

Accentuating Multicultural Britishness

An Open or Closed Activity?

Nasar Meer, University of Edinburgh

Tariq Modood, University of Bristol

In this chapter, we explore some of the political discourse around contemporary debates about Britishness and the alleged “retreat” of multiculturalism. Although new discourses of Britishness have accompanied new policies prioritizing types of unity, neither of these have completely overridden the recognition of “difference” and anti-discrimination that previously comprised multiculturalism at both the local and national levels. On the contrary, although a sense of plural Britishness owes something to the UK’s multinational character, it undeniably also reflects the political integration and contestations of postwar Commonwealth migrants and their descendants. While the story of Commonwealth nonwhite immigration to Britain is one of incremental immigration controls, it is also a story about anti-racism and multiculturalism guiding the redefinition of what it means to be a “British” citizen.

Some years ago we argued that contemporary revisions of British multiculturalism could be understood as evidence of a “civic re-balancing.”¹ That reading was in marked contrast to an emerging thesis, proposed by a number of commentators, which pointed to a “post-multicultural” era, or at least contained the view that we were witnessing a “retreat” of multiculturalism.² We agreed (and still do) that the *term* had become politically damaged, but we concluded that the policies and discourses that make up the strands of British multiculturalism remained in place, even though they have been contested and joined by others. We sought to show that there are a number of intellectual and political developments (sometimes competing, sometimes complementary) that have been shaping British multiculturalism over the medium to long term, in which current changes need to be located and interpreted. One implication being that it is a mistake to view British multiculturalism as

a completed or closed project, not least because the identities it seeks to take account of are dynamic, even when they are coherent, and a *political* multiculturalism would thus always need to be open to renewal—as indeed it has been.

Our argument was that it is short-sighted to view the elevation of previously perhaps underemphasized features of national identity as an abandonment of British multiculturalism. Such developments need no more lead to the abandonment of British multiculturalism than would lead to the abandonment of other public policy approaches concerned with promoting equality of access, participation, and public recognition, such as gender mainstreaming and the disability rights agenda. On the contrary, in the case of a multiculturalism sensitive to ethnic, racial, and religious differences, the pursuit of an inclusive national identity appeared to reconcile itself to what had earlier been promoted (perhaps to the disappointment and frustration of critics of multiculturalism). For example, even as he and other Conservatives spoke derisively of multiculturalism, the leading right-wing Cabinet Minister Michael Gove MP also stated “Britishness is about a mongrel identity.”³ Similarly, Pauline Neville-Jones, a figure regarded as on the right of the Conservative Party, led a review group that argued: “We need to rebuild Britishness in ways which . . . allow us to understand the contributions which all traditions, whether primarily ethnic or national, have made and are making to our collective identity.”⁴ Indeed, a Leverhulme project that interviewed cabinet ministers and shadow cabinet ministers in 2007/08 did not find a uniformity of views on this matter but instead considerable cross-party agreement that British national identity had to be opened up to include minorities, and that politicians and the state had a role to play in this process.⁵

Even while emphasizing that integration was something that had to be worked on, politicians of all hues made glowing references to the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics and the success of Team GB, including the Somalia-born Mo Farah and the mixed race Jessica Ennis. Indeed, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in London in July 2012 was an excellent expression of a multicultural Britishness that New Labour tried to articulate without ever quite succeeding. Its positive reception in the British media—including the same papers that had lambasted the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB) some years earlier—shows how far we have advanced.⁶ An Australian political theorist opined that the Britain displayed at the Olympics meant that many countries were now “looking to Britain as an example of a dynamic multicultural society united by a generous patriotism.”⁷ The left-wing journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a member of the CMEB, who returned her MBE as a protest against the Iraq War, wrote: “These two weeks have been a watershed of true significance. There has been a visceral reaction among black and Asian Britons to what we have seen. For some, it has been perhaps the first time they have really felt a part of this country. For others, the promise of tolerance and integration has come true.”⁸

Since the publication of “The Multicultural State We’re In” in 2009, which covered the period since the mid-1960s in broad terms and the New Labour governments in detail, public policy developments have continued apace. There has not yet, however, been much peer-reviewed analysis of the Conservative-Liberal coalition (2010–15) or the subsequent Conservative majority government (2015–).⁹ In this chapter, we thus begin by reminding ourselves of the core features of British multiculturalism as we have understood it, before turning to the present government’s strategy, which is deemed by some to be forging a new path. Current multicultural strategy is allied (indeed twinned) with significant changes in both immigration/settlement policies and approaches to anti-terrorism; the former are widely touted as being more restrictive and perhaps even leading to something like a British guest worker model, and the latter identifies “integration” as one of the primary objectives of counter-radicalism.¹⁰

We should not, however, ignore the potential significance of centrifugal tendencies for questions of “integration” in Britain that have become increasingly prominent since the publication of our 2009 article. These include the galvanized movement for the “break up of Britain” evident in the 45 percent of the electorate that voted in favor of Scottish independence; the potential fracturing of the European project and the prospect of splintering states therein (or formal tiering of membership); and the rise of popular English nationalisms, whether in relatively benign, though ultraconservative, forms like the English Democrats, or more menacing articulations of the Far Right that explicitly trade on an anti-Muslim rather than an anti-minority platform such as the English Defence League.¹¹

