

Public and political debates on multicultural crises in Britain

A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship: Legal Political and Educational Challenges

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1. Introduction

There are four parts to this report. Section one sets out the operative types of multiculturalism in Britain that have emerged from the policy agendas of Racial Equality at the local and national level. It then considers key issues concerning the alleged 'crises' of British multiculturalism, specifically Muslim exceptionalism and the manner in which a 'multicultural retreat' in Britain might be characterised as a 're-balancing' - through the emergence of competing discourses of 'civic assimilation' and 'cohesion' - and not necessarily as a 'replacement' or strict 'reversal' of multiculturalism. This is paralleled by an increasingly salient division amongst advocates of multiculturalism who hold either 'communitarian' or individualistic 'multiculture' views. It is suggested that each of the above tendencies are evident in governmental literature, policy and public and media discourse. Several 'crises' of multiculturalism make these distinctions suitable for empirical inquiry.

The first of these is explored in section two and focuses upon Incitement to Religious Hatred legislation as an example of a 'crisis' or country specific issue, event or challenge from 2001 onwards. Initially sought as a secular solution to the demand to extend existing blasphemy laws [theoretically outlawing a 'scurrilous vilification' and/or 'heretical dissent'] after the Rushdie Affair (see pg. 5), it was proposed as a government bill after 9/11 and continues to be a very 'live' topic in all areas of public and media discourse, parliament and the courts, as well as representing a planned policy-based issue that has involved lobbying, public argument and political engagement. As such it may reveal something important about the incorporation of Muslims into a rubric of British-citizenship, specifically with respect to civic and political participation, and on what terms Muslim 'difference' may or may not be recognised. As section two makes clear, this case goes to the very heart of how UK thinking on 'difference' has been understood, namely in terms of Racial Equality, and how this is adapting to Muslim claims-making when it has in the past provided a starting point for multiculturalism.

Section three then considers the impact of the Danish cartoon affair upon the British debate by examining what values are defended, debated and adopted, alongside the substantive elements of prevalent discourses. Although this example has its origins elsewhere, its relevance to the British debate is witnessed in several ways, not least in the print media's refusal to re-print the images and the various rationales they provided to support this decision. To this end it can be contrasted with the heavily policy based issues informing the national case discussed in section two. Section three therefore uses the Danish Cartoon affair to explore an emotive and symbolic example that might say something about the norms of a democratic culture that recognises and restrains itself from inflicting some pains over others vis-à-vis respecting different sensitivities in a multicultural society.

The concluding section four connects the key issues of the earlier sections to identify the relationship between them and, specifically, ascertains whether there has been a retreat from multiculturalism and, if so, how and what has changed, and what form these changes have taken.

1.1. British multicultural citizenship

Post-war migrants who arrived as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (CUKC), and subsequent British born generations, have been recognised as ethnic and racial minorities requiring state support and differential treatment to overcome barriers in their exercise of citizenship. This includes how, under the remit of several Race-Relations Acts (RRAs) the state has sought to integrate minorities into the labour market and other key arenas of British society through an approach that promotes equal access as an example of equality of opportunity (Lester, 1998). Indeed, it is now thirty years since the introduction of a

third Race Relations Act (1976) cemented a state sponsorship of Race Equality by consolidating earlier, weaker legislative instruments (RRA 1965 & 1968). Alongside its broad remit spanning public and private institutions; recognition of *indirect* discrimination and the imposition of a statutory public duty to promote good 'race-relations', it also created the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to assist individual complainants and monitor the implementation of the Act.¹

This is an example, according to Joppke (1999: 642), of a citizenship that has amounted to "a precarious balance between citizenship universalism and racial group particularism [that] stops short of giving special group rights to immigrants."² What it also suggests is that the institutionalisation of a space from which to begin to redress racially structured barriers to participation represents a defining characteristic in the British approach to integrating minorities. But does this amount to multiculturalism? The answer is that it amounts to a British multiculturalism for although the UK lacks an official 'Multicultural Act' or 'Charter' in the way of Australia or Canada (CMEB, 2000), the idea of integration being based upon a drive for unity through an uncompromising cultural 'assimilation' was something consciously rejected over 40 years ago, when the then Labour home secretary Roy Jenkins' (1966) defined integration as "not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance".

1.2. Local Multicultural citizenship

Alongside this state centred, "unmistakeably national" (Joppke, 1999: 146) focus, there is also a tradition of 'multicultural drift' (CMEB, 2000: 11) where multicultural discourses and policies have been pursued through local councils and municipal authorities, making up a patchwork of British multicultural public policies in the way summarised by Singh (2005: 170)

Historically, multiculturalism as a public policy in Britain has been heavily localised, often made voluntary, and linked essentially to issues of managing diversity in areas of immigrant settlement. The legislative framework on which this policy is based – for example, the Race Relations Acts (1965 and 1976) – recognised this contingency, giving additional resources to local authorities as well as new powers to better promote racial and ethnic equality. With these enabling powers, most local authorities with large ethnic minority populations have transformed themselves from initially being the bastions of official racism to being promoters of anti-racism and multiculturalism, and with this change the strength of local ethnic communities and coalitions have been instrumental.

Perhaps the best example of Singh's assessment of local multiculturalism is captured by the programmes of anti-racist education (Tronya, 1987; Mullard, 1985) and multicultural education (Swann Committee, 1985) that have historically been enacted at the Local Education Authority (LEA) level. As the earlier D1 report details, LEAs are responsible for education within the jurisdiction of county councils and metropolitan boroughs, and this includes responsibility for all state schools with the exception of those that apply and are afforded 'voluntary aided status' (and can therefore opt out) under the terms of the 1944 Education Act. In many multi-ethnic urban areas, LEAs have actively encouraged anti-racist and multicultural initiatives in the face of – and at the cost of – some vociferous opposition (Hewer, 2001), that has

¹ For a succinct overview see R. S. Dhami, J. Squires and T. Modood (2006: 19-25) 'Developing positive action policies: learning from the experiences of Europe and North America'. Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep406.pdf>

² This is a valid assessment despite the very problematic nature of Joppke's conflation of equality of opportunity as equality of outcome which he characterises as an example of Affirmative Action (see Joppke, 1999: footnote 26). The Race Relations Act does *not* allow positive discrimination or affirmative action. This means that an employer cannot try to change the balance of the workforce by selecting someone mainly because she or he is from a particular racial group. This would be discrimination on racial grounds, and therefore unlawful. See the CRE summary 'Positive Action in Employment' available at: http://www.cre.gov.uk/legal/rra_positive.html

in turn informed the national picture. Indeed, it was through the debates at the local level that one of the leading public policy documents on multiculturalism came from an inquiry into multicultural education. Entitled *Education for All*, the Swann Report (1985: 36) characterised multiculturalism in Britain as enabling

...all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate in fully shaping society...whilst also allowing, and where necessary assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within a framework of commonly accepted values.

1.3. Multicultural crisis and Muslim exceptionality?

It is important to understand these past policies and discourses comprising British multiculturalism because it is currently alleged to be facing a 'crisis', one that is purportedly precipitated by the exceptionality of "culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands" put forward by Muslims (Modood: 2006: 34). Culminating in a "confused retreat" (ibid. 48), this crisis is epitomised by the work of prominent centre-Left commentators such as David Goodhart (2004) and his widely disseminated essay 'Too Diverse?' Invoking a monocultural-nationalism, Goodhart has openly argued that "we feel more comfortable with, and are readier to share with and sacrifice for, those with whom we have shared histories and similar values. To put it bluntly - most of us prefer our own kind."³ Other critique has been much more vitriolic which, whilst not unusual from a centre-Right that has historically lamented and contested governmental or legislative interventions recognising the diversity of minority populations⁴, is now joined from "the pluralistic centre-left" and is "articulated by people who previously rejected polarising models of race and class and were sympathetic to the 'rainbow', coalitional politics of identity" (Modood, 2005a). Indeed, and whilst it is important not to assume a clear causal connection between rhetoric and anything more substantial, it is arguably the case that intellectuals and commentators have proven instrumental in presenting a 'crisis' of multiculturalism as real and impending in ways that appear alarmist (Meer, 2006, Meer and Noorani, forthcoming). As one newspaper columnist has put it, "the old alliance with the centre-left is fraying to breaking point; old allies in the battles against racism have jumped sides, and now routinely present arguments more Islamophobic than the centre-right."⁵

It is equally important to note, however, that the specific view that multicultural inclusion would prove problematic for - and with - Muslims is one that has existed for sometime. According to Favell (1998: 38), ever since the onset of the Satanic Verses affair "one of the hottest issues thrown up by multiculturalism in Britain has been the growing significance of political and social issues involving Muslims". Indeed, the publication of a novel by Salman Rushdie that disparaged both the

³ Reproduced as 'Discomfort of Strangers' in The Guardian available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1154693,00.html>. Another example includes John Sentamu, the first non-white Archbishop of York, who stated that "multiculturalism has seemed to imply, wrongly for me, let other cultures be allowed to express themselves but do not let the majority culture at all tell us its glories, its struggles, its joys, its pains." Quoted in The Times 22/11/2005 available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1882591,00.html>. Bryan Appleyard of the liberal-conservative Sunday Times, meanwhile, for example, recently announced that "Multiculturalism is dead. It had it coming. An ideology that defined a nation as a series of discrete cultural and political entities that were each free to opt out of any or all common orthodoxies was never a serious contender in the Miss Best Political System pageant." 'Eureka', The Sunday Times, 17 December, 2006. All of these ideas inform the critique from CRE chair Trevor Phillips as discussed in section 1.6.

