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Multicultural « Debris » in contemporary Britain

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Abstract:

This article examines the historical and theoretical contours of multiculturalism in Britain. It suggests that multiculturalism was rather misunderstood theoretically and then misapplied practically. We review the theoretical foundations of multiculturalism with a focus on the British version of multiculturalism. We proceed by tracing the political use/abuse of this concept in managing British race relations. The Rushdie Affair 1988 and the race riots of 2001 are taken as brief case studies. Finally, the article investigates the nuances and rectifications in British rhetoric of governance in relation to the ideology of multiculturalism within the context of endangered national unity and identity.

Key words: Multiculturalism, race relations, national identity, Britishness.

INTRODUCTION:

Within western liberal democracies, integrating ethnic minorities has posed numerous challenges. What matters to them- and in fact to any multicultural or multi-national society- is how to strike a balance between two compelling needs: cultural diversity and recognition versus national unity and social cohesion. To put it bluntly, the issue is how to create

unity within diversity and paradoxically diversity within unity. Britain has not been an exception. Throughout its imperial history, Britain witnessed various cultural encounters with different cultures, communities, religions and nations. Yet, Post-War era was typical in that Britain witnessed the entry of numerous waves of immigrants notably from its ex-empire and the commonwealth and the issue of integration became a clear and demanding public issue.

The British sociologist Adrian Favell, in his masterpiece *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain* (2001) compared the British race relations experience to that of France. He identified a number of distinctive aspects of the British philosophy of integrating its ethnic minorities. He identified four major traits. For him, British race relations politics tends to be "minoritarian", 'differentialist', "race-obsessedness" and "unprincipled" (pragmatic).

The British philosophy of integrating ethnic minorities seems to be "minoritarian" since it fossilizes and essentializes differences between the mainstream majority and other minorities. This process is understood as perpetuation of inequalities between the two blocs with the minority being given a subordinate position. Ethnic minorities are ten trapped in their minoritarianism and at least are discursively hampered from the real sources of power and empowerment.

The second, aspect is the 'differentialist' dimension of such policy. In this context, differentialism means that the official race-related politics and policies encourage, either directly or indirectly ethnic self-exclusion. The increasing relevant literature on the aspects and effects of ethnic minorities' segregation is indicative of the growing tendency towards leading what came to be called "parallel lives" within ethnic "comfort zones". Such segregationism was detected and managed along ethnic lines. Importantly, ethnic residential and socio-cultural segregation was noticed even among ethnic minorities themselves; ethnic lack of mixing is not just a

question of the host white majority and subordinate ethnic minorities. This practice was found out among ethnic minorities of the same historical and social experiences. For instance, what was generally seen as "homogenous" South Asian communities is discovered to be a mosaic of different and even antithetic communities divided along various cultural and religious parameters (Hindus vs. Muslims). The officially encouraged and self-imposed multiculturalism allowed the creation and perpetuation of "self-segregation" which led to marginalization and lack of social cohesion. The political ideology of multiculturalism, thus, offered fixed readymade ethnic identities that overlooked the dynamism and malleability of the concept of identity itself. After all, identity is a system in flux, a question of becoming rather than being to use Stuart Hall's expression.

The third aspect is its "race-obsessedness". British political and cultural jargon is replete with reference to the concept of race and its various derivates. The same is with the more fashionable concept of ethnicity. It perpetuates race-related discourses and racism which would in important respects; breed a kind of soft apartheid or segregationist policies. Moreover, the institutionalization of classificatory legislation and socio-cultural backing of the centrality of "colour" as a marker and a maker of individuals' self-description is an outstanding instance of such "race-obsessed" aspect of British race-related approach.

The last is its pragmatism or being "unprincipled". The dominant paternalist race relations management model opted for by British successive administrations set the stage for what we may call "racialized laissez faire" politics of race. Again, such pragmatism precluded any theoretically informed and practically experienced regulation of race relations in contemporary Britain. Hence, arguably, race-related legislation is the end-product of the ebbs and flows of race relations not its manager and regulator.

CRITICAL MOMENTS OF BRITISH RACE RELATIONS POLITICS:

The issue of integrating British ethnic minorities into the mainstream society has been a fundamental one in the history of British race relations. Both sides of the political spectrum, whether left or right, are committed to a race-related consensus which is built on the assumption that Britain is a multicultural and multi-racial community while these multiculturality and multi-raciality are produced and maintained by a strict immigration controls ideology. The wisdom behind such consensus is that regulated immigration would create more harmonious and cohesive intercultural relations. As early as the 1990's, Michael Howard, the then Conservative Home Office Secretary, told the House of Commons in December 1995 about the need to tighten immigration controls, defending the measures in his Asylum and Immigration Bill. He often repeated that firm immigration control was a prerequisite for harmonious race relations. Almost 30 years before (1966), his Labour predecessor Roy Jenkins had uttered the same words: "...immigration," Roy Jenkins said, "should not be so high as to create a widespread resistance to obstruct the integration process" (Jenkins, 1966). Thus, "

> From the 1960's on, policy makers seemed to embrace a 'twin track' strategy in response to immigration. On the one hand, they imposed increasingly restrictive immigration controls specifically designed to exclude coloured (the term coloured was widely used to describe non-white ethnic minorities) immigrants. On the other hand, they instituted a framework of legislation aimed at outlawing racial discrimination and facilitating the integration of non-white communities in British society" (Zriba, 2005: pp 99-100)

Such "twin track" strategy was elegantly expressed by the British Labour MP Roy Hattersley when he declared that "Without limitation integration is impossible, without integration limitation is inexcusable" (quoted in Rose: p 229).

