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1

Multiculturalism and Britishness: Provocations, Hostilities and Advances

Tariq Modood

This volume is a retrospective consideration of the British scene in relation to the issues of minority–majority relations, integration and British identity. I would like to think about 'then-and-now' with reference to a major national report, an aspect of which, 'rethinking the national story', shall be the main focus of this chapter. I would like to start, however, with a brief personal retrospective on this theme, to highlight how things have changed around me and some of my work and contribution. I started thinking seriously about racial equality in 1987. In that year, having hung on for a number of years in the hope of an academic career in political philosophy, I accepted the reality that such jobs were not available and started an administrative post as an equal opportunities officer in a London borough.[1] While trying to formulate a suitable policy for the borough's workforce, I especially felt the challenge of the politics of 'Black Sections' that were raging in the Labour Party, especially in London (Shukra 1998). Over the next few years I began to write short pieces in my spare time, trying to give expression to an alternative understanding of ethnic diversity in Britain to that of Black Sections, which saw things in terms of a black–white antagonistic dualism (Modood 1988, 1994). Much has changed in relation to Britishness since those essays were published as a collection, *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship* (Modood 1992).

From 'Not Easy' to 'Still Not Easy Being British'

From my point of view the most important change is that the suggestion, as made in that book, that the issue of racial equality led inevitably

to the bigger questions and 'isms' of multiculturalism, national identity and rethinking secularism is now commonplace. Very few made these connexions in the late 1980s and early 1990s when those essays were written. There is, indeed, a very early statement that racial equality and ethnic minority integration meant rethinking what it means to be British. In the early 1970s Bhikhu Parekh had argued that 'pluralistic integration within the framework of a generally accepted conception of the good life should be the ideal governing Britain's relations with her immigrant population' (Parekh 1974, p. 230). While he saw racism in its various manifestations as a significant obstacle to this integration, the aspect in which he was ahead of his time is his going on to say:

> In the ultimate analysis pluralistic integration entails that the Briton's perception of his identity should be revised... Only when it is acknowledged as a matter of course that a Briton is not by definition white but could be black, brown or yellow, that he might speak Swahili, Mandarin or Hindustani as his first and English as his second language, and that his 'kith and kin' might be found in Bombay, Barbados and Ibadan as well as in Salisbury and Wellington, can the non-white minority feel as authentically British as the native, and can be so accepted by the latter.
>
> (Parekh 1974, pp. 230–231)

A decade later a very similar sentiment was expressed by the Swann Report (1985), Parekh being a member of the commission that produced the report. This was a lengthy report on ethnic minority educational attainment in British schools and advocated multicultural education. Its first chapter, however, briefly considered the topic of integration in general and advocated multiculturalism or 'the pluralist ideal' as the most favourable model. It argued:

> we are not looking for the assimilation of the minority communities within an unchanged dominant way of life, we are perhaps looking for the 'assimilation' of all groups within a redefined concept of what it means to live in British society today. We are not seeking to fit ethnic minorities into a mould which was originally cast for a society, relatively homogeneous in language, religion and culture, nor to break this mould completely and replace it with one which is in all senses 'foreign' to our established way of life. We are instead looking to recast the mould into a form which retains the fundamental principles of the original but within a broader pluralist conspectus – diversity within unity.
>
> (Swann 1985, p. 8)

In a lecture at the British Film Institute in 1987, Stuart Hall spoke of 'new ethnicities', new ways of being black, a critical aspect of which was to give expression to British blackness, to black people making a claim of being British, not despite being black but as blacks who challenged their exclusion and so were contesting what it means to be British rather than trying to fit into received definitions (Hall 1988). In the same year, Paul Gilroy published *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, which challenged conceptions of black identity and British identity as mutually exclusive.

