British National Identity in the 21st Century

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Defining British national identity has never been an easy job as "being British is a variable ideology." This paper aims to analyze how "Britishness" has been and is being reshaped in the new global context by the new Labor Party since 1997. The New Labor interpreted British national identity as a conjunction of historical past and political future, the past being British cultural heritage and the future referring to a "new and creative Britain." Facing the challenges of the new information age and the country's own ethnic and cultural complexity, New Labor led by Tony Blair responded with "rebranding Britain" into a democratic, creative, modern, and plural state. With regard to multiculturalism, great effort has been made to promote diversity, tolerance, and the sharing of core British values for integration. Influenced by recent tension resulted from terrorist activities, Labor is shifting more emphasis on the duty to integrate. Gordon Brown, the new Labor Prime Minister, is promising fairness in tapping everyone's potential, so as to achieve harmonious fusion of people. The reconstruction of national identity calls efforts from all parts to contribute and compromise.

Defining British national identity has never been an easy job. "Being British is a variable ideology," as depicted by Richard Eyre (2004) in an article published in *The Guardian*. It is true that there has never been an unchanging definition of "Britishness." Notions of "Britishness" have been challenged by post-WWII national and international trends such as the loss of empire, black and Asian immigration, entry into the European Union (EU), devolution, globalization, etc. For decades, the country has been facing the challenge of redefining or reconstructing "Britishness" in order to forge a more solid nation-state. At the turn of the century, the interpretation of British national identity as a conjunction of historical past and political future seems a safe ground with certain scholastic consensus. Morley and Robins pointed out in *British Cultural Studies* that the core about what exactly "Britishness" might be made to mean in the contemporary world is "a central dilemma about how to combine the past and the future" (Morley & Robins, 2001, p. 4). For the purpose of holding the country together and winning elections, appeals to national identity, particularly the defining of "Britishness", have always been part of the party politics. It seems that to a certain extent it is left for the government to foster a feeling of "Britishness" among its citizens and it is the role of politicians to define what being British means. Therefore this paper aims to analyze how "Britishness" has been and is being reshaped in the new global context by the new Labor Party since 1997.

Blair's New Britain: Democracy, Creativity, Youthfulness

In the notion of "Britishness" by Morley and Robins, the past refers to British cultural heritage, which has become "central to our understanding of who we are" (Morley & Robins, 2001, p. 8) and which is what Britain sells to tourists as well as media audiences; the future largely adopts the attitudes, values, and ways of life that the New Labor has been engaged in

promoting, best known of which is "creative Britain" (Driver & Martell, 2001, p. 464).

To Labor modernizers, the Conservative appeals to "Britishness" they inherited, either the "putting the Great back into Britain" of Mrs. Thatcher or the Baldwinesque images of village cricket and warm beer from John Major in the early 1990s (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 143), were seen as exclusive, nostalgic, and nationalistic. What they wanted to cultivate was an image of the British as free traders open to new ideas and new ways of living.

Creating New Britain

Facing the challenge of Britain's displacement from the center of the world stage and trying to come to terms with its own ethnic and cultural complexity, the New Labor government, led by Tony Blair, in its initial period in office responded with a campaign of "rebranding Britain"—the creation of a "New Britain" with the country's distinctive strengths in the creative and cultural industries, and the creation of a new image for Britain as "Cool Britannia." In doing so, it meant drawing deep into the richness of the British character: "Creative. Compassionate. Outward-looking…Old British values, but a new British confidence" (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 143). With devolution and Europeanization, Blair preferred to identify New Labor's sense of "Britishness" with tolerance, openness, and internationalism, a kind of "enlightened patriotism" as he called it (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 144).

