

Contributions to the New York Meeting
on the Alliance of Civilizations

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on the Alliance of Civilizations**

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AN ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL GROUP

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has launched an initiative, co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, for an Alliance of Civilizations.

Context

- The initiative responds to a broad consensus across nations, cultures and religions that all societies are interdependent, bound together in their development and security, and in their environmental, economic and financial well-being. The Alliance seeks to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that militate against such a consensus. And it hopes to contribute to a coalescing global movement which, reflecting the will of the vast majority of people, rejects extremism in any society.
- Events of recent years have exacerbated mutual suspicion, fear and misunderstanding between Islamic and Western societies. This environment has been exploited by extremists throughout the world. Only a comprehensive coalition will be able to avert any further deterioration of relations between societies and nations, which could threaten international stability. The Alliance seeks to counter this trend by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures.

High-level Group

- To guide this initiative, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the co-sponsors, has established a High-level Group of eminent persons with the following objectives:
 - ❖ To provide an assessment of new and emerging threats to international peace and security, in particular the political, social and religious forces that foment extremism;
 - ❖ To identify collective actions, at both the institutional and civil society levels, to address these trends;
 - ❖ To recommend a practicable programme of action for States, international organizations and civil society aimed at promoting harmony among societies.
- Toward this end, the High-level Group will consider practical strategies:
 - ❖ To strengthen mutual understanding, respect and shared values among different peoples, cultures and civilizations;
 - ❖ To counter the influence of groups fomenting extremism and the exclusion of others who do not share their worldviews;
 - ❖ To counter the threat to world peace and stability posed by extremism;
 - ❖ To foster awareness in all societies that security is indivisible and is a vital need for all, and that global cooperation is an indispensable prerequisite for security, stability and development.
- The High-level Group will present a report containing analysis and a programme of action for States, international organiza-

tions and civil society with practicable measures designed, *inter alia*:

- ❖ To emphasize the importance of mutual understanding, and to propose specific mechanisms by which it can be advanced, including but not limited to developing better international cooperation frameworks and using mass media (including the Internet) to foster and frame public debates in constructive ways;
 - ❖ To cultivate cooperation among current initiatives aimed at enabling those in the mainstream majority – who are overwhelmingly moderate and reject the views of extremists – to set the agenda;
 - ❖ To establish partnerships that will help diverse societies to better understand their differences while emphasizing and acting on their commonalities;
 - ❖ To propose measures through which education systems can foster knowledge and understanding of other cultures and religions;
 - ❖ To reach out to the youth of the world, in order to instil the values of moderation and cooperation, and to promote appreciation of diversity;
 - ❖ To promote awareness that security, stability and development are vital needs for all, and that global cooperation is necessary to achieve them, and to present practical proposals for advancing mutual security.
- The High-level Group will present its report in the second half of 2006 to the Secretary-General, who will determine, in con-

sultation with the co-sponsors, the appropriate way to present the programme of action to the international community. Implementation of the programme could then be overseen by a smaller group of similar stature.

Support structure

- A secretariat headed by an experienced director will prepare studies, analyses and proposals for the consideration of the High-level Group. It will also cooperate with similar initiatives and draw on work accomplished or under way in other fora.

ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS
HIGH-LEVEL GROUP MEMBERS

Federico Mayor Zaragoza (Spain)
Mehmet Aydin (Turkey)
Seyed Mohammad Khatami (Iran)
Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned (Qatar)
Ismail Serageldin (Egypt)
Mohamed Charfi (Tunisia)
André Azoulay (Morocco)
Moustapha Niasse (Senegal)
The Rt. Hon. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa)
Hubert Vedrine (France)
Karen Armstrong (UK)
Vitaly Naumkin (Russia)
John L. Esposito (USA)
Rabbi Arthur Schneier (USA)
Enrique V. Iglesias (Uruguay)
Candido Mendes (Brazil)
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Recommendations

It is by no chance that the first draft to be discussed in New York still lacked the topic of recommendations to face the West-Islam confrontation. We are not in a classical case, where conflicts involve known, if not exhaustive actors, with a standard pattern of escalation, management, and consent, in bargaining power or ultimate threats. Neither at a curbing of distension, as the ever impending new catastrophes in the West cut through an appeal to the disarmament of the minds; or the tolerance of the liturgies of reconciliation. Nor it is applicable the old repertoire and the normal protocols of the national discourses, or the pledges for a world consciousness. It is also true that the first effort of the Alliance is geared towards the denunciation and the deconstruction of these cumulative stereotypes, misjudgements, apprehensions, fears that create a blind or a hate pattern in the present civilization of fear and distrust. The Alliance, at the same time, assumed since its start a joint effort to work on this understanding, regardless of a *Realpolitik* or of strategies of continuous redresses of Empire-like truces.

