

Can multiculturalism contribute to de-polarizing the current political polarization?

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Abstract

We seem to have a deepening polarization between those who are pro-diversity (possibly also pro-immigration) and those who feel that this is going too far and/or too fast and seek that their national identities are being demoted at the expense of other identities. Moreover, it's not only minorities who have identity-anxieties but also majorities. Indeed, it is suggested that multiculturalism has contributed to these anxieties and thereby to the polarization. This presentation shall consider the source of the polarization but, more so, how we can tackle and lessen this polarization which is fostering mutual distrust and threatening the national, democratic citizenships upon which any multiculturalist, egalitarian and unifying project must be built. This does not involve giving up on multiculturalism but, rather, developing a multicultural national identity, to which all citizens can have a sense of belonging without giving up other identities that are important to them. Such national and group identities cannot be conceived as monistic or static, rather interactive and dialogical. The presentation will argue that such a multicultural sense of the national can be adapted to work with a wide range of centre-left and centre-right views; above all it allows one to be sensitive to minority identity vulnerabilities and majority identity anxieties within an integrated theoretical and political framework.

Biography

Tariq Modood is Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy and the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol and the co-founder of the international journal, *Ethnicities*. He has held over 40 grants and consultancies, has over 35 (co-)authored and (co-)edited books and reports and over 300 articles and chapters. He was awarded an MBE for services to social sciences and ethnic relations in 2001, was made a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (UK) in 2004 and elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2017. He served on the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, the *National Equality Panel*, and the *Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life*. His latest books include *Essays on Secularism and Multiculturalism* (2019), *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2nd ed; 2013); and as Special Issues co-editor, with T. Sealy, *Beyond Euro-Americancentric*

Forms of Racism and Anti-racism (*Political Quarterly*, 2022) and Global comparative analysis of the governance of religious diversity (*Religion, State and Society*, 2022).