CONTEXTUALIZING THE TERRAIN

While multiculturalism in Britain had for some time been perceived as creaking under the weight of “culturally unreasonable or theologically alien [Muslim] demands,” there was a noticeable increase in governmental and non-right-wing criticism of multiculturalism after urban riots in the north of England in 2001.¹² By 2004, a swathe of publications and institutions of the center and/or liberal left—including *Prospect*, the *Observer*, the *Guardian*, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Open Democracy, Channel 4, and the British Council—had held seminars or produced special publications with titles like “Is Multiculturalism Dead?” With a chorus of commentators declaring that multiculturalism had been killed by the London bombings of 7/7,¹³ it is therefore not surprising that it is commonplace to characterize British multiculturalism as being “in retreat.”¹⁴

In querying the validity of this assessment, we distinguish at the outset between those seeking to point to a normative or descriptive tendency and others who have made little attempt to disguise their political motives in rejecting Britain’s multiculturalism. In the latter camp, we could include, on the center left, the influential commentator David Goodhart, who evidently sympathizes with the position of

those he perhaps unfairly calls “Burkeans” that “we feel more comfortable with, and are readier to share with and sacrifice for, those with whom we have shared histories and similar values. To put it bluntly—most of us prefer our own kind.”¹⁵ We could also include Trevor Phillips, previously chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and its successor, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), who stated that Britain should “kill off multiculturalism,” because it “suggests separateness.”¹⁶ While in opposition David Cameron characterized British multiculturalism as a “barrier” that divided British society,¹⁷ and subsequently as Prime Minister argued that “the doctrine of ‘state of multiculturalism’ has encouraged culturally different people to live apart from one another and apart from the mainstream.”¹⁸ Perhaps seeking to stake out a British *Leitkultur* (lead culture), Cameron also complained that multiculturalism led to the minimization of Christianity as a guiding public ethos, allowing “segregated communities to behave in ways that run completely counter to our values and has not contained that extremism but allowed it to grow and prosper.”¹⁹

While a much stronger and vitriolic critique is not unusual from a center right in Britain that has historically lamented and contested governmental interventions recognizing the diversity of minority populations,²⁰ opposition to the recognition and support of minority cultural practices in Britain has undoubtedly had a qualitatively greater impact since it was joined by “the pluralistic center-left [and] articulated by people who previously rejected polarizing models of race and class and were sympathetic to the ‘rainbow,’ coalitional politics of identity.”²¹

One outcome for the British approach is that the inclusion of ethnic minorities is now increasingly premised upon greater degrees of qualification. This was epitomized by the introduction of citizenship tests, the swearing of oaths during citizenship ceremonies and language proficiency requirements for new migrants, as well as repeated calls for an unambiguous disavowal of “radicalism” or “extremism” from Muslims in particular. Writing in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 2004, Christian Joppke interpreted these changes as evidence of a “retreat” from multiculturalism and a “turn to civic integration” that is “most visible in Britain and The Netherlands, the two societies in Europe . . . that had so far been most committed to official multiculturalism.”²² Our argument was that Joppke assumes that “civic integration” and “multiculturalism” constitute a dichotomy or a zero-sum equation, and thus ignores the extent to which they could just as plausibly be synthesized in a potential outgrowth of one another. For if it is the case that Britain is engaged in a “retreat” from multiculturalism, heralding a victory for liberal or republican universalism, would it not follow that, as Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka point out, it must “have rejected the claims of substate national groups and indigenous peoples *as well as* immigrants. After all, the claims of national groups and indigenous peoples typically involve a much more dramatic insertion of ethnocultural diversity into the public sphere, and more dramatic degrees of differentiated citizenship [emphasis in original].”²³

Since this does not appear to be the case in Britain at least, with quite the opposite in fact seeming to be true, one explanation of the “widely divergent assessments of the short history and potential future of multiculturalism” pertains to the meaning and usage of the term itself. Indeed, this “highly contested and chameleon-like neologism whose colours change to suit the complexion of local conditions” seems to have a “chameleon” quality that is adopted differently in support of different projects.²⁴ For example, while some intellectuals, commentators, and politicians of differing persuasions have in recent years united in their rejection of post-immigration multiculturalism—our concern here—their critiques have simultaneously revealed the diverging ways in which multiculturalism in Britain has been conceived.

This chapter argues that there are *at least* three discernible contemporary positions: (1) an integration and social cohesion perspective that seeks to include minorities through a process of greater assimilation to majority norms and customs; (2) an alternative, explicitly secular “multiculture” or “conviviality” approach that welcomes the “fact” of difference, and stresses lifestyle- and consumption-based behavioral identities that are anti-essentialist in orientation, and which invalidate “group” identities; and (3) a political multiculturalism that can to some extent incorporate the priorities of either or both of these positions, while also inclusive of “groupings,” not least subjectively conceived ethno-religious minority groupings.²⁵

Of these three positions, it appears that the latter had been taking a cumulative and progressive institutional form since the early 1990s, mainly by developing certain racial equality discourses and policies beyond their starting points in a response to minority ethnic and religious assertiveness.²⁶ This has taken legal form in, for example, the outlawing of religious discrimination and the incitement to religious hatred, and an educational form in the inclusion in England of some non-Christian, non-Jewish faith schools within public sector maintained by local authorities.²⁷ It is *this* multiculturalism that has been the principal target of recent critiques from across the political spectrum. We argue, however, that rather than having been defeated, the fate of this peculiarly British multiculturalism currently remains undecided and might equally be characterized as subject to a “re-balancing” rather than a wholesale “retreat.” One way to begin to explore the plausibility of this argument is to look at the most robust, coherent public policy advocacy of multiculturalism that Britain has known.

THE MULTICULTURAL MOMENT?

