Transformation of Socio-Cultural Integration Policy and Inherent Political Theories in the UK: A Way Forward

Samiul Ahmed[1], Sarwar Uddin Ahmed[1], and Ikramul Hasan[1]

[1]Affiliation not available

July 31, 2019

Abstract

The research followed a qualitative approach where in depth interviews, secondary researches and relevant policy documents were used as main sources of data.

Transformation of Socio-Cultural Integration Policy and Inherent Political Theories in the UK: A Way Forward

Samiul Parvez Ahmed
Associate Professor, School of Business
Independent University, Bangladesh
Email: samiul@iub.edu.bd

Sarwar Uddin Ahmed
Professor, School of Business
Independent University, Bangladesh
Email: sahmed@iub.edu.bd

Ikramul Hasan
Lecturer, School of Business
Independent University, Bangladesh
Email: ikramul@iub.edu.bd

ABSTRACT

Recently, the contemporary integration policies (Community Cohesion Agenda, CCA) of the UK have been heavily criticised for their foundational weaknesses; conceptual inadequacies; myopic views with regard to the complexity of the issue; lack of evidence etc. Vast majority of the studies conducted to verify this discourse has been done in the line of theoretical arguments of diversity management rather than exploring their connections to a target community in reality. This study aims at establishing a linkage between the growing theoretical arguments of the integration discourse with empirical data in light of the policy framework of the CCA. It is a qualitative study where CCA policies appear to be largely inclined towards the interculturalism/communitarianism ideology rather than to multiculturalism. However, the empirical evidence shows that the need for multiculturalism ideology remains in the integration policy discourse.

Key Words: Community Cohesion, Multiculturalism, Socio-Cultural Integration, Interculturalism

INTRODUCTION

It has been more than a decade since multiculturalism in the UK was replaced by the Community Cohesion Agenda (CCA), which is often referred to as the post-multiculturalism approach to integrationism. Many argue that the 2001 terrorist attack in New York and the urban disturbances (also known as race riots) that took place in the Northern cities of the UK in 2001 primarily account for by this shift in integration approach (Ritchie, 2001; Thomas et. al., 2017; McGhee, 2005, 2008; Alam and Husband, 2013). Following the race-riots, a series of reports were commissioned to analyse their underlying causes. It is argued that the idea of community cohesion was the result of such reports, as they were particularly critical of multicultural policy (Finney and Simpson, 2009). The most prominent of these reports, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team, 2001*, (Home Office, 2001a) criticised the core essence of multiculturalism: valuing diversity. Particularly, the report was based on a study of South Asian communities in a few Northern cities (Oldham, Burnley and Bradford) where there had been social disorders between ethnic groups, especially Pakistani Muslims, and the White community. Based on analysis, it introduced the popular, yet contestable, concept of 'community cohesion'. This report asserted that minority ethnic groups in the UK are, not only physically segregated, but that

> 'Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges.' (Home Office, 2001a:9).

Hence, a series of endeavours have been undertaken by the government in order to bring about cross-community harmony based on the community cohesion concept. Irrespective of CCA's efforts, a range of ideological and practical issues of the CCA can be observed. It is often argued that this contemporary integration policy is discriminatory as it only focuses on certain ethnic (e.g. South

Asians) groups or communities, as having extremely distinctive ways of life that is at odds with the norms and values of the dominant culture (Flint and Robinson, 2008). Likewise there are wider concerns that the recent discourse of integration is allegedly based on racialised minorities that focuses more on religion than the previous discourses of colour, race and ethnicity (Abbas, 2004) and particularly, for certain reasons (e.g. Islamophobia, global terrorism), Islam has become the focus of this discourse (Thomas et. al. 2017; Cameron, 2015). Communitarian critics condemn such developments on the ground that such a policy approach undermines the democratic process and social justice by eroding trust and common understanding (Bell, 1995). Critics also argue that, apparently, contemporary integration policy rests on an attempt to dismantle and dissolve the cultural identities of ethnic minorities to form a common "British" citizenship based on social control instead of social justice (Alexander, 2009). Furthermore, there are many controversies about the foundations and rationales of post-multicultural integration policies. Last but not least, concerns regarding the side effects of such policy in the community remains (Ratcliffe, 2012). Therefore, this research begins with a critical analysis of transformations of relevant philosophical and/or ideological standpoints of the integration policies (CCA) within the contemporary socio-political context of the UK. It then examines the practical aspects of the CCA's mechanisms from the point of view of the policy actors in operation. It then goes on to explore the plausibility of the CCA in connections to a target ethnic minority community, Bangladeshi community, which is predominantly a Muslim community, of the UK. Finally, the paper searches for an ideological platform (e.g. multiculturalism, interculturalism) that will pave the way to deal with the diversity issues of the UK.

IS MULTICULTURALISM DEAD?

The concept of multiculturalism is complex, and often contested, because its meaning is a product of several socio-historical issues and political cultures. These relate to pluralism, integration, national identity, citizenship and the state. Parekh (2000) suggests that, multiculturalism refers to any kind of difference of values/norms/culture/belief/principle, or even way of life, from the standard dominant

culture. From a different note, it is argued that the term 'multiculturalism' emerged due to the long historical process of migration (Hadjetian, 2005). According to cross-cultural psychologists, multiculturalism refers to the notion of *'…how difference should be recognized and included'* (Plaut, 2002:382). They suggest that multiculturalism inherently assumes the presence of pluralism where pluralism means *'maintenance or development of separate distinctive ethnic identities in a given society'* (Plaut, 2002:381) and a positive multicultural ideology, that is acceptance of *'cultural diversity as a valuable resource for a society'* (Berry, 1999:17).

