

MULTICULTURALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES

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Abstract

Britain has always been a land of several ethno-national groups. As an imperial power, it ruled over several nations in Asia and Africa. The British Empire unraveled after the Second World War ended in 1945, and Britain was left with an economy and infrastructure in shambles. To revive the British economy, immigrants were taken in from diverse backgrounds, mostly from Britain's former colonies. To accommodate these migrants and to avoid racial tensions, the policy of multiculturalism was designed and adopted. Over the decades, British multiculturalism has been confronted with several challenges and the prominent British political parties have responded to them in different ways. The aim of this paper is to analyze and compare the respective policies of major political parties on multiculturalism. The focus of the study is on the period 1997-2016, for during this particular period, debate began on multiculturalism. The debate became more contentious in the aftermath of the catastrophic events of 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings.

The ideology of Multiculturalism

"The idea of multiculturalism in contemporary political philosophy is about how to understand and respond to the challenges associated with cultural and religious diversity".¹

"Multiculturalism is the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles".²

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Multiculturalism", (2010). Visit <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>.

² Visit <http://www.ifla.org/publications/defining-multiculturalism>.

According to an online dictionary:

“Multiculturalism is the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or a nation”.³

Is it good or bad to be multicultural?

The notion of multiculturalism is now very much debated at national and global levels. Its pros and cons are being intensely discussed and a considerable amount of literature is available on the subject. It has succeeded in some societies and in others to a much lesser extent. Some societies perceive themselves as victims of multiculturalism.

According to a renowned British historian Will Kymlicka, in the contemporary world and in Britain in particular, multiculturalism has become an issue of political saliency in particular in the context of 9/11 and terrorist activities carried out in Britain, by British citizens of Muslim immigrant background. Questions have now been raised about the suitability of multicultural policies for Britain.⁴ Therefore, the thinking of the native white population regarding multiculturalism is now completely changed. They have begun to blame multiculturalism for nurturing home grown terrorism.

On the other hand, in defence of multiculturalism, Kymlicka presents a counter argument – that it provides a solution to the cultural diversity, which is a reality in contemporary British society. It can be regarded as a force for social inclusion, for allowing minority groups to adhere to their cultural norms makes them feel more positive towards the society they live. Multiculturalism also brings richness and variety to society.⁵

Post-colonial immigration

Britain has a long history of immigration and emigration. People of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds chose to settle in Britain. These included people from Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Some came over for employment and to improve their living standards. Others came to reunite with their families.

³ Visit <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/multiculturalism>.

⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 366.

⁵ Ibid, 367.

During the Second World War people from all over the world came to Britain to serve in the merchant navy and the armed forces, but when the war ended they preferred to stay back in Britain. In later years, there were people who sought asylum in the country to escape persecution on political or religious grounds, or civil war. The asylum seekers were mostly from the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia and Romania.⁶

During World War II, many British cities were devastated because of bombardment by the Nazi air force. Britain therefore, required economic assistance and a workforce for reconstruction. The US generously provided economic assistance to Britain for the reconstruction of the infrastructure and the revival of its economy.⁷

Though, Britain inducted women, young people and Irish workers to meet the shortage of labour, it was not sufficient, as British industries and agriculture required bigger work forces. Eventually, Britain imported workers from its former colonies. Some persons from the former colonies also offered their services voluntarily.⁸ World War II played a major role in stimulating migration and the trend accelerated with the passage of time, for the British Parliament's Nationality Act of 1948⁹ conferred on the people of the former colonies and the people of the Commonwealth, the citizenship of the UK so that they could enter Britain easily to fulfill the then needs of the country. It was known as the "Open Door Policy".¹⁰

Britain also received asylum seekers from the Communist countries of East Europe particularly after the bloody revolution in Hungary in 1956. More

⁶ "Post-Colonialism and Migration: UK", Fact File 2 (2006). Available from http://home.arcor.de/vhailor/408_FF_Fact_file_2_NRW.pdf.

⁷ Available from <http://ndla.no/en/node/90712>.

