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MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND MUSLIM IDENTITY POLITICS

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I offer a rebuttal of the view, now common among the political classes in Western Europe, that Muslim assertiveness is incompatible with the universalism of liberal democratic citizenship. I do so by sketching a view of multicultural citizenship in which respect for difference is grounded in universalist values. My conception of political multiculturalism is based on the ideas of 'difference', 'multi' and a double conception of equality. Multiculturalism seeks the goal of positive difference and the means to achieve it, which crucially involve the appreciation of the fact of multiplicity and groupness, the building of group pride among those marked by negative difference, and political engagement with the sources of negativity and racism. While the focus is not on anything so narrow as normally understood by 'culture', and multicultural equality cannot be achieved without other forms of equality, such as those relating to socioeconomic opportunities, its distinctive feature is about the inclusion into and the making of a shared public space in terms of equality of respect as well as equal dignity. I marry this conception of multiculturalism to a vision of citizenship that is not confined to the state but dispersed across society, compatible with the multiple forms of contemporary groupness and sustained through dialogue, plural forms of representation that do not take one group as the model to whom all others have to conform and new, reformed national identities. Citizenship consists of a framework of rights and practices of participation, but also discourses and symbols

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of belonging, ways of imagining and remaking ourselves as a country and expressing our sense of commonalities, as well as differences in ways in which these identities qualify each other and create inclusive public spaces. I show in some detail that some British Muslims' identity debates have precisely this character. Ideological and violent extremism is indeed undermining the conditions and hopes for multi-culturalism, but this extremism has nothing to do with multiculturalism and is coming into the domestic arena from the international.

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Blaming Multiculturalism, Blaming Muslims

1 This essay is based on my book *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2007).

A central feature of the political discourses in contemporary Western Europe is a critique of multiculturalism that focuses on Muslims.[1] It pre-dates the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and their aftermath, though in Britain at least 2001 is a pivotal year (in relation to other countries, see Modood 2007: 12–14). The late spring of that year saw urban disturbances in a number of Northern English towns and cities in which young Muslim – mainly Pakistani – men played a central role. The dominant political response was that the riots were due to a one-sided multiculturalism having facilitated, even encouraged, segregated communities which shunned each other. All subsequent events seem to point in the same direction. For example, Gilles Keppel (2005) observed that the 7/7 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'. While not all commentators are so gleeful in their reading of these events, it is nevertheless true that virtually throughout the western world there is disaffection with multiculturalism, even among its erstwhile supporters. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to speak of a 'crisis of multiculturalism' and to note that its prevalence is linked to the size or activities of the Muslim population in specific countries (Kymlicka 2007: 55; for qualifications, see Jedwab 2005).

I would like to respond to this state of affairs by restating a conception of multiculturalism which, while not within certain narrow forms of liberalism, places it squarely within an understanding of democratic citizenship and nation-building and so offers a prospect of winning back the lost support for multicultural politics.

Difference, Equality and Citizenship

Multiculturalism gives political importance to a respect for identities that are important to people, as identified in minority assertiveness, arguing that they

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should not be disregarded in the name of integration or citizenship (Young 1990; Taylor 1994; Parekh 2000). Sociologically, we have to begin with the fact of negative 'difference': with alienness, inferiorization, stigmatization, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, racism and so on; but also the sense of identity that groups so perceived have of themselves. The differences at issue are those felt both by outsiders or group members to constitute not just some form of distinctness but a kind of alienness or inferiority that diminishes or makes difficult equal membership in the wider society or polity. The differences in question are in the fields of race, ethnicity, cultural heritage or religious community – typically, differences that overlap between these categories, not least because they do not have singular, fixed meanings.

Multiculturalism refers to the struggle, the political mobilization but also the policy and institutional outcomes, and forms of accommodation in which 'differences' are not eliminated or washed away but to some extent 'recognized'. The character of 'difference' is addressed through both group assertiveness and mobilization, and through institutional and policy reforms to address the claims of the newly settled, marginalized groups; ideally, a negative difference is turned into a positive difference, though in most contemporary situations something of each is likely to be simultaneously present.

