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Britishness:

towards a progressive
citizenship

Edited by Nick Johnson

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Preface

Wilf Stevenson, Director, Smith Institute

The Smith Institute is an independent think tank which has been set up to undertake research and education in issues that flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives. In recent years the institute has centred its work on the policy implications arising from the interactions of equality, enterprise and equity.

The aim of this pamphlet is to look at the ways in which issues of diversity and equality interact with the notion of a positively stated and recognisable understanding of "Britishness". Many contemporary political speeches across the political spectrum deal with Britishness. For example, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has sought to argue for a common ground of progressive policy that reflects a range of "enduring British values". However, there are clearly potential tensions between the desire to celebrate common values, and the notion of Britain as a nation that is welcoming and accommodating of a wide range of cultures and belief systems.

The essays in this collection offer stimulating and thought-provoking accounts of what a progressive national feeling might encompass, and how it might be encouraged and shaped in the coming years. Over the course of their contributions, the authors address a wide range of questions germane to this debate: Is it possible to develop a statement of Britishness that transcends the wide range of beliefs and values that exist within the population? Can public institutions really claim to be difference-blind, or is it a matter of supporting and bolstering the public validity of group identities? How can the internally fluid and contested nature of "group identity" be recognised and taken into account when developing policies and shaping the requirements of British citizenship? What are the best ways to understand and respond progressively to the patterns of mass migration and the appearance of new cultures and communities within the British population? Can "Britishness" be understood in terms of the way we approach issues of difference within our borders?

The Smith Institute thanks Nick Johnson for editing this collection and gratefully acknowledges the support of the Commission for Racial Equality towards this publication.

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Introduction

Nick Johnson, Director of Policy and Public Sector at the Commission for Racial Equality

If you spill a stranger's drink by accident, it is good manners (and prudent) to offer to buy another.

*Britain is famous for being a nation of animal lovers, and many people in Britain keep pets. Taken from *Life in the United Kingdom, A Journey to Citizenship*¹*

It is the sense, and often the fact, of community, of human dialogue, the thousand invisible strands of common experience and purpose, affection and respect, which tie men to their fellows. It is expressed in such words as community, neighbourhood, civic pride, friendship. It provides the life-sustaining force of human warmth, of security amongst others, and a sense of one's own human significance in the accepted associations and companionship of others.

Robert F Kennedy, in his last book, *To Seek a Newer World*²

What is Britishness?

Too often when Britishness is discussed, we concentrate on the details, the slightly ironic notions of the small things that, taken together, make up what we can call a national identity. Rarely do we talk of Britishness as a sense of belonging, of common bonds – of the higher national purpose that Robert Kennedy outlines.

Given this, it can be no wonder that the recent British social attitudes survey showed that the proportion of people who consider themselves British has fallen from 52% in 1997 to 44% in 2007. The problem here may not be that people are rejecting Britishness per se, but rather that there is uncertainty as to what being British might involve.

Many accounts of what binds citizens in Britain together are expressed in terms of what being British cannot include. Icons of Britishness are seemingly set in stone and always under threat – from outsiders, government and the modern world. Britishness can often be seen as anachronistic and exclusive. Yet for others, it is meaningless – too abstract and inclusive to be anything distinctive. British values are almost always universal values, British behaviour quaint but hardly generating a shared sense of identity.

¹ *Life in the United Kingdom, A Journey to Citizenship* (Home Office, 2004)

² Kennedy, Robert *To Seek a Newer World* (Doubleday, 1967)

For progressives – with their commitment to internationalism, diversity, and equal opportunities and responsibilities for all citizens regardless of ethnicity, gender, age or faith – an exclusive or backward-looking account of what it is to be a citizen of Britain cannot be satisfactory. The lack of a positive account of what it means to be British could underpin what the Chancellor of the Exchequer has referred to as a “yearning for community” among the British public. In an age of global travel and communication, in which patterns of migration are bringing ever more diversity and richness to the texture of British society, the need for an account of what it might mean to be a part of British society in all its diversity is greater than ever.

This collection of essays aims to show why Britishness matters even more in this world of hyper-diversity and movement: how it can be drawn inclusively and aspirationally and how, through developing a more concrete sense of shared identity, we can piece together the “thousand invisible strands of common experience and purpose”.

... something to be proud of?

American writer and sociologist Professor Todd Gitlin makes a passionate case that not only do progressives need to embrace patriotism, but patriotism itself requires a progressive application if it is not to wither. He places the debate over Britishness among competing visions for the future – one anachronistic, rooted in the past, and the other forward-looking and embracing change.

For too long, he argues, politicians of the left have been too fearful of talking about Britishness, instead leaving it to the right to promote a narrow and exclusive view of national identity. He proclaims that “the nation must be saved from the nationalists” and places the onus on defining a view of national identity that is integrationist, not assimilationist. In an argument reflected in the contributions of both Trevor Phillips and Robert Winder, Gitlin shows how we can develop a concept of Britishness that recognises the diversity that has been an essential part of our history and is vital to our future.

However, he also contends that we should not fudge real differences and that national identity can be an answer to some of the present debates over diversity and multiculturalism. Just as he rejects the right's attempts to proclaim a cultural homogeneity to Britishness that does not exist, Gitlin also criticises laissez-faire multiculturalism for seeking to ignore the need for common allegiance. Britishness, he argues, can be the bridge between recognising cultural difference and multiple identities, while retaining some cohesion to the shared space we inhabit.

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To realise this vision, we need to concentrate on the role Britishness can play in our notions of citizenship and social solidarity, rather than seeing it as an ethnicity. Gitlin argues for seeing Britishness as a form of social contract that ties people together in an ever more fluid world.

... a symbol of solidarity and citizenship?

Labour MP Sadiq Khan makes a conceptual case for why Britishness matters and also gives an account of what that might mean for policy makers. Like other contributors, he sees no contradiction between a strong sense of British identity and other identities to which people may have loyalty. Indeed, he sees a renewed debate and focus on Britishness as a way of resolving some of our present debates over integration and cohesion.

For Khan, a strong notion of Britishness as a civic contract offers an important way of thinking about how different identities can coexist with a mutual sense of belonging as a British citizen. Discussion of identity and loyalty is fatally undermined while inequality and social exclusion persist. Specifically discussing the debate around extremism, Khan argues that both religious and political groups can undermine national unity by exploiting perceptions of a lack of social justice among vulnerable communities.

The threat to unity that is posed when the lines of inequality coincide with those of race or identity prompts Khan to propose a "vertical contract" between state and citizen that provides equality. The social guarantees that such a contract might include must be balanced, however, by a horizontal contract *between* citizens that works towards greater integration. Khan suggests that this requires learning British customs, history and language as well as a commitment to broaden horizons and move away from a narrow definition of identity, so widening interaction between people from different backgrounds. Khan places this in the traditional progressive notion of society, rather than "an assortment of individuals pursuing our own goals".

In making this case, Khan argues that Britishness can be a framework for "interculturalism" that recognises difference and promotes common bonds. Like Todd Gitlin, he believes that shared national loyalties are essential in promoting cohesion and solidarity. Thus Britishness must be both progressive and inclusive. It can then form the framework for a civic contract that acknowledges mutual as well as individual rights and responsibilities. Britishness must be about both equality and integration, rooted in our sense of community – local and national.

... a product of our multi-ethnic history and future?

Robert Winder makes a convincing case that immigration and our response to it is essential to any understanding of Britishness. In doing so, he refutes any suggestion that the discourse around our national identity should be seen as exclusive or mono-ethnic.

Building on the work in his seminal book, *Bloody Foreigners*, Winder points out that many of the supposed symbols of an anachronistic and idealised Britain are in fact the products of immigration. Any interpretation of Britishness throughout history has relied upon outside influences; and the symbols, culture and look of what we mean by Britishness have been fundamentally shaped by our changing population. Winder makes the case that we are a "magpie nation" and that this is part of our success.

That success is also founded on our adaptability and the ability to accommodate this change. Winder resists talk of universal values, seeking a more meaningful display of Britishness in our history. Our national story is based on pragmatism and change and that is why it is so hard to define what we actually mean by Britishness.

Winder argues that this debate is so important at the start of the 21st century because, as we face new and different challenges, we can seek solace in our past. Our history shows that no challenge should be seen either as insurmountable or as threatening our sense of national identity. Indeed, because of this history, Britain may now be in a stronger position than many other nations.

... a way of bringing us together?

Trevor Phillips places Britishness as central to the debates over our diversity and globalisation. In an ever-changing world, he argues, we need to find some things that can encompass generations, races and faiths to bind communities together. In contrast to the doctrine of multiculturalism, which he has previously criticised for its tendency to emphasise what divides people rather than what unites them, Phillips portrays Britishness as a means to engender greater integration.

The way in which this country responds to an increasing multiplicity of identities must be found in our history and previous waves of adaptation. How Britain accommodates this change will be unique to these islands and, as Robert Winder's chapter makes clear, we have a strong history of doing this successfully.

Importantly, we should not allow Britishness to be either assumed by the majority, or

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simply seen as something to stress to immigrants. Rather, Phillips argues that we should embrace the term and its meaning as a way of navigating society through this period of unprecedented change.

Phillips also believes that while talk of values can give us a framework for debate, we need to root the discussion over Britishness far more in the practical application of these values. A British meaning for liberty or freedom will be different from other nations' and will be "rooted in the traditions of these islands".

In harmony with many other contributors, Phillips shows us how Britishness can be used as an umbrella for our multiple identities, neither dominant nor subservient. It must be inclusive and practical: about how we live together in a shared space and have responsibilities to our fellow citizens. This will ensure it is neither exclusive nor abstract but vital to how we evolve as a society at the start of the 21st century.

... the strength to embrace the wider world?

Nick Pearce shows how we can embrace the debate over Britishness without compromising any progressive values. He rejects the notion that immigration and an increasingly diverse population have undermined any concept of shared national identity.

While Winder makes the cultural case for migration, Pearce makes an economic one, arguing that it poses no threat to our social cohesion, and placing the discussion over Britishness in the context of balancing diversity with solidarity.

Pearce makes an aggressive defence of multiculturalism as a means of accepting the multiple identities that are present in Britain today. However, he argues that this recognition of diversity must be seen alongside a common commitment to "active citizenship and civic patriotism". Pearce makes the case for a civic rather than ethnic definition of Britishness that enables other identities and loyalties to exist alongside it.

Arguing that Britishness cannot be simply left to take care of itself. Pearce shows how it can have implications in terms of public policy. He makes the case for "procedural fairness" to allay fears of special treatment for minorities, while also recognising that we need to increase moves towards equality to reduce any potential negative effects from our diversity. This is played out through a new emphasis on "localism", by which he means civic engagement and community identity. Pearce argues that local attachments and civic identity can be as important in fostering cohesion as having a national narrative.

... a mosaic of local identities?

In their chapter, Geoff Mulgan and Rushanara Ali root the debates over our identity in an atmosphere where "our senses of belonging have been dislocated" and argue that it is important that we find new expressions of communality and solidarity in a rapidly changing world.

Mulgan and Ali argue that we can better meet this challenge by concentrating on regenerating a patchwork of local identities. Drawing on Britain's long history of locally based civic organisation, they cite trade unions, mass political parties and municipal corporations as ways in which people have been able to bond with one another without needing a national narrative.

They show, in a similar way to Nick Pearce's argument, that diversity is not itself a threat to solidarity. However, there is an obligation for progressives to foster a sense of belonging and communality if we are not to make diversity divisive.

Their solution is for institutions and policy makers to forge "webs of mutual obligation" that generate notions of belonging at a local level. This practical feeling of belonging and inclusion should be the focus, rather than the more abstract notions of identity. In making this case, Mulgan and Ali are making a similar point to other contributors, in that we should focus more on the manifestations of common identity than on its definitions.

... a union of nations?

Britishness has always faced challenges from competing identities. In a personal account, Labour MEP Catherine Stihler explores the changing nature of Scottish identity and how this fits with a wider British narrative.

Stihler makes a persuasive case for Britishness being not an exclusive form of identification, but part of a range of identities any individual may claim. In the context of the devolution settlement, not only does she see no incompatibility between her Scottishness and her Britishness, but she argues that the latter is vital in developing a cohesive society. She places this in terms of the more generalised trend towards less static and more complicated identities that people experience today. Using her experience as an MEP, Stihler looks at why Britishness is still important in this ever-expanding range of identities with which people associate themselves.

In making this case, she demonstrates the practical side of the debate and links it

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explicitly to Scotland's place in the UK and in Europe. In defending the constitutional settlement, she shows why Britishness should be seen as a complement to a renewed Scottish identity.

However, she argues that this must not be taken for granted, and criticises the lack of emphasis upon both British history and its meaning today. She suggests that it is easier for schoolchildren to name the first American president than the first British prime minister, and in doing so sets out a persuasive case that history is core to any understanding of Britishness.

... something that we can teach?

A key theme of this volume is that we have been negligent about the history of our nation and the practical application of Britishness to the challenges we face today. Trevor Phillips, Nick Pearce and Catherine Stihler all make reference to the "teachable" nature of a civic understanding of Britishness. So too does Tony Breslin, who brings his professional experience, as both a former teacher and now chief executive of the Citizenship Foundation, to the task of exploring how we can make Britishness relevant to the schoolchildren of today.

Examined here through the lens of citizenship, Breslin argues that we need to take the case for Britishness beyond mere identity and make it far more practical. By showing how citizenship education plays itself out in the daily life of a school, Breslin opens up the debate to a set of real challenges and makes us question how relevant some of the current discourse is in an educational setting.

He also argues, however, that we cannot deal with issues of identity or citizenship in the abstract. Valuing and appreciating what binds us together can flourish best alongside an emphasis on greater equality. Strengthening communal bonds is made almost impossible if people are being asked to look at their obligations to a society that, in many other ways, excludes them.

Breslin also makes the case for the debate to be inclusive and not merely about status. What are our responsibilities to our fellow citizens? How does our behaviour impact upon others? The answers to these and other questions will undoubtedly have a uniquely British tinge. They will be informed by our politics, our culture and also by our history.

Citizenship can also engender a common bond that enables us to welcome and encourage

other identities as they find a meeting place here.

... a strong sense of our social responsibilities?

Much of the debate around Britishness and identity is seen through the lens of the terrorist challenge. Indeed, many of the more reactionary views of our national identity seek to place it in contrast to an Islamic identity and present a choice for Muslims to make between the two. Journalist and author Madeleine Bunting not only highlights the fatuousness of this false choice, but goes further in arguing that faith is an essential underpinning for Britishness.

In seeking to understand the decline of our national identity over the past century, Bunting draws links with the decline of Christianity as a force in our society. The Britishness she presents has a hollowed core where the Church used to be. However, she argues that the institutional link meant that Britishness did not have meaning for most citizens, and warns against trying to replicate a top-down national identity in the 21st century.

Far from harking back to a never-to-be-recovered world, Bunting makes the case that we need to find a more ethical understanding of citizenship, one that recognises our responsibilities to our fellow citizens. This can then provide an umbrella for a range of local and communal identities, creating a tapestry akin to a national narrative.

These local and smaller groups of identities are essential, Bunting states, if we are not to be seen as arguing for an assimilationist form of national identity that cannot be relevant in our multi-race and multi-faith country. These identities, based around such issues as faith, locality, gender and age, can provide the key to increased reciprocity within Britain and help rebuild a decaying social fabric.

As Bunting points out, though, we cannot simply allow these smaller identities to exist in a vacuum. Indeed, she specifically warns of the dangers of "parallel lives" if we do not find a way of building bridges between these different groups. In doing this, Britishness can be a glue holding together what may seem a disparate nation.

Taken together, this collection of essays offers an important overview of the core concepts that might be included in a progressive account of what it is to be a citizen of British society.

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Chapter 1

The progressive value of civic patriotism

Professor Todd Gitlin, Sociologist and Author

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The progressive value of civic patriotism

It is a platitude, though a useful one, that the global traffic of persons, capital, media and ideology is undermining the nation state. But to describe the world in that fashion might cast the "nation" as history's reactionary blowhard reduced to cursing those damnable waves incessantly eating away at the shoreline. To think of the nation as nothing more than a primitive relic of prehistory would be myopic and, from a political point of view, self-destructive. The modern movements of metamorphosis, however irreversible, do not negate the need for workable political communities. The nation is not the exclusive recourse of racialists, as the state is not the exclusive recourse of statist. If the left abandons the cause of either nation or state to those of the narrowest, most ethnocentric cast, it abandons an opportunity to extend, even reinvent the cause of a just and peaceful community.

Tomorrow's nation states are as unlikely to resemble today's as today's resemble yesterday's. The romance of simple, onward-and-upward nationhood is keenly exaggerated. Anyway, in the history of nations, there was rarely as much cultural homogeneity as partisans of purism imagine. Hyphenated nations, replete with complexities of language, religion and custom, were more the rule than the exception. A history of hyphenated identities is usually masked by the official cultivators of national uniformities. Bombastic jingos airbrush the complexities out and read their present day fantasies of monolithic nations back into the myths they call history.

Purification movements collude with one another. So the subject of national identity is no fancy abstraction. Concretely, when immigrants and their descendants are excluded from the common domain of a heterogeneous society – when they are ghettoised, unemployed, confined to the *banlieue* – it is not so hard for them to jump from the feeling of exclusion to the politics of resentment. Their hearts give way to their spleens. Many are the ideologues who are eager to sign them up in the name of fantasies of purification.

Reimagining the nation

In Britain, as in the United States and elsewhere, as workers, families, money, arms and passions cross borders with relative ease, pressures emerge to shore up the nation's or state's dwindling prestige by narrowing its meaning and purifying its lineage. But against these pressures, more promisingly, it is possible to imagine many hybrid forms of the nation, combinations of multiple and overlapping identities that make themselves at home with each other.

As many have recently suggested, the nation deserves its story. If it is not a story of unbroken progress, neither is it likely to be a story of straightforward decline and fall. But the nation, properly understood, is not the ogre of history. The concept of the nation must be salvaged from nationalists – that is, from those who think that their nation is now, or has sometimes been, an exemplar of perfection, and that it is therefore entitled to dictate to others who have the mistaken idea that their own nations are actually the superior ones. To feel attachment to a nation – as opposed to a tribe, a clan, or whatever we call the exclusivities of blood – is not barbarous. Neither is it turning one's back on humanity.