Most racial-egalitarians, however, thought that 'multiculturalism' was not sufficiently challenging of racism; indeed, it did not cut very deeply into society, as it was merely about 'saris, samosas and steelbands'. The idea that multiculturalism threatened social unity, let alone being subversive of Western civilisation, however common it is now, was undreamt of at that time. Moreover, most of those who thought of themselves as political multiculturalists, and did not think multiculturalism was primarily about black music, exotic dress and spicy food, saw British national identity as the possession not of the British people but of right-wing ideologues and extreme nationalists. Their main reaction to any talk of Britishness was to denounce it as reactionary and racist and/or to argue that, as no one could define what they meant by 'British' in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, the concept should not be used, as it referred to a fiction, to something that did not exist. In this most of the multiculturalists and the anti-racists were united, as, indeed, they were in that secularism was intrinsic to anti-racism and multiculturalism.

It was these views that I was challenging 25 years ago. At the time I was in a very small minority, especially among racial-egalitarians. The essays of that book were written in my private time while I was working as an Equal Opportunities Officer at the London Borough of Hillingdon and then at the head office of the Commission for Racial Equality. I was frequently told that the issues I was raising were unnecessary, confused and divisive – above all, that they had nothing to do with racial equality. The rest of my career has more or less been spent in proving this charge mistaken, as illustrated, for example, in the sequel to the earlier collection of essays, *Still Not Easy Being British* (2010). I may not have got as many people to agree with all my substantive views as I would have liked, but few now think that Britain can hope to be a society in

which ethnic minorities are not stigmatised and treated unfavourably without a large-scale discussion of multiculturalism, national identity and secularism.

In the late 1980s it was still not uncontroversial (especially among racial-egalitarians) to say that most ethnic minority people actually wanted to be British, indeed, that many wanted to be British more than some white people did, and that this particularly applied to Asian Muslims. It is good to see over the years that this too has been vindicated and the proposition is no longer as controversial as it used to be (e.g., Heath and Roberts 2008), though in the case of some Muslims some misunderstandings persist.

The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

Having started with a brief 'then-and-now' in relation to my entry into the policy, political and intellectual field of racial equality, I would like to take a 'then-and-now' look at the report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB 2000),[2] chaired by Lord Professor Bhikhu Parekh. I was the academic advisor to the Commission and an active part of the collective authorship of 'the Parekh Report'.[3] I want to look not at the report as a whole, but at just three pages of it – these being the three pages that led to a very negative, even hysterical reception in the newspapers over a number of days, when the report – or, more precisely, this reaction – was a major news item, leading to the government, especially the Home Secretary (Jack Straw) and the Prime Minister (Tony Blair), distancing themselves from the report. This intense press reception, meriting headlines and editorials for several days, was on Britishness and has been said to mark 'the beginning of the UK's current multicultural crisis' (McLaughlin and Neal 2007). It is an important case study in public contestation, how social research can be distorted by the media and how researchers can lose control of the presentation of their views, but that's not quite my focus here. I want to revisit the text in detail and, in a self-critical spirit, try to identify what exactly it was about the report that allowed the press to play havoc with it. I am extremely proud of my participation in the CMEB and of the report we produced, but, nevertheless, I do feel it is necessary to scrutinise it carefully for what messages it could be taken to be sending out.

The Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain had a number of unusual features for a national commission. It was created by an independent race relations think-tank, The Runnymede Trust, and, while it was

launched by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, it was wholly independent of the government and included no members of the judiciary or representatives of the government, or indeed any organisation. Of its 25 members (not all of whom served the full term), over a third were non-white and nearly a third were academics (CMEB 2000, pp. 366–371).[4] Besides its distinguished chair, it included prominent public intellectuals and race equality professionals such as Professor Stuart Hall; the journalist and writer, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown; the Chair of the London Assembly (and later of the Commission for Racial Equality, and, after that, Equalities and Human Rights Commission) and broadcaster, Trevor Phillips; Sir (later Lord) Herman Ouseley, the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality at the time; and Andrew Marr, Chief Political Editor at BBC Television at the time. As a result of this mix, some of the report had an academic character, such as Part I, 'A Vision for Britain', which began with 'Rethinking the National Story' and included several sociological chapters and a political theory chapter entitled 'Cohesion, Equality and Difference'. These chapters attempted, as the report did as a whole, to be accessible to the general as well as the public policy reader, and wore their academic apparel lightly – nevertheless, they offered an intellectual framework for thinking about minority–majority relations in Britain, and, so, for the more concrete analyses of the rest of the report. It may be the case, however, that the Commission did not have the personnel composition and balance that people are accustomed to and that it had a more theoretical and academic orientation than journalists and politicians would expect.

