

*Foreign Policy Implications of Multiculturalism: Strategy and Practice*

Spencer P. Boyer  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State  
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

John Adams Society Fall Lecture  
Thursday, November 17, 2011, 6:30p.m., 25 minutes  
Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)  
London, UK

Good evening. Thank you very much for that kind introduction. I'm honored to be here today to recognize this important milestone — the inaugural fall lecture of the John Adams Society.

I'm the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, which means that I'm responsible for the public outreach efforts at our 49 missions throughout this region—one that stretches from Iceland to Russia. As will be clear to all of you in this room, that means I cover a lot of issues. The day-to-day work of our bureau is vast and varied, as is the work of our embassies and consulates across the region. But there is one issue that every single one of our posts deals with, and that's diversity. It's an issue we spend a lot of time talking about and thinking about at the Department of State, and the issue of diversity in Europe in particular has been a special interest of mine for much of my professional career, both in and out of government. So I'm extremely glad to be here today, and I'm very much looking forward to our discussion.

In the United States, we've made slow but certain progress on issues related to diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism—progress that's expressed itself in

numerous ways, large and small, across our nation every day. Indeed, President Barack Obama personifies our nation's deep commitment to diversity, tolerance, and the successful integration of immigrant and minority groups in the United States. And yet, nearly 50 years after the Civil Rights March on Washington, our work is not yet complete.

Over the course of a career that has spanned a couple of decades and both continents, I've found that while the United States and Europe share much in common—including a similar religious and cultural heritage, strong democratic institutions, and a commitment to civil society—one thing we don't share is a common set of political attitudes and policies on how best to integrate immigrant and minority groups into our larger societies.

And that's one of the main reasons why I'm here today: because I believe that Americans and Europeans can learn a great deal from each other as we discuss our different views and actions on integration. I also want to discuss the foreign policy implications of multiculturalism.

Three decades after the Cold War, the world is a much different place—increasingly multipolar and profoundly interdependent. The interconnectedness of human society can fuel economic, social, and political change across the globe ever more quickly—with dramatic political tremors in Tunisia helping to produce a political earthquake in Egypt within only a few historic weeks.

Commenting on the moving journey made by the people of Egypt this year, President Obama pointed to the peoples of faith praying together in Tahrir Square and chanting “Muslims, Christians, we are one,” as an example that we need not be defined by our differences, but rather defined by the common humanity we share.

Given that you've all presumably come here today to discuss the foreign policy implications of multiculturalism, you may wonder why a U.S. government official wants to discuss it at all. You might ask "Why does the United States take an interest in social cohesion in Europe?" Or, to put it more bluntly, you may be asking yourself, "Why is social cohesion in Europe any of America's business?" I think there are good answers to these questions.

Our engagement with Europe begins with a shared history, shared values, shared concerns, and shared aspirations. The United States faces a daunting international agenda and our ability to deal with it is immeasurably increased by working with strong allies and partners. In meeting these challenges, we have no better partner than Europe, where we work with democratic, prosperous, and militarily-capable allies who share our interests.

The U.S. and Europe work together on an extraordinarily wide range of issues, from Afghanistan to Iran to the tumultuous events in North Africa and the Middle East. On both sides of the Atlantic we are working hard to recover from the worst financial crisis since The Great Depression. Because our economics are intertwined, and we are working together so closely on problems around the globe, policy decisions taken in Europe will have an impact in the United States.

So promoting social cohesion in Europe is a key strategic interest for us because if Europe manages integration successfully, it will be a stronger ally for the United States. And when the United States and Europe stand together, our people and people around the world can become more secure and more prosperous. In the words of President Obama, Europe is "the cornerstone of our engagement with the world."

Demographic changes also present new challenges for European leaders as they are faced with aging workforces and too few taxpayers to support generous social programs. The United States will encounter similar trends with the retirement of the baby boom generation.

How the United States and the European handle this demographic certainty is hugely important. While successful integration brings social and economic benefits, poor integration carries with it troubling implications. Preventing the alienation, resentment, and potential backlash that can come when immigrant and minority groups are excluded from the societal benefits others enjoy are concerns on both sides of the Atlantic. At a time when radical groups are increasing their efforts to recruit the disenfranchised in Europe and in the United States, these concerns are particularly relevant.

We know that it's up to Europeans to decide how they want to manage issues related to diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism. At the same time, diversity is one of America's greatest strengths so our public diplomacy officers actively promote social cohesion all across Europe. Let me stress, before I wind up taking shots from everyone, that we know very well we don't have all the answers. We make mistakes and always will. Everyone in this room knows about our long, troubled racial history and our challenges with immigration, upon which our country was founded. But in that long history, we've learned a great deal, made enormous progress, and have an important story to tell.

The U.S. government's people-to-people exchange programs, like the Fulbright Program, offer great examples of how we try to share our story. The late Senator William Fulbright, the American Senator who persuaded his colleagues in Congress to establish the scholarship program which now bears his name, once said

“Educational exchanges can turn nations into people.” It’s easy to lose sight of the common humanity that connects us if you don’t understand the culture, language and history of other countries and peoples. Senator Fulbright knew that humanizing international relations was critical for achieving lasting peace and progress. When the leaders and citizens of different countries can find common ground with each other, we are far more likely to negotiate our differences peacefully.

