



BETWEEN EXTREMES: CITIZENSHIP & CENSORSHIP IN A FREE SOCIETY

Panel event held at The Frontline Club, London W.2

Wednesday 30 November 2005, 7.20 PM to 9.0 PM

Chair: William Arthurs

Host: Ziba Norman

Panel: Catherine Audard, Sylvia Corona, Dr Abdul Wahid, Richard Weight

TRANSCRIPT

ZIBA NORMAN

Good evening everyone, I'm sorry we're starting a bit late, but I think many of the people who come here find it a little difficult to locate the place, so I thought we'd just wait and see if there were a few others. It's going to be a very interesting discussion even if it's a very intimate debate, and hopefully that'll give people chance to ask lots of questions. If you have visited our website you'll know a bit about the TI already, and what we are trying to do and stand for; if you haven't, may I just say, please have a look at our website, and if you have any suggestions as to events we should be organising, or indeed research we should be sponsoring, please email me and let me know.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks, Ziba. Good evening, I'd like to introduce myself, my name is William Arthurs, and I am your chair this evening. We've heard a little bit about the Transatlantic Institute, and as Ziba said, you can find out more from our website. Before we go any further, I want to just make my safety announcement: if you hear the fire alarm, the way out is not through the windows and not through the lift, the fire exit is at the back of the room and the green light will be illuminated and we should follow the green signs for the fire exit. Could you all turn your cell phones and beepers off please, if you haven't already done so... thank you.

Now a little word about our website, which has been mentioned. Some of you may have heard about this event via an email, we're trying to bring our website into the 21st century, and one of the features that we do have is a syndicated news feed. If you go to our site you'll see that there is a little box entitled RSS, you will be able to access our news via that, and get up-to-date information about our publications and

our activities delivered to your desktop. If you have the right sort of browser, for example Netscape, or if you have the right news-reading software -- I saw yesterday that the Guardian has free software that you can download from their website, news-reading software which you can use to visit not only the Guardian's news feeds but any other website that has a news feed, and we are going to make sure that that is up to date, so even if you don't receive an email from us, you should be able to look at our news via that route.

Now, our event this evening. We called this event "Between Extremes, Citizenship and Censorship in a Free Society." We're going to be discussing the role of the citizen in a free society, and controls over citizens' free speech and rights of free association. We asked for a representative of the Home Office to be present, because part of the topic we are going to discuss will touch upon the Terrorism Bill currently before Parliament. The Home Office were not able to provide anybody, so I may have to say a few words myself about the factual side of that.

A little caveat about this topic. We are an educational charity, we are not a political organisation and our aim here is to provide information and to provide a forum for debate, and this event should not be construed as an attempt either to aid or to hinder the passage of legislation currently before Parliament, or to influence policy. It is purely an educational and informational event.

Now, this event was advertised to the public, it is a public event, and according to our protocol for events, this event is in principle entirely on the record, we're making a recording of it, and there will be a transcript on our website. When you ask questions at the end, feel free to mention your name and affiliation, but be aware that those will become part of our published record of this event. I'm initially going to make some remarks by way of setting out the background to this topic. Each speaker will be allotted ten minutes to make an initial statement. Each speaker will then have five minutes to comment on or respond to points made by the other speakers, and we will have time for questions.

Let me introduce our speakers. Catherine Audard is from the LSE, though we have Forum for European Philosophy on your name tag, and Catherine will be able to help us with a few comments regarding the French experience in particular. Sylvia Corona is the founder and director of the UK New Citizen organisation, and Sylvia will be able to speak about the experiences of new citizens in British life, Dr Abdul Wahid is a member of the Executive Committee of Hizb ut Tahrir, which has been in the news in the last few months as the organisation, one of the organisations which Tony Blair said that it was the intention of the new Terrorism legislation to give the opportunity to ban, and Richard Weight is the author of a very interesting book, which came out a couple of years ago, "Patriots: National Identity 1940-2000" which gives valuable historical background to the contested notions of citizenship in the British context. So I shall say a few words lasting no more than five minutes, and then I will hand over to each of our speakers in turn.

One version of the narrative that leads up to the questions I posed a second ago, starts after the Second World War. The UK was one of the earliest countries to sign the Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights in 1951, though its incorporation into domestic law did not take place until 1998. The Convention defines

positive rights of, inter alia, freedom of speech, and freedom of association, as well as setting out the circumstances and processes whereby states may restrict or, in certain emergencies, suspend these rights. Meanwhile the break-up of Empires, and large scale immigration from former colonial possessions, led to debate in the 1950s and 1960s on issues of citizenship, nationality, international mobility (initially mobility of labour and more recently of refugees), these debates continue to this day, challenging both traditional stereotypes of national identity and the concept of formal equality before the law in circumstances where policies to protect minority groups from particular kinds of discrimination have been instituted. At the same time, the Civil Rights movement in the United States forced that polity to make good on its constitutional promise of formal equality before the law. I hope we'll have time this evening to discuss the American concept of citizenship and compare it to European concepts.

In Britain in particular, the decline of institutional Christianity after the Second World war left the cultural field open to be contested by a range of secular beliefs, each of which lays claim to unify the British nation - for example, the ideas of tolerance and good will which the Prime Minister appealed to in his press conference following the 7/7 bombings. Or the ideas of racial purity and isolationism promoted by extreme political movements. Can a nation be unified by secular beliefs in this way? or was J F Stephen right when he wrote in 1869: "We cannot judge of the effects of Atheism from the conduct of persons who have been educated as believers in God and in the midst of a nation which believes in God. If we should ever see a generation of men, especially a generation of Englishmen, to whom the word 'God' had no meaning at all, we should get a light upon the subject which might be lurid enough."

But we could take a longer view. In the former colonial possessions, political power and often control over great and valuable natural resources, was frequently handed over to ostensibly ideologically-motivated nationalist movements which since have been responsible for many instances of bad governance and human rights violations. Unfamiliar national identities were imposed on peoples, politicising them, pitting ethnic groups and religious sects against each other, and allowing unscrupulous politicians to betray the promise of national independence. And yet all this would have been no surprise whatever to anyone who knew how Britain had supplanted the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, and encouraged and supported Arab nationalism.

At any rate, the consequences of those actions taken with the intention of defending British interests are now our problem in a world of international trade, communication and travel.

Following 9/11, the Council of Europe set to work to update international conventions on terrorism and terror financing. More recently the Council of Europe prepared a comparative study of member states' legislation regarding incitement to terrorism and expression of praise or appreciation of terrorism, or what is now termed in the Terrorism Bill, "glorification" of terrorism. In some jurisdictions, to speak approvingly of, or to publicise, any crime, is itself a crime. The findings of this study were used in the drafting of the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, of May this year. To date this convention has been signed by twenty-six Council of Europe member states. It seeks to fill what the Council of Europe sees as anomalies in

member states' legal systems. This convention has not yet been ratified by any member state - in the UK, the passage of the Terrorism Bill will incorporate these provisions into domestic law, permitting the UK to ratify the convention.

