**Constructing Segregated Communities:**

**Or How Britain Became ‘Muscularly Liberal’**

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For many years Britain, along with much of Europe, has debated the necessity for migrant communities to integrate fully into mainstream culture and society. In the last ten years the public sphere discourse about integration versus segregation has heightened in response to concerns about minority groups cutting themselves off, both in terms of cultural and religious practices and wider community engagement. Compounded by mediated fears about the ‘enemy within’ brought on by the spectre of international terrorism discursively linked to Islam, policies aimed at further integrating minority groups into British society have abounded. Prompted by continued narratives about the failure of the multicultural project to elicit positive inter-cultural community relations, examples of these policies can be seen in the Cohesive Communities initiative founded after the North of England riots in 2001, and which worked to support wider media and political narratives that problematised the perceived self-segregation of particular ethnic and faith groups.

While it has been widely argued that community cohesion initiatives have in fact functioned to reinforce the popular notion of a nation divided in terms of ethnicity and faith,[[1]](#footnote-1) in recent years this discourse of otherness has taken a new turn, one which re-asserts a neo-liberal hegemony through the lens of what Prime Minister David Cameron labelled ‘muscular liberalism’ in his speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2011. Given just weeks after the start of the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and on the day that the English Defence League[[2]](#footnote-2) marched in London, Cameron reiterated the by then popular notion that Muslims are dangerous when he argued that ‘we should acknowledge that this threat comes in Europe overwhelmingly from young men who follow a completely perverse, warped interpretation of Islam, and who are prepared to blow themselves up and kill their fellow citizens’.[[3]](#footnote-3) While this sentiment had been expressed by the previous Prime Minister Tony Blair in a speech given in 2006, shortly after the 7/7 terrorist attacks on London, the effect of Cameron’s speech was to link the radicalisation of young Muslims in the UK and global Islamist extremism with the purported failure of a set of principles and policies that sought to enable people from different ethnicities and faiths to pursue their individual cultural practices. Coming less than a year after German Chancellor Angela Merkel had identified the ‘utter’ failure of multiculturalism to bring people together, and at the same as French President Nicolas Sarkozy presented the problem of immigration to internal cohesion, Cameron’s speech was located in a context of retreat. Stating that ‘under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream,’[[4]](#footnote-4) he tapped into persistent popular anxieties in Britain and across Europe about the Muslim threat. For sections of the news media in the UK, his speech presented an opportunity to reiterate what by then had become an all too familiar trope: the failure of multiculturalism, the problem of self-segregation, and the spread of Islam across Britain and, indeed, the world.

In an attempt to unpack some of the debates surrounding the re-assertion of liberal (in)tolerance, this chapter will critically examine media and political discourses that suggest Muslim groups in Britain present a barrier to cohesive citizenship. I begin by outlining the specific context of British race relations in order to contextualise current public sphere accounts about the problem of segregated communities, before moving on to a consideration of how the past decade has witnessed a steady increase in negative discourses about Islam and Muslims. I will present this work within a discursive framework that orders identity positions in terms of Britain’s colonial past in order to show how such narratives work to reinforce the dominance of hegemonic liberalism.

**1 The Rise and Fall of British Multiculturalism**

The history of modern race relations in the UK – that is after World War Two – is much like the development of race relations in any other former colonial nation in that it follows a much longer story of ethno-nationalism. Solomos[[5]](#footnote-5) explains contemporary race relations in Britain by situating it within the context of historical racism. Here, he explains that migrant settlers, such as the Jewish and Irish immigrants who came to Britain between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to severe socio-economic and political conditions in their home nations, were regarded as a threat to established communities as they competed for jobs and resources. According to Solomos, political discourses of the time argued for tighter control of immigration and worked to legitimate racist policies that saw incomers unable to access basic housing and welfare. Discourses of otherness were therefore already well-established before the significant increase of South Asian and African-Caribbean immigration to the United Kingdom to meet the demand of labour shortages after the Second World War. The process of post-war de-colonisation and subsequent migration by former colonial subjects to the UK saw a transformation in discourses about race, identity and immigration led by politicians and media commentators attempting to come to terms with the loss of hegemonic dominance that came alongside the demise of the British Empire.