It should be clear from the above that the concept of equality has to be applied to groups and not just individuals (Parekh 2000). Different theorists have offered different formulations on this question. Charles Taylor (1994), for example, argues that when we talk about equality in the context of race and ethnicity, we are appealing to two different albeit related concepts, which slightly altering Taylor's nomenclature, I will call *equal dignity* and *equal respect*. Equal dignity appeals to people's humanity or to some specific membership such as citizenship and applies to all members in a relatively uniform way; a good example would be Martin Luther King Jr's demand for civil rights. We appeal to this universalist idea in relation to anti-discrimination policies which depend on the principle that everybody should be treated the same. However, Taylor and other theorists in differing ways also posit the idea of *equal respect*. If equal dignity focuses on what people have in common and so is gender-blind, colourblind and so on, equal respect is based on an understanding that difference is also important in conceptualizing and institutionalizing equal relations between individuals.

This is because individuals have group identities and these may be the ground of existing and longstanding inequalities such as racism, or the ways that some people have conceived and treated others as inferior, less rational and culturally backward. While those conceptions persist they will affect the dignity of non-white people, above all where they share imaginative and social life with white people. The negative conceptions will lead to direct and

indirect acts of discrimination – they will eat away at the possibilities of equal dignity. They will affect the self-understanding of those who breathe in and seek to be equal participants in a culture in which ideas of their inferiority, or even just of their absence, their invisibility, are pervasive. They will stand in need of self-respect and the respect of others, of the dominant group; the latter will be crucial, for it is the source of their damaged self-respect and it is where the power for change lies (Du Bois 1999).

So, denigration of a group identity, its distortion or its denial, the pretence – often unconscious because part of a cultural rather than a personal way of thinking – that a group does not exist, and the withholding of recognition or misrecognition, is a form of oppression (Taylor 1994). It is a form of inequality in its own right, but also threatens the other form of equality – equal dignity – the fulfilment of which can be made impossible by stereotyping or the failure to recognize the self-definitional strivings of marginal groups.

The interaction and mutuality between the two kinds of equality run the other way, too. Equal respect presupposes the framework of commonality and rights embodied in equal dignity. Hence it is quite wrong to think of the latter in terms of universalism and the former as a denial of universality. For not only does the concept of equal respect grow out of a concern with equal dignity, but it only makes sense because it rests on universalist foundations. It is only because there is a fundamental equality between human beings or between citizens that the claim for respect can be formulated. As Taylor says, there is a demand for an acknowledgement of specificity, but it is powered by the universal principle that an advantage that some currently enjoy should not be a privilege but available to all (Taylor 1994: 38–9). Hence, we must not lose sight of the fact that *both* equal dignity and equal respect are essential to multiculturalism; while the latter marks out multiculturalism from classical liberalism, it does not make multiculturalism normatively particularistic or relativist.

Citizens are of course individuals and have individual rights, but they are not uniform and their citizenship contours itself around them. Citizenship is not a monistic identity that is completely apart from or transcends other identities important to citizens; in the way that the theory – though not always the practice – of French republicanism demands. The plurality is ever present and each part of the plurality has a right to be a part of the whole and to speak up for itself and for its vision of the whole. As the parties to these dialogues are many, not just two, the process may be described as multilogical. The multilogues allow for views to qualify each other, overlap, synthesize, modify one's own view in the light of having to coexist with that of others', hybridize, allow new adjustments to be made, new conversations to take place. Such modulations and contestations are part of the internal,

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evolutionary, 'work-in-progress' dynamic of citizenship. Moreover, we perform and experience our citizenship, not just through law and politics but also via civic debate and action initiated by our voluntary associations, community organizations, trades unions, newspapers and media, churches, temples, mosques and so on. Change and reform do not all have to be brought about by state action. They can also occur as a result of public debate, discursive contestations, pressure group mobilizations, and the varied and (semi-) autonomous institutions of civil society.