In the course of ushering in an era “after multiculturalism,” Yasmin Alibhai-Brown has argued that “all societies and communities need to take stock periodically to assess whether existing cultural and political edifices are keeping up with the people and the evolving habitat.”²⁸ Just such an exercise was the production of a report on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* by the Commission on the Future of

Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB). This report, sponsored by the Runnymede Trust and chaired by the political philosopher Bhikhu Parekh,²⁹ made over 140 policy recommendations to help Britain take advantage of “its rich diversity” and realize its full potential as “a confident and vibrant multicultural society.”³⁰ It strongly endorsed both the possibility *and* desirability of forging a meta-membership of “Britishness” under which diversity could be sustained. To this end, its recommendations not only sought to prevent discrimination or overcome its effects, but simultaneously championed an approach that could move *beyond* conceptions of formal equality by recognizing the substantive elements of “real differences of experience, background and perception.”³¹ For example, the CMEB advocated a systematic type of ethnic monitoring that would “go beyond racism and culture blind strategies” and could be implemented across public institutions in order to promote an awareness of cultural diversity in general, and unwitting discrimination in particular.³² This “multicultural moment” following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry was when the New Labour government declared its commitment to creating a country where “every colour is a good colour,” “everyone is treated according to their needs and rights,” and “racial diversity is celebrated.”³³ As then Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted:

“This nation has been formed by a particularly rich complex of experiences.... How can we separate out the Celtic, the Roman, the Saxon, the Norman, the Huguenot, the Jewish, the Asian and the Caribbean and all the other nations [*sic*] that have come and settled here? Why should we want to? It is precisely this rich mix that has made all of us what we are today.”³⁴

This was not only a time of reflection on the presence of institutional racism alongside Britain’s ethnic diversity, however, but a period in which the policy recognition of Britain’s historical multinational diversity was being concretized by devolution in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It was not unreasonable, then, that post-migrant ethnic minorities too were seeking recognition of particularities arising from previously demeaned identities; not as self-governance, but through an endorsement of the pluralizing of the mainstream with their own distinctive differences derived from ethnicity, religion, or culture. This high-water mark of British multiculturalism was in truth the consequence the cumulative political movement following the migrations of the parents and grandparents of many of Britain’s post-immigrant ethnic minorities, who had exercised their Commonwealth citizenship by moving to its metropole from South Asia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. The CMEB recommended that the government formally declare Britain “a multicultural society,” hoping that this would invalidate the social and political inequalities derived from minority cultural differences.³⁵

That the report was subject to an unrelenting critique from the Right, not least in the national media, has been well documented elsewhere.³⁶ What is worth noting here, however, is the extent to which it also incurred the wrath of some prominent liberals who considered its approach a grave contravention of universalistic

principles, not least those recommendations that promoted diversity as a means to facilitate equality.³⁷ Lord Anthony Lester, one of the founders of the Runnymede Trust and a key architect of Britain's race-equality legislation, said of the report that "much of the more theoretical sections is written entirely from the perspective of victims, with little to challenge attitudes and practices prevalent among some minorities and their leaders that are difficult to reconcile with the ideals of a liberal-democratic society based upon the rule of law."³⁸ Such a view minimizes, however, both a key problem identified by the CMEB—the role of differences that serve as an obstacle to political equality in the public sphere—and substantive elements of the British approach that has intertwined, albeit inconsistently, agendas relating to equality and diversity.³⁹

A MOVE TO NATIONAL COHESION

One of the components of diversity that we have in mind has developed a prominence over a longer duration and increasingly in the shadow of a policy trajectory concerning naturalization and civic unity. For example, the 1997–98 government-sponsored inquiry into citizenship education chaired by Sir Bernard Crick explicitly avoided the relationship between citizenship and nationality: "We're not dealing with nationality, we're dealing with a skill, a knowledge, an attitude for citizenship," Crick insisted.⁴⁰ This understanding of citizenship as mainly about delivering the knowledge and skills to pupils so as to promote active participation has shifted significantly over time.⁴¹ Whereas citizenship and nationality were clearly distinguished by the original Qualification Curriculum Advisory Commission (QCA), they were explicitly juxtaposed in the domain of naturalization following Crick's "migration" from the Department of Education to the Home Office after the 1998 report.⁴²

The Home Office Advisory Group, also chaired by Crick, was set up by Home Secretary David Blunkett to develop proposals for language and citizenship education for immigrants applying for naturalization as British citizens. The Advisory Group's report, published in September 2003, demonstrates the ways in which the "failed integration hypothesis" of the various community cohesion reports/strategies has informed the citizenship strategies for "new" migrants to the United Kingdom.⁴³ For example, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) explicitly introduced a test for residents seeking British citizenship (implemented in 2005), and those immigrants applying for "indefinite leave to remain" in the UK (effectively implemented since April 2, 2007). Applicants must show "a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic" and also "a sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom" through passing the test.⁴⁴ If applicants do not have sufficient knowledge of English, they should attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and citizenship classes. Some categories can get free tuition, but in principle applicants have to pay for the classes, and also for the test itself.

Overall, the focus of David Blunkett's citizenship strategy was less on the deliberative quality of identities, forged (and modified) in interaction with others, than on a rather more "practical" intervention, in which basic skills (English language proficiency and a superficial "knowledge of life in the UK") become the means whereby civic responsibilities can be taken up. The ability to speak English thus formed the bedrock of the dialogic, participatory, and active citizenship elements advocated by Blunkett's citizenship/integration discourse. The provision of English-language training for new and established migrants was described in the *Strength in Diversity* consultation document as a means of providing "practical support" that would "overcome the barriers to integration" that might face those newly arrived in Britain.