The Terrorism Bill defines a new offence, the effect of the wording of the Bill is that it is an "offence to make a statement glorifying terrorism if the person making it believes or has reasonable grounds for believing that it is likely to be understood by its audience as an inducement to terrorism" - the words of the Home Secretary in a letter to David Davis and Mark Oaten, dated 6th of October 2005.

The restrictions this bill seeks to impose on freedom of speech must be squared with the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 10 defines the right to freedom of speech as well as the restrictions that can be imposed by the state, as are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, territorial integrity and public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime, and other social values. Article 9 protects freedom of conscience and religion and Article 11, freedom of association, although as with Article 10 these are not unqualified absolute rights. Under European Court of Human Rights case law, such restrictive measures must be prescribed by law, well defined and thus predictable, necessary in a democratic society, proportionate to their legitimate aims or purposes, and respond to a pressing social need: also the grounds for the limitation of the rights must be relevant and sufficient. The Council of Europe identified during the drafting of the terrorism convention, the conflicts that were bound to arise between the proposed restrictions, and these fundamental ECHR rights. Since the convention takes effect by being imported into national law, it is a matter for each member state to ensure that other legislation is compliant with the Human Rights convention.

The Terrorism bill also seeks to widen the grounds for banning organisations which are concerned with terrorism.

I have copies of all the source material here. Though the precise genesis and wording of these policies is important, I don't want this to be mainly a discussion of legal minutiae.

Catherine?

CATHERINE AUDARD

Well, France has been in the spotlight, recently, unfortunately, with the violence in the suburbs and in the city, and it is a very complex situation, because I don't think it is only a question of immigration, it's the social and economic context that explains the present situation, but still it prompts a lot of questions about the shape and model of integration that we have had in France, and I just wanted to say a few things about its positive and its negative side.

I think one can say that the integration story in France was a success until the 1970s probably. It was a success, because it was a very dirigist operation, very statist, the state has been in charge of creating the nation, of creating a community of citizens, and it was successful because it put a lot of effort and means into it, for instance creating jobs for the public sector etc. So the state in France has been a major actor in

the integration process, and also the story is very difficult nowadays, because the immigrant population was very different obviously.

But this model was working, especially through the education system, which put aside any specificity, any cultural specificities, in order to impose a national identity, which is based on universal values etc. -- the republican model -- and that worked because France was seen as a country where, like America, you could start a new life with a new identity, and leave the past behind you. This new identity equated to modernity and to social mobility. It worked, and it still works.

When lots of young people from the second generation were asked about the troubles in France, they were saying, "Well look, we are assimilated, we are part of the system, we are French, but unfortunately we don't get jobs, we don't get proper accommodation, we live in ghettos," but they were rebelling against that, so that is one side of the story which we shouldn't forget.

But still the system did work, and it's not working: it's not working because promises have been made which are not fulfilled, and people are resenting the empty values they are confronted with, "liberty, equality, fraternity," these are empty words and they are really fed up, they want something else, and they are turning to the British and the American experience, and multiculturalism is seen more and more interesting and at the same time it is seen as very ambivalent, because multiculturalism is an experience which North America, Canada mostly, and Britain, nowadays, and it is still something alien to the French, centralised, tradition.

But still there are voices nowadays talking about positive discrimination, about multiculturalism in France, and recently, I think last week, it was announced that an organisation of black French people, representatives of the black French community, were organising themselves, that's really news, because nothing based on ethnicity or race is allowed really, the laws are very strict; the system is such that we cannot know how many children from immigrants are in France, because no mention of ethnicity or race should appear on the census, on the records; so the demographers and the sociologists have to find oblique ways in order to know exactly the situation. But still there is a move towards something more open.

At the same time we had the law about the hijab recently last year, the Muslim scarf, which banned girls from wearing it in schools, and that really was the end, or the beginning we don't know yet, but the end of a long crisis, maybe the beginning of something different. From the British side this law was seen as illiberal, and it is, in fact it is, something which contravened the Convention on Human Rights on freedom of religion, of possibility to express one's conscience, religious beliefs etc., so it's a complex situation.

But it has failed and I think it has failed in a way the British system is failing too, there are more general reasons why integration is not really working, I'm now turning to both the British and the French systems, both are in my view not working because immigration should be a two-way move: that is, the host country should realise the changes and the benefits from the changes, as well as demanding from the immigrant population, the new citizens, to realise that they are moving to a new context. So it should be a two-way move, and it is not. France, like Britain, like Germany, like Italy,

etc these are nations which really have a sense that their culture is threatened, that their national identity is possibly threatened by the newcomers: and instead of starting this two-way move, they are rejecting what they are saying.

So I think the obstacle is moral, it's not only political, it's also moral, the difficulty to operate this two-way move, the difficulty to recognise the moral worth of beliefs and practices that may be alien to us. And so, within the limits of what is acceptable, viewed from the limits defined by the European Convention of Human Rights, within these limits, there should be recognition of the diversity and value of other cultures especially Islam which is the most problematic culture, of course, in Europe.

So there is a moral obstacle, and also of course a political obstacle, because of the whole of the nation state, and the fact that the nation state demands similarities -- you can't operate without a strong core of shared values, so that there is enough special sympathy or special relationship between citizens so that solidarity, redistribution and social justice is possible. So there is really a problem at that level.

And the third, because I'm a philosopher, I would put the emphasis on that, the third limitation is conceptual, that is the fact that we are not prepared, in the Western World, to recognise diversity as the basis for toleration, we have based toleration on sameness, in the hope that in the end, everybody will think the same thing, the old Rationalist, 18th century Enlightenment view. And the conceptual move here should be the acceptance of this pluralism of values, that there is no sameness to be hoped for. Ok, I think I will stop here.

SYLVIA CORONA

Well, thank you very much for the invitation.

Thank you, Ziba, and the Transatlantic Institute. My name is Sylvia Corona and I have established a project called UK New Citizen about immigration and immigrants to the UK. And I think that before going to the practical part it is necessary in this debate to clarify some basic concepts. Because it happened to me several times that we were in the middle of a very interesting conversation about citizenship and we realise that we are talking about different concepts that only have in common the name. So what do we mean with "freedom"? what do we mean with "censorship"?

In that sense of course I am not representative of anybody, precisely my organisation is very proud of saying that new citizens have their representation in the hands of their MPs, their members of Parliament, so I can only present to you my personal opinion, based of course on the activities of my organisation.

I think that the problem with freedom at the moment, is that we are very much focused on quite a modern concept that freedom almost implies being able to do whatever we want. Even if it is something negative for ourself, and for other people. Personally I think that's quite a selfish concept of freedom, that is not useful at all when we are talking about our social responsibilities. In that sense I prefer a more classical or traditional concept of freedom, where we consider freedom under the rule of law, and consider the importance of the rule of law, to organise society, in that

sense we can also see the need to have some limitations, in order to provide and to secure the common good.

With that idea of freedom we can also consider the idea of censorship. Is censorship anything that is going to limit our activities, everything? or we can also define more precisely, censorship as the arbitrary resolution to limit our freedoms, but if that kind of limits are precisely to defend our liberties, should they then be called censorship? on the contrary, it is the kind of support system and to protect all the citizens.

