DIVERSITY AS FOREIGN POLICY ASSET

Michael Werz

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STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION
DIVERSITY AS FOREIGN POLICY ASSET

Dr. Michael Werz

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“I had a cab driver in New York City about three weeks ago who knew more about Afghanistan and the various tribes and the problems in Afghanistan, the Taliban and all of that, than almost any of the people we interviewed from the CIA or FBI.”

Thomas H. Kean, Chair, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the U.S. Dialogue Television, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 4, 2004

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in October 1989, Europe has become more concerned with its demographic makeup due to increased immigration. Although the movement of people within Europe follows a long historical precedent, today it is being amplified by current migration trends. However, domestic politics have not evolved at the same rate.

In many European states, the rapid population shifts of the last two decades have led to significant introspection and debate about the meaning of national self-perception — fueling, in some countries, a revival of past nativist traditions. Such domestic disputes have recently expanded into the realm of foreign policy: for example, the debate over labor migration from Northern Africa and Turkey into France and Germany evolved into a wider discussion on the wearing of Islamic headscarves in schools, and eventually progressed into a tense debate on the planned accession of Turkey into the European Union.

Fundamental demographic shifts and an emerging new world order have intertwined domestic and international policy debates. Whereas the business community has long recognized that workforce diversity serves as a profound asset in the marketplace, this insight has not translated into the realm of European foreign policy. It seems counterintuitive that the advantages of having a multiethnic and multilingual labor force, and the numerous opportunities they provide for the international business community, are not appreciated by many European political administrations.

Nowhere is this advantage more significant than in countries whose governments are attempting to successfully implement foreign policy. Diversity within a government provides a more accurate view of the country’s domestic dimension in its international relations, especially in a country such as the United States. Foreign policy is often determined by public opinion, which is shaped by changing demographic trends; therefore, the immigration process is a major factor in defining American foreign policy. Often, immigrant communities empathize with their country of origin and influence foreign policy based on their own interests abroad. In the United States, national interests today cannot be redefined without including the increasingly diverse populations within the country’s borders.

Former CIA director George Tenet said that “the diversification of the CIA’s workforce is not a nice to have, it’s critical.” Only three days after being appointed secretary of state, Colin Powell echoed that statement when he said, “America overseas ought to look more like America at home.” The U.S. government sees diversity in its workforce as not just an important strategy, but one that is
necessary for the security of the nation and its people. Government hiring in Europe has been very slow to embrace the comparative advantages of a diverse labor pool, and foreign policy institutions in Germany and other European countries have little or no experience in conceiving and implementing employment plans that increase diversity.

Such attempts need not start from scratch. The United States Foreign Service has many years of case studies and experience in incorporating the interests of a multiethnic society into foreign policy, and it is the goal of this essay to gather insights from the American experience for the benefit of German and European foreign policy institutions. In order to provide a better perspective on the initiatives that have proved successful in the United States, this essay will draw on: 1) interviews with officials at the U.S. Department of State; 2) interviews with members of minority groups at the Department of State; 3) research drawn from written materials in newspapers, journals, and academic publications; and 4) interviews with representatives of ethnic organizations concerned with foreign policy issues.

One of the most critical steps toward diversity that the United States government undertook was to initiate legislation designed to encourage it. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in government employment. The judicial system also played its part, ruling on the desegregation of schools. Additionally, affirmative action increased employment opportunities for minorities and women. The common goal of all these actions was the diversification of federal agencies and the institutions governed by them. These mandates are wide-reaching and give authority to individual departments to implement minority hiring programs. This paper analyzes the U.S. federal government’s employment policies, including problems encountered in designing and realizing diversity guidelines, as well as best practices. The United States’ benchmark programs can be used by governments in Germany and the rest of Europe, as a foundation for creating their own successful minority hiring processes, thereby benefiting their foreign relations in the same way that such policies have benefited the United States.

Active recruitment efforts in the United States include the Diplomat in Residence program. This program sends U.S. Department of State employees to historically minority colleges to act as employment recruiters. These employees visit typically black, Hispanic, Asian, and women-only universities to teach, consult with, and advise college students on careers within the State Department. Due to the presence of minority-oriented universities within the United States, the possibility of having such a program may be uniquely American; however, it is important to note the degree to which the Department of State is willing to reach out to a diverse student population. Other successful recruitment programs that reach out to minorities and are run outside traditional hiring practices include fellowships, internships, and apprenticeships. The department also encourages minorities in different agencies to organize into groups, with the goal of increasing minority representation. These proactive recruitment efforts serve as supplements to the regular foreign service hiring process.

Interviews with staff members of the U.S. federal government reveal optimism about diversity hiring, but they also cite downfalls within the program and suggestions for solutions. Some employees interviewed have called for increased funding for fellowship and internship programs. Since these programs operate outside the traditional guidelines set forth for diversity hiring, they are wonderful tools for recruiting typically underrepresented groups. Others interviewed suggested increasing the number of minority recruiters, who would engage others from their ethnic background. The

“The idea is that by seeing a representative of their group in the federal government, applicants are more likely to believe that the State Department is serious about employing them.”
idea is that, by seeing someone like themselves in the federal government, applicants are more likely to believe that the State Department is serious about employing them. Another suggestion was to develop a comprehensive mentoring program for young minority State Department workers. Regular mentoring helps with professional development and ensures a more efficient workforce. One interviewee highlighted the lack of internationally oriented courses and programs at historically black universities.

Analyzing the successes and failures of the State Department’s policies is an important tool for other governments developing similar programs. Such an analysis is useful in two ways: First, using the United States as a model for understanding why diversity is necessary in today’s changing global climate provides benchmarks to learn from, and it will benefit organizations and governments seeking information on diversity hiring issues. Second, a debate inspired by the American experience may help establish a new comparative perspective across the Atlantic, thereby adding to a constructive dialogue on the major policy initiatives of the future.

This paper was researched and written with the help of Carolin Brinkmann, Johannes Rittershausen, Heather Scott, and Ryan Sytsma.
Viewed from the perspective of 2006, political doctrines in which superpowers assured mutual destruction and similar Cold War attitudes seem remnants of a bygone era. The formerly all-consuming political and intellectual focus on bloc confrontation is now a quaint memory of a relatively stable period in international affairs. Indeed, times have changed. Old-style foreign policy debates, envisioned and codified for decades in the echo-chamber of the Harvard–Manhattan–Foggy Bottom corridor and in the capitals of Western Europe, require modernization and revision to meet a rapidly evolving global environment. With the standards and paradigms developed and practiced in such a polarized world mostly outmoded, it is necessary to accurately reinterpret the current global dynamic: its new frictions, realignments, and fault lines. Foreign policy no longer revolves around the counting of nuclear warheads or the measuring of the Fulda Gap, but has become more complex and exhausting.

During the last decade, it has become easier to observe an emerging arena of unconventional conflicts and violence, epitomized by Somalia in 1993, Rwanda and Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, and recent challenges in the Middle East. These disputes catalyzed a rethinking of the decision-making processes to an extent unknown until the early 1990s. As Marc Grossman, under secretary of state for political affairs under Colin Powell, commented, “decision cycles had sped up so much that the way we do business at the State Department was now too slow” (see Rothkopf, March/April 2005). Change and adaptation were the only certainties, and recommendations for enhanced institutional flexibility repeatedly gained voice in the mid-nineties. One vigorous example was a lengthy document issued by the Commission on America’s National Interests that featured numerous foreign policy figures, including Richard Armitage, John McCain, Condoleezza Rice, Brent Scowcroft, and many others. The report stated:

In the world of 2000, with its great global changes and born-again nationalisms that drive the military and economic behavior of states and groups, it is essential for the political leaders of the United States to understand our national interests. This will not be automatic or easy, and answers will not come from public opinion polls or focus groups … American leaders of every kind must accept the challenges of building domestic foundations for foreign policy in an America where social stability, public confidence, and a sense of common purpose are in short supply. Above all, Americans must recognize that the rest of the world includes many powerful states that are just as intent on ensuring their own safety and advancing their own national interests as we are. The organization of power — the political ordering of the international system — remains an inescapable issue that directly affects the safety and well-being of Americans.