This relationship between English-language skills and the idea of a culture of active citizenship resurfaced as being central to the findings of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion (CICC) in both its interim statement and final report published in 2007.⁴⁷ In the latter, English-language proficiency is linked with enhancing participation in civic culture in new and established migrant groups. The emphasis on English-language proficiency and increasing participation and dialogue between communities found in the Cattle-Blunkett civic assimilationist discourse (and to a certain extent in the CICC's recommendations) is, however, relegated to the category of "taken for granted skills" new migrants are expected to possess. As Prime Minister Gordon Brown wanted more from immigrants than just the ability to speak English and to have knowledge of "life in the UK," he wants would-be citizens to "become British" at a deeper level.⁴⁸

It is telling, however, that the government insisted that "it would be unfair for migrants to have to answer questions on British history that many British people would have difficulties with." Home Office explanatory documents stress that the tests aim at "integration," but without this meaning "complete assimilation."⁴⁹ What this illustrates are the strong emphases on the experience of living in Britain rather than an attempt to define Britishness per se. A critical interpretation of these initiatives is offered by Derek McGhee who is worth quoting at length:

The "integration" of "new" migrant communities in asylum and immigration policy, as well as the desegregation of "established" migrant communities in community cohesion discourses, were to be achieved through a common policy solution: the establishment of an inclusive sense of common citizenship. In turn, in asylum and immigration policy, the emphasis in the process of attaining British citizenship began to have a distinct "community cohesion" flavor, especially in its emphasis on the "new citizenship pedagogy," namely, on building the capacity in "new citizens" for effective engagement and "active citizenship." This was to be achieved by transforming naturalization from a bureaucratic process into "an act of commitment to Britain and an important step in the process of achieving integration into

our society.” The acquisition of the English language and knowledge of “British life” were presented as key to successful integration of “new” migrants, as, without them, according to the Home Office, migrant communities were ill-equipped to take an active role in society.⁴⁶

It is difficult not to recognize this as a particularly critical reading, however, given the kinds of measures introduced and the extent to which they retain strong commitments to anti-discrimination and the recognition of difference within them. For example, in the Home Office’s *Strength in Diversity*, the government maintains that: “Civil renewal is at the heart of the Government’s vision of life in our 21st century communities. It aims to reconnect citizens with the public realm by empowering them to influence the development of solutions to problems affecting them. It is vital that barriers to participation—from lack of confidence and capacity to express one’s views to prejudices which lead to exclusion—are tackled so that the aspiration for wider engagement can be translated into reality.”⁴⁹

This perhaps also illustrates two further continuities. The first concerns the utilization of notions of social capital within stipulations of civic renewal, as elaborated at the beginning, and the second is what has been termed the “Janus face” of British race-relations traditions (progressive to insiders but regressive to outsiders). This is perhaps symbolically illustrated by how “Britain as a diverse society” is one of the six areas upon which applicants seeking citizenship are tested. Yet it is also worth noting how on several occasions government ministers at the time maintained that “this is not a test of someone’s ability to be British or a test of their Britishness. It is a test of their preparedness to become citizens.”⁵⁰ The key point is that while scholars took the rhetorical failure/demise of multiculturalism at face value, when it required empirical rebuttal.⁵¹

IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND SECURITY

In “The Multicultural State We’re In” (2009), we surveyed a number of further public policy documents and developments in public policy and concluded that what had been taking place in Britain could accurately be called a “retreat” of multiculturalism. Rather, the emergent multiculturalism of the 1990s that was attempting to accommodate Muslim communities has been simultaneously subjected to at least two critiques. One emphasizes commonality, cohesion, and integration; the other was alive to fluidity, multiplicity, and hybridity, especially in relation to expressive culture, entertainment, and consumption. Each critique was a reaction against ethno-religious communitarianism, but neither emphasized what is not usually present in some form in most accounts of multiculturalism. Hence, we argued that “it is better to see these newly asserted emphases and the interaction between these three positions, as a re-balancing of multiculturalism rather than its erasure.”⁵² But

this should not be taken to mean that we underestimate the implications of competing developments.

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 was the basis for the post-Blair migration and integration strategy of Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Home Secretary Jacqui Smith from 2008 on. In particular, Brown elaborated how becoming a British citizen should not just be a matter of the applicants' choice, but ought to reflect a contract whereby they accept the responsibilities of *becoming* British and thus "earn" the right to citizenship.⁵³ To support this, a status of "probationary citizenship" was created as a pathway between temporary immigration status and either naturalization or the right to abode. Crucially, the length of this period could be reduced by two years in cases where applicants demonstrated that they were contributing to the community through "active citizenship." This could be achieved through "formal volunteering" or "civic activism." The idea of taking this further and developing a points-based system of citizenship was put forward in 2009. This included the prospect of "deducting points or applying penalties for not integrating into the British way of life, for criminal or anti-social behaviour, or in circumstances where an active disregard for UK values is demonstrated."⁵⁴

An overview of the new selectivity under the managed migration points system provided by McGhee points to the consolidation into five "tiers" of the more than eighty existing work and study routes to permission to remain:

- Tier 1: Highly skilled workers (e.g., scientists or entrepreneurs)
- Tier 2: Skilled workers with a job offer (e.g., nurses, teachers, engineers)
- Tier 3: Low-skilled workers filling specific temporary labor shortages (e.g., construction workers for a particular project)
- Tier 4: Students;
- Tier 5: Youth mobility and temporary workers (e.g., working holidaymakers or musicians coming to play a concert)⁵⁵

The Conservative-Liberal coalition government narrowed these tiers further, mainly by eliminating Tier 3.⁵⁶ The most controversial change, taking away the right to remain in Britain for more than five years from most Tier 2 migrant workers earning less than £35,000 a year, did not come into effect until April 2016.⁵⁷ This last reform may perhaps be taken perhaps as evidence of an emerging guest-worker type of approach for new migrants, although Brexit will certainly complicate matters still further.

