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**The Culture Factor:
German-American Media
Reporting on Religion and
Immigration**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Authors	2
Muslims in the Media: Ideologues or Worshippers?	3
The Press v. the Pulpit: Covering the Religious Factor in U.S. Politics	7
Immigration and the Media: Cutting Through the BS (Big Symbols)	12
German Media Reporting on Immigration	17
Not a Culture Club	19
Divided by Common Values? The United States, France, and Europe	22

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MUSLIMS IN THE MEDIA: IDEOLOGUES OR WORSHIPPERS?

GENEIVE ABDO

In the aftermath of events on September 11th, the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the American media has experienced a profound transformation, unseen since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the subsequent taking of American hostages. At that time, Americans were first introduced to the phenomenon of “radical Islam.” They were also made to realize that at least some Muslims in the Islamic world view their faith as an alternative ideology to Western liberalism. Then and now, Muslims and Islam are viewed differently than other ethnic or religious minorities.

In one respect, this difference is justified. Hardly any other religion or culture is completely derived from doctrinal principles. It is rare for religion to encompass all aspects of human life, including how to dress, eat, pray, or marry. Yet, these are precisely matters that are part of Islamic teaching. Therefore, because Islam is not only a faith, but a way of life and an ideology, it should not be surprising that the media focuses less on the religious practices among Muslims, and instead on other aspects of their lives that are more relevant to non-Muslim readers and viewers. The result is that there are far fewer reports on the religious practices and far greater coverage of Muslims who are political actors. The Muslim in the American mind is less of a worshipper and more of an ideologue.

Another distinction the media makes is between those deemed to be “good” Muslims and those who are problematic. In the early days of the Iraq War, for example, the Iraqi Sunnis were “good” Muslims who should prevail in governing the state over the Shi’ites. Because the basis of this distinction is determined by politics, the media often overlooked the theological differences between these two strands of Islam. Even now, more than four years into the Iraq War, many

Americans remain confused over the differences in beliefs between a Sunni and a Shiite Muslim. Apparently, even law enforcement officials, politicians, and intelligence analysts fail the test when asked to explain Shia versus Sunni Islam, according to an article published in *The New York Times* on 17 October 2006. Jeff Stein, the author, wrote a clever, tongue-in-cheek essay in which he posed this question to his interviewees in the nation’s capital: “Can you tell a Sunni from a Shiite?”

The answers were disappointing, to say the least. “Take Representative Terry Everett, a seven-term Alabama Republican who is vice chairman of the House intelligence subcommittee on technical and tactical intelligence,” Stein wrote. “Do you know the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite?” I asked him a few weeks ago. Mr. Everett responded with a low chuckle. He thought for a moment: ‘One’s in one location, another’s in another location. No, to be honest with you, I don’t know. I thought it was differences in their religion, different families or something.’”¹

The failure of the media to educate the public about the theological underpinnings in Islam has also produced two oversimplified classifications of Muslims. In Western societies with growing Muslim populations, it is the “secular” (good) Muslim who should be welcomed as a full-fledged citizen while the religious (bad) Muslim, who wears a headscarf on the streets of London and New York, should be shunned for her backwardness and unwillingness to adopt the fundamental principles of Western liberalism. This “good” Muslim “bad” Muslim characterization is particularly evident with stories about Muslims living in the United States and in Europe. In reporting the internal divides among Muslims, the “good” Muslim is

often described as “moderate.” These are Muslims who take pride in their national identity as American, British, or French citizens, who at the very least are willing to compromise Islamic ideals in order to fully integrate into a Western society and, at most, publicly criticize other Muslims and Islamic doctrine.

In several articles in the European and American press over the last two years, American Muslims are described as good citizens because they appear to have assimilated. European Muslims, by contrast, are viewed as troublesome because they live in some countries in ghettos, earn far less than the average European, and engage in Islamic radicalism with greater frequency than their co-religionists in the United States. One article published 13 September 2007 in *Spiegel Online* told this story with the headline: “A Lesson for Europe” American Muslims strive to become model citizens.”² In an article published 21 August 2006, *The New York Times* reached the same conclusion: “Pakistanis find US an easier fit than Britain.”³

Such stories are based on a false presumption: Middle class Muslims, who are educated and are vested in the societies in which they live, are less likely to become extremists. In fact, the development of radical Islamic movements over the last three decades has shown that it is the educated, middle or upper classes that have produced the militant leadership of al Qaeda and a host of other extremists groups. The foot soldiers might be classified as members of the underclass, but the brains behind the movements are often political elites who at one time were exposed to everything the West has to offer.

In reality, the story of Muslim life on both sides of the Atlantic is far more complex than the media leads the public to believe. Contrary to what has become popular wisdom, American Muslims are growing more alienated from mainstream society, and the vast majority of European Muslims are more integrated than the reports emphasizing their alienation and disaffection suggests.

In the American media, the focus is less on integration and more on the secular versus the religious

Muslim. One glaring example was coverage on CNN’s neoconservative Glenn Beck show in March. Beck devoted an hour of live coverage to what was called “The Secular Islam Summit,” held in St. Petersburg, Florida. Some of the organizers and speakers at the convention have received massive media attention in recent years. Irshad Manji, author of *The Trouble With Islam Today*, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the former Dutch parliamentarian and author of the best-seller *Infidel*, were but a few there claiming to have suffered personally at the hands of “radical” Islam. One participant, Wafa Sultan, declared on Glenn Beck’s show that she does not “see any difference between radical Islam and regular Islam.”

This secular Muslim vision is highlighted because it reflects a Western outlook that Islam needs to transform and modernize. But for the vast majority of Muslims, such coverage is offensive not only because a small fringe is given massive exposure, but also because it is the media, not Muslims, who have the power to decide who speaks for Islam. Giving attention to the minority of “secularists” overshadows the views of the majority.

The tendency to champion “secular” or “moderate” Muslims is also apparent in journalists’ coverage of the struggle within Islam over gender equality. Time and time again, Muslim women opposed to wearing headscarves are profiled as brazen activists who dare to challenge the great numbers of those wearing hijab, who say they do so out of devotion to the faith. According to typical portrayals, particularly reporting about Muslims living in the West, the headscarf is the litmus test; those who wear it are less interested in full integration than those who do not.

In the United States, a divisive issue within the Muslim community concerns where women should pray in a mosque. Across the country, the consensus is that women should pray in a different space, whether it is behind men, in an adjoining prayer hall, or even in a basement. In conservative mosques, the often male-dominated mosque governing boards require women to pray in a space isolated from the imam delivering the sermon and the male worshipers. As part of this internal struggle, an African-American Muslim activist,

Amina Wadud, in the spring of 2005 decided to bring the issue out into the open by leading a mixed congregation of Muslim men and women in prayer in New York City. The incident sparked a fierce debate that included religious scholars from the Middle East who denounced her actions and declared her an apostate.

The extensive news coverage of this incident sided with the female activist and dismissed criticism from Muslims who said her actions violated the principles of the faith. Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a scholar in Doha with a wide following, issued a fatwa in response to the prayer service, saying that all four schools of Islamic jurisprudence were clear: Women may lead prayers only before other women. Many Muslims expressed similar views on Islamic Web sites. "We need not judge Amina Wadud only by what she is doing this Friday," wrote one writer on the site of Al Jazeera, the Arabic-language cable network. "We need to judge her by the pending issues on the agenda of her sponsors and supporters. To us, they have crossed all limits. To them, they have just taken the first step towards transforming Islam into a 'progressive' and 'moderate' form according to the wishes of the enemies of Islam."

Muslims in the United States are trying to respond to distorted media images by gaining greater access to mainstream broadcast and print. More Muslims are appearing on television and writing opinion pieces in newspapers. In some cases, however, their own contributions are just as distorted as the media they are trying to deflect. Feeling marginalized and demonized, some Muslims have adopted an apologist position.

For example, instead of trying to explain to American readers the reasons for the development of radical Islam, Muslim Americans often try to argue that the interpretations of the militants have no basis in Islamic doctrine. Instead of explaining why radical groups are effectively using the internet to attract young Muslims to their movements, these writers try to argue that the percentage of radicals is small and that the majority of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims are peaceful. While this is certainly the case, the critical issue facing the world is not the peace-loving majority but the militant

minority. By skirting the issue, some Muslim writers and commentators do little either to guide law enforcement and policymakers toward more effective solutions or to educate the general public.

In their defense, participating in either foreign policy debates or public discussions about their faith is new to many Muslim public intellectuals and commentators. They have been compelled to break through the walls of exclusion that often feature opposing voices. Muslims complain that there are certain top-tier newspapers in the United States that rarely accept op-eds reflecting mainstream Muslim opinion. This opinion ranges from Muslim views that the United States' foreign policy agenda is based upon Israel's interest in the Middle East to sentiment that Muslims should be allowed to be Muslims, irrespective of Western conventions.

While Muslims have been successful in publishing more frequently in smaller and more localized publications, they have also arrived at another alternative, however limited. They are creating their own media. An imam in Chicago created "Radio Islam" in the fall of 2004. Despite its mostly Muslim listeners and the frequency—an ethnic radio network broadcast only in the Chicago area—the daily show opens with the idea that everyone is talking about Muslims and Islam. "Now it is time for you to talk," says the radio announcer. A leader from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), an advocacy group with its headquarters in Washington, D.C., is host to an NPR program in Florida. And a Lebanese radio host broadcasts weekly from Pacifica radio in Los Angeles. These are only a few examples.

Is there a solution to enlightening those in the media and the public? Not in the near future. The generation of journalists now covering Muslims in the East and the West are generally uneducated about contemporary Islam, and universities in the United States have been slow to establish new faculties since September 11th.

And there is another, more profound, obstacle. Even if American reporters immersed themselves in courses on Islamic studies, the baggage they—and

their editors—carry of viewing this religion through a Judeo-Christian prism, rather than on its own terms, is likely to remain. What is required is a new intellectual enlightenment about an ideology and faith that is vastly different from anything Americans have encountered.

