australia Policy was put to an end and the policy of Multiculturalism was adopted.*

*The aim of this dissertation is to give an account of the immigration policies of Australia since its inception and critically examine its multicultural policy. The dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter, which deals with the nature, scope and general content of the study and discusses the conceptual issues involved in the study. The second chapter examines in detail the White Australian Policy and its liberalization with special reference to Asian migrants. The third chapter discusses the Immigration Policy of Australia from 1972 to 1998. In the fourth chapter the concept of multiculturalism is discussed with special reference to Australia. The fifth and the final chapter has some concluding observations that there is consensus for multiculturalism in Australian society.*

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# ***CHAPTER - I***

## ***INTRODUCTION***



## INTRODUCTION

Immigration is the act of coming to a foreign country to live.<sup>1</sup> Throughout history, people have moved from country to country for many reasons. Immigrants may seek better jobs, new lands to farm or an escape from persecution for their religious or political beliefs. Large numbers of people have fled from their homeland because of such disasters as disease, starvation, or war. These people are known as refugees or displaced persons. The act of leaving one's own country to settle in another is called emigration. The term Emigration and Immigration are used to connote out-migration and in-migration across the international border, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Migration, according to Bogue, is a movement of people as an instrument of cultural diffusion and social integration that results into more meaningful distribution of population.<sup>3</sup> Migration is a complex phenomenon and an inquiry about the motives behind it is the most difficult part of analysis of the process of migration. With regards to the determinants of migration distinction has been made between pull and push factors.<sup>4</sup> Push factors are those that operate in areas of out-migration and compel the people to move to other areas. Pull factors are those that operate in areas of in-migration and attract the people to these areas. It is not necessary that in an area only push or pull factors should operate in fact, both push and pull factors operate

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. Chanda, *A Geography of Population, Concepts, Determinants and Patterns* Ludhiana; Kalyani Publishers: 1986 p. 155

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 155

<sup>3</sup> D. I. Bogue, 'Internal Migrations', in O. D. Duncan and P. M. Hauser (eds.) *The Study of Population: An Inventory and Appraisal* Chicago; Chicago University Press: 1959 p. 487

<sup>4</sup> J. Garnich – Beaujeu, *Geography of Population* London; Longman: 1966

simultaneously in the same area. All migrations in the modern context are borne out of growing process of industrialization, technological advancement and other changes that are taking place in the social and economic spheres. In addition, wars, political events, regional disparities in natural increase, in employment potentials, in wages and in availability of agricultural land and other stimuli for migration. However, the determinants of migration may be classified into three broad categories of economic, social and demographic determinants.

As observed earlier, economic motives constitute the most important determinants of migration – included among the various economic determinants which govern the magnitude and direction are the general economic conditions of the areas, availability of good agricultural land size of landholdings, the rate of growth of employment opportunities, etc. equally significant are the socially mooted determinants of migration. There are certain social customs that generate specific type of migration. For example, females moving from the place of their parents residence to the place of residence of their spouses at the time of marriage. Similarly, religious freedom has been another social cause of migration. The large scale sailing of “Pilgrim Fathers” across the Atlantic was also the product of the desire to preserve religious faith.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, demographic factors also play a determining role in the migration. For instance, age has been recognized as one of the important

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 217

demographic factors controlling the degree of desire to move among the potential migrants.<sup>6</sup>

International migration, which is one type of migration, took place voluntarily in response to spatial inequalities in the distribution of physical and human resources. The two approaches which dominate the geographical study of international migration are:-<sup>7</sup>

**Functionalist Approach**:- Migrants enter the new society at the lowest economic and social strata, but have opportunities for the improvements so that there is a progressive convergence of this characteristic with those of the host communities. This approach tends to minimize the element of conflict that pluralism creates and emphasizes the importance of the dominant value system in promoting consensual forms of pluralistic integration.<sup>8</sup>

**Neo-Marxist Approach**: - It presents a quite different picture of international migrations. Accordingly, international migration is seen as coercive labor migration, which is a manifestation of dependency which promotes underdevelopment in the periphery and over development at the core. Such a viewpoint does not admit of voluntary, rational, self-improving migration as visualized by functionalist. Integral to this model is the view that migrant workers are prevented from getting assimilated into the host societies because of the exploitative and discriminatory character of the

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<sup>6</sup> Op.cit., R. C. Chanda, p. 156

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 157

<sup>8</sup> Richmond and Verma, *The Economic Adaptation of Immigrants: A New Theoretical Perspective*, (International Migration Review, vol. 12) p. 5.

capitalist entrepreneurs. Whereas this neo-Marxist interpretation of model suffers from rigidity, the functionalist view of migrations seems optimistic.<sup>9</sup>

Nations that receive immigrants generally benefit from them. Higher levels of immigration will increasingly be recognized as good politics and as in the national interest. New research is demonstrating that high migration: produces higher economic growth; benefits the locally employed; reduces social expenditures; and enhances Australia's global positioning.

The aim of the dissertation  is to analyze the immigration policies of Australia and the development of multiculturalism. Thus, in order to understand it we need to have a sound knowledge about the background of Australia.

Australia is a relatively young nation established in an ancient land. European colonization of Australia began by 1788 when a British settlement at Port Jackson (now Sydney). It was founded as a penal colony and it became land of convicts. Immigrants since 1788, fall into four categories – Convicts, Assisted Immigrants, Unassisted Immigrants and Refugees, smaller numbers came as indentured laborers. Immigration policy has always aimed at attracting settlers who would remain in Australia to build up its population and develop its resources. The first important group of refugees to come to Australia were the Jewish people escaping Hitler, who were admitted under Evian Agreement of the 1938, most came between 1947 and 1952 as “displaced persons” from Eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup> Between 1945 to 1985, more

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<sup>9</sup> Castles and Kosack: 1973

<sup>10</sup> Australian Encyclopedia, Penguin Books Australia Ltd. Victoria 1990, p. 170

than 43,000 refugees entered Australia, the great majority of the refugees have been from Communist states mostly from China, East Timor and Vietnam.

Australia is a land of immigrants, with a population that has grown from 9,00,000 in 1788 to almost 18 million in the 1990's. When the Australian colonies united to form the Federal Commonwealth in 1901, the first acts of the Federal Parliament were the introduction of the infamous "White Australia Policy". Thus, until 1940's the immigration was limited to migrants from United Kingdom. Following World War II, migrants from East Europe were allowed in large numbers. The "White Australia Policy" was relaxed in 1966 under severe criticisms from the newly independent nations in the region. However, in reality this was just eyewash to assuage the feelings of the neighboring countries in reality and a trickle of Asians were allowed. The final step to do away with the remnants of the racist policy was taken by the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of the Labor Party in 1973. He was responsible for establishing a multicultural policy for Australia. Since then Asian migrants accounted for a significant proportion of migrant intake. By June 1993, 4.4% of the total population of Australia was Asia born. The maximum member of the Asian settlers are from East and South East Asia. Australia continues to be a popular destination for Asian immigrants, thanks to its stable economy and liberal democratic polity.

Migration to Australia is built on three building blocks: Humanitarian, Family and Independent. Australia values people who have lost the protection of their own government in a word 'refugees'. It also values the family, as it is the basic

social unit for human kind. And finally, Australia values the most qualified skilled and highly motivated new citizens to add economic vitality and vigor.

The term Multiculturalism was coined in Canada in the late 1960's and came to be used in Australia only in 1973. The basic premises of this Policy is to remove the disadvantages suffered by certain migrant group on the basis of their cultural diversity. Thus, under Australia's Policy of Multiculturalism, social justice and equal rights were guaranteed for all. This policy was seen as an important ingredient of Australia's foreign policy during Whitlam period. Even, Malcolm Fraser of Conservative Liberal Party who came to Power in 1975 continued with the policy of multiculturalism. It has been formulated in detail by the government through the following publication and departments.

- 1) Multiculturalism For All Australians (1982),
- 2) The Office of Multicultural Affairs set up within the Prime Minister Office in 1987, and
- 3) National Multicultural Advisory Council Report of 1995.

Multiculturalism and non-discriminatory immigration policy of Australia is the result of its foreign policy giving highest priority to engagement with Asia. An essential element of this policy is furthering Australia's commercial interests by increasing economic, political and cultural links with the region. By virtue of its geography, Australia needs to pursue a policy, which would closely bring the countries of Southeast Asia in particular.

Australia's policy towards Asia was articulated in the ministerial statement by Senator Gareth Evans in 1989. Australia has diligently translated the salient features of the ministerial statement into a regional policy under the Labor government from 1983 – 1996. Since 1996, under Liberal coalition government the conceptual framework laid down by the Labor government has basically remained unchanged. The coalition administration of Howard supports the 1989 National Agenda for a multicultural Australia. The basic principles laid down in it are:

- 1). The right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion.
- 2). The right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth.
- 3). The need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and talents of all Australians regardless of background.

***CHAPTER - II***

***WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY AND ITS***

***LIBERALIZATION***



## WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY AND ITS LIBERALIZATION

The origin of the White Australia Policy can be traced back to the 1850's, when the White miners resentment towards industrious Chinese diggers culminated in violence on the Buckland River in Victoria, and at Lambing Flat (now Young) in New South Wales. The governments of these two colonies thus introduced restrictions on Chinese immigration. Later it was the turn of hard working Kanaks in Northern Queensland. Factory workers in the South became vehemently opposed to all forms of immigration, which might threaten their jobs – particularly by non – White people who they thought would accept work for lower wages. Some influential Queenslanders felt that the colony would be excluded from the forth-coming federation if the Kanaka trade did not cease. Leading politicians from New South Wales and Victoria warned that there would be no place for 'Asiatic' or 'Coloureds' in Australia in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In 1901, the new Federal government passed an Act ending the employment of Pacific islanders. The new Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 received Royal Assent on 23 December 1901. It was described as an Act to place certain restrictions on

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<sup>1</sup> DIMA FACT SHEET – 5 “Abolition of the White Australia Policy” – *Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs*, August 1999, Australia.

immigration and to provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

Among those it prohibited from immigration were the insane, anyone who were likely to become a burden upon the public or upon any charitable institution, any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease 'of a loathsome or dangerous character'.<sup>3</sup> It also prohibited prostitutes, criminals, and anyone under a contract or agreement to perform manual labour within the Commonwealth (with some limited exceptions). One of the ways restrictions were imposed was by requiring the applicants to pass a written test in a specific language with which they were necessarily familiar. The Act stated the migrant had to "write out dictation and sign in the presence of an officer, a passage of 50 words in a European language directed by the officer".<sup>4</sup> Regardless of these severe measures, the implementation of the White Australia Policy was warmly applauded in most sections of the community. In 1919 the Prime Minister William Morris Hughes, hailed it as "the great thing we have achieved".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>4</sup> London, H. I., 'Non – White Immigration and the White Australia Policy', (University of Sydney; Sydney University Press: 1970)

<sup>5</sup> Yarwood, A., 'Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896 – 1913', (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press: 1964)

“White Australia,” was the manifestation of a movement not solely confined to Australia but uniquely appropriate to her geographic position and fortuitous historical experiences. Australia, which identified itself with the Whites, assured their superiority and believed that it was ‘White Man’s Burden’ to ‘Christianize,’ ‘uplift,’ ‘teach,’ and ‘civilize’ the natives. The White countries argued that the White people had emerged through nature’s struggles as the fittest’ species and therefore it was not at all surprising to see that effective restrictions were imposed on immigration of Non-White in Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia. It was believed that every White man was required to civilize the ‘Half – naked’ and ‘Half – wild child’ and was also obliged to maintain the homogeneity of his own race and avoid, at all cost, ‘racial contamination’.<sup>6</sup> By 1880’s Australians had imposed a capitation tax on every Chinese that arrived. Non-White exclusion and White supremacy were widely practiced by all of these White countries in the nineteenth century. Myra Willard, the author of “History of the White Australia Policy,” argues that the immigration policy was primarily a manifestation of national forces resolved ‘to maintain the British character and institutions’.<sup>7</sup> Moreover she further argues that, “If non-Europeans had come to Australia in large numbers, its effect would have been to alter, perhaps destroy the British character of the

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<sup>6</sup> Willard, Myra., ‘History of the White Australia Policy’, (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press: 1923)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5

community”.<sup>8</sup> Myra supports the White Australia Policy, by arguing that too much of non-White immigration would not only destroy the British institutions but also the democratic character of Australia which be impeded if races ‘unfit to exercise their political rights,’ were allowed into a milieu or environment requiring the fulfillment of political duties. Even Henry Parkes, advised that any race, “whom we are not prepared to advance to all our franchise, to all our privileges as citizens, and to all our social rights including the right of marriage, should not be admitted”.<sup>9</sup> Since Australia was thinly populated and potentially wealthy it was believed that Asians would use the country as a safety valve for their relatively poor and overcrowded population. Even Edmund Barton, the then prime minister, told the House, “I do not think that the doctrine of equality of man was really ever included to include racial equality”.<sup>10</sup> And J. C. Watson, Labor leader, remarked, “the objection I have to mixing of the coloured people with the White people of Australia lies in the main in the possibility and probability of racial contamination”.<sup>11</sup> All these sentences reveal the amount of support that the White Australia Policy got by many leaders i.e., both the leaders from Labor Party and Country Party.