The question of how the “political ordering of the international system” could be pursued most effectively has elicited much debate in the United States. Discussion has not been limited to organizational questions, but has inevitably touched upon much broader concerns of American society at large. The influence of traditional political elites has declined in many parts of the world, and greater diversity better reflects a country’s domestic situation in its international relations, especially for a country such as the United States.

One line of argument primarily focuses on the impact of demographic changes within the United States. It dates back to the 1970s, when Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote, “Without too much exaggeration it could be stated that the immigration process is the single most important determinant of American foreign policy. This process regulates the ethnic composition of the American electorate. Foreign policy responds to that ethnic composition. It responds to other things...”
as well, but probably first of all to the primal factor of ethnicity” (Glazer/Moynihan, 1975: 23).

Thirty years later, this claim was reformulated by an oft-quoted voice from New England. Samuel Huntington expressed his concern with regard to “confused debates about national interests,” contending that “Americans have become unable to define their national interests” after the end of the Cold War, mainly shaping foreign policies in light of the “changes in the scope and sources of immigration,” which create ethnic forms of self-perception, supposedly in competition with national ones. Huntington’s conclusion was that “economic and ethnic particularism define the current American role in the world,” thus weakening the political impact of the United States as a global force (Huntington 1997: 28f).

The same year, James R. Schlesinger stated in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies that the United States has “less of a foreign policy in a traditional sense of a great power than we have the stapling together of a series of goals put forth by domestic constituency groups … the result is that American foreign policy is incoherent. It is scarcely what one would expect from the leading world power.”

Three years later, political scientist Tony Smith scrutinized, in his book Foreign Attachments, how ethnic constituencies create political pressure in the foreign policy realm. In 2002, Thomas Ambrosio edited the volume Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy, which pointed in a similar direction when he wrote, “Unlike, for example, business or environmental interest groups, which are concerned with profits and social values, ethnic interest groups are concerned with the well-being of members of the self-defined group, wherever they reside.” Thus, immigrant groups often empathize with their country of origin, which can lead them to try to influence U.S. foreign policy in support of their interests abroad. In and of themselves, however, such developments are not really novel. The current impact of minority groups on foreign policy in many ways mimics the postwar tradition established by European actors as they played an integral part in stabilizing and developing international relations policy.

Current diversity politics, therefore, can be seen as an extension of a trend that was born in the aftermath of the GI Bill, which spread higher education to Southern and Western sections of the United States, challenging the East Coast’s dominance in American foreign policy. More recent trends also mirror facets of earlier diversity movements, including the civil rights era and Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society program.

The end of the Cold War and the surge of violent terrorist networks on a global scale have had an impact on a more localized level. The traditional European notion of national interests as emanating from territoriality, derived from a 19th century context of size and power, is now largely obsolete. National interests today cannot be redefined without broaching questions about increasingly diverse—linguistically, ethnically, and culturally—populations within states. To assess, widen, and diversify the ways of conceptualizing national interests in the 21st century requires experiences in an interconnected world. Instead of debating alleged predicaments of ethnic lobbying and bemoaning the changing of demographic trends, it might be more productive in current German and European discussion to assert what has been stated for the United States, namely that the “ diversification of the U.S. coincides with a diversification of U.S. interests and foreign policy needs” (IIPP, 17).

However, continental Europe and America differ in a number of ways, and the United States’ unique immigration tradition sets it apart from other
Western nations. Within the past two decades at least, developments within the United States have led to a greater sensitivity to the foreign policy objectives of domestic pressure groups, broadening the horizon dramatically. Among the outspoken advocates of diversity in employment and similar policies, one finds an array of opinions, ranging from realist conceptions that view minority participation as a valuable asset, to more idealist notions of equal opportunity and appropriate representation. For example, CIA Deputy Director Jami Miscik noted that “the biggest danger to American security and leadership may come from the assumptions and attitudes that are carried over from earlier eras” (IIPP, 6, 23). This was mirrored by Colin Powell, who, only three days after being appointed secretary of state, promised to further promote diversity within the State Department. By declaring, “America overseas ought to look more like America at home,” he suggested that both idealist and realist understandings would serve as underpinnings for his tenure in office.

Such positions reflect the massive changes within the domestic as well as the international realm. Nontraditional actors have thrust themselves onto the stage of global policymaking, and these previously less significant players are now expressing their interests more forcefully. At the same time, internal demographic changes, especially the rise of new middle classes, contribute to a more widespread concern with foreign policy in a number of societies that have not been international actors during the last couple of centuries, for “in most countries, foreign affairs is largely a middle class occupation” (Wilson 2004: 5). Such emerging international ambitions require analysis, especially if they are couched in the language of extremist ethnic politics or nationalist chest-beating. To underestimate these modern ideologies of “belonging” often means to confuse them with the traditional conceptions of ardent nationalists. The pervasive ethnic violence and religious fundamentalism of today represents a new state of mind, based on extremely flexible and changing individualized patterns of cultural identification that find their expression in imagined and invented traditions, linguistic flourishes, and refurbished religions. It is not a coincidence that the end of the Cold War also heralded the re-emergence of ethnic identity politics, religious fundamentalism, and the violent assertion of collective belonging.

This story is a counterpart of the changed public sphere, and it is imperative to realize that public opinion has become a more important institution in legitimizing foreign policy. As Thomas Risse-Kappen wrote in 1991, public opinion sets the parameters of political debate, defining in countries like Germany or the United States “the range of options available for implementing policy goals” (Risse-Kappen 1991: 510). In the 19th century, when European powers began to act as foreign policy players, the general population had little say; during the Cold War, few dramatic alternatives existed to be debated. In a post–Berlin Wall world, traditionally disenfranchised voices in many societies have enjoyed an environment of greater transparency and public participation in policymaking. Additionally, immigration and labor mobility have added to this growing domestic dimension of international relations (Turks in Germany, Algerians in France, Mexicans in the United States, and Asians in the United Kingdom, to name only a few examples). But to envision these communities only as bridgeheads for old ethnic communities within a new political geography diminishes their real potential. As many studies concerning ethnicity, including the work of Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, have shown, the formation of new groups along ethnic or religious lines is part of the assimilation process. The migratory experience also frees immigrants from
regional attachments, since they see and perceive themselves as part of a different society. The creation of new self-perceptions pushes minorities to the forefront of global experiences in daily life — they are the marginal men and women of the 21st century. Such complex states of belonging give members of minority groups a comparative advantage in redefining new global regions of political importance, demarcating subject areas, and offering the unique perception of individuals with old and new homelands.

Finally, immigrant communities are able to provide perspectives on the political systems of their homelands, and use their experience and knowledge to enhance often complex foreign policy assessments (Wilson 2004: 12), thus helping to answer new normative questions such as: Under which circumstances can Taiwan be considered safe? When can the Iraq engagement be considered an accomplishment or failure? How can Western countries be more successful in the United Nations? How can diversity on the Asian continent be appreciated, and how will Asia’s growing Muslim population impact the Greater Middle East? Where should the Atlantic alliance stand 20 years from now? Will the European Union survive the next decade? Is Turkey a part of Europe? How can the increasing impact of scarce energy resources on China’s and India’s foreign policy be grasped and dealt with? How can the newly emerging foreign policy elites be tracked and understood on a global scale?

