



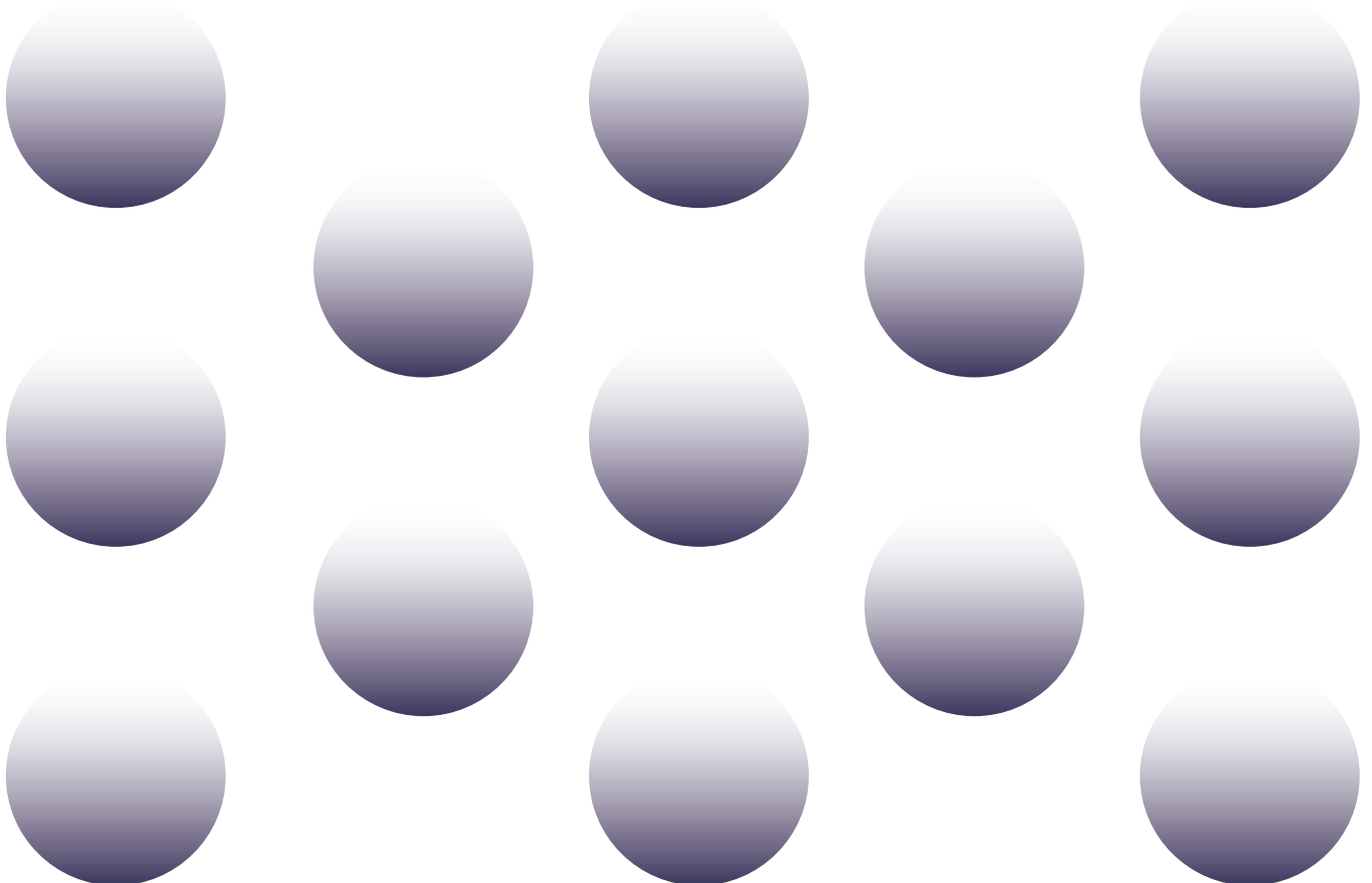
**ICAR**

Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees

## **Multiculturalism, Citizenship and Identity**

**Gareth Morrell**

**A policy and literature review prepared as part of  
ICAR's *Refugee Rights and Responsibilities* project,  
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## **About the Refugee Rights and Responsibilities Project**

ICAR's Refugee Rights and Responsibilities research and consultation project explores some fundamental questions about the place of refugees in contemporary British society and, in particular, how the experiences and legal status of refugees shapes their understanding and perceptions of important social changes that are at the heart of current political debates. The project focuses generally on issues related to citizenship, identity, multiculturalism, migration and integration, and specifically on rights and responsibilities as the cornerstones of new citizenship and current refugee integration policy.

ICAR is grateful to the *Sigrid Rausing Trust* for the funding of this project. For more information on the project or to take part in or view the results of the online consultations, visit [www.icar.org.uk/rightsandresponsibilities](http://www.icar.org.uk/rightsandresponsibilities)

## **About the policy and literature reviews**

There are three reviews in this series: *Multiculturalism, Citizenship and Identity; Globalisation, Transnationalism and Diaspora; and Refugee Integration: Rights and Responsibilities*. The aim of these papers is to provide a discursive and conceptual basis for the qualitative research stage of the project. The papers provide an examination of the literature on multiculturalism, citizenship and identity in the UK, the impact of globalisation, transnationalism and diaspora on these ideas and whether literature on refugee rights and responsibilities can be integrated into this work. The papers will address these theoretical developments in the context of the real social and political trends that they both influence and are influenced by.

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## 1. Introduction

The nexus of multiculturalism, citizenship and identity is the location for significant contemporary debate in the UK. The heightened discussion over these concepts reflects not only the internal tensions of a modern multi-ethnic state, but also the challenges posed to them by the contemporary processes and connections that emerge out of globalisation, transnationalism and diaspora. Each of the three concepts is contested in terms of its meaning and applicability in contemporary societies. Though they are inextricably linked, they address distinct issues that are central to the understanding, discourse and politics of equality, difference and belonging in a contemporary society.

While these concepts challenge traditional discourses of the nation and apparatus of the state, the latter remains at the centre of some of the paradoxes mentioned above. Consequently, this paper accepts the nation as the central reference point for expressions and manifestations of these concepts. For example, while a diaspora is transnational in nature it often retains national roots and its very existence is based on its origin in a nation. Additionally, at the sub-national level, claims for group rights and equality are still made at the national level (Koopmans and Statham 2000). It is true that the nation is changing, but it is still the dominant form of political organisation and representation.

### *1.1 Scope and methods*

The aim of this paper is to identify theoretical and practical contributions to the debates around multiculturalism, citizenship and identity. In parallel, the paper also identifies relevant government strategy and policy in the context of the academic literature. Each section attempts to lay out the main philosophical debates and explain how they interact with and are relevant for understanding the development of UK government policy in these areas.

Consequently, the review attempts to identify the main strands of academic argument in each area. This cannot be considered a full and systematic literature review, though the main academic debates that have shaped and, in turn, been shaped by national and local government policy are dealt with as comprehensively as possible. Academic literature is not confined to the UK and, where relevant, policy literature from elsewhere is included or alluded to. Academic literature, including books, journal articles and conference papers, has been sourced through extensive searches of academic directories and online libraries incorporating political philosophy, sociology, political science, ethnic and racial studies and other disciplines. Additional literature was sourced through ICAR's own research directories, political periodicals, government websites and libraries and contacting research and policy organisations conducting work on these issues.

Section Two of the paper will discuss multiculturalism: it has become a term so contested and often misrepresented that discussions around citizenship and identity have become almost subsumed under its cumbersome wing. Clarifying the meaning and applicability of multiculturalism will allow for a clearer understanding of citizenship to be developed in the Section Three, with Section Four exploring how and where identity has pierced these two concepts.

## 2. Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism is highly contested in terms of its philosophical meaning and in terms of its efficacy as a set of policies. Its central concern has been fostering a sense of tolerance and respect of group rights in ethnically and racially diverse societies. The emergence and use of the term in Britain has a specific history, bound up with post-colonial immigration and race relations. Across the last thirty years, there has been considerable academic and political debate on the meaning of multiculturalism: is it a descriptive term of a lived reality or a philosophical ideology for how to organise diverse societies? The confusion over the meaning was epitomised by the response to The Parekh Report, the product of the Commission in the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain. The report describes Britain as characterised by significant cultural hybridity and while the nation state retains its place as the focal point for social and political life, it does so in tandem with a Britishness that is a constantly evolving dialectic. The commission also contended that 'Britishness...has systemic, largely unspoken, racial connotations...and, therefore by extension is racially coded' (Parekh 2000).

There were several criticisms of the report, which reflected confusion around the meaning of the term multiculturalism but also exposed some of the weaknesses inherent in the dominant way in which multiculturalism had been understood and translated into policy. Much debate in academic and policy circles ensued, with some demanding the scrapping of multicultural policy or declaring its death, and others trying to redefine and expand the meaning of multiculturalism. It is currently unclear whether multiculturalism will survive as a redefined, reinvigorated concept that guards against its former weaknesses.

This section will address the confusion around the meaning of multiculturalism and explore the source for this misunderstanding by tracing the emergence of the term in Britain. It will then address the weaknesses of the rigid version of multiculturalism, with the next section analysing how a more reflexive understanding is emerging. The final section asks whether a formal policy of cultural recognition actually contributes to social justice in a liberal state.

### *2.1 Multiculturalism: origins, meanings and limitations*

Bikhu Parekh (2006) recently suggested that the British discourse surrounding multiculturalism, unlike its Canadian, Australian or Indian equivalent, is 'marked by a striking paradox'. The apparent contradiction that Parekh highlights is represented by two distinctly different uses of the word multiculturalism.

Firstly, Britain is undoubtedly a multicultural society; it is also a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society. This diversity is sometimes celebrated, occasionally criticised but largely tolerated (Finney and Peach 2006; Crawley 2005). This is what is distinguished as multiculturalism as *lived experience* (Malik 2002; Gilroy 2003; Hall 2000). This lived experience, however, is itself not homogenous for every person in the UK. Some people, largely living in metropolitan areas, interact or at least share space with different cultures in their daily professional, commercial and social life. Others, perhaps in more rural areas or provincial towns, do not experience such a *multi-cultural* lifestyle, but are still likely to interact with people of a different religion, class, region or ethnicity at some point during their lives. In aggregation, the UK is multicultural; yet the extent to which people experience this varies according to a combination of, amongst other things, regionality, class, age, and profession. The concept of the 'multicultural', used as an adjective to describe myriad cultural sources which people in a multi-ethnic society draw on, is not in question (Hall 2000) and is not the subject for this section of the paper.