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>9</sup> *Op.cit.*, n. 5, p. 5

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

Many leaders supported the Policy because of many reasons. Like, Edmund Barton, the first Prime Minister endorsed the Policy on social grounds and his greatest fear was miscegenation and eventual assimilation. He joined many leaders in approving a dictation test – “a way of controlling the leakage of coloured migration which at the sametime cautiously avoided any offence to Japanese or Indian nationals”.<sup>12</sup> Charles McDonald, first Labor speaker of the Parliament (1902) opposed coloured migration because it was an unwilling migration recklessly organized by irresponsible Europeans. By this he meant that he was against the ‘slave labour,’ which was practiced in Queensland. Alfred Deakin, one of Australia’s most important early leaders, in 1908, supported the Immigration Restriction Bill with yet another argument, “We here find ourselves touching the profoundest instinct of individual or nation – the instinct of self preservation – for it is nothing less than the national manhood, the national character, and the national future that are at stake”.<sup>13</sup> A. T. Yarwood indicates another reason that is still embraced as an argument for maintenance of the status quo: “From the viewpoint of international amity, the Australian Act of 1901, though regarded with hostility at the

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<sup>12</sup> Op.cit., as quoted in London, H. I., n. 4, p. 19

<sup>13</sup> Greenwood, G., ‘Australia: A Social and Political History’, (Sydney; Angus & Robertson: 1955) p.205

time for its severity, had the merit of preventing the growth of minorities whose presence might have led to recurring diplomatic crisis".<sup>14</sup>

It was quite distinct that men of different political persuasions rallied behind the policy. Even some historians have cast their doubts on the Labor Party (which represented trade union) fearing infiltration of sub-standard Asian labour. However, there is enough evidence to prove that it adopted a non – partisan approach to the issue of "White Australia". Even Australia's defense policy was an attempt to protect the White Australia against the 'Yellow Peril'. Former prime minister William Hughes (1915) argues that, "If the White Australia Policy is to be a permanence in this country, there must be behind it a sufficient force of White Australians ready if necessary, to make good their claim. There is no other way".<sup>15</sup> Since, Australia was dependent on British Naval superiority to maintain its White Australia Policy it gave some imperial concessions to non-White Commonwealth members, particularly Indian migrants. The Restriction Bill of 1902 also underwent few changes due to Japanese diplomatic pressure and the fear of aggressive intrusion in Australian affairs. At the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, the Japanese Representatives put pressure on the Australian government, to add a clause, which would guarantee equality of all races, into the

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<sup>14</sup> Op.cit., Yarwood, A. T., n. 5, pp. 24-25

convenient. This proposal was not accepted by the Prime Minister William Hughes who felt that, "It was an encroachment upon the right of countries to determine their own domestic policies".<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the outbreak of Second World War, there were relatively minor modifications in the White Australia Policy and hardly there was any internal demand for change. After the outbreak of hostilities with Japan, prime minister John Curtin (1941), reinforced the philosophy of the 'White Australia Policy', saying, "this country shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race".<sup>17</sup>

During the Second World War, many non-White refugees entered Australia in order to escape Japanese invasion. These migrants were given a sanctuary in Australia with the understanding that they would return when the War would end. Most of them left voluntarily at the end of the War, but those who had married Australians wanted to stay back.

In 1947, the Labor government tried to deport fourteen Malay Seamen, all of whom had married Australians and had children from them. As soon as the repatriation

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<sup>15</sup> Johanson, D., 'History of the White Australia Policy', in K. Rivett (ed.) *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?* (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press: 1962) pp. 2-3

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2-3

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7

decision was announced vocal opposition erupted in the press, attacking the policy on moral grounds and later as an expression of 'administrative callousness'. But Arthur Calwell, the minister for Immigration (1947), refused after considerable delay, to reconsider his decision. Malayan Seamen's defense Committee were organized in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, to satisfy some of the opposition's demand the government offered to pay for the transportation of the families to Malaya. But the bitterness of the struggle remained and organizational weapons for reform were created.

In 1949, with Liberal – Country Party in power the new Immigration minister Holt, changed the climate in which the immigration policy was administered. Minister Holt's decision in 1949 to allow 800 non-European refugees to stay, and Japanese War brides to be admitted, was the first step towards a non – discriminatory immigration policy. With the exception of a few minor cases, the 1950's were almost entirely free of incidents related to the White Australia Policy.

The next major step was taken in 1957 when non-Europeans with 15 years residence in Australia were allowed to become Australian citizens. The revised Migration Act of 1958 introduced a simpler system of entry permits and abolished the controversial dictation test. The revised Act avoided references to questions of race. Indeed it was in this context that the Immigration Minister, Sir Alexander Downer, stated



that, “distinguished and highly qualified Asians” might immigrate.<sup>18</sup> In 1966, the House of Representatives, in its sixty-five years history, conducted a full-scale debate on the White Australia Policy. Change in attitude within Australia was bolstered by diplomatic pressure from outside the continent such as the chastisement of Australian Policies by non-White members of the United Nations. In spite of the United Nations legal assurances that domestic policies were not within its purview, White Australia was very often opposed by the “full thrust of anti – racial vindictiveness”.<sup>19</sup>

After a review of the non-European Policy in March 1966, Immigration Minister Hubert Opperman announced that applications for migration would be accepted from well qualified people on the basis of their suitability as settlers, their ability to integrate readily and their possession of qualifications which is useful to Australia. At the same time the government decided that a number of non-Europeans who had been initially admitted as ‘temporary residents’; but who were not required to leave Australia, could become residents and citizens after five years (i.e., the same as for Europeans), instead of fifteen years as required earlier”.<sup>20</sup> There was also an easing of restrictions on non-European migrants. The criteria of ‘distinguished and highly qualified,’ were replaced by

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9-10

<sup>20</sup> *Op.cit.*, London, H. I., n. 4, p. 22

the criteria of 'well qualified'. Non-Europeans and the number of non-Europeans allowed to immigrate would be somewhat greater than previously.

A deterioration of military security was an extricable link in the pressure for reevaluation of the White Australia Policy. After World War-II, the British reduced the size of their forces in Asia and the South Pacific. The British Navy no longer served as a military shield to protect Australian separation from Asia and concomitantly her White Australia Policy. Moreover, the Asian and the African countries, which had achieved independence from the White colonial countries strongly, opposed any policy, which was based on racism. And this external pressure on Australia also made it rethink and reevaluate its immigration policy. Nonetheless, Australia made a commitment to a 'good neighbor policy,' with Asia and a reduction of the psychological distance associated with her earlier policies.<sup>21</sup> One fundamental step in coming closer to Asian countries was the modification of the White Australia Policy. The history of White Australia Policy after the war was marked by an increasing realization of Asian sensitivities. Particularly irritating to many Asians was the policy's categorical grouping of diverse individuals on the basis of the colour of the skin. The continued exclusion of industrially and technically advanced Asians clearly pointed to an underlying racialism. Even at the turn

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21

of the century, the economic argument for exclusion of non-Europeans was not entirely valid. The proposition that Asian Labour would work for lower wages and cause unemployment among Australians could have been opposed with some justification by the concept that an increase in the labour force would have led to increased production and effective demand, culminating in a higher standard of living for both Australian and Asian migrants. But the argument in favor of a restrictive policy was not only used for labourers but also for professional men and skilled artisans as well. It was argued that Asians who secured skilled positions might cause friction in the community and prejudice among those who are displaced, it appeared from this argument that for some, having an Asian in a higher rank than an Australian was plainly objectionable. Also, it was argued that, since the Asians were ignorant of the representative system they would impede the growth of democracy in Australia. Sir Keith reasoned, "No country can, without danger, give a share of power to aliens unable or unwilling to accept and defend what it most values".<sup>22</sup> In otherwords, since the Asians don't know how to use their franchise, they would endanger the Australian democratic tradition, and should thus be kept out. There were many important Australians who supported or wanted a homogeneous society. But homogeneity as a manifestation of racism was flatly denied

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<sup>22</sup> Johanson, David, n. 15. pp. 5-6

by most of the former ministers for Immigration. S. B. Hammond points out that, “the major subjective component underlying the policy appears to be a perception of difference in ‘way of life’ between people of various countries and Australia. Immigrants are expected to ‘fit in’ and to become Australians and opposition is strongest towards those groups which are believed to be unlikely to do so”.<sup>23</sup>

Whether or not it has been denied, colour played an important role in determining eligibility for migration. Perhaps the fears aroused by the American and British experiences in the past two decades had obscured Australia’s successful absorption of non-Europeans. Whether it be fear of foreign experiences or a reliance on nineteenth century historical antecedents, the criterion of colour as a guide to assimilability remains as an essential, but seemingly unjustifiable, ingredient in ministerial administration of the White Australia Policy.

**Liberalization of the White Australia Policy:** - In 1956, the minister for Immigration announced some important modifications in the White Australia Policy. The government decided to modify the conditions for the entry and stay of non-Europeans. These were: -

1. persons already permitted to remain here without getting periodical extensions of their stay should be eligible to qualify for naturalization;

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 5-6

2. certain non-Europeans already in Australia who normally would have been expected to leave, should be allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons;
3. distinguished and highly qualified non-Europeans should be admitted for indefinite stay; and
4. the conditions for the admission of person of mixed descent should be clarified and eased.<sup>24</sup>

For the first time naturalization was permitted for a large group of non-Europeans. Moreover, the new requirements established a precedent for easing the regulations still further. In September 1956, non-European spouses of Australian citizens were eligible to qualify for naturalization on the same basis as European spouses. And in 1957, other non-Europeans admitted for temporary residence were given the right to apply for naturalization after fifteen years of residence.<sup>25</sup> These changes in the immigration policy were due in no small part to the adhoc reaction of immigration officials to the near refugees, political refugees; Japanese brides, displaced persons, and other non-Europeans who came to Australia for asylum after the war. Government sympathy for those fleeing the Japanese invasion led ultimately to a review of the White Australia Policy. The government of Australia accepted political refugees during the war

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<sup>24</sup> Opperman, H., *Australia's Immigration Policy* (Canberra; Government Printers: 1966) p. 8

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8

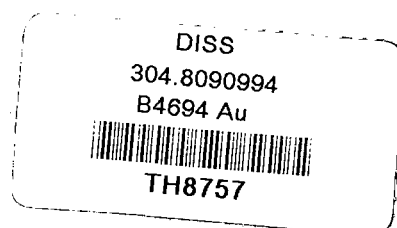
but with a condition – a guarantee of return when hostilities ceased. But when the time for return came, the political as well as ideological map of the East had changed.

Also, what were once Nationalist China and an ally had become a Communist China and an enemy. The government was faced with the dilemma of either deporting refugees to Communist China or modifying the White Australia Policy so that the refugees could remain in Australia. Australian government faced a dilemma, if it deported the migrants then it would have been labeled hypocritical in its anti-Communism stand and thus insensitive to the plight of migrants, but if, on the other-hand, it had modified the White Australia Policy radically, some people would have considered the act as violation of the 'national faith'. Even deporting the migrants to Hong Kong or Singapore, was rejected by authorities of these places who insisted that migrants even political refugees, required a visa for entry. The decisions of 1956 and 1957 unintentionally or unwillingly paved the way for further liberalization. In 1959, Australian citizens already domiciled in Australia were permitted, 'to introduce for residence their non-European spouses and unmarried minor children, who would then be eligible to apply for naturalization'.<sup>26</sup> In 1960, this provision was extended to those 'with

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8

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residence status in Australia,' or those 'about to attain it,' and in 1964 liberalized regulations applying to persons of mixed descent made their entry into Australia easier.<sup>27</sup>

Late in 1964 the Department of Immigration submitted reforms to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, including a five-year 'residence requirement,' for non-Europeans and further flexibility in the categories of acceptance. While most of the Cabinet members particularly the Minister for External Affairs and Trade, approved the proposal, Menzies summarily rejected them. But when Mr. Harold Holt succeeded Menzies and Mr. Opperman retained the Immigration portfolio, a shift in the policy was inevitable. Mr. Opperman, a Conservative Party man, was willing to accept, without reservations, the Prime ministers direction on this issue. After only a few months in office Holt asked the Department for Immigration to disinter the 1964-1965 proposals and resubmit them for cabinet approval. The Department's consultation with this council and a subsequent visit by the minister refined the carefully worded modification proposals. One factor for the possible shift in policy was the estrangement of Asians separated from their immediate families for fifteen years. It was suggested that this undue hardship should be eliminated for 'well qualified migrants,' without 'radically altering the policy'. Mr. Opperman later indicated that, a more flexible approach to the administration of the

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8

policy did not constitute a major shift in traditional principles. With only minor opposition the proposal were accepted by the Advisory Council. Government's acceptance of these proposals was influenced by several factors. Mr. Gough Whitlam, Deputy leader of the Opposition, made a stern comment on the racial discrimination in Australia's Immigration Policy at the Citizenship Convention in Canberra. He urged that Australia "remove as far as possible any racial aspects of discrimination, and specifically noted that the fifteen year residence requirement for Asians was glaringly racist".<sup>28</sup> During this time, Mr. Opperman's proposals seemed like a government rebuttal to Mr. Whitlam's attack of the policy. In much the same way, the Nancy Prasad and Aurelio Locsin cases – causes celebres of the 1965-1966 period seemed to influence the timing, if not the content, of the proposals. Pressure to change the Immigration Policy came not only from the Opposition Party or from any other source but also from the world. Though Mr. Opperman denied the fact that pressure was exerted from some groups like the Students Action and the Immigration Reform Groups, but the fact still remains that, these groups directly or indirectly influenced government's decisions to liberalize the policy. Another group seeking reform, the Australian Council of Churches, passed a resolution in late January calling for several reforms in the policy: -

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<sup>28</sup> Op.cit., Johanson, David., n. 15, p. 10



- To remove as soon as possible the racial discrimination involved in the rule that non-Europeans may not normally be naturalized in less than fifteen years.
- To raise the number of non-Europeans granted permanent residence to some 1500 a year.
- To reconsider Australia's Policy concerning the entry of skilled and professional people of non-European race.<sup>29</sup>

This Church Council did not have any direct link with the government either through the Immigration Advisory Committee or the Cabinet. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that its proposals affected the Opperman announcement directly. But it might have been quite significant because the council's resolution was quite similar to the Immigration Department's proposals. Newspapers like, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Canberra Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph* had strongly criticized the White Australia Policy. This criticism was significant in indirectly influencing the government's decision. In 1965 and 1966 there was no empirical evidence of foreign political pressure exerted on the government to modify the policy, except with the one exception of Philippine recommendations to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. A brochure entitled *Australia's Immigration Policy* announcing the changes was distributed

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<sup>29</sup> DIMA FACT SHEET Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, August 1999.

to all non-European embassies and drew mainly their responses. The Malaysian Prime Minister Tankur Abdul Rahman, who wanted to support the changed policy stated that “relaxation of the laws were a step in the right direction” and indicated an Australian “desire to be more friendly with Asian countries”.<sup>30</sup> In India, the Newspaper ‘*The Hindu*’ (Madras Publication), noted that, “the White Australia Policy had been a major stumbling block in establishing goodwill between Australia and Asian countries. Liberalization that is now planned would help Australia forge firmer friendships with Asian countries”.<sup>31</sup> *The Times of India* commented, “Relaxation of rules no matter how slightly is reassuring indication of Australia’s growing awareness that its policies, internal and external must be determined by its geographical contiguity to Asia rather than Europe”.<sup>32</sup>

In early March 1966, Mr. Opperman announced his proposed changes to a House of Representatives. He suggested that the changes should be recognized as important ‘but as not departing from the fundamental principles of our immigration policy’.<sup>33</sup> He declared as follows: -

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<sup>30</sup> Opperman, H., n. 24, p. 30

<sup>31</sup> *The Hindu*, (Madras Publication: 14 March, 1966)

<sup>32</sup> *The Times of India*, (Delhi Publication: 14 March, 1966)

<sup>33</sup> See Minister for Immigration Hubert Opperman’s statement in Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, L (1966) p. 69

(a.). Europeans who are already in Australia under temporary permits, but likely to be there indefinitely, could apply for resident status after five years instead of the previous fifteen year waiting period. This removed the most discriminatory aspect of the policy, although the provision didn't imply the ruling applied to everyone admitted to Australia for limited temporary residence. Students in particular were not given the right to settle after five years study.

