Security and Inclusiveness:
Protecting Australia's Way of Life

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Abstract

In the post-September 11 context, global vulnerability to terrorist attacks is heightened. In this article, I address the core dilemma of how a multicultural state like Australia balances the need to protect citizens against threats of terrorism with the promotion of multicultural tolerance. I show that what currently is being protected is a construction of a way of life that is not as inclusive as it claims to be. In reality, Arab-Australians and Muslims are implicated in the public imagination as threatening Australia's secure way of life. I explore some of the contradictions between the Australian government's public statements on diversity and tolerance and those actions that contradict these statements, particularly policies on asylum-seekers and border protection. My central argument is that governments should strive to balance the demands of state security and multicultural inclusiveness. A balance can be grounded in 'decent protection', a normative ideal that ethically evaluates domestic and foreign policies in terms of principles of respectful compassion. Governments that want to be considered ethically responsible should heed such arguments.

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Introduction: global vulnerability

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11 2001 in New York and Washington, on October 12 2002 in Bali and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, issues of security and protection dominate political and media analysis, travellers' concerns and people's fears. Within liberal democracies, national security generally has been left to foreign policy and international relations. Domestically, we are more accustomed to emphases on autonomy, self-sufficiency and independence than on vulnerability and the need for protection. However, vulnerability is part of being human. We are all at risk of suffering and sometimes need protection. The core dilemma this article explores is how a multicultural state like Australia balances the need to protect citizens against the threat of terrorist attacks with the promotion of cultural tolerance and multicultural inclusiveness. Through exploring the concept of the way of life that is being stressed by the Australian government, I argue that there are contradictions between rhetoric and practice. Australia is not a violent place of conflict, but disruptions to peaceful multicultural interactions are occurring. Australia is known for its openness, but exclusions are notable, most obviously toward Muslims. In particular, Australia's treatment of asylum-seekers challenges its reputation of being open to difference and protective of diversity. While I use Australia as an example, my central argument that governments should balance state security with human security has broad applicability. I argue that this balance can be grounded in a normative ideal of 'decent protection' that provides protective political security and a human security that responds compassionately to people's needs.

Protecting Australia's way of life

In February 2003, a twenty page booklet, titled '*Let's Look Out for Australia. Protecting Our Way of Life From a Possible Terrorist Threat*' was distributed to eight million households. Its emphasis is that public vigilance is needed to increase feelings of safety. Also, Australians are reminded in it that 'the way of life we all value so highly must go

on'.[1] My analysis of Australia's 'way of life' is a critical response to the persistent use of this concept in the booklet. In response to the September 11 2001 attack in the USA, Australia's Prime Minister, John Howard said that the attack was 'not just on America', but it was 'an attack on a way of life' shared across the world.[2] Howard clarifies that the attack amounts to 'a fight between those who believe in freedom and liberty and peace' and those who intimidate through terror.[3] What constitutes Australia's valued way of life may be contested, but the salient question here is who should have access to it. The government's 'Strength Through Diversity' program claims it 'promotes the values that unite us as Australians – tolerance, justice and a "fair go" for all'.[4] This program refers to 'building a united Australia' where cultural diversity acts as 'a unifying force'.

The government's emphasis on 'our way of life' is problematic. Historically, the White Australia policy, 'equated citizenship with adherence to the uniform values of a supposed "Australian way of life"'.[5] An assumed uniformity in the late 1960s yielded to the rhetoric of a broader tolerance of diversity within an emergent multiculturalism. The philosophical underpinning of multiculturalism is a recognition of, and fair treatment of diversities. Undoubtedly, those who value a multicultural 'way of life' share an equal respect for human dignity that underlies human rights and civil freedoms. Yet, we practice our liberty and equality not merely as individual rights-bearing agents, but as members of different groups. Within liberal democracies how citizens recognise and relate to one another cooperatively is significant in promoting peaceful coexistence. Multiculturalists argue that cultural justice in the sense of recognition of particular differences is as important to self-worth as a politics of equal dignity based on rights and justice. In assessing claims of recognition, 'participatory parity' is an evaluative standard.[6] For peaceful community relations, 'the traditional norms of freedom and

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[1] Commonwealth Government, *Let's Look Out for Australia. Protecting Our Way of Life From a Possible Terrorist Threat* (Canberra: AGPS, 2003).

[2] John Howard, 'Interview with Mike Munro, A Current Affair, Network Nine', *Media Interviews*, 12 September 2001a. www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2001/interview1238.htm. Consulted 20 February 2003.