⁸ Zig Henry, "The New Commonwealth Migrants 1945-62", *History Today* 35, no. 12 (1985). Visit www.historytoday.com/zig-henry/new-commonwealth-migrants-1945-62#sthash.ri95AfUb.dpuf.

⁹ Visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/commonwealth-immigration-control-legislation.htm>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

East Europeans came to Britain in 1968 when the Warsaw Pact intervened in Czechoslovakia to crush the “Prague spring”.¹¹

In the decade of 1960s, with a substantial rise in immigration, cases of racism began to surface. Political campaigns began, calling for restrictions on immigration. As racial clashes grew, in 1971 the Immigration Act was passed, which set out new rules for restricting immigration. In 1976, the Race Relations Act was passed which made discrimination illegal and encouraged racial equality.¹²

During the second half of the 1970s, the economic crisis in Britain required a reduction in the induction of foreign labour, therefore there was a decline in the influx of immigrants as compared to the previous decades.¹³

A significant development was the introduction of visa control in 1986 to limit further immigration from South Asian and African countries. Later, in the 1990s efforts were made to integrate the non-whites into British society. Thus people of other races and religions became Members of Parliament and government functionaries, representing the non-European citizens of Britain. Sadiq Khan (Labour Party) and Sayeeda Warsi (Conservative Party) are most prominent examples of the induction of persons of South Asian origin in government.¹⁴

The election of Sadiq Khan, a Muslim of Pakistani origin as the mayor of London is often cited as a manifestation of the success of British multiculturalism. The new mayor of London represents the liberal South Asian Muslim. He is vocal against the ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and supports democracy and religious tolerance. He proves by his words and actions that Islam and the West need not be enemies.¹⁵

¹¹ Urszula Kurcewicz, “The Evolution of British Immigrant Integration Policy after World War II: A Historical and Political Science Perspective”, *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej* no. 8 (2014): 355.

¹² “Post-Colonialism and Migration”, see http://home.arcor.de/vhailor/408_FF_Fact_file_2_NRW.pdf.

¹³ Urszula Kurcewicz, “The Evolution of British Immigrant Integration Policy”.

¹⁴ Ibid, 355.

¹⁵ Hassan Arif, “Consequences of Brexit: No Country Is an Island, Not Even Britain”, *Huff Post Politics*, 27 June 2016.

The evolution of multiculturalism

It was in the sixties when the British Labour Party took initiatives to recognize the rights of immigrants.¹⁶ It was owing to the efforts of the Labour Party that the first Race Relations Act of 1965 was adopted by the Parliament to eliminate discrimination in shops, pubs and other public places. It was aimed at promoting equality. This was followed by the second Race Relations Act of 1968, which stressed upon the lessening of discrimination in the areas of employment and housing. The third Race Relations Act of 1976, led to the establishment of a Commission for Racial Equality. These acts of parliament recognized the rights of people of immigrant origin. These acts changed the attitude of the law-abiding among the British people.¹⁷

However, at the same time, the Immigration Act of 1971 restricted the influx of immigrants from Africa and South Asia. It created the concept of “right of abode”. Those in the category of Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKCs)¹⁸ had the right to reside in the UK only if they, their husband (if female), their parents, or their grandparents were connected to the UK and Islands (the UK, Channel Islands and the Isles of Man). Thus the UK was now in a position to deny entry to some of its own nationals. For this reason the UK was unable to ratify the Fourth Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees the right to reside for nationals, a right recognized by international law. Thus many categories of people were denied the right of abode though they were registered as CUKCs. A group, which the British government was particularly keen to exclude, were Ugandan Indians who had been expelled from Uganda between 1968 and 1972 by the dictator Idi Amin. Since these people had passports issued by a British High Commissioner, large numbers of them had started landing in the UK. This concept of ‘Partiality’ was seen

¹⁶ Pavel Barša, *The Political Theory of Multiculturalism* (Brno: CDK Publications, 1999), 224.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The British Nationality Act of 1948 created the status of citizens of the UK and Colonies (CUKC). This was a status provided to all those British subjects who had a clear relationship, either through birth or descent with the UK and the remaining British colonies. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 made the CUKCs whose passports were not issued directly by the UK Government, subject to immigration control. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, added more distinctions between citizens of the UK and the CUKCs. This particularly impacted some people of the newly independent countries of East Africa. See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/commonwealth-immigration-control-legislation.htm>.

only as a temporary measure; therefore the British government began preparing for a major reform of the law.¹⁹ The British Nationality Act of 1981 abolished the ambiguous status of CUKCs which was now replaced by three categories of citizenship, applicable from January 1, 1983:

- British Citizenship.
- British Dependent Territories Citizenship (BDTC), which was renamed British Overseas Territories Citizenship (BOTC) by the British Overseas Territories Act of 2002.
- British Overseas Citizenship (BOC).