The strength of "Blairism" is its willingness to confront and keep pace with the changing times. In Tony Blair's words, the Labor Party had to "modernize or die" (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 223). The most notable aspect of the Labor modernization program is its constitutional reforms that which derive from a liberal pluralist tradition not shared by the previous Conservative governments. Blair argued in his Britain Speech on March 28, 2000: "True Britishness lies in our values, not unchanging institutions" and "It is not parliamentary sovereignty but parliamentary democracy that is central to British identity." On devolution, which challenges the centralist culture of British politics, Blair held that "we are stronger together…Let Scotland and Wales do what they do best locally. Let the UK do what it is right to do together" (2000). On connection with Europe, he argued that "standing up for Britain does not mean being anti-Europe." For him, "standing up for our country means… standing up for the core British values of fair play, creativity, tolerance, and an outward-looking approach to a world" (Blair, 2000). Added by the House of Lords reform, the incorporation of *European Convention of Human Rights* into British law, Britain is now moving from a top-down centralized country to a devolved and more democratic state. With written constitutions introduced for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, proportional representation in local assemblies and the *Human Rights Act* greatly empowering the judiciary and challenging the sovereignty of parliament, British constitutional reforms will be the most enduring political legacy of "Blairism" and look set to deepen in the next decade.

The new British national identity Blair wanted to build, as analyzed by Driver and Martell (2002), mainly emphasized three aspects, namely, "patriots and populists in the 'giving age,' 'creative Britain,' and 'the young country'" (p. 145-148). By "patriots and populists in the 'giving age'," Blair positioned the Labor Party as the "patriotic party" with a strong sense of history and tradition, as a "people's party" (whose budget was named the "people's budget") serving public good and aimed to inspire a sense of community by

appealing to national pride underpinned by the collective values and institutions such as social justice and National Health Service. By "creative Britain," Blair meant to tap the potential of the British nation as an inherently creative people for the historical inventions initiated in Britain. Lastly, "the young country" indicated the characteristics of being creative, inventive, dynamic, and forward-looking, which Blair wanted the country to be associated with in the age of globalization.

In retrospect, New Labor has to great extent succeeded in inspiring the fairness, creativity and, modernity in British national identity. New Britain is a fairer society: Blair introduced a national minimum wage system to protect the basic interests of low-incomers and promoted reforms in social welfare and education, leading to considerable increases in the health service fund and education budget. New Britain is "creative Britain" in tune with the developments of a post-industrial information society, with its creative industry responsible for $157 billion out of $2.2 trillion of global revenues in 2000 (Howkins, 2002). Britain has displayed its particular strengths in creative work and innovations, whether in science or in the cultural industries, industries crucial to a service- and information-dominated post-industrial economy. Britain is leading the world in design, pharmaceuticals, financial services, and telecommunications (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 147). Labor encouraged the hi-tech enterprises through tax cuts and invested more into education, especially equipping the schools with computers. The "young country" image boosted by the New Labor was an attempt to come to terms with modernity and to focus on contemporary culture and the industries of the post-industrial information society. Blair himself has been the first young Prime Minister to grow up in the 1960s. The Department of National Heritage under Thatcher government was changed under Labor into the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. In appealing to the interests of the young, Labor designed their free entry to museums and art galleries. Greatly helped by innovations in digital technology, modern cultural industries in Britain were seen to have undergone rapid change and have played an important role in Britain's long-term economic boom in the past decade. The fact that Spice Girls' music could bring in more annual revenue to Britain than its entire iron and steel industry displayed both creativity and youthfulness of the country.

Of course, everything has its two sides. Blair's Britain image is felt to be too "London-based", largely celebratory and too youth-tailored, "reducing national identity to a corporate brand" for sale (Parekh, 2000), which is a popular tendency for post-modern society.

British Identity in Bidding for the 2012 Olympic Games

To illustrate more vividly the image of Britain Blair has and Labor is still aiming for, I think the 2005 promotional film *Make Britain Proud* for bidding for the 2012 Olympic Games would serve as a good example, as Olympic bidding is based on the "model of national representation" (Polly, 2004, p. 12) and bidding films are expected to disseminate representations of national identity and demonstrate the best the country can offer.