A notable trend during the period we were initially exploring was the tendency for slippage between integration and security agendas. Whereas this was initially *implicit*, it is now a much more explicit coupling. Indeed, the striking development, and one that could not have been anticipated by proponents of multiculturalism in the 1990s, is how the assemblage of citizenship strategies has been reorganized to give a central role to counterterrorism strategies. This has not happened overnight

with the present government, and indeed owes some provenance to the previous administration and the way in which following the London bombings, and several aborted bombings in a similar “leaderless Jihad,” the Labour government (1997–2010) created seven working groups comprising representatives of Muslim communities under the rubric of “Preventing Extremism Together” (PET, or “Prevent”).⁵⁸ These were clustered as follows: (1) engaging with young people; (2) providing a full range of education services in the UK that meet the needs of the Muslim community; (3) engaging with Muslim women; (4) supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions; (5) imam training and accreditation and the role of mosques as a resource for the whole community; (6) security—Islamophobia, protecting Muslims from extremism, and community confidence in policing; and (7) tackling extremism and radicalization.

Initiated by the Home Office, this would later fall under the remit of the subsequently created Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). These working groups devised a series of proposals to develop “practical means” of tackling violent extremism. Sixty-four recommendations were put forward in a report published in November 2005, which especially emphasized three recommendations that would serve as central planks in the unfolding of government strategies concerned with preventing violent extremism.

These included, firstly, the development of a “scholars’ roadshow” coordinated by British Muslim organizations to facilitate “influential mainstream” Muslim thinkers to address audiences of young British Muslims. The rationale being that these speakers would distil effective arguments against extremist justification for terrorism in denouncing it as un-Islamic, so as to “counter the ideological and theological underpinnings of the terrorist narrative.”⁵⁹ A second proposal focused on the creation of Muslim forums against extremism and Islamophobia. These could be led by key individuals and brought together members of local Muslim communities, law enforcement, and public service agencies to discuss how to tackle extremism and Islamophobia in their area. The third and perhaps most substantive recommendation, in terms of proposed structural capacity building within British Muslim communities, promoted the formation of a Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB). To this end, a steering group of Muslim leaders undertook an extensive national consultation on matters such as the accreditation of imams, better governance of mosques, and interfaith activity. Alongside this professional development program or “upskilling” of imams and mosque officials, recommendations were also made for a national campaign and coalition to increase the visibility of Muslim women, and specifically to empower and equip them in the course of becoming “active citizens.”

While Prevent inevitably included some security-related work, it was criticized for a variety of reasons, “ranging from targeting the wrong people to stigmatizing Muslim communities by treating them all as potential terrorists.”⁶⁰ Two recurring issues were that: firstly, intelligence agencies were using the softer cohesion

aspects of Prevent “to spy and illicitly collect intelligence, which has dramatically harmed the programme as a whole”;⁶¹ and secondly, that Prevent was oriented to address wider social policy within Muslim communities which implied that this policy was only valuable because it contributed to counterterrorism (something illustrated by the fact that funding was directly linked to the size of the Muslim population in a local authority, not on the basis of known risk).

It is unsurprising that a strategy premised upon entering, and to some extent reformulating, the life worlds of British Muslim communities has been the subject of critical debate in the study of ethnic relations more broadly.⁶² That this objective was intended could be gleaned from the fact that immediately after the London bombing, the Home Office signaled that it would establish a Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC) “to advise on how, consistent with their own religion and culture, there is better integration of those parts of the community inadequately integrated.”⁶³

The previous government had sought to advance Prevent through a variety of local community partnerships and across statutory bodies, as well as voluntary agencies and community groups “with police forces, local authorities and their partners working closely together to oversee and deliver the project.”⁶⁴ To foster these outcomes the Prevent-related funding of around £45 million to foster these outcomes for the period from 2008–9 to 2010–11 was distributed via local authorities. The Prevent strategy thus signaled some diffusion of formal responsibilities for policy implementation and service delivery in a way that some see as indicative of broader developments in “governance” practices whereby “responsibility and accountability for a wide range of social issues is increasingly focused towards local levels, while at the same time centralized control in terms of resources and target-setting is maintained.”⁶⁵

While it is not immediately apparent in the earlier quotation, the incorporation of faith-based groups from the non-profit “third sector” is potentially party to novel approaches to engaging with religious minorities through the practices and models of representation, stakeholders, and advocacy in the consultative arena; perhaps as a development of what has been termed a multicultural “municipal drift.”⁶⁶ The extent of this shift is not the central focus here, other than in elaborating the manner in which the Prevent agenda, in constituting part of the broad counterterrorism strategy, appears to be simultaneously subject to at least two broader prevailing dynamics, comprising firstly “the implementation of anti-terrorist laws that can be used disproportionately against Muslims leading to the potential for their increased surveillance and control and thereby serving to reduce Muslims’ trust of state institutions, while [secondly] at the same time pursuing approaches that acknowledge, and stress the importance of, the involvement of British . . . Muslim communities in helping to combat extremism.”⁶⁷