[3] John Howard, 'Strength Through Diversity – the Coalition Government's Multicultural Affairs, Citizenship and Settlement Services Policy', *Media Releases,* 16 October 2001. www.pm.gov.au/news/media_releases/2001/media_release1339.htm. Consulted 20 February 2003.

[4] Howard, 'Strength Through Diversity'.

[5] Andrew Markus, *Race, John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2001), ix.

[6] Nancy Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?' In Scott Lash and Mike Featherstone (eds) *Recognition and Difference. Politics, Identity, Multiculture* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 32.

equality' need to accompany the newer 'norm of mutual respect for reasonable cultural or identity-related similarities and dissimilarities'.[7] Cultural rights 'protect different ways of being citizens…and different ways of exercising one's equality of opportunity'.[8] This is a worthwhile protection that benefits all.

Certainly Australian government documents approve communal values of friendliness and decency, where communities embrace diverse people, religions and languages. The government affirms mutual respect because 'terrorism affects us all and no community or religion should be made a scapegoat for the actions of extremists'.[9] These sentiments are substantively good. In practice, they are meaningful only to those citizens who feel fully included, through having a sense of national belonging. Ironically, those most in need of protection are those whose belonging is threatened by their race, religion or citizen status. Communities influence this threat by defining markers of difference, and thus fix closed identities or foster openness.

Currently, 'the national community can be imagined as a "unity in diversity" only by a containment of cultural difference', whereby Chinese, Vietnamese, Philipinos, Malaysians and Singaporeans are 'still collectively racialised whenever a wave of moral panic about Asian immigration flares up'[10] and where Muslims are not fully accepted by the communal will. This is an example where 'cultural difference is associated with unequal social relations'.[11] While the government's emphasis on 'our way of life' appeals to community consensus, it is potentially divisive to community relations. In the booklet mentioned above and in the media, Australians are being asked to report anyone looking suspicious. This request invokes mistrust and wariness; it is part of a politics of fear. It is worth remembering that what often unites communities is a siege mentality such as existed in apartheid South Africa or remains in Northern Ireland. What united many Americans in 2001 was a willingness to support revenge bombings. What united many Australians in the 2001 Federal election was a desire for 'strong' leadership that would

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[7] James Tully, 'The Illiberal Liberal: Brian Barry's Polemical Attack on Multiculturalism', In Paul Kelly (ed) *Multiculturalism Reconsidered. Culture and Equality and its Critics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 102. Tully is responding to Barry who disputes the importance of this premise.
[8] Tully, 'The Illiberal Liberal', p. 106.
[9] Commonwealth Government, *Let's Look Out for Australia*, p. 10.
[10] Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, 'Multicultural Imagined Communities. Cultural Difference and National Identity in the USA and Australia', In David Bennett (ed) *Multicultural States. Rethinking Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 8.
[11] Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity*, (Cambridge: Polity), p. 134.

allay fears of the rumoured intruders threatening to enter the shores illegally. What unites communities often is morally questionable. Communities need to be both secure and inclusive places of belonging. Where there is a willingness to negotiate about multiple ways of life, communities generally are inclined to be inclusive of respectful difference. The idea of Australia as an inclusive nation is challenged by current government policies and practices toward asylum-seekers.

Asylum-seekers, othering and difference

Concerns about national security have led to political policies on asylum-seekers that many Australians feel ashamed of. The ferment over the *Tampa* crisis and the 'children overboard' tale shaped the context for the 'war against terrorism'.[12] Senior politicians fostered people's fear of terrorist threats by promoting the idea that the mainly Afghani and Iraqi asylum-seekers might be criminals, terrorists and morally shallow people who do shocking things like throw their children into the sea. There is an 'associative logic of racism' at work here, whereby these claims about asylum-seekers are attached to Arab-Australians and Muslims in general.[13] Terrorism becomes linked with asylum-seekers and immigration policy with protection against external threats and national defence. Ironically, those seeking protection from the state terror of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein are themselves slandered as a threat to Australians. Accordingly, national security and state interests override the protection of human security and individual

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[12] On August 26 2001, the Norwegian container ship *Tampa* rescued 438 mostly Afghani asylum-seekers from a sinking Indonesian vessel. The Australian government refused to allow a landing on Christmas Island, an Australian territory even though these people were rescued in Australian waters. When the *Tampa* entered Australian waters, armed members of the SAS boarded and took control. On October 6 2001, a navy frigate, *HMAS Adelaide* confirmed an unseaworthy vessel but was ordered by Defence headquarters to stop the boat reaching Christmas Island. The 'children overboard' tales emanate from the desperate situation of the 223 mainly Iraqi asylum-seekers' actions, and told by Peter Reith the then Defence Minister, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock and Prime Minister Howard. When the boat began to sink, the navy rescued them. In November the allegations of deliberately throwing children overboard to force a rescue were exposed as false as navy officials had claimed them to be. The asylum-seekers were sent to New Zealand and to Nauru for detention and processing in the so-called 'Pacific solution'. Many refugees have drowned including 352 people in the notorious SIEVX incident. See Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter (eds) *September 11, 2001*: *Feminist Perspectives* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 2002). See also Russell Hogg, 'The Khaki Election', In Phil Scraton (ed) *Beyond September 11. An Anthology of Dissent* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 135-143.

