



Report on Wilton Park Conference WP820

WILTON PARK BRITISH-GERMAN FORUM 2006 BUILDING MODERN SOCIETIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: INTEGRATION, IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY

Monday 10 – Friday 14 July 2006

Introduction

1. This year's Forum spent almost four days in deep and sometimes heated discussion on what can be an emotive topic: religion, race, who we are, and how we react to differences from "ourselves" and welcome newcomers to our societies. The group recognised that Germany and the United Kingdom face broadly the same problems in building a modern society with an integrated population. Whilst both countries were moving towards solutions, and could learn from one another on the way, the goal posts however keep moving.

2. In terms of immigration Britain had more experience than Germany of more large scale migration in the 1950s-70s, and again currently with nationals from new EU member states such as Poland arriving in large numbers. For Germany the key challenge remains the integration of its existing migrant population, especially from Turkey, and how it relates to its former "guestworkers", but also from Russia and Eastern Europe.

3. In the concluding session of the Forum the working groups presented a number of concluding thoughts and also raised serious questions for the future. These are highlighted below, together with additional comments made by speakers.

Integration

4. In London one in three citizens is now “from somewhere else”; one in four is non-white. In Germany 19% of those living in Germany have an immigration background. 1.9 million people in Germany have Turkish citizenship. This reality of migration means that people of different cultures, ethnicity and religion are learning to live together and leads to challenging and uncomfortable choices for society and governments. Is assimilation the answer, or encouraging greater multi-culturalism?

5. Immigrants to both the UK and Germany over the last 50 years have generally been looking for a brighter future for their children; the theory of “immigrant succession”. Their primary concern has been economic. They have often managed to integrate in spite of government policies. Inter-ethnic marriages and the change of generations increases integration. As does citizenship. Discussion amongst the group highlighted the different approaches taken in the past between the UK and Germany towards granting citizenship to Turkish immigrants. German society was perhaps less prepared for multi-cultural society and it was important to encourage citizenship, and full participation in the political system.

6. In discussing the role of multi-culturalism there was criticism that it had been developed by policy makers for the ethnic minorities rather than with them. Extreme forms of multi-culturalism had created certain groups trying to exist without reference to the wider society. Many felt that policy makers should concentrate on social and economic factors to support newer migrants get a job and their children an education.

7. It was also felt that newer migrant communities may become less integrated in future with the potential for increased ghettoisation. This could, in part, be a result of the continued communications through the internet etc with their “home” nation and the opportunity to maintain a strong diaspora. Too much segregation of societies could lead to greater problems with racial tensions spilling over as seen in rioting in Bradford for instance. By comparison, it was noted, there have not been similar riots involving Turkish immigrants in Germany. Too much diversity can also prevent greater cohesion.

8. It was noted that education is the basis of an integrated Europe; equality in education is essential to prevent discrimination. To achieve this it is critical for immigrants to learn the native language, and this needs to be ensured at schools, but provision made within communities also; equally, for instance, accrediting Turkish as a language in German schooling. It was felt that integrated Schools were more desirable for children allowing a balance of ethnicity in schools. There is a need for parents, particularly those newer migrants who may not have had similar experience of schooling themselves to become involved in their childrens' school and education. In both Germany and the UK many children of ethnic minorities are leaving school underachieving, entering the labour market as 'human-capital poor'. That ethnic disadvantage becomes a penalty.

9. Encouraging racial equality in society and in the job market is therefore important. Equality aims for a fair treatment for all citizens. Germany does not have the structure that the UK does through its Commission for Racial Equality. In the UK there has recently been a shift away from equality towards recognising difference. This was sometimes felt as counter-productive. Could a black child be fostered by white parents and vice versa? If cultural differences are not overcome tribal instincts may increase and it was suggested that multi-culturalism can encourage tribalism, creating competition between communities and intolerance.

10. Business can play a key role in integration; a diverse workforce fosters integration. It was noted that the growth in the working age population in both countries will come from minority communities over the next 15 years. More businesses are taking 'positive action' to enable them to employ the best people. They recognise that those with a foreign background can help the company position itself to cope with the forces of globalisation. It is likely that more business will be run by those of ethnic migrant backgrounds in future.

11. For current and future migrants it was suggested that what was needed included:

- strategies and policies for meeting the social needs of new migrants once they arrive;

- an assessment of the impact and value of migration on the migrants themselves, recognising the varying economic and social backgrounds and likely different rates of integration;
- improved orientation/welcome packs for migrants.

Future immigration policy

12. Integration of future migrants will depend on the way immigration policy is shaped. But why is immigration needed in Europe? The changing demographics in the UK and Germany are a critical factor. Declining birth rates and aging populations are increasing the dependency ratios and will lead to continued pressures on government-provided welfare support. Immigration is therefore a necessary part of the overall solution for economic and social survival.

13. How many migrants are needed? A Europe-wide 20-year long-term plan/policy framework on migration policy was recommended. Who will the new global migrants be in 20 years time? Will Britain and Germany be in competition to attract the best qualified migrants? Will Britons and Germans in fact be migrating to India and China for jobs? Migration should not be “on demand”; there is also a need to consider the implications for the country of origin and for EU countries to have appropriate “importing policies”.

