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The Bristol school of multiculturalism

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Abstract

Tariq Modood, Bhikhu Parekh, Nasar Meer and Varun Uberoi are well known for their defence of multiculturalism in Britain and beyond. The article contends that the collective oeuvre of these and other scholars associated with the University of Bristol's Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship represents a distinctive and important school of multicultural political thought, a 'Bristol school of multiculturalism'. The school challenges the liberal biases of much of the corpus of multicultural political thinking and the nostrums of British and other western democracies regarding the status of the majority culture as well as of cultural minorities. It is an identarian and assertive multiculturalism that, above all, seeks inclusion and a sense of belonging in the national community. The article situates the Bristol school in the British context in which it arose, outlines its distinctive approach and principles and critically assesses its positions on liberalism and national identity. It also raises the question of the political acceptability of the Bristol school's 'muscular multiculturalism'.

Keywords

Multiculturalism, political approach, identity, national belonging, Bristol school

> I saw a beggar leaning on his wooden crutch, he said to me, 'You must not ask for so much'. And a pretty woman leaning in her darkened door, she cried to me, 'Hey, why not ask for more?
>
> — Leonard Cohen, *Bird on a Wire*

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A particular approach to understanding and defending multiculturalism has not been sufficiently recognised. Propounded by a group of scholars associated with the University of Bristol's Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, the approach is both distinctive and important in addressing aspects of cultural minority integration that are largely ignored by other defences of multiculturalism. To some extent, the recognition of this understanding of multiculturalism has been overshadowed by the work and prominence of its leading members: Tariq Modood, Bhikhu Parekh, Nasar Meer and Varun Uberoi. They are known for their own individual contributions. However, it is my contention that their collective oeuvre represents a distinctive school of thought and approach on this subject, what might be called the Bristol school of multiculturalism.

That appellation requires an explanation. Modood, who spans sociology and political theory, has been the driving force, intellectually and organisationally, behind Bristol's Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, established in 1999. Meer did his doctorate at Bristol under Modood's supervision and then worked with him as a research assistant on two projects. A sociologist and now Professor of Race, Identity and Citizenship at the University of Edinburgh, he has co-authored and co-edited with Modood a plethora of publications on minorities and multiculturalism (e.g. Meer and Modood, 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Meer et al., 2016; Triandafyllidou et al., 2012). Uberoi, now at Brunel University, acquired his doctorate in political theory at Oxford, during which he was Modood's research assistant at Bristol, sharing an office with Meer. He and Modood continued to collaborate after he left Bristol. He has co-authored articles analysing aspects of multiculturalism with Modood (Uberoi and Modood 2010, 2013a, 2013b) and with Meer and Modood (Uberoi, Meer and Modood 2010, 2015; and with Dwyer, 2011). The three also edit the *Politics of Identity and Citizenship* book series published by Palgrave Macmillan. In addition, Uberoi has published articles examining Parekh's ideas on multiculturalism and national identity (Uberoi, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2018), and he and Modood have co-edited a festschrift for Parekh (Uberoi and Modood, 2015).

The Bristol Centre has also graduated several doctoral students under Modood's direction – including Aleksandra Lewicki (2014); Terri-Anne Teo (2016) and Erdem Dikici (2017) – who have gone on to publish work individually or collaboratively that exhibits themes central to what I am calling the Bristol school of multiculturalism. Similarly, Jan Dobbernack and Nabil Khattab were, respectively, employed as Modood's research assistant and research associate and have co-published with him.[1]

Parekh may seem the most unlikely member of a 'Bristol school', having never had a formal connection to that university. After a distinguished career in political philosophy in India and in Britain, Parekh has remained active in academic pursuits while sitting in the House of Lords. Parekh and Modood were both much influenced by Michael Oakeshott, the man and his philosophy. Oakeshott informally mentored Parekh during his doctoral research and was an examiner of Modood's master's thesis and a subject of his doctoral dissertation (Martínez,

2013; Parekh, 2011: 24). But the event that brought Parekh and Modood together and galvanized their thinking about Britain in complementary ways was the Salman Rushdie Affair in 1988/1989 (Modood, 1992; Parekh, 1990a, 1990b). Modood goes so far as to say it was the 'foundational event for the Bristol school [of multiculturalism]'.[2]

Early in 1989, Parekh, as Deputy Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, appointed Modood to a post at the Commission. When Modood subsequently worked at the Policy Studies Institute in London and led the 4th National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, he asked Parekh to chair the project advisory board and to write the preface to the book follow-on. In 1997, Parekh was appointed to chair the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, culminating in the Parekh Report (CMEB, 2000). Modood served as the Commission's and the Report's academic adviser. In his published work, Modood often invokes Parekh's arguments on identity and cultural diversity in support of his own. Forewords and afterwords by Parekh feature in many of Modood's book projects. And Uberoi (2015a: 518, 2015b: 13–14, 2018: 61) has noted how Modood has in turn influenced Parekh's thinking on multiculturalism and national identity.

In short, this group of scholars has an intersecting sociometry. Their members have variously worked together in Bristol or London, co-authored articles and co-edited anthologies, drawn on each other's work and expounded on each other's arguments. Naming it the 'Bristol school of multiculturalism' (hereafter, BSM) is a way of highlighting this intersection of professional lives and interests. More important is the substance and, as I shall argue, distinctiveness of this school of multicultural political thought. And it is the distinctiveness, it bears emphasising, that is my focus. The BSM's senior figures have published prolifically, bringing multilayered analysis to a wide range of substantive issues. I cannot hope to do expository justice to that range and subtlety within the confines of a single essay and will not here even try. Instead, my aim is to identify the key features that distinguish the BSM from other interpretations and defences of multiculturalism. This means distilling what is common to the BSM's senior figures while largely passing over the differences between them on details. On a few points, however, the differences are too significant to be ignored.

In what follows, I discuss in turn the BSM's approach, auxiliary principles, and, perhaps most distinctive of all, the vehicle for realising its political vision. Thereafter, I offer an assessment of the importance of this school of multicultural political thought as well as identifying some issues that this approach throws up. I begin with some general remarks on the critical context in which the BSM develops.

Background context

How multiculturalism emerges as a public philosophy and policy differs across national contexts. While having general force and significance, the BSM understandably reflects the British context in which it arose. This background

contributes to its distinctive approach to cultural diversity. First, some points of comparison.

As public policy, multiculturalism debuts in Canada and Australia in the early 1970s as government initiatives, albeit, in the Australian case, with keen input from ethnic community leaders and immigrant intellectuals. Notwithstanding their similarities – such as both countries being New World, British settled (Quebec aside), immigrant democracies with Indigenous peoples – Canada and Australia adopted multiculturalism for quite different reasons. In Canada, it was introduced strategically in order to placate an assertive Quebec and preserve the integrity of the Canadian state. This was deemed to require a wholesale redefinition of Canadian national identity. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1971) declared that Canada has 'no official culture' and 'nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other'. The right of cultural groups to maintain their mother tongue and cultural heritage became a key emphasis of Canadian multiculturalism.