According to Mr. Opperman, this provision would facilitate the Chinese, who were allowed to stay on as a result of July 1956 decision, but unable to bring their wives and children to Australia since they lacked citizenship or settler status, would benefit from the new provision almost immediately.

(b.). Second, applications by 'well qualified people' were to be considered on the basis of their suitability as settlers, their ability to integrate readily and their possession of qualifications which are in fact positively useful to Australia.<sup>34</sup> The changes also specified that migrants could bring their immediate families with them on first arrival. The Minister said that, "the number of people entering the country, will be somewhat greater than previously but will be controlled by the careful assessment of the individuals

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<sup>34</sup> Department of Immigration, Australia, Summary of Rules Generally Applying to Entry of non-European, August 25, 1966

qualifications, and the basic aim of preserving a homogeneous population will be maintained”.<sup>35</sup>

The most significant debate in 1966, since the establishment of the Federation, on non-European Immigration Policy took place in the House of Representatives. Much of the debate and most of the decisions on both sides of the House were kept secret, but the debate in spite of its non – partisan character was significant. And it was considered a note worthy departure from the historic silence on this issue. Mr. Fred Daly (Labor M. P. for Grayndler), initiated the debate on the proposals for liberalization of White Australia Policy, set a non-partisan atmosphere by reflecting to the united support the non-European Immigration Policy ‘has enjoyed’ and the correct decision made by the minister to preserve ‘principles underlying our immigration policy’.<sup>36</sup> However he warned that non-Europeans would not be brought into meet general labour shortages, and that there would be no large-scale admission of workers from Asia. All these debates in the House reflected the rationalizations and the endorsement of the established policy of the government on immigration. According to the papers of the Commonwealth Parliament Debates of 1966, the policy was not and never has been directed to the total exclusion of non-Europeans nor was it based on any assumption of racial superiority. But

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.

<sup>36</sup> London, H. I., n. 4, p. 35

there were supporters of this policy also in the House of Representatives. For instance, Sir Keith Wilson (M. P. for Sturt), a supporter of the White Australia Policy, argued that Australia has the most liberalized immigration policy than any country. For this purpose, Sir Keith referred to the restrictive immigration policies of Malaysia, Burma, India, Philippines, Cambodia, Zambia and most African countries. As arguments for restriction they were most effective. The main ingredient of White Australia Policy was the emphasis on "Australianizing," the migrants to fit in or assimilate and this was the expression of the national ethos and a devotion to the White Anglo-Saxon tradition in which the nation evolved. "Opening the door," or relaxation of the regulations was considered a threat to Australia's homogeneity. And there was almost no disagreement on this point. Both the representatives of labour and industry opposed the influx of Asian immigrants on the basis of economic grounds. Likewise, both parties viewed the maintenance of the policy, with only the minor revisions suggested by Mr. Opperman as a reflection of the national interest. The debate in the House was characterized by a general approval of Mr. Opperman as a reflection of the national interest. The debate in the House was characterized by a general approval of Mr. Opperman's proposals there were two moderate yet notable exceptions. Mr. L. R. Johnson (M. P. for Hughes) forthrightly suggested, "there is a case for a real change in our policy, not merely in its

words but also in the implementation of its words, Australia needs non-European migrants to enrich its own culture. This will not mean opening the floodgates anymore than we have opened them to people from European countries. There is a need for us to permit the intake of non-European migrants so as to increase our understanding of our neighbors and to equip ourselves for participation in the international councils of the world. Of course, there is also the need to increase the intake in order to remedy what has been the fairly disastrous impact of our policy throughout Asia”.<sup>37</sup>

Another notable argument was by Labor spokesman Mr. K. E. Beazley (M. P for Fremantle), who challenged one of the primary assumptions on which the policy was predicted. Asians according to Mr. Beazley do not cast hungry eyes on Australia even though the White Australia Policy implies they do. “If the Asians had had the aggression and the determination to migrate that Europeans had in the nineteenth century, this country would have been settled by Asians long before Europeans ever saw it. After all, we do subscribe to the myth that a country is discovered when it is seen by Europeans – preferably Englishmen – but in point of fact Australia had been seen by Asians for generations before any Englishmen came here. The Malays traded with Australia. They were perfectly familiar with it, and they did not wish to migrate to it”.<sup>38</sup> Even after

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<sup>37</sup> Op.cit., Opperman, H., pp. 9-10

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

presenting this argument Breazley accepted Mr. Opperman's proposals as a moderate step towards liberalization consistent with the 'realities of migrant absorption'. The lack of severely critical remarks and bipartisan acceptance of the proposals was testimony to limited views and political conservatism. The policy proposals were described as "humane, sensible and progressive," or "reasonable and desirable," by both government supporters and government detractors. One reason for the lack of lively debate between the parties was that Mr. Opperman, before making the proposals, assured the Labor Party that liberalization did not constitute an unrestricted flow of migrants or a major deviation from the established policy. And because of these assurances, the Labor Party supported the modifications without many debates on it. Mr. Opperman actually admitted to review the admission categories in order to curtail "category jumping," – switching admission status in order to obtain permanent residence – and to control, within limits mutually acceptable, the total number of migrants permitted entry. The debate in the House of Representatives gave the government a bipartisan endorsement of the White Australia Policy and the Labor Party, an opportunity to reject its historically rigid position on this issue without discarding its allegiance to the principles of the White Australia Policy. Several months before Mr. Opperman's proposals, the Immigration Committee in the Labor Party recommended;

“That the proposals be not opposed and the assurance given by the minister be accepted, that is, that there is to be no departure from the accepted and established principle of our Immigration Policy, and that it will be administered with understanding and tolerance”.<sup>39</sup> The Labor Party’s concern with the phrase “White Australia” led to many intra party discussions on the basic principles of Immigration Policy. Some of the more liberal members of the Immigration Committee, i.e., Mr. Donald Dunstan (later Premier of South Australia) and Mr. F. E. Chamberlain, west Australian Party leader, suggested the elimination of distinctions between Europeans and non-European migrants – a suggestion which is considered to be more liberal than any other liberal proposal. In order to satisfy this faction in the Committee and at the same time satisfy the large majority of Conservatives on the Committee and in the Party, Mr. Fred Daly, a Conservative with some support from his colleagues, Messrs, Steward, and Fitzgerald, prepared a brief list of recommendations the party could adopt without alienating either faction. The first recommendation dealt with replacing the phrase “White Australia” in their platform with “predominantly homogeneous population,” (the phrase “homogenous character of our population was excluded from the policy proposal because of its ambiguous nature. But the principle of homogeneity was the essence of the new

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<sup>39</sup> Johanson, David, pp. 6-7



statement). The second set of recommendations which was most important, was related to administrative practices. In fact these recommendations constituted Labor demands in the February – March negotiations with Mr. Opperman. The Labor Committee desired: -

- (a.). Rejection of an Asian quota system.
- (b.). A review of the categories established for the entry of non-Europeans with the “object of improving or increasing the categories were considered necessary”.
- (c.). Making the period of residence for non-Europeans eligible for citizenship the same as that applying to Europeans namely five years.
- (d.). Preventing transfer of student visa to migrant visa status (a student visa, it was argued, should be issued for only a twelve – month period subject to a review before renewal);
- (e.). Control of tourist visas so that the holder “cannot transfer to a migrant visa” (this was considered necessary in order to leave no doubt about the limitation of the visa and to overcome deportation problems and the consequential publicity).<sup>40</sup>

These demands were passed by the Party but it was not incompatible with any of the Opperman’s proposals. However, the labour concern with “category jumping” indicated a disillusionment with the flexible administration of the policy which had

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<sup>40</sup> Op.cit., Yarwood, A., pp. 11-12

permitted several thousand migrants in the past ten years to transfer categories and remain in Australia, and the adverse publicity directed at the Department as a result of several deportation cases. In order to present an image of fairness and humanitarianism, Labor Party wanted to tighten categories of acceptability (i.e., improving or increasing the categories). And, moreover, this condition of the Labor Party was accepted by Mr. Opperman because the government never intended to abandon the principles on which the policy has been based. Tightening the categories of entry or easing naturalization requirements for non-Europeans, the mutually acceptable criteria for reform, were cynically dismissed by one member of the House of Representatives. He argued these recent changes would cause "more tightening and less reform"; this revision "is consistent with post 1963 immigration policy which because of a sluggish economy, security reasons and a large number of Asian students has had to be limited".<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding the few dissenters, a non-partisan view of immigration has been part of Australia's heritage. It came as no surprise that this tradition was continued in 1966. It was argued by some that if changes must occur "let us atleast maintain the traditional principles," or as one of the elder statesmen put it: "the established policy is and always will be the best one".<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Op.cit., Opperman, H., pp. 9-10

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, n. 1, p. 3

But a question usually arises, after so much of debate, as to whether really there were any major changes or liberalization in the new policy. Did they really represent a departure from the established policy? Could the modifications be accurately labeled “liberalization”? For analyzing these questions there is a need to look at the old admission categories as well as the new categories which replaced them.

The ‘old’ admission categories were: -

- (1.). Non-Europeans, who are the spouses, unmarried minor children and aged parents of Australian citizens, or of British subjects permanently resident here, may be admitted for permanent residences;
- (2.). A European British subject proceeding to Australia from overseas for permanent residence may be accompanied by his non-European spouse and unmarried minor children;
- (3.). Non-Europeans who have been admitted for temporary residence and other grounds, for permanent resident status and subsequently for naturalization;
- (4.). In addition to those non-Europeans admitted for temporary residence for commerce and trade, provision has been made for the admission on a selective basis for indefinite stay of highly qualified and distinguished people who seek to reside here;

- (5.). Included in this latter category would be those non-Europeans who have taken educational courses, and who have qualifications from which the Australian Community would benefit;
- (6.). Those non-Europeans, whose continued residence in Australia was induced by political events in their own countries, have been permitted to remain here indefinitely.<sup>43</sup>

The 'New' categories, which replaced them, were: -

- (a.). Persons with specialized technical skill for appointments for which local residents are not available.
- (b.). Persons of high attainment in the arts and sciences, or of prominent achievement in other ways.
- (c.). Persons nominated by responsible authorities or institutions for specific important professional appointment, which otherwise would remain unfilled.
- (d.). Executives, technicians, and other specialists who have spent substantial periods in Australia – for example, with the branches here of Large Asian companies – and who have qualifications or experiences in positive demand here.

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<sup>43</sup> Op.cit., London, H. I., p. 44

(e.). Businessman who in their own countries have been engaged in substantial international trading and who if admitted would be able to carry on trade with other countries which would be of significant value to Australia.

(f.) Persons who have been of particular and lasting help to Australia's interest abroad in trade, or in otherways.

(g.). Persons who by former residence in Australia or by association with us have demonstrated an interest in or ideational identification and the that with the Australia that should make their future residence here feasible.<sup>44</sup>

The new set of categories seemed to more liberal than the old ones. Expressions such as "highly qualified" and "distinguished" were eliminated. Moreover, the new policy included a paragraph which claimed, "applications for entry by well qualified people wishing to settle in Australia with their wives and children may be considered on the basis of their suitability as settlers, their to integrate readily, and their possession of qualification which are infact positively useful to Australia". This statement represents a departure from an earlier policy statement, which maintained, "It is fundamental to the policy that these people coming to Australia for permanent residence should be capable, both economically and socially, of ready integration

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 45

into the Community. Consequently preference is given to persons of European origin”.

Categories five and seven could be described as new as listed by Mr. Opperman. Though the reforms in the new categories are minimal yet the new policy is commendable. The exclusion of fifteen years residence requirement was a welcome change. It eliminated the obvious racialism, which was a common characteristic of the White Australia Policy. The other five new categories extended the already existed definitions of provisions since 1956.

Mr. Opperman’s reaffirmation of the old tenet made it quite obvious that although modifications had broadened the categories of acceptability, they had not appreciably improved the chances of admission.

#### **Public Opinion Regarding the White Australia Policy: -**

Public opinion is the expression by a large group of its perceived impression of a controversial point. Public opinion is manifested in a variety of ways, through polls, articles in national journals, newspaper editorials and private expressions of the distinguished as well as the “man in the street”.

In 1947, Prof. O. A. Oeser and Dr. S. B. Hammond reported on an UNESCO study concerning Australian attitudes to different races, nations and groups. The chart reveals a hierarchy of race – nations acceptable in Australia. The exception is being the Chinese, who are regarded somewhat differently because of their favorable reception in parts of the country. It was ‘over-determined,’ claim the authors, “by Australian cultural tradition derived from an English background”. The level of acceptance was largely determined on the basis of: -

- (a.) Similarity to the Australian way of life.
- (b.) Proximity to Great Britain.
- (c.) Share in English stock and history.
- (d.) Capacity to assimilate in Australia.
- (e.) Myth and legend about racial affinity.