NOTES

1 Jeff Stein, "Can You Tell a Sunni From a Shiite?" *New York Times on the Web*, 17 October 2006,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/opinion/17stein.html?_r=1&oref=slogin> (12 October 2007).

2 Marc Huger and Daniel Steinvorth, "A Lesson for Europe: American Muslims Strive to Become Model Citizens," *Spiegel Online*, 13 September 2007,

<<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,505573,00.html>> (12 October 2007).

3 Neil MacFarquhar, "Pakistanis Find U.S. an Easier Fit Than Britain," *New York Times on the Web*, 21 August 2006,

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/us/21devon.html>> (12 October 2006).

THE PRESS V. THE PULPIT: COVERING THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN U.S. POLITICS

MARK J. ROZELL

In 1994 when Iran-contra figure Oliver North ran for the U.S. Senate as the Republican nominee from Virginia, he frequently told audiences that every morning he began his day with two readings, the Bible and the *Washington Post*, in order to get “both sides.” This line brought loud cheers of approval from audiences of socially conservative supporters and journalists frequently mentioned North’s comment and the favorable audience response as indicative of the large gap between the worlds of social conservative political activists and the mainstream media.

Indeed, there is a long-standing assumption in American politics that Christian Right activists and the media who cover and analyze them have nothing in common. Stereotypes abound among both groups about one another. Christian conservative leaders and fundraising appeals have quoted a statement in a *Post* news story that supporters of Christian broadcaster Rev. Pat Robertson tend to be “poor, uneducated, and easy to command.”¹ Although a famously egregious example of journalistic stereotyping of the socially conservative political activists, many of these activists believe that statement reflects the reality of how they are perceived by the media. Journalists tell of being inundated with negative reactions to news stories by religious conservative news consumers, oftentimes the reactions accusing the media of anti-Christian bigotry. Many social conservatives perceive journalists, along with academics, as among the “elite” in our society who are hostile to religion and to religious persons.

As in most other areas of American politics and culture, such strong opinions of groups toward each other reflect some parts reality and some parts exaggeration or even outright error. One important purpose of this essay is to show that when it comes

to the media-Christian Right schism, common perceptions do not necessarily mirror reality. To be sure, there are important differences between members of these two groups, but they also have much more in common than widely believed. In what follows, I discuss and analyze the differences and similarities of these two groups.

A second purpose of the essay is to review and assess journalistic coverage patterns toward the religious factor in politics. At the core of the perception that reporters don’t properly understand the politically active religious community is the belief that journalists are too separated from the religious community to even know where to look for reliable sources and information. This study presents the results of a survey that examined both the demographic characteristics of the two groups and the coverage patterns of the journalists who write about the religious factor in state and local politics.

Method

The findings of this essay are derived from a series of surveys of state and local politics reporters and editors in four states and of Republican Party convention delegates in those same states. The states were selected primarily for considerations of levels of Christian Right activism in the GOP and secondarily for geographic distribution: Virginia, Florida, Texas, and Washington. The surveys of the GOP delegates were conducted in the mid-1990s and the journalist surveys were conducted in early 1999. The two sets of surveys contain identical and nearly identical questions on demographic characteristics, policy, and ideological measures.

Findings: Characteristics

There are surprising and some largely expected findings in the data. The journalistic community is overwhelmingly male, very highly educated, upper middle income, and young adult-to-middle aged. Christian Right delegates are more evenly divided on gender, educated yet predominantly lower-to-middle income, and also heavily young adult-to-middle aged, with a significant portion of senior citizens in that group. The most striking difference between the groups is that of gender. Whereas 43.25 percent of the delegates are women, that is the case for only 21.25 percent of the journalists.

This finding certainly reflects in part the still male-dominated journalism profession. Nonetheless, there may be some irony to the facts that journalism is a profession that makes significant noises about gender issues and diversity in the newsrooms and that critics of the Christian Right characterize the movement as hostile to women playing leadership roles in society. Many of the most prominent Christian conservative organization leaders in this country are women but the significant portion of Christian conservative women delegates at GOP conventions may be surprising to some.

Both groups have strong levels of education. Certainly that is expected of journalism with its increased emphasis on professionalization. Not a single journalist in the survey lacked a high school degree and fully 97.5 percent had attended college. Over 87 percent are college graduates with nearly half (49 percent) having attended or graduated from a post-graduate program. Among the Christian Right delegates the levels of education are not so high, but still significant. Once again, stereotypes of this group as “uneducated” simply do not dovetail with reality. Two-thirds (67 percent) are college graduates and 32 percent have attended or completed post-graduate education. These are impressive numbers, although they do not match those of the journalism profession.

Income differences between the two groups are significant. Of course it should be noted that a survey of journalists is by its nature a study of professionals—

and therefore one of working people likely to have better than typical salaries. Christian Right delegates are four times as likely to have very low incomes (below \$25,000) than are journalists. The largest income cluster among the Christian conservatives (36 percent) is in the \$25,000 to \$50,000 range, whereas the largest cluster for the journalists (41 percent) is in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 range. Three-fourths of the journalists and one-half of the Christian Right delegates earn over \$50,000 per year. Despite these significant overall differences, perhaps what is most striking is the very respectable level of incomes of the Christian Right delegates, once again far different from some common stereotypes. This group is certainly much more middle income than it is poor.

Age differences between the groups are noticeable but not all that substantial. Both groups are about one-half in the 35 to 50 years old range. There are nearly equal percentages of young adults (up to 35 years of age). The only substantial difference is in the percentages of senior citizens (over 65 years of age). There are far more seniors (15.3 percent) among the Christian conservatives than there are among the journalists (2.7 percent). A survey of a single profession will always reflect a mere tiny percentage of people who are in the typical retirement age category.

The surveys also included measures of religious denomination, church attendance, and religious television viewing patterns. These items help us to understand differences and similarities between the groups in religious commitment and practice.

Regarding denomination, the journalists are heavily mainline religion² (29 percent) and agnostic (23 percent). Nearly one in five is an evangelical (reflecting the heavily southern sample) and nearly that many as well are Catholic. Two-thirds (67 percent) of the Christian Right delegates are evangelicals and only 17 percent are mainline.

Church attendance measures show that whereas most journalists go to church, most Christian Right delegates go to church a lot. Stereotypes of journalists as godless elites don't seem accurate when we consider that 72 percent attend church. But the inter-

pretation here is certainly one of perspective. Some may find it more meaningful that in a nation of over 90 percent church-goers, 28 percent of the journalists say that they never attend. Or, that nearly one-half (48 percent) either never attend or merely attend a few times each year.³ On the other hand, more than one-third of journalists (36 percent) said that they go to church at least once every week.

Not unexpectedly, the Christian Right delegates are very heavy church-goers. Nearly half (48 percent) attend church more than once per week. Nine out of ten attend once or more per week. Only two percent said that they attend a few times per year and less than one percent said that they never go to church.

Group stereotypes may reflect different perspectives. Many would look at these data and conclude that both groups are religious and that group differences in these two surveys are merely ones of degree. But it is easy to understand in light of these numbers why the social conservatives would view the journalists as not sufficiently religious and the journalists would see the social conservatives as hyper-religious.

A final religious measure is religious television viewing. Social conservative delegates watch a lot of religious programming. One third (33 percent) watch religious programs at least once per week and two-thirds (67 percent) watch such programming more than once per month. Eighty-eight percent watch at least some religious broadcasting. For the journalists, only 6 percent watch such programming once per week or more. One in four watches religious programming at least once per month. Fully 40 percent never watch religious programs. When we consider, as some reporters penned in their surveys, that journalists who watch religious broadcasting may do so only because they cover religion or the political activities of religious broadcasters, the overall numbers may be even less than the surveys reveal.

The overall differences in religious broadcast viewing certainly reflect the very different cultures of the social conservatives and the journalists. The social conservatives rely strongly on religious broadcasting networks and stations not only for faith-based

programming, but also for news and perspective on current events. Mainstream journalists tend not to rely upon such sources for news and current events analysis.

The common stereotype of journalists is that they are almost all liberals. Numerous surveys of the profession suggest that there is some truth to the stereotype, although that fact is not so important if the journalists do their jobs without prejudice. For the party identification question, a plurality of journalists (44.9 percent) not surprisingly chose Independent. For those who expressed a preference for one of the two major parties, by nearly a two-to-one margin (34 percent to 18 percent) they chose the Democratic over the Republican party. This finding reflects the common belief of journalists as more positively disposed to the Democratic than to the Republican Party, although the results are not as strong as many conservative critics of the media might have expected.

The demographic items on the survey tell us that many of the expected differences between these two groups indeed are real. But the differences are not so stark as to justify common stereotypes of one group as poor, poorly educated, politically unsophisticated, and the other group as godless elites who detest church-going working class Americans. The socially conservative political activists make respectable incomes and the journalists earn stronger incomes. The social conservatives have strong levels of formal education and the journalists have extraordinarily high levels of education. There is not a large difference in the generational compositions of the two groups. Most journalists belong to some organized religion and attend church. The social conservatives all belong to a religious faith and most go to church a lot. A majority of journalists watch at least some religious programming on television whereas a stronger majority of social conservatives watch such programming with greater frequency. In all, the two groups differ, but a lot less so than many might expect.

Findings: Coverage Patterns

How do journalists learn about the religious factor in politics? Who are their sources and do they use these

sources effectively? Contrary to claims by some social conservatives, journalists listen to the views and positions of religious-based political groups. The journalists listen to some groups much more than others. The groups that get a hearing tend to be those that are better organized and have the resources to contact newspaper reporters and editors.

Almost all of the respondents in the journalist surveys said that they have received literature from religious-based political advocacy groups and 93.1 percent of the journalists said that they took the time to read such literature. Not many would say that reading such literature changed their minds or made them report or edit the news differently than if they had not received the group literature. A strong majority (64.5 percent) said that reading the literature of these groups had no influence at all on decisions whether to use such groups as resources for stories. Only 22.6 percent said that reading the literature of the religious advocacy groups made them “more likely” to use such groups as resources. Apparently group mailings are counterproductive in some cases: 12.9 percent said that this literature made them “less likely” to use these groups as resources in stories.

