

# UNU-GCM Policy Reports

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## Migration, Media and Intercultural Dialogue

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A historical overview of the relationship between 'intercultural dialogue' and associated terminology in UN-level documents in the mid to late Twentieth Century

Tendayi Bloom



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY

UNU-GCM  
Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility

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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.

# A historical overview of the relationship between ‘intercultural dialogue’ and associated terminology in UN-level documents in the mid to late Twentieth Century

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## Summary

This report takes an overview of the UN-level discourse in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) relating to the notion of ‘intercultural dialogue’, with a primary focus upon UNESCO and UNAOC. It examines the development of the notion of intercultural dialogue alongside that of the connected concepts of ‘Dialogue of Civilizations’, ‘Dialogue Among Civilizations’ and ‘Alliance of Civilizations’. It examines printed documents and speeches to trace the evolution of the term through the bodies in question. It proposes that the development of the use of ‘intercultural dialogue’ in the speeches of the leaders of the organizations being considered is closely connected to the introduction of each of these other key phrases. This report argues that it is crucial, therefore, to examine other core terminology development and its role in the construction of context when using the term ‘intercultural dialogue’ in international discussion. It is also important to consider which countries are involved in discussion labeled as ‘international’.

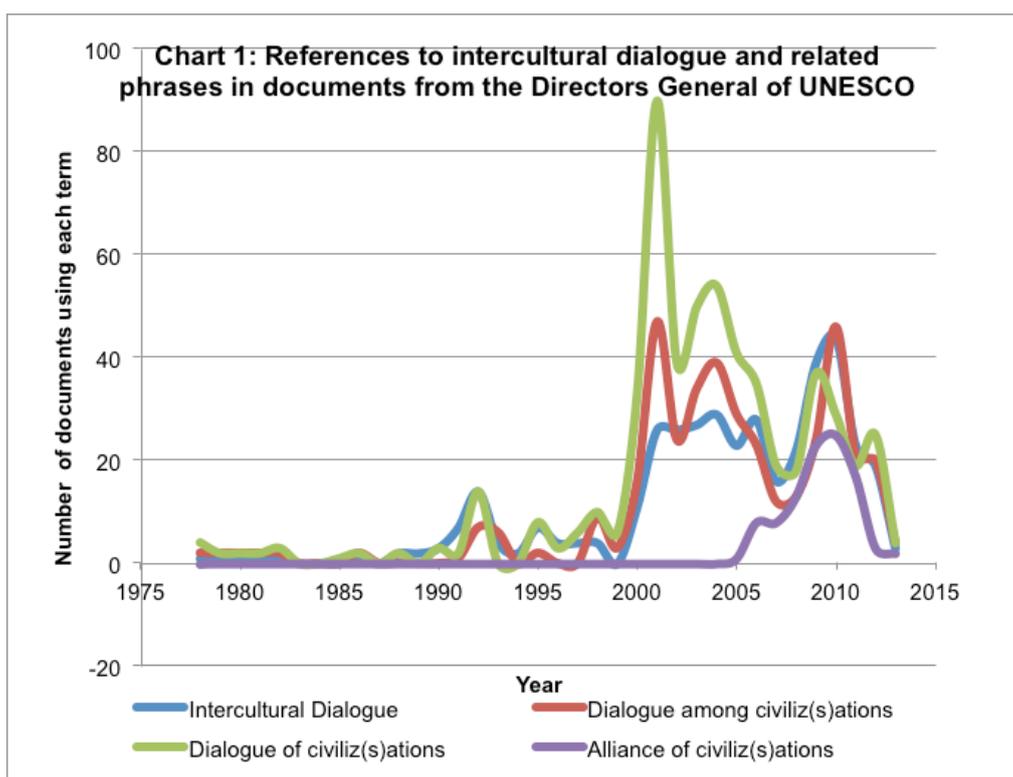
## Evidence

### *Three key moments in speeches of the Directors General of UNESCO*

Three key moments in the use of the phrase ‘intercultural dialogue’ can be found in discourse of UNESCO, UNGA and UNAOC. This section introduces them initially through an examination of the speeches of the Directors General of UNESCO. Chart 1<sup>1</sup> below, shows the use over time of

<sup>1</sup> The analysis for Chart 1 was conducted over all the English-language versions of the speeches of the Directors General of UNESCO, available from the UNESCO website (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/the-organization/the-directors-general/>). This is restricted to those speeches that are electronically available.