It is the second use of multiculturalism over which there extensive debate. The other half of Parekh's paradox is that despite the existence and tacit acceptance of the multicultural, many reject multiculturalism as a social or political theory. What is it that is being rejected? Parekh distinguishes two further types of multiculturalism (as distinct from the multicultural): one version is understood by those who reject multiculturalism and the other is understood by those who accept multiculturalism. Below, this paper assesses these versions in turn, examining first the more orthodox understanding of multiculturalism and, in the following section, exploring attempts to redefine multiculturalism.

To understand the first version of multiculturalism that is opposed by many it is useful to adopt both a philosophical and a historical perspective. Charles Taylor's essay, *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition* (1992) provided a catalyst for philosophical debate on diversity, equality and recognition in liberal societies. This seminal contribution opened the philosophical chasms that were being played out in modern liberal societies. Liberalism aimed to provide a society with a universal approach to what Taylor defines as procedural values, that is the way people treat each other, and a neutral approach to substantive values, that is the goals individuals have for their lives. The latter reflects a philosophical concept that Herder calls 'the individual way of the human being'. Yet collapsing social hierarchies, arguably one of liberalism's achievements, were replaced with the politics of recognition mediated through collective goals and identity politics.

Political struggles to defend collective goals and rights have often found liberalism wanting in this respect; the Salman Rushdie affair is an oft used emblematic example (see Favell 1998; Sagar 1999). Taylor argues that liberalism cannot guarantee the *survival* of aspects of minority culture as liberalism is not neutral. Liberalism finds itself in a conundrum, stuck between two contrasting trends that both appear liberal in their outlook. The first is universalism that treats people with 'difference blindness'. Critics of this position claim that it cannot incorporate difference and

ultimately enforces social homogeneity. The other trend is of recognising and fostering difference (Taylor 1992). Critics of this approach argue that it is, amongst other things, socially divisive. Politically, contends Habermas (1994), the clash is between public consideration for cultural difference and the universalisation of individual rights.

This philosophical debate manifested itself in British politics and society in a manner particular to the context of British constitutional architecture and history (Favell 1998). After 1945, there was an introspective shift in British identity as the country turned inward to reorganise and 're-imagine' its community (Hesse 2000). The period of immigration in the 1950s consisted almost exclusively of members of the commonwealth and was set to clash with the pensive public mood that prevailed in Britain at the time. Despite the incremental dissolution of empire, the social hierarchy upon which it functioned was retained (Hesse 2000; Gilroy 2003). Hesse (2000) argues that policies toward immigrants in this era were assimilationist and assumed that difficulties associated with the 'coloured' presence were temporary, a culture shock that with time would disappear. The Notting Hill riots of 1958 punctured this theory and made race a major public issue (Cesarani 1997). Attempts to move away from strict assimilation and offer greater political recognition for immigrants were themselves restricted by a popular reaction characterised by a desire to protect a particular understanding of a homogenised and unitary British culture and avoid the 'disruption of an old experience' (Scruton 2000). Taylor (2002) argues that such line of reasoning reflects a desire to hold on to the 'monological ideal', which seriously undermines the place of the dialogical in human life. In other words, this ideal puts too much emphasis on individual origins and ignores the fact that cultures collectively and identities individually are formed and constantly reproduced through exogenous interaction.

Opponents of this view drew attention to a number of these outside factors that were radically changing the inside of Britain and the once seemingly ordered world outside: economic decline and the end of empire, the erosion of family units and industrial communities, increasing consumerism and social pluralism (in contrast to war-time stoicism); while from the 1970s, closer political ties with Europe, early aspects of globalisation and privatisation also had an impact on the national character (Parekh 2000; Gilroy 2003). However, as Carter (2003) demonstrates, it was the demand for labour, rather than an exploration of other factors causing social change, that made heavy restrictions on immigration unfeasible. Irrespective of this, the economic necessity of further immigration from the Commonwealth conflicted with popular attitudes towards race, ethnicity and Britishness and generated a period of social and cultural adjustment. Consequently, immigrants and immigration became central to what Hall (1974) has described as 'Britain's quarrel with itself'.

In legislative and policy terms, race relations were born and the language of multiculturalism emerged out of a 'series of inconsistencies and contradictions' (Favell 1998). Many argue that this development can be read as a liberal reaction to the potentially destructive force of 'Powellism':

race relations represented a compromise that de-politicised race and allowed the implementation of an open but controlled immigration policy (Hesse 2000). As Favell (1998) puts it, the Race Relations Act (1976) was a continuation of historically institutional tactics, paternal leadership and regulatory frameworks in Britain that opened up the space for cultural self-definition. This climate produced the early concept of multiculturalism that is today understood primarily by those who oppose the term. This multiculturalism recognised that ethnic and racial difference would not 'melt together' in a period adjusting to the 'culture shock'; instead it saw that ethnic and racial difference and social hierarchy were constantly being reproduced. To combat this, up until the late 1990s, a number of measures, from anti-discrimination to equal opportunities, were brought together and co-ordinated through local authority practices, the Greater London Council (GLC) being the most notable exponent (Hesse 2000). Policies that could be conceived of as 'positive discrimination' also existed, again largely in local councils that adhered to a particular political philosophy (Favell 1998). As a pragmatic and temporary response to historical inequities this seems 'cogent enough' argues Taylor (1992), but as a fundamental principle it is a 'flagrant departure' from the supposed 'difference blindness' of liberalism. The emergence of this legal and institutional framework to recognise difference in a society that would otherwise be characterised by liberal universalism led to a series of seemingly contradictory rulings that, according to Favell (1998), are a consequence of the socio-legally constructed category of race. Yet, despite the ambiguity of its name, the objective of this multiculturalism was to counter-balance the structural imbalances and inequities in British society of race and ethnicity (Kymlicka 1999).

There are significant weaknesses with this theory, philosophically and at a policy level, which is why those who subscribe to this definition oppose it. The problems beset by this kind of multiculturalist policy stem from the concept's philosophical weaknesses, which shall be dealt with first. The genesis of this multiculturalism can be seen as representing a 'corrective to assimilationist approaches and policies surrounding the incorporation of immigrants' (Vertovec 2001) and is committed to a 'plurality of self-contained cultures' (Parekh 2006). Recalling the philosophical and political conundrum outlined above, this version of multiculturalism advocates the public recognition of difference through the protection of group cultural rights. Supporters of this position view the formal recognition of cultural identities as imperative for achieving 'true equality' (Gutmann 1994; see also Glazer 1995). In anthropological terms, the definition of culture that is associated with this position is problematic. The desire to furnish all 'cultural groups' with formal recognition presupposes that such groups can be neatly defined and categorized. Here, culture is a static, objective abstract (Joppke and Lukes 1999) and is in danger of trying to hold on to what Taylor (1992) called the 'monological ideal'. Geertz (1973) offers a more persuasive argument that culture is a 'relational subjective' rendering it 'highly particular' such that it cannot be seen as a neat package that perfectly encapsulates some people and not others. For immigrant groups Vertovec (1996) suggests that culture is often seen as a set 'of collective behavioural-moral-aesthetic traits and 'customs'...which instills a discrete quality into the feelings, values, practices, social

relationships, predilections and intrinsic nature of all who belong to (a particular version of) it'. This understanding of multiculturalism, it is argued, is essentialist: it homogenises a group of individuals that may have some (loose) connection or cultural affinity.

A second philosophical weakness of this version of multiculturalism is ontological: it assumes ontological primacy of the group over the individual (Joppke and Lukes 1999). Recalling Geertz, it can be argued that this is a fundamental weakness. Defending rigidly defined, essentialised group rights is considered more important than defending the rights of individuals. Consequently, it is argued, this form of multiculturalism is incompatible with human rights discourse as well as the philosophical liberalism that underpins many Western liberal democracies, particularly the UK (see Habermas 1994). A critic of this form of multiculturalism, Yael Tamir (1999), argues that all rights should be justified on individual terms, taking pluralism as a starting point and developing institutional arrangements to protect the rights of individual rooted in their own cultural, linguistics and religious communities and relations.

A final criticism often levelled at this version of multiculturalism is that of inherent relativism. Defenders of multiculturalism would suggest that it is a powerful critique of universalism (Kymlicka 1995). Universalism ignores the power relations inherent in creating a dominant discourse and what is often the ethnocentrism of the dominant group (Hollis 1999). The value of the multiculturalist critique of universalism is that it highlights the power relations that are implicit in the creation of a universal position and suggests they should be understood and unpacked as an imperative of social justice. Yet the relativism inherent in this version of multiculturalism makes this critique of universalism self-refuting. The claim that society needs to be formally understood as a collection of distinct cultural groups may be attempting to protect the particular, but is itself a universalist position. There is, it is argued, no reflexive understanding in this version of multiculturalism of the power relations that are inherent in its own promotion.

These three philosophical weaknesses (essentialism, primacy of group over individual and inherent relativism) generate a number of problems when translated into policy. The clearest translation of this philosophical position into policy can be seen through the essentialised understandings of culture that have been seen in formally acknowledged 'multicultural programmes' for education, media images, public funding mechanisms, training courses and handbooks (Vertovec 2001). In addition to this, these rigidly understood groups have required representation and voice leading to the imposition of individuals as community leaders or ethnic spokespeople. It is impossible to generalise about the motives of these individuals but it is unfeasible for them to be truly representative of the homogenised community they claim to represent, itself a chimera. Much political debate has taken place around this issue. In recent years, some commentators have argued government agencies have been guilty of consulting only with the 'usual suspects' on community issues, further empowering these individuals whose social networks or financial position

possibly contributed to their initial installation as 'community spokesman'. In 2006, a pro-active response to this form of community consultation and dialogue began to emerge. The manifesto of the New Generation Network is perhaps the most coherent attempt to formalise this opposition; it states:

*'We need an approach that discards the older politics of representation through government sanctioned gate-keepers...(multicultural policy) has not been helped by the government entrusting power to so-called community leaders and other umbrella groups who claim to be the voice of minority groups.'* (New Generation Network, 2006)

The essentialist assumption of the rigid and static nature of culture is also partly responsible for a second policy weakness. Assuming that all individuals in one community can be represented by one organisation or a cluster of individuals is unsustainable. It assumes that every Muslim in the UK (i.e. the 'Muslim community') has the same opinion on the conflict in the Middle East; it assumes that every gay person in the UK has the same opinion on civil partnerships. More than just being unsustainable, this position has other drawbacks when we consider that this version of multiculturalism also subordinates individual rights to group rights (Tamir 1998). This combination means that focusing policy on initiatives that ensure equality *between* groups has masked inequality *within* groups. Following this version of multiculturalism can mean the state is a passive bystander on intra-group inequalities, something fundamentally contra to the basic principle of the freedom of the individual. How, asks Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (2004), do we react and legislate if the 'freedom of the individual is stamped upon and killed within the very communities that call for equality in the public space?'

