Federal Election 2007: Racing to win, winning with race?

“Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.”
Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract

This paper is a discussion of Australian race-relations politics and its impact on the author who is a Bangladeshi-born Australian Muslim woman. The author considers her right as a citizen to vote as “sacred” because it empowers her to critically evaluate the standing of the two major parties and thereby decide who deserves her vote. The author’s “voting” journey began in 1996 and continued into the 21st century. But she focuses her discussion on the 2007 federal election. This paper is a personal narrative (or a polemic piece), which touches on her doctoral and post-doctoral research. It is based on both primary and secondary sources, including newspaper research.

My identity and Australian politics in the 20th century

I am a Bangladeshi-born Muslim woman. I migrated to Australia with my husband on a skilled migration intake in late 1987. We became Australian citizens in 1990, but then moved to the Sultanate of Oman because of my husband’s work, returning to Australia in 1995. At the same time I was a full-time mother of our three sons and not at all interested in Australian politics. I voted for the first time at the federal election in 1996, but did not take a keen interest in who would run my new “Home”. I was naïve and went to the election booth and voted, without conviction, for the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Since we had migrated to Australia when the Labor Government was in power, I felt some gratitude to this party. My vote had insignificant value, as the Coalition (Liberals and National party) won the election.

In 1998, when I finished my Master of Arts in Historical Studies on Indian History at the University of Queensland, I was still naïve about Australian politics. In the election in 1998, motivated only by the residue of gratitude, I voted for the Opposition Labor party. Yet again my vote had little impact and the Coalition won easily.
In late 1998 I started my PhD at the University of Queensland on the immigration history of Australia with a special focus on Muslim history. I started retrieving archival documents and interviewing Muslims aged 18-90 years (and some mainstream Australians) to study their settlement experiences in Australia. In retrospect this was the early stage of my “self-actualisation” (Maslow, 1954) as I gradually became connected to my new “Home”, its history and politics. Through my studies I could relate to the presence of my ethno-religious people in Australia over a period of 150 years. By “ethno-religious” I mean my Asian-Muslim identity. I could feel the injustice against the Asians, particularly the Afghans and the people of the Indian subcontinent who desired to be British subjects, but they were selectively turned down by the Australian immigration authorities because of their race and colour (Markus, 1994).

I was disappointed to discover that the Australian Labor Party, which had permitted me entry to this country and granted me citizenship rights, had strongly supported the “White Australia” policy in 1901. And in the first federal election of 1901, the Labor Party was determined to legislate for a “White Australia” (Markus, 1994, p. 114). The “White Australia” policy, officially known as the *Immigration Restriction Act*, 1901, was the means to exclude undesirable immigrants (people of colour), who were seen as a threat to the working conditions of European Australians. Under this act, all aliens wanting to enter Australia had to submit to a medical examination at their first port of call, and to a dictation test of fifty words in any language chosen by the immigration officer. The dictation test was crudely discriminatory because it was usually administered in a language unlikely to be understood by the applicant; shamefully, it remained on the statute book until 1958. The “White Australia” policy was effective in terms of reducing the number of non-European immigrants to Australia after 1901, and in deporting many “undesirable aliens”. Although a small number of Asian labourers (including some who were technically British subjects)
were permitted to stay after 1901, they were subjected to various restrictions such as
denial of naturalisation, family reunion and economic and political disadvantages
(Stevens, 1989; Kabir, 2006a). Through naturalisation, the rights of the British
subjects were conferred on the aliens. However, due to several geo-political changes
(Jupp, 1998, p. 11), the “White Australia” policy was gradually replaced by a policy of
assimilation and later integration in the 1950s and 1960s and, finally, a multicultural
policy was introduced in 1973. The *Racial Discrimination Act* 1975 made
discrimination on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin illegal
(Markus, 1994, pp. 155-222).

**My reading of the federal election 2001**

Of course it was the Whitlam Labor Government that disbanded the “White Australia”
policy in 1973 but to my way of thinking this did not erase the hardships for non-white
people/labourers in Australia throughout most of the 20\(^{th}\) century (Stevens, 1989;
Monsour, 2002). This was weighing on my mind leading up to the federal election in
2001. But so too was John Howard’s anti-Asian immigration rhetoric in 1988
(Hollinsworth, 1998, pp. 268). I was encouraged when Howard expressed his regret
for his anti-Asian speech (Markus, 1994, pp.. 82-100), but disappointed when he
heralded the maiden speech of Pauline Hanson, leader of the One Nation Party, as
“the arrival of a new era of free speech” (Markus, 1994, pp. 100-101). In her speech
Hanson said:

> …I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and
that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40 per cent of all migrants into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate (cited in Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p. 224).