⁴ Particularly the allocation of public provisions for minority cultural practices on the grounds that these deviate from a core "majority" national identity to which minorities are required to assimilate. A good example of this view can be found in The *Salisbury Review*, a conservative magazine that was founded in 1982 with the influential conservative philosopher Roger Scruton as its editor. The incendiary role it the Honneyford Affair provides an excellent case study of the main political argumentation contained within this position. See Halstead (1988).

⁵ Madeleine Bunting, 'It takes more than tea and biscuits to overcome indifference and fear', The Guardian, 27, February, 2006.

genesis of Islam and the biography of the Prophet Mohammed gave rise to a great deal of hurt and anger expressed by a Muslim community which felt that “as citizens they [were no less] entitled to equality of treatment and respect for their customs and religion” (Anwar, 1992: 9) than either the Christian majority denominations and other religious minorities.⁶ This episode brought to light the lack of cross-cultural understanding and, specifically, the lack of political space and public sympathy experienced by certain religious minorities. As Modood argued:

Is not the reaction to *The Satanic Verses* an indication that the honour of the Prophet or the *imani ghairat* [attachment to and love of the faith] is as central to the Muslim psyche as the Holocaust and racial slavery to others? [...] Muslims will argue that, historically, vilification of the Prophet and of their faith is central to how the West has expressed hatred for them and has led to violence and expulsion on a large scale (2005 [1993]: 121, 122).

In describing a European trend, Parekh (2006) has characterised these sorts of issues as the ‘Muslim question’ i.e. the norms and values of a democratic culture that does or does not recognise some Muslim sensitivities, which has been portrayed elsewhere as “the nut that Europe has to crack” (Joppke, 1998: 37).⁷

In the UK, an important articulation of the view that Muslims are an exceptional, problematic minority can be found in the ‘parallel lives’ (Cantle, 2001) thesis that followed the inquiry into civil unrest and ‘rioting’ that had taken place in some northern towns home to both a small and large number of Muslims. In charging Muslim communities with self-segregating and adopting isolationist practices under a pretence of multiculturalism (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005), this report pioneered an approach found in other post-riot reports (cf Ritchie, 2001; Clarke, 2001; Ouseley, 2001).⁸ This included the Ouseley Report’s (2001) likening of Muslim settlement patterns to those of ‘colonists’⁹ and which provided many influential commentators with the license, not necessarily supported by the specific substance of each report, to critique Muslim distinctiveness in particular and multiculturalism in general.¹⁰ This has given rise to discourses of ‘community cohesion’ and a greater emphasis upon the assimilatory aspects of ‘integration’, and which have increasingly competed and sought to rebalance the recognition of diversity in previous discourse and policy.

The relationship between Muslims and multiculturalism in Britain has, therefore, become increasingly interdependent, and this is exemplified by the way in which visible Muslim practices such as veiling¹¹ have been conflated with – or assumed to run parallel to – alleged Muslim practices such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, a rejection of positive law in favour of sharia law and so on. Since multiculturalism is alleged to license these practices, opposition to the practice, therefore, it is argued, necessarily invalidates the policy.¹²

⁶ For example, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) tried but failed to prosecute Salman Rushdie for blasphemy under existing common law offences. The reason for this failure was that Islam, unlike Christianity, is not recognised within blasphemy legislation (in 1977 the editor of *Gay News* was sentenced to six months in prison for publishing a poem that characterised Jesus Christ as homosexual). The question of parity was then central during the Satanic Verses Affair and emerges in a more secular form with the examples of anti-discrimination and incitement to hatred legislation that are discussed in section 2.

⁷ The similarities with the ‘Jewish question’ are discussed in Meer and Noorani, forthcoming.

⁸ At the same time, and once it was established in the public mind that young Muslim and communities were the protagonists being discussed, the official documents themselves did not always *explicitly* state this and so therefore used more universalistic language.

⁹ See Martin Wainwright, 12 September, 2001. ‘Some Bradford Muslims act like colonists’ *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/raceequality/story/0,,550557,00.html>

¹⁰ For example, even a sympathetic commentator such as Jocelyne Cesari (2004: 23-4) inaccurately concluded that “[w]hether in the areas of housing, employment, schooling or social services, the [Cantle] report describes an England segregated according to the twin categories of race and religion.”

¹¹ Including the headscarf or *hijab*, full face veil or *niqab*, or full body garments such as the *jilbab*.

¹² Evidenced not only in the public and media discourse examined later but also by academics and intellectuals including Christian Joppke. Writing in the *British Journal of Sociology* he states: “Certain

To this we could add that not only has Muslim claims-making appeared unreasonable, but that the acts of terrorism undertaken by protagonists proclaiming a Muslim agenda has, according to one commentator, led “British public opinion to be agreed on one thing: that British multiculturalism is dead and militant Islam...killed it off” (Singh, 2005: 157).¹³ In linking the diversity and the anti-terrorism agendas, then, British multiculturalism has been implicated as the culprit and fuelled the securitisation of ethnic relations.¹⁴ For example, whilst it is not quite the case, as one commentator has suggested, that public policy solutions aimed at managing ethnic and religious diversity amount to being “tough on mosques, tough on the causes of mosques” (Fekete, 2004: 25), it is certainly more common to find statements such as that made by the Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly that it is a requirement for Muslim organisations to take “a proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values”.¹⁵

1.4. A ‘re-balancing retreat’ or outright rejection?

Having been celebrated as “unique in Europe” (Statham, 2003: 123) and once recognised as an approach that “has not stood in the way of successful integration” (Joppke, 1999: 644), to what extent is it then true to say that “the normative policy rhetoric from a few years ago, which was in favour of multiculturalism, [has] shifted to one that advocates a thicker national citizenship, where migrants, and Muslims in particular, are expected to publicly have prior allegiance to Britain” (Koopans et al, 2005: 248)? Assuming for a moment that this is the case, one way this ‘shift’ might be characterised is as a move from a perceived *neglect* to *affirmation* of British identity, presented as the meta-community to which all must subscribe. For example, the government endorsed report entitled ‘A Journey to Citizenship’ (2005: 15) chaired by Sir Bernard Crick has stated that

To be British seems to us to mean that we respect the laws, the elected parliamentary and democratic political structures, traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights and mutual concern; and that we give our allegiance to the state (as commonly symbolised in the Crown)... To be British is to respect those over-arching specific institutions, values, beliefs and traditions that bind us all, the different nations and cultures together in peace and in a legal order. [...] So to be British does not mean assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost.

Similarly, the aforementioned Cantle report (2001: 10) argues for a “greater sense of citizenship” informed by “common elements of ‘nation-hood’ [including] the use of the English language” (pg 19). Though, equally, it stresses that “we are never going to turn the clock back to what was perceived to be a dominant or monoculturalist view of nationality” (pg 18), and its lead author has since stated: “let’s not just throw out

minority practices, on which, so far, no had dared to comment, have now become subjected to public scrutiny as never before. The notorious example is that of arranged marriage which, to an alarming degree, *seems to be* forced marriage. It is a widespread practice in Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities to import marriage partners for their sons and daughters back home – *in part, one must assume*, because a British visa yields a significant dowry” (1994: 251 emphasis added). On what evidence these assumptions are based remains undisclosed in the rest of the article.

¹³ That this view may already have been held by some legislators is evidenced when Labour MP Tony Wright, commenting on Muslim faith schooling, stated that “[b]efore September 11 it looked like a bad idea, it now looks like a mad idea”. BBC News, 22/11/2001 available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1670704.stm>

¹⁴ See for example the debates surrounding passenger profiling at British airports and other transport terminals, along with the recent disclosure that the government will give fifty local authorities five million pounds to monitor ‘Islamic extremists’ and “establish systems to share potential risks or concerns at the local level with councils and staff acting as the eyes and ears for police in countering threats”. Quoted in Oonagh Blackman, ‘£5m for council staff to watch Muslim rebels’, Sunday Mirror, 7 January, 2006.

¹⁵ Speech by Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly to Muslim organisations on working together to tackle extremism. Held at Local Government House, London, on 11 October 2006. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503690>

the concept of multiculturalism; let's update it and move it to a more sophisticated and developed approach" (2005: 91). Indeed, Tony Blair's most recent speech on the topic presents this affirmation in a strong 'civic' sense by arguing that

...when it comes to our essential values - belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage - then that is where we come together, it is what we hold in common; it is what gives us the right to call ourselves British. At that point no distinctive culture or religion supercedes our duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom.¹⁶

An insight into Blair's thinking can be found in the earlier White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (2002) which proposed some measures, following the Cattle recommendations, that were first suggested in the much maligned report from the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain's (CMEB) (2000)¹⁷. These include swearing a US style oath of allegiance at naturalisation ceremonies, an English language proficiency requirement when seeking citizenship, as well as the Crick Report's recommendations for citizenship education in Schools. Meanwhile, the Government's current strategy for Race Equality and community cohesion, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* (Home Office, 2005: 42) states that:

Fundamentally, national cohesion rests on an inclusive sense of Britishness which couples the offer of fair, mutual support – from security to health to education – with the expectation that people will play their part in society and respect others.