Australia's story is vastly different. Although the word 'multiculturalism' was borrowed from Canada, Australia is unburdened by a culturally distinct, subnational province. Instead, multiculturalism was adopted in order to ensure that immigrant and Indigenous Australians could 'find an honoured place', as Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (1975) put it. This meant addressing discrimination and checking the entrenched privileges of the dominant, Anglo-Australian majority. Anti-discrimination legislation and securing the rights of *common* citizenship thus have been central to Australian multiculturalism. In the early period, this focus was augmented by programs and services aimed at assisting the settlement of new migrants. Eventually, multiculturalism policy was formulated in terms of better realising the principles of individual liberty, equality and toleration, as well as capitalising on a culturally diverse population. Unlike Canada, there was little emphasis on minority cultural maintenance and no denial of its Anglo-Australian national identity or dominant cultural ethos.

In contrast to the state multiculturalism of Canada and Australia, in the United States and Britain multiculturalism emerges from 'below', that is, by minorities asserting their presence on the state and society. In the United States, multiculturalism develops as an assertion of black pride and group difference in response to a perceived failure of the civil rights movement of the 1960s to deliver equality. Multiculturalism never becomes state policy in America. Rather, it becomes closely associated with the curriculum taught on campuses and affirmative action policies (Fleras, 2009; Glazer, 1997). In Britain, multiculturalism developed as an expression of and demand for identity affirmation not unlike in the United States. As Modood (2016a) explains, '[m]ulticulturalism in Britain grew out of an initial commitment to racial equality in the 1960s and 1970s into one of positive self-definition for minorities' after the *Satanic Verses* affair of 1988/1989. It is a transition that helps explain how two decades later Prime Minister David Cameron could contrast multiculturalism and 'muscular liberalism' (BBC News, 2011).[3] Rather than an overarching state policy, British multiculturalism has issued more localised, piecemeal and ad hoc multicultural policies.

Britain contends with certain challenges in relation to cultural diversity. As an Old World European state and former empire, a large proportion of its post-war migrant intake comprised people from its former colonies, especially, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and those in the Caribbean. For many of these immigrants, this was more of a homecoming than a typical inter-state migration in that they had responded to Britain's call to help in its post-war reconstruction. Or as the saying goes, 'We are over here because you were over there'. At the same time, Britain grapples with the challenge of the four nations. Recent decades have seen an increased devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as they seek to advance their own national-cultural identity and political decision-making. England, for so long the definer of imperial and post-imperial British identity, has been left to ponder what Britishness might mean apart from English identity and culture, and vice versa. In a sense, both of these experiences – empire and subnationalism – afforded Britain a long familiarity with governing cultural diversity. However, that same experience requires overcoming entrenched patterns and associations in confronting new situations and challenges. Some analysts note, for example, how the legacy of empire is so deeply insinuated in Britain's political repertoire that it makes developing a Britishness suitable for today's multicultural citizenry especially difficult (Asari et al., 2008).

Another perceived challenge that Britain confronts – which it shares with continental Europe, but less so with the New World democracies – is its sizeable Muslim population, some 4.13 million or about 6.3% of the overall population in 2016 (Lipka, 2017). During the post-war mass migrations, most Muslims came from Pakistan and Bangladesh, with smaller numbers from India, Turkey, the Middle East and Africa. The vast majority of British Muslims live in England's metropolitan centres, especially London. And Islam is now the fastest growing religious community in the UK, courtesy of immigration and high birth rates. Finally, Britain is profoundly shaped by being an 'island/s nation' (as is Australia). Its debacle inside and now outside the European Union concerning its sovereignty, control of borders, attitudes to immigration and preservation of identity are tied, in no small part, to its geography.

Contained within this brief sketch of Britain's circumstances are the rudiments of the BSM.

Political approach

All multicultural political theories are a response to the presence and claims making of cultural communities. Although they range widely in their assumptions and core principles, the most prominent nevertheless tend to share the same general approach. They begin from a set of principles or values and then determine what kinds of minority cultural rights or accommodation follow. Thus, liberal nationalists work out what respecting individual autonomy and equality within a national context might betoken for minority cultural rights (Kymlicka, 1995; Tamir, 2003). Liberal and democratic universalists derive their multiculturalism

prescriptions from what they, respectively, take honouring autonomy, equality, fairness, reciprocity, neutrality, toleration, liberal constitutionalism or deliberative democracy to entail (Bader, 2007; Benhabib, 2002; Cohen-Almagor, forthcoming; Joppke, 2017; Patten, 2014; Phillips, 2007; Spinner-Halev, 2000). Liberal pluralists spell out the implications of taking diversity or value pluralism seriously (Crowder, 2007; Galston, 2002). Libertarians examine how pure toleration, freedom of conscience and/or freedom of association might authorise groups to live as they wish (Balint, 2017; Kukathas, 2003). Even pragmatic-cum-contextual approaches tend to proceed by inferring multicultural provisions (or not) from their proffered pragmatic or contextual principles (Carens, 2000; Levy, 2000).

The BSM's first distinguishing feature is that it takes the legitimacy of multiculturalism to derive not from any principle or set of principles, but rather from the situation of flesh and blood people seeking recognition and inclusion in their societies *as they are* and *for what they are*. It is a 'bottom-up', sociological, identarian, elementally political and agonistically democratic approach to understanding and justifying multiculturalism. Modood (2001: 248) originally called the approach 'political multiculturalism' (see also Meer and Modood, 2009; Modood, 2007). It is not entirely unique, of course. Something of this grassroots identity multiculturalism is to be found, for example, in Charles Taylor's (1992) recognition theory in which the non-recognition or misrecognition of people's identities is said to cause them real psychological and social harm. Taylor, however, elaborates individuals' and groups' need for recognition in terms of the historically contingent valorisation of 'authenticity' and places both fundamental liberal and national-cultural limits on it. A bottom-up, political approach also chimes with Iris Marion Young's (1990) 'politics of difference', although she is mainly concerned with institutionalised political representation and privileges the value of justice. Also, some post-colonial and radical multiculturalist approaches are strongly identarian, although much of this work is in cultural studies rather than political theory or philosophy (e.g. Gunew, 2003; Hage, 1998; Pateman and Mills, 2007; Tully, 1995; cf. Margalit and Halbertal, 1994). The BSM scholars accept that Britain is, in some sense, a liberal society, but insist that a multicultural politics should not simply take its cues from some version or other of liberalism. Since not all members of the polity are liberals or democrats – including, they shrewdly note, many, if not all, members of the cultural majority at certain times or in some respects – multiculturalism even in liberal democracies must begin from a more impartial position that reckons with its own diversity.