Spalek and Imoual frame these dynamics relationally in terms of “harder” and “softer” strategies of engagement, whereby the former may be understood as

consisting of various means of surveillance, policing, intelligence gathering, and so on.⁶⁸ The latter, meanwhile, would include the development of dialogue, participation, and community feedback between Muslim communities, state agencies, and voluntary organizations in a way that may serve to increase trust in “the battle for hearts and minds.” For example, the Prevent strategy also emphasized long-established equality traditions historically orientated towards ethnic and racial minorities and sought to extend them to Muslims: “The Prevent strategy requires a specific response, but we must also make the most of the links with wider community work to reduce inequalities, tackle racism and other forms of extremism (e.g. extreme far right), build cohesion and empower communities. . . . Likewise, it is recognised that the arguments of violent extremists, which rely on creating a ‘them’ and an ‘us,’ are less likely to find traction in cohesive communities.”⁶⁹

This built upon recognition of Muslim religious difference in government policies and legislation that has been manifested in other ways, including measures against religious discrimination as set out in the Equality Acts of 2006 and 2010. The tensions, then, surround the extent to which the prevailing British citizenship being extended to Muslims through social and community-cohesion measures is twinned, or placed within the same register as, counterterrorism strategies that import or rely upon certain securitized “hard” aspects of this dimension of state-Muslim engagement. The risk has always been that “active citizenship” for Muslims is to some extent framed in terms of demonstrable counterterrorism activities in a way that assumes that Muslim communities in general are the “locus. . . of extremism.”⁷⁰ Arguably, this risk is now being actively stated as a policy ambition, as the concern is expressed within the Prevent strategy that insufficient attention has been paid to whether Muslim organizations comprehensively subscribe to mainstream British values.

As then Home Secretary Theresa May stated in her foreword to the second iteration of the Prevent strategy: “We will respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it. In doing so, we must be clear: the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not. But we will not work with extremist organizations that oppose our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society. If organizations do not accept these fundamental values, we will not work with them and we will not fund them.”⁷² As such, while it is not quite the case that, as Liz Fekete has suggested, public policy engaging with Muslims amounts to being “tough on mosques, tough on the causes of mosques,” it has become common to find statements such as that made by the former Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly, that Muslim organizations must take “a proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values.”⁷¹

The new Prevent strategy thus takes a much more interventionist line regarding the constellation of British Muslim politics, forthrightly insisting that the

government will not fund organizations “that hold extremist views or support terrorist-related activity of any kind.”⁷³ Much here hinges on the word “extremist,” and mainstream organizations easily fall foul of this threshold by, for example, taking oppositional positions on foreign policy or towards the state of Israel. The current integration strategy of Department for Communities and Local Government thus explicitly asserts the previously implicit view that Prevent is “distinct from but linked to integration, tackling non-violent extremism where it creates an environment conducive to terrorism and popularises ideas which are espoused by terrorist groups.”⁷⁴ A parallel effort was the Conservative-Liberal coalition’s three-year “Near Neighbours” strategy, a program to “bring people together in diverse communities, helping them build relationships and collaborate to improve the local community they live in,” which was run by the Church Urban Fund, a Church of England charity set up in 1987, and initially focused on Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester and East London.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the Prevent agenda remains the British government’s most significant investment in Muslim civil society organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

While new policies, complementing anti-discrimination strategies and recognition of “difference,” albeit with an emphasis on commonalities, have been introduced in the twenty-first century at both local and national levels, this has not eliminated multiculturalism. It is most striking that when senior British politicians seek to define Britishness, they simultaneously appeal to a political-institutional history (monarchs, rule of law, parliamentary democracy, etc.) and to cultural diversity.⁷⁶ Although this sense of plural Britishness owes something to the UK’s multinational character, it undeniably also reflects the political integration of postwar Commonwealth migrants and their descendants. In general, the story of Commonwealth nonwhite immigration to Britain is one of immigration controls, but also of redefining what it means to be “British” through anti-racism and multiculturalism.

NOTES

1. See Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, “The Multicultural State We’re In: Muslims, ‘Multiculture’ and the ‘Civic Re-Balancing’ of British Multiculturalism,” *Political Studies* 57, no. 3 (2009): 473–97. In retrospect, it might have been more appropriate to term what we were describing a “civic thickening,” which does not imply that we have had too much of one rather than the other. In addition to the original piece, see how this argument was taken up by Daniel Faas, *Negotiating Political Identities: Multiethnic Schools and Youth in Europe* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010); Dan Rodriguez-Garcia, “Beyond Assimilation and Multiculturalism: A Critical Review of the Debate on Managing Diversity,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 11, no. 3 (2010): 251–71; Fethi Mansouri and Juliet Pietsch, “Local Governance and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism in Liberal Democracies: An

Australian Perspective," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 32 (2011): 279–92; and Peter Kivisto, "We Really Are All Multiculturalists Now," *Sociological Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.

2. Christian Joppke, "The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy," *British Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 2 (2004): 237–57.

3. Michael Gove, "What Do Britons Have in Common?" (paper presented at Quilliam Foundation Conference, April 23, 2009); Gove, "1688 and All That," in *Being British: The Search for the Values That Bind the Nation*, ed. Matthew d'Ancona and Gordon Brown, 197–207 (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2009); and Gove, "All Pupils Will Learn Our Island Story" (speech, October 5, 2010).

4. Pauline Neville-Jones, *An Unquiet World: Submission to the Shadow Cabinet* (London: National and International Security Policy Group, 2007), 23. Accessed November 30, 2018, <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2007/07/26/securityreport.pdf>.

5. Varun Uberoi and Tariq Modood, "Inclusive Britishness: A Multiculturalist Advance," *Political Studies* 61, no. 1 (2013): 23–41.

6. Sunder Katwala, "An Island Story: Boyle's Olympic Opening Was Irresistibly British," *Open Democracy*, July 31, 2012, and Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (London: Profile Books, 2000).