In the film, we see a historical sense raised at the beginning as the camera shoots the significant buildings of London, such as the Tower Bridge, Buckingham Palace, the Globe Theatre, Hyde Park, and British pubs (in one of which David Beckham is doing crossword puzzles), all "iconic sites" for past glory and representatives of the nation's "uniqueness." Then we see the "species of national genius" (famous literary people and quality film stars),

reminding people of the richness of British culture. Then, not surprisingly, members of the Royal Family are given a place, with Princess Ann, gold medal holder of 1972 Olympic Games, riding a horse in Hyde Park and Prince William practicing rowing, since monarchy adds a unique dimension to the country (McGuigan, 2000, p. 5-7). After all this history and culture, the presence of the ethnic minority sport-icons (like Dame Kelly Holmes and Amir Khan) is good evidence to the recognition of the diversity and "more inclusiveness" of "Britishness" of the present. What is especially impressive to me is the dominance of sparkling ideas, which is a fascinating visualization of Blair's "creative Britain" rhetoric. From using tires as dumbbells to employing umbrellas—an indispensable outfit of traditional English gentlemen—as duel sword, from taking green light as a starting pistol of a foot-race, to the final vault in the construction field, touches of creativity and imagination manifest itself throughout the film. Such is the picture of "Britishness" in the 21st century. It craftily combines Britain's golden past and not-too-distant future. Its values extend beyond a bid for Olympic Games to a bid for British national identity.

The logo for the 2012 Olympics (see Appendix at the end of the paper) unveiled on June 5 provided a further evidence of the authority's orientation. The jagged emblem, based on the year 2012, comes in a series of bright shades of pink, blue, green, and orange ("London 2012 Logo Revealed") and includes the five Olympic rings emblazoned onto the "0" and "London" onto the "2." According to the London 2012 web site, the new emblem is "dynamic, modern, and flexible" and "it will work with new technology and across traditional and new media networks" ("London Olympic Logo: Could You Do Better?"). Lord Coe described this logo as "ambitious, interactive, and youth-friendly" ("London Olympic Logo Lambasted"). However, the public comments are highly negative[1], criticizing it as having "no London landmarks," "not representing London or the UK in any way," "too vibrant," and "too expansive" (logo revealed). Bob Neill, 2012 Olympics spokesman for the main opposition Conservative Party, was disparaging about Coe's optimism and described the logo as "hideous" ("Lambasted"). So Labor's aspiration for a modern and young Britain has to be more cautious.

Blair's New Britain: Multiculturalism

New Labor promises that New Britain will be inclusive, plural, and diverse. They have taken concrete measures to move toward the goal. Yet multiculturalism is such a complicated issue that any discussion of it deserves cautiousness.

Multiculturalism: Variety of Approaches

In today's globalized world, diversity is more and more a reality that contemporary nations have to live with and deal with. The relation between solidarity and diversity has become one of the key political and cultural issues and it carries particular weight in the British case as Britain has transformed into a multi-racial and multi-cultural society since the 1950s. National mentality tends to regard diversity, difference, and complexity as a problem for fear of the possible cultural and political "fragmentation" or "disorder" that might be aroused. So negotiating a way between an ideal Unitarianism and a pragmatic pluralism is a challenge facing policy-makers.

In debates concerning multiculturalism in Britain, I think five approaches[2] are worth mentioning: (a) the revisionist cultural nationalism of David Miller, (b) constitutional patriotism of Habermas, (c) the civic nationalism of Linda Colley, (d) the post-national cultural approach of the Runnymede Trust's Report, and (e) the multicultural citizenship of Tariq Modood.

What Miller advocates is a kind of cultural incorporation, or in other words, a renewed and revitalized system of integration in which the "new minorities" are encouraged "to participate in the continuous redefinition of national identity" (Robins, 2001, p. 481), thus given an opportunity of "being British" in their own ways. For me, this view is more traditional, conservative, and majority-oriented.