There is, then, deep resonance between citizenship and multicultural recognition. Not only do both presuppose complementary notions of unity and plurality, and of equality and difference, but the idea of respect for the group self-identities that citizens value is central to each. Moreover, seeing citizenship as a work in progress and as partly constituted, and certainly extended, by contestatory multilogues and novel demands for due recognition as circumstances shift, means that citizenship can be understood as conversation and renegotiation: not just about who is to be recognized but about what is recognition, about the terms of citizenship itself. At one point, it is the injuries of class that demand civic attention; at another there is a plea for dropping a self-deluding 'colourblindness' and of addressing racialized statuses through citizenship. The one thing that civic inclusion does not consist of is an uncritical acceptance of an existing conception of citizenship, of 'the rules of the game' and a one-sided 'fitting-in' of new entrants or the new equals (the ex-subordinates). To be a citizen, no less than to have just become a citizen, is to have a right to not just be recognized but to debate the terms of recognition. Multiculturalism, then, seeks the goal of positive difference and the means to achieve it, which crucially involve the appreciation of the fact of multiplicity and groupness, the building of group pride among those marked out by negative difference, and political engagement with the sources of negativity and racism. Its distinctive feature is the creation of a shared public space in terms of equality of respect as well as equal dignity.

'3+1': Implications for Liberal Citizenship

Multiculturalism arises within contemporary liberal egalitarianism, but it is at the same time in tension with and a critique of some classical liberal ideas. Specifically, it has four major implications for liberal citizenship. Firstly, it is clearly a collective project and concerns groups and not just individuals. Secondly, it is not colour/gender/sexual orientation-'blind' and so breaches the liberal public-private identity distinction which prohibits the recognition of particular group identities in order that no citizens are treated in a more or less privileged way or divided from each other. These

two implications are obvious from the discussion so far, but the next two implications are less obvious and more controversial. The first of these is that multiculturalism takes race, sex and sexuality beyond being merely ascriptive sources of identity, merely categories. Liberal citizenship is not interested in group identities and shuns identitarian politics; its interest in 'race' is confined to anti-discrimination simply as an aspect of the legal equality of citizens. Strictly speaking, race is of interest to liberal citizenship only because no one can choose their race; it is either a biological fact about them or, more accurately, is a way of being categorized by the society around them by reference to some real or perceived biological features, and so one should not be discriminated against on something over which one has no control. But if, as I have argued, equality is also about celebrating previously demeaned identities (for example, taking pride in one's blackness rather than accepting it as a merely 'private' matter), then what is being addressed in anti-discrimination, or promoted as a public identity, is a chosen response to one's ascription: namely pride, identity renewal, the challenging of hegemonic norms and asserting of marginalized identities and so on. Of course, this is not peculiar to race/ethnicity. Exactly the same applies to sex and sexuality. We may not choose our sex or sexual orientation but we choose how to politically live with it. Do we keep it private or do we make it the basis of a social movement and seek public resources and representation for it? In many countries the initial liberal – and social democratic and socialist – response that the assertions of race, political femininity, gay pride politics and so on were divisive and deviations from the only political identity that mattered (citizenship and/ or class, in the case of socialists), soon gave way to an understanding that these positions were a genuine and significant part of a plural, centre-left egalitarian movement.

Marginalized and other religious groups – most notably Muslims – are now utilizing the same kind of argument and making a claim that religious identity, like gay identity, and certain forms of racial identity, should not just be privatized or tolerated, but should be part of the public space. In their case, however, they come into conflict with an additional fourth dimension of liberal citizenship. This additional conflict with liberal citizenship is best understood as a '3+1' rather than merely a fourth difficulty because, while it is not clear that it actually raises a new difficulty, for many on the centre-left this one, unlike the previous three, is seen as a demand that should not be conceded.[2] One would think that if a new group was pressing a claim which had already been granted to others, then what would be at issue would be a practical adjustment, not fundamental principle. However, as a matter of fact, the demand by Muslims not just for toleration and religious freedom but for public recognition is indeed taken to be philosophically very different to the same

2 One of the latest examples being the Euston Manifesto, online at www. eustonmanifesto.org/ joomla/index.php? option =com_ content&task =view &id =12&Itemid = 41.

