

Andrew Bolt: How we still pay for Malcolm Fraser's big blunder

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THE unhinged and even threatening reaction to Peter Dutton proves he's right to raise issues with Muslim Lebanese immigration. And it proves the Immigration Minister was also right to call it out, before we import even more refugees who could put Australians in danger.

Oops. Too late. See the extraordinary crime wave we've since imported with Sudanese refugees as well? The carjackings, home invasions and brazen thefts? Will we never learn?

On my Sky News show last week, Dutton finally admitted that prime minister Malcolm Fraser in 1976 made a dangerous mistake by lowering our entry requirements and letting in many illiterate and unqualified Muslims fleeing Lebanon's civil war. Yes, Dutton conceded, "Fraser did make mistakes in bringing some people in the 1970s and we're seeing that today".

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Fraser's own Immigration Department had warned him that these largely unskilled Muslims from rural towns would struggle to fit in here. It even predicted "the possibility that the conflicts, tensions and divisions within Lebanon will be transferred to Australia". How right they were, and we're now living with the consequences of Fraser's decision to overrule them — to import not just a people but a hard-to-assimilate culture in which many of their children have since been raised, too. Result: gun crime in western Sydney and northern Melbourne often involves Lebanese Australians, as we saw with the murder last month of Hamad Assaad, himself a suspected hitman.

Bikie gangs such as the Nomads recruit heavily from among Lebanese Muslims, as have jihadist recruiters.

As Dutton has noted, 22 of the 33 people arrested for terrorism offences are from Lebanese background, even though Lebanese make up only 20 per cent of Muslims here. Moreover, of the first 21 Australians jailed here for terrorism offences, at least four were born in Lebanon and seven more to Lebanese families.

Many of the Australians who have joined the Islamic State are also from Lebanese families, including the notorious Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar, who posed for photographs with severed heads.



Many Nomads bikie gang members are Lebanese Muslims.

True, many Lebanese Muslims here have done well and even more mean well. But the community has plainly struggled. The 2011 census, three decades after Fraser's decision, showed nearly one in five Lebanese-born Australians still struggled to speak good English (even though the figures include the far better integrated Christians). They earned a median income of just \$333 a week on average, far below the Australian average of \$577, and were four times more likely than the rest of us to be on a disability pension.

So the consequences of Fraser's decision are plain and only a dangerously reckless immigration minister could afford to ignore them.

But let's now check the response to the truth spoken by Dutton.

From many of the media, the Greens and Labor there has come the utterly predictable vilification — abuse that he's a "racist". This is important. I assume from Labor leader Bill Shorten's attack on Dutton on Wednesday — "loud, lazy, disrespect" — that Shorten has learned nothing at all from Fraser's mistake and would, in government, happily repeat it. Does he deny it?

Actually, I suspect Shorten knows damn well that Dutton is right, but is crawling for the votes of the big Muslim minorities in critical marginal seats such as Barton, Reid, Werriwa, Banks and Parramatta.



Immigration Minister Peter Dutton.

All that is bad enough and shows the intellectual poverty of the Left today — as well as the sanctimonious thuggery that voters are now revolting against. But worse has been the response from prominent Lebanese Muslims. Take the article, foolishly published by the Sydney Morning Herald, from Mostafa Rachwani, a Lebanese Muslim Association employee.

Psychologists and historians have noted that Muslim Arab culture often stresses male honour so obsessively that there is a strong tendency among its members to admit no error and blame others for their own failings.

Rachwani has that tendency big-time. His article mindlessly blames non-Muslim Australians for turning poor Lebanese Muslims to crime and terrorism. “No one ever wants to talk about the deeply rooted racism Fraser’s migrants had to face,” he claims. “These communities have faced cultural, political, economic and physical violence from a society that was hostile to any kind of encroachment on their grip on what it means to be Australian ... “Whether it is expressed in gang violence or in foreign fighters, these people are inherently just seeking what society was unwilling to provide them: their humanity, their worth being recognised.”

This is not just false. Not just pathetic. It is also dangerous. This actually reads like a rationalisation of jihadism — don’t blame them if they kill you — and is almost as shocking as the implicit threat made two years ago by Hizb ut Tahrir Australia spokesman Wassim Doureihy, who is also of Muslim Lebanese background. He told a crowd of Sydney Muslims: “Even if a thousand bombs went off in this country, all that it will prove is that the Muslims are angry and they have every reason to be angry.”

Their bombs, your fault.



Lebanese Muslim Association president Samier Dandan.

Lebanese Muslim Association president Samier Dandan was almost as bad. This week he smeared Dutton as a racist and claimed that the “root causes of the foreign fighters issue” included “socio-economic status, political disempowerment and racial discrimination, none of which has anything to do with any one culture entering Australia”. So don’t blame Muslim Lebanese Australians. Ignore how Chinese, Indians and Buddhists — even Christian Lebanese — managed to settle here so successfully without turning to guns and bombs. No, just blame evil Australia and the “shocking cruelty” of its border policies.

This manic determination to play the victim and blame Australia is a menace and at times even funny, in a sick way. Take Fairfax columnist Ruby Hamad, of Lebanese descent, who yesterday demanded Australia “demonstrate it has some humanity left” by sacking Dutton. Muslim Lebanese weren’t the problem, according to Hamad. Nor were jihadists. Blame instead the “Western powers, including Australia, that has led to the kinds of catastrophic wars and sectarian violence that continue to create refugees”.

Wow. We created the Islamic State? The Assad regime? Hezbollah? We’re to blame for the beheadings and bombings of Muslims by Muslims? Muslims have no moral agency at all? Everything is always the fault of white Christians? Apparently so, because Hamad even blamed racist Australia for “its attacks on my language”: “I stopped reading, writing, and speaking Arabic; this poetic gift of my ancestors is now largely lost to me and I grieve it every day.”

Bizarre.

So it's entirely our fault that Hamad didn't take enough of the Arabic courses we provide in our universities, or watch the Arabic-language programs on SBS. And it's our fault that even now she can't take a course in Arabic in the TAFE colleges we also provide.

Again, many Muslims do in fact fit in. But Dutton is absolutely right to point out that too many did not and that it comes at a cost.

Lessons must be learned. We must not forget that some cultures are less compatible than others with our own and we help no one by dropping our standards.

We certainly don't help ourselves.

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