The 1981 Act modified the application of the principle of *jus soli* in British nationality. Before this act came into force, anyone born in the UK (except children born to foreign diplomats or an enemy alien) was entitled to British citizenship. To gain British nationality, a child now born in the United Kingdom had to have at least one parent who was either British born or a permanent resident of the UK.²⁰

The Act also replaced the term 'British subjects' with 'Commonwealth citizens'. The term 'British subject' was now only applicable to certain persons holding British nationality through connection with British India or the Republic of Ireland before 1949. Through this Act, the right of Commonwealth and Irish citizens to acquire British citizenship by registration was rescinded. Instead they were now expected to go through the process of naturalization for acquiring British citizenship.²¹

Multiculturalism: A debate

Ever since the civil disturbances in Oldham and Bradford (2001) in northern England,²² followed by the 7/7 London bombings and the Madrid bombings of 2005, the policy of multiculturalism has become a subject of intense debate. Politicians, journalists and scholars have begun to question whether multicultural policies are appropriate for European societies. Was

¹⁹ J.M. Evans, "Immigration Act 1971", *The Modern Law Review* 35, no. 5 (1972): 508.

²⁰ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61.

²¹ Ibid. It was pointed out by critics that a major undeclared objective of the law was to deny most ethnic Chinese born in Hong Kong the right to reside in the UK. This was the period preceding the 1985 Joint Declaration on Hong Kong signed by the British Government and the People's Republic of China (PRC), followed by the British handover of Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997.

²² See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/1703432.stm.

multiculturalism to be blamed for the increasing racial tensions and segregation between communities? Should governments continue practicing the policy of multiculturalism or would it be better to discard it? Since the whole idea of multiculturalism has come under the spotlight, therefore the period from the beginning of the twenty-first century till date has been chosen for this study.

Be it the government of the Labour Party or the coalition government of the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats, the policy of multiculturalism and issues related to it are on the agenda of every British government. It has become a growing concern for the white British population as well as for the government. The different perceptions and practices of political parties are discussed below.

‘New’ Labour government: Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997-2007)

The policy of multiculturalism was once celebrated during the tenure of the rejuvenated ‘New’ Labour Party. When the Labour government came into power in 1997 and David Blunkett became the Home Secretary, the catch phrase for the party which had been in the wilderness for some time, became ‘New’ Labour. It was the government of New Labour (1997-2001) which was probably the most multiculturalist government in Europe. It initiated funding for Muslim and other faith schools; it was New Labour which set up the Mac Pherson inquiry to look into allegations of institutional racism in London Metropolitan Police, and it secured the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which strengthened the previous legislation on equality. Such agenda continued to some extent during the tenure of the second and third Labour governments. Most significant was the adoption of the law for religious equality.

The policy of multiculturalism was apparently quite successfully implemented, until the outbreak of racial clashes in northern England followed by 9/11. The Labour Party began to express doubts about multiculturalism and immigrants after the catastrophic 7/7 London bombings. The change in attitude of the Labour government towards multiculturalism was clearly reflected in the speech of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, delivered at 10 Downing Street. This rather blunt speech profoundly affected Labour’s stand on multiculturalism, for Blair declared that the suicide bombings had somewhat altered the concept of multiculturalism and highlighted the divisions within British society.

