



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

Debate on 19th June: Britishness

This Library Note aims to provide background information for the debate to be held on Thursday 19th June:

“To call attention to the concept of Britishness in the context of the cultural, historical, constitutional and ethical tradition of the peoples of these islands”

This Note provides an overview of the various debates that have taken place on the concept of Britishness. These include historical accounts, current commentaries and research into public attitudes. The Note also considers various Government proposals regarding British citizenship, shared values and rights and responsibilities, along with reaction to these proposals.

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1. The Backdrop to Debates on Britishness, National Identity and Citizenship

1.1 The Concept of National Identity

Historians and social scientists have considered at length what constitutes national identity. A full overview of the concept and the many debates it has engendered are beyond the scope of this paper. However, there are some general themes that can be mapped out. A number of early writers, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Gottfried Herder, argued for a cultural definition of national identity based on the primordial ties of language and the notion of national culture as a living energy not imposed from above.¹ Writers such as Ernest Gellner, suggested that though elements of pre-existing culture were not unimportant, national identity was more a product of state formation, industrialisation and modernity and hence a product of the 18th and 19th centuries.² Other writers, such as Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, have argued that the concept of nation and national identity is essentially a socially engineered construct with elements of invented and imagined traditions.³ This latter approach also emphasised the importance of social phenomena, such as class. More recently, academics have sought to cast national identity as one of a number of 'multiple' or 'fractured' identities, mediated by other issues such as race, gender, ethnicity and religion and globalisation.⁴ The latter approach suggests that national identity could be experienced differently according to one's social characteristics. Many accounts, however, offer a synthesis of some of these approaches. For instance, Anthony D. Smith suggests that national identity is the result of the interaction of the ethnic past and the forces of modernity.⁵ This approach has allowed social scientists to identify different types of national identity—civic and ethnic. Civic national identity refers to residence, shared political values, common civic institutions and shared language, whereas ethnic national identity is seen as being related to ancestry and emersion in national customs and traditions.

1.2 Britishness as a Historical Phenomenon

The concept of Britishness has been the source of some recent debate amongst historians. Some commentators have noted that the study of Britishness as a distinct national identity is complicated by the fact that many accounts tend to conflate Britishness with Englishness, and often treat English events and trends as though they were synonymous with British developments.⁶ However, a number of historians have charted the development of Britishness as a distinct national identity. Linda Colley argues that Britain was an invented nation "heavily dependent for its *raison d'être* on a broadly Protestant culture, on the threat and tonic of recurrent war, especially war with France, and on the triumphs, profits, and 'otherness' represented by a massive overseas

¹ See Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory*, (2005), p. 4, and James McKay, 'An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilisationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 5 no. 4, (1982), p. 395–420.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (1983).

³ For example, see Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, (1992) and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (1991).

⁴ See for instance Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory*, (2005), p. 198–206; Harriet Bradley, *Fractured Identities: Changing Patterns of Inequality*, (1997); Mattei Dogan, 'The Decline of Nationalisms within Western Europe', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 26, no. 3 (April, 1994), pp. 281–305.

⁵ See Anthony D. Smith 'Gastronomy or geology? The role of nationalism in the reconstruction of nations'. *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 1, no. 1, (1994), pp. 3–23.

⁶ See for instance Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 31 no. 4, (October 1992), pp. 309–329.

empire”.⁷ Keith Robbins argues that the historical roots of Britishness are to be understood in relation to a ‘blending’ based on: the continued existence of historically established local and ethnic identities; the development of overarching political institutions; the historical evolution of the idea of ‘Britain’ and Britain’s relationship to the wider world.⁸ Lawrence Brockliss *et al.* argue that Britishness was a subtle and ‘composite’ national identity that developed after 1800 and which made limited demands upon its subjects.⁹ Importantly, they contend that no formal attempt was made to make Britishness a primary cultural identity, which allowed a number of interpretations of what being British meant. Instead, they point to the various social and economic processes of industrialisation and the ‘peculiar’ role of Parliament in the acceptance of Britishness.

1.3 Britishness as a Social and Legal Construct—British Citizenship

National identity can be seen as a concept linked to citizenship. Citizenship has been described by social scientists. For example, Paul Whiteley describes it as “a set of norms, values and practices which bind society together, makes democratic government possible and helps individuals to solve collective action problems”.¹⁰ Citizenship has also been legally defined in terms of legislation. It has been seen increasingly as a way of introducing new entrants into the UK to the values and rights and responsibilities which accompany being a British Citizen. The scope of such legislation has changed over time, which by inference has changed perceptions of Britishness. The British Nationality Act 1948, for example, saw common citizenship extended to citizens of the UK and Commonwealth. However, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 defined such citizenship in terms of the place from which one’s passport was issued, while by the time of the Immigration Act 1971 it had been linked to clear ancestry. The British Nationality Act 1981 took this further. While all previous legislation held onto the category of Citizen of the UK and Commonwealth (CUKC) and to the notion of subjecthood, the 1981 Act abolished the former and largely abolished the latter. A new category, UK citizen, was established and specified a more standard form of citizenship. Essentially, a child born in the UK would be granted British citizenship if either its mother or its father was a British citizen or settled in the UK, and naturalisation for residents without kinship linkages was made relatively easy.

1.4 Views of Britishness as a Current National Identity

On 20th January 1999, *The Guardian* published the views of various commentators ranging from historians and politicians to writers and musicians on the question of what Britishness meant.¹¹ Michael Ignatieff, writer and broadcaster on issues including nationalism, commented that:

If Britishness is about anything it isn’t about places or people, it’s about institutions. Britishness is parliamentary democracy, rule of law, fairness and decency. It is the institutions that deliver this. It’s not black, it’s not white, it’s not the shires, it’s not London, it’s not brassy and it’s not old-fashioned.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions, and the Idea of Britishness*, (1997).

⁹ Lawrence Brockliss and David Eastwood, *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c. 1750–c.1850*, (1997).

¹⁰ Paul F. Whiteley, ‘What makes a Good Citizen? Citizenship across the Democratic World’, in Alison Park *et al.* (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 24th Report*, (2007), p. 173.

¹¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/1999/jan/20/features11.g27>.

The historian, David Cannadine, who has written on Britishness, noted its elasticity:

Britishness is a complicated and enormous thing—what different people see as meaning different things. It can mean one island, a group of islands off the coast of Europe, or it can mean the British Empire—at times it means all those things. Politicians, and the rest of us, define it in different ways at different times.

Lord Bragg, the author and broadcaster, sought to emphasise the cultural aspects:

Britain has always benefited from having tensions and competing tribes inside it. The force of the country has come from that mix. To me, Britishness is a Saturday night in London, in Glasgow, in Cardiff, or in Belfast—it's the variety on offer for people aged 14 to 70, the vivid culture.