Habermas offers an alternative approach by arguing for "constitutional patriotism," which supports the functional fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation. He believes that "societies can be held together by political culture if that political culture is inclusive of social and cultural rights." But this "constitutional patriotism" has been criticized as being "too weak a bond" and for "lack of emotional 'thickness'" (Robins, 2001, p. 481).

Linda Colley (1999) offers a third approach. In her December 1999 lecture in Downing Street entitled "'Britishness' in the 21st Century," Linda listed the postwar challenges to customary notions of "Britishness" and put forward "Citizen Nation"—a constructive focusing on citizenship rather than an obsession with identity: "It would be far more productive to concentrate on renovating British citizenship, and in convincing all of the inhabitants of these islands that they are equal and valued citizens, irrespective of whatever identity they may select to prioritize." She considers herself radical for proposing a "21st century citizen's monarchy."

The Runnymede Trust's Report on *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain* (2000) is one of the most radical contributions to the contemporary debate on British culture. Chaired by Lord Bhikhu Parekh, the report starts by rejecting the imagined or illusory singularity and homogeneity of 'Britishness': "British national identity has always been more diverse than it is normally imagined to be." It then points out that contemporary global transformations are making diversity both more apparent and more unmanageable: "They have shaken the unified conception of "Britishness" hitherto taken for granted and have injected a sense of fluidity and uncertainty into what was formerly experienced by any as a settled culture." Though the need to maintain shared values and social cohesion is acknowledged, the report discusses more, and puts a positive value on, diversity and difference in British society. By characterizing culture as "constantly adapting and diversifying", the report wants to convey a sense of the cultural complexities of "post-national" everyday life in Britain (Robins, 2001, p. 483-484). To a great extent, the Runnymede Trust's Report serves as a counter-balance to David Miller's policy of integration.

Finally, Tariq Modood (2007) recently put forward the notion of "multicultural citizenship." Since the 7/7 London underground bombing, the idea of multiculturalism has been severely attacked, or labeled a "scapegoat" in Modood's word, for accentuating social division and undermining national identity. Reasoning that difference has to be related to things people have in common, and noting that the commonality that most multiculturalists emphasize is citizenship, Modood argues for a citizenship which is "seen in a plural, dispersed, and multi-logical way and not reduced to legal rights, passports, and the franchise." He suggests that a good basis for, or accompaniment to, a multicultural citizenship is a

national identity. Drawing people's attention to successful models as Canada, Australia, and Malaysia, where multiculturalism seems to have worked, he holds that multiculturalism is integral to a nation-building project.

Multiculturalism: Blair's Vision and Labor Policy

With the speeding-up of globalization and the coming of more and more immigrants, ethnicity has been an increasingly important theme in British social identity. The country, already in a headache to share a common sense of values among the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, is now facing a more complicated situation of growing cultural diversity. "Britishness" has been seen from the 1990s more like a set of interlocking identities. Multiculturalism begins to gain momentum and poses to the identification within contemporary British society more difficulties. However, to unite the country and reduce racial tension, there must be a set of core values that could unite all the citizens around. So, politicians of all sorts have attempted to repair and reconstruct those old identities.

Obviously what Labor inherited from the Conservative government was "narrow nationalism"—*Not Easy Being British*, according to a book name. Mainly dealing with racial issues, the book begins with a general pessimistic preface:

> It is not easy to identify the values, processes, and customs which are distinctively British; not easy, having identified them, to be in all aspects proud, grateful, and loyal; …not easy to establish and protect public policies and laws which recognize and rejoice that there are many different ways of being British, with sources of strength in different continents, religions, histories, languages. (Modood, 1992, p. xi)

The fact that it was not easy being British in the 1990s could find easy evidence in Charles Moore's article in the *Spectator* in October 1991, in which he argued for an explicitly racist immigration policy (Modood, 1992, p. xii).