Non-Europeans on the chart as shown below were perceived as a threat to Australia’s development and unique cultural heritage. In most cases “many Australians regarded coloreds, because of their generally lower standard of living, as a threat to labour – employer relations. Those whose social mobility was static or lower than their parents showed a higher than average hostility to non-Europeans”.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Oeser, O. A., and S. B. Hammond, ‘Social Structure and Personality in a City’ (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1954) p. 52

[THE CHART]

Race/ Nationality	Keep out	Let a Few In	Allow Them To Come	Try to get Them to Come
U. K.	0.9	1.8	25	72
USA	03	12	48	37
Irish	06	22	45	26
Swedish	04	20	45	31
French	05	20	60	14
Balt	12	37	39	12
German	23	32	28	17
Jew	39	31	26	04
Italian	38	35	23	04
Russian	57	25	16	02
Chinese	26	42	23	08
Indian	45	39	14	02
Negro	68	23	09	00

[\*\* As cited in O. A. Oeser and S. B. Hammond social structure and personality in a city  
(London; Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1954) p. 64



Writers, academics, and public men agreed with the attempt “to bring Australia closer to her Asian neighbors,” but there was dissension over the judiciousness of a modified immigration policy. Some believed that it would not affect the condition of the non-Europeans, rather it would cause insuperable racial problems for Australia. Still others maintain that a strategy of good neighborliness could best be pursued through an aid program without an alteration in the migration policy.

In short, it appears that public opinion poll on the immigration issue and many of the statements associated with the policy are unreliable. Lacking information, public opinion has to rely predominantly emotional shibboleths such as “national welfare,” “humanitarian spirit” and other value loaded phrases. The elimination of the information gap on the matter of immigration is definitely in order if public opinion on immigration is to have any validity.

#### **World Opinion of the White Australia Policy and Its Liberalization: -**

In this section, the worldview is taken into consideration because the external powers were one of the driving forces, which made Australia’s rethink about its policy.

Malaysia is one nation that has cautiously avoided governmental condemnation of Australia’s immigration laws. Infact, the statements of Tunku Abdul Rahman (the

then Malaysian Prime Minister) was often employed by policy defenders as an indication of Asian views. Though, a section of the Malays feel that Australia's immigration policy is discriminatory yet, the government did not condemn it because the country's future depended on the protection of Western powers against potential Chinese Communist encroachments.

Even though they are probably better informed than the majority of Malaysians, the Indonesian population did not seem to be resentful of Australia's immigration laws. Indonesians regarded Australia's "White Australia Policy," as a relatively insignificant issue.

But the Philippines is an example of one nation that had taken active retaliatory measures against the abuses in Australia's Policy.

In the United Nations Filipino representatives criticized Australian action and at one stage proposed a resolution, which would bind all members to a "system of reciprocal immigration laws," as a means of combating "violations of the Charter".<sup>46</sup> The Philippine government continued to see the liberalization process as 'a fraud,' but didn't react to it as long as the policy did not exclude Filipino migrants. This verbal respite did not last long. When Aurelio Locsin, a university educated Filipino, was barred from

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<sup>46</sup> Rivett, K., (ed.) 'Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?' (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press: 1962) p. 88

permanent residence in 1965, the old wounds were again opened. Strong resentment was felt in many parts of the country regarding Australia's immigration laws. Australia's public relations were severely handicapped because there was no press attack at the Manila Conference of 1966 and little publicity was given to aid distribution by Australia through the Colombo Plan and the SEATO.

Even though most Japanese were not concerned with Australia's policies, the business segment of the population, engaged in bilateral trade and investment, found immigration legislation an impediment.

Indian government had always been out-spoken in its opposition to immigration policies. Even in 1947, Indians were sensitive on questions relating to colour and apartheid. African opinion while it was extremely antagonistic to the alleged principles in Australia's policy was of less importance than the Asian opinion in its ability to influence the Australian policy makers, because of geographical location.

The United Kingdom's criticism of the policy was often more severe. Before World War II the British, through Commonwealth defense arrangements protected Australians prerogative to the White Australia Policy. Since the war, however, several British governments had viewed the policy as an embarrassment to the Commonwealth, only slightly less than apartheid.

Though the resentment that the world expressed against the White Australia Policy was not immediately accepted by Australia but it was a driving force in making Australia ultimately rethink about this policy.

***CHAPTER – III***  
***AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY***  
***FROM 1972 TO 1998***

## AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY FROM 1972 TO 1998

Labor migration, settlement and the development of multicultural societies. Since 1945 are global phenomena. Migratory patterns have changed in the period of economic restructuring and “internalization,” that started in the 1970’s, giving rise to the so-called ‘new’ migration<sup>1</sup>. The increasing economic and political importance of the Asian region for Australia in the 1970’s and 1980’s made it impossible to sustain its racist nationalist boundaries, leading to a shift from the White Australia Policy to a non – discriminatory entry system. The two world wars also influenced Australia’s migration programme – a resettling of refugees and young people were significant chapters in Australian immigration history.<sup>2</sup> Australia has a non – discriminatory immigration policy which means that anyone from any country can apply to migrate, regardless of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or religion.<sup>3</sup> Australia being a huge continent with a small population and no foreign borders, rich in resources and almost untouched by terrorism and close to Southeast Asia is seen as environmentally unpolluted and capable of sustaining a much larger population. This capability made Australia impossible to ignore international population pressure and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Castles, *The New Migration and Australia Immigration Policy* in ‘Asians in Australia’, (ed.) Christine Inglis, S. Gunasekaran Gerand Sullivan and Chung Tong Wu. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore: 1990 p. 45

<sup>2</sup> *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their choices*, Australia 1788 – 1988, Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1988, p. 917

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Multicultural Australia’, Fact Sheet no. 2, February 1988, p. 1

refugee movements. Australia's political economy has never been autonomous, and immigration patterns and policies have been shaped by the changing forms of incorporation into the world market.<sup>4</sup>

In 1970, when the Minister for Immigration, Phillip Lynch, sketched Australia's growth as a nation, and he felt it necessary to go beyond the contribution made by Western Europeans and the new migration patterns he identified were not from Asia, but from Scandinavia and France.<sup>5</sup> This chapter focuses on understanding the immigration policy of Australia as it underwent various governments from 1972 to 1998.

### **The E. G. Whitlam Government: - (1972 – 1975)**

After twenty-three years of liberal-country Party rule, in 1972 the newly elected Labor Government under Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister brought about a radical change in the immigration policy of Australia. At first instance this was surprising. Since the nineteenth century Australia's working class movement, finding political expression through an independent Labor Party, had identified nationalistic radicalism with racial purity 'White Australia' was born of Labor's economic fears

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., n. 1, p. 53

<sup>5</sup> P. Lynch, *Immigration: A Story of Nation-Building, address to the United Commercial Travellers' Association, Melbourne, 4<sup>th</sup> April, Canberra; Government Printer: 1970*

and xenophobia.<sup>6</sup> The Calwell – Chifley heritage of the Labor Party, based on radically restrictive immigration, remained strong in the 1960's. But the political base of the Labor Party was broadening to include a higher proportion of middle class voters, including some articulate and radically inclined intellectuals. In August 1965 the Federal Labor Conference deleted its 80-year-old reference to 'White Australia'.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless it was only a year before taking office that the conference added that immigration policy be based on the avoidance of discrimination on any grounds of race or colour of skin or nationality.<sup>8</sup>

The Whitlam Labor Government's decision in the mid-seventies to remove ethnicity as a condition of entry meant a larger number of Asian migrants. This decision revealed the economic and political significance of the Asia – Pacific region to Australia's future economic political interest. Another explanation for the Labor Party's willingness to support such principles in June 1971 was that its commitment to ethnic equality went hand in hand with an intention to reduce the immigration markedly. High rates of population growth, stimulated by large-scale immigration were no longer to be a central objective of the government. The economic posts, as well as the benefits of the immigration, needed to be assessed; and the pressures placed upon welfare, education, housing and others special social services by

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<sup>6</sup> As quoted in H. I. London, *Non-White Immigration and the White Australia Policy*, Sydney University; Sydney University Press: 1970 p. 15

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26



newcomers required considerations. The new Labor government reduced the intake (using new points systems for entry that made access to Australia more selective). The immigration targets were no longer to be determined solely by Australia's Labor markets conditions though the labour demand was reflected in the number of settlers allowed into Australia. The highest priority was given to the reunion of immediate family members. Yet, selection continued to take account of the 'economic viability,' and personal 'qualities,' of applicants for the family reunion and also assessed the potential migrant qualification skill or experience in terms of 'national need'.

Just as significant was the increased selectivity of Australian immigration policy. The shift from labour shortage to family reunion as the major criteria, was the explicit rejection of ethnic origin as a factor in selection.<sup>9</sup> The government, in line with its pre-election policy, formally renounced discrimination between prospective migrants on the ground of race or colour of skin or nationality. Such a positive stand did not, of course witness a sudden transformation in the ethnic composition of the immigration intake – indeed the emphasis on family reunion served, atleast in the short term, to preserve the status quo.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 27

<sup>9</sup> David Pope and Peter Shergold, *ASEAN – Australian Immigration and the Demise of 'White Australia'*, ASEAN – Australia Joint Research Project, Kuala Lumpur & Canberra 1985, p. 14

However, the new immigration policies, applied for the first full year in 1973 – 74, did actively seek to assure Asian governments that ‘White Australia’ policy was no longer valid. Immigration policies aimed at improving Australia’s foreign relations in the indo-Pacific region rather than embittering them. Account was taken not only of past migration links, but also of equally important ties of trade, political affairs and geography. The assisted passage scheme was extended to all races; the new points system sought to remove the most obvious hallmarks of race based on settler selection in immigration procedures made easier for non-European students to enter.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1974 elections, the Labor government was returned to office, although the minister for Immigration Al Grassby, lost his seat atleast in part because the extreme wing of ‘White Australians’ had made special efforts for his defeat. Even his successor, Clyde Cameron, could not reverse the change in immigration policy, which Grassby had presided. Infact, it was Cameron who abolished British preferences in visa procedures and naturalization. The number of Asian born migrants increased; gross settler arrivals rose from 7,729 in 1972 – 73 to 9, 938 in 1974 – 75. As a proportion of a reduced intake this represented an increase from 7.2 percent to 11.1 percent of total settlers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A. J. Grassby, *Australia's Decade of Decision, Immigration Reference Paper*, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1973

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 9, p. 15

The end of Indo-China War in April 1975 was accompanied by a massive displacement of Vietnamese people from their homes. A decision was taken by the Australian government to provide assistance to the Vietnamese and Indo-Chinese refugees – under the auspices of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) which was established in 1950, ‘ to provide international protection for refugees and to seek permanent solutions to their problems on a purely humanitarian and non-political basis’.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, refugee selection operations, which were carried out in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand by Australian personnel, were conducted following requests from the UNHCR calling on Australia and other countries to indicate the number of refugees which they would accept for durable resettlement’. On 22 April 1975 the Prime Minister announced the categories of persons having Vietnamese citizenship who would be eligible for temporary entry into Australia. These categories include: -

- Spouses and children of Vietnamese students at present living in Australia.
- Spouses and the under 21 year old children of Australian citizens subject to completion of Australian citizenship formalities.
- Vietnamese with long and close association with the Australian presence in Vietnam whose life was considered to be in danger (and whose

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Australia and the Refugee Problem’, p. 4, Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign

applications would be considered on a case by case basis).<sup>13</sup> The Prime Minister stated that these decisions had been taken with regard to the principle of maintaining the unity of families. At this time the Department of Labor and Immigration had received nominations for residence covering 3667 persons, which included 970 nominated by persons permanently resident in Australia together with 2697 nominated by students and other temporary residents. Of these 3667 persons, a total of 342 persons were approved for entry to Australia under the guidelines of 22 April and the Australian Embassy was notified of them prior to its evacuation on April 1975.<sup>14</sup> On 23 July 1975 the government had commissioned a survey of Vietnamese refugees who had recently settled in Australia. This survey was conducted in order to enclose a number of things such as: 'the reasons why the refugees left their own country; their social characteristics; what they requested, needed and received from the Australian government; their aspirations in Australia; the problems they thought they might have to face in settling in Australia; the problems of culture and language difference they had to face, and what happened to

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Affairs and Defense, The Commonwealth government Printer, Canberra: 1977

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 10

their cultural identity in the process of resettlement and to what extent – if at all – they suffered from racism’.<sup>15</sup>

So this way the Whitlam government tried to bring a change in the immigration policy which was initially restricted only to European migrants.

### **The Malcolm Fraser Government (1975 – 1983)**

The second Labor government ended, unexpectedly soon, through its intervention of governor-general in November 1975. One might have expected to witness a major reversal in immigration policy, given the political bitterness engendered by Whitlam’s dismissal, and the Labor Party’s subsequent defeat by a Liberal-Nationalist Party Coalition headed by Malcolm Fraser. Fraser was seen in parts of Asia as “a White Politician who could take an enlightened view of world problems”.<sup>16</sup> He developed a reputation for commitment to end racially based regimes in Southern Africa, and his work within the Commonwealth to this end was widely acknowledged. Charles Price a more detailed analyst of immigration policy argued that non-European immigration was likely to become more difficult again, and that it would take sometime for the new government to decide on a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>16</sup> Meg Gurry, *The Struggle Over Authorship of Australia’s Asia Policies* in ‘Australian Journal of International Affairs’, vol. 52, no. 3: 1998

comprehensive coherent policy to replace its former mild version of 'White Australia'.<sup>17</sup> But all these predictions proved to be incorrect in a span of time.

The change of Federal government witnessed no significant change in the handling of the immigration portfolio. It was true that the new government did once again increase migration levels. In mid-1978 it was announced that the gross migration target for 1978-81 would be 90,000 a year. It also reemphasized the benefits of encouraging immigration and created a revamped and more powerful Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.<sup>18</sup> In June 1977, the government established 'Ethnic Radio' in Sydney and Melbourne in order to include ethnic segments in radio stations throughout Australia.<sup>19</sup> And it was generally believed that ethnic media would be very important in the settlement of migrants and the development of multiculturalism. In order to enable the ethnic communities and individual migrants participate in the development and operation of ethnic radio that the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council (NEBAC) and the State Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Councils (SEBACS) were established in 1977.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the new Liberal ministers, at first Malcolm MacKellar, and from December 1979, Ian

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<sup>17</sup> Charles Price, *Immigration and Population Policy: The Fraser Government* in his 'Australian Immigration: A Bibliography and Digest', no. 4, Department of Demography, ANU, Canberra: pp. A4 – A5

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 9 p. 15

<sup>19</sup> *Migrant Services and Programs*, Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, Parliamentary Paper, Canberra; Australian Government Publishing Service: May 1978, p. 112

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113

McPher, did not retreat from the commitment to non-discriminatory selection procedures introduced by their Labor predecessors. Indeed, the 1970's, a decade of profound change in immigration policy, was also a decade of bipartisan support for most immigration areas. There was, in the words of Malcolm McKellar, "a common belief in a policy of non-discrimination," and a realization that, "ought to be above Party politics".<sup>21</sup>

There was general acceptance, at least amongst Parliamentary representatives, that immigration policy should be applied consistently to all applicants 'regardless of their race, colour, nationality, descent, national or ethnic origin or sex': there was also a growing belief that cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity (multiculturalism) was and not a threat to Australian society.<sup>22</sup> No longer was the central image that a bubbling melting pot, into which Asians, by their physical differentness found it difficult to fit. Rather the watchword was integration, a concept which saw a value in allowing Asian new comers, like other ethnic groups, to preserve and disseminate their ethnic heritage within the value system and social morals built by their traditions. To the extent that the need for assimilation was no longer an unargued assumption, non-Europeans could more readily be tolerated. Mental as well as administrative barriers were slowly being removed.

