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We need human rights not nationalism 'lite'

Globalization and British solidarity

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ABSTRACT The article explores the relationship of multiculturalism to social solidarity. The multicultural nature of Britain is accepted as a welcome reality but certain problems in relation to the development of multiculturalism in Britain are acknowledged. Various approaches to buttress or replace multiculturalism are reviewed. These are: a strengthened and/or reconstituted nationalism ('Britishness'); human rights; and social equality. The issue of citizenship recurs throughout. It is argued that a combined emphasis on human rights and greater social equality offer a better basis than nationalism for strengthening solidarity in Britain, especially in the longer term. Sociological theory offers a fruitful if strangely neglected starting point for understanding social solidarity. I draw critically on Durkheim and Marx to obtain some objective perspective on this controversial matter.

KEYWORDS Britain ● citizenship ● equality ● integration ● multiculturalism ● social solidarity

INTRODUCTION

The intensification of the debate about British identity reflects fears that British society is becoming more fragmented along ethnic and religious lines, with possible consequences of disorder and dysfunction. These fears have increased since the London bombings of July 2005 (7/7) and the alleged conspiracy of August 2006 to blow up 10 planes: the former providing Britain's parallel to the USA's iconic September 11, 2001 (9/11). Terrorism is the perceived immediate threat but some see multicultural policy as an underlying factor eroding a sense of national unity. Trevor Phillips, a prominent left-wing social commentator and the Chair of the Commission

for Racial Equality, gave several influential speeches to this effect following 7/7 (2005a, 2005b). A tendency for ethnic and religious identities to overlap in Britain has sharpened the lines of possible conflict.

Responses to the alleged crisis of multiculturalism in Britain include: advocacy of a strengthened nationalism; unity through shared citizenship; reassertion of some form of multiculturalism; and greater emphasis on human rights as a broad basis of identification for the citizens of a diverse society. These 'solutions' are not mutually exclusive and often the debate is about how best to balance all or some of these factors. Thus David Goodhart combines an emphasis on nationalism with citizenship and is critical of both multicultural and human rights as bases of social cohesion (2004a, 2004b, 2006). Despite the complexity of some contributions, the debate has tended to become polarized around the respective claims of multiculturalism and a revitalized British identity. At one extreme, some see multiculturalism as the source of many of Britain's current discontents, whilst others condemn any notion of 'Britishness' as reactionary and imperialistic.[1] There are more productive ways of framing the debate than this. The underlying issue is social solidarity and how to foster it. Focusing on national identity as a counterbalance to multiculturalism is merely one approach and could be counterproductive if pursued insensitively.

Below I review the relationship of multiculturalism to the following: 'Britishness'; human rights; and social equality. Citizens' rights recur as an issue throughout. Equality is a theme of both citizens' and human rights but also has a distinct provenance via the socialist/social democratic tradition. My argument is that a combination of human rights and social equality offer a better basis than nationalism for strengthening social solidarity in Britain, especially in the longer term. These universal perspectives also offer a better basis than nationalism for a critique of multiculturalism. Sociological theory offers a fruitful starting point for understanding social solidarity and I draw critically on Durkheim and Marx to gain some objective perspective on this fraught matter.

The controversial nature of this issue requires that I clarify my own perspective. First, it is clear that Britain is a multicultural society and in any conceivable scenario is likely to remain one. To reverse this would require policies little short of fascism. Second, it follows that even if multiculturalism has in some ways 'gone wrong', it cannot be abolished but should be reshaped through policy and/or informal social interaction. The policy shift (back) towards integration advocated by Trevor Phillips cannot fundamentally change the fact that Britain is a multicultural society, though it may encourage exploration of areas of cultural commonality. Third, my own commitment is to a multicultural rather than a monocultural Britain. I see this as complementary to human rights and greater social equality.

The case made below that human rights are a particularly powerful means of contributing to social solidarity in a diverse society is predominantly

theoretical but practical and empirical arguments are also cited. Not that theory per se needs defending, but some critics of the human rights project, particularly nationalists, sometimes characterize its supporters as impractical romantics and themselves as realists. Thus, Skrbis, Kendall and Woodward mock the 'impotence' of Beck's (2006[2004]) cosmopolitan vision in which universal human rights prominently figure (Skrbis et al., 2004: 118). In fact, attempts to extrapolate the pattern of the future from the present have a distinguished pedigree in social science. Beck's work on global risks and the necessary collective response is firmly within this tradition – and is highly realistic (2006[2004]).

Several points of terminology need to be made. The debate under discussion is about 'Britishness' rather than 'Englishness' and accordingly I use the former term. Britishness is an example of nationalism but there is a problem of appropriate usage of the latter term. Nationalism is a broad-spectrum ideology ranging from fascism to a moderate identification with a given country with no necessary negative assumptions about other nations. These variations are indicated below as necessary. I use the term 'solidarity' rather than 'integration' as the appropriate term to indicate social cohesion and order. Integrationist policies can contribute to solidarity but so can other policies and processes discussed below. Finally, several of the many meanings of the term 'equality' are used. I adopt the human rights assumption that human beings are equal in their humanity. References are also made to socialist and liberal approaches to equality, the former stressing greater material equality and equality of cultural access and the latter greater equality of opportunity. I use the qualification 'greater' to indicate that, as far as I am concerned, there is no necessary assumption of absolute equality in either ideological account of equality.

