D r .   H a n s   K ö c h l e r
University Professor of Philosophy, University of Innsbruck, Austria
Life Fellow, International Academy of Philosophy
President of the International Progress Organization

The Philosophy and Politics of Dialogue

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Preliminary remarks

"Dialogue of civilizations" has become a buzzword in today's global discourses. The phrase is often used to justify *mutually exclusive* strategies and policies. Those who propagate a peaceful vision of multicultural society (whether at the regional or global level) refer to the notion of "dialogue" as do politicians and state leaders who pursue an effectively confrontationist agenda; the latter also have discovered the usefulness of "civilizational dialogue" as a paradigm to achieve common acceptance of a strategy that is ultimately aimed at reshaping the balance of power in favor of a *particular* civilization, which is defined by themselves, and themselves alone.

To allude to a famous literary quote, something "must be rotten in the state of the world" if a generally accepted fundamental principle of peace, namely dialogue, can be interpreted in, and subsequently used for, such contradictory goals. How else could it be explained that states that have officially declared themselves as "Friends" of a United Nations *Alliance of Civilizations* actively engage in confrontations with and wars against other states, which they often justify with civilizational undertones? Although membership in that Alliance's "Group of Friends" commits all of them to tolerance and mutual respect, the antagonistic relationship some of them have entered into with Muslim countries – and Islamic civilization in general – conveys an entirely different message.

The "politics of dialogue" at the global level have eroded the real meaning of the concept. It therefore appears appropriate to revisit the original paradigm and briefly reflect on the philosophical context in which it will have to be defined if its instrumentalization for political purposes, whether shortsighted or not, is to be prevented. At the same time, we must not be ignorant of the historical fact that the concept of dialogue has been launched on the world stage in an essentially political context, namely in response to a "counter-paradigm," that of the "clash of civilizations," as a possible post-ideological element of the global power game after the end of the Cold War.

Before we proceed, I should clarify the use of the concept. In the context of this lecture, I use the term "civilization" in the sense of a *universal worldview* that comprises "culture" as a sub-category and includes theoretical and practical aspects. I do not juxtapose "culture" and "civilization" as two distinct forms of human self-realization whereby "culture" would mean the totality of a society's knowledge, beliefs, artistic expressions, etc., and "civilization" would be defined as the sum total of the means by which this world

view is enacted (as e.g. in "industrial civilization"). In that regard, I follow Samuel Huntington's usage of the term.[1]

(I)
The hermeneutics of civilizational dialogue

When, during the 1990s, the "clash of civilizations" was first identified as major factor determining the global order, almost everyone, including the paradigm's foremost exponent, Samuel Huntington,[2] rushed to the opposite, the "politically correct," side – to ensure compatriots and the world of the importance that we all commit ourselves to dialogue, not confrontation, as basis of lasting peace among nations.[3]

This, albeit superficial, "consensus of political correctness" manifested itself in the last decade's global media spectacle of dialogue proclamations, diplomatic initiatives, summit conferences, etc., all dedicated to that noble goal which no one dared to object. The underlying public relations agenda was itself part of the politics of dialogue.

In the majority of cases, however, the *conditiones sine quibus non* of the co-operative relationship on which dialogue has to be based in order to be meaningful, were overlooked – whether deliberately or out of ignorance. This is where the *philosophy of dialogue* comes into play, as a reflection of and corrective against the political instrumentalization of inter-civilizational and inter-cultural issues.

The principles – or necessary conditions – of dialogue

As a first step, we shall identify the principles and indispensable requirements of dialogue that have to be acknowledged if "dialogue of civilizations" is intended to be a sustainable feature of international relations:[4]

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[1] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 24.

[2] The first to use the term "clash of civilizations" was Bernard Lewis: "The Roots of Muslim Rage," in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 47–60.