In that sense I believe it's necessary to think again on the concept of society, and I must confess that when I arrived in England eight years ago, seven years and a half, more or less, I remember that there was still a very lively debate about Margaret Thatcher saying that "there is no such thing as society". In practical terms, in my experience as a newcomer, and a new citizen, I've noticed that for other reasons we are actually having the same result, because in practical terms, communities and groups are put above the wider sense of society. And I think that's the worst result of our multicultural policies, these policies are pushing people like me, newcomers, not that we have to learn to understand how to integrate into society, we are instead pushed into our communities, therefore our communication with the wider society is much more difficult.

I do believe in the need to generate something like, in theory -- not very precise, but in practical terms -- for us the newcomers, it is necessary to talk about something like a social contract, between society, the receiving society, and the newcomers, and in that sense that social contract should take also the sense of reciprocity and respect. To have a two-way relationship like Catherine mentioned, is crucially important because not only as a newcomer we must demand respect for our dignity and diversity, but also we should be tolerant with the new things we are going to find in these new receiving societies. And in that sense, I think it can be quite shocking and difficult for newcomers to understand, first of all, the long tradition of democracy in Britain, because with all the defects, actually, Britain has a long and very wealthy tradition of democracy, here we have not only the Magna Carta, but one century before the French revolution, here in England we were already talking about limiting the powers of the Kings and Queens, so with that tradition, and because of all the debate about identity cards etc. in other European countries which have identity cards and here is a taboo, we have to see as a newcomer that there is a tradition of democracy that it is necessary to understand and respect.

On the other hand it is very difficult for us as newcomers, if we don't come from a Christian tradition, to understand that this country is a Christian country even in a secular way, they still have a profound Christian tradition. You know that recently there was a poll, BBC 24 faith poll, that actually showed that almost 70% of population still described themselves as a Christian, even if they almost never attend a church, and even more importantly they wanted to consider Christian values important for the future of Britain. What means? for us the newcomers that we have now been relegated because we have other religions? no. I don't believe that, but it is necessary for us to consider that in this new social contract, we must understand and try to generate a real common point of view among people with different traditions and different religions, but on the other hand as a newcomer I really want to promote some changes, and one change that I would like to present as my idea, like Catherine

did with the two-way relationship between newcomers and society, is the need to talk about the new concept of English identity. Because I believe that we need, as Dr Sentamu the new Archbishop of York said, we need to reinforce the sense of English identity -- but again, what kind of identity? Anglo-Saxon I am not, and I will never be, but on the other hand I would like to be considered the new British, the new English citizen with this concept of identity.

Finally to answer some of the questions that the organisers provided me, what about the possibility or need of censorship? Well, I believe that for citizens, censorship should not be allowed, because as I said before, censorship implies some sort of arbitrary rule, but on the other hand I believe that citizens will need limits because we need to preserve the common good and the democratic society. In that sense and to finish, I believe that it's important for communities and groups to understand that we must not allow to put as a condition to integrate that the [inaudible] for the receiving society that some characteristics are against a democratic society. On the other hand, groups and communities should not ask for the right to be isolated and in ghettos. It is necessary in the same way that we demand for you the white native populations not to discriminate against us; we also should recognise our duty to do our best, even if it goes beyond sometimes our desire and our strength trying to find a common way, because after all, what we are trying to do here is to generate a better society for our children, and in that sense you the receiving population and us the newcomer have to try to find the way to generate a common project.

Thank you.

ABDUL WAHID

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you very much to the Transatlantic Institute for inviting me. I think this whole debate about citizenship that really has come to the forefront in the last few years is flawed. For me it starts hitting public life after 9/11, when people question why would citizens of Britain go and fight against their own troops in Afghanistan or after the 7th of July bombings, why would people try to harm their own citizens, the result of that focus has been that people have lost sight of the fact that, why is it that significant numbers of people in Britain have felt alienated. Why is it that they have felt anger to the state and this and there's been a lot of focus on Islam and the Muslim community, I'm happy to address issues from the point of view of the Muslim community maybe when we get on to the Q&A part, but I wanted to address some of these other issues in my ten minutes.

I believe that if you try and unify people on a concept of Britishness based on a common history and a common heritage it'll be pretty impossible to do that. It'll be impossible to do that, to be fair to all the people, to be fair to major minorities in this society, to do it in a non-prejudicial way, and it'll feel oppressive to some. I don't think there is any unified view of Britishness, if there is a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority, their view of the common history of this country and the heritage will not necessarily be shared by the Celt or the Catholic or the Muslim or the Hindu, or the person who has come from one of the former colonies, the result of that kind of model of Britishness, will be something which makes a large number of people feel very united on one basis, and makes a significant number of people excluded from that, and never feel part of being British.

I think that's a problem coming from identities that are based on the nation state, and are based on nationality, and I think that that can be very divisive in any society, when we try to talk about building a society based on shared values, I don't see it as being particularly any easier, a lot of the time when we try and reduce things to common values that everyone can agree with, we either find that these are not unique to Britain, in which case trying to bind society together on that basis doesn't seem like a very sensible way forward, or we are reducing the values to some kind of lowest common denominator, which doesn't inspire anyone to feel loyal to anything in particular. Or that we're trying to impose certain values as universal when in fact many people would dispute the universality of those, and if you try, through a variety of processes, whether it be through education, whether it be through media pressure, whether it be through legislation, to coerce people to follow those values, what you're doing in effect is no more than what would be condemned in a religious society if you tried to coerce to pressurise people to convert to the majority religion.

I don't believe that kind of approach will be well received by significant numbers of minorities in this country, I think at best it will be heavily questioned, it will be heavily questioned and debated if you're throwing up a certain way or a best way of thinking or of being, and I think that at worst it will be rejected, and backfire spectacularly, and both of these two things have the propensity to increase alienation, rather than to bring a sort of social harmony which is I think the end point that we should all be looking for.

I have looked at the proposals for citizenship classes for immigrants, citizenship classes in schools, the examination that's been proposed, I don't see that as doing anything to bind society and bind people together, I see a lot of the pressures, within the media, that people should conform to some kind of liberalism that the media puts forward, as something which is highly discriminatory towards Muslims, it seems to demand from the Muslim community that they should display more loyalty towards these values than actually the rest of society is often asked to. We're asked to display more loyalty towards the Crown than most people who are out on Oxford street or in London would actually ever be asked to, we're asked to display more loyalty towards institutions like Parliament, when about 40% of the country doesn't bother voting in a General Election, and these things from our viewpoint are looked on as very discriminatory, and very prejudicial.

I think the worst scenario we have coming is in the form of censorship and the anti-terror laws, because the effect of these laws, whether or not it's the intention, the effect of these laws will be to censor political campaigns which support liberation movements, liberation struggles around the world, that would be defined by the Attorney General as being terrorism. Now that is something that many people would agree involves genuine terrorist activities, violence against civilians etc, etc, but in many of these cases it does not, and it means that people who dissent or oppose from a certain foreign policy position would actually be denied -- criminalised from speaking, in particular if they spoke that view using Islamic language and rhetoric that Muslims do tend to use.