DURKHEIM AND MARX: SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

In *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim stipulated two kinds of social solidarity: mechanical and organic (Durkheim 1964[1893]). The former is based on members' unity of beliefs and values, often religious, and the latter on practical interdependence resulting from the modern, complex division of labour. While these concepts remain a useful starting point for analysing social solidarity, the social context to which Durkheim applied them has greatly changed and they require review and buttressing from contemporary social science.

Adopting a broadly social evolutionary perspective, Durkheim assumed that as modern socioeconomic forms came to predominate, the incidence of mechanical solidarity would decline and organic solidarity would increase. He argued that the values underpinning modern societies were

rational and secular rather than religious. Until about 20 years ago, many observers would have agreed with his following remark, but it now seems spectacularly mistaken:

> If there is one truth that history has settled beyond all question, it is that religion embraces an ever diminishing part of social life. (Durkheim in Thompson, 1985: 49)

In fact, the solidarity of many predominantly Islamic nations is substantially based on a high degree of religious unity and is also arguably a significant factor in that of some other societies, including the USA. Equally, religious divisions within otherwise modern societies can undermine organic solidarity. This has been the case in Northern Ireland and arguably the growth of religious diversity in the rest of Britain during the post-Second World War period is divisive and may become more so.

Whereas mechanical solidarity has persisted beyond Durkheim's expectation, organic solidarity has proved more fragile than he perhaps expected – although he did stipulate demanding conditions for its effective functioning (p. 265). Durkheim's model of a modern society assumed largely autonomous nation states within which economic activity was effectively regulated by the state (the role of the state in maintaining a 'normal' division of labour is extensively discussed in *Book Three* of *The Division of Labour in Society*). Globalization weakens this model by reducing the degree to which the borders of modern nation states circumscribe relatively discrete societies. Appadurai (1996) and Urry (2000, 2003) have illustrated the extent to which global flows of information, images, objects and people have opened up formerly relatively homogeneous and autonomous societies to powerful and potentially disruptive external economic, social and political forces.

Durkheim scarcely addressed the effects of the international economic and political forces on organic solidarity. Indeed, as Ken Thompson points out, he did not even think it worth speculating much about the possibility of a politically unified Europe, let alone world government (2002: 154). Specifically, he did not consider the effect on organic solidarity of the relocation of substantial domestic production abroad and/or the use of im/migrant labour. Globalization has greatly accelerated these developments, including their disruptive consequences. It is Marx rather than Durkheim who offers foresight on these matters.

Marx analyses the division of labour in terms of capitalism rather than modernity. He differs from Durkheim in regarding the capitalist division of labour as fundamentally divisive and as generating a deep fault-line in capitalist society (Marx in Bottomore and Rubel, 1967: 153–8). Unlike Durkheim, Marx analysed the international dimension of the division of labour, arguing that capital adapts the division of labour to suit its own purposes (mainly profit) with limited or no concern for the effect on social

stability. He fully theorized the global or, as he put it, 'imperialist' dimension and momentum of capitalism (Marx in Bottomore and Rubel, 1967: 145–8). More recently, Lash and Urry (1987) use the phrase 'disorganised capitalism' to describe the prevailing character of the 'free' market that followed the more regulated version.

Durkheim emphasized the growth of individual diversity in modern societies but made little reference to the consequences of increased ethnic group diversity or to the possible associated allegiances of various ethnic groups to external entities, including religious and political. Recently, ethnic and cultural conflict has been more apparent than conflicts directly caused by the mobility of capital and labour, but the latter have an underlying influence on the former. Global or international labour has been so weakened in relation to global capital that its protests have been subdued and its arguments muted. However, as both Marx and Durkheim appreciated, such class inequality is not a sound long-term basis for social solidarity. Marx's views in this respect require no elaboration. While Durkheim accepted class hierarchy he was a radical meritocrat, arguing that organic solidarity could not function 'normally' without genuine equality of opportunity (1964[1893]: 374–88). This led him to advocate a number of egalitarian positions, including opposition to inherited wealth (1957: 210–11).

Marx's critique of nationalism as an ideology that divides the working class has been extended by some contemporary Marxists and critics of the left to apply to what they see as the ineffective and potentially divisive effects of multiculturalism (Mullard, 1982; Solomos, 2003: 209–10). They mainly focus on national and ethnic division among the proletariat, although in principle such division can affect all classes. They argue that the conflicts of capitalist society, including ethnic or racial ones, cannot be fully or systemically understood or resolved at the cultural level, but require addressing in terms of the political economy of capitalism, particularly its tendency to produce extreme inequalities (see also Miles and Brown, 2003: 130–6, 148–50). Marxist theory offers a radical interpretation of racial and ethnic conflict that locates nationalism and frequently multiculturalism as exacerbating factors. To the extent that this perspective has merit, it is questionable whether either nationalist or multicultural policies alone or in combination can adequately solve ethnic conflict and cultural fragmentation.

To emphasize the role of economic factors in explaining Britain's, and by implication western Europe's, current ethnic conflicts does not imply that cultural factors are unimportant or without 'relatively autonomous' effect. The Rushdie 'affair' emphatically demonstrated the contrary, as did the worldwide protests in early 2006 against the cartoons of the Prophet. Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis is too narrowly cultural; nevertheless there is immense potential for conflict between the values and practices of Islam and western liberalism (Huntington, 1996).

In summary, whereas Durkheim regards the 'modern division of labour' as socially unifying (in its 'normal' form), Marx and Marxists see 'the capitalist division of labour' as fundamentally divisive. The systematic thinking of these two classic thinkers can illuminate the multiculturalism/British identity debate and similar debates across Europe. In particular, both consider that solidarity requires greater equality than occurs in contemporary capitalist societies.