Prime Minister Blair stated:

If you come here lawfully, we welcome you. If you are permitted to stay here permanently, you become an equal member of our community and become one of us. The right to be different, the duty to integrate, that is what being British means. The right to be in a multicultural society was always implicitly balanced by a duty to integrate, to be part of Britain, to be British and Asian, British and black, British and white.²³

As is quite evident from Blair's speech, multicultural policies had to be modified by integration in British society of immigrants and people of foreign descent. Though one does have the right to practice his/her religion and culture, it is of equal importance that one also adopt British values.

People may belong to different cultures, but as citizens of the UK they should not forget that they are British first. Thus adopting British principles and norms should be the first priority. Such was the policy of the Labour party on multiculturalism till 2010.

It is noteworthy, that Andrew Neather, a former Labour Home Office official and adviser to Tony Blair, admitted that the flow of immigration since the last decade was more of a political move on part of the Labour cabinet to rub the Right's nose in diversity so that the country could become more multicultural. He contended that it was a "deliberate policy" since late 2000, which continued till around February 2008.²⁴

Andrew Green, chairman of the think tank Migration Watch, pointed out that many in his think tank had been sceptical about the policy of stepped up immigration under Labour, which he felt was a conspiracy for the fulfillment of their personal greed. He further alleged that the Labour

²³ Philip Johnston, "Blair Says: Adopt our Values or Stay Away", *The Telegraph*, 9 December 2006. See www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1536408/adopt-our-values-or-stay-away-sys-Blair.html.

²⁴ Tom Whitehead, "Labour Wanted Mass Immigration to Make UK More Multicultural", *The Telegraph*, 23 October 2009.

government had allowed in three million immigrants during 2001-2011 for gaining political mileage, camouflaging it as an economic imperative.²⁵

Some critics point out that owing to Labour's open door policy on immigration, the UK has been confronted with severe problems. The increased cultural diversity has undermined national identity and common values and simultaneously it has hindered integration of the immigrants into British culture and society.

Another interpretation of Labour's immigrant welcoming policy is paranoid and extreme. It alleges that the hidden agenda behind Labour Party's promotion of mass immigration is to make Britain more multicultural, rather multiracial, which is quite different from the concept of multiculturalism. With an increase in the number of immigrants there is a strong possibility that the white European population will become a minority in their own homeland. It has been suggested that the whole 'conspiracy' serves the 'Jewish agenda' to reduce the number of white Europeans so that whatever control they still have over media and the financial and political institutions of Europe would be undermined. The Jews, according to this source perceive the Europeans as a threat to their power over the global economy.²⁶

The voters of the Labour Party are mainly immigrants of South Asian origin. For instance during the elections in May 2005, the percentage of voters for Labour among Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis respectively was 56%, 50% and 41%; on the other hand for Conservatives, the vote of the people of the above-mentioned origin was 11%, 11% and 9% respectively. It was further alleged that the Labour Party had declared war against its own [white] people and it was willing to allow non-whites to have physical and political control of British territory.²⁷ Thus, there are persons and groups

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "The Fabian Society, The Labour Party and Mass Immigration – State Enforced Multiculturalism and Multiracialism i.e. White European Genocide", (1 January, 2016). Visit <https://smashculturalmarxism.wordpress.com/2016/01/01/the-fabian-society-the-labour-party-and-mass-immigration-state-enforced-multiculturalism-and-multiracialism-ie-white-european-genocide/>.

²⁷ Kevin McDonald, "The Labour Party War Against White Britain", *Occidental Observer* (2011). Visit <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2011/05/the-labour-party-war-against-white-britain/>.

which are ready to go to any extent to paint the Labour Party's policies as not only inappropriate but even unpatriotic.

Gordon Brown (2007-2010)

Labour Party's Gordon Brown, before becoming prime minister delivered a speech in 2004 in which he defended the idea of Britishness, British culture and values. When he became prime minister in 2007, his mindset was unchanged and thus his policies while he was at the helm, stressed that Britain would no longer look inward rather it would follow its old tradition of being engaged globally. He and his cabinet also claimed that under his leadership, Britain had become more confident as a nation.

Prime Minister Brown's stress upon the successful historical union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which made it Great Britain, revealed an admiration for British imperialism. He urged that his country should adopt a vigorous and proactive approach in foreign policy, trade and investment and so on.²⁸

As soon as New Labour was voted out of power, a coalition government was formed, comprising Liberal Democrats and Conservatives led by Prime Minister David Cameron (Conservative) and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrats). With the induction of the new government from a different party, as was the tradition, there was a change in various policies, including multiculturalism.