[3] Huntington further clarified this point in his subsequent book: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. – He also confirmed his commitment to dialogue in a personal conversation with the author on the sidelines of the Second International Seminar on Civilizational Dialogue "Japan, Islam and the West" in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2 September 1996).

[4] The author has initially outlined those principles in a lecture before Jordan's Royal Scientific Society in Amman on 9 March 1974. See Hans Köchler, *Cultural-philosophical Aspects of International Cooperation*. Studies in International [Cultural] Relations, Vol. II. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 1978.

(1) **Equality of civilizational (cultural) "lifeworlds,"** including value systems, in the normative sense: This excludes any form of patronizing or supremacist attitudes from the part of one civilization (culture) towards another. "Sovereign equality," one thus might say, is not only an attribute of states as entities of international law, but also a principle that can be used to describe the inalienable right to civilizational identity.[5] It is obvious, in this context, that the notion of "development," if it is understood in a normative sense (which would allow a kind of external evaluation), cannot be applied to civilizations. Development (in a normative sense) can only be measured from *within* a given civilization or culture.

(2) **Awareness of the "dialectics of cultural self-comprehension" and self-realization**: A civilization (culture) can only fully comprehend itself, and thus realize its identity if it is able to relate to "the other" in the sense of an *independent* expression of *distinct* worldviews and value systems, i.e. perceptions of the world, which are not merely an offspring of one's particular civilization. The process of civilizational or cultural self-realization is structurally similar to how the individual human being achieves self-awareness: *re-flexio* (reflexion) implies that the subject looks at himself/herself from an *outside* perspective, making himself/herself the object of perception ("subject-object dialectic").[6] As has been explained in the philosophy of mind, particularly since Immanuel Kant, individual self-awareness is the synthesis in a dialectical process in which the *ego* defines itself [in the sense of *de-finitio*: drawing the border] in relation to "the other." The same applies to the collective self-awareness of a civilization. Only if the latter is able and willing to see itself through the eyes of "the other," will it achieve a status of *maturity* (in the sense of its *internal* development, not in regard to external evaluation!) that will allow it to overcome the fear of the other as "the alien" and, thus, to take part in a global interaction ("dialogue") with other civilizations.

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[5] This right is also implicitly enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as a collective right. Art. 1(1) clearly states that the peoples' right of self-determination implies that they "freely pursue their … cultural development."

[6] For details see Hans Köchler, "The Philosophical Foundations of Civilizational Dialogue," in: Philosophy, Islamic Views & Modern Attitudes. The Papers Presented at the Second World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 2004 - Tehran), Vol. 4. Tehran: SIPRIn Publications, 2008, pp. 3-15. – On the epistemological problem of self-reflection see the author's *Die Subjekt-Objekt-Dialektik in der transzendentalen Phänomenologie: Das Seinsproblem zwischen Idealismus und Realismus*. (Monographien zur philosophischen Forschung, Vol. 112.) Meisenheim a. G.: Anton Hain, 1974.

(3) **Acknowledgment of meta-norms as foundation of dialogue**: Derived from the normative equality of civilizations (point [1] above), these norms at the meta-level are logically prior to any *material* norms and have to be subscribed to by all partners in a credible undertaking of dialogue. "Tolerance" and "mutuality" (mutual respect) are two such examples of meta-norms; they are to be understood as *formal* (as distinct from *material*) values that determine the interaction between civilizations on the basis of dialogue and, as such, are non-negotiable. They are the very "conditions of possibility" (*Möglichkeitsbedingungen*) of any such process, enabling an individual civilization to realize its specific, i. e. materially distinct, value system. Due to their general, formal nature as quasi-transcendental preconditions in the Kantian sense, they cannot be attributed to just one particular civilization; their status is obviously *trans-cultural*.