MULTICULTURALISM AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Criticisms of multiculturalism preceded 9/11 but have since become more widespread. Prior to 9/11, the debate in North America and Britain largely focused on the respective merits of multiculturalism/cultural relativism versus human rights/universalism (see Barry, 2001; Kelly, 2002). After 9/11, and in Britain particularly after 7/7, the emphasis of the debate shifted to multiculturalism versus national identity. Some adopted compromise positions in these debates although the overall tone was quite partisan. The post 7/7 debate was initially conducted mainly through the daily and weekly British media where contributions tended to be short and sharp.

Despite fundamental differences, both the human rights and nationalist perspectives typically argue that strong multiculturalism threatens social solidarity. There are two main aspects to this criticism. The first is that a preoccupation with multiculturalism obscures and devalues what people have in common. Human sameness is important as well as difference. In the human rights' perspective, the reference point for what people have in common is the human species, whereas in the nationalist one the reference point for inclusion is usually British citizenship, although some versions are narrower, seeking to exclude one or more group as being less authentically 'British'. The media debate in Britain focused on integration through a revived national identity as the main antidote to ethnic tension and perceived segregation without adequately considering alternative approaches to strengthening social solidarity, including the human rights one. This may partly be because Trevor Phillips, the influential Chair for the Commission for Racial Equality, presented the terms of the debate in this way (2005a).

A second criticism of multiculturalism is its alleged 'political correctness'. This criticism is associated with the political right (Browne, 2005) but has also come from the left (Cummings, 2001). Political correctness is seen as bureaucratic and controlling, if not repressive and, at least by implication, as a threat to social solidarity. The minority rights reforms of the last 40 years have involved establishing a vast framework of law and regulations, with accompanying enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. If these are

to some extent necessary to reduce prejudice and discrimination – and surely they are – they also run a risk of stifling legitimate opinion and debate. Clearly a balance has to be struck. Where the balance weighs against freedom of expression people may feel inhibited and even intimidated, and resentment can build up. This association with political correctness has contributed to the backlash against multiculturalism.

Several writers with Muslim cultural roots have expressed the need for a more open cross-cultural dialogue with perhaps less inhibition than a non-Muslim might choose to do. For instance, Hanif Kureishi argues that 'an effective multiculturalism' should involve 'a robust and committed exchange of ideas' rather than 'a superficial exchange of festival and food' (2005: 21). The relative lack of such debate until recently in Britain has resulted in previously little discussed and even unrecognized issues erupting dangerously. A crucial one is the extent to which the western liberal value of freedom of expression should apply to religion. Manifestly, there are other serious matters of cultural disagreement – not only between some versions of Islam and western liberalism but between aspects of certain African and African-Caribbean cultures and the West. There is a sense in which Muslim anger has caused a loss of liberal 'innocence' in a way that black anger never quite did. Well-meaning words and even reform are insufficient to assuage the sense of historic injustice and humiliation felt across a proud culture. An honest debate is needed between cultures, including their historical relations. As Kureishi concludes: '(our) children deserve better than an education that comes from liberal guilt' (2005: 21). What they do deserve is a debate in which conflicting and complementary cultural values are thoroughly aired in a mutually civilized and tolerant manner. If this is now beginning in Britain following the shock of the alleged conspiracy of August 2006, it has taken far too long.

The effects of political correctness are not confined to the intellectual sphere. The politically correct ethos surrounding multiculturalism can undermine the informative and constructive communication required to formulate practical policy and behaviour. Often difficult and controversial matters affecting minority communities are ignored by white commentators and left to minority writers to address. The latter include Diane Abbott ('black on black' gun crime, 2005) and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (black racism, 2003).[2] It is understandable that white commentators should feel cautious about commenting on sensitive 'race' issues. However, in a mature multicultural society in which trust is high, they would feel more confident to do so. Michael Cummings passionately argues that social scientists should in any case address these issues because avoidance can damage the very people whose sensitivities are supposedly being protected. He contends that political correctness on the left 'unintentionally undermines progressive causes' (2001: ix). I argue later that it is not merely 'progressive causes' but the wider 'social equality project' of the left – which

transcends ethnic divisions – that has been damaged and, in fact, almost supplanted by an excessive but paradoxically inhibited emphasis on culture.

Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood are among the academic contributors to the multicultural debate who have defended multiculturalism against recent criticism. Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000) and the Report of the Commission he chaired, *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain* (the 'Parekh Report') (Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, 2000) are regarded by some critics as emphasizing minority rights at the expense of national identity (*Guardian*, 2000) and by others at the expense of human rights (Barry in Kelly, 2002: 212–17). I partly agree with the latter criticism and will return to it later. Parekh makes a sustained attempt to balance the merits of multiculturalism with those of national identity and human rights. However, my reading of the Parekh Report is that its communitarianism – Britain as a 'community of communities' – was the acme of a trend in multiculturalism that had simply gone too far and was already in danger of losing support even before 9/11 (for a more favourable view of the Parekh Report and one critical of the media's response to it, see Pilkington, 2003: 264–74). It is possible that the Report inadvertently set back rather than helped the cause of multiculturalism but in any case, 9/11 has provoked much soul-searching about the possible divisive effects of multiculturalism.