[13] Ghassan Hage, 'Postscript: Arab Australian Belonging after September 11', In Ghassan Hage (ed) *Arab-Australians. Citizenship and Belonging Today* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 242.

welfare. The Australian government would not like to be accused of neglecting human welfare, but in real terms, this is happening to asylum-seekers who arrive without visas and to many Australian Muslims.

'Mandatory detention was retrospectively introduced in 1992…and remains the only system of mandatory detention in the western world'.[14] By legitimising de-humanising strategies such as keeping people in detention in isolated camps or leaving people stranded at sea, the government actively propagates petty prejudices that contribute to social unrest. Dealing appropriately with terrorist threats is necessary, but the means of national protection should not jeopardise the safety of vulnerable groups. Australia has protective obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. This Convention states that refugees must not be returned to any situation where their lives are in danger. However, when Howard defends detention centres as a deterrent against refugees coming to Australia, he implies that asylum-seekers do not have a legal, internationally recognised moral right to seek refuge. When reminded by a radio interviewer of the awful current situation - hunger strikes, children in detention, pregnant women who are not receiving adequate health care, young people protesting by sewing their lips together, frequent self-harming and community division - Howard replied, 'Well, we won't be changing the policy of mandatory detention'.[15] Absolutist positions that 'we're right' and 'they're wrong' cannot see the anger, shame, humiliation and pent-up frustration that provokes those most at risk to take extreme self-harming or dangerous actions to protect themselves and their families. The Australian government's response to asylum-seekers is indicative of a growing closedness to difference, demonstrated through excluding 'specific others' via immigration. Internationally, Australia's reputation for being generous of spirit is jeopardised.

Ghassan Hage describes Australia's treatment of placing asylum-seekers in mandatory detention camps in remote outposts pending determination of refugee status as 'ethnic caging'. By this, he means that a 'non-social space' is created for 'non-people', separating the 'way of life' of Australians from those who are deemed 'illegal

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[14] The Independent Education Union, 'End Mandatory Detention. Refugee and Asylum Seeker Policy', 26 February 2002, www.ieu.org.au. Consulted 12 August 2003.

immigrants'.[16] Ethnic caging is a morally repugnant form of *othering* – the stereotyping of particular groups considered different from 'us'. In a context of global insecurity, othering has become a simplistic tool to justify the exclusion of some from society.[17] While the Australian government's protection policies on 'our way of life' purport to be antiterrorist strategies, they seem to be influenced by anti-Muslim othering. With reference to the action against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq, Howard tried to reassure the public that these actions were not attacks upon Islam. But there are reasons to be sceptical. Historically, Australia's 'other' included southern European immigrants who were not as white as Anglo-Celts and northern European immigrants, then it became Asians. The gaze shifted during the Gulf War to those from the Middle-East. Othering leads to a vilification of groups, such as Middle-Eastern Muslims, which is occurring in many western nations as well as in Australia.

Tight border controls

The official position on strengthening border control, introduced in September 2001 is explicit: 'the laws are an important step towards the objective of deterring the activities of people smugglers'.[18] Ironically, the Australian Defence Force has become integral to border protection, not to protect from invading forces but from asylum-seekers or economic migrants. Some officers in the Defence Force neither welcome this role nor approve of the policies on asylum-seekers. Yet few doubt the need for border protection. However, the morality of a nation's protection of sovereignty matters. Certainly, the

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[15] John Howard, 'Interview with Neil Mitchell, Radio 3AW', *Media Interviews*, 25 January 2002. www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2002/interview1484.htm. Consulted 20 February 2003.

[16] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation. Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 106.