Looking through my folder of press-cuttings from the time of the launch of the CMEB report in 2000, I am reminded of some very angry headlines:

> A National Outrage!; The Gang Of 23 Who Are Trying To Do Down Britain (*Sunday Mercury*, 15 October 2000, George Tyndale);
>
> Racism Slur On The Word 'British' (*Daily Mail* (London), 11 October 2000, Steve Doughty); British is racist, says peer trying to rewrite our history (*Daily Mail* (London), 10 October 2000, Jonathan Irwin; David Hughes);
>
> Curse of the British-Bashers (*The Sun*, October 11).

These damning headlines were accompanied by scathing attacks on members of the Commission, individually as well as collectively,[5] and were soon joined by articles and editorials, including in *The Guardian*, a

natural ally, arguing that Britain was more tolerant and inclusive than most countries, including those of continental Europe and the USA. There were also several articles about how proud most ethnic minority individuals were to be British, especially sporting heroes who represented the country in international competitions like the Olympics, and also articles by ethnic minority individuals on how proud they were to be British (a good, short overview is Richardson 2000).[6]

The Home Secretary, it was reported under the headline ' "Proud to be British" Straw raps race report':

> was appalled when he read part of the document suggesting that the term British had racial connotations and was no longer appropriate in a multicultural society. He ripped up a speech prepared for the launch of the document yesterday and instead delivered a strong attack on the part which he believed lacked intellectual rigour.
>
> 'Unlike the Runnymede Trust I firmly believe that there is a future for Britain and a future for Britishness', Mr Straw declared. 'I am proud to be British and of what I believe to be the best of British values'.
>
> (*The Times*, 12 October, Richard Ford)

Yet the previous day, an article had been published in *The Guardian* by the chair of the CMEB, in which he argued:

> The report recognises that, while cherishing cultural diversity, Britain must remain a cohesive society with a shared national culture. That culture is based on shared values, including such procedural values as tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences, as well as such basic ethical norms as respect for human dignity, equal worth of all and equal life chances.
>
> The common national culture includes shared symbols and a shared view of national identity, and these are best evolved through a democratic dialogue between our various communities. The report sees Britain both as a national community with a clear sense of collective purpose and direction and also made up of different communities interacting with each other within a shared moral framework.
>
> (Parekh 2000b)[7]

The main points of this angry reaction can be summarised as that the CMEB:

- were saying 'British' was racist
- were saying the days of a country called 'Britain' were over
- wanted to rename Britain as 'community of communities'.

Consequently, the CMEB were insulting British/white people and seemed unaware that many ethnic minorities were proud to be British and that Britain was becoming a multicultural society. The CMEB was unpatriotic, out of touch with ethnic minorities and offensive to the minorities and majority alike.

So, what exactly had we said? The whole row was focused on three pages – out of a nearly 400-page report – the final section of Chapter 3, entitled 'The future of Britishness'. I shall look at these three pages quite closely, but it's important to precede that by noting that these three pages were the culmination of Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 argued that there has never been a single, undifferentiated conception of Britishness: the Scots, Welsh and English have overlapping but also contested notions of what Britain is, and this is further differentiated through the different regions of the country, the class structure and the perspectives of the Irish. Moreover, conceptions and self-images of the country are never static and have mutated across its history. This change has been particularly dramatic in the second half of the 20th century and will continue to be so in the 21st century as a result not just of ethnic diversity but also of devolution, European integration, globalisation and a number of other factors. We can orient ourselves more in these uncharted waters if we embrace change and diversity and recognise that 'Britain is not and has never been the unified, conflict-free land of popular imagination. There is no single white majority' (CMEB 2000, 2.24). Chapter 3, entitled 'Identities in Transition', is devoted to the post-migration minorities and also emphasises change and diversity, mixing and hybridity, and, while the varied character of the principal groups is highlighted, a commonality is that none of the minorities is or aspires to be ghetto-like, separate from the mainstream. After giving some attention to specific groups, including Irish communities and Jewish communities, we reach what is meant to be the concluding section of Chapters 2 and 3 taken together.