It has been argued that the majority of multiculturalism's problems stem from its focus on culture (Grillo 2001). The discursive shift from race and ethnicity to culture is crucial in understanding the weaknesses of multiculturalism. As mentioned above, it has been argued that multiculturalism emerged from a political compromise at a time of racial and ethnic discord in certain British towns and cities. Favell (1998a) argues that racial and ethnic minorities were offered cultural tolerance, defended and formalised by 'multicultural' legislation and institutions on the premise that they lived in accordance with the rule of law and existing civic principles. Such an agreement echoes much of what was contained in Tony Blair's 2006 speech on multiculturalism and integration. The former prime minister was unequivocal on the deal that was on the table for immigrants: they would be offered the 'right to be different' upon the fulfilment of 'the duty to integrate' (Blair, 2006).

This approach to multiculturalism has certainly influenced policy and had positive effects on the political climate in Britain that should not be dismissed (Giddens 2006). Parekh (2006a) suggests that Britain has rightly earned the reputation of a society at ease with its diversity, citing a succession of legislation and institutions as proof of this fact. It is certainly true that today discourse

and practice on race, ethnicity and diversity is unrecognisable from the 1960s. As mentioned above, equality directives are part of mainstream practices for national and local government, public services and the majority of the private sector. By the 1990s, Hesse (2000) argues that the visual landscape of Britain had changed: ethnicity had become 'British' in certain spheres and something of which all Britons could be proud. More substantively, Kymlicka (1999) argues that pervasiveness of the multicultural discourse represents a changing of attitudes towards rights.

The aim of the current government discourse, epitomised by Blair's speech, is similar to the aim of 1970s multiculturalism: to manage diversity while creating a stable society. However, it has reproduced many of the existing problems it was attempting to tackle and generated additional difficulties. It is an ideal that has succeeded only in 'papering over inequality, conflict and power relations with a therapeutical, top-down discourse of multicultural unity' (Favell 1998a; see Vasta 2006 for a demonstration of this trend in The Netherlands). Its piecemeal and material successes forged the view that this idea of multiculturalism was the only possible conception of a post-colonial and post-industrial society rather than a competing theory amongst many; its acceptance has left unresolved, the post-colonial condition (Hesse 2000). Gilroy (2003) contends that the character of contemporary multicultural society and the unravelling of this particular version of multiculturalism have to be understood in the context of colonial and imperial history. Post-colonial does not equate with non-colonial; post-colonial represents a continuation and reproduction of certain social structures of empire in contemporary institutions. The institutions and legislation associated with the rigid form of multiculturalism epitomise this post-colonial hangover.

A final criticism of this version of multiculturalism is what Grillo (1998) describes as its attack on the 'common core' of British society. In its capacity and willingness to correct previous imbalances, a common conception of multiculturalism is that it is a doctrine for minorities. The perception that multiculturalism represents a dialogue between only minorities and the government is problematic. Alibhai-Brown (2000 and 2002) argues that this has created a sense of white exclusion and, more particularly, the exclusion of the English at least from this particular discourse. Furthermore, the emphasis of *multiculturalism* on *ethnicity* is not only incongruent, but is also ignorant of the claims of other minorities. These two trends, combined with the erection of group barriers that multiculturalism has facilitated and maintained have created further division in society rather than unity. Munira Mirza (2004) has suggested that policies based on the premise of group rights have disrupted the development of meaningful social bonds as people retreat into rigid formalised 'groups' feeling they have less in common than they actually do.

The criticisms of this version of multiculturalism are widespread, yet its achievements in changing the way British society views the questions of race, equality and rights has suggested to many that it is not the aims of multiculturalism that are at fault, but its philosophical underpinnings and how it has been translated into policy. Kymlicka (1999) has gone so far as to suggest that the question is

now not whether multiculturalism, but what type. This is not to ignore the weaknesses and criticisms outlined above, but an appreciation that questions remain about organising a diverse contemporary society. To continue to grapple with these questions, attempts have been made to re-describe multiculturalism, rather than abandon it, and to manage some of the negative consequences of the recognition of group rights.

## *2.2 Redefining multiculturalism*

Anthony Giddens (2006) has responded to the criticisms of multiculturalism, claiming that much of the rhetoric of 'sleepwalking to segregation' and 'too much diversity' is based on an ignorant and misconceived understanding of what multiculturalism actually is. *The Parekh Report* (Parekh 2000) made some similar assertions, but suggested that the aim of multiculturalism had been misunderstood not only by its critics but also by its proponents and by those responsible for its translation into policy. The commission made a conscious effort to distance itself from the rigid and essentialised understandings of culture and community outlined above. The report attempted, therefore, to re-describe Britain in terms of hybridity and rather than reifying culture, emphasized overlapping communities and cultural interaction (Vertovec 2001). The report accepted and understood that in a society of multiple and overlapping identities, many enjoyed the diversity and complexity of life in Britain 'but also experience conflicting loyalties' (Parekh 2000). It is from this starting point that we can understand the second version of multiculturalism.

The report did not shirk from explaining how far Britain still had to travel in terms of equality and reducing formal institutional prejudice. As mentioned above, the report suggested that Britishness remained tainted by racial connotations rendering the concept exclusionary. Multiculturalism has often been loaded with a sense of this Britishness, particularly when considered as a doctrine of cultural 'tolerance'. The reaction to this assertion of the inherent racialism of Britishness saw multiculturalism attacked from both sides. For some, it was the entrenching of cultural difference and group division associated with multiculturalism that was responsible for re-creating these racial connotations and a certain indignation at the suggestion that there were English or British symbols and institutions that had retained a racialised basis. Conversely, authors such as Gilroy (2003) suggested that it was in fact the post-colonial character of multiculturalism and race relations that had reproduced the racial connotations of empire by merely papering over them.

The ensuing debate led to further confusion about the meaning of multiculturalism. The meaning being implicitly proposed by the Parekh report (see also Parekh 2006) saw multiculturalism as recognition that all cultures have limitations and benefit from dialogue with other cultures. This multiculturalism challenges social and political hegemony through a 'bifocal dialogue' and interaction within a system of agreed principles (Parekh 2000a; Parekh 2006). This particular

meaning of multiculturalism does not rely on rigid understandings of cultural groups. Yet the reaction to *The Parekh Report* clouded the debate, blurring and muddling the two versions of multiculturalism. Those who oppose it do so *ad infinitum*, irrespective of its form, with the second version of multiculturalism being dismissed by association. Against this backdrop it appears that the government have abandoned the terminology of multiculturalism but, by now promoting the concepts of cohesion and diversity, retain some of the central tenets of a more nuanced understanding of the theory. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion made this clear in its final report (CIC 2007) by emphasising the importance of a respect for (cultural) difference alongside the necessity for shared civil rights and responsibilities and an emphasis on what unites communities rather than that their constituent parts are different.

It is clear that this second version of multiculturalism is a logically and philosophically dominant theory; but it is not the case that all those who criticise multiculturalism are guilty of misunderstanding the concept. In 2004, David Goodhart, the editor of centre-left progressive *Prospect Magazine*, wrote a polemical article suggesting that Britain may be becoming too diverse to sustain a progressive political agenda. Increasing levels of immigration and (multiculturalist) policies that entrench difference, Goodhart argued, had contributed to a fracturing of a society diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, lifestyles, attitudes and behaviour (Goodhart 2004). He went on to develop this argument in 2006 in *Progressive Nationalism* in which he explains how a number of traditional ties of religion, class and ethnicity have become weakened. Britain, he argues, requires a new 'social glue': it is naïve and dangerous to suggest that diversity will take care of itself.

The response to Goodhart's work has been mixed: some agree that there needs to be something acting as a 'social glue', but disagree about what this should be; others disagree with many of Goodhart's underlying premises arguing that this is not just about immigration and ethnic diversity. It is with the latter that we are concerned here. Firstly, Goodhart contrasts the diversity of today with 1950s Britain, which he claims was a largely homogenous and predictable society. This is a difficult claim to sustain, but also to unravel: while the homogeneity of Britain is consistently overstated (Hall 2000; Pearce 2004; Benhabib 2004), it has often been the aim of state discourse to 'imagine it' (see Hobsbawm 1990). Goodhart's argument illustrates, however, that ideas of cultural homogeneity are often no less important or efficacious for being 'invented'. Class difference had not disappeared by the 1950s and is still prevalent today (Park et al 2007); much the same can be said of regional, even national, differences. Bernard Crick (2004), in his response to Goodhart's original essay, highlights that Britain has always been a multi-national state that has sustained cultural difference within it, as have other European countries with multi-national or multi-lingual states (e.g. Spain, Belgium and Switzerland). The implication of this is that while such diversity was previously assailable by common political institutions, the ethnic and racial diversity of today is not.

If this is the argument Goodhart is making, then many argue that it is an essentialist one. Equating all of a particular race or ethnicity with a specific culture incompatible with British society implies a logical conclusion that ethnic differences are insurmountable. In many ways the responses to Goodhart's original article expose some of the problems with the first version of multiculturalism mentioned in the previous section. The assumption that Britain was united and homogenous in the 1950s is indicative of Gilroy's proposition that post-colonial structures have been reproduced in discourse and policy around race, ethnicity and diversity. Any ubiquitous commonality in Britain throughout the period of the World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century was a fragile one born out of necessity. In facing a common enemy and working toward a common cause, British society did unite, but only on this basis. Just as multiculturalism would paper over cracks of racial inequality in the 1970s and 1980s, the façade of unity forged by war disguised other antecedent divisions in Britain based on class and region.

In the contemporary discourse, very few defenders of multiculturalism understand it as a promotion of rigidly understood minority group rights over individual freedoms. A more nuanced version of the theory has emerged that does not promote separatism and sees no inherent contradiction between multiculturalism and Britishness or national identity (Madood 2004; Parekh 2000; Kymlicka 1999). It is an acceptance of the *multicultural/ethnic/racial* reality of contemporary Britain and a framework that offers a way to provide equality within this diversity. For Kymlicka (1999) multiculturalism is now a practical debate about the distribution of benefits and burdens throughout society. Consequently, we should not necessarily dispense with the idea of group rights but understand the further impositions that the recognition of group rights creates and address them. This requires a move beyond the absolute primacy of the group over the individual to adopt different levels of jurisdiction for different spheres of rights. Where there is conflict over behaviour, customs or jurisdiction, Parekh advocates debate and dialogue on the basis of shared principles, a process that is central to any democratic society. This is not the simple imposition of the majority or the dominant, but a dialogical interaction between competing claims from which all cultures can benefit (Parekh 2000a and 2006).