The follow-up: *One year on – A progress summary* (Home Office, 2006), reiterates its two key aims as: "achieving equality between different races; and developing a better sense of community cohesion by helping people from different backgrounds to have a stronger sense of 'togetherness'" (pg, 1). This includes, for example, "raising the achievement of groups at risk of underperforming i.e. African-Caribbean, Gypsy Traveller, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Turkish and Somali pupils" (pg, 2) and "tackling perceptions of discrimination in the housing sector among ethnic minority and majority groups and stop exploitation of housing issues by political extremists" (pg, 4). All of which is meant to contribute to a cohesive community where:

...there is a common vision and a sense of belonging; the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods (pg, 7).

Thus it is still the case, to take an extreme example, that the British Airport Authority allows its Sikh employees (in all facets of airline duties) to wear the *Kirpan* (a traditional knife with a three inch blade), despite strong opposition from the British Pilots Association (Singh, 2005: 165). Given these sorts of accommodations (and others such as funding minority faith schools outlined in the D1 report) and evidence of an emphasis upon recognising differences in governmental literature and rhetoric, as well as the polls conducted shortly after the London Bombings which reported that "the majority of British people think that multiculturalism makes the country a better place"¹⁸, how can it be said that multiculturalism has been rejected either in policy or practice?

1.5. 'Multiculture' or 'communitarian' multiculturalism?

One explanation might be to point to the very different meanings of multiculturalism. For example, in the above opinion poll it was noted that while 62% of the same survey sample stated that multiculturalism makes the country a better

¹⁶ Tony Blair , 8 December 2006, "Our Nation's Future - multiculturalism and integration" available at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10563.asp>

¹⁷ See McLaughlin and Neal (2004).

¹⁸ See 'UK majority back multiculturalism' BBC 10 August 2005, available <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/4137990.stm> accessed 13 November 2006.

place, 58% declared that people who come to Britain should adopt its values and traditions. Of course this does not necessarily describe a dichotomy, for nuances of both can easily be true of the same type of multiculturalism. It is worth considering, however, the extent to which the poll confirms Giddens suspicion “that much of the debate about multiculturalism in this country is misconceived” (The Guardian, 14 October, 2006). That is that a key misconception may be found in the confusion of ‘communitarian’ and individualistic ‘multiculture’ views of British multiculturalism. The difference being that where the former emphasises the ways in which strong ethnic or cultural identities can lead to a meaningful and self-assured integration, the latter stresses the possibilities of life-style identities adopted in an atmosphere of ‘conviviality’. In Gilroy’s (2004: xi) terms this refers to “the process of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere. I hope an interest in the workings of conviviality will take off from the point where ‘multiculturalism’ broke down”. The alleged ‘breakdown’ here emerges over the fault-line of ‘essentialism’ and reification that is felt, certainly by Gilroy and other cultural studies thinkers, to be underpinning the conception of multiculturalism presented in the aforementioned Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000), and elsewhere by the thinkers such as Parekh (2000: 6) in the way he sets out below:

[a] multicultural society...is one that includes two or more *cultural communities*. It might respond to its cultural diversity in one of two ways... It might welcome and cherish it...and respect the cultural demands of its constituent communities; or it might seek to assimilate these communities into its mainstream culture either wholly or substantially. In the first case it is multiculturalist and in the second monoculturalist in its orientation and ethos. The term ‘multicultural’ refers to the fact of cultural diversity, the term ‘multiculturalism’ to a normative response to that fact (emphasis added):

Indeed, in their defence of a wholesale rejection of a normative and state sponsored multiculturalism, Gilroy and others have defended only the ‘multiculture’ and not the communitarian version.¹⁹ These rival conceptions of multiculturalism do in fact return us to an earlier debate examined in Modood’s (1998: 378, 379-80) discussion of anti-essentialism and multiculturalism, in which he noted how

...critics have attacked multiculturalism in very similar terms to how multiculturalism attacked nationalism or monoculturalism. The positing of minority or immigrant cultures, which need to be respected, defended, publicly supported and so on, is said to appeal to the view that cultures are discrete, frozen in time, impervious to external influences, homogeneous and without dissent... British anti-essentialists have proposed the ideas of hybridity and of new ethnicities as an alternative to essentialist ethnic identities [which] are not simply ‘given’, nor

¹⁹ For example, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Trevor Phillips (3 April, 2004) has rejected all multiculturalism in his assertion that “[t]he word is not useful, it means the wrong things. [...] Multiculturalism suggests separateness. What we should be talking about is how we reach an integrated society, one in which people are equal under the law, where there are some common values - democracy rather than violence, the common currency of the English language, honouring the culture of these islands, like Shakespeare and Dickens.” The journalist and writer Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (2001: 47) rejects ‘Old’ i.e. communitarian multiculturalism when she argues that: “[t]he most progressive ideas which are right and appropriate at one historical moment can, in time, decay or become defensively self protective. Old multiculturalism may have reached that point... it is disabling Britons of colour from seeing themselves as key shapers of the emerging citizenship culture”. In response Paul Gilroy (2004: 1) defends the multiculture view by remarking: “Of course, the briefest look around confirms that multicultural society has not actually expired. The noisy announcement of its demise is itself a political gesture, an act of wishful thinking. It is aimed at abolishing any ambition toward plurality and at consolidating the growing sense that it is now illegitimate to believe that multiculture can and should be orchestrated by government in the public interest.” Seddon (personal correspondence) adopts the term in a similar manner when he argues that: “Multiculturalism is not dead. If the theorists actually lived in the multicultural spaces instead of avoiding them they would realise this. It is the post-industrial, ghettoized, racially and ethnically exclusive spaces of the white over-spill housing estates or the inner-city post-migration Black and Asian terraced-housing ‘enclaves’ that are creating parallel oppositional communities”.

are they static or atemporal, and they change (and should change) under new circumstances or by sharing space... Reconciled to multiplicity an end to itself, its vision of multiculturalism is confined to personal lifestyles and cosmopolitan consumerism and does not extend to the state, which it confidently expects to whither away.

These sorts of hybridity and multiplicity are epitomised by Stuart Hall's (1988; 1991) 'new ethnicities' thesis, and refers to a laissez faire, secular multiculturalism that is less receptive to the recognition of 'groupings' in general, and ethno-religious community identities in particular (suggesting that it is as much a political objection to the recognition of religion as it is a theoretical objection). This sort of multiculturalism seeks to engage with the cultural complexities of ethnic identities, specifically their processes of formation and change, which it views as being produced somewhere between an interaction of the local and the global in which

...the displacement of "centred" discourses of the West entails putting in question its universalist character and its transcendental claims to speak for everyone, while being itself everywhere and nowhere (Hall, 1996 [1988]: 169).

It is arguably the case then that if the latter multiculturalism view is championed at the expense of a communitarian accommodation of ethno-religious community identities in general, the impact on Muslims may be particularly negative when paralleled by a shift toward nationalist civic-assimilationist rhetoric. This is because it "demarcates the limits of their [Muslims] expectations for the future extension of special rights and exemptions, as well as perhaps having a demoralising effect because of the stigmatising and stereotypical way it represents them in the public domain" (Statham, 2003: 145). This is examined in the first case study.

2. The national case: Racial Equality and Incitement to Religious Hatred.

Anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation has taken a largely gradualist approach in Britain, and while case law has established precedents in the application of Race Relations legislation (summarised in the introduction and the D1 Report) to prevent discrimination against some religious minorities, namely Sikhs²⁰ and Jews²¹, this has not been extended to Muslim minorities because they have not been recognized - within the application of the legislation - as being "defined by racial grounds i.e. race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins"²². In the past the courts have tried to operationalize an understanding of ethnic origin that functions as a wider concept than 'race' alone, and with the case of *Mandla v. Dowell Lee* (1983) the House of Lords set out several such characteristics. These include (i) a long shared history the group is conscious of as distinguishing it from other groups, (ii) a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance, and (iii) either a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors - which is one of the main criterion for identifying group membership, including 'perceived' group membership.²³ These criteria emerged from Lord Fraser's ruling in favour of Sikh inclusion and which emphasized the use of

²⁰ Cf *Panesar v. Nestle Co Ltd*, 1980 [IRLR 64]; *Mandla v. Dowell Lee* (1983) [2AC 548]; *Singh v. British Rail Engineering Ltd* (1986) [ICR 22]; *Dhanjal v. British Steel plc* (1994) [unreported].

²¹ Cf *Seide v. Gillette Industries Ltd* (1980) [IRLR 427]; *Morgan v. CSC & British Library* (1990) [DCLD 6 19177/89].