Paragraph 3.22 states: 'The prospect of all communities finding a better, more just and humane way of living together has improved in the recent past.' This is a positive start, but it is also recognised that 'Britain continues to be disfigured by racism' (para. 3.23), which is fair and, of course, important to say. We then go on to ask: 'Is it possible to reimagine Britain as a nation – *or post-nation* – in a multicultural

way?' (3.23, italics added). In retrospect, one can see that the question we are raising is weakened because it is made ambivalent through the introduction of the parenthesis, which suggests the CMEB were unclear whether they were talking about a nation or a post-nation. This was our central question, and yet there is ambivalence about how it should be posed. Chapter 2 would prepare the reader for the ambivalence – if it was read, and it is clear from the press coverage that it was not – nevertheless, the CMEB cannot decide whether the term 'nation' refers only to a monistic nationalism or – in the manner of 'new ethnicities' (rather than 'post-ethnicities') – whether there can be 'new Britishness' (as opposed to 'post-Britishness'). It may be that it exhibits an intellectual openness not to close off either of these perspectives, as each is illuminating. But this openness is at the price of risking not being, or not seeming to be, positive about Britain as a nation (as opposed to a post-nation). That by 'post-national' we did not literally mean an ex-national state is suggested by the text of a lecture that Parekh gave shortly after the publication of the report, in which he writes that Britain's 'sense of nationhood' must reflect its diversity, not a single collective vision of the good life, 'what Habermas calls a post-nation and what I might call a multicultural state' (Parekh 2001a, p. 23).

The report goes on to mention the infamous 'Tebbit Test', about whether, for example, British Pakistanis are really British if they cheer Pakistan when it plays cricket against England. It is said that 'This is just one aspect of the complex, multifaceted, *post-national world* in which national allegiance is played out' (3.24; italics added). This is really quite damaging: what was originally parenthetical, namely, the post-national, has quickly become a matter of fact. So, perhaps it is not so surprising that, four paragraphs later, it is asked, 'Does Britishness as such have a future?' (3.28). Now, of course we raised this question to answer it affirmatively, albeit we wanted to emphasise that Britishness has to be rethought and remade and so on, and we even began the section by saying, as noted above, that the prospect of a 'more just and humane way of living together has improved in the recent past' (3.22). But, as the text proceeds, so many negatives and so few positives are mentioned that the reader can perhaps be excused for doubting our intention. Through a favourable mention of the Good Friday Agreement (which brought peace and hope to Northern Ireland), the phrase '...these islands...' is introduced and this flow of passage comes to an end with: 'It is entirely plain, however, that the word "British" will never do on its own.' Our intention here was to record the unsatisfactoriness of the term 'British Isles' to describe the two islands, Britain and Ireland, but we have ended

up appearing to suggest that the term 'Britain' will not do even to describe Britain.

We strike a more positive note in the next paragraph when it is said that 'Britishness [as a self-identity] is not ideal, but at least it appears acceptable, particularly, when suitably qualified – Black British, Indian British etc' (3.29). This is a positive statement we wanted to make, namely that ethnic minorities are assuming a British identity and qualifying it with a minority ethnicity, and thus not just passively accepting Britishness but making it their own; which, together with affirmation of their minority identity, is a mark of a new confidence. We do not dwell much on this, however, for we are conscious of problems – after all, a commission is a problem-oriented exercise. Our task was 'to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage and making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with itself' (Preface, p. viii). So, in this section about everyone coming to feel that they belong together as Britons, we go on to say:

> However, there is one major and so far insuperable barrier. Britishness, as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations. Whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British, but is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension, Britishness is racially coded. (3.30)

It is important to note here that, in saying that if Britishness was to continue to be associated with whiteness – and that it has till very recently been so associated by everybody and continues to be so by some people is uncontroversial – then an ethnic minority identification with it would be impossible, we were not meaning and did not say that Britishness connotes racism, or that it is racist to identify as British. However, the tone of our discussion has been less than positive, such that we are by this stage unlikely to be accorded any generosity of interpretation by critics. We were, of course, right to emphasise the importance of the problem of continuing racism, but we perhaps did not express it as well as we might have done by concluding that, unless expunging racism was taken seriously, 'the idea of a multicultural post-nation remains an empty promise' (3.30; italics added). The next and final paragraph of this chapter moves on to summarise what needs to done to fulfil the promise, and to explain that this subject is discussed in detail in the following four chapters. Inattentive readers may not have appreciated, however, that the chapter's last paragraph is explaining how the arguments of Chapters 2 and 3 are going to be further developed, and may

therefore have thought that the statement 'the idea of a multicultural post-nation remains an empty promise' were the words the CMEB chose to effectively conclude a key chapter and a forward-looking, enthusing section on 'The future of Britishness'.

Having offered a close reading of the passages that got the Commission such a barrage of abuse and misunderstanding, I suppose it is fair to ask: what did I, as one of a small team of drafters of Part 1 of the report, think this chapter was doing? My view was that the Commission had an overarching message, which was then qualified in certain ways. The overarching message was that the rethinking and political action to make Britain more inclusive, which had begun, had to continue and had to focus on British identity itself if the country was to continue to progress towards an inclusive, non-racial, multicultural Britishness.[8] Our argument was that the inequalities and exclusions associated with racism, including material inequalities and disadvantages, could not be countered by merely materialist strategies but required 'rethinking the national story', our collective identity, in a plural way. A qualifying message was that there could be no complacency about the importance of anti-racism, which needed more political will, if Britishness was to be made inclusive in fact and not just rhetoric. Another qualifying message was that old-fashioned, monistic, assimilationist, majoritarian nationalism was past its usefulness and had to be replaced by a new, plural kind of national identity. This latter was sometimes expressed as recognising the emergence of a post-national space without boundaries, and, while this was not my chosen way of expressing the point, I recognised that it was so for some members of the Commission (and, of course, beyond it) and was unlikely to be taken the wrong way as long as it was harnessed to the dominant message. I thought the report's text had achieved this because I – naively – thought that a reader would read the report from the beginning and the chapter as a whole, and would therefore see the centrality of what I have called the overarching message. Of course the critics of the report, especially in the right-wing press, did not read the report in that way; rather, they fixated on some ill-chosen and ambiguous phrases – indeed, rephrased them to make them even worse – and so were able to give this part of the report almost exactly the opposite meaning to the one it was written to convey. Much of the media coverage was hysterical and one-sided, informed as it clearly was by a hostile political agenda informed by a chauvinistic, right-wing nationalism and specifically by wanting to avenge the New Labour government's acceptance the previous year of the Macpherson Report's charge that the London Metropolitan Police was 'institutionally racist'

(Parekh 2000a, p. 6). Moreover, when one looks closely at the really hostile coverage it seems that it was not based on independent readings of the report but on repeating one poisonous misreading in *The Telegraph* (Richardson 2000). Yet, the fact that even many sympathetic commentators, such as *The Guardian* and the New Labour Home Secretary who launched the Commission, took us to be saying what our critics interpreted as saying, retrospectively suggests that our text suffered from certain weaknesses and fatal ambiguities (Parekh 2001b, p. 7).