By the way, I don't think that Muslim countries are particularly immune to this problem. Muslim countries have lived as nation states for the best part of the last

century, as we've heard before, and they have a huge problem with racism and nationalism which exists within them. And that goes against the trend historically, when you would never hear, historically, terminology about there being a black Muslim or a white Muslim because actually in Muslim societies there was a successful melting pot; and even the way non-Muslim minorities actually existed in the society and were part of the society is an interesting thing to look at. Now there's a long quote here, from Sir Thomas Arnold, which I'm not going to read, but it effectively helps to define something that existed in the Caliphate in the past, which I think are lessons that actually we could learn from. One is that citizens were only asked as a measure of their citizenship, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, black or white, to simply obey the law. Nothing more was demanded of them than that: to obey the law. It was not demanded of them that they believe in the source of that law, that they believe that that law that came from sharia, was the truth; nobody asked them to declare that, nobody asked them to change their beliefs and their religious book, nobody asked them to omit verses from their texts. And some of us feel that that's what's being asked of us: not simply to obey the law but actually to have a belief in the source of that law. And that's not just asking for a contribution to society, and to be a citizen, that's asking for, actually, a piece of my mind, and a piece of my heart.

The other thing that I think was quite successful in that time, was to give minorities space and to give them institutions even, that you trusted your own model of society enough to give them even autonomy in certain areas to actually practice their faith and to practice the differences that they had with maybe the majority society or maybe the majority thought or religion in society. And that gave people a feeling of gratitude and a feeling of belonging and a feeling that they were being respected. If you ask an older generation of Muslims in this country what they've liked about Britain, it is that historically they have felt that they have been given the space, and they have been given the respect, to do what they want. I think it's very bad that that capital has actually gone out the window in the past two years, or two to three years; if you ask the same group of people now, they feel very pressurised and very forced into a certain way of doing things, and very criticised when they do things in a religious way, which seems to go against the general trend of society,

So I could go on and address things to do with the anti-terror laws, things the Muslim community needs to do, because there's a lot that needs to be done on that side. But it's these two things that I'd leave you with -- the thought that if you try and build an identity based on nationalism, or on a set of values which the majority try to impose on the minority, it is actually going to appear to those minorities as being pretty oppressive and not going to go towards social harmony. Thank you.

RICHARD WEIGHT

I believe strongly that -- I hesitate to use the word "project" because it's like a lot of the political language that 's been hijacked by New Labour in recent years -- but I believe the project of reforming Britishness and Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness and any other constituent parts is a project worth embarking on. My problem with it is that it's being embarked on in a highly prejudicial way and I think that this is where we have quite a lot of common ground. First of all, I think that citizenship tests are a good idea, personally, although I have to say as a republican, in the English sense of the word, I have great difficulty in swearing an oath of allegiance to the Crown. I'm

not too keen on the Union Jack either; for all sorts of historical reasons, I'd be much happier if it was a George flag, but anyway let's leave that aside for the time being,

I think that citizenship tests may have a symbolic value, I think the ceremony may have a symbolic value, the tests may have some kind of value too, although where the English language, I mean you read a lot of sort of inflammatory articles, particularly in the tabloid press, "immigrants have to speak English"; well, in the area where I live in London, in Peckham, which has got one of the largest West African communities in the UK, indeed in Europe, and a great many of the West Africans in that area speak much better English than the indigenous white working-class population. So language is not necessarily... and of course the English language being a lingua franca, as well, language cannot necessarily be seen as, nor could be seen as, a benchmark of Englishness per se, although perhaps, certainly as a way of getting on in the society that you've come to, but certainly not as a benchmark of Englishness.

My problem with what is really an American-style citizenship test system is that in America -- clearly what's happened in New Orleans shows that America is still a deeply divided if not segregated society, and that is a huge qualification to what I am about to say, which is this. Citizenship tests work to some extent in a country where immigration is central to the national story, as it is in America. Here it is still peripheral to the national story. The whole -- and again let's look at language, "toleration" -- I mean, so much of the debate, over the past fifty years has been: "Should we tolerate other cultures?" Well, frankly, if I was an immigrant anywhere, I wouldn't want to be "tolerated"!

I think it was Yasmin Alibhai Brown who said, I think in a slightly melodramatic way, but nonetheless it did make an impression on me at the time: the white middle-aged middle-class Christian couple who cradled Stephen Lawrence in their arms as he lay dying before the police arrived, did not say to him "Stephen, you are tolerated," they said "Stephen, you are loved." Now I'm not saying we should all hold hands, and fly rainbow flags, in that sense, but I think we need to see that the language of toleration is not a language of acceptance and I think that's the point that Yasmin was making, and I think it's because immigration is still -- it's moving into the centre of our national story, but I think it's still much more peripheral than it is to the American story, and it has to be central if this project is going to work.

Also, as someone else on the panel said, it has to be a dialogue. The BBC recently, I think it was on the day that the tests came in, sent a crew out onto the streets around West London, and not surprisingly found that most of the people they interviewed couldn't -- of the so-called indigenous population -- couldn't answer many of the questions! It has to be a dialogue. If you're going to demand of people that they know something about the indigenous culture, history, traditions, customs, first of all that history has to be based on a realisation that this country has always been multicultural. Let's face it, multiculturalism is particularly -- and this is where I think the British are in no position to lecture the French about race relations -- multiculturalism is a euphemism for race in this country. Because we're not talking about the large numbers, for example, of white South Africans, in this city, which the comedian Jeremy Hardy in a memorable phrase described as the "only refugees from democracy in human history" [laughter]. We're not talking about the large number of white South Africans in the country. We are talking about -- and granted that Eastern European

asylum seekers are predominantly white -- but on the whole the debate about multiculturalism is largely a debate about race.

Again it's very British to not only talk about tolerance instead of acceptance, but to talk about multiculturalism, to use euphemisms. One of the biggest civil wars in modern European history, that took place within the British state in Northern Ireland, was referred to as "The Troubles". I think that's an incredibly British thing to call it the Troubles, it was a civil war. And I think we need to get beyond these euphemisms and confront firstly all of what we mean by toleration, what we mean by multiculturalism, but just to get back to this other point -- we've heard about the social contract, a new Englishness, as I said I think this project is worth embarking on but it has to be a dialogue, and part of that dialogue must be, I'm afraid, to predicate, not only to demand that immigrants pass written tests, but that the history of those tests has to be based on an understanding that this country's always been multicultural.

And secondly, the indigenous population also needs to be educated, you know it's got to be a dialogue, a social contract cannot be forged except on the basis of a dialogue, a genuine dialogue between the indigenous population and the immigrant population. I heard Norman Tebbit say the other day, "You know what these people need to do is to learn about the Battle of Britain." Well, I'm very happy for immigrants to learn about the Battle of Britain, I'm very happy, in fact, for them to take a test on it, what I object to is that Tebbit sees the Battle of Britain as this sort of cultural paradigm, a paradigm of white Britishness, when in fact many hundreds of West Indians, not just Poles but West Indians, volunteered to fight in the RAF, travelled thousands of miles, fought in the Battle of Britain, were many of them decorated, and then were told after the war, "Thanks very much, you can go home now, you're an alien." Let's test people about the Battle of Britain, but let's actually re-excavate that history and see that within that history is a story of a much deeper multiculturalism than the current debate allows.

