

# WHY PROMOTING TOLERANCE AND INCLUSION IN EUROPE IS IN THE US INTEREST

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There is an evolving debate across Europe about how to manage growing diversity effectively, coupled with a backlash against the notion that Europe should openly embrace these demographic changes. While many European countries have come to accept the notion they are—and have long been—countries of immigration, here is no dearth of examples of European states struggling to find a balance between preserving valued traditions and incorporating those with different backgrounds and beliefs. What is less evident, however, is that furthering integration, tolerance, and a respect for diversity in Europe are key objectives for both policymakers and public diplomacy practitioners in the U.S. government.



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## *Introduction*

There is an evolving debate across Europe about how to manage growing diversity effectively, coupled with a backlash against the notion that Europe should openly embrace these demographic changes. In 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel proclaimed the death of multiculturalism in Germany, asserting that it had “utterly failed.” In the Nordics, we see the rise of self-proclaimed anti-immigrant parties, such as the True Finns and the Danish People’s Party, which reject the concept of diversity as a positive force. Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared multiculturalism a failure and claimed that American and British efforts to encourage diversity have only led to diluted national identities and stronger extremist voices in immigrant communities. While many European countries have come to accept the notion they are—and have long been—countries of immigration, here is no dearth of examples of European states struggling to find a balance between preserving valued traditions and incorporating those with different backgrounds and beliefs.

What is less evident, however, is that furthering integration, tolerance, and a respect for diversity in Europe are key objectives for both policymakers and public diplomacy practitioners in the U.S. government. As the Obama administration and Congress grapple with how to order priorities in a time of constrained budgets, supporting and strengthening U.S. efforts to manage diversity effectively in Europe should be a top concern for both our traditional government-to-government diplomacy as well as our direct engagement with European populations. This is not just valuable for Europe. It is also crucial for the United States and the future of transatlantic relations.

## *Why it’s our business*

To begin with, it is reasonable to ask why the United States spends any of its resources on what many call a “purely domestic” issue. After all, the United States tries to avoid becoming entangled in the affairs of other nations that do not have a broader global or regional impact. And in many ways, there is no more domestic an issue than how a government chooses to integrate religious or ethnic minorities into the broader society. In Europe in particular, this is an issue strongly tied to history, national identity, and a societal commitment to long-held traditions that many see as being under threat by newcomers.

The answer to the question of “why this is our concern,” however, is fairly straightforward. If the United States is to succeed on the seemingly endless array of challenges we face in the world today, we must have strong partners. Countries that are struggling with painful internal divisions at home tend to make weaker partners than those that are not. Countries hampered by large segments of society that are poorly integrated often make less stable and less reliable partners. And European countries in particular, which need immigration at a time of declining birth rates, will continue to see much of the best global talent look elsewhere for opportunities if these nations do not fully commit themselves to creating welcoming environments.

As President Obama has made abundantly clear, the United States simply has no better partners than those in Europe. On nearly every issue of global importance today—from the war in Afghanistan to the Iranian nuclear challenge to the 2011 operation in Libya—Europe’s contributions have been crucial in advancing our shared interests. Furthermore, the U.S. and E.U. have the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world, which serves as a pillar for the global economy. Together, the United States and Europe account for approximately half of world GDP and one-third of global trade flows. Approximately \$2.7 billion in goods and services are traded bilaterally each day, and the U.S. and E.U. have more than \$3.7 trillion directly invested on both sides of the Atlantic. The United States is stronger in terms of legitimacy, resources, and ideas when it joins forces with Europe.

In addition, efforts to further inclusion and tolerance also impact our transatlantic security agenda in an even more direct way. The United States and most European countries are rightly wary of having integration efforts filtered through a security and law enforcement prism, which can breed distrust among immigrant and minority communities. However, we partner closely with Europe on combatting violent extremism—which can be fueled by feelings of alienation among groups that feel excluded from the societal benefits others enjoy. Thus, the United States has a stake in whether European countries are creating climates that properly balance the short-term objective of rooting out homegrown terrorists with the long-term objective of not creating an environment that allows extremist ideologies and recruiters of the disaffected to flourish.

In short, if the United States is to continue to succeed, it needs Europe. Furthermore, it needs a strong Europe that is whole, free, and at peace—and paving the way for a future based on the realities of a 21<sup>st</sup> century multiethnic, multicultural Europe. This will require Europe to manage its growing diversity and ethnic tensions in a manner that is conducive to regional and global growth and security, and that creates a welcoming environment. Thus, issues of inclusion, tolerance, and respect for diversity are far from purely domestic matters. They are issues that directly affect the United States and its interests.