Having focused on what we said and how we said it, I think we cannot also ignore who said it. Bhikhu Parekh has pointed out that white Scottish authors had published books with titles such as *The Day Britain Died* and *The Breakup of Britain* without generating anything like the response to the CMEB and without being taken to task for what could easily be taken to be unpatriotic language. He goes on:

> [T]he fact that there were so many high-profile black and Asian intellectuals gave the impression that the Commission and its report had a distinctly minority orientation. This imposed intangible and subtle limits on what the report should and should not say – limits which it could transgress, as indeed it did, only at its peril.
>
> (Parekh 2001b, p. 7)

It has rightly been said that the negative press reaction to the CMEB report 'demonstrates that the public sphere is highly racialized and patrolled by a powerful conservative press instinctively hostile to any intellectual position that problematizes national identity through the lens of race and ethnicity or promotes positive discrimination' (McLaughlin and Neal 2007, p. 924).

Then – and now?

The reception of the CMEB report was a catastrophe for the multiculturalist cause which it espoused, but what is interesting is that on this specific point of controversy, if we look only a few years forward, we see that what was deemed by the press and politicians to be unacceptable has come to be thought of as necessary, even relatively uncontroversial, among senior politicians. To see this, consider what British prime ministers had been saying about British national identity in the years up to the CMEB report. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mrs Thatcher wanted 'to keep fundamental British characteristics' (Thatcher 1999) and in the 1990s John Major hoped that 'fifty years from now

Britain will survive... un-amendable in all of its essentials' (Major 1993). New Labour had a very different view of Britain: for them it was not so much about a thousand years of history, as it was for John Major, but it was a country on the move, 'a young country', as Tony Blair described it. In such rhetoric and that of 'cool Britannia', New Labour were signalling a brand that foregrounded changing lifestyles, urban multiculture, the creative arts and youth culture and the ethnic minority dimension within them. Jack Straw had spoken about Britishness having become more inclusive and multiethnic, and Robin Cook, a senior Cabinet figure, in a highly publicised speech had referred to chicken tikka masala as the favourite national dish. The CMEB was aware of how New Labour were recognising the growing multiculturalising of the national identity. The Commission, however, were not content for senior politicians to merely acknowledge this, as we thought this led to the complacent view that the process could be left to itself, that no action or political leadership was necessary. We wanted to challenge that complacency and passivity, what we referred to as 'multicultural drift'.

This challenge, as we have seen, was not appreciated, to put it mildly. Nevertheless, soon afterwards, Cabinet members started expressing exactly the view that had been lambasted; or, to put it more precisely, which was not sufficiently identified because of the lambasting. In 2001, John Denham argued that Britishness, as it existed, was insufficient, and hence 'positive action must be taken to *build* a shared vision and identity...' (Denham 2001), and in 2007 Jack Straw himself said that it was necessary 'to *develop* an *inclusive* British story which reflects the past, takes a hard look at where we are now and *creates* a potent vision... to make sense of our shared future...' (Straw 2007). Note the active verbs: 'build', 'develop', 'creates' – exactly the view that had motivated the CMEB. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, in this same period of time senior Conservatives have started to express the same view. The current Education Secretary, Michael Gove, has said: 'Britishness is about a mongrel identity' (Gove 2009, 2010), thus directly using an expression that a Tory MP had tried to make out was an insulting inference from Robin Cook's suggestion that the British were not a race (BBC 2001). Even while some Conservatives speak derisively of multiculturalism, Pauline Neville Jones, a figure regarded as being on the right of the Conservative Party, led a review group which 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' (CPNISPG 2007, p. 23). A Leverhulme project that took interviews from

Cabinet ministers and shadow Cabinet ministers during 2007–2008 did not find a uniformity of views on this matter, but found 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 (Uberoi and Modood 2013).

