Alliance of Civilizations
International Security and Cosmopolitan Democracy

Seminar Conclusions

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WORKING PAPER

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Abstract

The initiative to form an "Alliance of Civilizations" as a means to overcome cultural and political gaps originated in a proposal made by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to the Secretary-General of the United Nations during a speech at the 59th UN General Assembly on September 21, 2004.

Kofi Annan officially took over the initiative, co-sponsored by the UN, the Spanish and the Turkish governments, on July 14, 2005. The Secretary-General also put in place a process to form a High Level Panel, which is expected to hold its first meeting in late November, in order to convert this first impulse into a feasible and operative concept by the end of 2006.

On June 6-7, 2005, the Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales (ICEI) and the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) organized an international seminar in Madrid, bringing together experts, academics and practitioners to analyse contemporary challenges, reflect critically on their implications for the present initiative, and enhance and enrich it.

The present paper summarizes the main ideas for an Alliance of Civilizations, the major critical points, and the suggestions made, during the seminar, in order to tackle them.

Resumen

La propuesta de formar una "Alianza de Civilizaciones" para superar las divergencias políticas y culturales tuvo su origen en la propuesta de José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero al Secretario General en un discurso ante la 59ª Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas el 21 de septiembre de 2004.

El 14 de julio de 2005, Kofi Annan oficialmente adoptó la iniciativa, co-auspiciada por Naciones Unidas y los gobiernos de España y Turquía, y puso en marcha un proceso para formar un Grupo de Alto Nivel, cuya primera reunión se espera para finales de noviembre, con el objetivo de convertir este primer impulso en un concepto viable y operativo hasta finales de 2006.

Los días 6 y 7 de junio de 2005, el Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales (ICEI) y la Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) organizaron un seminario internacional en Madrid, con el objetivo de analizar retos contemporáneos y sus implicaciones para el futuro concepto de una Alianza de Civilizaciones. El presente documento de trabajo resume las principales ideas, puntos críticos y sugerencias surgidas en el seminario.

Contents

1. The Alliance of Civilizations Initiative

1. The Alliance of Civilizations initiative originated in a proposal made by the Spanish President of Government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, during a speech at the 59th UN General Assembly on September 21, 2004. Zapatero presented his idea to form an "Alliance of Civilizations" as a means to overcome cultural and political gaps, and called on the Secretary-General to adopt the initiative.

2. The proposal was taken up by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, in his address before the Arab League the following December, as well as in an intervention held together with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on March 9, 2005, in Madrid. The Secretary-General officially took over the initiative on July 14, and put in place a process to form a High Level Panel in order to convert this first impulse into a feasible and operative concept.

3. A working group, composed of representatives from the UN and the Spanish government, was formed to bring forward that process. For this purpose, Kofi Annan appointed Iqbal Riza and Giandomenico Picco as Special Advisers. On behalf of the Spanish government, which was asked by the Secretary-General to take a leading role in bringing forward the initiative, Ambassadors Máximo Cajal and Juan Antonio Yáñez were appointed. This working group has elaborated an initial concept paper for the Alliance of Civilizations to serve as a basis for the work of a High Level Panel which was nominated by the Secretary-General on September 5, 2005, and which is expected to hold its first meeting in late November.

4. The composition of the Panel counts with a wide regional and civilizational representation, and comprises politicians out of office, academics with a religious-cultural background, media representatives and other representatives of the different civilizational entities. A list of the 18-member Panel and its terms of reference will be made available shortly. The High Level Panel will be supported by a secretariat in its task to elaborate a set of recommendations to the UN Secretary-General by the end of 2006, and to issue an action plan with concrete, practical measures.

5. The Turkish government, represented by Prime Minister Erdogan, agreed to co-sponsor the initiative alongside with the Spanish government and the UN. This Turkish co-sponsorship is symbolically extremely valuable and constitutes a strong political signal.

6. Beyond the question of co-sponsorship, an informal group of 19 states and two organizations already expressed their support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. These are: Argentina, Costa Rica, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Turkey, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, and Tunisia, as well as the Arab League and the Islamic Conference.

7. Parting from a general unease due to the widening gaps between certain parts of the world, the Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales (ICEI) and the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), two institutions dedicated to the studies of International Relations, were both convinced that this was an initiative that was put forward at the right time and which was worth supporting through assistance to its further development. On June 6-7, 2005, FRIDE and ICEI, in collaboration with Universidad Complutense, Caja Madrid and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, organized an international seminar in Madrid, bringing together experts, academics and practitioners to analyse contemporary challenges and reflect critically on their implications for the pre-

sent initiative, enhance and enrich it and think of ways of making a real impact.

8. The seminar was attended by a wide range of academic scholars, experts, diplomats, journalists, as well as representatives of the United Nations, the Spanish government and civil society. Particularly welcomed was the presence of the representatives of the Spanish government for the Alliance of Civilizations, Máximo Cajal and Juan Antonio Yáñez, and the Special Adviser on behalf of the UN, Iqbal Riza. The debates were organised around four sessions where the following issues were discussed: possible contents of an Alliance of Civilizations; which is or could be Europe's role in the relation between the West and the Islamic world; how does the Alliance of Civilizations fit into the multilateral framework of global society, especially in terms of international law; and finally, which could be the role of civil society within the framework of this Alliance?