Being a Bangladeshi Muslim, such a statement was an anathema, and I wondered
how John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, could support such divisiveness.
Moreover, in 1996 the unemployment level of Australian Muslims was three times
higher than the national total (Australian Bureau of Statistics), and this sort of divisive speech was clearly unhelpful to social cohesiveness.

Refugees: Woomera detention centre

In the late 1990s, John Howard’s propensity to “play the race card” was revived with his Government’s refugee policy. But it should be remembered that the Labor party had a hand in the development of this policy. Since the late 1980s when Australia witnessed the inflow of offshore refugees by boat, the Australian Immigration Department first under the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments (witnessed the arrival of Vietnamese refugees), and then under the Howard Government (witnessed the arrival of Afghan and Iraqi refugees) was very critical of their arrival (Anonymous, 2001, 4; Mares, 2001, p. 68)\(^1\). Labor always stood for border control. The party voiced the deep Australian fear that the arrival of a few boat meant “a flood was on the way” (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003, p. 90). In 1975 when the first Vietnamese refugees came to the Australian shores on boat, Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam told his Cabinet he was “not having hundreds of fucking Vietnamese Balts coming into the country”. Later, in the 1980s Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke
branded the next wave of boat people queue jumpers and threats to Australia’s immigration policy (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003, p. 90). It was Hawke government – with the co-operation of the Liberal and National parties – that began the system of mandatory, indefinite incarceration of boat people without trial in the early 1990s (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003, pp. 90-91).

Amnesty International and United Nations High Commission for Refugees were both critical of Australia for not being responsive to the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees. The Convention envisaged that many refugees in flight would enter another country seeking protection without having complied with the migration laws of the country where they were seeking asylum. It prohibited the contracting states from imposing penalties “on account of their illegal entry” (Brennan, 2003, pp. 15-16; Dale, 2001, pp. 22; Rivett, 2001, pp. 9-13).

Since 1996 when the Liberal Prime Minister John Howard came to power his Government also referred to the offshore refugees by boat (Afghan and Iraqi refugees) as “queue jumpers”. Then, after the September 11, 2001 Twin Towers tragedy, some senior Liberal politicians linked them with terrorism (Kabir, 2005, p. 303) and they were incarcerated in detention centres for an indefinite period (Burnside, 2003). In 2002 one of the leading newspapers of Great Britain, the Guardian, reported:

**Australia has one of the world’s toughest regimes for dealing with illegal immigrants, automatically detaining people arriving illegally or overstaying visas in camps while cases are assessed. That process can take years with appeals.**

The mandatory detention of asylum seekers, including children, and a policy of diverting to other countries boats carrying asylum seekers, have been criticised by human rights groups (Goldsmith, 2002).

As an Australian Muslim I felt deeply the pain of asylum seekers, especially those who had fled their countries due to the atrocities committed against them by their
fellow Muslims, the Taliban in Afghanistan or the ruthless dictator Saddam Hussain in Iraq. The Howard Government treated these people inhumanely by incarcerating them and their children in detention centres (Mares, 2001, p. 68).

Though I lived in a prestigious western suburb of Brisbane and enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle, I related to the plight of the asylum seekers and I felt saddened when politicians and some media constructed them as the “Muslim or Middle Eastern other” in their speeches, policies and reports (Poynting et al., 2004, pp. 23-28; Kabir, 2005, pp. 298). As Burke (2001, p. 327) stated:

….The perceived threat of the boat people really lies in their difference – Muslim, Coloured, Oriental – in their status as an unassimilable excess that the pure being of the Australian subject cannot abide.