7. Thinethavone Soutphommasane, "Labour Can Make the Most of a Britain Alive with Olympic Spirit," *Observer*, August 19, 2012.

8. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, "Mo's Joyful Embrace of Britishness and Why These Games Mark a Truly Historic Watershed," *Independent*, August 12, 2012.

9. Paul Thomas, *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

10. Alan Travis, "Skilled Migrants to Lose Right to Settle in UK," *Guardian*, February 29, 2012.

11. Chris Allen, "Opposing Islamification or Promoting Islamophobia? Understanding the English Defence League," *Patterns of Prejudice* 45, no. 4 (2011).

12. Modood, *Multiculturalism*, 100.

13. Examples include William Pfaff's (2005) certainty that "these British bombers are a consequence of a misguided and catastrophic pursuit of multiculturalism"; Gilles Kepel's (2005) observation that the bombers "were the children of Britain's own multicultural society," and that the bombings have "smashed" the implicit social consensus that produced multiculturalism "to smithereens," alongside Martin Wolf's (2005) conclusion that multiculturalism's departure from the core political values that must underpin Britain's community "is dangerous because it destroys political community . . . [and] demeaning because it devalues citizenship. In this sense, at least, multiculturalism must be discarded as nonsense." See Pfaff, "A Monster of Our Own Making," *Observer*, August 20, 2005; Kepel, "Europe's Answer to Londonistan," *Open Democracy*, August 24, 2005; and Wolf, "When Multiculturalism Is a Nonsense," *Financial Times*, August 31, 2005. These views have also been elaborated in Andrew Anthony, *The Fallout: How a Guilty Liberal Lost His Innocence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007); Nick Cohen, *What's Left? How Liberals Lost Their Way* (London: HarperPerennial, 2007); Michael Gove, *Celsius 7/7* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006); and Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan: How Britain Created a Terror State Within* (London: Gibson Square Books, 2006). This suggests a large degree of convergence between commentators of the "Left" and "Right" on the topic of multiculturalism.

14. Bryan Appleyard, "Eureka," *Sunday Times*, December 17, 2006; Joppke, "Retreat of Multiculturalism"; Kepel, "Europe's Answer to Londonistan"; and Rod Liddle, "How Islam Killed Multiculturalism," *Spectator*, May 1, 2004.

15. David Goodhart, *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-war Immigration* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), and Goodhart, "Too Diverse?" *Prospect*, February 20, 2004.

16. Quoted in Tom Baldwin, "I Want an Integrated Society With a Difference," interview with Trevor Phillips, *Times*, April 3, 2004.

17. David Cameron, speech, Handsworth Mosque, Birmingham, January 30, 2007.

18. David Cameron, speech, Munich Security Conference, February 5, 2011, accessed November 30, 2018, www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-andtranscripts/2011/02/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference-60293.

19. Quoted in Riazat Butt, "Cameron Calls for Return to Christian values as King James Bible turns 400," *Guardian*, December, 16, 2011.

20. See Tariq Modood, "Remaking Multiculturalism after 7/7," *Open Democracy*, September 29, 2005. The Center Right objects particularly to public provisions for minority cultural practices, on the grounds that these deviate from a core "majority" national identity to which minorities are required to assimilate. A good example of this view can be found in the *Salisbury Review*, a conservative magazine that was founded in 1982 with the influential conservative philosopher Roger Scruton as its editor. The role it played in the Honeyford affair—a controversy regarding multicultural education—provides an excellent case study of the main political argumentation contained within this position. See J. Mark Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity: An Examination of the Honeyford Affair, 1984–85* (London: Falmer Press, 1988).

21. Madeleine Bunting, "It Takes More than Tea and Biscuits to Overcome Indifference and Fear," *Guardian*, February 27, 2006, goes on to say that "the old alliance with the centre-left is fraying to breaking point; old allies in the battles against racism have jumped sides."

22. Joppke, "Retreat of Multiculturalism," 253. However, Christian Joppke, "Immigration and the Identity of Citizenship: The Paradox of Universalism," *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 6 (2008): 537, withdrew this claim.

23. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

24. David Pearson, of Victoria University in New Zealand, quoted in Peter Kivisto and Thomas Faist, *Citizenship: Discourse, Theory, and Transnational Prospects* (London: Blackwell, 2007), 35, a similar point is made by Katherine Smith, "Research, Policy and Funding: Academic Treadmills and the Squeeze on Intellectual Spaces," *British Journal Of Sociology* 61, no. 1 (2010): 176–95.

25. Some of the material in this chapter was published in N. Meer and T. Modood, "The Multicultural State We Are In: Muslims, 'Multiculture' and the 'Civic Re-balancing' of British Multiculturalism," *Political Studies* 57, no. 3 (2009): 473–97. The authors thank the publishers of the journal, Wiley-Blackwell, for permission to republish it.

26. Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

27. Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

28. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, "After Multiculturalism," *Political Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2001), 47.

29. Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. Interest disclosure: Modood was involved in this report.

30. *Ibid.*, viii.

31. *Ibid.*, 296.

32. *Ibid.*, 297.

33. United Kingdom, Home Office, *Statement of Intent: Changes to Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 5 of the Points Based System; Overseas Domestic Workers; and Visitors* (London: Home Office, 2012).

34. Tony Blair, "Tony Blair's on Britain Speech," *Guardian*, March 28, 2000.

35. Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, *Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, 296.

36. Eugene McLaughlin and Sarah Neal, "Misrepresenting the Multicultural Nation, the Policy-Making Process, News Media Management and the Parekh Report," *Policy Studies* 25, no. 3 (2004): 155–74.