Journalists reported that receiving unsolicited literature was the most common way in which they became aware of the political activities of religious political advocacy groups in their communities. The second most common method was for the journalists to seek out sources for story angles and quotes on their own initiative. The third method was observing group leaders and activists at hearings, demonstrations, and other public forums. The fourth method was to learn of these sources through reporting in other media. The least common method was to seek sources by referrals from other journalists.

Journalists reported receiving literature from a variety of religious-based political advocacy groups. Not surprisingly, the most frequently cited group in the survey was the Christian Coalition. Focus on the Family was the distant second most mentioned group. Rarely did a journalist mention any non-conservative religious-based political advocacy group as having contacted him or her.

The most common sources of information from the religious-based political advocacy groups are news packets and informational literature. Two-thirds of the journalists reported receiving those sources. The religious groups also supplied names of local contacts and lists of spokespersons to newspapers, although the journalists reported using these sources only occasionally.

Journalists report significant use of representatives of religious-based political advocacy groups in their stories. Only two percent said that they “never” use these representatives as sources. But the use of these sources tends to center not surprisingly around a host of policy issues associated with politically active religious organizations. The number one issue for which journalists use representatives of such organizations as sources is abortion. The number two issue is gay and lesbian rights. Journalists reported using religious-based political advocacy group sources with some frequency on race and affirmative action issues, gambling, and welfare reform. Issues of foreign policy, immigration, and drug policy did not draw the interest of journalists in quoting these groups’ representatives.

The survey findings make it clear that journalists are not slighting religious-based political advocacy groups and their representatives in stories. The journalists report hearing from such groups, seeking out their representatives, and using them in stories. Perhaps the one noticeable lack is any diversity of groups consulted for stories. These data reveal that news consumers often hear a limited number of social conservative groups. Organizations that comprise the “Religious Left” such as the Interfaith Alliance almost never show up in the survey responses. The picture of politically active religious advocacy groups presented in the news may be too narrow and misses the diversity of groups and positions within that community. News consumers are learning much about the issue positions of these groups on prominent social issues. Yet, at a time when many report the broadening agendas of these groups, political reporting reflects an interest in a fairly narrow range of issues that actually concern these groups.

Conclusion

Although conservative religious-based political activists and mainstream journalists view one another with some suspicion, they have much in common. The real differences between these groups are insufficient to merit common group stereotypes.

Many social conservatives view journalists as pro-Democrat, secular elites who are hostile to religion. The data reveal that journalists are largely political independents who belong to some organized religion and go to church. The social conservatives often complain that the mainstream press does not listen to them, but the survey data make it clear that journalists are seeking out and listening to representatives of religious-based political advocacy groups. And furthermore, the journalists are listening most often to the representatives of prominent conservative religious-based political advocacy groups.

To the extent that some journalists may hold stereotyped perceptions of Christian social conservatives, the survey data reveal a much more nuanced picture. People who identify with that movement have respectable levels of income and education. Movement activists are both men and women and they come from a variety of religious traditions.

NOTES

1 Michael Weisskopf, "Energized by Pulpit or Passion, the Public Is Calling," *The Washington Post*, 1 February 1993, sec. 1A.

2 Whereas evangelicals emphasize one true faith, focus on conversion, and believe the Bible to be inerrant or the word of God, the mainline (or sometimes called "liberal evangelicals") have a more modernist interpretation of the Bible, they believe that there are many paths to salvation, and they generally don't try so much to evangelize their faith or convert non-believers.

3 Some people attend church a few times a year for reasons unrelated to worship (e.g., accompanying family on holidays) and their religious commitment is actually closer to those who answered "never."

IMMIGRATION AND THE MEDIA: CUTTING THROUGH THE BS (BIG SYMBOLS)

PETER SKERRY

It is hard to think of a contemporary public policy topic where rhetoric and symbols cloud analysis as much as immigration. This is true on both sides of the Atlantic. And it is certainly evident when Germany and the United States, especially their media, stop to consider each other's approach to this difficult issue.

A kind of natural experiment drives home the point. Toward the end of his first term, in the period leading up to the 2004 election, President George Bush proposed a reform of U.S. immigration policy centered on what he proudly identified as a "guest-worker program." A bit prior to this, then-Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, eager to encourage high-skilled immigrants to Germany, put forward a hastily conceived "green card" proposal, invoking precisely that untranslated American phrase.

This exchange of terms highlights the blissful ignorance of each country's elite toward the other's struggles with immigration. Bush's readiness to use the term "guestworker" underscored a striking indifference to America's Bracero Program, initiated during World War II and terminated in the early 1960s, now judged by most observers to have helped to establish the immigration patterns whose consequences we grapple with today. Even more to the point, Bush's proposal blatantly ignored the abundant evidence on the other side of the Atlantic that, as the saying goes, there is "nothing as permanent as a temporary guest-worker."

As for Schroeder's green card idea, as German analysts and politicians I spoke with at the time reminded me, it was intended to sell Germans on increased immigration by associating it with one thing they see the United States managing well. Never mind that to many immigrants in America today (not

to mention to many native-born Americans), the green card represents not just permanent legal resident status, but also the interminable delays, unreturned phone calls, and lost applications routinely experienced by so many who have to deal with that beleaguered bureaucracy.

Immigration is an arcane, complicated domain in which legislative details directly affect the lives of millions of individuals, families, and businesses. This combination of technical complexity and targeted, high-stakes interests makes this a unique—and uniquely intractable—issue. It also helps to explain why the emotionally satisfying symbols and intellectually simplifying rhetoric about America's immigration experience are so frequently invoked by those in the political and policy arena—and above all, in the media.

In a period of strained trans-Atlantic relations, immigration is one topic where Germans and other Europeans may be giving Americans more credit than we deserve! By the same token, we Americans cannot expect our European friends to cut through our symbols and rhetoric. That is a job we will have to do ourselves. I offer these remarks as a beginning.

The most potent symbol of U.S. immigration is the Statue of Liberty. Yet at its origin, the statue had nothing to do with immigration. Its sculptor, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, was part of a circle of French liberals who conceived of the work as a gift from the French people to their republican brothers and sisters across the Atlantic. As historian John Higham has pointed out, the inaugural remarks accompanying the unveiling of the statue in 1886 "concentrated almost exclusively on two subjects: the beneficent effect on

other countries of American ideas, and the desirability of international friendship and peace.” Well into the 1930s, the statue remained nothing more than a symbol of “Franco-American friendship and liberty as an abstract idea.”¹

What transformed the symbol was the plight of Jewish refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe. Only then did the rousing line from Emma Lazarus’s long-forgotten sonnet, “The New Colossus,” come to be identified with the Statue: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” This was not entirely a contrivance, since the sonnet had been inspired by the arrival in New York of Jews fleeing pogroms in Czarist Russia in the 1880s. During World War II, the sonnet was set to music. And in 1945 a bronze tablet bearing the poem was placed by the main entrance to the statue. In 1965, when Lyndon Johnson signed historic immigration reform legislation in a ceremony at the base of the statue, he cited the sonnet while announcing a new program to aid refugees from Castro’s Cuba.

This treasured image of America as a haven for those seeking liberty is hardly incorrect. But to focus exclusively on it is to obscure a more complete understanding of what motivates many, indeed most, immigrants to these shores. Contrary to Lazarus’s stirring words, most immigrants come to the United States not with lofty aspirations for political freedom, but with more mundane ambitions for economic security and advancement. Obviously, these two motives are related. But they are distinct and should not be so readily confounded.

Also misleading is Lazarus’s language about “your tired, your poor . . . The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.” Historian Josef Barton, among others, has pointed out that immigrants to America have typically been people with at least the modest means required to plan ahead and pay for trans-Atlantic passage. The most deprived and down-trodden in any society are the least able to do that. In his research on immigrants from Mexico, sociologist Douglas Massey has documented that it is hardly the

most destitute who migrant north into the United States, but rather those with a modicum of education and resources.

Perhaps most difficult for Americans to absorb is that many immigrants do not plan to settle here. Labor economist Michael Piore reminds us that in the period leading up to World War I, about one-third of those arriving from Europe were “birds of passage” who eventually returned home. Return-migration rates for specific Southern and Eastern European nationalities (with the notable exception of Jews) were significantly higher. Today, a similar pattern is evident, especially among Mexican immigrants. Massey’s research demonstrates that many Mexican migrants, not just illegal but also legal, intend to return home. More precisely, the journey to *El Norte* typically reflects a conscious plan to maximize income, minimize expenditures, and go back with enough money to start a business or perhaps build a house. To be sure, such plans change, and many immigrants put down roots and stay. But that process is gradual, and typically distorted by the rhetoric of immigration.