²² See Racial Group in CRE glossary <http://www.cre.gov.uk/duty/grr/glossary.html>

²³ There were also four other, arguably lesser, criteria in addition to those identified above including: (iv) a common language, not necessarily peculiar to the group, (v) a common literature peculiar to the group, (vi) a common religion different from that of neighbouring groups or from the general community surrounding it, and (vii) being a minority or being an oppressed or a dominant group within a larger community, for example a conquered people (say, the inhabitants of England shortly after the Norman conquest) and their conquerors might both be ethnic groups). See *Mandla v. Dowell Lee* House of Lords Transcript available at: http://www.hrcr.org/safrica/equality/Mandla_DowellLee.htm

'race' in some popular sense. At the time this led the Liverpool Law Review (1983: 83) to believe that "a major consequence of the judgment is the protection which will be afforded to other groups. For example, Muslims will be a racial group for the purposes of the Act." That this has not materialized in the twenty three years since highlights a number of factors in the conception of Racial Equality vis-à-vis Muslims.

2.1. Problem of Muslim heterogeneity

One issue was illustrated by the case of *Nyazi v. Ryman Ltd* (1988) where the ruling excluded Muslims from the protection of the RRA on the grounds that "Muslims include people of many nations and colours, who speak many languages and whose only common denominator is religion and religious culture"²⁴. The decisive rationale common to this and further rulings²⁵ was that Muslim heterogeneity disqualifies their inclusion as an ethnic or racial grouping. Crucially, the way in which the definition of racial groups is conceived in this *civil* anti-discrimination legislation is also adopted in *criminal* law through the Public Order Act (POA) (1986). This introduces the criminal offence of Incitement to Racial Hatred²⁶ which outlaws the use of 'threatening', 'abusive' or 'insulting' words or behaviour with the intention of stirring up racial hatred. It is compounded by further criminal legislation which implements the same definition in the prevention of aggravated offences of harassment, violence and criminal damage guided by racial hatred in the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) (1998):

...an iniquitous anomaly in the law establishes a hierarchy of protected faith communities. Mono-ethnic faith communities benefit from protection against discrimination, aggravated offences of harassment, violence and criminal damage, and against incitement to hatred [and] the imposition of a positive duty on public authorities to promote equality. Multi-ethnic faith communities, like Muslims, benefit from neither protection nor equality provision. (Allen, 2005: 53).

Although this view risks mischaracterising faith communities, since neither Sikh nor Jewish religious minorities are entirely 'mono-ethnic'²⁷, it is the case that binary distinctions between 'race' and religion particularly flounder when we recognize that many British Muslims recount heightened discrimination and abuse when they appear 'conspicuously Muslim' than when they do not.²⁸ The increase in personal abuse and everyday racism since 9/11 and the London bombings, in which the perceived 'Islamic-ness' of the victims is the central reason for abuse²⁹, regardless of veracity of this presumption (resulting in Sikhs and others with an 'Arab' appearance being attacked for 'looking like Bin Laden'), suggests that racial and religious discrimination are much more interlinked than the current application of civil and criminal legislation has allowed.

In the past this has meant that the British National Party (BNP) has been permitted to campaign against what it described as 'the Muslim problem'. Similarly, when the London Borough of Merton asked the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to prosecute those engaged in anti-Muslim incitement, following the distribution of

²⁴ Quoted in Dobe and Chhokar (2000: 382).

²⁵ Cf *CRE v Precision Engineering*, 1991 and *Malik v Bertram Personnel Group*, 1990 [DCLD 7 4343/90].

²⁶ See section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986. Though it is worth noting that it was not introduced to protect minorities per se. but to maintain public order to the extent that the offence of incitement to racial hatred 'should continue to be based on considerations of Public Order' (Review of Public Order Law, Cmnd 9510/1985, para. 65).

²⁷ For example, Jewish minorities in Britain can incorporate Ashkenazi Jews from Poland, Berber Jews from Algeria and African Jews from Ethiopia - all of whom may have different languages, customs and cultures. It is also feasible that Sikhs, through conversion, could incorporate different ethnic groupings.

²⁸ As testimonies to the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) (2004) bear witness. See also the summary report on Islamophobia published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia shortly after 9/11 which indicated a rise in "physical and verbal threats being made, particularly to those visually identifiable Muslims, in particular women wearing the hijab" (Allen and Nielsen, 2002: 16).

²⁹ See the IRR record of 'Backlash' against Muslims since 7 July 2005. www.irr.org.co.uk

offensive and threatening material by a BNP member, they were refused on the grounds that Muslims were not covered by the POA (1986). This is despite the same BNP member pleading guilty to distributing similar material and inciting racial hatred against Jewish minorities in the same borough.³⁰ Indeed, the CRE has recounted how it failed to persuade the West Yorkshire CPS to prosecute the BNP for distributing a leaflet headed 'Islam: Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson, Molestation of women' in an area with existing community tensions (Qureshi, 2005).

2.2. Incitement to religious hatred

In responding to these sorts of issues, and after considerable controversy and amendment to the original bill, a criminal offence of 'Incitement to Religious Hatred' has now been introduced via the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, but must meet a disproportionately high threshold before prosecutions become an option. The final wording of the offence states that:

[R]eligious hatred' means hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief. A person who uses threatening words or behaviour, or displays any written material which is threatening, is guilty of an offence if he intends thereby to stir up religious hatred.³¹

The Government first attempted to introduce a stronger offence in Part 5 of the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Bill 2001 but were thwarted by the House of Lords. Another unsuccessful attempt was made in a 2002 private members Religious Offences Bill, before the proposal was reintroduced in Section 119 and Schedule 10 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill 2004. On each occasion enough opposition was encountered in the House of Lords that the offence was ultimately withdrawn in order to get the rest of the Bill passed within the parliamentary session. Eventually, the Labour Party included in its 2005 General Election Manifesto the commitment that "it remains our firm and clear intention to give people of all faiths the same protection against incitement to hatred on the basis of their religion" (2005: 111). As such the proposed bill was always going to have more support from 'loyal' Labour MPs than those who were more critical and dissenting.

Each attempt to create this new offence sought to modify the previously mentioned Incitement to Racial Hatred found in Part 111 of The Public Order Act 1986. This offence is based upon that previously adopted in Northern Ireland in The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 PART 111 which has outlawed incitement to Religious Hatred for some years.

In October 2005 the Lords defeated the Government again and modified the Bill so as to make the proposed offence much weaker by applying only to 'threatening' words or behaviour not 'threatening, abusive or insulting' words or behaviour. In addition, and whilst the original proposals would have applied to a situation where the defendant did not actually intend to stir up religious hatred, the changes meant that the offence would only apply if the prosecution could prove premeditation. When the Bill was re-introduced in its original form in January 2006, it was defeated by a single vote following a House of Commons debate that was notable in the degree of misunderstanding it contained, as is exemplified by the comment:

[The] reason why some of us are troubled is that we remember when the clamour first arose for the protection of Islam as a religion, in the wake of publication of 'The Satanic Verses' when there were marches, book-burnings and demands for protection. The demand then was for a blasphemy law for Islam, and the demand now is for a blasphemy law for Islam.³²

³⁰ Cf *R v DPP ex parte London Borough of Merton* (CO/1319/1998).

³¹ Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006) Chapter 1 Section 29A and 29B available at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/60001--b.htm#sch1>

³² Hansard 21 June 2005, column 681

These are the words of Labour MP Dianne Abbot, a once staunch ant-racist and long-time campaigner on Race Equality issues. Her confusion of two rationales (the protection of a belief system as opposed to protection for its adherents from *incitement* to hatred) is crucial in understanding how Muslim ‘difference’ was conceived. Indeed, the strong opposition that ensued throughout each incarnation of the Bill included coalitions of satirists and liberals, conservatives and Christians, most notably the comedian Rowan Atkinson, Liberal Peer Lord Anthony Lester (an architect of the RRA), Senior Barrister David Pannick QC, the Conservative Party front bench and former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey. This unique convergence did not escape the notice of the liberal activist Joan Smith, who commented: “for once I find myself on the same side as the right-wing columnist Melanie Phillips and Don Horrocks of the Evangelical Alliance!”³³ Amongst the objections emerged at least three interdependent lines of argumentation; each, in turn, overlapping with other objections characterized by the topoi discussed in the following section and set out in figure 1. Four of the six key themes are selected for reasons of brevity and, whilst not exclusive, there is a disproportionate focus here upon journalist commentary which is taken to be an important barometer of public discourse (Meer, 2006: 35-59). This is particularly relevant because this part of the report explores some of the ‘common-sense’ arguments on Racial Equality and religion vis-à-vis the proposed offence.