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<sup>21</sup> M. J. R. MacKellar, *Australia's Immigration Policy*, Canberra; Australia Government Publishing Service: 1978, p. 10

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13

By the late 1970's, it had become clear that the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, not only approved of a non-discriminatory immigration policy, but also had sympathized with the multiculturalism of Grassby and Whitlam. In September 1977 his government Commissioned an inquiry headed by Frank Galbally into the settlement needs of migrants, and by mid-1978 his government had committed itself to implementing the 57 major recommendations, of that Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants – had established a new statutory authority, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs. Fraser's government had adopted a few guiding principles in developing these fifty-seven recommendations.

They were: -

- needs of migrants should, in general, be met by programs and services available to the whole community but special services and programs are necessary at present to ensure equality of access and provision;
- services and programs should be designed and operated in full consultation with clients, and self help should be encouraged as much as possible with a view to helping migrants to become self reliant quickly.<sup>23</sup>

Keeping these guidelines in the forefront that the Fraser government started bringing change in the policies. His government was appreciated for being committed to multiculturalism as one of the key policies.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., n. 19 p. 4



During 1983, Australia was accepting increasing numbers of Asian migrants with rather less positive enthusiasm. These were chiefly from East and Southeast Asia and also from the Middle East (Turkey and Lebanon) and some from South Asia. No longer were these new comers predominantly highly skilled professionals and technicians posing competition to the bulk of Australian workers. It is true that larger Asian migrants that did gain entry to Australia were those selected on the basis of their skill. As a result of the changes to immigration categories and procedures introduced from January 1979 they came either as independent applicants; who applied on their own behalf on the basis of possessed skills which would provide 'economic, social or cultural gain to Australia, or as employment nominees,' actively recruited by Australian employees. However, a modest rise in the number of Asian born skilled workers was rapidly overwhelmed by a dramatic rise in the number of Asians who were accepted under the category of 'refugees'.<sup>24</sup>

It was the commitment to a refugee intake as a vital component of Australia's Immigration Policy that distinguished Fraser's government from that of Whitlam's. Although the Labor government had set something of a precedent in 1975 by selecting 500 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong and Singapore, and bringing them for resettlement in Australia at government expense, it had never succeeded in formulating a clear refugee policy. Under minister for Immigration MacKellar, in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 5

contrast, administrative links were made with refugee advisory bodies, and the resettlement of Indo-Chinese refugees was placed on a regular basis.

The dimensions of the human tragedy, which followed, fall of the Saigon government was difficult for most Australians to appreciate. By mid-1979 MacKellar, estimated that there were about 350, 000 Indo-Chinese refugees awaiting resettlement, with probably three times the number seeking to leave Indo-China.<sup>25</sup> Many escaped a regime, which they feared, through sea in overcrowded vessels. Some looked to Australia as a possible haven. In all only about 2000 Indo-Chinese arrived illegally, but the landings were sufficient to generate tabloid headlines emphasizing 'invasion and disease'.<sup>26</sup> There were calls for increased surveillance of the coastline. However, many realized that Australian interest – as well as humanitarian impulses – would be served by allowing a controlled intake as administered officially.

In May 1978, the Federal government decided to admit 9,000 Indo-Chinese refugees a year. By December this quota had increased to 10,500. Following the Geneva Convention on Indo-China in July 1979 the number was raised to 14,000 and in 1980 – 81 program was set at the same level.<sup>27</sup> Most were selected by the Department of Immigration from the huge numbers, from Laos and Kampuchea as

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., n. 17 p. 15

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., n. 19 p. 5

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., n. 9 p. 17

well as Vietnam, huddled in refugee camps in SouthEastern Asia. As time went on, those fortunate enough to be admitted to Australia as refugees sought to use the provisions of the family reunion program to reunite themselves with relatives left behind in camps or, through the introduction of the Orderly Departure Program, with those who remained behind in Vietnam. In 1975 – 76 a mere, 1037 refugees had arrived from Indo-China. By 1981 – 82 the number of Vietnamese arrivals alone totaled 11,088, comprising 9.4 percent of settler arrivals; in the following year another 8,690 arrived, representing 9.3 percent of settlers.<sup>28</sup>

These new immigrants who came from Indo-China which had been ravaged by year of brutal war, brought with them psychological scars from the past. Though they had enthusiastic hope for the future, few of them had educational and occupational attributes of the Asian immigrants who had preceded them. The proportion of total settler intake increased rapidly, at the moment when the ranks of the unemployed had begun to increase leading to recession. Signs of hostility of emerged regarding immigration in general and the increased share of Asians in particular. But the early 1980's apprehensive immigration officials had started to talk of compassion fatigue.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Hanifa Deen, *Ethnic Minority Groups and Public Policy in Australia: New Challenges in a Culturally Diverse Society*, India – Australia Public Policy Conference, Perth; Curtin University of Technology: 1996 p. 118

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 9 p. 17

Not all Australians were opposed to the changes taking place in immigration policy. To many the intake of Indo-Chinese refugees was merely a recurrence of earlier experiences in Australia's immigration history – a temporary phase of resentment of refugees of postwar Europe. It was generally argued that Vietnamese should be accepted, keeping in mind the inflow of central European refugees, mainly the Jews in the recent past who were accepted on humanitarian grounds. An annual intake of 14,000 was too large a number for Australia to bare, keeping in view its deteriorating economic position, but viewed in the context of the problem faced by Asian countries Australia's response was limited, and motivated in part by a desire to prevent the arrival of desperate boat people directly onto Australia's northern shores. To others the resettlement of Indo-Chinese refugees was a program for which Australia should show a clear commitment. Since the crisis was occurring in its geographical region, placing a heavy burden on its Asian neighbors, it was a crisis in which Australia through its military intervention in Vietnam bore a particular responsibility. Therefore it was an issue on which the genuineness of governmental rejection of 'White Australia' would be judged. According to the Department of Immigration in 1981 Australia was 'strongly aware of the fact that the ASEAN countries have had to bear the brunt of the problem, and this had raised serious difficulties for them'.<sup>30</sup> They are all less developed countries and, with their own

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., n. 9 p. 19

population pressures, shortages of employment opportunities and limited material resources, are not well equipped to cope with the influx. Therefore, Australia's role in accepting Indo-Chinese refugees for permanent settlement was not based merely on its role as a responsible member of the international community: it was founded in large part, upon it being "a good neighbor – willing to meet its share of regional obligations".<sup>31</sup>

There were many who viewed the inflow with less sympathy and understanding. As unemployment increased it became easier for extremist elements to identify 'Asians' as a cause of the genuine hardship faced by a growing minority of 'Australian' workers.

#### **The Bob Hawke Government: - [1983 – 1991]**

The new Labor government which was elected in March 1983, with Bob Hawke as the Prime Minister, in its first year of office enunciated what could be interpreted as a market shift in immigration policy. However, the new policy reflected economic events and a policy change made by the previous government.

The recession in Australia automatically caused a decline in the number of occupations listed as being in shortage in Australia in the Occupational Demand Schedule prepared by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations

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<sup>31</sup> Joan Beamont and Garry Woodard, *Perspectives on Australian Foreign Policy, 1993*, 'Australian Journal of International Affairs', vol. 48, no. 1 1994 p. 100

according to labor market samplings. The policy changed by the previous government had occurred in April 1982 when siblings and non-dependent children were included in the family reunion category and eligibility for 'independent' applicants was greatly tightened.<sup>32</sup> The total effect of these two developments was a substantial shift from labor shortage to family reunion in the immigration program. Whereas the previous government had admitted 32,000 migrants under the 'labor shortage and business' program in 1982 – 83, and a further 6,490 as 'independent' migrants, the new Labor government's combined quota for 1983 – 84 was only 13,000. The target for migrants in the family reunion category, on the other hand, was raised to 51,000 to 57,000, compared to the 27,000 persons admitted by the preceding government in 1982 – 83.<sup>33</sup>

The new minister for Immigration, Stewart West, told Parliament that, "in times of recession the first commitment would be to honor responsibilities to those migrants already in Australia, to honor international obligations and to accept that humanitarian considerations applied to both these interests".<sup>34</sup> In essence, economic considerations, which had always been the basis upon which the large majority of immigrants had been accepted politically, dictated a significant decrease in intake:

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 97

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., n. 28 p. 117

<sup>34</sup> Goldring Committee of Review of Private Overseas Student Policy (1983), *Immigration Paper*, Canberra; Australian Government Publishing Service: 10<sup>th</sup> October 1983 Australia

humanitarianism was to be ground upon which largest proportion of immigrants were to be selected.

During this period (1983 – 1987), there were no three categories of family reunion, ranging from category A (close relatives such as spouses) to category C (more distant relatives such as brothers, sisters and non-dependent children).<sup>35</sup> Most family reunions still have to exhibit educational, skill and employment characteristics deemed of value to the Australian economy. The weaker the family relationship the more important are the labor market criteria in assessing the suitability of the family reunion application. Category C applicants, for example, have not only to prove that they have received a genuine offer a job in Australia, but also have to have family sponsors willing to sign an “assurance of support” which guarantees that they, and not the Australian government, will bear the burden of any economic costs imposed by the incoming relatives.<sup>36</sup> The recent evidence suggests significant shortfall on the forward estimate of category C intake in 1983 – 84.<sup>37</sup> It was believed that less than 16,000 persons would be issued visas under this sub program, that is about 9,000 to 12,000 less than the original estimate. The government had also shown a continued commitment to accepting migrants under the refugee and special humanitarian program (a ceiling of 20,000 in 1983 – 84).<sup>38</sup> Indo-Chinese continued to dominate the program as they were the most recent

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<sup>35</sup> C. Price, *Reflections on Australian Immigration*, (Canberra; Australian National University: July 1983) p. A15

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. A15

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. A15

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 9 p. 18

arrivals, and because they had relatives whose desire to enter Australia was generally much greater than that of the Europeans. They also constituted an increasing proportion of the intake under the family reunion program. As the proportion of Asian – born settlers had increased, so resistance to the program had also grown, perhaps accentuated in part by the statements of the then Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, concerning what he called the “Asianising” of Australia. Another public controversy was triggered by a statement by the distinguished Australian historian, Professor Geoffrey Blainey, in which he drew attention by saying that the policy on Asian migration was dangerous as it was running ahead of acceptance among sections of Australian public opinion. Controversy was accelerated further when the Liberal Shadow Minister for Immigration, Micheal – Hodgman, complained of discrimination against British and European applicants for emigration. However, Australian employers and their political allies were convinced that high immigration was economically desirable. In spite of the controversy intakes continued to grow in the early 1980’s, reaching 100,000 in 1982 – 83.<sup>39</sup> Numbers arriving from Asia increased from 15 percent of the total number of arrivals in 1976 – 77 to 34 percent of the total intake within ten years. This increase was largely the result of Indo-Chinese refugee settlement and the entry of people from countries like Singapore, Malaysia, India and Hong Kong – source countries of well educated professional and business people.<sup>40</sup> But the international recession of the early 1980’s had a severe

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., n. 28 p. 120

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., n. 28 p. 121



impact on Australia, with unemployment reaching a record level of more than 10 percent in 1983. In line with traditional concerns of the Labor movement on the threat to jobs of Australian workers through immigration, it was the entry of skilled workers which was cut back, leaving family reunion and refugee resettlement as the main elements of the program. Although British and New Zealand immigration remained high, Asia for the first time became the largest single component of entries (36 percent of net immigration in 1982 – 83).<sup>41</sup> In 1985, the unemployment rate for Australian residents born in Asia was 14.4 percent (14.9 percent for male and 13.4 percent for female) and 28.1 percent for Vietnam – born Australian residents, compared with the national average of 6.7 percent.<sup>42</sup> Thus, ruling Australian Labor Party immediately cut immigration and only 62,000 new entries were permitted in 1983 – 84 and 78,000 in 1984 – 85.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Paul Keatings Labor Government: - [1991 – 1996]**

The conceptual framework did not develop until the late 1980's, when Keating government took the lead in setting a new agenda for Australia – Asia links Paul Keating and Gareth Evans believed that there was a national mindset about Asia which was locked in past prejudices and shaped by no longer relevant Cold War

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., n. 35 p. A15

<sup>42</sup> DILGEA (Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs), *Settlement Advisory Council Background Papers: DILGEA settlement role, particularly in Relation to the Development of a National Integrated Settlement Strategy* Canberra: 1992 p. 36

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., n. 35 p. A17

thinking.<sup>44</sup> It needed to be changed and thus a rigorous attempt was made to transform Australians mental images of their neighbors. The commitment to change and to enter into cooperative partnership with neighbors became the central theme of Keating – Evans programme, articulated in a stream of speeches delivered by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Prime Minister Paul Keating from the late 1980's onwards. The vision was clear – Australia was to become avowedly multicultural and cosmopolitan. It was to engage with Asia economically and politically. The policy that emerged laid emphasis on being partner in the Asian region through regional and multilateral forums. The means for achieving this vision were clearly envisaged, first to institutionalize Australian links with Asia through the development of regional forums such as APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum; second to construct a new conceptual framework with the aim of shifting the national mindset to one that was more appropriate to the post-Cold War, globalized world of the 1990's.<sup>45</sup> Throughout this process, Keating and Evans constantly emphasized the primary role of government, adopting an activist foreign policy position, which set out on a number of innovative paths. It started all in 1986 with the formation of the Cairns group, and was quickly followed up with the formation of APEC in 1989, the Cambodian Peace initiative, the initiatives to ban mining in Antarctica, and to effect a CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), the conclusion of the chemical weapons