In spite of that rhetoric, which powerfully reinforces our self-image as the quintessential nation of immigrants, many Americans today feel anxious about the current record level of immigration. One recent analysis of the survey data concludes: “A plurality or majority of Americans want fewer immigrants coming into the country.”² These views are not entirely of recent vintage. As economic historians Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson write, “For most of the past fifty years, at least half of the Americans surveyed thought there were too many immigrants.”³

Nevertheless, newcomers—both legal and illegal—have continued to arrive in ever increasing numbers. Thus Hatton and Williamson emphasize: “The evidence is quite clear that the gap between public attitude and government policy is far greater for immigration issues than it is for war, inflation, unemployment, gun control and abortion.”⁴

This gap in attitudes tracks with education, income,

and social status. Economists Kenneth Scheve and Matthew Slaughter note that “less skilled people prefer more restrictive immigration policy, and more skilled people prefer less restrictive immigration policy.”⁵ As they sum up their statistical analyses: “If you could put a high school dropout with roughly 11 years of education through both high school and college, ending up with about 16 years of education, then the probability that this individual supports immigration restrictions would fall by some 10 to 14 percentage points.”⁶

These findings are corroborated by surveys sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. In its 2002 report, the Council notes that immigration elicits much stronger reactions from the general public than from elites: “The public is substantially more alarmed by immigrants and refugees coming into the United States as a critical threat to U.S. interests by a 46 point margin (60 of the public versus only 14 percent of leaders).”⁷ Indeed, the Council’s research indicates that this gap has been at least this wide for more than a decade.⁸

How does the rhetoric about immigration contribute to this gap? By helping elites turn a deaf ear to the concerns of ordinary citizens. As a result, the public becomes frustrated, and popular perceptions of immigrants become heated and often skewed. An example would be the oft-repeated complaint that immigrant families are not learning English. This is true in the sense that immigrants themselves often fail to master the language—as was the case in previous generations. Their children, however, are certainly learning English, and in many cases losing their ability to speak the language of their elders.⁹

Another commonly voiced concern is the threat to American jobs and wages posed by immigrants. Indeed, Hatton and Williamson cite one recent poll that more than three-quarters responding “thought that immigrants robbed jobs from natives.”¹⁰ Other polls report somewhat lower figures.¹¹ Either way, a large proportion of the American public consistently expresses concerns about the negative labor market impacts of immigration.¹²

For these labor-market worries, there is some support. Economist George Borjas reports that between 1980 and 2000 immigration had its biggest negative impact on the low-skilled, reducing the wages of native-born high-school dropouts by 9 percent.¹³ This is troubling. But overall, immigration has a relatively small negative impact on Americans’ wages.¹⁴ Of course, immigrants also contribute to economic growth. Yet the overall increase is slight, about one-tenth of one percent of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). More to the point, this is less than the percentage of GDP attributable to the fiscal costs of immigrants.¹⁵

Do such findings suggest that Americans who want to curtail immigration are acting rationally in defense of their economic self-interest? The answer is no—and yes.

No, because the proportion of Americans expressing restrictionist views is greater than the relatively small segment of the labor force competing directly with immigrants. Yes, because, as Scheve and Slaughter point out, high-skill workers have benefitted from substantial wage premiums, while “the majority of the US labor force has had close to zero or even negative real-wage growth for about 25 years.”¹⁶ In fact, it is striking that this period of wage stagnation coincides roughly with the steadily increasing numbers of immigrants arriving since the United States reopened its doors in 1965.

Not surprisingly, then, many Americans attribute their economic woes to immigrants. Yet the evidence is that immigration, trade, and other aspects of globalization have contributed only modestly to growing wage inequality. For example, productivity gains and wage increases have been the most sluggish in service sectors, which are relatively insulated from global economic forces. More to the point, premiums to skilled labor are attributable primarily to technological change.¹⁷

The latest rhetorical device in the contemporary debate over immigration is to make a sharp, moralistic distinction between legal and illegal immigrants. Here again, the public's concerns are not without factual basis, but neither are they entirely rational. And here again, the rhetoric favored by elites—and the media—fails to clarify the real dilemmas facing us all. On the one hand, pro-immigration elites condescend to or just ignore the outrage many Americans feel about illegals; on the other, restrictionists pander to it. Neither engages the public constructively on this topic.

More than a decade ago, in the mid-1990s, opinion polls demonstrated that Americans greatly overestimated the number of illegals in our midst.¹⁸ Since then, the number of illegals has continued to grow at an increasing rate.¹⁹ And as these illegal immigrants have dispersed around the United States, what was once a regional concern has become a national one.²⁰

Still, the intense focus on illegal immigration remains a curious one. Were it possible to stop illegal immigration tomorrow, most of the concerns expressed by ordinary citizens would remain unaddressed.²¹ That is because these concerns involve the social strains and disorder attendant on the movement of large numbers of unskilled, poorly educated newcomers into and out of American neighborhoods. These problems have little to do with the newcomers' legal status. In fact, because legal immigrants outnumber illegals, the former are arguably a greater source of concern. The evidence suggests that the real challenges here do not stem exclusively or even primarily from illegal immigration. Nevertheless, virtually all participants in this debate—regardless of their political orientation or substantive views on immigration—share the same unchallenged assumption: that legal immigration is uniformly benign or even beneficial, while illegal immigration is uniquely problematic.

On the defensive since the mid-1990s, pro-immigration advocates have learned that by retreating tactically and talking tough about illegal immigration, they bolster their case for legal immigration.²² Restrictionists have gone through the obverse

process and learned how to narrow an array of objections to immigration in general down to illegal immigration in particular. At some point, restrictionists figured out that it is less risky to inveigh against illegals than against Hispanic immigrants.

The upshot is that pro-immigration elites depict illegal immigrants as victims "living in the shadows." On the other hand, restrictionists dismiss them as "criminals." Both are wrong: illegals are in fact well integrated into the warp and woof of American society. As Moises Naim, editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine, points out, there is no distinct, isolated underground economy, for the simple reason that the mainstream relies so heavily on illegal labor.²³ These are, after all, our laborers, gardeners, and cleaning ladies. Thus, the popular understanding of illegal immigrants as a distinct class of flagrant law-breakers hardly accounts for all the facts on the ground. As Naim concludes about the broader problem of illicit flows, of which illegal immigration is but one facet, "To think of a clean line between good guys and bad guys is to fail to capture the reality of trafficking today. The fact is that illicit trade permeates our daily lives in subtle ways."²⁴ In the United States today, it is a crime to work without proper papers; but so is it a crime to hire such individuals.

In other words, the American public's worry about immigration is actually broader and deeper than anyone bothers to notice or admit. The dominant rhetoric—legals good, illegals bad—serves the interests of elites, from skittish politicians to advocates and lobbyists of diverse persuasions. For them, this simple dichotomy is a relatively safe way to address a technically complex, emotionally charged issue that they would prefer to avoid completely. Indeed, whether talking tough or expressing sympathy for illegals, they reinforce each other. And the image of a bright line dividing upright legal immigrants from a separate (pitiable or threatening) caste of illegal immigrants becomes the most distorting symbol of all.

NOTES

- 1 See Higham's essay, "The Transformation of the Statue of Liberty," in John Higham, ed., *Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants to Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975): 78-87.
- 2 Kenneth F. Scheve and Matthew J. Slaughter, *Globalization and the Perceptions of American Workers* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2001): 44.
- 3 Hatton and Williamson, *Global Migration*, 348-349.
- 4 Hatton and Williamson, *Global Migration*, 362.
- 5 Scheve and Slaughter, *Globalization and the Perceptions of American Workers*, 69.
- 6 Scheve and Slaughter, 71.
- 7 *Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002): 72.
- 8 See *Worldviews 2002: U.S. General Population Topline Report* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations), 92; and *Worldviews 2002: U.S. Leaders Topline Report* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations): 22.
- 9 Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003): 217-230.
- 10 Hatton and Williamson, *Global Migration*, 350.
- 11 CBS New Poll; Oct 3-5, 2005 [p 17 of compendium]
- 12 Scheve and Slaughter, *Globalization and the Perceptions of American Workers*, 35-36.
- 13 George Borjas, "The Labor Demand Curve Is Downward Sloping," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (November 2003; 118/4): 1335-76.
- 14 Scheve and Slaughter, *Globalization and the Perceptions of American Workers*, 85.
- 15 See Hanson, 36-40, and George Borjas, *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), ??
- 16 Scheve and Slaughter, *Globalization and the Perceptions of American Workers*, 10.
- 17 Scheve and Slaughter, 10. See also Jagdish Bhagwati, "Technology, Not Globalisation, Is Driving Wages Down," *Financial Times* (4 January 2007).
- 18 New York Times
- 19 Jeffrey S. Passel, "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.," 2-3.
- 20 Jeffrey S. Passel, *Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics – Background Briefing Prepared for Task Force on Immigration and America's Future*, (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center; June 14, 2005): 11-13.
- 21 This point gets elaborated on in Peter Skerry and Devin Fernandes, "Citizen Pain: Fixing the Immigration Debate," *The New Republic* (May 8, 2006): 14-16.
- 22 This point is made forcefully in Kenneth K. Lee, *Huddled Masses, Muddled Laws: Why Contemporary Immigration Policy Fails to Reflect Public Opinion* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998): 144-145.
- 23 Moises Naim, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy* (Doubleday, 2005): ??
- 24 Naim, *Illicit*, 240-241.

GERMAN MEDIA REPORTING ON IMMIGRATION

MALTE LEHMING

How do the German media report about immigration? What does this tell us about immigrants in Germany? To answer these two questions, I would like to refer to an article of a recent edition of my own newspaper, *Der Tagesspiegel*, published on Wednesday, 26 September 2007. This edition contained four different stories about aspects of immigration.

A headline in the local section read: "A majority of young migrants are homophobic." In a recent survey, the first of this kind, it was shown that two-thirds of young Turkish-Germans and 50 percent of Russian-Germans have hostile attitudes towards homosexuals (compared to around one-fourth of young German).

A big story in the cultural section celebrated the new film from Fatih Akin, the prominent thirty-four year old filmmaker, who grew up in Hamburg and whose parents emigrated from Turkey to Germany. One of Akin's previous films was nominated for an Oscar. He is a star both in Germany and Turkey.

The next story is in the science section, reporting about a new private high school in Cologne, run by Turkish immigrants, in which it is obligatory to speak German, even during breaks, yet Turkish is taught as the first second language.

And, finally, I found a little note saying: The famous liberal writer Günter Wallraff, who was denied the request to read from Salman Rushdie's book *Satanic Verses* in a mosque in Cologne, wants to travel to Turkey to convince people that allowing him to read from this book would in itself be a contribution to successful immigration.

Now, what do these four stories show us? First of all, none of them could or would have been published ten years ago. The idea to look specifically into differences between groups of immigrants, as well as between ethnic Germans and immigrants, be it psychologically or culturally, would, back then, have been blamed as inherently racist. Whoever points at differences is thus also manifesting them and, consequently, contributing to disharmony. Now it seems that we have overcome this kind of reluctance. All people in Germany are different and the public is curious to find out in what aspects. This poll, shows that "Multikulti" is not just a nice dream but actually very hard work.