In truth, the nation state is an ambiguous historical achievement; I mean both the nation, the cultural community of its residents, and the state, the political apparatus of its citizens. Descended from the holdings of monarchs, the nation state has followed an evolutionary forking path, producing – among many other varieties of governance – both absolutisms and democracies, enshrining alike injustices and forms of justice and, most promising, aspirations to justice.

Since a nation is, in the political anthropologist Benedict Anderson's words, an "imagined community", and since its traditions are frequently, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger wrote, "invented", it has been widely derided as something both incidental and oppressive – an excrescence, an inauthentic concoction devised by elites to disguise their particular interests. In truth, it is not only contemporaries who have understood the nation as a work in progress – "*un plébiscite de tous les jours*", or a daily referendum, in Ernest Renan's words of 1882. It is a work in progress. It always has been.

Samuel Johnson famously called patriotism, or love of the nation, "the last refuge of a scoundrel"; quoting this is supposed to stop conversation, when such matters come up among the *bien pensants*. But the conversation immediately starts up again if one notes that, immediately after reporting this epigram, Boswell – as if anticipating that Johnson's remark would become the canonical refuge of the intellectually lazy – noted that Johnson "did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest".

That "pretended patriotism", a rationalisation for something petty, stupid and ugly, is no stranger to history. But surely there is a different – a progressive – tradition for patriotism if we think of it as an affection for country, where the country stands for shared, decent values. From this point of view, the nation state matters because it is a concrete embodiment of values – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, in the case of one of the

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great revolutions of the late 18th century; liberté, égalité, fraternité, in the case of the other. It is the values that matter, not the flags that symbolise them. Then the response to a confusion or crisis in national identity is not to put out more flags, but to invigorate values.

The problem, of course, is: which values? Values clash. The nation whose everyday life or proclaimed ideology embodies only a single value is either nonexistent or monstrous. In despair over resolving the question of a priority of values, and under the pressure of heartfelt principles jostling for attention, space and deference in a world of severe conflicts and scarcities, a tendency has emerged (on the left, but not only there) to say that anything goes; that all heartfelt beliefs, or at least those that can claim a lineage, are sacrosanct simply because they are passionately adhered to; that all cultures or subcultures are created equal and that the alternative to cultural laissez-faire is cultural imperialism. But such views do not represent the triumph of the left. They represent its definitive defeat.

The recent upsurge in cross-border migration has combined with this ideological turn to produce various strong forms of multiculturalism, meaning roughly, a refusal to privilege a single cultural tradition over others. Dominance by an elite, usually a nativist one, is held to be disrespect for minorities. Conversely, respect for minorities is held to require disrespect for national traditions and symbols whose lineage is intertwined with the dominance of elites.

Here, a progressive patriotic ideal insists that the nation be an embodiment of transcendent values – not ethnocentric identities. It is more than an arithmetic sum of subnational communities standing side by side, each behind its wall, each demanding its distinct allegiance. The liberal state has a right to expect loyalty to its laws and institutions – including, in a democratic society, the institution of campaigning for change in the laws. The heterogeneous nation has a right to expect some attachment to heterogeneity of purpose; in short, to the purposes of individuals.

Preserving national identity

Nation states need not be shy about what they expect of their citizens: that they obey the law, renounce service in the armies of other nations, and participate in the common life as the particular nation state requires in its particular way. Likewise, morality impels nations to a certain hospitality, but they need not be shy, either, about what they expect of guests. They have a right to expect, frankly, that other identities be muted or limited.

Culturally, a nation may well be one of those Wittgensteinian phenomena defined by family resemblance – there is no single feature borne by all the members, but intuition recognises that they belong, in fact, to the same family. Not every intuition will agree, but still, there will be some consensus on the multiple overlappings that can be recognised both by outsiders and by insiders.

Partisans of heterogeneous nations like Britain and the United States can agree with immigrants from more homogeneous nations that the receiving nations are, indeed, corrosive of other identities. Fundamentalists of various stripes are correct to recognise that identity is something of a zero-sum game. Everyone has multiple identities – you may be at once, for example, British, English, female, Muslim and so on. But to the degree that you belong to a nation, to that degree you are less affiliated to other identities. So be it.

The question for patriots is, what are the necessary overlaps that define a boundary between inside and outside? It strikes me that progressives can agree that certain political values are more important than customs of food and fashion, and that the core emphasis in these political values is equality before the law. In Britain, as in the United States, it seems to me that puddings, cuts of meat, and tastes in sport are less essential than a particular set of values: equality before the law and the inalienable right of the individual not to be enslaved by boss, spouse, chieftain, or anyone else. The liberties of individuals are what count, not the cultural uniformities insisted upon by certain anointed "leaders" of "communities". In Britain, as in the United States, national law trumps religious law.

In other words, a progressive idea of the nation to which patriots owe loyalty is quite different from what Amartya Sen has called "plural monoculturalism". Insofar as the common civic mores – Tocqueville's "habits of the heart" – have withered, they need to be self-consciously taught. Again, this is not a reactionary position. To the contrary. When police single out immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, or South Asia, or their descendants, for offensive treatment, this is an offence not only to those individuals or to the sum of them – it is an offence to *British values*. If a Muslim citizen of the United States is deprived of constitutional rights, this is an offence to the Constitution and to the inalienable rights of every American. The defence of liberty for oppressed groups is undertaken in the name of the rights of all, not because they are the distinct rights of a particular category of persons.

Concretely, a Briton, it seems to me, has the right to oppose (or support) British policy in

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Iraq, or anywhere else. He or she may campaign to this effect, may write, agitate and stand for election toward the chosen end. It is elementary that he or she does not have the right to stone adulterers to death, or to blow up the Underground or a jetliner. Civic patriotism, the patriotism of values, affirms that to live in the community is to receive its protections – and to respect *its* right to expect an attachment of spirit in return.

Civic patriotism entails an intellectual obligation as well. You may believe whatever you like in private. In a place of religion, as in any private association, you may subscribe to any code you like. But when you come into the public domain to advocate, you must, as the political philosopher John Rawls wrote, make arguments that can be understood by those of your fellow citizens who adhere to different cultural or religious codes. You may well *derive* your position on, say, abortion from Roman Catholic doctrine. That is your business. But when you *defend* your position in public, among non-Catholics, you should do so with recourse to principles that non-Catholics acknowledge. "God wants you to spare the foetus" is not an adequate argument, since many of your fellow citizens do not believe in God, and some who do may believe you are mistaken about what God wants.

Building up shared experience

The point of a robust civic patriotism is to build up the tissue of interlocking beliefs that bind all the members of a society, however hyphenated they may be in some respects, in a common affirmation. Citizenly virtue entails attachment to civic values and institutions. But to the degree that the society is, *de facto*, nothing more than an assortment of distinct communities, experience of the commons withers and attachment to the common good thins out.

In other words, the nation has a stake in an *experience* of integration. If Britons of Pakistani origin wish to live in certain neighbourhoods, or to speak Urdu or Punjabi, by all means let them. But the nation has a stake in encouraging them to share some overlapping experience. It is not the business of the nation state to shore up other identities than the civic – specifically the religious or ethnic. Common participation in public education, public service and even public transport matter greatly, and the nation has a right to place a premium on them. The United States and Great Britain should absolutely not suppress languages other than English, but the respective nation states are right to *prefer* English on civic occasions, and to make it generally accessible. In an open nation, diversity takes on value because something is not diversified – a national spirit. And this should not be simply *pro forma*. Commonalities of spirit do not derive strictly from abstract pledges.

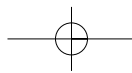
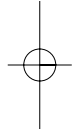
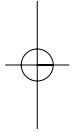
If an American may be so brassy as to make an ex-colonial suggestion, it would be good to have a written constitution to declare such principles. There are other ways to enshrine the values that the *patria* is supposed to stand for, but a constitutional essence would be useful. To be substantial, a national identity must extend over time, and this means that it needs binding. It is certainly not enough for a contract among generations to be stated on paper, but it is better that it exist on paper than not.

But there should be no illusion about how easy it will be to reclaim the nation for an ideal that would not be strictly nationalist or chauvinistic. The recrudescence of poisonous, exclusivist ideologies is not only a phenomenon resulting from economic and cultural interpenetration, but is both cause and effect of an ideological crisis – a defeat for universalist visions. Revolts against modernity are features of modernity itself, but the current revolts are intense as well as technologically enhanced. They represent, in a sense, the triumph of the past, with its often spurious but fervent comforts, over the future, with its intrinsic uncertainties.

The rise of religious and political fundamentalisms everywhere has, as one of its determining causes, the weakening of the great post-Enlightenment ideologies of common humanity. Liberal individualism, associated too intimately with the unbridled market, corrodes social bonds and generates various strong counterreactions – religious zealotry and fantastical nationalism chief among them. Socialist ideals, undermined first by the awfulness of the Soviet model and then by the successes of the market, have also lost their tensile strength. Lacking a strong sense of a common future, many people are more inclined to turn to various images of an idealised past. When the heart does not turn to the hope of a common future, it turns to an exclusive past.

We hear much of identity in these times, and much of what we hear is defensive cant. What we need is open, self-renewing nations, which are nations of citizens. A vision of such nations can anchor the goals of a larger humanity. Without such vision, internationalism is helpless. With it, a world of general human rights becomes imaginable.

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Chapter 2

Is Britishness relevant?

Sadiq Khan, Labour MP for Tooting

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Is Britishness relevant?

Britain in 2006 is multicultural, multiracial and multi-religious, but in this country of multiple identities do all our citizens feel that they belong? The relevance of Britishness is to provide a unifying core to the many different citizens of these islands and their rich variety of backgrounds and histories. This is not just for people of colour, or those outside the Judaeo-Christian religions, or even the Scots and the Welsh – all of us have multiple identities, one of which is British.

Many people living in this country would not identify themselves primarily as British and do not see Britishness as particularly relevant. A study conducted by the Commission for Racial Equality in 2005, asking "What is Britishness?" found that respondents associated the concept with holding a passport, the geography of the British Isles, national symbols, language and some of our more stereotypical cultural habits and behaviour, such as queuing and eating fish and chips.³ The study showed that ethnic minority respondents drew on other sources of identification – religion, ethnicity, race and colour, and these sat alongside and were seen as being compatible with an idea of Britishness.

This is a reminder that Britishness is not a regional, religious or cultural identity, but instead a civic identity. Hyphenated, shifting and multiple identities might be harder to understand, but they exist within a wider civic framework. These understandings and narratives can help us move towards the kind of multicultural society we want. We won the Olympic bid by making a promise to the world that, in London, we had a vision of ourselves as united by a pride in our diversity and a commitment to the idea that, whatever our backgrounds, we all deserve the opportunity to fulfil our potential. While this may not be an entirely accurate picture of today's London or Britain, much work has been put into trying to achieve this goal: we have the best race relations and religious discrimination laws in Europe, and are moving in the right direction.

Mirrors of inequality

Our vision of Britain must be one of social justice. A sense of belonging comes from a feeling of being included, which has tangible parameters. Inclusion means having both a right and a responsibility to be fully part of British society. If we look for inequality, for disadvantage, for opportunity denied, then far too much of it will be found in the Muslim communities, but also elsewhere. Community cohesion can be measured by the equality

³ *Citizenship & Belonging: What is Britishness?* (Commission for Racial Equality, 2005)

of life chances, and here the predictor is as much class as race. In 2004 a third of Muslims of working age in Britain had no qualifications, but three-quarters of pupils from a higher professional background achieved good GCSEs, compared with just a third from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.⁴ Education results are class-based.

The gap in life chances has failed to narrow between disadvantaged children and their peers since 1997.⁵ There is also a case to be made that these overlooked communities, both Muslim and white, mirror each other both in disadvantage and in the tendency towards political extremism. While young Asian Muslims feel like lesser citizens and become increasingly alienated from mainstream life in Britain, their sense of injustice is mirrored in some white communities, which has led to polarisation, extremism and the attraction of groups like Hizb ut Tahrir and the British National Party.

Both are intent on spreading hatred and are determined to splinter any sense of national unity. In both cases we must understand that it is the perception of a lack of social justice for themselves, their family and their community that tempts white people and Muslims into the arms of the extremists. Muslims feel that the host community does not allow them to participate fully in society and keeps them in poverty. Yet in Barking, where 17% of voters backed the BNP in the May 2006 local elections, the feeling among the poor white people is that the new arrivals, whether from Pakistan, Africa or Kosovo, are taking the council housing and getting to the top of NHS waiting lists faster than them. It is important that the host community does not feel, and is not, effectively disenfranchised. Where the perceptions are not borne out by the facts, these should be tackled head on.

In the 1970s, need was put above entitlement for council housing, so that refugees and immigrants could get a place to live. Whereas 30 years ago there was good reason for this, there cannot be a mandate in perpetuity to carry on. We need to have an open and mature debate that involves the British public about how public services, such as housing, are rationed. Politicians must lead the debate, but we must listen to people and give them a sense of ownership as we try to shape policy that could last for generations.

⁴ Sources: annual population survey for 2004; *Focus on Social Inequalities* (Office of National Statistics, 2005)

⁵ The recent Fabian Commission on Life Chances & Child Poverty report, *Narrowing the Gap*, found that life chances were unequal for children from different backgrounds – those from backgrounds with low incomes, low socioeconomic status or disability and those from particular ethnic groups all have higher risks. In 2003/04, 21% of all children in the UK lived in poverty – down from 25% in 1996/97 – but the poverty rate among Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups was three times as high, at 61%.

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Just as the disadvantages are mirrored in both the host community and minority communities, so the solution is the same: serious policies to promote community cohesion within and between communities. The Cantle report on the subject, produced after the Burnley and Oldham disturbances in 2001, showed that contact between communities is vital to challenge misunderstandings and racism – these contact opportunities can demonstrate to both communities that they have something in common.⁶

Vertical and horizontal contracts

An inclusive definition of Britishness alone will not solve the problems of integration. However, to grow a sense of belonging, we cannot carry on with a laissez-faire attitude to Britishness, citizenship and identity: there should be a public debate about the idea of a civic contract, with the core goals being integration and equality. There needs to be a horizontal contract between citizens – to provide integration – and a vertical one between state and citizen, which provides equality.

For the vertical contract the government needs to address people's life chances at a macro and micro level: both dealing with the socioeconomic factors that lead to inequality in vulnerable communities and regenerating run-down areas so that the people living there no longer have an environment that perpetuates their sense of hopelessness. The barriers to greater social interaction need to be broken down, leading to mixed housing and schools. There should be managed interaction between different communities, leading to bridge building and understanding.

The government needs to empower citizens to be more active in community groups, mosques, temples and churches, and politics generally. Community work in all its forms helps make the texture of this country so rich, yet the barriers range from pressure of time to the frustration of not being able to achieve anything because of the authorities' refusal to listen.

This is crucial for young people. They are being taught about citizenship, but this needs to reach beyond abstract classroom discussions. Citizenship is a feeling of belonging to a community; it needs to build on students' sense of belonging and their developing consciousness of themselves as individuals with human rights and reciprocal responsibilities to respect and defend the rights of others. It should seek to encourage understanding and

6 Cantle, Ted *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (Home Office, 2001). Available online at: <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2001/12/11/communitycohesionreport.pdf>

acceptance of the core values, principles and procedures that underpin British democracy. We have repeatedly seen the value of volunteering and we have the opportunity to engage young people through this, strengthening their understanding of rights and responsibilities. Some with a weak sense of national identity may be active in their local community or be involved in voluntary movements with global outreach such as Oxfam: this should be encouraged and nurtured. Citizenship can be local, national or global.

The newly formed Commission for Equalities & Human Rights could both set the tone and institute these changes. This could bring back to life the idea of human rights as more than a legal act – rather, a living instrument that sets out the positive rights of all citizens. The new Department for Communities & Local Government has the potential to champion community cohesion, rather than being lost in the Home Office alongside policing and immigration.

The horizontal contract between citizens should first concentrate on each of us realising our rights and responsibilities as citizens: that together we are Britain, not merely an assortment of individuals pursuing our own goals. We need to look for measures that will lead to greater integration. While statistics show that Muslims are far more likely to have white friends than white people are to have a Muslim friend, there are ghettos in Britain where English is barely heard and where it is the politics of Kashmir that dominate rather than that of this country.

As British citizens, immigrants cannot ask for respect without showing it: they have to learn the language. English is the passport to participation – jobs, education, even being able to use the health service. While there may be older people who cannot learn a new language, there are young brides brought over who are deliberately kept in ignorance of English as a means of control. Naturally, English should be an additional language – nobody should lose their native language; but it should be compulsory.

There has been a rush to condemn multiculturalism; but really multiculturalism is about respecting difference instead of striving for homogeneity. It should not be about separation or insulating immigrant cultures from British influence, but a celebration of the diversity of the country, with each culture adapting to Britishness in its own way. This only becomes a problem if that identity seeks to trump the British base norm; for instance, using "culture" to defend forced marriages, honour killings, female genital mutilation or child abuse – then it becomes unacceptable. Multiculturalism should be a tool that provides mutual respect based on a common ethic, rather than on the more obvious

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manifestations of difference. It can provide intercultural dialogue to avoid communities developing in parallel, with no links between them. Perhaps it is time to call "multi-culturalism" what we want it to be: interculturalism.

The state cannot demand more of new citizens than of indigenous Britons, but there is an obligation on incomers to show commitment to their new country – through understanding tradition, history and moral sensibilities. Adapting to life here without being defensive will help lead to good relations with fellow citizens; studying history can help with this. It should be a compulsory subject in schools to the age of 16 and we should be learning about our story. A GCSE history student will study the Vietnam War while staying in ignorance of the British Empire, a story that is at the roots of most British people.

In Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island*, a Jamaican character comes to Britain to fight in the Second World War and is shocked that nobody he meets knows of Jamaica: his history lessons had been about the bond between Jamaica and Britain. Few people in this country are aware that so many Asians fought in the First World War that there is a cemetery dedicated to those who died. Some 2.5 million men from the Indian army fought in the Second World War, yet the gathering at the cenotaph every November is white.