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<sup>44</sup> Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of 1990's* (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press: 1995) p. 27

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 31 p. 98

Convention, the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forums, the APEC leaders summit meetings, and the Australia – Indonesia Agreement on Maintaining Security.<sup>46</sup>

Census figures for 1991 show the number of Asia – born Australians were 4.3 percent of the total population i.e., 687,850. Of this number 2.2 percent came from Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam)<sup>47</sup> Another 1.2 percent or 199,288 were born in Northeast Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Macao, Mongolia and Taiwan. The remaining 0.7 percent or 110,811 were born in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).<sup>48</sup> By July 1992, in the midst of a recession, the unemployment rate for the Asian born was higher than the national unemployment rate of 10.7 percent; Malaysian born was higher at 11.9 percent, for the Philippines born 16.6 percent. Of particular concern was the unemployment rate of Vietnamese born at 31.1 percent.<sup>49</sup>

#### **John Howard's Liberal National Government: [1996 – 1998]**

Even John Howard's Conservative government remained committed to the previous policies of immigration and multiculturalism. However, initially the reluctance of Howard government to take on Pauline Hanson's attacks on Asian immigration; the repeated somewhat defensive, assertions of the prime minister that Australia is very different from Asia; the severe budget cuts to Radio Australia; the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., n. 16 p. 86

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. was n. 22 p. 37

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 37

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 37

withdrawal of media liaison officers from its embassies in Asia – all had created the impression in some quarters that the Howard government lacks the drive of its predecessors towards a full and active engagement with the Asia – Pacific.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, he was narrowly returned to office in 1996, and later on became committed to the policies of immigration and multiculturalism, which his previous governments had followed. After being in office, Howard's government came out with a white paper in 1996, which explained the policy of the coalition government. The government stated that it would give considerations to adopt a rolling three-year planning projection for future immigration policy. The new immigration policy focussed on Australia's economic as well being, and the maintenance of Australia's commitment to the role of the family through family reunion.<sup>51</sup> It also took full account of Australia's international responsibilities for refugee and humanitarian programs. In short, the immigration policy under the Coalition government aimed to balance economic, social, environmental and international considerations. The key to the success of any ongoing immigration program is a viable balance in its humanitarian, family and economic composition. The composition must reflect the nation's capacity, responsibilities, desires and needs. The Coalition continued to remain committed to non-discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender or religion.<sup>52</sup> Selection was based on the case by case assessment of the individuals or family applications. It also maintained an independent appeals

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., n. 1 p. 86

<sup>51</sup> Insight; Foreign Affairs and Trade, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1996, p. 4

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 4

system, and ensures fairness and equity by appointing only suitably qualified persons.

The goal of the coalition government was the reunite-dislocated families. Dependence of the family unit received priority in the annual immigration intakes. The role of the family in providing emotional and financial assistance to its members continued to be an overriding consideration in getting entry. There were limited instances in the community of the use of spouse sponsorship for other than bonafied relationships. Serial spouse sponsorship was curbed. Individual sponsors were limited to two. Spouse relationships with a minimum of five-years apart, other than in exceptional circumstances.

To avoid any avenue for abuse the government made the current two-year probationary period applicable to onshore sponsorships applicable also to offshore spouse sponsorships.<sup>53</sup> Applicants in the concessional family category, in which entry was assessed predominantly on skill levels, would ever-additional points for English levels similar to the independent skilled category. Family connections would continue to be an important criterion for entry.

Consistency and a high standard of entry criterion are important to the community's confidence in the administration of the program. Skills, which are

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<sup>53</sup> Alexander Downer, *Australia's Commitment to the Region*, address to the Asia – Australia Institute, Sydney, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1996a.

identified as shortage in Australia, constituted the first priority in determining skilled migrant entry.

The coalition had also promised to improved skills recognition and employment prospects information, which is supplied by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs at overseas posts to potential applicants. This would help in informing potential applicant of their employment prospects in Australia. Employer nomination where migrants are guaranteed employment was accorded a higher priority for independent skilled entry. English proficiency was given high priority for permanent skilled and business migrants. It also gave high priority to bilingual and multilingual skills. The coalition recognized the important contribution made to Australian economy by business migrants. The immigration policy was committed to running an effective business migration category, which would bring highly skilled and successful business people with their entrepreneurship skills, capital to Australia.<sup>54</sup> This category was closely monitored to guarantee that only business people of high calibre and character were granted entry. The coalition is concerned at the continuing difficulties experienced by many permanent residents, and many applicants for migration, in having their overseas qualifications adequately and speedily assessed for recognition in Australia. The government would continue a thorough review of the existing processes with the objective of improving their efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The Australian

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<sup>54</sup> Diane K. Mauzy, *Redefining A Nation: Australia's Efforts to Gain Acceptance for Its Policy of Comprehensive Engagement With Asia* The Round Table, (1999) p. 336

government is even planning to establish professional associations with the aim of improving bridge courses to allow migrants to meet Australian standards and bring their qualification up to those required standards. This would help both the migrants in finding work and Australian employers in finding suitably qualified staff.

The Howard Government recognizes the serious concerns that have long been expressed about the aspects of the current system of recognition of Overseas Trained Doctors (OTD's). These concerns were highlighted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's 1995 decision in the case of Dr. B. Siddiqui.<sup>55</sup> The Commission in its present form, the system governing the admission of OTD's to medical practice in Australia is grossly unfair, resulting in unnecessary trauma, frustration and a deep sense of injustice in many doctors, their families and friends.<sup>56</sup> The Howard Government accepts the need to change the existing system to provide for more equitable registration procedures for OTD's.

Australia has an outstanding record of maintaining in its international humanitarian commitments. The refugee and humanitarian program will continue to be an essential element under the present Coalition Government. The refugee and humanitarian assistance was considered to be one of the special keyways of alleviating the massive suffering of the victims of war and abuse of basic human

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., n. 51, p. 6

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 6

rights in many countries. Under this program the government hopes to emphasize the role of assisting genuine refugees. The government plans to review the efficiency and equity of the practice that has emerged in recent years of establishing adhoc special assistance categories, to ensure it does not unfairly disadvantaged the legitimate claims of other refugee or humanitarian applicants.

The increased international flow of goods, services and people means Australia must have an efficient and effective visa system, which is able to handle millions of short term, or temporary arrivals. As people become more internationally mobile this aspect will play an increasingly greater role in government decision.

The government is also undertaking a public review of the effectiveness and efficiency of immigration decision making. This review will pay particular attention to the membership, role and performance of the Immigration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal as fair, impartial and expeditious decision making bodies.<sup>57</sup> Without confidence in the integrity and competence of such agencies, confidence and support for Australia's immigration programs is undermined. The Coalition is also moving towards increased cost recovery of immigration procedures and services to ensure that taxpayers are not called on to subsidize the processing of applications for migration. For this screening procedures the government is committed to a fair and equitable assessment process for all migrant applicants. The

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 7



applicants would also be ensured a fair hearing and provide justification for their decision. Full health and character checks, which are already an integral part of Australia's screening system will be maintained and enhanced of necessary to guarantee confidence in the assessment and approval procedures: future applicants would also be required to give an additional undertaking that they have not committed or participated in war crimes, atrocities or crimes against humanity. There would also be enforcement of the provisions for the revocation of visas where they have been obtained as a result of fraudulent or false declarations. The Citizenship Act would also be amended where necessary, to allow the revocation without time limitation – of future grants of citizenship, where such citizenship was granted as a result of material false declaration made or demonstrable fraud, either at the time of entry to Australia, or application for citizenship.

The Coalition Government also has provisions to support the mandatory detention of illegal immigrants, with appropriate release provision in the event of prolonged detention. It is also reviewing the Migration Reform Act (MRA) to ensure that prolonged detention is avoided.<sup>58</sup>

These are the key provisions of the immigration policy under the Liberal National Party during 1996 to 1998. As the coalition continues to be in power, the various policy decisions mentioned above remain in place.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 7

Thus, in this chapter we can see how different governments adopted liberalization policy in their immigration program in order to give off the so-called “White Australia Policy”.

***CHAPTER – IV***

***MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA***

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM

*“ It is precisely because of the cultural diversity of the World that it is necessary for different nations and peoples to agree on those basic human values, which will act as an unifying factor”.*

*Aung San Suu Kyi.*

For the first time in history, after Cold War, that global politics has become multipolar and multicivilized.<sup>1</sup> In the post Cold War period the important distinctions among people are not ideological, political or economic but cultural. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and at the broadest level, civilizations.<sup>2</sup> People use politics not just to advance their interest but also to define their identity.

Plural, Diverse and Multicultural are terms commonly used to describe societies that comprise of different religions, race, languages and cultures. These three words are often interchangeably used and each of these expressions represents the same thing – namely, the presence of many, different communities.<sup>3</sup> Although it is true that plural, diverse and multicultural point to the existence of many, it is less realized that these three words carry different conceptions of “many”. The idea of multiplicity and difference that they incorporate are dissimilar in different ways. And we need to understand the meaning of these concepts in order to have a broad idea of multiculturalism. Let us begin with plurality. Plurality suggests the presence of many

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<sup>1</sup> Sameul P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Penguin Books India (P) Ltd. 1997) p. 21

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>3</sup> Gurpreet Mahajan, *Rethinking Multiculturalism Seminar, Monthly Symposium New Delhi; 1999* p. 56

but it does not stipulate any thing about the nature of many.<sup>4</sup> How the multiple forms are structured, and how they relate to one another, are expects on which the idea of plurality is silent.

Consequently, the many that it denotes could be manifold representations of “one,” they could even be reducible to a single unified whole. Alternately, the “many,” may be separate and unequal entities. We may speak of a multi – racial society as a plural society even when the different races are related to each other in a relationship of domination and subordination. The existence of “many,” is a sign of democracy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because the presence of one, for instance, one ideology, one political party, one electoral candidate, is regarded to be a sign of state coercion. Hence, the presence of many associations, interest groups, political parties and so on – are seen as a minimum condition of freedom.

Plurality merely suggests the presence of many; diversity points to the existence of many that are different, heterogeneous and often incommensurable.<sup>5</sup> To put it in another way, when we speak of diversity we refer to multiplicity that is not collapsible into one. The concept of multiculturalism endorses the idea of difference and heterogeneity that is embodied in the concept of diversity.<sup>6</sup> The diverse cultural communities are categorized as majority or minorities. In modern democratic politics the state is usually identified with the majority culture, while communities that differ from it are designated as minorities.<sup>7</sup> In other words diversity is no longer pushed outside the nation – state. Moreover, as diverse communities coexist within the state,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 58

<sup>6</sup> J. G. Von Herder, *On Social and Political Culture* translated and edited by F. M. Barnard, Cambridge; 1969 p.188

<sup>7</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship* “Ethics” 99 (2): 1989 p. 250

multiculturalism raises the issue of their equality. It asks whether the different entities, constituting the many are granted and equal status within the polity.<sup>8</sup> The German historians and philosophers, who spoke of cultural diversity, conveniently pushed differences outside the boundary of the state. The multiculturalists, on the other hand, place diversity within the borders of the nation – state. The concern for equality and non-discrimination of people of minority communities links multiculturalism to democracy in a fundamental way.<sup>9</sup> The concept of multiculturalism contributes to this agenda of democratization and non-discrimination. First, it locates cultural identity as a source of discrimination in a society. While earlier theories focussed on discrimination that occurs on account of one's religion, race and gender, multiculturalism points to discrimination of minority cultures within the nation – state. Second, it argues that equality for diverse cultures requires a system of special, group-differentiated rights.<sup>10</sup> While liberals defend universal citizenship and equal rights as the most suitable instruments for countering community based discrimination, the multiculturalists support special group rights for vulnerable minorities. The concept of multiculturalism is significantly different from that of plurality and diversity. While plurality simply represents the existence of many (more than one), multiculturalism points to the existence of many, which are equal in the public arena. In other words, the presence of many different communities in itself is not enough. The important thing is whether they are treated as equals by the state.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 260

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., n. 3 p. 58

<sup>10</sup> D. L. Sheth & Gurpreet Mahajan (eds.) *Minority, Identities and the Nation – State* Oxford University Press: 1999 p. 14

The early 1970's marked the emergence of the multicultural movement at first in Canada and Australia and then in the USA, UK, Germany and France. Multiculturalism is best understood neither as a political doctrine nor as a philosophical school but as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life. Its central meanings are there, each of which is sometimes misinterpreted by its advocates and needs to be carefully reformulated. First, human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance.<sup>11</sup> And this does not mean that they are determined by their culture in the sense of being unable to rise above its categories of thought and critically evaluate its values and system of meaning, but rather that they are deeply shaped by it, can overcome some but not all of its influences, and necessarily view the world from within a culture, be it the one they have inherited and uncritically accepted or reflectively revised, or in rare cases one they have consciously adopted. Secondly, different cultures represent different systems of meaning and visions of the good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions and grasps only a part of the totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understand itself better, expand its intellectual and moral horizon, stretch its imagination, save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutise itself and so on. This does not mean that one cannot lead a good life within one's own culture, but rather that other things being equal, one's way of life is

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<sup>11</sup> Bhiku Parekh, *Equality in a Multicultural Society* in J. Franklin (ed.) 'Equality', London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 1997 p. 17

likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others, and that a culturally self – contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and independent world.<sup>12</sup> All it means is that no culture is wholly worthless, that it deserves at least some respect because of what it means to its numbers. Third, every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. This doesn't mean that it is devoid of coherence and identity, but that its identity is plural, fluid and open. Cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be significant in others, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitutions.<sup>13</sup>

Multiculturalism is now the preferred term to describe the policies of a nation – state in relation to its cultural minorities. The concept of nation – state implies that the state is held together not only by sovereignty and common laws and procedures but also by a shared national identity and culture.<sup>14</sup> Attempts to accommodate individual rights as well as those of the minority communities characterize the multicultural state.

