Lilya Mikhavchuk

RETHINKING PATTERN OF IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH POLITICS

From the mid-20th century onwards the United Kingdom began to experience large-scale inward migration which proved to be permanent. Thus international migration grew into an influential factor of social and political change. Newcomers have broadened ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that aggravated old and generated new ethno-cultural conflicts and social tensions in a society. In recent decades immigration has turned to be one of the most acute problems in British politics. Along with the scale of immigrants arriving in the UK the issue of integration of long-term residents into the British society has come to the fore. Social disturbances, which took place since 2001, evoke critics of policies on integration of immigrants into receiving society the government has been carried out over the past decades. Hence, the vulnerability of public order revealed the urgent need to develop new adequate framework for migrant integration. This article aims to analyze current developments in British politics in the field of migrants' integration.

Up until the late 1940s the United Kingdom didn't receive large numbers of immigrants. Instead, it was rather a country of emigration. However, in the immediate post-war period the situation has changed. In the second half of the last century the United Kingdom along with other West European countries appeared among the most likable immigrants' destinations. The overwhelming majority of immigrants came to Britain from the British Commonwealth – mostly Asian and African countries. Therefore, in a quite short period of time numerous and influential communities of non-white population has been formed in the former metropolis. Today the United Kingdom is a country with considerable experience of receiving immigrants who belong to different ethnic groups and religions. From a social point of view, Britain has transformed into a conglomerate of ethnic and religious enclaves.

According to the United Nations statistics, the United Kingdom is the third largest immigration country in Europe. In the last thirty years the number of persons born outside the United Kingdom, but living in the country has doubled – in 1990 there were 3.6 million foreigners in the United Kingdom and in 2013 it has increased to 7.8 million people[1]. We

---

[1] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2013). Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin. United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013 <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/TIMSO2013/migrantstocks2013.htm> (2014, August, 28)

should emphasize that from around 1993 there is a stable positive net migration in the UK. This means that the rate of those who left country is lower than of those who came. For example, in 2012 about 498,000 persons came to the UK and about 321,000 left thus the net migration has amounted about 177,000 persons[1].

Given the official figures, present-day Britain has numerous native-born ethnic minorities together with a large proportion of non-UK born population which is rapidly growing. Estimates of the resident population of the UK by nationality in 2012 indicated that one in eight (12.4 %) of the population of the UK were born abroad (7,679,000). Approximately two thirds of the non-UK born population were born outside of the EU (5,071,000). In 2012, one in thirteen (7.8 %) of the population of the UK had non-British nationality (4,852,000) and over half of non-British nationals (2,509,000) hold non-EU nationality[2].

2011 Census data showed that 13 % (7.5 million) of the resident population of England and Wales were born outside the UK, which is up from 4.6 million people in 2001. The most common countries of birth are India, Poland and Pakistan. The most common non-UK nationality is Polish (558,000 residents); it is followed by Irish (372,000) and Indian (315,000). These three countries together account for 30 % (1.2 million) of all foreign nationals and 22 % (1.7 million) of the non-UK born[3]. 2011 Census estimates of the population by ethnic group showed that 86 % of the population of England and Wales were of "white ethnicity"; 2.2 % – "mixed/multiple ethnic groups"; 7.5 % – "Asian/Asian British"; 3.3 % – "Black/African/Caribbean/Black British"; 1.0 % – "other ethnic group"[4]. Farther, the fastest growing ethnic group is the "Black African population". Its population has more than doubled from 485,000 to 989,628 between 2001 and 2011. It is followed by immigrants from Bangladesh whose numbers during this period increased from 283,000 people to 447,201 alike that of Pakistanis from 747,000 to 1,124,511.

---

[1] Long-term Migration into and out of the United Kingdom, 1964-2012. *The Neighbourhood Statistics Service.* <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc123/index.html> (2014, September, 12)

[2] Population by Country of Birth and Nationality Report, August 2013. *Office for National Statistics.* <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_324663.pdf> (2014, September, 12)

[3] Detailed country of birth and nationality analysis from the 2011 Census of England and Wales. *Office for National Statistics.* <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_310441.pdf> (2014, September, 12)

[4] 2011 Census, Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales 2011. *Office for National Statistics*. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf> (2014, September, 12)

The aforementioned evidence confirms that immigration has explicitly changed the ethnic and cultural composition of UK's population.

