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The End of Tolerance: new discourses of racism, migration and the state in Britain, 1997–2008

Submission for the degree of PhD by prior output, September 2010

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Abstract

This submission – one self-authored book and six refereed journal articles – constitutes a study of new racialised policy and media discourses that have emerged between 1997 and 2008 around the themes of community cohesion, managed migration and Britishness. It is argued that these discourses mark a new era in British ‘race relations’, breaking with an earlier consensus that had been forged in the late 1960s. As part of this discursive shift, an older notion of ‘integration’ as social, economic and political inclusion, to be effected by anti-discrimination legislation, multicultural tolerance and political representation, gave way to a new notion of ‘integration’ defined as the adoption of ‘British values’, to be effected by oaths of allegiance, citizenship tests and various other techniques for reshaping the cultures and values of minority communities, particularly Muslims. Alongside this redefinition of integration was a shift in the central axis of ‘race relations’ from white-black to western-Muslim, and from a view of minority cultural identity as a stabilising force to one in which it was seen as threatening and needing clear limits placed on it. As well as resulting in new forms of racism against Muslims and asylum seekers, this shift has also gone hand in hand with new apparatuses of policing directed at these groups. Following a theoretical approach drawn from the work of A. Sivanandan, this political and social transition is analysed in the context of linked changes in global political economy and the resulting neoliberal transformation of the state, in particular through the politics of New Labour. Critical discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation are the methods used to describe and analyse these new discourses of racism, migration and the state, and their interaction with the experiences of various racialised groups.

Declaration

I am submitting the following seven pieces – one self-authored book and six refereed journal articles – for the award of PhD by prior output:

- ‘Stumbling on: race, class and England’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 41, no. 4, April 2000), pp. 1–18
- ‘In a foreign land: the new popular racism’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 43, no. 2, October 2001), pp. 41–60
- ‘From Oldham to Bradford: the violence of the violated’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 43, no. 2, October 2001), pp. 105–131
- ‘The death of multiculturalism’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 43, no. 4, April 2002), pp. 67–72
- ‘An unholy alliance? Racism, religion and communalism’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 44, no. 2, October 2002), pp. 71–80
- *The End of Tolerance: racism in 21st century Britain* (London, Pluto Press, 2007), 221 pages including notes and index
- ‘Islamism and the roots of liberal rage’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 50, no. 3, October 2008), pp. 40–68

It is my belief that this submission fulfils the criteria for a PhD, in both volume and academic substance. It constitutes a substantial independent and original contribution to knowledge in the subject area and forms a coherent whole with a perceptible core argument, contributing to current academic debates. Specifically, this body of work demonstrates:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

The submitted work as a whole is not substantially the same as any that I have previously submitted or am currently submitting whether in published or unpublished form, for a degree, diploma, or similar qualification at any university or similar institution. None of the work submitted includes outputs conducted in collaboration with others.

Covering document

Introduction

The research that has informed the output listed above was carried out between 1999 and 2008 as an employee of the educational charity, the Institute of Race Relations, alongside other work – including community outreach and the editing of publications and journals. The starting point for my research was the thesis that popular and state racisms in Britain had shifted significantly through the 1990s and into the following decade, such that categories of understanding developed from the 1960s to the 1980s needed rethinking. In particular, I posited that the emergence of new stigmatising discourses which constructed asylum seekers, migrants and Muslims as threats to national cohesion and security could not be analysed as simply a repetition of earlier racial discourses constructing ‘New Commonwealth’ immigrants and their descendants.

The research questions that I have sought to address are: how have government policy agendas of ‘community cohesion’, ‘Britishness’, ‘managed migration’ and ‘preventing violent extremism’ transformed the ways in which racial and ethnic relations are conceived in Britain? why were ideas of multiculturalism perceived to be in crisis in the first decade of the twenty-first century? what was driving the increase in migration to the UK over the period under consideration and what were the experiences of these new migrants? how has the ‘war on terror’ impacted on ‘race’ and immigration policies? and what were the impacts at community level of the shifting contours of official policy and discourse?

This research work led to a series of articles appearing in the peer-reviewed academic journal *Race & Class* and culminated in a major 87,000-word study entitled *The End of Tolerance: racism in 21st century Britain*, which was published as a book by Pluto Press in September 2007 and is the central text that I am submitting for this doctorate. Since the beginning of 2007, I have investigated the patterns of Muslim political identity in Britain and the response to it by Right, Left and liberal political formations. This work has appeared in a 13,000-word article entitled ‘Islamism and the roots of liberal rage’, which appeared in *Race & Class* in October 2008. In addition to placing the discussion of recent British racial and ethnic relations in an original analytic framework, I would argue that this work has also made a significant contribution to our knowledge of new stigmatising discourses, through documenting and analysing the media coverage of asylum seekers and public policy debates on Muslims. The interviews I have conducted with young people and the subsequent analysis of this material have contributed to increasing our knowledge of how official policies are experienced.

It should be noted that, from August 2008 to May 2010, I served as editor of *Race & Class* and, from August 2006 to August 2008, I was deputy editor. Hence, the article ‘Islamism and the roots

of liberal rage' was published while I was editor of the journal in which it appeared. My involvement in the review process was to identify three reviewers who I regarded as experts in the field and ask them to review the paper. On this occasion, the usual *Race & Class* practice of hiding the identity of the reviewers from the article's author was not followed. In light of criticisms and comments received from the reviewers, the article was substantially revised before eventual publication. The earlier journal articles I am submitting, which were published in *Race & Class* from 2000 to 2002, appeared while I had no editorial role with the journal, although I was employed at the time by the Institute of Race Relations, on whose behalf the journal was published. On these occasions, I had no involvement in the peer review process and was not informed of the identity of the anonymous reviewers.