Another point is, religion's been brought up. ... Actually I do just want to say something quickly about France before I wind up. Which is that, I do think that the British have got no reason to be smug about what's happened in France recently, for the reasons that I've described. But the French have clearly had an assimilationist rather than an integrationist model, when it comes to race relations which clearly hasn't worked particularly -- you were talking about the rights of association on ethnic grounds, and I will never forget a rather chilling moment, in the late 90s, I was asked to join a delegation by the Foreign Office of what they called twelve British intellectuals, led by Michael Ignatieff, who was quite happy to be deemed British for the occasion, and we flew out to this chateau, in the French countryside in the Centre I think it was, a chateau that had been a Napoleonic prison and is now a conference centre, and we were sat in front of twelve French intellectuals, and we were told we were invited by the head of the Academie Francaise to debate the future of Anglo-French relations, and we had three very interesting and stimulating days -- the best food I've ever had at a conference as well -- but the chilling moment came when the British delegation said "We haven't discussed ethnicity" and I emphasise that the delegation was made up of people of the left, the centre, the right, people with religious faith and none. And it seemed perfectly reasonable and natural for everyone, whatever their politics, in the British delegation, to say yes, we need to talk about how race affects Britain, and France and Anglo-French relations and immigration, and the

head of the Academie Francaise who was a real Gaullist from Central Casting, and in fact he'd been a friend of de Gaulle -- he was pretty aged then, and I don't think he's with us any more -- he slammed the table and he said "We will not discuss this subject any more because there are no immigrants in France, there are no blacks, there are only Frenchmen" -- only men, mind you, French women didn't come into it -- "there are only Frenchmen" -- and it really was a chilling moment because, for the whole of the delegation, regardless of our politics, that was it -- it was not to be discussed. and I remember that we all thought then that if that attitude is pervasive, in the French cultural and political elites, then they are going to be storing up some serious problems, and so it's come to pass.

That said, we do need here to re-excavate our history, and to do that in order to forge a new England, a new Britishness, a new Europeanness, and I think it is a project worth embarking on, that it is possible but that Britishness must be something that is contemporaneous. it's got to be more than just a cipher of what people believe our national past to have been. It's got to be contemporaneous. And finally, this is my final point, it's got to have a sense not only of its historical fluidity and contingency and ambiguity, but the fact that it is going to go on being fluid.

I was at a meeting this morning of a Conservative party forum at which people, liberals and others were invited and there was this feeling that they were trying to move forward, and redefine Britishness but there was clearly a desire to redefine it again... for all time. Take on board certain changes but redefine it for all time -- having released the insect from the amber as it were, to then put it back. [laughter] you can't do that! you've got to accept that not only have you got this multiple identity which is an essential part of the social contract but it will always be fluid and we have to get over our fear of that.

Thank you.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks Richard, I'd like now to allow each member of the panel a few minutes to comment on views which we've already heard, so I'd like to pass back to Catherine.

CATHERINE AUDARD

Well, yes I think, I have a question for Dr Wahid, which is really crucial: Can Muslims accept to live in a secular state? Because you do see a secular state as asking too much from citizens with faith, I mean asking them for part of their soul, that is really what you are saying and I fully understand it.

But the condition, I mean the historical condition of national identity in most European countries has been the separation of the State and the Church, or at least some measure of secular public sphere, where religious beliefs are really a matter of privacy etc.

It is not working, it is not fully working, because religious freedom is expressed in the public sphere as well, it is of course a complex issue. But the main thing is, and really that is my main worry, is there a way Muslims could accept a secular state? or would

you think in terms of pluralism, where there is really no neutral public sphere but there is a kind of market place of religions, something like that, where everybody recognises the other as a citizen of faith or not etc, and try to coexist instead of our historical tradition in France and Britain, which is the neutrality and secularisation of the public sphere.

SYLVIA CORONA

Well, I think first of all that in my ignorance, because you are a specialist, but I believe not only nation states but any organisations demand some kind of similarities, because either you have that kind of possibility to have some kind of unity because of some kind of basic shared values or you have the force.

And because we believe in the rule of law we have to try to find some kind of similarities, so because of a British euphemism, as our friend says, we have to talk about "immigration" and "diversity", we are talking about the possibility to generate a common project with the Muslim population.

Also, my question is, when you said "no identity based on nationalism", "no identity based even on a set of shared values" and instead you propose a model to imitate the Caliphate, I think -- and with all respect, and going back to my original presentation, actually we do have in Europe a basis of Christianity -- I think that is almost promoting a problem of conflict without any kind of resolution. Because we are actually promoting a concept, a system, which is quite different in nature with the democratic secular system. On the other hand I know, it is probably going to be mentioned in this debate, that secular societies in Western European countries are not really secular because of the connection to the church; indeed it is what I call the secular Christianity, or secular Christianity, this is not really the promotion of the religion, but there is a historical tradition, because our people in Europe and America are coming from somewhere. Not only the Muslims are coming from a very rich and important tradition. Also European countries, in art, music, history and ideas have a Christian tradition, so that kind of tradition has been tried to do it a bit more "lite", and that is the kind of secularism we have here. So I think that, together with the question that Catherine presented, I would like to ask if, again, the model of the Caliphate is a proposal that we believe actually is going to generate a more profound division in our society.

ABDUL WAHID

I wanted to first mention something that has come up several times from my colleagues on the panel, and that is almost equating the idea of immigrant with the idea of citizen and minority, we are mixing these arguments, of course, the issue of immigration and citizenship is of very great importance, but I did not migrate here from anywhere, my parents did and even if my parents came here agreeable to a certain set of conditions and contracts, the situation we have to live in, live with, is that huge numbers of people have been born here and several generations down the line, and many people I know agree with my views and values and they are British born and bred through and through for generations.

So the question of citizenship has to go wider than just the question of immigration, that is the point we need to be very clear on. Can Muslims accept to live in a secular state? I think Muslims do live and have lived in this secular state, and have lived fairly well actually. Up to now. I think Muslims are finding it increasingly difficult. Because the goal posts are in a state of being shifted, and we talk about the hijab ban in France and the questions arise, and there is no law in Britain.

One of the things we were asked to think about for this, is what factors influence censorship or what factors influence social control and stuff. There is a huge pressure in the media that raises the debate about dress code and appearance, and the expression of religion in society, and so hitherto I think Muslims have lived in a secular society, but I think it is becoming increasingly difficult. I am not proposing the Islamisation of Britain or the Caliphate in Britain, I did not mean to make the point in that way, the point I was making was that actually the historical experience was one which had -- with many errors, with many mistakes over many different eras and times and places -- one where people of different races were not identified by their race, although there was no barrier to that, and people of different religions managed to quite successfully live with each other.