John Major, the former Prime Minister, evoked a pastiche of various images:

...long shadows on county cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and—as George Orwell said—old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist.

In July 2005, the *Daily Telegraph* published what it called the ten core values of the British identity, which underpinned its campaign for Britishness.¹² These values included:

- I. The rule of law. Our society is based on the idea that we all abide by the same rules, whatever our wealth or status. No one is above the law—not even the government.
- II. The sovereignty of the Crown in Parliament. The Lords, the Commons and the monarch constitute the supreme authority in the land. There is no appeal to any higher jurisdiction, spiritual or temporal.
- III. The pluralist state. Equality before the law implies that no one should be treated differently on the basis of belonging to a particular group. Conversely, all parties, sects, faiths and ideologies must tolerate the existence of their rivals.
- IV. Personal freedom. There should be a presumption, always and everywhere, against state coercion. We should tolerate eccentricity in others, almost to the point of lunacy, provided no one else is harmed.
- V. Private property. Freedom must include the freedom to buy and sell without fear of confiscation, to transfer ownership, to sign contracts and have them enforced. Britain was quicker than most countries to recognise this and became, in consequence, one of the happiest and most prosperous nations on Earth.
- VI. Institutions. British freedom and British character are immanent in British institutions. These are not, mostly, statutory bodies, but spring from the way free individuals regulate each other's conduct, and provide for their needs, without recourse to coercion.

¹² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2005/07/27/dl2701.xml>

- VII. The family. Civic society depends on values being passed from generation to generation. Stable families are the essential ingredient of a stable society.
- VIII. History. British children inherit a political culture, a set of specific legal rights and obligations, and a stupendous series of national achievements. They should be taught about these things.
- IX. The English-speaking world. The atrocities of September 11, 2001, were not simply an attack on a foreign nation; they were an attack on the anglosphere—on all of us who believe in freedom, justice and the rule of law.
- X. The British character. Shaped by and in turn shaping our national institutions is our character as a people: stubborn, stoical, indignant at injustice. ‘The Saxon,’ wrote Kipling, ‘never means anything seriously till he talks about justice and right.’

The *Daily Telegraph* hosts a range of materials on its website concerning its *Call Yourself Britishness Campaign*.¹³

1.5 Multiculturalism and Britishness

Public discourse has also centred on the merits of multiculturalism, often in relation to accounts or evocations of Britishness. Lord Parekh’s *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, set out the values which should underpin a multicultural British society.¹⁴ The report questioned the notion of Britain ever being a homogeneous society in the past and present, pointing to the continuing complexity of different communities with internal diversity and disagreements linked to differences of gender, generation, religion and language. This meant that the identities of the British people were constantly in transition. As such, the report argued that a single national culture could not address the diversity of its citizens and instead proposed a culture based on “cohesion, equality and difference”. In the introduction to the report, Lord Parekh elaborated a number of principles on which such a society could be based. This society had to recognise that the differences emerging from such a culture would often lead to conflicting requirements that would need to be resolved. Since citizens had differing needs, he argued that equal treatment required that full account be taken of their differences and as such equality had to be defined in a culturally sensitive way and applied in a discriminating but not discriminatory manner. While he accepted that every society needed to be cohesive as well as respectful of diversity, it also needed to find ways of nurturing diversity while fostering a common sense of belonging and a shared identity among its constituent members. Similarly, while every society needed a broadly shared body of values, of which human rights were a small but important part, there was a risk of defining them so narrowly that their further development was ruled out or legitimate ways of life were suppressed. While values, such as tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences were paramount, society also needed to respect deep moral differences and find ways of resolving inescapable conflicts.

¹³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/exclusions/british/nosplit/british.xml>

¹⁴ <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects/past-projects/meb.html>. See also Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism : Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, (2006).

Tariq Madood, in May 2007, also criticised the notion of a single national identity:

The idea that there has to be a schedule of 'non-negotiable' value statements to which every citizen is expected to sign up is not in the spirit of an open, plural citizenship. National identity should be woven in debate and discussion, not reduced to a list. For central to it is a citizenship and the right of all, especially previously marginalised or newly admitted groups, to make a claim on the national identity. In this way, racism and other forms of stigmatised identities can be challenged and supplanted by a positive politics of mutual respect and inclusion.¹⁵

However, a number of criticisms have been made of multiculturalism. In a Demos pamphlet published in 2005, Vince Cable, the Liberal Democrat Shadow Chancellor, contended that multiculturalism was often a poor description of what exists and a poor guide to how the politics of identity can and should evolve.¹⁶ He thought that it underestimated the complexity of ethnic groups. Furthermore, while 'multiculturalism' may have played a positive role in encouraging respect for other faiths and traditions it had the "negative effects of stereotyping, of encouraging exaggerated deference to unrepresentative 'community leaders' and creating in the political world the dangerous—and erroneous—idea that Britain's ethnic minorities are 'vote banks' rather than aggregations of individuals". He called for the abandonment of multiculturalism and the creation of a tolerant British national identity based on the concept of 'multiple identities', whether national, ethnic, geographic or religious, and combined with a strong commitment to the rights of the individual and law and order.

Trevor Phillips, the current Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, has also questioned the direction of multiculturalism. In an interview with the *Jewish Quarterly* in 2005, he said that he recognized the fact of a multicultural society, but did not agree with "putting people into boxes which not only separate them but end up treating them unequally". This meant accepting that "people are different, but in some key areas, if you live in a society, you have to play by the rules that we have all agreed".¹⁷

1.6 The Decline of Britishness?

Part of the debate surrounding Britishness was the perception by some that it was in retreat. Tom Nairn, who had predicted the break up of the UK in the late 1970s, in 2007 argued that the "passion of 'Britishness' has lost all weight and gravitas".¹⁸ He suggested that processes of globalisation and Scottish nationalism, especially in the wake of devolution, made the break up of the Union very likely. Linda Colley argued that Britishness was threatened by the decline of Protestantism, the absence of war and the end of Empire, which had removed the ability for Britains to define themselves with the 'other'.¹⁹ David Weight pointed to developments such as devolution and the European Union, the decline of Empire and Protestantism and the generational weakening of patriotism relating to the Second World War.²⁰ He also thought many of the modern transmitters of Britishness, such as the BBC and the British film industry were no longer

¹⁵ Tariq Madood, 'Multiculturalism and nation building go hand in hand: British identity should never be reduced to a list', *The Guardian*, (23rd May 2007).

¹⁶ <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/multipleidentities.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.jewishquarterly.org/article.asp?articleid=80>

¹⁸ Tom Nairn, 'Union on the Rocks?', *New Left Review*, no. 43, (January–February 2007), pp. 117–132.

¹⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, (1992).