Context and themes

The publication in 1999 of the report of the Macpherson inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence seemed at the time to herald the beginning of a new era of official recognition of institutional racism – not just in the Metropolitan Police, the inquiry's primary focus, but across British society. The result of a long campaign by the Lawrence family, whose son had been the victim of a racist killing in south-east London in 1993, and who campaigned for many years to challenge the police's failure to investigate the murder, the inquiry was seen as a significant sign of the potential progress that the New Labour government might make in relation to 'race'; the inquiry had been commissioned by the then home secretary, Jack Straw, shortly after the May 1997 election that brought Labour to power for the first time since the 1970s.¹

The key term of Macpherson's report, 'institutional racism', was taken to indicate that racism was best understood not, as earlier official inquiries into 'race relations' had suggested, as a matter of individual prejudices but as a matter of social structures that reproduced relationships of power. The report also called for the 'valuing of cultural diversity', although without specifying precisely what that phrase might mean. One could thus discern in the report, at least in its choice of vocabulary if not in its recommendations, a debt to two decades of theorising on 'race' in Britain which had emphasised two basic concerns: first, a focus on 'race' as a structural feature of British society, rejecting the view that it could best be analysed through examining individual attitudes or prejudices (the works of Robert Miles, John Rex, A. Sivanandan, and Stuart Hall's work on 'race' from the 1970s were all key texts in advancing this broad argument, albeit in often sharply divergent Marxist, neo-Marxist and Weberian forms); second, a focus on whether the cultural self-conception of Britain as a nation could be reworked to include multiple ethnic identities (here, the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy from the mid-1980s onwards would be emblematic).²

Within three years, this moment had passed. In early 2002, the government published *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: integration with diversity in modern Britain*, its white paper on immigration,

citizenship and integration.³ The earlier focus on tackling 'institutional racism' and 'valuing cultural diversity' had given way to a new vocabulary of 'shared values', 'community cohesion' and 'Britishness'. The new emphasis was not on 'race' as a structural feature of British society but on the need to set limits to excessive cultural diversity through an idea of shared, national values. 'Integration' now referred to this process of binding society together through 'core values' rather than seeking to undermine the institutional racism which Macpherson had identified. This new approach was no longer concerned with social structures; rather the problem was fundamentally to do with culture and values. It was no longer a racist murder in south-east London but the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the summer of 2001 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks that were the media events around which this new approach was narrated. And the key conflict was no longer taken to be white-black but western-Muslim. It was such an approach that was, in various forms, to dominate official thinking and a good deal of media coverage of issues of 'race' from 2002 onwards. Rather than ushering in a new age of 'race relations' in Britain, in which the insights of scholars such as Stuart Hall were central, the Macpherson moment thus appeared, in retrospect, as a hiatus before the arrival of a new discourse.

The collection of published work included here constitutes a series of attempts to make sense of this shift and its impact in Britain over the last decade. The first article, 'Stumbling on: race, class and England', published in April 2000, examined press coverage of the publication of the Macpherson inquiry report, particularly focusing on the articulation of shifting ideologies of 'race', class and nation. The article found that the report was 'represented in much of the press as an attack on Englishness and as a capitulation by a cosmopolitan anti-English ruling elite' (p. 2) to foreign concepts of anti-racism. Newspapers were able to articulate a notion of the common-sense tolerance and moderation of ordinary English values, against which the Labour government was introducing the alien and artificial language of 'institutional racism'.

The second article included here, 'In a foreign land: the new popular racism' (hereafter 'In a foreign land'), published in October 2001, sought to explore the emerging media and political construction of 'asylum seekers'. The article focused on the ways in which an attitude of multicultural tolerance towards some racialised groups, seen as 'settled', appeared to be consistent with attitudes of hostility and suspicion towards more recently arrived groups constructed as 'asylum seekers'. Coverage in a number of national and local newspapers was examined as well as some of the ways in which asylum seekers were constructed in policy discourse. In order to make sense of this, the article used Martin Barker's notion of a 'new racism' that asserts not so much racial superiority but rather advocates an implicit theory of human nature in which xenophobia and fear of immigration are naturalised as legitimate instincts that come to the fore once a 'threshold of tolerance' is crossed and a way of life or culture is seen as threatened.⁴ This interpretation begged three questions which I offered tentative answers to in

this article: how did the Labour government come to adopt a discourse which had its origins, according to Barker, in the right-wing of the Conservative Party from the late 1960s onwards? is such a discourse a racialisation of 'asylum seekers' or is it better thought of as representing an expression of cultural nationalism or xenophobia (Barker himself saw such discourses as constituting a new form of racism but he did not sufficiently distinguish in his analysis between racism, xenophobia and nationalism)? is the construction through such a discourse, from the 1990s onwards, of 'asylum seekers' any different from the construction of other racialised groups/'New Commonwealth' immigrants? The answers suggested to these questions in 'In a foreign land' were partial and under-analysed; another limitation of the article was the absence of a systematic account of what was driving the increase in the numbers of people claiming asylum in the UK in the 1990s and early 2000s, beyond a recognition that it was 'linked in complex ways to the end of the cold war order and the emergence of a world defined by the free market, global trade and the military power of the US' (pp. 43-4). These lacunae I sought to remedy in later work, particularly in *The End of Tolerance*.

With 'From Oldham to Bradford: the violence of the violated' (hereafter 'From Oldham to Bradford'), my work moved beyond an exclusive focus on media and policy discourse analysis, and sought to engage more directly with local histories of racism and resistance, in order to explain the violent clashes that took place in the summer of 2001 in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. My analysis of the summer 2001 violence focused specifically on industrial decline in the northern mill towns and the consequent entrenching of social separation along ethnic lines, coupled with the institutional mechanisms by which racial barriers were reproduced in housing, education and policing.