The refugee situation deteriorated further when the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa arrived on Australian shores on 27 August 2001 with 438 mostly Afghan asylum-seekers who had been rescued from an Indonesian boat that was leaking dangerously. Before entering Australian waters, captain Rinnan made three mayday calls reporting this as a medical emergency. However, tragically, the Australian immigration authorities held that although under international law the Tampa had the right to berth in Australian territory if there was a genuine emergency, this was not a real emergency. The then Australian Prime Minister Howard refused the ship’s entry into Australian waters, ruling that the boat people had been picked up in the Indonesian sea rescue zone; and must return to international waters (Marr & Wilkinson, 2003, pp. 48-74). Many Australians held that under the climate of international terrorism, the Howard Government was justifiably preserving the security and sovereignty of his country; whereas the critics argued that, this being an election year, the refusal to accommodate the asylum seekers was politically motivated (Kabir, 2005, p. 313). And Brennan (2003, p. 112) observed, “Though there were 60,000 overstayers (mostly British) in Australia, our Government locates
only about 15,000 of them a year.” Thus the Howard Government’s interest in “illegal” immigrants appeared to be selective.

On 31 August 2001 the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties appealed to the Federal court to grant asylum to the *Tampa* refugees in Australia (Kabir, 2005, p. 305). But after an initial success they lost the case against the Howard Government. Next the Howard Government reached for a “Pacific solution” (with the ALP’s bipartisan support) with Nauru, New Zealand, and later Papua New Guinea, opting to share the asylum-seekers (Marr & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 171). The asylum seekers were thus transported to somebody else’s soil.

But what was the Labor party’s stand on this matter? Initially the Opposition Labor leader Kim Beazley showed compassion towards the *Tampa* asylum seekers, thinking that it won’t affect the voters in the forthcoming election (10 November 2001) as they appeared to be concerned with health, education and GST (Marr & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 92). But after receiving bullet threats in the mail for failing to protect the coalition in the Senate and sanction the Border Protection Bill (which the Labor party and other political groups, the Democrats and the Greens perceived to be “draconian”) the Opposition Labor leader Kim Beazley and his party provided bipartisan support for the Border Protection Bill and the “Pacific solution” (Kabir, 2005, p. 305; Brenan, 2003, pp. 106-112; Marr & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 171). It appeared that in desperation to “keep its head down” and win the federal election, Kim Beazley followed his predecessors (Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke) footsteps and lost his compassion for the asylum seekers.

In the sequel to *Tampa*, the Children Overboard Affair, I was further saddened that the Liberals accused the asylum seekers (mostly Iraqi) in boat SIEV 4 of throwing their children overboard in a desperate bid to reach Australian shores (Weller, 2002).
They failed to inform the public, or release the photographs to the media that the suspected illegal entry vessel or SIEV 4 was leaking and falling apart prompting the asylum seekers to jump into the ocean (Weller, 2002). Out of 130 photographs, the Government selectively released only two photographs that showed the children being rescued by navy personnel (Marris and Henderson, 2002, p. 1). On 24 October 2001, another tragedy occurred when a boat (SIEV X) capsized causing the 353 asylum seekers (mostly Iraqis) to drown on their way to Australia. But even this tragedy did not soften the hearts of the Liberals (as depicted by the cartoonist Nicholson, see below).

Refugees drown before they can become election issue

![Cartoon](https://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au)

Two months later after *Tampa*, at the Liberal Party launch on 28 October 2001, John Howard’s pledge to repel all asylum seekers received rapturous applause. He declared, “We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they
come” (Poynting et al., 2004, p. 178). With the federal election due to take place on 10 November 2001, I took a keen interest in the forthcoming election and wrote several letters to the editors of different Australian newspapers criticising the Howard Government’s refugee policy. Each time when my letter was published, I felt my voice as an Australian citizen was being heard, and I was keen to have my voice heard further through the casting of my vote. Living in a secure Liberal seat in Brisbane meant that voting ALP would likely be insignificant, but I kept comforting myself that the Labor party if elected, would pursue a compassionate refugee policy. Also I comforted myself by thinking that mine at least would be a protest vote. But in winning a third term, John Howard became Australia’s third longest-serving Prime Minister and dissension on my part or by others was largely unnoticed.