Taught by the racial conflicts of the 1980s, Blair had to learn to balance. Therefore, New Labor's "Britishness" is meant to be tolerant and outward-looking, promising a "New Britain" that will be "inclusive, pluralist, and internationalist" (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 150). In his 2000 speech, Blair argued that standing up for Britain means standing up for "the core British values of fair play, creativity, tolerance, and an outward-looking approach" as well as having the strength to put these values into practice (Blair, 2000). Blair accepted Britain's multi-ethnic and multicultural character as an essential component of its identity: "Blood alone does not define our national identity . . . . It is precisely this rich mix that has made all of us what we are today" (Blair, 2000). In his speech to the Labor Party Annual Conference on October 2, 2001, Blair stated, "We celebrate the diversity in our country; get strength from the cultures and the races that go to make up Britain today" (Blair, 2001). In conclusion, New Labor's first term stressed diversity, tolerance, and shared values.

Labor has been criticized as paying only "lip service" to the cultural diversity (Driver & Martell, 2002, p. 151). Yet I feel enough evidence can be found to support my understanding that the Party has done a lot to promote both diversity and integration. Here we should not be swayed by either the attempted or the successful terror attacks in the UK in the past three years. For me, they are more an outcome of Labor's foreign policy—Blair's support for the

war against Iraq—than of his internal race policy. In Blair's reign, substantial measures were taken for multicultural coexistence. Devolution was put into practice to meet diversified local needs. In 2000, the *Race Relations Act 1976* was revised into the *Race Relations Amendment Act 2000*. The *Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003* was codified. In 1997, the labor government approved the first Muslim primary schools within the state sector, a demand which had been rejected by the Swann Report on Multiculturalism in the 1980s and by the Commission for Racial Equality in the 1990s (Modood, 2005, p. 206). It has also expanded state funding to minority faith schools. In 1997, a Muslim umbrella organization to speak for all Muslims, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), was formed under the encouragement of the Labor Party, making prompt and direct dialogue between Muslim communities and the Labor government a reality. Measures were also taken to nurture common British identity. First, citizenship study was made a compulsory part of the national curriculum for British secondary schools in 2002. Second, the UK made it compulsory that all foreign "ministers" of religion, including imams, show a basic command of English if they want to work in Britain. Third, new citizenship ceremonies were introduced, during which new British citizens swear loyalty to the Queen and respect for the UK rights. Contrasting with former policies which encouraged immigrants to maintain their cultures and way of life as they like, the revised UK nationality laws require immigrants seeking UK citizenship to have knowledge of English language, British history, culture, and customs. A short test was designed for applicants to pass and a government-approved citizenship and language class was provided. The UK Government hopes that the language and "Britishness" requirements can ensure that all new citizens are able to fully take part in British society and have a sense of belonging.

Yet Blair's mission was destined to be difficult as the issue of diversity/pluralism and commonality/solidarity seems paradoxical. The response of the public and Labor Home Secretary Jack Straw to the Runnymede Trust's Report on *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain* could be good evidence of the difficulty of Blair's task. After its publication in 2000, the report was severely protested for its analytic deconstruction of the taken-for-granted meaning of "Britishness" as a racial category. Jack Straw reacted immediately and spontaneously by calling people to stand up for "Britain," for "patriotism," and for "pride in our country" (Robins, 2001, p. 485). Alan Wolfe and Jytte Klausen accused Parekh of "underestimating the extent to which social solidarity requires strong national cultures" and argued that in a period of change and disruption, "Britons still need a unifying idea of "Britishness" that can encompass diversity but is not eclipsed by it" (Robins, 2001, p. 485). In the wake of the Report, what is obvious is that thinking on questions of culture and identity in Britain does not move easily. Negotiation and compromise have to be very cautious. The media-generated moral panic at the turn of the millennium about the invasion by "illegal immigrants" and asylum-seekers further confirms the British conservativeness towards multiculturalism. The Labor government's tough measures in response to asylum-seekers seem to show that New Labor can be as exclusive as the Conservative, but to reason that Labor is racist simply for this is not well-based. The attacks on London's underground by four British-born Muslim youth on July 7, 2005, the day right after London won the bid for 2012 Olympic Games, have taken identity issue to the center of British political debate.