²⁰ David Weight, *Patriots*, (2002).

able to reach a mass audience as they had in the past. Andrew Marr suggested that Britain was suffering from its inability to evolve “into a popular modern democratic society”, which had led to the unpopularity of British political culture and its institutions and which led some to seek political expression elsewhere.²¹

Peter Hitchens argued that the decline of Britishness was largely due to politically engineered reasons.²² He thought that these included the questioning of traditional values and institutions, such as the Church of England, and the undermining of pride in British history and culture. He also questioned the country’s increasing internationalism and the growth of the welfare state, which he thought had helped to reduce British confidence in itself as a nation. John Redwood argued that the crisis of identity was related to constitutional reform.²³ He questioned Britain’s ability to coexist with devolution, cooperation with the EU, the reforms of the House of Lords, the slimming of the monarchy and proportional representation. *The Spectator* more recently suggested that Britishness was under attack from “the pulverising pressures of demographic change, the ideology of multiculturalism and the decline of traditional history teaching”.²⁴

2. Recent Debates on the Future of Britishness

In recent years the debate has moved to consider what Britishness should mean and whether it should be recast.

2.1 The Fabian Society—The Future of Britishness

In 2005, the Fabian Society launched a number of initiatives which sought to generate ideas and debate surrounding Britishness. Materials relating to these initiatives are hosted on the Fabian website.²⁵ Before its conference in January 2006—*Who do we want to be? The future of Britishness*, the Fabian Society asked a number of commentators about their views on Britishness.²⁶ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *The Independent* journalist, called for a forward-looking and inclusive British identity:

The Britishness debate is more urgent than ever before but is taking place within terms and parameters which make little sense. To lay claim to universal good values as particularly ‘British’ is absurd—many of our political actions tell a story that is far from benign. The challenge surely is to engage all citizens—black, Asian and white, to create a new British identity which has evolved from historical meanings but is not bound by history. This Britishness is a civic project, a response to devolution, globalisation, and the changing populations of this island. It is an ideal, an imagined constitution mapping out the best of what we are today and hopes for the future. The models would be post-apartheid South Africa or the rapid and healthy transformations we have seen in Spain and Portugal.

John Lloyd, a *Financial Times* journalist, called for a genuine debate:

We need to have some notion of Britishness which is robust enough for native Brits with long British lineages to assent to and open enough for new immigrants

²¹ Andrew Marr, *The Day Britain Died*, (1999).

²² Peter Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain*, (1999).

²³ John Redwood, *The Death of Britain: The UK’s Constitutional Crisis*, (1999).

²⁴ *The Spectator*, ‘The Vision Thing’, 10th November 2007.

²⁵ <http://fabians.org.uk/debates/the-new-britishness>

²⁶ <http://fabians.org.uk/publications/extracts/britishness-voices>

to be part of, with some adaptation. Such a debate mustn't be inhibited. Especially on the left, debates on nationality and culture tend to genuflect to real or supposed sensitivities at the expense of frank talking.

2.2 Prospect—Britain Rediscovered

The April 2005 edition of *Prospect* contained a round table discussion with a number of commentators and politicians on what could be done to create a more visible and inclusive sense of British identity.²⁷ Gordon Brown, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, set out his views on history, ideas and British national identity:

I would want to stress a belief in tolerance and liberty, a sense of civic duty, a sense of fair play, a sense of being open to the world. The real challenge over the next few years is to see how our institutions can better reflect these values. That may mean quite profound changes in how our constitution is organised, how civic rights work—especially at a local level, where big changes need to be made—and an anti-protectionist approach to the wider world. And we've got to think about the symbols of integration for the future—this is not just about a national day, or how to treat the festival of remembrance, it is about greater emphasis on the shared values that unite us. Our values have influenced our institutions and traditions in a particular way—partly because we have been a multinational society over centuries. And one proposition that I am keen to support is the idea of an institute of British studies, or something similar, that looks in depth—and in a non-partisan way—at how the ideas that shape our history should shape our institutions in the future and what effect that might have on policy.

The historian, Linda Colley, called for mechanisms that could stress rights, responsibilities and diversity and a history that could weave common themes:

There has to be a way of linking past, present and future. And one of the ways we could do this is surely with a document. We don't necessarily want a codification of British values, but there is a case for a new bill of rights, or a bill of rights and responsibilities, which would include values. One of the things we need to do too is improve the history curriculum in schools. It is right that Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland should have their distinctive histories taught. But there could be common history lessons too, which would recognise all kinds of diversity but which would also hammer out something of a common story. This would be partly an invention; all histories are. But it might be a useful invention.

2.3 Gordon Brown at the Fabian Society: The Future of Britishness

On 14th January 2006, Gordon Brown in a speech at the Fabian New Year Conference 2006—*Who do we want to be? The future of Britishness*, expanded on his views.²⁸ He noted the challenges facing Britain, ranging from the global, such as relationships with Europe, America and the rest of the world, to the local and the individual, in areas such as modern citizenship, diversity and terrorism. He argued that this made it imperative that Britain and its citizens were clear about what it meant to be British. He contended that this should draw upon the country's qualities of "creativity, inventiveness, enterprise

²⁷ <http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=6832>.

²⁸ <http://fabians.org.uk/events/speeches/the-future-of-britishness>. See also Gordon Brown's July 2004 British Council Annual Lecture, which also set out key elements of his views on Britishness: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/press/2004/press_63_04.cfm

and ... internationalism” but also upon its commitments to “liberty for all, responsibility by all and fairness to all”. He believed that the establishment of such shared values could foster a new British patriotism that would move beyond ethnicity, race and institutions, and which would allow people to share:

...a common view of challenges and what needs to be done, forge a unified and shared sense of purpose about the long term sacrifices they are prepared to make and the priorities they think important for national success.

He hoped that this Britishness would allow “a rich agenda for change” based around “a new constitutional settlement, an explicit definition of citizenship, a renewal of civic society, a rebuilding of our local government and a better balance between diversity and integration”. He also sought to cast Britishness in a history that emphasised liberty, co-operation and common endeavour and fairness. He offered examples of how some of this could be brought about. Public involvement could be encouraged through devolving power, especially to local and neighbourhood level. Citizenship could be promoted through citizenship lessons in schools and citizenship ceremonies which could define the scope of citizen’s rights but also their responsibilities and achieve the right balance between diversity and integration. Public discourse and a vibrant civic society could also advance tolerance and address extremism, as could the tackling of religious hatred and inequalities in education and job markets. He hoped that Britain could celebrate its history and national symbols as being emblematic of the wider values of inclusion and tolerance. Such values would enable Britain to offer international leadership in areas such as the global economy and international development.