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demand made by black people, women and gays. It is seen as an attack on the principle of secularism, the view that religion is a feature, perhaps uniquely, of private and not public identity.

Hence it is commonly found in the op-ed pages of the broadsheets that Muslims (and other religious groups) are simply not on a par with the groups with which I have aligned them. It is argued that woman, black and gay are ascribed involuntary identities, while being a Muslim is about chosen beliefs, and that Muslims therefore need or ought to have less legal protection than the other kinds of identities. I think this is sociologically naive (and a political con). The position of Muslims today in countries like Britain is similar to the other identities of 'difference' as Muslims catch up with and engage with the contemporary concept of equality. No one chooses to be or not to be born into a Muslim family. Similarly, no one chooses to be born into a society where to look like a Muslim or to be a Muslim creates suspicion, hostility or failure to get the job you applied for. Of course, how Muslims respond to these circumstances will vary. Some will organize resistance, while others will try to stop looking like Muslims (the equivalent of 'passing' for white); some will build an ideology out of their subordination, others will not, just as a woman can choose to be a feminist or not. Again, some Muslims may define their Islam in terms of piety rather than politics; just as some women may see no politics in their gender, while for others their gender will be at the centre of their politics.

I therefore reject the contention that equality as recognition (uniquely) does not apply to oppressed religious communities. Of course, many people's objections may be based on what they (sometimes correctly) understand as conservative, even intolerant and inegalitarian views held by some Muslims in relation to issues of personal sexual freedom. My concern is with the argument that a commitment to a reasonable secularism rules out extending multicultural equality to Muslims and other religious groups.

I proceed on the basis of two assumptions: firstly, that a religious group's view on matters of gender and sexuality, which of course will not be uniform, are open to debate and change; and secondly, that conservative views cannot be a bar to multicultural recognition.[3] Those who see the current Muslim assertiveness as an unwanted and illegitimate child of multiculturalism have only two choices if they wish to be consistent. They can repudiate the idea of equality as identity recognition and return to the 1950s liberal idea of equality as colour/sex/religion-blindness (Barry 2001). Or they must appreciate that a programme of racial and multicultural equality is not possible today without a discussion of the merits and limits of secularism.

3 It is clear that 'moderate' Muslim public figures in Britain are divided on homosexuality in just the way that all religions seem to be divided today.

Muslims, Identity and Ideology

How does this relate to Muslim identity politics, one of the central sources of anxiety and disillusionment about multiculturalism? Even with those for whom a Muslim identity is in many ways central to their sense of self, it does not follow that it is the religious dimension that is most salient: it can be a sense of family and community, or collective political advancement, or righting the wrongs done to Muslims. Indeed, we cannot assume that being 'Muslim' means the same thing to them. For some Muslims – like most Jews in Britain today – being Muslim is a matter of community membership and heritage; for others, it is a few simple precepts about self, compassion, justice and the afterlife; for some others, it is a worldwide movement armed with a counter-ideology of modernity; and so on.

British Muslim identity politics was virtually created by the *Satanic Verses* affair of the late 1980s and beyond (Modood 1992). Muslims began to make demands for recognition and civic inclusion into a polity which had up to that point misrecognized them (as black or Asian) or had kept them invisible and voiceless; a polity which was struggling to recognize gender, race and ethnicity within the terms of citizenship but was not even aware that any form of civic recognition was due to marginalized religious groups. The conflict that erupted led many to think of themselves for the first time as Muslims in a public way, to think that it was important in their relation to other Muslims and to the rest of British and related societies. This is, for example, movingly described by the author Rana Kabbani, whose *Letter to Christendom* begins with a description of herself as 'a woman who had been a sort of underground Muslim before she was forced into the open by the Salman Rushdie affair' (Kabbani 1989: ix). Such shocks to Muslim identity are hardly a thing of the past. The present situation of some Muslims in Britain is nicely captured by Farmida Bi, a New Labour parliamentary candidate in Mole Valley in 2005, who had not particularly made anything of her Muslim background before 7/7 but was moved by the London bombings to claim a Muslim identity and found the organization Progressive British Muslims. Speaking of herself and others as 'integrated, liberal British Muslims' who were forced to ask 'am I a Muslim at all?', she writes: '7/7 made most of us embrace our Muslim identity and become determined to prove that its possible to live happily as a Muslim in the West' (Bi 2006).