Long history of multiculturalism brought by migration shows that the developed nations welcome it as it contributes to economic development, technological innovation, labour market and a vibrant culture (OECD, 2016). However, in recent time many have started to perceive it as a negative force that favours separatism (Policy Exchange, 2007), fundamentalism (Phillips, 2006; Gove, 2006) and, even, oppression (Okin, 1999). From a different angle, critics of multiculturalism, particularly the anti-essentialists, argue that multi–'culture' (ism) is fundamentally problematic on the grounds that the idea of multiculturalism is innately essentialist. Multiculturalism is also criticised for creating *preferential treatment myths* among resource-constrained citizens in the community (Author, 2015) or, in other words, it is alleged that multiculturalism distorts the equitable distribution of wealth (Barry, 2001; Thomas et al. 2017; Goodhart, 2013).

The 9/11 incident and subsequent series of terrorist incidents which resulted in Islamophobia also contributed to the rise of anti-multiculturalist views where Muslims often being labelled as a problematised group (Bourne, 2007; Finney and Simpson, 2009, Thomas et. al. 2017; Cameron, 2015). There is a perception that Muslims make *'politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands'* (Modood, 2009:164). The Government's '*Preventing Violent Extremism'* *(PVE)* strategy*,* which is targeted towards Muslims, is an example of an initiative based on such perception. However, broadly, in the new post-multiculturalism era, it is not only Muslims yet South Asian communities that are being 'problematised' in the UK. This is based on the assumption that

these groups supposedly nurture a culture, especially their values and norms, that is at odds with the dominant standard values (Burnett, 2007; Flint and Robinson, 2008; Kundnani, 2007). In light of these developments, there are arguments about the degrees and limits to which the ethnic minorities can practice their religio-cultural rituals. In many circumstances, it becomes difficult to take normative decisions when minority beliefs or values conflict with the value system of the dominant culture.

It is widely noted in the contemporary integration discourse that, though the ethnic minority communities are individually cohesive or have social bonding within them, they are physically and socially isolated from each other and, thus, these tendencies to separate lead to racism, inter-community antagonism, lack of a common sense of belonging and, hence, a weak sense of British citizenship or identity (Ratcliffe, 2012; Burnett, 2008; McGhee, 2008). With such perceptions in mind, multiculturalism was condemned as the root cause of several social problems; and hence, the policy focus shifted towards harmonising cross-community unity based on *British culture*, norms and values, i.e. 'Britishness'.

CRITICISMS OF THE CCA

Many argue that the contemporary integration policies define the central issue (e.g. inter-community antagonism) from a narrow 'cultural' view while undermining the issues related to structural inequalities and the complexities of the dynamics of various minority ethnic groups having diverse value systems (Finney and Simpson, 2009). These policies are also criticised in that it would be a mistake just to see the issue from the shallow view of cultural differences and separateness (alleged 'parallelism') of the minority ethnic communities. Rather, what is needed is a thorough understanding of the conditions that create and mobilize ethnicity and, hence, so-called 'ethnic conflict'.

The ideology of the CCA that is the establishment of a collective 'British identity' based on common shared principles has also caused some confusion. It is not clear what the dimensions of the commonality would be as there can be various commonality grounds: shared attachment to locality, agreement for democratic solutions, particular forms of ethical and cultural values, particular forms of psychological bonding or shared emotions etc (Wetherell, 2009:5). According to Kundnani (2007), society definitely requires common values to unite around but that may not have to be limited to specific British values, rather, the values could be *'...universal values of human and democratic rights'* (Kundnani, 2007:9). There is also confusion about the single identity concept based on British values from equality in diversity perspective. People can have multiple identities in respect to their culture, faith and various social roles. Therefore, the focus on core British values or 'Britishness' - which is, in itself, a contestable concept - can be a part of the overall identity of a person (Wetherell, 2009:6). In a similar vein, Parekh argues that, rather than having a single collective British identity, *'...being British must accommodate plurality and allow people to be British in their own different ways'* (Parekh, 2009: 134). From another point of view, Brah argues that identity is not static or given, rather it is fluid and forms through process (Brah, 2009). In line with the fluidity, or plurality, of the identity debate, a study, conducted by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), found that peoples' identity encompassed a number of dimensions (i.e. geography, national symbols, people, values and attitudes, cultural habits and behaviour, citizenship, language, and achievements) in its formation (Ethnos, 2005:6-7). However, their conception of 'Britishness' is restricted to a few dimensions and the way they have defined the dimensions that include

> '…watching and supporting football, cricket and rugby; and consuming food and drink such as 'fish and chips', 'English breakfast', 'Yorkshire pudding', 'cream teas', 'cucumber sandwiches', 'roast beef', 'Sunday lunch', 'curries' and 'beer' (Ethnos, 2005:7).

Here, the dimension excludes the cultural characteristics of the ethnic minorities. Critical examination of this study shows that post-multiculturalism does not accommodate cultural diversity while forming the collective or British identity.