Something similar is illustrated in the huge success of Fatih Akin, the filmmaker. Aside from him, there are at least a dozen Turkish-German authors, artists, and comedians who have become very influential in Germany. We can easily speak now of a Turkish-German culture in Germany on a very clear level. Many of the artists deal in a sometimes dramatic, sometimes funny way with all aspects of immigration, e.g., dual loyalties, identity problems, cut roots. This Turkish-German culture is gaining more and more ground in the popular German culture.

This again is underlined by the third story: More and more private schools for Turkish immigrants are opening with the explicit goal of contributing to German integration. A little footnote: Since education in Germany lies very much in the hands of the states (*Länder*), Germany has a confusing variety of teaching methods of Islamic studies at public schools. for example. In general it can be said that "*Islamkunde*" contributes a great deal to a successful integration. The pupils get the feeling that they are on the same level with their Christian counterparts.

Highly interesting, disturbing, and amusing is the story about Günter Wallraff, who wanted to read from the *Satanic Verses* in a mosque in Cologne. This story points to a fairly new phenomenon: various attempts to aggressively challenge immigrants and Muslims, testing their human rights credentials and secular values. This phenomenon needs to be explained and analyzed, because it can very well lead to a kind of intellectual anti-Islamism or Islam-phobia.

Anti-Islamism is the notion that Islam itself is evil, dangerous, and/or inherently aggressive and that, therefore, members of this faith do not deserve the same rights and freedoms as do followers of any other religion. Additionally, every Muslim as such needs to denounce terrorism and violence and should confess that he or she shares all Western values.

Historically it can be said that until September 11, migrants in Germany had very rarely been perceived in religious terms, but rather mainly in ethnic ones. This changed after the terrorist attacks in the U.S. and the bombings in London and Madrid. Suddenly the rhetoric of “they and we”, Islam and the West, and “clash of cultures” overlapped the integration discourse. Three-fourths of Germans now do not agree with the statement “The Muslim culture fits into the Western world.”

These sentiments gave rise to a new coalition: Human rights activists and feminists closed ranks with the “neo-con” Muslim-bashers. And even Pope Benedict, probably involuntarily, had his role in this development with his famous Regensburg lecture. Other striking and very good examples of this are the various passionate debates about plans to erect mosques in Germany. The whole notion of religious liberty and religious rights is almost absent in these debates. Instead, the pro-camp argues that it might be better to have Muslims worship out in the open than secretly. Again, the numbers tell their own story: In Cologne 36 percent of residents are fine with the mosque plan, 29 percent wanted to see it scaled down (165 feet high), and 31 percent are entirely against it.

To sum it up, immigration to Germany was never pure fun. The Germans in general are not very sexy, they

are laden with complexes due to their history—forms of symbolic patriotism are basically absent. Nevertheless, immigration and integration are facts and are covered in all their aspects and problems in the media. But 9/11 led to a new sense of insecurity and the feeling shared by many Germans that they are challenged, if not threatened, by Muslim culture. The we-don’t-like-them-because-they-are-different-front is joined now by the we-don’t-like-them-because-they-are-dangerous-inhuman-and-patriarchic-front.

In a secular environment like the one in Germany, secularism is often connected to modernism. The message is: The more secular you are the better you fit into our society. Religiosity—not only the one being practised by Muslims—is regarded as backward, old-fashioned, and threatening. Some of the mosque-opponents are simply jealous: Our churches are becoming emptier and are being sold; the Muslims, however, need new mosques to meet the demand. Not only Christians and Muslims have still a long way to go in Germany, but believers and secularists as well.

NOT A CULTURE CLUB

KATRIN BENNHOLD

When German police arrested three Islamic militants in early September for allegedly plotting a major terrorist plot, Germans couldn't decide what was worse: that their country, believed to be relatively safe from terrorism, no longer was. Or that the names of two of the three militants were Fritz and Daniel.

Ingold Bungert, who owns a small hair salon in the western German city of Saarbrücken next door to the building where Daniel Schneider had lived, spoke for many when he said: "What gets me most is that he was one of us."

It fascinated and deeply disturbed people here that the two suspects were pretty much like them—ordinary Germans, not immigrants from another continent or people of foreign heritage. Schneider, 23, and Fritz Gelowicz, 28, grew up in middle-class Christian homes. They went to suburban high schools in sleepy neighborhoods and played soccer as teenagers.

Their arrests challenged one of the most pervasive and unhelpful notions in the debate surrounding the integration of Muslims in Europe today: that Islam is a problem because it is culturally different from Europe. There was no foreign-sounding name, no darker skin color that allowed white Germans to preserve a distance between their own cultural experience and that of the suspects. As Schneider's Jordanian-born landlord, Jamil Khalil, put it a few days after his tenant's blurred image had gone through the press: "The stereotype of the Arab Muslim who hates the West has been broken."

But stereotypes are stubborn—especially when they help distract from a much more fundamental debate about what it means to be European in a world whose postwar foundations have been shaken by ever-faster

globalization and changing demographics. The focus on a culture clash has conveniently framed the identity debate in negative terms: Islam—a term that has become associated with fears of mass immigration, social conservatism, fundamentalism, and terrorism—is the "other."

Like scores of other immigrants and their descendants over the past four decades, Khalil was used to the simmering xenophobia that meant he and his children were not identified as Germans but as "foreigners." Then came 9/11 and the debate about Turkey beginning membership talks with the European Union. Khalil was suddenly a "Muslim."

Across the Continent, the rhetoric shifted, imposing a religious identification onto communities that often did not identify in religious terms themselves. Xenophobia became Islamophobia. Europeans, many of whom never set foot in a church, suddenly rediscovered their Judeo-Christian roots. Everyone, it seemed, had read the title of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations"—if not the book itself.

It is a defensive Europe that looks at Islam in cultural terms. This Europe feels threatened by the Muslim headscarf because rather than a religious symbol, it sees a challenge to western values. It is hostile to Turkish membership in the European Union because rather than a secular (if imperfect) Muslim democracy, it sees the threat of Islamists taking over what could become the bloc's most populous country in a few decades time.

In fact, Muslims in Europe are neither a cultural entity, nor an entity that is inherently non-European. Second- and third generation immigrants of Turkish, Pakistani, North African and Middle Eastern origin may share

religious beliefs but they have their roots in very different cultural traditions. Like the majority of European “Christians,” many “Muslims” no longer practice their religion, even if polls suggest that they are on average a little more religious than they were a decade ago. Add to that large Muslim communities in the Balkans, an ancient European region with ambitions to join the European Union, and it becomes evident that Islam is no more a cultural identity than Europe is a Christian Club.

Indeed, the European Union is a post-cultural construct. It was deliberately created as an economic and political bloc that transcends the cultural differences of its twenty-seven member states. Its identity is political. It is based on citizenship and is sustained by a sense of shared interest.

If European identity has been shaken in recent years it is first and foremost because that sense of shared interest has crumbled. Six decades after World War II, the EU’s most powerful rallying cry—the promise of peace and prosperity—sounds hollow. Europeans take peace for granted and no longer trust the EU to deliver prosperity. In a world whose postwar foundations have been shaken by the end of the Cold War, ever-faster globalization, and changing demographics, they worry about their jobs and the survival of their state-financed welfare system, a central pillar of European identity.

But the tale of Us vs. Them—incidentally the same tale that Islamists like to tell—has been perpetuated in parts of the European media and left its traces in mainstream public discourse.

Take the French riots in the fall of 2005. During three weeks of rioting in over three hundred impoverished suburbs across the country, some commentators were quick to talk about “jihad” and a “suburban intifada.” Some members of the conservative government mused about polygamy as one reason for the violence. But a report into the unrest by the domestic intelligence service concluded that neither Islamists nor culture came into it. Instead, the report described a “popular revolt” borne out of a combination of double-digit unemployment, social exclusion, organ-

ized crime, and the poverty-related breakdown of traditional levers of authority at home and in school.

The report touched a raw nerve in a country whose national identity is synonymous with the promise of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*. More generally, the failure of European countries to live up to the very values they purport to protect from the social conservatism and perceived cultural demands of Islam adds another twist to the identity debate. Any credible debate about our identity has to address mass unemployment and troubled education systems in large parts of Europe—both of which hit second and third generation immigrants most. And any such debate must talk about extraordinary renditions, habeas corpus, and profiling.

Avoiding these issues risks cementing the alienation European citizens feel from the EU, whatever their origin.

Research by Olivier Roy, an Islamic scholar and author in France, suggests that religious and cultural identities are increasingly disconnected in Europe. That also goes for European Muslims and Muslims in Turkey, he says.

Only a minority of France’s estimated 5 million Muslims, for example, identify as “Muslim” before they identify as “French,” according to a survey by the Pew Center last year. In a 2005 poll by the U.S. State Department, 95 percent of French Muslims expressed a favorable overall opinion of France.

The danger is that in a vacuum of any real sense of belonging, imposing Islam as an identity can turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. In Britain, the Pew study showed that a full 81 percent of Muslims said they considered themselves more Muslim than British.

One key to understanding today’s identity puzzle is demography. In 1957, the year the EU’s foundations were laid with the Treaty of Rome, all twenty-seven nations currently in the bloc had population growth above the replacement ratio of 2.1 percent. Today none do. Demographers predict that the EU’s share of the global population will fall from 21 percent now

to 7 percent in 2050.

Against this backdrop it is easy to see why the debates about immigration and Turkish membership in the EU are so pertinent. Immigration from Europe's Muslim neighbourhood and Turkey's 70 million inhabitants are the only ways to counter demographic trends. If integrated properly, these new EU citizens could be a source of economic dynamism and tax revenue to pay for Europe's welfare systems. Put another way: Rather than the problem, Muslim immigrants and their descendants could be a large part of the solution to Europe's identity crisis.

Whatever the decision on future immigration and Turkey, the face of European societies has already changed irrevocably. Mecca cola and Islamic rap are here to stay. The number of non-white Europeans in class rooms will increase further. On current trends many of them will grow up to be secular citizens. Others will hold on to their religion and may become the founders of a European Islam. A few hundred will be tempted by radicalization and violence.

Europe has a choice: Either it welcomes its new citizens into the fold of a European identity that delivers on key European values like social mobility and human rights. Or it risks alienation on a scale that could rip apart the social fabric of the Continent's oldest democracies.