As knowledge grows, fear disappears. Britain could tell a positive story about immigration rather than allow the tabloids to demonise it. Perhaps it is time to consider the merits of an independent body to set immigration limits. This would depoliticise the issue of immigration and enable a stronger economic argument and justification to be made.

Where next for Britishness?

Our society needs the cohesion that a sense of belonging to Britain brings with it. Looking across to the United States: whatever their origin, people feel that they are American; being a US citizen confers a special status. Most young Muslims there agree that to enjoy the full benefits of American society, they have to accept most of the customs and conventions that embody the fundamental values of American society. While the United States is no utopia, with its inequality and race riots, being an American is an inclusive concept – not, as so often with being British, code for being white.

We do not want the Union Jack flown from every home or our children to pledge allegiance to it at school every morning, but we need to build on the idea that being a British citizen by birth or naturalisation (after completing the new course/test/ceremony) is enough: Britons of a minority ethnicity or faith should not feel that they have extra

hurdles to jump. Young American citizens gain a sense of belonging from activities ranging from the garage sale of toys, items and property no longer required to selling orange squash to neighbours, with the proceeds going to a local good cause. From a young age, understanding and practising the value of giving up one's time for a good cause – by reading to children at the local cancer hospital or tending the garden at the old people's home – gives a sense of community.

This sense of belonging leads to a confidence that means that the majority community does not fear the celebration of St Patrick's Day, in all its pomp and glory, by Irish Americans, or the Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur. Diwali and Eid are now being celebrated by newer American communities, without fear of contradiction of the "American ideal".

The bombings on 7 July 2005 challenged community relations in the UK and forced us to think more carefully about what it means to be British. Nothing can excuse the actions of the men who carried out the atrocities, but surely the response should not be to turn on the British Muslim community; rather, it should prompt us to explore the degree of alienation that allowed them to destroy their fellow citizens, and work on the causes. It is no good demanding action from the mullahs – these are often old men whom the young see as out of touch. The only answer is old-fashioned community action. Young British Muslims want to make their own decisions about how to mix and match their faith with the customs and conventions of British life; posing a false choice between Islam and Britain merely pushes them towards the extremists. Islam is essential to their identity and self-respect. They want to be integrated, but not assimilated.

The left has allowed its rightful hatred of jingoism to spread to a distaste of anything nationalist, allowing the right to define Britishness in exclusive terms of who does not belong. We want a Britishness that does not mean being white and able to trace your ancestry on these islands back a few hundred years – a hybrid identity, not defined by geography or ideology, but by a combination of influences and beliefs. As the academic Stuart Hall puts it: "Britishness as a national identity is in a transitional state, beset by problems and up for extensive renovation and renegotiation."⁷

Solutions have to be both top down and bottom up, with the government taking the lead

⁷ Hall, Stuart "Conclusion: The Multicultural Question" in Hesse, Barnor (ed) *Unsettled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (Zed, 2000)

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with inclusiveness towards all. The measures that British sport has taken against racism bore fruit in the summer of 2006, with England fans of all ethnicities supporting their team in the football World Cup; while the popularity of the Sikh English cricket player Monty Panesar led white fans to ape his turban and beard in admiration. We need to turn the rhetoric of our Olympic bid into a reality. At a time of transition, when the far right is fanning the fears of terrorism, queue jumping for homes and public services, and Eastern Europeans undercutting jobs, the government must show leadership and take action. We need to re-examine our policies and come up with new ones to meet the challenges. The relevance of Britishness could be our future.

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Chapter 3

**Immigration and national
identity**

Robert Winder, Author

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Immigration and national identity

Immigration is usually seen as a threat to British identity – a direct challenge to our collective sense of ease and well-being. It is the work of a moment to dismiss this as ignorant prejudice or bigotry, but the fear of otherness is ancient and deep-rooted, and cannot be lightly dismissed or wished away. In the Middle Ages, a man from Somerset would have viewed a visitor from Gloucester with grave suspicion, as a stranger from foreign parts. Someone from Yorkshire or Scotland (let alone Holland or Italy) might as well have fallen from another planet. So even though the modern world, shrunk by aviation and telecommunications, is producing an ever more rapid stirring of populations, it still suffers all the agitations that accompany wounded national pride and an uncertain sense of national identity.

Nothing new in the immigration debate

This is nothing new. Each major generation of immigrants has been welcomed with a cool shoulder; all have encountered more hostility than they deserved. Modern Britain has often presented itself – for reasons of military morale – as a proud and unconquerable island race, but the truth is that we have been repeatedly overrun. The Roman, Saxon, Danish and Norman warriors who came as armed immigrants sparked rebellious animosity; maybe it is this that ingrained in us the idea that any arrival of people from abroad can be termed an "invasion".

Certainly, the endless queue of travellers who subsequently landed on these shores had to struggle to find acceptance. In the Middle Ages, the Christian injunction against usury was strong; but capital was needed to build those magnificent abbeys and stately homes, so Jews were imported from France to run the capital market. Many became wealthy, so they were hated, attacked, herded into ghettos, forced to wear a patch of yellow cloth as a badge and eventually expelled. The Protestant refugees who fled Catholic oppression on the Continent during the Reformation, though they were officially welcomed as suffering co-religionists, could still be jeered at in their refuge and bitterly envied when they prospered.

No one has ever been more vehemently abused than the Irish labourers who spread across Victorian Britain, digging canals, laying railway lines, and settling in ugly slums (or rookeries) in the city centres of Leeds, London and Manchester. They were depicted in cartoons as hairy apes and barbarians, and were feared – like the Italian pedlars who ground barrel organs or sold ice cream on street corners – as troublesome, unhygienic

Papists. It is true that their arrival brought sectarian scuffles to these shores: in Lancashire and Glasgow the din was loud and angry. But this was racial and religious bigotry of the starkest kind.

Feelings such as these turn out, alas, to be transferable. So it was much the same story for the Jews who fled across the Baltic at the end of the century, in flight from Tsarist persecution on the disputed Russian-Polish border. They formed swollen ghettos, again in the blighted inner cities near the docks, and east London in particular became a Jewish enclave, humming with round-the-clock sweatshops. Polite society was alarmed and outraged (Jack the Ripper was often assumed to be Jewish), to the extent that parliament was moved to legislate to restrict entry. And just over a hundred years ago, in the summer of 1905, a new Aliens Act was introduced in parliament by Aretas Akers-Douglas, Conservative Secretary of State.

Immigration, he said, in tones dismayingly familiar to modern ears, was an "extremely pressing question". There were 82,000 "undesirable aliens" bringing "evils in their train". They caused "overcrowding, living in unsanitary conditions, the lowering of the general standard of life and morality, and crime". There was "no doubt about these facts", he said. Worse, it was "organised traffic". We needed to "prevent this country from being made a receptacle for destitute, diseased and criminal aliens from the rest of Europe".

The opposition was led by Charles Dilke, Liberal MP for Forest of Dean. Rather than objecting to the idea, he squabbled about figures. It was left to more forthright characters to object on principle. Winston Churchill growled at the "loathsome system of police interference" and, in a letter to *The Times*, said we must not betray "the old, tolerant and generous practice of free entry and asylum to which this country has so long adhered and from which it has so greatly gained".

The bill marched through, however. Government spokesmen kept banging the gong. Major Evans Gordon, MP for Stepney, told the House that there were 5.5 million Jews in Russia, all of whom might head for Britain. "East of Aldgate one walks into a foreign town," he said. These people were "the poorest and the least fit". Urgent action was needed to prevent this country from being "a refuse heap for the whole of Europe". Parliament nodded its assent. The bill passed on 10 August 1905, and Britain became for the first time a club with restrictions on membership.

In the century that followed, government after government raised new obstacles to entry;

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so despite the increasing ease of travel, migration remained a momentous undertaking, requiring unusual reserves of sap, spirit and optimism. Yet still people came: from the dissolving Empire in India, Pakistan and Africa, but also from new worlds: from China and the Middle East, from Vietnam and South America. Two centuries of global adventuring, in which the Union flag was planted on lawns all over the world, found an echo in the millions that dared or dreamed to come here.

Britishness is based on foreign arrivals

It sometimes seems arcane to dwell on historical episodes, when the scale of contemporary issues or dilemmas seems so large. But it is important to see that the sizeable migrations of modern times are not unprecedented: they are part of the continuing ebb and flow of people to and from Britain over many centuries. And at a time when religious and racial antipathies remain sharp, history throws them into relief and teaches us that these tense times are not, in fact, insurmountable.

There is often talk, sometimes at a high level, about the need for a revival of British values – fair play, tolerance, diversity and so on. But while it is true that Britain does have a tradition of respect for these virtues, these are merely ideals to which anyone might aspire. What is uniquely British is the nation's landscape and history: so it is here that the singular thing called Britishness must reside. The past is both glorious and inglorious, but there is no point trying to forget it. It will never be easy to have a clear sense of who "we" are if we do not look hard at where we are from.

And we do not need to look far to see the extent to which migration has been overlooked as a formative influence on the national character. Britain has always enjoyed seeing itself as a nation of emigrants – the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish have spread themselves across most of the known world for several centuries, in a union that usefully made mini-multiculturalists of us all, before the word even existed. Emigrants always sound exciting – intrepid, bold and adventurous – so it is odd that the same process, seen from the opposite angle, seems so problematic. Immigrants set out as emigrants: immigration too can be seen as an adventure.

The plain truth is that there is a roomy roster of "typically British" features that owe something to immigration. Indeed, it is no longer easy – perhaps not even possible – to imagine a Britain not touched and shaped by the arrival of people, ideas and flavours from overseas. We would obviously be lost without the defiant Roman grid that still connects our towns and roads. And where would we be without the medieval castles and cathedrals

that stud our historic landscape, but have their roots in French gothic, and were originally inspired by Norman aristocrats? Our royal family, long since naturalised, is of German extraction: Queen Victoria spoke German at home to her princely husband – and the First World War, we sometimes forget, was almost a family squabble (the Kaiser was Victoria's nephew).

Without immigration, the catalogue of artists we would lose is immense: Van Dyck, Vanburgh, Handel, Holst, Eliot, Conrad, Naipaul, Rushdie, Brendel, Freud and countless others. And both of our so-called desert island books were inspired by migrant literature. Shakespeare might not have written blank verse or sonnets without Virgil and Petrarch, and the Bible is a durable immigrant that came to us via three languages (Hebrew, Greek and Latin) and yet seems, in translation, a national treasure. Our own tongue is a rich blend of German, Latin and French, with notes from Greece, Spain and India mixed in for good measure. We would not have had publishers like Deutsch, Heinemann, Gollancz and Weidenfeld, film-makers such as Korda and Pressburger, or generations of actors from David Garrick (Ireland) to Leslie Howard (Hungary) and Stephen Fry (Austria).

In business and commerce, there are too many remarkable individuals to count. Jean and Peter Dollond came as Protestant refugees from France in the early 18th century. They were part of a desperate evacuation that had precise echoes, 200 years later, in the hair-raising cross-Channel dashes undertaken by the desperadoes from Sangatte. They came as stowaways, hiding in wine barrels, bales of straw or mounds of coal. The Dollonds set up as opticians in the Strand and perfected a broad range of optical instruments: for more than a century the telescope used by the all-conquering British navy became known, in naval slang, as "a Dollond". Eventually, after the 1926 merger with Aitchison, this immigrant chain store became one of the most common presences on the modern British high street.

There are many similar stories. The Moses brothers were big enough players in the Houndsditch second-hand clothes market, but when they changed their name to Moss Bros they became even bigger. Montague Ossinsky changed his name to Burton before setting up his famous network of menswear stores and becoming a leading maker of uniforms for the British army. Michael Marks was a lonely refugee when he landed, aged 17, from Russian Poland. After a period of door-to-door peddling he set up a market stall in Leeds and, since he spoke so little English, put up a sign saying: "Don't Ask the Price – It's a Penny." The sign grew notorious and his chain of penny bazaars spread across the towns of northern England. He teamed up with an accountant called Thomas Spencer,

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created Marks & Spencer, and became, as St Michael, the unofficial patron saint of the British V-neck sweater.

In so many areas, immigration goes back further than we think. Britain's first mosque was built, not by modern migrants, but by 19th-century Muslims from the subcontinent, and was created not in some quiet outpost but close to the heart of London's commuter belt, in Woking. Black professional footballers often seem a modern phenomenon, but Arthur Walton and Walter Tull played for Preston and Northampton long before the First World War. Tull, the son of a freed slave from the West Indies, was an especially resonant figure, a dashing player for Tottenham Hotspur who went on to become the first black officer in the British army.

He was killed, like countless thousands of his compatriots, in France in 1916, and is the kind of man who ought to loom large in our historical imaginations. But only recently were veterans of the Empire forces permitted to march alongside their British comrades-in-arms in the Remembrance Day parade in central London. Nearly a third of the army that fought the First World War was not British, a fact we often forget in the routine, jolly-good-show iconography of the conflict, all fallen poppies and the cream of a generation mown down and is there honey still for tea ...

The Victorian fleet was to a great extent staffed by south Asians (Lascars), who were popular with the shipping lines because they worked harder, drank less, got into fewer fights, and could be paid smaller wages than the disputatious British dockers. Many of these busy seamen disembarked in cold British harbours and had to make a chilly home-from-home in our damp city centres. But there is also a long tradition of more senior Indian figures in British life. The first Indian MP, Dadabhai Naoroji, was a Bombay Parsee who won Finsbury as long ago as 1893.

The list goes on. Without immigration, we would lose Nobel prize winners, politicians, generals and captains of industry and finance. We would have to survive without Ritz, Schweppes, Brunel, Trust House Forte and Selfridge's. We might never have had Triumph (founded by a German sewing machine salesman) or ICI, Harland & Woolf or GEC, Shell Oil, Kleinworts or Rothschilds, Warburgs or Schroders. We wouldn't have pizza and pasta, curry and spring rolls, kippers, kebabs and even oxtail soup (a Huguenot speciality). Where would we be without afternoon tea – not by accident is it served in "china"? And how would we cope without the hundreds of migrant cricketers, footballers, athletes and boxers who have brightened (and sometimes clouded) our sporting fantasies? None of this

is smooth or simple. Linford Christie spoke for many in remarking that when he won he won for Britain, and when he lost he was "Jamaican-born". But it is no longer possible to imagine national teams without energetic contributions from migrants.

There is more. We would lose Glyndebourne and the Edinburgh Festival (launched by refugee German musicians led by Rudolf Bing), the Notting Hill Carnival, the corner shop and the takeaway. We would never have had the Amadeus String Quartet (three-quarters of which met in a wartime refugee camp for aliens on the Isle of Man). Half of Humberside would be knee-deep in ooze (it was drained by Dutch engineers in Stuart times). We could scarcely contemplate, imagine, conjecture or dream of Roget's Thesaurus. And half the flowers and plants in our country gardens are foreign interlopers, thriving in our varied soil and temperate climate.

Undeserved resentment

The only remarkable thing about the above list is how easily, in the raucousness of tabloid Britain, it can be overlooked. In 1904 Ford Madox Ford wrote: "England, almost more than any other, is the land that has been ruled by foreigners, yet the Englishman, almost more than any other man, will resent or ignore the fact." This is true. Not everyone likes admitting it, but one of the defining aspects of the national character may lie in Britain's historic ability to commandeer and absorb foreign habits, skills and people, even as it shouts them down. Our myths and chants often seek to congratulate ourselves for surly pugnacity (Britons never, never, never shall be slaves), but we are also the opposite, a magpie nation, quick to absorb and profit from foreign influences of all shades. Far from being fearful or angry, we should see this as a source of pride. We are all from somewhere else: it simply depends how far back you go. Immigration, as has been said, is the sincerest form of flattery.

John Maynard Keynes once wrote, in words that might usefully be pressed into service as a set text for modern life:

Migration is the oldest action against poverty. It selects those who most want help. It is good for the country to which they go; it helps break the equilibrium of poverty in the country from which they come. What is the perversity in the human soul that causes people to resist so obvious a good?

These are fine words. But the other lesson from the never-ending history of immigration is that it has never been a smooth or easy process. Encounters between strangers

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generate uncertainty, fear and sometimes friction. It is all very fine (and not very taxing) to be eloquently anti-racist in theory. But we need to be realistic: even if we see immigration as a fine and enriching thing, this does not mean that every single immigrant is a nice person. Oxford is a beautiful city, but it has its fair share of creeps.

This is only a way of saying that immigration resists generalisation. It is not, despite the best efforts of some sociologists, a uniform experience. A wealthy Egyptian dentist in Belgravia does not have much in common with a penniless Somali asylum seeker in Newcastle, though both may be African. Immigration is not one thing: it throws up rags-to-riches parables, but also tragedies, horror stories, sob stories and cautionary tales. The only useful working definition of immigrants is that they embrace the same contradictory mixture of qualities possessed by the native population, with perhaps a slightly greater tilt in favour of audacity and resolve. These are people who have, after all, by definition fulfilled the now ancient Norman Tebbit requirement of getting on their bikes and seeking to better themselves.

In so doing, immigrants have for centuries pressed, stretched and enlarged the meaning and definition of what it is to be British. This is one reason why Britishness remains attractively roomy and vague: it refuses to be pinned to a small set of shrill folkloric fundamentals. Inevitably, there are arguments along the way, as ideas of nationality are continually examined and contested. And sometimes, since identity often evolves by aligning itself *against* things it sees as foreign, it produces a clenched and rancorous reaction. But this, though not always a comfortable process, is a fine and necessary one. There are even areas (such as family values, manners, cricket and grammar – to name only a few) where immigrants keep alive traditions and standards the native population has allowed to slide.

If immigration has played a large role in Britain's past vitality, then it is an intrinsic part of its future too. At a time when a new technological revolution is girdling the world in the intricate high-speed web, Britain finds itself a nation with many flags, many languages, many cultures, many faiths, many cuisines, many songs and many flavours; in a position, in other words, to cultivate and entrench connections to almost every other region of every other country in the world. This is a precious resource; something to keep us warm when the oil runs out. What a crime it would be to let it curdle and grow sour.