And I was trying for us to learn some lessons from that and that comes to the point that Sylvia made that, about no nationalism, about no shared values; just that I think it doesn't work, it won't work, the world is very different now. To talk about national identity in such a globalised world, where people will have come from all different parts of the world, where the historical story is so different and everything they learned at school about British history was so actually was not the story I would have learned about British history had it been taught to me from an angle of the colonised as opposed to the coloniser. And that makes the whole experience very, very difficult, and I think we have to recognise that, and so I think that's why the whole problem of trying to find the national definition of Britishness, or a definition based in values, is going to be difficult. It is a problem that exists in the Muslim world, I'd love to see a Caliphate in the Muslim world, yes, but I am not looking for that here, it just won't work, will it? People don't want it; over there people might want it, or do want it, I think.

RICHARD WEIGHT

Can I just say something about religion here? I think that the question to some extent, "Can Muslims live in a secular society?" is potentially misleading, firstly because it goes back to what you were saying about the burden of proof, post- 9/11-7/7, being a much greater burden of proof, a much greater burden of loyalty than to a nation state. Because no one is asking, for example Born-Again Christians, whether they are black or white, the extent to which they feel comfortable in our more secular society, that is one point.

But I think, the real question here is not so much can Muslim or Christians or Hindus of a "fundamentalist kind," quote-unquote, live in a secular state, it is, can they live in a secular state that sees religion as part of a traditional culture. By which I mean, yes this is in many ways the most secular nation in Europe, and it is certainly more secular than the United States, despite the fact that the Church and State are constitutionally linked, whereas of course in America they are not linked, and religious observance

there is only matched here by religious observance in Northern Ireland, it is one of the great ironies of Britain and America and the difference between the two. But the point is this -- I was struck recently, and we were discussing before this officially kicked off, by a Daily Express headline a week ago. A local authority -- I mean if the story was true; it was in the Daily Express, so -- a local authority said we can't call the Christmas lights "Christmas lights" because, they've got to be called "winter festivity illuminations", some tortured politically-correct prose like that. And in fact local Muslim leaders said, actually, we are quite happy with "Christmas lights", we are actually quite happy for there to be some acknowledgement that there is a religious dimension to these festivities. But what the Daily Express headline ran with was: "Christianity is banned by Muslims".

Now the point is that in the leader, and I have read similar leaders in the Guardian, when it comes to the subject of religion, and it is this: "Christianity is part of our heritage and part of our traditions" runs the argument. The problem is not so much, can Islam exist in a secular society, it is can it exist in a society which still uses religion to define itself? Religion has ceased to be a confessional identity, it is now a cultural identity, that is the real problem and this society needs to confront that hypocrisy frankly before the question of "can this or that religion fit into our society." We need to look at the way in which we are using religion in the way that we are identifying ourselves.

CATHERINE AUDARD

Can it be cultural religion?

RICHARD WEIGHT

Well, should it? I am not sure that it should, though, either for religious or for political or cultural or social reasons. I think clearly there are elements of Islam that need to embrace the Enlightenment, shall we say, but I don't think that means that Islam should become a cultural form.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks, Richard. I'd like to open up to questions from the floor if I may. We have microphones here; if the red light is on, it means that the microphone is on. Are there any questions?

FIRST QUESTIONNER

I think the main sort of problem is that sometimes in this sort of forum there is an absence of colour, of people from the sort of cultures that we are debating. There is one person from the panel from the Muslim faith, and probably two people who might represent African Caribbean or whatever, origins. The main thing is that it does not always take on those sort of perspectives, of being a country that once tried to sort of dominate the world, so that is some sort of duplicity in the sort of debate we are having now.

In terms of what is happening in Iraq, a lot of people in this country were against the war, and I think, there isn't really a true sense of democracy going on in terms of what we want to say is citizenship or a sense of belongingness or even owning a different culture in Britain or wherever people find themselves.

ZIBA NORMAN

Thank you very much for that, but just to say that is the reason why we organise debates like this, because we want to have people take part in this discussion, and if you have some suggestions as to somebody you think would be suitable, please let us know.

SECOND QUESTIONNER

It is really quite exhausting, all this, because I feel at every point there are absolutely spot-on moments, but at other times I have to come in at an angle, because I do think we are entirely confused about language and certainly about ourselves. The first thing I want to say about the state is that -- first of all, let's not say secular, let's say economic, because we also know that people are moving not for cultural or religious freedom, but for economic reasons -- that is why people are moving, and if we accept that, we will then begin to understand where the energies are.

One of the most interesting things -- I am not English by the way, I am Italian, I am not American, because I am un-American, and also I say that if you were born in China you would not be Chinese, I am not American -- I have to say that there is an amazing difference in valence of energy amongst the peoples of this world, ethos, culture and behaviour and language are for distinct elements. In Britain particularly the energy for any kind of ethos or culture is very low and subjected to economics, it always has been, and as long as there is some kind of economic survival, that for example the Commonwealth countries also felt had something to do with them, of course, everyone fought the Battle of Britain; I won't go in to the reason why it has not been recognised or taken to heart, that is too complicated, but the thing I want to say about my experience of the British is that as a matter of fact there was a time when they were also immigrants, and they were being immigrated upon by all the Northern people and the French and so forth, the indigenous ones went into the hills, and only worked as part of the nation when it was time for survival. We are not at that level of survival, we are at a higher -- I don't want to say "higher" -- we are at a different valence again of what we consider important. And like progress, the human condition has not kept up with the economic and the historical and the national realities -- very difficult.

The only thing I want to say about living in Britain, is that, as long as the identity of the British is remembered to be language and behaviour, not how you feel, not what you think, then people are brought into this kind of very loose, not deep, not profound, not philosophical, groupness. As long as it stays like that, Muslims can come in, Italians can come in, anyone can come in. And actually what happens is that -- listen, the English love colour as you know, they dye their hair, they are always wearing bizarre clothes, so colour is not a problem for them at all -- I come from a place where colour is a problem, believe me it is not a problem here. there are more mixed everybody here than anywhere I have ever seen, I just wanted to say that unless

it can remain somewhat detached, and not get upset, although I suppose there is cause to get upset, -- because survival is the issue, -- as long as what they see as extremism, whether it be Born-Again Christians or Muslims, warlike Muslims, or whoever it is, as long as the extremes can be kept out of the mix, and in a sense just either not acknowledged or kept peripherally, then it seems to me the sense of liberty and the social contact and law can deal with it. I just think extremism and passionate, deep philosophical, or intellectual or religious belief or religious desire and energy is upsetting to this nation, and we have to somehow keep it at bay.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks. I'd like to let our panel respond to those questions and points, would either of you like to do that.

SYLVIA CORONA

I entirely understand your feeling because I always have the same feelings when I go to conferences and I debate. As you notice now from my accent, I am a new citizen, I have been in this country seven and a half years, and I am not white Anglo-Saxon. I must acknowledge, I dye my hair [laughter]. So you can tell me that other races have greater discrimination or not -- in my particular case, I was born in a country that recently had a war with Great Britain, I am originally from Argentina, so I think that I know quite well what discrimination means, because there is apparently political correctness, I'm talking about Afro-Caribbean, about Muslim, but when is the moment to talk about the Argentinians? "argy-bargy", Maradona¹ and everything? So I, on the other hand, even if our colleague said, quite rightly, that multiculturalism is about race, on the other hand I also agree with the lady here, that the big problem in Britain is not really race, but that kind of Englishness, mysterious thing, something that apparently you only achieve after centuries here. And you notice this is such a particular people, that they did not even bother to write a constitution, because everyone has to know what the constitution is [laughter]. You know in all the other countries that are following the British constitutional principles we have very long constitutions, but here in Britain we have not even a written constitution.