DIVIDED BY COMMON VALUES? THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE, AND EUROPE

JOE FITCHETT

My title, eliciting the possibility of being “divided by common values” comes—literally, word for word—from a speech last year in Washington by Nicholas Sarkozy, then on the point of becoming president of France. The phrase about the U.S. and France being “divided by common values” was in fact a Freudian slip by his interpreter. Sarkozy meant to say “united by common values,” and the record was corrected in the final published version. But the flawed original struck me as an inspired insight.

It is natural that on opposite sides of the Atlantic our worldviews are influenced by comparisons and contrasts with our friends and enemies. We seem to be in danger of finding many contrasts with our friends instead of comparisons. Oddly and at the same time, even the old practice of defining one’s friends as the enemies of one’s enemies, a stand-by in the Cold War, seems to have become more slippery: nowadays, “the other” is usually the Muslim world or China, a more complicated contrast since these are ambiguous relations, not avowed hostility as with the old Soviet Union. Instead, as shown by treaties, actions, polls, and anecdotal evidence, Americans and Europeans—the elite and the rank and file—are starting to think of themselves increasingly as defined by their differences rather than by their similarities. It is an alarming pattern for those who think that the Atlantic community needs to strengthen its affinities and combine its assets in order to have the authority to shape a better global order. And it seems to me that Americans and Europeans do in fact share a corpus of values that differ enough from all others to constitute a corpus of shared values that can be called “trans-Atlantic.”

But this does not mean to say that we always mean, tactically, the same thing when we say that, strategi-

cally, we hold similar values. Indeed, there are questions about whether we are evolving divergently or toward some higher convergence in which Europeans subscribe to some Euro-identity while “Western” values come back to the foreground after a period when we have been more focused on disputes. Whichever outcome emerges in future history, my thesis is that we can gain a better understanding of where we are today if we can tease out a better sense of what we mean, in practice, by what we say, often slightly theoretically. Frequently, we use what sound like the same words to describe practices that are very different. I believe, as I said, that we are focused on the same ends—that we all want a roughly similar public sphere that protects the private and political values that we claim to share. Right now, however, our views of the “ends” are often obscured by misunderstanding of each others’ “means” of getting there. As a result, it is not always clear how deep our differences really lie. Nowhere is this risk of misunderstandings more acute than in the contemporary hot spot where values of religion, culture, and immigration intersect.

In talking today about the United States and France, I think that France’s relationship in these areas with the United States (and with Germany and its EU neighbors) offers a striking case study of this sort of confusion. Often extreme (partly because history has driven France into love-hate dynamics with countries it considers its rivals), the French relationship can throw into strong relief some of the differences that prevail in our countries’ practices in this area. I will discuss our “differences” in the context of our “unity” in the way we approach all three topics: religion, culture, and immigration.

On religion, it seems we are witnessing a complex

trend of interacting changes between societies and cultures and between religion and globalization. For our purposes today, the immediate gap (in values that divide/unite us) is the one usually described as the secularization of Europe and the growing evangelical fervor in the United States. This trend has an impact on relations with Muslim minorities on both sides of the Atlantic. Beyond that, it is important to bear in mind, beyond any immediate comparisons in practices on opposite sides of the Atlantic, that all these questions are evolving in more profound contexts of change and history, so that our trans-Atlantic questions in this sphere may also be relativized by bigger global trends of changing attitudes toward religion, culture, and immigration. Indeed, there are obvious differences between the older European Union members in western Europe and the new democracies. In these matters, “old Europe” may be “the odd man out” from a trend in eastern Europe, the United States, and much of the rest of the world. Even if that is so, it remains true that “the Atlantic community” authored and anchored the Western worldview that seems to inspire global admiration (if judged only by the number of people who want to immigrate there) and therefore seems worth trying to keep as closely in tune as possible.

For the moment, there is no denying our trans-Atlantic differences in this area. It is manifestly true that “religiosity” is on the rise in the United States and among some parts of Muslim immigrant communities while it is declining among the general population in the European Union. It has become a widespread stereotype: worship dying out in Europe while megachurches are opening like shopping malls in the United States. The French tend to see America as a country of Bible-thumping Christian fundamentalists, a country where sects are free to exploit the gullible masses and where political leaders seem ready to revert to the religious wars of the Crusades. For the French, America appears as a country backsliding to the cheap tricks of Elmer Gantry and other con men of the revivalist era. In contrast, American clichés of modern France depict the French as atheistic hedonists, who are too cynical even to have children and big families. In this view, the faithless French are vulnerable to their Muslim minorities, whose faith

propels them to reproduce.¹ In this stereotype, the resulting overpopulation of young Muslims makes them malleable clay in the hands of fanatic imams, turning young Muslims into terrorists ready to attack the West. In this U.S. stereotype of France, a rigidly centralized political system imposes deepening paralysis on the state and its ability to deliver equality, notably in the schools.

In other words, Americans see France as suffering from many ills that can be traced to “secularism,” translated as a loss of faith, including in oneself and one’s nation. And French see America as a country where secular values, meaning the modern separation of state and church, are endangered by an evangelical form of fundamentalism.²

Even among many sophisticated people, versions of these misconceptions prevail. To start with the French view—which is prevalent in Europe—it is widely felt that the United States is set on a course to undo the separation of church and state that is the hallmark of Western democracy. French people bring up the fact that the U.S. mint prints “In God we trust” on the coin of the realm. There is widespread shock to see the issue of prayer in public schools reach the Supreme Court. Before rushing to judgment, people might remember that a moment of collective worship is required in schools in Britain. But leaving aside such contradictory details, it is clearly true that the United States stands in contrast to European countries, not just in its religious freedoms and in its interpretation of freedom of conscience, but above all in its “religiosity”—meaning the external manifestations of faith, including in public life. In fact, this contrast between American attitudes and the prevalent ones in Europe (and especially with France) has been true since at least the end of World War II as Americans maintained high church attendance (often shifting from mainline denominations to more evangelical movements) while Europeans have more widely adopted an attitude equating religion with backwardness. This divergence has been exacerbated by recent developments, especially under the Bush administration. (A factor in this trend has been the deeply opposed general attitudes toward Israel, with American support for Israel partly coming from evangelicals—a religious

group that hardly exists in Europe. But this aspect is beyond the scope of this paper.)

The essential point, I think, is to distinguish between the evidence of religiosity in political life in America. It is true that there is less and less separation between church (or churches) and politics. But that is not the same thing, as is too often deduced in Europe, as a lack of separation between church and state. The real difference is that Americans accept an overt role for religion in politics that is rejected by most Europeans. In other words, on many specific points of trans-Atlantic friction on this account, trends could change quickly with electoral shifts. Think of U.S. government opposition to stem-cell research or to birth control in international development aid programs. U.S. policy would change (and the international visibility of U.S. religiosity would recede) if the Democrats take charge of the White House and Congress in 2009. And whichever party prevails, presidential candidates from both have made it clear, repeatedly over the years, that they do not intend to let any religious organization usurp the separation of church and state associated with modern Western democracy.

Similarly, there are misconceptions in the United States about the meaning of “secular” in France and, to some degree, in other European countries. Used correctly, “secular” means a society where religious values have lost any particular meaning or relevance. Clearly, Europeans as a group have become “secular” in their attitudes and assumptions in a way that Americans by and large are not. Statistics attest to a steep decline in religious practice in Europe—among Christians, Jews and, it should be noted, Muslims. But this overwhelming dominance of secular attitudes still masks some residual religious ties to the faith of one’s father. Contrary to American perceptions, France has a very high percentage of parochial elementary schools: they must teach the national curriculum, but they are run by churches—and subsidized by the state. In some traditionally strong Catholic areas, more than half the pupils are educated in such schools. France has a consensus that this system (in effect since the mid-1960s) has improved the quality of French education overall. More generally, what were once “religious values” survive under

different, more secular labels that reflect the basic tenet of Judeo-Christian faith—the value of each individual’s existence.

But the existence of this shared value is often obscured by trans-Atlantic misunderstanding of how the upholding of each individual’s worth is translated into action. Take the schools: in dealing with the school system, it is not “secularization” that distinguishes French attitudes (as I said, parochial schools flourish in France). The key tenet that sets apart France is something else—the principle incarnated in the concept of *laïcité*. It has a distinct content. Whereas “secular values” means indifference to religious influence, *laïcité* means active opposition to any intrusion of religious practice and values into affairs of the state. It is a peculiarly French concept, born of the perception that the French modern tradition, after the revolution of 1789, was under attack by a rear-guard action of priests and the church. So protection was needed from religious influence on state business, notably in the schools. This was institutionalized in a 1905 law. So while both the United States and France are secular states and even secular countries, France has a distinctly different practice in implementing the *laïcité* that interprets its secular values. In practice, *laïcité* meant the need to combat clericalism and all its works. It is easy to see how a modern transition—and transposition—has taken place from “clergy” to “Islamicism” as the threat to French people’s concept of their state that has taken shape since the 1789 Revolution. The original concept of *laïcité*, developed to combat the Catholic clergy’s secular ambitions—including imposing faith in the schools—fits easily into a similar new resistance to perceived inroads of Islam, a religion that is deemed among the French to naturally prefer the caliphate, which can be defined as the unity of religion and the sovereign. (The wording is slightly imprecise here because Islam usually does not institutionalize the “church,” but the sense of supremacy of clerics is what matters.)

This notion of *laïcité* puts a clearer light on the French furore about the ban on veils in state-run schools. (Incidentally, much more than the sumptuary code for a few girls was involved: a key element was the expul-

sion of several hundred foreign imams, accused by the French authorities of interfering with young Moslems' education and thus contravening the role of the French state.)