Remarkably, British governments needed to set up institutional solutions to post-colonial immigration. There were two striking and contradictory issues in post war British race-related policies. First, Britain, in the context of national reconstruction after the devastating effects of the Second World War, was in dire need of cheap and largely unskilled labour to rebuild what the Nazis damaged. Second, Britain had to cope with its imperial legacies and commitments towards its ex-colonies. Those ex-colonies were brought up to believe that Britain was their mother country and accordingly they expected to meet no serious obstacles when they decided to immigrate there.

Within the post-war era of consensus, immigration was largely accepted as a fundamental aspect of British society. Cultural pluralism was depicted as an asset that need valorization and socio-cultural and political plans were offered to ease the integration of British ethnic minorities. A number of race relations acts were passed to echo such official interest in creating harmonious relations between British ethnic minorities and the dominant white community. Tow topical acts were passed: Race Relations Act of 1976 and 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act. The Race Relations Act of 1976 made it illegal to discriminate against any person because of race, color, nationality, or origin, and it is a criminal offence to incite racial hatred. 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act emphasized that every institution and local authority has not only not to discriminate but to promote racial equality. Apart from their legislative requirements, the two acts presented a watershed in British race-related legislation since they were the fundamental acts in organizing and managing race relations with British society and polity. They equally paved the way for the emergence and consolidation of multicultural politics in contemporary Britain.

Historically speaking, there seemed to be an enduring consensus on the issue of race and race relations in immediate post war British governments whether Labour or Conservative. Little political disagreement was remarkable regarding the

integration of British ethnic minorities or the management of immigration policy. British politicians seemed to be more extrovert and concerned about issues of class, economics and gender. Britain' relation with the Commonwealth and Empire colored such ethnic consensus. In general, the immigrants from the British ex-colonies were welcomed as familiar population. Consequently,

> "Both left and right were happy with the situation, if sometimes for different reasons: to the left it was the appropriate response of Britain to its international responsibilities to the ex-colonies; to the right, it was the inevitable expression of the fact that any Commonwealth subject could say '*civis Britannicus sum*', the fulfilment of Britain's role as empire leader, and the preservation of sovereign rule. (Favell, 2001: pp 101-102)

The British experience of imperialism was rather paternalistic. Comparatively, Britain co-habited with the cultures of its colonies allowing considerable freedom to the colonized to preserve their cultural and social institutions intact. Arguably, British Empire was a multicultural empire par excellence where different cultures coexisted and even flourished. The emergence of the Commonwealth as a credible "substitute" to the Empire was regarded, arguably, as a continuation of British central role in the organization. Members of the Commonwealth, were, then deemed as legitimate British citizens with the right to immigrate freely to Britain, "the mother country". Open door policy of immigration was a viable option. A junior Home Office minister boasted in 1958 that:

> "This country is proud to be the centre of an inter-racial Commonwealth…which is the greatest assortment of peoples of all races, creeds, and colours the world has ever seen. As a result…we have always allowed any of the people in what was the Empire and is now the Commonwealth to come to this country and go as they please". (Hansard, vol. 596, col.1552, quoted in Saggar, 1992: p 70)

Thus, the immigrants were encouraged to come to Britain, notably, within the context of reconstruction plans. Immigrants represented a necessary cheap labor to rebuild what the Second World had damaged. Immigrants were widely welcomed and seen as an economic necessity. However, the race-oriented consensus seemed to come to an end with the race riots of 1958 in Notting Hill, London, and Nottingham. The events alarmed the British authority to the need to deal with immigration and immigrants differently. Race and race relations became, hence, a national priority and moved from the margin to the center of British political debate. Widespread anti-immigration malaise was gathering momentum. The British society and British politicians turned the page of tolerance and became impatient with the new comers with their perceived "alien cultures". One political observer warned:

> The government must introduce legislation quickly to end the tremendous influx of couloured people from the Commonwealth. Overcrowding has fostered vice, drugs, prostitution and the use of knives. For years the white people have been tolerant. Now their tempers are up.(Quoted in Miles and Phizacklea, 1984: p 36)

Open door immigration came to its end and the discourses of tolerance and intercultural communication seemed to evaporate. Two major immigration control acts were enacted: Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 and Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968. Commonwealth Immigrants Act restricted the free entry of Commonwealth and colonial subjects; entry based on vouchers; quota system; no right of appeal. Yet the 1968 version distinguished between British citizens who were partials and those who were not, and accorded entry accordingly. What became clear is that the open door policy of immigration came to its end and race became a topical thesis within both British sociology and British political culture. The 1960's were turbulent not only in United States but also in Britain itself. The American Civil Rights Movement

was a catalyst and microcosm to other race-related movements among which was the British. It was the heyday of progressive liberal politics where ethnic minorities were accorded a number of rights and entitled to some benefits of British citizenship. The then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins broached the issues of immigration management and those of integration. He seemed to strike the balance between the need to control immigration and promote integration. The equation was then no integration is tenable without limiting the number of immigrants but importantly immigration cannot be justified without full integration. Commenting on his understanding of integration, Jenkins once wrote:

> Integration is perhaps rather a loose word. I do not regard it as meaning the loss, by immigrants, of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think we need in this country a 'melting pot', which will turn everyone out in a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman … I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of uniformity, but cultural diversity, coupled with equality of opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. (Butcher, 2011: p54)

Obviously, integration was seen as a priority and race relations became problematic. It is no longer something taken for granted. Jenkins identified a terminological and conceptual distinction between integration and assimilation. For him, British preferred model of managing its ethnic minorities was cultural diversity rather than cultural uniformity that was the standard target for American experience. Yet, Jenkins talked about "mutual tolerance" which posed a problematic question: who is tolerating whom? This question supposed a lack of communication between British various ethnic minorities. But, equally, it underpinned a spectacular celebration of difference rather than highlighting potential similarities. Such celebration of difference was the gist of the historic speech of the right-wing politician Enoch Powell "Rivers of Blood" in 1968. Powell, referring to Britain and British people, declared that:

> We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding a family with spouses and fiancées whom they have never seen (Powell, 1969: p 289)

Powell's speech invoked the myth of cultural unity and superiority of Britain. He indulged in the discourses of cultural distinctiveness of British customs and political institutions. He argued that unbridled immigration would result into spoiling the purity of the English blood and generate cultural conflict and social fragmentation. Powell's played on inherent fears of the British working class of being reduced to the position of a racial minority in their "own" society. Couched in the discourse of public order/disorder, Powell argued that allowing Britain to become a multi-racial society means the destruction of any common national culture and the ushering into a state of "bloody" violent confrontation of the white majority and the non-white minorities. The race riots of 1958 were invoked as an outstanding instance. Nevertheless, ironically, the same order/disorder discourses of Powell were employed by British governments whether Labour or Conservative to finish off Powellian thesis. Race was systematically wiped out from the mainstream agenda and both major political parties detached themselves from Powell's arguments. They believed the such arguments were racist and discriminatory and very likely to incite civil disturbances and endanger national social cohesion. Moreover, Powell's celebration of the distinctiveness and uniqueness of English national identity was thought to be misunderstood and abused by some nationalist and sectionalist movements in the other nations within the United Kingdom. Thus, Enoch Powell and his "rivers of blood" speech were regarded as a clear and present danger that needs marginalization and exclusion from mainstream political arena.

The Labour MP Tony Ben warned that: "If we do not speak up now against the filthy and obscene racialist propaganda ... the forces of hatred will mark up their first success and mobilise their first offensive." (Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky : 1971, pp159-160). Subsequent race relations acts worked to express the progressive nature of British liberal race related policy. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was then created to fight against any racial discrimination against ethnic minorities. However, the end of the 1970's witnessed other race riots and again the issue of race came back to the center of political debate. There seemed to be a steady decline of the process of the de-politicization of race. The race relations strategy of avoidance followed by successive British governments in the age of Consensus was no longer maintainable. Race riots reached their peak with the popular events of Brixton in 1981. The then conservative Thatcherite government was committed to tighten control on immigration and the 1981 Nationality Act was indicative of more check and controls put on the entry of immigrants. Even before here election as the first female British Prime Minister, he uttered in an interview with Granada TV in 1978:

> "But there was a committee which looked at it and said that if we went on as we are then by the end of the century there would be four million people of the new Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather *swamped by people with a different culture* and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in» (Tomlinson, 2013) (emphasis is mine)

This kind of discourse is symptomatic of the emergence of a new anti-immigrants agenda. The use of the expression "swamped by people with a different culture" aroused the fears of the British and especially the British working class (the majority of the electorate) of being dominated by the new comers with their

alien cultures and importantly with their competitiveness as a cheap labour in the period of increasing economic recessions. The political outcome of such anti-immigrants' emotionally-charged language was the victory of Margaret Thatcher in the General Election. Whether such speech was just for popular mass-mediated consumption or a true incarnation of a conservative nationalist and even jingoistic spirit of Thatcher and her party was not topically important. What was really crucial was the outcomes of such discourses being indulged and voiced by a prominent political figure like Thatcher. The discursive cognitive schema that Thatcher coined was that immigrants represented a flood that threatened the very existence of Britain as a nation. Her "swamping flood" metaphor was in considerable respect a revival of Powell's "rivers of blood"; after all the river can flood and swamp Britain and its culture with different bloods that contaminate the purity of the original "pure" British blood. The resonance of that speech is that it revived Powell's speech and emphasized its credibility. It bestowed it with a political and cultural legitimacy.