'intercultural dialogue' and other associated phrases in these speeches. The three key moments are determined by spikes of suddenly increased usage represented on the chart. These spikes are also found through analysis of the documents of the Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly (UNGA), and, later the UNAOC. This is discussed later in this report, and more detailed data can be found in (Bello 2013). Furthermore, as Chart 1 demonstrates, each of these spikes are coincident with spikes in the use of other terminology. These three spikes will now be briefly summarized, after which, each will be discussed in more detail within their historical contexts, alongside detailed discussion of the situation both before and after the period under examination.



The first main spike in the use of the phrase 'intercultural dialogue' occurred in the early 1990s, and coincided with the use of 'Dialogue of Civilizations'<sup>2</sup>. The second, in 2000, coincided with the increased use of two phrases: 'Dialogue of Civilizations' and 'Dialogue Among Civilizations'. The final spike to be discussed occurred in around 2009, when all three associated phrases were being used with more frequency, and a new phrase, 'Alliance of Civilizations' had been introduced.<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in Chart 1.<sup>4</sup>

2 Note that, as there are two commonly used spellings of this word (civilization and civilisation), this analysis includes results for both spellings. This risks that there may be some overlap, where documents make use of both spellings. It is not possible to conduct an advanced search on the presence of both words to remove this potential repeated intersection.

3 Note that over time, increasing numbers of documents are available online. However, this should not affect the proportions using each phrase. To give an indication of the rate of increase, consider the electronic outputs of the four Directors General over the time period represented: 2009- Irina Bokova (622 documents), 1999-2009 Koichiro Matsuura (1684 documents), 1987-1999 Federico Mayor (816 documents), 1974-1987 Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow (589 documents), 1962-1974 Rene Maheu (203 documents), 1958-1961 Vittorino Veronese (17 documents), 1953-1958 Luther Evans (18 documents), 1952-1953 John W Taylor (5 documents), 1948-1952 Jaime Torres Bodet (55 documents), 1946-1948 Julian Huxley (43 documents).

4 It is useful to note that this corresponds also, for example, with changes in the creation of UNESCO academic chairs of intercultural dialogue. While in 1999, many chairs were created, the emphasis was on interreligious dialogue. Peaks in the appointment of chairs specifically in intercultural dialogue also occurred in 2000 and 2007.

In what follows, the context of each spike will be considered. It will be demonstrated that each corresponds to a similar spike in the documents of the UNGA and UNAOC, as well as with the wider theoretical literature primarily among Western theorists. This report also briefly touches upon the development of the terminology in the documents of the UNSC (for more detail, see Bello 2013 4, 6) where useful comparative graphical representations can be found. The remainder of this report examines each of the first two moments in turn. The third will be addressed in (Bloom 2013b).

### *The 1960s and 1970s: dialogue of civilizations and cultural cooperation*

A recent UNESCO report on intercultural dialogue notes that the phrase, 'Dialogue of Civilizations' first made it into international discussion in 1961, during a symposium of the European Centre of Culture. The report attributes the phrase to the Swiss intellectual, Denis de Rougemont (UNESCO 2009 59). The phrase, 'intercultural understanding', appeared earlier. The Oxford English Dictionary traces it to an article in *Scientific American* in 1955.<sup>5</sup> The Soviet states, meanwhile, brokered a number of treaties relating to 'cultural cooperation' in the 1970s and 1980s (Ginsburgs 1987 645-646), resembling the European Commission's more recent development of bilateral protocols on cultural cooperation (e.g. the 2009 EU-Korean Protocol, discussed in Loisen and de Ville 2011, and the CARIFORUM protocol in 2008). In these instances, however, as in UNESCO documents more generally, culture and cultural dialogue or cooperation refers primarily to cultural outputs, and manifestations of cultural expression. They are also closely tied to intellectual property, and to trade. Indeed, these more recent European protocols were brokered in parallel with free trade negotiations (e.g. Protocol on cultural cooperation 2012). The role of the Cold War in discourse of this time is important to recall, and the relationship of the end of the Cold War with the development of the civilizational discourse will be discussed in the next section.

