Being British – Exploring the identity

Veronika Manová

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce pojednává o současném skloňovaném pojmu Britishness především ve smyslu úpadku a poukazuje na fakt, že jednotlivé národy žijící ve Velké Británii inklinují ke svým národním identitám spíše než k identitě Britské. Klade si za cíl přiblížit současnou situaci a objasnit otazky: Co vedlo k těmto debatám? Co způsobilo úpadek? Byla to jen velká vlna přistěhovalců ze zemí rozpadlého Britského impéria? A jak vůbec definovat Britishness? Kdo je považován za Brita a kdo se jím skutečně cítí. Jednou z odpovědí na řešení této situace je rozšíření školních osnov o předmět „Život v UK – soužití s rozdíly od kterého si Britská vláda slibuje posílení sociální soudržnosti.

Klíčová slova: Britové, "Britishness", identita, Britská identita

ABSTRACT

This work deals with contemporary, frequently discussed notion of Britishness especially in the sense of decline and points to the fact that the individual nations living in Great Britain tend to identify with their national identity rather than to the British one. The goal of this paper is to examine the contemporary position and to unravel questions: what stirred these debates? What caused the decline? Was it just a huge wave of immigrants from the countries of the dissolved British Empire? How to define Britishness at all? Who is considered British and who actually feels British? One possible solution of this situation would be to broaden the national curriculum to include a new subject: "Life in the UK-Living with difference" from which the British government awaits strengthening the social cohesion.

Keywords: being British, Britishness, identity, decline

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Just as soon as I arrived in the UK to spend the following 25 months there I was a bit suspicious when being called "darling", "love" or "dear" by complete strangers.

Soon I met Tony, 6 feet and 2 inches tall who bought me warm beer in pints before 11 o'clock "last orders" in a local inn or we used to go to sing in karaoke bar. We both liked seacoast and his family owned an apartment in Hastings which we often rented. When taking me down there he drove on the left, bough petrol in gallons and even understood pounds and ounces.

We drank teas with milk all day long and hardly missed roast beef especially on Sunday and to pour gravy sauce over anything. Chinese noodles, Japanese sushi and French wine were often on our dinning table.

He also taught me how to wash hands from two taps in a house which is his castle in a land of industrial revolution, knights, lawn tennis, pop idols a land with beautiful landscape and long and glorious history and rich variety of weather.

I was explained the rules of the game in which all dress so impractically in white. He was so proud of great achievements in cricket and football but reserved in dress, manners and speech. Self-disciplined and polite, perfectly happy queuing and never complaining about anything, that was him, a "true Brit" with ancestors dating back through the middle ages. We used to buy one to get one free even for his beloved pets. Even though he never learned to speak foreign languages, he never forgot to thank, please or apologize, and his sense of humour was just hilarious.

Some time ago I received a postcard from his holiday in Ibiza, announcing that he sold the apartment in Hastings in order to buy one in Spain. That surprised me so I decided to call him recently to find out. I just caught him in his garden which he called a sanctuary of many endangered species and now he considered himself as one of them. "What's up?" I asked? "Well" the answer went: "Bloody foreigners everywhere, this is not the same country anymore. I think I will soon be forced to speak Polish and pray to Allah."

INTRODUCTION

Recent events such as the London bombings in 2005, perpetrated by four suicidal assassins of Pakistani origin but all born and living in Great Britain, led to lengthy and complex discussions among the general public, experts from various fields, and politicians. Most, shocked by the fact that this atrocity was implemented by their co-inhabitants, pointed out that something must have failed in a multicultural Britain that highly tolerates and respects anything distinct and that is noted for cultural diversity, with members of various cultures sheltered under the political and social construct of Britishness. The political strategy of dealing with immigrants has developed over time, but one weakness became apparent after the 2005 attack: it did not distinguish differences among generations and their relationships with their original cultures and traditions. It underestimated the nature of cultural identity, the character of religious faith, and the upholding of cultural traditions. Immigrants have understandably different attitudes towards their new country than do their children, who were born in Britain. This second generation's primary identity has been wiped out, and a new identity has not yet adequately developed, leaving this second generation facing an identity crisis and a lack of belonging.

Scholar Bhikhu Parekh once wrote that "every country needs and as a rule tends to develop a shared self-definition. In a stable society this is often taken for granted but it changes when a society passes through rapid and extensive changes or faces an internal or external threat to its way of life or existence, forcing it to ask itself what it stands for, what holds it together, what unites it and distinguishes it."[1]

What forced Britain to ask for its definition, what were the "changes" or "threats"? Significant changes were waiting for Britain shortly after the Second World War as a result of decolonization of most of the empire. Two imperial centuries came to an end consequently causing shrinkage of its geographical expanse and political power. Along with decolonization, arrival of large number of non white immigrants played a role in the

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[1] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The British Identity, 1851-2008", British Scholar no.1 (2008): 4-20, http://britishscholar.com/LordMorganproof8282008finalbook.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010)

changing make up of British society. There were widespread fears about the joining the European Community but more fear was aroused over the emergence of Scottish and Welsh nationalism and changing the territorial and political integrity. Many traditional sources of pride namely the empire, social cohesion, stable democratic institutions, the industrial leadership, superiority to the rest of Europe and political unity started dropping behind.

To redefine the Britishness schools have been singled out as the key place to promote understanding and avoid intolerance, thereby strengthening British identity. As a result, a proposal has been made to modify the already existing subject – citizenship to include Britishness.

The term Britishness only exists due to the formation of Britain which can be traced back to historical events. It has been used over the years to evoke national pride or will in times of political strive or conflict. The British stiff upper lip has been a symbol of a nations pride and unyielding desire to succeed. Britain is an essence, political and historical event which can be traced back to the Act of union in 1800 and further back to the Union of England and Scotland in 1707. Since the formation of the union Britain has developed through the rise of imperialism from around 1870 into an empire which subsequently became the largest the world has ever seen. During the period of 1940-90 the fall or dissolution has rendered Britain back to what it has always been, a small island nation. This small island nation still to this day has aspirations to be a dominant player in the modern world. However it now relies heavily on nothing more then its concept of Britishness, a non empirical ideology that commands a respect throughout the world and in particular the former colonies. It can be argued that Britishness is no more than a concept to promote a set of values common to a group of nations that historically were as diverse as the more recent new comers to the British Isles. Eminent historian David Starkey commented that it is impossible to teach Britishness because a British nation does not exist. He further qualified this with the statement "we are made up of four nations which constitutes a market place of identity."[2]

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[2] BBC, "Can pupils learn 'Britishness'?", BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7040137.stm (accessed April 26, 2010).

What exactly will the teachers talk about in the new Britishness subject? What is Britishness and what is to be British, who is considered British and who actually feels British and what are the identification factors? When this term was first introduced, how it has developed, and what it actually encompasses, are the topics of this thesis.