It is widely recognized that migrants mostly contribute to the development of their host country. Despite this fact, the permanently growing scale of immigration provokes social grievance. In a last decade "race relations/immigration" is firmly in top three "main issues facing Britain today" along with "economy" and "unemployment". An analysis of opinion polls shows that British attitude to immigration has undergone significant changes in recent years. Until late 1990s there was not much concern about immigration and immigrants in British society. Only once in a while public anxiety about migrants aroused because of racial disturbances[1]. Back in June 1997, when Labour won general election only 3 % of UK citizens saw "Race relations/immigration/immigrants" as among the most important issues facing Britain[2]. In 2001, worries among population about race relations and immigration have risen to 14 %[3]; in 2005 up to 33 %[4]. In 2010, the rate slightly declined and was around 29 %[5].

While levels of migration increase, big ethnic groups are beginning to emerge. These groups are often isolated. As a result, social exclusion of migrants, xenophobia, racism, interethnic and interfaith conflicts occur. Consequently, because of difficulties of migrant integration, the issue of immigration frequently comes to the fore in public and political debate in the United Kingdom. Basically, the government should take measures to overturn the negative stereotypes on race and ethnicity which exist in minds of a significant part of the UK population; create provisions to maintain a positive attitude of the white British population to ethnic minorities and multi-cultural nature of British society. However, the leading parties are frequently held hostage by strongly politicized public opinion.

More than fifty years long history of non-white immigration from the so called New Commonwealth countries has transformed British society

---

[1] Page, B. (2009). *British Attitudes to Immigration in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

[2] Ipsos MORI - Political Attitudes in Great Britain, 20-23 June 1997. *Ipsos MORI.* <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2201> (2014, September, 12)

[3] MORI Political Monitor, June 2001 Political Attitudes in Great Britain. *Ipsos MORI.* <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=1414> (2014, September, 12)

[4] MORI Political Monitor June 2005. *Ipsos MORI.* <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=511> (2014, September, 12)

[5] June 2010 Issues Index. *Ipsos MORI.* <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2624> (2014, September, 12)

into a truly multi-cultural society. This has made the problem of defining an adequate model of migrant integration to be a very acute political issue, although the formal model of migrants' integration has never been clearly outlined in the UK. Yet, from around 1960s British authorities have widely embraced multicultural rhetoric. That said, British multicultural model can best be described as the policy of liberal non-interference towards public manifestations of ethnic differences[1]. Furthermore, unlike those countries where multiculturalism was declared as the state's official policy to deal with cultural pluralism Britain has never done so.

Many observers conceive that multicultural approach in Great Britain originates from the famous speech of the then Home Secretary R. Jenkins announced in 1966. In his speech he has stated that integration was "… not a flattening process of uniformity, but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance"[2]. Since that time good relations between communities have been actively promoted in British politicians' rhetoric. But in practice British authorities haven't done much to create favourable conditions for this goal. Only few public policies have been presented but traditionally they were inconsistent and lacked proper funding.

However, there was developed a considerable anti-discrimination legislation. The successive Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968, 1976 prohibited any kind of discrimination in public places, in employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, services and facilities. The Race Relations Act of 1976 was of particular importance as it established a publicly funded Commission for Racial Equality. The Commission was aimed at monitoring facts of racial discrimination and providing the government with recommendations in the field.

Most explicitly multicultural rhetoric was embraced in the late 1990s when New Labour came to power. The Party is considered to be the main adherent of multicultural ideology in the UK. For several decades it has consistently and very actively asserted multiculturalism as the main principle on which British society should be based: "Unlike many other countries, British nationality has never been associated with membership of a particular ethnic group. For centuries we have been a multi-ethnic nation. We do not exclude people from citizenship on the basis of their race or ethnicity. Similarly, our society is based on cultural difference,

---

[1] Малахов, В. (2012) Мультикультурализм в Западной Европе: по ту сторону риторики. *Сайт Российского Совета по международным делам.* *<http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=1155#top>* (2014, September, 18)

[2] Quoted in: Favell, A. (2001). *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain.* London: Palgrave, 104.

rather than assimilation to a prevailing monoculture. This diversity is a source of pride"[1].