The September 11 2001 tragedy in New York had clearly an impact on the Howard Government. There was no denying the need for vigilance and about Australia’s national security. However, it has been observed (Poynting and Mason, 2006, pp. 365-391) that under the Australian Government’s anti-terrorism laws, the ethnic profiling and random searching of Muslims and others who looked visibly different were prejudicial. There were several cases of attacks against the Muslims in Australia, including the firebombing of the Kuraby mosque in Brisbane on 22 September 2001. The September 11, 2001 tragedy was an act of the Muslim extremist al-Qaeda terrorist group, which killed about 3,000 civilians including some Australians. So some people from the wider community began to perceive the Muslims as “enemies” (Kabir, 2005, p. 265). When in the wake of this incident, John Howard called for restraint against the Australian Muslims, I was momentarily impressed by his concern. However, I do not regret that I voted ALP in the Federal election November 2001, as I was overall displeased with John Howard’s election
slogan, “We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.”

**The federal election of 2004**

In October 2002, I was shocked to hear about the Bali bombing tragedy. So when the Howard Government proposed to ramp up its anti-terrorism laws, I assumed this was necessary for our national security. However, I was displeased when soon after the Howard Government rushed to join the US and Britain in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

On 14 April 2003, tens and thousands protesters rallied on the streets of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane against the invasion of Iraq, and I also joined the Brisbane anti-war rally (Anon., 2003). Like thousands of fellow Australians who rallied against the war, I thought the “Coalition of the Willing” could have deposed Saddam Hussain’s dictatorial regime through peaceful methods (UN sanctions etc). However, the then Prime Minister consistently insisted, Australia (and UK and USA) was to “deprive Iraq of its weapon of mass destruction” which are a “direct undeniable and lethal threat to Australia”, as well as to remove “a dictatorship of a particularly horrific kind” (Howard, 2003).

Australia sent about 550 combat troops in Iraq in 2003. There were five Australian casualties since 2003. An Australian airman was killed in a place crash in Iraq (Anon., 2005). An Australian soldier met an accidental death while cleaning his pistol (Anon. 2006). Two private Australian contractors were killed in a roadside explosion in Baghdad (Anon 2007a); and an Australian soldier was gunned down in a roadside attack while on patrol in Iraq (2007b).
No weapon of mass destruction was found in Iraq and Saddam Hussain was executed by the Iraqi verdict in court. However, Iraqi casualties have risen very high during this occupation. A team of American and Iraqi epidemiologists estimated that 655,000 more people have died in Iraq since coalition forces arrived in March 2003 than would have died if the invasion had not occurred. The estimate, produced by interviewing residents during a random sampling of households throughout the country, is far higher than ones produced by other groups, including Iraq's government (Brown, 2006).

**Moving to Perth**

In 2004 we moved to Perth and I started post-doctoral research at the University of Western Australia and later at Edith Cowan University in Perth. While continuing my research on Muslims in Australia, I noted that the unemployment of Australian Muslims had reduced (from the early 1990s) but it was still three times higher than the national total (ABS 2001). It appeared that visible Muslim women who wore the *hijab* (head scarf) and *jilbab* (a full length gown), were especially disadvantaged in the Australian labour market and the wider society (HREOC). Furthermore, some Muslims encountered resistance in building mosques, for example the case of the Annangrove Prayer Hall in New South Wales (see Kabir 2007c, p. 1288).

After the Bali bombings on 12 October 2002, which killed 88 Australians, Muslims in Baulkham Hills planned to build their mosque know as the Annangrove Prayer Hall. But the Baulkham Hills Shire Council received thousands of letters objecting to the building of the Annangrove Prayer Hall. Many feared that Baulkham Hills would become a Muslim enclave like Lakemba in Sydney’s south-west. So the Baulkham Hills Shire Council also objected to it establishment. Later the Muslims lodged a case against the local council and in July 2003, the New South Wales land and
Environment Court gave a verdict in the Muslims favour. In 2004, the Annangrove Prayer Hall was built (Kabir, 2007c, pp. 1288-1290).

Many Arab and Muslim youths felt that the media had unfairly targeted them as the “other”. For example, they were profiled by the police and media as “gang rapists” or “trouble makers” (Kabir, 2005, pp. 292-302; Noble, 2007, pp. 331-344). In 2000 Australian-born Bilal Skaf of Lebanese origin led groups of up to fourteen Lebanese-Australian men who committed three gang rape attacks against young white women some as young as 14. In August 2002, he was convicted on 21 counts of aggravated rape, assault and kidnapping. Bilal Skaf is serving a 31-year prison sentence, and will be eligible for parole in 2033. He was originally sentenced to 55-years with a 40-year non-parole period, but that was modified several times upon appeal. Skaf’s brother, Mohammed Skaf has been sentenced to a maximum 15 years over the same pack rape of a 16-year-old girl (The Advertiser, 29 July 2006, p. 44). Such horrendous incidents tend to taint all Muslims, particularly Muslim youth and young adults with one brush.