More recently, Tariq Modood, a notable but critical admirer of Parekh, has reasserted the continuing need for a 'moderate, egalitarian multiculturalism', which he sees as complementary to developing a sense of national belonging (2005a: 205). Modood argues that there is a need for British Muslims to develop strong institutions, somewhat as British Jews have done, which interweave with the fabric of British public life (2005b). Clearly, there is a cultural dimension to this, but his main argument is that Muslims should engage in political and civic pluralism. Few would disagree, but such is now the degree of communal distrust that even what Modood terms 'political multiculturalism' requires to be pursued rather less for ethnic advantage and more to achieve consensus and conciliation. As Dench, Gavron and Young argue, debate must effectively address the needs of the ethnic majority as well as minorities for fairness and equality (Dench et al., 2006, 'Introduction').

NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

In the months following the London bombings of July 2005, numerous politicians, journalists and academics prescribed one or other version of shared 'British identity' as antidotes to ethnic and religious tensions and

conflicts. Others were emphatic that the history of the British Empire provides little basis for any such consensus (see note 1). I share this scepticism on the grounds that Britain is now so culturally diverse that an inclusive nationalism would be too dilute to provide a sufficient basis for social solidarity. Britain is now so multicultural that it is necessary to widen the basis of its solidarity. Human rights figured prominently in the post-7/7 debate in respect to the arrest and internment of alleged terrorists but not as a basis for fostering social solidarity. Nor did the argument that greater social equality could enhance solidarity get much media coverage.

David Goodhart's promotion of 'national citizenship' has made an influential contribution to the debate on national solidarity (*Observer*, 8 February 2004; *Prospect*, 2004, 2006). Goodhart and certain other contributors to *Prospect* are concerned that Britain may have reached a point where 'diversity' threatens solidarity (see also Wolfe and Klaussen, 2000). Goodhart has recently stated his position more fully in a pamphlet titled *Progressive Nationalism: Citizenship and the Left* (2006) in which he gave space to others to comment on his views. His main argument is that 'civic nationalism' expressed in the form of a strong welfare state offers a practical basis for strengthening social solidarity and that steps should be taken to ensure that access to full citizenship, including welfare rights, is highly prized as a basis of national identification. A key idea he floats is that of a two-tier citizenship. He does not formally define the two tiers but gives the example of temporary European workers as a group that might have restricted rights. 'National citizenship' appears to equate with the privileged tier of citizenship. Welfare is one of four areas where Goodhart believes that public policy should 'favour solidarity'; the others are: immigration and asylum, culture, and politics and language.

There are important practical aspects of Goodhart's argument that I partly agree with. A strong welfare state is one of these, although, granted that access to welfare requires some differentiation, a two-tier system is probably not the best approach – it appears not to have worked very effectively in Denmark and may have contributed to the recent ethnic-religious tensions there. In any case, a robust welfare system should be part of a broader egalitarianism, including an international dimension (see Seabrook, 2002: 29). I also agree that immigration must be regulated, although the preferred framework for dealing with issues of immigration and asylum should be European rather than national. As far as asylum is concerned, contrary to Goodhart's wish to strengthen political control, the role of the judiciary in protecting asylum seekers' human rights is crucial for justice and important for ethnic relations. Even these areas of partial agreement with Goodhart indicate an underlying philosophical and political disagreement. This is still more evident in terms of culture, politics and language. 'Nationalism' is too narrow a core philosophy for multiethnic and globalized Britain. On this point I agree with Parekh that 'the language of

nationalism is deeply flawed and best avoided' (Parekh in Goodhart, 2006: 76). Much of the rest of this article argues or implies that nationalism is inadequate as the main basis of social solidarity. Goodhart's analysis seldom extends much beyond the borders of Britain and as a result he misses the 'big picture'. He betrays a conservatism at odds with his claim to 'progressivism'. An example of this is the conclusions he draws from a legitimate distinction he makes between 'indigenous' British residents and more recent immigrants and asylum seekers. He suggests that the former's historical struggle for democracy and its associated rights has fostered a deep-rooted identity with the nation state, whereas recent immigrants may covet and acquire citizens' rights without having developed such an identification. He further argues that competition for welfare with recent immigrants has caused some resentment among the ethnic majority. This analysis is accurate as far as it goes but it requires sensitive balancing with the needs and perspectives of ethnic minorities. Goodhart offers little more than a rather minimal recognition that the identities of ethnic minorities must be respected and an indication they must also be part of a revitalized nationalism. A deeper and more empathetic understanding of the motivations and concerns of Britain's minorities is urgently needed to achieve a sounder basis of solidarity. This includes addressing human rights and British foreign policy. The logic of human rights is to check the drift towards ethnic separatism by ensuring common rights. The gradual harmonization of the rights of European citizens moves in this direction.

A further example of Goodhart's wary approach to diversity is his tendency to treat diversity almost as the opposite of solidarity. This is not quite correct and throws his discussion slightly out of focus. The opposite of solidarity is lack of social cohesion and order. Diversity may threaten cohesion and order, but not necessarily. It is impossible to pursue the point in detail here, but arguably the diversity of the USA contributes more than it detracts from solidarity. The USA is a famously argumentative and litigious society, but, in the longer term, the democratic expression of diverse opinion contributes more to the nation's solidarity than would its suppression. However, the inept handling of diversity, particularly disregarding its potentially divisive aspects, as has sometimes characterized British multicultural policy, can lead to social disruption.