There are also limitations of the naive *contact theory* presumed by the CCA. The work of Putnam (2007) suggests that contact theory does not work where there are resource constraints. Other studies also show that there is a positive relationship between ethnic composition and prejudice. That is, increasing the number of ethnic minority people can increase discrimination and prejudice in the majority group (Hewstone *et al*., 2009). This can be explained through *threat theory* where it proposes that increasing numbers of minority ethnic members will threaten the majority's position and that prejudice is a response to this perceived competition (Hewstone et. al., 2009:103).

Critics also argue that the new community cohesion approach would require a change of relationship between the State and the citizen. They assert that the CCA is a type of a forced assimilation strategy in disguise (Alexander, 2009; Burnett, 2008; Kundnani, 2007; Sivanandan 2006; Back et. al., 2002); where the State is the sole guiding and enforcing power in creating national unity through intended 'norms' and 'values' and the citizens are subtly or indirectly, in some cases directly, forced to comply with it. For example, compulsory citizenship ceremonies ensure that those who obtain citizenship must swear loyalty to the state. Moreover, 'Britishness' is now intended to be taught to children through the national curriculum (Burnett, 2008:39, 47). Similarly, the British value test (i.e. Life in the UK Test) is now a mandatory requirement of the naturalisation process. Hence, this role of the government conforms to *governmentality theory* where

> '...government is conceptualized as 'working' through its power to put others into action, to stir up the desire, the interest and the will to participate or to act 'politically'' (McGhee, 2005:54).

McGhee states that the community cohesion discourse inherently instrumentalises this idea *'through encouraging local people to alter their ways of thinking about doing and being*

communities' (McGhee, 2005:54). From such a perspective, the CCA indicates a form of authoritarianism, rather than communitarianism (Burnett, 2008).

There are also controversies over the evidence base of contemporary integration strategies. It is often argued that the *'...cohesion agenda is based on a very limited and disputed evidence base'* (Flint and Robinson, 2008:264). The lack of evidence in community cohesion is also acknowledged by the Denham Report (Home Office, 2001b) and the Community Cohesion Panel (2004) report. In addition to questioning the evidence base of the CCA, some query the fundamental conception of community cohesion and its statutory framework. For example, Burnett (2008) states that the community cohesion is ill defined or vague and these are ambiguous concepts that can be understood and interpreted in very different ways. Last, but not least, is the lack of relationship between community cohesion policies and immigration policy. There is, apparently, very little substantive relationship between these two important policy areas, especially at the local level (Reeve, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research looked at the issue from two strands—examining fundamentals of the CCA and, in light of operational/practical implications aspects of CCA, analyzing racial, ethnic and religious issues of a target community, Bangladeshi community, predominantly a Muslim community, in Aston, Birmingham, UK. The research could be termed as exploratory in nature where qualitative approach or, particularly, *narrative and ethnographic approaches* were followed. Within this qualitative approach, in-depth interviews (directed by broad topic guidelines), secondary researches and relevant policy documents were used as the main sources of data[1]. Initially, interviews were conducted with the policy actors that play important roles in the local integration policy process. After this, the Bangladeshi residents of Aston were researched in order to explore their living experiences in light of the cross-community integration issues in Aston. At the same time opinions of

---

[1] Informed consent was taken from each of the respondents. The data collection instrument was duly approved by appropriate Research Ethics Committee.

various social workers, faith leaders and people of different voluntary organizations were taken into consideration. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the primary data.

THE STUDY REGION

Aston, an electoral ward in Birmingham was chosen as the study area. Birmingham is severely culturally diversified. With such a diverse population, Birmingham City Council has had to put more effort into their cross-community or cross-cultural work than any other city in Britain. In the light of the ideology of *community cohesion* and, with the guidance of the Home Office, Birmingham City Council, along with its local partners, has taken various strategic and operational steps to implement the CCA.

The details of the respondents are given below:

Types of Respondents	Frequency
Policy Actors in the formation and implementation of CCA	20^2
Community Leader	(Individual respondents)
Community Worker	
Faith Leader	
Ethnic Minorities of Aston (Bangladeshis)	Numbers in each FGD
FGD with males Age: 25-50 years	5
FGD with females Age: 25-50 years	7
FGD with young girls & boys Age: 16-20 years	8 (girls:6; boys:2)
Total number of Respondents	40

---

[2]Some respondents have overlapping roles such as few policy actors also belong to the community workers category and, hence, it is hard to differentiate them.

CCA IN ASTON

Policy actors' experiences show that certain riots or 'social disturbances' in the northern cities of the UK; local and global terrorist incidents; Islamophobia; and the social, cultural and religious diversity of the minority ethnic communities of the UK are the perceived reasons for the development of the community cohesion ideology in the UK and these findings are coherent with the argument that we have presented earlier in the literature review. An active community worker, being a supporter of the CCA, stressed on the fact that the British communities are overburdened with cultural diversities which the nation cannot handle and hence, a control mechanism should be in place to regulate such chaotic societal amalgamation. He also labeled such Britain's diversity as "Super Diverse" where hardly there is any understanding about each-others' norms, values and other cultural aspects.

From a different angle, many policy actors expressed their concerns regarding rising Islamophobia in the UK and its role in the integration policy paradigm. One of the policy actors said that the perpetrators of the terrorist incidents in the UK were mostly Muslims and, therefore, non-Muslims, including the Government, became afraid of Muslims. This, he believed, is how Islamophobia became an issue in the UK and the Government and non-Muslims became suspicious about the operations of Mosques, as some were allegedly, involved in the 7/7 bombing incident. With this perception, the Government stereotyped the whole Muslim community as a potential threat.

