



# BRITISH POLITICS REVIEW

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## The Britishness debate

Identity issues in a contested United Kingdom

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Espen Kallevik • Dana Arnold • Kristin M. Haugevik

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The last night of the Proms, one of the most popular classical music concerts in the world, transmits traditional British anthems to a multi-million audience across the world. Held in Royal Albert Hall, the event also incorporates a number of outdoor venues, such as London's Hyde Park seen here in 2008. [Photograph: Neil Rickards. Published under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License]

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## Editorial

# Identity in an age of uncertainty

Questioning national identity is a sign of our times. Throughout Europe, nation states are grappling with the challenges of subnational autonomy, globalisation, European integration and multiculturalism. Hardly anywhere, however, are these questions more prevalent than in Britain, where openness to international trade and migration has often been accompanied by caution and restraint when it comes to displays of national unity. British patriotism was confirmed by the Second World War, so it is said: hardly a sufficient platform for a national unity fit for the twenty-first century.

Arriving in England, wrote George Orwell in "The Lion and the Unicorn", "you have immediately the sensation of breathing a different air... The beer is bitterer, the coins are heavier, the grass is greener, the advertisements are more blatant. The crowds in the big towns, with their mild knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners, are different from a European crowd." While Britons may still be a particular breed, they are also asserting separate national identities to the extent that the future of the United Kingdom is in question, as discussed in the spring issue of *British Politics Review*. This is also the challenge for Gordon Brown, a Scot yet a British prime minister, whose advocacy of Britishness and a shared national credo has expanded over the last few years. Brown's version of Britishness defends a historical set of values, summarised in his British Council annual lecture of 2004 as "a passion for liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and fair play". The Prime Minister's efforts to create a united British football team for the 2012 London Olympics reflect a wish to popularise this perception of unity.

The Prime Minister has an arduous task in defining Britishness across geographical and political divides. His Conservative predecessor, John Major, met with criticism for championing the white middle classes of southern England, his reference to "the country of long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs" finding little resonance in other parts of the population. A shared vision of Britishness today carries even greater difficulties. The recent announcement on the planned introduction of ID cards for British citizens illustrated the problem, seeing the Union Jack removed from the card to the benefit of a floral pattern of shamrock, daffodil, thistle and rose, signifying the four nations of the UK.

The present issue of *British Politics Review* discusses Britishness in light of the multiple identities of Britain today. Our fine team of guest contributors include Paul Ward, Arthur Aughey, Christopher Bryant, Vron Ware, Espen Kallevik and Dana Arnold. Together, they show the many dimensions of the debate today as well as its historical antecedents. Resolving identity in a multi-national and multicultural "nation of nations" will be vital for the future of the British state. Can Britishness provide the answer?

*Øivind Bratberg and Kristin M. Haugevik, Editors*

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# The end of Britishness? A historical perspective

By Paul Ward

## Revival of a debate.

Discussion of Britishness now seems endless. Googling "Britishness" returns hundreds of thousands results for the last month alone. Almost any event relating to sport, politics and culture seems to provoke commentators to raise the spectre of the crisis of Britishness. There have been newspaper and magazine articles, radio and TV programmes, and a stream of blogs discussing what it means to "be British". Without a doubt, Britishness is being discussed at unprecedented levels.



Paul Ward is a Professor at the School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield. His publications include *Unionism in the United Kingdom, 1918-74* (Palgrave, 2005) and *Britishness since 1870* (Routledge, 2004).

It is too often the case, though, that this discussion is taken to mean that Britishness is at its end. It has been widely assumed that the discussion of national identities in the UK is relatively recent, beginning with Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* in 1977. Nairn suggested that it was only a matter of time until Britain and Britishness was no more. The articulation of arguments about Britishness have therefore been taken to imply its demise. It is necessary, however, to take a historical perspective on current discussions of national identity in the UK - viewing them in their historical context rather than as containing some essential truth about the future of Britain.

Debates about Britishness have occurred frequently in the past - hence the volume of historical discussion in the last 20 years or so. Much of this, like that of Nairn, focuses on the contemporary UK, and the recent past, but it possible to cite books and articles that push discussion back and back through history. There is a substantial number of works on Britishness in the twentieth century, including my own *Britishness since 1870* (2004) and Richard Weight's *Patriots* (2002), which argue very different positions. For the nineteenth century, Keith Robbins' work should be mentioned, and Linda Colley's *Britons* (1992) is probably the most cited book on Britishness. Colley argues that Britishness emerged out Protestantism in the eighteenth century, while Britain was engaged in a series of wars against the French Catholic "other".

The early modern period is now also well covered by historians such as Steven Ellis, Sarah Barber and John Morrill. Historians such as J.G.A. Pocock and Hugh Kearney have emphasised just how important it is to consider the history of the Atlantic archipelago in its Britannic context, as a

history consisting of unity and integration as well as disunity and disintegration. This array of historical examination suggests that current debates are part of a continuum rather than a break with the past.

And these historians are exploring discourses contemporary to their periods. Some of these, without doubt, are discourses challenging Britain and Britishness. From the very beginning of the union between the UK and Ireland in 1801 there have been multiple voices opposing the imposition of Britishness.

The outcome in the early 1920s was the first contraction in the size of the UK for some centuries with the establishment of the Irish Free State, later the Republic of Ireland. However, not all non-English commentators on Britishness in the period before the 1970s were seeking to undermine it. It has not been easy for the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish living in a UK dominated by the interminably insensitive English. But outer Britain has been part of Britain while cultivating cultural belongings remote from any centrally imposed uniformity. Underway, there has been a constant dialogue about what it means to be British. In the last hundred years alone it is possible to name David Lloyd George, James Ramsay MacDonald, and Andrew

"Britishness has never been a fixed entity [...] but has been fluid and contested for centuries."

Bonar Law among prime ministers who have not been English and who have addressed the multi-national nature of the UK. All of them found themselves at the centre of power, foreshadowing Gordon Brown and his emphasis on Britishness in the twenty-first century.