### *The U.S. role in furthering tolerance and inclusion in Europe*

Even casual observers of European affairs will likely recognize that the United States regularly plays an assertive government-to-government role in attempting to resolve European conflicts that are rooted in ethnic conflict and a lack of tolerance. Whether it is helping to broker the 1995 Dayton Accords to end the Bosnian war or being a key intermediary in the Northern Ireland peace process, U.S. policymakers often find themselves on the front lines. U.S. diplomats are regularly working with European governments to find permanent, peaceful solutions to disputes between nations and within them. In fact, the United States has been such an integral player in European conflict prevention and resolution over the past several decades that it is

often blamed for not doing enough on intra-European matters when things go sour or do not improve quickly enough.

Not to be overlooked, however, is the role the United States plays in working directly with European civil society leaders, students, and other residents in the effort to further tolerance, inclusion, and respect for diversity. Through a combination of U.S. public diplomacy programs, State Department special representatives, and the efforts of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission), the U.S. government attempts to compliment traditional diplomatic efforts aimed at government officials with equally robust government-to-people and people-to-people efforts aimed at shaping attitudes—especially those of the next generation.

While State Department efforts on inclusion and tolerance in Europe are tailored to meet the specific challenges of the countries in which America has a presence, there are a number of common objectives. Perhaps the most high-profile U.S. government effort in this arena is the commitment to engage more effectively with Muslim communities around the world, including those in Europe. In keeping with President Obama's promise to begin a new chapter in U.S. relations with Muslim communities, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appointed the first Special Representative to Muslim Communities, Farah Pandith, in 2009 to streamline U.S. efforts. The Special Representative's portfolio has augmented the work of diplomats in embassies and consulates across Europe in developing a more honest two-way communication stream with Muslim communities on issues of importance within those populations.

U.S. government inclusion and tolerance efforts, however, go far beyond Muslim engagement. In 2011, for example, Special Representative Pandith and former Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Hannah Rosenthal launched the high-profile "Hours Against Hate" campaign to combat bigotry and promote respect across cultural, gender, religious, racial, ethnic, and class lines, and focused many of their efforts on Europe. The campaign, launched at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), urged young people to pledge their time to help individuals outside of their own communities. In addition, the U.S. government supports international efforts to combat hate crimes through bodies such as the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), established through the OSCE, and the Capitol Hill-based Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (also known as the Helsinki Commission), which supports a broad range of initiatives to combat racism and discrimination in Europe.

The State Department also dedicates attention and resources to bringing together ethnic groups that have had long-standing tension between them through joint educational, sports, and cultural programs. These include activities ranging from sports programs for Turkish and Armenian youth to music education programs for Albanian and Serbian youth on opposite sides of the divided city of Mitrovica in Kosovo. Participants in these programs regularly provide positive feedback about their experiences, which allow them to interact with, and understand, their counterparts in new, more productive, ways. Furthermore, a number of U.S. missions in Europe,

including our embassies and consulates in Germany and France, have been leaders in recent years in developing programs to promote tolerance and a respect for diversity. The efforts include interfaith gatherings, cultural conflict training, meetings with American counterparts to discuss the U.S. civil rights movement, and anti-violence workshops.

Finally, U.S. embassies and consulates play a strong role in furthering inclusion across Europe by reaching out to minority populations that have not traditionally been included in U.S. public diplomacy programs and who might otherwise feel excluded from broader communities in their home countries. The State Department runs visitor and exchange programs that specifically recruit candidates from minority populations in the multiracial, immigrant enclaves of Europe's major cities. The U.S. government is also expanding the pool of people and institutions to which it advertises Fulbright, other academic exchanges, and general study abroad opportunities in America. In addition, several U.S. missions in Europe have created recurring programs that bring underserved youth to the United States—both to experience life in the U.S. and to learn about community service and activism—and sponsor training programs for minority professionals.

### *Conclusion*

Does the United States have all of the answers about creating a tolerant and inclusive society? Of course not. We have struggled with our own racial and ethnic challenges for hundreds of years, and will continue to do so. But through our long history as a country of immigration, our civil rights battles, and unique present-day diversity, the United States has an important story to tell European audiences and many best practices to share. We should continue to invest the proper time and resources into such efforts.

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