From a multiculturalist perspective, no political doctrine or ideology can represent the full truth of human life. Each of them be it liberalism, conservatism, socialism or nationalism is embedded in a particular culture, represents a particular vision of the good life, and is necessarily narrow and partial. Multiculturalism also marginalizes such other great values as human solidarity community, a sense of

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<sup>12</sup> Bhiku Parekh, *What is Multiculturalism?* Seminar, Monthly Symposium, New Delhi, p. 14

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>14</sup> D. T. Goldberg (ed.) *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* Oxford; Blackwell, 1994, p. 5



rootedness, selflessness, deep and self-effacing humanity and contentment.<sup>15</sup> From a multiculturalist perspective the good society cherishes the diversity and encourages a creative dialogue between its different cultures and their moral visions. Such a society not only respects the rights of its members to their culture but also cultivates in them the power of self – criticism, self – determination, imagination, intellectual and moral sympathy, and contributes to their development and well – being. The only condition of multiculturalism is that it should not repeat the mistake of its monocultural counterpart by requiring that all its communities should become multicultural. Indeed, it should cherish cultural plurality as it accommodates those who do not share its dominant cultural ethos. In order to be stable and long lasting, a multicultural society has to develop a commonsense of belonging among its citizens. The sense of belonging cannot be ethnic and based on shared cultural, ethnic and other characteristics, for a multicultural society is too diverse for that but must be political and based on a shared commitment to the political community.<sup>16</sup> Its members do not directly belong to each other as in an ethnic group but through their mediating membership of a shared community, and they are committed to each other because they are all in their own different ways committed to a common political community. The commitment to a political community is highly complex in nature and easily misunderstood. The political commitment does not mean commitment to common goals, for members of a community might deeply disagree with it, nor to a common view of its history, nor to its form of government about which the members might entertain very different views, nor to its dominant cultural ethos. The commitment to its continuing existence and well – being, and implies that one cares

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., n. 12 p. 16

enough for it not to harm its interests and undermine its integrity. Whatever may be the emotions of the citizens towards their community the only thing expected from them is that there should be basic commitment to its integrity and well – being, what one might call it as patriotism or political loyalty.<sup>17</sup> The political community cannot expect its members to develop a sense of belonging to it unless it in turn belongs to them. It must, therefore, value and cherish them all equally and reflect this in its structure, policy conduct of public affairs, self-understanding and self-definition.<sup>18</sup> And this involves granting them equal rights of citizenship, a decent standard of living, and the opportunity to develop themselves and participate in and make their respective contributions to its collective life. In a multicultural society different communities have different needs and some might be structurally disadvantaged or lack the skill and the confidence to participate in the mainstream society and avail of its opportunities. Both justice and the need to foster a common sense of belonging then require such measures as group differentiated rights, culturally differentiated application of laws and policies, state support for minority institutions and a judicious program of affirmative action.

#### **Domestic Explanation:**

Western Canadians devised the term multiculturalism to protest continuing hegemonic ambition by the anglophone and francophones of Central Canada. The subsequent Federal government policy of multiculturalism and official bilingualism

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<sup>17</sup> S. Castles, *Australian Multiculturalism: Social Policy and Identity in a Changing Society* in G. Freeman and J. Jupp (eds.) *Nations of Immigrants: Australia, the United States and International Migration*. Melbourne; Oxford University Press p. 184

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184

established in Canada set off two decades of political change, leading to a new constitution, a charter of rights and a referendum on separation.<sup>19</sup>

Broadly speaking, national approaches to the management of cultural and ethnic diversity can be grouped into three categories which themselves have variants in the models they comprise. The first approach is well illustrated by France, which calling upon Article 2 of its constitution (which makes no reference to cultural identity), avoids to recognize the existence of national or linguistic minorities within it to borders.<sup>20</sup> French citizens, whatever their ethnic origin, enjoy equal civic, cultural and linguistic rights as individuals, but not collectively, as minority groups. This integrationist response to diversity assumes that the non-recognition of minority groups is a way of preserving state unity and societal cohesion.<sup>21</sup>

In comparison to the individualistic French approach the model illustrated by Germany, Japan or Singapore is founded upon the principle of Jus – Sanguinis, as opposed to Jus – Soli.<sup>22</sup> Citizenship in these countries based on “blood” or ethnic origin concretely this means for example, that German citizenship can only be granted to those individuals of German ancestry.

Finally a third category, of which Australia and Canada are the foremost example, is accommodations of identitarian claims through the adoptions of a model

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<sup>19</sup> L. Dorais, L. Foster and D. Stockley, *Multiculturalism and Integration* in H. Adelman et al; (eds.) *Immigration and Refugee Policy: Australia and Canada Compared*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1994 p. 375

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 378

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 392

<sup>22</sup> Multiculturalism: A policy Response to Diversity Paper prepared on the Occasion of the “1995 Global Cultural Diversity Conference” 26 – 28 April 1995 and “Most Pacific Sub – Regional Consultation” 28 – 29 April 1995, both in Sydney, Australia by Management of Social Transformation (MOST) UNESCO 1995 p. 3

of multiculturalism as an official policy response. Although Australia and Canada have adopted this approach, it is important to point out that not all groups in the two societies were favorable to this decision. Traditionally, a major difference between them which affects the evolution of multiculturalism is that Australia is composed of one indigenous population – the Aborigines – one founding population – English – and was later populated by waves of immigrant population. Canada, however, has several indigenous or First Nation populations; and two “founding populations”: one English, one French (with the French having arrived about 100 years before the English).<sup>23</sup>

#### **Implications of Multiculturalism:**

Link to these three approaches are three interrelated, but nevertheless distinctive, references of “multiculturalism” and its related adjective “multicultural”: the demographic – descriptive; the ideological – normative and the programmatic – political.

The demographic – descriptive usage occurs where the word “Multicultural” refers to the existence of linguistically, culturally and ethnically diverse segments in the population of a society or state.<sup>24</sup> It represents a perception that such distinctiveness has some social significance – primarily because of perceived cultural differences though these are frequently associated with forms of structural differentiation. The precise ethnic groupings, which exist in a state, the significance

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 4

of ethnicity for social participation in the societal institutions and the processes through which ethnic differentiation is constructed and maintained many, vary considerably between individual states and overtime.<sup>25</sup>

The ideological – normative usage of multiculturalism generates the greatest level of debate since it constitutes a slogan and bases for political action. Furthermore, it is one where the limited implementation of explicit multicultural programs and policies mean that there is a limited range of empirical evidence available on their operation and out come. The ideological – normative usage of “multiculturalism” constitutes a specific focus towards the management and organization of governmental responses to ethnic diversity.<sup>26</sup> Put in simplistic terms, these alternatives constitutes a continuation from assimilationism to differentialism. The extreme focus of which are exclusion, apartheid, “ethnic cleansing” and genocide. While assimilationism views the significance of ethnic or cultural differences as transitory and disappearing overtime as a result of full political, cultural and social incorporation of minority groups into the nation, differentialism does not envisage or consider possible such an in corporation. As an alternative to assimilationism and differentialism, multiculturalism emphasizes and acknowledges the existence of ethnic diversity and ensures the rights of individuals to retain their culture. It goes hand in hand with enjoying full access to, participation in, and adhesion to constitutional principles and commonly shared values prevailing in the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 5

society.<sup>27</sup> By acknowledging the rights of individuals and groups and ensuring their equitable access to society; the advocates of multiculturalism maintain that such a policy benefits both the individuals and the society at large, thus, reducing pressures for social conflicts based on disadvantage and inequality.<sup>28</sup> They also argue, that multiculturalism enriches the society as a whole. In Australia in particular, it is contented that cultural diversity actually provides an important national resource for economic, political, cultural and foreign relations. This view corresponds to a definition of “multiculturalism” as “the theory that it is beneficial to a society to maintain more than one culture within its structure”.<sup>29</sup>

Third, pragmatic – political usage of “multiculturalism” refers to the specific policies developed to respond to, and manage ethnic diversity.<sup>30</sup> Originally coined in Canada, mainly as a response to English/ French divide, the concept was subsequently endorsed by Australia in a statement called “A multicultural society for the future,” launched in 1973. Despite adopting this approach, there are many who question today the relevance of the policy to the indigenous population of these two countries, as well in New Zealand, where the indigenous maori people resist the notion of an official multicultural policy. Elsewhere, although multiculturalism may not be officially adopted as national policy, at various sub – national levels or in non – governmental agencies, multicultural approach addresses issues of ethnic and cultural diversity and are put into practice in many ways.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., n. 14, p. 26

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., n. 19 p. 400

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 401

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 402

An examination of “multicultural” policies indicates that while there may be certain very general shared objectives (based on the ideological – normative view of multiculturalism) the actual practices underlying such policies vary considerably among various states and have changed over time within each state. As a pragmatic response to diversity, multiculturalism must be seen as located within a very specific historical context, both nationally and internationally.

### **Australia and Multiculturalism:**

Australia’s multicultural policies evolved from the need to address issues raised by the arrival in Australia of large number of migrants, many whose first language was not English. This evolution has undergone three main phases:

a). **ASSIMILATION:** (1901 to the mid 1960’s)

Assimilation implies almost total absorption into another linguistic and cultural group. This policy drew its rationale from the so-called “White Australia Policy”. While the preference of this time was for British migrants, others were accepted on the understanding that they should shed their cultures and languages and be assimilated into the host population so that they would rapidly become indistinguishable from it. The policy effectively excluded non-European immigration. It could not, however, withstand the attitudinal changes after World War II, and the growing recognition in Australia that, in relation to Asian countries,

it was not just a matter of “our view of them” but also “their view of us” which was important.<sup>31</sup>

b). INTEGRATION: (The mid 1960’s to 1972)

Integration does not imply the loss of an individual’s identity and original language and culture. The Liberal Country Party effectively ended the “White Australia Policy” in 1966 by allowing the migration of “distinguished” non-Europeans. Among other things the new integration policy recognized that large number of migrants, especially those whose first language was not English, were experiencing many hardships as they settled into life in Australia, and required more direct assistance. It also recognized the importance of ethnic organizations in assisting the process of resettlement. Expenditure on migrant assistance and welfare rose sharply in the early 1970’s in response to those needs.<sup>32</sup>

c). MULTICULTURALISM: (from 1972)

By 1973, the term “multiculturalism” had been introduced and minority groups were forming state and national association to promote the survival of their language and heritage within mainstream institutions. This brought about a radical new view of the place of migrants in Australian society and offering many substantive changes in government provisions for migrants and ethnic minorities.

In 1979, the coalition government’s initiative resulted in the passing of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act, which established the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA), whose objectives included raising

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<sup>31</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Multicultural Australia*, Fact Sheet no. 2 February 1988 p. 1

<sup>32</sup> L. Foster and D. Stockley, *Australian Multiculturalism: A Documentary History and Critique*, Clarendon: Multilingual 1988 Book reviewed in *International Migration*, vol. XXVIII, no.4



awareness of cultural identity and promoting social cohesion, understanding and tolerance.

In 1986, the Act was replaced by the Labor Government, which then created in 1987 the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

In 1989, following community consultations and drawing on the advice of Advisory Council for Multicultural Affairs, the Labor Government produced the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which had and continues to have a bipartisan political support. This National Agenda consisted of three dimensions of multicultural policy: -

- a). Cultural Identity: The right of all Australians within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual – cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- b). Social Justice: The right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, or place of birth; and
- c). Economic Efficiency: The need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.<sup>33</sup>

These dimensions of multiculturalism are said to apply equally to all Australians whether Aboriginal, Anglo – Celtic or non – English speaking Background – regardless of whether they were born in Australia or overseas.

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<sup>33</sup> Insight, Foreign Affairs and Trade, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1996 p. 8

The National Agenda was a pioneering document of its time and was developed in 1989 by the former Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, with the help of a specially appointed group of Australians from diverse cultural backgrounds forming an Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs (ACMA).<sup>34</sup> Eight recommendations were accepted by the Prime minister and his government.

However, the Agenda also accepted that there were limits to Australian Multiculturalism. This was carefully worded to allay the fears of some Australians who were suspicious of what multiculturalism “really” meant. In summary there policies were based on the premise that; firstly, all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future; secondly, all Australians were expected to accept core Australian values and basic structure of Australian society – the constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and thirdly, an acceptance of the principle that the right to express one’s own culture and beliefs involved a reciprocal obligation to accept the right of others to express their views and values.<sup>35</sup>

In 1994, NMAC (National Multicultural Advisory Council) was established to review and update the National Agenda. The NMAC report, of June 1995, found that much had been achieved, and recommended some more initiatives.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 8

<sup>35</sup> Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, FACT SHHET 8 – The Evolution of Australia’s Multicultural Policies 1993 p. 3

Following the election of Conservative Coalitions Government in March 1996, the Office of Multicultural Affairs was absorbed into the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.<sup>36</sup>

Australia has an enviable international reputation for being a racially tolerant and culturally diverse nation. Prime Minister John Howard moved a parliamentary statement on Racial Tolerance, in the House of Representatives in October 1996. The statement: reaffirmed its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin.

- Reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining an immigration policy wholly non – discriminatory on grounds of race, colour, creed or origin;
- reaffirmed its commitment to the processes of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in the context of redressing their social and economic disadvantage;
- reaffirmed its commitment to maintain Australia as a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, united by a overriding commitment to our nation, and its democratic institutions and values;
- denounced racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be.<sup>37</sup> The statement was supported by the Opposition leader, Kim Beazley. The parliament unanimously endorsed the government statement on racial tolerance.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 4

- In June 1997, the government announced the new NMAC on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1999, Prime Minister, Mr. Howard, launched NMAC's report "Australian Multiculturalism for a new Century: Towards Inclusiveness". The report identified issues relevant for future multicultural policies and programs. In particular the Council recommended improving and refocusing.