U.S. government institutions have in part embraced “double diversity,” the twofold challenge of a more diverse foreign policy arena and its diversifying labor force. The resulting “intersections of domestic and foreign diversity” (Wilson 2004: 4) are visible throughout the United States. The aftermath of 9/11 and the War on Terror have intensified these developments, not only in the Foreign Service, but also within the intelligence community. The following chapters will sketch out the historical and current debates and procedures at the Department of State.
Historical Outline — Toward the Foreign Service Act

In order to fully appreciate the current procedures and protocols of the United States government in its effort to promote employment diversity, it is helpful to briefly recall the historical context that legislation has attempted to redress. Although the United States has traditionally been an immigrant society attracting individuals from all parts of the world, there is also a significant record of forced emigration, with the foremost example being the African populations that were transported to Southern states as slave labor. During the 1861 Civil War between North and South, slavery was banned, at least from a legal perspective. After the war, new amendments to the Constitution were ratified and the 14th amendment asserted “equal protection” under the law. Such laws, however, were only partly effective in addressing discriminatory attitudes. Even though the Constitution had changed, in practice race segregation remained, as white and black children attended separate schools, ate in separate restaurants, and went to different churches. When segregation was challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark case Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896), a majority of the justices upheld a Louisiana law that required exclusive train-car seating for whites and blacks. From that, a legal precedent known as “separate but equal” was established and remained in effect for six decades.

After the Second World War, in which soldiers had equally fought and died irrespective of skin color, the pressure against segregation increased, and the civil rights movement began in May 1954, when the Supreme Court decided unanimously that segregation was unconstitutional. After a decade of social turmoil, Lyndon B. Johnson pushed the 1964 Civil Rights Act through Congress. The law prohibited discrimination in government employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (see Equal Employment Opportunity Laws). The most pointed section of the legislation appeared in Title VII, which addressed discrimination in the labor market, extensively covering all areas of the employee–employer relationship. Title VII formally prohibited discrimination in all facets of employment, from the advertising of open positions to termination and retirement; violations were to be enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Overcoming historical prejudice proved, however, to be a very difficult task. More equal opportunity legislation alone would not fix the problems; proactive interventions were required. The judicial system played an important role in this process, such as when the courts, threatening arrest, desegregated individual public schools. To this day, the EEOC is an active litigant in discrimination suits, having filed 79,432 charges in 2004, 76 percent of which cited instances of prejudice based on race, sex, or national origin (see www.eeoc.gov/stats/charges.html).

Although the courts occupy a crucial role in protecting the rights of minorities, they are not the only guardians of equal opportunity legislation. The executive branch, by virtue of its executive order prerogative, has also actively pursued diversity policy. Executive Order 11246, issued in 1965, requires organizations that accept federal funds to take “affirmative action” to increase employment opportunities for minorities and women. Organizations receiving federal contracts must formulate a written affirmative action plan, including goals, timetables, and progress statements for achieving the full utilization and recruitment of minorities (as amended by E.O. 11375). These and other subsequent executive orders have come to be known as affirmative action laws, which stipulate that federal employers must actively recruit and employ members of underrepresented minorities. The goal of diversity for government hiring is summarized in Executive Order 11478, as issued by Richard Nixon in August 1969. Section 1 states:

“It is the policy of the Government of the United States to provide equal opportunity in Federal employment for all persons … and to promote
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“...as a crucial part of its operating mission and charter.”

The Foreign Service encourages a diverse and representative employee base as a crucial part of its operating mission and charter.

Section 2 further directs:

It is the responsibility of each department and agency head, to the maximum extent possible, to provide sufficient resources to administer such a program in a positive and effective manner; assure that recruitment activities reach all sources of job candidates; utilize to the fullest extent the present skills of each employee; provide the maximum feasible opportunity to employees to enhance their skills so they may perform at their highest potential and advance in accordance with their abilities; ... assure participation at the local level with other employers, schools, and public or private groups in cooperative efforts to improve community conditions which affect employability; and provide for a system with the department or agency for periodically evaluating the effectiveness with which the policy of this Order is being carried out. (E.O. 11478, Sections 1 and 2.)

The affirmative action mandate is wide-reaching and gives authority to the heads of executive institutions, such as the secretary of state, to pursue a broad-based approach to minority hiring, including supplemental training and recruitment efforts. The attempt to integrate minorities in all economic and social spheres is thus being achieved at the government level by nondiscrimination litigation, and through affirmative action programs that actively encourage minority hiring and training.

Both of these principles are embraced by the Department of State and the Foreign Service in their official policies. Currently, the State Department operates under the auspices of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which replaced the initial Foreign Service Acts of 1924 and 1946. Clearly articulated in Chapter 1, General Provisions, is the clause:

The objective of this Act is to strengthen and improve the Foreign Service of the United States by—(2) fostering the development and vigorous implementation of policies and procedures, including affirmative action programs, which will facilitate and encourage (A) entry into and advancement in the Foreign Service by persons from all segments of American Society, and (B) equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment for all without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition. (Section 101 (b) (2))

The Foreign Service encourages a diverse and representative employee base as a crucial part of its operating mission and charter. The formal prose, however, is also backed by accountability to Congress. According to Section 105 (a) (2), the secretary of state must submit to the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, the speaker of the House, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission a report on the State Department’s affirmative action and minority recruitment programs, to be delivered once a year. In the past 30 years, federal agencies have implemented numerous programs to encourage minority hiring, often against their own institutional cultures. In doing so, they have changed norms to the extent that it is possible for the secretary of state to be, as she is now, an African-American woman (and none of the past three employees in this post have been white men).
Advocating for increased diversity in U.S. federal government hiring practices inevitably creates a fundamental problem concerning metrics. How does a policymaker or minority interest group measure success? Is the most important aspect a statistically proportional demographic workforce? Or should planners instead concentrate on fostering an inclusive environment that encourages minority expertise and participatory tolerance irrespective of numerical representation? In short, measures of effectiveness require a great deal of institutional consideration, especially for a bureaucracy the size of the Department of State. Diversity advocates, in other words, must decide both the broader goals of minority hiring policy and the metric by which progress is assessed. The ensuing analysis engages U.S. federal hiring procedures, with special emphasis placed on the cultural competencies of the Department of State’s existing policy and the various problems remaining for those who both design and realize diversity guidelines.

Recalling the historical context of the civil rights movement, the federal government maintains two broad approaches in dealing with minority grievances: 1) non-discriminatory statutory procedures, including litigation, stemming from past instances of discrimination, and 2) proactive measures to encourage minority participation in civil society, broadly understood as affirmative action programs. Each requires an individual examination followed by a synthetic analysis of the broader institutional context. As will shortly become evident, the U.S. government is highly weighted toward the procedural side, with very little in the way of affirmative support.

Compliance with equal employment opportunity laws, as defined by Executive Order 11246 and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, is required for employers holding federal contracts; all state, local, and educational institutions; and for all programs receiving federal financial assistance. Yet, formal procedural language and measures of effectiveness are defined in-house, albeit subject to congressional approval. It should be noted that the goals and measures of effectiveness are mainly enforced by the individual contractors and branches of government, with higher federal regulators such as the EEOC involved autonomously only in the most egregious breaches of protocol or by request. While ultimate authority rests with the “protectors” of Executive Order 11246 and the Civil Rights Act, most of the decisions that affect diversity hiring, promotion, and workplace culture are made at the agency level.

Such is the case for the Department of State, which maintains an elaborate mechanism for merit-based hiring and promotion: its recruitment and hiring process for foreign service generalists (political, economic, public diplomacy, consular, and management officers) is a two-step testing process, one written and one oral. According to Ambassador W. Robert Pearson, director general of the Foreign Service and the director of human resources at the Department of State, traditionally slightly fewer than 20,000 applicants take the written test each year, of which roughly 20 percent pass. The approximately 3,500 who pass are then invited to take a lengthy oral examination. One in five survives this round, with several hundred eventually offered positions. In 2004, a total of 19,000 took the exam, 23 percent passed, and 385 of that group were hired. Approximately 30 percent of written-test applicants are minorities, and during the oral exams, the pass rate of minorities is slightly above the average. The vetting process is based on merit.