Alongside these discussions of the territorial aspects of Britishness there have been equally persistent discussions of ethnicity and Britishness. It is well to remember that the Irish were frequently considered racially different in the nineteenth century, and from the 1880s to 1930s Jewish immigration drew attention to the multi-ethnic nature of the UK, enriched also by pockets of black settlement in British port cities. In the early twentieth century, some Jews tried to train others on how to be English in the Jewish

Lads' Brigade, and black seafarers in the British merchant marine used the phrase "British justice" in their demands for improved working conditions. In the 1930s, Jewish sportsmen wore the star of David and the Union Jack. In the 1940s, Jewish ex-servicemen battled British fascists. The post-1948 immigration of West Indians and South Asians was on a different scale to previous waves of immigration but many of the discussions of what it had meant to be non-white and British that would follow had already been pre-figured.

Britishness has therefore never been a fixed entity that would shatter if was discussed or challenged but has been fluid and contested for centuries. Sometimes this has resulted in crisis - Catholic and nationalist Ireland's war against the British between 1916 and 1921 certainly warrants the description of revolution, and the crisis of Britishness was played out globally in the end of the British Empire. But despite these traumas, substantial numbers in the UK continue to consider themselves to share something that amounts to Britishness. These shared institutions and values include Parliament, the monarchy, the British Army, the BBC, and the National Health Service. None of them are unanimously popular and unchallenged, but they do provide a core around which discussion of Britishness continues. When that discussion stops, then so too will Britishness. But so far, people are still talking, as Google shows.

The University of Huddersfield has set up its own **Academy for the Study of Britishness**. Established in 2008, the Academy coordinates research on citizenship, nationhood and identity across a broad range of academic disciplines. For more information see <http://www2.hud.ac.uk/asb/index.php>

## POBLAcht NA H EIREANN. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty - six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past. Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,  
THOMAS J. CLARKE,  
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,  
P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN CEANNT,  
JAMES CONNOLLY, JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

**Proclamation of the Irish Republic, Dublin 1916.** Unity within the UK and the British Empire has been challenged on a number of occasions before, under different and harsher circumstances. Photograph: public domain

# What is Britain for?

By Arthur Aughey

The expectation of an end. At a recent conference in Cardiff on the theme: *Small countries and the global crisis: challenges and opportunities?* I was asked to present a paper on: "Can Britishness resist the economic crisis?" The only other paper which had an interrogative title was concerned not with a negative (resistance) but with a positive, how Wales could turn its small size to advantage in the global economic crisis.



Arthur Aughey is Professor of Politics at the University of Ulster. He has published extensively on the politics of Northern Ireland and constitutional change in the UK, most recently as the author of *The Politics of Englishness* (Manchester University Press, 2007).

Since this was a conference without any nationalist intent clearly the British question involved a number of assumptions and these assumptions can be said to constitute a current fashion in academic interpretation. When speaking and writing of Britishness it is often assumed first, that it is *fragile*; second, that it is *artificial*; third, that it has a distinctively *instrumental purpose*; and fourth, that there is an *expectation of an end* - the expectation, in short, that the modification of the United Kingdom which goes under the name of devolution must mean its dissolution. In the United Kingdom, this expectation of the end has an ideological inflection, or "endism", a wished-for outcome which is synonymous with the varieties of nationalism in the United Kingdom. What gives endism its own distinctive character is the third assumption, the instrumental purpose of being British, and it is with this assumption that this article deals.

In the indispensable studies of devolution by Alan Trench it is possible to track the emergence - rather, re-emergence - of this assumption. In the introduction to *State of the Nations* (2008), Trench asked the key functional question (one which was implicit in the question I was asked to address in Cardiff): "What is the United Kingdom for in the 21st century?" Why did Trench think this was an urgent question? Because he thought that the United Kingdom has "reached the point where the instrumental underpinning

of the Union has started to dissipate, and to the extent that it remains it does not attract support for the UK".

This judgement suggests the imminence of that venerable prophecy of Tom Nairn about the break-up of Britain and Nairn recently gave the United Kingdom a brief "extinction lag" of only a few more years. Certainly Trench is no nationalist or 'endist' but his warning complements the resent thesis of McLean and McMillan in their *State of the Union* (2006). They made the distinction between primordial unionism which believes in Britishness as an end in itself and instrumental unionism which is British as a means to an end such as, for example, welfare. As they provocatively argued, a primordial attachment to the United Kingdom has "always suffered from deep intellectual incoherence" though historically that incoherence was "masked by its usefulness to politicians and its popular appeal" (note that they find it difficult to think of Britishness beyond the category of "useful").

With the exception of Northern Ireland and its atavistic form of unionism which had little or no resonance elsewhere, McLean and McMillan thought primordial unionism was dead. Hence their fatal question: "can the union state survive without unionism?" Instrumental unionism, on the other hand, means that the United Kingdom is good if has "good consequences". It may have delivered these good consequences in the past but - like Trench - McLean and McMillan believed that it has become increasingly difficult now to sell Britishness instrumentally. They seem to confirm Napoleon's alleged jibe that the English/British are a nation of shopkeepers, for belonging here is

supposedly reckoned on a profit and loss basis. Every economic crisis of consequence, like the present global financial crisis, diminishes the already decreasing value of the United Kingdom's political capital. To the economic crisis one could add the political crisis following revelations in *The Daily Telegraph* that a number of MPs abused the allowance system, revelations which provoked popular outrage and reduced even further the standing of the Westminster Parliament.

The thesis set out by McLean and McMillan exhibits what may be called "project discourse" - the view of Britishness as a "project" which integrated the internal cohesion of the British project, the stability of the United Kingdom, with the external object, the construction and maintenance of Empire. To take one example, Andrew Gamble (*Between Europe and America: The Future of British Politics*, 2003), recently adapted Linda Colley's argument about the "forging" of Britain in the 18th century against the "Other" (mainly France, and claimed that the United Kingdom "was always a political project".

"Trench and McLean & McMillan seem to confirm Napoleon's alleged jibe that the English/British are a nation of shopkeepers, for belonging here is supposedly reckoned on a profit and loss basis."

In this now familiar trope, the end of Empire has "meant the disappearance of the project" which for so long defined Britishness; and its substitute, the American Special Relationship, can do as much to undermine support for the United Kingdom as it does to strengthen it. Even the welfare state, symbolised by that grand British project of the National Health Service, no longer sustains in the manner it once did the project of internal cohesion because its operation has now been parcelled out to the devolved institutions.