This sense of feeling that one must speak up as a Muslim has nothing necessarily to do with religiosity. Like all forms of difference it comes into being as a result of pressures from 'outside' a group as well as from 'inside'. In this particular case, both the 'inside' and the 'outside' have a powerful geopolitical dimension. The emergence of British Muslim identity and activism has been propelled by a strong concern for the plight of Muslims elsewhere in the world, especially (but not only) where this plight is seen in

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terms of anti-imperialist emancipation and where the UK government is perceived to be part of the problem – tolerant of, if not complicit or actively engaged in, the destruction of Muslim hopes and lives, usually civilian. For British, American and Australian (perhaps to some extent most western) Muslims to develop a sense of national citizenship and to integrate into a polity which has a confrontational posture against many Muslim countries and is at war or occupying some of them in what is perceived by all sides to be a long-term project, is an extremely daunting task and its success cannot be taken for granted. Moreover, domestic terrorism, as well as political opposition, has unfortunately become part of the context. The danger of 'blowback' from overseas military activity is, as events have shown, considerable and capable of severely damaging the movement towards multicultural citizenship.

One of the reasons why I do not think we should simply give up and pursue a less attractive political goal is that I am impressed by how many British Muslims are responding to the crisis with a concern to stand up for their community through civic engagement; with a refusal to give up either their Muslim identity or being part of democratic citizenship. Despite this partial dependency on overseas circumstances outside their control – which might easily have led to passivity and a self-pitying introspection – many British Muslims exhibit a dynamism and a confidence in rising to the challenge of dual loyalties and not giving up on either set of commitments. Ideological and violent extremism is indeed undermining the conditions and hopes for multiculturalism, but, contrary to the arguments of multiculturalism's critics, this extremism has nothing to do with the promotion of multiculturalism but is coming into the domestic arena from the international.

The Danger of Ideology

Ideology is a cause for concern in the debate around the politics of difference as it is in most political discussions. Ideological diagnoses and prescriptions can often be exciting and appealing to a certain constituency, but they are not a good basis for addressing problems and developing strategies for reform because they are too abstract and disconnected from a specific society, its institutions, norms and ways of working. This is often hidden from those who subscribe to particular well-developed ideologies, which often present themselves as total, self-referring, closed or semi-closed systems. An ideology can achieve quite sophisticated levels of internal coherence, as in certain forms of Marxism, but still have a poor sense of connection with any existing society. Additionally, ideologies can be a danger to the pluralist and multilogical nature of citizenship. This is

particularly the case because ideologies typically dichotomize the social world into key actors or groups. These may be workers and capitalists, nation and aliens, male or female, black and white and so on. Each of these dichotomies has a certain validity, but a wholesale application of them in the arena of politics totalizes in such a way that each member of the pair is utterly different – and usually opposed – to the other. All possibilities of overlap, hybridity and plurality are put in abeyance and the paired identities are said to have a sociological primacy which lends support to claims that for members of these groups the relevant identity should always trump all others.

