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Understanding global intercultural dialogue initiatives within the logic of state-based multiculturalism

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This research programme focuses on a range of issues, theoretical and practical, related to cultural diversity and difference. Migration and media are twin facets of globalization, the one demographic, with crucial spatio-temporal consequences, and the other cultural and technological. While migration often poses the question of cultural difference, diverse forms of media play a key role in enabling representation, thus forging modes of communication. Through a focus on the role of media, this research programme explores the extent to which the latter bridges cultural differences in contexts of migration and facilitates intercultural dialogue. Of interest too are the ways in which media can mobilize societies and cultures. Also relevant is the role of media in triggering migration, as well as in connecting migrants to their homelands.

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Summary

This report uses the lens of the state-based multiculturalism literature to provide an insight into global intercultural dialogue initiatives. It argues that the draw-backs within outdated forms of mosaic multiculturalism persist in global intercultural dialogue. It is proposed that these problems derive from a mentality of engagement that mirrors that of mosaic multiculturalism at a state level (which sees society as a mosaic of discrete cultural groups). Within the multiculturalism literature, there has already been a move away from mosaic-like forms of the theory, and it is proposed that a movement similar to that evident in the multiculturalism literature is necessary with regard to the development of further intercultural dialogue initiatives.

Evidence

Introducing multiculturalism

It is useful to consider the first known in-print use of the word ‘multiculturalism’ in English, as it reflects much of what would later feature in multiculturalism discourse. It appeared in 1957, in *Hispania*, a journal concerned with the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese, based at John Hopkins University in the United States (OED 2003):

... the section of the country [U.S.A.] which I represent is a land, as lands all over the world should be, where good will, understanding and cooperation are not only desirable but essential. For here its Indians, its Americans of Spanish descent, and its "Anglos" meet in daily contact. They must not only co-exist but contribute to each other's lives. The key to successful living here, as in Switzerland, is multilingualism, which can carry with it multiculturalism (Meade 1957 349).

This passage presents multiculturalism as a valuing of individuals' cultural affiliations, and as a compromise between the maintenance of distinct cultural groups and peaceful cohabitation within a society.

It also reflects the two main disciplinary frameworks in which multiculturalism has developed. There is within this passage, social-scientific multiculturalism: a sociological description of what is the case now, and of a process of social change. There is also multiculturalism as a normative and normative-political reflection on such social-scientific observations. In the above passage, multiculturalism is represented not only as good for the US, but also as universally good. This universalistic element to multiculturalism is something still critiqued today (e.g. Taylor 1994).

There are a number of ways to differentiate between forms of multiculturalism. This report adopts the two-fold distinction, offered for example by Joppke and Lukes, of mosaic multiculturalism and hodgepodge multiculturalism (Joppke and Lukes 1999). Mosaic multiculturalism describes or advocates a mosaic-like society of distinct cultural groups. Hodgepodge multiculturalism describes or advocates a messier social arrangement of intersecting and changing cultural groups. In practice, multiculturalist policy practices vary, according to local contextual frameworks (e.g. Ivison 2010 2) and also according to different types of group interaction (e.g. Kymlicka 2010 36-7). This report focuses on mosaic multiculturalism as the version of the theory that provides the best model for current intercultural dialogue (ICD) initiatives.

Mosaic multiculturalism

Mosaic multiculturalism is the idea that the state is made up of discrete cultural units, which coexist independently of each other, and that the protection of each of these cultural entities is important to the individual right to live within a culture that one feels to be important and worthwhile.¹ The use of the word 'mosaic' in this context is found in comments in a 1965 report regarding the situation in Canada (RCBB 1978). Indeed, in 1971, Canada became the first officially multicultural state.

Since its inception, there has been much criticism of mosaic multiculturalism. The most important of these criticisms are that it:

1. Falsely creates a classification of people along firm cultural lines that do not exist (e.g. Benhabib 1999 56);
2. Ignores vulnerable persons and communities within groups (e.g. Okin 1999);

¹ Will Kymlicka is often seen as a quintessential multiculturalist of this form, from his 1995 introduction to the theory until his more recent work, however throughout, it seems appropriate to apply mosaic multiculturalism to only two of the three groups of cultural interactions he discusses.