Border control has become a top priority for successive British governments. Laws of immigration control were not built upon straightforward ideological premises. They were rather pragmatically inspired. Immigration control was thus to serve the established British population (ethnic minorities and dominant white population). Thus according to official instructions

> "The function of immigration control is broadly to ensure that people … are admitted only in such numbers and for such purposes as are consistent with the national interest. The objectives of the control are to prevent the entry of people who are personally unacceptable, for example because of a criminal record, to protect the resident labour force and to keep the rate of immigration within limits at which it will not give rise to serious social problems"(HMSO, 1985: p 13)

Again, despite the mild (somewhat neutral) language of the instruction, it is obvious that immigrants were negatively represented as strong potentials of "serious social problems". This would harm the collective image of immigrants primarily and even the well-established British ethnic minorities secondarily. Seemingly, the age of border control policy has reached its maturity. The policy has been justified and explained pragmatically. This is according to British authorities, as much as immigration control limits the number of immigrants and hence avoids Britain' "swamping" with "strange bloods", it is justifiable. As mentioned before, the number game was interpreted as the most appropriate solution to, first appease the fears of British white majority and second to facilitate the integration of the already settled ethnic minorities. Arguably, this 'twin track' strategy was somewhat utilitarian and beneficial not only to the mainstream majority but equally to the first generation of British ethnic minorities. Adrian Favell (2001) shows how such strategy created a terminological and political distinction between the status of "immigrants" and "ethnic minorities". Ethnic minorities were thus given ample opportunity and enough time to establish themselves within the host society and "they have had a clear period of twenty to thirty years to establish themselves and a place for their culture and ethnicity within the British nation" (Favell: 2001, p 114).

The issues of integrating British ethnic minorities intermingled and overlapped with the political and normative issues of the meaning and definition of citizenship. The question was how and to what extent the ethnic minorities can fulfill their citizenship status. Is their citizenship like that of the mainstream? Do they need specific citizenship? And if yes what type(s) of citizenship rights and duties do they need? These were questions which Britain has been grappling. The answers seem endless and open ended. In 1990, the report of the Commission on Citizenship attempted to elucidate the

meaning of citizenship and offer a tenable definition. It stated that

> Citizenship, whatever it means, is a cultural achievement, a gift of history, which can be lost or destroyed. The Commission's purpose in publishing this Report is to propose practical ways in which our participatory arrangements can be strengthened so that they remain efficient rather than simply dignified, or ceremonial, parts of the constitution. (1990: p xv)

The cultural nature of the political concept citizenship is clear. What can be understood from this discursive formation is that citizenship cannot escape its cultural context and then speaking about citizenship in Britain means invoking British cultural repertoire. To be a citizen and enjoy the benefits of citizenship, ethnic minorities have to endorse the cultural dictates of Britain. Arguably, citizenship was an embodiment of cultural identity in Britain.

In general, given the nationalist tendencies of the Post-War British governments, immigrants and established ethnic minorities were generally expected to integrate into the host culture. It was just a question of time. British authority (nationally and locally) operated with a model which conceived of the problem as being one of integration and assimilation. The leading assumptions of this model, "The immigration-integration model", are stated by Richardson and Lambert (quoted in Abercrombie *et al*, 1994: p 248) as follows:

1-The immigrants are strangers by virtue of their colour and culture
2-The host society is confused and insecure and, as a result reacts with hostility and intolerance
3-The host society is stable and does not have any fundamental conflicts within it
4-The stability is temporarily disturbed by immigrants. Order is restored, however, when the immigrants adapt to British society and the white population accepts immigrants

5-This process of adaptation and acceptance may be broken down into several phases, which can proceed at varying speeds and may be complete only after several generations have passed.

Arguably, this version of the 'immigration-integration model' made it hard for the British politicians of the era to appreciate the cultural differences and meet the needs of the newcomers. Consequently, any special measure to respond to their specific needs or to tackle 'racial disadvantage' would be seen as "privileged treatment and politically incorrect" (Singh, 2002: 1). Just like other British citizens, the immigrants and even the already established ethnic minorities would and should resolve their difficulties through the 'self-help' approach of their predecessors. There seemed to be no clear and legal framework that offered assurance and support to British ethnic minorities.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION: MULTICULTURAL BRITAIN:

Though historians tend to refer to the 1980' and 1990's as the decades when multicultural politics came to the fore in Britain, the story of cultural diversity, inter-culturalism and multiculturalism dates back to the days of the British Empire itself.

Bikhu Parekh (1998), one of the most popular political theorists who wrote on multiculturalism in Britain, has made important theoretical and normative contributions to understand multiculturalism. He has identified five models of integrating minorities that societies tended to pursue. These models are: Proceduralist, Assimilationist, Bifurcationist (Procedural and Assimilational), Pluralist and Millet model. During the 1980' and 1990's, the British approach was rather pluralist. British authorities thought that ethnic minorities needed more than tolerance; they needed recognition of their cultural values. Hence, multiculturalism was systematically