Based on these developments, a range of policies have been implemented in Aston with a view to bring cross-community harmony. The primary objective of many projects is to *breaking down cross-community tensions and conflicts* among various ethnic minority communities. Among many projects, inter-community sports, cross-community inter-faith programmes, community festival programmes, community residents engagement programmes etc. are focused on bringing various communities together so that they can interact with each other in order to get to know each other better, especially in terms of each-others' culture and religion. Many policy actors perceive that

various community cohesion projects have been successful in bringing cross-community harmony in Aston. However, there have also been a lot of concerns regarding various aspects of the CCA among the policy actors.

With regard to ideology, many policy actors including faith leaders perceive that the current Government has made clear their rejection of the multiculturalism ideology and is now keen to push the idea of a united community. Some policy actors were actually worried about this constant ideological tension in relation to contemporary integration discourse. One of the policy actors expressed his confusion and worry about the current political shift in the integration discourse by stating that the current Government's conviction for the Community Cohesion is so strong that it may turn out to mean a push for assimilation of the minority ethnic communities of the UK. It was felt that everyone in the community cohesion policy arena is in disarray with the ideological shifts. Moreover, policy actors often feel that the CCA has been developed without examining real issues that persist in ethnic minority communities.

THE BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY OF ASTON

From the primary evidence, we have noticed that a constant tension persists among Bangladeshi immigrants regarding their identities and relationships to the host community. The dimensions of the identity and feeling of belongingness mostly pertain to various social, cultural, religious and, even, legal issues. Many second and third generation Bangladeshis said that the way their identity is defined or labelled by others, mostly native English people, is different to their self-perceived personal identity, and thus, this difference often causes confusion and dilemmas among many immigrant Bangladeshis of the UK.

Primarily, many Bangladeshi residents' identity is closely associated with their ethnic origin, culture, religion, and citizenship status. For example, in general, the first generation Bangladeshis, those who migrated during the '60s and '70s, feel that, as they were born in Bangladesh, their roots still belong there. Hence, they perceive Bengali, the native culture of the Bangladeshis, to be the dominant part

of their identity. On the other hand, from a citizenship or legal perspective, generally the older generation Bangladeshis, who have got British citizenship, asserted that they are 'British'. However, it is to be noted that the older generation Bangladeshis perceive 'English' as a cultural identity of the ethnic White or indigenous people. They consider 'British' identity as applicable for all those, irrespective of race or ethnicity that hold British citizenship.

In order to accommodate these two diverse aspects - citizenship/legal status and 'Bengali' as cultural identity, the hyphenated identity came into play--'British-Bangladeshi' or 'British-Bengalis'--an identity that denotes, both the citizenship status and their ethnic origin and root culture. In many cases, it was found that the Bangladeshis are comfortable with this hyphenated identity. However, there are differences of opinions about this hyphenated identity across the generations. For example, it was noticed that the older generations put more stress on the Bengali or Bangladeshi aspect of their hyphenated identity.

However, the younger generations of Aston have, since birth, been exposed to various cultures of the minority ethnics groups of the area. They have, thus, developed a broader spectrum of culture where a variety of norms, values, rituals, and traditions, derived from other Muslim communities, are embraced. They feel a greater association with other Muslim cultures, in Aston, and so are gradually moving away from their previous generations' Bengali culture. Many of those interviewed said that they consider themselves to be more Muslim-British than Bangladeshi-British or English. Thus, their identity has become religion-driven, rather than driven by Bengali culture.

It is true that the young Bangladeshis are tending towards a more complex (combination of multicultural and religious) identity, rather than their traditional Bengali identity. The evolution of identities of different generations of the Bangladeshis indicates the inherent complexities or danger in developing a collective or shared identity based on the dominant host culture, 'Britishness' — which is one of the goals of the community cohesion.

It is observed that, in the context of Aston, the Bangladeshi's perception of community is limited to cultural or ethnic homogeneity in the area. Their experiences revealed that, certain cultural preferences and the disproportionate composition and dispersion of various ethnicities in Aston, facilitated the formation of a tightly-bonded Bangladeshi community, or in a broader sense, Asian community, in Aston. They feel that they have all the social facilities (e.g. Mosques, education, health services) and social amenities (e.g. community centres, sports facilities) they need is in Aston within their surroundings. Moreover, the interviewees asserted that they are very happy about the fact that many aspects of the Aston community reflect Bengali culture. For them, one of the positive factors about living in Aston is that, due to a higher concentration of Bangladeshis and Asians, many regular services (e.g. taxis, restaurants, grocery shops) in the area are provided by them as well. Moreover, nowadays, some Bangladeshis and other Asians also work in various essential service-providing organisations in the area (e.g. education institutions, hospitals, banks). From a cultural perspective, the Bangladeshis perceive some commonalities with that of other south Asian communities, especially Indian and Pakistani communities in the area. Moreover, in relation to the cross-community commonality issue, male interviewees asserted that professional work interest plays a major role in developing positive relationships with each other. They asserted that many Bangladeshis have developed joint business ventures with the Pakistanis and Indians in the local area and, they perceive, this professional association has a positive influence on the cross-community relationships in the area. The Bangladeshis also stressed on the religious commonality of the Bangladeshi and other minority ethnic communities of the area. They feel that gathering in mosques for daily prayer is a symbol of closeness among different Muslim ethnicities.