With Ed Miliband declaring at the Labour Party Conference in September 2012 that 'One Nation' is to be his master-concept, one might fear a return to some form of assimilationism or majoritarianism. While that cannot be ruled out in practice, it is unlikely, as in a later speech he celebrated diversity and the contribution of migrants and the second generation (like himself and his brother, David, his rival for the leadership of the Labour party), and made glowing references to the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony and the success of Team GB, including Somalian-born Mo Farah and mixed-race Jessica Ennis, while emphasising that laissez-faire was the mistake of the past and integration is something that has to be worked at (Miliband 2012a and b). 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, and its positive reception in the British media – including the same papers that had lambasted the CMEB – shows how far we have advanced (Katwala 2012). An Australian political theorist opined that the Britain displayed at the Olympics meant that '[m]any countries are [now] looking to Britain as an example of a dynamic multicultural society united by a generous patriotism' (Soutphommasane 2012). Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, the left-wing journalist and a member of the CMEB, who returned her MBE as a protest against the Iraq War, wrote:

> [T]hese 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.
>
> (Alibhai-Brown 2012)

So, my optimistic 'then-and-now' conclusion is that, despite the ferocious attack on the CMEB report and the relentless anti-multiculturalist rhetoric of the last decade, some progress is being made by the standard of multiculturalism. Hence, it seems that the detailed academic analysis which concluded 'the erasure of the Parekh Report as a progressive intellectual imaginary through which to make sense of the multitude

of complex dilemmas facing twenty-first century Britain is all but complete' (McLaughlin and Neal 2007, p. 927) may yet prove to be premature in relation to the report's understanding of the need to pluralise Britishness. Not an easy task, and one, as we have seen, which will be experienced as threatening by some, including powerful forces in the media, but it does seem to be a process that some British politicians and publics have embarked upon. Moreover, if we look beyond the symbolic, at what has happened to 'state multiculturalism' or multiculturalist policies, as this volume does, it will be seen that, contrary to what some academic commentators say, we do not have a 'retreat' or a 'return to assimilation'. There have been a number of new policies in relation to community cohesion, security, immigration and naturalisation, which, considered by themselves, may not be particularly multiculturalist but have to be seen in a larger context. The multiculturalist agenda of New Labour's first term (1997–2001) saw no reversal during its later terms but, rather, a steady advance on a number of fronts such as the outlawing of religious discrimination and incitement to religious hatred, the expansion of state-funded Christian and non-Christian schools, public funding to develop Muslim community infrastructure and the inclusion of Muslim organisation in various spheres of governance (Meer and Modood 2009; O'Toole et al. 2012). Hence, this process is best understood as a civic rebalancing of multiculturalism, a correction of any view that multiculturalism is not about the pluralisation of national citizenship (Modood 2013). The Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government is not so committed to this on-going civic multiculturalism, and has an anti-multiculturalist rhetoric, but it is noticeable that it too had not – by the end of 2012 – reversed any multiculturalist policies.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Bhikhu Parekh, Robin Richardson and Varun Uberoi for their detailed comments on an earlier draft and for bibliographical assistance.

Notes

1. My political philosophy work was not on racial equality (my PhD thesis was entitled 'R G Collingwood, M J Oakeshott and the Idea of a Philosophical Culture' (University of Wales, 1984)). I started full-time intellectual work on issues of race and ethnicity with a visiting fellowship at Nuffield College, 1991–1992.

2. At almost exactly the mid-point between the essays of *Not Easy* and *Still Not Easy*.
3. The report was sub-titled 'The Parekh Report' on the advice of the commercial publisher and with the support of the Commission, but against Bhikhu Parekh's own wishes (Parekh 2001b).
4. I include the report's editor, Robin Richardson, who is not listed on pp. 366–371 but who played a key role in the shaping and drafting of the report.
5. '[T]hey were described as 'worthy idiots' in *The Times*, 'middle class twits' in the *Star*, 'crack-brained' in the *Daily Telegraph*, 'left-wing wafflers' in the *Evening Standard* and 'disconnected, whining liberals' in the *Daily Mail*' (Richardson 2011, p. 154).
6. To see how an academic discussion could be very different, see the Review Symposium in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(4), October 2000: 719–738. This appeared at the same time as the report itself and its media reception and so was written several months before those events.
7. For a fully philosophically elaborated statement, see Parekh (2000).
8. For a Quebecan Commission arguing to the same end, see Bouchard and Taylor (2008, pp. 123–130).

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