Eventually, the authorities banned the veil from schools (actually, the veil in question in France was not a face-covering but a symbolically devotional headscarf) because, as a religious practice, it violated the cardinal principle of French governance that the state is secular or, more precisely as we have seen, *laïc*. This rule of secularism is not just aimed at preventing any attempt at turning back the clock to religious civil war. It is also forward-looking in French eyes, progressive in the sense that it supports the tripod (liberty, equality, fraternity) that holds up the social contract of modern France. The state is secular, *laïc*, meaning that no group based on religion or race, can enjoy any special status and that all citizens are the same in the eyes of the republic. That is why, too, the French oppose affirmative action and other policies giving minorities a head start. In France, such a helping hand directed at a "community" is anathema. Or at least it has been until President Sarkozy started moving toward affirmative action as a pragmatic offset for greater assertion of law and order in what had been police no-go zones controlled by poor Muslim youth. Affirmative action—generally seen as generous and inclusive in the United States—is viewed in France as a dangerous wedge in the doctrine of the nation state's "republican values" that guarantee equality to every citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, etc. The French carry that value so systematically that the authorities are banned even from collecting statistics about people's race, ethnicity, or religion. As the New York Times noted in October 2007, "even today census takers are forbidden to ask citizens their religion" in France.³ (As a result, the Muslim minority in France is "estimated" to number 10 million—in a country of 60 million.)

It should come as no surprise that this stance blends with other French values such as centralized authority. For example, it is partly in the name of secularism that French governments do not tolerate sects. As a result, the Scientologists, even with backing from Hollywood, have been less of a vexed issue in France

than in Germany. Also, the "republican ideals" involved with secularism are often mixed with hypocrisy in French life. For example, it's very hard to change your name in France, and some people think this difficulty is related to people's wish to know when they are dealing with correspondence or a job application from a Muslim. My point is that the French decision—in suppressing the veil—was not based on depriving a minority of its rights to freedom of expression. In the eyes of most French people, it was based on the need to protect the equal rights of all citizens, including Muslims, in a color-blind state. As I said earlier about the United States, this does not mean that race and religion are not powerfully and visibly present in French politics. But for the French, the state should be neutral.

Those of you who followed this controversy know that the French decision was widely criticized both in the United States and elsewhere in Europe. Countries such as Britain, which like the U.S. has a multi-cultural model of assimilation, have a philosophy based on the idea that people's private values and their heritage in their own ethnic community can be tolerated by a liberal state. Indeed, this approach holds that strong ethnic communities are a better basis for a nation pursuing individual freedom and prosperity. In French eyes, this Anglo-Saxon model, which they call "communitarianism," leads to rivalries, divisions, and inequality in the United States. Americans, of course, view this differently and condemned the French ban on headscarves. An American scholar concluded that: "The French Republic should be based not on a shared religious faith, but on a faith in the possibilities of sharing a life together, despite vast differences in appearance, history, and religious ideas."⁴ Properly understood, this approach liberates citizens to explore their differences, not to conceal them.

In my view, this conclusion appeals strongly to the instincts of Americans, and understandably so. But it is rooted in the wrong paradigm—a set of attitudes and reflexes that I am calling "religiosity." Banning the veil was not, for the French, denying Muslims' religious rights; if anything, it was protecting them in the sense that the state should not let any religious group trespass on the common rights to a secular public space

and a spiritual private space. In other words, both French and Americans want to live under political and cultural systems that emerged from the Enlightenment and from our revolutions. The American founding experience led the United States to pay greater public homage in our politics to religion. The French revolution led French people in the opposite direction: the church is not seen as the starting point for liberty but as an authoritarian source of privilege for a ruling caste. For the French, the modern state is thus expected to safeguard the common rights of all citizens. This view also explains why the French—in contrast to Americans—take such a harsh view of sects, for example. The French intolerance for sects is not based simply in suspicions that they extort money: it is also that they try to intrude on the public space that individuals ought to enjoy outside their religious practice. Similarly, France has rejected any form of “affirmative action” as a violation of the state’s neutrality and a possible step towards a division of loyalties in which citizens think of themselves as French and something else as a member of a minority.

This support for a robust state’s role and cultural model is of course quite alien to American sentiments. And the French view has been at odds with neighboring European nations’ reliance on multi-culturalism as the vehicle for assimilating minorities in the immigrant community.

Interestingly, these days the French are feeling slightly vindicated as they watch multi-culturalism being called into question in Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, and other EU countries.

These interpretations of secularism need to be seen as different but fundamentally not divergent. They actually still have more in common—with respect to the boundaries of private life and individual conscience—than the rules that apply in this regard in many other parts of the world that are increasingly assertive about their non-Western values. So it is still possible—likely, I would even say—that these countries in the trans-Atlantic community will conclude in the future that they do agree on their ultimate values of freedom of conscience in a private sphere and the need for some degree of consensus and a common

stance on basic national values.

To get there, of course, it is important first to understand our current differences in interpretation regarding secularism. In other words, we need to better understand what different things we mean when we invoke “secular values” and how our feelings contrast—on opposite sides of the Atlantic—about the appropriate degree of visibility for church groups and religious values in our politics. In practice, my argument is that a better (maybe time for a new word: clearer, more precise, etc.) understanding of these contrasting interpretations of “secularism” will contribute to our ultimate convergence at a higher level of “values” in our views of proper governance and the international order to be fostered.

Our trans-Atlantic discussions about this subject these days often focus on attitudes toward the Islamic world, the threat of extremism and international terrorism and questions about the assimilation of Muslim minorities in Europe—Turks in Germany, Pakistanis in Britain, Algerians in France, and similar groups in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, and now even in some Scandinavian countries. In general, Americans share a view that European countries have failed dramatically to meet the challenge of assimilating these Muslim immigrants. (This poor European performance is often posed as a contrast with comparative U.S. success in integrating African-Americans into society. After many setbacks over decades, the U.S. was able to transform the overall situation for African-Americans so that the community, as a whole, feels it is on track to improved circumstances—in contrast to the feeling among many Muslim minorities in Europe that they are stuck in an “under-class.”)

This American cliché about Europe contains elements of truth that have wide resonance in the United States—notably the role of European-based Muslims in terrorist plots against U.S. targets. It is natural for Americans to seize on this threat. But here again, the overall image is misleading. Even in France, the European country credited with having the largest Muslim minority, there is a perceptible acceleration of more Muslims’ gravitation into mainstream life, mainly

through inter-marriage. Beyond the anecdotal evidence of integration, many international polls suggest, interestingly, that French Muslims are among the most comfortable minorities in Europe in the sense that they see scant contradiction between themselves and modernization of the country in which they find themselves. Overall, France's well-publicized troubles with its Arab ghettos seem to have little direct impetus from Islamic extremists. Instead, it seems that social prejudice has pauperized and radicalized the Muslim youth in France. (It is worth remembering that French opinion in general views Muslims as very inferior in education and work ethic: as an ex-colonial power, France in general is less open-minded than is Germany about its Muslim minority, Turks, or Britain about its Pakistanis—many of whom came from middle-class backgrounds in their own culture.)

France never practiced the multi-cultural approach to immigrant assimilation that prevailed in other European countries since the 1970s. Now that the problem has captured French attention at the highest level, both in public opinion and in the presidency, it will be interesting to see if France can repeat with Muslims the success it enjoyed for generations with Italians, Poles, etc. For those immigrant influxes, history shows that after three generations the earlier waves of immigrants were assimilated, for all practical purposes, and so the debate today is whether Muslims present some unique challenge that bars them from similar assimilation eventually. In other words, while France has never thought of itself as a country of immigration, it does in fact have a long history of immigration and assimilation of immigrants, *mutatis mutandis*, comparable to other Western democracies. In France, the time frame for assimilation has usually been three generations, which is comparable similar to key patterns in the United States. It is noteworthy that in France today, even with all its "issues" with its Muslims, has not been used as a launching pad for international terrorists. (Germany's place in this regard is interesting for involving expatriate Arabs—often middle-class—not Turks from Germany's main immigrant community.) In other words, France has trends of assimilation and social coherence that can inspire considerable confi-

dence and admiration for the country's ability again, as it has in the past, to assimilate immigrants after a generation or two.

As noted in his new book, *Islam Confronts Secularism* (English title), French scholar Olivier Roy argues that "the problem is not Islam but religion—or rather the contemporary forms of the revival of religion." The notion that faith should be private has been challenged in the last decades by a new brand of fundamentalist (or rather evangelical) Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The new breed of believers challenges their own religious institutions as well as the state. There is room for all Western democracies to be nervous about handling this change and challenge. Reviewing Roy's book, Philip Gordon of the Brookings Institution said in *Foreign Affairs* that the subject was a question of whether or not Islam is compatible with Europe's increasingly secular society. "Many scholars, politicians, and polemicists say no, arguing that Islam makes no distinction between religion and politics and that it is not just a religion but also a culture, which makes it hard to assimilate," Gordon says, noting that Roy, in his book, is less categorical.⁵ Indeed, Roy sees the possibility that Islam will evolve in response to its interface with Europe, an exchange that includes much friction, partly because of actions and attitudes among extremists or all three faiths.

U.S. responses to this new global "religiosity" have been much more inclusive—for Americans—than most other nations and cultures for their citizens of minority faiths. Ironically, this has made the U.S. enemies in both major camps that Washington seeks to influence. In Europe, the U.S. is viewed as too religious, a view eloquently expressed in a letter published by the *Financial Times* that said, *inter alia*, "organized religion plays a role in US society otherwise only equaled in Muslim societies."⁶ At the same time, the Muslim world has come to despise Americans for what it perceives as their wanton secularism. "Too religious for one group, too secular for the other," concludes Andrei S. Markovits.⁷ Markovits, a University of Michigan professor of German studies, links this paradox to the anti-American tilt in French high school textbooks that portrays the United States

as the main danger to world peace. He reports the findings about this trend in a much-discussed book, *Elevés sous l'Influence* by Barbara Lefebvre and Eve Bonnard (Audibert 2005). The authors concluded that this anti-Americanism fits the bias of French teachers and also placates Muslim students, who are often vocal in defending terrorism against U.S. victims.