This 'new multiculturalism' is a distinctly bottom-up theory, with culture generated from below rather than rigidly and falsely imposed from above. Paul Gilroy's concept of convivial culture epitomises this more optimistic vision for the future of diverse British society. Rather than see the necessity for the state to impose a 'framework' over or 'weave a thread' through Britain's diversity, Gilroy (2003) identifies a youthful and more reflexive culture that is emerging out of 'Britain's post-colonial melancholia'. With references to musicians, artists and comedians, Gilroy suggests Britain is consciously and openly beginning to grapple with its simultaneous obsession and discomfort with so many issues that remain unresolved: race, Empire, devolution, commercialisation. This is a version of multiculturalism that goes beyond race, practiced by a generation that is comfortable

with, not phased by, race and ethnicity. The role of the state, therefore, is merely to recognise this and reflect it in its educational curricula, equality frameworks and political discourse.

### 3. Citizenship

The concept of citizenship has taken diverse forms and been applied in various ways in different historical contexts. Yet the fundamental and constant characteristic of citizenship is membership. What is expected of members and what they are entitled to depends on how the parameters of citizenship are set. These parameters also control access to the citizenry and determine its territorial coverage. Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer (2002) offer this definition of citizenship:

*'Citizenship denotes membership of an intergenerational project, committed to knowing a past and promoting a better future for generations to follow'*

It may be added to this definition that citizenship is territorially bounded and affiliated, most often in alignment with the frontiers of a nation state.

The parameters that set the form of citizenship also have policy implications and consequences for the success of the aforementioned 'intergenerational project'. In Britain, citizenship has a decidedly 'patchwork' history (Cesarani 1997) from being applied expansively through the empire and Commonwealth to extend control and influence, to retreating within Britain's borders following large-scale immigration and the dissolution of the empire. Consequently, British citizenship has often been used as a political tool rather than a mechanism for social unity. It is argued that citizenship has been persistently racialised and, after 1962, bound up with immigration policy (Hansen 2000). There is much contemporary debate about the value of citizenship and how it can be reformed and re-imagined in order to be more inclusive and gain more currency. Citizenship tests have often grabbed the headlines, but there is more nuanced work being carried out on citizenship exploring ways of making citizenship matter at a local and national level.

A criticism of multiculturalism has been that in emphasising the rights of different groups, government policy has eroded the ability and willingness of all members of society to fulfil their responsibilities as citizens (Kymlicka, 1999). Furthermore, some argue that immigration has led to a devaluing and decline of citizenship (Goodhart, 2006) An alternative position would suggest that citizenship can in fact be the space in which different groups and individuals transcend their differences (Kymlicka, 1999), an arena for Parekh's bifocal dialogue or what Benhabib (2004) describes as 'democratic iterations'.

This section of the paper begins with an outline of types of citizenship and their parameters. Secondly, a brief history of British citizenship will be traced followed by an exploration of contemporary debate around how citizenship should be formed and promoted. Finally, this section will address the compatibility or otherwise of citizenship and multiculturalism.

### 3.1 *Citizenship: History and Parameters*

Tracing the history of citizenship illustrates the relationship between its intended function and its parameters, or what Karatani (2003) labels ‘aspects of citizenship’<sup>1</sup>, that determine its form. Recalling the definition given above, membership of the intergenerational project of citizenship carries with it certain rights and responsibilities. How these are defined represents perhaps the most crucial parameter of citizenship. Members of a citizenry are likely to be entitled to a combination of civic, political, social, economic and cultural rights while simultaneously being obliged to fulfil certain associated responsibilities. In this context, rights reflect what a member can be expected to receive or have protected from the state and fellow members with responsibilities consisting of involvement and participation in the citizenry conducive to its maintenance and reproduction. As will be explained, citizenship has historically not emphasised rights and responsibilities equally, which has been a consequence of and responsible for shaping the function of citizenship most relevant to that particular context.

Geographical and territorial coverage is a second parameter that sets the terms of a citizenship. In today’s world, it can appear that citizenship can denote membership only of a nation state. Historically, citizenship has often been used as an expansive controlling device for a number of empires. Furthermore, even today, Spanish or British citizenship, for example, remains inclusive of people from a number of nations. A final parameter that sets the terms of citizenship is access to membership. This is an increasingly crucial and contested parameter in an era where migration is more feasible for more people but connections to home or relatives elsewhere are equally accessible. Developing the criteria used to determine who has access to citizenship is a crucial question in deciding what kind of society contemporary citizenries want.

Setting these parameters has generated a number of philosophical debates between a number of opposing approaches to citizenship: Republican vs. Cosmopolitan, Liberal vs. Democratic, Communitarian vs. Libertarian. While the last of these debates is currently setting the citizenship policy agenda the UK (Baggini 2008) and the second reflects the development of modern European citizenship, the first dichotomy can be illustrated by a comparison of the Athenian polis and the Roman Empire (Delanty 2007). The former was developed for a relatively small administering territory with the aim of practicing an early form of direct democracy: a civic conception of political community. Citizens had the right to respect and security under the law, but also had partial responsibility in its creation. While this was an active, participatory and democratic citizenship it was still subject to a paradox persistent throughout the history of citizenship: the universality of citizenship but the particularity of its membership. Citizenship has consistently created borders and markers of difference. The only threat to the citizen, therefore, could come

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<sup>1</sup> Karatani’s aspects of citizenship do not equate exactly to the ‘parameters’ used here but do pertain to the issues of membership, rights and obligations, and spatiality.

from outside, which developed another recurring aspect of citizenship, that is the 'citizen as warrior' (Castles and Davidson 2000). A quite different model of citizenship emerged from the development of the Roman Empire, where allegiances were less immediate and more universal (Delanty 2007). Here citizenship was multi-ethnic, disregarding blood ties, and did not aspire to administrated polities. The result was an inclusive and open citizenship (the first to guarantee civil rights), a legally defined political community that required neither 'myths of common origins' (Castles and Davidson 2000) nor intimate contact between its members. Yet, while civil and legal rights were protected, the responsibilities of citizens amounted to little more than respecting the law: law making was an entirely top-down process and citizens were passive.

As Delanty (2007) illustrates, the roots of modern European citizenship can be found in the Republican and Cosmopolitan traditions. Hobbes' *Commonwealth* was developed from the Republican tradition, while Locke's *Second Treatise* has more in common with the cosmopolitan tradition; yet it could be argued, that despite fundamental differences in their views on human nature, both retained the central ideal of universal peace and collective security imposed from above. It was in the Eighteenth Century that citizenship began to take a different form in north-west Europe by accepting an alternative starting point. Without adopting a completely bottom-up approach citizenship was to become a mechanism for balance between the state and the people. Arneil (2007) suggests that these traditions developed along two trajectories: Liberal and Democratic citizenship. The former has close links with cosmopolitanism with low membership threshold and its basis in universal liberal norms; the latter has more in common with republicanism as a more closed citizenship in which a particular political community is generated. Yet what was fundamentally different about the models of citizenship emerging in this period was the emphasis in a bottom-up approach. The idea of a social contract was most eminently explained by the contribution of Rousseau, who questioned the absolute legitimacy of the state and of its rulers instead promoting the idea of the general will, based on common interests of all in society (Wootton 1996). The social contract of citizenship in this period was an assertion of power by the citizenry against the 'internal tyranny' of their rulers (Castles and Davidson 2000) and generated the conditions for a period of social conflict and struggle between the state and its vested interests and the popular will of the people.

Inspired by this paradigm shift, the French Revolution represented a nascent attempt to imagine a citizenship in the Republican and democratic traditions that not only provided safeguards against the power of the state through equality under the law but was also an assertion of the popular will (Castles and Davidson 2000). The contextual origins of this form of citizenship can be seen as a response to past treatment of the people by the state. Domestically, it sought to formalise equality through legal and political rights and allow the popular will to be reflected in the practices of the state. However, the political and legal equality formalised under the law was not mirrored by the reality of social and economic inequity prevalent in Europe in that period. This illustrated the

weakness of the early models of citizenship in comparison with the power of parliamentary democracy (Everson 2003). The advent of liberal socialism, it is argued, was a realisation that certain social and economic conditions had to be met to enable the full participation of all in society. This meant acknowledging the relative (not absolute) impact of an individual's social origins on the ability to participate equally in politics and society (Castles and Davidson 2000). Without an incorporation of social and economic rights, it was argued that the majority of citizens remained passive or were unable to make informed choices and meaningful use of their political rights (Kymlicka 1989).

By the late Nineteenth Century the emphasis of citizenship had changed: its function was no longer absolute control and it was characterised by the protection of additional categories of rights, yet it was still not the absolute will of the people, nor did it incorporate all types of rights. It was the political and social extremes of autocracy and revolution that punctuated the inter-war and early post-war period and the burgeoning influence of industrial society's working class that generated a further step-change in the form of nationally bound citizenship. Along both Liberal and Democratic traditions, the second half of the Twentieth Century saw a major shift in the form and function of citizenship. While the post-war poverty of the 1950s in Europe provided the platform for governments to incorporate social and economic rights into citizenship, it was the work of T.H. Marshall that changed the terms of the debate about rights coverage. Marshall (1992) pointed to the asymmetry between formal equality and the reality of socio-economic inequality that prevented full participation in a more coherent and systematic manner than had previously been done. Many European governments built on the selective welfare programmes that had existed in the inter-war period and, in some cases, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to create a comprehensive welfare state to which all citizens were entitled.

The fundamental universal-particular contradiction was exposed most clearly as a weakness of citizenship derived from a purely territorialised or ethnicised understanding of 'the people' in the post-war period. The large-scale immigration that followed de-colonisation and provided cheap labour for European countries turned the tables on citizenship: multi-ethnicity was internalised and it challenged the basis for membership of citizenship. Democratic versions of citizenship have reacted by attempting to control the entry of immigrants; such a policy went, in theory, against the principles of Liberal citizenship practiced in the UK. Access to membership for immigrants has subsequently been controlled by length of residence, providing that a number of further criteria are satisfied. These include language proficiency, financial solvency or absence of a criminal record; some countries also insist on either the completion of a citizenship test or an oath of loyalty. Most countries operate a combination of these measures and have created a complex of different legal statuses that apply to different types of migrants at different times. Access to citizenship for the second or third generation of immigrants also varies across Western Europe. The creation of 'quasi-

citizens' or 'margizens' that are entitled to some rights and not others can have implications for division within communities as well as potentially stigmatizing the individuals involved.