The article can be read alongside 'The death of multiculturalism' (April 2002) which sought to trace the official response to the summer 2001 violence and the emergence of a new policy framework of community cohesion. Here, I begin to think of a significantly innovative 'race' policy discourse emerging, which cannot be understood simply as a New Labour capitulation to New Right ideas but is a genuinely novel 'third way' alternative to the New Right monoculturalism approach and the liberal multiculturalism approach. Moreover, I try to interpret the emergence of this new policy discourse as a response to what, from an official point of view, is a crisis heralded by the summer 2001 violence, the upsurge of popular hostility to asylum seekers, the emerging economic demands for a 'positive' migration policy and the beginning of the 'war on terror'. I argue that a set of assumptions about 'race' and immigration policy that had been laid down in the period 1966-71 and which had, despite varying interpretations by different governments, remained by and large intact for thirty years were, from 2001, being undone and a new set of principles introduced. Those assumptions, held for thirty years, could be summarised as follows:

- that, as far as possible, the non-white population which had settled in the UK in the post-second world war period should not be added to by further non-white immigration;
- that integration was best achieved through equality of opportunity to be encouraged by anti-discrimination legislation and by appropriate political representation;
- that this population should be defined in terms of its various ethnic identities, which should be freely pursued and maintained within an atmosphere of multicultural tolerance.

Each one of those assumptions came to be challenged by policymakers with the new policy discourse of community cohesion and managed migration that came to prominence from 2001 onwards:

- the goal of zero non-white immigration was held to be incompatible with the new economic imperatives of globalised capitalism;
- integration was redefined to refer not to social, economic and political inclusion but the adoption of a core set of 'British values' (hence the burden was on 'ethnic minorities' to change their attitudes, not on society as a whole to challenge its prejudices);
- the cultivation of minority cultural identity was no longer seen as a stabilising force but as a potentially dangerous process which needed careful management and limits placed on it – whereas in 1981 young black men were seen as rioting because they lacked culture, in 2001 young Muslim men were seen as rioting because of an excess of culture.

While the assumptions that held for thirty years until 2001 could be seen as leading to colour-coded racism in immigration and nationality policy, coupled with statutory equal opportunities for the 'already settled' population, the creation of the statutory Commission for Racial Equality and, ultimately, the space for the Macpherson inquiry's recognition of institutional racism, the new policy discourse led to oaths of allegiance and citizenship tests for would-be settlers, a migration policy that sought to manage flows of labour migration according to economic need and assimilability to 'British values', and various state efforts to reshape the culture and values of those elements among the existing population seen as insufficiently 'integrated'.

Alongside this shift was a linked trend in policy and media discourse of certain parts of the population being constructed according to a 'faith' rather than ethnicity, as the primary axis of 'race relations' shifted from white-black to western-Muslim. Published in October 2002, 'An unholy alliance? Racism, religion and communalism' was an attempt to analyse this trend and explore some of the growing religious divisions between different South Asian communities in the UK. This text also began an exploration of the emergence of new, religious political/social movements

in the UK. This article was limited by an insufficiently analytical notion of religious communalism/extremism and a lack of attention to the underlying dynamics of religious identity. I sought to overcome some of these limitations in my later, more systematic account of religio-political movements among British Muslim communities in 'Islamism and the roots of liberal rage' (2008).

The End of Tolerance: racism in 21st century Britain, published in 2007, was an attempt to draw together my previous work examining the shifting patterns of racialised policy and media discourse under New Labour, placing this work within a more systematic and analytical framework, filling some of the gaps and addressing some of the conceptual problems which I had not resolved in earlier work. Here I will present a summary of the book's argument before, in the following section, discussing some of the theoretical choices that informed it.

The End of Tolerance takes Britain as a case study of a general trend across a number of western countries in which a series of linked issues – to do with managing migration, integrating minorities (particularly Muslims) and preventing violent extremism – have come to the fore as major political themes. The coming to prominence of these themes is analysed as a symptom of a shift from one form of political economy (nation-centric capitalism and the welfare-state in a mixed economy) to another (a global, neoliberal economy and the market-state). This shift, it is argued, has prompted a shift in the forms of racialised discourse, the latest in a long history of 'race' adapting itself to new social conditions and political projects (the plantation economy, modern colonialism, capitalism) and, at different times, constructing different racialised groups (Gypsies, Jews, Irish, blacks, 'coloured immigrants'). The new racialised discourses that have emerged in Britain over the last two decades, constructing 'Muslims' and 'asylum seekers' as, in effect, threatening ethnic identities, are state mediated but globally rather than nationally driven. One key theme is a perceived crisis of multiculturalism, a sense that an earlier national homogeneity has been shattered by immigration and that an overly tolerated Muslim minority has exploited multiculturalism to make excessive demands on the 'host' society. This 'integrationist' discourse flourished as much among liberals as conservatives, a sign that it was a significantly different version of anti-multiculturalism from that which had been associated with the New Right. A key feature of this discourse is its misreading of ethnic division; what is really an outcome of a history of industrial decline coupled with institutional racism is taken instead to be a failure of multiculturalism and over-tolerance for diverse sets of values. In response, the government has pursued policies of seeking to limit cultural diversity and asserted the need for shared national values and a stronger sense of Britishness, along with greater surveillance and policing of communities defined as 'suspect', particularly Muslims. Simultaneously, a new approach to the regulation of migration was embarked on, attempting to carefully fine-tune the flow of labour migration in line with market need and the perceived assimilability to western

values of potential migrants. This meant that borders were re-imagined to be less a wall around a nation and more an expanded apparatus of policing and surveillance, intervening at a whole range of points to regulate the everyday lives of migrants. Combined, these two trends have led to a significant expansion in policing measures directed at migrant and Muslim populations, drawing on and reinforcing processes of racialisation.