(4) **Ability to transcend the hermeneutical circle of civilizational self-affirmation**: In order to be able to position itself as a genuine participant in the global interaction among cultures and civilizations, a given civilizational community has to go beyond what Hans-Georg Gadamer described as *Wirkungsgeschichte* ("Reception History," referring to the exclusive impact of the respective community's "autochthonous" traditions on the formation of cultural identity). When it comes to the shaping of its identity, the need for a civilization to "free" itself from *exclusive* dependence on its own history is particularly obvious in all educational processes.[7] In view of the lasting impact on the global power constellation, reference to *Eurocentrism* as basic feature of Europe's – and the West's – cultural identity formation can most pertinently illustrate this hermeneutical dilemma. Over hundreds of years, the Western civilization has been accustomed to export its worldview, value system and lifestyle to "the rest" of the world, a process that has often been accompanied by a strategy to reshape the identity of those other cultures and civilizations. Against this background of claimed, and enforced, civilizational hegemony, international cultural exchanges have all too often been mere self-encounters – or "civilizational *soliloquia*" – of the dominant partner. However, a civilization will only be able to fully understand itself and define its place in the

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[7] This aspect and the resulting need for comparative cultural studies were particularly emphasized in the Final Resolution of the International Progress Organization's conference on "The Cultural Self-comprehension of Nations," held in Innsbruck, Austria, from 27 to 29 July 1974: Hans Köchler (ed.), *Cultural Self-comprehension of Nations*. (Studies in International [Cultural] Relations, I.) Tübingen/Basel: Erdmann, 1978, p. 142.

global realm of ideas, if it is able to reach out to the worldviews that have developed *independently* of it, namely those that have not already been shaped by that civilization. This is indeed the essence of the *dialectics* of civilizational self-comprehension or self-definition (point [2] above): *de-finitio* means the ability to see what is *beyond* the (civilizational) border, and to understand one's own civilization *with regard* to the other. Absence of self-reflexiveness has all along been the handicap of Eurocentrism and its mirror-like phenomenon, *Orientalism*, which Edward Said has aptly described as the ideological legacy of the West's colonial encounters with the rest of the world.[8] Accordingly, the "colonial," in fact colonialist, approach that has recently been revived under the auspices of a "New World Order"[9] has meant the rejection, *ex principio*, of the realities and requirements of civilizational hermeneutics; constructive dialogue has been ruled out in favour of a "reinvention" of other civilizations along the lines of the "colonizer's" – or the cultural hegemon's – definition of civilizational standards.

(II)
The multi-faceted politics of dialogue

The rejection of civilizational hermeneutics has been particularly obvious in the ambitious Western (mainly U.S.) project of remodeling the region of the "Greater Middle East" according to Western standards of democracy and secularism – if need be, by use of force. The civilizational undertones of the justification for the Iraq war of 2003 have made this tendency particularly obvious.[10] In the meantime, the tensions and deep rifts between civilizations caused by the self-proclaimed hegemon's crude military approach have made the promotion of dialogue almost "mission impossible."

It should not surprise us, however, that the tendency towards cultural and civilizational uniformity has always been strong in constellations that are characterized by the absence of a balance of power. The situation resulting from the collapse of the bipolar system at the beginning of the 1990s is one such instance. In this context, the buzzword

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[8] Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Reprint ed., New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
[9] For details see Hans Köchler, *Democracy and the New World Order*. Studies in International Relations, Vol. XIX. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 1993.
[10] On the geostrategic aspects of the instrumentalization of "civilization" see also Hans Köchler, "Civilization as Instrument of World Order? The Role of the Civilizational Paradigm in the Absence of Balance of Power," in: *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs / Jurnal Islam dan hubungan antarabangsa IKIM*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2008), pp. 1-22.

"civilization" has increasingly been used as a tool to legitimize otherwise unpopular and legally dubious wars.[11]

Against this background of conflicts and increased geopolitical tensions revolving around issues of civilization, we shall briefly analyze the "politics of dialogue" in the sense of (a) the political *requirements* and *consequences* of dialogue, and (b) its political *instrumentalization*.