No other was the call for a dialogue of civilizations by President Khatami before 9/11. We speak today to deaf ears, mixed with utter cynicism and systemic fear that are the result of a world of hegemonic controls, targeted by a relentless and uncontrollable terrorism.

In this literal acumen of social anomia it is important to reassert the limits of the power of discourse, the ingenuity of “good conscience”, and, specially, the frustrated idealism of any kind of proclamation, denunciation or “call to the hearts” in a world waiting for the agenda of the next catastrophe and its relentless alert. The HLG is attentive not to repeat the rhetoric or voicing from states, international organizations, or non-governmental organizations, out of an open look to talk freely on their awareness on the subject, on the new risks of a world confidence on mankind apparata.

A first concern necessarily refers to the tension expressed in a ideological speech of a world dominated by the mediatic image, state propaganda, *vis-à-vis* a common interest in getting effective, truthful information.

We are also sensitized to the permanence of the idealistic-minded discourse of reason, in terms of the irrepressible transfer of the Western achievements within the modernization process to the Islamic culture. At the same time, nevertheless, recognizing the secularization process that is its “second nature”, the West starts to acknowledge the rebirth of religion in all parts of the world, as a transcendent commitment, facing the transitive performances of an acquisitive society. Attempts at a different and symbolic well-being may be at a start.

This path against a war of religions could, precisely, bring faith to the imperative of effective multi-coexistence nowadays. In the very same line, the Western patterns of achievement within modernity have to stick to their own results, without forcing them out of context and other roots of authenticity menaced by former colonial domination.

The HLG is also conscious of the need of genuine, creative, new gestures that may bring back a first confidence, to build trust and dialogue, and then, full exchange, in a world fractured by the fall of the Twin Towers.

A genuine affirmative action can never be a repetition. In the same way, it must assure a full new reception to its message and impact. Of course, its consistence builds on the thorough multilaterality of this gesture, and the full risk-taking in its assumption. What is the degree of distrust, in the Islamic world *vis-à-vis* the West? What is the extent of a coriaceous cynicism enrobed in it? What can still be a late opening or a first *vis-à-vis*? Such a quest supposes the priority of gestures over works, and discourses, to clarify the cultural hindering that hits the full respect for religions in a secular era, or the right to expression as, exactly, the exercise of reason, out of dogmatism and in the true search for its critical freedom.

Hostages for dialogue

Affirmative actions of that kind, also, will regard acts of full donation and counter- martyrdom, as expressed by the terrorist yoke. Programs like, for instance, “hostages for dialogue” suppose a mutual offering from Western and Islamic intellectuals, either in universities or areas of the civil society, to a relentless exchange in the willingness to pay attention, before answering and providing such a ladder for interlocution, and the premises for an opening to the “otherness”, in order to assure a real exchange.

The report as a White Book

Attentive to the explicitness of its statements, the document did not bring in suggestions for effective affirmative actions to be taken by an Alliance of Civilizations. The great exception is the splendid proposal of Andre Azulay that the report may be made a white book, as an open and bold address to the Israel-Palestine issue. In itself, the exercise of truth becomes the normative action, coming out of a deconstruction (Aydin) of the cumulative set of prejudices, hidden arguments, reasonings and biased interests that brought the problem to the present impasse, and nurtured its ideologies of “no return”.

The first universal – the human rights basic platform

In the general format of recommendations it is important that we go further than just repeating the optimalization of behaviors involved in each one of the thematics, in order to improve the interaction of the main social actors of today’s history, into an Alliance of Civilizations. We have to face the utter priorities for a redress of a global understanding related to the defense of the general platform of human rights. Among them, and in their individual stand, one has to stress respectively:

- a) The full abolition of torture, both in its physical and mental exposition, having in mind, especially, the constitutive right to a vision of the world rooted in religion as a constitutive dimension of one’s intrinsical self. Together with the body the integrity of the mind, its representations and seeds of identity become a paramount priority in a recognition of the contents of the person in history.

- b) The right to religion as the ultimate configuration of one's reference to the world and its possible transcendence. Modernity coexists necessarily with these many differences in facing the ultimate values of men's identity. In fact, the very specificity of secularity is, precisely, to accept the multi-religious expression, as a necessary ingredient of today's multiculturalism.
- c) The right to expression as the necessary exercise of reason, in terms of the quest for truth and the understanding of the world and the general criticism towards the context of social life. Such an exercise involves the full responsibility of those statements and exactly *vis-à-vis* the whole of the human rights advance, of which they are such a crucial component.