The Conservative and Liberal Democrats Coalition Government (2010-2015)

It was the first coalition government after 1945, when Churchill's all-parties war cabinet was replaced by a caretaker government prior to elections. The Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition took up issues related to multiculturalism and suggested to local authorities in England not to give community grants to organizations which promoted divisions in British society. The government continued to promote British values such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for others.²⁹ The inclination and policies of the coalition government are clearly reflected in the speeches of the party leaders.

²⁸ Brown's Mansion House Speech, *The Guardian*, 17 June 2004.

²⁹ Stephen Jivraj and Ludi Simpson, (eds.), *Ethnic Identity and Inequalities in Britain: The Dynamics of Diversity* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 66.

Prime Minister David Cameron (2010-2016)

At the Munich Security Conference (MSC)^{*} of 2011, David Cameron spoke against the policy of multiculturalism saying that it had promoted segregation and division in society and discouraged immigrant communities from assimilating in European societies, including that of Britain. It had produced home grown terrorists who had carried out terrorist attacks in Britain and other countries of Europe and were also engaged in other nefarious activities which threatened the security of Europe. He urged his European colleagues to discourage the policy of multiculturalism in their own countries.

Prime Minister Cameron stated:

The multicultural policies . . . introduced by the British governments since the 1960s, based on the principle of the right of all groups in Britain to live by their traditional values — had failed to promote a sense of common identity centered on values of human rights, democracy, social integration and equality before the law.³⁰

As is evident from his words, he stressed upon what in his eyes was the total failure of multicultural policies, which instead of promoting social cohesion had created further divisions. Cameron's tone echoed Tony Blair's speech in 2005 just after the 7/7 bombings.³¹

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg

Nick Clegg, as the Deputy Prime Minister representing the Liberal Democrats, set out his own vision of multiculturalism during his speech in Luton in 2011. He stated:

^{*} MSC is a Germany-based think tank conducting annual conferences on international security issues.

³⁰ John F. Burns, "Cameron Criticizes "Multiculturalism in Britain", *The New York Times*, 5 February, 2011. Available from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/europe/06britain.html?_r=0.

³¹ See <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/feb/05/david-cameron-attack-multiculturalism-coalition>.

Where multiculturalism is held to mean more segregation, other communities leading parallel lives, it is clearly wrong. For me, multiculturalism has to be seen as a process by which people respect and communicate with each other, rather than build walls between each other. Welcoming diversity but resisting division: that's the kind of multiculturalism of an open, confident society. Furthermore, the cultures in a multicultural society are not just ethnic or religious.³²

Thus Clegg distanced himself from David Cameron's blunt strategy for countering extremism, which the latter had proclaimed during his speech on "state multiculturalism" in Munich. Deputy Prime Minister Clegg clarified that the government must distinguish between violent and non-violent actors. He emphasized that it was the Conservatives, who were wanting to ban extremist groups like Hizb-ut-Tahrir and it was the Liberal Democrats who had prevented their partners from banning of such groups, for it believed that banning an organization should be the last resort, and governments had to be very careful in taking such extreme measures.³³

The differences of opinion between the coalition partners on the policy of multiculturalism created a rift within the government. The coalition ended after the 2015 elections. The Conservative Party with 331 seats, won a 12-seat majority in parliament in these elections, while the Labour Party was able to get 232 seats. The Liberal Democrats Party on the other hand, suffered major losses, for it could get only 8 seats as compared to the 2010 elections when it won 57 seats.³⁴

British National Party (BNP): Anti-Multiculturalist?

Other than the above mentioned political parties, there is another political party, the British National Party (BNP), which has gained popularity in recent years. The reason why the party is gaining adherents is that there has been a steep rise in the number of immigrants and related racial clashes. Nick Griffith became BNP's leader in 1999. Under his leadership, the party had no qualms in expressing anti-multicultural sentiments. Along with its opposition to multicultural policies the BNP has fashioned an

³² Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-12638017>.