1 HISTORY

1.1 Emergence of Great Britain

Historically prior to the 18th century there was no single British identity, the British Isles consisted of four nations whose people had often been hostile to each other.

Firstly between 1536 and 1543 a series of laws passed in the English Parliament resulted in the Act of Union with Wales during the reign of King Henry VIII. of England. Britishness since the 1707, the Union between England/Wales and Scotland had been largely identified with the representative and centralized values of state and civic institutions, such as monarchy, Parliament, law and Protestant churches as well as the expanding empire and military success.

"That the two Kingdoms of Scotland and England shall … be united into One Kingdom by the name of Great Britain…and the Crosses of St Andrew and St George be conjoined" [3]

Concepts of Britishness became more widely used and accepted in the nineteenth century following the 1801 incorporating Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland by the second Act of Union.

"That the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall … be united into One Kingdom, by the name of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland." [4]

Both Acts of union were a function of policy, a political concept to bring these countries together therefore Britishness may be seen as a political construct, an artificial new identity, an umbrella term which should shelter the individual nations which were put together by the Acts.

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[3] Office of Public Sector Publication, "Union with England Act 1707" Statute Law Database, http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?ActiveTextDocId=1519711 (accessed April 26, 2010).
[4] Office of Public Sector Publication, "Union with Ireland Act 1800" Statute Law Database. http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?activeTextDocId=2678772 (accessed April 26, 2010).

1.2 Historical Milestones of the British Pride

The period from 1805 left little doubt as to what Britain meant to the people. The Hanoverian emblems of the union jack and the militaristic song Rule Britannia were symbolic to a proud Protestant people (The poem "Rule Britannia" by James Thomson (1700-48) was put to music by Thomas Augustine Arne around 1740 and is sung as an unofficial national anthem.)[5] During this period the threat from the age old enemy France was to galvanize the nation in a common cause with the powerful British Navy characterized by the "Jolly Jack Tar" (a seaman of Royal Navy during the period of British Empire) at the front line keeping a close watch on Napoleons vessels assembled in the harbors of France. In many ways, Britain became far more integrated and closely-knit after 1815. Its people were put together by the growth of national railways and systems of communications, by a national market and credit and banking system, by the advance of mass literacy after 1870 Education Act and the rise of mass newspaper press.[6]

Britain used its growing empire to control large areas of the world. The empire gave the British a feeling of their own importance. The belief of the British in their own importance was at its height in the middle of the nineteenth century among the new middle class which had grown with industrialization. The national pride was nicely described by Charles Dickens when one of his character's Mr. Podsnap believed that "Britain had been especially chosen by God and considered other countries as a mistake; no other country is so favored as this country"[7]

The British Empire was the collective name for the land, countries, kingdoms, dominions, colonies and dependencies controlled by the British Government. At its height, it was the largest official realm in the world comprising approximately one quarter of the earth's surface, with territories in every continent and a population of between 400 and 500 million people.[8]

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[5] Britannia Internet Magazine, "Rule Britannia!", Britannia, http://www.britannia.com/rulebrit.html (accessed May 4, 2010).

[6] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The British Identity, 1851-2008", *British Scholar 1* (2008): 4-20, http://britishscholar.com/LordMorganproof8282008finalbook.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010)

[7] Charles Dickens, *The Works of Charles Dickens: Our Mutual Friend* (New York: Books, Inc., 1868).

[8] The Museum of London Group, "British Empire", Exploring 20.century London, http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Collections/OnlineResources/X20L/Themes/1381/1091/ (accessed April 26, 2010).

Britain had also enjoyed a strong place in European councils after the defeat of Napoleon in Waterloo in 1815. Its strength lay in industry and trade and the navy protected this trade. Britain wanted a Europe with a balance of power which would prevent any single nation from becoming too strong and free market in which its own industrial and trade superiority would give Britain a clear advantage. Outside Europe Britain wished its trading position to be stronger than anyone else's. It defended its interests by keeping ships of its navy in almost every ocean of the world.[9]

The following historical events depict the proud feeling and enhancement of Britishness during the glory years of the British Empire.

In 1851 Queen Victoria opened the *Great Exhibition* of the Industries of All nations inside the Crystal palace in London – exalting the primacy of the workshop of the world. This workshop was created by people migrating to factories and mills in Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds and Sheffield, to work in the textiles, steel and ship building industries. The stamp "made in England" became famous across the globe. The exhibition aimed to show the world the greatness of Britain's industry. No other nation could produce as much at that time. By 1850 Britain was producing more iron than the rest of the world together. Britain made and owned more than half the world's total shipping. This great industrial empire was supported by a strong banking system developed during the eighteen century.[10]

In 1924 followed the *Empire exhibition at Wembley* stadium opened by King George V. Incredible 58 countries were part of the British Empire. It cost 12 million and was the largest exhibition ever staged anywhere in the world with 27 millions attracted visitors. For this occasion the British Post Office issued commemorative stamps.[11] Its official aim was: "to stimulate trade, strengthen bonds that bind mother Country to her Sister States and Daughters, to bring into closer contact the one with each other, to enable all who owe allegiance to the British flag to meet on common ground and learn to know each other."[12]

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[9] David McDowall, An Illustrated History of Britain (New York: Longman, 1989).
[10] David McDowall, An Illustrated History of Britain (New York: Longman, 1989).
[11] The Exploring 20th Century London Project, "British Empire Exhibitions 1924-1925", Exploring 20th Century London, http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.86 (accessed April 26, 2010).
[12] Donald R. Sabey and Alan D. Knight, Lion Roars at Wembley: British Empire Exhibition 1924-25, (London 1984)

Not only festivals and exhibitions convey the British pride, also the sense of Britishness was encouraged by the *Second World War* when the nations were united and spoke of one voice, the voice of Winston Churchill.

This unionist mystique of the WWII was lovingly preserved for half a century afterwards in endless wartime films, frequently shown on TV on Christmas Day when the British could settle down after their Christmas dinner and the Queen´s traditional message to her people to enjoy their boys once again sinking the Bismarck.[13]

Another powerful *Festival of Britain 1951* celebrated the nation's recovery after the Second World War. 8, 5 million people came to see and marvel at the South Bank of the Thames where all the existing buildings were transformed into an exhibition. New structures were built exploring Britain's landscape, the British character, the British industry and science.[14] New buildings appeared such as the Royal Festival Hall, the Dome of Discovery and Skylon – (a magical, 300ft high steel, wire and aluminium sculpture that acted as a hi-tech herald of the 1951 Festival of Britain. Nothing quite like this improbably slim structure had been seen in Britain before).[15] Although the Festival took pride in Britain's past, it also "aimed to raise the nation's spirit while promoting the very best in British art, design and industry"[16] noted King George at the opening.