So I think that when talking about discrimination it is not only race, and on the other hand, for your reassurance, what I tried to present in my introduction is a view not only for one ethnic group, because, contrary to most of the immigrant organisations, in UK New Citizen, we work across communities. In our members we have Muslim people, Jewish people, black people, green people orange people, all the colours, we don't care about that -- we have even white people.

RICHARD WEIGHT

I am just going to add to that. The British conceit, you know, that we are a thorough democracy because we don't codify our democracy; and it is often said in a self-congratulatory way, and similarly if you look at the vox pop responses to these tests, what people said when they -- of different colours and nationalities and people already were British citizens, whether born here or not, it has to be said -- "no, I did not get

¹ References to hostile UK press coverage of Argentina during the Falklands War (1982) and the 1986 World Cup.

most of the questions right," but Britishness is not something that you can pin down, it is not something that you can codify, that is what Britishness is, in theory [laughter].

And the point I am making is that this idea of this wonderfully amorphous Britishness -- we don't codify it like the French, those nasty continentals -- is often paraded as an inclusive feature of it, when in fact it often operates in an exclusive way, by saying it does not matter what you can do, it does not matter how many questions you can answer, we'll just keep changing them. It does not matter, you can get 100% on this test, or whatever other test we devise, but you will never quite get Britishness, because you weren't born here, or your great-grandmother wasn't born here, so that what is seen to be a guarantor of this peculiarly British democracy, is actually one of the things that undermines it.

[inaudible comment from audience]

WILLIAM ARTHURS

You need the microphone if you want this to be part of the record.

THIRD QUESTIONNER

I want to debunk that, I am a new citizen of three months' standing, I have lived here for almost thirty years, I have experienced none of the problems described by Ms Corona nor Dr Wahid. There is only one reason, I am white and I speak fairly good English, and I have been regarded as English for most of the time that I have been here, therefore I have been included within the pump, but actually I don't feel English, and I know I am not. I have no English blood in me at all as far as I know.

The reason I would put most of these troubles down to -- and I have travelled around this country a lot, especially out in the boondocks -- the race, it is the colour, the white English, in my experience, do not like people, do not like people who are not like them, but people who are not white, and I think Dr Wahid put forward a very interesting proposition, which I think is no different from my own, when he discussed the teaching of history at school. I find when I discuss history with English people -- I am excluding Scots -- the history that they learn, it seems to be incredibly exclusive to what was happening in the world, especially to those of Dr Wahid's generation. I don't know whether the history has changed now, I grew up under a system that had a national curriculum, so that every school taught the same subject, so that you were taught the same subject whether you went to a private or a state school. I think if anything is going to change, then the attitudes of the majority -- "majority" is too strong -- it has to be education. It has to be an education system that addresses many of the problems that this country faces and has refused to face for quite some time.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks. Another question?

FOURTH QUESTIONNER

I don't really agree with that because I was brought up in Belgium and in France, and I think it is sometimes this has to do with education, in our post degree studies, we had people from Africa, the Middle East, there was never discrimination. No one ever felt a target, I think probably there was a cause -- Richard, sorry, where are you from? I am from Belgium, and we never at my university. I don't know I am speaking for Europe and France. I don't think we ever had problems, and I hate to say, sometimes the white people have problems when they lack education. They always cannot integrate -- I think it has nothing to do with the French being racist against Northern Africans. And in this country there are people from India and other places, and they have a higher education and they integrate very well.

ZIBA NORMAN

Do we have time for more?

FIFTH QUESTIONNER

There are a lot of changes that are happening in England and Europe generally over the past couple of days, that there has been a riot because there two North African boys were killed, but the politics that goes on conceals the fact that there is sort of under class within that class. There are changes in the CRE² in Britain, and that is going to turn the clock back on race relations, and on top of that there hasn't been an acknowledgement of the colonial baggage that this Britishness engenders.

ZIBA NORMAN

Is there another question here?

SIXTH QUESTIONNER

I just wanted to explore something that Dr Abdul Wahid said, he focused our minds on two issues. Space for difference... and when I think of that I just think of my extended family, and if I think of my extended family, as many people here... my sisters don't have the same faith as myself, my wife has Indian blood, my children have Indian, African, and all over the place and in the wider society that is multiplied again and again and again, so obviously there are differences, and his model, when he mentioned that people should be allowed, maybe in the individual sphere, should be allowed to practice their differences, and what seems to come across is their nowadays, when people talk of Europeanness or Britishness, there is a coerciveness, the issue that there needs to be a commonality, and when that concept is pushed it actually demands that there are aspects that are peculiar to you me and anyone else that we have to give up. And so a lot of people say that the hijab ban in France on a simplistic level, well... these women wearing pieces of cloth on their heads, how does that threaten a state, why is this state not mature enough? they don't want to overthrow the state, they just want to wear this particular piece of cloth on their heads, in school or college. So this particular issue of giving people space to, is I think very important. The other point he mentioned, was I think in terms of the flip side of that

² Commission for Racial Equality. UK official agency for race relations.

you are going to impose, and that is going to breed resentment whether that is resentment of the white English, who are the majority of this country [inaudible].

And so the model that he painted of the Caliphate, one, that of giving people space, and two, simply saying that you need to obey the law of the land, drive on the right hand side of the road in England you do that. When it comes to court cases -- okay more profound. On the one hand, given space, and on the other they simply have to obey the law of the land. My final point is I think that when people talk about Enlightenment values, whether it is immigrant and minorities need to embrace, I find it extremely coercive, but I find what is surprising is that those who say that don't acknowledge that -- it does not register in their minds that they are imposing anything. There is an assumption that we are all Europeans and we are talking in a modern context, we are just asking people to buy into this, and if you flip that around, if some of us, if some of the English who went to the Costa del Sol to live, or many of the expats who went to live all over the world, if the locals had asked them to embrace some of their values they would have been up in arms ... [some in audience: "That is right."] To share space is very important, but to maintain harmony in society, by simply buying into the law.

RICHARD WEIGHT

There has to be a mutual embrace, is that what you are saying?

SIXTH QUESTIONNER

There has to be something overriding, theft is a crime in England... everybody regardless of colour race, alien or human, this is the form we all function on this basis, but in terms of my particular religious belief, and praying at work in my breaktime, that does not threaten anybody else, why should people feel the need to say: no Muslims need to give up their belief in the Caliphate, Charles Clarke said this recently, he said it is non-negotiable.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks. I think we need to start to wrap up now. Closing remarks and responses from our panel. We'll start with Richard if I may...

RICHARD WEIGHT

Okay... that has caught me off balance... can we not start with Richard, because I was busy thinking about what the last speaker was saying, so...

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Yes, certainly.