The political and media discourses that followed black[[6]](#footnote-6) migration to Britain from the commonwealth nations are well recorded.[[7]](#footnote-7) Whereas former colonial subjects had been granted limited citizenship rights prior to 1945, which situated them firmly within a colonial framework, the post-war, post-colonial situation demanded that immigrants were able to settle indefinitely: that they were now at home. The official recognition of former colonial subjects resulted in a volatile set of social conditions centred on the renegotiation of colonial subjects as full citizens. This real and discursive shift culminated in the race riots of 1958, and required serious political intervention in order to address unstable inter-cultural community relations. It is as a result of these conditions that within twenty years of the Second World War a range of parliamentary Acts[[8]](#footnote-8) had been introduced that at once sought to limit further immigration and to define the relationship between the post-war settlers and their host nation.[[9]](#footnote-9) New race relations legislation sat closely alongside renewed immigration policies aimed at post-war commonwealth migrants and their families. The introduction of such policies resulted in the by now well-worn assimilation / integration debate. The debate, which dominated political rhetoric for much of the 1960s, centred on two inter-related concerns: that all citizens should adhere to a set of laws and social mores that prioritise Britain and Britishness (assimilation): that they should *become British*; and the idea that new citizens would be able to engage in public life alongside the existing population and maintain their differences in private (integration).[[10]](#footnote-10) While Banton stresses that the debate was always a false dichotomy based on a misunderstanding of both concepts, the debate was never truly settled. Despite this it became popular to describe race relations in terms of an integrationist module that lasted well into the 1980s.

Moving on from the assimilation / integration debate, both of which sought to maintain the notion of British sovereignty, by the 1980s Britain began to adopt a set of equality measures that made efforts to encourage sensitivity toward difference.[[11]](#footnote-11) Such policies centred on the rights, recognition and inclusion of ethnic minorities in work, education and welfare provision that by the 1990s were understood under the blanket heading of multiculturalism. While it impossible to fully trace the development of multiculturalism in terms of its relationship to policy principles and practices in this space, it would not be contentious to argue that the current popular rhetoric about the failure of multiculturalism was written into its origins. Multiculturalism never had a true core. In fact it is probably fair to say that no-one really knew what it meant. It did not exist in a singular policy, but rather could be identified in the emerging equal opportunities discourse that, for example, was interpreted by local education authorities as teaching children about Hindu Gods alongside Christian theology. As such it can be argued that multiculturalism never has been truly embraced in Britain. Instead it slowly emerged as an idea that opposed national identity. Here multiculturalism was ridiculed as ‘political correctness gone mad’, and newspapers derided efforts to provide an inclusive space for all members of society. It was only when the MacPherson Inquiry Report into death of Stephen Lawrence[[12]](#footnote-12) in 1999 presented the idea that endemic racism existed in public institutions that New Labour asserted its commitment to multiculturalism as a key part of their political mandate.[[13]](#footnote-13) This form of multiculturalism moved beyond the politics of recognition outlined in the work of Charles Taylor[[14]](#footnote-14) and in the educational policy work where it had made its home, to state that public institutions must demonstrate cultural awareness and tolerance toward difference. However, its fall from grace was equally swift. In fact, by the time Cameron gave his speech in 2011, the view that multiculturalism had failed was enshrined in popular rhetoric.

Built on the premise that the drift toward multiculturalism in the 1980s had tolerated citizen’s rights to be different, social commentators such as Yasmin Alibhai-Brown[[15]](#footnote-15) began to argue that the acceptance of otherness had instead resulted in a fractured society. Indeed rather than uniting around a singular British identity, it was argued that multicultural Britain had fragmented to form a series of parallel communities with no perceivable core. In his widely cited treatise ‘against multiculturalism’ Kenan Malik[[16]](#footnote-16) expressed the view that cultural pluralism and the demand for equal recognition had resulted in a society that lacked a ‘common yardstick’. Arguing that under the guise of liberal tolerance Britain had opened itself up to a form of cultural relativism that failed to assert the positive aspects of British liberal democracy, that freedom for all demanded the oppression of some views and practices, Malik pronounced:

Why should I, as an atheist, be expected to show respect for Christian, Islamic or Jewish cultures whose views and arguments I often find reactionary and often despicable? Why should public arrangements be adapted to fit in with the backward, misogynistic, homophobic claims that religions make? What is wrong with me wishing such cultures to ‘wither away’? And how, given that I do view these and many other cultures with contempt, am I supposed to provide them with respect, without disrespecting my own views?[[17]](#footnote-17)