The BSM scholars elaborate this bottom-up approach in different but complementary ways. For Parekh (2000a: 239–240), human beings are 'cultural beings' and 'cultural diversity' is a defining feature of humanity. Modood (2007) grounds the approach in the importance of 'identity' and 'difference'. And Meer (2010), drawing on Hegel and W.E.B. Du Bois, explicates the position through the dialectical category of a group's 'consciousness'. These group-differentiated features carry moral and political weight because they define people's sense of themselves, nourish their self-respect, sustain what they value and cherish and direct or reflect

how they wish their lives, individually and collectively, to proceed. The BSM scholars reject, however, primordial or essentialised notions of culture, identity, difference or consciousness. They understand these aspects to be dynamic, multifarious, internally as well as externally contested, dialogical and the outcome of multitudinous agency as well as established structures (Meer, 2010: 55–106; Modood, 1998, 2007: 87–116; Parekh, 2000a: 142–176; Uberoi, 2008).

The BSM contends that minorities need and have every right to be assertive of their cultural interests and that multiculturalism, rightly conceived, establishes a politics and political order that are suitably responsive in kind. Initially, this encounter between cultural minorities and the dominant cultural majority may dwell on certain groups' marginalisation, stigmatisation and experience of exclusion, or what Modood (2007: 39) calls 'negative difference'. New immigrants typically arrive in a context in which aspects of their national, racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic identity coupled with their very newness are publicly contested and politically charged. Indeed, the Bristol school scholars make the cogent point that such a reception around 'negative difference' helps forge a minority's group consciousness and mobilise it politically. However, they argue that multiculturalism cannot simply be about arresting these negative experiences through anti-discrimination and hate speech laws and the like, as important as those measures are. It must also be about taking minorities' 'positive difference' seriously by fashioning more inclusive policies and services, restructuring institutions and broadening the national story.

If there is one word that sums up the BSM's political approach, it is 'struggle'. Parekh notes that claims for recognition will perforce be met with resistance and so recognition must be wrested from the dominant group. Citing Hegel, he writes: 'Since the dominant group welcomes neither the radical critique nor the corresponding political praxis [vis-à-vis prevailing political and economic inequalities], the struggle for recognition involves cultural and political contestation and sometimes even violence' (Parekh, 2000a: 343). And Modood (2007: 39) writes that '[m]ulticulturalism refers to the struggle, the political mobilization but also the policy and institutional outcomes, to the forms of accommodation in which "differences" are not eliminated, are not washed away but to some extent recognized'.

Importantly, the BSM understands this struggle as being mutually beneficial and ultimately unifying. Not only minorities but also the dominant majority and the political community writ large thus stand to gain from the encounter. The BSM's vision is a far cry from cultural communities leading parallel lives in splendid (or not so splendid) isolation. Parekh speaks of cultural groups learning from one another and being mutually enriched (2000a: 155, 168, 210–212, 338). As if to illustrate the point, Meer (2010: 40–41) studies Du Bois's insights regarding the African-American experience more than a century ago and applies them, to great effect, in understanding the situation of British Muslims today. Through their oppression, Du Bois observed, African-Americans are 'gifted a second sight', a 'double consciousness', in which they come to know a deeper truth about America regarding the distance between its ideals and practice that is impenetrable to white

Americans. Impenetrable, that is, until political struggle bequeaths an enhanced societal self-understanding.

Political principles

As noted, the Bristol school arrives at multiculturalism by working up from the cultural diversity, identities, difference and consciousness of real life groups rather than 'working down' from a prior commitment to some political values or organising principle. Nevertheless, in elaborating multiculturalism, the BSM advances a number of political positions which can be thought of as auxiliary principles *inferred* from its bottom-up, political approach.

The first of these principles is equality. Virtually all theories of multiculturalism reject interpretations of equal treatment that ignore differences in people's background circumstances (cf. Barry, 2001). For example, regulations requiring crash helmets to be worn while motorcycling or on construction sites may appear to treat everyone the same, but it is anything but for Sikhs, who may be precluded from these activities if they wish to wear their turban as their faith demands. The Bristol school scholars also subscribe to a fuller notion of equality that takes into account background circumstances and uneven starting points; however, they differ from many multiculturalists in two respects. First, they apply this fuller notion of equal treatment to cultural groups and not only to individuals (Meer, 2010; Modood, 2007, 2012; Parekh, 2000a). The Parekh Report described Britain as a 'community of communities' as well as of citizens (CMEB, 2000: 3). Equal treatment that takes into account background circumstances should therefore not only address individuals whose circumstances may include observing a minority faith – as in the crash helmet case above – but also the resources, opportunities and recognition available to cultural communities as communities. Modood (2014: 312) cites the example of having the British national curriculum not simply include the history of the majority but also the complex experience of its subject peoples and immigrant groups.

The second way in which the BSM differs from many multiculturalists in the understanding of equal treatment is that approximate equal outcomes are not sought even after considering background circumstances. On the contrary, the BSM understands equal treatment to mean that a vast array of arrangements may result for different groups and even subgroups. Muslims, for example, should not be obliged to organise and represent their interests to government according to existing models, such as that of the Board of Jewish Deputies in Britain, neither should all Muslims be bound to follow the model adopted by the Muslim majority. Such a 'variable geometry' (Modood, 2007: 83) of institutions and relationships and 'asymmetrical political structures' (Parekh, 2000a: 195) are, for the BSM, a truer measure of realising equality. Hence, the second moniker that Modood (2007) adopted for the BSM was 'multicultural citizenship', where the 'multi' is taken to denote 'difference' within as much as between groups and multiple ways of being integrated.

Another BSM principle is that multiculturalism should include religious groups and identity along with ethnic and other cultural groups and identities. This theme is stressed especially in Modood's and Meer's work on the situation of Muslims in Britain and Europe. A key contention is that Islam and Muslims endure a double exclusion: both as a religion/religious group and as a negatively racialised group. As Modood (2018: 27) notes, even the Parekh Report's conception of Britain as a 'community of communities' dwelt on ethno-cultural and ethno-racial groups to the effective exclusion of religious groups. Liberal multiculturalists tend to equivocate on the place of religious groups.[4] Kymlicka (2002: 345), for example, accepts that 'benign neglect' is appropriate for the 'religious model' of church-state separation but is a false 'account of the relationship between the liberal-democratic state and ethnocultural groups' (see Modood, 2007: Chap. 2). For the BSM, a secular state implies prohibiting some state-religion entanglement, such as imposing a particular faith on citizens, denying religious worship, or setting religious tests for public office. But otherwise it should allow (as, indeed, most of the world's liberal democracies do allow) a wide variety of engagement. Public religions like Islam should be able to find suitable accommodation in regimes committed to 'weaker' (Parekh, 2000a: 322) or 'moderate' (Modood, 2007: 73) forms of state secularism.