2.4 House of Lords Debate on British Identity and Citizenship

On 2nd February 2006, the House of Lords debated British identity and citizenship. Lord Wallace of Saltaire, who initiated the debate, drew attention to what he saw as the poor teaching of history and citizenship education and the increasing disengagement of people from the political process. He welcomed the broad parameters of the debate that had been initiated by Gordon Brown and others, but thought that the focus should be on “the balance between individual rights and obligations to society, and about the extension of political rights to all citizens in a liberal society and a democratic state”.²⁹

Lord Giddens said that it was right to try to hold Britain together as a nation state and avoid “an endless fragmentation of nations, especially along quasi-ethnic lines”. However, he thought that the notion of Britishness should be dropped as it was “an elusive, essential identity which does not really exist”. Instead he favoured Britain “as a citizenship nation”, with an “ambiguous pluralism” that allowed multiple identities. He also cautioned against a selected and distorted history that ignored noxious moments and pretended that achievements were unique to Britain.³⁰ Lord Desai also favoured the notion of multiple identities and argued that it was much more important to have a culture of equal rights and not to give people “a single label or a monotheistic construction of nationality”. He preferred that Britishness should evolve in people’s daily lives rather than by “an official proclamation of what it is to be British”.³¹

Lord Howell of Guilford, speaking for the Conservatives, criticised the concern with Britishness as being a “quite shallow business”. He thought that if there was a concern about the cohesion and health of the country, the focus should be upon its institutions, especially Parliament, and a foreign policy that people could be proud of and identify

²⁹ HL *Hansard*, 2nd February 2006, cols. 343–47.

³⁰ *ibid.* cols. 351–53.

³¹ *ibid.* cols. 359–60.

with. He was worried that people had lost trust in Parliament. He thought a strong and clear foreign policy defined the nation within and criticised what he saw as the subcontracting out of foreign policy to international bodies, such as the European Union. He also questioned multi-culturalism as “a simplistic proposition and bound not to bring cultures together but to set them on conflicting paths”.³²

Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, said that it was the Government’s responsibility to promote citizenship and that a key part of this was pride in a multicultural society that was built on equality and equality of opportunity. National cohesion would also depend upon a sense of inclusiveness in the concept of Britishness, something which was accessible to everyone and encouraged each individual to play their part and to respect others. He pointed to the Government’s efforts to promote citizenship, such as language and citizen tests and citizen ceremonies and the piloting of a Citizen’s Day. He saw the key challenge as envisaging “Britishness and citizenship in a way that encompasses the collective contribution that diverse communities make to the country” and in a way that could make them proud of both their British and other cultural identities.³³

2.5 Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)—*Who Are We? Identities in Britain*

In a report published in February 2007 for the IPPR, Lucy Stone and Rick Muir considered a range of survey data that focused on people’s various identities, including national identities.³⁴ They argued that the focus on a national identity perhaps underplayed the role that local identity could play in terms of social cohesion. They suggested that local government in particular could play a role, by using its public voice to foster an inclusive sense of local belonging. The authors also highlighted the dilemmas that faced those who sought to create an inclusive national identity, by noting that Britishness was mediated by other social identities and different geographical settings. For instance, in Scotland, Scottish identity had a greater resonance than British national identity, including minority ethnic Scots, while in England there was a growing divide between those who preferred English or British national identity. Unlike in Scotland, Britishness in England was much more popular than Englishness among black and minority ethnic groups. They also pointed to the uneven strength of religious adherence between and within various social groups, which along with other social factors, could be problematic for an inclusive British identity.

2.6 Ruth Kelly and Liam Byrne: *A Common Place*

In June 2007, two Government ministers, Ruth Kelly and Liam Byrne, published a Fabian pamphlet—*A Common Place*.³⁵ Though citizenship education and citizenship ceremonies had been introduced, they were concerned that the overall process had stalled. They therefore set out a number of proposals:

A new national day, learning from countries like Australia, celebrating what is best about Britain but developed locally, with an emphasis on the civic values and traditions we are proudest of, like service and volunteering.

A renaissance of civic governance and identity in our counties, cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods with a clearer constitutional focus for England in Parliament.

³² *ibid.* cols. 371–74.

³³ *ibid.* cols. 374–79.

³⁴ <http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=525>.

³⁵ http://fabians.org.uk/images/stories/pdfs/common_place.pdf.

Support for Muslim communities defining a modern sense of British Islam, emphasising citizenship and loyalty to Britain as well as to one's faith.

A stronger 'rite of passage' for young citizens linking access to Child Trust Funds and the generosity of these funds with both volunteering and a clear statement of British citizenship, its rights and responsibilities.

Support for localised 'good neighbour contracts' for all newcomers, with an extra link to new identity cards for non-EU migrants.

Backing for local leaders who develop local plans for better integration, but with a passion and drive for learning English—anticipating the work of the forthcoming Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

The introduction of 'earned citizenship' with a clearer, fairer path by which newcomers earn the privileges of settling in Britain, together with more visible and inclusive citizenship ceremonies.

2.7 David Cameron: Stronger Together

On 10th December 2007, the Leader of the Opposition, David Cameron, made a speech in Edinburgh, on the importance of the Union.³⁶ He first expressed his concern at the Union's fragility and the "ugly stain of separatism seeping through the Union flag". He thought that the best way to counter this was through the creation of a clear identity:

But in this search for identity, here in Great Britain we have the best possible start. Not just English; not just Scottish; not just Welsh; not just any regional or religious identity. But British.

That is because being British is one of the most successful examples of inclusive civic nationalism in the world. We are a shining example of what a multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-national society can and should be.

And the challenge now is to renew that sense of belonging by creating a positive vision of a British society that really stands for something and makes people want to be part of it.

A society in which we are held together by a strong sense of shared history and common values and institutions we cherish.

A society which encourages active citizenship, not a passive standing on the sidelines.

A society which people are not bullied to join, but are actively inspired to join.

He thought the Prime Minister's approach was "embarrassing, misplaced and trivialising":

So we have citizen's juries—focus groups—to decide what it means to be British.

We have a competition to come up with a motto for Britain.

We have the attempt to replace the National Anthem

³⁶ http://conservativehome.blogs.com/torydiary/files/stronger_together.pdf.

...He talks about values but Britishness isn't just about values—liberty, fair play, openness—are general, unspecific, almost universal.

They are virtues which could be as easily associated with Denmark, say, or Holland.

Britishness is also about institutions, attachment to our monarchy, admiration for our armed forces, understanding of our history, recognising that our liberty is rooted in the rule of law and respect for parliament.

2.8 Lord Baker's Proposal for a Museum of Britishness

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 12th of December 2007, Lord Baker of Dorking set out the case for a Museum of Britishness.³⁷ He noted that he had been campaigning for ten years for such an institution and had assembled a team of 15 historians and had had the support of politicians such as Denis Healey and Roy Jenkins. It would help address what he saw as the worrying decline of British and general history teaching in school. It would also serve a wider purpose:

Such a museum in this country would show the position of Britain as a world power and as a European power, and what over the centuries it has given the world. It would also demonstrate how Britain came together as a nation.