[17] 'Othering' is based on hierarchically valued dichotomies. Dichotomies are not simple opposites, 'but rather mask the power of one side of the binary to control the other', like us/them, citizen/foreigner, good/evil. (Diane Bell, 'Good and Evil: At Home and Abroad', In *September 11, 2001*, p. 433). An example of binary control is Bush's ultimatum 'if you're not with us, you're against us'. His assumption is that you identify with the civilised world of freedom, or you must be part of the terrorist world of savagery. With simple moral absolutes, 'there are no grey areas, no contradictions and no different "ways of seeing". From this position it becomes all too easy to slide into the prejudice of "otherness"; rejecting the "moral" definitions, decisions and actions of others'. Phil Scraton, 'The Politics of Morality', In *Beyond September 11*, p. 44.

[18] Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, *Fact Sheet 71. New Measures to Strengthen Border Control* (Canberra: Public Affairs Section, DIMIA, 2003).

problem of people smuggling needs to be addressed and properly resourced, but 'the punishment of asylum-seekers with mandatory detention as a "deterrent" to people smugglers is a clear case of the means being disproportionate to achieving the end'.[19] Deterrence is inconsistent with UNHCR refugee conventions and in itself does not deter 'boat people' from seeking safety in Australia.

Further, creating a culture of fear whereby a supposed Islamic threat at Australia's territorial borders is assumed to mean an Islamic threat everywhere has serious consequences for Australian Muslims. Much of the trust-building processes and the dialogue across ethnic differences that have been path-breaking in Australia is being tested. Mosques are subject to arson, racist graffiti has increased and women wearing the hijab or scarfe often are tormented. In this light, concerned citizens have called for the Australian government to reassess the relationship between the means for protecting sovereignty and the consequence of this means on the goal of positive multicultural relationships.

Instead, a focus on borders exacerbates the inclusion/exclusion mind-set. Borders extend beyond physical territoriality; they are deeply symbolic. Borders signify friendship and acceptance or suspicion and aggression. They foster or discourage citizen belonging. They demarcate inclusions and exclusions. The drawing of boundaries excludes certain categories of people from full participation as equal citizens. Once immigrants 'are described as a threat to order, culture, economic prosperity or physical integrity, they are denied any claims on justice'.[20] Assuming that all asylum-seekers are a potential threat to a nation's stability is reckless, given the rigorous security checks undertaken on refugees. 'It is all too easy to confuse those fleeing terror with those who are suspected of causing terror – and in that process, of curtailing the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers'.[21] In the confusion, a climate of suspicion, mistrust, xenophobia and racism grows. Where there is a 'paradigm of fearful protection', protective care is 'disguised as parochialism' and the moral impulse is directed towards the protection of

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[19] Justice for Asylum Seekers Alliance, 'Alternative approaches to asylum-seekers: Reception and Transitional Processing System', June 2002. www.westnet.com.au/jackhsmit/ref-documents.htm. Consulted 12 August 2003, p. 9.
[20] Barbara Hudson, 'Beyond September 11: Certainties and Doubts', In *Beyond September 11*, p. 196.
[21] Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan, In J. Seers, 'Amnesty International Criticises Australia's Human Rights Record on Refugees', 20 March, 2002. *World Socialist Web Site*. www.wsws.org. Consulted 19 March 2003.

the familiar, of that which belongs to 'our' culture, justifying the 'fencing off' of outsiders.[22] There are conspicuous contradictions between the Australian government's public statements on diversity and its practices toward those asylum-seekers who arrive by boat. How then can Australia meet the demands of national security whilst fostering a culture of inclusiveness and meeting obligations to asylum-seekers?

Security and decent protection

To answer this question, I posit an ideal of 'decent protection' - political security that is morally principled and supports people's well-being. This ideal is important because the Australian government, along with other western governments, limit security to issues related to the 'war against terrorism'. While states need to maximise national security in the sense of protecting nations from external threats, there are broader understandings of human security that encompass social well-being and the security of political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights.[23] With this broader understanding, security 'implies freedom from threats to core values'.[24] As explained earlier, this notion of core values is fundamental to the Australian government's exclusionary protection of the way of life of the ethnic majority. The pertinent question then becomes, 'what is the best way to view human security and reconcile it with national security?'[25] This may generate conflict between two, potentially irreconcilable forms of security. A full exploration of possible conflict is beyond the scope of this article. However, what I seek to do is to expose the need to debate further this core dilemma between state security and the need to ensure that this also protects human security.

In particular, I confine my analysis of decent protection to the moral responsibilities Australia has toward asylum-seekers who arrive to our borders without visas and by boat. I argue that a humane, compassionate, yet rigorous asylum policy is

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[22] Selma Sevenhuijsen, 'Values That Sustain Life: The Ethic of Care about Vulnerability and Protection', Lecture for the Symposium, *Vulnerable and Secure: Women's Contributions to an Order of Peace*, Protestant Academy Boldern, Switzerland, 21-23 February 2003.