As regards the first aspect, the basic question can be formulated as follows: <u>How</u> is politics to be structured – or "reshaped" – so as to enable a dialogue of cultures and civilizations at the local, regional and global levels?

A simultaneously existing multitude of cultural and civilizational life-worlds (if we may use here this phenomenological term) has become a fact of life under the conditions of globalization. The era of cultural homogeneity in an insular nation-state is long past. To draw the appropriate conclusions from this new *status quo* is one of the major political challenges at the beginning of the 21st century.

The complex *interrelatedness* of local and global dimensions is a basic feature of today's civilizational diversity. It is most visible, though only partly and reluctantly acknowledged, on the European continent, but has also existed, to varying degrees, in other regions of the world (e.g. South-East Asia). The multicultural reality in the *domestic* context of Europe – mainly a result of the migration processes over the last decades, which have brought profound demographic changes – mirrors the cultural and civilizational diversity at the *global* level. Developments in the relationship between the communities *within* a state will often have an impact on global civilizational relations, and vice-versa. This interdependence has become increasingly obvious in Muslim-Christian relations, with potentially far-reaching political consequences. The Danish experience with the "cartoon controversy" is just one of the more dramatic examples of a traumatic *local* event with *worldwide* repercussions. The most recent example is the "minaret controversy" in Switzerland. In this regard, Europe may, and should, learn from the experiences in other continents where multicultural societies have emerged much earlier, and partly due to the (economically motivated) demographic policies of European colonial powers.

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[11] See the title of Robert Fisk's critical book: *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*. First American edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

Politics also has to take into consideration the *complex hermeneutical constellation* of inter-civilizational relations, and in three different respects:

(a)   Concerning the fact that distinct cultures/civilizations, in different phases of their internal development, exist simultaneously at the local level: This situation can be described by reference to the paradoxical term of *ungleichzeitige Gleichzeitigkeit* (**"non-simultaneous simultaneity"**);

(b)   Concerning the necessity to interact in the face of often irreconcilable differences in the ontological (or metaphysical) as well as normative perceptions of the world (**"unavoidability of interaction"**): This requirement is most obvious at the domestic level, but it also cannot be ignored in terms of the reality *beyond* the borders of the nation-state; due to the integration of almost every country's economy into an ever more complex global network and in view of the rapid development of information technology, "splendid isolation" is not a viable option anymore; a country can only indulge in such a policy at the expense of stigmatization and at the cost of economic progress (e.g. the experience of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea).

(c)   The simultaneity of distinct civilizational (cultural) life-worlds at the local level is *complemented* by the global simultaneity of hitherto separately existing civilizations, whereby the latter may directly impact on the assertion of civilizational identity "at home" (**"double, or interdependent, simultaneity"**); the ever increasing flow of information and communication in cyberspace and by means of satellite-based technologies has created a "global village" of civilizations – even if, in some (increasingly frequent) instances, they do not want to take notice of one another.

The principle of affirmative action in the domain of civilization

The complex realities of civilizational diversity can only be managed in accordance with a *philosophy of dialogue* (according to the four principles and requirements of the self-comprehension and self-realization of a civilization we have outlined earlier). This makes it imperative that politics *acknowledge diversity* and adopt a set of *clearly defined rules* that

ensure respect of the right to diversity on the basis of mutuality; any rejection of this principle is a recipe for conflict and may threaten the stability of the respective political order, and in the long term even the very survival of that polity.

The time for measures to ensure, or reestablish, a "*monocultural reality*" has long passed – and not only for Europe, which has itself triggered a "multicultural development," first through colonization and, later, through an economically-driven immigration policy and, as partner of the United States, through the globalization of the economy.[12] The "civilizational dynamic" these historical processes have activated cannot be suddenly stopped, or "switched off," just as the process of industrialization cannot be reversed for the sake of a new "romantic" encounter with nature.