A third BSM principle is the vital importance of 'dialogue'. Parekh (1995, 1996, 2000a) sets out a much-discussed procedure for how an intercommunal dialogue and 'intercultural evaluation' should proceed in the case of controversial minority practices, such as female circumcision and polygamy. This procedure relies heavily on his concept of 'operative public values'. Revealed in a society's constitution, laws and 'norms governing the civic relations between its members', operative public values 'represent the shared moral structure of a society's public life' (Parekh, 2000a: 268, 270). The concept underscores the BSM's concern with cultural and political formations in their particularity, and its aversion to abstract and universalising political theory. As others have noted, there are clear echoes here to Oakeshott's (1991) idea of the 'intimations' of a political tradition (Kelly, 2001; Uberoi, 2015b, 2018).

With its emphasis on political struggle and intercultural learning, the BSM entertains an enlarged idea of dialogue, beyond an orderly intercommunal dialogue to general public debate and more demonstrable forms of contestation. Regarding public debate, Uberoi (2015b: 8–9) cites as an example of dialogue how minority intellectuals intervened in the Rushdie affair by pointing to blasphemy, incitement to hatred and libel laws and showing that Britain in no way recognised unfettered freedom of expression. That is a case of minorities reminding liberals of their own standards. As evidence that dialogue may include more vigorous and contrarian activity, it may be noted that Parekh (2000a: 342–343) criticises Taylor's account of misrecognition for supposing that 'the dominant group can be rationally persuaded to change its views of [misrecognised groups] by intellectual argument and moral appeal'.[5] Parekh calls instead for 'a rigorous critique of the dominant culture' and a 'radical restructuring' of its material base.

In recent years, Meer and Modood (2012a, 2016) have confronted criticism from self-styled 'interculturalists' that multiculturalism is flawed, among other things, for militating against intercultural dialogue and interaction. The thrust of the criticism is that multiculturalism imagines cultural groups as fixed, self-absorbed communities in pursuit of their own values and living apart from others (e.g. Cantle, 2012; Wood et al., 2006). The thrust of Meer and Modood's reply has been to point to obvious counter-examples such as Parekh's intercommunal dialogue and to note how the interculturalists' notion of 'dialogue' is far too genteel. Multicultural dialoguing includes robust interaction and exchange. They also note that some groups may have little option other than to be self-absorbed in the face of sustained public attack and denigration. The BSM seeks to take stock also of those circumstances. More recently, Modood has acknowledged that while multiculturalist discourse may not always have emphasised the kind of dialogue that interculturalists prefer, multiculturalism does not preclude it, can easily accommodate it and can well benefit from it (Modood, 2016b, 2017a).

A fourth BSM principle is, in a sense, its master principle, namely, the crucial importance of a sense of belonging in one's society. Where liberal multiculturalists do not ignore belongingness altogether they tend to regard it as the corollary of securing cultural liberty and equality. The problem is that simply extending liberal democratic rights in this way is unlikely to realise the inclusive thrust of multiculturalism. Equal liberties and opportunities matter enormously, of course, but they do not necessarily bring social acceptance. This was the predicament of European Jews in the late 18th and 19th centuries: they secured legal but not social emancipation. It is the predicament of Muslims in western societies today insofar as they have even secured equal rights and opportunities. All formal, liberal rights-based versions of multiculturalism are subject to this limitation. For the BSM, fraternity or belongingness precedes liberty and equality. As Modood (2017a: n. 11) writes: 'multiculturalism is not just about justice... on the contrary, belonging is more central to multicultural nationalism [Modood's position] than either the liberal goal of furthering autonomy or the social democratic means of redistribution of resources'. Or as Parekh (2000a: 342) succinctly puts it: 'Citizenship is about status and rights, belonging is about being accepted and feeling welcome'.

Finally, a word is in order about where the BSM stands on the question of the appropriate limits of multicultural accommodation. Most liberal and democratic multiculturalists begin with this question in mind. The question figures less centrally for the Bristol school scholars. In part, this is due to their political approach to multiculturalism in which arrangements are open-ended, subject to struggle and negotiation, and therefore never really final. It is also linked to their conviction that societies have their own particular traditions, operative public values and social composition, and so will confront the issue of limits differently. Nevertheless, they do offer some further comment on limiting conditions in places.

Modood (2007: 67) refers to the imperative of respecting individuals' 'fundamental rights' rather than liberal rights. As he puts it, '[r]ecognition should not infringe the fundamental rights of individuals or cause harm to others'.

He nominates child sacrifice, sati, and cannibalism as practices that 'would be unacceptable to just about everybody'. He notes that many people – he does not say whether he includes himself – would also draw the line at clitoridectomy. Parekh, who argues that 'human rights' are culturally mediated (2000a: 133–136) and 'harm to others' too vague in its scope (2000a: 267), mainly relies on intercommunal dialogue and a society's operative public values to determine the bounds of acceptability (1995, 2000a). This leads him to specify the 'institutional preconditions' of any such dialogue, including 'freedom of expression, agreed procedures and basic ethical norms, participatory public spaces, equal rights, a responsive and popularly accountable structure of authority, and empowerment of citizens' (2000a: 340).

These positions have led some, including myself, to suggest that Modood and Parekh are closer to liberalism than they claim, a point to which I will return. For now, the BSM's dialectical position is well captured in Parekh's (2001a: 138) suggestion that diversity and political integration mutually limit each other: 'Diversity should not undermine social order, and social cohesion should not be so defined as to rule out legitimate forms of diversity'.

Vehicle for realisation

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the BSM of all is the central role it assigns to national identity in the multiculturalism project. Thus, Modood has more recently taken to calling his approach 'multicultural Britishness' (Modood, 2016b) and 'multicultural nationalism' (Modood, 2017a, 2017b). Many multiculturalists ignore or reject the place of national identity (e.g. Bader, 2007; Patten, 2014; Phillips, 2007), including many radical and critical multiculturalists (e.g. Fleras, 2009: 105–108; Hage, 1998). Others, notably, 'liberal nationalists' (Kymlicka, 1995; Soutphommasane, 2012; Tamir, 1993), do think that national identity matters.[6] The BSM construes and deploys national identity very differently.