These systems echo an understanding of citizenship that emerged from the writings of John Rawls on distributive justice. Although this account is based largely on adapting economic theories of efficiency and resource distribution, Rawls proposed that we ask what sort of society we would want to establish if we did not know what position we would hold in it (Wootton 1996). He argues that the correct principles are those we would choose when placed behind a 'veil of ignorance' about our place in society. This attempt at reforming a 'Kantian' social contract followed the Democratic tradition and saw democracy as a closed system in which the improvement of society was dependent only upon improving the situation of the worst off individual (Rawls 1999). From these arguments it can be suggested that limiting immigration is often necessary to protect certain political and constitutional principles that pertained to this aim. The basis of this position is an equation of nation with state and culture with politics (Castles and Davidson 2000), which is difficult to sustain in an era of large-scale migration. Furthermore, the increasing influence of the market in providing 'mixed economies of welfare' (Esping-Anderson 1990), the privatisation and commercialisation of the state (Cerny 1997) and the transnationalisation of state interests (Panitch 2000) have all contributed to an erosion of state control over the levers of economic and social rights.<sup>2</sup> Political apathy has also contributed to an erosion of the active and participatory element of citizenship. Consequently, it is untenable to suggest that immigration is exclusively responsible for devaluing citizenship as it is to blame immigration for a loss of national character, as discussed above. While immigration is a contributing factor to these phenomena, it does not mean that it is incompatible with a healthy, inclusive and functioning citizenship, but that existing conceptions of citizenship need to be able to accommodate new members (Benhabib 2004) and provide reassurance to existing members of the terms on which new members may be admitted.

This section has concentrated on some influential models and significant trends that have affected the form of citizenship. Consequently, it has described how citizenship has been used as a mechanism for control and protection, a balance between the state and the people, an expression of popular will and as a tool to create social equality and unity. It has also been shown how the intended function of citizenship has dictated its parameters: rights coverage, level of participation, territorial coverage and membership. The focus here has been on Western ideals of citizenship in order to provide a context for understanding the genesis and emergence of British citizenship and the debates surrounding citizenship in Britain today.

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<sup>2</sup> That is not to say that the state is no longer the major player, but its decisions are increasingly contingent on factors that are not part of the state-citizen relationship (Morrell 2008).

### 3.2 *British citizenship*

Pinning down what is meant by British citizenship is a difficult task. Historically it has taken on many forms and functions and today debates on citizenship are wide-ranging, addressing social and welfare rights, identity and Britishness, electoral participation and social engagement. Discussion of British citizenship is beset by much confusion, with it being seen as synonymous with identity, rights or the welfare state in different political contexts. This is partly a consequence of Britain lacking a single defining constitution or historical event to which the origins and parameters of citizenship can be traced (Karatani 2003; Goodhart 2008); consequently the development of British Citizenship has been open to a number of interpretations, with academics emphasising the relative importance of allegiance to parliamentary democracy (Everson 2003), Empire and immigration policy (Karatani 2003) and pragmatic politics and the balance of political power (Hansen 2000; Money 2004). This has made British citizenship, 'wholly a creature of statute' (Karatani 2003), highly contextual and 'vulnerable to the instability of change' (Cesarani 1997).

The origins of this institution can be found in England and the social hierarchy of feudal allegiance (Karatani 2003). This was an overtly controlling social order and citizenship was highly exclusive. The majority were passive members: subjects rather than citizens. The idea of private property as the basis for political rights maintained this hereditary structure and emphasised the vertical relationship between subject and sovereign rather than forging any horizontal relationship among subjects (Everson 2003; Karatani 2003). Citizenship was only to threaten to break out of this mould, partly in response to social conflict, in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, in much the same way as was described in the previous section, as the feudal basis for allegiance came under attack from thinkers in Scotland and the American colonies (Cesarani 1997). The victory of Parliament over the Crown did not, it is argued, lead to an assertion of the popular will in Britain but a shifting of absolute sovereignty from the monarchy to the government (Everson 2003). It was the concepts of citizenship imported from the French Revolution that offered a convincing argument on the state's duty to provide political rights and subsequently social citizenship to enable full participation (Cesarani 1997). Yet, in Britain, there was no revolutionary event or deep discussion of nationhood to allow this form of idea of citizenship to take hold. Britons remained, and those living in the colonies became, subjects not citizens. The politics of Empire would embed this vertical association (Karatani 2003).

The relationship between the development of citizenship and the functioning of Empire provides an interesting example of how the changing aims of citizenship affect its dimensions. At the height of Empire, British citizenship or subjecthood outside Britain was used in a similar way to the multi-ethnic citizenship of the Roman Empire. Some historians argue that the brutal expansion of this form of citizenship aimed to preserve the Britishness of the Empire and the sheer numbers that could be described as 'British' became a powerful posturing symbol of the reach of the Empire

(Cesarani 1997); others suggest that while the development of citizenship and subjecthood was linked to control, it was never linked to nationhood or Britishness (Karatani 2003; Everson 2003). Yet the attempt to control or eliminate cultural difference through imposed citizenship ultimately failed. As was the case in Europe a century earlier, the acute poverty experienced by masses of the 'citizenry', reflected by an increasing diversity of legal statuses (Karatani 2003), made it impossible for any of the rights that came with membership to be meaningfully attained (Castles and Davidson 2000). The resulting dissolution of the Empire and the post-war migration to Britain that followed exposed the conceptual gap between the previously transposed ethnic and cultural genesis of 'the people' and the political and civil concept of citizenship.

Randall Hansen (2000) argues that what is most significant about British immigration and citizenship policy between 1950 and 1962 is not its inherent racialisation, but its openness. The waning of the Empire and the development of domestic policies on citizenship and immigration within dominions and colonies was confirmed by the partition of India and Canada's assertion of its own citizenship (Karatani 2003). This led to a further rearrangement of the dimensions of British citizenship and belonging (Hansen 2000; Cesarani 1997). The 1948 British Nationality Act created two primary categories: citizens of the UK and colonies and citizens of Commonwealth countries. Despite the fact that both these categories of people had the right to settle in Britain, this Act was 'not designed to facilitate and did not anticipate non-white immigration' (Hansen 2000). Immigration, however, certainly did follow and, until 1962, was largely unrestricted. This was a policy largely out of step with public opinion on the issue of non-white immigration, as polls from the time indicate (*Ibid.*). A number of factors contributed to the formation of this policy, including an enduring liberal support for the Commonwealth and nostalgia for Empire as well as the demand for cheap labour (Carter 2003; Cesarani 1997).

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act dramatically reduced the rights previously associated with being a British subject, most notably rendering subjects of the Commonwealth and colonies subject to immigration controls. The only exemption was for those considered to have a 'close connection to Britain (Karatani 2003): those born in the UK or of British descent (Cesarani 1997). The growing popular opposition to further non-white immigration was intensified by the riots of 1958 and penetrated the political discourse in the first years of the 1960s. Some argue that despite the full support of the public and the back-benches, immigration controls were implemented reluctantly by the Conservative Party leadership (Hansen 2000). The contradiction of preaching multi-ethnicity in the Commonwealth without practicing it at home was apparent to leading Party members (*Ibid.*). Yet the supposed temporary measures of 1962, combined with the 1948 Act set the tone for a confused relationship between immigration and citizenship policy.

Hansen (2000) argues that the adoption of an imperial definition of citizenship locked British politicians into a narrow set of policy choices on immigration. Despite a desire and, occasionally, a

necessity for a liberal approach to immigration, the result was a policy structure that was racist in effect more than intention. Karatani (2003) suggests that by developing the idea of requiring a 'close connection' to be granted British citizenship, citizenship policy continued to be driven by control, in this instance immigration control, rather than a discussion about nationhood or horizontal rights and responsibilities. Alternative analyses of immigration policy suggest that the Acts themselves were severely racialised (Cesarani 1997). Furthermore, irrespective of the intentions of policy, Gilroy, amongst others, argues that the remnant structures of Empire conditioned all feelings of antipathy towards newcomers (Gilroy 2003; Hesse 2000). Taking account of the numerous interpretations of this issue, it could be argued that it was Britain's ambiguous post-war attitude towards Empire, Commonwealth and their subjects that, located within the dichotomy of a liberal elite and an illiberal public, made a confused and racialised citizenship and immigration policy inevitable.

British citizenship was only formally created by the British Nationality Act 1981. It promoted a more positive version of citizenship than previously seen in Britain through an attempt to define rights and responsibilities, though it is argued by Karatani (2003) that there was little political commitment to discussion of these substantive aspects. Hansen (2000) argues that the Act was an attempt to 'rationalise and clarify' the status of British citizens and the role of citizenship, yet the Act still created six citizenship statuses. The nature of these statuses maintained the link between immigration control and citizenship; some argue that citizenship will ultimately become the sole basis for immigration control (Karatani 2003). The subsequent development of immigration policy has followed the piecemeal fashion of legislation throughout the Imperial era and has resulted in a 'patchwork of rights' for an increasing number of categories of migrants and their offspring (Spencer 1995); access to citizenship for these individuals is also highly differentiated.<sup>3</sup> This reflects the policy conundrum detailed above: despite the eradication of discrimination being an aim of successive UK administrations, significant inequality remains inherent in nationality and citizenship policy that accords status on the basis of the country of origin and reasons for flight of a migrant rather than residence (*Ibid.*). This exposition of the paradox inherent in liberal citizenship at a national level has produced a stratification of rights in a number of European states, including Britain (Morris 2004 and 1997). In a situation where access to citizenship is more restrictive than immigration controls, it is argued that the creation of quasi-citizens can contribute to the fragmentation of communities that contain a high proportion of immigrants. In this context the lack of inclusiveness of citizenship can make it a divider rather than a unifier.

The above analysis demonstrates the impact citizenship policy has had on the protection of immigrants' rights. It is also argued, however, that immigration has had an effect on the perceived worth of citizenship in Britain. Jacobson (1997) argues that 'transnational migration is steadily

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<sup>3</sup> See Spencer (1995) for a detailed breakdown of the access to citizenship for different categories of migrants and Morris (2004) for a more recent assessment of the differentiated entitlements of migrants.

eroding the traditional basis for nation-state membership'. Such arguments are frequently heard in contemporary politics, particularly in reference to the impact of immigration and diversity on community relations (Howard 2004; Field 2006) and routes to accessing British citizenship for migrants (Goodhart 2008), yet they face opposition on two fronts. Firstly, the idea that processes of globalisation, of which transnational migration is one, are wresting control over immigration and welfare policies from the state is not sustainable in absolute terms (Morrell 2008). Increasingly, external factors do affect national decision making, but the state is far from relinquishing control over its subjects and its policy. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the state has experienced a reconfiguration of its interests and apparatus (Poulantzas 1975; Cox 1981; Panitch 1996 and 2000). Secondly, many argue that other factors, both domestic and external, are contributing to the erosion of the value of citizenship. Access and contribution to the welfare state has long been seen as a central part of British citizenship. Irrespective of the arguments that this emphasis has created a citizenship built on material entitlement rather than moral and political behaviour, the link with the welfare state appears to be declining (Scheirup et al 2005). Academics point to the increased involvement of the market and the commercialisation of the provision of social and economic rights. While this has roots in the globalisation of capital, it does not represent a nation state held to ransom by these processes. In fact, the state has often been an active instigator of the move to the market and mixed economies of welfare. In addition to these supra-national processes, including the stuttering but widening remit of the European Union, British citizenship is also subject to sub-national pressures. Devolution in Scotland and Wales has brought the multi-national character of British citizenship into focus more clearly than previously. These pressures have raised questions about traditional tenets of belonging and democracy in the minds of individuals and political parties.