According to Thomas Wolfson, an examiner at the Board of Examiners (HR/REE, Recruitment, Employment, and Examination), skills are structured such that “any person can demonstrate” them, independent of cultural or regional background, and “rest on common sense and judgment.” These skills are divided into the “13
Dimensions,” which encompass composure, cultural adaptability, experience and motivation, information integration and analysis, initiative and leadership, judgment, objectivity and integrity, oral communication, planning and organizing, quantitative analysis, resourcefulness, working with others, and written communication. A constant testing feedback cycle, epitomized by questionnaires that seek relevant community feedback, also imbues the institutional culture.

Promotion procedures also stem from a rule-based, institutional system. They are contained in a document entitled “Decision Criteria for Tenure and Promotion in the Foreign Service.” The most recent guidelines used by selection boards to make recommendations for promotions read as a charted “skills matrix.” The annual evaluation reports used as evidence by selection boards show that employees must display that they have met the matrix requirements in order to have the opportunity to advance. Foreign Service criteria for promotion include a series of six broad skill categories: leadership, managerial, interpersonal, communication and foreign language, intellectual, and the accumulation of “substantive knowledge.” Under each of these distinctions, subcategories define the differences between junior-level, mid-level, and senior-level competencies. A particularly illustrative example is the subcategory “support for equal opportunity” within the “managerial skills” section. See chart below.

Each level of competency stresses a cumulative mastery of certain skills and procedures, meaning that to acquire a senior position, a candidate must also be evaluated in terms of junior- and mid-level proficiencies. The three orders are defined in terms of “apprentice, journeyman, and master” skill sets, implying separate pay scales, responsibilities, and advancement opportunity therein. The presentation of the requirements, in a seven-page grid-based “core precepts” document — which details the decision criteria mentioned above — also eases many of the complexities and biases (for both the reviewed and reviewer) inherent in promotion schedules. For the sake of comparison, a similar matrix exists at a parallel institution of U.S. foreign

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<th>Junior Level</th>
<th>Junior-Level</th>
<th>Senior-Level</th>
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<td><em>Takes diversity training and applies its principles to the workplace</em>; treats all individuals with respect and without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation; acts in compliance with USG and Department EEO policies</td>
<td><em>Recruits and develops employees to realize full potential of a diverse staff.</em> Promotes diversity awareness through training; ensures by example and instruction, and verifies through monitoring and follow-up that all employees are treated with fairness and respect; applies EEO and merit principles consistently; identifies and addresses situations giving rise to complaints and grievances based on issues of fairness in the workplace</td>
<td><em>Manages diversity by recruiting diverse staff at all levels and ensuring staff diversity training and awareness.</em> Fosters an organization-wide environment in which diversity is valued and respected; provides personal leadership and vigorous support for EEO and fair employment practices</td>
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policy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In its “Foreign Service Skills Matrix,” objectives are outlined in an even more precise manner. Specifics cater to “quality of work,” “resource management,” “staff development,” “professionalism,” and “interpersonal relations.” The subskills, however, are denominated among a six-category (based on pay scales) hierarchy. See chart below.

In many senses, this rubric raises interesting questions as to the fundamental legitimacy of such methodology as an accurate or desirable metric. After analyzing the actual text of the skills matrix, one finds much of it still requires a qualitative assessment on the part of superiors — a subjective judgment on, for example, the “diversity awareness” of an individual. Even the best-conceived efforts to delineate neutral guidelines do not infuse absolute objectivity into the process. For instance, consider the diversity subskill for the top executive position at USAID: “Provides personal leadership and support for equal employment opportunity by vigorously enforcing EEO and merit principles.”

Fostering diversity becomes an especially important responsibility for individuals in high-level positions, regardless of formalized rules, although respect for diversity principles is expected of all.

If the success of diversity employment regimes places a premium on the active interpretation of formalized protocols, then the more indicative facet of the federal government’s minority inclusion efforts would stress the affirmative, proactive programming. Active recruitment efforts at universities begin with Diplomats in Residence to teach, consult, and advise. The other proactive minority inclusion efforts focus on non-career hiring. Fellowships, internships, and a state department apprenticeship program are all run independent of traditional hiring procedures. These endeavors target minorities, encouraging them to enroll in a State Department-approved program. The proactive attempts of the Foreign Service to recruit minorities function as supplements to the regular hiring process, either by providing training assistance for the normal testing process, or a limited number of apprenticeship opportunities to highly qualified candidates.

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<th>Junior (FS-06, 05, 04)</th>
<th>Mid-Level (FS-03)</th>
<th>Mid-Level (FS-02)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acts in compliance with USAID EEO policies and core values</td>
<td>Treats all people fairly and without regard to race, color, gender, religion, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, or any other factor related to job performance and potential. Completes employee evaluations in accordance with standards and deadlines</td>
<td>Supports and implements fair personnel practices, which foster an inclusive, non-discriminatory work environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior (FS-01)</td>
<td>Executive (FE-OC)</td>
<td>Executive (FE-MC/CM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures by example and instruction and verifies through monitoring and follow-up, that all employees are treated in a fair manner. Applies EEO and merit principles consistently</td>
<td>Identifies and addresses situations giving rise to complaints and grievances based on issues of fairness in the workplace</td>
<td>Provides personal leadership and support for equal employment opportunity by vigorously enforcing EEO and merit principles</td>
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The Department of State’s diversity policy reflects an effort to encourage minority hiring and participation. As the next section will discuss, impenetrability has certainly lessened, though there is still definite room for improvement. Procedural measures and efforts have to provide the means to mediate between substance and methodology, between what is desired (more diversity) and how it is implemented (rule-based matrices). Even though one could argue that diversity is, overall, an afterthought, the Department of State faces the same institutional challenges as any other organization that rightly emphasizes legal equality and enforces negative rights. Battles over metrics and implementation also hint at a paradox of diversity policy. A matrix, for example, can be clear and concise, or broad and all-encompassing. Diversity policy requires both — a precise statement of means and goals, complemented by a clear presentation, quickly understandable to all involved. Current diversity policy confronts institutional dissonance on this front, as a clear, convincing message requires strict definitions as to acceptable behaviors and methodology in an ideal, diverse work environment.

These rules apply not only to internal procedures but also to the entire hiring process. In its attempts to level the playing field, the Department of State constantly reviews and vets its written entry exams, which have been criticized for being culturally biased.”

During the oral exams, a rating system is applied by four-member assessor teams who evaluate up to two groups of six candidates per day. Assessors list each “dimension” on a 1–7 scale; these “general characteristics” are vetted by contracted psychologists and in-house lawyers to eliminate bias. Questionnaires are scrutinized in a constant testing cycle and undergo in-house revision. Oral exams stretch over an entire day and all different dimensions are rated by all assessors, from which a matrix of 30–40 numbers is converted into a composite score; here, discussion among assessors is encouraged and required when divergence in rating is too large. The entire process has no minority-oriented steering mechanism. Skills tests are structured in a way that “any passer of the preliminary written exam can demonstrate” them, independent of cultural or regional background, as they “rest on common sense and judgment.” Thomas Wolfson has observed a very “strong desire in young college students’ makeup” to show and practice tolerance, as well as demonstrating strong qualities in dealing with different individuals and competency in managing diversity.

Such procedural attempts to measure cultural competencies are the first step toward achieving effective diversity policy, which does not limit itself to the arithmetic of color. But they are also driven by institutional necessities in a changing international environment. The sets of questions used in the recruiting process are based upon a worldwide survey among State Department officials from the 1990s that thoroughly analyzed the structure of foreign service work. From this survey, the list of necessary skills (13 dimensions/categories) was developed. The emphasis on neutrality and merit also translates into how written recommendations have to be formulated: race, religion, marital status, and background are not to be mentioned.

The rules for implementing diversity and measuring cultural competencies in the Department of State are set, and the next section attempts to evaluate the progress in implementing these goals.
The following section seeks to highlight current trends, opinions, and activities concerning diversity hiring in the U.S. federal workforce, focusing on the Foreign Service in particular. A brief look at minority representation among the upper echelons of the federal government is followed by a statistical summary that examines minority hiring policies. As statistics tend not to fully account for underlying causes and institutional problems, this chapter also draws upon information obtained through interviews with State Department officials as well as representatives of minority groups.