Collective rights to identity and the rule of law

Together with those individual rights especially enhanced within a conflict of civilizations nowadays one has to look at the collective rights involved in the same confrontation; as:

- a) The right to difference of a collective subjectivity and its prevalence in the world at large, regardless of any ideological paradigm, within the respect of that platform of human rights. No model of power systems or economic behavior can be imposed out of the proper and effective inner demand of one's collective subjectivity.
- b) The present world coexistence required by the full respect of the Geneva Conventions of prisoners, be them concerned with declared or undeclared wars, with the recog-

niton of such rights, in any situation dealing with a threat to state's sovereignty.

- c) The conditioning of claims to national security to that rule of law and the evidence of a full acknowledgement of the human rights, according to such law.
- d) The recognition of the international courts to judge offenses emerging from ethnocide and genocide as crimes intrinsically transcendent to national sovereignties.
- e) The understanding of warfare within the same Geneva Agreements and the United Nations according resolutions, leading to a crime of genocide through respectively:
 - ❖ a fully unbalanced retaliation, in a state of declared or non-declared war, leading to the intervention of the United Nations;
 - ❖ preemptive wars, made at the cost of a full unilateral appraisal of an international conflict, and the hegemonic conditioning to its sequence and resolution. Genocide results from the identitarian deprivation of a full social collectivity, with is collateral of annihilation, damage or destruction.

The HLG present mandate has to be concentrated in the immediate confrontation between the West and Islam, at the very threshold of its new developments, out of the threats of terrorism, the World Trade Center collapse, the Iraq occupation, and the emerging conflict in Lebanon. Its conviction is that the new strategies of the rising phenomenon of terrorism and the hegemonic ways to tame it lead to a world threatened coexistence, a regressive basic support of human rights, a thorough impairment of the

culture of peace and of the platform for an effective human understanding, in a rising civilization of fear.

Towards the follow-up of the HLG recommendations

It is proposed that, either in the form of the present HLG, or eventually under a new Committee, a follow-up of the present recommendations may take full advantage, after Istanbul, of the insights and the richness of the last meetings.

The proposal is that three meetings may take place in 2007, in Stockholm, Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona, responding to the following thematics:

- a) the incoming international order in a multicultural world: Stockholm, next March the 5th;
- b) the world dialogue and the universal of human rights: Rio de Janeiro, 26th of May;
- c) towards a culture of peace, beyond hegemony: Barcelona, September 6th.

The Brazilian government pledged its support to the meeting in Rio de Janeiro, and also its concourse with the Royal Bank of Sweden for the meeting in Stockholm and with the Fundación Cultura de Paz, for the one to be held in Barcelona.

General Comments on the Experts Draft Text of experts or of HLG members?

As I reminded in my first reaction, I refrained to make any immediate comments on the first draft, following the Co-chairs information that a new full text was supposed to be made, as the basis for our contributions, before the meeting of next September 5. This first document will be then seen as a proposal by the group of Experts, of which we don't know, inclusively the names, and their specific responsibility in the original document.

According to this *modus operandi*, our task, hence, will be, through the lines we have agreed, to assure the basic ground already established, in the previous meetings of the HLG, to support the final presentation. It is difficult to find that in those pages. The text refers to the general purpose of our mandate, as an effort to reduce the levels of incomprehension, stereotypes, hidden views and prejudices that prevent the general interactions of civilizations nowadays, looking for an Alliance to build an understanding and a "culture of peace". As set from the very beginning by Prime Ministers Zapatero and Erdogan and Co-Chairs Federico Mayor and Mehmet Aydin, the main purpose goes for a real epistemological approach, in order to deconstruct the "bias" and impasses that prevent such a dialogue, and lead to a confrontation in the present world scenario.

Terms of discourse (II)**Global identitarian tensions, global awareness**

At the start of this quest for the identitary tensions nowadays it is crucial to have in mind the full picture, at large, of this crisis of the general encompassing framework of such representations. That is the case, for instance, of the claim for regressive ethnological subjectivities, or subaltern cultures, in arrested nation-building processes, simultaneous to modernization, for instance, in Andean Latin America.

No other is the push for an “aymara” or “quetchua” identity in Bolivia; or similar ones in Equator. At the same time, nowadays, migration inflows can give birth to repressed expressions of a collective self, as shown by the “chicanos” settlement in the U.S., under a growing second-class citizenship status. At a same level of awareness, a general concern has to be expressed, with regard to remaining rights to nation-state selfness, as claimed by the Kurds in the Middle East, or the Chechens in Central Asia.