Of course the paradox of the argument he presents is evident in the very words he uses. As stated above, at the heart of multiculturalism is the idea that everyone can assert their difference and that those differences should be recognised by others. The anti-multicultural argument is based on the premise that this leads to a situation where everyone is equally different, that this leads to conflict and, in fact, a lack of recognition that opposes the first directive of the multicultural project. Malik too wants to maintain his position, but he does not want to recognise another’s right to maintain theirs. The superficial logic of this argument is that if we do recognise others it will lead to conflict (as with Malik’s case against multiculturalism), and that if we do not recognise others, it will too lead to conflict. The shift in the anti-multiculturalist rhetoric is that we must reform around a common identity.

**2 [Dis]integration**

Forming the basis of the liberal assertion of nationalism, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*[[18]](#footnote-18)report pursued the logic of the above argument. While the report appeared committed to multiculturalism, the introduction issued a warning about the possible side-effects of the demise of national community against the tidal wave of different voices competing for attention. In the foreboding assessment of social relations in 21st Century Britain the report states that:

Each of these changes involves dislocations in the way people see themselves, and in how they see the territorial, political and cultural space – ‘Britain’ – where they meet, and where they seek to build a common life. What will emerge? Possibly and deplorably a Britain where people are divided and fragmented among the three separate countries and among regions, cities and boroughs, and where there is hostility, suspicion and wasteful competition – the politics of resentment.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Presenting multicultural Britain in terms of a politics of resentment that opposes the much cited politics of friendship cited in the literature advocating multicultural, the report argued that too much difference was in danger of pulling the nation apart. Despite this warning, it insisted that Britain had within its power the ability to create a new type of society. This would be a society united around a story of Britain, a national imaginary that recognised its long history of successful adaptation to the waves of migration that had come before. Asserting that there had never been one view of what it meant to be British, the report suggested that we take the opportunity to acknowledge our differences and move forward to find new commonalities. Sounding a bit like assimilation, at the heart of his recommendations was the idea of a ‘community of communities’. The community of communities would see people connecting between their separate social and cultural, public and private spheres and envisioned that a sense of shared unity would emerge from such interactions.

Examining the discourses of identity that followed publication of the report, Fortier[[20]](#footnote-20) notes that despite acknowledging the real multi-ethnicity of Britain, the national media response seized upon the report’s community of communities narrative as one that sought to dismantle what it *meant* to be British. By presenting the idea that Britain had never been monocultural, the report undermined the popular national imaginary of a Britain dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon norms, values and practices. However, instead of resisting an account of national identity that opposed this white imaginary, Fortier argues that media narratives actually emphasised the proud tradition of immigration, inclusivity and liberal tolerance to difference. In much the same way that media organisations had struggled to accept the idea of an institutionally racist police force in response to the MacPherson Report a year before,[[21]](#footnote-21) they now asserted the view that such reports undermined the ethos of an open and inclusive Britain. Indeed, that it undermined the fact of multiculturalism in Britain. What are we to make of this assertion of contented plurality expressed in the national media? Does it reveal acceptance of marginalised ethnic groups? Fortier contends that rather than revealing the national media as champions of multiculturalism, the narratives can be read in terms of a politics of pride. These, she argues, present the ethnic population of Britain in terms of their successful integration to dominant values; their Britishness. In their assertion of British values, citizens of all faiths, ethnicities and cultures were divided in terms of their expressions of pride in being British rather than by the colour of their skin.

We can perhaps observe this practice in the media representations of the North of England riots in 2001. Just as Kundnani[[22]](#footnote-22) argued that the Runnymede Trust Report provided an opportunity to revise the political multicultural agenda in order to pursue a set of principles surrounding core citizenship rights and responsibilities, Rhodes[[23]](#footnote-23) suggests that the riots that took place across the North of England the following year cemented the turn away from inclusive multiculturalism toward a more hard line approach to race relations in the UK. The riots took place between April–July 2001 in the northern towns of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford with lesser cited disturbances in Leeds and Stoke-On-Trent. As with all such cases there are competing discourses as to how the riots came about. In their analysis of events leading up to the riots Bagguley and Hussain[[24]](#footnote-24) suggest that a mix of factors contributed to the violence. Here, they note that while there were a number of flashpoints, including provocation from racist organisations The National Front and Combat 18, the roots of the trouble can be traced back to existing racial tensions brought about by long-standing structural inequalities in the areas affected. Arguing that young people of South Asian origin were responding to feelings of marginalisation, Bagguley and Hussain suggest that the wider structural factors that influenced the build-up to the riots, including widespread unemployment, lack of investment and urban degradation, were subsumed by narratives that problematised those already living at the periphery of society.