Responsible politics has to create the organizational framework in which distinct – and often (not only geographically) distant – cultural and civilizational identities can develop and interact *without* threatening the stability of the respective system, and without alienating a country from the rest of the world.

Europe's multicultural challenge

The ever more complex interrelationship between the local, regional and global dimensions of cultural identity brings about new challenges for an increasingly multicultural Europe. The future stability, indeed the viability of the European project (as regards the European Union as an intergovernmental and partly supranational entity) – and of Europe as a global player – will depend on how the countries and peoples of the continent will deal with the *fact of cultural diversity*.[13]

The simultaneity of <u>distinct</u> civilizations, each in a <u>different</u> phase of identity formation, and at the <u>same</u> place – in the same European πόλις –, is an existential challenge from which decision-makers cannot escape lest they will be "punished by history." Even if they would try to solve what is perceived as a "problem" by the use of naked force (as through population transfers of the sort of ethnic cleansing that were practiced in the

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[12] On the socio-cultural implications of globalization see the author's analysis: "Philosophical Aspects of Globalization: Basic Theses on the Interrelation of Economics, Politics, Morals and Metaphysics in a Globalized World," in: Hans Köchler (ed.), *Globality versus Democracy?* Studies in International Relations, Vol. XXV. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2000, pp. 3-18.

[13] On the implications for the European state system see Hans Köchler, "The Concept of the Nation and the Question of Nationalism: The Traditional 'Nation State' versus a Multicultural 'Community State'," in: Michael Dunne and Tiziano Bonazzi (eds.), *Citizenship and Rights in Multicultural Societies*. Keele: Keele University Press, 1995, pp. 44-51.

Balkans not so long ago),[14] they will, if at all, only achieve a Pyrrhic victory since, whether we like it or not, the world is about to become <u>the</u> πόλις within which the reality of everyday life will be determined; the nation-state – in the sense of an entity that is sealed off from the rest of the world, vested with "sovereign" power as the sole origin of the state's political and legal order – is not anymore a viable concept. The notions of the nation-state and of national sovereignty are undergoing a profound transformation in the direction of a co-operative system of international relations,[15] which has materialized, to some extent, at the (regional) level of the European Union.

Accordingly, a civilization cannot simply "delink" itself from the global interplay of forces; it cannot just "opt out" of interdependence. History cannot be reversed – unless one risks perpetual confrontation between civilizations, or more precisely: between their state protagonists, and under conditions of nuclear armament.

<u>Co-existence / dialogue / alliance of civilizations</u>

The potentially disastrous consequences of "civilizational revisionism" are the reason why, at the beginning of the third millennium, the "politics of dialogue" will have to be more than an attempt to preserve a precarious *status quo*, or a strategy merely aimed at the *co-existence* among civilizations. This term denotes the simultaneous existence of distinct civilizational entities on the basis of mutual tolerance, but without necessarily implying genuine interaction or mutual engagement. It can also be described, in reference to its consequences, as "civilizational non-interference" or "civilizational apathy."

In international relations theory, the term "co-existence" was used to characterize the *status quo* in the relations between the political blocks and their ideologies in the era of the Cold War. Commitment to the doctrine, it was argued, ensured a precarious peace,

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[14] Extreme right wing and racist groups in Europe have become increasingly vocal about "repatriation" of Muslims. Although leaders of right-wing parties would, for the moment, only call for "voluntary repatriation," *principiis obsta*! The speech which Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Partij *voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom), delivered on 14 June 2009 before the Danish Free Press Society in Copenhagen is symptomatic of this approach. As part of a program of action "to combat the Islamization of Europe effectively," he demands, *inter alia*: "… we will have to stop mass immigration from Muslim countries and promote voluntary repatriation." What makes this demand particularly dubious is that all measures he proposes as part of his six point-program of action are, according to point 1, based on the premise that "Our Western culture is superior to Islamic culture." The option he offers to Muslims who want to live in Europe is "assimilation." (Quoted according to the text released by Partij voor de Vrijheid at http://www.pvv.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2045&Itemid=1, accessed on 7 December 2009.)