14. Greater debate about the overall need for immigration is needed it was suggested, together with exploring the alternatives. Alternatives, which were discussed, include:

- encouraging the current population to have more babies;
- providing improved policies for families and working parents to enable them to do so and the provision of better child-care provision – state-free, or at least with income subsidies. Governments cannot do this alone; business needs to encourage a work/life balance, allow more part-time working etc which will only work if a company understands the long-term benefits for them. Companies need to begin to have part-time leading staff. There were calls for society as a whole to be more child-friendly; what can government do to support this? Norwegian policy sets a 40% quota of women in the board-room which forces them to retain their female staff who have children. In the

Netherlands there is legal provision for workers to have a 4-day week if they choose it;

- training current settled migrants and people in poor socio-economic positions to do the jobs that are being filled by new migrants;
- look at the message which is implied when saying to migrants “we need people to do the jobs our people do not want to do”;
- look into the viability of career progression of supposedly dead-end jobs – learning for instance from supermarkets and MacDonalds.

15. Immigration will continue to be a thorny political issue. In the UK an intolerant minority of about 15-20% have a real fear of immigration. There is recognition that modern societies will be hugely challenged by new waves of migration, especially if this is accentuated by ‘differences’ in race and religion from their traditional societies. Participants from both countries were keen to see integration succeed but recognised the challenges given the likelihood of increased immigration in coming years. Immigration would need to be seen to be beneficial by all members of society if harmony within society was to be achieved.

Ideology

16. The increasing mobilisation of communities around ethnic and religious lines was noted, especially amongst newer communities. Whilst this was not divergent from previous waves of immigration in past centuries it was felt that religious differences are likely to rise in future with greater identity with a faith, and the differentiation of the values and ideals of those faiths becoming more important.

17. It was felt a clash between Islam and Christianity is unlikely within European societies, but there is a risk of increased tension between value systems, some based on religious beliefs. The secular state might need to be more accommodating to the religious values whilst at the same time rearticulating secular values. There is likely to be increased debate about what the values of a society and nation are. Turkish accession to the EU, with Turkey a secular state but with a predominantly Muslim population, is likely to throw these issues into sharp relief.

18. There is a potential for increased conflict within Muslim communities in both the UK and Germany between so-called moderates and extremists, however these are described. Who speaks for the Muslim communities? How can they reduce tensions between different views? "Home-grown" Imams and inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue of all faiths should be encouraged.

19. Faith-based communities, whether Muslim, Christian or other, have both opportunities and responsibilities in a secular society. Freedom of religious expression and speech has to be set within boundaries.

Identity

20. The values of a society and nation are developed around a sense of identity. Identities, it was suggested, are increasingly based on a local level: there is more identity with cities and regions than the nation state. "I am from Berlin or London; I am Bavarian or Welsh". People are increasingly proud to display their distinctions and differences whether relating to a distinct team (much on the minds of the Forum coming immediately after the 2006 World Cup) or of a tribe. Germans are perhaps keener to see the nation state providing the overarching identity – to be German rather than of 'hyphenated' identity, such as Irish-American.

21. At the same time identity is increasingly formulated around race, culture and religion. Whilst there is no permanent idea of identity; it is likely to be reinvented every 20 years. Britain had used a strong multicultural identity as part of its Olympic bid for 2012. The question of identity had recently been raised throughout Germany during its hosting of the World Cup

22. In relation to the European Union (EU) Germans have a stronger identity towards the EU than Britons. The EU is still a greater shaper of society in Germany than the UK. The current level of identity of Britons and Germans towards the EU is likely to remain at a similar level in future.

23. How will future migrants change the receiving countries themselves? An increasing fragmentation of societies is expected; with a rise of political parties representing ethnic and socio economic groups. This politicisation of certain groups

could be positive, encouraging greater civil engagement. It could however encourage the rise of extremist parties.

24. As society fragments there is likely to be greater debate about citizenship in the coming years. The question of values, rights and duties is likely to become increasingly important.

25. As the proportion of the population in Germany and the UK have links with international flash points – whether Middle East, South Asia etc, the interplay between foreign and domestic policy will become more important. For Muslims the concept of Ummah and brotherhood take precedence over national identity and this is likely to increase tensions between the value systems nationally and internationally.

Conclusion

26. As a concluding remark the group recognised that issues of integration of current and future migrants, identity and ideology are likely to become more relevant and more heated in the coming years within our societies. They questioned whether the current political leaders in both countries were prepared for the ongoing changes within and across societies? New leadership would be needed for the new societies. In 20 years time there could well be a Chancellor or Prime Minister who had an ethnic background.

Robin Hart
August 2006

Wilton Park Reports are brief summaries of the main points and conclusions of a conference. The reports reflect rapporteurs' personal interpretations of the proceedings – as such they do not constitute any institutional policy of Wilton Park nor do they necessarily represent the views of rapporteurs.