2.9 Gordon Brown: We Must Defend the Union

On 25th March 2008, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, wrote an article in which he warned against "secessionist" forces.³⁸ He disagreed that people had to choose between different territorial identities. He sought to stress the tangible advantages of the Union, but also the benefits of shared understanding and values:

There is no Scotland-only, Wales-only, England-only solution to transnational challenges that range from terrorism to foot and mouth disease, and from avian flu to security and climate change. So for these islands an environmental Union, a security Union and a Union for defence is to the benefit of all.

...But what matters even more are the common values we share across the United Kingdom: values we have developed together over the years that are rooted in liberty, in fairness and tolerance, in enterprise, in civic initiative and internationalism.

These values live in the popularity of our common institutions from the NHS, the BBC, to the Queen—and even more recently in UK-wide support for the Olympics, Children in Need, Comic Relief, Make Poverty History and action on climate change.

3. Polling Data on Britishness and British Values

Over the past 10 years there have been a number of surveys which have attempted to track public attitudes towards Britishness and what might constitute British values. Polls

³⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1572148/It%27s-time-for-a-museum-of-British-history.html>.

³⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2008/03/25/do2501.xml&page=1>.

have also indicated how different social groups experience Britishness and how they perceive integration. An overview of some of these surveys is included below.

3.1 IPSOS MORI—Race No Barrier to Britishness (May 2002)

On 16th May 2002, IPSOS MORI published survey data to mark the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Commission for Racial Equality.³⁹ The survey found that whilst 86% of the British public disagreed that to be truly British you had to be white, there was no consistent view on what it meant to be British. When asked what came to mind when thinking about the “British way of life” people highlighted attitudes and behaviour (cultural diversity 9% and people being polite 6%) rather than demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, while 28% were unable to give an answer. There was widespread respect for diversity in Britain, with 78% agreeing that it was important to respect the rights of minority groups and 57% said that people should do more to learn about the systems and culture of ethnic groups, although 27% disagreed. There was a general consensus amongst all ethnic groups on the rights and responsibilities of those who migrated to the UK: 69% of the GB population and 51% of ethnic minority respondents thought that ethnic minorities needed to demonstrate a real commitment before they could be considered British; 77% of white and 76% of ethnic minority communities believed that immigrants who did not speak English should be made to learn it.

3.2 British Social Attitudes Survey—Dimensions of Being British (2004)

James Tilley *et al.*, in their contribution to the 21st British Social Attitudes Survey included a table revealing the importance attached to different strands of Britishness:

Importance of Different Aspects of ‘being British’, 1995 and 2003

% who say ‘very’ or ‘fairly important’	1995	2003
Speak English	85%	87%
British Citizenship	83%	83%
Respect laws/institutions	82%	82%
Born in Britain	76%	70%
Feel British	74%	74%
Lived life in Britain	71%	69%
Have British ancestry	n/a	46%
Be a Christian	32%	31%
Sharing customs/traditions	50%	52%
<i>Base</i>	1058	873

The authors also considered whether civic and ethnic typologies were applicable to national identity in Britain. Civic national identity referred to residence, shared political values, common civic institutions and shared language, whereas ethnic national identity was related to ancestry and emersion in national customs and traditions. The authors suggested that analysis of attitudinal data relating to different aspects of Britishness indicated that support for a civic understanding of Britishness had grown between 1995 and 2003. The data also suggested generational differences, with younger respondents more likely to approximate to a civic conception of identity. Overall, this suggested that very few people held a purely ethnic view of national identity and that this view would decline further with younger generations. The data also showed that amongst younger generations a small minority (20% of respondents) did not appear to align with either

³⁹ <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/content/race-is-no-barrier-to-being-british.ashx>.

conception, suggesting that for such people “there is very little at all that matters in making a person ‘truly British’”. Whether this would lead to a longer term decline in British nationalist sentiment would depend on other developments, such as increasing migration, European enlargement, globalisation and external nationalistic conflicts.⁴⁰

3.3 YouGov/Telegraph—Britishness (July 2005)

On 27th July 2005, YouGov published the results of polling commissioned by the *Daily Telegraph*, which asked a range of questions relating to key perceived components of Britishness. Respondents were asked what importance they attached to 37 items, ranging from people’s sense of fair play, to institutions, such as the Monarchy and the House of Commons and to cultural matters, such as the natural landscape, warm beer and cricket. In terms of ranking, of those who saw an issue as “very” or “fairly important”, the top ten included: British people’s right to say what they think (91%); Britain’s defiance of Nazi Germany in 1940 (87%); British people’s sense of fairness and fair play (90%); the landscape of Britain (88%); the achievements of Britain’s scientists and engineers (89%); British Justice (86%); our Parliamentary democracy (84%); people’s politeness and consideration towards one another (86%); having a strong economy (81%); the Royal Navy (79%). Other important items included tolerance of other people and other people’s ideas (81%), the House of Commons (78%) and the Monarchy (69%). In relation to specific cultural items, respondents ranked items as follows: *Land of Hope and Glory* (60%); *God Save the Queen* (57%); William Shakespeare (62%); cricket (45%); warm British beer (23%).

When asked which aspects of Britishness respondents took “pride in”, the ranking was as follows: British people’s right to say what they think (69%); British people’s sense of fairness and fair play (68%); British people’s tolerance of individuals of all races and faiths (54%); the British system of justice (50%); Parliament: the House of Commons and the House of Lords (48%); British people’s tolerance of all religious faiths (47%); the Monarchy (43%); the BBC (39%); Big Ben (38%); St Paul’s Cathedral (34%). When asked whether on balance Britain had been “a force for good in the world”, 80% agreed, 10% disagreed and 10% did not know. When asked whether on balance how proud they were to be British, 50% of respondents answered “very proud”, 36% “fairly proud”, 8% “not very proud: and 3% “not at all proud”.

3.4 Commission for Racial Equality—Race Relations 2006: A Research Study

In March 2007, the Commission for Racial Equality published a study which examined various aspects of Britishness and integration, using both qualitative and polling data collected in 2006.⁴¹ The study found interesting differences between the general public and ethnic minorities in terms of their attitudes towards immigrants who settled in the UK and who maintained their culture and lifestyle. The polling data indicated that 36% of the general public thought this was a good thing compared to 71% of ethnic minority respondents, with Asian respondents more positive than black people (81% to 53%). The data also found that 73% of the general public and 68% of ethnic minority respondents agreed that ethnic minorities needed to demonstrate a real commitment to the UK before they could be considered British. The study concluded that the polling data and qualitative research indicated that irrespective of place of birth respondents felt that “you don’t have to be white to be British, but it helps”.

⁴⁰ James Tilley *et al.*, ‘Dimensions of British Identity’ from Alison Park *et al.* (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 21st Report*, (2004), pp. 147–67.