Minority representation at the Cabinet level has increasingly reflected demographic trends in the United States, providing evidence of the growing sway of minority groups within the broader political process. For example, among the twenty-four total Cabinet appointees of President Bush’s first term, five women, four African Americans, three Hispanics, and two Asian Americans were selected. Before his tenure, no person of color had been named to any of the four most prestigious Cabinet jobs at the departments of State, Treasury, Defense, and Justice. In George Bush’s second term, African Americans are represented by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Alphonso Jackson (secretary for housing and urban development). The Cabinet also includes the growing Mexican-American minority, with Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez (Department of Justice); Cuban Americans, represented by Secretary Carlos Gutierrez (Department of Commerce); and Asian Americans, represented by Secretary Elaine Chao (Department of Labor) and Norman Mineta (Department of Transportation).

It is important to note that minority groups do not generally accept their representatives on the basis of ethnic background alone. After all, political appointments mostly reflect political loyalty and occupational acumen. Just because an Asian American is appointed to a Cabinet office does not mean he or she will represent the “Asian interests.” A recent example of such a clash was evident when the nomination of Alberto Gonzalez as attorney general was not endorsed by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC). Gonzalez, they argued, “proved unwilling to discuss important issues facing the Latino community and refused to meet with the CHC” (see document at www.humanrightsfirst.org).

Minority representation in twenty-four elite positions does not translate into major minority employment in the federal government as a whole. The latest report of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission provides the following numbers about diversity in the workforce: During fiscal year 2003, 2.4 million women and men were employed by the federal government across the country and around the world (see www.eeoc.gov/federal/fsp2003/summary.html). Of these:

1. Men comprised 57.4 percent and 42.6 were women, a ratio that has remained essentially unchanged over the last decade.

2. The ethnic composition, in terms of percentages, is: 67.1 white, 18.6 black, 7.2 Hispanic, 5.5 Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.5 American Indian or Alaskan Native.

3. Women have made the most gains in securing senior-level positions in the federal government, occupying 25.5 percent of those positions in 2003, compared to 16.4 percent in 1994.

Nonwhites comprised 13.8 percent of the government’s 15,000 senior-pay positions in fiscal year 2003, up slightly from 13.5 percent the previous year, according to the commission’s report. Senior-pay positions are those above the rank of GS-15, including Senior Executive Service, Senior Foreign Service, administrative law judges, and top technical and scientific employees. Although there
have been some modest gains in the last decade, the number of Hispanics and white women employed by the federal government remained below their availability in the civilian labor force as reported in the 2003 census.

The recruitment mechanism plays a crucial role in the context of diversity employment, as it may contain “hidden barriers” for ethnic minorities. Director General Robert Pearson describes how this problem is tackled in the Foreign Service. His outlook is altogether quite positive, and he sees minority participation improving. Not only has the funding for outreach been increased, but it is also used more efficiently to support minority-oriented programs. A more effective means of outreach has been developed with the Diplomats in Residence program that sends State Department employees to universities with diverse student populations to act as recruiters. According to Ambassador Pearson, there has been an upsurge in people taking the exam over the past three years, which can be partly attributed to the star power of Colin Powell and the events of 9/11. A “critical languages” program does exist, which gives people with certain language skills, and who pass all exams, extra credit within the pool from which they are drawn. As a result, the department is hiring increasing numbers of people who speak Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish.

About 36,000 individuals signed up to take the written exam for the U.S. Foreign Service in 2004, and 19,000 actually took it. Of this pool, 30 percent of those who participated in the test were minorities. Pearson believes that the relatively high rate of minority applicants is due to an increased advertising budget allocated for minority recruitment, which now amounts to $1.2 million. Approximately 20 percent of the people pass the written exam and then undergo an intensive oral examination process. One in five passes the oral exam, with minorities passing at the same rate as the white majority. From 1988 to 2002, minorities had a 21.2 percent pass average, which was slightly higher than for the pool of test-takers. As far as promotion among all ranks is concerned, Pearson describes the rates between minorities and nonminorities as relatively similar. From 2001 to 2003, minorities had a 28.4 percent promotion rate. From 2001 to 2003, nonminorities had a 27.5 percent promotion rate. He explains that “assignments are based on having a fair distribution among everyone and promotion files are ethnically neutralized as much as possible.” For senior positions, there are two committees that choose personnel, one for the DCMs (deputy chiefs of mission) and principal officers, and one for the ambassadors.

However, as Robert Pearson admits, “there are still some challenges within this area, such as the promotion of minorities and women to very senior positions, but there has been progress over the past three years and everybody involved in recruitment in the department is being held responsible to encourage diversity and fairness.” According to Pearson, everyone is subject to equal opportunity laws as well as proactive diversity training. The State Department also has an Office of Civil Rights with procedures for discrimination grievances. With regard to the benefits created by establishing a diverse workforce, Pearson argues, “It is for the greater good of the institution and helps around the world to present the U.S. as a meritocracy.” The institutional landscape reveals that minorities are fairly organized and well-represented through a variety of non governmental organizations, interest groups, and foundations. With increased awareness of the diversity potential of the U.S. population, support for strong social networks — and for the active advancement and social cohesion among minority groups and between minorities and the majority of white Americans — has been steadily growing.
Ethnic-group activism is promoted in American society and many of its institutions. A crucial contribution minorities make to the process is their readiness for constructive participation in a society that in the past might have excluded members of such groups. Therefore, conditions of the legal, political, and cultural environment are crucial to further successful integration. Within the federal government and the foreign affairs agencies, the core American ethnic minorities (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans) are organized into affinity groups. They mostly regard themselves as nonexclusive, and everybody interested in minority issues has the option to join or consult the respective group.

The Foreign Affairs Chapter of Blacks In Government (FACBIG) was founded in 1989. It is one of the more than 200 chapters nationwide chartered by the national organization Blacks In Government (BIG). BIG was organized in 1975 and incorporated as a nonprofit organization under District of Columbia jurisdiction in 1976. It was created as a response to the need for African Americans in public service to organize around issues of mutual concern and use their collective strength to confront workplace and community issues. BIG’s goals are to promote equity in all aspects of American life, excellence in public service, and the extension of opportunities to all Americans, irrespective of skin color. The African-American community has the longest tradition in the State Department and is often identified as the “door opener” for other minority groups. Although African Americans have been prominent in representing diversity within the American diplomatic community and abroad — especially in African countries — such traditions have been consciously strengthened and are continually discussed and affirmed in public meetings. One of many recent examples is the U.S. secretary of state’s Open Forum Conversation Series, which led to a meeting called “Black Diplomacy” (March 1, 2000). In order to gain a better understanding of how minority groups are integrated into U.S. foreign policy institutions, it is helpful to look at the careers of a few prominent officials who are also members of minority groups. In a series of interviews, they discussed their own experiences as well as some of the programs offered that help ensure diversity within the State Department and wider foreign policy institutions.

Ruth Davis started her career in the Foreign Service in 1969 to “help tell the American story abroad,” and was the first African-American female career ambassador, having served in that capacity to the Republic of Benin from 1992 to 1996. From 2001 to 2003, she worked as director general and director of human resources of the Foreign Service under Secretary of State Colin Powell. During this period, she increased the number of African Americans in the Foreign Service, particularly by quadrupling its advertising budget, much of which went to target minority groups. In addition to this, the number of fellows hired through the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship program was doubled. The Pickering program, funded by the U.S. State Department and administered by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, is designed to recruit talented students in academic programs relevant to international affairs, political and economic analysis, administration, management, and science policy for careers in the Foreign Service. This program tries to attract outstanding students from all ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds for its fellowship award, which includes tuition, room, board, and mandatory fees during the junior and senior years of college and during the first year of graduate study. Fellows attend two seven-week summer schools on public policy and international affairs; participate in two summer internships, one in the United States and one abroad; and receive mentoring from a Foreign Service officer during the graduate school segment. To be eligible to apply for...
“With increased awareness of the diversity potential of the U.S. population, support for strong social networks and the active advancement and social cohesion among minority groups and between minorities and the majority of white Americans has been steadily growing.”

the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, students need to be U.S. citizens with a cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or higher, which must be maintained throughout participation in the program. Once accepted for a Pickering Fellowship, students are obligated to a minimum of four and a half years’ service in an appointment as a Foreign Service officer.

The Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program is another recruitment initiative for those interested in working within the Foreign Service of the U.S. State Department. This program actively encourages the involvement of members of minority groups as well as those with financial needs. The Rangel program offers ten fellowships every year for undergraduate students. The fellowship provides up to $28,000 annually, to be applied toward graduate-level study in international relations or a related subject at a school approved by the Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center. In addition to financial support, the program also offers an educational support system, including two summer internships, one of which is on Capitol Hill and the other overseas at a U.S. embassy; ongoing mentorship from a Foreign Service officer; and a six-week Summer Enrichment Program to stimulate student interest in international affairs and related career opportunities. In order to apply, students must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or higher, and they are expected to maintain this grade throughout their fellowship. In addition to outstanding leadership skills and academic achievement, students must be able to demonstrate financial need in order to qualify. All accepted Rangel Fellows who earn a master’s degree are committed to serving a minimum of three years in an appointment as a Foreign Service officer.

Despite such initiatives and recent successes, the number of African Americans is still not reflective of society at large, with only about 5.5 percent to 6 percent of Foreign Service officers being African American. Reflecting on these numbers, Ruth Davis stated, “I’ve never been happy, and I’m still not happy. And I don’t think Colin Powell is happy about the numbers.” Because of the lack of African Americans in the Foreign Service, she said, “one of the problems in the Service has not been overt racism, but ‘benign neglect.’” However, attitudes have changed since the time when Davis joined the Foreign Service, which she explained by saying, “Sometimes I didn’t know if people were reacting to me because I was a woman, because I was black, or because they were stupid.” She argues that, although changes have been visible in recent years, it is still important to increase the department’s level of diversity. This is best done through a more widespread use of programs such as the Pickering and Rangel fellowships, which bring members of minority groups in contact with the Foreign Service. In addition, Davis states that more African Americans need to be brought into the Foreign Service through the conventional way of taking the written and oral exams. The hindrance to this being accomplished is the lack of internationally oriented courses and degree programs at historically black universities, programs that are necessary in order for African Americans to become acquainted with, and interested in, international affairs.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield works with the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and began her service with the Department of State in 1982. She took the Foreign Service exam in 1978, a time when there were few active programs to recruit African Americans. As she recalls, the majority of African Americans within the service were primarily employed in technical roles. The only formal attempt to recruit African Americans was through an entry program that involved employment directly into mid-level positions without the requirement to sit the formal entry exams undertaken by all
other employees. Linda Thomas-Greenfield said this program only created an overall impression that all African Americans working within the Department of State were being employed for the benefit of statistics, rather than for their skills and academic qualifications. She views this type of program as a failed attempt at affirmative action because it bypassed certain aspects of the accepted recruitment process, it only succeeded in increasing prejudice, and it undermined not only those African Americans who had pursued conventional avenues, but those recruited through the program as well.

In recent years, she agrees, the Foreign Service, in realizing the importance and benefits of a representative workforce, has developed a number of programs to address this issue. Having witnessed the success of these programs, such as Pickering and Rangel, she wholly supports their objectives. When Linda Thomas-Greenfield entered the Foreign Service, she says, she had little knowledge about the system, but African Americans today “are very confident, very knowledgeable of the work, and they know exactly what they want to achieve within the service.” In the past, African Americans within the Department of State were unfairly criticized about their inability to write like a Foreign Service officer, as happened to Thomas-Greenfield when, she says, “my first supervisor told me I could not write.” This problem, she explains, stemmed from a lack of mentoring given to African Americans in their early years within the service, compared to white counterparts who received regular mentoring. To address this, a formal mentoring system has been introduced, in which Thomas-Greenfield plays an active role. The same is true for minority educational institutions, but she feels that this matter is being addressed by the Diplomats in Residence program, and she stresses the importance of the expansion of this initiative.

With regard to the number of programs being introduced to increase minority participation in the Foreign Service, the question over what specific benefits equally qualified African Americans can offer over whites could be raised. In response, Thomas-Greenfield does “not think we learn or work any differently,” but feels strongly that the “Foreign Service, which represents the face of America, should show a diverse, fair and integrated America” to the outside world. In the current political climate it is important to create “a vision that America has a multicultural society.”

When questioned on her experiences of racism within the Foreign Service, Linda Thomas-Greenfield reflects on her career in a fairly positive manner. Having grown up in Louisiana, she compares any prejudice toward her within the Foreign Service as being almost negligible. On reflection, she recalls that the only direct confrontations in which racism arose took place between some of her close colleagues and friends, who made prejudiced remarks without even realizing their nature. However, during the early stages of her career, she participated in the Black Class Action Lawsuit against the Department of State, established to investigate whether African Americans’ promotional development had been hampered in comparison to that of their white counterparts. On a personal level, if she had been permitted to, Thomas-Greenfield says she would have opted out of this case, as she did not feel that the lawsuit applied to her, and the committee finding on her case agreed. However, her situation was not typical of other findings, and evidence of the unequal treatment of African Americans was documented, particularly with regard to promotions to Officer rank, and these cases were compensated.
Overall, Linda Thomas-Greenfield stresses the positive results achieved by the Department of State in its attempt to diversify its workforce and make employment more accessible to all American minorities. In recent years, she has noticed an increasing level of competitiveness among all groups within the Foreign Service, which she views as a confirmation that the Foreign Service is succeeding in leveling the playing field. Yet, she feels strongly about the need for further development to make the Foreign Service workforce much more reflective of the general population.

Eva González is a physical scientist working for the Bureau of Arms Control at the State Department, and she chairs the Hispanic Employees Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies (HECFAA) at the Department of State. For a number of years, she says, the group was “not very active, owing to a lack of support and apathy.” More recently, however, a new generation has rededicated itself to the employee organization, which started in the late 1970s. As chairperson, González organizes lunchtime meetings to discuss current issues and concerns of Hispanics. When defining her function, she clarifies, “Some people at the department believe that HECFAA can process discrimination complaints, but that is not what we do.” Rather, the organization “mentors people” and helps “identify practices that could result in discrimination during the hiring or promotion process. If we identify a practice that can adversely affect the Hispanic employee, we then recommend alternatives to the Office of the Director General.” Asked about the group’s political orientation, González explains, “HECFAA is a nonpartisan assemblage.”

Although overall awareness of the diversity gap in employment has increased and some progress has been made to open the Foreign Service hiring processes, there is still expressed disappointment about underrepresentation, particularly among Hispanics. In an interview with the Federal Times last year, Jorge Ponce, co-chair of the Council of Federal Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Executives, highlighted some central problems. He pointed out that although the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has diversity on its agenda, it focuses more on complaint processes within government agencies and on litigation than on proactive affirmative action responsibilities. There is evidence of this: most of the commission’s 356-page report for FY 2003 analyzes the agencies’ processing of discrimination complaints, whereas only 6 pages of the report are devoted to the representation of minorities and women in the workplace. Ponce noted that Hispanics comprise about 13 percent of the national workforce today, but they made up under 6 percent of the federal workforce in 1994. At a national level, this figure had increased more than 7 percent by 2003, but Hispanic representation in the Senior Executive Service, which is the liaison organization between top presidential appointees and the rest of the federal workforce, is stuck at around 3.4 percent. Ponce argued that taking proactive steps to increase the Hispanic representation is a major challenge for agencies because “the main problem is that despite the fact that Hispanics have been underrepresented in the federal government at least for the last ten years, the federal agencies are still looking for the magic answer” (Ziegler 2004).