I kept thinking that the overall Islamophobia was a repercussion of the Tampa crisis. On the other hand, I felt distressed at the way militant Muslims (especially the al-Qaeda) had resorted to terrorism, and that these violent acts directly contributed to negative perceptions of Australian Muslims. However, in the 2004 election, again I did not vote for the Howard Government as I was particularly displeased with its stance on Iraq. Again, I knew my vote would be insignificant because our electorate was a secure Liberal seat in Perth, but as the preacher of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi said, “Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.” On 9 October 2004 Prime Minister John Howard led the Coalition (with the
National Party) to its fourth consecutive federal election victory, presumably as an endorsement of the Government's economic management (ABC Online news).

**Election 2007: Who do I vote for?**

When the federal election of 24 November 2007 was near at hand I received a flyer from our federal Liberal member of parliament with “five reasons to vote for the Howard Government” (16 October 2007, Liberal Campaign for Curtin, Perth, 2007) with an emphasis on a stronger economy that the Howard government had been able to provide to the Australians. I concurred with the Liberals that the Australian economy was sound under their current administration. My husband and I each both had jobs and our sons would have good career opportunities. And the Australian Muslim unemployment level has dropped from 18.5 per cent (2001) to 12.7 per cent in 2006 (ABS), although Muslim unemployment level still remained three times higher than the national total. Furthermore, in February 2007, the Howard Government provided funding of $8 million to the University of Melbourne, Griffith University and the University of Western Sydney for the establishment of an Australian National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, which was a positive step towards identifying Muslim issues and addressing these concerns through research and the development of new policies. It has now been established in the respective Universities.

However, from 2004 to 2007, the Howard Government has not been entirely free from criticism. On 4 December 2005 a fight between three surf lifesavers and a group of four Lebanese-background young men occurred at Cronulla beach in Sydney, which later turned into a riot. On 11 December 2005 about 5,000 young Australians converged on Sydney’s Cronulla beach, many draped in Australian flags, singing *Waltzing Matilda* and *Advance Australia Fair* and chanting “Kill the Lebs”, “no more
Lebs”, “get Lebs off the beach”, “F…k off, Lebs”, and “F…k off wogs” (Overington and Warne-Smith 20). Subsequently, on 12 December 2005 a group of Lebanese-Australians arrived at Punchbowl Park armed with guns, machetes, baseball bats, knives, chains and iron bars and launched a reprisal attack by smashing shops and cars and threatening people who got in their way. Allegedly the Lebanese-Australians injured at least 4 people (Kabir, 2007d). Instead of remaining neutral over the conflict between the Australian and Lebanese-Australian youths, John Howard took the side of the mainstream Australians when he said “We’re not a bunch of racists” (Kerin and Leys, 2005, p. 4).

In September 2006 the former mufti (Muslim spiritual leader) Egyptian-born Sheikh Taj el Din al-Hilali delivered a sermon in Arabic, which depicted scantily-dressed women as uncovered meat and blamed them for drawing men to rape. Though he offered an unreserved apology, claiming that he had intended his speech to protect women’s honour, his statement was regarded as offensive (Australian, 27/10/2006, p. 4), and it sparked political and media debates that continued for two weeks. The then Prime Minister John Howard reacted to the inflammatory speech of the former mufti and invited the Muslim community to act against Sheikh al-Hilali or risk a backlash from the mainstream community. Some Muslims were critical of John Howard’s intervention, saying that it was a Muslim affair and the Prime Minister should not interfere (Fanning, 2006). When Mr Howard maintained his silence over the inflammatory comments of Cardinal George Pell and the leader of the Christian Democratic Party, Fred Nile, I was especially concerned. For example, in 2006 when Cardinal George Pell criticised the Muslims’ Holy Book, the Qu’ran as follows:

In my own reading of the Koran [Quran], I began to note down invocations to violence. There are so many of them, however, that I abandoned this exercise after 50 or 60 or 70 pages (Morris, 2006).
Mr Howard made no comment (see also Kabir, 2006b). Then on 10 March 2007, Fred Nile, the leader of the Christian Democratic Party, called for an immediate moratorium on Islamic immigration. Again, there was no reaction from the John Howard (Debien, 2007).