For liberal nationalists, national identity plays an important role in producing social cohesion, a sense of belonging and a commitment to the commonweal. These properties are considered vital not least because mutual trust and a sense of solidarity are deemed necessary for citizens to support collective purposes (such as welfare measures). Uberoi (2015a: 512, 514) suggests that liberal nationalists accept Ernest Renan's proposition that national identity relies on a 'shared amnesia' that forgets divisive episodes in the past so that a sense of unity might be created.[7]

Liberal nationalists seek to reconcile national identity and cultural diversity in either of two ways. One is to 'thin out' the national identity and culture in order to make them more accommodating of cultural difference. Thus, Kymlicka understands and approves of 'nation-building' in liberal democracies where it is limited to a 'societal culture', entailing a shared language, comprehensive set of social institutions, core curricula in schools, state symbols and public holidays (Kymlicka, 1995: 76, 2001a: 18–19). The second 'multiculturalist' strategy involves

carving out space in the public sphere for minorities alongside a 'thick' or 'thicker' national identity and culture. Thus, the Israeli philosopher Yael Tamir (1993) accepts an almost ethno-nationalist rendering of national identity but argues that national self-determination does not require statehood, and that members of cultural minorities are also entitled to publicly express their 'national identity'.

For the BSM, in contrast, national identity is important mainly because it provides the vehicle for forging a sense of belonging for all members, individuals and groups, of the political community. In this account, national identity applies both to the polity or political community writ large (e.g. 'Britain's identity') and at the personal level, where individuals recognise something of the identity of the political community in themselves and thus identify with that community (e.g. 'British identity') (Parekh, 2008: 56–57; Uberoi, 2015b: 14, 2018: 49). An ethno-nation is not presupposed or required; neither is a primordial culture (Parekh, 2008: 60–61). Rather, according to the BSM, national identity is shaped by a particular history, language, shared territory and geography, set of traditions as well as current circumstances and challenges. It bridges political values and institutions (including a state's symbols, ceremonies and rituals) and, it would seem (see discussion below), cultural attributes (e.g. language, imaginative literature, habits of thought, beliefs, sensibilities), without being or needing to be homogeneous. Above all, for the BSM, national identity is understood as an 'ongoing political project' (Parekh, 2009: 39) in the sense of being a collective work in progress.

Drawing on the Canadian case, Uberoi (2008) argues that multiculturalism policies do not undermine national identity so much as change it (see also Uberoi and Modood, 2012). In subsequent research on the background to Article 27 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and the *Canadian Multicultural Act* (1988), he reveals how these instruments were intended to recognise and promote multiculturalism as integral to Canadian heritage and identity, which the instruments ultimately stated (Uberoi, 2009, 2016). I return below to the peculiarities of the Canadian case, but here it is worth noting that the Bristol school's approach to national identity and nation-building seems to be importantly different from Canada's attempt to have multiculturalism itself be a new national identity. The BSM seeks to build on the extant national identity and culture rather than wipe the slate clean. Modood (2014: 313, 1994) speaks of needing to be 'additive' rather than 'subtractive' in this matter. So, for example, public holidays celebrating Christian heritage (Christmas and Easter) would not be abolished, rather public celebration of minority festivals would be added to the calendar. Similarly, the BSM approach to national identity involves confronting rather than forgetting divisive episodes in the society's past in the interest of 'truth-telling', the better that all parties may move forward (Uberoi, 2015a: 512–514).

More in keeping with the BSM's stated approach is Uberoi and Modood's (2013a) analysis showing that British politicians across the political spectrum began adopting more inclusive formulations of British identity notwithstanding sometimes their dim view of multiculturalism. Many of the politicians alluded both

to civic or political features of Britain (such as found in the pledge that new citizens are required to make) and to Britain's changing society and its diversity of identities, beliefs, traditions and values. Uberoi and Modood (2013a: 30) call this positive development, which incorporates common citizenship and cultural difference, a 'civic multicultural national identity'.

The connection that the Bristol school scholars draw between multiculturalism and national identity has encouraged two further postures. One is an openness to engineering national identity. Despite their bottom-up, political multiculturalism, Meer, Modood and Uberoi, individually and collaboratively, have looked to political elites and the state to redefine national identity in the desired direction (Meer, 2015; Modood, 2005; Uberoi and McLean, 2009). Modood recalls that the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (which produced the Parekh Report, (CMEB, 2000)) 'was not content for senior politicians to merely acknowledge' that New Labour was 'recognising the growing multiculturalising of the national identity'. That's because

> . . .we thought this led to the complacent view that the process could be left to itself, that no action or political leadership was necessary. We wanted to challenge that complacency and passivity, what we referred to as 'multicultural drift'. (Modood, 2016b: 485–486)

Years later, Parekh (2009: 36) is more cautious about such intervention: 'A national self-definition cannot be imposed from above or prescribed by politicians'.

The second posture encouraged involves a suspicion of what Gérard Bouchard (2011) has called 'majority cultural precedence', the ad hoc if not duly legislated ways in which the established or historic culture may be privileged institutionally and symbolically (Meer and Modood, 2012: 187–190). Modood (2014) has genuinely grappled with this issue but clearly remains uneasy about any concession that is not accompanied by a dividend for minorities as well (Modood, 1994). Parekh cautions that 'both justice and political wisdom' recommend against the majority community claiming 'cultural ownership of the political community', although he accepts that eliminating majority cultural precedence, even by additive measures, is 'not always practical' (2000a: 235). However, he also suggests that expecting Britain 'to leap out of its cultural skin' and 'deny the Christian component of its identity a privileged status' is 'wrong' (2000a: 235, 259).

An assessment

The foregoing has laid out the key positions of the BSM, as I see it, and how they represent a distinctive and formidable school of multicultural political thought. The BSM is nothing if not challenging. It challenges the liberal biases of much of the corpus of multicultural political thinking. And it challenges the nostrums of British and other western democracies regarding the place of the majority culture

as well as of cultural minorities. I want to touch on both the liberal and the national aspects of this challenge, but first a few general observations.

Considering the Bristol school's assertive form of multiculturalism, it cannot be coincidental that the senior figures of the school (and many rising ones) come from minority communities themselves. Modood was born in Pakistan and is a Muslim. Parekh was born in India, is a Hindu and, in some ways, a follower of Gandhi. Meer was born in Wakefield to Pakistani, Muslim parents and identifies as a Muslim. Uberoi was born in West London to Hindu parents from India. The leading thinkers of the BSM thus know intimately what it means to be a visible minority in British society. Uberoi (2015b: 4) recalls that Parekh (1974: 81) wrote 'that an "Indian in England" is "haunted" by self-consciousness of their differences as these are misunderstood, feared, and are the source of his discrimination and exclusion'. Most leading multicultural political theorists do not hail from visible minorities (in some contrast to cultural studies), as is plain from the roll call of names – Bader, Banting, Bauböck, Carens, Crowder, Eisenberg, Kymlicka, Patten, Phillips, Tamir, Taylor, Tully, Young. There are, of course, notable exceptions, including Monica Mookherjee in Britain, Charles Mills, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Sarah Song in the United States, and Chandran Kukathas (now in London) and Tim Soutphommasane in Australia.[8] Otherwise, the most 'exotic' it gets are some assimilated Jews (e.g. Benhabib, Galston, Gutmann, Levy, Raz, Shachar, Spinner-Halev). Unlike most liberal and democratic multiculturalists, the Bristol School scholars arrived at their positions through a baptism of fire. It may explain why the former do 'not ask for so much' for immigrant groups while the latter 'ask for more'.