The media has considerable responsibility for these biases and misunderstandings and knee-jerk reactions. Reporters, perhaps because they lack enough resources (either intellectual or material from their publishers), often seem ready to ignore the need for reporting on the actual context of an issue and instead are quick to seize on what seems a slightly sensational quirk. For example, earlier this month the global media highlighted the Sarkozy government's plan to use DNA-testing in screening immigrants applying for family reunion. The implication, in most of the reporting, was that this was somehow a shocking innovation to curb the influx of immigrants. What was not reported was that it has been a common practice for several years now in the United States to use DNA in immigration cases, especially in cases when there is suspicion that a child is being smuggled in as a family member who is actually destined for the sex trade. (The French authorities said in October that eleven other EU states are using DNA screening as part of their immigration processes.)

Is it realistic to think that better information will lead to better understanding? Let me cite a positive example. Few issues have been more fraught with clichés and tensions than the differences in the “cultural industries” in the United States and France. The French are delighted by some of U.S. culture's products but they are outraged by the power of the American cultural machine. In French eyes, the run-of-the-mill current output of Hollywood, for example, typifies what is wrong with America: it is vulgarizing, it is venal and profit-driven, and above all, it is inauthentic. Beyond its resentment of Hollywood, the French elite has clung to the view that French culture is superior to anything Hollywood can offer.

That assumption has finally been challenged by the

Sarkozy government. Whatever one thinks of the Sarkozy team's grasp of culture (and many French observers deride it for being proudly philistine), it has started to respond to a book published last year about the achievements of the U.S. approach to culture, notably in achieving the social objectives that France often prides itself on tackling but often fails to achieve. The book, *La Culture en Amérique* (a pun on Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*) was written by Frederic Martel, a former French cultural attaché in Boston, and based on his extensive personal research about how culture is financed and disseminated in the United States. His findings are that serious and pop culture in the United States often works well and can be more profoundly innovative than French culture. In an astute psychological stance toward his audience, Martel shuns any comparisons with the situation in France. Instead, he leaves it to readers to draw the obvious conclusion—that France actually has a lot to learn from the United States in its cultural policies. The reverse may be true in some cases, too, but the conclusion was a shock for the French, as evidenced by the lively media reaction to the book's publication.

A strong source of pride (and condescension toward the United States) is the shared belief that the nation's state-administered culture treats everyone equally. Without disputing the achievements of French cultural activities, Martel lays out hundreds of pages of evidence about the United States' performance in this regard, explaining the roles of non-governmental actors in the United States, including foundations and corporate sponsors. Such bodies may get indirect government support in the form of tax incentives, but they dictate the form of the spending and the outreach. As a result, Martel suggests, American culture may be more inclusive of minorities than France's state-run programs. What is so interesting about Martel's approach is that it is not overtly polemical or preaching. He never offers his own views about possible shortcomings in the French system. As a result, his account of how America does it—with the implicit agenda of how France could do it better—has been widely discussed by the French media and in policymaking circles. The author denied (publicly at least) any interest in fueling the cultural wars between France and the United States. Perhaps as a

result, he may have helped both countries to learn from each others' best practices. In any case, information seems to have changed perceptions and realities on the ground, for the better.

There is a nexus to these trans-Atlantic differences on religion, culture, and immigration, with special emphasis on Muslim immigrant minorities and the question of Turkey's role vis-à-vis the EU. The nexus, for policy reasons, is most easily labeled the growing anti-Americanism among Europeans because of differences—sometimes real and sometimes only perceived—on these values. In European eyes, Americans often have “values”—notably religiosity—that are being used to mask the intrusion of American power into other societies' affairs, not just in Europe but around the world. From the American viewpoint, Europeans' lack of power has led them to back away from their old values and instead invoke “secularism” to deny trans-Atlantic affinities and elude questions and action about shaping a world that adapts to the new challenges (from globalization to the emergence of China) in ways that are in keeping with our values. Put another way, we need perhaps to work together in understanding how our differing senses and interpretations of our “old values” can be clarified to become shared “new values” for contemporary circumstances.

Ironically, the recent truism—that religion stood for reactionary views and secularism for progress—may prove to be an excuse for passivity in Europe in coping with emerging trends around the world and, above all, in the trans-Atlantic relationship. And in the United States narrow-minded zeal—a transference of religiosity—may be blinding policymakers to their common values with Europeans.

Meanwhile, these differences and doubts about each others' values have contributed to a trans-Atlantic rift that seems to be unprecedented in depth and durability. Markovits puts it this way: “Animosity toward the United States [has] migrated from the periphery and disrespected fringes of European politics and become a respectable part of the European mainstream.” Significantly, he discerns “a new sweep of anti-American sentiments among Europeans [that

has] fostered a heretofore-unmatched degree of unity between elite and mass opinion in Europe”⁸ that reflects what Europeans believe America has become.

To validate his view, Markovits cites scores (literally) of surveys and other evidence confirming how deeply Europeans (excluding those in the new democracies in eastern Europe) have come to feel dislike for Americans. “Indeed, a change to a center-left administration in Washington, led by a Democratic president, would not bring about its abatement, let alone disappearance.”⁹ Despite his evidence from the polling and the press coverage, Markovits may be overstating the case. Even so, it is a grave situation liable to condition, for the worse, our mutual determination to pull together on opposite sides of the Atlantic, and it brings us to the question assigned to this meeting: What is the role of the media in all this?

The impact of facile reporting has obviously contributed considerably to the build-up of stereotypes and often worsened divisions and hostile prejudices. In reporting on cultural and immigration issues, there often seems to be a tendency to sensationalize the stories or, at the very least, play up any differences between practices in the culture a reporter is covering and similar ones in the country of the reporter's readers. This is a natural way to attract readers—by saying, in effect, look how differently things are done in this other culture. The only way to counter this natural professional reflex is for editors to insist that reporting is better “contextualized” so as to explain the reasons for behavior that can seem strange to foreign audiences when reported without enough history and sociology.

At the same time, the media bears only a partial role in these divergences, which are rooted in differing perceptions and experiences in our different societies, as documented in so many polls and news stories about how far countries have already drifted apart and feel they are losing their old affinities. Obviously, that shift also involves real and correctly perceived divergences and cannot be entirely explained by misconceptions perpetuated by the media.

The question is, what can and should the media do now? The obvious task for media now, both in Europe and in the United States, is to report the story of all the polling data and the stories documenting the way in which our countries are drifting apart—across the Atlantic and to some degree within Europe—as we grapple with questions of cultural values, religious practices, and immigration of difficult-to-assimilate minorities. The essential point is that the reporting on these divergences avoids the vices and embraces the virtues cited above in the examples. Media need to contextualize, to explain the reasons for tactical divergences that can mask strategic convergences. Perhaps above all, media need to concentrate on stories and events that point to developments liable to have policy consequences. Nowhere is this more important than in these cultural and religious issues that contribute to a mental framework which colors and limits the readiness of people to make marginal decisions on more or less cooperation. (On business, for example, trans-Atlantic common interests seem too dense to be harmed by misperceptions or even temporary conflicts.)

Ideally, we would all do well to work toward an expanded ideal of pluralism, one that includes not only differing political forms of democracy but also differing conceptions of religious faith and cultural life.

In practice, I think that this is too big a task to be carried out by the media alone. The best hope, in my view, lies elsewhere in a major new push to promote greater, more systemic and sustained contacts and interaction among the practitioners in our cultural lives in different countries. Ironically, peacetime has not brought, as one might have expected, more opportunities to put more energy into these “soft” policy areas. Instead, we see declining trends in bringing about these exchanges, these comparative programs, these meetings involving the practitioners and the media in fora that reach out broadly beyond the academic arena. This is a task for foundations and think tanks to recognize and then move into these non-traditional areas of international relations. The results, in terms of better understanding, need to be transmitted upwards to national leaders so they can

articulate a wider consensus. And they need to be disseminated outwards by the media.

It will be slow work. All the more reason to recognize that it is time to begin.

NOTES

1 Birthrates have become a trans-Atlantic policy issue. Some combination of religious belief, patriotism, and optimism seems to be at the root of a widening gap in reproduction rates that enables the United States to maintain population growth while most European countries are aging and some even starting to shrink. It is another reason to explore the nexus of religiosity and behavior and trans-Atlantic (mis)perceptions.

2 (I will not go into the specific issues linked to the political salience of Evangelicals in current American foreign policy, notably Israel. For those interested, European Affairs recently published an article on the subject on its website, Europeanaffairs.com, “Israel’s Most Unquestioning Ally.”)

3 This ban on personal data in the official sphere should not be confused with the U.S. practice, to avoid discrimination, of not disclosing such particularities in the public media. In France, there is a legislated absence of official statistics on French citizens of foreign origin. Under French law passed after the wartime Vichy regime, it is forbidden to categorize people according to their ethnic origins. In France, as in many European countries, censuses do not collect information on supposed ancestry. Moreover, all French statistics are forbidden to have any references concerning ethnic membership. Thus, the French government’s assimilationist stance towards immigration as well as towards regional identities and cultures, together with the political heritage of the French Revolution, has led to the development of a French identity which is based more on the notion of citizenship than on cultural, historical, or ethnic ties.

In contrast, the U.S. Census Bureau has a policy of collecting racial and ethnic data in its reporting. The department’s official statement explains this practice, as follows: Since 1997, the minimum categories for race are now: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and White. Instead of allowing a multiracial category, respondents are allowed to select one or more races when they self-identify. The Census 2000 questionnaires also include a sixth racial category: Some Other Race. There are also two minimum categories for ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino.

4 John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

5 Phillip Gordon, review of Oliver Roy, “Secularism Confronts Islam,” in *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 86, No. 5 (2007).

6 Tom Brown, “Letters to the Editor: A common language should not blind us to the reality of a deepening transatlantic gulf,” *Financial Times on the Web*, 29 May 2004,

http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?startDate=24%2F05%2F2004&dsz=1&dse=true&queryText=brown&activeTab=ftNews&id=040529000696&commentAndAnalysisFilter=%2Bgaarticlebrand%3A%5E%22Brussels+Briefing%22%24&sortBy=gadatearticle&page=1&endDate=30%2F05%2F2004&aje=false&resultsToReturn=10&ct=0&nclck_check=> (12 October 2007).

7 Andrei S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.