The process of political change first identified in 'The death of multiculturalism' (see the bullet points on p. 7) is, in *The End of Tolerance*, further contextualised in terms of the political and social shifts brought about by neoliberal globalisation. The construction of 'asylum seekers' and 'Muslims' as racialised identities is analytically linked to the shift from welfare-based to market-based principles of state legitimacy. It is this transition – and especially the Labour Party leadership's interpretation of what it meant – that is central to *The End of Tolerance's* argument. With the state's legitimacy as a vehicle for providing welfare to its citizens dwindling, questions of welfare were, from the 1990s, increasingly linked to questions of national belonging and shared values. Refugees, who had a formal right to state protection that applied irrespective of any question of national belonging, became an icon of the failure of the state to 'look after its own people' and the image of the 'asylum seeker' became a symbol of the unwanted foreigner, a screen onto which all kinds of anxieties to do with neoliberal globalisation could be projected. Similarly, the lack of a wider political context to 'Islamist terrorism' meant that this form of political violence was seen as the result of a new ideology of absolutism that was at odds with a modern, liberal society – and ultimately a sign of Islam's supposed unique failure to adapt to liberalism. Political violence and forced migration were thus systematically misinterpreted as 'external' religio-cultural threats rather than the products of global structures of inequality with which western states were implicated. A global racism (epitomised in Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis) served to naturalise those inequalities and rearticulate them as cultural rather than political divisions, cutting across domestic and global contexts.

The last article included here, 'Islamism and the roots of liberal rage' (2008), is, in a sense, the missing final chapter of *The End of Tolerance*. It examines the construction of a 'Muslim' identity in Britain, showing how this identity has been produced through a political process, rather than being a simple inter-generational inheritance or a legacy of a less enlightened culture; the limitations of a liberal frame in seeking to understand Muslim political identity in Europe are thus highlighted. The article also focuses on the ways in which notions of 'liberal values' have been invoked in discourses of a cultural cold war that western governments must pursue in the 'Islamic world' and among Muslim populations within Europe. It is argued that such a discourse fails to comprehend the complex dynamics of Muslim political agency in Europe.

Theoretical approach

Anyone approaching the field of ethnic and racial studies today could hardly fail to notice the dominance of the culturalist approach to the subject. A cursory glance through the leading journals would reveal a multiplicity of conceptual vocabularies – diaspora, hybridity, transnationalism, whiteness, super-diversity – but these different terms are used within a common framework that takes as central the construction of ethnicities as cultural identities. Within this culturalist approach, as Claire Alexander and Brian Alleyne have noted, there are

two opposing poles, both encapsulated in the notion of ‘difference’; on the one hand, appearing in the ethnicity-rich guise of a pluralist ‘cultural difference’ and, on the other, as the theory-bound and increasingly ethereal ‘politics of difference’. The former has served to reify and reinforce essentialist ideals of ‘community’, ‘experience’ and ‘belonging’ within a multiculturalist landscape and legislates the racialized common sense of public discourse and policy (Parekh et al. 2000). In contrast, the latter’s fascination with fragmented and hybrid identities has abstracted, reified and celebrated a discursive marginality with scant regard for the structural inequalities, ambiguous authorizations and collective experiences that underpin, constrain and subvert the reach for postmodern subjectivity.⁵

The latter ‘politics of difference’, focusing on the necessarily unstable, contingent and hybrid discursive processes involved in the cultural construction of ‘imagined’ ethnic identities, is largely influenced by the work of Stuart Hall from the mid-1980s onwards. The dominance of this paradigm has led to the ‘banal, even platitudinous’ repetition of its set phrases, with Hall himself commenting in 2006 that the disconnection of this approach ‘from broader issues of social justice and political action, and from the historical specificities of the present conjuncture, had limited the effectivity, and the meaning, of much of this work’.⁶ As David Theo Goldberg has written, the culturalist approach, in either of the two guises identified by Alexander and Alleyne, while originally bringing with it important and necessary insights, has now grown ‘weary’ and ‘clichéd’ and led to ‘almost complete theoretical silence concerning the state’.⁷ Indeed, the original intention of the culturalist turn – to think through more rigorously the relationship between identification and the political – has been neglected as, within this paradigm, the concept of the political has been lost and replaced by the apparent assumption that to describe someone’s cultural identity tells you all you need to know about their politics or their victimisation. Thus ‘cultural difference’ becomes sufficient explanation for socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination, and, with the fetishisation of marginality, a surrogate for politics,⁸ while there is diminishing attention paid to the state regulation of racism, to the social reproduction of racist ideology, to institutionalised racial discrimination, exclusion and violence, the dominant themes of the Marxist and neo-Marxist accounts of the 1970s and 1980s.⁹

In the rest of this section, I seek to recover a perspective that allows for 'race' to be understood as a changing social and political relationship reproduced through state and dominant media discourses that construct racialised identities as part of an ideological struggle intimately linked to wider transformations of the political economy of capitalist societies. I suggest that now unfashionable accounts from two or three decades ago have much to offer current debates and were rather too rapidly abandoned in the late 1980s, as Marxism and class politics came to be seen as passé. I draw on the work of A. Sivanandan as one example of a theoretical approach that locates the shifting patterns of racism in the wider social and economic structures of modern capitalist societies.