A senior executive official at the State Department, Roy Chavera, saw “overall progress at a snail’s pace.” Depicting the prospects for Hispanics as rather discouraging, he said that “today, the number of Hispanic career and ambassadorial appointees is at an all-time low. Hispanic representation in the department has been at a constant 4 percent for the last 20 years.” He explains that, statistically, the group’s representation seems to improve at least slightly, but such small increases still fail to keep pace
with overall Hispanic population dynamics. Factors such as political indifference, insufficient education, and mere lack of availability on the side of the Hispanics have often been cited as factors hindering recruitment. González emphasizes that “Hispanics have both the commitment and the expertise that are needed to succeed. The pool of highly qualified and trained Hispanics is big enough and does not support their underrepresentation.” The most prominent problems, all interviewees agreed, are lack of access to information, failed efforts at outreach, and the inability to consistently demonstrate genuine gains in promotions for Hispanic Civil and Foreign Service employees.

Eva González also pointed to other causes for Hispanic underrepresentation in the Foreign Service, including the stringent application processes for Foreign Service positions. The entry examinations are still seen as a hurdle, especially with regard to the oral section. In the Civil Service, González points out, the whole application process is different and is overseen by the Office of Personnel Management. The procedure for a Civil Service job is quite complicated, she argues, “and you need somebody to guide you through the application process, especially writing the qualification criteria or KSAs in the correct format for the specific job application.” When it comes to help and support, the functionality and success of (family) networks have an impact on job distribution, in both the Civil and Foreign Service, but they are currently nonexistent among the small group of Hispanics. Moises Behar, a Civil Service employee at the Office of Andean Affairs, claimed that there is a need for more Civil Service positions opened for “all sources,” especially in positions dealing directly with foreign affairs. Currently, most of the Civil Service and foreign affairs positions are only open for current State Department or federal government employees, where the diversity pool is limited. Opening more positions for individuals applying from outside the federal government would increase the diversity pool for the department.

Francisco Zamora, chair of the USAID Chapter of the Hispanic Employees Council for Foreign Affairs Agencies (USAID HECFAA), identified the lack of full-time recruiters and insufficient funding as main problems. “USAID has for years allocated only approximately $15,000 for job fairs and recruitment expenses annually,” he said, “and that is by far not enough funding for a professional outreach program.” Although outreach programs are starting to receive more funding today, this trend has not yet translated to significantly improved Hispanic hiring rates. According to March 2005 statistics, 93 of 2,310 USAID employees are Hispanic (3.8 percent), and among the 135 Senior Executive Service (including Foreign Service) officers, only 5 are Hispanic (3.5 percent). Although successful initiatives promoting Civil and Foreign Service jobs — such as the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program, the New Entry Professional program, and the International Development Intern program — exist, it is unclear whether enough Hispanics hear about such programs. Assuming the pool of Hispanics is big enough, the question remains outreach.

Mr. Zamora also provided concrete recommendations for improvement. First, it would be helpful if USAID were to increase the number of Hispanic recruiters. Only one recently established position exists. Given that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offices now primarily produce statistics, they could possibly do a better job in encouraging more diversity-oriented outreach strategies. Zamora also mentioned that “the mentality of people within the organization has to change.” Implementation...
of more diversity-oriented activities is sometimes difficult because “pockets of resistance” against Hispanic employment still exist. He describes the foreign affairs agencies as the worst of all government institutions as far as numbers of Hispanics employed are concerned, since they are more traditional than other government agencies. He feels that increasing diversity should be viewed as being a positive input to Foreign Service, but because diversity has long been a class issue, the concern about double loyalties might have played a role. “Hispanics did not feel welcome at the State Department-affiliated agencies like USAID,” Zamora points out, “and although we have overtaken other minorities as the largest group in the United States, we have the lowest representation in the foreign affairs agencies such as the State Department and USAID.”

It is in the interest of the U.S. government to remove these hurdles, the interviewees argued, adding valuable human resources. Ethnic diversity, overall, contributes to a diversity of skills. Zamora pointed out that Hispanic expertise can “help understanding about conditions in underdeveloped societies” and thus contribute to activities in other countries. “Nobody likes quotas or statistics,” he admitted, “but statistics point at existing problems. We need to deliver the facts to show that our multinational society is not represented in foreign affairs although both are dependent on each other.” If the United States promotes diversity and equality overseas, it should itself represent its encouragement of minority participation in its ranks. This theme is particularly important for an international agency like USAID. Although Zamora is critical about short-term prospects, he looks optimistically to the future and credits USAID for starting to change: “We are unafraid of challenging existing barriers — we are, after all, very American.”

Jorge Ponce added recommendations, in the Federal Times, on how the problem should be tackled. He argued that increased representation could only be achieved with commitment from top leadership. The Department of Homeland Security’s workforce is almost 23 percent Hispanic, as is 12 percent of the Social Security Administration’s workforce. Agencies should meet with human capital leaders from those two agencies to find out more about their diversity programs, Ponce said. In addition, agencies should embark on a massive recruitment effort, staffed by diverse teams that include Hispanics. “If you don’t have Hispanics represented in recruitment trips, applicants will get the idea that agencies aren’t very serious about hiring Hispanics.”

Representative Danny Davis (D-III), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, agreed by saying that agencies should approach minority groups directly, since many minorities have a limited understanding of how to apply for federal employment. “Agencies have to get more proactive if people are going to find federal employment,” he says. “If some groups never get in the door, never know where to go, don’t know how to approach federal employment opportunities, the federal government’s hiring, retention, and promotion will not be diverse” (Ziegler 2004).

Corazon Sandoval Foley is a Filipina American who served as the chairperson of the Asian Pacific American Federal Foreign Affairs Council (APAFFAC) and is a senior regional economist for East and South Asia in the Office of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State. She joined the service in 1978 and since 1980 has been involved in recruitment and mentoring. The APAFFAC works with political appointees to improve the recruitment of Asian-American minorities. Supported by the secretary of labor, the group participates in an Asian-American summit every year, one effort among many to remove glass ceilings, those invisible and artificial barriers that impede the advancement of minorities to senior leadership positions in
government. These de facto barriers often limit the development and mobility of men and women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. As with Hispanics, she argues that Asian-American representation in the Foreign Service agencies does not match the societal resources. Out of 13 million Asian Americans, only 800 are employed at the State Department, about 4 percent its total number of employees. Foley identified problems similar to those of the Hispanic minority, including very low representation at the upper management level (only about 2.7 percent) due to persisting deficiencies in promotion to the senior level. Only three State Department political appointees are from the Asian-American community.

Foley argues that Asian Americans do not have a very long tradition within the State Department, and that they struggle more against deeply rooted political and cultural prejudices. As Foley points out, certain stereotypes of Asian Americans — such as their being quiet, embarrassed, or hesitant to speak up — have had considerable impact on employment and promotion decisions in the State Department. She considers it interesting how ambivalent, even antithetical, these stereotypical images of Asians were and to some degree, still are — all of which are disadvantageous for a career in the Foreign Service. While African Americans received the first black appointment for a high-level position in 1949, the first Asian-American ambassador, Julia Chang-Bloch, was appointed 40 years later, to the Kingdom of Nepal. “The establishment had for long not been comfortable with diversifying the Foreign Service,” Foley explains, “and they were concerned with maintaining a so-called elite tradition.”

A reason for the late recognition of Asian-American employment issues was the complex historical relationship, particularly with Japanese Americans. The U.S. government addressed many instances of anti-Asian riots in the first half of the 20th century by restricting the influx of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. The 1924 Immigration Act denied entry to virtually all Asians. It took 41 years before the U.S. Immigration Law abolished national origin as a basis for allocating immigration quotas to various countries, putting Asian countries on an equal footing for the first time. During the remainder of the century, memories of political conflict and internment camps kept mental barriers fresh on both sides.