To try to find that common ground in communities throughout Europe, we run a number of visitor and exchange programs that specifically recruit candidates from minority populations in disadvantaged, multiracial, and immigrant enclaves of Europe’s major cities. We link European minorities with American minorities for short-term exchanges in the U.S. and overseas. We’re also expanding the pool of people and institutions to which we advertise Fulbright, other academic exchanges, and general study abroad opportunities in America. Several of our posts, including Germany, France, and Italy, have created recurring programs that bring underserved youth to the U.S. for several weeks, both to experience life in the U.S. and to learn about community service and community activism, all things we hope they will take back to improve their communities. The common link across all these programs is that many of these young people have never been to the U.S., and will never go on one of our traditional exchange programs. In many countries, owing to gaps in achievement or lack of access to quality education for some minorities, these individuals would never have been eligible for our traditional programs. That’s a gap in our own outreach efforts that we’re addressing across the region.

On the press side, we’re working with new media outlets—some of which didn’t exist just a few years ago, or exist in languages that we’re not used to working with in Europe. We’re working hard to identify young, talented journalists for our journalist exchanges and training programs whose backgrounds don’t match those of

the majority of their colleagues. And we're listening to everyone who comes to our programs to find out what kinds of media they're consuming. Ten or twenty years ago, we might have been able to say we were reaching the majority of a country's people if we did an interview with the one or two leading broadcasters—the BBC or France 2 or Germany's ARD. Not anymore. In many places, our key audiences aren't even reading newspapers regularly, let alone the ones we're used to working with. We seek out these new media because we want to reach Europeans where they are, not where they used to be.

Within the United States we have seen progress on promoting diversity but much more needs to be done. We see it as a moral and economic imperative. Indeed, Secretary Clinton has said, "In representing the United States to the world, the Department needs a workforce that reflects and respects the rich composition of our nation. Diversity brings innovation and creativity to the workplace and demonstrates our commitment to inclusion and respect for all people."

In order to support this kind of diversity, the U.S. government and the education sector have focused on helping minority students gain entrance into relevant training and internship programs to help prepare them for success in the future. Over time, we have seen this bear fruit with an increase in minority representation in business, government, and community leadership.

The proportion of minority students in U.S. colleges and universities is increasing. In 2004, some 30 percent were minorities, up from 15 percent in 1976. Moreover, nearly 583,000 international students attended U.S. colleges as of 2006.

Contributing to the diversity of our population, the United States also serves as a magnet for highly-skilled immigrants. They want to come to the United States and

we have created a business environment in which this is possible. The Global Talent Index, released in cooperation with The Economist Magazine, ranks the United States as number one in global talent and at nurturing new talent.

One-third of U.S. residents belong to a racial or ethnic minority group and approximately 20 percent of U.S. businesses are minority owned, with the number growing. Immigrants have higher rates of starting new businesses than do native-born Americans and immigrant women are one of the fastest growing segments of small business owners in the United States. Indeed we have seen that a key element driving successful integration in society is economic integration into the workforce.

Greater economic integration by immigrant populations may have a positive effect on overall societal cohesion as well. The Anti-Defamation League reported in 2008 that 66 percent of Americans view the country's population growth due to immigration as "an advantage for America," a dramatic increase from the 39 percent of Americans that felt that way in 1992.

While government regulation creating an environment that encourages diversity and discourages discrimination is crucial, I'd argue that business imperatives rather than government regulation have been the chief drivers of increased diversity within the American workforce. American businesses have most likely become increasingly diverse not out of a sense of corporate social responsibility—although that's good—but rather because of a growing recognition of the business benefits of a diverse workforce.

Today, we see that the results of inclusion are increased production and innovation. According to Gallup consumer data, companies with a diverse workforce showed elevated rates of consumer satisfaction, productivity, profitability, and lower

turnover. As one corporate executive put it, "You never know where the next idea will come from. By bringing together people with diverse backgrounds, who have a variety of experiences, there are more actionable ideas. We find new ways to approach markets, our processes and our business model."

So I would argue that it's in the strategic interest of the United States to promote diversity, tolerance, and successful integration at home. And we want to share this experience with our partners in Europe for one simple reason: if we can both effectively manage and harnesses the power of diversity in employment, education, and other areas, we will be more resilient, more stable, more peaceful, and more productive together.

But 21st century diplomacy comprises more than government-to-government conversations. People-to-people relationships are at the heart of modern international relations—and they are why exchange programs are so powerful. As alumni of the International Visitor Leadership Program and other State Department exchange programs, you are all part of a proud legacy and an important cross-cultural relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

The International Visitor Leadership Program is 70 years old and some U.S.-U.K. exchange programs go back as far as 1924. When you include the Fulbright Scholars, Fulbright Teacher Exchange, International Visitors Leadership Program, and Voluntary Visitor Program, over 18,000 people have participated in U.S. Government programs from the UK. While on your programs, you and your American counterparts established bonds of mutual understanding and respect. Not only did you learn about American culture and values, you also shared perspectives from your own culture, beliefs, and society. You dispelled stereotypes and opened new avenues of dialogue across boundaries and borders.

All U.S. exchange programs are founded upon the belief that differences between nations can be bridged better if their citizens understood each other through overseas study and living in proximity to one another. The United States is deeply committed to the idea that we need to be doing more across the world to help each other understand what is happening outside of our own culture and our country, using these exchanges as a bridge. Indeed, State Department exchange programs have become a centerpiece of American efforts to promote diversity, tolerance, and the successful integration of immigrant and minority groups around the world.

Through the International Visitor Leadership Program and the John Adams Society, we are excited to work with you to identify, educate, and support the next generation of leaders in both our countries. We hope that you will, in turn, work together in the coming years on issues such as energy, the environment, food security, human rights, conflict resolution, and other important issues that affect us all.

In closing, I want to thank you for building the people-to-people connections around the globe that help foster greater understanding across communities, cultures, and countries. You represent the best aspects of the U.S.-U.K. relationship, and I want to thank you for embracing that role so enthusiastically.

Thank you.