⁴¹ <http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/cre/downloads/racerelations2006final.pdf>.

3.5 British Social Attitudes Survey—The Regional Nature of Britishness (2007)

In the 23rd British Social Attitudes Survey (2007), Anthony Heath *et al.*, in their consideration of the possible decline of various social identities, included data which indicated attitudes towards Britishness amongst English, Scottish and Welsh respondents at selected intervals between 1974 and 2005.⁴² The data was based on a question which ‘forced’ respondents to choose between British or English, Scottish and Welsh national identities:

Trends in ‘forced choice’ national identity, 1974–2005

	1974	1979	1992	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
Lives in England	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English Identity	n/a	n/a	31%	34%	44%	43%	38%	40%
British Identity	n/a	n/a	63%	59%	44%	44%	48%	48%
Base			2442	3150	2718	2761	3709	3643
								%
Lives in Scotland	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish Identity	65	56	72	72	77	77	72	79
British Identity	31	38	25	20	17	16	20	14
Base	588	658	957	882	1482	1605	1508	1549
								%
Lives in Wales	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Welsh Identity	n/a	57	n/a	63	57	57	60	n/a
British Identity	n/a	33	n/a	26	31	31	27	n/a
Base		858		649	1256	1085	988	

It should be noted that some caution should be used when considering such ‘forced’ responses, as respondents may have a range of competing identities which can override or underscore national identities. The authors suggest that that most interesting finding from this data is the decline over time in British identity amongst English respondents, whereas the lower base amongst Scottish and Welsh respondents reflects longer term trends where Britishness has remained for many a secondary national identity.

3.6 Camelot Foundation—*Young People and British Identity* (June 2007)

In June 2007, the Camelot Foundation published a report—*Young People and British Identity*, which considered how Britishness resonated with young people.⁴³ The study found that amongst young people, Britishness “did not feature on the list of traits which helps define personal identity” and was seen “as an unchanging static attribute”. However, this was not necessarily true of being Welsh, Scottish or Irish. Britain appeared to be viewed as old, hierarchical, traditional, while the research indicated that many young people who took part did not know the geo-political story of Great Britain. However, 56% of respondents did agree that Britishness had some meaning, as opposed to 24% who did not and 77% saw a shared sense of Britishness as important to the country. Many young people acknowledged the advantages of living in Britain such as a strong economy, good public services, basic law and order and personal freedoms

⁴² Anthony Heath *et al.*, ‘Who do we think we are? The decline of traditional social identities’ from Alison Park *et al.* (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 21st Report*, (2007), pp. 1–34. See also Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, ‘Talking the Talk: National Identity in England and Scotland’ in Alison Park *et al.* (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 24th Report*, (2007), pp. 81–104.

⁴³ The Camelot Foundation was set up in 1997 by Camelot Group, the operators of the National Lottery, to support young people’s charities. The Report was based on research conducted by IPSOS MORI and can be found at: <http://www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/docs/frypbi.pdf>.

and rights. Britishness was often experienced when abroad in relation to other cultures, but rarely as a daily reality.

In terms of other identities, the study found that young white English people found it hard to distinguish between being English and British, though they were less likely to think that their English identity was more important than their British identity, as compared to young Welsh and Scottish people. In terms of multiculturalism, the study found that Asian and black young people had a more complex layering of national and ethnic identities. Cultural differences between their heritage and British society and the reality of racial discrimination often made it difficult for them to accept Britishness. However, Scottish Pakistani young people appeared more comfortable with the notion of 'Scottish Asian' than young Asians living with 'English Asian'. The study suggested that "as an agent of social cohesion young people are unable to see how Britishness as shared social identity can work, taking into consideration multiple identities and ethnic, religious, social and cultural differences between communities" (p. 15).

3.7 BBC Asian Network—Young Asians and Britishness (July 2007)

The BBC's Asian Network commissioned polling data in July 2007, which examined young British Asian views on Britishness.⁴⁴ The survey found that 38% of young British Asians questioned felt 'a little' or 'not at all' British; 47% felt 'a little' or 'not at all' that they were treated as British by white British people. The poll also found that 85% of respondents were very or quite satisfied with living in the UK.

4. Government Policy

The Government has introduced a number of proposals and pieces of legislation and has commissioned reports with regard to community cohesion, shared values, rights and commitments. The principal documents are covered below.

4.1 Citizenship Education

In July 1997, the White Paper—*Excellence in Schools*, (Cm 3681), pledged to strengthen education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy. Following this, an Advisory Group on Citizenship was established and headed by Professor Sir Bernard Crick. The Advisory Group's final report—*Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, was published in September 1998. The report advocated a three-pronged approach to citizenship education, covering: knowledge and understanding; skills of enquiry and communication; and participation and responsible action. The Advisory Group's detailed proposals on the form and content of a National Curriculum for citizenship were largely adopted by the Government and the subject became compulsory in September 2002 for secondary schools, at which time it also became part of the non-statutory framework for primary schools. Citizenship studies have sought to promote a number of aptitudes and behaviours. This has included learning self-confident and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, both towards those in authority and each other. It has also entailed learning about, and becoming helpfully involved in, the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service. Another key element has been the development of political literacy, which has involved learning about the institutions, problems and practices of our democracy and how to engage effectively in the life of the nation, locally, regionally and nationally.

⁴⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/asiannation/pdf/Asian-Poll-1.pdf>.

In January 2007, an independent review, led by Sir Keith Ajegbo, published its report—*Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship*.⁴⁵ The review found that there was not enough emphasis on UK identity and history and recommended that the secondary curriculum for Citizenship Education should include a new element entitled ‘Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK’. This would mean that all pupils, as part of compulsory secondary Citizenship Education, would be taught about shared values and life in the UK, which would be informed by an understanding of contemporary issues and relevant historical context which gave rise to them. The report was welcomed by the Commission for Racial Equality and the then Shadow Education Secretary, David Willetts. Mr Willetts said that it was crucial that citizenship was “linked very closely to narrative British history”.⁴⁶ A Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) press release issued in July 2007 indicated that part of the new element would involve the teaching of the legacy of the British Empire.⁴⁷

4.2 Citizenship Ceremonies and Life in the UK Tests

In February 2002 the Government set out a number of proposals on citizenship applications in a white paper—*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, (Cm 5387) under the heading ‘Celebrating the acquisition of citizenship’.⁴⁸ One of these proposals was the introduction of ‘citizenship ceremonies’, which it was argued could have a positive impact upon the process of naturalisation. The ceremonies were implemented as part of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 and involved prospective citizens swearing an oath of allegiance to the Queen and a pledge of loyalty to the United Kingdom, after which a certificate would be presented. From 1st January 2004, anybody who successfully applied for naturalisation has been required to attend such ceremonies in their local communities. The first ceremony took place on 28th February 2004. In 2005, over 110,000 ceremonies took place (HC *Hansard*, 7th November 2006, col. 1346W). Further information can be found in House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/HA/2965, *Citizenship Ceremonies*, (7th December 2005).