It should be said that Gamble is not advocating the break up of Britain but he evokes what others have called a "crisis" of British purpose precipitated by, amongst other things, devolution, the disappearance of Empire, the problems of the monarchy, the political insignificance of Protestantism and the decline in deference for traditional institutions.



The dignified institution. Celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee on 4 June 2002, outside Buckingham Palace.  
Photograph: Michael Peal. Published under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License.

# What is Britain for? (cont.)

By Arthur Aughey

Project discourse – especially amongst Scottish and Welsh nationalists but not confined to them – implies that the United Kingdom has become the dispensable political middle, no longer necessary to mediate between power devolved to the nations and sovereignty ceded to Europe. Multi-nationalism of the British sort is now redundant.

As a matter of fact, state membership does involve such functional, utilitarian concerns.

There is an inescapably contractual element to government and project discourse captures it, but it is one-dimensionally materialistic and if it were *all* that it involved then the state would be no more than Burke's description of "a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico, or tobacco, or some other low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the partners". That, of course, is how nationalists do understand the United Kingdom – a failed project, lacking authority and a partnership in the process of liquidation.

Of course, this is an ideologically loaded view and it is possible to see things differently. Here the philosopher Michael Oakeshott's distinction in *On Human Conduct* (1975) between enterprise and civil association illustrates matters more subtly than McLean and McMillan's distinction between primordial and instrumental. To understand the United Kingdom as an *enterprise* association assumes, as does instrumental unionism, a project of fixed duration the ending of which ends the state itself. But civil association is a way of looking at the state which is not concerned with any particular project, is not dissolved by that project's ending, is not defined by any substantive outcome but is sustained by the legitimacy of its rule. The authority of the association continues so long as there remains acknowledgement of its authenticity defined not by identity but by allegiance to its procedures.

This is primordial not in the McLean and McMillan sense of original or unreconstructed but in the sense of



**Britannia rule the waves.** How a shared British patriotism should be expressed today is a much-debated topic. Olympic sports represent a welcome abstraction in celebrating British success abroad. Portrayed here is Christine Ohuruogu after her victory in the 400 meters at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Photograph: Imex80. Published under GNU Free Documentation License.

being the condition for the satisfaction of individual or collective projects. For Oakeshott, political engagement, then, "is an exploration of *respublica* in terms of the desirability of the conditions it prescribes, and this entails a relationship to *respublica* which is at once acquiescent and critical. The acquiescence is assent to its authority. Without this there can be no politics". This is not because the United Kingdom is an organic whole but because the elements which make up the constitution depend upon, and connect with, one another. Devolution took place within a state recognized as possessing authority and the new arrangements continue to acknowledge it.

The key concept here is not identity but allegiance. Nationalism is a political project to engineer the conformity of identity and allegiance. Britishness means diverse national identities within a common sovereign allegiance. For the moment, the United Kingdom remains the "primordial" or "civil" association within which the exploration of the desirability of the conditions takes place. And even at the instrumental level, there are also across the United Kingdom expectations among citizens that common standards in public services will be maintained. This applies even though the delivery of those major public services has been devolved since the solidarity of the civil association continues to be essential for their common funding.

Perhaps the best way to understand

Britishness is to return to a conception of it which can be found in the introduction by Peter Madgwick and Richard Rose to their jointly edited book of 1982, *The Territorial Dimension in United Kingdom Politics*. They used the term "fifth nation" to explain how the United Kingdom was able to act as a unitary state notwithstanding its multi-national composition. Most studies of British politics, argued Madgwick and Rose, either substituted the politics of England for the politics of

the United Kingdom or they tended to concentrate on one of its component parts, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, while frequently neglecting the relationship between Westminster and the nations. To express that neglected relationship and its efficient secret, they thought that "the United Kingdom is a fifth 'nation' in Westminster".

What the United Kingdom is *for*, of course, can be calculated in terms of benefits and

"The key concept here is not identity but allegiance. Britishness means diverse national identities within a common sovereign allegiance."

services, but continued allegiance to it cannot be so defined. This requires a sense of belonging which is not instrumental but authoritative and the term "fifth nation" tries to capture it. When considered existentially it is sovereign; when considered in terms of solidarity, it is the condition for the material benefits which British citizens still wish to share. "Britain", according to Vernon Bogdanor in *The New British Constitution* (2009), "is less of an artificial or imagined construct, and British loyalty is more organic and primordial than many commentators have suggested". The United Kingdom has changed, is changing and will continue to change but I think that judgement still holds.

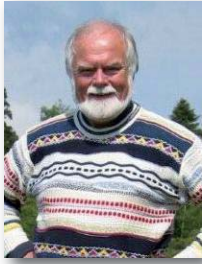
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# The British question

By Christopher Bryant

## Disintegrating Britain.

In December 1999 Linda Colley, author of *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale UP, 1992), gave a millennium lecture at 10 Downing Street in which she addressed this question: "Since so many of the constituent parts of old-style Britishness have been dismantled or have ceased to function effectively, is it possible successfully to re-design and re-float a concept of Britishness for the 21st century?" You could call this the British question. A decade later, do we have an answer?



Christopher G.A. Bryant is Professor of Sociology at the University of Salford, an Academician of the Social Sciences, and the author of *The Nations of Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

Colley thought Britain the "citizen-nation" was the possibility most worth pursuing. She advocated doing everything necessary to convince "all the inhabitants of these islands that they are equal and valued citizens irrespective of whatever identity they may individually select to prioritise". This required that civil rights, equality of opportunity, political participation and empowerment all be maximised - an agenda of particular interest to non-whites and women but not one with anything distinctively British about it.

But Colley also argued that a citizenship expressed in universal terms would only be meaningful, even inspirational, to Britons if connected to British history and experience. It was thus necessary to "pillage the past selectively" and engage with the present, to evaluate heritage and draw upon cultural capital. All Britons, she suggested, could agree to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade back in 1806, the Reform Act of 1832, the Catholic Emancipation of 1829, the end of Jewish disabilities in the 1850s, Votes for Women in 1918, etc. "And why shouldn't we commemorate independence for India in 1947, since it is part of our history too?"