3. Assumes the privileged authenticity and entitlement of a prioritised hegemonic culture (e.g. de Ruijter 1997); and
4. Does not explain how a coherent political culture can be developed (e.g. Raz 1998 201; Waldron 1992 760).

These criticisms will be developed in more detail in the context of the discussion of global ICD.

It might be argued that it is artificial to adopt mosaic multiculturalism here, as it has been largely replaced by more democratic and more complex forms of the theory within the multiculturalism literature (e.g. Taylor 1994; Shacher 2009). However, as it will be shown, mosaic multiculturalism provides a useful parallel for consideration of global ICD.

Globalizing multiculturalism

There are three ways in which multiculturalism theory can be globalized:

1. Bringing state-based multiculturalism to more states;
2. Recognizing the relationship between multiculturalist policies within the state and that state's foreign policy, or involvement in international policy; or
3. Expanding the scope of the theory of multiculturalism from the state level to encompass the global community at large.

There has been a developing literature regarding the first two of these, but the third has not really been considered.

In 2010 Will Kymlicka's most recent analysis of the progress of policy relating to the globalization of multiculturalism analyzed international and regional agreements relating to the adoption, by more states, of internal multiculturalist policies.² Indeed, the globalization of multiculturalism has largely been seen in this way, as is apparent from the range of books on global multiculturalism that provide only a range of local cases, for example.³

There has also been a movement towards calling for an acknowledgement of the impact of state-based multiculturalist policies upon foreign and international policy of states and *vice versa* (e.g. Pieterse 2007). The reality of this relationship can be seen particularly clearly through the example of the 2005/6 'Danish Cartoon Crisis', as it has come to be called (McGraw and Warner 2012).

In September 2005, Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, launched a competition for cartoonists to depict the Muslim prophet Mohammed as they saw him, something forbidden in Islam. The competition was ostensibly to make a statement regarding free speech, and particularly media self-censorship, though later discussion of the situation makes the grounds for this seem tenuous (e.g.

² He considers the 1995 Council of Europe Framework Convention on National Minorities (Kymlicka 2007); the establishment, in 1992, of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'s High Commissioner on National Minorities; and the UN General Assembly's 2007 Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Kymlicka 2010 40).

³ E.g. consider, spread through time: Satish K Sharma's 1996 book, *Multiculturalism and Ethnicity in Global Context*; Grant Cornwell and Eve Walsh Stoddard's 2001 book, *Global Multiculturalism*; and Fay Patel, Mingsheng Li and Prahad Sookninan's 2011 book, *Intercultural Communication: Building a Global Community*.

McGraw and Warner 2012). Later in September 2005, the paper published 12 cartoons, in a move that was considered contentious in the context of the contemporary Danish discourse of conflict between multiculturalist policies and freedom of speech (e.g. Murphy 2012 138).

Although some Danish Muslim organizations reacted at the time (Murphy 2012 138), it was not until later that the 'crisis' unfolded. In October the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen controversially initially refused to meet with the ambassadors of various Muslim countries when they asked for meetings with him to discuss the matter (Murphy 2012 139). In December 2005, it was raised at an OIC meeting in Mecca and was soon brought also to the UN. Meanwhile, protests were erupting in several other countries around the world, some of which led to injury and loss of life. This event is seen as an example of how multicultural policies within a state affect and are affected by that state's foreign and international policy (Pieterse 2007; Murphy 2012).

Finally, while the 1970s saw a number of projects applying state-based political theories to a global context (e.g. Beitz's Neo-Rawlsian project), the same was not carried out for multiculturalism. There is not scope here to discuss reasons for this, but this sort of globalization will be used as a model for critiquing global ICD initiatives. Lessons learnt both in the discussion of state-based multiculturalism and in the globalization of other theories will be used.