All the above mentioned events along with designed buildings stay in a strong contrast with the emptiness of a so discussed later dome, the *Millennium dome* at Greenwich in 2000. It was from start to finish an embarrassing failure with no sense of identity to convey. The proximity of the architectural glory of Christophe Wren's Naval Hospital and Inigo Jones's Queen's House made it look even duller.[17] Its spirit may be enlivened while hosting the London Olympic Games in 2012.

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[13] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The British Identity, 1851-2008", *British Scholar 1* (2008): 4-20, http://britishscholar.com/LordMorganproof8282008finalbook.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010)

[14] The Exploring 20th Century London Project, "Festival of Britain 195" Exploring 20th Century London, http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.238 (accessed April 26, 2010).

[15] Guardian News and Media Limited, "Skylon: is there a point in rebuilding it?" Guardian.co.uk, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2008/jul/09/skylonwhatsthepointofrebu (accessed May 4, 2010).

[16] BBC, "1951: King George opens Festival of Britain." BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/3/newsid_2481000/2481099.stm (accessed April 26, 2010).

[17] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The British Identity, 1851-2008", *British Scholar 1* (2008): 4-20, http://britishscholar.com/LordMorganproof8282008finalbook.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010).

There was an obvious feeling of Britishness from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century symbolized by the above mentioned events.

1.3 Breakpoint in the British Pride

A radical change was seen in the later twentieth century, when several of the older symbols of Britishness suddenly collapsed. A significant mainstay of Britishness was removed with the dismantling of the empire and the Church of England declined in esteem. The imperial role of the monarchy was diluted by the loss of the empire however; the popularity of monarchy in Great Britain did provide some comfort to offset this loss. The most powerful enduring symbol of the sense of Britishness became the National Health Service.[18]

The initiator of this project was William Beveridge with his "Beveridge Report" proposing a new welfare state. On 5 July 1948, the National Health Service was launched with the proud expectation that it would make the UK the envy of the world.[19]

During the 1960 and 1970 there was a growth in political nationalism in Scotland and Wales along with the re-emergence of Irish nationalism, the end of "Britain" became a distinct possibility. The Thatcher years following her election victory in 1979, in contrast to the failed policies of socialism after the war years, suggested a desire for a new approach and national unity.[20]

A survey undertaken by Richard Rose suggested that 86 percent of people in Britain were proud to be British. The survey was conducted before the Falkland war. Rose went further though. His research suggested that while the proportions differed between those who were very proud and quite proud in England, Wales and Scotland, the totals of those who were proud in each nation were the same. He concluded that "Because national pride is so widespread in Britain, it is normal in the literal sense, that is, it is the norm to which

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[18] P. Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[19] BBC-archive, "Birth of the national health service", http://www.www.bbc.co.uk/archive/nhs (accessed May 4, 2010)

[20] Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

nearly everyone conforms".[21] The conservative nationalism restored the "Great " in Britain but this all came at a cost, the decline of yet another symbol of Britishness, the welfare state.[22]

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[21] R.Rose, *National Pride: Cross National Surveys* (Glasgow, Centre for the Study of Social Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1984).

[22] Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

2 WHAT IS BRITISHNESS

Britishness is feeling part of the whole Britain, not just one of its component countries, the feeling to be a preferably proud member of a multinational kingdom that is bigger than the sum of its parts. There you have it: a no frills clear-cut definition of Britishness that is popular in well educated political circles and relies heavily on the Union Act that brought four nations together. But is it that clear-cut? Not so for the authoritative political theorist Bikhu Parekh. The Indian born Parekh, now part of British nobility as Baron Parekh, doesn't find it that simple and is even puzzled by the word Britishness: "I do not quite know what the word Britishness means. It is also rather striking that we seem to be one of the few countries in the world to use that expression. No one talks about Americannes, Canadiannes, Frenchnes, Indiannes or Germannes."[23] Simple versus puzzled, this merely points out that even scholars can not agree to a single definition of the term Britishness, hence it becomes a very individual question enabling a variety of answers.

Some historians, sociologists and political scientists have seen Britishness as some form of economic or cultural imperialism imposed on Scotland, Wales and Ireland by English ruling elites. For Haseler, Britishness was "an imposition of the English on the non English, who maintained their diversity in this colonial situation"[24]

Similar view is shared by Murray Pittock: "What is Britishness? The first thing to realize is that it is another word for Englishness, it is a political word which arose from the existence of the British state and which extends Englishness over the lives of the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish. If one asks what the difference is between English culture and British culture one realizes that there is no difference. They are the same. The British language is the English language. British education is English education. British television is English television. The British press is the English press. The British Crown is

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[23] Varun Uberoi, Iain McLean, "Britishness: A Role for the State?, *The Political Quarterly Publishing Co.Ltd.(41-53, 2009),*
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122608303/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0 (accessed May 5, 2010).
[24] S. Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, nation and Europe, (*Basingstoke, 1996).

the English Crown, and the Queen of Britain is the Queen of England...Britishness is Englishness."[25]

Linda Colley has provided an explanation of Britishness as "a separate identity alongside other identities". She sees Britishness being "forged in a conflict with external other" when war with France confirmed the role of Protestantism in Britain for much of the nineteenth and twentieth century. She argues the possibility to be Scottish and British, Welsh and British and so on since "Identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time"[26]

Keith Robbins is compatible with Colley with saying that "it was the blending of the English, the Scots and the Welsh that produced the British."[27]

A bit light hearted version from the public debates says that being British is about driving in a German car to an Irish pub for a Belgian beer, and then travelling home, grabbing an Indian curry or a Turkish kebab on the way, to sit on Swedish furniture and watch American shows on a Japanese TV.

Britishness is what people mean when they identify themselves individually and collectively as being British. This identification relates to political, economic, social, cultural and personal surroundings they find themselves in at the time they choose to think about their Britishness.

As these circumstantial factors determinate the perception of Britishness, the scope is being broadened from the academics point of view to a research that aimed to find out how ordinary people interpret the term Britishness.

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[25] M. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*. (Manchester University Press, 2000).
[26] L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837*, (Yale University Press, 1992).
[27] *British Isles 1901-1951* Edited by Keith Robbins. Online: O U P,2003., 2003.