9. The present conclusions summarize the main ideas for an Alliance of Civilizations, major critical points, challenges, and the suggestions made in order to tackle them.

2. The Need for an Alliance of Civilizations: Global Challenges

10. The first set of issues was related to the present intercultural and intercivilizational relations, the nature of existing tensions and their possible root causes.

2.1. GROWING GAPS

11. An immediate criticism of the Alliance of Civilizations which had arisen after its proposal by the Spanish Head of Government before the UN claimed that the proposal took for granted the existence of the entity "civilization" as a compact and more or less closed reality, thereby indirectly, or partially, confirming Samuel Huntington's theory of a *"clash of civilizations"*. The debate on a possible "clash", as predicted by Huntington in 1993, is indeed closely linked to some of the core issues of the Alliance of Civilizations. However, there was agreement among the participants of the seminar that Huntington's theory has had a highly unconstructive effect on public discourse, poisoning public debate and people's minds for over a decade with ideas that have been feeding hostile attitudes.

12. Up until the 18th century, the term "civilization" described the opposite of barbarism. Today it has gained a new meaning as a virtual synonym for culture and society. Huntington's definition of a civilization is similar: "A civilization is a cultural entity [...] the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have [...]."[1] According to Huntington, "[t]he great divisions of mankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural."[2], and a clash of civilizations will occur between nations and members of different civilizations, with the fault lines between civilizations as the battle lines of the future. After the Cold War, he says, the two blocks of capitalism and communism will be replaced by "the West versus the rest" as the main line of conflict. But the creation of fault lines between cultures, civilizations and societies, so history has shown, can only happen over time. And which are the borders of civilizations? According to Huntington, a civilization is the broadest level of identification an individual can participate in, and this identification lays the foundation for the clash that is to come, with the main source of conflict being the antagonistic relationship between the "West" and the "Islamic World".

13. According to some participants, Huntington's theory had been granted too

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[1] Huntington, Samuel P.: "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, n° 3/1993.
[2] Ibid.

much scientific significance, and was best opposed by ignoring it. However, in practice, the theory has attracted vast attention, and no matter to what degree one might consider the "clash of civilizations" to reflect current realities, there is no doubt that it has been successfully used in Western political discourse for agitation against Islam. Similar discourses – conspiracy theories, demonization of the Western culture - exist in Islamic countries. So even though Huntington's general picture might be simplistic, cut and dried - all justified critique of his ideas cannot distract from the fact that we do face an authentic threat: the enormous intensification of *hostile perceptions* between the "Islamic World" and "the West". As we have had to witness in the past, the manifestation of these hostile perceptions through violence can do terrible harm. The confrontation between the Islamic World and the West has reached a civilizational dimension. This is why we need an Alliance of Civilizations.

14. There was consensus among the workshop participants that the current confrontation and the whole discourse on conflict and dialogue between civilizations are at its heart about the relationship between the *"Arab-Islamic World" and the "West"*. Consequently, the improvement of this relationship was considered a key issue of future action of an Alliance of Civilizations. Moreover, it was expressed that the term "civilization" was used only for reasons of political correctness or politeness. Nevertheless, it was clear to most people that from the Western point of view, the term was mainly aimed at religion in general and Islam in particular. This impression seemed indirectly confirmed in the context of the seminar by the regional representation of the speakers, who exclusively originated from Western and Islamic countries.

15. In an attempt to explain the narrow focus of a debate which should actually be of global scale, it was expressed that the initiative to form an Alliance of Civilizations was a merely reactive framework: on the one hand, responding to Huntington's argument, trying to soften it and reduce the damage by providing a human, anti-racist concept using the same terms, and on the other hand, reacting to the fact that the USA and Spain were, for the first time, the main targets of large-scale terrorist attacks, which eventually led to the powerful agenda-setters calling for a global remedy. Others considered that, given the increasingly hostile perceptions among some civilizations, Zapatero's proposal was simply a pro-active initiative at the right time.

16. However, there was no doubt that the growing tension between the West and the Islamic World constituted a true threat to international peace and security, which could not be ignored and must be counteracted by adequate measures. Hostile perceptions do not only exist in extreme right-wing circles, but are spreading across the minds of intellectuals, youth, ordinary people in all parts of society, leaving people in both worlds more and more convinced of the bad faith of the other. Stereotypes such as the imaginary army of radical bomb-throwing Bin Ladens, or the decadent non-believers trying to colonize the Islamic World for oil and imperial domination, are subject to *instrumentalization by religious and political extremists*, who themselves firmly believe in their own stereotypes and the rejection of the other. The question was raised whether the Alliance of Civilizations should be a political initiative only, or include also a religious dimension. As desirable as it may be leaving religion aside, it was concluded to be impossible because religion had de facto turned into a political instrument.