[15] For details see the author's analysis in: *Democracy and the International Rule of Law: Propositions for an Alternative World Order. Selected Papers Published on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*. Vienna/New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995.

which, in actual fact, was more guaranteed through the mechanisms of "mutual deterrence" (that were based on the expectation of mutually assured destruction in case of nuclear war).

In the present historical constellation, however, the Cold War's paradigm of peaceful co-existence among nations cannot easily be transferred to the realm of cultural and civilizational diversity. While commitment to the doctrine may be an *ad hoc* measure of last resort – meant to avert Huntington's clash of civilizations –, to insist on co-existence between artificially *isolated* entities will not be a sustainable strategy in the long term because, in an era of global interconnectedness, constant interaction between cultural and civilizational collectives simply cannot be avoided.

Only if "co-existence" is reinterpreted in the way of active mutual engagement, can it contribute to inter-civilizational relations under the conditions of globality.[16] This is the reason why, in our analysis, the model of *dialogue* (which, by definition, includes mutual engagement) may be better suited to deal with the consequences of civilizational diversity. It takes heed of the actual interdependence of our life-worlds and bids farewell to the splendid isolation of civilizations (an idea which appears to be modeled according to the paradigm of the sovereign nation-state).

In recent years, a third notion has been advanced, which is situated in a different position on the "intensity scale" of inter-civilizational relations: in addition to "co-existence" and "dialogue," an "alliance" between civilizations has been propagated as part of a broad strategy to counteract the confrontational paradigm and promote durable peace at the global level. There should be no doubt about the noble motives, which led the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain to launch such an initiative within the framework of the United Nations Organization. In the meantime, however, the project appears to have become part of the *politics of dialogue* in the second sense: namely as instrumentalization of the paradigm of civilization by some of the "allied states," and for partly hidden political motives (which, in some respects, are directly opposed to dialogue).

While one may reflect about a possible metaphorical use of the term "alliance" (in a way similar to the semantics of the 19th century's "Holy Alliance"), one cannot avoid asking as to which civilizations are "allied" under this phrase, and against which common enemy, since the term is only too well remembered from war-like constellations in earlier

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[16] This is how the author has tried to define the term in the context of contemporary international relations theory: "Civilizational Dialogue versus Civilizational Coercion: The Risks of Unilateralism and the Virtues of Co-existence," in: Hans Köchler, *World Order: Vision and Reality. Collected Papers Edited by David Armstrong*. New Delhi: Manak, 2009, pp. 503-510.

epochs. So far, more than one hundred states have joined a so-called "Group of Friends" of the Alliance of Civilizations in order to "support" its efforts to "counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism."[17]

It cannot be overlooked, however, that some of these "states-friends" – a civilizational version of states-parties, so to speak – are themselves, like their 19th century predecessors, actively engaged as allies in wars – even a so-called "global war" –, which are justified with arguments that appeal to civilizational prejudice. Certain of these states-friends are also systematically oppressing ethnic and cultural minorities in their own domain.

The "politics of dialogue" have indeed become part and parcel of a global political game in which the players seek to gain legitimacy for their parochial political agenda – whether domestic, regional, or international – through associating themselves with the noble goal of civilizational peace, something no one can object to. They proclaim that they aspire to something even *higher* than abstract dialogue, namely an alliance, and thus *partnership*, among all civilizations against their common enemies: "extremism" and "polarization" (according to the language of official UN documents).[18]

The political instrumentalization of the civilizational paradigm has become particularly obvious in the ongoing military confrontations in the wider Middle East and in Central and South-East Asia: Since the tragic events of the year 2001, a new form of "polarization" is taking root in global affairs, which juxtaposes the "enemies of civilization" *as such* with its self-proclaimed defenders – whereby, in a kind of reverse *pars pro toto* terminology, "civilization" is implicitly, and exclusively, understood as *Western* civilization. (Apparently, this antagonism along an almost Schmittean friend-enemy pattern is not subsumed under the category of polarization that is officially abhorred by the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations.)