#### Multiculturalism By:

- Highlighting that Australian multiculturalism has been built on the evolving values of Australian democracy and 'citizenship';
- Ensuring that it adequately reflects the balance of rights and obligations expected of all 'citizens';
- Making it inclusive so that it seeks to embrace and be embraced by all sections of the community;
- Acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of their multicultural society, and in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which their democracy has evolved;
- Stressing the imperative nature and urgency of reconciliation between the indigenous people and all other Australians;
- Promoting acceptance and mutual respect by all Australians of their diverse cultures;
- Drawing a clear conceptual distinction between settlement and multicultural strategies;

- Ensuring that they maximize the social, cultural and economic benefits of their diversity and address any of its weakness;
- Ensuring that the funding of multicultural programs is based on defined criteria and accountability;
- Seeking political leadership and cross – party support for Australian multiculturalism; and by
- Stressing the importance of leadership, in all areas of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of a culturally diverse society.<sup>38</sup>

Over the last twenty-eight years, the philosophy of multiculturalism has given rise to a range of multicultural policies in education, employment languages, community services, health, housing, the arts, media, broadcasting, and the law. And overall they have been successful in redressing the disadvantage that immigrants' face in accessing services which have always been designed for mainstream Australians – that is Australians of Anglo – Celtic heritage.<sup>39</sup>

Multiculturalism in Australia replaced earlier policies of assimilation and briefly, integration. The Anglo – Celtic assimilation policies of the 1940's, 50's and 60's were first criticized by Al Grassby, the first Minister for Immigration of Prime Minister Whitlam's government.<sup>40</sup> This government is also known for having established the Ethnic Radio in June 1975. The incoming Fraser Liberal Government (from November 1975 to 1983) continued promoting Australia as a multicultural

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>39</sup> Hanifa Deen, *Ethnic Minority Groups and Public Policy in Australia: New Challenges in a Culturally Diverse Society* India – Australia Public Policy Conference, Curtin University of Technology, Perth 1996 p. 118

<sup>40</sup> Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of 1990's* Melbourne; Melbourne University Press, 1995 p. 27

society through a number of policy initiatives, including the establishment of the special Broadcasting Service in 1978, designed to oversee Ethnic Radio, which was established in June 1975 and later multicultural television introduced in 1980. Australia has come a long way in its pursuits of multiculturalism as today there are as much as 80 newspapers and periodicals appearing at least monthly in at least 25 languages. The readership comprises of approximately 5,00,000 people. However, all ethnic press is privately owned.

Since its establishment, the Ethnic Radio has been plagued with uncertainty regarding its future. Much of this is linked to the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and is due to the tensions between the rights of the ethnic communities in the management of this service and those of the government.<sup>41</sup> Restrictions were imposed by the government and on SBS, imposed guidelines governing the content of the broadcasts. The guidelines were however discontinued in 1985.

#### An Assessment of Multiculturalism in Australia:

Multiculturalism in Australia has evolved through several phases. A characteristic of all the phases was that it necessitated a far more pro-active governmental response than was required by earlier policies. Earlier it was assumed that, while there might be a few delays and disruptions along the way, ultimately, ethnic homogeneity would ensue so that no specific institutional change was required. A major impetus for the change in policy was the emergence of an ethnic rights movement, which included articulated and politically active immigrants from

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<sup>41</sup> Migrant Services & Programs, Report of the Review of Post – Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, Parliamentary Paper, Australian government Publishing Service, Canberra, May 1978, p. 110

non – English speaking backgrounds and grassroots workers in a range of welfare areas, education, health, and social services, concerned about the disadvantages faced by many known English speaking background immigrants.<sup>42</sup> The 1972 elections of a non – Conservative Reformist Government committed to social welfare provisions and overcoming social disadvantages was responsive to changes addressing class related disadvantage and the potential contribution of ethnicity.<sup>43</sup>

In the first phase of Australian policy, the target groups were the newly arrived immigrants of non – English speaking background. The main focus was on the provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate services with the long-term acceptance that culturally maintenance, especially evolving language diversity, should be supported.<sup>44</sup> Funding of the nation wide Telephone Interpreter Service, and of welfare and Health Services for specific ethnic groups were a major initiative which have continued till today. Other major initiatives in this period included the development of “community” language program and to a much lesser extent, bilingual education in schools as well as government funding of after hours ethnic community language schools and the setting up of government Radio and Television networks for broadcasting in languages other than English.

In the second phase of the policy the focus of concern shifted from cultural maintenance to concerns about inequity and social disadvantage and, subsequently,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., n. 22 p. 14

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., n. 35 p.4

<sup>44</sup> Australia and The Refugee Problem, Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, The Commonwealth government Printers, Canberra, 1977, p. 4

to community relations and racism.<sup>45</sup> Contributing to this shift was the perceptions that cultural maintenance and cultural pluralism were insufficient to overcome structural inequities confronting many of those belonging to non-English speaking backgrounds, even if not themselves immigrants. The response was not, however, to set up parallel institutional structures but to move towards deep change in the major institutions, especially those bureaucratic institutions associated with the delivery of governmental services. The terms “mainstreaming” was used to refer to the strategies involved in changing the essentially monocultural bureaucracies. Programmatic – political multiculturalism had already resulted in a variety of Federal and State agencies to oversee policy development and implementation but the shift now was towards changing the way general governmental agencies operated. These changes intended to remove structural barriers to social participation and were enunciated in the 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. They were part of the government broader agenda for promoting social justice and ensuring equitable access to government programs and services for a range of groups perceived as disadvantaged, including Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the disabled and women as well as those of non –English speaking background.

Political outcomes of the National Agenda included improvement of the procedures for recognizing overseas qualifications; a campaign to improve community relations a strengthening of the government’s access and equity strategy; extensions and improvement of multicultural to broadcasting; extension of English

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., n. 35 p. 5



language teaching programs and support programs; a commitment for continued support for second language bearing and reviews of law and administrative decision – making.<sup>46</sup>

The Australian National Agenda is significant for the way in which it heralded the shift from multiculturalism as a policy for specific targeted groups to being a broader policy for “all Australians”. In this way, the programmatic – political definition of Multiculturalism shifted from a “ethnic group” model to what has been described as a “social democratic concept of citizenship for an ethnically diverse nation”.<sup>47</sup>

As important innovation in the specification of the dimensions of multiculturalism is the inclusion of “economic efficiency” which gives Australian Programmatic – political multiculturalism a unique orientation. Specially, it is the key to the argument that multiculturalism is for “all Australians,” since it specifies how cultural diversity is in the interests of all, through its contribution to the economic development of Australia. “Economic productivity,” which follows from this dimension involves utilizing the cultural skills and talents of Australians from diverse cultural backgrounds to extend Australian economic initiatives both locally and internationally. The use of economic advantage as a basis for achieving legitimation and national acceptance of multiculturalism is not fortuitous. The changes heralded in the National Agenda articulate the broader changes involving economic structuring of the labor market and the industrial relations system designed

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., n. 39 p.119

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., n. 22, p. 13

to ensure a more flexible workplace reliance on formal paper qualification.<sup>48</sup> As part of the restructuring of the economy there was also a refocusing towards a highly skilled workplace which was to be achieved through major reforms of the educational and training institutions.

The changes in Australian multiculturalism policy over the last two decades are the outcome of a variety of factors, including awareness of the limitations and outcomes of earlier stages of the policy (as with supplementing cultural pluralism and maintenance initiatives with efforts to reduce disadvantage by removing structural barriers). Changes in the policy objectives of different elected governments and the changing outcome of the interplay of interest groups affected by multiculturalism.<sup>49</sup> An underlying factor of considerable importance is the emergence of a generation of Australians who have grown up under the policy of multiculturalism and accept the changes it has produced in Australian society. These include a much more inclusive approach to the attributes of Australian identity and a remarkably high level of tolerance. High levels of inter – generational mobility have also contributed to acceptance of the policy among those of non-English speaking background.

To Sum Up: - There is little to suggest that the multiculturalism policy has reached an end point in its evolution. Australian society has continued and will continue, to change. In addition to economic restructuring, the fiscal crisis of the last decade has resulted in major reductions in the commitment by government to provide, and their

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., n. 35 p. 3

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., n. 22 p. 15

ability to pay for, the range of welfare activities which were common when multiculturalism commenced. Inevitably, this puts pressure on expenditure associated with multicultural support services as well as other, programs. The existence of such support services, especially for newly arrived immigrants, has been viewed as contributing to successful settlement of these in Australia and the absence of an emerging ethnic underclass. The composition of new arrivals has also shifted which now include substantial numbers of Asians, often-skilled professionals, technicians and managers. Their relationship to those of other ethnic backgrounds and their response to multiculturalism has yet to be clarified.

In addition to these changes, there are also unresolved tensions within the policy, which could well produce further change. These include the balance between policy provisions for specific ethnic groups and more general provisions for diversity within existing institutional structures; the balance between maintenance of cultural diversity or pluralism and the attainment of equity; and the acceptance of a national identity based on a concept not of unity but on diversity of cultures, a far more abstract notion, the symbols of which may not always be easily identified. A considerable level of pragmatism has characterized the policy responses adapted by government in Australia to multiculturalism and within fairly broad limits, they have been successful in avoiding the highly emotive critiques and opposition based on a politics of identity.

***CHAPTER - V***

***CONCLUSION***

## CONCLUSION

Australia's current immigration policy and its emergence as a multicultural nation as discussed earlier has been a slow evolving process. It took years for Australia to come to terms with being a country of white people located in Asian neighborhood. Though from its very inception it was a country of immigrants, it chose to deliberately prevent non-Europeans from entering. Its immigration policy of racial discrimination came to be known as the "White Australia Policy". The Australia's immigration policy was related to its foreign policy, which reflected its desire to be a part of the larger entity like Great Britain and USA. In the early 50's Australia entered into a formal security relationship with USA and also strengthened its already existing ties with Britain. This close relationship with the west seemed to assuage the anxiety felt by the Australians vis-à-vis their culturally and ethnically different neighborhood. There is no doubt that Australia's immigration policy was a step taken to protect itself against its exaggerated dangers from the Asian mainland.

As the neighboring countries gained independence, their criticism of Australia's kind of apartheid became vociferous. They questioned the selective immigration in which only Europeans seemed to qualify while no Asian or African seemed "good enough to be let into Australia". However, the most form of the discriminatory law had to be relaxed. Australia could no longer live a life of isolation as in pre World War II years. For it's economic and political well being interaction with the Asian neighbors had become a necessity. For example, relations could turn

disagreeable it for instance a rich South east Asian businessman was denied an entry permit which could result in an uproar in the regional press. Therefore, small concessions were made to the 1901 law, which prohibited entry of seven categories of person. The first category consisted of those who failed to pass the “dictation test” which was aimed ~~to~~ to keep non-Europeans out. It was, basically, in 1966 that some changes were in the immigration laws. Under these changes, firstly, non-Europeans ~~could enter~~ <sup>spouses and minor children could enter.</sup> ~~residing in Australia~~. Secondly, non-Europeans could apply for immigration but their entry would depend on their ability to fulfill certain requirements. Thirdly, those of mixed descent could also apply and this category found it easier to ~~enter~~ <sup>enter</sup> Australia. However, the White Australia Policy of 1901 virtually remained unchanged in spite of 1966 law. Hence, till 1972 Australia remained exclusively a white country with sparse population.

The rapid expansion of Australia’s trade with Asia and the dynamic economic growth of East and Southeast Asian countries, were some of the important reasons for Australia to abandon its white Australia policy. Consequently, Australia started identifying more with the region than being an outpost for Anglo – Saxon countries. Laying down the policy of multiculturalism was Australia’s effort at imbibing a new identity. Even though the Labor Party under Gough Whitlam was responsible for doing away with the racist policy, the subsequent Liberal Government of Malcolm Fraser did not deviate from these changes. It was so because by now the policy makers realized the importance and significance of its Asian countries.

The late 1980's and 1990's were watershed years for Australia. It was engaged in the reshaping of its national identity, which was more internationalists and regionally focussed. In its attempt to become a regional power, it has to have a foreign policy stressing "Constructive Engagement" with Southeast Asia. Australia by taking active interest in the formation of Indian Ocean Rim Association has boosted trade and commerce among the Afro – Asian littoral states. It is also a member of APEC, ARF and a dialogue partner of ASEAN. These indicate a culmination of a search for Asian identity. If history draws them closer to Britain and the United States, geography demands greater allegiance to Asia.

Australian governance under multiculturalism is utilizing cultural and language diversity as a source for the future, which could be of help in Australia's economic efficiency and competitiveness in the new global market. At present there are over 170 Bilateral Business Association (BSA) covering 58 countries, 63 of which relate to the Asia – Pacific region. Moreover, these bodies represent a partnership between local trade associations and local ethnic groups; the later leasing with business in their own country of origin. This is one of the ways by which diversity is linked to productivity. Australia's diversity has given it a network of people with inside knowledge of the outside world. This cultural diversity of Australia was utilized to attract the 2000 Olympic games to Sydney. Capitalizing their diversity through the strategic use of business networks, language skills, cultural understanding and market knowledge would take Australia a long way into the new global market place in the years to come. As a consequence of these

endeavors, the immigration policies of Australia over the last two decades have social, political, cultural and economic development of the country. In its attempt to be accepted in the region, even as an “odd man in” than an “odd man out”, Australian leaders particularly in the early 1990’s under Prime Minister Paul Keating and Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, it was decided to redefine Australia as an Asian Society. Reinforcing belief in multiculturalism became the mantra with which close ties could be cultivated with geographical neighbor. However, critics like Sameul P. Huntington, considered Australian Asian ploy, a failure because of three reasons. First, there is no consensus among Australian elite regarding this shift towards Asia; even the ruling Liberal Party has not been as vocal as the Labor regarding the development of an Asian identity for Australia. Second, public opinion is ambivalent regarding multiculturalism, as many in Australia feel overwhelmed by the presence of Asian migrants. Third, and most important “the elite of the Asian countries have been less receptive to Australia’s advances than European elite have been in Turkey”. This thesis of Huntington is not completely true for Australia is now truly pluralistic and multicultural as it is willingly accepted by the region and does not carry any longer the negative images of the past (an immigration policy tainted with racism). At present in Australia strong bipartisan support exists for maintaining a universalistic criteria for immigration program <sup>and</sup> mainly Europeans but since ~~then~~ there has been a “demographic – revolution”.

There is now no turning back for Australia’s open immigration policy and multiculturalism. As already seen whichever political party might come to power,



there is no way that retrograde steps vis-à-vis the immigration policy will be taken. However, there are people like Pauline Hanson, the leader of One Nation Party<sup>who</sup> has ultra rightist views regarding the Asian immigration and multiculturalism. But the rejection of her party by a large number of white Australians show that multiculturalism is fully established in Australia. And moreover, Australia is trying to get out of the stereo type image of being defined as geographically “almost a part of Asia” and psychologically, “a part of Europe”.

To sum up, the contemporary Australia under the policy of Multiculturalism, provides to all immigrants the rights to cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency. The strategies adopted by Australian government by achieving social cohesion among its diverse population have resulted in Australia emerging as a middle power.

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