2.1 What Defines Britishness

Most of the research participants shared a common representation of Britishness, ranging over 8 dimensions.[28]

2.1.1 Geography

Britishness was associated with the British Isles and its topographic features. It was also linked to the idea of an island nation, being cut off from Europe by the English Channel. A story which further illustrates British insularity refers to a news announcement which said: There has been a persistent fog at London airport during the weekend and the continent has been cut off for twenty four hours.[29]

Emphasis was placed on the small size of the island in contrast with the great achievements of the British people. Distinctive features of British landscape were also mentioned in connection with Britishness. The "countryside" was the symbol for mainly white and older participants. Lochs, mountains, Highlands in Scotland, valleys and daffodils in Wales, white cliffs in England, all these related to the more particular places within Britain. Pride was prevailing in participants' answers: *"To take such a tiny country like we have got and to lead the world…that was Britishness."*

2.1.2 National Symbols

National symbols such as *Union Jack* were mentioned across all groups, closely associated with the national anthem especially in emotional situations such as state funeral and Olympic Games. The professional road – racing cyclist of welsh origin Nicole Cooke says: "…being British means to me the honour to represent my country in World Championships, Olympic Games and competitions all around the world….I wear my British cycling jersey with pride the colours Red, White and Blue and the Union Jack Flag give me strength…Every time I hear my British Anthem it stirs so many emotions because it always makes me recall very proud moments in my life.*"[30]*

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[28] ETHNOS, "Citizenship and belonging: What is Britishness?", Research and consultancy, Commision for racial equality, http://www.ethnos.co.uk/britishness.htm (accessed May 3, 2010).

[29] Story, Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, 3rd Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[30]DirectGov Ministry of Justice, "What does it mean to be British?" People, Power and Politics, http://governance.justice.gov.uk/join-the-debate/british/ (accessed April 26, 2010).

The royal family with the monarchy in general and the Queen in particular, but also Prince Charles was mentioned as well as Buckingham Palace. Even though, the monarchy has been the most famous icon of national identity, the individual monarchs were often foreign (Norman Plantagenets, Dutch House of Orange, German Hanoverians).

Morgan claims there were monarchs who summed up the national idea for most people, placing special emphasis on the queen mother who acquired an honoured reputation as a national icon. He goes further on saying "by the end of the Millennium, reinforced by the bizarre personal misfortunes of the royal family, a remarkably dysfunctional group of people who hardly embodied the values of the traditional nuclear family, the monarchy had lost much of its authority.[31]

Other national symbols mentioned were the Houses of Parliament, the bulldog and Beefeaters.

There are some other symbols which were not mentioned by the participants. David Cameron said in an interview for Daily Mail that it is important to have some symbols of national unity after the failure of multiculturalism, recognizable symbols that will tie the British as a nation and he brought up "Britannia" as one of the powerful symbols. A woman seated in a Roman chariot and accompanied by a lion, spear and a shield, to whom the colonized people make their offerings and show their subservience, the personification of the British Isles created by the Romans, making her first appearance on a British coin in 1672. Cameron believes that if people understand history than they understand where they come from and therefore where they can go.[32]

2.1.3   People

Who the British people actually are? Three different views emerging from the data revealed the British as English, Scottish and Welsh people, the British as exclusively white English people, the British as a multicultural and diverse people.

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[31] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The British Identity, 1851-2008", *British Scholar 1* (2008): 4-20, http://britishscholar.com/LordMorganproof8282008finalbook.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010).

[32] Daily Mail, "David Cameron:Now more than ever we need Britannia as symbol of unity", Mail Online, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-523776/David-Cameron-Now-need-Britannia-symbol-unity.html (accessed April 26, 2010).

British: English, Scottish, Welsh

English participants tended to see themselves as English or British, whereas the Scottish and Welsh went for their national identity but some were happy to combine both, their national plus British to create a dual identity. This confirms Linda Colley in earlier suggestion that one can have several identities at a time. It also implies that these identities are not static but can shift depending on the circumstances. The best example is sport. During the rugby or football world cups the national identity prevails, with English, Scottish and Welsh cheering on their respective national teams and waving their respective flags. During the Olympic Games, the next ones coincidentally held in London, the allegiance shifts towards Britishness and predominantly "Union Jacks" are seen waving. The volatile nature of these identities means they can be under threat as will further be discussed in the Contemporary Debates Chapter.

British: the white English

Most strongly associated with Britishness were understandably the three nations living in Britain therefore white people, thus confirming the views of Pittock and Haseler. Among the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis immigrants being English meant being indigenous and white but being British meant having British passport.

The stereotypical image that prevails with the immigrants is the white English being very white while meticulously gardening and mowing their lawns while getting sunburnt in the process while Britishness is colourful as far as skin is concerned.

British: multicultural and diverse

For many participants, Britishness was also specifically associated with ethnic diversity. These associations were equally present among white and ethnic minority participants However, for the white participants, ethnic diversity had negative connotations "it was predominantly a white country but now Britishness is more and more blackness" whereas ethnic minority participants saw the diversity as something positive "I think it's very important for people to accept that Britain is a multicultural society. The sooner they realise that, the better. Some people still think it is white, but it isn't."

Britishness was associated with white people when talking about the past and with ethnic minorities and multiculturalism when referring to the present or the future. For many

ethnic minority participants, the differentiation between English and British was crucial because it provided them with a space to belong. They saw Britain multicultural and Britishness about coming together of very diverse people. It seems like for them this term is just a citizenship.

"The British are not one thing, they are different: Asians, European, Africans, all sorts of people. British people have got a history of mixing with all other people coming over and becoming British, part of the society, from many, many hundred years. We are the latecomers. If you look at the history of Britishness, these people fight within themselves over a religion. They were catholic, then Protestant, than they came out with the religion of being Church of England. All this is now a part of Britain, same as Islam. What's wrong with it? Nothing wrong! Another part of Britain that's new" an opinion shared by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis living in London. Opposite view from the White English: "Going through our heritage, we have had the same sort of developments. We have been invaded by Vikings, by French, Germans, Irish, Danes. All sorts of European nations have come over here, we have been a seafaring people so there have been black people and Chinese people for longer than most other places and there has never been a problem, but it only seems to have arisen with the mass immigration that came after the break-up of the empire."

The effects of immigration Britishness should not be underestimated. It even led to the fact that Britishness became a hot discussed topic and will therefore be further analyzed in the Contempary Debates chapter.

2.1.4 Values and Attitudes

As central values and attitudes were seen freedom of speech, press, religion, rule of fairness, tolerance and respect.

British people were often associated with being *reserved*, both in negative (by Scottish and Welsh and ethnic minority participants complaining that one never knows what the English think when they keep smiling) and positive way (by English, stressing the manners, never offending anyone)

Pride made English participants think of memories of great achievements whereas the others had it linked with the sense of superiority, dominance, nationalism and arrogance.

Even the Scottish expressed a feeling as not being regarded equal but inferior instead. An opinion shared among Black Africans: *"*They think they are more superior, like they still rule the world. There is a bit about arrogance, that being patronising to other people, that's my experience, particularly of London and the Southeast."

Work ethic was also strongly associated with Britishness with shared opinion of being hardworking and having the longest working hours in Europe.