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Chapter 4

Britishness and integration

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Britishness and integration

What is the point of Britishness? And why are we so keen on talking about it these days?

It may seem perverse to begin an answer to the first of these questions with a French city. But for me the paradox of Marseilles in 2005 holds a profound lesson for anyone concerned with the meaning and purpose of national identity. When virtually every French city was seared by the heat of burning cars in the autumn of 2005, we were left in no doubt what was taking place every evening and why. The young men, mostly of North African heritage, who led *les emeutes* were characteristically French in the expressiveness of their protest. They held up their identity cards to the TV cameras and protested that though they were officially French, they were treated as aliens by the French authorities. They wanted to belong, but the state rejected them.

This was a large group to alienate. France does not keep figures for its ethnic minority population, but overall it is estimated to be in excess of 10%. Their poverty and unemployment, their low educational achievement and high rates of unemployment, the deep penetration of criminal gangs in their estates and the casual contempt shown towards them by police officers all combined to deny them the most sacred promise in the French republic's trilogy: *égalité*. Without it they could not claim to be truly citizens.

Why did Marseilles stay calm?

Yet the one city in which the fissures should have been most evident remained tranquil. In Marseilles, according to authoritative estimates, the ethnic minority population accounts for over a third of the residents, and among them unemployment exceeds 30% and may be as high as 40%. Its non-white residents tend to live in separate districts and they are predominantly Muslims. This should have been a potent recipe for minority alienation. So why the paradox; or, to put it another way – what went right?

I have heard three explanations, all of which are persuasive, and all of which could be true simultaneously. They add up to one simple truth: the citizens of Marseilles, whatever their faith or ethnicity, share a powerful civic identity that makes the thought of trashing their common space an alien notion. First, this is a port city that faces Africa. It is used to diversity, and it is particularly used to many of its people being of North African heritage. Second, its location, cramped between the Mediterranean and the hills to its north and east means that the municipality was never able to exile its Muslim residents to grim suburban estates, as happened in virtually every other French city.

Finally, my own addition to the hypotheses about Marseilles. Like all second cities, Marseilles has built an identity out of resentment at the perceived predominance of the capital. Think of Birmingham's noisy railing at London's pre-eminence, Manchester's determination to proclaim itself an international hub to rival the South East, and Liverpool's cheerful conviction that the rest of the world exists only to disrespect Merseyside, and you get a small idea of the southern city's fierce civic identity. It may be that this collective anti-Parisian chippiness was enough to bind its citizens together in a way not available to other French cities.

And herein lies a pointer to why, I believe, Britishness matters so much. At moments of great stress, societies are always in danger of two extreme reactions. One is fragmentation and collapse. The other is the unity of the despot; the enforced solidarity of the Soviet system held dozens of nationalities together – but only for just so long, and at the cost of millions of lives and decades of misery for most people. Our challenge is to find an answer to our growing diversity that is better than either of these two options.

Each decade now makes success measurably harder. At the Commission for Racial Equality, we now frequently say that there are two major challenges for mankind in the 21st century. One is how to live with our planet. The other is how to live with each other. To some extent the two challenges are related. Though I very much doubt that mankind is inventive enough to destroy the planet, or to provoke it to destroy us, I do believe that we could well manage the job of self-destruction entirely without the help of Mother Earth. If we can make large parts of the surface of the earth effectively uninhabitable, growing numbers of human beings of very different kinds trying to squeeze into diminishing spaces face an anxious, tension-ridden future. That is why the challenge of living with human diversity is so urgent.

Pressures on modern Britain

Britain in the 21st century faces momentous change, on a scale probably not encountered since the start of the 19th century. Then, the combination of the Industrial Revolution and the establishment of Britain as an unrivalled imperial power unleashed economic, social and cultural transformation. Today, the ocean of change created by three forces – globalisation, demography and technology – threatens to overwhelm us. But just as in the 19th century, it is the task of politics to offer a coherent account of these world-shaking movements; and to propose routes by which democratic societies can negotiate their own transformation, rather than being drowned by seemingly irresistible natural forces.

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Living together graciously in Britain is made harder today by two new forces. First, there are more of us, who are more different, encountering each other in greater numbers than ever before. The UN tells us 191 million people live and work outside their country of birth. In the past 60 years, Britain has attracted about 4.5 million new settlers. We may welcome that number again in the next 30 years. At the same time, people are leaving. For every two emigrants from this country today, only one returns. For every two immigrants, only one leaves, and that means the composition of our population, if not its actual size, is changing quite rapidly. Today, there are 42 communities of more than 10,000 people of foreign heritage in London alone.

This kind of rapid change alters the composition of the population significantly. In practice, we notice the new faces in the high street, the new accents in the shops. But the change is not just one of sheer numbers. It is also characterised by a new fierceness with which people express the aspects of their identity – heritage, ethnicity, faith – that make them different from their neighbours.

One reason is that in liberal democracies we are free to express and celebrate our specialness. In a world marked by growing materialism and consumer offerings, remarkable only in their prepackaged, worldwide sameness, it is hardly surprising that many of us want to stress our uniqueness. Along with pornography and gambling, the most democratic medium of our times, the internet, is fuelling a boom in amateur genealogy. There could not be a clearer sign of a demand to assert differentness.

The bonds of trust and solidarity that define unique communities are not just geographical. They can also be tribal, familial and ethnic. Out of our new and flowering diversity, each of us can decide with whom we choose to identify and when. In the best of all worlds each of us moves easily and effortlessly between different kinds of identity, and adjusts the significance of what we are to the circumstances. As the Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan points out, when you invite a vegetarian poet to dinner you expect that while everyone is at the table, you need only worry about what she wants to eat. If you also have to be concerned about forcing everyone to stop talking so that she has the chance to declaim her verse for an hour or so, then someone hasn't quite got the hang of multiple identity yet.

The problem for many communities is that we are failing to create the conditions where people in the many diverse communities of interest in our societies can exercise this freedom to be what they want when they want to be different. All too often the cause of

this is sheer inequality and disadvantage. Poverty provides its own familiar trap, reducing our life chances and our options of how and where to live, for example.

Fear of being different also destroys a healthy response to diversity. For example, many ethnic minority people who can afford to live in areas where there are fewer of their own kind won't take the risk, for fear of harassment and abuse. White families, on the other hand, when faced with the prospect of there being a white minority in their children's school, will withdraw their children and – even as they express their sincere regret for doing so – scramble vigorously to find their offspring a place in a largely white school.

The search for common ground

It is therefore no coincidence that we are asking what defines our Britishness at the same time as the debate rages around the world over how to create a more integrated society. The same question is being asked in the United States, with its growing population of Hispanics; in the Middle East, where Jews, Christians and Muslims struggle to live side by side; in Africa, where religious and tribal warfare has led to untold atrocities and genocide; in the EU, in determining which countries should join the union (considering problems of cultural differences with Turkey especially) – all are trying to find the answer to the implied question: can people of very different, and not so different, traditions and cultures find a way of sharing the same space? Taking our cue from the Marseilles observations, can we find an overarching identification – whether civic or national – that trumps more volatile and uncontrollable kinds of identity differentiation?

The answer, in my view, is yes. Two years ago, I visited an elderly persons' day centre in Edinburgh, where the council had made strenuous and, as it turned out, successful efforts to integrate a facility that had previously served only white elders. When I finally got to the bottom of what had made the programme successful, it came down to something simple. The old folk told me that the moment they had realised that they had more in common than divided them was the point at which they found that they all – white and Asian – considered that their sons had married women who weren't quite up to scratch! A trivial point perhaps, but telling nevertheless.

More robust is the finding of a small CRE survey early in 2006 demonstrating that, though ethnic minority Britons had little problem identifying themselves as Scottish (Asians) or (black) Welsh, say, they could not bring themselves to describe themselves as English. In essence, the finding was that identities that carried less ethnic baggage and more civic or political meaning were more accessible to all ethnicities, faiths and tribes. In Scotland and

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Wales, civic coherence has been given flesh by a tradition of resistance to domination by England and Englishness. The same is very likely true of London, for different reasons; in the capital, civic identity rests squarely on the embrace of diversity and change.

Most striking is that in spite of its imperial echo, Britishness emerges as a brilliantly coherent civic identity, easily adopted by people of all backgrounds, and laden with unifying value. It is malleable and modern, it is capacious and inclusive. But it is not formless. Critically, there is more to Britishness than just symbols and flags; though these are important, as they stand for underlying values.

In my view the heart of Britishness does not lie, like some Continental traditions, in ethnic belonging or republican obeisance. Rather it lies in a way of living together characterised by tolerance, egalitarianism, respect for the dignity of the individual and a powerful tradition of dissent. Attempts to create lists of symbols and objects that encapsulate Britishness are wide of the mark; efforts to identify people whose behaviour defines Britishness come closer, because our national identity is essentially about the way we treat each other. In a phrase: British is as British does. It is about what people do, not who they are.

Our national reputation for politeness and reserve is still warranted, even in these days of loutishness in town centres and celebrity vulgarity. But Britishness is not just about etiquette; the rules of behaviour rest on some deeper values. The habits that we associate with Britishness are in a complete sense merely the expression of those deeper values of tolerance, egalitarianism and so forth. In a diverse society, the shared values are the fundamental glue that holds us together; and the way we behave towards each other is the outward manifestation of our values.

The code of courtesy

To try to make this clear, let me use a common metaphor. There are millions of cars on British roads, all very different in style, power and luxuriousness. Not only does the vast range of vehicles reflect our human diversity; what we do with them mirrors the myriad tasks we have to perform in the narrow strips of highway that we share. Given all this, and the fact that each of us really wants to do our own thing in our cars and get where we are going in the shortest time possible, it is quite extraordinary that we manage this diversity of type and purpose so amiably and with relatively little conflict. That is because we have rules, encompassed in our highway code. We all learn it; and though few of us could recite it after passing our tests, we intuitively know what it demands of us in

situations where we interact with other road users – at junctions, roundabouts and so on.

In the old days, when cars were fewer and pretty much identical, none of this mattered. But numbers and diversity bring special challenges. They demand ways of managing our interactions, most of which are voluntary and consensual. We drive on one side of the road, we stop at lights, we give priority to emergency vehicles.

However, the code is not simply a neutral document, with no intrinsic values. It has one basic underlying proposition – that all road users have rights; and irrespective of how small or mundane your vehicle might be, it has the same right to respect as any other vehicle. We only make exceptions for vehicles that are serving the community's interest rather than their driver's – police, ambulances and the like. We take this for granted today, but it is not obvious that it has to be this way. We do not have to imagine what it would be like to have a code based on other values. During the Soviet era, some cities reserved lanes for the Zil automobiles of party officials. As they swished by in their Ladas, I don't suppose the citizens of Moscow reflected that the special lane represented the correctness of democratic centralism, and the leading role of the party; but they would know for certain that liberal democracies wouldn't do things this way.

The rules of our community are no different in principle, except that in this country they are not generally written down, nor are they made explicit. But the rules of our interaction and their underlying values are what we usually mean when we talk about the essence of Britishness. Are those rules and values unique to Britain? Not all are, but taken overall, the combination is peculiar to us. We may share universal values, but the way that we express them and the way in which we manage our interactions are shaped critically by our history, our traditions and our geography.

For example, both we and the Americans believe very strongly in freedom. However, because of America's history and, arguably, partly because of its geography, the way that Americans express the idea of freedom is very different from the way that we think of it. Freedom, for example, in the United States is very allied to the frontier myth: you can go and find a place where you can be exactly what you want to be. This idea of freedom also underpins America's persistent and ingrained racial segregation: people have the right to choose to live with their own.

In Britain, though, we interpret freedom in quite a different and much more communal way. Yes, "an Englishman's home is his castle" – but this notion precisely makes a

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distinction between our private sphere, where we can do as we like, and a public sphere in which we are required to show tolerance and a willingness to compromise with people who are very different from us. In practice this means that a critical part of the idea of Britishness is the manner in which we negotiate our differences. We know this from our history, which is not revolutionary but evolutionary.

So in our modern, diverse society, Britishness works for us for two key reasons. First, it offers an overarching common identity, available to anyone who chooses to live here. Second, in and of itself it provides a toolkit and culture by which we negotiate our diversity and accommodate it. This is not easy. It takes tolerance, humility, inventiveness and patience. In practice it is assisted by large amounts of humour – the British propensity not to take ourselves too seriously is a vital lubricant in the often scratchy process of integration.

However, simply doing what we have always done will not be enough. The scale and speed of change today presents a huge test of our evolutionary integration process. It takes time that globalisation and runaway growth do not always allow us. If, for example, we want to keep our economy at full stretch, we need more immigrants in bulk – and they bring with them correspondingly large challenges. This demands a proactive stance from our society, led by the public authorities.

We need to guarantee equality, the first prerequisite of integration, by law and by policy. We need to empower citizens, ensure their personal freedoms and engage them in our democracy. We also need to be vigorous in creating an environment where they can interact constructively with their fellow citizens. The CRE's integration agenda – equality, participation and interaction – is, in its way, a description of what it should be like to be British.

Bring Britishness out in the open

But finally, we need to challenge one traditional aspect of the way we practise Britishness. Except in rare periods of turbulence (the Industrial Revolution, for example) few of us moved very far from where we were born. Our rules and values were handed down from parent to child by example. Today, with vast amounts of movement both within and into the UK, we cannot take it for granted that everyone has learned the rules and absorbed the values. Implicit understandings about what it means to be British no longer exist. We want new immigrants to subject themselves to citizenship education and tests; yet there is little expectation that the same should apply to our existing population. I suspect

many immigrants will end up with a better understanding of our culture, traditions and customs than many school leavers.

The truth is that as charming as the floppy-haired, tongue-tied caricature of a Brit now beloved of Hollywood might seem, we have to move beyond it. We need to learn to be explicit about the way we interact. We have to stop being embarrassed about saying what it means to be British and what that word demands of us. That is why I welcome the proposal for a written constitution that might define more closely what we aspire to in British citizenship.

Alongside this, we also have to find a way of expressing our rules of engagement, one with the other. We would never do anything as French as set this down on paper so that everyone could read it – but we do need to find a way of ensuring that part of the debate over Britishness is about how we engender consensus about those rules in the population as a whole. We should be unashamed of asserting this. I think it is smarter to do this positively. And it really matters. Every week some new, very concrete issue arises about the conflict between the way that we express our core values and the way that some traditional cultures express themselves. We need to be brave and say flatly: "We've all talked about this; and, for now, this is how we do things here."

The value of Britishness is that it offers a transcendent identity that stops people having to choose between those who share their religion, or who look like them, and everyone else. It is an identity that is not dependent on their religion, or how long they have been here.

We should be absolutely clear that people should not need to choose between their British identity and other cultural or religious identities. They should be able to be proud of both, and view them as complementary rather than conflicting.

In the end, Britishness has to be a practical identity. The challenge is to find a sense of Britishness that sets out a way for very different kinds of people to share the same space and resources and to prosper. We know how to do this. For example, in one of those lists of symbols of which I am so wary, queuing is identified as a typical British trait. We do not need a code that makes queuing compulsory, but a common understanding that enshrines the principles of behaviour underlying queuing: common courtesy, politeness and fairness.

The real issue for us in this society is how we negotiate the way that we live together so

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that we have enough in common to allow us to share experiences and ambitions, and to work together communally, but preserve the things which are essential to us as individuals.

Western societies face a formidable challenge, in the form of increasingly vibrant identity politics. The experience of Britain has a great deal to offer to others. In an ever more diverse world, nations that choose to deny, separate or suppress their diversity look increasingly unstable. I do believe that the principle of "British is as British does" has much to offer, not just to our society, but to the world.

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Chapter 5

Not less immigration, but more integration

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Not less immigration, but more integration

Until recently multiculturalism was a byword for mutual respect, equal rights and the celebration of diversity. It was the accepted common sense of the political mainstream and the liberal media. Now it is under sustained attack as politicians of the right, academic gurus of the radical left and the assorted ranks of the commentariat compete to administer the last rites to its corpus of beliefs.

The climate of ideas began to shift against multiculturalism in 2001. The turning point was not 9/11 alone, but the whole constellation of events that made that year such a toxic one for the self-understanding of British society: the riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley; a sharp increase in asylum claims, accompanied by daily images of young men scaling the fences of the Eurotunnel freight yards; and then the globe-shattering attacks on the twin towers.

As Labour's second term progressed, public fear of terrorist attacks, heightened anxiety over immigration and the looming war on Iraq combined to form a lethal cocktail too powerful for the apparent certainties of multiculturalism to withstand. The attacks on London on 7 July 2005 simply delivered the coup de grace.

But what does multiculturalism actually mean? And how does it relate to national identity and the integration of new migrants?

Solidarity versus diversity?

In recent years Britain has experienced high and sustained levels of immigration. Net migration reached 223,000 in 2004, the highest level recorded since the present methods of calculating migration flows were introduced in 1991. Britain is not unique in this regard; most advanced capitalist economies have witnessed historically high levels of inward migration since the early 1990s. But in terms of numbers alone the recent inflow is unprecedented, and it has had important economic and political consequences.⁸

Net migration figures hide considerable diversity in the new immigrant populations. Migrants have come to the UK from an increasingly diverse range of countries. As a consequence, Britain's ethnic composition has undergone a radical pluralisation over the

⁸ John Salt, quoted at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2006/july/migration.aspx?ComponentId=16063&SourcePageId=13404>

past decade. While official statistics still record the trajectories of Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and other established ethnic minorities, the reality on the ground is far more diverse. Britain is now home to a host of new immigrant communities from right across the world: from South Africa to Somalia, Australia to Afghanistan.

While the politics of migration have been anything other than benign, the economic impact of these migration flows appears to have been generally positive. Migrants make a net fiscal contribution to the UK exchequer, paying proportionately more in taxes and consuming fewer public services than the indigenous population.⁹ Migrants have filled vacancies at both the bottom and top ends of the labour market, enabling the economy to expand and public services to improve. Even the recent influx of migrants from the EU accession states has not had the deleterious impacts claimed by some commentators.