The New Labour's more than ten years tenure has seen significant legislature changes in the field of anti-discrimination. In 2000, Race Relations (Amendment) Act extended the application of the 1976 Race Relations Act to the police and other public authorities as well as set out a general duty on public authorities to promote race equality. In 2003, when the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force, discrimination against workers because of religion or belief became unlawful. In fact, this Act was a legal exemption for minority religious practices, including in the workplace. In 2006, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act recognized incitement to religious hatred as an offence. In 2006, Equality Act outlawed discrimination on goods and services on the grounds of religion and belief. This Act also created the Equality and Human Rights Commission which merged the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission into one body. In 2010, the successive Equality Act replaced all existing anti-discrimination enactments, and extended protection across almost every equality strand. These acts covered virtually all of equality aspects and protection of the rights of persons of a different race, culture and religion. These provisions afforded ethnic and religious minorities ground for preserving their cultural practices and religious norms even if they contradict those of receiving society. It is worth mentioning that with all these initiatives the indigenous Britons appeared to be the group which was in a position close to the discriminated one.

Around the turn of the millennium, concerns about the sustainability of the multicultural approach have been high on the public and political agenda. This was largely due to the upsurge of ethnic tensions in areas densely populated by immigrants and their descendants. Some commentators assume ethnic clashes in May 2001 to be the starting point in the serious debates about the insufficiency of multiculturalism in the UK.

In fact, social disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the spring of 2001 were the largest over the previous decades therefore received wide public resonance. In response to social anxiety, Home Office initiated the establishment of the commission to investigate into the situation. The commission has introduced the report, entitled 'Commu-

---

[1] Home Office (2001). *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain* <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/250926/cm5387.pdf> (2014, September, 12)

nity Cohesion', which summarized the deep polarization of interethnic relations in society[1].

Since the multicultural doctrine became popular it has never been lacking criticism. The main rebuke stems from the fact that such model of newcomers' integration contributes to the isolation of migrants in ghettos and does not facilitate social interaction between minorities and indigenous population. That is, according to the abovementioned report, what has happened in the UK. The experts pointed on the opposite life strategies of indigenous Britons and the descendants of immigrants: "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". The report warned that such situation increased the potential for conflicts in the British society. At the same time, it has been stressed that neither communities nor political parties and public organizations virtually took no pains to establish a dialogue between communities; they also did nothing to clearly define those values which should underpin the notion of what it means to be a citizen of a modern multi-cultural Britain. As a possible solution to the situation, the Report offered a promotion of community cohesion with a strong emphasis on the prioritization of a British citizenship which should be founded on the mutual approval of "common principles".

Striving to improve the situation, the government intended to strengthen immigrants' allegiance to the British state by introducing citizen ceremony and language proficiency test. In 2002, a new law concerning citizenship and migrants (The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002) came into force. This Act obliged all those who wanted to receive the right of abode to pass the "Life in the United Kingdom Test". The test required good English language proficiency, knowledge of British history since 1945, of the most important state institutions as well as knowledge of British life-style. It was assumed that even if immigrants didn't embrace British customs and traditions, then, at least, they would become familiar with the values of the host society to contact with the indigenous population successfully.

In April 2004, a sensational statement about the failure of multiculturalism was announced by the head of the then Commission for Racial Equality Trevor Phillips, who is a Muslim and a member of the Labour Party. In an interview with "The Times" he urged the government to

---

[1] Home Office (2001) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle.* <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2001/12/11/communitycohesionreport.pdf> (2014, September, 12)

withdraw the policy aimed at building a multi-cultural society because British society did not benefit from it any more[1]. But it was an inappropriate time for such statements and it fell on deaf ears of public and policy-makers.

The terrorist attack on London in 2005 seriously affected the British attitude to multiculturalism. After the tragic events, the word multiculturalism has become firmly established in the British political rhetoric, but it has acquired a negative connotation. Despite the fact that among the major political parties, there still were serious differences on many issues, their attitude to multiculturalism suddenly felt exactly the same, they all started to consider it as a disastrous one[2].

London bombings of 2005 forced the government to think about the need for change in policy towards immigrants. Given that the instigators of these actions have been of immigrant origin, born and brought up in the UK, the problem of the development of measures for the integration of persons already living in the country became crucial. To begin with, the government offered a limitation of the flow of new immigrants. This measure has nothing to do with migrants integration but it was important to demonstrate government's activity to reduce citizens' dissatisfaction.

On this background, in December 2006 Tony Blair gave speech on integration and multiculturalism. In his speech, he stated: "We like our diversity. But how do we react when that "difference" leads to separation and alienation from the values that define what we hold in common? For the first time in a generation there is an unease, an anxiety, even at points a resentment that very openness, our willingness to welcome difference, our pride in being home to many cultures, is being used against us. […] Our tolerance is part of what makes Britain, Britain. So conform to it; or don't come here"[3]. He appealed to all – immigrants and indigenous Britons – to respect the religion and culture of each other and live together and particularly gave a message for Muslims to integrate into British society. At the same time, T. Blair made it clear that the policy of creating a multi-cultural society which was actively carried out throughout all the years of the Labour Party tenure will remain unchanged.