Goodhart's suggestions are vulnerable to the Marxist critique of nationalism or, more precisely, 'ethnicism': that is, it divides the proletariat along ethnic lines. From this perspective, nationalism and ethnicism are regarded as kindred ideologies that obscure the common interests of the proletariat, of whatever ethnicity, in greater equality. Instead, the indigenous proletariat is offered an empty identification with 'nation' and im/migrant labour is routinely characterized as the alien and threatening 'other'. The divisiveness of nationalism can extend beyond the proletariat. A 'British' and, still more, an 'English', nationalism is likely to have some appeal for

British-born whites across the class structure and a relative lack of appeal to ethnic minorities. Of course, divisiveness is the opposite of Goodhart's intentions, but the risk of it is inherent in his approach. Nevertheless, unlike some multiculturalists, Goodhart does not fudge the real tensions between Britain's ethnic groups, despite his apparent prioritization of the ethnic majority.

The route to solidarity in contemporary Britain is neither through homogenized national identity nor hegemony of the majority. Britain is now so diverse that no one set of national values, institutions and symbols can provide a sufficiently unifying focus. The term 'British' itself is favoured as a self-description by few Asians, although many accept it as part of a hyphenated identity (*Guardian*/ICM Survey, 2002) and according to Tariq Modood, over a quarter of British-born African-Caribbeans do not think of themselves as British. (Modood, 2005a: 196–9). In any case, as Modood also observes, 'British' is a declining identity even among white Britons (2005a: 196). Alternative means to sustain social solidarity must be found. It matters less what people believe than that they care about the society they live in. People are likely to care if their rights are secure and they have a decent standard of living.

Nevertheless, within a wider strategy of rights and equality, there is scope for government-led cultural initiatives to strengthen social solidarity. However, these should be in the form of creating opportunity for fair and open cultural expression, dialogue and exchange. One move in that direction would be for the representation of the Church of England in the House of Lords to be replaced by a system better reflecting the diversity of faith and belief in British society. And it would be a unifying and dignifying measure if the people of Britain were formally recognized as sovereign rather than as subjects of the monarch. However, much, almost certainly most, cultural creativity in, for instance, sport, entertainment, and in some areas of the media occurs with limited reference to government and should be left to do so.

Finally, Goodhart's views on the contribution of human rights to solidarity are substantially opposed to the arguments of the next section. He criticizes multiculturalists for typically supporting human rights laws alongside multiculturalism as a way of dealing with common needs and conflicts (2004b: 33). It is true that Parekh and others tend to look as much to human rights law as to national law for this purpose (see Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, Ch. 7). However, Goodhart makes no mention of the central and defining debate between multiculturalists and human rights theorists referred to earlier. What is at stake in this debate is the balance between universal/human values and law and relative/ethnically based ones. The difference between the two approaches is not merely abstract, but affects such everyday matters as dress and schooling. It is Parekh's tendency to favour relativist rather than universalist solutions in concrete instances

that marks him as a robust multiculturalist. His theoretical contributions to the multicultural/human rights debate further reinforce this assessment (see especially his exchange with Barry in Kelly, 2002, Ch. 8). This debate rather than Goodhart's comments reflects the notably antagonistic nature of the two positions. Of course, multiculturalists and human rights theorists variously take something from each position, but crucially disagree about the primary philosophical and legal (and therefore practical) basis of a free society. However, Goodhart virtually conflates the two positions, too easily dismissing human rights with multiculturalism. What he offers is a majority nationalism. Ulrich Beck's remark that those who fail to appreciate the reality of globalization tend to reiterate ineffectual 'modern' ('first modernity') solutions to 'second modernity' problems seems applicable (2006[2004]: 68–71)). It is, then, possible to appreciate Goodhart's concern about multiculturalism whilst radically disagreeing with his views on human rights.

Many of Goodhart's arguments have been made by David Miller in his impressive *On Nationality* (1995). If anything, Miller is more comprehensive in his support of nationalism in that Goodhart favours a specific form, 'progressive' nationalism. Both rebuke cosmopolitan liberals for a supposed lack of realism and Goodhart adds the observation that the 'notion' of human rights is 'ahistorical' (2006: 6). This need not be the case, but the notion of nationalism is certainly not ahistorical. It has already changed much more fundamentally and with profounder consequences than Miller and Goodhart acknowledge. The identities of the British are less and less confined within national boundaries. Communities of identity, for some far stronger than national identity, straddle the world, a reality that the British government must accommodate to.

Much of the debate reviewed in this article focuses on the relative claims of three different bases of community as foci of identity: ethnicity; nationality; and humanity/human rights. Of course, all three are valid sources of identity, but none is static or transhistorical. It is entirely realistic, in fact urgent, to respond to rapid global change by bolstering human community. Nationalism and ethnic identification not infrequently occur in excess and can be counterproductive and even dangerous to the wider human community.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

I now turn to the positive side of my argument: that human rights and greater social equality are the most effective means to develop solidarity in a globalized society. In a sense, these two arguments are one in that rights covering basic equality, including material survival and education, are

written into the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (see especially Articles 9, 22 and 25). However, more than basic equality would be required in modern societies to substantially enhance social solidarity.

A brief reference to the philosophical debate about the basis of human rights will suffice here. Arguments range from the belief that human rights are divinely ordained to the view that they simply offer the best protection to human frailty (Turner and Rojek, 2001, Ch. 7). The latter point is powerful, although human rights can also be conceived of positively as a framework for individual, group and species expression and development. However, the issue here is the potential of human rights as a foundation for social solidarity rather than their philosophical justification. In this respect, they are a frequent basis of legal appeal in cases where one ethnic group or certain members of it are considered to be oppressing another. Ultimately, the effectiveness of human rights depends on the support of a democratic global consensus and commitment to action. In contrast to nationalism, human rights offer the possibility of a universalist justification for action. Participating more fully within a regional and global human rights framework could alleviate fractiousness and fragmentation in Britain by increasing a sense of fairness and justice. An appropriately framed British Bill of Rights would complement nicely the Human Rights Act of 1998.