At no point in his published work does Sivanandan offer what might be called a methodology or give a detailed account of his theoretical approach. However, it is possible to outline some of the background theoretical ideas that inform his work. Sivanandan's 1976 essay, 'Race, class and the state: the black experience in Britain' offers a useful starting point for this discussion.¹⁰ At one point in this essay, he exhorts his readers to 'Listen to the voice, the anxieties of the state' before quoting at length from the White Paper which it is the initial aim of the essay to analyse.¹¹ A key part of his approach, then, is a focus on state discourse as an object of study. But, more importantly, that discourse is potentially revealing not just for what it overtly says about the state's view of problems and issues to do with 'race' and immigration but also for what it reveals about the 'anxieties' that simmer just below the surface of the text. The task of the analyst is thus to bring out the meaning of those anxieties and fears, tracing their surface manifestations back to their underlying social and political causes. In this case, the object of anxiety, the growth of a British-born 'coloured population', is traced back to 'the fear of the mass politics that it may generate in the black under-class and in that other discriminated minority the migrant workers and perhaps in the working class as a whole – particularly in a time of massive unemployment and urban decay'.¹² The argument is thus that the state's discourse could, in the first instance, be best explained in terms of a fear of political militancy, spreading from the black 'sub-proletariat' to other groups, potentially the entire working class. The problem might be explicitly expressed in terms of the need for the integration of 'coloured immigrants' into British society but the true intention is to absorb a potentially anti-capitalist revolutionary politics into the status quo of social democracy. But how did a 'black sub-proletariat' come into being in the first place as the potential subject of a militant political project? The essay's interpretation of post-war immigration from Britain's colonies and ex-colonies offers an answer to this question. Economically, this migration is understood in terms of Marx's notion of a 'reserve army of labour': it acted as a 'shock absorber' as labour demand fluctuated. As a foreign labour resource, it had lower social reproduction costs and, defined as 'black' labour, it could be discriminated against in order to extract greater surplus value. But this migration also tended to 'highlight' existing social problems such as poor housing in the deprived areas of Britain's cities. From the economic point

of view of capital, therefore, immigrants were an exceptionally profitable 'reserve army', whereas socially they were associated with dislocation. And it is precisely a discourse of 'race' that serves to ease this tension: 'the economic profit from immigration had gone to capital, the social cost had gone to labour, but the resulting conflict between the two had been mediated by a common "ideology" of racism'.¹³ A 'consciousness of race' thus had the effect of placing 'black' labour outside of the existing working class, preventing a 'common consciousness of class' from intruding into an understanding of social issues such as housing, and constructing black people as a 'sub-proletariat' or 'under-class'.¹⁴ But once this 'race consciousness', introduced for economic gain, came to be seen, after the 1958 Notting Hill riots, as a socially destabilising force, giving rise not just to white racist violence but also to black under-class militancy, the state chose to intervene to reshape 'race relations' in the interests of the longer term stability of capitalism: 'Racism, though economically useful, was becoming socially counter-productive.'¹⁵ The ensuing shifts over the next decade and a half in immigration and integration policy are then interpreted as responses to the contradiction between the economic and social aspects of post-war immigration; and, in intervening to manage this problem, the state is seen as effectively stamping its own authority on the 'laissez-faire' racism which had existed in the 1950s without the state's sanction, thereby making 'racism respectable and clinical by institutionalizing it' and also increasing its 'social and political consequences'.¹⁶

It is not my purpose here to examine the validity of the specific interpretation of this period given by Sivanandan but rather to evaluate his general methodology. First, matters of 'race', for Sivanandan, are ultimately to be explained by relating them to the underlying social relationship between labour and capital. 'Race' differences become 'material' as a result of a 'racist ideology that grades these differences in a hierarchy of power – in order to rationalise and justify exploitation. And in that sense it belongs to the period of capitalism.'¹⁷ For this reason, 'race' relations cannot be studied separately from class relations. Moreover, because 'race' has come to be a central feature of the way in which the state mediates class, the study of 'race', properly conducted, reveals 'like a barium meal ... the whole organism of the state'.¹⁸ Sivanandan's Marxism does not regard 'race' as an epiphenomenon, directly reducible to class; rather, 'consciousness of race' refers to both a political strategy of the state and a potential mode of resistance or even revolutionary opposition to capitalism. Racism certainly is seen as a diversion from class struggle but 'race' identity can also be the basis for forms of politics that not only challenge racism itself but can infect the wider working class with anti-capitalist radicalism. It is only in the last paragraph of the essay that we have a hint that 'race' and class might be situated on different ontological levels: Sivanandan predicts that, with capitalism having reached a certain level of advancement, it can now dispense with 'race' in order to preserve class, suggesting that the latter is perhaps somehow more 'real' than the former. In a more recently published version of the essay, the final sentence is amended from 'Racism dies in order that capital might survive' to

'Racism changes in order that capital might survive'.¹⁹ With this amendment, ontological parity of 'race' and class is restored, as both racism and capitalism grow old together, rather than one dying for the sake of the other's survival.

Elsewhere in his writing from the 1970s, Sivanandan uses the Marxist metaphor of 'base' and 'superstructure' to describe the relationship between class and 'race'.²⁰ Class relations (the material base) produce a cultural superstructure, one aspect of which is the notion of 'race', which divides the working class and thereby strengthens the social relations that make up the base. Changes in the economic base give rise to changes in the superstructure, so that racism changes in line with changes in the productive forces.²¹ So far so orthodox. But the base-superstructure metaphor is also used somewhat more creatively than Marxist orthodoxy would normally allow. For instance, there is no suggestion that political struggles in the superstructure need to be translated into class terms in order to become legitimate or effective; on the contrary, such an assumption is identified as deriving from Marxism's Eurocentrism.²² Rather, 'the economic and cultural aspects of struggle ... are interdependent and retroactive'.²³ The correct approach is not to reduce the cultural to the economic but to 'grasp this totality' so that the class struggle is enriched by political demands that go beyond the purely economic, while the 'cultural' struggle is prevented from accommodating itself to 'capitalism's plural society'.²⁴ In another formulation, Sivanandan writes that racism 'is *determined* economically, but *defined* culturally', implying that it can only be half explained through conventional Marxist economic determinism and only half overcome through class politics.²⁵ Thus 'colour oppression' is 'more than an aspect of class oppression', the 'colour line [cannot] be subsumed to the class line' and 'the strategies worked out for the white proletariat [cannot] serve equally the interests of the black'.²⁶ Such a formulation is consistent with the specific analyses he offers of government policy, black struggle, and so on. Scholars such as Ali Rattansi are therefore mistaken, it seems to me, in rejecting Sivanandan's approach to 'race' on the grounds of class reductionism.²⁷