The current debate surrounding the meaning and form of British citizenship comprises viewpoints that stress the importance of its protection and viewpoints that emphasise the unifying potential of a reformed, more inclusive version. New Labour came to power insistent upon returning confidence in public services, a central element of British citizenship, yet a fully inclusive citizenship has proved problematic for the government in recent years due to a number of factors. Firstly, the election pledge of devolution appeared to be politically opposed to an amplified discourse on *Britishness*. Gordon Brown has been keen not only to stress his own Britishness, but also the value of Britishness to all parts of the union. He has led calls to re-imagine and reawaken Britishness as a way of unifying society. Yet for Brown, Britishness appears to mean more than citizenship: a source of cultural identity, rather than a civil and political framework, something that in political terms has no historical precedent (Everson 2003; Karatani 2003). While this argument emphasises the multicultural nature of this Britishness, it runs the risk of transposing an idea of culture and identity onto society and confusing the role of citizenship. It also runs counter to the recent trend of decreasing numbers of English and Scottish people considering themselves only or mainly British (Park et al 2008). Crick (2004) is clearer about the meaning of Britishness: it means citizenship, an overarching political and legal framework, not a homogenous common culture.

Pronouncements on citizenship from other influential New Labour figures have adopted this tone. In 2002, David Blunkett (2002a) proposed that citizenship can offer 'a shared ground for diverse communities...based on political membership'. This offers a space for diversity and does not impose a mono-culture or present an idea of identity formed by a multicultural Britishness. Yet the tone of Blunkett's work and much subsequent government policy on citizenship is imparted with an additional sense of global insecurity. While citizenship can be a force for unity, changing global security considerations make it incumbent upon governments to impose specific criteria of access to membership (*Ibid.*). The difficulty of balancing civil liberties with security has been apparent in recent years, particularly with a scrupulous media and an often unforgiving public prepared to react to any imbalance. This concern with security has often permeated immigration and asylum policy and citizenship policies in a way that may not square with the goal of providing a shared ground for diverse communities, when citizenship and its quasi alternatives can act as an additional marker of difference.

It is the duality of rights and responsibilities that ties together much of New Labour's thinking on citizenship and the attempt to emphasise a citizen's duties is the notable element of this approach. 'Rights and responsibilities' can be found in statements and speeches across a number of policy areas: citizenship, law and order, integration, public services, climate change. In 2007, Tony Blair attempted to re-invigorate the idea of a social contract between the citizen and the state, in response to debates about what responsibilities citizenship should carry and what behaviour is conducive to being a 'good citizen'. Galston (1991), *inter alia*, has offered an indicative set of 'civic virtues' that make for good citizenship. These disaggregate into 'general virtues' (such as loyalty and to abide by the law), 'social virtue' (including independence and being open-minded), 'economic virtues' (a good work ethic, for example) and 'political virtues' (respecting others, demanding only what can be afforded and voting in public elections). Kymlicka and Norman (2000) suggest that it is not so much a question of what these virtues should be as they should be subject to an ongoing dialogue involving all members of society; rather it is a question of what governments should do to promote these virtues and facilitate this discussion.

It is the shift in emphasis to responsibilities that has prompted a number of other arguments about what it means to be a British citizen. In a number of high profile pieces, David Goodhart proposed a concept of 'earned citizenship' for newcomers to Britain. This takes the dualism of rights and responsibilities a step further to citizenship that offers rights that are conditional upon a period of demonstrated responsibility. Goodhart (2006 and 2006a) is attempting to offer a 'progressive' response to what he calls the 'free-rider' problem in the welfare state. While accepting that on the whole free-riding is not a problem among immigrants any more than existing citizens, Goodhart suggest that there has been a substantive change in the provision and distribution of welfare that contributes to the perception that free-riding is a problem. The shift from mutual forms of welfare to

the modern needs-based system is deemed responsible for this perceived breakdown in reciprocity (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006). Yet a clarification of how the system works may be a more enlightened way to tackle this misperception than imposing further criteria on newcomers. Goodhart does go some way to proposing the latter, with a formalised two-tier citizenship in favour of the complex of levels and entitlements that currently exist (Goodhart 2006).

Critics oppose such an approach on the basis that it is discriminatory and may have the potential to stigmatize. Conversely, it is argued that this merely differentiates citizens rather than making a value judgement on humans. Parekh (2006) has suggested that it is reasonable to withhold political rights from non-citizens without infringing upon social rights (see also Soysal 1994) but encourage naturalisation through active participation (Crick 2004). Despite these arguments, Goodhart's approach, utilising the very language of earned citizenship, has recently been adopted by the government (Byrne 2008). Along with proposals for a British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (Straw 2008), this is the culmination of the trend towards emphasising responsibility. The government's aims are wider than merely tackling a perception of free-riding amongst migrants. Firstly, the proposals are a further attempt to offer clarity over statuses and rights and responsibilities to prospective citizens; a further, political aim is to provide reassurance over access to citizenship to core Labour voters. Yet, despite extensive political posturing and column inches devoted to the issue of nationhood and defining Britishness, these proposals do not attempt to link citizenship to any formal understanding of these concepts. Interestingly, the proposals were released just months before Lord Goldsmith, in a review of citizenship carried out for the Ministry of Justice, reports on the findings from months of consultation with experts and research amongst the general public.<sup>4</sup> This might suggest that political concerns, as well as a desire for legislative clarity, are driving current citizenship policies.

### *3.3 Citizenship and multiculturalism*

This section addresses the relationship between citizenship and multiculturalism: in what form are these two concepts compatible? Solomos and Schuster (2000) argue that 'citizenship and multiculturalism are fundamentally concerned with the role of racial and ethnic categorisation in the construction of social and political identities'. Their fundamental aims certainly overlap, but it has also been argued that the unitary character of citizenship conflicts with the inherent diversity of *multiculturalism*. An alternative argument would suggest that they operate in distinct but interrelated spheres. This section briefly addresses the arguments that predict conflict and compliment respectively and highlights some of the mechanisms that may allow them to co-exist.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, Lord Goldsmith was publishing his findings; they were not able to be incorporated into this work.

As was explained in the first section of this paper, multiculturalism is an acceptance of the multicultural society and a theory on how to accommodate such diversity. Many of the arguments suggesting that citizenship and multiculturalism are incompatible accept that multiculturalism can only be theorised in a rigid and essentialist form, the weaknesses of which are discussed above. From this position it may be correct to suggest that operating policies of redistributive justice through homogenised cultural groups would erode the value of any form of overarching citizenship based on individual rights. The translation into policy of this form of multiculturalism, it is argued, would also be divisive and create competition between groups subsumed under the same citizenship. Such a reading is based on some flawed multicultural policies rather than an exhaustive critique of more nuanced versions of multiculturalism. Yet there are still some that argue against the compatibility of these versions of multiculturalism with citizenship. Here it is relevant to recall the argument of Schuster (2006), which contends that multiculturalism adds little to liberalism in terms of social justice. An extension of this argument would suggest that citizenship and liberal norms of equality are all that is necessary for social justice. Some of the arguments that Goodhart has presented evoke this view, suggesting that diversity should be secondary to unity. The difficulty with this argument is that it precludes new members of society from a role in shaping the dimensions of citizenship, the rights it protects and the obligations it demands (Vasta 2007). It forces citizenship into a rigid and non-reflexive form. It is essentialist to suggest that the presence of diverse peoples in a society prevents that society from reaching agreed principles (Malik 2004; Alibhai-Brown 2004).

Where multiculturalism and citizenship are compatible is in allowing citizenship to be an evolving concept, something that truly participatory citizenship makes inevitable. In responding to claims that multiculturalism and the multicultural are eroding citizenship, Kymlicka (1999) suggests that citizenship, with its clearly defined dimensions can be the forum where people transcend their differences. In societies that are multicultural and multi-ethnic, the certainties of citizenship offer a framework to debate and judge the merits of minority claims rather than extending the practices of the dominant (Kymlicka and Norman 2000). The latter would be avoided as denying minority rights would be damaging to the kind of social cohesion that gives value to citizenship in the first place. Parekh (2000a) also suggests that citizenship can provide a common language for bi-focal dialogue on rights and responsibilities, with the dimensions of citizenship not exempt from examination. The focus on commonality inherent in citizenship offers diverse individuals the opportunity to develop strong social bonds on the basis of their shared civic identity (Mirza 2004). Rather than a search for shared values or unity under the cultural identity of Britishness, a civic idea of polity and belonging removes ethnicity, race or nationality from the granting of rights. Rights are instead granted on a moral basis providing a unity among the multi-ethnicity, multi-culture and multi-race that comprise many contemporary societies. This diverse dialogue can actually enrich citizenship and democracy (Parekh 2000).

In order for the compatibility of citizenship and multiculturalism to function in this way society requires a mechanism of participation and dialogue, encouraged and facilitated by the state at various levels of government and civil society. The theory of deliberative democracy offers one such mechanism, articulated for the 'post-national world' most comprehensively by Jürgen Habermas (2001). It attempts to grasp the role of discourse in shaping society and is intent upon ameliorating structural inequalities by putting the power relations inherent in these conditions at the centre of deliberation (Williams 2000). This deliberation is necessary to assess rights claims where legitimacy rests on a commitment to public justification of policy, and the capacity of the population to challenge outcomes (Hicks 2002). Thus, rather than seeing competing individuals or groups within a democracy, the focus here is competing discourses, with the ability for these discourses to be transformative of structural cycles of injustice. This mechanism certainly allows multiculturalism to compliment and enrich citizenship, yet it does have some weaknesses. Articulating their thoughts by means of these structures can reproduce the very structures that individuals are marginalised by. This is likely to be the case if the form of dialogue and consultation facilitated by the state is able to be influenced by a small number of community leaders or groups (Williams 2000). Furthermore, while discourse is important to policy making, it still has to be translated into policy.