If globalization has disruptive and divisive effects, it also offers, through human rights, solutions to the problems it produces. Mary Kaldor makes a link between globalization, civil society and human rights. She argues that 'civil society has become transnational' (2003: 48) and that 'reason, moral sentiment and/or civil action . . . provide the basis for social solidarity' (2003: 46–7). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its many derivatives provide a more inclusive foundation for developing social solidarity than minority or majority cultures with limited reference to a wider framework of values and law. Minority exceptionalism risks fragmentation and majority hegemony risks degenerating into an oppressive nationalism. In contrast, human rights, at least in principle, embrace everybody equally and are therefore the natural (human) basis for social solidarity.

However, human rights and group rights need not be antagonistic and, in fact, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes various rights that imply freedom to various group and communal memberships, including political and religious. The diverse global origins of Britain's recent immigrant groups mean that human rights are of special relevance to them. Their foci of identification are in part different from longer-term inhabitants. If Britain and other western states are to maintain the commitment of their minorities, they must respect the human rights of all members of the wider ethnic and/or religious communities with which their minorities identify – wherever and whoever they are. This includes asylum seekers, those seeking to avoid deportation and those accused of terrorist crimes. Otherwise, some members of ethnic minorities, possibly

many, may distance themselves from and even reject the societies to which they have emigrated. Clearly, some young Muslims of both Asian and African descent in Britain have already done so. Many recent immigrants into Britain are highly transnational in their identities, which is why the Thatcherite Conservative politician Norman Tebbitt's nationality test (which cricket team would they support) remains as anachronistic as ever. They identify with aspects of their countries of origin, just as Britons moving within the country retain regional allegiances. These diverse, multiple and sometimes fluid identities make it unlikely that most members of minorities will adopt the kind of traditional British nationalism that has in the past contributed to a sense of 'one nation' and helped create a degree of solidarity. A further profound consequence of multiethnicity is that it is increasingly difficult and dangerous for a state to declare war against a country with which its minorities have substantial ties. To do so is perhaps a kind of civil war. The logic of global communities and of a nascent global community undermines nationalism.

The impact of globalization on the sources and flows of power and authority in the contemporary world affects solidarity. Benjamin Barber argues that the break up of the European and Soviet empires has let loose a myriad of ethnonational identity movements, often reinforced by religion (Barber, 2003). This is happening on a global scale and, paradoxically, globalization contributes to it. In some cases, notably in eastern Europe, these movements have dismantled polyethnic states and established more monoethnic new ones or revived old ones. Parallel to this and reinforced by it, the global movement of labour has resulted in large numbers of immigrants, often from areas previously subjugated by the European empires, settling in western Europe. In contrast to eastern Europe, the monoethnic basis of western European nations has been weakened. Concentrations of ethnic minorities have some resemblance to internal colonies even where residents have full formal rights of citizenship.

A central domestic issue now facing several western European states is how to reintegrate their populations. Tendencies to ethnic segregation must be balanced by countervailing forces if integration is to be achieved and social solidarity (re)established. Human rights are the most ethically compelling of these forces – far more so than some fabricated version of nationalism, the content of which people cannot anyway agree on. However, it is important to strike a balance between universal rights and group, specifically ethnic and religious, rights. The metaphor of the pendulum is appropriate – whenever it swings further towards one or other of human or group rights, the pull back towards the other can be anticipated. In Britain, group rights – a.k.a multiculturalism – have had a long momentum but this may now be reversing.

Although Bhikhu Parekh is a noted advocate of a global dialogue on rights, he seems as much concerned to argue the cultural relativism of

human rights as the practical need for their implementation (Parekh, 2002). His writings on Britain focus more on the advocacy of minority rights than the development of a wider framework of unity. His notion of diversity inclines to the communitarian: an equality of communities. Despite attempts to balance the claims of minority rights, human rights and national identity – the latter, especially more recently – his emphasis is on the former. Thus, in an article opposing 'dogma' in higher education he gives more emphasis to criticizing the Higher Education Minister's insistence that universities prevent terrorist influences on Muslim students than to the possible effects of such influences (Parekh, 2006: 16). Tariq Modood has better appreciated the dangers of cultural conflict between sections of minority communities and western liberal values and lifestyle (1992) and accordingly argues the need for a dynamic and interactive multiculturalism rather than one characterized by defensiveness and introspection (2005b). Thus, multiculturalism could strengthen national solidarity. He is also more open than Parekh to the influence of universal values, although contends that these require mediation within different national contexts (2005a, Ch. 9).

The Human Rights Act (1998) links Britain to universal principles of justice that provide a foundation for social solidarity in a diverse society. The recently established Commission for Equality and Human Rights presents a further shift in the direction of universality in that it is intended to unite into a single institution the various bodies that currently protect against specific forms of discrimination – race, gender and disability – and add age and sexual orientation. The point is that any human being, not merely members of specific minorities, is potentially vulnerable to any of these forms of discrimination.