These "modern" wars are portrayed (by their perpetrators) as necessary struggles for the *supremacy* of a supposedly morally *superior* civilization, indeed as wars in defense of civilization against alleged new forms of barbarism, labeled as "terrorism," "Islamic fundamentalism," etc.[19] It is a sublime irony that the underlying rationale very much

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[17] United Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, *Mission Statement*, at
http://www.unaoc.org/content/view/39/187/lang,english/, accessed on 3 November 2009.
[18] *Loc. cit.*
[19] For a critique of the underlying ideology see, *inter alia*, Mark Salter, *A New Civilizing Mission: Trauma, Crisis, Critique*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Honolulu,

resembles the ideology of the 19th century's "Holy Alliance." While the main proponent of this epic confrontation is not itself a statutory "Friend" of the Alliance of Civilizations,[20] several of the Alliance's supporting countries have joined "coalitions of the willing" that give those wars an aura of international acceptance and legitimacy. At the same time, this military engagement has undermined the stated civilizational agenda of those states; in the long term, it may even threaten religious and civilizational peace on a global scale, particularly between the Western and Muslim world. It goes without saying that these supposedly just wars totally contradict the very principles which underlie the hermeneutics of civilizational dialogue, and in particular the acceptance of diversity as *conditio sine qua non* of a community's self-comprehension.

Logic of war versus rhetoric of dialogue

Thus, the previously referred to members of the "Group of Friends" of a peaceful, UN-sponsored "Alliance of Civilizations" act as military allies in a battle that is supposedly directed at the enemies of civilization as such. One cannot ignore the strange and delicate co-existence of the "logic of war" with the "rhetoric of dialogue" when reflecting on the long-term political implications of these military campaigns (which were given poetic names – such as "Operation Enduring Freedom" – to underline the proclaimed humanitarian, or civilizational, mission). This "simultaneity" of contradictory paradigms is unacceptable in our modern era where the rules of "civilized" behavior require consistency of the principles that underlie the actions of states as members of the "international community."

Should one, thus, not suggest that modern states adopt the practice of the Greek city states of ancient times whose citizens had well understood that the Olympic spirit of open competition is not compatible with the use of force between their communities? The "Sacred Truce" (Ὀλυμπιακὴ ἐκεχειρία) meant that arms had to be silent during the Olympic games.[21]

Hawaii, 5 March 2005. Draft version published at www.allacademic.com/meta/p70816_index.html, accessed on 2 December 2009; and John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, "Empire of Barbarism," in: *Monthly Review*, Vol. 56, No. 7 (December 2004), at www.monthlyreview.org/1204jbfclark.htm, accessed on 2 December 2009.

[20] For the current list of members of the "Group of Friends" of the Alliance of Civilizations see the dedicated United Nations web site at http://www.unaoc.org/content/view/115/174/lang,english/.

[21] For the importance of that maxim in the history of the modern Olympic movement see, *inter alia*, F. Mezö, "Olympic Peace – World Peace," in: *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique*, No. 29 (September 1951), pp. 22-24.

Although this may sound naïve: should one not equally expect of those who claim to support an "Alliance of Civilizations" that they abstain from using violence against other states as long as they formally adhere to that Alliance's "Group of Friends" (except in obvious cases of self-defense)?[22] There can be no doubt that such a proposal will be quickly dismissed as an overly idealistic demand which, as the pundits of international affairs will say, is not compatible with the imperatives of realpolitik. What cannot be challenged, however, is the assertion that the "politics of dialogue" will be utterly discredited if, under the disguise of a "global war on terror,"[23] partners in this undertaking wage wars with a quasi-imperial civilizational agenda in mind. As has become all too obvious since 2001, these campaigns have also been aimed at *reinventing* a civilization that was perceived as <u>different</u> – or shaping it in the image of the dominant one –, insofar as that civilization's value system and perception of the world were seen as a threat to the dominant paradigm.[24]