That the BSM manages to incorporate Oakeshottian sentiments into a quest to reconstitute the modern state is no mean achievement. Hannah Arendt would seem to be a more germane source for thinking through the political incorporation of 'pariahs'. Indeed, there are striking Arendtian leitmotifs in the BSM's positions that appear to have gone unnoticed, including by Parekh, who has written extensively on Arendt (Parekh, 1981, 1982), and despite Meer and Modood having compared Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and analogised the situations of Muslims and Jews (Meer, 2013; Meer and Modood, 2012b; Meer and Noorani, 2008).[9] Consider, for example, Parekh's core position that human beings are cultural beings and cultural diversity is endemically human. Arendt (1964: 268–269) held that 'human diversity as such' is integral to the 'human status'. Or Modood's argument that the marginalisation and exclusion of minorities at once negatively defines them and politically mobilises them. Arendt (2005: 12) argued that 'If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man'. Or take the BSM's insistence that political equality and inclusion be accorded to groups and not only to individuals. Arendt insisted that 'individual' or liberal solutions and even cultural autonomy, a 'depoliticized' solution, are inadequate, arguing instead for the equal right of Jews to participate in the political life of the state *as Jews* (Arendt, 2007: 48–53, 126–131).

This is not to suggest that Arendt anticipates the BSM. Arendt died in 1975 just as multiculturalism was getting underway. Whether she would have been a multiculturalist of any stripe is far from clear. Her sharp differentiation of the 'social' and the 'political' is inhospitable to the BSM's comprehensive promotion of belongingness and she attached little value to national culture (Benhabib, 1996). Nevertheless, her accounts of the pariah in European society and the imperative to politically incorporate minorities as groups arguably speak to the Muslim situation today and challenge prevailing liberal and liberal multiculturalist visions in terms not unlike those of the BSM (see Saunders, 2003).

Previously, I mentioned the criticism that Parekh and Modood are more in tune with liberal values than they acknowledge. Kymlicka (2001b) made this case in reviewing Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. I raised a similar question in reviewing Modood's *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Levey, 2009: 87). Joshua Preiss (2011) sees in Parekh's intercommunal dialogue 'latent Kantianism' and suggests that he is therefore inconsistent in his charges against liberals such as Rawls, Habermas, Kymlicka and Raz. I now think these sorts of observations miss the mark. Not, or not only, because, as Uberoi (2018: 11) points out, one may endorse equal participation, democratic representation, accountability and free speech without endorsing them *as* a liberal or *for* liberal reasons. Rather, because ambiguity and ambivalence around liberal values would be hard to avoid for the BSM scholars insofar as they recognise operative public values.

Parekh (2009: 38) writes that 'a set of basic public values...collectively define Britain a liberal society'. The values include 'individual liberty, equality of respect and rights, tolerance, mutual respect, a sense of fair play and the spirit of moderation'. He adds that Britain is also defined by its being a 'multicultural polity'. The key, then, to understanding the BSM's position on liberal values is context and change. 'Kantianism' may well have shaped or seeped into western political morality and culture, but context matters. No liberal democracy interprets and respects liberty, equality and accountability in the same way. And it genuinely matters that they are *our* society's and not others' interpretations, practices, negotiations and even compromises of these principles. That list of liberal values is indeed 'uniquely British', Parekh insists, because 'the British arrived at and internalised them in their own way'.

The BSM objects to liberalism as a form of monism, as though it were the only worthwhile game in town. Parekh (2000a: 110–111) writes that not 'absolutizing' liberal ways of life and thought 'opens up a vitally necessary theoretical and moral space for a critical but sympathetic dialogue with other ways of life'. This point effectively stands as the BSM's answer to liberal and feminist concerns about accommodating various gendered minority cultural practices (e.g. Okin et al., 1999). It clearly allows that some iteration of liberal values percolating as a society's public values may be reaffirmed, albeit always subject to contestation and review. But then a *national* liberal framework need not be the monistic bogey that troubles the BSM. Such a framework operates much like operative public values do. It captures something, not everything, of what people in a society care about.

It is an inheritance and vessel into which people pour their own meaning. (This shouldn't be news even to universalist liberal theorists, who spend most of their professional lives disagreeing about what they agree on.) To be sure, the liberal tradition contains strong universalistic and juridical currents that seek to prescribe entitlements, including cultural rights, in advance (Williams, 1995). They may not be poetry but these lines, too, may be thought of as valuable perspectives in the 'conversation of mankind'.

Liberal framework or not, choices must be made. Indeed, Modood joined me in making exactly this point in analysing the Danish cartoon affair (Levey and Modood, 2008b). So much of the commentary at the time was cast as a clash between liberal-democratic and illiberal religious values or whose position was most consistent with liberal democracy. We made the elementary point that liberal-democratic values do not speak with a single voice in the Cartoon affair, or any case for that matter. They only prompt questions: Which liberal-democratic value warrants prioritising in this case – liberty, equality, or fraternity? Which interpretation of each value is most relevant? To what extent does liberal practice depart from its own ostensible principles here? Might there be other pressing considerations beyond liberal-democratic values, such as how best to make a multicultural society work? When working well, a national liberal framework opens up intercommunal dialogue rather than closes it down (Levey, 2012, 2017).[10]

Dialogue, *in its broadest sense*, is an engine of change. Because operative public values are contextually contingent and not universal and hard-wired, they are open to reform. Which brings us to the BSM's advocacy of national identity as the vehicle for mediating a sense of belonging. As a political position agitating in behalf of subaltern groups, it is understandable why national identity might be a focus and why a broader, more inclusive national identity would be a goal. In the 1980s and 1990s, many if not most in British society were still wedded to the notion that being British meant being white. While part of the public backlash to the Parekh Report's (CMEB, 2000) call for a more inclusive definition of British identity was tabloid mischief-making, another part was genuine indignation at what was being asked. As noted at the outset, the question of national identity also imposes itself on Brits today courtesy of the four nations and devolution. So, there is a lot going on and a lot at stake in this matter. As an outsider (albeit with English grandparents), I can only offer some observations in the conceptual realm as I read the Bristol school scholarship.