The inclusion of 'Equality' in the title of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights offers some encouragement for those who consider Britain too unequal a society. Marxism offers a penetrating systemic critique of capitalist inequality as well as of nationalism but the refusal of many Marxists to link the human rights and equality projects smacks of the ideological rigidity of yesteryear. Unfortunately, the interpretation of numerous writers of the left of the Enlightenment tradition of rights as primarily liberal propaganda has significantly undermined the intellectual credibility of the human rights movement (see, for instance, Wallerstein, 1991; Hall, 2000, 227–31). The 'blame game' is dangerous in the current incendiary climate. The 'wrongs' of liberal societies and individuals must be confronted, but they do not undermine the argument for human rights. Historically, inhumanity between cultures has been routine: the human capacity for evil – what Freud came to refer to as 'the death instinct' – appears universal. Recognition of one's own evil – actual or potential – is likely to contribute more to progress than condemnation of the evil – real or imagined – of others. Such modest insight may even be a precondition for an effective global dialogue on human rights.

Equality is as much a part of the human rights tradition as liberty and solidarity. A rights-informed social democracy is the answer to outmoded attempts to separate communist/socialist and liberal/social democratic interpretations of equality. The point is to combine these traditions effectively.

EQUALITY AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

The adoption of egalitarian policies could significantly contribute to the strengthening of social solidarity in Britain and, for that matter, globally. Before focusing on the socially stabilizing effects of equality it is helpful to locate the concept within the development of the rights tradition. Equality gains purchase through being part of a wider developing framework of rights.

The practical pursuit of equality has occurred mainly within the context of emerging nation states. T.H. Marshall's account of the struggle for civil, political and social rights in Britain demonstrates how rights have come to be associated with national citizenship (Marshall, 1963; 1973). The focus of equality has shifted in given periods with social equality, particularly welfare, being the dominant emphasis for most of the 20th century. Not all individuals and groups benefited equally from the attainment of these rights, but Marshall discerns a progressive and cumulative pattern. More recently, Bryan Turner has illustrated that national traditions and the legal embodiment of rights vary considerably (Turner, 1990). While this is true, the emergence of a global human rights perspective can underpin and may even eventually supersede national citizens' rights (see Soysal, 1994). Human rights have an inherently universal dimension – despite enormous and well-charted inconsistencies of practice. The justification for possession of human rights is simply membership of the species or common humanity rather than national citizenship. The universality of human rights was a prominent theme during the Enlightenment (see Lynd, 1982, especially Chapter 5 titled 'My Country is the World') and again, during and after the Second World War, culminating in the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights.

However, Bhikhu Parekh (2002) and Ash Amin (2004) rightly argue that European (and western) liberalism should not be the sole basis for the construction of global human rights. Human rights must be constructed and possessed by the species not merely by members of a specific culture. Amin observes that even before post-war immigration, Europe has long been exposed to and influenced by non-European philosophical and religious traditions. Moreover, the conditions are there for cultural exchange to increase and for the fostering of a community of discussion (2004: 13–4).

Despite the serious problems bedevilling the human rights project, they are increasingly institutionalized at the international/global level for which the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights provides a broad template and point of appeal. It appears that civil and political rights are emerging more widely than social rights (although there is a strong Islamic tradition of communal help and protection as distinct from state welfare). The uneven development of social equality is partly related to the dominance of neoliberal capitalism which, whatever its other characteristics relative to the distribution of resources and opportunity, tends to increase the gap between the very rich and the poor. As the protests of myriad social movements claim, growing inequality is a potential threat to global stability.

Referring to material inequality in Britain, particularly of wealth and income, Jackson and Segal state: 'Current levels of inequality are not only unjust: they also undermine social solidarity' (2004: 39). Social rights embrace citizens of all ethnic groups: they are colour-blind. In Britain, a significant improvement in the material conditions of poorer sections of particularly the African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi and white populations would achieve more for solidarity than further emphasis on multiculturalism. Jackson and Segal cite comparative studies that 'demonstrate that more economically equal societies are also those that exhibit the highest level of trust between their citizens' (2004: 41). Both the civil disorders in Britain involving black youth in the 1980s and Pakistani and Bangladeshi youth in 2001 were at least partly caused by low wages, high unemployment and an accompanying sense of disaffection (Cantle, 2001). In this important respect, the causes and solutions to Britain's disorders are similar to those that occurred in France in 2005. Hopefully, it is not too late to reclaim a significant minority of seriously disaffected British Muslim youth through egalitarian reform. Of course, a general reduction of social inequality would benefit far more white people than members of ethnic minorities, although in relative terms the latter would benefit most. However, the wider the benefits of egalitarian reform the more positive should be the effect on social solidarity.

In a brave article titled 'No One Asked Blackburn's People What they Wanted', the veteran socialist thinker, Jeremy Seabrook, stresses the importance of including disadvantaged white people in egalitarian reform (Seabrook, 2002). He combines a robust antiracism with an understanding of the insecurities of white working-class people in relation to immigration. He observes that the white working-class did not formulate immigration policy, but experienced its disruptive consequences more directly than the middle class. Similarly, Dench et al. (2006) contend that resentment at immigration among some white working-class people in London's East End was not racist, but reflected that they had lost ground in relation to social services.

Seabrook advocates a major attack on poverty, not only in Britain, but also in the poor countries in which many members of Britain's minorities have roots. The Marshall plan accomplished something on a similar scale in post-war Europe and, given the political will, it could be done again. In Britain, some resources could be directed to improving and extending public facilities and places – those spaces we share together. Seabrook's suggestions seem more adequate to healing social and ethnic divisions than Goodhart's, which smack of what Beck might refer to as a first modernity-type solution (i.e. nationalism) to a second modernity problem (2006[2004]: 69).