The way in which intercultural dialogue develops in the three spikes under consideration here apparently focuses more on a coming-together of persons, or representatives of persons, from different cultures, rather than on the protection of cultural outputs. However, intercultural dialogue is not adequately defined in these documents, and indeed, the intended meaning of intercultural dialogue evolves as it accompanies the different emerging terminology. Each of the first two spikes will now be considered in turn.

### *Early 1990s: Dialogue of Civilizations*

The first spike in the use of the phrase 'intercultural dialogue' occurs alongside the development of the notion of 'Dialogue of Civilizations' (see Chart 1, above), in the 1990s. This was heavily influenced by the work of Samuel Huntington, who first published his Leviathan-like premonition of the 'Clash of Civilizations' in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 (extended into book form soon after). From then on, the twin notions of 'clash' and 'civilizations' would direct the discussion of intercultural dialogue, as would the developing notion of a war between Islam and Islamic states on one side, and democracy and neoliberal states on the other. Huntington explains:

...the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily

5 "inter-, prefix". OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97516?rs-key=rA54on&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed 4 July 2013)

ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations (Huntington 1993 22).

Huntington recognized that civilizations may overlap, but he posited that what he called the 'major civilizations' do not. The six major civilizations he identified are: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and 'possibly African' (*sic.*). Despite heavy criticism, this way of dividing the world has been influential.

The UN-level civilizational discourse that followed from this focused, primarily, upon two of these: Western and Islamic. Considering this bipolarity of discussion (and the conflation of geographic and religious demarcation), it is useful also to consider the parallels both Huntington and his critics draw between this and the cold war (Huntington 1993 22; Balci 2009 98), in which there were also two major sides, with 'Western' on one side and another other large power on the other. With this in mind, it might be worth also mentioning the context of this talk of civilizations in the early 1990s with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, so that the fear of an Islamic or Arab bloc seems to be replacing that of Soviet Communism for the Western bloc. It is also worth noting the absence of discussion of how even Huntington's other civilizations fit into this clash, especially given, for example, the strong Chinese civilizational discourse.

The notion of a clash of civilizations which refers to Islam and the West perhaps dates back to Basil Matthews' reference in the title of his 1926 book, *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations* (Balci 2009 96). Indeed, Huntington took the title of his paper from Bernard Lewis, who wrote:

...we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both (Lewis 1990 60).

In this quotation, there is an almost imperial ambition finding itself challenged. It is interesting here that the clash is seen as of Islam against a group with Judeo-Christian heritage, rather than the later discourse, focusing almost entirely on the specifically 'Liberal' (rather than merely secular) present.

The dominant response in the high level documents was to agree with the existence of civilizations, and their imminent clash, and to put in place mechanisms to try to ameliorate it. Balci notes, however, that the Commission of Global Governance took a different tack, already in 1994, with the report *Our Global Neighborhood*. This report took civilization as human, so that there are not in fact civilizations, but one singular human civilization with variability of expression within it. This was then picked up by German Chancellor, Roman Herzog, who argued that 'our aim should not be the clash of cultures or civilizations but the development of a *common civilization* built on consensus and mutual trust.' (this other route is discussed in Balci 2009). This has been a secondary theme through the a high level discourse, and gained interest particularly among non-Western states (e.g. see Bello 2013).

*Early 2000s: Dialogue among, and Dialogue of, Civilizations*

The reaction to the Civilizational discourse of clash that had arisen in the 1990s that had the most initial impact was that of avoiding the clash among civilizations by creating dialogue. In this tradition, Mohammad Khatami, then President of Iran, called in the UNGA for a 'Dialogue Among Civilizations', understood as an intellectual coming-together of representatives from civilizational groups.