Figure 1. Public and media discourse toward legislation

Against	For
2.3 Religion stands outside the Racial Equality paradigm	2.4. Religion and race are not always separable
Protection is sought by extremists	Need to take anti-Muslim discrimination seriously
2.5. Making concessions after the Iraq war	2.6. Parity with other minority faiths

2.3. ‘Race’ and religion are different phenomena

One of the key objections to the legislation was captured in the actor and comedian Rowan Atkinson’s signature statement: “To criticise a person for their race is manifestly irrational and ridiculous but to criticise their religion, that is a right”.³⁴ This is because “[t]here is an obvious difference between the behaviour of racist agitators...and the activities of satirists and writers who may choose to make comedy or criticism of religious belief, practices or leaders, just as they do with politics.”³⁵ A less nuanced form of this argument was invoked by the commentator and liberal activist Joan Smith, columnist in the libertarian *Independent* national newspaper, when she argued: “Race is a biological fact, and it is wrong to hate people because they belong to a particular ethnic group; religion is a set of ideas, voluntarily adopted, which may or may not be offensive to members of other faiths”.³⁶ Indeed, the uncritical recitation of racial biology and conflation of ethnicity with ‘race’, as constituting members of a family of involuntary identities, was a common tendency shared by the former conservative MP and political sketch writer Matthew Parris. As a commentator in the liberal-conservative *Times*, he argued that “...with race

³³ Joan Smith, ‘Why Should I Be Jailed For Attacking Religion?’, *The Independent*, 8 December, 2004.

³⁴ Quoted in ‘Actor Opposes New Bill’, *The Liverpool Daily Post*, 7 December, 2004.

³⁵ Quoted in ‘Blackadder fights law that could catch out comedians’, *The Sunday Times*, 4 December, 2004.

³⁶ Joan Smith, ‘Why Should I Be Jailed For Attacking Religion?’, *The Independent*, 8 December, 2004.

relations, the intention is to protect individuals, not ideas, from attack. The difficulty here is that (broadly speaking) 'race' defines a human group, rather than an idea, so racial attacks are almost by their very nature hateful towards individuals and therefore easily criminalised. Religion, however, is essentially an idea, not a group".³⁷ The view that this legislation fell outside the Racial Equality paradigm was most trenchantly put by the left-wing social policy commentator Polly Toynbee of the liberal-left *Guardian*, who reserved 'right' to affront religious minorities on the basis of their faith:

...it is now illegal to describe an ethnic group as feeble-minded. But under this law I couldn't call Christian believers similarly intellectually challenged without risk of prosecution. *This crystallises the difference between racial and religious abuse. Race is something people cannot choose and it defines nothing about them as people. But beliefs are what people choose to identify with [...]* The two cannot be blurred into one - which is why the word Islamophobia is a nonsense (emphasis added)³⁸.

In common with other issues arising from the recognition of religious minorities (cf Meer, 2006), there is then a clear convergence between sections of the Left, Centre and the Right in their objection to this legislation and agreement with the Conservative shadow home secretary's view that whilst "Government rightly sought to criminalise people who attempted to stir up hatred on the grounds of race, religious belief is quite different (21 June 2005, Hansard column 686).

2.4. Race and religion are not always separable

Contrary to this position, other parliamentarians, including Labour's Chris Bryant, took the view that this argument operates

...on the basis that there is a substantial difference between a faith and a race because one chooses one's faith but not one's race. I contest the argument that everyone chooses their faith. [...] Many people in this country live in communities where they have little choice about the faith to which they adhere and are always believed by other people, because of the clothes that they wear, to belong to a particular faith (21 June, 2005, Hansard: 691).

Recognising the importance of the subjective attribution of 'perceived' group membership was not confined to Parliamentary discourse, for as Gary Younge of the *Guardian* put it "we have a choice about which identities to give to the floor, but at specific moments they may also choose us."³⁹ This taps into the voluntary/involuntary distinction that the RRA tries to bridge by providing redress for discrimination based upon one's 'perceived' as well as 'real' group membership. A point made by Modood in the *Guardian* debates on Islam, race and British identity when he stated that

No one chooses to be born into a Muslim family. Similarly, no one chooses to be born into a society where to be a Muslim creates suspicion, hostility, or failure to get the job you applied for. [...] The idea that woman, black and gay people do not choose their identities, unlike Muslims who choose what to believe, and that Muslims therefore need or deserve less legal protection than those others is at best politically naïve.⁴⁰

2.5. Making concessions after the Iraq war

³⁷ Matthew Parris, 'Mockery, calumny and scorn: these are the weapons to fight zealots', *The Times*, 11 December, 2004.

³⁸ Polly Toynbee, 'My right to offend a fool: Race and religion are different - which is why Islamophobia is a nonsense and religious hatred must not be outlawed', *The Guardian*, 10 June, 2005,

³⁹ Gary Younge, 'We can choose our identity, but sometimes it also chooses us.' *The Guardian*, 21 January, 2005.

⁴⁰ Tariq Modood, 'How to live with who we are: Equality is not possible today without a discussion of its merits and limits', *The Guardian*, 12 January, 2005.

These arguments ran parallel to those questioning the motives of a Government “[t]errified of losing the Muslim vote as a result of the Iraq war”⁴¹ (though it is important to recognize that this offence was first proposed in the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Bill 2001, before the conflict). Thus Michael Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph*, a right-wing broadsheet, characterised the proposed offence “as a cynical attempt to claw back Muslim support for New Labour that has been squandered through the war in Iraq”. [...] In reality, evidence for ‘Islamophobia’ - as distinct from a justified fear of radical Islamist terrorism or a desire to protect our freedoms, institutions and values from those who hold them in contempt - is anecdotal and slight.”⁴² Following Toynbee, then, Burleigh dismissed Islamophobia as a myth and rationalizes hostility to Muslims on the grounds of self-preservation. He was supported in this view by Simon Heffer of the *Daily Mail* who argued that

The result of this politically correct desire to pander to one small section of society will be that everyone will have their freedoms constrained. Moreover-you can be sure that the law would not lead to the appearance of Muslim extremists in court for attacking the majority religion of Christianity. I cannot see why we should make their religion immune from our intellectual or humorous assault.⁴³

Heffer’s friend (we) / enemy (they) distinction operates on the understanding that Muslims do not form part of the greater British constituency that shares with ‘the majority religion of Christianity’ a stake in the national space. These sentiments are also evident in the importation and synthesis of European discourses considered in the next section.

2.6. Parity with other minority faiths

It is worth contrasting this view with that put forward by Iqbal Sacranie, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), an organisation that had long lobbied to get the offence on the legislature (see footnote: 6). For Sacranie

the aim was to provide a level playing field so that the protections that applied to race would be extended to religion; for example criminalising reckless, abusive and insulting behaviour directed at an individual because of their faith. It would have given Muslims the same protection afforded to Sikhs and Jews in the UK.⁴⁴

This conception of parity, as a motivation for the proposed legislation, was shared by the *Times* writer Tom Baldwin when he argued that the adoption of the legislation would mean that the “limited but vital protection afforded to Sikhs and Jews - who are races as well as faiths - will be extended to Muslims, Christians and atheists too.”⁴⁵ For many, this is a conception rooted firmly in a Racial Equality tradition characterised as giving rise to pragmatic and intervening policies which seek to remove barriers to participation. As former government minister Frank Dobson put it:

No one can deny that, because of their religion, some people in our country are the victims of hate crime, and many more live in fear and insecurity. We owe it to them to try to protect them as we have tried, and partly succeeded, in protecting people against race hatred.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Leo McKinstry, ‘Don’t Sacrifice Free Speech To Appease The Muslim Fanatics’, *The Express*, 22 September, 2005.

⁴² Michael Burleigh, ‘Religious hatred Bill is being used to buy Muslim votes but centuries-old religious freedom of expression will be torn up’. *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 December, 2004.

⁴³ Simon Heffer, ‘This really is beyond a joke!’ *Daily Mail*, 11 December, 2004.

⁴⁴ Secretary General’s Speech, *The Muslim Council of Britain Annual General Meeting*, Sunday 4 June 2006.

⁴⁵ Tom Baldwin, ‘This law will protect believers not beliefs: and we can still laugh at vicars’, *The Times*, 20 July, 2005.

⁴⁶ Frank Dobson, “Atheists should welcome a law against religious hatred: To fail to support this bill is tantamount to tolerating hate crime”, *The Guardian*, 18 June, 2006. See also Modood (1998).

Others maintain that it continues to go beyond 'race' into what is considered 'private' and should, therefore, remain unsupported by liberal citizenship. Moreover this debate has been overshadowed by current anti-terrorism legislation that criminalises the 'glorification of terrorism', and which has been disproportionately used against some Muslims perpetrating 'hate speech'. Indeed, several Muslims were found guilty of such offences during a protest against the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad.⁴⁷ It is to this issue that we now turn.

3. The Danish cartoon affair and the decision not to reprint the images.

In contrast to this heavily policy based national case; the Danish Cartoon affair allows us to explore the symbolic issues raised in Britain by this European-wide issue. *The specific concern is to identify the norms and values of a democratic culture that does or does not respect different sensitivities vis-à-vis multicultural Britain.* For example, since no British national newspaper re-printed the cartoons, operating in what has been described as the world's most competitive newspaper market⁴⁸, it raises the basic question as to what arguments newspapers put forward to justify their decision. Did the restraint indicate a post-Rushdie sensitivity towards a minority community? Was it due to concerns over threats of violence, either within Britain or to Britons living, working and fighting abroad? Given that a large percentage of newspapers are distributed by Muslims, is it due to fear of industrial sabotage? The following section cannot answer these questions in any finality but it can report on the public and media discourse that has permeated print and electronic newspaper journalism, including readers' letters and blogs, alongside the decision amongst the broadcast media to show the images very fleetingly, where they were shown at all, in the context of telling a story.