Sense of togetherness and showing great community spirit were attributed to British people. They were seen as willing to give a helping hand in times of trouble and show compassion after the bomb attacks and the tsunami.

Unfortunately also *drunkenness and hooliganism* were associated with Britishness. "I don't like 17-year-olds going down the pub and getting absolutely plastered, which is also part of British culture."
"You are not always proud to be British. When you see these football hooligans abroad, these yobs that are completely out of control and going on a rampage, you'd do anything not to have anything to do with them."

In the Contemporary Debates chapter these values and attitudes will be elaborated further on as they are the spear point of Gordon Brown's Britishness campaign, stressing shared British heritage and shared British values as the foundation of Britishness.

2.1.5   Cultural Habits and Behaviour

Queuing seems to be very representative of Britishness and courtesy and among the contestants it seemed to show a sign of civilisation. Even the immigrants seemed to adhere to this and follow this typically British feature.

Very British was seen the *passion for sports* especially the ones invented by the British - football, cricket and rugby and their expansion over to the empire where it served to bind together British communities within the empire.

"British sports served overwhelmingly to express and enhance the solidarity of colonial society. Providing amusement for those far from home isolated amidst an alien and sometimes hostile population, sport was not so much a luxury as a necessity, a means

of maintaining morale and a sense of shared roots, of Britishness, of lawns and tea and things familiar."[33]

The strong British feeling came to the fore during international sporting contests.

Not less important were "fish and chips", "English breakfast", "Yorkshire pudding", "cream tea", "roast beef", "Sunday lunch" etc.

2.1.6   Citizenship

Holding British passport and being formally recognized as British citizen were associated with Britishness but especially among Scottish, Welsh and ethnic minority participants. "Passports! Everyone wants a British passport, don't they?"

"I am Scottish first, but I am also British. I have a British passport. That's a fact."

2.1.7   English Language

English language unites British people, it's a common language shared by all. White participants emphasized the importance of learning the language among the ethnic minorities otherwise they can not be properly considered as British. *The accent* – manifestation of regional and class differences – was also thought as essentially British.

2.1.8   Achievements

It was only the whites who associated Britishness with great historical and political achievements although a past tense was used while talking about them. Nostalgia was evident when talking about the "empire over which the sun never set" which "invented parliamentary democracy"

"Britain hasn't done anything recently since the wars to relate to, to take hold of and be proud of. When I think of British things, I do tend to think of what we went on years ago, when they fought for freedoms, when we were a great industrial nation, when we ruled the world. But we are no longer a great nation"

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[33] Richard Holt, *Sport & The British*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Also *technological inventions* by the British were mentioned such as Fleming's penicillin, Bell's telephone, Dyson's vacuum cleaner. This perception of Britishness was confined to white participants: "Britain was the workshop of the world. We were very strong and that's the origin of Great Britain. It's not so much the conquests and the empire as such, although some people may see it that way. But I don't, as far as I am concerned. For me it's just a great industrial nation. And we can be proud of that."

The younger generation saw Britain as cool and dynamic thanks to its vibrant *pop culture*. Names such as Robbie Williams and singer and actress Charlotte Church were mentioned. Surprisingly the distinguishing British humour seemed to be forgotten.

3   NATIONAL IDENTITY

To define an identity is not an easy task. There is no precise definition how the nation and national identity can be best described.

Some suggest a definition such as "imagined political communities" imagined in the sense that "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their members…yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[34] Billig says that "Having a national identity means to possess ways of thinking about nationhood and to be situated physically, legally, socially as well as emotionally within a homeland, which itself is situated within the world of nations".[35] Some theorists seem to suggest that the concept of national identity should be conflated with that of ethnic identity so Connor sees the nation as a "self aware ethnic group."[36] For Smith a nation is "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members."[37]

When it comes to Britain the determination of nation becomes a difficult task. Even though some sense of common British identity emerged among Welsh, Scottish and English in the nineteenth century, however for the Scots and Welsh there remains to this day a clear distinction between a political identification with Britain and national identification with Scotland or Wales. On the other hand, for the English allegiance with England and with Britain tends to be regarded as one.

As worldwide communication and travel became rapidly affordable and thus within reach of the masses, Britain lost the insularity of its island position. The continuous influx of visitors and new residents re-designed the world as a global village with people-magnet London being the personification of this.

Due to the process of globalisation in the late twentieth century, new hybrid identities are emerging and it is getting common to have overlapping identities. Christina Julios talks about a friction of nationality and citizenship caused by immigrants. The demographic makeup of nations is constantly altered by the successive waves of immigrants. Thus the

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[34] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London:Verso, 1983).
[35] M. Billig, *Banal nationalism (*London: Sage, 1995).
[36] W. Connor, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (London, 1978).
[37] A. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).

societies are transformed into diverse, multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual ones. Diversity increasing migration leads to changes in national identity; it poses a challenge, brings social changes, decline to old certainties, and creates new political institutions.[38]

Some embrace these challenges, others perceive them as a threat and a cause of decline. Food for thought and further analysis are to be found in the Contemporary Debate chapter and subsequent Conclusion.

Parekh suggests that if one feels British there has to be a way of relating to the country with respect to all the other fellow members. Membership is an element of one's identity, is shaped by it and has some degree of attachment to it. There can be degrees of identification. Some feel passionately committed to the country, are shaped by it and identify with its way of life, for them it is their home and object of intense love. Others may identify only with some aspects and feel alienated from others. The way a country treats its members plays a particularly important role. They are more likely to identify with the country if they are accepted as its full and legitimate members and treated with respect, enjoy equality with the rest of the population and are free to express their cherished ethnic identities. Conversely they are unlikely to feel at home in a country and identify with that country if their presence is resented, if they are subjected to discriminatory treatment, mocked and ridiculed with impunity. [39]

3.1 Identification

Identification is surely not fixed but a highly dynamic, evolving and complex process with several factors contributing to it such as shared historical experiences, common fights for liberation, and defence against foreign invasion, character and mentality, social values, and a language.[40]

In order to identify one self it may help to have a reference identity which may take the form of another nationality for comparison, such as the British started to form their identity

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[38] Ch. Julios, *Contemporary British identity*, (Ashgate 2005).
[39] Bhikhu Parekh, "Being British," *The Political Quarterly Publishing Co.Ltd no. 1* (2009): 32-40, http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/122608306/PDFSTART (accessed May 5, 2010).

in comparison with their French enemy. The context is also important to be considered before identifying ones self. You may want to identify yourself at various levels, starting with the local community through town, county and then the region up to national; sometimes you may even call yourself European.

The British are a very diverse people with varying identities. To complicate the picture even further there are ethnic minorities within Britain who may use dual or multiple identities and embrace different loyalties. Many call themselves British while still identifying with their countries of origin or descent. To employ their ethnic ties they define themselves British Indian, Afro-Caribbean British or if they embrace religious identity British Muslim, British Hindus or British Jews.