It is also observed that there is a persistent racial and, more so, religious, tension among the young Bangladeshis regarding wider relationship between Muslims and the native English of the UK. Primarily, it seems that they perceive racism to be cross-racial and cross-religious antagonisms between the native English population and various ethnic immigrants, mostly, Muslims. According to the young interviewees, contemporary faith issues, particularly, terrorist issues, Islamophobia, and,

the relevant role of the media have generated this tension between Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK. The Bangladeshis perceive that the native English people or, in some cases, other non-Muslims, in the UK generally tend to believe what the media and government say about Muslims. They asserted that the media and the UK government stereotype all Muslims as potential terrorists, based on some local and global terrorist incidents. The young interviewees perceive these faith issues to act as a barrier to developing healthy relationships between the Muslim immigrants and the native English people in the local area.

According to many young interviewees, the prevailing racial tension in Aston often depends on the composition of the racial and religious demographics of an area. For example, they feel that, due to the religious-ethnic compositions of Aston (majority Muslim immigrants and minority English native population) they hardly face any racism from the native English people because, being the minority in Aston, the English stay away from the Muslim immigrants of the area. However, the interviewees considered that they would face severe racism from the native English people if they moved out of Aston and lived in a predominantly English area.

The Bangladeshis also asserted another element of racism within their local community - persistent racial tension between Bangladeshis, African communities and Pakistanis, even though they are all Muslims. They explained that, particularly, due to the past history of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis[3], the older generation Bangladeshis still feel strong animosity towards the Pakistanis, and vice versa; and this often results in open confrontations in the local area. The interviewees said that the Bangladeshis had been carrying this animosity for generations though, interestingly, it is to be noted that the young interviewees thought that this is wrong because they consider themselves, and the Pakistanis, to be more British-Muslims than Bangladeshis or Pakistanis. Hence, they do not want to have this division between them.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

---

[3] Relates to the bitter experiences between them during the liberation war in 1971.

From the primary evidence it is evident that the concept, community cohesion, the central idea of the post-multiculturalism integration approach, arises from a mere response to civil unrest, rather than the social evolution of a multicultural society. Community cohesion emphasizes cultural issues of the ethnic minorities over wider social evolution. Linking the policy actors' understanding of the ideology of community cohesion with the wider understanding of community perceived by the Bangladeshi residents of Aston reveals further dimensions of the contemporary integration issues. The various perspectives defining self-identity, socio-cultural-religious norms and values, and overall community show how difficult it may be to fix the meaning of community cohesion with a universally accepted concept that encompasses all the crucial aspects of social life and that are understood equally by all the stakeholders in the community.

The primary research also reveals that the relationship of the Bangladeshis with other communities depends on various factors, such as their preferences and need for socio-cultural-religious life; their economic dependencies within their community; their experienced and perceived racial issues with various communities; their historical issues with particular communities; the demographics of the area; both global and local faith issues; and Islamophobia. Having such complexities, physical proximity and frequent interactions, which are initiated by the CCA, with each other may have some influence on cross-community relationships, but its nature (whether positive, negative or mixed) and degree of influence would be highly contextualised. As asserted by a policy actor, the communities themselves have to be ready before they are forced to integrate, physically, so that they can develop good relationships with each other. Otherwise, while there are prevailing inter-community antagonisms, such policy interventions may have detrimental effects on their relationships.

Moreover, the analysis of the Bangladeshi residents' life experiences shows that there are a number of reasons for them developing their own community in Aston. The discussion regarding the social evolution of the Bangladeshis show how and why a dense and tight Bangladeshi community was established in Aston when Bangladeshi immigrants first arrived in the area during the '60s.

Hence, the concept, 'parallel lives' asserted by the Cantle report, fails to understand the underlying issues of an ethnic community, and, rather naively, concludes that the existence and sustenance of individual minority ethnic communities is linked to cross-community antagonisms. Therefore, it is important to understand the social dynamics of ethnic minorities more acutely in order to handle the cross-community integration issues of Britain.

The discussion about the identity of Bangladeshis indicates the importance of a plurality of identity of the Bangladeshi community in a dominant host cultural setting. It appeared that the Bangladeshis do not have any resistance to being British (e.g. from a citizenship perspective). However, they want to be 'British' in their own way – being British while preserving some crucial aspects of their ethnic culture and religious customs and rituals.

Moreover, it appeared that the Bangladeshis are dubious about the CCA because they think the Government intends to assimilate them into English culture through such policy programmes. In addition, the policy actors of the area are also doubtful about the inherent motives of the CCA. Many of them think that the CCA may turn out to be an assimilatory integration tool aimed at ethnic minorities. These findings compliment the wider debate regarding the ideology and the fundamentals of the CCA, discussed earlier. Moreover, the CCA stereotypes all ethnic communities based on its own assumptions regarding various socio-cultural aspects of these communities and, subsequently, develops blanket policies for everyone.

From another angle, the primary research shows that the Bangladeshi residents and community workers in Aston perceive that the community cohesion ideology particularly labels Muslims as a problematised group in society. They criticised the Government and the media for establishing and propagating this negative image of Muslims and, hence, promoting Islamophobia among the non-Muslims. They perceive that Muslims, in general, are stereotyped for the act of few terrorists, who happen to be Muslims by faith, though many interviewees asserted that those terrorists are diverted from Islam and, hence, do not belong to the greater Muslim community.