Rhodes[[25]](#footnote-25) refers to the ‘colour-blind racism’ debate in the USA to argue that the subsequent media and political discourses surrounding the riots worked to divert attention away from structural racism in two key ways. In the first instance, he argues that the public sphere debate that followed the riots centred on the effect of actual or rumoured far-right marches in the areas affected by violence. Racist groups like the National Front were designated outcasts, outside ‘normal’ mainstream society. Because they were peripheral it could not be argued that they represented the views of ordinary citizens. The second factor is that the young men, predominantly from a Pakistani and Bangladeshi background, who violently protested to the planned marches, were branded as abject members of a community that chose to live apart from mainstream society. Instead of having legitimate cause for protest, they became signifiers for an unknown and potentially volatile community. At this point both groups became empty containers for forms of extremism. This symbolic shift worked to conceal any genuine grievance about structural inequalities that may have triggered the violence.

**3 Funding a Return to Ethno-Nationalism**

The events surrounding the disturbances in the North of England in 2001 lie at the heart of the community cohesion narrative that has dominated race relations discourse in the UK over the past decade. Within months several reports had been produced examining both the local disturbances and the set of circumstances leading up to the events.[[26]](#footnote-26) The most prominent of these, the Cantle Report[[27]](#footnote-27), stressed the role that structural conditions played in motivating the violence, and painted a picture of disparate communities turning inward in response to the poverty and exclusion they faced on an everyday basis. It was in this report that we first see the phrase ‘parallel lives’ appear:

Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The report was critical of structural inequalities – access to decent public services, educational arrangements and high unemployment – the areas affected, that made the likelihood of equality for all challenging. In response it made a series of 67 recommendations centring on the rights and responsibilities of all members of British society. Within the recommendations were those that put forward the notion of community cohesion that continues to dominate political discourses around race and community relations in the UK. Here, it presented the idea that cohesion might be achieved if those living on the faith and ethnic margins of UK society participated in mainstream social, cultural and political life. Media discourses about the report recommendations centred on two ideas; first, to put emphasis on the notion that South Asian communities fail to integrate into mainstream society; and second, shift the responsibility to integrate onto South Asian communities.[[29]](#footnote-29) By repositioning responsibility away from mainstream society, media reports presented a discourse that introduced the concept of problem ‘Muslim communities’ that has never since abated.

The official discourses that followed the Cantle Report cemented this account of parallel lives by further presenting the disturbances as a problem of segregation. For example the Ousley Report[[30]](#footnote-30) based on the Bradford disturbances, explicitly cited segregation as being at the heart of misunderstandings between the various groups competing for space and resources. Although critical of an institutional failure to provide adequate services to the communities affected, both reports had the counter effect of shifting the blame – centred on the South Asian communities in question – to a problem of faith. Holohan and Poole argue that part of the reason behind this discursive shift lay in the media explanations that worked to assert the notion of liberal tolerance through their use of Asian spokespersons. Here, newspapers and broadcasters reports turned to representatives from (various) ethnic and faith backgrounds to articulate the problem of Muslim separatism in Britain in order to denounce the violence said to have emanated from ‘Muslim enclaves’. In this way media institutions were able to position themselves as non-racist while at the same time presenting reports that othered a discursively distinct group. Phillips[[31]](#footnote-31) argues that part of the reason that the British media was successful in re-ordering British Muslims to the ethnic margins was because it mobilised a blame discourse based on the ‘desire for self-segregation by British Muslims in particular.’[[32]](#footnote-32) In this way ethnic ghettoization was presented as a choice, instead of the effect of structural inequality. The notion of choice is important if we look back to Fortier’s assertion that media narratives surrounding the Runnymede Trust Report centred on the presentation of Britain as a liberal democracy; open, inclusive and tolerant as long as citizens adopt the norms and values of the host society.