[23] See Karen Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co, 2003), pp. 179-180.

[24] John Baylis, 'International Security in the Post-Cold War Era', In John Baylis and Steve Smith eds. *The Globalization of World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 194.

not a contradiction, but is part of maintaining a balance between national and human security. To those of us who are sympathetic to such an argument, the case seems straightforward. Yet, it is clearly not so for the Liberal-Coalition Australian government and the majority in the Opposition Australian Labor Party, hence the need to reiterate the inhumanity of current policy is important. For example, instead of recognising that refugees constitute a global humanitarian crisis,[26] the Australian government ignores the desperation of asylum-seekers and the pleas of many citizens by redefining the crisis as a threat to national security, thereby justifying stronger border protection. The problem with this justification is that it seems to prioritise state security over inclusiveness. Decent protection aims to balance the need to protect sovereignty with the formulation of humane policies.

Attentiveness to vulnerability

Shortly, I outline some concrete suggestions as to how the government can develop policies that maintain sovereignty and the integrity of Australia's borders while also treating all applicants for asylum with the respect that is shown to other immigrants and those mainly westerners who overstay their visas. Before doing so, I extend the case for the need for an attentiveness to vulnerability. This case is important, because without it, governments with realist approaches to security do not understand the reason for the need to change. The more these reasons become explicit within community groups, the more likelihood that stronger civic responsibility grows and then challenges realist inattentiveness to questions of human security. Attentiveness to vulnerability begins by recognising those who are at risk.[27] In today's climate, this risk is real for nations who were part of the 'coalition of the willing', western targets in all countries and particular

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[25] Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf, *World Politics. Trend and Transformation*, 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004), p. 245.

[26] Figures from UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimate between twenty three million refugees and twenty five million displaced people in the world with 19.8 million persons who fall under the Commission's mandate in more than one hundred and twenty countries (www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics, Consulted 16 March 2003.

[27] On August 15 2003, Family Court Judge, Justice Richard Chisholm found a family of five to be in urgent need of release from the Baxter detention centre in Port Augusta, but could not release them. Immigration Minister Ruddock had fought through the courts to keep them in detention. Chisholm appealed to Ruddock

ethnic and religious groups. Attentiveness requires listening carefully to intelligence warnings and to the felt insecurity of individuals who are suffering because of inattention to their needs. Politically, there seems to be little attentiveness to the inhumanity of official asylum policies.[28] In propagating demonising myths about 'illegals' - myths justified as increasing state security by keeping potential terrorists out - politicians in the present government rarely acknowledge the suffering behind the frantic attempts by asylum-seekers to seek new lives. As part of human security we all need recognition of our distinctive identities.[29] Asylum-seekers are 'starved of recognition' and yet many Australians 'feel that their assumed preeminence is threatened'.[30] All forms of security protection should recognise distinctive identities in order to attend to all types of insecurities.

While we are usually more attentive to those we know well, we have a 'multiplicity of loyalties' in attending to humanity, our nation, city, community, family and friends.[31] It is easy to distance ourselves from those who are not part of 'our way of life'. Conversely, our attentiveness to the insecurity that asylum-seekers feel can grow when 'we empathetically imagine a little of what it might be like'[32] to flee persecution, torture or death threats and seek hope elsewhere. Such empathy is important in understanding inclusive protection. Otherwise, 'we can be seduced into believing that we have no obligation to people who do not share our culture and race or who do not belong to our political sphere of influence'.[33] As Carmen Lawrence, Australian Labor Party backbencher explains, differences can be magnified to such an extent that the humanity

to give compassionate consideration. They were released but Ruddock's office would not confirm they were granted temporary protection visas despite being rejected as refugees.

[28] For example, detention can last for one to two years, sometimes longer. Isolation, uncertainty, separation from families and past traumas understandably leads to frequent mental breakdowns, where suicide attempts or self-harming occurs.

[29] David Miller, 'Group Identities, National Identities and Democratic Politics', In John Horton and Susan Mendus (eds) *Toleration, Identity and Difference* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 115. Miller suggests three elements of recognition: a comprehension that understands what groups want; a valuation that validates different identities as of equal value; and a practical endorsement of policies that respect the demands of groups.

[30] Fenton, *Ethnicity*, p. 83.

[31] Amartya Sen, 'Humanity and Citizenship', In Martha Nussbaum (ed) *For Love of Country. Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 113.

[32] Elisabeth Porter, 'Risks and Responsibilities. Creating Dialogical Spaces in Northern Ireland', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2, 2 (2000), p. 175.