[1] Baldwin, T., Rozenberg, G. (2004) *Britain 'must scrap multiculturalism'.* The Times. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article1905047.ece> (12 September 2014)

[2] Bagehot: In praise of multiculturalism. *The Economist*. <http://www.economist.com/node/9337695> (2014, August, 28)

[3] Blair, T. (2006) *Our Nation's Future - multiculturalism and integration.* <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20070119120000/http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10563.html> (2014, August, 28)

The events of July 7, 2005 and earlier the **September 11, 2001 terrorist** attack on the United States draw particular attention to Muslim communities in debates about integration. Many commentators point out that from the 21st century the discourse on migrants and minorities integration has shifted from "ethnicity" to "religion"[1]. That is why, in present-day world, speaking about migrants' integration one cannot help but mention Muslim community.

Indeed, Muslims to a lesser extent than any other immigrants demonstrate the ability, and most importantly, the willingness to integrate into new environment which is culturally and religiously alien to them. As many commentators argue, Muslims are very reluctant to identify themselves with any nation state; ethnic and especially religious identification prevails. Therefore, the presence of a large number of Muslims in the UK makes the issue of their integration particularly topical. Their inability to be part of the Western world leads to the growth of extremist attitudes, social alienation and hostility.

In the UK, the number of Muslim population rapidly grows. In the 2011 Census, the second largest religious group were Muslims with 2.7 million people (4.8 % of the population). Muslims are the second (after Christianity) biggest religious group and have grown in the last decade. Between 2001 and 2011 there has been an increase in people who identify themselves as Muslims from 3.0 % to 4.8 %[2]. Worth considering that Muslims constitute the fastest growing group of the population.

Population growth leads to the increasing political influence of Muslims in Britain. As immigrants with permanent residence have the right to elect and be elected to local authorities the leading political parties have begun an active struggle for the votes of Muslim electorate back in the 1980s. Traditionally, British Muslims were more inclined to vote Labour due to its loyal attitude towards people from third countries in contrast to Conservative's adherence towards tougher immigration policy and assimilation of immigrants[3].

After the terrorist attack of 9/11, 2001 and 7/7, 2005, when the attitude of indigenous Britons toward Muslims significantly deteriorated,

---

[1] Abbas, T. (2005) *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure,* London: Zed Books; Vertovec, S., Wessendorf, S. (2010). *The Multiculturalism Backlash European discourses, policies and practices*. London: Routledge, 50-71.

[2] Religion in England and Wales 2011. *Office for National Statistics*. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html> (2014, August, 28)

[3] Колпинская, Е. (2008). Социально-политическая активность мусульман Великобритании. *Вестник Томского государственного университета, 312,* 84-88.

some Labour changed its position with respect to multiculturalism and moved closer to conservative stance, who called for the strengthening of social cohesion and national unity. Despite the unrest, which came about in the Labour Party, its leaders were still firmly committed to the ideology of multiculturalism. Simultaneously, the authority of the Labour declined among Muslims who used to support the Party. This has happened mainly because the tightening of immigration policy and the adoption of tough anti-terrorism laws. But particularly severe discontent of Muslims was caused by Blair's endorsement for war in Iraq. So, disappointed in Party's policies they switched to support the Liberal Democrats[1].

Despite existing problems in the field of migrant integration and community cohesion, the New Labour government in the time of its tenure remained committed to the multicultural ideology, although after 2001 riots and especially 2005 London bombings multicultural model came by a strong community dimension. In contrast to the Labours, the Conservative Party has never shared this ideology and has always insisted on using of assimilationist model of migrant integration in the UK. Being in opposition D. Cameron – the Party's leader – frequently attacked multiculturalism. For example, in February 2008 at a debate hosted by the Commission on Equality and Human Rights he tried to draw attention to the danger posed by the current domestic multicultural policy: "For too long we've given in to the loudest voices from each community, without listening to what the majority want". Cameron blamed multiculturalism for creating "cultural apartheid" in the UK: "Of course we should respect different cultures. But we shouldn't encourage them to live apart"[2]. "State multiculturalism" as D. Cameron named it, according to his words, is a "wrong-headed doctrine that has had disastrous results. It has fostered difference between communities" therefore Britain should become a "cold place" for all immigrants from other countries who refuse to integrate into British society[3].