encouraged. The theoretical trends within social and cultural theory marked the salience and emergence of what came to be called "cultural turn". Such cultural turned set the stage for the appearance and consolidation of "Cultural Studies" as a well-established subject in academia. The British scholars like Richard Hoggart, William Thompson, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall were towering figures in the domain and British Cultural Studies was globally leading. What Cultural Studies did was to recognize the importance of culture as a key factor in understanding human societies. Humans are thus understood as basically cultural beings. Suggestively, ethnic minorities needed cultural recognition and valuation to feel and live their humanities. Pluralist approach to integrating minorities was hospitable to cultural diversity. Unlike assimilationist views of integrating ethnic minorities who ardently thought that ethnic minorities have to fully integrate into British culture or simply leave the nation (a case of love or leave it), cultural pluralists believe that ethnic minorities should be given ample room to enjoy their cultural rights along with others. Education was the major site where multicultural values were to take place and flourish. The Swann Report (1984) was central in encouraging multicultural visions and practices in education. The report was entitled "Education for All" which suggested that none would be excluded from educational opportunities. All ethnic minorities should enjoy the benefits of education and their cultures be recognized and appreciated. The report suggested a more inclusive multicultural education for both ethnic minorities and mainstream white majority. Such arguments were the substitute to the already adopted antiracist approach. Moreover, the report investigated ethnic disadvantage in education and presented a wider analysis of academic underachievement of ethnic minorities. The research findings showed that though African- Caribbean minority was achieving much lower results than whites and Asians. The Swann Report rejected the provision of English as a second language and suggested that bilingual children should be

educated through mainstream education and improve their intercultural understanding by being aware of minority cultures (Parekh, 1998). Equally, the Swann Report rejected "segregated 'ethnic minority' schools, especially 'Islamic' schools. The report was thus an embodiment of a secular inclusive multiculturalism away from the divisive character of religiously-based education.

The pluralism the report suggests and defends is an idealised utopian vision of cultural pluralism. The report presents a theoretical formula which both political orientations from the right and the left widely accepted but seldom realized when in office. The report states that:

> We consider that a multi-racial society such as ours would in fact function most effectively and harmoniously on the basis of pluralism which enables, expects and encourages members of all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures, whilst also allowing and where necessary, assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within this common framework. (EFA, p. 5)

The Swann Report was consequently deemed as the best expression of the need for cultural recognition of ethnic minorities and their rights. It was equally an official avowal that the time of cultural pluralism and then multiculturalism has gained momentum. In the same vein, political and social theorists appreciated the centrality and relevance of what came to be called the "cultural turn" both in sociology and political science. It is widely accepted within ethnic studies that the binary division between the categories of black and white was not tenable and workable. Those two categories did not capture the dynamism and ever-changing character of identity whether individual or collective. The postcolonial concept of "hybridity" well expresses the overlapping and multiple natures of identity formation and expression. Moreover, increasing number of ethnicity-related studies confirm the fact that ethnic minorities

themselves are not homogeneous block as they were used to be presented and represented (Back and Solomos, 2000). This gave credibility to liberal and pluralist defense of multiculturalism. In 1998, the race-related independent Runnymede Trust conducted research to chart out the possible avenues and contours that race relations may tread in what came to be considered as British multicultural society. The outcome of such research was the publication of a crucial document entitled "*The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*" in 2000. It was also known as the Parekh Report as Professor Bikhu Parekh was the chairman of the project. According to Andrew Pilkington "The purpose of the report was to analyse the current state of Britain and propose ways of combating racial disadvantage and enabling Britain become a vibrant multicultural society (2003: p 265).

The report was both descriptive and normative. It presented a scrutiny of the current state of British race relations and also set an agenda to how to secure acceptable race relations within British multicultural parameters. Importantly, the report challenged the conventional conception of Britain as being divided into whites versus blacks or non-whites or into minorities and majority. Alternatively, Britain is conceptualized as a "community of communities". This view suggests and emphasizes the dynamic nature of those communities and overrides any preferential categorization of British citizens into inferiors and superiors. A further conceptualization argues that Britain was also a "community of citizens". This enhances the traditional British values of individualism and liberalism. Britain, being a "community of communities" and a "community of citizens", is to create unity within diversity and diversity within unity. The report adopts the three values of socio-economic equality, community cohesion and cultural difference within the hegemonic multicultural paradigm. Those values "must be held together, qualifying and challenging each other, yet also mutually informing and enriching" (Parekh, 2000: p 105).

Normatively, the report offered six major recommendations to be followed to secure good future race relations and keep multicultural consensus intact. Those recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- The need to rethink the national story and national identity;
- The need to recognize that Britain comprises a range of "majority" and "minority" communities which are internally diverse and which are changing;
- The need to strike a balance between the need to treat people equally, the need to respect differences and the need to maintain shared values and social cohesion;
- The need to address and remove all forms of racism;
- The need to reduce economic inequalities;
- The need to build a pluralist human rights culture. (Pilkington, 2003: pp 265-266)

The report received different attitudes. But the overall perception was positive and *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* was regarded as a cornerstone reference to those interested in understanding the current and possible future of multi-cultural Britain. The onset of the twenty first century seemed to be heyday of the multicultural ideology in contemporary Britain. The dictum of the American scholar Nathan Glazer « We are all multiculturalists now" seemed to find resonance and credibility in 1990's and early twentieth century Britain. All the British citizens, whether they were opponents or proponents of multiculturalism, accepted that Britain became irreversibly a multicultural society. Yet by the onset of the twenty first century the 2001 race riots in some British cities along with the September events in USA posed a serious defiance of the multicultural establishment and new alternative conceptualizations and discourses seemed to seize the center of the British race-related floor.