[33] Carmen Lawrence, 'Fear and Denial in Public Policy', www.psychsociety.com.au/news/fear_and_denial_in_public_policy.pdf. Consulted 12 August 2003, p. 14.

of others is diminished and 'our capacity to empathise with their suffering and take in the nature of the hurt inflicted on them becomes partially obliterated'.[34] Ignoring such empathetic attentiveness occurs by factoring the human aspects out of a realist, reductionist notion of security. The Australian, UK and USA governments find themselves in awkward predicaments. These states want to be considered by the international community as ethically sound nations. However, citizens who are critical of these governments interpret their actions in Iraq as factoring out the resultant human suffering and interpret their tight domestic responses to immigration as an inhumane consequence of a preoccupation with national security over human security.

Developing a compassionate asylum policy

A compassionate asylum policy that also maintains border protection is possible. In the past, Australia has processed asylum-seekers in respectful ways. The Vietnamese refugees who arrived by boat in the 1970s and 1980s were treated with hospitality, despite significant community alarm. The more recent experiences of the Kosovars being housed in 'safe havens' is a further example of humane responses. However, with the increased numbers of Cambodian asylum-seekers arriving by boat in the mid-1980s, the policy shifted from a UNHCR group determination process to an assessment of individual cases. The policy then shifted toward explicit deterrence and in 1992, to mandatory detention. Unsurprisingly, it is the issue of detention that arouses intense community debate. Detention is the norm for all unauthorised arrivals without a visa. Despite some improvement in the conditions in the detention camps, the human rights implications of detention and the suffering imposed remain serious concerns; hence I concentrate my brief discussion of alternatives on detention.

The Refugee Council of Australia suggests alternative detention models with three stages of closed detention, open detention and community release as being more humane, offering greater flexibility, enhanced equity, reduced costs and being in closer

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[34] Lawrence, 'Fear and Denial in Public Policy', p. 15.

harmony with international guidelines.[35] This Council also suggests a presumption for release within three months after an applicant complies with checks on identity, asylum claim and health. Some refugee rights advocates want the processing to be done in as little as eighteen days.[36] The Justice for Asylum Seekers Alliance rejects the idea that detention achieves deterrence.[37] Most alternative models argue for 'minimal detention'. The 'no detention' campaign suggests that this position sends messages to the community that the detainees are a possible threat to the wider community. Advocacy of minimal detention may be a political compromise, but it does not challenge the government's basic premise that asylum-seekers are hostile, alien threats to national security. The refugee rights community are being asked 'to shift to advocating alternatives which involve no detention of asylum-seekers'.[38] One alternative is to give 'all refugees immediate access to a permanent protection visa'.[39] An important long-term strategy by the Australian Greens is to tackle fundamental root causes and to 'accept refugees fleeing from violence, social injustice and environmental devastation, and encourage their country of origin to reverse the practices which have forced them to flee'.[40] There are realistic alternatives to the government's harsh stance that are humane, flexible and abide by international human rights conventions. These alternatives also reassure the wider community and policy-makers of a balance between national and human security.

Creating conditions for open dialogue

Underlying acts of terror, risking lives in unseaworthy vessels or the self-harming of asylum-seekers, is a deep anger or despair about ever being heard without resorting to desperate measures or horrific acts. Those concerned with peace, including governments,

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[35] Refugee Council of Australia, 'Who we Are', www.refugeecouncil.org.au/html/. Consulted 12 August 2003.

[36] Project Safecom, 'The Australian People's Refugee Visa', www.safecom.org/downloads.htm, Consulted 12 August 2003. This document is prepared by 'the people of Australia' as a signal to current refugees that the desire of many Australians does not correspond to government policies.

[37] Justice for Asylum Seekers Alliance, 'Alternative approaches to asylum seekers'.

[38] An open letter to the refugee rights movement in Australia, 'The humanitarian alternative to mandatory detention is "No detention"', www.geocities.com/nodetention. Consulted 12 August 2003.

[39] See Independent Education Union and The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, 'End Mandatory Detention', 26 February 2002, pp. 8, 10. www.ieu.org.au. Consulted 12 August 2003.