Sivanandan conceives of the state as an entity that tends to act in the perceived short- or long-term interests of capital. It is not necessarily the case that the state succeeds in acting this way or that, when it does, its actions necessarily have the intended outcomes. For example, an unintended consequence of the 1960s attempt to ease racial tension through restricting 'black' immigration is that racism is institutionalised in the state and the 'race' problem is deepened. In addition, the state is seen as engaged, to some extent, in a quest for legitimacy: it often needs to be seen to be acting in the 'national interest', not just the interests of a specific class; its discourse is therefore ideological in the sense that specific class interests are presented as national interests. Hence there is an ongoing struggle by different classes to establish their own interests as the general will. There is also an emphasis, in Sivanandan's writings, on the discursive process by which the state comes to decide what is in capital's interests, rather than

assuming that such interests can simply be 'read off' from the economic base. Finally, the structures of the state are also seen as reflecting the outcome of earlier political struggles: for example, the civil and political rights of the liberal state are seen as being 'wrought in the white heat of battle between capital and labour',²⁸ and therefore still containing within them the trace of working class political demands, albeit in a bourgeois ideological form.

From the mid-1980s, influenced by post-structuralist theorists, racial and ethnic studies began to pay increasing attention to the constitution of black subjectivity and to de-emphasise the relationships between 'race' and class, the state or capitalism. The base-superstructure notion of ideology was rejected and any attempt to systematically think through the relationship of 'race' to the structural dimensions of capitalism came to be seen as 'essentialist', 'determinist' or 'functionalist'. The main scholarly task for scholars such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Kobena Mercer was, by this time, to contribute to the forging of new identities and ethnicities that were mobile, flexible and hybrid in opposition to the fixed identities of 'race' and nation, through which racism was maintained.²⁹ Identity was not to be related to an underlying social structure or political struggle but conceived as something produced through discourse itself; and political change came about through producing different identities.³⁰ While such an approach has been important in focusing attention on the discursive dimensions to the cultural constitution of racialised subjects, which had often been neglected in race relations sociology and orthodox Marxist accounts, in the end, I would argue, it is an approach that neglects the structural dimensions of capitalism and its enduring systematicity, fails to account for the role of the state in reproducing racism, and encourages a drift towards an unhelpful cul-de-sac of focusing on the minutiae of identity construction and deconstruction.³¹ Moreover, in a context in which discussion of racism is systematically downplayed in mainstream media and policy discourse in favour of questions of cultural identity, there is a danger that a scholarly discourse which also restricts itself to that level is unable to achieve a sufficient degree of critical distance.

How then could Sivanandan's approach be used to analyse the emergence of new discourses of racism constructing asylum seekers and Muslims in Britain from the 1990s onwards? In his analysis of an earlier period, 'race' had been the means by which tensions between the social and economic levels of capitalist society had been eased: racial ideology worked to frame capitalism's social problems as the product of the presence of an alien 'other' defined by its racial identity rather than by its class belonging. The illusion of unity in a class-divided society could thus be produced through the cultural construction of the 'coloured immigrant' as an external intrusion. In *The End of Tolerance*, I also grounded my analysis in political economy. Capitalism continues to define the social relations of British society but capital is no longer locked in the same kind of encounter with a corresponding national labour force; instead, it is relatively free to roam the globe, while labour itself is disaggregated. This is, in turn, reflected in a shift in the principle of

state legitimacy from the state being the guarantor of welfare in a social-democratic, mixed economy to an enabler of market participation in a neoliberal economy (the 'market-state'),³² accompanied by a corresponding move away from (Keynesian) demand-side to supply-side (e.g. workfare) economic interventions, and from notions of equality to equality of opportunity. The politics of New Labour epitomises this shift, effectively completing the neoliberal transformation of British society through a restructuring of the state itself.³³

The series of linked crises of welfare provision, national sovereignty, political violence and social fragmentation, themselves the products of this neoliberal transformation, provide the contexts for the generation of the twin symbols of the 'asylum seeker' and the 'Muslim' as vehicles for displacing these social problems onto a racial plane, representing them as originating in the presence of an alien population which is culturally less modern/civilised/liberal. (Sivanandan's formula that racism 'is *determined* economically, but *defined* culturally' is apposite here.) The policy discourse of New Labour was an obvious starting point in seeking to trace this process, particularly from 2001 onwards, as policy-makers explored ways of maintaining national cohesion in the context of neoliberal globalisation and the associated 'war on terror'.³⁴ 'Race' continues to be the terrain on which an easing of the tensions between (neoliberal) economics and the resulting social dislocations is sought but the social problems around which 'race' operates are different from before (social fragmentation, political violence, declining welfare provision) as are the forms of racialisation at work (Muslims and asylum seekers defined as groups threatening British/western/modern values). The notion that a stable national identity of 'British values' has been disrupted by the presence of racialised 'others' – who need to be 'integrated' (i.e. civilised into adopting 'our' values) or expelled – is assumed. The unity of a class society and the cultural differences between 'their' identity and 'ours' are thus naturalised and depoliticised with this attempt to construct a homogenous 'us' at the very moment when global capitalism 'threatens to loosen the hold of the nation-state over its subjects'.³⁵ As Wendy Brown has argued, the fantasy of national purity which is invoked by this discourse aims at literally screening out a confrontation with structural inequalities and denies the dependency of the privileged on that structure in 'a world of extreme and intimately lived inequality, deprived of strong legitimating discourses'.³⁶

Methodology

As explained above, I have sought to understand 'race' as a changing social and political relationship reproduced through state and dominant media discourses that construct racialised identities as part of an ideological struggle intimately linked to wider transformations of the political economy of capitalist societies. 'Race' is one of the major terrains onto which social antagonisms generated by capitalist relations of production are displaced and where the ultimate unity of society is symbolised. The object of study is thus not a particular group of people but a

changing social relationship reproduced through discourse. This relationship is approached qualitatively by seeking to explore the meanings, ideas and values that are attached to 'race' in twenty-first century Britain, in policy documents and media texts, and to explore how 'race' discourses circulating in policy and media texts interact with the experiences and beliefs of young persons from racialised groups in specific locations. A number of methods were used: critical discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I also used some very basic secondary quantitative data on the numbers of persons officially recorded as migrating to Britain under various categories.