The policy actors made a number of relevant suggestions as to how to tackle some of those issues of the CCA. These recommendations aim to address the ideological implications, approaches, mechanisms and operational strategies of the CCA. According to primary evidence, it would be wrong to form general perceptions about all the ethnic communities without exploring the internal issues of each community. Once the particular issues of each community are identified, then these issues should be incorporated within the broad policy framework.

It was noticed that there is widespread ignorance among the Bangladeshi residents regarding the various projects and programmes of the CCA that operate in the area. Thus, dissemination of information and effective communication with the target community could be an area of concern of the CCA.

Another area of concern of the CCA could be to run community leadership development projects for adults. Currently, the CCA have leadership development projects for youths, but the residents complained that they did not have enough effective Bangladeshi community leaders who would listen to their voices and deal with their issues. It appears that the Bangladeshis have a lack of representation in the local council, i.e. their representatives are not in sufficient proportion to their numbers in the community. In general, as we have seen earlier, Bangladeshis have issues with Pakistanis due to past histories. This animosity is also evident at the institutional level where there is resource competitiveness between the Bangladeshi and the Pakistani communities. This particular Bangladeshi local authority representative asserted that he often fails to acquire funds as he is in a minority position in raising the voices of the Bangladeshi community in the local council. Moreover, he added, due to animosities between him and the local Pakistani leaders or local authority persons, who apparently dominate the local council in terms of ethnic minority representation, he is outnumbered. Thus, institutional racism, community leadership, its connection to local community,

and equality issues, need to be considered when dealing with the cross-community issues of the area.

In general, it was felt that many people are aggrieved with the situation where they perceive that the Government blames ethnic minorities for the so-called 'social disorders' in the community and, moreover, they accuse the Government of not taking effective measures to solve their problems. This anti-Government feeling is particularly intense among the youths of the area. Thus, it is important that more two-way communication between the general population and the Government should take place regarding local community issues and their policy initiatives. The policy process should be more community driven, and transparent.

Many interviewees, both policy actors and residents, asserted, the integration policy moves with the changes in political interests. Many interviewees urged for the separation of integration policies from their alleged political association. This is an area of argument, whether the integration policy is free from political interest or not. It appears from the primary evidence that widespread confusion and suspicion persists among the policy actors and the target community about the CCA's relation to the Government's political agenda regarding ethnic minorities' integration in British society. Thus, it is suggested that this alleged political association within the policy paradigm should be clarified by the Government if they really want to gain the trust of the citizen as well as the policy actors. Otherwise, much of their effort, irrespective of their motives, role and importance, may not be welcomed by both policy actors and target communities.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is evident that the post-multicultural integration policy perceives the diversities of various ethnic minorities of this country to be a problem (rather than a strength) that often leads to cross-cultural antagonisms. Hence, there is the notion that diversity should be managed. Various political leaders' and policy actors' allegations regarding the dysfunctional role of multiculturalism also raises concerns about the accommodation of the diverse life of the ethnic minorities in the UK. Thus, the

research reveals that the CCA, which develops on anti-multiculturalism ideology, fails to address the *equality* issues that are linked to the *differences*. As the contemporary integration approach rejects the philosophy of multiculturalism, then what would be the normative standpoint regarding various different ways of life of the ethnic minorities of the UK to be pursued by the CCA?

Let us, re-visit the key features and criticisms of multiculturalism while exploring a plausible alternative for the contemporary integration approach. The key feature of multiculturalism rests on recognition and accommodation of various forms of 'differences' or inequalities while dealing with the integration issues of ethnic minority groups within the dominant host community. It is often argued that the multiculturalism act as a means of *"remaking of public identities in order to achieve an equality of citizenship"* (Modood, 2005:5). However, multiculturalism, as a public policy, has gone through severe criticism on the grounds that it is inherently an essentialist idea that asymmetrically focuses more on the politics of 'difference' and 'recognition' of certain 'groups' and, hence, favours preferential treatments to those 'groups' over identical treatment to all disadvantaged including poor White communities of the UK (Barry, 2001, Goodhart 2013). In line with this argument, the critics assert that multiculturalism mainly focuses on equalities of 'differences' where 'differences' only pertain to ethnic, cultural and, or, religious aspects of the ethnic minorities and, thus, fails to address other areas of differences– gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic disparities (Hansen, 2006). Multiculturalism also accused of being relativist (Meer and Modood, 2011) and illiberal as, in many cases, it defends ethnic minorities' certain cultural practices—religious conservativeness with regards to sexual orientation and gender issues—*"that violates norms of human rights"* (Kymlicka, 2005:83). Similarly, multiculturalism is also criticized for not considering the challenges that the majority identities are currently facing due to the forces of globalization and de-industrialisation in the UK (Antonsich, 2015).

Having such dissatisfaction with multiculturalism, another stream of political ideology, Interculturalism, currently surfaced in the integration paradigm. It is argued that the interculturalism

is a form of discourse that supposedly rests on the critiques of multiculturalism (Joppke, 2017) and subsequently offers 'novel' solutions to them (Modood, 2017). Advocates of interculturalism assert that it is a discourse or political theory that is less 'groupist' and more liberal; opposes ethnicisation of individuals; has a stronger sense of whole; favors hybridity and fluidity of identity; committed to national citizenship and societal cohesion (Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Meer and Modood, 2011; Modood, 2017) and *"more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism"*(Modood, 2014: 302). It is claimed that, as opposed to multiculturalism, essence of interculturalism is 'dialogism in openness' or interactions between people from different diversities in a public sphere (Zapata-Barrero, 2016) through which sense of belongingness based on commonality could be formed; this ideology, to certain extent, resembles 'contact theory' (as discussed earlier). The interculturalism also stresses that the dialogue and interaction is so vital that the process, by itself, could address normative aspects of various crucial issues. However, critics argue that, in many cases, the interculturalism *"allows for the recognition of certain elements of ad hoc (or contextual) precedence for majority culture"* (Bouchard, 2011:451).