Taking place a decade before the riots, the Salman Rushdie affair is often cited as the first mediated event in the UK to present the Islamic faith as a central indicator of cultural deviance. Prior to this point much of the media coverage of Muslims and the Islamic faith centred on international relations, the most dominant narrative being the Israeli Palestine conflict.[[33]](#footnote-33) Yet, while media coverage of ‘Muslims’ as a potentially dangerous category had already began to rise in the years prior to the 2001 riots, the public sphere debate about the North of England disturbances transformed the dominant narrative of South Asians living in Britain. Indeed the events in 2001 are regarded by many as a turning point in the definition and problematisation of Muslims as a homogenous community of others.[[34]](#footnote-34) Because the separation between ‘good’ Asian and ‘bad’ Asian was based on an idea of faith it removed the need to talk in terms of race or ethnic difference. Faith – Islam – was a particularly potent signifier for difference, because while it was centred on centuries old constructions of the exotic and unknown other,[[35]](#footnote-35) its contemporary story centred on the disassembling of old forms of structural authority. This idea was made famous in Huntingdon’s ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis,[[36]](#footnote-36) where he argued that the reordering of global politics after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had opened up space for new narratives of difference to emerge. Here, communism was no longer the main threat to a North American and European version of liberal democracy and attention was refocused onto the Middle-East and its associated religious conflict. We can perhaps look to Wieviorka’s[[37]](#footnote-37) categorisation of racisms to see how this process works. He puts forward two types of racism – differentialist and inequalitarian – to reveal how narratives of difference centre on 1. establishing the complete ‘otherness’ of the outlying group, and 2. are determined by a dominant belief system that categorises the other as inferior. For Wieviorka, the two work together to form a discourse of difference that almost transcends logical interrogation because in the first instance the other has been rendered totally beyond recognition. In this regard ‘race’ is a fluid category. It becomes a container for any kind of difference that fails to fit the model of the dominant social order.

The view that global narratives of otherness centring on faith have grown over the past 20 years is held by many.[[38]](#footnote-38) The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington just a few months after the North of England riots, reinforced the notion of Islam as a growing global and local problem. Because Islam is not tied to any one nation or ethnic group it can be constructed as a container for all ills of society. Islam is a fluid category because it can move beyond borders. In the UK the spectacle of violence created by the constant stream of images showing the Twin Towers fall, supported the mounting unease about local Muslim populations and re-ignited fears about the enemy within. This is what Bauman[[39]](#footnote-39) called liquid fear, where the unfixed quality of Islam meant that it became an empty signifier within which to fill a whole range of dominant ideologies created to reinforce the structural authority of the west. This can be observed in the wars that took place against Afghanistan and Iraq in the wake of 9/11. In this regard the discursive construction that linked Islam, terrorism and the Middle-East, worked to reinforce race as a primary indication of abject otherness.[[40]](#footnote-40) Despite race being a displaced category, it remained racialised in the media accounts that followed. Just as Islam became synonymous with Middle-Eastern terrorism, British Muslims were transformed into an ethnic category that sought to render them knowable.

The discursive reconstruction of Islam as precarious to liberal democracy intensified in the post-9/11 environment. It is within this context the notion of multiculturalism became especially problematic. This was in part due to the way that multiculturalism had been conceived principally as a movement toward difference and separation. It was particularly challenging in the British context because it was set against a backdrop of colonial race relations that rejected difference unless it had been tamed by the adoption of dominant British identifiers such as language and dress. While assuming such identifiers inferred ‘pride’ in being British, those that expressed their difference, or who ‘chose’ to live separately, were understood to have rejected the social mores of their host country.[[41]](#footnote-41) The argument went: if people are not invested in the nation as citizens how can we know if they are friend or foe. By the time of the London bombings in 2005, measures were in place to address the problems of separatism. The impression created by official documents was that British Muslims lived in self-created ghettos, which seemed to confirm the worst fears of the British public: we have something to fear from the unknown other; what are they getting up to in their faith schools and Mosques? So, while the reports that emerged from the riots set the ball rolling on the discussion about ‘what to do with segregated communities’, discourses surrounding the global terrorist threat made the implementation of measures to encourage identification with Britain imperative.[[42]](#footnote-42) In this regard, alongside increased immigration controls implemented under successive policy regimes, the 2000s has so far witnessed a plethora of measures intended to ensure cohesion.[[43]](#footnote-43) Community cohesion has since become the central component of a political philosophy that espouses communitarian ideals[[44]](#footnote-44).