Similarly, Benhabib (2004) offers the concept of democratic iterations to mediate between rights claims that emerge from different forms of belonging and membership. This theory constitutes a process of public argument and debate through which universalist rights claims are judged and tested. Consequently, citizenship becomes a constantly evolving set of norms. The citizenship itself is 'jurisgenerative': a clear understanding of what constitutes membership allows citizens to be both the subject and author of laws (Habermas 1994 and 2001). This process can take place at various territorial levels, allowing membership to be layered along the lines of multiple but compatible identities and allegiances. While this theory improves on deliberative democracy by adding an understanding of layered membership, it is still representative of 'talk-centric' rather than 'vote-centric' participation and requires the iterative process to be facilitated by the state and civil society.

## 4. Identity

In contemporary debates around multiculturalism and citizenship, identity is often seen as both affecting and being affected by policy on rights, diversity and community. Commentators are as likely to suggest that identity is eroded by a certain policy as they are to argue that it emerges out of it. This apparent ambiguity over the role and definition of identity is responsible for it being frequently misunderstood, conflated with other variables such as rights, interests and opinions or for its meaning to be transposed onto citizenship, culture or class. This ambiguity, however, is actually instructive. What it demonstrates is that identity is a form of relationship and its expressions situational (Parekh 2006; Kymlicka and Norman 2000; Hall 2000). That is to say that we do not possess identity or identities in a neat, fixed and subjective format from which we choose depending upon our situation, like we choose our clothing dependent upon the temperature outside; rather, identities are overlapping and in constant reproduction by human agency and experience. In this sense identity *is* ambiguous and intangible.

Yet this does not render identity a futile concept. The identity of an individual plays different roles in different social settings (Parekh 2006) and is from our birth an intimate part of who we are and how we inform our decisions (Mondal 2004). The various social situations in which we rely on an aspect of identity can be isolated in order for the concept to be relevant in understanding behaviour and attitudes. An essentialised version of identity, however, must be guarded against in preference for an understanding that identity has many fissures and apparent contradictions and is not determined entirely by one or two social variables, such as nationality or class. With that argument in mind, this section of the paper analyses Britishness as a form of identity, highlighting its contradictions and assessing the value of the concept in the context of pressures upon it from within and without. It then explores the perceived emergence of identity politics and its relationship with multiculturalism and citizenship. Finally, it will discuss the concept of multiple identities and the impact this may have on achieving an agreed understanding of rights and responsibilities in a diverse contemporary society.

### 4.1 *The decline of Britishness?*

There has been an upsurge in interest in the meaning of Britishness in recent years, with the concept being aligned with citizenship, values and social cohesion. Despite this, academic research and social surveys studying the subject continue to find not only a reduction in popular identification with Britishness but also a lament at its decline. In January 2007, the *British Social Attitudes 23<sup>rd</sup> Report* found that less than half of British citizens define themselves as British (Park et al 2007). Furthermore, a research report commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) found that in discussing Britishness, a large proportion of white respondents 'immediately and

spontaneously changed the topic (to) a perceived decline of Britishness' (Ethnos 2006). So what was this Britishness and in what ways is it believed to be in decline?

The Parekh Report states that concepts of Britishness originated in the Eighteenth Century with the formal constitutional arrangement of an act of political union between England and Scotland. It goes on to remark that this Britishness was 'developed in the nineteenth century and cemented for much of the twentieth century' (Parekh 2000). Historically, Britain existed only as a political arrangement and the events, symbols and institutions associated with it: the British Empire, the British economy, the monarchy, the flag or the BBC. Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising that the extent of British 'culture', even up until the 1980s, was looked upon 'purely in terms of heritage, a monument which needed tending' (Dodd 2002). As discussed in the previous section, British citizenship, as a result of its territorial coverage, was primarily used as a tool of control and held up as an emblem of the reach of the British Empire. To achieve this, a significant amount of top-down artifice was crucial in maintaining loyalty to the political concept. Therefore, the situations in which the 'Britishness' aspect of identity was expressed would primarily be political, celebratory of the success of the political and economic power of the British.

Benhabib argues that 'citizenship and practices of political membership are the rituals through which the nation is spatially reproduced' and adds that 'through membership practices the state controls the synchronic and diachronic identity of the nation' (Benhabib 2004). Furthermore, Alexander Wendt argues that the identity of a nation is relational to other members of the global system of states: sovereignty, he argues is an 'evolution of cooperation...and collective identities' (Wendt 1992). Britishness as identity, therefore, has followed the fate of Britain as a political concept. While there are some elements of cultural commonality that the members of the British Isles perhaps share, it is primarily a shared political identity that informs Britishness, something that existed in the imagination of British subjects, supported by the aforementioned symbols and institutions (Anderson 1991), but was never formally politically acknowledged (Everson 2003; Karatani 2003). It is crucial to understand this situational use of Britishness in order to explain its perceived decline and the lament at this turn of events.

While this Britishness can be said to be an intangible top-down concept, the efficacy of the concept in informing identity must not be understated. The clearest political symbols upon which this historic Britishness was based have either been lost or weakened since the decline of the Victorian economy and the dissolution of the Empire. Yet, when asked about Britishness in more recent studies, respondents still cling in significant number to these aspects. This also explains the mourning of its decline, which is most prevalent amongst the white English majority (Ethnos 2006). Mourning the decline of Britishness is associated with a particular understanding of what Britishness was in the first place. Historically this has long been conflated with Englishness, and as a form of identity has been used more by the English than any other group (Parekh 2000). These

individuals find themselves unable to any longer celebrate the success or reach of 'their' British Empire. It is the English who have felt most keenly the sense of relative loss from no longer being the largest or strongest economy, wielding the most political influence or presiding over the racial hierarchy of the Empire and post-colonial Britain (Alibhai-Brown 2002; Hesse 2000).

The relative decline of Britain's political and economic power and domination has been traced from a number of factors in the late Nineteenth Century (Elbaum and Lazonik 1984; Sanderson 1999). There has been some delay in this being translated to public attitudes that accept and lament this decline. Gilroy (2003) explains this as a consequence of the 'victory' of war masking the inexorable loss of prior economic and political status. A number of recent research studies bear this out, with participants claiming that the 'good old days have gone' for a country (Britain or England) that is now 'an embarrassment' (Alibhai-Brown 1999; Parekh 2000; Ethnos 2006). That a significant proportion of the white English population express identity with such reminiscence could be problematic (Alibhai-Brown 2002) and has, some argue, contributed to the creation of an identity vacuum for those who feel they are not part of the progressive and multicultural identity others wish to formulate. This is an aspect of the post-colonial melancholia identified by Gilroy and summed up by this quote from Ian McDonald QC in his report into the killing of a young Bangladeshi boy in 1987:

*'One gets the sense of white working class parents, who have little or no basis in which to root their own identity and whose education has given them little or no conception of the value of their own experience as English working class' (quoted in Alibhai-Brown 2002)*

For national and ethnic minorities, the decline in Britishness is seen as less problematic and has certainly had less impact upon their identity. Where the English have primarily mourned the loss of Britishness, the Scottish and Welsh people in particular see this as a positive turn: it has allowed a more open flourishing of their own national identity. This is again rooted in the conflation of England and Britain. National minorities' view of British history is one of their own subordination to English rule, not of an equal political union. Consequently, despite the involvement of many upper class Scottish and Welsh in its running, the loss of Empire and economic decline does not represent a relative loss. In fact devolution represents a relative gain in freeing and dissociating their political and cultural identity from Britain and, by extension, the English (Alibhai-Brown 2002). Latest evidence suggests that the trend is continuing: in the latest report from the British Social Attitudes Survey, only three per cent of people born in Scotland defined themselves as only or mainly British (Park et al 2008). The situation for ethnic minorities is a little more complex, as the report commissioned by the CRE demonstrates. Non-white Scottish and Welsh people hold a similar opinion to their white compatriots: Britain is associated with the oppression and racial hierarchy of the Empire and so Britishness is not something they wish to identify with. For ethnic and racial minorities in England, however, the situation appears slightly different. This group tends to have a

similar opinion of Britishness given that it is seen as synonymous with imperialism, yet Englishness too is perceived to have racial connotations. Consequently, many ethnic minorities in England are stuck 'between two cultures with which they cannot identify' (Fukuyama 2007; see also Ethnos 2005).

A number of factors are identified as responsible for the decline of Britishness. The research commissioned by the CRE reports that those who lament this decline hold four distinct but interrelated processes as responsible. These are immigration, unfair benefit claims by ethnic minorities, a rise in moral pluralism and political correctness (Ethnos 2006). These themes echo the arguments detailed above about the effect of immigration and racial and ethnic diversity on British culture and citizenship. It may be argued that these trends associated with immigration, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism are actually consequences of the decline of the political construct of Britishness and subsequent attempts to hang on to it. As discussed above, British citizenship was extended in 1948 to allow the immigration of members of the commonwealth, many of whom formed ethnic and racial minorities. The policies of multiculturalism, that may have led to a cultural relativism and therefore moral pluralism, emerged out of political attempts to manage the new ethnic diversity and fragility of national unity that this exposed in Britain. It may be that the processes blamed for eroding Britishness are in fact indicative of the fragmentation of the political constructs most closely identified with the concept, yet this is important, as it has exacerbated the perception of decline.

It is difficult to suggest, however, that this perception constitutes a 'loss' of identity. Identity, as argued above, is not possessed but expressed. Mondal (2004) suggests that it is impossible to lose a sense of identity. Such a claim is more likely to represent nostalgia for dismantled sources of identification that will eventually be replaced by new ones. It may be more accurate, then, to say that these feelings represent a shrinking frame of reference for self-understanding, which affects the scope and relational ability of identity. This is not something common only to the white English; ethnic and racial minorities may also experience a confusion of self-understanding that can affect identity (Parekh 2000). Identity is also affected by how all individuals feel they are treated by the state, institutions and other members of society (Parekh 2006).

Despite the decline of the traditionally understood notions of Britishness, the concept continues to conjure up loose and diverse meanings for Britain's multi-ethnic society. The research commissioned by the CRE found eight dimensions of Britishness identified by participants. These cover geography, symbols, people, values, cultural behaviour, citizenship, language and achievements (Ethnos 2005). The specifics of many of these dimensions are still held, primarily by the white population, to represent the traditional notions of Britishness outlined above, particularly the symbols, geography and some cultural habits. There were also a number of identifications with Britishness that have emerged more recently, such as the respect for difference and notable

cultural or artistic achievements. Britishness was very much associated with citizenship for Scottish, Welsh and ethnic minority participants and not for white English participants (*Ibid.*).