While some people question the effectiveness of multiculturalism, some blame one-sided multiculturalism for having facilitated community segregation. By calling the 7/7 bombers

"the children of Britain's own multicultural society," Gilles Kepel pointed out that the bombings have "'smashed' the implicit social consensus that produced multiculturalism 'to smithereens'" (Modood, 2007).

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, with Tony Blair's approval rating was as high as 87 percent, he was able to say Labor "celebrate[s] the diversity" (Canadian Immigration Hotline, 2007). In the 2005 Olympic bidding, he was also able to present "a compelling, modern vision of Britain: a country at ease with different races, religions, and cultures" (Blair, 2006). But after the 7/7 bombing, Blair was not able to be as confident. In response to a question on whether Britain should maintain multiculturalism during a press conference in early August 2005, the Prime Minister stated, "Most people understand that you can have your own religion and your own culture," but "coming to Britain is not a right…staying here carries with it a duty. That duty is to share and support the values that sustain the British way of life" (Blair, 2005). With an approval rating of just 32 percent in 2006—the lowest ever (Canadian Immigration Hotline, 2007), Blair had to care more. Three days after the ratings were released, his tone turned conservative immediately. Speaking in June 2006, he blamed "mass migration" after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 for "rising crime and the decay of British society" and for "triggering 'seismic' social changes round the world [including] global terrorism…"(Canadian Immigration Hotline, 2007). As a result, Blair's "Our Nation's Future" speech at Downing Street on December 8, 2006 was entitled "The Duty to Integrate: Shared British Values." It gave more stress on the right balance between integration and diversity. Pointing out the Olympic Bid vision of social harmony and the terrorist attacks in London the day after the winning of the bid, Blair raised the serious question, "How do we react when that 'difference' leads to separation and alienation from the values that define what we hold in common?" He stated: "The right to be in a multicultural society was always, always implicitly balanced by a duty to integrate, to be part of Britain, to be British and Asian, British and black, British and white." Those who support separateness and those who shun integration both contradict the fundamental values that define Britain today: "tolerance, solidarity across the racial and religious divide, equality for all and between all" (Blair, 2006). However, active participation and integration is more founded on equal opportunities in social and political life. So it is extremely urgent for Labor to take measures to tackle the country's "democratic deficit" to promote a better sense of home belonging.

Consolidating British Identity: Gordon Brown's Mission

In 1998, Gordon Brown, as the then Labor Chancellor of Exchequer, was echoing the party line when he stated that "My vision of Britain comes from celebrating diversity, in other words a multiethnic and multinational Britain….I understand 'Britishness' as being outward-looking, open, internationalist with a commitment to democracy and to tolerance" (Alibhai-Brown, 2000). With Tony Blair's resignation in June 2007, Brown has to face all the challenges.

Gordon Brown inherits a legacy of two visions of national identity, one of the Conservative New Right and the other of New Labor. Margaret Thatcher stressed "parliamentary sovereignty, individualism, and the ethnic unity of the British people" (Parekh, 2000, p. 10); minorities should be assimilated into the British way of life. John Major did not make much policy difference though his tone was more modest. William

Hague, Conservative leader after Major, in his speech entitled "Identity and the British Way", confirmed "parliamentary sovereignty," "the spirit of enterprise and individualism," and added "open and mobile society" and a "country of neighborhoods" as the core of British national identity (Parekh, 2000, p. 11). He appreciated Britain's multi-ethnic character but refused to take it as an integral part of British national identity. The Conservative accused Labor's constitutional reform and European policy for undermining all the constituents of British national identity. This New Right vision was criticized by Bhiku Parekh as being "narrow, exclusive, dogmatic, intolerant, backward-looking, and uninspiring", lacking "democratic legitimacy" (Parekh, 2000, p. 12). In comparison, Blair's version gave much more balance, yet has often been commented as highly rhetorical or paying only lip service.