THE END OF MULTICULTURALISM:

By the end of the 1980, and throughout the 1990' many events put the multicultural creed into question. Dramatic events such the Rushdie Affair of 1989 and the race riots of 2001 in some northern British cities made it hard to boast on multiculturalism and its alleged merits.

Multiculturalism and the politics of difference seemed to work well throughout the 1980' and 1990's. However, 1989 Rushdie Affair, race riots of 2001 in some British cities and the 7/7 bombings in London ushered into a new era in which multicultural politics were seen a detrimental trigger of the lack of a common sense of national identity and social cohesion. A crisis of identity seemed to hit British society and issues of Britishness and belonging came to the fore as urgent needs. While past riots such as Brixton events of 1981 were seen as a result of lack of cultural recognition, the new 21st events were read as the complete opposite: too much cultural recognition and pluralism were the direct cause of such race-related violence.

In 1988, a controversial book entitled *The Satanic Verses* was published by the British Indian novelist Ahmed Salman Rushdie. In brief, the book was judged to insult Islam and Muslims and immediately a Fatwa was declared which urged the assassination of Rushdie after being exempted as committing religious blasphemy. Rushdie denied such accusation and in 1989 he wrote that his novel was not ""an anti-religious novel. It is, however, an attempt to write about migration, its stresses and transformations" (Rushdie 1989). He even apologized for his assumed insult to faith in general and Islam in particular. He wrote in his apology letter:

> I recognize that Muslims in many parts of the world are genuinely distressed by the publication of my novel. I profoundly regret the distress the publication has occasioned to the sincere followers of Islam. Living as we do in a world of many faiths, this experience has served to remind us that we must all be

> conscious of the sensibilities of others. (MacDonogh *et al*, 1993: p 132).

Beyond personal goals of the letter, Rushdie's letter was indicative of the need to understand "the sensibilities of others" and respect them. Such understanding correlates with the dominant theses of multiculturalism in Britain. Britain was, then, a nation of multi-faiths, multi-ethnicity and multi-culture. Yet, such denial and apology could not halt the increasing international anger of Muslims. The book was burnt and Rushdie was largely seen as blasphemous. Violent demonstrations took place in what came to be perceived as multicultural British society. Such largely Muslim relations were read differently by different political and social theorists. The major concern was how such reactions violated British values of freedom of speech and tolerance. For assimilationists, the Rushdie Affair was a spectacular evidence of the failure of multicultural politics in Britain. To quote the political theorist Bikhu Parek essay, "The assimilationists accused Muslims of 'disloyalty' to and lack of 'love' for Britain, the former because they had shown greater respect for Khomeini than for the British law, the latter because they showed no concern for the good name of Britain and the views and feelings of their fellow-citizens" (1998: p 18). Obviously, such Affair and the reactions of British Muslims were golden opportunity for conservative assimilationists and far-right racists to attack the liberal and progressive discourses of integrationists who believed in multiculturalism. Never were assimilationists, racists and nationalist unique in their attack on Muslims' reaction. Liberals and left-wing progressivists were also offended by such reactions and their cause was left unjustifiable. Though liberals joined the nationalists and assimilationists in their criticism, they differed considerably on the "whys": the causes. Liberals stressed the fact that British Muslim protesters violated the basic principles and values of British law and society. Such values were constitutive of the nature and essence

of British identity. Their preclusion and violation meant the inability to confirm to and respect Britain and British way of life. It meant also a dramatic failure of ethnic minorities in general and Muslims in particular to integrate into British way of life and respect the very values that enabled them to get their multicultural rights and public political recognition. The Rushdie Affair highlighted a resultant multicultural liberal paradox. The paradox was that "liberals had for years fought the white society's intolerance of its ethnic minorities only to find themselves now confronted with the latter's own intolerance of one of them" (Parek, 1998: p 18). The seeds of dissatisfaction of the multicultural approach of integrating ethnic minorities were underway and the integrationist model was hard to maintain. Integrationist model seemed to need fundamental revisions. We agree with Professor Bikhu Parek on the crucial consequences that Rushdie Affair generated. We equally add that such consequences were shared with other incidences such as the 2001 race riots and 7/7 London bombings (2005).

The second major race-related even was the race riots of 2001. It is vital here to note that other major events did dramatically shape the multicultural consensus in contemporary Britain. For instance, we can mention the 7/7 bombings in London and how they metamorphosed the liberal multicultural agenda. Yet, in this article, we selected to focus on the Rushdie Affair and 2001 race riots because they were in many respects turning points in the contemporary history of British race relations.

Publicly and officially conceived race riots erupted on July 7 and lasted until July 9 in some multiethnic northern British cities. Their general background included a series of violent incidents in the Lidget Green area of Bradford. The same process took place in other cities notably Burnley on 24-26 June, Oldham on 26-29 May. However, the immediate context was supplied by the cancelling of the Bradford Festival planned

for July 7, because of police fears about an intervention by the racist British National Party (BNP) (Zriba, 2005).