CATHERINE AUDARD

Just to answer your queries. You have to understand that the French state is threatened by the girls wearing the scarf because of the long tradition of the [inaudible] with the Catholic church, so the French tradition is founded on the idea of secularisation. So in the public sphere, in schools, manifestations of religious affiliation are seen as non-acceptable, I mean as .. it is the long history of integration, I mean through this separation between the Church and the State which makes it meaningful... well, from the outside it is unacceptable, you are absolutely right.

But I just wanted to add to what you said. You are talking about space to develop your diversity, etc. etc. you are talking about rights; perhaps we should talk also about duties, and the fact that this space is bought, has a price, and the price is economic, it is benefit, solidarity between fellow citizens. I think you seem to, and that is typical of Britain, that citizenship and integration go through the channel of civil society, and/ but you should think also about the welfare state, and how this really is at the back of the demands of the private space of the people, they have to not only rights.

SYLVIA CORONA

Well I think that we have the problem that we always have when we don't understand our history. We are prone to have the same kind of mistakes. I think that indeed it is a bit coercive that thing about citizenship, if you want to consider that, because law is coercive -- otherwise there is no law. If suddenly everyone has the right to say, ah, law, no I don't like that, I prefer to do this and this... because of my freedom... that is not law. I don't know if you came in to the first part of my presentation... that is not law it is not the rule of law, I think that we must understand that there is some degree of coercion to sustain the system. Secondly, nation states are not weak to feel threatened for this or that, talking like this about a nation state that was created centuries ago, and now it still survives. Nation is everyday created, by you and me, and for all the people that are coming to the country, so nation state, or democratic system is to be sustained everyday, and finally, very brief, there is a big issue that has not been considered here, and it is Islam, as a religion, and a colleague of ours that we have here in the audience, Professor Fiona Adams, the point that the political manifestations of Islam as a political ideology in that sense I think that when Clarke, I don't remember that statement, you said he said that the Caliphate has to be ruled out, he spoke, I believe, not as a religion, but as a political system that is different than the democratic system.

Obviously, if an officer of the democratic system has to talk about other system, he is going to say, of course we prefer to keep this system and not another one, and so it is not about only rights, but about the duties to sustain democracy, if we want also to have the benefits of the democratic system, one of them the welfare state.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thank you, Sylvia - UK New Citizen.

ABDUL WAHID

I think the best phrase I have heard this evening is from you [audience member], which I am going to borrow from now on: which is, Britishness should be about language and behaviour, and if it is, I actually don't think you are going to find many Muslims are going to have a problem with that, because actually the religion, the belief drives you, or should drive you to actually manifest that, to obey the laws, and to help your neighbour and to try and interact with other people around you and try and remove the very understandable fear of difference that exists everywhere in the world. but then you see when I find that as a model, that sits very comfortably with me, I go out into the world and I don't hear my colleagues raise questions like my colleagues on the panel have done very reasonably about, "Islam, can it become a more cultural religion? can it conform to the Enlightenment?" I come across newspaper headlines similar to what Richard has mentioned, that say beards and scarves are symbols of [inaudible], and a media that criticises belief in heaven and hell. And expressing that, and frankly speaking statements that, like the ones Charles Clarke made, they were not talking about Britain, the USA, they were talking about the Muslim world. And that brings me to the other side, the other part, of the dialogue, the lady here said about understanding the colonial baggage there is here, which is not just historical baggage, it is present day baggage. If you are not allowing people in another part of the world to adopt a different view, there is a big problem, and you are going to find a problem -- frankly speaking -- people here from all faiths are going to question the legitimacy of that. The other side of the dialogue, and we should be asking the question, why do so many immigrant communities and minority communities live and have they lived in ghettos, why did the Jewish community live in the East End, why did the black community centralise, why do people feel more comfortable in numbers, what is it about wider society that makes people feel safer amongst themselves and stops them from interacting with each other to reduce these barriers of difference. I don't think we have touched that, and I think that issue -- we have very short memories, we are talking about Paris riots, but we've had Brixton riots, Toxteth riots, riots in Los Angeles -- this is not a thing that is unique to the UK, this is something which is actually much more fundamental that we have not questioned, which I think we need to question. And finally I loved your point [Richard Weight] you almost said Britishness is *je ne sais quoi*.

RICHARD WEIGHT

I'll say it if you want me to, I'm quite happy to...

I do think that the British have no right to be smug, about the French riots, and one element of that is that I agree, the British like most former colonial powers, European powers have yet to confront their imperial past or fully confront their imperial past, and to confront the racism that became embedded as a result of that imperial past. One of the things that Britain has, let's face it, in common with the French, and the Italians, and Spanish and Portuguese, it is a form of European unity that really needs to be discussed, because we are all in our different ways denying that history. But I think also if we are going to confront it we need also to confront a lot of the paradoxes that are thrown up by the huge migrations that are the result of colonial power, there are huge divisions that are thrown up... this is literally and metaphorically not just a black and white issue, race, I think, is at the heart of the debate about multiculturalism,

immigration, citizenship, and we need to confront that, but it is not a black and white issue.

I am sorry I don't agree [audience: "No"], I'd just like to finish my point. There are difference between Africans and Caribbeans, there are differences, and not just cultural divisions. Not entirely, there were divisions that were exacerbated, but not created by them.

Asians are all different, there are all sorts of divisions within our society, that are to some extent due to our colonial history, but we need to explore the paradoxes. Where religion is concerned, you could argue that Christianity was an example of Europe being colonised by the Middle East and North Africa, since the Christian church started in North Africa, so it was Africa colonising Europe, you could argue. The reason why I mention that is because we need to explore, because people are terrified, and not just white British people, people are terrified of ambiguity and paradox and irony, and we need to confront them all, and that is going to be the basis of the excavation of our past. Where I am concerned, I'd like more people to realise there is a hyphen in Anglo-Saxon. Our excavation of the past we must build a new kind of citizenship, but we all have to examine ourselves, all of us.

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Thanks, Richard.

One final comment from the floor?...

SECOND QUESTIONNER

It is human, it is psychological, everyone in this room cares about what other people think, the minute you care about what other people think you have an imagination about it, and if someone carries a certain kind of self-esteem you can think that you are being looked down upon, that is the first thing; the second thing is that, everyone look at your children, look at why economics completely dominate our children no matter how we mitigate against it, they want to be like everyone else, then you find you are not like everyone else, you are different, then you want everyone to be different like you, but of course people with very deeply-held cultural or religious traditions that are external end up in ghettos, but of course, not because someone put them there, although it may be threatening that there are more than four or five against one, that is the other aspect, but it is a psychological thing, and it is so obvious that if you don't care what other people think, not that you don't care but if they don't impinge on your identity you don't have all these problems about "they're just excluding me". And the English do, they define themselves, I said this in New York at the Nuyorican Poets, the one big difference between the Americans and the British is that the British describe themselves and identify themselves as exclusive not inclusive. Now why should that threaten everybody, why does everybody want to be included in whatever the English are doing? it seems very strange to me, very odd. [audience: "it is a problem when they are forcing everybody else to be exclusive."]

WILLIAM ARTHURS

Splendid. We could carry on for another hour or two, but we do have to close now. Thank you all for coming and I'm sure you'd like to join with me in thanking our panel for a terrific discussion.

[Applause]

[Adjournment]