If we examine the dimensions and arguments of the two 'ism's in search for a plausible integration policy discourse, primary evidence of the Bangladeshi community can play a important role. The identity issue of the older generation Bangladeshi community, in one hand, highlights the importance of 'groupness' asserts by multiculturalism; and, on the other hand, the views of the younger generation (shift from Bengali to greater Muslim identity) and hyphenated identity (British-Bengali) of the Bangladeshi community supports the plurality/fluidity/hybridity conception of identity asserts by both multiculturalism and interculturalism. The transformation of identity clearly shows that forms and nature of identity changes over time but it never be "identity-less". Furthermore, CCA, by breaking down cross-community barrier, tries to explore areas of common interests and shared principles and pushes for a dominant identity, "Britishness", shows the duality of majority-minority tension in forming identity.

Primary evidence of the Bangladeshi community can also shed light on the dialogism idea which is supposed to be the core essence of interculturalism; though to a relatively lesser extent also valued by multiculturalism. According to the primary evidence, as mentioned earlier, the representation of the Bangladeshis in the local council of Aston, Birmingham, is outnumbered by the Pakistanis, with whom Bangladeshis have long history of animosity and, hence, it is likely that the Bangladeshis' voices are not cared much in the local council. Thus, they urged for leadership development (developing competencies) programmes for the Bangladeshis so that they actively can take part in the political process. Hence, it is clear that mere interaction or open dialogue may not work where all the parties are not in equal power balance and competencies. Multiculturalism's 'protectionism' approach for the minority in this regard cannot entirely be disregarded, though form and nature of power balancing may further be explored as these issues are highly contextualised. It can also be argued that, dialogism to be effective, 'appropriate' environment or 'condition' must be ensured for all the parties. For example, both the policy actors and the Bangladeshi residents of Aston raised their concern about the Islamophobia which may endanger the cross-community interactions as non-Muslims have reservation against the Muslims in the area. The Bangladeshi residents assert that the non-Muslims seem to stereotype all Muslims based on the way Muslim's images projected in the media as terrorists. Thus the core essence, naïve contact theory, of interculturalism and CCA is in question; whereas, multiculturalism is clearly sympathetic to minority ethnic communities on this regard.

In relation to the empirical case, and, after having thorough examinations of the arguments for and against the two prominent political theories of integrationism, interculturalism and multiculturalism, it is evident that the weights are positively more inclined towards the multiculturalism. However, the core essence of interculturalism, dialogism, should be appreciated though it needs to consider the conditions (e.g. power balance, competencies of the participants) within the process. Any integration political theory should consider an ethnic minority community's inherent social complexities before pushing them to interact with others, especially with the dominant entity. It is

also to be noted that, theoretically may be possible to have identity-less and self-less individuals; but in reality, identities do matter even though it transforms and takes different shapes over time. Thus, race, culture, identity and religious aspects always be there in the integration discourse. Particularly, considering the socio-cultural condition of the Bangladeshi community of Aston, it is deemed necessary that certain 'protectionism' policy (or support) may be needed for them to be included in the mainstream society and this is what multiculturalism intends to achieve. Whereas, interculturalism may take a stance for a broader, liberal and less-protectionist integration approaches; but this approach may be effective when all minority ethnic communities are out of their various forms of inequalities compared to the dominant community. Till then the multiculturalism ideology should remain in the integration policy discourse.

References

Author Citation. (2015).

Abbas T (2004), After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* 2004, Vol. 21; Part 3, pages 26-38.

Alam Y and Husband C (2013) Islamophobia, community cohesion and counter-terrorism policies in Britain. *Patterns of Prejudice* 47(3): 235-252. DOI:10.1080/0031322X.2013.797779.

Alexander C (2009) Cohesive Identities: The Distance between Meaning and Understanding. In: Wetherell M, Lafleche M and Berkeley R (eds) (2009) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion*, London: Sage Publications Limited, 115-125.

Antonsich M (2015) Interculturalism versus multiculturalism – The Cantle-Modood debate. *Ethnicities* 0(0): 1-24.DOI: 10.1177/1468796815604558.

Back L, Keith M and Khan A (2002) New Labour's White heart: Politics, multiculturalism and the return of assimilationism. *The Political Quarterly* 73(4): 445–454.

Barry B (2001) *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bell D (1995) Residential Community Associations: Community or Disunity. *The Responsive Community,* 25-36.

Berry JW (1999) Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologiecanadienne* 40(1): 12-21.DOI:10.1037/h0086823

Bouchard G (2011) What is Interculturalism? *McGill Law Journal* 56(2):435–468.

Bourne J (2007) In Defence of Multiculturalism, Institute of Race Relations, Briefing Paper 2. Available at: http://www.irr.org.uk/news/in-defence-of-multiculturalism/

Brah A (2009) Non-Binarized Identities of Similarity and Difference. In: WetherellM, Lafleche M, and Berkeley R (eds) (2009) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion.* London: Sage Publications Limited, 136-145.