The social impact of migration is a different matter and has been the focus of much intense recent debate. In a controversial but influential essay, "Too Diverse?", David Goodhart – the editor of *Prospect* magazine – claimed that progressives faced a dilemma of choosing between their commitments to diversity and those to social solidarity.¹⁰ Too much immigration and ethnic diversity, he argued, can undermine the bonds of community and commonality upon which valued public goods, such as the welfare state, depend.

The argument owes much to evidence from the USA that ethnic heterogeneity undermines trust and social capital, and the related claim that an unwillingness to redistribute to non-white racial groups explains the absence of a strong, European-style welfare state in that country. Yet the US experience is exceptional, not exemplary, in large part because of the legacy of slavery. More positive findings for interpersonal trust and solidarity have been derived from cross-national analyses as well as specific case studies of countries such as Canada.¹¹

Second, as Peter Taylor-Gooby has demonstrated, the impact of diversity as an explanatory variable for the differences in the welfare states of the US and the EU disappears once the presence of left-wing political parties in governing coalitions is taken into

⁹ Sriskandarajah, Dhananjayan, Cooley, Laurence and Reed, Howard *Paying Their Way: The Fiscal Contribution of Immigrants in the UK* (IPPR, 2005)

¹⁰ Goodhart, David "Too Diverse?" in *Prospect* no 95 (February 2004)

¹¹ For a brief overview, see Pearce, Nick "Diversity vs Solidarity: A New Progressive Dilemma?" in *Renewal: A Journal of Labour Politics* vol 12, no 3 (2004)

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account.¹² Third, ethnicity does not exhaust diversity. Resource conflicts or community fragmentation may result as much from divergences of class, age or religious belief as ethnicity. To privilege ethnic diversity is to indulge in uni-causal social science.

However, it is clear to anyone with a passing knowledge of recent European politics that high levels of immigration have led to extensive public anxiety and, in some countries, existential angst over the orthodox models of multiculturalism. Terrorist attacks by fellow citizens may confound, but do not dispel such concerns. At the very least, those who defend the possibility of making a success of diverse societies have a case to answer. But what exactly do we mean by multiculturalism? And is it dead, or just in need of rebalancing?

Multiculturalism and integration

Multiculturalism is a classic floating signifier, attached to different sets of ideological baggage by its critics and defenders. For the right, it is a politically correct assault on British nationhood and cultural history, a vessel for the dangerous platitudes of limp-wristed lefties and human rights lawyers. For the radical left, it is an abdication of egalitarian truths, a fatal compromise with pre-Enlightenment obscurantism and a diversion from solid class politics.

Both of these positions are caricatures. In truth, multiculturalism is amenable to a wide range of interpretations, both in theory and in practice. The leading theoretical exponent of multiculturalism, Bhikhu Parekh, argues that it is neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical world view imbued with a concept of the good life to offer its adherents. Rather it is a perspective on human life, which stresses that human beings are culturally embedded, while at the same time recognising that cultural forms are multidimensional, interactive and dynamic.

Understood in these terms, multiculturalism is a plea for sensitivity. It asks us to recognise others' legitimate claims to cultural identity and to value differences. It seeks to cultivate our knowledge of other cultures and to nurture feelings of belonging between different communities. It insists on facilitating genuine equality of citizenship within a diverse political community, and what flows from such a conception is simply a description of practices that are common to many progressive democracies: race equality strategies,

12 Taylor-Gooby, Peter "Is the Future American? Or Can Left Politics Preserve European Welfare States from Erosion through Growing 'Racial' Diversity?" in Delorenzi, Simone (ed) *Going Places: Neighbourhood, Ethnicity & Social Mobility* (IPPR, 2006)

public recognition of cultural diversity, and sensitivity, within the framework of public law, to religious beliefs.

Sterner critics of multiculturalism have a different target in mind, however: the "ethnic enclaves" of what Sylla Benhabib calls "mosaic multiculturalism". Here they are on stronger ground. Much multiculturalist thinking has been concerned with the claims to recognition of communities whose voices, experiences and cultures have been systematically marginalised and sometimes viciously oppressed over many centuries. Unsurprisingly, therefore, multiculturalism has often stressed the importance of cultural protection and the right of minority communities to receive state support for sustaining their cultural practices. Some of these practices require residential clustering of minority communities, particularly if they involve religious rites.

However, cultural claims to recognition of this kind run a number of risks in contemporary capitalist societies. To begin with, they may essentialise culture and community, ignoring the diversity and contingency of cultural forms in favour of publicly recognised expressions of particular practices or norms. This is not only reductionist, but may in turn involve giving implicit (and even explicit) support to existing hierarchies of power and belief in particular communities, notably patriarchal ones. The consequence is that struggles for recognition from within minority communities do not receive attention or support. Similarly, if taken to its limits cultural particularism can inhibit the formation of solidarity and mutual trust between citizens of different cultural groups.

Liberal democracies face at least two basic challenges when confronted by claims to cultural recognition. First, where should we draw the line between basic liberal rights and cultural practices? Outlawing forced marriages and female circumcision is straightforward. But other cases, such as the wearing of the jilbab in schools, are less straightforward. In my view, public authorities have a duty to understand the depth of motivation that religious belief brings to individual lives. But this sensitivity should not prevent forceful confrontation with irrational or oppressive beliefs. Children are denied their rights when they receive wholly inadequate education in private religious schools. Women from communities of faith have equal rights to live free and fulfilling lives, and should be supported in the assertion of those rights in the public sphere, as well as the private one. Immigrant communities, as much as other citizens, can legitimately be required to cease practices that violate liberal principles.

The second challenge is to develop new forms of citizen solidarity that ensure greater

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integration around a common core of citizenship, while maintaining liberal respect for diverse beliefs and practices. This is not a matter of assimilation. Even if it were ethically defensible, there is no monoculture to which people could be asked to assimilate. Although liberal societies are structured by their histories and political institutions and the beliefs and practices of their citizens, they no longer have uniform dominant cultures. Instead, we should give patriotic support to our collective political citizenship, underpinned by public debate, social interaction and association in civil society. This is perhaps best described as "civic liberalism". Civic liberalism argues for the importance of education for citizenship, the cultivation of civic virtues, and a strengthening of mechanisms for citizen involvement in democratic deliberation, in both civil society and the institutions of state.

A strong version of this civic liberalism asserts that it requires commitment to a substantive vision of the good society, albeit one that prizes individual autonomy highly. A weaker version, which I prefer, asserts that deontological liberalism, which allows individuals to frame their own ends consistent with the ability of others to do likewise, can nonetheless insist that active citizenship and civic patriotism are necessary conditions for the reproduction of a liberal democracy, as well as valuable in themselves. It also claims that the duties and obligations of civic belonging are compatible with liberal human rights traditions, as long as the human rights that citizens claim are basic and fundamental, not frivolous exercises in litigation or convenient covers for vested interests.

Proponents of discursive democracy might add that human rights and the protection of those rights in a constitutional democracy are co-original with popular sovereignty. A citizen can only have his or her rights protected in a constitutional democracy of which he or she is a sovereign citizen member.

In recent years, the United Kingdom has undergone a quiet revolution in its citizenship policies. Citizenship education is now part of the school curriculum. New applicants for citizenship have to demonstrate a basic mastery of the English language and knowledge of British history and civic life. Local authorities now hold ceremonies for those granted citizenship – public affirmations of access to the British community that have become popular occasions. Thousands of people now gain citizenship at the local town hall rather than when a brown envelope falls through the letter box.

These citizenship laws and practices have given greater content to the objective of promoting civic integration. They are familiar to many other Anglo-Saxon democracies,

not least those that proudly describe themselves as multicultural. These democracies do not believe that inculcation of a common core of political citizenship is antithetical to the recognition of diverse beliefs and cultural identities.

Rethinking national identity

Since the 19th century, civic patriotism has been most commonly identified with the nation state and national identity. But can national identity survive in a global.com world? Transnationalism is now extensively developed in political institutions and economic regulatory regimes, as well as in migrant communities themselves. At the same time, social movements constructed around demands for global social justice and environmental protection have assumed considerable political importance. These trends support the view that cosmopolitan consciousness will eventually supersede national identity.

Yet attitudinal studies have found little evidence of a secular trend towards stronger post-national affiliations in developed countries, as post-modernisation theory predicts.¹³ Around the world, people still identify primarily with locality, region and country, rather than a global commons. Only a tiny minority are pure cosmopolitans.

However, there is strong evidence in the *World Values Survey* of a cohort effect by which younger generations display stronger cosmopolitan attachments than their parents and grandparents. Almost one in five post-war baby boomers describe themselves as citizens of the world, who identify with their continent and the world rather than with their nation state, compared with only one in 10 of those brought up in the inter-war years. This suggests that as older generations die out, national attachments will wane, and cosmopolitan views will increase in salience.¹⁴

National identity is also challenged by pressures on the underlying model of citizenship it embodies. Theories of citizenship commonly rely on the notion of closed or bounded communities of free and equal citizens, and concern themselves with how rights, duties and resources should be distributed between those citizens. Common bonds of affection and patriotic identity cement citizen solidarity and underpin the effective functioning of the political order.

Migration unsettles these conceptions. Migrants cross boundaries and increasingly

13 See Norris, Pippa "Global Governance and Cosmopolitan Citizens" in Nye, Joseph and Kamarck, Elaine *Globalization & Governance* (Brookings Institution Press, 2001) for a full discussion of this evidence.

14 Ibid, p9

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maintain allegiances to the communities and nation states of their countries of origin. They may be temporary rather than permanent migrants, and their status can vary: from those who are irregular or awaiting determination of their case to those who have indefinite right to remain but not full citizenship. Their rights and obligations, civic loyalties and affiliations are not clear cut.

Although supranational bodies such as the EU have grown in importance, cosmopolitan citizenship in a global republic is a distant prospect and cannot function to answer transnational dilemmas for political theory. Cosmopolitanism is perhaps better viewed as an ethical attitude than a specific form of political organisation.¹⁵ Citizens with an ethical orientation towards their fellow human beings still require national republics of which to be citizens, however far politics has become loosened from territorial attachments.

Hence the challenge is, first, to articulate forms of national political belonging that are inclusive, outward-facing and civic, rather than ethnic in form: cosmopolitan national identity, rather than post-national cosmopolitanism. Second, national identity must be capable of appeal to generations whose loyalties have not been forged in the fulcrum of war and self-defence. Global openness and inclusivity towards citizens of diverse backgrounds are the sine qua non of such an endeavour.

Finally, identity has to be put in its place. Understanding civic and national identities is important for policy makers. Symbols, moments of national unity and other forms of collective cultural expression are very important. But identity should not be inflated as an explanatory variable. For perhaps obvious reasons, a feature of much writing about multiculturalism is a culturalist bias, by which cultural practices and forms of identity, whether ascribed to majority or minority communities, are privileged over socioeconomic factors. Hence, for advocates of progressive nationalism, a new focus on the symbols of nationhood and collective cultural life is required: shared national sporting events, civic ceremonies and so on. Conversely, defenders of the politics of recognition advocate such measures as cultural protection rights, the importance of diversity in the media, and bilingual education.

In practice, most forms of identity, social practice and political struggle have both socio-economic and cultural dimensions, which cannot easily be disaggregated. Claims for distributive justice and cultural recognition are often interconnected, even if they are

15 Benhabib, Seyla *The Claims of Culture: Equality & Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, 2002)

distinct and conceptually irreducible, as Nancy Fraser argues.¹⁶ But recent policy discourses on integration have downplayed social and economic disadvantage in favour of a focus on cultural factors.

This is a mistake. Economic integration, principally through work, is a key driver of civic integration. Data shows that many new immigrant communities are prospering in the workplace, but others have catastrophic levels of disadvantage, particularly those from war-torn backgrounds such as Somalia, Ethiopia and the former Yugoslavia. Levels of unemployment and economic inactivity in these communities are appallingly high. Unless urgent action is taken across a range of fronts – from English language classes and skills training to focused local economic strategies – these communities will be cut adrift from mainstream society for decades to come.

More widely, the term “equality” is too often missing in debates on community cohesion. Defenders of multiculturalism pay too little attention to the underlying socioeconomic drivers of social justice, and the concrete social and economic policies necessary to address injustice and exclusion. Likewise, proponents of integration and common purpose remain too ready to restrict their analyses and prescriptions to immigration laws and cultural practices, leaving socioeconomic equality and effective equality of citizenship out of the equation.

New policy directions

I conclude my discussion by highlighting two avenues for policy development that are likely to prove fruitful for policy makers in Britain: procedural fairness and new localism.

Procedural fairness

The concept of procedural justice is at the heart of the political and legal systems of liberal democracies. All citizens have equal rights before the law and equal status as participants in free and fair democratic deliberation. Rules must be fair and applied consistently and impartially. Procedural fairness in these terms is widely understood and supported.

Increasingly, however, economists and social scientists are uncovering the importance of procedural fairness to individuals' well-being and their propensity to co-operate with others.¹⁷ People care not just about outcomes, but the conditions and processes that lead

16 Fraser, Nancy and Honneth, Axel *Redistribution or Recognition? A Philosophical Exchange* (Verso, 2003)

17 Gintis and Bowles; Benz, Matthias *The Relevance of Procedural Utility for Economics*, Institute for Empirical Research in Economics working paper no 256 (University of Zurich, 2005)

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to those outcomes; indeed, they appear to accept widely divergent outcomes if they believe the procedures used to arrive at decisions were fair. This has important implications for public policy. For while distributive outcomes remain central to social justice, it is apparent that individual well-being, interpersonal trust, social co-operation, and the legitimacy of public institutions can be enhanced if fair rules are seen to apply.

Underlying these claims are important psychological insights into how procedural fairness contributes to the well-being that individuals experience, rooted in the determinants of selfhood or sense of self. Matthias Benz defines procedural utility as the "well-being people gain from living and acting under institutionalised processes as they contribute to a positive sense of self, addressing innate needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness".¹⁸ He cites research evidence from a wide range of fields to support the importance of procedural utility: from how markets and public authorities allocate goods, to the experience of autonomy at work, participation in democracy, and willingness to pay taxes.

Cross-national studies have also shown that the fairness of a society matters more for its level of social trust than does its homogeneity.¹⁹ Countries with high levels of procedural and distributive fairness have higher levels of generalised interpersonal trust or "social" trust. Diversity declines in salience as countries become more equal and more democratic. The perceived fairness or unfairness of ethnic relations in a society – related in turn to levels of discrimination, income inequality and political participation by minority groups – is more important than diversity per se.

The literature on procedural fairness gives theoretical support to evidence from recent studies, such as *The New East End*²⁰ that hostility to migrants from indigenous populations derives from a sense of "queue jumping" or unfairness in access to housing and welfare benefits. It also shifts the focus of race relations and community cohesion to the governance and administration of core public services. The implications for policy makers are that greater well-being and social trust will result from policies that better reconcile procedural justice with other values, such as need, in determining access to services; and that at the same time, the legitimacy of public authorities will increase if local electorates participate more widely in the determination of policies.

¹⁸ Benz, op cit, p7

¹⁹ See, for example, You, Jong-Sung *Corruption & Inequality as Correlates of Social Trust: Fairness Matters More than Similarity*, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations and JFK School of Government working paper no 29 (Harvard University, 2005)

²⁰ Dench, Geoff, Gavron, Kate and Young, Michael *The New East End: Kinship, Race & Conflict* (Profile, 2006)

A new localism

A focus on procedural fairness also implies a strengthening of the role of local public authorities in securing community cohesion. Race relations policy in the UK has traditionally been implemented through landmark pieces of national legislation, such as the 1965 and 1976 Race Relations Acts. Historically less attention has been paid to local, on-the-ground public action and community engagement. Similarly, asylum and immigration policies have been predominantly concerned with border controls and bureaucratic case processing, rather than understanding the impact of migration on local communities. A startling example was the creation of the National Asylum Support Service – a national agency set up to disperse asylum seekers around the country whose staff were originally based entirely in London.

This neglect of the importance of locality has had deleterious effects, most conspicuously in repeated race riots and widespread hostility to newly dispersed asylum seekers arriving in disadvantaged areas.²¹

Although the government has focused much more effort on localities and community cohesion at the local level since the report of the Cattle commission,²² it is clear that without stronger local state capacity and authority, migration flows will not be managed effectively, particularly as these impact on public services. Nor will community cohesion extend into real interaction between citizens.

More positively, locality can serve as an important arena of identity formation and community cohesion. Civic pride is expressed through attachment to village and town, city and county, as much as to the nation state. Localities that are open to all, rather than gated or deeply segregated, can function as sources of pride and belonging, the site of democratic engagement and physical spaces in which inter-ethnic contact is forged. Contact theory suggests that such local interaction will improve mutual understanding, social trust and commonality of identity.²³

Conclusion

Recent events have reminded us of the importance of tackling political indifference to segregation, asserting liberal values and the need to inculcate a common core of political citizenship. But multiculturalism is far from dead. It is simply evolving a different life

²¹ Lewis, Miranda *Asylum: Understanding Public Attitudes* (IPPR, 2005)

²² See cohesioninstitute.org.uk

²³ Muir, Rick *The New Identity Politics: from "Multiculturalism" to "Social Cohesion"* (IPPR, forthcoming)

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course. "Mosaic multiculturalism" will not survive. But many of the practices of multicultural states will continue, accompanied by new policies for socioeconomic and civic integration. And it is through this process of negotiation and debate that we can renew our democracy with greater strength in our diversity.

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Chapter 6

Belonging – local and national

Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation, and
Rushanara Ali, Associate Director of the Young Foundation

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Belonging – local and national

For more than two centuries literature has been exploring what it feels like not to belong, to feel out of place. The literature of the rapidly urbanising societies of Europe and North America unravelled the feelings of alienation and anomie that seemed to be associated with great concentrations of people in big cities. Whereas we felt at home amidst hills and fields, the grimy smoky cities seemed to be turning people into strangers, resentful and fearful of each other.