But why was Britain a better vehicle for the citizen-nation than Scotland, Wales or England? Colley's indirect answer was that "Britishness is a synthetic and capacious concept with no necessary ethnic or cultural overtones". This is an overstatement - Britishness does have necessary cultural overtones, not least the paramountcy of the English language - but it reminds us that the 1707 treaty of union between England and Scotland ensured that, by guaranteeing that

Scotland kept a distinctive civil society of its own, there would always be more than one way of being British. Moreover "synthetic and capacious", combinatory and accommodative, does describe a feature Britishness has had for centuries, and must sustain if what Colley called the "multi-national, multi-cultural, infinitely diverse" Britain of today is to have a future.

The London tube and bus bombings of 7 July 2005 perpetrated by disaffected Muslims have made the British question even more pertinent. Responses to it have been varied and complex and there is space here to mention just two. One hinges on "British values" and is associated with Gordon Brown, the prime minister; the other relates to "multiculturalism" but remains mostly confined to academic debate.

**British values.** Gordon Brown used high-profile lectures in 2004 and 2006 to argue that devolution must not, and need not, lead to the break-up of Britain, and that respect for ethnic diversity must be, and can be, accompanied by respect for shared British values and a common Britishness. In speeches, and especially in soundbites, Brown's British values often sound both rapid and not Britain's alone. What these lectures do is make the connections with episodes, events, institutions, practices and persons in British history. (Actually English and then British history, but not pre-1707 Scottish or pre-1536 Welsh history.) The values may be western or universal but their particular actualisation in (English and) British history and contemporary

life has given them a distinctively British cast.

Brown makes the case that the British values of liberty, duty and fair play, complemented by the essentially British qualities of adaptability and a creative and internationalist openness to new ideas and influences, have shaped British national identity. He refers to "a golden thread which runs through British history of the individual standing firm for freedom and liberty against tyranny and the arbitrary use of power" beginning with Runnymede in 1215 and including the 1689 Bill of Rights, both of which were

"Gordon Brown used high-profile lectures in 2004 and 2006 to argue that devolution must not, and need not, lead to the break-up of Britain, and that respect for ethnic diversity must be, and can be, accompanied by respect for shared British values and a common Britishness."

not, of course, British but English (though there was a Scottish Claim of Rights in 1689), and he links liberty to tolerance of difference and acknowledgement that successive waves of immigrants have enriched British culture.

Belief in liberty has been accompanied "by a British idea of duty as the virtue that reinforces neighbourliness and enshrines the idea of a public realm and public service." Whether inspired by religious belief, noblesse oblige or a sense of solidarity, the call to civic duty has given strength to civil associations, voluntary organisations, mutual societies, and local democracy and made them a notable feature of British life. Brown's third value, fair play - Adam Smith's helping hand (that complements the invisible hand), George Orwell's decency - has prompted quests for social improvement and social justice. Duty and fair play combine in an ethic of public service that has given rise to great institutions such as the National Health Service, the BBC, the armed forces and universities, galleries and museums.

This is what Britons have long stood for and should now revisit and build on. Respect for diversity in a multiethnic and multinational state is essential but so is respect for common values. The best of Britain's past has created a distinctive British identity which is incompatible with both individual enslavement "to some arbitrarily defined collective interest" and individual indifference to society. Instead the "British way" depends on "a strong cohesive society in which in return for responsibility there is opportunity for all".



**Brown and Britishness.** The shared identity of Britain has been a centrepiece for the Prime Minister: "a strong sense of duty and of fair play" and "a golden thread which runs through British history of the individual standing firm for freedom and liberty against tyranny and the arbitrary use of power". © Jeff Moore/all rights reserved

# The British question (cont.)

By Christopher Bryant

In July 2007 the new ministry responsible for constitutional affairs, the Ministry of Justice, published a green paper on *The Governance of Britain* with an introduction by Gordon Brown and the justice minister, Jack Straw. The section on Britain's future presents British national identity as the identity that "overarches" other identities, such as gender, ethnicity, class and faith, and "brings the nation together" and it conflates it with British citizenship. It also announces that "Through an inclusive process of national debate [the Government] will work with the public to develop a British statement of values that will set out the ideals and principles that bind us together as a nation".

The government has, however, no idea how a broadly based national debate could be conducted and Gordon Brown is now so unpopular his support for it could in any case be the kiss of death. The government is also unclear whether Britain, as distinct from England, Scotland and Wales, is a state only or also a nation of nations. And any conclusions from the debate of relevance to the school curriculum could only be applied to England anyway as responsibility for education in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the devolved governments. There is not even an all-UK education ministers' talking shop. Brown's top-down British values initiative has petered out.

**Multiculturalism.** The debate about a multiculturalism offers a second response to the British question. The context is well known. People who are not white British made up 14.7 percent of the population of England and a remarkable 41.6 percent of the population of London in 2004. In that year multiculturalism was questioned from the left and from the Commission for Racial Equality as never before. David Goodhart, the editor of *Prospect* magazine, argued that progressives want "plenty of both solidarity (high social cohesion and generous welfare paid out of a progressive tax system) and diversity (equal respect for a wide range of peoples, values and ways of life)" but there comes a point beyond which these are inversely related. The volume of asylum seekers, he thought, threatened to take us beyond that point.



*Integration.* The East London Mosque, one of the largest Islamic places of worship in Britain.  
Photograph: public domain

Trevor Phillips, the co-author of *Windrush* (1998) and the head of the Commission for Racial Equality, agreed, arguing "that multiculturalism was out-of-date. It encouraged separateness when the need now was to re-emphasise "common values... the common currency of the English language, honouring the culture of these islands, like Shakespeare and Dickens". The view seemed to prevail that multiculturalism could issue in a dangerous separateness though it need not, that all responsible citizens should guard against this, that more attention to common values and practices was overdue, that the problem of the radicalised minority of young Muslims who rejected Britishness could no longer be ignored, that the ceremonies to mark the award of British citizenship introduced by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, were a good idea, and that it was time to take forward a Britain of which all citizens would be proud. A rebalancing was called for.