Critical discourse analysis

From 1999–2005, a commercial cuttings service was used with a set of chosen keywords to collect articles appearing in national and some local newspapers concerning issues of race and immigration.³⁷ This was supplemented by internet searching of local and national newspaper websites using the same keywords. These articles were then coded, initially according to broad content headings of 'policing and criminal justice system', 'asylum and immigration', 'violence and harassment', 'far Right politics', 'integration, community cohesion and multiculturalism', 'national security' and 'education', and by the geographical region that the story primarily referenced. A set of policy documents was also collected including all white papers, ministerial speeches, Bills and Acts of parliament on matters to do with asylum, immigration, terrorism and race relations, as well as a selection of key publications by think-tanks and government departments in these areas. It soon became clear that, over the period under consideration, the 'asylum and immigration' theme was receiving a huge amount of coverage as was a set of linked themes around integration, community cohesion, multiculturalism and national security.

Discourse in both of these theme areas was first critically analysed at the level of the text itself. How was a particular set of 'problems' constructed (excessive, unwanted immigration; fragmentation of society along ethnic lines; 'homegrown terrorism')? How were particular social identities ('Muslims', 'asylum seekers') being constructed? How were different issues connected together (for example, terrorism seen as caused by ethnic fragmentation, which in turn is seen as caused by multicultural policies). Consideration was given to the particular choices of words used, the presuppositions of the texts, the rhetorical tropes of argumentation and, especially, the kinds of narratives being offered, what they left out and their internal inconsistencies. Discourse was also analysed as a social practice, in which texts relate to the reproduction of social and political relations and resistance to them.³⁸

Semi-structured interviews

The table below gives an indication of the interviews conducted, showing thirty-two in total, with all except three done face to face and the rest by telephone.

No.	Location	Interviewee	Form
1	Derby	Congolese asylum seeker	In person
2	Nottingham	Iranian asylum seeker	In person
3	Bradford	Young Muslim	In person
4	Bradford	Young Muslim	In person
5	Bradford	Director of community cohesion	In person
6	London	Community activist supporting Chinese migrant workers	In person
7	London	Civil servant working on community cohesion	In person
8	London	Community activist working on Muslim civil rights	In person
9	Bolton	Congolese asylum seeker	By telephone
10	Luton	Young Muslim	By telephone
11	London	Community activist supporting Iraqi asylum seekers	In person
12	London	Anti-racist activist	In person
13	Oldham	Young Muslim	In person
14	Oldham	Young Muslim	In person
15	Oldham	Young Muslim	In person
16	Oldham	Young Muslim	In person
17	Dover	Anti-racist activist	By telephone
18	Leicester	Iranian asylum seeker	In person
19	London	Iraqi asylum seeker	In person
20	London	Community activist supporting Congolese asylum seekers	In person
21	London	Congolese asylum seeker	In person
22	Bolton	Congolese asylum seeker	In person
23	Bolton	Congolese asylum seeker	In person
24	London	Young Muslim	In person
25	London	Community activist working on Muslim civil rights	In person
26	London	Community activist working on Muslim civil rights	In person
27	London	Community activist working on Muslim civil rights	In person
28	London	Community activist working on Muslim civil rights	In person
29	London	Anti-racist activist	In person
30	Derby	Young Muslim	In person
31	Derby	Young Sikh	In person
32	Rotherham	Young Muslim	In person

Less than half of the interviews were recorded; a choice was made that, when interviewing persons who did not speak about the issues under discussion in a professional capacity, it would encourage free discussion if notes were taken during the interview instead of using a recording device. A relatively unstructured approach was taken in the interviews, combining some pre-planned questions and topics to explore but also allowing for interviewees to take the discussion in unanticipated directions, to narrate their own experiences and 'life history' and to reshape the discussion into a different framework from that with which we had begun.

The activists who were interviewed were identified through contacting significant organisations working in the fields under consideration. In order to identify potential young people to interview, youth workers were approached in different locations to act as gatekeepers and asked to refer young people to be interviewed; these young people in turn referred other young people whom they felt, for various reasons, it would be good to interview. In some cases, young people were initially reluctant to speak to me as an 'outsider' (by ethnicity, religion, locality or class); I took an approach of being open about the purposes of the interview and about one's own life and

opinions, in order to build personal relationships and trust. All interviewees were offered the opportunity to be kept anonymous in any published material and to vet any direct quotes attributed to them before publication.

The interviews with asylum seekers raised a set of additional issues: access to potential interview partners and motivating them into participation; issues to do with translation and cultural differences; and how to address 'delicate' research issues, such as illegal working or crossing borders without permission.³⁹ My approach was to rely on 'community gatekeepers' (who I already had strong links with and a relationship of trust) in order to facilitate meetings with asylum seekers to interview. The advantage of this was that the gatekeeper could contribute to securing trust and overcoming any fears that an 'outsider' researcher would make negative judgements or abuse the information given; gatekeepers could also assist with translation. The disadvantage was the danger of biases being introduced by being limited to their contacts, which will tend to be self-selecting in various ways. Where possible, a diversity of gatekeepers was used to overcome this difficulty. I found that by building open and honest relationships about the nature of the work, I was able to conduct interviews with asylum seekers in which issues such as illegal working and the crossing of borders without proper documents could be explored. However, the vulnerability of asylum seekers (who were usually at risk of imminent detention or removal from the country) meant that there were additional ethical issues that did not come up with other interviewees. I was aware that asylum seekers would potentially be hoping for assistance in establishing the credibility of their asylum claim with the Home Office, and that that might be part of why they were choosing to share their, often painful, narratives. This was further complicated by the fact that I was also at the time of the interviews active in various campaigns to support asylum seekers. I sought to handle this ethical challenge by explaining as clearly as possible what the purposes of the interviews were, by signposting asylum seekers to organisations which might be able to assist them, and by being clear on what my role as a researcher was.