After David Cameron took the Cabinet he gave a speech on February 5, 2011 at an international security conference in Munich, where he announced the failure of "state multiculturalism" in Britain. This statement

---

[1] Blackhurst, R. (2004). A New Force in British Politics. *The New Statesman*. <http://fpc.org.uk/articles/277> (2014, August, 28)

[2] *David Cameron: Extremism, individual rights and the rule of law in Britain.* <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20080414170431/http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=142585> (2014, August, 28)

[3] *David Cameron: Extremism, individual rights and the rule of law in Britain.* <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20080414170431/http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=142585> (2014, August, 28)

synchronized with the similar declarations of the German Chancellor A. Merkel and French President N. Sarkozy. By this affirmation D. Cameron wanted to distantiate oneself from a multicultural rhetoric that gained so much resistance in recent decades. For the first time in many years, the Cameron government has attempted to draw a line under the rigid controversies in society regarding the use and effectiveness of policies which favoured ethnic minority groups. Indeed, the policy pursued by successive British governments toward minorities has turned to be unable to achieve the main goal: to build a tolerant society where minorities and indigenous population get along well and share mutual values. Moreover, such policy gave rise to serious problems, precisely entailed a formation of stratum of the population – mostly second-generation immigrants – of whom D. Cameron stated: "In the UK, some young men find it hard to identify with the traditional Islam practiced at home by their parents… But they also find it hard to identify with Britain too… Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values"[1].

In the Munich speech, the Prime Minister indicated the threats facing the United Kingdom in recent years. The biggest of them he named terrorist attacks on the country, which are carried out by home-grown citizens. At the same time he draw a clear dividing line between Islam as a religion and Islamic extremism, calling the latter a political ideology that attracts people, "torn off from life" which have no roots in society. The Prime Minister promised to radically revise this policy: to replace "passive tolerance" with "muscular liberalism". Instead of encouraging separation of citizens within their subcultures David Cameron suggested to develop a "sense of shared national identity". It should be based on a set of values shared by all citizens, including freedom of speech and religion, democracy and the rule of law, and equal rights for all, regardless of gender, race, and religion.

Notwithstanding sharp attack on multiculturalism from the Conservatives, after they took office in 2010, no major changes in the field of inter-ethnic relations, rights of ethnic and religious minorities took place. Former anti-discrimination legislation still operates and cultural pluralism is still being supported. Probably, this is largely because Con-

---

[1] Cameron, D. (2011). *PM's speech at Munich Security Conference.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference> (2014, August, 28)

servative Party likewise Labour share the same fundamental principles of equal rights, the rule of law and strongly oppose racism.

Within immigration issues, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat's coalition government chiefly cared about numbers hence restrictions on entry into the country have been presented. In a speech on April 14, 2011, the Prime Minister announced the major steps to be done in this vein. In particular, suggested actions included cap on the non-EU economic migration, halt issuance of fraught student visas, reform of the family visa route and end to permanent settlement of those who came by the temporary routes[1]. In general, announced plans and the steps already taken have shown some progress in solving problems. Restrictions on visas and residence permits for migrants from countries outside the EU were imposed. By virtue of this the government, apparently, was planning to partially restore the balance in the country in favour of the European culture. Furthermore, the tests of English language and British culture for immigrants applying for work in the country became tougher. For the same purpose it was also planned to introduce more in-depth study of culture and history in the UK schools.

To sum it up, there's no doubt that immigration has dramatically changed British society. This makes initiatives towards migrants' and their descendants' integration of particular importance. With that in mind, integration policy framework has never been precisely set in the UK. From 1960s onwards British political leaders explicitly embraced multicultural rhetoric in dealing with migrants' integration, although multiculturalism has never been legally framed in the UK. In practice, British model of multiculturalism frequently diverges from the real meaning of multicultural policy. However, there have been some practical confirmations of multicultural approach, for example, creation of the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976, also the particular emphasis placed on anti-discrimination and exemption of group rights. The present Conservative-Liberal Democrat's coalition government tends to deviate from the multicultural rhetoric of the previous decades as it is blamed to have segregated British society. Overall, it seems that D. Cameron has condemned multiculturalism on the basis of its general unpopularity in recent years. That said, there is little evidence to back D. Cameron's retreat from multicultural model.

---

[1] Cameron, D. (2011). *Good immigration, not mass immigration.* <http://www. webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20111208003901/http://www.conservatives. com/News/Speeches/2011/04/David_Cameron_Good_immigration_not_mass_ immigration.aspx> (2014, August, 28)