This has not settled the debate about multiculturalism. In a speech shortly after the London bombings, Phillips gave voice to the fear that there are "districts on the way to becoming fully fledged ghettos" and that "we are sleepwalking our way to segregation". Subsequent research suggests that the incidence of residential segregation has been exaggerated and the dynamics of such segregation as there is are more complex than the mythmakers would have us believe. Even so there is a general view that multiculturalism without interaction between bearers of the different cultures is undesirable. Responses to this include the articulation of more sophisticated versions of multiculturalism, the switch in emphasis to interculturalism, and government support

for "community cohesion" understood as respect for cultural differences within a community, that of the majority as well as minorities, allied to the generation of shared experiences and values. This all has an air of making the best of the diversity we have found ourselves with. There is an argument that London points to something better.

The success of London's financial heart, at least until the onset of recession in 2008, raised its standing worldwide, but

the extremes of wealth and poverty it generated were greater in London itself than anywhere else in the UK. Diversity alongside inequality might have led to social conflict and urban disorder, but for the most part it has not. London's successful Olympic bid emphasised the city's ethnic diversity and Londoners' contentment with it. The 7/7 bombings, the day after the 2012 Olympics were awarded to London, might have started the unravelling of London, but they did not.

It is easy to point to examples of Londoners enjoying London's diversity - the vast crowds at the West Indians' Notting Hill carnival, for example; and it is easy to cite examples of objections to it, such as the hostility of some East Enders to what they perceive as an unfair allocation of council housing in Tower Hamlets that favours Bangladeshis. According to Paul Gilroy (*After Empire*, 2004), however, there increasingly

"London's successful Olympic bid emphasised the city's ethnic diversity and Londoners' contentment with it. The 7/7 bombings, the day after the 2012 Olympics were awarded to London, might have started the unravelling of London, but they did not."

prevails a "convivial cosmopolitanism". In the big city the spontaneous interaction of diverse people and peoples generates ever new cultural and economic possibilities. Londoners agree. Polls repeatedly indicate that a majority think the diverse communities of London make it a better place to live.

London's diversity is recognised as a huge asset and not just something to be accommodated, but the world-in-one-city character of London is untypical of Britain as a whole. Even so today's bottom-up Britishness is about benefiting from diversity in a common home and London leads the way.

# Chasing Britishness: a post-colonial project

By Vron Ware

## Identity after Empire.

The concept of national identity is in crisis. In spite of Gordon Brown's best efforts to breathe life into something called Britishness, the fact is that in this age of economic collapse, climate change and global communication, governments can no more dictate and describe our collective identities than control the weather.

Bearing in mind the ambivalence met by New Labour's project to develop the concept of Britishness as a governing principle of a new civic nationalism, it is worth raising questions about the relevance, substance and validity of what is commonly termed national identity today.

We are repeatedly told that young white Britons - particularly in England - are at a loss to explain what is distinctive about their national culture, or more worrying, that they hold negative perceptions of what it means to be white, English or British - a condition sometimes referred to as "identity fragility". In response, the Britishness project launched by New Labour aims to instil a sense of civic identity through education, but there are few signs that this has met with anything other than ambivalence.

Research indicates that many young adults are overwhelmingly indifferent to the whole concept of national identity outside the arena of competitive sport. Evidence also suggests that the concept of global citizenship is increasingly attractive to a generation at ease in a virtual world where activism, social networking and entertainment have no respect for national borders. However, with the reappearance of immigration control as a central political issue and the election of the far right to the European parliament, the Britishness agenda is in danger of taking on a depressingly insular and nationalist tone. A strident appeal to a nativist sense of national identity, premised on the qualifications of being white and indigenous,



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immediately becomes more alarming in the context of a breakdown in trust for mainstream political parties.

Any initiative to address collective identity - whether through education, the arts, or political debate - must also address racism as a fundamental issue for Britain's future, as well as for Europe as a whole. This demands a trenchant reckoning with the UK's history as a former global power. The tortuous history of Britain's imperial ambitions, from the slave trade to the invasion of Mesopotamia, means that Britishness is a concept that travels with heavy global baggage. The consolidation of empire meant that British values, dialects, social customs and laws were planted in the fabric of daily life in colonies far and wide. This inevitably gave rise to a supranational, world-spanning diffusion of Anglo-Saxon hubris which took root in many different places.

In order to consider Britishness from a post-colonial perspective I recently embarked on a journey that took me to South Asia, Kenya and Ireland to talk to young people about the relevance of national identity in their own lives, and to ask them what Britain might look like from their point of view.

The currency of Britishness as a colonial construct was perhaps best demonstrated in Nairobi where I met a group of students, youth workers and journalists over two days of intense discussion. We began by taking it in turns to answer the question: which part of you is British?

"Kenya itself is a British construct," said one, ruefully. "We can't escape that aspect. Why are there so many expats here and so much of our families over there?"

"I was brought up in the British system," said another, "so it's hard to define. Most

of what is me is British."

"For me, Britishness is the idea that the world is shaped with you at the centre," said a young woman from Cameroon, a country split in two by the distinct legacies of British and French colonial rule. "It's the feeling that you are better than anyone else. Even their version of colonialism is supposed to be better." She quickly pointed out that she was glad she did not grow up in the French part.

"The mentality of colonialism has affected us like second hand smoke," observed Binyavanga Wainaina, a writer who was facilitating the session. "I think we give too much credit to the imperialists though. It's difficult to pinpoint what's British and what's western. The way we dress

for instance or having an individualistic approach. The love of money, the fact that a lot of us even think in English. Is this British or American?"

Later that day Binyavanga made another acute diagnosis: "The worst place in the world to be young is an old country where there is no place for the young," he said. He was talking partly from his own

experience of living in the UK, where, as in other western European countries, the proportion of young to old people is the inverse of that in most developing nations. Demographic data from 2005 showed that 18% of the UK population were less than 15 years old, compared to 43% in Kenya. In 2006 the median age in Britain was forty, while in Kenya and its neighbouring countries it was just 18 years old.

The views of young people growing up in countries not just shaped, but often created, by Britain were frequently coloured by their palpable anger at the UK's role in Iraq. This was often matched by the rage and frustration at the state of

politics in their own backyards. Sharing in their conversations about identity as they talked in urgent tones about their own, local, issues of inequality, exclusion, racism and bigotry, demonstrated that it is possible to glimpse a rapidly converging global generation able to think beyond, as well as within, the space of the postcolonial nation.