After the 7/7 bombing, Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown argued for the need to revive and revalue British national identity in a number of speeches, most notably at the 2006 annual conference of the Fabian Society on January 14, 2006. In this speech entitled "Who Do We Want To Be? The Future of Britishness," Brown presented a new version of "Britishness," which was depicted as "liberty for all, responsibility by all, and fairness to all" (Brown, 2006). He believes that this new version is not about common blood and culture, not based on a shared heritage, but on a certain set of shared core values. Compared with Blair's position, Brown's version emphasizes more on broad general human values. The problem is that such values, even if they could (singly or in combination) be given a distinctive British mark, are "too complex, and their interpretation and priority too contested, to be pressed into the service of meaningful definition" (Modood, 2007).

He also blamed multiculturalism for "pushing communities apart" by "overemphasizing separateness at the cost of unity" in his "We Need a United Kingdom" speech of January 13, 2007. Continually failing to emphasize what bound the British people together as a country, "multiculturalism became an excuse for justifying separateness, and then separateness became a tolerance of—and all too often a defense of—even greater exclusivity" (Brown, 2007).

Brown became Prime Minister in late June 2007. Then what is his manifesto of Britishness and will his manifesto arouse national consensus and ease?

In his inauguration speech, Gordon Brown promised that Labor will continue to change. He identified his priorities of change in housing, education, and the NHS. Labor will also continue constitutional settlement for a stronger democracy, with the government giving more power to Parliament and both government and Parliament giving more power to the people and local government. In the world arena, Britain will continue to shoulder international obligations. Coming to multiculturalism, Brown condemned racial prejudice and discrimination: "Our way of life is to reject the prejudice and discrimination practiced by those who preach xenophobia and racism." He assured fairness in tapping people's potential: "Also, no matter your class, color, or creed every individual citizen has the right to rise as far as your talents take you." He then called for respect for "the shared British values of liberty, civic duty and fairness to all" and demanded "responsibility from all: to learn English, contribute to and respect the culture we build together" in return for "opportunity for all."

Brown has met two serious challenges. The first one is the growing separateness of Scotland. The Scottish National Party (SNP) defeated Labor in local elections and is overtaking Labor as the major party in the region, arousing public concern about the possibility of Scottish independence in the near future. (The situation is the same in Wales.)

Devolution for almost a decade seems to have not led to a diminution of separatist agitation, but a growing sense of it. On devolution and separateness, Brown clearly stated twice, both linked with the 300th anniversary of the Act of Union creating the UK. In his "We Need a United Kingdom" speech, he warned people of the dangerous drift in anti-Union sentiment today, saying, "For while it is healthy to recognize the distinctiveness of each nation, we will all lose if politicians play fast and loose with the Union and abandon national purpose to a focus on what divides." He pointed out that the Union was founded not just on the respect for diversity, but also on institutions that bound the British people together, such as the monarchy, the Parliament, the Armed Forces, the NHS, the BBC, and the National Insurance. Therefore, "it is by showing what binds us together that we will energize the modern British patriotic purpose we should all want to see" (2007) In *Stronger Together*, a pamphlet for the Fabian Society co-written with the Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander delivered in April 2007, Brown and Alexander argued powerfully that Scotland and England are stronger together. Both authors outlined why Scotland benefits both economically and politically from remaining part of the Union, e.g., more employment and a more powerful international voice under the background of globalization and argued that it would not make economic sense for Scotland to break away from the Union with England and Wales. They regarded the SNP's politics of "grudge and grievance" as refusing to recognize these economic realities (Brown & Alexander, 2007).