Participant observation

Similar methodological issues arose, even more starkly, in carrying out a four-day period of participant observation with members of the Iraqi Kurdish community in Hull. This was made possible through a referral to a member of the community in Hull by another person who had acted as a gatekeeper for me in London. My contact in Hull was one of the few members of the Iraqi Kurdish community there who had been able to secure refugee status and acquire the right to settle in the UK. As such, he lived in a one-bedroom council flat and worked as a translator for the local authority. At any one time, three or four other Iraqi Kurdish men seeking asylum, who were generally also in their twenties, lived unofficially in this flat, as they would have often otherwise been homeless. My contact offered me the opportunity to stay with him for four days, joining his other visitors in sleeping on the floor, and spending the days and evenings with him

and other asylum seekers. This gave me an excellent opportunity to observe at close hand the lives of members of this particular network of Iraqi Kurds in this Yorkshire town. Over the course of the four days, I sought to immerse myself in the given social setting, observing the group in their usual milieu (mainly various people's homes and a Kurdish café), listening to what people said, asking questions, building up relationships with informants, and participating in their activities. Field notes were taken on the conversations held and on other points of interest.

While this method provided significant insights, there were a number of limitations. First, due to the fact that most of the informants were working without appropriate documents, and were therefore in a somewhat vulnerable situation with their employers, I was unable to accompany them to their places of work. Second, I could not speak either Kurdish or Arabic, the two languages which most of my informants were fluent in, and most of them did not speak English; we were therefore reliant on those who did speak English to act as makeshift interpreters in these situations – which tended to make conversation less fluid and more time-consuming. In addition, there were no doubt barriers to communication as a result of significant differences between us in life experiences, cultural background, and so on. I was also strongly aware that, despite all of my efforts to avoid being identified in this way, I was being treated as a 'guest' and codes of hospitality were determining how people interacted with me and around me. As with the interviews I carried out, there was also a problem of a potential sample bias resulting from my reliance on an individual gatekeeper. Finally, the limited amount of time I was able to stay with my informants meant that, at best, I was able to observe a brief snapshot of their lives. For all of these reasons, this use of the participant observation method can at best be seen as offering a partial window on the lives of the informants, rather than as providing especially 'authentic' or 'insider' knowledge.

Impact and audiences

As a significant part of this submission has appeared in the journal *Race & Class*, it is worth making a few comments about this journal. It is a journal that is recognised by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) as meeting academic standards. According to the ISI's citation database (one measure, albeit imperfect, of a journal's impact), *Race & Class's* five-year impact factor was 0.835 in 2008 – indicating a high level of citations by scholars writing in other journals in the fields of ethnic studies, political science and sociology. The journal is ranked by ISI as the third most important internationally in ethnic studies and forty-third in sociology.⁴⁰ According to Scopus, Elsevier's abstracting and indexing database of over 18,000 peer-reviewed journals, my 2001 articles – 'From Oldham to Bradford' and 'In a foreign land' – were the third and fourth most cited articles in *Race & Class* between 1996 and 2001.⁴¹

Indeed, 'From Oldham to Bradford' is a key reference point in most scholarly studies of the urban disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the summer of 2001 and the debates on multiculturalism and community cohesion which flowed from those events.⁴² The article has also been translated and reprinted in a 2002 edition of the Japanese academic journal, *Shakaikagaku Kenkyu* ('*The Social Sciences*'). My 'The death of multiculturalism' is also widely cited in the academic debate on multiculturalism and community cohesion. Paul Thomas, for example, has critically engaged with this article, arguing that, in practice, community cohesion policy is closer to a 'critical multiculturalism' than a 'death of multiculturalism', as I had argued.⁴³ Derek McGhee also widely references my work on multiculturalism.⁴⁴

The End of Tolerance has been included on reading lists on a number of university courses on racial and ethnic studies. It has also been well reviewed in academic journals. The *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (February 2009) described it as 'part of a much-needed critical academia' and *Translocations: migration and social change* (Winter 2008) described it as 'invaluable' to the study of 'immigration, race and ethnicity' and 'in the spirit of Zygmunt Bauman's insistence that good sociology is always engaged sociology'. The reviewer in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (November 2008) described the book as expressing 'some important critical insights' using a method that 'is rare and will be useful to both students and activists'.

A number of leading figures in the field have praised *The End of Tolerance* for its scholarship including Dr Ronit Lentin (Trinity College, Dublin), Professor Robert Moore (Liverpool University), Professor John Rex (Warwick University), Professor Scott Poynting (Manchester Metropolitan University), Aziz Huq (University of Chicago Law School) and Professor Aileen McColgan (School of Law, Kings College London). In addition, one of the concepts from the book, 'integrationism', used to refer to a new post-multiculturalist discourse of assimilation to western values, has been used by a number of other scholars. Jon Burnett, for example, uses the concept in analysing local government policy in Bradford; it has also been adopted by Virinder S. Kalra and Nisha Kapoor, and by Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason in their discussion of multiculturalism in Australia.⁴⁵ In his studies of the politics of the British National Party, James Rhodes has relied heavily on the articles and book being submitted here to provide a framework within which to understand the emergence of new racialised discourses and their appropriation by the far Right.⁴⁶ Ash Amin has also drawn on the output submitted here.⁴⁷

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