3.1. Responsibility and 'gratuitous offence'.

There were several overlapping rationales not to re-print the cartoons which inter alia included issues of journalistic responsibility, restraint, choice, toleration and fear of violence. Thus the editorial of the main liberal-conservative national broadsheet, *The Times*, detailed its "anguish" in deciding not to reprint the images but instead to make a web-link available, a decision they reached by balancing the issue of choice against not wanting to cause gratuitous offence:

To duplicate these cartoons...has an element of exhibitionism to it. To present them in front of the public for debate is not a value-neutral exercise. The offence destined to be caused to moderate Muslims should not be discounted. [...] The crucial theme here is choice. The truth is that drawing the line in instances such as these is not a black-and-white question. It cannot be valid for followers of a religion to state that because they consider images of the Prophet idolatry, the same applies to anyone else in all circumstances. Then again, linking the Prophet to suicide bombings supposedly undertaken in his honour was incendiary. The Times would, for example, have reservations about printing a cartoon of Christ in a Nazi uniform sketched because sympathisers of Hitler had conducted awful crimes in the name of Christianity. Muslims thus have a right to protest about the cartoons and, if they want, to boycott the publications concerned.⁴⁹

Britain's leading right-wing tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, shared much with *The Times* but was in fact more robust in its refusal to re-publish on the grounds that the images were offensive and irrelevant to Britain:

⁴⁷ Indeed one man, Abdul Saleem, was convicted on charges of Incitement of Racial Hatred (through the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to stir up racial hatred) after he was filmed chanting "7/7 on its way" and "Europe you will pay with your blood" outside the Danish embassy Press Association, Man convicted over cartoon protest, *The Guardian*, 1 February, 2007, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/cartoonprotests/story/0,,2003860,00.html> See also: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/cartoonprotests/story/0,,1983936,00.html>.

⁴⁸ Editorial, 'A more responsible approach to the debate on freedom of speech', *The Independent*, 4 February 2006.

⁴⁹ Editorial, 'Drawing the line', *The Times*, 3 February, 2006.

The cartoons are intended to insult Muslims, and The Sun can see no justification for causing deliberate offence to our much-valued Muslim readers. Second, the row over the cartoons is largely a manufactured one. They were printed first in a Danish dispute over free speech. The Sun believes passionately in free speech, but that does not mean we need to jump on someone else's bandwagon to prove we will not be intimidated.⁵⁰

On one level this is unprecedented as *The Sun* is rarely sympathetic to minority groups, and is in fact notorious for its offensive sensationalism. The editorial decision might be explained by the papers proprietors desire for consistency since both, and many others, are owned By Rupert Murdoch's News International organisation. Yet these sentiments were also evidenced by independent and competing broadsheet and tabloid publications. For example, the editorial of the libertarian broadsheet *Independent* newspaper made its case for not publishing on the grounds of its right to exercise restraint.

There is, of course, no doubt that newspapers should have the right to print cartoons that some people find offensive. [...] But there is an important distinction to be made between having a right and choosing to exercise it. The editor of France Soir had the right to reprint the offending cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed that first caused a stir in the Danish press. But in doing so he was throwing petrol on the flames of a fire... It is facile, in so complex a situation, to seek refuge in simple statements about the rights of a free press. Most difficult decisions are not between right and wrong. They are between competing rights. There is a right to exercise an uncensored pen. But there is also a right for people to exist in a secular pluralist society without feeling as alienated, threatened and routinely derided as many Muslims now do.⁵¹

It was a sentiment shared with the right-wing 'middle-class' tabloid newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, when it stressed the exercise of responsibility:

...great freedoms involve great responsibilities. And an obligation of free speech is that you do not gratuitously insult those with whom you disagree. While the Mail would fight to the death to defend those papers that printed the offending cartoons, it disagrees with the fact that they have done so. Rights are one thing. Responsibilities are another. And the newspapers that so piously proclaimed their right to freedom of speech were being, to put it mildly, deeply discourteous to the Islamic view. They knew perfectly well that images of the prophet offend the deepest beliefs of Muslims. Wasn't it incumbent on them to think long and hard before indulging in what seems a grandstanding attempt to display their brave liberal credentials?⁵²

3.2. British traditions distinct from Europe

Implicit in the reasons set out in these editorials was the view that papers should not print things that their readers find unfair and offensive. Indeed, the Society of Editors hailed its British members' "restrained" wisdom in not showing the cartoons, and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) praised the BBC's "impartial and sensible" stance in showing them. As Andreas Whittam Smith, the co-founder and former editor of the *Independent*, told BBC news: "this is an issue not of press freedom but of taste and responsibility" (BBC News, 3 February 2006). In this vein, his pro-European former newspaper argued that "British institutions, for all their faults, have a greater cultural sensitivity than their continental counterparts. [...] This is due, in no small part, to our tradition of multiculturalism... on the whole, we are in a better position than many of our continental neighbours".⁵³ This is a view shared by *The Sun's* only Muslim columnist, Anila Baig, when she concluded that "[w]e're much luckier here in Britain that there is tolerance and acceptance of other cultures but it seems clear that the intention in Denmark was to deliberately provoke Muslims".⁵⁴ In

⁵⁰ Editorial, 'Out of toon', *The Sun*, 3 February, 2006.

⁵¹ Editorial, 'This is not just a simple issue of freedoms', *The Independent*, 3 February, 2006.

⁵² Editorial, 'Free speech and a collision of cultures', *Daily Mail*, 3 February, 2006.

⁵³ Editorial, 'A more responsible approach to the debate on freedom of speech', *The Independent*, 4 February, 2006.

⁵⁴ Anila Baig, 'Muslims should worry about the real issues..not about a cartoon', 3 February, 2006.

an extension of this view Simon Jenkins of *The Times* lamented European Newspapers for what he describes as the perpetuation of falsehoods, and presented the affair as an example of continental racism:

To imply that some great issue of censorship is raised by the Danish cartoons is nonsense. They were offensive and inflammatory. The best policy would have been to apologise and shut up. For Danish journalists to demand "Europe-wide solidarity" in the cause of free speech and to deride those who are offended as "fundamentalists ... who have a problem with the entire western world" comes close to racial provocation. We do not go about punching people in the face to test their commitment to non-violence. To be a European should not involve initiation by religious insult.⁵⁵

This point was also expressed in *The Observer* editorial (The Guardian's Sunday sister paper) which recounted that "one German paper published the cartoons on grounds of 'Europe-wide solidarity', yet it is hard to see how the Continent benefits from Europeans insulting each other. German Muslims are Europeans, too."⁵⁶ A view more stridently held by *The Guardian* columnist Jonathan Steele who shared both arguments put forward earlier by *The Sun*:

Denmark is still at the prejudiced end, a traditionally mono-ethnic country that has not yet accepted the new cultures in its midst. Public discourse is stuck where it was in Britain a generation ago, with angry talk about "guests" who ought to conform to the "host country" or go home. [...] When the demonstrations started and other papers in Europe printed the cartoons in "solidarity" with Jyllands-Posten, they compounded the initial anti-Muslim error by trying to stir up a continental clash of civilisations. But why should a progressive paper in Britain feel "solidarity" with anti-immigrant Danish editors who made a major error of judgment rather than with British Muslims who universally deplored the cartoons?⁵⁷

Ziauddin Sardar, a prominent Muslim writer and broadcaster, echoed many of Jenkins' and Steele's points when he distinguished British from European fields of media discourse on the grounds of self-representation and right to reply:

This is not an issue of freedom of expression, it is very much an issue of power. In Britain, Muslims are in a good position and are capable of representing themselves, but in Europe they are marginalised and do not have the means to reply. If you use your freedom of expression to denigrate and abuse, knowing they have no way of responding, then it is an act of oppression. It is an act of banality and we are moving towards a "banality of evil". The demonisation of Muslims is like the demonisation of Jews that led to the Holocaust and there is a similar swing to the right occurring now in Europe. I have travelled in Holland, Belgium, France and Germany and have been horrified by the open hatred of Muslims in those countries. What this kind of exercise does is to confirm people's belief about Muslims, that they are right to hate them and the next stage, which is one of violence, is implicit.⁵⁸

Almost responding to Sardar's complaint, the *Independent* editorial argued that "Muslim community here feels less excluded than do Muslim communities on the continent. We should take heart from that. These are violent and disorientating times. But provided we recognise that British Muslims are friends - rather than our enemies-our society will ultimately emerge into brighter days."⁵⁹ Indeed, Mark Steel of the *Independent*, compared the cartoons with the limits of acceptability applied to past British satire to argue that "the reason we no longer accept golliwogs and black and white minstrels and the joke of throwing bananas at black footballers is because their existence affects the status of black people in society. If it's legitimate to portray an entire race as sub-human idiots, they're more likely to be attacked, abused and made

⁵⁵ Simon Jenkins, 'These cartoons don't defend free speech, they threaten it', *The Times*, 3 February, 2006.

⁵⁶ Editorial, 'We must put a stop to this savage bitterness' *The Observer*, 5 February, 2006.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Steele, 'Europe's cartoon battle lines are drawn in shades of grey, not black and white: Lost in the furore over violent protests is any condemnation of the deliberate provocation by newspaper editors', *The Guardian*, 11 February, 2006.