On 31st October 2005, the Home Office announced the introduction of a new Life in the UK Test, which was to commence on 1st November 2005.⁴⁹ The test consists of 24 multiple choice questions designed to test knowledge of life in the UK, focusing on all areas of UK society on a range of topics from UK traditions to its laws. It noted that those wishing to attain British citizenship would, in addition to the existing English language requirement, now need to pass the Life in the UK Test or successfully complete the new English for Speakers of Other Languages Skills for Life course. Tony McNulty, Home Office Minister, said that the measures would “help new citizens to gain a greater appreciation of the civic and political dimension of British citizenship and, in particular, to understand the rights and responsibilities that come with the acquisition of British citizenship”. More information on the test is at: <http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/>.

4.3 Commission on Integration and Cohesion

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion was established on 24th of August 2006 and considered how local areas could make the most of diversity while being able to respond to the tensions it might cause. The Commission delivered its final report on

⁴⁵ http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES_Diversity_&_Citizenship.pdf.

⁴⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6294643.stm>.

⁴⁷ DCSF Press Release, *New secondary curriculum creates time to focus on the basics and stretch high achievers*, (12th July 2007).

⁴⁸ <http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm53/5387/cm5387.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Home Office Press Release, *Becoming a UK Citizen—New Requirements Introduced*, (31st October 2005).

14th June 2007.⁵⁰ It began by highlighting a number of key principles which underlay its more detailed recommendations. It noted the importance of “shared futures” which emphasised what bound communities to together, rather than what divided them. It also called for a new model of rights and responsibilities which could clearly set out what was expected of citizens. The development of an “ethics of hospitality” could also develop a new emphasis on mutual respect and civility. A commitment to equality that informed visible social justice through transparency and fairness would help build trust in the institutions that arbitrated between groups. In terms of specific proposals, it advocated a nationally sponsored community week, a national school linking programme, local volunteering and GCSE Citizenship Ceremonies, all of which would encourage local civic pride and local understandings of citizenship but also foster an understanding of wider British citizenship. This required local authorities to play a new role in mapping and addressing the needs of different communities. Local authorities would, when faced with new migrants, be supported by a national integration body and specialist integration and cohesion teams to manage change. The Commission also called for the provision of better translation and language services to help migrants, local people, businesses and public bodies.

4.4 The Governance of Britain Green Paper

In July 2007, the Government published a Green Paper—*The Governance of Britain* (Cm 7170), which contained a section on national identity and citizenship.⁵¹ It elaborated on the nuances linking citizenship and national identity. While it noted that people possessed multiple identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, class and faith, it contended that “in addition to these there is a national identity that we can all hold in common: the overarching factor—British citizenship—that brings the nation together” (p. 54). The paper noted the importance of formal citizenship rights based on British nationality rules and a sense of citizenship tied to democracy and democratic institutions. It stressed the need to set out rights and responsibilities that could induct people into democratic processes. Citizenship education, citizenship ceremonies and Knowledge for Life tests were examples of how such rights and responsibilities could be conveyed. The paper announced that Lord Goldsmith would conduct a review to explore and develop these themes further. There was also a need for the articulation of a shared and defining set of British values:

It is important to be clearer about what it means to be British, what it means to be part of British society and, crucially, to be resolute in making the point that what comes with that is a set of values which have not just to be shared but also accepted. There is room to celebrate multiple and different identities, but none of these identities should take precedence over the core democratic values that define what it means to be British. A British citizen, fully playing a part in British society, must act in accordance with these values.

(p. 57)

Some values could be conceptualised in part through national institutions such as the NHS or through the display of the Union Jack and other flags. However, the Government believed that an inclusive national debate should be initiated to inform the drawing up of written British values. It would publish discussion documents and materials and allow contributions from a wide range of interested groups and people at local, regional and national levels. The discussion of citizenship and values would also allow a wider debate to begin concerning a Bill of Rights and Duties. Further information

⁵⁰ http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Our_final_report.aspx.

⁵¹ <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7170/7170.pdf>.

is provided in House of Commons Library Research Paper 07/72, *The Governance Green Paper*, (23rd October 2007) and House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/PC/4703, *Governance of Britain: An Update*, (23rd May 2008).

4.5 The Path to Citizenship

The Government, on 20th February 2008, set out a series of proposals for consultation regarding a citizenship 'contract'—*The Path to Citizenship*.⁵² If agreed, this would include a new probationary period of citizenship, requiring new migrants to demonstrate their contribution to the UK or leave the country, with full access to benefits being delayed until migrants had completed the probationary period. Migrants would also have a good command of English to pass probation. Anyone committing an offence resulting in imprisonment would be barred from becoming a citizen; while those committing minor offences would be required to spend longer in the new probationary period. Migrants would also be expected to contribute to a new fund for managing the transitional impacts of migration which would provide extra financial help to communities experiencing change because of migration. Migrants would also be encouraged to volunteer in their local community to enable them to graduate to British citizenship more quickly.

4.6 Youth Citizenship Commission

On 29th February 2008, Professor Jonathan Tonge of Liverpool University was announced as Chair of the Youth Citizenship Commission.⁵³ The Commission emerged from the *Governance of Britain Green Paper*, which had noted the need for young people to be encouraged to play an active part in British society. The Commission will focus on 11 to 19 year olds. It will examine what citizenship means to young people and how young people's participation in politics can be increased. It will also seek to develop citizenship amongst disadvantaged groups and explore how active citizenship can be promoted through volunteering and community engagement; and how the political system can reflect the communication preferences of young people. The Commission will also lead a consultation with young people on whether the voting age should be lowered to 16. The Commission will report in the spring of 2009.

4.7 Lord Goldsmith's Review of Citizenship

On 11th March 2008, Lord Goldsmith published his review of citizenship—*Citizenship: Our Common Bond*.⁵⁴ The report recommended that it was important to make clear who was a British citizen and what it meant. It suggested the abolition of residual types of citizenship, with the exception of British Overseas Territories Citizenship and British Nationals Overseas status, to allow people who qualify for those categories to obtain full British citizenship. It also proposed that only citizens should have the fullest rights to political participation, meaning that voting rights of non-citizens should be phased out while retaining the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and Irish citizens who have Irish citizenship by connection to Northern Ireland. The report stated that people who were settled in the UK for the long term should become citizens, whereas those who could not (because their country of origin did not allow dual nationality) should become Associate Citizens. It also recommended reform of the law of treason to make the duty of allegiance relevant to modern conditions. The report offered proposals to enhance a sense of shared belonging which would require for the first time a clear statement of the

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<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/consultations/closedconsultations/pathtocitizenship/>.