"Any initiative to address collective identity [...] must also address racism as a fundamental issue for Britain's future... This demands a trenchant reckoning with the UK's history as a former global power."



Post-colonial paths. The Kenya-Uganda railway near Mombasa, c. 1899. How do citizens in former British colonies relate to the concept of Britishness?  
Photograph: public domain

# Britishness, multiculturalism and ethnicity

By Espen Kallevik

**Unity in diversity.** National identity and the notion of Britishness are today among the most debated issues in the British media. The debate picked up in earnest after the 2001 riots in northern England, and the several disparaging reports about communities divided along ethnic lines which were produced thereafter.



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Despite this increased focus, however, the exact meaning of Britishness as a term remains disputed, although it seems clear that it rests on the perception of an identity which incorporates all the different peoples of the United Kingdom. The question is whether such a common British national identity can still be said to exist, following the impact on British society of post-war immigration, globalisation and devolution. This article will highlight the multicultural dimension: does Britishness have a place and function in the modern multicultural UK?

The historian Linda Colley famously argued that following the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland, the British nation was essentially created, or "forged", out of four elements: *Protestantism, trade and Empire, war and military service, and intermarriage among the landed classes of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.* These factors underpinning 18th-century Britishness lost most of their importance after the Second World War. Since then, Britishness has also met with a new set of challenges, raising the question of whether a different kind of identity needs to be forged for the future. Devolution, championed by reinvigorated nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales, has formalised the view of a UK of four nations. Meanwhile, immigration and globalisation have affected Britain with increasing strength. During the last decade, this international dimension has been consolidated by technological changes facilitating cross-border communication and enabling ethnic minorities to be updated on events in their native country to a larger extent than before.

Faced with the perceived disintegration of Britain, some experts have argued that the policies of multiculturalism which were introduced in the 1960s to facilitate cohesion have, in fact, undermined the position of Britishness as a common identity. Britain moved from tolerating ethnic minorities, to more actively

appreciating their culture and existence. The education sector was particularly influenced by this change of approach. A number of local education authorities (LEAs) introduced new reforms which stated that all sections of the community had an equal right to maintain their distinctive identity, culture, language and tradition, thus emphasising diversity over common identity. Moreover, multicultural policies also influenced government policies on health, housing, policing and cultural activities in a wide sense.

Over the last few years, the debate about national identity and Britishness has regained attention. Several leading politicians and intellectuals have argued that Britain has too often emphasised what *separated* people at the expense of what *united* them. Moreover, it has been claimed that policies initiated to address the increased diversity in society had led to further segregation and distrust between the communities. Trevor Phillips, head of the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights, argued that multiculturalism entailed separateness and had created a situation where people were sleepwalking into segregation. To overcome these problems Phillips suggested jettisoning the policies of multiculturalism and instead emphasising "a core of Britishness".

A similar viewpoint has also been voiced by other central figures, including John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, and most recently Gordon Brown. Brown's proposals included a "British day" to celebrate the nation's cultural values, as well as a campaign to "take the Union Jack back" from the far-right British National Party (BNP), and make it again a symbol of unity. Both initiatives built on to the UK citizenship tests and UK citizenship ceremonies for new immigrants introduced under Brown's predecessor Tony Blair.

If there is agreement on the need to forge cohesion around a shared set of values, what should this manifestation of a modern British identity imply? In the view of many researchers in the field, a common British identity has to be defined in a way that is inclusive and considerate of ethnic minority cultures, and this opinion corresponds to the views emanating from recent polls. A MORI poll conducted in 2002, for example, showed that the majority of British people were in favour of defining Britishness in an inclusive manner. Almost nine in 10 said that being British is not about being white and that attitudes and

behaviour were more important than ethnicity when defining Britishness.

Several studies, including the report "Living Apart Together", published by the think tank Policy Exchange in 2007, support the findings in this particular MORI poll. Interestingly, the Policy Exchange report found that while there is a growing religiosity amongst the younger generation of Muslims, most Muslims are well integrated and do not regard their religion as a barrier to being British.

These findings have come as an encouragement for those who believe it is possible to re-construct a national identity within the framework of a cosmopolitan Britain. At the same time there are those who assert that Britishness might not be a suitable identity for all citizens in the UK. For instance, the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, chaired by Bhikhu Parekh, argued that Britishness is unsuited as a common identity

"In a MORI poll conducted in 2002 almost nine in 10 said that being British is not about being white and that attitudes and behaviour were more important than ethnicity when defining Britishness."

because of its controversial past and domination by the majority culture. The Commission also stated that "Britishness, as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations". In particular for Africans, Caribbeans and Asians, Britishness is a constant reminder of the unjust treatment of colonisation. A survey conducted by ICM in 2005 highlighted the central argument put forward by the Commission, and demonstrated that only 39 per cent of ethnic minorities saw themselves as "fully British".

Finally, and returning to the age-old issue of Britishness as identity marker within the UK, the Commission also emphasised its domination by quintessential southern English values. As such, the identities of people in Scotland, Wales, and a significant part of the population in Northern Ireland are not sufficiently acknowledged.

Given the multiplicity of views around identity issues in Britain today, it is perhaps more important than ever that a future British identity is inclusive and based on more than merely ethnic origins. None the less, ever since the treaty of union in 1707, Britishness has been a capacious concept accommodating a variety of national and cultural differences. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Britishness might adapt to the demands of a multicultural society, and as such continue to encompass more than one way of being British.

# The architectural aesthetic of Britishness

By Dana Arnold

**Architecture, power and identity.** The creation of a single public culture is fundamental to our understanding of nationalism and nationhood. How are these manufactured cultural identities expressed in architecture and the built environment? Moreover, to what extent do they evolve and change over time?



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From our viewpoint in the post-colonial world we are able to re-contextualise British architecture since it is deracinated and juxtaposed in an environment where colonialism is now only part of a much longer and ongoing historical narrative. And the new dimensions that this brings offer fresh opportunities for re-thinking British architectural history and the complex ways in which it expresses national identity in a globalised context.