³³ See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/mar/03/clegg-rejects-cameron-extremism>.

³⁴ "Elections 2015", *BBC News*, 8 May 2015.

ideology, which claims to uphold national security, democracy, freedom and identity. It proposes to defend national interests through economic protectionism for the white population and this of course necessitates opposing immigration. This agenda reflects the strong grudge the BNP holds against multiculturalism and globalization.

The activists of BNP claim that multiculturalism champions the rights of the immigrants/aliens at the expense of the rights of the white population.³⁵

According to BNP, large-scale immigration is equivalent to the invasion of Britain by unwanted and uninvited people from all over the world. It advocates that only the white citizens have a right to live in Britain and only their culture should be acceptable. Multiculturalism, according to BNP works neither in theory nor in practice.³⁶

The views of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) on multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has another opponent, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), led by Nigel Farage. The UKIP is strongly opposed to the whole idea of multiculturalism and Nigel Farage who is now a member of the British Parliament, has recorded his opposition to multicultural policies on several occasions. The following statement of Nigel Farage gives a fair idea of his views on multiculturalism:

“I simply challenged a philosophy in multiculturalism that has failed Britain, failed France, and in reality failed every country it has been implemented in. Why can’t people be considered British Muslims, British Hindus or British Jews? Most of the people identify locally, rather than nationally or by ethnicity or religion anyway. Multiculturalism backers simply don’t allow for this. They willfully segregate us and politicians play ‘divide and conquer’ with our sensitivities”.³⁷

³⁵ Nigel Copsey and Graham Macklin, (eds.), *British National Party: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2013), 62-63.

³⁶ “Why is the Third World Not Multicultural?”, also available from <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/why-third-world-not-%E2%80%9Cmulticultural%E2%80%9D>.

³⁷ Nigel Farage, “Why Multiculturalism has Failed Britain, France and Every Other Country”, *Daily Express*, 16 January 2015.

In this statement Farage clearly contends that multiculturalism has failed as a concept and has not succeeded in any European country. He maintains that multiculturalism does not allow togetherness rather it promotes segregation between various communities. Furthermore, on various occasions Farage has emphasized that the British government should learn from its past mistakes, and put a stop to uncontrolled immigration and discard multiculturalism. The UK, he opined, continues to face the negative consequences of the mistakes made by successive governments in the past. He expressed the belief that the policy of multiculturalism has promoted more divisiveness in society. Learning English has not been made compulsory for people who have chosen to settle in the UK and immigrants have been allowed to grab British towns and cities.³⁸ Such is the opposition of the UKIP to multiculturalism.

2001: A turning point for British multiculturalism?

The year 2001 appears to be a turning point for multiculturalism in the United Kingdom. The unfortunate events of September 2001 and the London bombings of 7/7 resulted in some modification in the policy of multiculturalism in the country.³⁹

However, the policy of multiculturalism was more seriously criticized after the civil disturbances in Oldham and Bradford in northern England in July 2001. It has been contended that owing to the various traumatic events beginning with the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001, followed by the Madrid train bombings in March 2004 and the London bombings in July 2005, the policy of multiculturalism lost much of its significance, rather it increased the rift between the native white population and the non-white immigrants in the UK and in other European countries, following similar policies.⁴⁰

³⁸ Tim Hains, "UKIP's Nigel Farage: Multiculturalism, the Biggest Mistake the Governments have Made", (18 January 2015). Available from www.Realclearpolitics.com/video/2015/01/08/ukips-nigel-farage-multiculturalism-the-biggest-mistake-the-governments-have-made.html.

³⁹ Tariq Modood, "Multiculturalism Can Foster a New Kind of Post-Brexit Englishness", *Policy Bristol Hub* (12 July 2016). Available at www.polybristol.blogs.bris.ac.uk/2016/06/12/multiculturalism-can-foster-a-new-kind-of-post-brexit-englishness/.

⁴⁰ Olga Chudičková, "Multicultural Britain of the 21st Century", Bachelor Thesis (Zlin: Tomas Bata University, 2011), 32-33.