Uberoi and Modood's notion of a 'civic multicultural national identity' is helpful. It captures the public/political aspects of a national identity and the importance of including cultural minorities in the national story and the state's symbolic repertoire. The opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games, for example, was widely praised for presenting an inclusive national story (Goodhart, 2013). Teaching the immigrant experience in school curricula and about the diversity of British society are further examples of 'multiculturalising' national identity. So far, so good. Complications enter the BSM's account with the place of culture more broadly in a national identity. The distinction drawn between 'Britain's identity'

(polity) and 'British identity' (personal) does not quite do, as even the latter is understood in terms of aspects of the polity that individuals share and identify with (e.g. laws, taxes, welfare, state symbols and ceremonies, national sports teams, pride and shame at what government has done in their name) (Parekh, 2008: 56–57; Uberoi and McLean, 2007: 42). Parekh notes that Britain differs from the four nations in not being a 'thick and comprehensive culture' (2009: 36). That need not mean that 'Britishness' is devoid of cultural content. In fact, the BSM's senior figures write a lot about British national culture in this broader sense, yet it moves in and out of view analytically. Some in the BSM seem to suggest not only that the public-cum-political domains of national identity should be remade but the broader national identity and culture as well. And, further, that this refashioning should be executed from 'above'. An intriguing internal disputation helps reveal the fly in the ointment here.

In *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Parekh (2000a: 231–232) argued that national identity should be defined in 'politico-institutional' terms, what all citizens can be expected to share as members of the same political community, and not more broadly in terms of cultural habits, dispositions and practices. Otherwise, he said, national identity was bound to be partial and exclude many in the community. It is a familiar argument, often dubbed 'civic nationalism'. Modood (2001: 249) responded that locating national identity in the political structure and values would undercut the idea of a British Islam or having ethnic identities adapt to the culture of a particular country. British Muslims 'want to be part of a British identity in a non-assimilationist way'. Moreover, a politically defined national identity would imply, incongruously, that French language is not part of French national identity. He pointed out that a political definition is at odds with everything else Parekh says about the interpenetration of culture and politics. According to Uberoi (2015a: 14), Parekh thereafter ceased defining national identity so narrowly. Yet, in his essay 'Being British', Parekh (2009: 36) still contends that 'British identity is political in nature' and 'limited to the civil and public sphere of life'.

Modood's points against this narrowness have force. However, they harbour a critical conflation. While it is inevitable that culture and politics combine in a national identity, it does not follow that forging a national-*cultural* identity should be the business of government. As Parekh elaborates so beautifully in places, national cultures develop through interaction and debate among a people over time (2000a: 230–236, 342–343, 2000b, 2008: 59–65). Even if a national identity were to be defined in political terms, it would not stop cultural minorities from contributing to and being part of a *national-cultural* identity, just as it does not stop the *lingua franca* from being part of that identity. A national-cultural identity is the dynamic outcome of the myriad interactions among all members of a political community (and often of geopolitical and cultural forces outside it).

Modood likes to cite foreign secretary Robin Cook's (2001) famous observation that 'Chicken Tikka Masala is now a true British national dish' (Modood, 2005: 199, 2007: 10, 2016b: 485, Uberoi and Modood, 2013a: 31). It is a rich example with many sides to it. One is Modood's point: it signifies the inclusion of minorities

in the definition of Britishness. It is also a good example of how a national culture develops through the interaction of ordinary folk and *not* through a politically orchestrated effort at forging national identity. Moreover, Cook's point was not simply that an Indian dish had become popular, but that it had been modified with sauce (the masala) to appeal to the British palate. It is a case of immigrant adaptation or, as Cook tells it, of the 'way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences'. Finally, the example illustrates the subliminal exclusions of cultural dominance even in the effort to be inclusive: for why should the product of people who have been citizens for more than a half a century be considered an 'external influence'?

The foreign secretary's observation resonated because it pointed to a cultural development in lived experience. Such acknowledgement is better than having a government deny that British culture is undergoing change. But whether or not gastronomy – and 'saris, samosas, and steel bands' multiculturalism more generally – can carry the weight of what Uberoi (2015a: 513) calls (and Meer, Modood and Parekh call for) giving 'British people "mental images" of Britain that include minorities', it is even more important not to get carried away and look to government for carriage over national-cultural identity. First, because that is not how a national-cultural identity develops. Second, because entrusting the definition of the national-cultural identity to government is laden with risk.

Given his remarks on the development of a national identity and culture and his caution about political intervention from on high, perhaps Parekh was reaching for a similar point in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. Not, as he stated it, that a national identity should be defined only in political terms, but that a national-*cultural* identity should not generally be the business of government. To their credit, most democratic political leaders have a well-founded sense of their lack of competence to direct a national culture. That is why, as prime minister, Gordon Brown's (2006) chosen British values – 'liberty for all, responsibility by all and fairness to all' plus 'enterprise' – appear so unexceptional and bland. Did Brits really want him nominating which dishes pass national muster and, by omission, which don't?

Liberal-democratic government has legitimate authority over the public/ political domains of national identity. The latter will include some cultural aspects such as language policy, school curricula, public holidays, and the anthem, ceremonies and symbols of the state. Government also has a responsibility to rebut exclusionary definitions of the national identity. Otherwise, the rest of a national-cultural identity is for the people to fashion. As they will. The other crucial point is that national cultures will implicitly find expression in and through government simply because those in government have typically internalised it to a greater or lesser degree. What is passed in to law, how one addresses the nation, the metaphors drawn upon, the style of public architecture commissioned, and so on, are all likely to reflect something of the prevailing culture and national character (Montesquieu, 1748/1989). It is thus important that parliaments and governments 'look like' and be compositionally representative of the community

that installed them and whom they serve (Phillips, 1995; Uberoi et al., 2010). The trouble occurs when politicians lose sight of the difference between the public-cum-political and cultural domains of national identity and politicise the cultural as well. Cultural conservatives routinely err in this regard. They seek to legislate a national-cultural identity without realising the violence that does to its dynamic complexity and integrity. The result is caricature and jingoism. Particular features of the culture are wrenched from the whole such that they look ridiculous. A favourite example is how then Prime Minister John Howard sought to have the word 'mateship' inscribed in the preamble to the Australian Constitution by way of a referendum in 1999. Fortunately, it did not get that far.

The Bristol school scholars' use of the Canadian and Australian cases is also ambiguous on the relation of the broader culture to national identity. These countries are cited as paradigmatic examples of how an official commitment to multiculturalism positively redefined their national identities (e.g. Modood, 2012: 42–43; Parekh, 2008: 64; Uberoi, 2015b: 13). Their stories are much more complicated.