3.1.1 Identification with being British and alternative sources of identification

A research carried out by the Commission for racial Equality defines: "Identification is the psychological process by which people come to see themselves as members of a group, rather than as a collection of unrelated individuals, and the emotional value they place on this membership. Group identification is a fundamental part of people's own identity. Sharing a common social identity helps people to bind together. It may also lead to tensions between groups if memberships of different groups are seen as unacceptable or impossible"[41] here from ensues that some people may identify with Britishness but also with some other alternative sources of identification such as ethnicity, region, religion etc.

All holders of British passports know they are British citizens, which doesn't necessarily mean that they attach any value to it. Strong identification with Scotland and Wales rather than with Britain was felt among the Scottish and Welsh participants which can be seen in the answer of one Welsh participant: *"Scotland and Wales are actually proud to be part of their own culture rather than proud of the British culture, whereas*

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[40] Bhikhu Parekh, "Being British," The Political Quarterly Publishing Co.Ltd no. 1 (2009): 32-40, http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/122608306/PDFSTART (accessed May 5, 2010).

41 ETHNOS, "Citizenship and belonging: What is Britishness?" Research and consultancy, Commision for racial equality, http://www.ethnos.co.uk/britishness.htm (accessed May 3, 2010).

England is proud to be part of all cultures, or they see themselves as under the umbrella of British culture."

In England most white English participants felt both English and British not seeing that much difference in-between, but most ethnic minority participants felt exclusively British because they strongly associated England with white English people whereas British could be used for anyone, so even though there were black Africans living in London they considered themselves British not English.

Religion appeared to be dominant identification for Muslims. Despite placing their religion first, they happily labelled themselves British Muslim; they did not see nationality and religion mutually exclusive.

Last but not least *ethnicity* was the identifiable mark. Most ethnic minority participants saw their place of origin as part of their identity. Sometimes, the identification was with a continent, sometimes with a country and sometimes with a region. Also *race* was an identification marker, especially among the black Caribbean and black African participants.

A fluid construct - identity is sensitive to context. One is aware of their identity when faced with difference. Various identifications come to the fore in international conflicts. Some may identify with the British policy over the war in Iraq or with relationship with America; on the other hand others may feel completely dissociated. Sport competitions may enhance one's identity or travelling abroad can make one realize how British they have become.

4   CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

4.1   Immigration

Before 1945, and marked by the end of the 2nd World War, most Britons lived their lives without seeing any non-white or non-Christian people. Sure, they all knew the stories and saw the images of their adventurous and enterprising compatriots overseas commandeering local workforces from India to the Caribbean for the greater good and wealth of the empire. But few had never been in contact with the odd Pakistani or Barbadian, let alone that they could imagine living alongside them in their own country and community.

In the Post War rebuilding climate a lot, preferably cheap, hands were needed. The solution to this demand was mass immigration of non whites coming from former colonies, resulting in a radical turnover within these communities that had previously been essentially white. In 1950s there was substantial immigration to Britain from the Caribbean. The other notable influx in 1950s and 1960s was from both India and Pakistan and later from Uganda. Both of these waves were encouraged by the British authorities and by employers such as London Transport, who set up recruitment offices in Jamaica and elsewhere. Thus The United Kingdom began the Post War years with a non white population of some 300 000 people, in contrast, it approached the end of the century with over three million people whose origin extend from Africa, the Pacific Rim, the Caribbean and the Indian Subcontinent.[42]

But what about those people with a different skin and often different religion too, coming from all corners the British Empire who were all subjects to the Queen? Were they British? Surely that was not how the majority of white Britons saw those post war years immigrants from former colonies. They were far from accepting them as British. Both groups were de facto leading segregated lives, and as immigrants kept arriving in greater numbers during barren economic times, not much was needed to trigger race riots and social unrest.

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[42] Christina Julios, Contemporary British Identity (Ashgate, 2005).

The government had tried to counter this evolution with its philosophy of multiculturalism introduced in the 1960s in order to strengthen relationships, but unfortunately it brought the society to fragmentation rather than unity. It seems like the idea of tolerating differences slipped over into encouraging differences. The chairman of Commission for Racial Equality Trevor Philips claims that "the term multiculturalism suggests separateness and had ceased to be useful in modern Britain."[43] Even researches show, that people did not like the imposed multiculturalism on them: "We have this notion on integration forced upon us for the past 40 years, since people from the Commonwealth started coming into our country and our government and our councils decided that this is the best way to go. Well, I don't think that integration has happened at all: 90% of integration hasn't happened. There are still Pakistanis, there are Bengalis, there are Indians, there are Chinese, there are still Polish, there are still Irish, there are still Jews."[44] They were convinced that people in power are not encouraging to integrate but the opposite.

"What is at the heart of the aggressive form of multiculturalism as most ordinary people suspect is not tolerance but self-loathing: the deprecation of our own culture and history that elevates almost anybody else's values above our own. It is not the indoctrination of some mystical sense of Britishness that is required but a restoration of the quiet pride and conviction that used to enable Britons to maintain the highest standards of civil behaviour in the world."[45]

The final wake-up call for the at least partial failure of the multiculturalism policy was embodied by Muktar Said Ibrahim, who has lived in Britain since he was a young boy and in 2003 had applied for citizenship. In 2005 he attempted to blow up a bus in London just after the terrorist attacks on the London underground, while other British Muslims burned the union jack in Regents Park.[46]

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[43] BBC, "Debate call on 'multicultural' UK",BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3599925.stm (accessed May 4, 2010).

[44] ETHNOS, "The Decline of Britishness" Research Study, Commion for racial equality, http://www.ethnos.co.uk/decline_of_britishness.pdf (assessed May 3, 2010)

[45] Telegraph, "We don't need to define Britishness", Telegraph.co.uk, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/janetdaley/3555154/We-dont-need-to-define-Britishness.html (accessed May 4, 2010).

[46] BBC, "Profile: Muktar Ibrahim" BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/email_news/6634901.stm (accessed May 4, 2010).

What makes a British citizen do such a thing to his cohabitants? Do these second and third generation Muslims hate this country and prefer Usama Bin Laden? This appeared to be a serious social problem that deserved political attention.

Up to the 07/07 London bombings the immigration debate was about how to reduce the stream of immigrants, about multiculturalism or assimilation, about the limits of the welfare state. The realization that Britain was fertile ground for homegrown terrorists produced a shock effect. The questions were no longer limited to material issues as how do we house and feed these people or to how do we give them jobs. Under impulse of Prime Minister Gordon Brown the debate broadened to how do we get this people to create a, if not loving, at least appreciative bond with Britain, give them a sense of belonging, of identity, of Britishness?