British multiculturalism and Brexit

The negative views about multiculturalism in Britain have fanned anti-immigrant sentiments throughout the country. The outbreak of racial clashes and violence further boosted racism and negativity among British people.

The negativity has grown to such an extent that it seems to have become deep-rooted. Therefore some scholars believe that the ultimate consequence of the trend was the move towards Brexit. Though Brexit happened because of the UK's reservations regarding the European Union and the way it functions, but apart from these reservations, the people of Britain voted to leave the EU because they wanted to put a stop to the continuing influx of immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Brexit is a manifestation of growing anti-immigrant sentiments, racism and a grudge against multiculturalism. The negativity increased owing to the misinformation, distortions and mischievous coverage by newspapers such as *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. The horror stories regarding immigrants and refugees polluted the minds of the gullible sections of society. The native white population began to blame immigrants for most of their problems, such as unemployment, shortage of government subsidized housing, etc.⁴¹

Brexit and the call for a second Scottish referendum

A fallout of Brexit is that it has revived calls for a second independence referendum in Scotland. With the vote in favour of Britain's exit from the EU, the Scottish began to point out that Scotland was taken out of the European Union against its will.

Alex Salmond, a former first minister of Scotland, stated that "if Scotland was dragged out of Europe against the will of the Scottish people, then the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another independence referendum".⁴²

⁴¹ Garrett Mullan, "Brexit Was Driven by Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Fuelled by Racism" (1 July 2016), available from www.thejournal.ie/readme/brexit-anti-immigrant-racism-education-2855964-Jul2016/.

⁴² Alastair Jamieson, "Scotland Seeks Independence Again After UK-Brexit Vote", *NBC News*, 24 June 2016. See www.nbcnews.com/storyline/brexit-referendum/scotland-could-see-k-independence-again-after-u-k-brexit-vote-n598166.

In June 2016 the people of Britain voted by a slim majority of 52% to 48% to leave the EU even though vigorous efforts were made by the 'Remain' side. According to a scholar, the main reason why the majority of the British people voted to leave the EU was primarily because the country's ageing population, had seen British society and culture in its original form, before immigrants changed it. The British also felt that it was high time for Britain to reassert its full political sovereignty, which, in their perception had been usurped by the EU bureaucracy.⁴³ It is being said that Brexit may lead to greater British nationalism, and the country would aim to regain its old glory and insularity. These conjectures are yet to be proved.

Conclusion

To examine the respective thinking and policies of British political parties with regard to multiculturalism, the period from 1997 to 2016 was chosen by the author, because British multiculturalism was confronted with several highs and lows in this particular time period. The article began by examining the Labour Party which took over the reins of power after a long time and had an agenda that celebrated cultural diversity and called itself "the New Labour". Research revealed that the so called New Labour promoted multiculturalism from 1997 to 2007. It initiated funding programmes for the Muslim and other faith schools, set up the Mac Pherson inquiry against institutional racism in London Metropolitan Police and passed the Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000 which strengthened previous legislation on racial and religious equality. Therefore, the New Labour government can be considered the most genuinely multiculturalist in Europe.

These policies were pursued with enthusiasm till early 2001. In July racial clashes broke out in northern England and there were racial tensions in the aftermath of 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings. Though multicultural policies continued, doubts about the sagacity of continuing on the path of multiculturalism began to creep into the minds of policy makers. The encouragement of large-scale immigration by New Labour, is said to have changed the nature of British society, which is now multi-racial and multi-religious.

⁴³ Salim Mansure, "Brexit and Multiculturalism", *American Thinker* (26 June 2016). See www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/06/brexit_and_multiculturalism.html.

The study found that the Labour Party's policies on multiculturalism and immigration were variously interpreted, one perception being that it was a deliberate political move to discountenance the rival Conservative party.

Some (a tiny minority) even went to the extent of declaring Labour's policy of large-scale immigration as serving the 'Jewish agenda', which was allegedly to increase the number of immigrants, so that the natives would become a minority in their own country. This paranoid view upheld that the Jews perceive white Europeans as a historical threat and are conspiring to minimize their hold on British media and financial and political institutions.