Adroitly, the HLG mandate focused in the paramount confrontation between the West and Islam as the main identitarian conflict nowadays. It reflects the full impact after 9/11, of a first limit-threat on a global world, in terms of an international “Rule of Law” and an effective “coexistence in difference”, as seen at the turn of the century, and the ending of the Cold War.

The debatable premise: clash of civilizations or international political interests

We were asked to comment on the present draft, chapter by chapter, but it is on the grounds of the very premises of the discus-

sions that starts a disagreement with the approach taken to the concept of a “clash of civilizations” to rule the collective interactions, conflicts or the acknowledgement of the actors or subjects of history, nowadays, and their sense of identity and meaningful gestures in the present world scenario. The whole effort of the HLG intended to avoid polemics and abstract digressions, in order to proceed towards an action-oriented and objective set of recommendations for an Alliance of Civilizations. The Commission, exactly, tried to escape the huntingtonian pitfalls, but certainly not to embark into sentences like “what we are concerned with is a clash of political interest and forces not of civilizations” (2.4).

In fact, the experts yield to a clear reductionism, in terms of the reactive paradigms between civilization and states by precisely confining this latter category to the nation-state. There are no full parametric grounds, for the interplay of power and civilization, to assess the present global identitarian tension. Power structures are coeval to any idea of an historic organization, being them empires, city-states or nation-states. Culture also has the same extension, as the expression of meaning of any collective subjectivity. Civilization, on the contrary, springs out of the crescent command rationality and consciousness have over history, and expresses the overall impingement of technology and controls over any social context. Civilization in this sense – and following the Weberian tradition – expresses a post-Renaissance upcoming that derails the previous inertia-bound trend of history. It produces the growing contradictions with the previous cultural process, reaching the forms of colonial domination, under the *aegis* of progress and “illuminism”. What may be at stake is a full final deprivation of the inner collective self in the cultures outside the Western space, in a late awakening of this sense of loss. It took centuries to figure out the cost of modernization, and many

cultures succumbed to such a yoke, giving way to proselyte forms of full adoption or primacy of the Western *aegis*. The Islamic culture has been the one that, despite its strong religion building, resisted and gave birth at the second half of the 20th century to a late recovery of consciousness, starting with the Khomeyni Revolution. A general sense of malaise took its roots to overcome an almost vanished perception of identity – only possible through a retrieval or a fundamentalist stand. The sense of a loss of a collective soul became more and more acute – and moved into the ladder of protest – taken easily into the movements of terrorism, advanced by Al-Qaeda or similar groups. The 9/11 catastrophe climaxed, necessarily, these confrontations, born in the very seeds of a social unconsciousness spread over the Islamic space. It went parallel with the upcoming, in the West, of its hegemonic profile, after the Cold War and a full and ever growing unilateral command of the world events. Preemptive wars erupt in the same way as the subjective destitution went to the virtualization of the soul, and the full grip of the mediatic society. It's indeed a seizure of the world imaginary that takes place, together with this expropriation of men's interior dimension. Protest may evolve into violence, in this unconscious escalation, and terrorism expresses the ultimate rupture. It will be not Al-Qaeda that pushes the young girls in Gaza to kiss their parents and explode in a bus. Present terrorism is new in the world confrontation, and anonymous, and ubiquitous, and cannot be faced by the ordinary pre-9/11 demands for a return from violence. Specially being aware that the present world confrontation is not between recurrent world power interests (2.1) but between the process of culture and the development of the civilization process nurtured in the West. It comes to overall conditioning of reason at work in the historic context, and its inevitable reification.

The radical difference of the present world impasse

A new approach to terrorism and the global alert to its spread is required for an address like the one of the HLG, instead of seeing the present impasse as just one more case of known violence, distrust and panic in a world coexistence. Before any turn to the indictments of “decompression”, inherited from the Cold War, we have a duty to explore this new age of fear: the challenges it originally proposes, distinct from worn-out historic parallels, or pardons, repetitions or pious exercises of goodwill.

In the face of the full abduction of a collective identity, terrorism expresses the annihilation of the very “otherness”, in terms of a sacrificial rite, much more than of an ultimate bargaining; of a martyrdom, signed as the last will of its protagonists of no return. The uniqueness of this threat may open an indefinite time of troubles and fears, in a new hundred-year lasting of the old “wars of religion”.