On the other hand, I considered the Howard Government’s citizenship test (with the support of ALP) Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007 legislated from 1 October 2007, to be against the Australian value of “a fair go”, and with its implied endorsement of assimilation, to be counter productive. It was equally disappointing that the Labor party supported the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007. It would seem that Labor’s social justice policies are to be jettisoned for the sake of electoral success. Refugee Council of Australia CEO Paul Power said people from non-English-speaking backgrounds were particularly disadvantaged of this test (AAP, 2007). On 2 January 2008, the West Australian reported that out of 10,636 people taking citizenship tests carried out since their introduction in October 2007, 2311, or more than 20 per cent failed (Butterly, 2008, p. 5).

Also the decision by the Howard Government to reduce the Sudanese immigration intake to 4,000 annually was also disappointing. The then federal immigration minister, Kevin Andrews stated (Farouque, Petrie and Miletic, 2007):

The Government squeezed the African component of the refugee program because "some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life".

Kevin Andrews further said that it was not racism, “it's all about integration or the problems being experienced by African migrants, specifically those from the Sudan” (Laws, 2007). Refugee and ethnic representatives were critical of the singling out of the Sudanese. "It almost borders on vilification of Sudanese refugees," said activist
Jack Smit (Farouque, Petrie and Miletic, 2007: 2). I concurred that this labelling of an ethnic group had racialist overtones. And again I was disappointed that the Opposition leader, Kevin Rudd “kept his head down” and distanced himself from the Liberals’ act of vilification.

Though the Labor party did not have specific policies if re-elected, kept silent on the Sudanese refugee intake, and endorsed the citizenship test, I was pleased to hear when Kevin Rudd promised that if he was elected he would bring back the Australian troops from Iraq. As discussed earlier, the “illegal” occupation of Iraq had resulted in many Iraqi civilian casualties – 655,000 more people have died in Iraq since coalition forces arrived in March 2003.3

Conclusion

The news poll favoured a Labor victory and perhaps even a Labor landslide victory on 24th November (Australian, 2007, pp. 1 and 8). However, my concern was more personal: how will I cast my vote? I have been critical of both parties – Liberal and Labor. I have supported the ALP in the last four federal elections. But I have grown politically to become an active Australian citizen, and this during the period the Liberals have been in power. I also believed that to have Labour leaders in all the states and territories, and at the federal level, will be an imbalance. However, the decisive point of casting my vote moved between the last playing of the race card, the cutting of the Sudanese intake, and Australian foreign policy, bringing back the Australian troops home from Iraq.

Now that the Rudd Labor government won a landslide in the 2007 federal election, I am pleased to hear that it plans to withdraw Australian troops by about the middle of 2008 (Maley, 2008, p. 6). Under the present Rudd government the citizenship test is
under review (Butterly, 2008, p. 5); and the Sudanese question is yet to be answered. My vote in the next federal election (2010) will again depend on my observation of the Australian race relation politics. I return to Mahatma Gandhi’s saying: “Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.”

Notes


2. The controversial citizenship test would have 20 multiple-choice -question covering a wide range of topics such as, “What year did Federation take place? What day of the year is Australia Day? What's the first line of Australia's national anthem? What is approximately the population of Australia?” To pass, prospective citizens will have to get at least 12 questions correct. It would be a computer-based test designed to make sure new citizens had a basic knowledge of English and understood the responsibility and privilege of being Australian.

3. On 18 March 2008, a female suicide bomber struck Shiite worshippers in the holy city of Karbala, killing at least 43 people (Gamel 2008). The blast was the deadliest in a series of attacks that left at least 72 Iraqis dead, including six youths killed when mortar rounds slammed into a soccer field in eastern Baghdad. Two U.S. soldiers also were killed Monday in a roadside bombing north of Baghdad, bringing the American death toll closer to 4,000 as the U.S.-led war entered its sixth year. At least 3,990 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003 (Gamel 2008). The violence marred overlapping trips by US Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator John McCain to Baghdad. Their visits were aimed at touting recent security gains and stressing Washington's long-term commitment to fighting insurgents in Iraq (Gamel 2008).

Reference


Nahid Kabir, Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University