In 1997, Khatami addressed 50 Muslim heads of state at an Islamic Summit in Tehran, offering 'the dialogue of civilizations as a new conception of international politics' (Lynch 2000 311). Then, he directly addressed American people on CNN, as well as the UNGA, UNESCO, some European and Islamic states and international conferences. As a result, it quickly became part of the world public discussion, culminating in the 2001 Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations (Lynch 2000 311). He had first introduced this idea to the UN at the 53rd Session of the UNGA, in 1998, where he explained the Dialogue Among Civilizations as emerging from the Iranian National story, and called for 2001 to be the 'Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations' (Khatami 1997 4):

The Islamic revolution of the Iranian people was a revolt of reason against coercion and suppression. Certainly, a revolution which resorted to logic in the phase of destruction is much better disposed to resort to dialogue and reason in the phase of construction. Hence, it calls for a dialogue among civilizations and cultures instead of a clash between them.

(Bello 2013) indicates that this was in fact part of a larger Organization for the Islamic Congress (OIC) policy to promote dialogue. Khatami also parallels the clash of civilizations concept with the 'mentality of the cold war' (Khatami 1997 7).

It was not until 2000, however, that Khatami formally announced the Dialogue Among Civilizations, in a speech in September, emphasizing the importance of engaging 'thinkers, scholars, intellectuals and artists', and, while he noted politics to be important, he argued that the dialogue would explicitly not be about politics (Khatami 2000, reference suggested by Balci 2009). This key speech by Khatami does not contain one reference to the older concept of 'dialogue of civilizations', though mentioning 'dialogue among civilizations' 16 times. It seems that by this time, he had fixed the branding of a dialogue among, and not of, civilizations. Indeed, it is clear from his speeches that it must be a dialogue among civilizations which remain distinct, rather than a dialogue of civilizations which may risk blurring. He explains that there are two ways in which the dialogue among civilizations could be put into effect:

1. '...actual instances of the interaction and interpenetration of cultures and civilizations with each other, resulting from a variety of factors' (Khatami 2000); and
2. '... dialogue among civilizations could also mean a deliberate dialogue among representative members of various civilizations such as scholars, artists and philosophers from disparate civilizational domains' (Khatami 2000)

While, for Khatami, the first represents an involuntary, unplanned coming together, driven by events, the second is deliberate. That is, in the second sense, 'dialogue entails a deliberate act based upon premeditated indulgence and does not rise and fall at the mercy of historical and geographical contingency' (Khatami 2000). This would come to influence the later development of the Alliance of

Civilizations (Bloom 2013a), though the Alliance had a more political emphasis from the outset.

Khatami's concept was influential, and by 2001, there was a Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, heavily supported by UNESCO, and indeed, following his suggestion, 2001 was made the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. More recently, Khatami has continued to pursue the project of a Dialogue Among Civilizations (Khatami 2012). The UN Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations ended, however, with terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and other symbolic US sites in September, which changed the discourse dramatically.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The term, 'intercultural dialogue', and the way it is used in UN-level discussions is heavily affected by the development of parallel terms. It is crucial, when debating intercultural dialogue, therefore, to recognize the contextual framework in which this is taking place. This report has demonstrated that there have been three key moments in the use of 'intercultural dialogue' in the high level documents of the organizations under discussion. In considering the use of the term itself, it is important to ask what is the role of intercultural dialogue:

- Is it being used to support these new initiatives?
- Is it being used as a proxy for each new term?
- Is the developing use of intercultural dialogue in fact driving the use of the new terminology?

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United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility  
Sant Manuel Pavilion, Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site  
C/ Sant Antoni Maria Claret, 167  
08025 Barcelona, Spain  
Email: [info.gcm@unu.edu](mailto:info.gcm@unu.edu)  
URL: <http://www.gcm.unu.edu>

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