⁵⁸ Quoted in 'They should have published...they shouldn't...how the world divides on freedom of expression', *The Times*, 5 May, 2006.

⁵⁹ Editorial, 'We should recognise our friends', *The Independent*, 8 February, 2006.

to feel utterly dreadful".⁶⁰ The most widely read national broadsheet newspaper, the right-wing *Daily Telegraph*, also chose not to publish the cartoons on the grounds of responsibility and restraint, but characterised its desire to not cause gratuitous offence as in keeping with a British tradition of tolerance:

We prefer not to cause gratuitous offence to some of our readers, a policy we also apply, for example, to pictures of graphic nudity or violence. However, there might be circumstances in which the dictates of news left us with no choice but to publish - and where the public interest was overwhelmingly served by such an act, we would. Our restraint is in keeping with British values of tolerance and respect for the feelings of others. However, we are equally in no doubt that a small minority of Muslims would be offended by such a publication to an extent where they would threaten, and perhaps even use, violence. This is a problem that the whole of the Western world needs to confront frankly, and not sidestep.⁶¹

3.3. Fear of Muslim response

For the *Daily Telegraph*, then, there existed a tension between showing restraint on the one-hand, and 'confronting' rather than 'side-stepping' the offended parties on the other. Yet it did not re-print the cartoons and one theme that emerged in reader's letters was that this decision was not, in fact, due to tolerance and restraint, but an outcome of intimidation and threat of violence. The following letter is characteristic of this view:

Recent events have made clear that the British people (and, in particular, the British press) have been successfully intimidated by acts of violence and threats of violence by some British Muslims. [...] The British press has shown that it is too frightened to publish those cartoons. It is a most stunning act of calculated omission that they have all found excuses to seek to distance themselves from what has hitherto been hallowed in this country, namely, the freedom of speech as reflected in our daily newspapers.⁶²

Indeed, when the Left-leaning liberal broadsheet, *The Guardian*, made its decision not to print the images but instead to provide links to the newspaper sites that had, it asked its readers to blog comments. Over seven hundred opinions were posted in a matter of hours, with the clear majority favouring the "publish and be damned" approach. This was characterised by a negative comparison with other European newspapers exemplified by the following post: "It is as simple as being a free speech issue - as previous posters have pointed out, you have not fought shy of offending many other groupings in the past. Compare yourselves to your newspaper colleagues in Denmark, France and all over Europe and hang your heads in shame." As editors conceded, however, "this was an exercise in finding out what readers thought, not a democratic process".⁶³ Thus it also did not carry the images and stated that:

The Guardian believes uncompromisingly in freedom of expression, but not in any duty to gratuitously offend. It would be senselessly provocative to reproduce a set of images, of no intrinsic value, which pander to the worst prejudices about Muslims. To directly associate the founder of one of the world's three great monotheistic religions with terrorist violence - the unmistakable meaning of the most explicit of these cartoons - is wrong, even if the intention was satirical rather than blasphemous. [...] The extraordinary unanimity of the British press in refraining from publishing the drawings - in contrast to the Nordic countries, Germany, Spain and France - speaks volumes. John Stuart Mill is a better guide to this issue than Voltaire.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Mark Steel, 'It's no joke if you're on the receiving end', *The Independent*, 8 February, 2006.

⁶¹ Editorial, 'Why we will defend the right to offend', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 February, 2006.

⁶² 'Letters to the Editor: The press gives in to a threat of terrorism', *The Independent*, 4 February, 2006.

⁶³ Emily Bell, 'Readers echoed an internal debate on the Danish cartoons', *The Guardian*, 4 February 2006.

⁶⁴ Editorial, 'Muslims and cartoons: Insults and injuries', *The Guardian*, 4 February, 2006.

Yet the Guardian's media editor suspected "the truth is that many British journalists feel uncomfortable with the accommodations we are already making, not because they think it is the role of a free press to cause gratuitous offence, but because we have accepted that a large group is to be treated with greater circumspection for fear of what it will do if we don't [...] Freedom of the press is all very well, but newspapers are commercial operations."⁶⁵ Indeed, writing in the *Independent*, the former *Daily Telegraph* editor dismisses much of the 'respect' rationale as a half-truth:

Let me tell you what in fact each and every one of those editors would actually have been thinking about before "choosing not to publish". They would, first of all, have had a phone call from the newspaper's distributors, or their own circulation department, pointing out that a large number of "our" newsagents up and down the country are run by families originally from Pakistan and Bangladesh, both Muslim countries. You don't bite the hand that sells you.⁶⁶

In a similar vein, the *Sunday Times* columnist Andrew Sullivan protested that "[t]he one argument you haven't heard is the one you hear off-camera. Many editors simply don't want to put their staffs at risk of physical danger. They have "offended" Muslims in the past and learnt to regret it. [...] In this new war of freedom versus fundamentalism I always anticipated appeasement. I just didn't expect the press to be among the first to wave the white flag."⁶⁷ This was a view shared by Ayaan Hirsi Ali who was described by a journalist as "disappointed by the British media's acceptance of the religious case. She does not believe it stems from concern for pious feelings but rather fear of violent reprisal. 'You're scared,' she says. 'That's a shame.'"⁶⁸ Indeed, two days after stating its initial position, *The Daily Telegraph* group of papers (in the *Sunday Telegraph*) returned to the issue of coercion:

What is completely unacceptable is that this debate should be carried out in a climate of fear. For let us not delude ourselves: it is violence, or the threat of violence, that has driven the decisions that have been made in the past week. At a time when reasonable dialogue is most needed, the supposed custodians of our democracy are allowing a gun to be held to its head.⁶⁹

3.4. Importation or reference to European discourses

Alongside the domestic discourses, there emerged others pertaining to European debates vis-à-vis the 'advanced' state of negative relations with Muslims on the Continent. Holland, for example, was often referred to as a case in point, described by one commentator as 'the canary in the mine':

Where Holland has gone, Britain and the rest of Europe are following. [...] Holland - with its disproportionately high Muslim population - is the canary in the mine. Its once open society is closing, and Europe is closing slowly behind it. It looks, from Holland, like the twilight of liberalism... not least freedom of expression. All across Europe, debate on Islam is being stopped...and in Britain the government seems intent on pushing through laws that would make truths about Islam and the conduct of its followers impossible to voice.⁷⁰

Whilst these characterisations were more prevalent in centre-right publications, the view that the cartoons formed part of a broader continental problem was not localised to the centre-right. For example, Bruce Anderson of the *Independent* argued that the cartoons simply drew our attention to an existing problem:

The cartoons did not create the tension. They merely highlighted it. They have forced Europe to face a problem which most political elites would rather ignore, although it will be

⁶⁵ Kim Fletcher, 'On the press: When freedom gives in to fear'. *The Guardian*, 6 February, 2006.

⁶⁶ Dominic Lawson, 'Hysteria, hypocrisy and half-truths', *The Independent*, 7 February, 2006.

⁶⁷ Andrew Sullivan, 'Islam-bullies get a free ride from the West', *The Sunday Times*, 12 February, 2006.

⁶⁸ Andrew Anthony, 'The end of freedom?', *The Observer*, 12 February, 2006.

⁶⁹ Editorial, 'Democracy has a gun held to its head', *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 February, 2006.

⁷⁰ Douglas Murray, 'We should fear Holland's silence', *The Sunday Times*, 26 February, 2006.

one of the major questions of the next few decades: How are we to achieve peaceful coexistence with Islam?⁷¹

In more combative terms, the context of printing of the cartoons was described by the *Daily Mail* columnist Richard Littlejohn in a clash of civilisations rhetoric:

...the publication of a couple of cartoons in Denmark has absolutely nothing to do with freedom of speech. This is war. [...] In Holland, it was the murder of a Dutch filmmaker deemed guilty of showing insufficient respect to Islam. In Spain, it was the slaughter of hundreds of commuters in Madrid. In France, it is the routine desecration of Jewish graveyards and synagogues.⁷²

These considerations, it is argued, are more advanced on the continent than they are in the UK because "in Holland and Belgium, liberals have woken up to the fact that Islam is not their ally. What will it take before their equivalents do the same here?"⁷³ In some agreement, and once again demonstrating the tensions in adopting its positions not to re-print the images, *The Daily Telegraph* contrasted British politicians responses unfavourably with those of their European counterparts:

Mr Straw has been put to shame by the German home minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, who robustly defended the freedom of newspapers to make their own decisions. "Why should the German government apologise?" he said. "This is an expression of press freedom." In contrast, the British Government's craven response has sent a terrible signal: those who wish to see free expression curtailed need only light a flame, issue a threat and wave an angry fist.⁷⁴

3.5. British Politicians responses

Although the Prime Minister distanced himself from the crisis by stating "this is entirely a matter for the media organisations to decide what they ought to do within the law"⁷⁵, Peter Mandelson, the British EU Trade Commissioner, urged newspapers not to re-print the cartoons whilst Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, argued that press freedom carried an obligation not "to be gratuitously inflammatory". Straw stated that while he was committed to press freedom, "the republication of these cartoons has been insulting, it has been insensitive, it has been disrespectful and it has been wrong". He then praised the British press for showing "considerable responsibility and sensitivity".⁷⁶ These comments were complimented by those made by the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, who said: "we understand the offence caused by the cartoons... freedom of expression must be exercised with respect for the views of others, including their religious beliefs."⁷⁷ The opposition Conservative party too defended the right of editors to decide whether to re-print the images or not, though with a somewhat different emphasis. Dominic Grieve, the shadow attorney general, said: "From what we know about the cartoons it is understandable that they have caused offence. However, the decision as to whether to publish or not is one of taste and decency that should rightly be taken by newspaper editors, broadcasters and their owners and is not one for government. Whilst it could be argued that these cartoons were reckless, it is almost certainly the case that they were not intended to stir up hatred."⁷⁸ Again, the issue of incitement to religious hatred become a keep signpost and an issue upon which Mohammed Sarwar, Britain's first Muslim MP

⁷¹ Bruce Anderson, 'Stop cringing and stand up for our own values', *The Independent*, 6 February, 2006.