Brown's second challenge came in just a few days after his inauguration when two terrorist bombing attempts occurred, one in Piccadilly, London on June 29 and the other in Glasgow on June 30, for which Brown made a security speech to MPs in Parliament on July 25, 2007. Apart from talking about detailed security defense measures, he stressed the urgent need to do more work in strengthening citizenship education for promoting national cohesion. And government will also "support a new skills qualification in citizenship and community cohesion for faith leaders, sponsor English speaking imams, and propose interfaith bodies in every community in the country to build greater understanding." He also promised "funding for a BBC Arabic channel and an editorially independent Farsi TV channel for the people of Iran" (Brown, 2007).

In his first speech to 2007 Labor Party Conference as leader of the Labor Party, Gordon Brown highly praised Labor's 10-year achievements: UK's rise from seventh in the G7 for income per head ten years ago to second only to America, the lowest unemployment rate in history, and the introduction of the National Minimum Wage. He set his priority to give "the best of chances for all families" and to "unlock all the talent of all of the people." Measures to achieve this ambitious goal include one-to-one tuition in primary schools, extension of free education from 11 years to 15 years, granting scholarships to two-thirds of university students, and expanding the help of nurse-family. He promised to invest "record-high" public money to improve NHS and a "50 percent increase" in funds for social housing. The new Brown Government also aims to renew British democracy by making the executive more accountable, strengthening citizens' liberties, as well as local democracy. He ended his speech with his promise to stand up for British values. I feel the shining point of Brown's plan is not its ambition, but its concrete measures and detailed target figures supporting the plan, such as increasing "240,000 new homes a year" (Brown, 2007). Compared with Blair's record, Brown's speech puts more emphasis on individual persons and their potentials, no matter what background they are from.

Can such a vision be turned into a real, working British identity in the 21st century? It is not difficult to see that equality is the precondition for harmony. In this sense, Brown's vision gives people more hope. I agree that with skill and strategic leadership, national consciousness can be influenced towards doing the right thing, although it takes courage, clarity of mind, and determination of Labor leadership, the intelligent contribution of leading political and cultural elites, and the sincere consensus and active participation of the people.

Conclusion

Facing the challenge of globalization and fragmentation, Labor's modern version of "Britishness" is putting more emphasis on broad human values in defining and promoting "Britishness" and on fairness bound with responsibilities. This is driven by the urgent need to create common ground that may unite the whole multicultural nation for future development. Since the 7/7 bombing, Blair and Brown have focused more on duty to integrate and the urgency of the task is reinforced by recent terrorist attempts, especially when the attempts were conducted by well-educated professional doctors or university students.

The search for national identity is a never-ending process. The more "inclusive, tolerant, culturally plural, open-minded, historically grounded, inspirational, and democratically based" (Parekh, 2000) it is, the greater is its power to mobilize all citizens. However, the need to explore the concept of commonality seems to pose more challenge at the moment. British multiculturalism, fair or not, needs to do a lot more to cultivate loyalty to the country. Its somewhat "let it be" attitude in past decades has to some extent put the burden of seeking life chances and developing cultures onto the shoulders of minorities themselves. We need to share the understanding that "integration and cohesion are not states but process. They need to be worked at, built up, and nurtured" (Ruth, 2006).

The seriousness of the present situation in the UK predicts that Brown cannot immediately get out of the shadow of "Blairism." He has to carry for some time both its legacy and burden. Evaluating Brown's first speech to the Labor annual conference after becoming Prime Minister, I am glad to see that his focus is more down-to-earth on people's living and his strategy is concrete and detailed. He is right in tracking inequality as the root of the problem and in intending to tackle it via prioritizing equal opportunities in developing each individual's potentials. No matter how hard the task is, it must be carried on by Brown's new Labor Government sincerely.

Notes

[1]"3,000 comments of the day about it, almost all negative" (http://www.yesbutnobutyes.com/archives/2007/06/london_olympics.html). "A poll by the BBC News website asked readers to give it a gold, silver or bronze medal, or a wooden spoon if they really didn't like it. Eighty three percent gave it a wooden spoon." (http://theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21852337-2722,00.html).
[2] Four of the approaches were mentioned in Robins, K. (2001). "Endnote: To London: The City beyond the Nation.".*British Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 473-493.

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