Burnett J (2007) Britain's "civilising project": community cohesion and core values. *Policy and Politics* 35(2): 353-357.

Burnett J (2008) Community Cohesion in Bradford: Neoliberal Integrationism. In: Flint J and Robinson D (eds) (2008) *Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference.* Bristol: The Polity Press, UK, 35-56.

Cameron D (2015) Extremism speech. Birmingham. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/extremism-pm-speech (20 July, 2016).

Community Cohesion Panel (2004) The End of Parallel Lives? The Report of the Community Cohesion Panel, 2004. Available at:
http://www.tedcantle.co.uk/publications/012%20The%20end%20of%20parallel%20lives%20the%202nd%20Cantle%20Report%20Home%20Off.pdf

Ethnos (2005) Citizenship and Belonging: What is Britishness?, a report commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 2005, London, UK. Available at: http://www.ethnos.co.uk/what_is_britishness_CRE.pdf.

Finney N and Simpson L (2009) *Sleepwalking to Segregation'?: Challenging Myths about Race and Migration.* Bristol: The Policy Press.

Flint J and Robinson D (eds) (2008) *Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference.* Bristol: The Polity Press, UK.

Goodhart D (2013) *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-War Immigration.* London: Atlantic Books.

Gove M (2006) *Celsius 7/7*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Hadjetian S (2005) *Multiculturalism and Magic Realism? Between Fiction and Reality.* Germany: GRIN Verlag.

Hansen R (2006) The Danish cartoon controversy: a defence of liberal freedom. *International migration* 44 (5): 716.

Hewstone M, Tasuh N, Hughes J and Cairns Ed (2009) Prejudice, Intergroup Contact and Identity: Do Neighbourhoods Matter? In: Wetherell M, Lafleche M and Berkeley R (eds) (2009) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion*. London: Sage Publications Limited, 102-112.

Home Office (2001a) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team.* London: Home Office.

Home Office (2001b) *Denham Report, Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion*. London: Home Office.

Joppke C (2017) *Is Multiculturalism Dead?* Cambridge: Polity Books.

Kundnani A (2007) *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain.* London: Pluto Press.

Kymlicka W (2005) The uncertain futures of multiculturalism. *Canadian diversity,* 4 (1): 82-85.

McGhee D (2005) *Intolerant Britain? Hate, Citizenship and Difference.* England: Open University Press.

McGhee D (2008) *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights.* England: Open University Press.

Meer N and Modood T (2011) How does interculturalism contrast with multiculturalism? *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33(2): 175-196.

Modood T (1997) Introduction: The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe. In: Modood T and Werbner P (eds.) (1997) *The politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community.* London & New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1-25.

Modood T (2005) *Multicultural Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Modood T (2009) Muslims, Religious Equality and Secularism. On: Levey GBand Modood T (eds) (2009)*Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 164-185.

Modood T (2014) Multiculturalism, Interculturalisms and the Majority. *Journal of Moral Education* 43(3): 302-315, DOI: 10.1080/03057240.2014.920308.

Modood T (2017) Must Interculturalists misrepresent multiculturalism? *Comparative Migration Studies* 5(15): 1-17.

OECD (2016) International Migration Outlook 2016. OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2016-en (October, 2017).

Okin SM (1999) *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Edited by Cohen J, Howard M and Nussbaum MC (1999) N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Parekh B (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory.* London: MACMILLAN Press.

Parekh B (2009) Reasoned Identities: A Committed Relationship. In: Wetherell M, Lafleche M and Berkeley R (eds) (2009) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion.* London: Sage Publications Limited, 130-135.

Phillips M (2006) *Londonistan: how Britain created a terror state within*. London: Gibson Square Books.

Plaut VC (2002) Cultural Model of Diversity in America: The Psychology of Difference and Inclusion In:Shweder RA, Minow Mand Markus HR (eds) (2002) *Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 365-395.

Policy Exchange (2007) *Living apart together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism.* London: Policy Exchange.

Putnam R D (2007) E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30(2): 137-74.

Ratcliffe P (2012) Community cohesion': Reflections on a flawed paradigm. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(2): 262-281.

Reeve K (2008) New Immigration and Neighbourhood Change. In: Flint J and Robinson D (eds) (2008) *Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference.* Bristol: The Polity Press, UK, 177-197.

Ritchie D (2001) *Oldham Independent Review: One Oldham One Future.* Oldham: Oldham Independent Review.

Robinson D (2008) Community Cohesion and the Politics of Communitarianism. In: Flint J and Robinson D (eds) (2008) *Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference.* Bristol: The Polity Press, UK, 15-33.

Sivanandan A (2006) Attacks on Multicultural Britain Pave the Way for Enforced Assimilation. *Guardian Unlimited*, September 2006.

Thomas P, Busher J, MacklinG, Rogerson M and Christmann K (2017) Hopes and Fears: Community Cohesion and the 'White Working Class' in One of the 'Failed Spaces' of Multiculturalism. *Sociology* 52(2): 1-20.DOI: 10.1177/0038038516676775

Wetherell M (2009) Introduction: Community Cohesion and Identity Dynamics: Dilemmas and Challenges. In: Wetherell M, Lafleche M and Berkeley R (eds) (2009) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion.* London: Sage Publications Limited.

Zapata-Barrero R (2016) Theorising intercultural citizenship. In: Meer N, Modood T and Zapata-Barrero R (Eds.) *Multiculturalism and interculturalism: Debating the dividing lines.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.