Lord Peter Mandelson, a former minister and a member of the Labour Party admitted that the New Labour government especially sent 'search parties' abroad to 'look' for potential immigrants.⁴⁴ According to the think tank Migration Watch, from 2001 to 2011, the UK received nearly three million immigrants.⁴⁵

The research also reveals that one of the major reasons why New Labour supported immigration, was that the latter are the biggest vote bank of the Labour Party.

As soon as the tenure of the New Labour ended, a coalition of the Conservative party and Liberal Democrats formed the government from 2010-2015. The coalition partners had differences of opinion on multiculturalism. The Conservatives blame multiculturalism for most of Britain's problems and say that it has failed to promote social cohesion; in fact it has created divisions in British society and nurtured home grown terrorism. The study highlights that the Conservatives even urged other European leaders to abandon the policy of multiculturalism, pointing out that it not only promotes segregation and divisiveness but also boosts terrorism. In support of their arguments they cited the civil disturbances in northern England in 2001, and the 7/7 London bombings.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10055613/Labour-sent-out-search-parties-for-immigrants-Lord-Mandelson-admits.html>.

⁴⁵ Tobias Langdon, "The Labour Party's Immigration Treason: Selling out the White Working Class", *Occidental Observer* (13 July 2013).

Unlike the Conservatives, their coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats held a completely opposite view on multiculturalism. They argued that multiculturalism is a process through which people with different origins and cultural backgrounds interact, and communicate with each other and learn mutual respect. Multiculturalism welcomes diversity and resists division. For the Liberal Democrats, multiculturalism is the hallmark of an open and confident, culturally diverse society.

Due to sporadic outbreaks of racial clashes and race-related violence, the British National Party which is staunchly against multiculturalism and immigration has gained popularity in recent years. BNP espouses exclusivist nationalism and blames its predecessor governments for promoting the rights of the immigrants at the expense of the native white population. It firmly believes that unwanted immigrants have 'invaded' Britain and only the natives should have the right over their homeland. Only their culture and language should be acceptable. They also believe that only the natives have the right to get jobs and housing facilities. BNP claims that multiculturalism works neither in theory nor in practice.

Another strong opponent of multiculturalism is the far-right UKIP, which also believes that multiculturalism has created divisions within British society. This policy, they say has allowed foreigners/immigrants to grab British towns and cities. UKIP puts the blame squarely on past governments for their myopic policies of multiculturalism and uncontrolled immigration, the repercussions of which, the people of Britain are facing.

The research study has unfolded several angles of the policy of multiculturalism. Though the policy is presently being criticized and debated, immigration has played a very important role in British society, and it must not be abandoned. It must not be forgotten that it was immigrants from all over the world who made an immense contribution to the reconstruction and revival of the British economy after the Second World War. In fact some immigrants came to the country voluntarily to help in its rebuilding. Successive British governments did recognize the contribution of the immigrants and knew that they were needed for the continued well being of the economy. They therefore supported and protected immigrants through legislations and by adopting the policy of multiculturalism.

The facts reveal that British government policies on immigration, race relations and immigrant related issues were quite liberal till the beginning of the twenty first century, when race riots and terrorism began to have a negative impact on thinking and policies. Gradually, multiculturalism was politicized by politicians and successive British governments, because for some it was a trump card to gain votes and get into power. Some advocated its continuance and others called for discarding it. But owing to this tug of war, the immigrants and the native white population have suffered. The majority of immigrants are peaceful and law abiding citizens; for instance, during the Birmingham riots of 2011, Tariq Jahan, an immigrant of Pakistani origin, whose son Haroon Jahan had been killed during the race riots, passionately appealed to the people to stay calm.⁴⁶ Likewise, only a miniscule section of the white population is responsible for fanning hatred, and it must not be forgotten that several whites were victims of the 7/7 London bombings.

To conclude, multiculturalism has been greatly politicized, which is why it is either praised or vilified, instead of being assessed in a cool headed manner. Multiculturalism is a reality in British society, but its continuing existence is now in doubt, though it is difficult to predict what lies in future.

⁴⁶ Available from www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2024375/birmingham-riots-race-murder-victim-haroon-jahans-father-tariq-calls-calm.html.