We must express the acumen of this momentum, stressing its novelty in the same way the break of the century hampered a “culture of peace”, in the burst of multi-scenarios to assure the world of differences in all its potential. In the opposite trend, terrorism is exactly the present sign of the times and the increasing void of the present world confrontation.

History and memories (III)

The chapter intends to build a background to the prevailing conflict of West and Islam. It indulges in overall generalistic conclusions on historical facts, together with errors and despondent comments.

Intending to state a full example of power greed of the Papacy, for instance, it refers to the crusades, without distinguishing the first and the fourth. The Byzantines in 1453 did not capitulate (3.7) to the Ottomans. The text unfortunately refers to Latin America independent states “ruled by caudillos of European stock”. We wonder how Bolivar would respond to this label, or the Empire of Brazil, under the statesmanship of D. John the VI and Peter the I.

Failed hope and a dividing world (IV)

This chapter, in an unnecessary and superficial start, mixes up historic synchrony linking the emergence of the US transatlantic alliances, with the Ottomans in 1914, as “the only Muslim, strong enough to enter that war” (4.1). We wonder how useful it is to mention, in one sentence the “problem of the Jewish question in Eastern and Western Europe” (4.0). We will also demand to what added insight responds a paragraph as this: “the end of colonialism also raised hopes for colonized peoples, including Muslim societies but also brought trauma” (4.3).

One would ask if the laudatory paragraph (4.5) on the United Nations would help in the stand taken by the HLG. It is also to ask if, in terms of the general realistic view of the present world tensions, it is to be kept a sentence like “the rich countries give more to the poor ones” (4.7) or “major initiatives against diseases were launched” (4.8).

The text is not helped by repeating solemn platitudes like “the phenomen nowadays of an increasing tendency to use force to shape the world order with indifference to the international law” (4.11). It is significant of the lack of relevance in this kind of specialist discourse to mention the practices of preemptive at-

tacks in just one general enumeration of the world present tensions (4.11). Nor a single reference is made to a kind of new political change – “sea level” like – in the world condition of the hegemonic unilateral command of the historic discourse. At the same time the reference to the “facts of torture” goes together with an imprecise condemnation: “Extraordinary imprisonment” (4.11). Still more significant of that paragraph’s randomic phenomenology is the mention of the impact of “Modernity and globalization” that, of course, have contributed to the West-Islam conflict and “merit examination” (4.15).

The chapter wants to be a general outlook of the world problematic. It encompasses the real and the normative, sometimes even in a same sentence: “civil society organizations and non-violent non-state entities have become a vital part of all societies and must be acknowledged by governments” (4.15). Sometimes these mixed certitudes become utterly absolute: “an independent and globalized world can be regulated only through an effective multilateral system” (4.15).

Another assertions propose an unnecessary *modicum* to the general expected ban on “military precipitated actions”: “They must be a last resort after negotiations have failed, and in conformity with international law” (4.15). If we are going to speak about the relevant in the document, it cannot indulge with trivial and solemn sentences, such as: “Nation States and their government, as their protagonist, must conform to international norms” (4.15).

The phenomenon of extremism (V)

This may be the most critical part of the introduction, as it develops the conceptual framework of extremism and terrorism. Strange enough, no definition is made of extremism. It is only

said that it can “be found in any human activity, and can be tolerated as long as it does not harm” (5.1). Neither adequate definition is given of terrorism, confounding the instrument or the modes of the action with its effective meaning. We will be under severe criticisms if we took the concept by just its resulting behavior. It is understood as just “the killing or the maiming of innocents” and requires more in the explanation of its political motive or objective.

Terrorism deals with the nullification or the abolition of the other. It is the intransitive action of cutting its social relationships to the very bottom, either of the actors or their supportive environment. It is unnecessary to curse terrorism and manifest an utter condemnation without first defining the attempt, and more than the objective damage. It is *per se* the gesture that entails its final proscription. The action is coextensive with the lethality brought to violence. It's not an escalation, that bets on its reversible and reluctant rupture. It corresponds to the symbiotic relationship with the feeling of deprivation, to the despair of a void in the soul that signalizes a chasm and a final confrontation. The effective damage effect is, at the end, the exercise of unlimited violence. It never stands as an indication of further negotiation or truces. Nothing is said in the documents about the inner qualitative difference between extremism and terrorism with a clear impact on the practices to assure its suppression in the contemporary world.

There are not procedures, in terms of threats, rewards or reversals in such a violence, brought from the very beginning into a limit-situation. The sacrifice of its actors is today equated with a sense of testimony, ignited by a sheer assumption of the deed, once made irreversible.