Yet by the end of the 19th century – although the arts never lost their interest in anomic dislocation – much of the urban public had discovered new feelings of belonging, both at the level of the nation and closer to home. Patriotism, imperialism and nationalism dominated politics, promoted by many governments and by the newly formed mass parties. A new wave of civic and working-class organisations were winning millions of members. Municipal corporations proud of Stafford or Stoke or Surrey were showing off their feelings in the form of grand town halls. Alienation did not disappear, but a powerful new sense of belonging was successfully created and nurtured.

A century later our sense of belonging has again been jolted, this time more by globalisation. And once again the responses are appearing at many different levels, as people try to find a sense of belonging, a place to feel at home. The symptoms of the problem are everywhere. They can be found among white working-class communities who feel resentful that they have lost "their" jobs, housing or culture (experiences documented in the recent book *The New East End*²⁴). They can be found in very different ways among newly arrived migrants, living transient lives, and second-generation migrants experiencing racism. They might feel that they are living between cultures, or fear that the West is engaged in a war on Islam or, at least, a clash of civilisations.

The challenge of belonging

For the UK these heightened feelings of identity bring with them a difficult, dual challenge. On the one hand, how to ensure that long-standing communities do not lose the sense that their towns, cities and nation belong to them, and, as a result, turn to a harsher, sometimes exclusivist politics of the far right. And on the other hand, the challenge of integrating past and present migrant communities so that they feel their citizenship is in no way second class.

²⁴ Dench, Geoff, Gavron, Kate and Young, Michael *The New East End: Kinship, Race & Conflict* (Profile, 2006)

One of the dominant arguments of the last decade has been that this can only be done through a more assertive propagation of what are taken to be British values. In what follows we will argue that this stance is largely mistaken: mistaken in its reading of what is known about belonging, identity and conflict; and mistaken in the prescriptions that follow this. It is well known in political science that it is easier to get people to agree on practical prescriptions than about underlying principles or values; the same applies to questions of belonging, and how diverse communities can get along.

First, however, we need to acknowledge where the Britishness debate has come from. To some extent it has never gone away – whether in the form of reactions to decolonisation, to devolution, to joining Europe or to the fluctuating fortunes of the monarchy. One of its recent sources was a project that Demos ran in the early 1990s to re-examine, and recast, Britain's national story. It was prompted by strong evidence from around the world that Britain was still seen predominantly as a country of the past, overseen by a monarch and aristocrats living in stately homes, ethnically homogeneous and which, to a large extent, had failed to make the transition to become an advanced industrial society.

This image was not just a concoction of Britain's critics. Rather it had been assiduously promoted by many powerful interests – the Conservative Party, the heritage industry and much of the media – and then reflected back to us in both Hollywood and British films; look, for example, at the all-white London overseen by a limp upper class that is depicted in films like *Notting Hill*.

That this identity was so pervasive seemed to us to be not only dangerous for Britain, but also profoundly misleading, since it portrayed a Britain that no longer existed. It was an identity that was bound to leave many people feeling alienated. Britain's cities had become very diverse, and had started their long turnaround from the shocks of de-industrialisation. Britain might not be king in high-tech manufacturing but we had plenty of contenders, from BAe to Dyson, and in many of the newer industries we were doing incredibly well (London now employs some 600,000 people in creative industries alone). Some tourists undoubtedly came for royalty and stately homes, but many others came for the Notting Hill carnival, fashion, cutting-edge arts and cultural experiences, and clubbing, or to see the Britain of the Beatles or David Bowie or Norman Cook.

The heritage industry had belatedly tried to reap the benefits of Britain's formidable popular music culture. Yet while hundreds of millions of pounds were spent on preserving aristocratic homes, Britain did almost nothing to preserve and promote its democratic

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heritage. Not one out of 2,500 museums celebrates democracy, and there are no plaques to commemorate the places where democracy was fought for; nor are there any signs to anyone entering Britain that we might be proud of some of our achievements.

Reshaping national identity?

During the second half of the 1990s many argued for nothing less than a different national identity. They pointed out that in the past national identities have been shaped and made – they are not aspects of nature, rooted in blood and soil – and that the same would be true in the future. The central argument was that Britain had changed and would continue to change; that any story needed to be capacious enough to cope with those changes; that we should celebrate rather than deny our openness and hybridity as a “mongrel nation” (to use Philip Dodd’s phrase). We should promote our nation as much through living values and living institutions as through dead ones.

The key point was that national identities do not rest on abstract values any more than they rest on blood and soil. They are made and remade through practice – through what real institutions say and do.

This understanding that identities are socially made has also influenced thinking about the very local places where people live most of their lives. A few years ago it was assumed that the advent of 24-hour TV and the internet would make people even less attached to their locality, but this is not the case. Although people travel further to work or play or learn, well over two-thirds report a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, and, if anything, the physical proximity of parks and schools seems to matter more.

The weakening of local government over the last few decades has partly obscured these identities. However, when studies have been done to find out what people identify with, their attachments have generally turned out to be much more local than the big structures of governance – neighbourhoods and towns, rather than counties or big cities. Here, too, identities turn out to rest much less on shared values, or for that matter on physical attributes, and more on relationships and institutions.

One of the telling findings of *The New East End* was that British National Party support was highest among people with the densest networks of family relationships in an area: they were the ones most likely to feel that they had lost their sense of belonging as new migrants came in. Many of their values – including the belief in strong families – were closer to those of the new migrant communities than they were to those of other white

people, but that had little bearing on their feelings of identity.

More generally, it has become clear from social science research over the last few decades that conflict in localities does not arise simply because of the diversity of the population, or for that matter whether or not people happen to share the same belief system. How much meaningful contact people from different backgrounds have with each other, and precisely what kind of contact they have (for example, whether they see people like themselves making friends with people from other groups), is all-important. The same applies across class lines, and has been shown from research in places as diverse as the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland. The implication is clear: the practical character of contact has a profound impact on belonging and identity.

The other key finding is that the actions of politicians – and political entrepreneurs – are also critically important. In some situations they can turn small incidents into catastrophic crises. In others they can choose to dampen conflicts. This is why places with apparently similar class or ethnic mixes react in such different ways: some Indian cities, for example, are riven with violence; while in others Muslims, Hindus and Christians get by perfectly well. Again the key point is that identities and conflicts are made: they are not natural, or structural, or inevitable results of social conditions.

The lesson for anyone concerned with Britishness is clear. It is not enough to assert common values, though these can help, provided there is sufficient legitimacy and ownership of them. How institutions behave counts for much more, as does how they give people a sense of meaning and purpose and how they respect them and their contribution.

What nationalism is for

Promoting Britishness – or Frenchness or Germanness, or, for that matter, attachment to Middlesbrough or Maidenhead – is not a good in itself; indeed, it can be a very dangerous activity. In the 19th-century heyday of national consciousness, nationality was promoted for three main reasons: to help free people from oppressive empires; to provide the motivation to fight if and when they fought wars; and to promote mutual solidarity as early welfare states took shape, and a wider sense of community and shared destiny.

In some parts of the world the first of these motives remains relevant; the Basques and Catalans in Spain, and the Sami in Sweden and Finland would still claim the need for new freedoms. The second has become much less relevant: when we fight wars it is generally

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as part of multinational forces. The Falklands may turn out to be the last war fought for a purely British national sentiment. The third motive does retain its importance, but has become subtle.

Here the key is that belonging connects people to others around them, and to webs of mutual obligation: willingness to care or protect. We feel we belong when we are respected and recognised by the community and therefore owe something back.

This helps to explain the apparently contradictory findings on the relationship between welfare and diversity. Very influential work by Alberto Alesina in the early 2000s appeared to show conclusively that more diverse societies were less willing to fund welfare states. It appeared to reinforce a common-sense observation that people are less willing to finance others who are unlike them.

More recent research, however, has shown profound flaws in the analysis. Across Europe, where there are strong left-of-centre political movements the inverse correlation between welfare and diversity has disappeared. Clearly, these political institutions are able to create a sense of common belonging that overrides other factors. Clearly too, some political changes turn apparently all-important divisions (like those between Southerners and Northerners in England, or between the Scots and the English) into rather marginal ones.

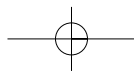
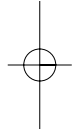
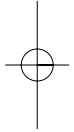
Our sense of belonging can, thankfully, be worn more lightly than in the past. The idea of nationality in its full sense is a relatively recent invention – coinciding with the decline of the great multinational empires. It provided a glue for new democracies and dictatorships, which had to be moulded and enforced through schools and broadcasting, primarily for the purposes of war. But today that same kind of Britishness and Frenchness is not needed, and so what nationhood is for is something more low-key – a sense of belonging, solidarity, being part of a common project.

This takes us to the crucial issue. Identities are inevitably abstract, but belonging is not. It is made and unmade by lots of practical realities: by how people behave, what they say, what they see, what they do; and it is here that our efforts should be directed. The idea that a state can simply assert a set of values is misplaced; unless they come to ground in actions, habits and behaviours what states say risks being beside the point.

We should also remember that any useful national ideal has to be, in part, a challenge to the nation it represents. It has to offer a better possibility against which to judge an

imperfect present. At its best, too, it has to offer an ideal that different interests can buy into: a dream, an aspiration. That is why, if there are to be values that underpin any revived sense of Britishness, these should be universal values, and values that we often fail to live up to – not ones that we claim as uniquely ours.

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Chapter 7

Devolution – the layers of identity

Catherine Stihler, Labour MEP for Scotland

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Devolution – the layers of identity

Jim Hacker, the main character of *Yes, Minister*, asks his private secretary Bernard whether he has actual powers, as minister for administrative affairs, in the various "far-flung parts of the UK, such as Scotland and Northern Ireland". Bernard politely advises him to read the brief his civil servants have prepared for him, which should answer his question. To the new minister the brief makes no sense, but he decides to study it in order not to be defeated by his civil servants.

His diligence pays off. A problem arises when arrangements for the official visit of an African head of state coincides with a visit of the Queen to Scotland. The minister suggests the radical idea that the African dignitary meet the Queen in Scotland. "Out of the question," replies Sir Humphrey Appleby, his permanent secretary and chief civil servant. However, the minister quotes back the brief given to him by his civil servants that describes his powers, and Sir Humphrey is stumped. Jim Hacker goes on to explain that his plan "really shows that Scotland is an equal partner in the United Kingdom. She is Queen of Scotland too." Sir Humphrey continues, "But Scotland is so remote." "Not all that remote," replies Hacker, pointing to the map of the UK on his wall: "It's that pink bit about two feet above Potters Bar."

Things go from bad to worse when they are leaked a copy of the African head of state's speech calling on the Scots to rise up against English oppression and to recall their former "greatness"; to remember "William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, Bannockburn and Culloden". The minister shouts at Sir Humphrey, "You are paid to advise me. Advise me!" "All in all," Sir Humphrey replies, "this is not unlike trying to advise the captain of the Titanic after he has struck the iceberg." He goes on: "We could sing 'Abide with me'."²⁵

The complexity of Scottish politics

Perhaps Sir Humphrey knew that "Abide with me" was written by the Scottish-born poet, hymnologist and preacher, Henry Francis Lyte, or he was hinting that this was the ministerial funeral of Jim Hacker. Scottish politics has never been and never will be simple. A real Sir Humphrey, Sir Christopher Meyer, in his recent book *DC Confidential*, had first-hand experience of dealing directly with devolution. He describes in his memoirs the instance when the First Minister met the President of the USA, when "the sound of

25 Lynn, Jonathan and Jay, Anthony "The Official Visit" in *Yes, Minister: The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* by the Rt Hon James Hacker MP (BBC, 1981)

spitting from envious Westminster politicians became audible in Washington"²⁶ His second recollection involved preparing the first Tartan Day in 2001. He inadvertently got caught up in a debacle involving the SNP and the other political parties, and was falsely accused in the Scottish press of banning SNP members from the embassy's party. From the experience, he recalls how he "better understands now why Scottish politicians seem to hate each other"²⁷

Devolution has revolutionised the British constitutional settlement. No longer can "Britain" mean "England". The different nations that make up the United Kingdom are at last recognised. Devolution redressed the democratic deficit, from a handful of ministers ruling Scotland to a democratically elected parliament of 129 MSPs. It was the will of the Scottish people, through the Constitutional Convention, that kept the light of devolution burning in the dark days of Tory rule. Devolution was so opposed by the Conservative Party, which clung to central control while being barely represented in Scotland. With devolution it would no longer be acceptable that Scottish education would just have an hour of debate in a year at Westminster.

We are quick to forget that it took the historic victory of a Labour government in 1997 to bring about devolution through the successful September referendum. Two years later, for the first time in Scotland's history, the first democratic elections to the Scottish parliament were held. The previous parliament, which met almost 300 years ago, was unelected, unrepresentative and truly, as Robert Burns described it, a "parcel of rogues"²⁸

It is difficult to describe the emotion stirred when devolution occurred. Some doubted that it would ever happen, even with the manifesto commitment from the Labour Party. On the opening day of the Scottish parliament in 1999, feelings of joy, happiness and amazement (and these are not emotions that come easily to a Scot) pervaded the capital. As I walked near the front of the official procession to the Mound – the site of the parliament's temporary home – schools from all across Scotland were parading just behind. As my father, a teacher at the comprehensive school I attended, walked with school pupils, I remember waiting back to see him march down the Mound and quickly running out to hug him. A former pupil, then a newly elected MSP, also ran from the crowd to greet him. These scenes on that day were commonplace. How quickly the honeymoon ended!

26 Meyer, Christopher *DC Confidential* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p80

27 *Ibid*, p126

28 From "Fareweel to A'Our Scottish Fame"

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Now the reasoning behind establishing the Scottish parliament is questioned – a parliament that was fought for so hard, yet whose building costs led to so much resentment and acrimony. The irony is that although our new parliament building has suffered so much criticism, visitor numbers have rocketed. People wanted to see it for themselves and many were impressed that modern Scotland had a modern parliament to match.

Meanwhile at Westminster, the West Lothian question, instead of being nipped in the bud, has been brought into focus by devolution. How could Scottish MPs vote on English education when their constituents are not affected? What right do Scottish MPs have to allow tuition fees to be introduced in England, in the knowledge that it will have little impact on their own constituents? Tensions between MPs and MSPs loom large. Some MSPs and MPs who are from the same party and represent the same constituency do not share an office. The number of Scottish MPs in the cabinet has been called into question and the prospect of having a Scot as prime minister is openly criticised by the Conservative Party.

Tension is nothing new

This anti-Scottishness is not a new political phenomenon. Ian Jack wrote recently: "The last time Scotland made such an impression on British and English life – or at least the last time it had such an irritant effect – was probably soon after the beginning of the 20th century." At that time "the three largest political parties were led by men who were Scots in one way or another. Lord Roseberry, Henry Campbell Bannerman (who was the son of a Glasgow Lord Provost) and Arthur Balfour came of an old landed family with estates in East Lothian."²⁹ With anti-Scottishness in England comes anti-Englishness in Scotland.

When the Scottish First Minister refused to support England during the recent football World Cup, there was a huge debate over whether he was right or wrong. Some compared it to asking Hearts supporters to back Hibs in a Cup final, or Rangers supporters to back Celtic – it would be anyone but the "enemy". Thus the First Minister was vindicated. Surely anti-Englishness was just jolly banter against the auld enemy? Not so. A dark side to Scotland emerged. A young boy was attacked for wearing an England shirt as he walked through a park in Edinburgh with his dad in broad daylight. It would appear that the Scottish Executive campaign to tackle racism, "One Scotland, many cultures", failed to address anti-Englishness. What are the layers of identity that make Scots Scots, and how do we, in a devolved Scotland, claim our British identity?

29 Ian Grant on the unspeakable Scot, in *Review, The Guardian* (15 July 2006)

Scotland obsesses over identity. As Alan Bold wrote, "Scottishness is a recognised state of mind: sometimes an independent mind, occasionally a theocratic state of mind, frequently a confused state of mind."³⁰ A confused state of mind, indeed. Are you from the East or are you from the West? Are you a Highlander or Lowlander? Are you from urban or rural Scotland? The primary identity of someone born and brought up in Scotland will always be Scottish, yet the area in which you were born defines you.

As a Scot, married to an American with a German surname, representing Scotland as part of the UK Labour delegation in the European parliament, I am Scottish, British and European. I now have the task of bringing up my son who, although born in Scotland, has American citizenship too. He will have Scottish, British, European and American identities. Will he be a Scottish American or an American Scot? For centuries, people left Scotland to go to America – many had no choice. Today, a third of all Americans claim Scottish ancestry: but what is Scottish ancestry? A leading geneticist recently developed a DNA test for Scottishness. For a mere £130, the test can tell whether you are directly descended from the Picts.³¹ I would probably fail; I have some 17th-century French Huguenot blood!

On a more practical level, the Institute of Governance at the University of Edinburgh conducted an identity-related analysis from the 2001 and 2003 Scottish social attitudes survey. From the 2001 analysis, the trend in "best choice" national identity since the 1970s shows an increase in choosing Scottishness and a decrease in choosing Britishness. Given a multiple choice of national identities, where people could choose more than one identity, 86% of people pronounced themselves Scottish, while only 50% saw themselves as British. This work illustrates that the prioritisation of a Scottish as opposed to British identity is much more marked in Scotland than the comparable identity choice is in Wales or England.

In Scotland, identity as a Scot is relatively important to self-perception when compared with other sources of identity, such as class, gender, or employment status. Only parenthood has a similar level of importance. Interestingly, when national identity is associated with political party identification, there is considerable non-alignment between those who identify as most strongly Scottish. Around half support neither the SNP nor Scottish independence. Most importantly, devolution is the most popular means of government across all national identity categories.³²

³⁰ Bold, Alan *Modern Scottish Literature* (Longmans, 1983), p1

³¹ "Think You Are a Real Scot? Try Checking your DNA" in *Times Online* (13 August 2006)

³² www.institute-of-governance.org/forum/Leverhulme/summaries/public_opinion

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Devolution, not independence, is the settled will of the Scottish people. Yet, if we are not careful, the spectre of blinkered nationalism could rear its ugly head, particularly if we do not make the case for Scotland as part of the United Kingdom. During a schools' European forum in Dunfermline, I asked the primary school pupils to name the countries that make up the EU. As they whizzed through France, Germany and the countries of central, Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe – they missed out their own. I pointed this out to them. They immediately shouted "Scotland". I tried to help. "England," they said doubtfully, and then one said hesitantly, "the United *erm* Kingdom". These words, or indeed the name "Great Britain", did not come easily or quickly. One wee lad followed on by asking if we were going to become independent. This lack of knowledge about the country where you come from is deeply worrying. Which other country would have school pupils unable to answer this basic question? I believe more people could name the first president of the United States of America than could name the first prime minister of our own country.