As should be apparent from the above description of the current crisis of multiculturalism, the ideologies that pose the greatest danger are those formed around a totalizing dichotomization of the West and Islam/Muslims. On one side is Islamophobia or anti-Islamism as a set of attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes that are being developed into an ideology in the context of a neo-conservative geopolitical strategy to dominate Muslims. Talk of a 'clash of civilizations', of Islam being deeply opposed to the ethos of democracy and gender equality, of the presence of too many Muslims among migrants and new citizens as a problem for democracy, are some examples of these discourses. Obverse views include those that simply see the West as decadent compared to the civilizational superiority of Islam and its products, or characterizes the West as a colonial overlord. The two sets of discourses are asymmetrical inasmuch as they are sustained by quite unequal intellectual, political, economic and military forces, but each has a similar distorting binary logic. Such dichotomies obscure, for example, the fact that there are a variety of views in the West, including those that are hostile to the western geopolitical domination of the Muslim world, just as there are a variety of views among Muslims. With each ideological tendency, the totalizing of West and Muslim into radical opposites undercuts efforts to build the cross-cutting connections, syntheses and alliances which multicultural citizenship facilitates and also needs. Just as earlier divisions – such as the 'political blackness', an anti-racism in the 1970s and 1980s that separated British people on the grounds of skin colour – had to be challenged, so some versions of Islam that are not sufficiently respectful of, say, fellow British citizens and the aspiration for a plural Britain have to be confronted even while the legitimate grievances of Muslims are being addressed. Indeed, attending to the latter is necessary to any effective change. I must re-emphasize there is no special problem with Islam, let alone with religion as such. It is religious ideologies, not religion, that can threaten the free, healthy working through of multicultural citizenship. Secular ideologies are no less dangerous than religious ones: indeed, in the twentieth century they proved more of a menace. In fact, another of the current dangers to multicultural citizenship is a radical secularism that seeks to destroy the historic

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compromises with organized religion which have been characteristic of citizenship for the last hundred years, especially in Western Europe, and form a promising basis for the accommodation of Muslims in those countries (Modood 2007 and 2010).

National Identity and Being British

Multiculturalism has been broadly right and does not deserve the desertion of support from the centre-left, let alone blame for the present crisis. It offers a better basis for integration than its two current rivals, namely, 'social cohesion' and 'multiculture' (Meer and Modood, 2009). For while the latter is appreciative of a diversity of interacting lifestyles and the emergence of new, hybrid cultures in an atmosphere of 'conviviality', it is at a loss as to how to deal sympathetically with the claims of newly settled ethno-religious groups, especially Muslims, who are too readily stereotyped as 'fundamentalists' (Modood 1998). However, some advocacy of multiculturalism has perhaps overlooked or at least underemphasized the other side of the coin, which is not just equally necessary but is integral to multiculturalism. For one cannot just talk about difference. Difference has to be related to things we have in common. The commonality that most multiculturalists emphasize is citizenship. This citizenship has to be seen in a plural, dispersed and dialogical way and not reduced to legal rights, passports and the franchise (important though these are). I would now like to go further in suggesting that a good basis for or accompaniment to a multicultural citizenship is a national identity.

We in Europe have overlooked that where multiculturalism has been accepted and worked as a state or national project – Canada, Australia and Malaysia, for example – it has not just been coincidental with but integral to a nation-building project. Even in the US, where the federal state has had a much lesser role in the multicultural project, the incorporation of ethno-religious diversity and hyphenated Americans has been about civic inclusion and making a claim upon the national identity. This is important because some multiculturalists, or at least advocates of pluralism and multiculture (the vocabulary of multiculturalism is not always used)[4] – even where they have other fundamental disagreements with each other – argue as if the logic of the national and the multicultural are incompatible. Partly as a result, many Europeans think of multiculturalism as antithetical to rather than as a reformer of, national identity.