⁵³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease290208a.htm>.

⁵⁴ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/reviews/citizenship.htm>.

rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Another suggestion was a new national day which could articulate such sentiments. Citizenship education could be augmented at primary school level in addition to a citizenship ceremony for school leavers. Reduction in university fees could also be introduced for those taking part in civic activities, while employers could be encouraged to promote civic engagement among their workers through an Investors in Communities standard. In terms of newcomers to the UK, Lord Goldsmith sought to promote fluency in English, through initiatives such as language loans for people who could not afford to pay for lessons at the outset. He also suggested mentoring schemes, citizenship courses and citizenship ceremonies that could connect new citizens with the local community.

4.8 The Flying of the Union Flag

The *Governance of Britain* Green Paper announced that the Government would consult on altering the guidance that prohibited the flying of the Union Flag from Government buildings for more than the 18 set days a year. The Government initiated a consultation running from July 2007 to November 2007.⁵⁵ While the consultation was taking place, the Government relaxed its guidance and granted UK Government departments the freedom to fly the Union Flag on their buildings when they wished. The Government announced in its Constitutional Renewal White Paper, (Cm 7342), published on 25th March 2008, that it had decided that this change should become permanent, though the specific arrangements for flag flying in Northern Ireland would remain unaltered and that the arrangements would only apply to UK Government buildings in Wales and Scotland.⁵⁶ In addition, the Government would explore the greater use of the Union Flag on other public buildings and consider whether explanatory information about the flag should be included in material for new British citizens.

4.9 A Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and A Statement of British Values

On 25th March 2008, the Government announced that it would be shortly consulting on a British bill of rights and responsibilities (HC *Hansard*, 25th March 2008, col. 23). On 4th June 2008 it was announced that the Government was finalising the process to inform the debate on a 'Statement of Values' and hoped to make an announcement before the summer recess (HC *Hansard*, 4th June 2008, col. 1034W).

5. Reaction to Government Policies and Proposals

5.1 Citizenship Education

A number of criticisms have been levelled at citizenship education provision. The House of Commons Education Select Committee in its report *Citizenship Education*, (HC Paper 147; 8th March 2007) concluded that "while inspiring programmes exist, and progress is being made, the quality and extent of citizenship education is still inconsistent across the country".⁵⁷ It did however support Sir Keith Ajegbo's proposals regarding the use of British social, cultural and political history as points of entry in the citizenship curriculum to engage students in discussing the nature of citizenship and its responsibilities in 21st Century Britain. The Government responded on the 22nd May 2007 (HC Paper 517). Ofsted has also reported on variation in the quality of citizenship teaching. Its report *Towards Consensus? Citizenship in Secondary Schools*, (2006), found that in 2005/06

⁵⁵ <http://www.culture.gov.uk/flagflying/gbcr.html>.

⁵⁶ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/docs/constitutional-renewal-white-paper.pdf>.

⁵⁷ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmmeduski/147/147.pdf>.

while significant progress had been made in implementing National Curriculum citizenship in many secondary schools, there was not yet a strong consensus about the aims of citizenship education or its incorporation into the curriculum.⁵⁸ Moreover, it found that in a quarter of schools surveyed, provision was found to be inadequate, reflecting weak leadership and lack of specialist teaching.

5.2 The Governance of Britain Green Paper

The House of Lords Constitution Select Committee noted that the proposals in the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, including those on a statement of British values, “would require close scrutiny over the coming months and years if they are to be turned from aspirations into new pillars of the constitution”.⁵⁹ The Committee did, however, welcome the Government’s commitment to consult widely.

5.3 A British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

On the day that *Governance of Britain* Green Paper was issued, David Cameron, the Leader of the Opposition, said that there was a need “for greater clarity about the Human Rights Act 1998”, which meant that “a proper British Bill of Rights should mean replacing the Human Rights Act” (HC *Hansard*, 3rd July 2007, col. 821).

The Constitution Unit’s response to the Green Paper welcomed a debate about a British Bill of Rights.⁶⁰ It said that such a Bill should “repatriate and repackage the ECHR, and put a British label on it”. It also argued that any proposals needed to be subject to: public conventions or citizens’ assemblies; scrutiny hearings held by the Joint Committee on Human Rights or an *ad hoc* Joint Committee of both Houses; a referendum. It questioned whether the Bill initially required a statement of values as it thought that previous attempts to do this had “produced lists of values which are unexceptional but not distinctively British”, which it feared could undermine the debate.

In May 2007, the Joint Committee on Human Rights launched an inquiry into a British Bill of Rights and has taken evidence and received submissions from a number of individuals and organisations.⁶¹ Liberty, the human rights group, in its submission was concerned that a Bill of Rights might undermine the Human Rights Act (HRA), and hoped instead that such a Bill would protect and build on the HRA. While, Liberty did not oppose the notion of a British Bill of Rights, it did reject the idea of a Bill of Rights which reserved basic rights and freedoms to British citizens, as it would undermine the universality of human rights more generally. Liberty questioned any suggestion that individual rights should be contingent upon compliance with one’s responsibilities, as this might also undermine the principle of universality. JUSTICE, the legal and human rights organisation, also thought that a Bill of Rights should enshrine the ECHR and saw it as an opportunity for debate and consensus on a core set of common principles appropriate for a modern British democracy. JUSTICE also concurred with Liberty by arguing that making the enjoyment of rights legally contingent on the exercise of responsibilities was to misunderstand the concept of universal and inalienable rights.

Peter Ridell, writing in *The Times*, in February 2008, wondered about the scope of the rights that such a Bill might contain and the costs they might incur if citizens tried to

⁵⁸ http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_Content/Shared_Content/Files/towardsconsensus.pdf.

⁵⁹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldselect/ldconst/158/158.pdf>.

⁶⁰ <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/files/publications/GovernanceResponse.pdf>.

⁶¹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200708/jtselect/jtrightts/memo/britishbill/contents.htm>.

enforce them, as rights were “now seen as not just in familiar political terms, but also economic, social and, now increasingly, environmental ones”.⁶²

5.4 *The Path to Citizenship*

David Davis, the then Shadow Home Secretary, in responding to *The Path to Citizenship*, was concerned about the implications of granting probationary or permanent citizenship:

In many cases, the granting of UK citizenship, probationary or permanent, will result in the loss of original nationality under the laws of the country that the individual comes from. Does the Home Secretary understand that that could make British citizenship permanent? Under international law, it is not possible to render a person stateless. It is not possible to take away British citizenship from a person if they have lost their original nationality—it is not like a probationary driving licence. Such action could be irreversible and irrevocable under international law and therefore under UK law.

He also suggested that the probationary period for UK Citizenship should be five years (HC *Hansard*, 20th February 2008, cols. 353–4).

⁶² http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/peter_riddell/article3285492.ece.