There is no doubt that architecture remains one of the most potent symbols of western civilization and culture. In terms of British architecture this has led to the establishing of canonical histories and narratives that both privilege certain social and political elites and promote the idea of a national identity or style. My aim here is not to chart the field of British architectural history; rather I want to consider how its expanding geographical and temporal boundaries influence our understanding of it.

I want to look at two discrete areas of British architectural history which together present a series of position statements about how we might begin to think differently about the way national identity is expressed through the built environment. First, I discuss the *country house*, arguably the hallmark of British architecture, which continues to perform a variety of functions in the making and telling of national identities. My second area for consideration is *how British architecture operates in a colonial/post-colonial world*

and the ways in which the expansion of geographical borders inflects on its history.

**The country house** was the predominant building type in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Alongside the growth of towns and cities, it was indicative of the nation's increasing wealth and prosperity and as such reflected the complexities of the notion of Britishness at this time. On one level it operated as a symbol of commemoration of national triumph - for instance Blenheim Palace, c1712 designed by Sir John Vanbrugh, was a gift from the nation to the Duke of Marlborough for the victory over the French at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704.

A little over a century later Stratfield Saye, an existing house which dated from the seventeenth century, was given to the Duke of Wellington with the unrealised intention of constructing a grand Waterloo Palace to celebrate his defeat of Napoleon. Country houses also represent the opulence of the landed elite, which frequently eclipsed that of the monarchy. The architecture, landscape and collections of houses such as Kedleston, designed in 1760s by Robert Adam for Lord Scarsdale, were products of a highly capitalistic society where wealth was mostly based on speculative ventures and profits from working land in town, country and overseas.

The use of the classical style in the design of country houses can be seen as a common denominator in these various expressions of Britishness. The architecture of the Romans and Renaissance Italy, as seen in the use of columns, porticos and domes, became the architectural language of the elite which was admired and coveted by

visitors of both equal and lower social rank. The veneration of this style of architecture continues to the present day. The popular pastime of country house visiting enjoyed by both British and foreign tourists transforms the country house into a consumable object. Whilst the villas designed for the Regent's Park in London in 1980s or the redevelopment of Richmond town centre by Quinlan Terry offer either emulation or pastiche of British classicism. But what is being admired?

"Appreciation of the classical architecture of the past is coloured by the world of antiquarianism... These are also processes of exclusion as they privilege the aesthetic taste of the elite and mask the social inequalities embodied in the country house."

Appreciation of the classical architecture of the past is coloured by the world of antiquarianism and the polite activities involved with the rediscovering the antique, such as the grand tour in

eighteenth-century Europe. These present a romanticised image of well-established cultural practices but these are also processes of exclusion as they privilege the aesthetic taste of the elite and mask the social inequalities embodied in the country house. We are rarely reminded of the sources of wealth that facilitated such grand architecture; for instance sharp farming practices that exploited the rural poor or the slave trade and use of slaves on West Indian estates. Nor are we invited to remember the thousands killed in the battles of Blenheim or Waterloo.

In this way the grand narratives of aristocratic owners, opulent interiors and collections become the history of classical British architecture, rather than one aspect of a multi-faceted cultural phenomenon. And the present day visiting public is invited to share in and perpetuate this myth. It is exactly this cosy image of our knowledge of British country house architecture that needs to be disrupted and unsettled. In other words, instead of accepting these historical narratives

around the country house it is important to see this cultural phenomenon as a site of struggle: a problem, a product of historical discourse. In this way classical architecture is, then, indexical of the predominant notion that the history of the landed elite is what the British past is all about. Needless to say I seek to disturb such a view.



**Blenheim Palace:** a quintessential example of the British country house, seen here in an 18th-century engraving.  
*Photograph: public domain*

# The architectural aesthetic of Britishness (cont.)

By Dana Arnold

**Imperial architecture.** Much is made of the concept of globalisation in all aspects of the academy, as well as social, cultural and political life. But what impact do these ever-expanding physical boundaries have on the intellectual parameters of architectural history and the geographical limits of Britishness? Moreover, is globalisation just colonialism by another name?

In terms of the colonial world neither Rome, nor Byzantium, came close to the imperial scope of Britain in the nineteenth century. The rule of the vast dominions that comprised the British Empire left scarcely

a corner of the globe or of life untouched in either the colonies or the imperialist capitals. British Imperial architectural history shows how culture and politics co-operated, knowingly and unknowingly, to produce a system of domination that involved more than cannon and soldiers.

The colonial aesthetic was in fact a form of sovereignty that extended over the forms of the built environment. The result was a "consolidated vision" that affirmed not merely the British right to rule but their obligation to do so. As such alternative arrangements became unthinkable. In contrast to the splendour of the country house these architectural statements of dominance were frequently visually modest; the power and dominance of the colonial presence pervaded the ordinariness of the architectural fabric of the Empire. Here I am thinking, for instance, of the domestic architecture of pre-independence America where the terrace house and garden square was transposed from London to Boston and Bath to Savannah.



**The Jewel in the Crown.** The North Block of the Secretariat Building in New Delhi, a rare example of architectural glory in an Empire characterised by expedience rather than splendour. The building, housing the Ministry of Finance and the Home Ministry, was designed by the British architect Herbert Baker, working alongside the legendary Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Photograph: Nimrod Bar. Published under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License.

It is arguable that the British colonial presence both in the architecture of rule and of residence remained an aesthetic of mercantilism. For the most part official governmental buildings were designed by military engineers who adopted local forms such as the bungalow and the veranda which suited the hot climate of India. Indeed, these features were transported across the Empire as need required. Commercial, domestic and even religious architecture was exported not as a self consciously fashioned colonial aesthetic but as practical prefabricated structures that could be constructed quickly obviating the necessity for the adoption of indigenous materials and building methods. This is in stark contrast to the design practices of other European countries - here I am thinking of the Beaux Arts classicism that typified

"The British colonial presence [...] remained an aesthetic of mercantilism... Commercial, domestic and even religious architecture was exported not as a self consciously fashioned colonial aesthetic but as practical prefabricated structures..."

and colonised and the kinds of cultural identities expressed by visual means. And these remnants of a colonial presence,

are now the subject of questions concerning their preservation and interpretation as they are also part of a post-colonial re-reading of the past.