It is worth reiterating that both Durkheim and Marx also considered that greater equality would strengthen social solidarity. Although they differed ideologically, both regarded inequality as socially disruptive. Whereas Durkheim addressed the issue in terms of the reform of capitalist society, Marx argued that long-term social stability and capitalism were incompatible. Durkheim argued that the division of labour contributed optimally to social solidarity only when equal opportunity existed. He considered that this was far from the case in his own time, with the result that feelings of anomie in relation to industrial work were rife (Durkheim, 1964[1893]: 353–73). He appreciated that to achieve equality of opportunity would involve substantial state intervention. His concept of anomie resonates with Marx's analysis of alienation in the context of capitalist production. Marx pitted the solidarity of the working class against capitalism and foresaw a future of solidarity in a classless society. He advocated the abolition of the capitalist division of labour, but never quite stipulated what equality in communist society might involve. Whatever the respective merits of Durkheim's radical reformism and Marx's communism, both understood the substantial relationship between equality and solidarity and both in their different ways were more radical than many contemporary commentators, including many of the left.

There is no shortage of other areas of common concern in addition to material equality. For, instance, the national school curriculum – which some wanted to call the 'common curriculum' – should be widened to include the international and British history of ethnic and religious minorities. Faith schools should be required to set aside substantial quotas for those of other beliefs and, in turn, these beliefs should be embedded in the educational ethos and exchange of the schools. Areas of discussion between communities that might lead to policy changes include marriage, 'the family' and gender; drugs, including the international drug trade and the sale and abuse of alcohol; and British foreign policy in the light of its reconstituted population. These suggestions are made in the spirit of international humanism but some or all may appeal to both multiculturalists and nationalists. All the better if, coming from different directions, we end in the same place.

CONCLUSION

The conflicts and stresses associated with Britain's multicultural society have provoked a number of suggestions about how to increase integration and strengthen social solidarity. This issue has been widely perceived as a conflict between 'British' identity and the identities of 'other cultures' and/or religions. An almost reflex response has been to seek a revitalization and strengthening of national symbols, values and bonds – i.e. of national culture. As even many supporters of this approach acknowledge, the difficulty is that there is widespread disagreement about what 'Britishness' is and what aspects, if any, should be generally identified with. Your idealized Britain may very well not be mine. It matters that Britons care about their country, but the basis of caring need not be in a revived and perhaps artificially gerrymandered nationalism. Given the cultural diversity of Britain, shared material self-interest in the form of rights and greater material equality is a sounder basis for social solidarity. Certainly, some rights will be coded and secured nationally, but globalization means that the principle of human rights transcends nationality and their implementation overides national sovereignty. Many, though not all, rights are supported at all of the ethnic communal, national and global level and in practice there is often more practical agreement than theoretical argument might suggest. However, the imperatives of historical change, particularly growing global interdependence, and the need for a longer vision require the articulation of these matters in the most inclusive and unifying terms.

Britain is not alone in facing the consequences of imperial expansion. The former European colonial powers are all confronting a late post-imperial crisis. What is needed is a post-imperial humanistic global vision and matching action on a scale to convince the understandably sceptical. It really does not matter whether this is termed radical, liberal, Marxist or, for that matter Islamic. It needs to be agreed and it urgently needs to happen.

Notes

1 At the poles of opinion this debate can be quite uncompromising and emotive. Thus, Gilles Kepel's piece in the *Independent*, 'Why Multiculturalism Has Failed in Britain', ran the subheading 'Society has a choice between two models: Radical secularism and radical multiculturalism' and he left no doubt which he preferred (Kepel, 2005). In contrast, Jonathan Steele's article in the *Guardian* was as critical of British national history as its title indicates: 'The Textbook Whitewash of our Brutal Empire is a Lie' (Steele, 2006).

2 The following pieces make the point, although none was an explicit attack on political correctness: Abbott, 'It Hurts Me to Say It, but Guns Really Are a Black Issue' in the *Evening Standard* (2005); Alibhai-Brown, 'Black Racism is Every Bit as Bad as White Racism' in the *Independent*, 03.02.2003. Later Alibhai-Brown

gave a qualified but vigorous defence of political correctness in a notable spat with the right-wing commentator, Anthony Browne.

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In defence of both multiculturalism and progressive nationalism

A response to Mike O'Donnell

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Since 9/11, 'to be a Muslim is to be under suspicion, under threat and, given the huge increase in racial violence, under attack' (Younge, 2001). In Britain, the situation has worsened with the bombings of 7 July 2005 (7/7), the abortive bombings of 21 July 2005 and the alleged conspiracy of August 2006 to blow up 10 planes. While the coordinated attacks in the USA were deeply shocking, they took place in another country and could be seen to be the product of fanatics. In 2005 and 2006, the conspiracies were closer to home, with most of those responsible for the atrocities being Muslims born and/or brought up in Britain. While the British government and the media have continued to emphasize that the enemy is terrorism and not Islam, there is little doubt that a discourse celebrating Britain's multicultural society is on the retreat (Rattansi, 2004) and in its stead nationalist discourses from different sides of the political spectrum have been revived (Goodhart, 2006; West, 2005), along with discourses that urge Muslims to integrate (Modood, 2005). I write this at a time when, following the leader of the House of Commons, politicians are vying with each other in urging Muslim women not to wear the niqab veil. The clear