This may suggest that there is potential for Britishness to represent a common civic and legal identity in the guise of citizenship. Yet is Britishness the correct term to use and should we be concerned about arresting its decline? The imperial and racial connotations that the concept has already been highlighted, which, when combined with the sense of loss it appears to represent for some of the white English population, may render Britishness an unsuitable term to foster social unity. Parekh (2006) argues succinctly that:

*'Since the increasingly popular term 'Britishness' is non-relational, and stresses passive attributes, has an essentialist orientation, is inherently vague, and can be easily used to disqualify any group that appears to show insufficient Britishness, it is a source of much mischief and nuisance, and is best avoided.'*

It may be argued that the concept of Britishness is sufficiently inclusive for forging a unity out of the diversity of contemporary British society. Whether we identify with it or not, the images that Britishness conjures up are often considered to be anachronistic, backward-looking, unrepresentative of British society and divisive. This does not disavow anyone from expressing their own British identity in the manner and situations of their choosing; but as a force for 'unity in diversity' it appears to be inadequate and may even exacerbate inequality and disadvantage (Parekh 2000).

#### 4.2 Identity politics in Britain

The increased use of the term identity politics signifies three main trends. The first is the shift from 'grand-theory ideology' to plurality within identity politics; it is this shift that is new rather than identity choices being political. Secondly, it conveys what may be called a 'fetishization' of identity (Maddood 2000), that is the politicisation of minor and partial expressions of identity. This has to some degree been facilitated by some policies of multiculturalism. Finally, and linked to fetishization, identity politics represents a political conflation of rights with needs and interests, which not only contributes to social fragmentation but has also undermined the meaning and value of 'rights-talk' (Kuper 2005; Parekh 2004).

The end of the Cold War was the end of an era of bi-polar international politics. It also signalled the demise of the Left and Right as unequivocal organising principles of political life in Britain (Cable 2005). Yet the declaration of the 'end of history' was premature, as rather than a dismantling of left and right, this traditional political spectrum became blurred by cross-cutting factors of identity.

Politics has increasingly abandoned the ideological grand theory, the all-encompassing account of economics, politics and society that offered positional guidance when making individual choices and expressing identity. The contemporary politics of identity distorts these boundaries and encourages expression of partial identities with a number of ideologically contradictory factors interacting to produce an individual's world view.<sup>5</sup> This form of identity politics is new, but identity politics has always existed. Politics based on identity arrived with the modern era and is not exclusive to a globalised post-modernity (Mondal 2004). Fukuyama (2007) recognises Martin Luther, with the identity politics of the Reformation, as the first to expose the conflict between individual and group rights inherent in liberalism. Furthermore, identity choices are more political than they are anthropological. It is the pervasiveness of nationalism and the inter-state system that did not eradicate identity politics between Martin Luther and today but contained and ordered them. The legacy of Westphalia<sup>6</sup> is the conflation of nation, state and culture, the amalgam through which identity became primarily expressed. As noted above, the nation and its associated cultural rituals and myths have controlled identity (Benhabib 2004).

Contemporary politics and political action is, therefore, no longer framed by expressions of unitary identity but by expressions of partial identities. As such it is a threat to the two-party dominance inherent in the British political system (Cable 2005). Single-issue politics is on the rise. A pamphlet published by the think tank Demos in 2005, explored a number of examples of this type of political protest and highlights the role of the media and new media in effectively facilitating this form of politics (Milne 2005). There have also been a number of unlikely alliances that have emerged out of blurring of left and right (Cohen 2007). These uneasy coalitions are across left and right, between religions and amongst unrelated advocacy groups. It has been suggested that modern politics is civil war by other means; post-modern politics, therefore, is a series of messy interrelated and localised 'civil wars'. In Britain, as discussed above, the post-colonial condition has left many questions of identity unanswered. The response to this has been periodical 'transruptions' with ethnic and racial minorities attempting to break through the anodyne policies of multiculturalism and race relations to assert their identity (Hesse 2000; Gilroy 2003). Multiculturalism, in attempting to ensure respect and rights for group difference, was the liberal response to Liberalism's own theoretical absence of social groups, yet its most striking consequence may be a contribution to the modern plurality of identity politics (Cable 2005). Despite its laudable aims, Fukuyama (2007) argues, multiculturalism has allowed too much authority to sub-state communities to define the rules of behaviour for their own members. There is no logical limit to the types of groups that can claim group rights; therefore the search for new ways to express partial identity has generated a fetishization of identity. Furthermore, this has been institutionally formalised in local government practices and funding mechanisms.

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<sup>5</sup> For example see British Social Attitudes Survey 2007 and difference between incidence and impact of identification.

<sup>6</sup> The Treaties that combined to become the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, drew distinct territorial boundaries in Northern and Western Europe and is often referred to as the birth of the international nation-state system.

The effect that the pluralism of identity politics has had on the political process is epitomised by the conflation of needs, interests and rights. Identity has always claimed recognition and authenticity (Waldron 2000), yet it has become more frequent to put forward claims to recognise identity based on needs, interests or opinions as rights claims. Recent public debates around the right to free speech (or the right to cause offence) and the protection of particular minority cultural practices are examples of where interests of identity have been framed as rights. This presents a fundamental difficulty for liberalism and multiculturalism, where the former privileges individual rights and the latter group rights. The fact that these ideologies or theories are concurrent in Britain creates confusion between what is a right and what is an interest or an attitude. There are several dangers that emerge from this tension. Firstly, an uncontrolled expansion of rights claims generated by the ambiguity of identity politics devalues the concepts of rights, to the extent that the concept of human rights is now held in contempt by a significant proportion of society (Parekh 2004). Secondly, it is likely to lead to conflict. Waldron (2000) introduces the concept of 'compossibility' to evaluate rights claims – that is assessing whether a rights claim and the principles of a liberal democratic society are simultaneously possible. Some rights claims are not 'compossible' with liberal principles of individual equality (Fukuyama 2007; Waldron 2000). If such rights are granted despite this conflict, those upholding liberal values are unlikely to feel adequately protected as an individual by the state; if the rights are not granted, the group in question may be disadvantaged and express concerns of victimisation. Whichever is the outcome, it is likely to contribute to further plurality in the politics of identity by appropriating the position and identity of victim (Gilroy 2003) either through a desire to re-assert a perceived traditional identity of exclusive nationalism or increased competition for the protection of group rights.

The new politics of identity are characterised by increasing pluralism, fluidity and ambiguity exposing the contradictions of multiculturalism and liberalism. While there remains some strong identification with the nation, it is ambiguous as to whether this looks forward or back and is exclusive or inclusive. The political challenge is to provide some coherence for the unavoidable multiplicity of identity in Britain today.

#### *4.3 Multiple identities and citizenship*

The emergence of pluralist identity politics is often considered a threat to social unity and justice, despite its potential for open dialogue amongst diverse and cross-cutting sections of society. Identity in Britain, whether thought of as Britishness or not, is 'more diverse and pluralistic than is normally imagined' (Parekh 2000). The cliché of 'community' afforded to a certain set of individuals based on class, gender, ethnicity or region amongst other markers, conceals the myriad fractures and fissures that exist within. Vince Cable (2005) elaborates this complex of multiple identities that

comprise contemporary British society, explaining, for example, that one can be 'British, Indian, Punjabi and Sikh, growing up in a middle-class, west London suburb'. Any combination of national, racial, religious, ethnic, or class identifications constantly interact to provide different expressions of identity for a particular scenario of modern Britain. There is some optimism that this 'hybridity'<sup>7</sup> need not descend into protracted identity politicking that would leave society at an impasse. Instead a bottom-up confident self-understanding of difference can emerge from identity politics to create a society comfortable with its diversity. Gilroy's 'conviviality' is again useful to conceptualise the mechanism of this process as a reflexive identity with a radical openness. The existence of multiple identities does not make conflict inevitable, yet more than the utopias of rigid multiculturalism are required to avoid this. As Taylor (1992) has argued, identity can affect participation in society, particularly if it is involved in a constant quest for recognition (see also Waldron 2000). It is crucial that within the multiplicity of identity, distinction is made between cultural, social, civic and political identities. Benhabib (2004) argues that political identity needs to be decoupled from national membership. The implication is that 'the nation' is ethnically exclusive and removes 'reason from political identity' making moral and political judgements a matter of chance rather than judgement (Waldron 2000).

While identity is situational and in constant reproduction, a political entity requires the fashioning of a transcendent, inclusive and unifying civil and legal identity that sets the terms of judgement to avoid moral and cultural relativism (Kymlicka and Norman 2000). As alluded to above, there has been extensive discussion as to whether Britishness, or a 'New Britishness' (Alibhai-Brown 2002), can provide this focus of commonality and unity. It is questionable whether this is possible on two counts. Firstly, Britishness retains too many Imperial connotations, as the earlier account of the research studies into the concept demonstrates. Despite the diversity of understanding of Britishness, it is a concept that 'leaves too much out' (Parekh 2000). Secondly, despite the fact that Britain is itself a multi-national construct, Britishness is not a purely political concept. Britishness came to represent the 'national' in what Benhabib identifies as the dialectic of political rights and cultural identity (Benhabib 2004); the fact that political rights have historically not been inclusive means that it would be difficult for the term to achieve the necessary separation of cultural and political identities. Furthermore Britishness is often equated with British citizenship (Goodhart 2004 and 2006; Crick 2004), which may limit the attraction and reach of the latter.

For British citizenship to become a form of transcendent civil and legal unity, as discussed at the end of the section on citizenship, it has been suggested that it needs to take into account the multiplicity of identities it is required to incorporate. Fukuyama (2007) suggests that European states have more difficulty than their North American counterparts in integrating new immigrants into a civic and legal framework because they have de-ritualised their political lives. Europeans tend

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<sup>7</sup> There are also limitations to the idea of cultural hybridity, as to exist it must presuppose the existence of two unitary and self-contained cultures.

to be cynical of such rituals, he explains, as a consequence of their uneasy love-hate relationship with nationalism. Even so, if rituals and symbols are to become an effective part of citizenship and unity, they need to be carefully chosen. Goodhart (2006) has made some proposals along these lines, but their form and content must resist retreating into the exclusivity of Britishness. To be a unifying force, these rituals need to represent a more inclusive, reflexive and critical understanding of British history and society that would be reflected in the educational curriculum of citizenship. This requires more than merely raising the visibility of national citizenship with ceremonies and language tests (Fukuyama 2007). One way of making these rituals something that are not only for immigrants and that could re-awaken the civic identity of existing citizens is a citizenship ceremony for *all* citizens at a certain age, not just immigrants. This proposal, put forward by Goodhart and others, could imply that citizenship is a civic and not a national or cultural identity. A civic and legal form of citizenship needs to be inclusive not only to *incorporate* the existing diversity and multiplicity of identities that currently comprise Britain but also to *allow them to be maintained*. It is argued, therefore, that there is no contradiction or necessary conflict between this common civic identity and differentiated religious, class or ethnic identity (Parekh 2006).

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