ICD as globalized mosaic multiculturalism

There have been several instantiations of global ICD initiatives in recent years (e.g. see Bloom 2013a; 2013b). However, this report focuses on the most developed of these, which also currently has the highest international status, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). The UNAOC is currently seen as the principal forum for ICD globally (Bloom 2013b 8). Developed since 2005, by initiatives sponsored by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, and then also by Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, the UNAOC now exists as a separate UN body, with a UN High Representative and a Secretariat, as well as annual meetings and a wide range of initiatives. The argument in this report is that the UNAOC project as it currently exists can be analyzed as a form of globalized mosaic multiculturalism (of the third form), and that the problems associated with this on a state level persist. Further, while these problems may be cushioned within a state, they become more pronounced when the theory is globalized. Indeed, UNAOC works on the premise that there are 'civilizations', particularly the civilizations of the West and Islam (Bloom 2013b 5). It holds that these groupings in fact exist non-arbitrarily and that dialogue between the groups should be facilitated to ensure peaceful cohabitation. For this reason, it is useful to analyze the project as a form of globalized mosaic multiculturalism.

Problems that persist when mosaic multiculturalism is globalized

The UNAOC struggles with the same problems as mosaic multiculturalism on a state level, and existing criticisms of the project can be understood in this light. This section presents the four problems with mosaic multiculturalism discussed above as they pertain to the global ICD initiative of the UNAOC.

(i) False classification

It would be patently false to suggest that there do not exist, broadly, for example, Islamic cultural

groups and Chinese cultural groups, and that there are shared differences between them. However, it is also incorrect to assume that such groupings are mutually independent, in terms of both adherents and cultural content. As a simplistic counter-example, consider the Hui Chinese community, who fit both within Chinese and Islamic civilizational groupings. Such intersects exist throughout the world.

The lack of independence of civilizational groupings is more fundamental in terms of ideas. Indeed, many ideological framework ideas do not, in fact, properly belong to any civilizational heritage. Amartya Sen draws attention to the mathematical concept of Sine as a useful illustration of this. He notes that, as the Indian and British intelligentsia of the Nineteenth Century struggled to distinguish between authentically Indian and forward-thinking-ly Western concepts and ideas, they failed to realize that a large proportion of theoretical heritage of both sides were shared. With regard to Sine:

Aryabhata [a Fifth Century Indian mathematician] called it *ardha-jya* ("half-chord") and *jya-ardha* ("chord-half"), and then abbreviated the term by simply using *jya* ("chord"). From *jya* the Arabs phonetically derived *jiba*, which, following Arabic practice of omitting vowels, was written as *jb*. Now *jiba*, aside from its technical significance, is meaningless in Arabic. Later writers who came across *jb* as an abbreviation for the meaningless word *jiba* substituted *jaib* instead, which contains the same letters, and is a good Arabic word meaning "cove" or "bay". Still later, Gherardo of Cremona (ca. 1150), when he made his translations from the Arabic, replaced the Arabian *jaib* by its Latin equivalent, *sinus* [meaning a cove or a bay], from whence came our present word *sine* (Sen 2006 129, quoting from Howard Eves *History of Mathematics*).

The heritage of Sine, then, is shared across apparent civilizational groups. Indeed, as Sen, and many others have pointed out, this is not only the case with scientific concepts (e.g. Sen 2006; Parens 1994). Notions of justice, of law, and of rights, developed across the world, not independently, but as a result of complex dialogue (Benhabib 2009). As a result, it hardly makes sense to speak of one or another tradition, but rather a global conversation moving towards the world that we have jointly created today. The false assumption that there are distinct civilizational groups of people imposes a notion of clash and disunity that is unnecessary. Meanwhile, the false impression that a particular ideology is authentically derived from one particular civilizational group makes it difficult to facilitate free debate.