Learning about Scotland's place in Britain

For our British identity to flourish we need to start with education. We need to understand why we in Scotland are both Scottish and British. While most 10-year-olds in Scottish schools learn about the EU, they do not learn about the United Kingdom. We secondly have to explain why we are stronger as part of the United Kingdom. The case must be made as to why the United Kingdom works.

What are the three key reasons Scotland benefits from being part of a bigger entity? First, the strength of being part of a large country with economic, social and cultural ties allows us to be outward-thinking. Second, our shared belief in freedom, democracy, the rule of law and progress allows us to seek what is best for all our citizens. Third, our internationalism in a highly changing global world allows us to take our place in the world and prepare us for the challenges ahead. We are stronger together and weaker apart.

Scottishness will always be the primary identity for the majority of Scots, but the next most important is the concept of being stronger as part of the United Kingdom. This benefits Scots, not just economically, but culturally and socially as well. Scots are practical. Devolution works because decisions best taken in Scotland are taken in Scotland. Decisions taken in Westminster are best taken there, and the same goes for decisions at the EU level.

For example, Scottish education should be dealt with in Scotland, while foreign affairs are best dealt with at Westminster. As pollution knows no national boundaries, environmental

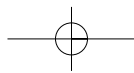
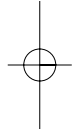
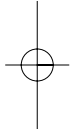
policy is best made on the European political platform. However, we urgently need to reinvigorate in Scotland what being British is all about, in contrast to narrow nationalism.

Nationalism by its very nature is non-inclusive and non-progressive. The SNP tried to address this by talking about independence in Europe. Now they don't want to talk about independence at all – in Europe or otherwise. With the forthcoming Scottish parliament elections, they know that their central message of independence is what people are most scared of. The SNP, like the Tories, maintain a policy of withdrawal from the common fisheries policy, yet both know that this is only possible if you withdraw from the EU. Once thought of as civic nationalists with an international outlook, they are increasingly becoming a Euro-sceptic party, failing to support the EU constitution and even ruling out the euro. Under the SNP, Scotland would not only be ripped out of the UK but also removed from the EU. Scotland would be alone, isolated and vulnerable in this globalised world. Not a pretty picture to paint.

Writing to Jacqueline Kennedy in 1964, John Steinbeck observed: "You talked of Scotland as a lost cause and that is not true. Scotland is an unwon cause."³³ Devolution is the cause that Scotland has won. It was the Labour Party and the Labour government that successfully and finally delivered on this cause. Now, almost a decade on from the birth of devolution, we have to seek maturity in our multiple identities to keep Scotland the outward-looking, progressive nation we can be proud of. The past is a foreign country. The future is a work in progress.

³³ Bold, op cit, p1

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Chapter 8

Citizenship education and identity formation

Tony Breslin, Chief Executive of the Citizenship Foundation

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Citizenship education and identity formation

Contexts, ambitions and rationales

To rework a well-worn cliché, a week is a long time in citizenship education. The week in which this essay was penned proved longer than most, starting with the negatively reported but essentially supportive Ofsted report into the teaching of citizenship under the national curriculum³⁴ and ending with the renewed debate around the nature of Britain as a multicultural society that followed Jack Straw's controversial comments about the style of dress adopted by some Muslim women. In the intervening days there had been disturbances on the streets of Windsor between white and Asian youths; a press furore over a Muslim police officer allegedly excused from guarding the Israeli embassy; the killing of Steven Nyembo-Ya-Muteba, a British citizen and former Congolese refugee who had come to this country to find educational success, following a dispute with a group of local youths whose allegedly rowdy behaviour he had seemingly objected to; and a walk-in shooting at a fast food restaurant in Brixton.

These disparate (and in some cases, desperate) events form part of the agenda for citizenship education, not because they provide a description of everyday existence in Britain today but because they represent, and articulate, our fears for a less stable future and our lack of confidence in the ability of the processes of education, civil discourse and politics to deal with such a spectre. And this lack of confidence has some foundation: low levels of participation in formal politics, concerns about the social exclusion of significant numbers of young people, the involvement of young men born and educated in Britain in last summer's London bombings, the prevalence of a gun culture in parts of Britain's inner cities, the apparent decline of neighbourhoods and the rise of the far right in local politics.

In this context, the case for citizenship education is clear: there *is* such a thing as society but we need to prepare young people with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and the confidence to play their role within it. Moreover, British society today is more complex, more sophisticated, more fluid, more materialistic and, critically, more individualistic than that which earlier generations encountered: choices come earlier but pass quicker; wealth, through the prism of celebrity, is flaunted at those who would seem to have the least chance of attaining it; notions of community and neighbourliness are apparently (and often romantically) confined for many to a bygone age; collective institutions – the

³⁴ *Towards Consensus? Citizenship in Secondary Schools* (Ofsted, 2006)

unions, the political parties, many areas of organised religion – struggle to attract members or congregations.

Against this backdrop, the aspirations of Professor Sir Bernard Crick's advisory committee on citizenship,³⁵ which enjoyed all-party support and whose recommendations led directly to the introduction of citizenship into the secondary school national curriculum in the summer of 2002, were both ambitious and unambiguous:

We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves.

Thus, Crick's model of citizenship – developed around three strands: social and moral responsibility, political literacy and community involvement – is built firmly on the concept of citizenship as process: as engagement in the community and in politics. Hence the emergence of a subsequent curriculum based not simply around knowledge and understanding, but around a set of citizenship skills and dispositions, and the acknowledgement by both the National Foundation for Educational Research³⁶ and Ofsted³⁷ that citizenship is most effectively taught where knowledge and understanding are enriched through a range of opportunities to actually "do" citizenship. In the citizenship-rich school or college,³⁸ citizenship is identified on the curriculum, lived through the life of the institution and evident in its relationship with the community that it serves.³⁹

Matters of terminology

For Crick, and the wider citizenship education community, then, the focus has been on an approach that champions *effective* – rather than merely "active" – citizenship, with the

35 Crick, Bernard *Education for Citizenship & the Teaching of Democracy in Schools: Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship* (Department for Education & Employment/Qualifications & Curriculum Authority, 1998)

36 Kerr, D, Ireland, E, Lopes, J, Craig, R and Cleaver, E: annual reports from the citizenship education longitudinal study (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2003, 2004, 2005)

37 Op cit

38 Breslin, Tony and Dufour, Barry (eds) *Developing Citizens: A Comprehensive Introduction to Effective Citizenship Education in the Secondary School* (Hodder Murray, 2006)

39 Pattison, Peter and Barnett, Anthony "A School for Citizenship" in *Teaching Citizenship* issue 10 (Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2005)

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language being of engagement and empowerment; of not simply activity, but activity with a political edge. By definition, this notion of citizenship as process is overtly inclusive. Citizenship – expressed as freedom of speech and association, and through engagement in public life – is a basic human right, not a legal matter, even though the rights of citizenship might – and should – be legally enshrined.

In everyday parlance, though, the term "citizenship" can play out very differently, especially in settings that feature the very diversity that the best citizenship education both explores and celebrates. Five or so years ago, the author was involved in evaluating the experiences of 17- and 18-year-olds on a new citizenship module set within a BTEC course at a vocational college in the Old Street area of London; just on the edge of the City but sharing little of the wealth or glitz of the latter. If the young people on the course had grown up in other settings, they might perhaps have gone into higher education. Able and sharp, they were on a day release programme sponsored by two of the City's largest merchant banks. "What do you think of this new citizenship stuff that you are doing?" I asked with uncomfortable informality. One hand, belonging to the only white student in the group of 18 or so learners, shot up aggressively. "I didn't like the sound of it at first," he ventured, adding when prompted "... because I thought it was going to be all about whether my mates would be allowed to stay in this country or not."

The message is clear. The notion of citizenship as status can appear often to be as excluding as it is inclusive. On matters of status, Goodhart may be right to note that, if it is to have some value, "citizenship must include *and* exclude"⁴⁰; but we need to be clear about the how, who and why that follows from this. Welcome as the recently launched education programmes for newcomers to Britain are, resulting from the recommendations of a further Crick-led committee,⁴¹ their linkage to the exercise of gaining "naturalisation" (that is, the legal status of British citizenship) has perhaps added to the confusion over what we actually mean by the term "citizenship" in the different settings that we use it.

A second tension in the term "citizenship" has pertinence here: the tension between the conformist and progressive overtones in its use. While some on the left criticise citizenship education as being simply about "good behaviour", an exercise that limits its ambition to encouraging the picking up of litter and being nice to police officers, there are others on

⁴⁰ Goodhart, David "National Anxieties" in *Prospect* (June 2006)

⁴¹ Crick, Bernard *The New Et the Old: The Report of the "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group* (Home Office Social Policy Unit, 2003)

the right who question whether it is little more than a left-wing plot to indoctrinate impressionable minds.

Melanie Phillips' recent attack,⁴² in which she presents Crick's approach to citizenship education, erroneously, as "encouraging children to pursue a kind of permanent rolling revolution", is a classic presentation of the latter stance. However, the articulation (or interpretation) of citizenship as being both about status and conformist is hardly likely to appeal to either those who feel marginalised within British society or those who disagree with aspects of government policy at any particular time. If the concept of citizenship understood in disaffected and minority communities (among the young men behind the London bombings of July 2005, for instance) is one that involves coalescing with a society from which they feel utterly excluded – because of myriad factors, stretching from low educational attainment and limited life chances to a particular interpretation of their faith and reading of British foreign policy – it is likely to be, at best, a blunt tool for social inclusion and community cohesion. Only when debates about citizenship move forward from these tensions between, on the one hand, process and status, and, on the other, progressiveness and conformism, can we begin to find a model in which all can engage – a model of citizenship, and citizenship education, that places the recognition and affirmation of common and contrasting identities at its core.

Citizenship and national identity

Issues of identity, in particular national identity, are exercising academics, writers and politicians of all persuasions. Linda Colley points to global trends that "are currently challenging the integrity of all states", noting that "the ever more rapid flow of capital, information and people across the world is exciting but the internet, migration, e-commerce and multinational corporations also represent assaults on all kinds of customary boundaries, beliefs and allegiances".⁴³ Certainly, the language of emigration and immigration, a once-in-a-lifetime experience for my parents and many of their contemporaries, seems oddly dated; to an increasing number, the language of on-going population flows seems much more pertinent today.

And these changes cannot fail to have an impact in our classrooms and our neighbourhoods, framing our expectations, our options, our vulnerabilities and, ultimately, our life journeys. As a school pupil in north-west London in the 1970s, the presumption of careers

42 Phillips, Melanie "Lessons in Being Good Citizens? No, Propaganda that Undermines British Values" in *Daily Mail* (29 September 2006)

43 Colley, Linda *Britishness in the 21st Century*, unpublished seminar paper (2002)

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teachers was that my contemporaries and I would stray little further than the industrial estates of Park Royal and the Great West Road for our careers. As a careers tutor myself in the late 1980s, I began to discuss with my pupils the possibility that they might move further away, that they might go on to higher education, that they might even look forward not to a single career but to two or three careers over the span of their working lives.

By the mid 1990s, I was beginning to have discussions with some young people not just about going to university in Manchester or Newcastle but about working in France or in the United States, or in some other part of the world; and, increasingly, I was having those discussions with young people from a diversity of backgrounds, for whom travel and change were already the norm. Moreover, my colleagues and I began to talk about the "turbulence" of the school's community – the movement of young people in and out of the school's population (and, therefore, the local neighbourhood) at points other than the start of year seven and the end of year 11, following a parent or parents; sometimes to another country, more usually from the town to the suburb as the consequence of employment opportunities (or the lack of them) or family upheaval.

In the managed environment of the primary or secondary school, especially where the intake is diverse rather than monocultural, the negative consequences of this fluidity can be mediated, the many positive elements enhanced and drawn upon. At the level of the community or the neighbourhood this is more difficult. Neighbourliness and a sense of community are achieved more easily in stable, unchanging societies that are not particularly diverse.

However, neighbourliness in such contexts is not always a positive experience, as newcomers (or "outsiders") will testify; witness the experience of immigrants from near and far in 1950s London: "No Irish, no blacks need apply." Notions of community and neighbourliness are harder to create or develop (but when successful much more rewarding) in diverse, fluid societies, precisely because this fluidity has to be dealt with as a part of daily life.

Perhaps for this reason, so many of the communities of "multicultural" Britain live not in diverse, cosmopolitan neighbourhoods but in monocultural roads and streets – ghettos of a sort – in which the particular group can be parochially secure in its own identity, but where it is likely to feel light years from that held by those who live on the next estate or the neighbouring district; "sleepwalking into segregation", as Trevor Phillips memorably termed this scenario a year or so ago.

These fluidities and tendencies to segregate, of course, contribute to the difficulty of trying to define a national identity. Such a task is challenging in any case in an integrated multicultural society. It is all the more difficult where that society is differentially integrated, where some communities are internally cohesive precisely because they are (or feel) isolated, where their neighbourliness tends to the excluding, not the inclusive, and where their relationships with those from other communities are underpinned by a fear of the unknown.

What is the relevance to those who feel marginalised or disaffected if the identity proposed appears to belong not to them but to the community in the next district, whether this be a cosmopolitan and metropolitan elite or an equally alienated and disenfranchised group who happen to lay claim to a different history, a different set of flags or symbols, or a different faith?

Perhaps for this reason, a number of commentators are beginning to acknowledge that either the pursuit should be of a shared sense of citizenship rather than identity⁴⁴ or that identity should be based on an agreed model of citizenship.⁴⁵ In this context, Colley argues that "it would be far more productive to concentrate on renovating British citizenship, and on convincing all of the inhabitants of these islands that they are equal and valued citizens irrespective of whatever identity they may individually select to prioritise".

There is much substance to her argument that such an approach allows a range of diverse identities, themselves in flux, to prosper alongside a *shared* citizenship.⁴⁶ However, a position closer to Goodhart's – whereby the exercise of engaging in citizenship can be a means of generating a shared (and national) identity; a "progressive nationalism" as he terms it – is more in keeping with what is being proposed here: first, that citizenship as process (promoted and enabled through rigorous programmes of citizenship education, not just in schools but in colleges, adult learning centres and work-related training schemes) provides a mechanism for the development of identity; second, that any form of national identity subsequently developed can be plausibly shared by individuals from each and every community.

44 Ibid

45 Goodhart, op cit

46 *Faith, Identity & Belonging: Educating for Shared Citizenship*, report on a seminar held on 7 February 2006 (Interfaith Network, 2006)

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The role of citizenship education

Citizenship education can provide a forum for vital debates, especially around community cohesion, social exclusion, integration and national identity. The purpose of citizenship education is to promote the political literacy championed by Crick and still so evidently absent in so many corners of our society. If political activity prospers when identities are secure, genuine *political* literacy emerges when this secure identity is not simply a given but is challenged, negotiated, mediated and reaffirmed through political debate.

And it is here that the citizenship curriculum – and citizenship education more broadly – has a key role: education *for* citizenship involves the interaction of identities in the classroom, in the school council and in the community project, but does so in a context in which learners gain access to the knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions of effective citizenship as they work through the thorny, but ultimately liberating, processes of socialisation and identity formation.

Whether there is such a thing as a *current* British identity – or, indeed, a shared cause – around which Britons of every colour and culture can cohere remains, of course, a moot point; our diverse and fluid schools and neighbourhoods might suggest not. But that there are myriad overlapping and connecting cultural identities in Britain (rather than a single, definable cultural identity) is beyond doubt. On these multiple identities – evident in so many classrooms – the citizenship curriculum must build; for it is through the process of *doing* citizenship that these often very different identities are connected, confirmed and reconstructed. Moreover, it is from this process, an exercise in society building, that commonalities will derive: a renewed and shared British identity for the future – strongly historically informed, in particular by the history of these islands, but definitely not lost in somebody else's yesteryear.

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Chapter 9

Faith and nation

Madeleine Bunting, Journalist and Author

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Faith and nation

Ten years ago, a series of essays on Britishness would not have included this chapter, would not have regarded that a consideration of faith had much of a contribution to make to the question of national identity. No matter that such an omission would have required a kind of wilful blindness to British history, it would have reflected a dominant perspective that disregarded religion – its present manifestations and its historical and cultural legacy – in Western society. It would have reflected the view that secularisation was an inevitable (and beneficial) historical process as part of modernisation.

But religion has re-emerged in the national conversation in recent years. The secularisation thesis has been challenged by the emergence of a faith-based identity among the British Muslim population and the revival of vigorous faith-based political identities in many areas of the globe. Models of secularisation were often based on the assumption that economic prosperity and education weakened faith identity; but this was challenged by the development of a second generation of British-born Muslims who found their faith identity more important than the ethnic identities that their parents had used as new migrants to the UK in the 1960s and 1970s. This British Muslim identity is often clearly expressed even by the socially mobile and educated section of the community. To complicate matters further for secular liberal opinion, many of this new wave of British Muslim politics used the language of identity politics – not dissimilar from feminists and gay activists – to advance their cause.

What does secularism mean?

After a generation of near total absence, British Muslims have put faith back into the political conversation, and this has prompted a wide-ranging debate about the proper relationship between faith and politics – and indeed the beginnings of a real discussion about what secularism really means: does it mean the complete exclusion of all religious sentiment from political life? Or are there occasions when cherished freedoms such as that of free speech need to be circumscribed by the freedoms accorded to religious beliefs? These are questions that have prompted passionate debate, revealing an anxiety to protect the undoubted achievements of post-war secularisation in the UK: a draining of the poison of sectarianism and greater tolerance, and respect for non-Christian faiths, to mention just two.