In the second half of the 20th century, change began to accelerate, the most prominent example being the hiring of Norman Mineta as Secretary of Transportation. He and his family were among the 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry forced from their homes and into internment camps during World War II. Yet he became the first Asian-American mayor of a major U.S. city, San Jose, California, from 1971 to 1974, and has served in the U.S. government since 1975. He co-founded the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and became its first chair. While in Congress, Mineta was the driving force behind passage of HR 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which officially apologized for and attempted to redress the injustices endured by Japanese Americans during the Second World War. His and further examples of outstanding individual success within the Asian-American minority community indicate progress but do not represent an overall trend.

Nevertheless, Foley is optimistic about the future. “There has been an incredible change in attitude towards minorities,” she says, “and Secretary Rice’s appointment by President Bush is a great message for inclusion of all Americans in the foreign policy establishment.” She sees decisive improvement of the situation, particularly in the development of minority networks. Asked about the main barriers for promotion, Foley explains that although “in the past, it was really difficult to overcome the biases hindering advancement of minorities,

“Ethnic diversity, overall, contributes to a diversity of skills.”
today we are slowly but surely progressing in the development of connections and support groups to provide career advancement information for minorities who would otherwise have been excluded from the old discriminatory clubs or guilds.” Political connections are imperative, and thus the increasing cooperation between government and minority groups is a promising development. “There is of course a high intensity of competition for ambassadorial posts,” Foley adds, “but the past has shown that political appointees from diverse ethnic backgrounds contributed to some movement on the ambassador front.” For those who made their way into a foreign service career, the Foreign Service Institute provides training and support in preparing American diplomats and other professionals to advance U.S. foreign interests overseas and in Washington. Another important factor Foley mentions is how the respective minorities are performing outside the State Department, in society and business. She says that the increasing societal and entrepreneurial success of Asian Americans is likely to be reflected in their influence and representation in the Foreign Service. Minority leaders therefore encourage their communities to become more economically active, since this will generate more political support.

The overall pressure on the government to diversify its workforce has increased considerably, and publicity-catching actions, such as high-profile lawsuits, have helped put minority community issues on the agenda. Also, linguistic skills are more valued now in the selection process. Although Secretary of State Colin Powell began asking Congress to increase the budget of the State Department when he first arrived, the events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq have led to a more concerted effort to recruit speakers of Arabic languages. However, as Foley points out, “There is a difference between having a guild of facilitators like multi-linguists and integrating minorities. The major pressure to bring in minorities is both political and legal.” To the final interview question — what she believes to be the added value of minority participation in the Foreign Service — Corazon Foley spontaneously answered: “Democracy,” and she continued, “You need to have support from all your citizens, also for foreign policy, and you need to invite them to be part of the policy community.” She stressed that the administration “should not deprive itself of talents from other groups,” since, by reaching out it could gather political support for diplomatic initiatives within society. Finally, diversity underlines “the message that you bring overseas” and provides “a stronger base to argue policies in countries that the U.S. deals with.”

As one can see from these interviews, the results of diversity policy vary based on perspective. When viewed through a long-term historical lens, the Department of State appears to have made significant efforts and been rewarded with a more cosmopolitan and diverse labor force. The institutional effects have followed, in many regards, trends throughout the United States, focusing on eradicating structural barriers and legally enforcing anti-discrimination statutes. But as representatives of the various minority groups all agreed in interviews, the diversity situation is far from perfect.
Diversity as Foreign Policy Asset

Considering how demographic shifts and the new post-1990 world order have intertwined domestic and international policy debates, the U.S. Department of State seems to be well equipped for dealing with the challenges ahead. The legacy of bitter conflicts during the civil rights era, painful and costly class action lawsuits, institutional change, goodwill, and enlightened self-interest have created an extraordinary political and institutional environment. The empirical approach of accumulating information on the workday of Foreign Service officials in the 1990s was helpful in modernizing content and procedures in the Department of State. The skills required for advancement show that communicative capacities, problem-solving, creativity and cultural competencies, as well as specialization, are important. Thus, recruiting parameters and basic training differ dramatically from, for example, the practice in Germany, where often a law degree is a helpful prerequisite.

In addition to these inner-institutional traditions, an ongoing nongovernmental discussion about these issues exists within the think tank community in Washington and beyond, as well as in organizations dedicated exclusively to such issues. One of these is the aforementioned Institute for International Public Policy (IIPP), which addresses diversity where it intersects U.S. national and global interests. The institute has a Web-based information and tracking system (see www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsiipp), and helps to bring minorities into successful international service careers. It is within such organizations that the most current debates are led. Interestingly, in his assessment of future trends, IIPP Executive Director Mark Chichester sees affirmative action diminishing at the same time that a culturally diverse environment is developing. He argues that the “institutional self-interest is moving away from the individual perspective of affirmative action and individual opportunity” toward the development of a U.S. policy of “cultural competence,” which goes beyond racial and ethnic diversity. It embraces a “broader conception of diversity of experience and perspective that allows individuals to communicate and function effectively across cultures” (IIPP, 25).

In order for the State Department to use the “untapped natural resources” of American society, the case must be made that identifying, teaching, and leveraging cultural competence is not an idealist proposal, but falls squarely within the national interest. However, as Chichester acknowledges, it is neither an automatic nor an easy process to introduce cultural competence into the goals and performance measures of American institutions with international responsibilities.

The same is true for an increasingly diverse European Union, as well as for the new Germany. With the changing demographics within Europe, it is becoming increasingly necessary to reevaluate the manner in which European states develop their foreign policy. It is important for them to understand that the integration of members of minority communities into their foreign policy institutions leads to an overall strengthening of foreign policy.
7 Bibliography and Internet Resources

Publications


Web-Based Resources

1 American Foreign Service Association, www.afsa.org

2 Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, www.apaics.org

3 Black Professionals in International Affairs, www.iabpia.org

4 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, www.chci.org


7 The Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center, www.howard.edu/rjb/rangelprogram.htm


Michael Werz is Director of the Hessen Universities Consortium in New York, a liaison office for 12 German universities and the Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and the Arts. He completed a doctoral degree in philosophy in 1998 at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, and was a Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1996–1997; a John F. Kennedy Memorial Fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard in 2000–2001; a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, in 2002; and a Transatlantic Fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States in Washington, DC, since 2004.

Dr. Werz was assistant professor of sociology at the University of Hannover from 1998 to 2005, where his primary interests lay in the Frankfurt School theory, the philosophy of the European Enlightenment, and 20th century American thought. Among other books, he edited and wrote Bosnien und Europa (Fischer, 1994); Antisemitismus und Gesellschaft (Neue Kritik, 1995); Keine Kritische Theorie ohne Amerika (Neue Kritik, 1999); Grenzen der Saekularisierung (Stroemfeld, 2000); Kritik des Ethnonationalismus (Neue Kritik, 2000); and Veränderte Weltbilder (Neue Kritik, 2005). His recent research focuses on the socio-historical and academic factors involved in the development of ethnicity and identity politics.
GMF OFFICES

WASHINGTON, DC
1744 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
T 1 202 745 3950
F 1 202 265 1662
E info@gmfus.org

BERLIN
Oranienburger Str. 13/14
10178 Berlin, Germany
T 49 30 28 88 13 0
F 49 30 28 88 13 10

BRATISLAVA
Transatlantic Center for Central and Eastern Europe
Štúrova 3
811 02 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
T 421 2 5931 1522
F 421 2 5931 1405

PARIS
30 rue Galilée
75116 Paris, France
T 33 1 47 23 47 18
F 33 1 47 23 48 16

BRUSSELS
Transatlantic Center
Résidence Palace
Rue de la Loi 155 Wetstraat
1040 Brussels, Belgium
T 32 2 238 5270
F 32 2 238 5299

BELGRADE
Balkan Trust for Democracy
Dobračina 44
11000 Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro
T 381 11 30 36 454
F 381 11 32 88 022

ANKARA
Tunus Cad. No. 15/4
Kavaklidere 06680
Ankara, Turkey
T 90 312 425 6677
F 90 312 425 3399

www.gmfus.org