(ii) *Communities within communities*

The creation of such ostensibly monolithic groups as conversation partners also makes it difficult to hear from minorities and subgroups within the assigned categories. This includes those that fall across groupings, like the Kurdish community, who may not be considered to fit within *any particular* group, so may be left out of the conversation, as well as, for example, members of the Indian Hindu diaspora in the United States who may consider themselves to be both Western and Hindu at the same time. Indeed, this problem has been raised by OIC member states speaking at meetings of the UNAOC (Bello 2013). For them, Muslim communities within Western states are members of the Muslim civilizational category, and so they advocate on behalf of Muslim communities that are finding themselves subject to discrimination in Western countries. This may appear to disprove the suggestion that this global ICD is problematic for minorities. However, while some minorities may have advocates, for political reasons other minorities do not. For example, Sub-Saharan African

countries are largely not members of the Group of Friends of the UNAOC (Bloom 2013b 7). Thus, while members of the Sub-Saharan African diaspora face significant discrimination in countries of both the 'Western' and the 'Islamic' blocs, this is not addressed through the UNAOC.

(iii) An assumed hegemony

The assumed privileging of a hegemonic cultural group within the project of the UNAOC is made particularly clear by the Media Program's 'Global Experts' project. The list of over 300 experts⁴ are primarily located in Europe and North America (85%). This bias is interesting, given that their area of expertise range across apparent civilizational groups. The prevalent use of English, with some French, Arabic and Spanish, also privileges some contributors to the debate over others (e.g. see Bloom 2013c).

(iv) Makes shared political culture difficult

Finally, the UNAOC presents the possibility for shared political culture as an 'alliance', a combative grouping against some non-included other. However, Michael Murphy contends that, while there are difficulties in theorizing shared political culture within multiculturalist theories, this is not a problem with the *theory*, but with the complicated nature of human existence, and, as such, multiculturalism does no worse than the other theories on offer (Murphy 2012 128). Similarly, it can be argued that, despite the problems with ICD at the UNAOC, culture has turned out to be important to people in ways reflected at the UNAOC, and that UNAOC has become successful because it has responded to a need that people have perceived to be important.

Particular problems associated with globalizing multiculturalism

Each of these problems takes on a new significance when multiculturalism is globalized. The most problematic, perhaps, is the assumption of a hegemonic culture. Will Kymlicka has argued that, on a state level, certain conditions were needed for multiculturalism to develop. He argues that there needs to be a descuritization of state-minority relations and a consensus on human rights (Kymlicka 2010 43). Others have added that global ICD is thwarted by inequalities of economic and political power. Indeed, even at the state level, Brian Barry has argued that multiculturalism reinforces social conflict and sidesteps the real social and economic problems (Barry 2001). So, not only do such inequalities hamper successful dialogue, but dialogue that focuses on cultural differences and sources of conflict serves to obfuscate more fundamental problems of inequality of resources and power.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report has argued that there are fundamental problems with the concept of global ICD. These problems, it argues, can be illuminated by considering this initiative as a globalized version of mosaic multiculturalism. Under this lens, it becomes clear that there are four key problems with the initiative. First, it forces humanity into a false categorization. Second, it can hide the needs of minorities within cultural groups. Third, it functions on the assumption of an underlying hegemonic cultural system, to which only some have authentic claim. Fourth, it does not explain

4 See www.theglobalexperts.org

how to develop a coherent political culture between members of different groups.

This report argues that current ICD initiatives like those at the UNAOC should take note of developments in the literature of state-based multiculturalism, which advocate a move away from mosaic-like understandings of cultural groups. It is increasingly argued that cultural groups are complex and changing, with critique from both within and outside. With this in mind, theorists have advocated a move towards a 'fusion of horizons' (e.g. Taylor 1994; Benhabib 1999). Such a fusion means coming together with a view to finding a shared goal of peaceful cohabitation, of efficient use of existing resources, and of enabling fuller human existence (in its many forms) of people everywhere. This requires, rather than accepting the enforced categorization of peoples according to the essentialist sociology of neo-Huntingdonists, a problematization of such an account.

This report recommends that policy-makers in the area of global intercultural dialogue:

- Challenge the notion that there need be unique and distinct cultural groupings, allowing persons to interact in a range of ways, and from a range of perspectives;
- Recognize the complexity of human life, in which there may be intersecting groups, and groups within groups;
- Problematize the existing underlying hegemony in intercultural dialogue discourse; and
- Focus, rather than on potential differences and inter-group boundaries, on the possibility of developing a coherent political culture that is directed towards the achievement of shared goals.

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