[40] The Greens (WA), 'Peace and Security – 2001 Federal Platform', http://wa.greens.org.au/policy/peace/security. Consulted 12 August 2003.

do not excuse terrorism or wilful danger, but need to listen to individual expressions of political anger as well as to official intelligence warnings about national security. Listening requires deliberation and space for reflection, particularly where there is disagreement. Within multinational democracies citizens are free to challenge, provide reasons, negotiate, revise views and 'have a duty to listen and respond'.[41] The duty to listen includes unsavoury views like religious beliefs we disagree with, cultural practices we do not understand and stories of suffering that are painful to absorb. The duty to respond includes replies to uncomfortable findings like the Amnesty International Human Rights' criticism of Australia's detention, particularly of children.[42]

The ideal of decent protection presupposes mechanisms to allow for dialogical relations between state protection and groups that need protection. Yet 'actual opportunities for dialogue between people who have been marginalised or excluded and the powerful are unlikely ever to come close to fulfilling the conditions that would qualify them as "participation with justice and dignity"'.[43] Without such mechanisms, there rarely is the recognition of vulnerability that prompts attentiveness to human suffering. In Australia, refugee advocacy groups have ongoing contact with asylum-seekers and are engaging in regular dialogue with federal and state departments. However, typically, politicians, policy-makers and power-players neither engage personally with the marginalised nor appreciate the importance of such dialogical processes. Some citizens uncomfortably acknowledge western complicity in others' underprivilege and suffering. With regard to the asylum debate, those who defend the rights of individuals to seek asylum generally accept that nations cannot accept unlimited numbers of immigrants.

Yet, when one empathetically considers the circumstances of persecution, oppression and violence that lead people to seek asylum, many individuals feel compassion and a willingness to expand immigration while states cut their intake back.[44] Empathy should foster openness to others. Sometimes, in trying to put ourselves in the position of others,

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[41] Tully, 'The Illiberal Liberal', p. 110.

[42] A visit by Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan in March 2002 highlighted the abuse of basic democratic rights in Australia's mandatory detention camps.

[43] Ute Bühler, 'Participation "with Justice and Dignity": Beyond "the New Tyranny"', *Peace, Conflict and Development. An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1 (2002), p. 15.

[44] In 2002, the USA reduced the maximum number of refugees it would annually accept to 70,000. In the mid-1980s it was 200,000. Kegley and Wittkopf, *World Politics*, p. 241.

we may be repulsed by the nature of the differences between 'them' and 'us'. However, part of creating the conditions for open dialogue is a preparedness to face the 'other' and a willingness to expose our own vulnerabilities in order to create a tentative basis for dialogue between those from different backgrounds. Dialogue is the non-violent means to political solutions that can be directed toward both multicultural inclusivity and national security. The problem in Australia is that the debate about responsibility toward asylum-seekers is being held predominantly within civil society. Political debates by the major parties are tainted by the 'war against terrorism' where security concerns quickly are assumed to require closed doors.[45]

Dialogue 'repudiates the safe dogmatism of one's own position or being ignorant of another's views'.[46] It presupposes a willingness to challenge personal and political views through deliberation with others. Dealing constructively with disagreement is imperative in negotiating reconciliation between profound cultural, religious, ethnic, personal and political differences.[47] Disagreement on security is inevitable with complex issues like a nation's threshold of responsibility toward asylum-seekers, involvement in the war against terrorism, anti-terrorist legislation that infringes on privacy rights and differing responses toward Muslims and Middle-Easterners. Open dialogue on these issues is integral to the development of ethical security policies and continual public debate is essential. 'Security means more than defence', it refers 'to everything that contributes to the protection and well-being of a national population'.[48] The Australian Greens' policy on peace and security focuses 'not just on military threats but on any threat to our wellbeing'.[49]

Openness to different types of threats and different protective responses is central to a secure democratic multiculturalism. Openness exists where there is a willingness to revise unreflective views through prolonged discussion. In today's climate, open responses are enhanced by dialogue between those from Christian-Judaist backgrounds,

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[45] The Australian Democrats and the Australian Greens are notable exceptions.
[46] Elisabeth Porter, 'Identity, Location, Plurality: Women, Nationalism and Northern Ireland', In Rick Wilford and Robert Miller (eds) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism. The Politics of Transition* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 55.
[47] See Norman Porter, *The Elusive Quest. Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003) for an outline of the principles and practices of reconciliation.
[48] Stewart Firth, *Australia in International Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 164.
[49] The Greens (WA), 'Peace and Security'.