Questioning national identity is a sign of our times. Throughout Europe, nation states are facing the challenges of sub national autonomy, globalization, European integration and multiculturalism but these questions seem to be more prevalent in Britain than elsewhere. Are Britons a particular breed? As George Orwell says in his Lions and Unicorns "you have immediately the sensation of breathing a different air...The beer is bitterer, the coins are heavier, the grass is greener, the advertisement are more blatant. The crowds in the big towns, with their mild knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners, are different from a European crowd."[47]

4.2 Gordon Brown

This "particular breed" – Britons are also asserting national identities to the extent that the future of the United Kingdom is in question. This becomes a challenge for Scottish – British Prime Minister *Gordon Brown* whose defence of Britishness and a shared national credo has expanded over the last few years. He interprets Britishness as a historical set of values. He stresses the importance of the fact that Britishness and Britain is not based on ethnicity and race instead it is founded on shared values, serving as a model for the rest of

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[47] George Orwell, *Lion and the Unicorn*. (New York: Ams Pr Inc, 1976).

the world. There prevails the need to unite the distinct people within the British Isles as it was done in the history. The Anglo-Welsh Union, followed by the Anglo-Scottish Act of Union were the possible answers how to best manage the neighbourly relations. The shared values Brown talks about are: "a commitment to liberty for all, a commitment to social responsibility shown by all, and a commitment to fairness to all in addition to our qualities of creativity, inventiveness, enterprise and our internationalism".[48]

He stresses the need to have a clear vision of what being British means in order to survive in the developed world. He wants Great Britain to be successful, to master international, demographic, constitutional and social challenges ahead and in order to be able to do so he suggests learning from history and applying values that bind the people together and give them common purpose. He pictures the United Kingdom as a unity with its component parts and argues that the United Kingdom has always been a union of different nations and thus of plural identities so it is not problematic to have dual identities. In his speech he talks about the risks that when people feel insecure they retreat into more exclusive identities instead of being able to gain great strength from celebrating a British identity, a union which is strong because of the shared values expressed through history and institutions.[49]

Seemingly by the people feeling insecure were meant in this case the second generation immigrants, British citizens, British born, apparently integrated into community but prepared to maim and kill fellow British citizens.

Brown speaking at the Fabian Conference in 2006 praised the magnificent response by the British people to the events of 7. July, but still was puzzled by the failure in balancing the need for diversity with the obvious requirements of integration in the society. Brown refers to recent poll in which half of British people said they were worried that there might be a real risk of having divided society if there is no promotion of Britishness.[50]

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[48] BBC, "UK's existence is at risk - Brown", BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6258089.stm (accessed May 4, 2010).

[49] Fabian Society, "Brown: The future of Britishness", Fabian Society, http://www.fabians.org.uk/events/speeches/the-future-of-britishness (accessed May 4, 2010).

[50] Fabian Society, "Brown: The future of Britishness", Fabian Society, http://www.fabians.org.uk/events/speeches/the-future-of-britishness (accessed May 4, 2010).

4.3   Decline of Britishness

When surveys have been carried out to find out what Britishness is, respondents spontaneously changed the topic of the discussion slightly to talk instead about a perceived decline of Britishness. This happened with white people who were distressed by this decline, feeling victimized and frustrated. Muslims were mostly the target of their frustration. They linked the decline with three main causes: "the arrival of large number of migrants", "the unfair claims made by people from ethnic minorities on the welfare state", "the rise in moral pluralism and the failure to manage ethnic minority groups properly due to political correctness". [51]

Interestingly, none of the participants talked about decline caused by dissolution of the British Empire and Scottish and Welsh devolution. Instead only the ethnic minorities were seen responsible for a decline of Britishness. But British Muslims also feel victimized and frustrated. They felt that white people perceived a fundamental incompatibility between being Muslim and being British, while they saw them as compatible.

The notion of integration did not seem to be clear to white participants. They equated integration with assimilation and when they saw that people from ethnic minority groups had not completely assimilated, and then they believed that people had simply refused to integrate and that the project of multiculturalism had failed.

As the research suggests, the main barrier to integration is not self segregation by ethnic minority groups but the demand by white British for complete assimilation, then it relegates people from ethnic minority group and Muslims in particular to the margins of British society.

There prevails a view that Britishness is the prerogative of white and predominantly English people, rather than an all - embracing citizenship that includes different people. Many participants realized that they do not even know what Britishness is anymore; "I think it has just declined maybe in the last 50 years or since the war, now its all just mix of people from other countries", the links with this term were from the past, once it was "a

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[51] ETHNOS, "The Decline of Britishness" Research Study, Commision for racial equality, http://www.ethnos.co.uk/decline_of_britishness.pdf (assessed May 3, 2010)

solid idea and a firm empirical reality espoused by all at home and recognized and respected by all abroad, but that this reality no longer exists."

The ethnic minority groups did not feel the equivalent loss and decline. Their views were more focused on difficulties of the present in terms of racism and islamophobia than on the past.

4.3.1   The Causes of Perceived Decline

An increase in the ethnic minority population of Britain

White participants attributed to the decline of Britishness to the arrival of large number of immigrants from different national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. "I think there is a lesser sense of Britishness today than what it used to be, because there are so many ethnic minorities coming here now so you don't get that sense of as much Britishness anymore, but its still there." Other opinions expressed doubts about the asylum seekers and concerns of Britain being ruined by them.

Ethnic minorities were seen as representing a fundamental attack on the values that form the very core of Britishness. Ethnic minorities were seen as undermining many of the values such as attitudes, cultural habits, and behaviours associated with Britishness. There were complains expressed among the white participants about "not respecting to queue" or "not being able to learn English"

When white participants were asked to write down the first three words that came to their mind when thinking about ethnic minorities, many produced answers rather negative such as "trouble", "don't seem to be minority", "jump queue", "anti-British", "poor English".

They seemed to show fear of Muslims as illustrated in the following: "I heard one of the foremost men from the mosque and he was saying that in 50 years, there would be a black flag over Downing Street. Basically, they are saying it will be run by Muslims. That's what they are going for."

The fear and intolerance towards Muslims seems to become more widespread, both within Europe and outside.

Unfair claims on the welfare state

The white participants perceived the ethnic minority groups to receive preferential treatment. They even associated the ethnic minority groups with terms such as "spongers", "drain on society", "unfair politics" and "want everything". But there is evidence which says: "people from ethnic minority groups are much more likely to be socially and economically excluded, more likely to live in poor housing, in overcrowded conditions and in the most deprived wards, to be poor or unemployed, to suffer from poorer physical and mental health. While this may mean that some people from ethnic minority groups can make greater demands on the state, it does not necessarily mean, as implied by many white participants, that ethnic minority groups receive preferential treatment from welfare services"[52]

Moral pluralism and political correctness

Political correctness was seen as another reason of decline of Britishness. Institutional efforts to promote integration and cultural diversity were indications of political correctness which was perceived as anti-British because it undermines the democratic freedom of speech.