Indeed, in the long run this reference of a limit-situation of protest as a severance may be linked to a general strike against

secularization. The fundamentalist stand springs from the defense of an identitarian claim that can only respond in its wholeness, and this in its full religious profile.

Within this sense of a plethoric defense of identity, secularization becomes, more and more, the elusive enemy, to be confronted by ultimate annihilation. As it is impossible to think about an Herodian *vis-à-vis* of Islam and the West – in the Toynbean concept – it is useless to imagine a position of trading with European or American values or pinpointing sets of acceptance or rejection. In such a context, a final Westernization was only possible in the still, half-dominated, colonial days. The more we move at the present to the hegemonic standing, the less one can think of a rationalization of those choices, or of a bet on a middle of the way coexistence between the two worlds.

In this same line, it is impossible to tame the ultimate pressure of terrorism with enduring negotiations, as it is the case of extreme violence, by contemporary nationalist or separatist movements, on the other end of annihilation as still-a-bargain. Violence out of an ultimate condition of destitution is indeed closer to Islamist terrorism when the sense of deprivation of a collective subjectivity becomes the gestures of a last rupture. Neither “psychological terrorism” resemble the kind of annihilation of post-September 11. Policies of megalomaniac dictatorships reflect the hindering or the paralysis of passive citizenship, in the systems of power but not, at all, the razing of their identities.

Identities and perceptions (VI)

The whole chapter leads to the discussion of the institutionalized prejudices put at stake by the religions confrontations. It

adroitly remarks the acute sense of despondency and rejection in the mutual appraisal of said religious bodies, activated by political militancy, attributed to an estrangement that leads to the full abolition of the human dimension of otherness (6.5).

The chapter defends, of course, as a general policy, the necessary balanced *vis-à-vis* of West and Islam against a denigration of their respective images in the stereotypes settled by the mediatic world. Such a redressing is seen as imperative for a new possible understanding of their reciprocal identity. It is disturbing that the paragraph concerned settles the problem by stressing the strict validity of historic synchrony that, in itself, looks very much as a statement from the parusic, Fukuyama-like, “End of History”. A document as ours cannot keep a sentence like this: “History is not compassive in redress its wrongs. Muslim societies have no alternative – and decades have already been lost – but to assess their place in the contemporary world and examine the causes for their weaknesses and slow change” (6.8).

Religion and modernity (VII)

The basic question, that goes from paragraphs 7.1 to 7.8, is to know to what extent secularization is, in itself, a constitutive element of the civilization process nowadays and creates, in this sense, a basic and strict fundamentalist reaction against it that would encompass, in the same stand, and over cultural differences, the rapture of the evangelist right, or the missionaries eschatologies all over the world. What is needed, indeed, is to understand that religions revivals are not a transient phenomenon (7.8) and face symbiotic relationship with secularism.

Its outcome will depend on a final non-reductionist look at the humanistic content of modernity, as the fulfillment of men for men's sake in history.

Counter-extremism

Concerning the approach to counter-extremism, and a general practice on the thematic issues of the report, it is important to advance the following remarks:

- It is necessary to expand the draft on strictly the present state of the problematique, without repeating the obvious or even making the trivial pompous. This happens several times, as in media strategies, when it refers to media as “increasingly powerful in a world where access to it is expanding” (9.3), in the education section: “the educational system becomes a monumental challenge today” (10.1) or in regard to youth: “the idealism and energy and creative of youth make them an important factor for mobilizing change” (12.1).

- In general the message of the document has to depend on its own words and not on the very debatable idea of having a *thesaurus* of quotations, or a *florilegium*, of worn-out golden sentences, crowning each chapter. At the same time it is important that in each one of those themes, the report could concentrate on the specific interaction between the West and the Islamic confrontation. In it, part of the information is relevant but requires a rewriting, having in mind the real nerve of the issues. This draft have the only object of stressing these discrepancies – as a general fracture – of misunderstanding misjudgments, stereotypes, policies and behaviors that bust from such impasses and widen the confrontation between the West and Islam. According to such issues, the

following observations are advanced, concerning each successive themes:

Media

- a) Paragraphs 9.1 to 9.5 are to be suppressed, as redundant and strictly general intakes on the thematics.
- b) Paragraphs 9.6 to 9.11 would be rewritten, giving more push to the contrast between the Western and the Islamic culture, in the reception and specially the “reciprocity of perspectives” in such a hazy if not a hostile intertwining.
- c) Paragraph 9.14 needs to be enlarged with more data, to the effective contrast, especially in the new media. It is, at the same time, in the effective condition of access to the new emergent info–civilization, that the classic distance between the West and Islam don’t follow, necessarily, the same pattern of the traditional expression of the first mediatic society.