The re-telling of the history of empire brings an additional layer of historical explanation to British architecture in these distinctive environments. Equally, the current dynamic expansion of Asia - not least China, Singapore

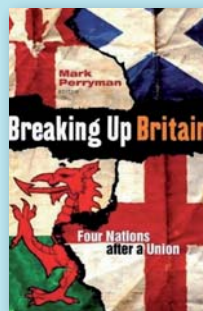
and Hong Kong - fuelled by the embracing of international capitalism offers present-day star architects the opportunity to export a new kind of Britishness in design.

French colonial architecture.

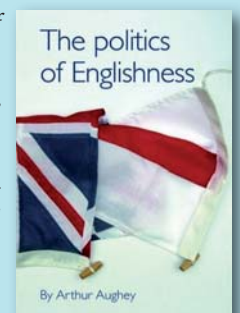
The star architects of the country house who played such an important role in the shaping of a national identity made a far smaller impact on the forging of a colonial notion of Britishness. The Bombay of George Gilbert Scott or the Delhi of Edwin Lutyens stand as notable exceptions in an architecture of Empire that was largely without names. Moreover, after World War Two the establishing of the Commonwealth completely transforms the relationship between coloniser

## Recent publications on Britishness:

- Paul Ward (2004) *Britishness since 1870*. Routledge.
- Christopher Bryant (2005) *The Nations of Britain*. Oxford University Press.
- Mark Perryman (eds.) (2009) *Breaking up Britain: four nations after a union*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Dana Arnold (2004) *Cultural Identities and the Aesthetics of Britishness*. Manchester University Press.



- Arthur Aughey (2007) *The Politics of Englishness*. Manchester University Press.
- Ian Bradley (2008) *Believing in Britain: the spiritual identity of Britishness*. Lion Hudson.
- Vron Ware (2007) *Who Cares about Britishness? A global view of the national identity debates*. Arcadia Books.
- Michael Storry and Peter Childs (eds.) (2007) *British Cultural Identities*. Routledge.



# Britishness and the international dimension

## Taking identity abroad.

As many of the articles in this issue have suggested, the contemporary debate about "Britishness" is first and foremost a domestic one. At heart, it is about that collective or single British identity taking in, uniting or exceeding all relevant geographical and ethnic sub-components. More often than not, it is linked to debates about multiculturalism, devolution and immigration, and to the idea about shared British values, principles and national symbols.



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international stage can be said to involve both an *internal dimension* – how various British governments portray British identity and foreign policy on the international arena – and an *external dimension* – how this portrayal is interpreted by other members of the international community. In the former sense, Britishness can typically be observed in the official British foreign policy discourse and through concrete political practices. In the latter sense, it may for instance be observed through the accounts of other governments, or through analyses by scholars and commentators. In both senses, identity is a *relational* concept – it becomes meaningful only in relation to other identities.

In a much-quoted 2006 speech on the future of Britishness, Gordon Brown (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) pointed out that in Britain's relations with Europe, the United States and the rest of the world, it was important to "have a clear view of what being British means".

Traditionally, and at a very general level, Britishness in the world seems closely linked with the notion of *exceptionalism*. In short, this means placing British identity and foreign policy against the backdrop of its unique geographical location, its incomparable national history and imperial past, and its distinctive values, culture and political system. Britain's identity as an island state physically disconnected from the European continent has, for instance, been used by British prime ministers both to account for Britain's cautious approach to European integration and its "Atlanticist" identity inside NATO. Similarly, Britain's identity as a former imperial power and



**Atlanticism.** George W. Bush and Tony Blair at a NATO meeting in Istanbul, 2004. White House photo by Paul Morse. Public domain.

world hegemon is often referred to when British officials speak about Britain's global role and responsibilities in the world. Furthermore, historical bonds, as well as similarities in values, culture and language, are factors commonly pointed at when British state leaders seek to explain Britain's close political bonds with the United States.

"Britain's identity as an island state [...] has been used by British prime ministers both to account for Britain's cautious approach to European integration and its "Atlanticist" identity inside NATO."

Acknowledging that geography, history, culture and values might be constitutive or constraining of Britishness in the world is, however, not the same as saying that the British foreign policy identity has remained unchanged for the last sixty years or so. From a constructivist viewpoint, identities are not fixed,

but constantly affected by processes and events in their environment. Thus, much like Britishness on the national level, Britishness in an international context is a concept in flux, one that can be altered and adjusted. The changing British approach to European integration over the last decade arguably illustrates this well – to be British in Europe has had different meanings under different British governments and at different times in history.

At the international level, however, these domestic complexities fade and make room for another, arguably more stable and recognisable, account of Britishness. This "global version" of British identity can be seen as closely related to the formulation and execution of British foreign policy.

Following the so-called "constructivist turn" in International Relations theory in the 1990s, a growing number of scholars have turned their attention to how identity can be constitutive and constraining of political processes and outcomes on the international arena. As part of this understanding, the foreign policy of states was increasingly seen in connection with their national identities. The general recognition was that how states see themselves in relation to others, how they would like to be seen by others and how they are *de facto* seen by others, are likely to affect their "sayings and doings" on the international arena.

Following this logic, Britishness at the

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## Forthcoming edition of *British Politics Review*

The name of *Winston Churchill* never ceases to stir debate in Britain. Through many contemporary political issues runs a thread which can be followed back to Churchill's era in British politics, be it related to constitutional reform, relations between the nations of the UK or Britain's position in the world. "The man who won the war" was for long a controversial figure in Britain, facing workers'

riots as home secretary before the First World War and was largely written off in British politics after the disastrous Gallipoli landing in 1915. His campaign for British rearmament in the face of the German threat in the 1930s caused Churchill to be labelled as war-monger and outsider – until his vindication in 1939-40.

The next edition of *British Politics Review* is dedicated to the multifaceted career

of Winston Churchill. We will discuss a range of events from his political life and try to relate to some of these experiences to challenges faced by Britain today. Articles from readers of *British Politics Review* are very welcome. Please get in touch with the editors at [mail@britishpoliticssociety.no](mailto:mail@britishpoliticssociety.no) for further details.

The autumn edition of *British Politics Review* is due to arrive in November 2009.