So British Muslims have inadvertently stumbled into an old minefield where much violent British history lies buried. The result is that too often the protagonists in the UK debate

about faith and secularism in political life are fighting different and much older battles. For example, the assertion of a Muslim faith identity is steeped in the politics of anti-colonialism, while expressions of secularism are rooted in the struggles against the entrenched and privileged power of the Christian church. No wonder the protagonists end up firing shots over the top of each other's heads, with little mutual comprehension.

But setting aside the frustrations of this encounter, this revival of the debate around faith and politics has two main consequences. The first is that it acts as a can opener on the whole question of British national identity, exposing the vital interrelationship between religion and nationalism, between these two classic types of collective faith, each with its rituals and symbols. The second is that the debate about Britishness is being seen through the prism of global jihadi terrorism, so that faith and national identity are frequently characterised in the form of a conflict of loyalty, of competing identities: are you British or Muslim?

What is disturbing and surprising is that such a question makes explicit the notion that despite a generation of secularisation, Britishness has a religious definition and it doesn't include Islam. One can see the same process of a re-emergence of religious identity in another context, in the European Union, where the proposed membership of Turkey has prompted President Chirac, and more obviously the Vatican, to talk of a common Christian heritage as the basis of the EU.

In fact, faith and nation have been interlinked in Britain for centuries. By breaking away from a transnational religious faith in the Reformation, and setting up established national churches in England, Scotland and Wales, Britain institutionally linked faith and nation in a significantly different way from the rest of Europe. Linda Colley, in her book *Britons*, highlights the crucial role of British Protestantism against a Catholic Europe in the forging of national identity in the 18th century.

One only has to listen to the Sunday prayers for the Queen and her ministers recited in every Anglican and Church of Scotland parish church in England and Scotland, or take a look at the coronation service, to grasp how faith and nation have been welded together. For much of its history, the Church of England has been a vital constituent part of English national identity; similarly, the Church of Scotland, which played a major role in the campaign for devolution, has been integral to Scottish identity. Established churches (with the exception of Wales, where the church was disestablished in 1911) have been engines of patriotic commitment, as well as providing the stage for its monuments and memorials

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to national greatness and self-sacrifice.

The Church of England provided much of the emotional and ritualistic architecture for an English national identity, providing different myths in different historical periods for Providence's generous blessings on God's Englishmen and for Jerusalem "builded here on England's green and pleasant land". One only has to remember that the national anthem is still, even for a deeply secular country, all about God saving the Queen.

The Church provided a focus – both at local and national level – for the cultivation of nationalism, inculcating into generations of Sunday school pupils how Christianity made you patriotic and vice versa. Above all, the churches elevated the monarchy as the linchpin of this relationship and this British multinationalism of different national identities: the monarch imbued with God's divine grace to rule the United Kingdom and head the church. This produced a particular British expression of nationalism – the monarchy – which has proved remarkably resilient in comparison with its European counterparts over the last century and a half.

The tight interlinking of church, nation and monarchy has meant that the fortunes of the three rise and fall together, to a great extent. In discussions about the fragmentation of national identity, plenty of attention has rightly been focused on globalisation, the compromising of sovereignty, and movement of information and people as the primary causes, but the impact of the precipitous decline of church attendance warrants more recognition.

Decline of the Church left a hole

Nationalism and patriotism are about belief, aspirations and commitment, and the decline of Christianity in the UK knocked one of the central pillars supporting these characteristics. The collapse in religious belief hollowed out the edifice of British national identity, leaving little but heritage – Beefeaters, cups of tea and double-decker buses – and the tribalism of football teams. It removed the moral imperative of collective commitment to the common good.

Some of this hollowing out was masked initially by the present Queen, who attempted to use the resilience of the British monarchy to maintain the structure of faith and national identity. Reviewing her Christmas speeches, the extent to which she conveys an explicitly Christian message of self-sacrifice and the service of others, and indeed of the country, is extraordinary. Serving in the armed forces, serving others: patriotism, public service are all

part of the same ethic, an expression of the Christian commandment to love thy neighbour as thyself.

Her efforts are closely pinned around her own person, and have been compromised by the cult of celebrity and the catastrophic efforts of her children to establish strong families to continue her model of Christian familial piety. It is hard to see therefore how her aspirations to an ethical nationalism could survive her death. But it is a measure of her success that despite all the setbacks, the most powerful rallying figure of national identity is, in many parts of Britain, still the person of the Queen, however unpopular other members of her family may be.

However, there has been a singular and striking legacy of Britain's resilient intertwining of God, monarch and country. It has been a major contributor to what Colley describes as Britain's "weak culture of citizenship". The very resilience of this historical edifice of belief, identity and faith has given little space for alternative narratives of citizenship, the common good and the faiths (either religious or secular political) they might generate. It entrenched privilege, deference and an elite's sense of entitlement. It effectively hobbled any competing narratives, driving them either to the margins or, through its power of patronage, diverting the energies of those who might describe those narratives.

This last is well illustrated by that well-charted path of those from religious traditions outside Anglicanism finding their way into the Church as part of their path of upward social mobility, and once there becoming ardent campaigners for the establishment's definition of nationalism – both Margaret Thatcher and Benjamin Disraeli (Methodist-born and Jewish-born respectively) and their formulations of popular (and nationalistic) Conservatism are cases par excellence. It is no accident that the roots of secular liberal and progressive politics lie largely outside the Church of England (remember the "Tories at prayer" adage), in non-conformist, dissenting traditions and those such as Methodism.

The strength of this reinforcing relationship of faiths, both religious and national, through the established church is part of the explanation of why the emergence of a British Muslim identity has proved so challenging. This new identity brings to the surface what had been implicit – namely, that Britain has never had a powerful secular civic nationalism. Such possibilities were forced to the margins of a patriotism conceived entirely in terms of an (Anglican) God and country.

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So how to revive Britishness?

Given this historical legacy, there are three ways of renewing British national identity: the first is to start developing now a secular nationalism comparable to the versions enjoyed by America or France. The second is to allow space for communal identities to emerge within a looser mosaic of national belonging, and the third option is a combination of the two. This last has been roughly the strategy of the British government in recent years, as it attempts to implement elements of a secular nationalism while continuing to accommodate multiculturalism's plurality of communal identities. In the balance between these three approaches, I would put the emphasis on the second as being ultimately more effective at engendering collective commitment to the common good – the kind of ethical nationalism that is the only legitimate end purpose of the renewal of Britishness.

Let me explain my reasons for this emphasis, before turning to some of the undoubted weaknesses of this communal approach. Identities are dynamic, and any political response has to be cognisant of that constant dynamism to have any resonance; the political leadership, in other words, will only work when it is crystallising and articulating already emerging sentiments. Recent thinking from Labour rightly identify that national identity is "created not discovered", as John Denham puts it, but it too often gives the impression that the sole "creators" are a political elite. But we are all creators in a spontaneous sentiment, often latent but prompted into expression by a football match or a royal anniversary; it is shaped by myriad influences and interactions at every level, from the most local to national soap operas and *Big Brother*.

Community identities can be based around faith or geography or a combination of the two; talk to young Muslims in Bradford, and you will find that their commitment and allegiance to Yorkshire, Mirpur and their faith all jostle together in constantly shifting orders of importance. When they go on holiday to Spain, their sense of national identity becomes prominent. Religious traditions can be crucial in developing concepts of solidarity and the common good, from which civic identities around a city or a nation can draw deeply; Islam in the UK is often – though rarely acknowledged as such – a powerful stimulus to forms of integration such as political participation. This local, emotional identification is the raw material of "thick" moralities that inspire mutual commitment and belonging, argues US theorist Michael Walzer.

Secular concepts of citizenship rarely inspire the kind of emotional commitment that geography or faith can provide; in Walzer's terminology, citizenship and the liberal universal human rights discourse are "thin" moralities. While clearly admirable, they are

based on reasoning that inspires comprehension and loyalty only among an elite. What they cannot provide is the emotional content for the vast majority that underpins a secure identity, solidarity and commitment.

A "thin morality" cannot provide a compelling focus as globalisation – migration and dilution of distinctive local and national cultural identities with a homogenous, impersonal cosmopolitanism – puts pressure on all identities. Nor can "thin morality" withstand the process by which economic growth profoundly disrupts mechanisms of social solidarity of every kind.

That must prompt considerable scepticism that an agreed, compelling national narrative based on abstract values – thin morality – is possible right now. Does the articulation of "British values", such as tolerance or fair play, have resonance in public debate right now? I am sceptical. Such national narratives are forged at points of national crisis such as war and revolution, not at a time of peaceful economic growth and in competition with the steady hum of individualistic consumerism.

Remember politicians' limitations

So first and foremost, I would suggest that this is a subject that demands a political modesty. The politician is most effective intervening at key moments – Ken Livingstone's comments to Londoners after 7 July 2005, even Tony Blair's "the people's princess" in August 1997 – rather than sketching out grand visions. The politician can help articulate local identities at a city or regional level, such as Livingstone's "We are Londoners" campaign or Liverpool's bid to transform its story of identity during 2008's City of Culture experience. The most obtuse political mistake would be to invoke the nation in order to "suppress the smaller institutions that give us a sense of ourselves" as David Cameron's special adviser, Danny Kruger, puts it in a recent edition of *Prospect*.

But the emphasis on recognising and bolstering communal identities – of provincial cities, of regions, of faiths – is always exposed to the danger of fragmentation and promoting the proverbial "parallel lives". It requires constant and vigilant effort to build bridges between communities, to foster empathy and understanding. A huge amount of anxiety hangs over this debate, but there is nothing new about living "parallel lives" – after all, the middle and working classes have done just that for many generations.

Many religious minorities have consciously tried to create many characteristics of parallel societies; for example, Catholics and Jews. They are both useful historical analogies for the

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situation now faced by British Muslims. Both have been characterised by a communal self-absorption (building their own schools, welfare societies, social networks in deliberate parallel societies) as well as by a cautious pragmatism, discreet transnational allegiances and heavy protestations of commitment to the UK.

The reception Catholic and Jewish religious minorities have experienced has been a mixture of distaste (even on-going discrimination) and accommodation. A Yorkshireman told me that his mother had told him that he could marry a black woman, a Chinese woman, but never a Catholic. It is a residue of the deep distrust that has persisted into the 21st century; we are yet to have a Catholic or a Jewish Prime Minister. These are not easy accommodations, yet the state funds thousands of Catholic and hundreds of Jewish schools. Crucially, both have achieved national variants of the faith – English Catholicism is markedly different from either its largely Irish origins or its European counterparts, and Anglo-Jewry is similarly different from American Jewry.

The emergence of British Islam

This last prompts one of the most contested debates within the British Muslim community: is there such a thing as a British Islam, and, if so, what does it look like? The fierce refusal to consider such a thing by one vocal section of the Muslim population is countered by the seemingly unstoppable development of British Islam. To describe just some of its emerging characteristics: it has strong global links to the Indian subcontinent and sympathies in the Middle Eastern conflicts, but it is absorbing increasingly large amounts of the Western liberal tradition of human rights (much of which resonates with Islamic teaching anyway), as well as the manners of British political culture and debate. It is media-savvy and as absorbed in consumer culture as are non-Muslims, but keenly anxious to maintain a quality of relationship and commitment within the family.

The real question is not whether a British Islam will emerge – it is doing so – but whether it can gain the respect that is essential if it is not to become defensive and paranoid. Communal identities are not developed in isolation; they are shaped by the environment they find themselves in. Whether British Muslims are to develop a secure, confident identity and place in this country depends not just on their own resources, but on the reception and encouragement of the wider community. As Charles Taylor argues, public recognition is crucial to reflect back to the community its sense of self and stabilise its identity.

The greatest challenge in the next decade is likely to be over this issue of public

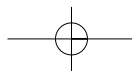
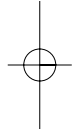
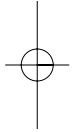
recognition. An intense media focus on jihadi violence is reinforcing prejudice and ignorance; if that is the only recognition awarded to British Muslims, their sense of identity will be destabilised, with all the obvious consequences in terms of alienation and violence, both criminal and terrorist.

What British Muslims increasingly find themselves having to defend is the very idea of a community identity. They can rightly point to the paradox that while some communal identities are regarded as immensely positive, such as those around a city, those around a faith are regarded with suspicion, particularly by those on the secular left. Yet faith can be an enormous resource for a minority in building similar qualities to those recognised in a provincial city identity – dignity, pride, a sense of self-worth and engagement. What the secular left often overlooks is how they take for granted their own easy access to these forms of cultural capital.

It is out of confident communal identities that comfortably acknowledge their Britishness that nationalism is built. How that translates into policy in specific local contexts is infinitely varied, which is why much more work needs to be done – and the government has been right to set up a commission on integration and cohesion – on best practice of how to foster bridging identities. One particularly important dimension is areas where racism and far right politics have thrived; these are often on the peripheries of major cities (Keighley is a good example) where old identities have crumbled and political inertia or indifference has failed to generate new local identities, leaving a vacuum. It is a revival of Keighley's local identity, not nationalism, that offers the best hope of thwarting racism.

The model I have sketched out allows for the multiplicity of human identities – of place, of faith, of gender, of ethnicity – and how they fit into a wider pattern of national belonging. The outcome is not tidy or uniform, and it leads to different discourses of entitlement jostling together, sometimes in competition; but without being complacent, there are reasons to be cheerful that a British pragmatism is facilitating some bold innovations – a British Islam for example, or London, the most diverse city in human history. And from these emerge millions of utterly ordinary, but inspirational experiences of mutual commitment.

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Endnote

Towards a progressive British citizenship?

Nick Johnson, Director of Policy and Public Sector at the Commission for Racial Equality

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Towards a progressive British citizenship?

This collection of essays presents a case for why Britishness matters intensely at the start of the 21st century. It also offers some suggestions as to what it can mean in policy and practical terms. There are some disagreements over emphasis and what that practical application might be, but there is a strong consensus that in a rapidly changing and ever more heterogeneous world, we need to develop better ways of generating a feeling of belonging among our citizens.

Many of the essays make the case for why Britishness needs to be seen as an essential part of any progressive consensus. In part, this is due to our history as a nation of immigration and our openness to diversity. Britain is as much, if not more so, a product of outside influences and how we have embraced them as of anything intrinsic to these islands. However, Britishness is also important in setting out a vision for how our society can work together today. The answer is firmly entrenched in two of the founding traditions of the Labour movement – solidarity and mutuality. Many contributors talk of the need to rebuild the fabric of our community, both national and local, and stress mutual responsibility and good citizenship.

Britishness must also be seen as not a threatening identity. It has always existed alongside other identities, both national and religious. Indeed, that is a source of strength that other nations may not share as we face an increasing multiplicity of identities and group loyalties. In stressing the importance of Britishness, we are not asking anyone to give up other loyalties or identities. We may, though, be asking for them to change their behaviour, and should not be afraid of doing so. Similarly, the ways in which people lived their lives 50 years ago will need to change. The process of change and the negotiation, tolerance and understanding involved are more important aspects of Britishness than either the end result or what went before.

Any progressive agenda should imply that citizens have a political as well as a consumerist relationship with the state; that underlying the social values of citizens who are committed to the common good is a collective interest in the aims and objectives of policies that override the self-interest of service users. We must also stress the relationship between citizens, and much work needs to be done to rebuild social capital and civic engagement.

These values, however, will not be evident in a society where life chances are dependent

on individual wealth and ability. Equality must be seen as a fundamental foundation stone for notions of Britishness.

This calls for national action and governmental leadership. Britishness can provide a framework for an integrated society that is diverse but still unified, and which recognises both the individual and the collective. It is a framework through which we can perhaps address some of the difficult issues with which we wrestle, including immigration, the role of faith in public life and citizenship. That is why progressives should embrace the debate over Britishness and use it as a way to define what we all share.

In taking forward notions of British citizenship, we need to look both at uniting values and at common and shared behaviours. As well as stressing what rights citizenship entitles someone to, we must equally stress the duties and responsibilities that the individual has to fellow citizens. Citizenship should describe the relationship between individuals as much as between an individual and the state.

This is not about retreating to a vision of what society looked like a century or even a decade ago, but about building a new vision founded on common values. We need to create a shared sense of identity that encourages solidarity and helps to develop a renewed sense of belonging. People have more complex identities and relationships, ranging across diasporas and countries. The way we think of identity must change as situations cause people to define themselves in ever more diverse ways. Britishness does not need to be dominant or even a domineering identity, but it must be a significant part of everyone's identity and a common facet that we all can share. It is a key component in developing greater ties that can bind society together.

This collection also argues that creating a national philosophical framework is important, but it is not enough. We must also concentrate on practical policies at the local level. By encouraging the growth of bridging social capital and a local sense of belonging, we can bring the community together to create a culture of respect, restore neighbourliness and build good relations. We need to discover those sites, spheres and agents that encourage positive interaction and help us to restore community. We need to build on citizenship education but also invest in youth groups, sport and cultural projects that bring people together.

Britishness does matter, but we need to make it relevant to our citizens as well as our politicians. It is important to have a national story that acknowledges our evolution

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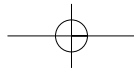
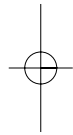
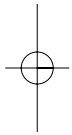
and our diversity. Britishness can be a way of accommodating change and reasserting commonalities among all who live on these islands. But it must also be a very local and practical concept. If it is about sharing space, that applies as much to the town centre or even the workplace as to the nation. In that respect, we should also be promoting greater local belonging and community interaction.

For Britishness to succeed we must seek common, equal citizenship. There must be general agreement on a set of values based on justice, human rights and social responsibility, and a sense of common belonging so that all groups feel at home. All people must be considered of equal value and deserving of equal respect, and individuals must have the opportunity to voice their opinion on issues that affect them.

Libertarians fear the submerging of diverse outlooks into a single, monolithic culture under the pretext of "shared values". In fact, the democratic practice of citizenship, the commitment to mutuality and solidarity and the acceptance of rights and duties can provide the common beliefs that will bind communities together across a diversity of cultures.

Perhaps, therefore, we should be talking of *British citizenship*. It is uniquely British as it has evolved here and, though some values may be universal, they have resonance and implications that are specific. But it is about how we relate to one another within that framework that is important. Both national and local, abstract and practical, Britishness can be a way for us to navigate the path of change at the start of the 21st century.

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