Moreover, it does not make sense to encourage strong multicultural or minority identities and weak common or national identities. Strong multicultural identities are a good thing – they are not intrinsically divisive, reactionary or fifth columns – but they need a framework of vibrant,

4 For a discussion of the differences and tensions between communitarian multiculturalism and 'multiculture', see Modood (1998) and Meer and Modood (2009).

dynamic, national narratives and the ceremonies and rituals which give expression to a national identity. It is clear that minority identities are capable of having an emotional pull for the individuals for whom they are important. Multicultural citizenship requires, therefore, if it is to be equally attractive to the same individuals, a comparable counterbalancing emotional pull. Many Britons, for example, say they are worried about disaffection among some Muslim young men and more generally a lack of identification with Britain among many Muslims in Britain. As a matter of fact, surveys over many years have shown Muslims have been reaching out for an identification with Britain. For example, in a Channel 4 NOP survey done in spring 2006, 82 per cent of a national sample of Muslims said they very strongly (45 per cent) or fairly strongly (37 per cent) felt they belonged to Britain,[5] although of course there is also much anger and fear, especially in relation to the aggressive US-UK foreign policies and anti-terrorism legislation. While I do not think that we are at all close to undoing the mess we have got into with these policies, to not build on the clear support there is for a sense of national belonging is to fail to offer an obvious counterweight to the ideological calls for a violent jihad against fellow Britons.

A sense of belonging to one's country is necessary to make a success of a multicultural society. An inclusive national identity is respectful of and builds upon the identities that people value and does not trample on them. Simultaneously respecting difference and inculcating Britishness is not a naive hope but something that is happening even now and which leads everyone to redefine themselves. Perhaps one of the lessons of the current crisis is that in some countries, certainly Britain, multiculturalists and the left in general have been too hesitant about embracing national identity and allying it with progressive politics. The reaffirming of a plural, changing, inclusive British identity, which can be as emotionally and politically meaningful to British Muslims as the appeal of jihadi sentiments, is critical to isolating and defeating extremism. The lack of a sense of belonging to Britain that can stand up to the emotional appeal of transnational solidarities has several causes, including some stemming from the majority society itself. One of these is the exclusivist and racist notions of Britishness that hold that non-white people are not really British and that Muslims, in particular, are an alien wedge. Another is the conventional leftwing view that there is something deeply wrong about defining ourselves in terms of a normative concept of Britishness – that it is somehow racist, imperialist, elitist and so on – and that the goal of seeking to be British is dangerous and demeaning to newly settled groups (Preston 2007). But if the goal of wanting to be British is not considered worthwhile for Commonwealth migrants and their progeny then what are they being expected to integrate into? And if there is nothing strong, purposive and inspiring to integrate into, why bother with

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integration? We cannot ask new Britons to integrate and at the same time suggest that being British is a hollowed-out, meaningless project whose time has come to an end. This will only produce confusion and will detract from the sociological and psychological processes of integration, while offering no defence against the calls of other loyalties and missions. Today's national identities certainly need to be reimagined in a multicultural way, but if this is thought impossible or unnecessary then multiculuralism is left not triumphant but with fewer emotive resources.

It is therefore to be welcomed when politicians of the left show an interest in British national identity. A leading example of this is the former UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. He has argued for the need to revive and revalue British national identity in a number of speeches (most notably, Brown 2006). Brown wants to derive a set of core values (liberty, fairness, enterprise and so on) from a historical narrative, yet such values, even if they could singly or in combination be given a distinctive British take, are too complex and their interpretation and priority too contested to be amenable to be set into a series of meaningful definitions. Every public culture must operate through shared values, which are both embodied in and used to criticize its institutions and practices, but they are not simple and uniform and their meaning is discursively reworked as old interpretations are dropped, and new circumstances unsettle one consensus and another is built up. Simply saying that freedom or equality is a core British value is unlikely to settle any controversy or tell us, for example, what is hate speech and how it should be handled. Definitions of core values will either be too bland or too divisive and the idea that there has to be a schedule of value statements to which every citizen is expected to sign up is not in the spirit of a multilogical citizenship. National identity should be woven in debate and discussion, not reduced to a list. For central to it is a citizenship and the right to make a claim on the national identity in which negative difference is challenged and supplanted by positive difference. We cannot afford to leave out these aspects of multicultural citizenship from an intellectual or political vision of social reform and justice in the twenty-first century. Rather, the turning of negative difference into positive difference should be one of the tests of social justice in this century.

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