On some accounts, Trudeau's top-down redefinition of Canadian national identity as a multicultural mosaic worked only too well. Hence, the stock jokes about Canadian identity being vacuous and amounting to little more than not being American. But many view Canadian multiculturalism as having failed to transform Canadian national identity 'all the way down'. It did not sate a restive Quebec. Its emphasis on minority cultural maintenance was withdrawn in the wake of Islamic militancy in the 2000s. And astute observers insist that Anglophone dominance remains alive and well on the ground outside Quebec despite the official line (Winter, 2011).[11] The idea that multiculturalism itself can constitute a new national identity is deeply problematic. People may strongly identify with multiculturalism, believe it captures an essential truth about their society and think it has improved their country. But simply offering up a mosaic of different cultural identities and traditions and being proud about it does not make a national identity in a national-cultural sense. As the Canadian experience shows, it actually requires repudiating such a national identity. Repudiating but not eliminating, as the elevation of the mosaic simply masks the force of the dominant culture still operating beneath the official rhetoric.

In Australia's case, the adoption of multiculturalism certainly entailed a repudiation of the White Australia policy, although this had been unravelling for several decades prior to the multicultural era. It also entails a rejection of requiring immigrants to culturally assimilate. However, as noted previously, there was no plan or aspiration to fundamentally alter the country's British heritage, symbolic institutions or cultural ethos. At most, there was and is an expectation that Australian identity and culture will inevitably change over time with the changing composition of the population. Australian multiculturalism is more about making room for minorities than deliberately making the country over (to the disappointment of many local multiculturalists).

When a country declares itself to be multicultural, it signals an acceptance of (some) cultural diversity and a letting-go of an *ideological* commitment to its prior

self-understanding. Such signals can undoubtedly enhance minorities' sense of feeling welcome and are vitally important. But they should not be mistaken for wholesale or deeper transformations in the national culture. Indeed, one might liken such declarations to the BSM's own rejection of monistic, universalistic liberalism while accepting liberal values contingently as operative public values. The hard-core, ideological self-understanding is abandoned for a similar-looking contextual and more contingent one. That opens up the possibility of a more inclusive self-understanding evolving. For that to occur usually requires political agitation and debate, just as the BSM envisions, and certainly requires time, usually across generations, which some BSM members seem eager to circumvent through political engineering.

Some of the BSM's calls for remaking the British national story and broadening what it means to be British clearly fall within the public/political domains, such as challenging racial or ethnic definitions of Britishness, including the immigrant experience in and contribution to Britain in national stories, and including cultural minorities in public events and state ceremonies. Whether every instance of majority cultural precedence (MCP) is therefore illegitimate or suspect – as Modood seems, at times, to suggest – is another question. Not every case of MCP involves non- or misrecognition of minorities, not every case of non- or misrecognition of minorities causes them harm and not every minority perceives MCP as a slight to its status. At stake here is whether justice and inclusion are compromised by a 'variable geometry' (to borrow Modood's phrase) of institutional arrangements that may differentially recognise aspects of the historic or established culture. This issue, however, warrants a more extensive discussion.[12]

Finally, belongingness can be promoted variously. It is not only addressed or fulfilled through the prism of national identity. Especially important is public rhetoric and the tone and tenor in which minorities are addressed and spoken about (Young, 2000: 57–70). In Australia, too many politicians and political commentators still speak to and about minorities condescendingly, and that is after 40 years of official multiculturalism. Symbolism and gestures also resonate deeply and should not be dismissed as tokenism. As I have noted elsewhere, the most memorable thing about President John F. Kennedy's visit to West Berlin in June 1963 in the shadow of the newly erected Berlin Wall was his uttering three sentences in German (Levey, 2013). It signified both his recognition that he had entered a different cultural landscape and that he had made an effort to speak in the local language. It was a gesture and nothing more. Yet, for his audience, it was also what was most affecting. Gestures matter in intercultural relations just as they do in interpersonal relations.

Conclusion

The BSM is distinctive in multicultural political thought. Fundamentally critical of liberal doctrine and highly assertive of cultural minorities' identities and right to belong, it is also accepting of liberal operative public values and supportive of a

remade national identity. That is an unusual combination of inclinations in any political playbook. While I have demurred on some finer points, there is no denying that the Bristol school's muscular multiculturalism involves high stakes politics. If the BSM is right about minority and group entitlements, majority cultural precedence, national identity, and what multicultural equality and belonging entail, it might be reason for many longstanding citizens to want to restrict entry to those who are culturally similar. Many Brexiteers seem to have arrived at such a conclusion. In that case, multicultural policy would mainly operate at the borders through immigration policy.

The Bristol school scholars are well aware of the risk of a backlash (Uberoi and Modood, 2013b), having also had a taste of it in the fallout from the Parekh Report (Parekh, 2001b). Where they 'ask for more' it is invariably in the most civil and reasoned way. The BSM oscillates politically as well as philosophically in that tense area between radical critique and provisional acceptance. As befits a nationally-committed politics, the BSM's challenge registers in public debate and is not only an important contribution to political theory.

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Notes

1. See, respectively, Dobbernack and Modood (2013); Dobbernack et al. (2014); Dobbernack and Modood (2015); Modood and Dobbernack (2011); Khattab and Modood (2015); Khattab and Modood (2017) and Modood and Khattab (2016). Disclosure: I have myself co-edited and co-authored work with Modood (see Levey and Modood, 2008a, 2008b).
2. Personal email to author, 8 February 2018.
3. Days after Cameron publicly condemned multiculturalism, the then Australian Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen (2011) delivered a speech on the 'Genius of Australian Multiculturalism', in which he dismissed the relevance of Cameron's concern because Australian multiculturalism always has been based on firm liberal-democratic values.
4. A notable exception is Spinner-Halev (2000).

5. Taylor (2001) rejects the criticism.
6. There are liberal nationalists who are not multiculturalists, David Miller (1995, 2016) being perhaps the most illustrious. They, of course, are even further removed from the BSM.
7. My reading of Kymlicka on this point is that he is unconvinced of the prospects of such 'forgetfulness' creating unity. He notes, for example, how it can insult minorities with historical grievances and sow disunity (Kymlicka, 1995: 238, n.14).
8. Economist Amartya Sen (2006) and philosopher Akeel Bilgrami (2014) might also be cited; however, their interventions on multiculturalism in the west have had little traction in multicultural political theory.
9. Meer (2013) cites Arendt once in passing. Arendt does not appear in the indexes of Parekh (2000a, 2008).
10. Modood (2012: 33) later situated his understanding of multiculturalism in a typology of 'alternative modes of integration' based on different conceptions of liberty, equality and fraternity.
11. I benefitted from discussions with Will Kymlicka in 2015 regarding this point.
12. For entries into this discussion, see Friedman (2015), Levey (2018), and Levy (2000).

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