secularists and those from Islamic and other faiths, together trying to understand each other's views.[50] Openness is also improved by community and youth workers who go into each others' ethnic, cultural enclaves; health, psychological and legal workers and volunteers who listen to the stories of the asylum-seekers and respond with sympathy and appropriate medical, mental, legal care and friendship. It also means those who are in Ministerial and policy-making capacities meeting with asylum-seekers and refugees who are diligently contributing to a new country. A strong civil society with active community groups can foster diverse and constructive social change and rebuild trust. Such practices not only are positive responses to multiculturalism that respond sensitively to the sort of recognition that affirms human security, but they also strengthen national security through removing some of the fear of the other discussed earlier.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that hospitality can coexist with security. Jacques Derrida presents a sympathetic appeal to an ethic of 'cosmo*politics*' where cities become places of 'refuge' that take seriously the duty and right of hospitality toward and for foreigners, immigrants, exiles, the deported, stateless or displaced persons. Derrida uses examples of cities of refuge taken from the Hebraic tradition where cities protected those escaping 'bloody vengeance', and Pauline Christianity where the message is of being neither foreigner nor alien but fellow-citizens. He also draws on the medieval tradition where churches provided sanctuary for refugees. He writes of the paradox that while internal borders are being lifted, the external borders of the EU are being bolted tightly. Derrida's argument is that the way we relate to ourselves and to others, including foreigners, is indicative of an ethic of hospitality. 'Being at home with oneself supposes a reception or inclusion of the other'.[51] A good example of this attitude is the significance of handshakes in peace agreements. The snub of public handshakes as is the case with some

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[50] Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms. Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002) calls for an Islamic Reformation to sweep away conservative fundamentalism and open Islam to new ideas.
[51] Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Trans. M. Dooley and M. Hughes (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 127.

Members of the Assembly in Northern Ireland signals a rejection of different traditions. Countering this lack of recognition, hospitality demonstrates inclusive warmth, not merely in our homes, but 'hospitality signifies here the *public nature* of public space'.[52] Some Australian Local Councils are declaring themselves as 'Refugee Welcome Zones', demonstrating a willingness to welcome refugees into their areas.

In an Australian context, Ghassan Hage also writes about the way that compassionate hospitality cultivates a caring society of hope. Asylum-seekers arrive in search of hope, the chance to rebuild their lives. Hage suggests that formal citizenship should be complemented by expressive demonstrations of care about a nation. For example, Australians who express shame at Australia's indecent handling of asylum-seekers do so because they care about suffering and about Australia's reputation as an accepting nation. These Australians are concerned with human and national security. Many Australians are demonstrating practical care – lawyers, workers in health and welfare departments, many churches, human rights groups, migrant workers, students and concerned volunteers. Care and worry differ. Worrying about national security or global politics happens when we feel threatened. The defensive society 'generates worrying citizens and a paranoid nationalism'.[53] Australia is not alone in institutionalising 'a culture of *worrying* at the expense of a culture of caring'.[54] Caring lacks paranoia or defensive connotations because it keeps people's humanity within its perspective.

Finally, I summarise two significant reasons why the Australian government should take a different approach to the issues raised in this article about security and who has access to Australia's valued way of life. First, there is the contradiction between the rhetoric of an open, considerate society and the practice of harsh treatment, especially toward asylum-seekers and I have provided examples. We have moved, as former Prime Minister Paul Keating says, to a society in which 'tolerance looks frailer and xenophobia more robust'.[55] The contradiction is an embarrassment for many Australians and such a contradiction should be intolerable, given that Australia wants to be considered as an open, inclusive, tolerant society. Second, how long Australians will continue to accept

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[52] Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, p. 22.
[53] Ghassan Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism. Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 3.
[54] Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, p. 3.

this contradiction is an open question. There is reason to doubt that Australians would continue doing so indefinitely because the current government practice tarnishes Australia's self-image as a liberal, tolerant society. It may, actually, be imprudent for an Australian government to ignore this reason because in ignoring human security, it is possible that national security fears are heightened through increasing the likelihood that Australia will become a terrorist target.

In this article, I have argued that the ideal of decent protection requires attentiveness and open dialogue in order to respond both to national security and to human needs. There clearly are limits to the principles proposed, particularly in terms of differing concepts of responsibility. Generally, we are more attentive to those who are part of our way of life. However, I suggest that whenever possible, individuals, communities and nations have a moral obligation to respond with respectful compassion to the needs of those who are excluded from secure ways of life. Such a response requires substantial prior debate over the reasons for exclusions, political complicity and legitimate security fears. Political care is the hallmark of a decent society. A decent society accepts a moral responsibility to protect the dignity of citizens and those seeking asylum, and provides the conditions through which everyone living within its borders can flourish peacefully. Protecting a nation should involve protecting multiple ways of life of respectful diverse people. Considerable political will is needed for Australia to meet the demands of national security as well as of inclusive human security.

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[55] Paul Keating, 'A Time for Reflection. Political values in the age of distraction', *The Third Manning Clark Lecture*, March 2002.