An increasing spasm of violence shook Bradford on the night of July 7: about 400-500 people were active on the streets armed with different weapons. Fires were started, and some stabbings occurred, including attacks on police horses. Damage to property was enormous, estimated at £7.5-10 million. 326 police officers were injured, and occupants' lives were placed at risk (Samad *et al*, 2002: 9). The July events had been preceded by comparatively minor violence at Easter. John Denham, Chairman of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion, in the report *Building Cohesive Communities* (2001) provided along with other researchers statistical figures about the damage caused by those events. The damage was great not only in material properties but also in the multicultural consensus in Britain. Again, multiculturalism was held responsible for the lack of ethnic genuine integration into the mainstream culture. Equally, social cohesion, or to use the preferred British expression, "community cohesion" was the principal victim of such multicultural creed. In response to such racial violence, a number of race-related official reports were produced to broach the aspects and causes of such race riots. Three major investigations were held in the cities of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. In Bradford, the Ouseley Report (2001) presented somewhat nuanced reading of multicultural politics in the locality of Bradford. The report described the increasing self-segregation within Bradford's communities. Such polarization and self-segregation, the Report stressed, were the outcome of an accumulation of mutual distrust and fear between the various local communities. This rampant culture of fear urged those local minorities to create their "comfort zones" and retreat to them whenever they are confronted with hardships. Racial residential segregation was, consequently, considered as the major trigger of race riots and lack of social cohesion. Hence, residential segregation was seen as the result of cultural

concentration which promoted "parallel lives" in Bradford and Britain in general. The Report represented Bradford as a city composed of groups who refused to interact, and who needed official training to learn how to inter-mix. Thus overdose of ethnic culture could lead to contradictory outcomes. Multiculturalism was responsible for lack of communication between not only British ethnic minority and its majority but also between ethnic minorities themselves. Relatively, the same findings and discourses were exposed by the two other reports with some idiosyncratic aspects.

In response to those race riots and the alleged failure of multiculturalism, the New Labour government opted for the alterative discourses of community cohesion and cultural diversity. Two national reports (Cantle Report and Denham Report) were leading documents in shaping the new race-related agenda. Though the *Cantle Report* and the *Denham Report* identified numerous reasons for the eruption of violence in the northern cities of England during the spring and summer of 2001 – such as socio-economic deprivation of ethnic minorities in particular and the general population in general, irresponsible negative media coverage of ethnic issues and extremist group practices – they concentrated primarily on the question of increasing ethnic concentration and self-segregation. Focus on culture was a reflection of the politics of recognition that appeared during the 1980's.

In those two reports ethnic segregation seemed to be the key cause and consequence of inter-ethnic friction in Britain. Central to the concept of ethnic segregation discourse was the phrase coined by Ted Cantle and his group: "the series of parallel lives" (Cantle: 9) that all the communities were operating. The phrase "parallel lives" seemed to sum up all the official discourse of ethnic segregation and community cohesion. Lack of real interethnic communication and interaction was both the trigger and aspect of such "parallel lives". Living parallel lives encourage ethnic minorities preserve their ethnic cultures and values that are likely to run counter to broader

mainstream British society. Thus, the then (2003) Labour Government seemed to be encouraging social cohesion in order to make those "parallel lives" meet.

The *Cantle Report* viewed community polarisation as the basic source of ethnic friction. "When I leave this meeting with you I will go home and not see another white face until I come back here next week," said a Bradfordian Muslim of Pakistani origin. Another statement (this time a member of the white community) affirmed, "I never met anyone on this estate who wasn't like us from around here" (Cantle: 1). These segregation discourses seem to reflect the ethos upon which the *Cantle Report* built its own strategies and recommendations. When the Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT) visited Bradford and other rioting cities, it "was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities" (*Cantle Report*: 9). According to the *Cantle Report*, the geographical physical segregation of housing estates worsened a "very evident" ethnic polarisation. Such polarisation was represented as endemic in every walk of life. It meant separation in everything: education, cultural network, linguistic behaviour, place of worship and so on.

Such increasing segregation, the report continued, would promote mutual ignorance between different ethnic groups, which was likely to nourish mutually xenophobic attitudes. The ethnic segregation "appears to allow ignorance about each community to develop into fear, particularly when fostered by extremists attempting to demonise a minority community" (Ibid: 28). Xenophobic attitudes, fear and mutual ignorance and stereotyping seemed to be the picture of ethnic relations in the *Cantle Report*.

To remedy such ethnic segregation, the report made some recommendations. It asked for a "very" frank and comprehensive analysis "of the nature of separation of each community" (p 29) which would lead to the production of a Community Cohesion Strategy. Also, local ethnic issues should not "be seen as being 'a little' local difficulty" (p 6). They must

be a national priority. Ethnic mixing should be the ultimate aim of the community cohesion policy (p 29).