37. See Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001).

38. Anthony Lester, "Nailing the Lie and Promoting Equality—The Jim Rose Lecture" (speech, Runnymede Trust, October 15, 2003).

39. Of course, feminists have long critiqued the ensuing power imbalances contained within the public/private sphere distinction. While one of the earliest, extended, critiques may be found in the work of Carole Pateman (1970), the late Iris Marion Young is probably the best-known advocate of consolidating the critique of the public/private sphere distinction by incorporating a multitude of minorities that are potentially oppressed by an unreconstructed public sphere. This led her to argue that “a democratic public sphere should provide mechanisms for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged” (Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990], 165).

40. Interview with Sir Bernard Crick, June 2002 quoted in Dina Kiwan, “Citizenship Education at the Cross-Roads: Four Models of Citizenship and Their Implications for Ethnic and Religious Diversity,” *Oxford Review of Education* 34, no. 1 (2008): 39–58.

41. *Ibid.*, 62.

42. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools: Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship*, ed. Bernard R. Crick et al. (London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998).

43. United Kingdom, Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (London: Home Office, 2004).

44. *Ibid.*, 11.

45. *Ibid.*, 14.

46. Derek McGhee “The Paths to Citizenship: A Critical Examination of Immigration Policy in Britain since 2001,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 1 (2009): 48.

47. United Kingdom, Commission on Integration & Cohesion, *Our Shared Future: Themes, Messages and Challenges: A Final Analysis of the Key Themes from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion Consultation* (London: Home Office, 2007).

48. *Ibid.*, 50–51.

49. United Kingdom, Home Office, *Strength in Diversity: Towards a Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy* (London: Home Office, 2004).

50. Quoted in Kiwan, “Citizenship Education at the Cross-Roads,” 69.

51. See Meer and Modood, “Multicultural State We’re In”; Uberoi and Modood. “Inclusive Britishness”; Peter Taylor-Gooby and Edmund Waite, “Toward a More Pragmatic Multiculturalism? How the UK Policy Community Sees the Future of Ethnic Diversity Policies,” *Governance* 27, no. 2 (2014): 267–89; Anthony Heath and Neli Demireva, “Has Multiculturalism Failed in Britain?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 161–80.

52. Meer and Modood, “Multicultural State We’re In,” 490.

53. Gordon Brown, “Managed Migration and Earned Citizenship,” speech, Camden Centre, London, February 20, 2008, www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/protected/RDON/RDON-BROWN-Managed-Migration-and-Earned-Citizenship-20_02_08.pdf, accessed February 17, 2019.

54. Tufyal Choudhury, “Evolving Models of Multiculturalism in the United Kingdom,” in *Interculturalism: Europe and Its Muslims in Search of Sound Societal Models*, ed. Michael Emerson (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2011), 124.

55. McGhee, “Paths to Citizenship,” 52.

56. Travis, “Skilled Migrants to Lose.”

57. *Ibid.* and Damian Green, “Making Immigration Work,” speech, the Policy Exchange, February 2, 2012, accessed November 30, 2018, www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/making-immigration-work.

58. Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the 21st Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

59. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “EIWG Fact Sheet,” www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=153388310360. The “Radical Middle

Way” project was also supported by the Home Office (see <http://impacteurope.eu/partners/radical-middle-way>).

60. Jamie Bartlett and Jonathan Birdwell, *From Suspects to Citizens: Preventing Violent Extremism in the Big Society* (London: Demos, 2010), 8.

61. Ibid.

62. Basia Spalek and Alia Imoual, “Muslim Communities and Counter-Terror Responses: ‘Hard’ Approaches to Community Engagement in the UK and Australia,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2007): 185–202; Robert Lambert, “Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counter-Terrorism Case Study,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 1 (2008), 31–35; and Derek McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration & Human Rights* (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press & McGraw-Hill Education, 2008).

63. Outlined by Tony Blair himself. See the prime minister’s press conference, August 5, 2005.

64. United Kingdom, Home Office, Office for Security & Counter-Terrorism, *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery* (London: Home Office, 2008), 9.

65. Spalek and Imoual, “Muslim Communities and Counter-Terror Responses,” 188.

66. See Daniel DeHanas, Therese O’Toole, Tariq Modood, and Nasar Meer, *Taking Part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance*, www.bristol.ac.uk/medialibrary/sites/ethnicity/migrated/documents/mpcgreport.pdf, accessed February 17, 2019; and Meer and Modood, “Multicultural State We’re In.”

67. Spalek and Imoual, “Muslim Communities and Counter-Terror Responses,” 191.

68. Ibid.

69. United Kingdom, Home Office, Office for Security & Counter-Terrorism, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 6–7.

70. Spalek and Imoual, “Muslim Communities and Counter-Terror Responses,” 194.

71. Liz Fekete, “Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State,” *Race and Class* 46, no. 1 (2004): 25, and speech by Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly to Muslims on Working Together to Tackle Extremism, Local Government House, London, October 11, 2006.

72. United Kingdom, Home Office, *Prevent Strategy* (London: Home Office, 2011), 1.

73. Ibid., 35.

74. United Kingdom, Department for Communities and Local Government, *Creating the Conditions for Integration* (London: Home Office, 2012), 16–17.

75. See United Kingdom, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, press release, “Multi-faith Communities to Benefit from New £3 Million Grant,” February 27, 2014. Accessed November 30, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-faith-communities-to-benefit-from-new-3-million-grant>.

76. Uberoi and Modood. “Inclusive Britishness.”