Although such ideals have been debunked by those who insist that the segregation currently blamed on British Muslims is actually informed by other factors, for example by ‘white-flight’ from areas heavily populated by ethnically diverse populations,[[45]](#footnote-45) they held sway in popular discourses that sought to demonise Muslims. Despite much academic work discrediting the underlying reasons for the pursuit of community cohesion, it remains central to policy-making surrounding immigration. The current Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, recently reignited discussion about segregated communities, arguing that ‘they’ must make more effort to integrate. Such rhetoric plays into the hands of a public discourse that seeks to reinforce retreat from multiculturalism.

**4 What Now for British Race Relations?**

Perhaps we can recognise the absurdity of the prevailing failure of multiculturalism narrative against the celebratory discourses of cultural difference presented in more recent national events such as the Olympics and the Jubilee. To think about this we can look to Gilroy[[46]](#footnote-46) who has branded multiculturalism with the zombie category. Following the earlier work of Beck[[47]](#footnote-47) the idea asserts that contemporary race relations are structured in two ways. First is the ordering of social relations to serve political goals. Political commentaries attempt to assert a top down view of society as multicultural, cohesive or divisive or otherwise. Such narratives work to serve the needs of the dominant hegemonic order. So despite its most recent demise in Cameron’s 2011 speech, multiculturalism was reanimated in order to present a self-congratulatory picture of a Britain unified under the banner of the Union Flag. But for Gilroy such articulations do not accurately capture the lived reality of most citizens. Here, we see the second function of the zombie category, which is to recognise the everyday interactions of people and how they impact upon our understanding of who we are and where we live. According to Gilroy the zombie (multiculturalism) is reanimated in these everyday interactions. They are fluid and indefinable. They may change depending on social setting or individual action and they cannot easily be captured in language or in politics. In this sense communities are separate only in the minds of the institutions attempt to define them according their particular goals. While it is true that parts of towns and cities across the UK are disconnected in terms of one or another faith or ethnic group, including white working class and middle-class ‘enclaves’, it does not means that there is no mutual understanding of how people negotiate these spaces.

In Modood’s many works[[48]](#footnote-48) he has dismissed claims that multiculturalism has failed. He argues that to assert the death of multiculturalism is to deny the recognition of the other. This unwillingness to recognise another’s point of view works to present the idea of liberal tolerance where everybody lives under (white) British cultural norms. Like Islam, this resembles the concept of multiculturalism itself, and ultimately the suspicion that it is useless or meaningless: what exactly is it and how do people use it? Therefore multiculturalism becomes an empty signifier of the attempt to reconcile difference to the centre. We can link this idea back to the 2001 riots and the start of the community cohesion discourse that has dominated political rhetoric for much of the 2000s. Because multiculturalism is an empty signifier – it can be celebrated as a uniting force or condemned as separatist – community cohesion was introduced to reunite absolute difference with dominance. In this reconciliation British Muslims became a remainder because they did not integrate to the ideals of liberal democracy. As soon as a remainder is created media stories work to amplify difference through representation. This amplification of abject otherness was seen in the media discourses about parallel communities after the North of England riots and continues to work through more recent representations of Muslim radicalism.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Evident in all of these stories is a narrative that positions Islam as an extreme form of identification and legitimates the view of Britain as liberal democracy. This is what we see happening in Cameron’s 2011 speech. After years of debate about the appropriateness of multiculturalism to describe Britain, finally a new term was provided: ‘muscular liberalism’. Cameron’s version of muscular liberalism will accept difference as long as those differentiated by colour, faith or culture, shake off their past and adhere to a certain set of rules about what it is to be a British citizen. Of course, racism remains concealed within this tide of contradictory political rhetoric that both celebrates cultural diversity and guides us toward the view that multiculturalism is no longer fit for purpose precisely because it encourages difference. Yet, all of these narratives of Britain work to hide the reality of living in a discursively racialised society, where many of its citizens must negotiate their everyday interactions through a set of historical (colonial) constructions of self/other relations.

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2. According to its website The English Defence League (EDL) is a ‘human rights organisation’ protesting the spread of Islamic extremism. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. David Cameron “PMs Speech at Zurich Security Conference,” HM Government, accessed July 2013, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130109092234/http://number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. David Cameron “PMs Speech at Zurich Security Conference,” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain,* *Third Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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8. Parliamentary Acts passed between 1945 – 1965 included the British Nationality Act (1948) and The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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17. Kenan Malik, “Against Multiculturalism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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