Conclusion: A philosophical reminder

Those who engage in the *rhetoric* and *politics* of peaceful partnership among civilizations – certainly the vast majority of UN member states – should be reminded of the philosophical principles of dialogue, which do not allow a policy of double standards. Philosophy underlines that the *equality* of civilizational expressions necessitates *mutual recognition*, plain and simple, and without any mental reservation. What states claim for themselves (in terms of national sovereignty), they also have to be prepared to accord to the other; the application of the reciprocity principle to issues of communal identity means that states have to abstain from any claim to civilizational supremacy or hegemony. In order to be credible and sustainable, the politics of global dialogue have to incorporate these principles.

The multicultural reality, which is a *fait accompli* in many polities that used to define themselves in the tradition of the nation-state, has plunged those states into a deep identity crisis. Unless the new reality is also acknowledged at the global level, the world

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[22] The author posed this question to an official of the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat (New York) at the Seventh Doha Interfaith Dialogue Conference in Doha (Qatar) on 21 October 2009; as expected, he got only an evasive answer.

[23] On the ideology of the war on terror cf. Hans Köchler, " The Global War on Terror and the Metaphysical Enemy," in: Hans Köchler (ed.), *The "Global War on Terror" and the Question of World Order*. Studies in International Relations, Vol. XXX. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2008, pp. 13-35.

[24] For details see the author's essay: "Civilization as Instrument of World Order? The Role of the Civilizational Paradigm in the Absence of Balance of Power," *loc. cit.*

will be headed towards an era of perpetual confrontation along cultural and civilizational lines.

Accordingly, those who promote the goal of civilizational dialogue *internationally* can only do so credibly, and consistently, if they recognize the equal rights of cultural and religious minorities in *their own* countries. In our era of global interdependence, "peace at home" and "peace in the world" are intrinsically linked.

Civilizational identity cannot anymore be defined within, and confined to, the parameters of an insular and culturally secluded nation-state; much to the dismay of the apologists of a monocultural society in an ethnically homogenous framework, *that* type of state does not exist anymore. In many parts of the world, our old continent included, multicultural societies have become a fact of life. Politics cannot negate this fact; it can only weigh the options as to how best to ensure the future stability and global competitiveness of the state in question – in an open space of ideas and worldviews.

Monocultural nostalgia should thus give way to *intercultural openness* and *civilizational curiosity*, which alone will ensure a polity's long-term stability and success (including economic competitiveness) under conditions of an ever more complex interdependence between the realms of cultural diversity at the local, regional and global levels.

That history cannot be arrested is a truth, which the holders of power of all epochs have tried to ignore. However, when it comes to the dynamic of civilizational identity, it would not only be self-delusional, but dangerous in terms of world peace, to insist on the perpetuation of supremacy in the tradition of Eurocentrism (that has anyway become fictitious under the conditions of globalization). The only rational, indeed "civilized," answer to the many local and international conflicts that are related in one way or another to the increasingly felt, and feared, social and political consequences of cultural diversity[25] is the pursuit of an agenda not of mere tolerance or *co-existence,* nor of exuberant *alliance*, but of a prosaic and philosophically "sober" *dialogue* among cultures and civilizations.

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[25] *Post scriptum*, 30 November 2009: The Swiss people's decision to ban the building of minarets is a dramatic illustration of socio-political consequences in Europe. See the statement of the International Progress Organization: *Swiss minaret ban violates basic human rights and threatens religious peace in Europe.* Vienna, 3 December 2009, P/RE/22013c-is, at http://i-p-o.org/Swiss-minaret_ban-IPO-nr-03Dec09.htm, accessed on 7 December 2009.