"I just want everything fair; I want to think that councils build as many churches as they do mosques, that if somebody opens a sandwich shop they have the same opportunities as someone who wants to open a corner kebab shop. I just want it to be fair; right now the system isn't fair." White participants felt that the ethnic minorities can hold their own identity whereas they have to give up their own. And the English felt that they can not call themselves English but British to be politically correct.

White people made some social unrest predictions leading to ideas such as civil war. "There will be an uprising and it will happen, the rivers of blood. You can only take so much."

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[52] Census 2001, Family Resource Survey 2000, Labour Force Survey 2005, Social Exclusion Unit 2000, and Survey of English Housing 2002

4.4 New Subject Britishness

Not only the new subject was introduced but there are also some incentive programmes such as various exchange studies due to the importance of enhancing respect for each other. Various surveys have shown that the national identity is being diluted by immigration therefore it is important to learn about the alien cultures in order to understand them better and involve them in a common identity.

Martin Davidson CEO from the British Council explains the purpose of the exchange study project by stressing the vital importance of building engagement and trust between young people from different countries and cultures especially in multinational Britain. The Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon contributes with speaking about introduction of a new concept of national identity, about a transition away from the traditional conception towards a new kind of citizenship characterized above all by respect for others which maybe „depressing news for those that have an old fashioned view of identity".[53]

The government has declared schools to be a key factor in improving social cohesion and integration, therefore Citizenship as a school subject was born out of „the political determination to confront key issues facing society: disengagement from public life and apathy on the part of young people, confusion of identity and perceived breakdown in moral values." [54]

The citizenship was introduced into the national Curriculum in 1999 with schools being given three years to prepare to teach it. There were three divisions of citizenship lessons, the social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy but after the London bombings some ministers began to think of a revision of the citizenship because of the time of the initial proposal there was not so much need for elaboration of diversity. Therefore the new fourth element was added called Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK with the emphasis on discussion of what are or may

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[53] British Council, "Two out of three young Brits see our national identity in decline", British Council – Home, http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/Press-office/press-releases/Two-out-of-three-young-Brits-see-our-national-identity-in-decline/ (accessed May 4, 2010).

[54] BBC, "What school citizenship involves", BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/5388712.stm (accessed May 4, 2010).

be shared values and what Britishness is. This should teach pupils to understand contemporary issues and their relevant historical context.[55]

Unfortunately there are plenty of schools specially designed for the members of a certain community and these will stay untouched by the mainstream educational system, which is seen problematic: "They've got their own schools and that shouldn't happen. Ban the whole lot and have only one type of school. They could bring in their priest or rabbi or whatever into lesson, but everyone should have one basic education and learn the same basic things"[56] noted participants in a survey.

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[55] Bernard Crick, "Do We Really Need Britannia?", The Political Quarterly Publishing Co.Ltd no. 1 (2009): 149-157, http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/122608295/PDFSTART (accessed May 5, 2010).

[56] ETHNOS, "The Decline of Britishness" Research Study, Commision for racial equality, http://www.ethnos.co.uk/decline_of_britishness.pdf (assessed May 3, 2010)

CONCLUSION

If there are still those who doubt the term Britishness with a perplexed expression on their faces, or even claim its non-existence, this thesis tried to prove otherwise.

Although this notion – a political construct - was created somehow artificially, there were times when the Welsh and Scottish, as well as the English, indiscriminately and proudly avowed their Britishness. Who would not consider himself with pride to be British in times when Britain proclaimed many primacies?

Nothing lasts forever and even in Britain a change was inevitable. All of the foundations – the imperial project, shared loyalty to Protestantism, the union in which they stood up to the French and then Germans, economic status, the monarchy – crumbled or lessened in value. This breakpoint occurred after the Second World War, when Britain started experiencing an influx of immigrants from the countries of the Commonwealth, more specifically from the Caribbean, Indian subcontinent and eastern Africa.

The year 1948 is considered a milestone in the modern history of London, when the ship Empire Windrush landed on a British seacoast with almost 500 Jamaican passengers aboard. This became a symbol of the beginning of the "colored" immigrants and new multicultural relations which were to change the British society significantly over the following years.

The islanders were essentially respectful of foreign cultures; nevertheless, they considered their own as superior. The mass immigration definitely changed the face of the metropolis and of the whole kingdom. In the 60s there followed another wave from Pakistan, in 70s from Kenya and Uganda and Bangladesh.

Britishness was a common identity of the white settlers, until the middle of the twentieth century defined it in terms of English ethnicity, which may have generated a vision of the United Kingdom as an English nation state. Britain was even often mistaken for England. In 1941 George Orwell confessed to some difficulty of nomenclature. "We call our islands by no less than six different names, England, Britain, Great Britain, the British Isles, the United Kingdom and, in very exalted moments, Albion."

The shift in identity was necessary after the arrival of such numbers of immigrants. The definition had to be broadened and to be more inclusive, and therefore today Britishness is a strong dual self-description of most of the immigrants, such as British

Muslims. For the immigrants, Britishness represents a space to belong – the imaginary umbrella term to cover all the diversity of those who live there.

The Scottish and Welsh did not stand back, although they tend to prefer their national identities, the legal allegiance to Britishness still prevails and still remains an important part of the population's identity.

It is not wise to cling on to the past, time goes on and it is important to adjust to change, so the native whites should allow the re-definition of Britishness as an overarching identity. Britishness now has to be big enough to allow Jews to respect their ancestral home in Israel, or for Hindus to foster their spiritual link with India, or Muslims to be emotional about their Islamic brotherhood. But all should equally sign up to respect all of the British values.

As a result of the proliferation of immigrants into British society, which was seen as a threat to the traditional concept of Britishness, multiculturalism was introduced. But a recent event raised questions as to whether this was a good way of "integrating" immigrants. Some think that once living in Britain, they should adopt British values and traditions. Despite various opinions, one thing is apparent: there is lack of social cohesion. Therefore schools have been put to the front line to solve this with a new subject, or more precisely a modification of an already existing one, with the extension called "Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK."

Let's be confident that they will succeed and will be able to benefit from this immense, diverse asset, so that it may contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of the nation. And if Britishness may also be defined as singing karaoke in bars, eating Chinese noodles and Japanese sushi, drinking French wine, wearing Prada and Nike, dancing to Italian house music, listening to Cher, using an Apple Mac, holidaying in Florida and Ibiza, buying a house in Spain, and of the national dish being voted Chicken Tikka Massala, then they must already be halfway there!

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