The discourse and findings of the *Denham Report* did not differ very much from that of the *Cantle Report*. In fact, as John Denham himself acknowledged (in the introduction), the *Cantle Report* informed much of his Report's analysis and recommendations. Denham expressed his own gratitude to Ted Cantle and his group for "their co-operation in allowing us to draw on the issues they have identified in framing our own recommendations" (*Denham Report*: 3). Thus, the *Denham Report* reinterpreted *Cantle Report* findings and observations.

Like the other reports, the *Denham Report* concentrated mainly on the issue of ethnic segregation and the reasons for such ethnic demographic distribution. The term 'segregation' and its derivatives as well as its synonyms (e.g. fractured community, polarisation, separation fragmentation…) seem to be endemic in the report: they were used more than 40 times in a thirty-five-page report. Denham stated that ethnic segregation was on the rise (Zriba, 2005). Yet he acknowledged that "there are no easy answers for quick fixes to the deep fracturing of communities on racial, generational and religious lines now evident in parts of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham" (p 4). Such a lack of quick solutions was, he added, because "[a]t this stage it is difficult to identify what is cause and what is effect in the development of segregated communities" (p 13). The reasons for such segregation were multi-layered and complex. Nevertheless, Denham recommended that to tackle the negative effects of ethnic segregation "**community cohesion should be an explicit aim of Government at national and local levels**" (p 21) (bolding is in the original). Multiculturalism is thus depicted as the prime cause of cultural fragmentation, residential segregation and social division. The same discourses were invigorated and invoked immediately after any ethnic or more correctly "ethnisized" conflict.

Multiculturalism has been criticized in Britain along three major axes. It suggests an essentialist conception of culture

that treats culture as something which is static, homogeneous, and un-dynamic. The second critique focused on giving unfair advantages to minority cultural and religious groups. This thesis is pushed to its extreme mainly by racist and right-wing political groups. The last and maybe the most crucial assumption is that multiculturalism encourages and promotes cultural communities to lead separate parallel lives and hence hamper any authentic integration. As seen in previously analyzed race-related reports, the last argument has been hegemonic. The multicultural ideology encourages ethnic segregation by locating ethnic minorities into ethnic boxes usually mutually exclusive.

The ideology of multiculturalism could be read as an official attempt to fragment the increasing power of anti-racist movements. It is in some respects a "divide you rule" strategy that disperses the unity and solidarity of various ethnic minorities by setting policies that highlight and glorify difference rather than similarity between them. Thus, the goal of the various ethnic minorities becomes competing with/against each other for the scarce opportunities offered by the state. Also, the ideology of multiculturalism enhances a type of "cultural consociationalism" where ethnic blocks are created and offer "comfort zones". cultural consociationalistic spirit is clear in promoting the authority of certain community leaders at the expense of individual empowerment and autonomy. This stifles British well-established liberal values notably the value of individualism. The official authorities, whether local or national, resort to community leaders in resolving ethnic issues.

The idea is that there has been a striking confusion between multiculturalism as a political ideology and multiculturalism as a lived experience. If we terminologically distinguish between the two juxtaposed and different phenomena, we can either use the concept of Multiculturalism with a capital "M" to refer to the ideology and multiculturalism with a small "m" to refer to it as a lived experience. Or we may

suggest another distinction by coining the term "macro-multiculturalism" when considering the political ideology and "micro-multiculturalism" while referring to individually lived and experienced cultural pluralism. However, a further conceptualization, and generally preferred one is to use multiculturalism to designate the political ideology and diversity of refer to the lived experience. This terminological and conceptual distinction may better clarify our understanding of the nature of the theoretical and methodological confusion in the treatment of the concept of multiculturalism.

CONCLUSION:

By the mid of the 1970' the issue of race relations was politicized and the race-related de-politicization consensus seemed to come to its end. The post war consensus on race relations held that Britain had to adopt an open door immigration policy in response to cultural, political and economic necessities. However, the 1958 race riots inaugurated the immigration controls policy which was based on the logic that no good race relations were possible without curbing the number of new immigrants. New immigrants were thus perceived negatively as potential economic competitors to British white working class as well as threats to British way of life and cultural identity. In response to increasing ethnic minorities' anti-racism and anti-discrimination movements, British authorities introduced multicultural agenda and politics of difference. In this article, we argued that such multiculturalism was largely abused as a strategy of containment of ethnic mobilization. It was a case of "divide you rule". It was misapplied. Thus, what was at stake was how the politics of difference were applied and implemented. Multiculturalism was thus fossilized and it created more division within British ethnic minorities than defended their collective rights. Ironically, the same cultural division and socio-cultural anomaly befell Britain as a whole, minorities and

established white majority. The alternative race-related agenda has been to adopt what came to be named the "cultural diversity and community cohesion" model. Seemingly seductive, this combination of diversity and cohesion within the same society appears highly contradictory. More research needs to take place to strike a theoretical elaboration and above all a practical procedural balance between these two pressing needs. We believe that new conceptualizations of multiculturalism have to be elaborated. This model has to differentiate between multiculturalism as a political ideology and multiculturalism as a genuine lived experience. The latter has bred the values of divisiveness and ethnic conflicts while the former promotes those of intra and inter ethnic communication and coexistence. For the time being, we just have multicultural debris with no clear and well-determined official intention to collect it let alone organize it.

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