Education

- 10.3 – It is highly debatable to access, in a general-like grand view, the correlation of an increased religious population and its growth through the immigrants inflow. Synchronic comparative studies can show how much the dominant pattern (Clifford Geertz) of westernization involves a clear derooting, as the dominant matrix following the displacement into new different and accelerated conditions of social time.

10.9 – 10.11 – It is also important to stress that the considerations on paragraph 10.9, 10.10, 10.11, relevant as they are, have also to be insightful. Otherwise they are not going to escape the “so and so” stand of its present discourse. Crucial in the discussion of the technological versus the humanistic studies, paragraph 10.12 adds nothing to relevance in the present text.

The status of women

Paragraph 11.1 and 11.2 have to be shortened in order to lead to the contrasts in the climatic issue between the West and Islam. It is also highly recommendable that a full general discussion of the plight or condition of women could be put forward in terms of the effective cumulative process of liberation, together with the importance of the new breakthroughs of social movements. The presence of gender in new affirmative action have not been, at all, discussed in the issues. I do not think that the text is improved by sentences like: “Women contend with much greater difficulties than men to reconcile work with private life” (11.4).

The chapter on women on a predominant Muslim world cannot be confined just to the general problems of strict citizenship *vis-à-vis* a patriarchal interpretation of the Islamic law, or the keeping of a personal status in this conditioning. No mention is made in this chapter to the general awakening of a gender claim, demediated from this frame, towards a general platform of human rights.

It is fundamental also to see what is the present state of a consciousness-taking movement concerning the rights to the body, information access and family freedom in today’s Islam.

Youth

The problem with all this section deals again with the need to move from accuracy to relevance. A strict strategy-oriented comment will face the democratic, multilateral invasion of Internet in mediatic society, hit in its previous formal structure and bunkers. We are only about to discuss, in the whole world, the full dimension of these problems and the way in which they bring a new Gutenbergian breakthrough in communications.

Youth is debunked more and more from a *locus* of learning, a generation-like transmission of knowledge, and exposed to an anonymous, tribal-like social interaction. In such a context the affirmative action, the full exercise of disclosing truth, faces a world frozen into misunderstandings, embattled by the courageous production of White Books, on questions like the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Ruanda-Burandi confrontation, or the still equivocal information on the Darfur genocide. The effort to a possible universal opening dives into the anonymous, uncontrolled, idiomatic gangs of secluded solidarity, or hate within the former expected behavior of the civil society. It is not enough to discuss the good or the bad news of the Internet and how extremism would, of course, prosper in new recruiting in this never-never land of savage information. The text remains in the guessing-side, to predict the overcoming of the set media policy, or to really assemble information on the decline of “early pregnancy”, or the increase of drugs or alcohol abuse, strictly linked to the Western World, or out of any comparison with Islam (12.10).

Important indeed is the picturing of the exchange students program, to emphasize its reduction today, specially in the United States, concerning youth from the Middle East after 9/11. A picture of that kind seems essential for our specific purposes, due to

the level of attention the HLG is mandated to, in terms of insisting on a broad, general program on that matter and to what extent a vicious circle of fear and prejudice paralyses the logistic efforts at rebuilding the international or national system to provide for such an urgent endeavour. Again, references to youth participation in decision-making social structures are useless without any comparative data between the West and Islam.

Immigration

This section brings in itself a strategic value, as the effective physical basis for the support of a multicultural world. The problem, therefore, is not to discuss the dimensions of those flows, that feedback, in terms of home remittances and the effective moods and ways to settle the last targets of those same flows. Indeed what is at stake is the level in which migration tends to become peripheric, and marginalized, *vis-à-vis* the real full integrative push in the receiver country. A new problem – and concerning human rights – on the emerging “fundamentalist” approach to national identities has been, with regards to the US neo-cons, to distinguish levels of citizenship, in a admitted inequality *vis-à-vis* the Rule of Law. Less and less, the perspective of a well integrated minority, working as a bridge towards an open world, survives in a “civilization of fear”. Its disturbing new profiles may appear from the look at the “chicano” as a pariah, and a suspect, at the threshold of the hegemonic empire. At the same time, the spontaneous first flow, at the turn of the 19th century, from Muslim countries to Europe built geographical settlements that are more and more turned from the multi-boroughs rooting into the center-periphery dyad, overemphasized in the

great megalopolis nowadays, and an inner sense of exile in the context of the collectivity chosen to live and grow.