⁷² Richard Littlejohn, 'This is war. And I hate to say it, but we're losing', *The Daily Mail*, 7 February, 2006.

⁷³ Peter Hitchens, 'Can't our police see which side Islam's on?', *Mail on Sunday*, 12 February, 2006.

⁷⁴ Editorial, 'Democracy has a gun held to its head', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 5 February, 2006.

⁷⁵ Quote in Daniel McGrory and Dan Sabbagh, 'Cartoon wars and the clash of civilisations', *The Times*, 3 February, 2006.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Ewen MacAskill, Sandra Laville and Luke Harding, 'Cartoon controversy spreads throughout Muslim world', *The Guardian*, 4 February, 2006.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Andrew Gimson, 'Clarke shows how to tolerate intolerance Commons Sketch', *The Telegraph*, 7 February, 2006.

⁷⁸ Melissa Kite, 'Muslim protests are incitement to murder, say Tories', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February, 2006.

made a speech in Parliament stating that "while we recognise and respect freedom of speech and expression, it does not extend to a right to insult, humiliate and hurt people, which is what the irresponsible publication of the cartoons of the Prophet, peace be upon him, has done - causing deep offence to millions of Muslims around the world."⁷⁹

3.6. Where they were shown

Although it is correct to state that no national newspaper re-printed the images, there were a number of cases where the images were briefly uploaded onto news agency websites or published before being removed or recalled. It is instructive to consider each of these cases as their specific details offer a comment on the climate of public and media discourse vis-à-vis recognising Muslim sensibilities as a rationale for restraint. For example, the centre-right political magazine, *the Spectator*, briefly carried the images on its website for a few hours before its acting editor, Stuart Reid, removed them saying they were "unnecessarily provocative".⁸⁰ Equally, a libertarian magazine with a small circulation - *The Liberal* - posted one of the cartoons on its website before removing it after just twenty five minutes.⁸¹ In print, however, it was a Welsh student newspaper entitled *Gair Rhydd* – meaning "free word" – that recalled all copies after it became the first British publication to re-print the cartoons.⁸² Consequently the Cardiff University Students' Union moved quickly in stating that it "very much regrets any upset caused or disrespect shown".⁸³ Elsewhere, Llwyd Williams, the Archdeacon of Bangor and editor of the official Welsh language church magazine - *Y Llan* – resigned after his magazine re-printed the cartoons.⁸⁴ A church spokesman is quoted as saying:

...we are concerned about the possibility of causing offence to the Muslim community in Wales - with whom the Church in Wales has an excellent relationship. The Archbishop has been in touch with the leaders of the Muslim community in Wales to proffer an apology for any offence caused.⁸⁵

It is of significance then that the only organisation to have shown or re-printed without retracting the images was not a news agency but the British National Party (BNP). This organisation claimed to have circulated half a million leaflets featuring the cartoons to its fourteen local groups across the country (though it is not clear whether this was undertaken). In a message on the BNP website, its leader, Nick Griffin, urged members to print off the leaflets and "pin them to church notice boards" and to "leave them on trains and buses" to protest at the reaction to a decision by British newspapers not to publish the images out of respect for the Muslim faith.⁸⁶

3.7. Broadcast media

Elsewhere, the national BBC news bulletins showed a page from the French newspaper that carried the images of Muhammad. A late evening news discussion programme on BBC2 - *Newsnight* - did not show the cartoons but used obscured shots of the newspapers carrying the images as well as an artist to draw sections of the cartoons without the depictions of Muhammad. The commercial ITN news agency went further in showing the image on its 10.30 bulletin. The BBC said that brief

⁷⁹ Quoted in The Express, 9 February, 2006.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Daniel McGrory and Dan Sabbagh, 'Cartoon wars and the clash of civilisations', The Times, 3 February, 2006.

⁸¹ Roland White, 'First Kennedy, now those cartoons - here's a Liberal who lives on the edge', Sunday Times, 12 February, 2006.

⁸² Simon de Bruxelles, 'Students' paper in hot water', The Times, 8 February, 2006.

⁸³ Richard Savill, 'University drops editor over cartoon', The Daily Telegraph, 8 February, 2006.

⁸⁴ Simon de Bruxelles, 'Editor of church magazine quits over cartoon', The Times, 22 March 2006.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Karen McVeigh, 'BNP publishes Danish cartoon', The Times, 23 February, 2006.

images were being broadcast "responsibly" and "in full context" so as to "give audiences an understanding of the strong feelings evoked."⁸⁷ In his assessment of this policy, the former Director General of the BBC, Greg Dyke, openly stated that there was agreement amongst the major news agencies to the effect that they would not too greatly focus upon the images:

What I do know is that senior people in all three television news organisations - BBC, Sky and ITN - had informal discussions on what to show and what not to show that resulted in them all following the same policy. By all sticking to that policy, by all agreeing to show only a quick pan shot of the cartoons, it meant that none of them were out of step and all were less exposed. In all three newsrooms there was a great deal of internal debate. Inside ITN there were some who thought that the decision taken to show the panned shots in only one ITV bulletin was itself self-censorship.⁸⁸

The BBC disclosed that it had received more than 2,400 complaints after showing fleeting images of the cartoons in news reports, with most saying that the images should not be shown again (1,116 respondents), or that they should never have been shown (950). Only 20 people got in touch to say they wanted the cartoons shown fully.⁸⁹

4. Conclusions

If there has been a retreat from multiculturalism in Britain, it has neither been a wholesale nor uncontested retreat. Indeed, the first section of this report argued that although there is currently a discursive re-positioning underway, toward a more 'civic' conception of British citizenship, this does not indicate – and has so far not resulted in – a clear commitment to abandoning the recognition and support of 'difference' either in governmental literature or policy.

It is instead argued that what we are witnessing is more like a 're-balancing' that is not necessarily replacing but significantly competing with multiculturalist discourse and policy. For example, discourse and policy explicitly stressing 'integration' and 'cohesion', and which emerged after the 2001 riots, has increasingly premised minority inclusion upon a greater degree of qualification than before i.e. citizenship tests and language proficiency for new migrants, and an unambiguous disavowal of 'radicalism' or 'extremism' from settled ethnic minorities. This means that the once prevalent view of British multiculturalism as an incremental movement that could in time accommodate increasingly levels of diversity - extolled in places such as the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) – is presently much less salient.

As section two makes clear, one of the biggest hurdles currently facing the British Racial Equality paradigm that has given rise to British multiculturalism, is the resistance to conceiving Muslim 'difference' as an addition to it. As the same section also demonstrated, however, this not an uncontested resistance in public and media discourse, nor in a governmental policy that persisted at some political cost in the creation of the offence of incitement to religious hatred under to achieve greater parity. In contrast to this heavily policy based case, section three considered the reasons that the print and broadcast media put forward for not reprinting the Danish cartoons in Britain. Rather than import European rationales wholesale, British editorials made the case for exercising restraint in not causing 'gratuitous offence' out of respect for Muslims in Britain. The section also showed how these arguments consciously contrasted British traditions as being distinct from their European counterparts. In some respects, this distinction proceeded upon the past lessons of respecting different sensitivities vis-à-vis multiculturalism and, in this way; salient Muslim differences seem to be understood in political as well as religious terms. This

⁸⁷ Gabriel Milland, 'BBC Sparks Muslim Death Threats', 3 February 2006.

⁸⁸ Greg Dyke, 'Why did the media choose not to show the cartoons of Mohamed?' The Independent, February 13, 2006.

⁸⁹ Andrew Alderson, Nina Goswami, James Orr and Chris Hastings, 'More than 1,000 Muslims protest in London over cartoons satirising Prophet' The Sunday Telegraph, 5 February 2006.

suggests that the discursive character of British multiculturalism is a central and not a minor feature.

At the same time, however, it remains the case that the self-restraint exercised in not re-printing the images was not universally viewed positively, as some editorials, not least in the right-wing press, testify. This tension rested on an assertion of British traditions of freedom of expression into which offended minorities must be inculcated. The question currently facing British multiculturalism is, therefore, how much recognition of diversity needs to be off-set with civic assimilation, and the issues this question raises will be further pursued in the next work package.

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