In effect, and in looking at ways to fight the “civilization of fear” and its terrorist hidden actors, through the full open model of the 19th century, we are far away from the “sea-level” in the exchange and symbiotic relationship to assure the redressing of identity demands, compressed in the present acceleration of history and its inner push for uniformity.

First Reactions to the Experts Draft

Dr. Iqbal Riza
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United Nations
New York – NY – USA

Rio de Janeiro, August 1st, 2006

Dear Dr. Riza,

I intend to develop my full comments, as suggested, to the ongoing report, after the new draft to be presented, as announced by the Co-Chairs of the HLG. This will be the occasion to really assess the expression of the Group as a whole, taking into consideration several suggestions already advanced in the Doha and Dakar meetings and that do not appear in the notes, nor in the present text, entrusted to the specialists, indicated by the General Secretariat.

I will, for the moment, just point out some of my own remarks concerning, respectively:

1. The necessity to go beyond the *vis-à-vis* with Islam in the Alliance of Civilizations effort. Although, and for sure, this is the paramount effort, as stated by the Secretary-General, at least a reference as a sense of awareness is needed to signal out the emerging multi-cultural tensions in the cases of aborted development, up to the im-

perilment of the nation-building process of modernity. This is the case, nowadays, for instance, of the Andean Latin America, where an emergent fundamentalism claims, in Bolivia or Equator, for a return to a tribal or fully ethnic identity.

2. The continuing outburst of terrorism, after 9/11, bounces into a “culture of fear”, and the emergence of a hurt social unconscious, coming out of a late, deferred perception, of a continuous deprivation of a collective self, like the one of the Islamic World exposed to the “built-in” technological Western process of change, and its impingement on the culture, or the subjective dimensions confronted by a universal progress.
3. The concern, at the verge of a “war of religions”, that any return to the previous days to 9/11, and their attempts at a genuine “culture of peace”, cannot just express the classic predicaments of an ethic rebound at large, or out of the known repertoire of goodwill or pardon. A request is made, towards the reach of new symbolic forms of gatherings, through affirmative actions and “shocks of disarmament”, needed to rebuild a basic confidence over a level of irrational mistrust, coming out of 9/11 and the subsequent escalation on return.
4. The widening gaps on the semantics of credibility about, in fact, to be destroyed by the level of extreme confrontation and the “culture of fear” – as stressed by several participants of the HLG. We face this new imperviousness to a common exchange – that need, even at the heurist level, to reopen eyes and ears. A full new attempt at this breakthrough is a must in the agenda of the HLG. It is not

enough to speak about “affirmative actions” but to explore new ways to such an attempt. Unilateral risk taking initiatives of approach, experiences like “hostages for dialogue” become, in fact, testimonial, as required by such founding gestures. At the level reached by the culture of fear extremism disappear in the wake of terrorism. Mediation cannot prosper, as there are not middle menaces, or reasonable threats. Ultimate fear cannot be negotiated but remain in endless confrontation.

We cannot end our mandate by just making a splendid updating on the state of the problem proposed to the AoC, and limit our manifestation to just a “placet”, or “non placet”, to the voice of specialists. Indeed the specificity of the mandate requires, for ourselves, an appraisal on this perspective – in its wholeness. No other is the view that will bring the “plus” of our genuine contribution, as a group, to this general problematique. The HLG is supposed to move beyond the statement of the adequacy of a world acknowledgement of such a “state of the art”. A move forward requires necessarily a common reflection on the subject, after any specialist input. It brings, in this sense of awareness, the building on priorities, the exploration of scenarios that do not came out of just the sum of elaborate *exposés*. As a first example, not a single mention is made, in the specialists’ draft of the instances and demands of human rights, as the first universal of confidence for overcoming the “culture of fear”. Neither to the primary competence, nowadays, of the U.N. special rebuilt Commission, to provide for such a fulfillment. A basic first consensus requests, for instance, the full understanding of torture, *vis-à-vis* the physical and moral grievance it bears: the assessment of the right of expression facing the respect of the right to re-

ligion, the trial of genocide or ethnocide by non national courts, or the stop of preemptive wars, as a new “rational” advancement of global wars.

The draft made by the specialists is a significant background paper for our work, and the subsequent expression of what has been said by the HLG or what will come out of the Co-chairs presentation. I hope that in New York a first overall reaction to the new text would already have taken place, to save time for a consensus on the final document to be presented in Istanbul.

With highest regards,

Candido Mendes