17. For some Muslim extremists, the "clash of civilizations" provides a most welcome support, feeding their belief of being warriors of Jihad against the new crusades, and facilitating the recruitment of followers. Some participants considered that the dominance of a globalized neoliberal economy was crucial in this respect because in many parts of the world it removed the "safety net" provided by states which used to give ordinary people shelter

by providing basic health, education, elementary and economic rights. Once removed that shelter, people find relief in the charity and welfare institutions of religious organizations, some of them extremist. The social and welfare work is precisely one of the strongest assets of Islamist organizations and a way to ensure support and recruitment. In some occasions, a similar phenomenon has been observed in Christian extremism. As long as secular forces do not take a stand and religious groups are the only societal forces which address the needs of people, be they social and economic needs, or fear and anger vis-à-vis imperial foreign occupation, the field is left to non-secular forces. It was stressed that the question of how to stop the flows of recruitment by bringing forward policies should be at the centre of reflection, and that the issue of foreign occupation, most particularly in Iraq and Palestine, played a major role in this regard.

18. When talking about the need for an alliance between civilizations, the notion of *terrorism* as one of the fiercest expressions of the existing confrontation is unavoidable. Some raised the question whether the fight against terrorism by the dominant Western powers was not the new mask of a modern colonialism. According to another critical argument, the fact that terrorism, as a threat which causes not a fraction of the fatalities caused by war, disease and starvation, had been put on top of the global agenda gave evidence that this agenda was not being set according to the objective scale and dimension of the threat, but rather according to its target group, and according to who had the power to determine when there is or not an urgent need for concerted global action.

19. The phenomenon of terrorism is so complex that, for decades, the international community was unable to define it properly, and the term keeps on being misused for other kinds of violence.[3] Terro-

rism, even though by no means an exclusively modern phenomenon, has today developed into a large-scale lethal threat which at the same time constitutes, illustrates and reinforces the confrontation between Western and Islamic societies. There is nothing by which terrorism can be justified. However, in order to be able to tackle the problem, the underlying reasons behind it must be well understood. Dealing with the root causes and motivations of terrorism means trying to resolve the Gordian knot, and still it is a much more sustainable and therefore promising approach than trying to tackle the problem merely through security measures. Desperation and anger of a long-term suffering and injustice from the hands of a powerful opponent often provide the fertile ground on which extremism and terrorism can grow. With regard to the Alliance of Civilizations, it was strongly believed that any initiative which contributed to successfully countering hostile perceptions between members of different civilizations would also help to stop the violence.

2.2. THE SELF AND THE OTHER: IDENTITIES AND PERCEPTIONS

20. A clear image of the other, as well as of one's own identity, are preconditions for recognizing and respecting each other's differences. When talking about an Alliance of Civilizations, who are we talking of? What constitutes "the West"? Is there an "Arab-Islamic Civilization", and if so, how is it characterized? In accordance with the mentioned perceptions, the answers to these questions are very different, depending on which side of the Mediterranean one enquires.

21. There was general agreement that a cut and dried characterization of either "the West" or "the Islamic / Arab World" did

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[3] In his report *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all,* published on 21 March 2005, the UN Secretary-General fully endorsed the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change´s call for "a definition of terro-

rism, which would make it clear that, in addition to actions already proscribed by existing conventions, any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."

not do justice to the complexity of either of them. Moreover, even if one allowed the existence of such civilizations as relatively homogeneous entities, by using these terms one encounters the practical difficulty of not knowing whom to include. Does Israel belong to the West? Does Japan? Does the "Islamic World" include only Arab states or also Far Eastern Islam? And where to place Turkey?

22. Historically, the terms "East" and "West" arose from the split of the Christian Church in the Roman Empires of the West and East, thus out of a break within Christianity, not as a distinction between Christians and Muslims. Speaking of an *"Arab-Muslim World"* is per se not acceptable, because the term is mixing up religion with ethnicity by equating the religion of Islam with the Arab ethnic group. Such a blend of categories reinforces stereotypes ("All Arabs are Muslims", "All Muslims are Arabs") and must therefore be carefully avoided. The term "Arab World" remains extremely limited, while the term "Muslim World" appears rather too extensive, especially if one includes not only those states where the majority of the population is of Muslim confession, but also those with a considerable Muslim minority, which would again include almost all of Western Europe. And even if a suitable term could be found, given the variety of the different forms of Islam as a religion, the range of political systems in Arab countries, and the many inner-Arab conflicts throughout history, it would remain daring to speak of this entity as a homogeneous block without further differentiation.

23. The quest for an entity called *"the West"*, in order to find a term one can actually operate with, does not prove much easier. Participants especially expressed their difficulties in mingling together Europe and the United States, given the substantial differences between them. And even if one accepted to define the "West" as comprising the European Union and the United States, and maybe Israel, what about Japan, and many other countries? So

apparently, failing to make up a precise definition, the debate sticks to the West as only including the US and the EU only to reduce complexity. Despite the general rejection of the whole "East-West" terminology for being all too cut and dried and actually out-dated, the terms kept on being used due to the lack of more suitable alternatives.

24. In the reflection on what constitutes the identity of the West from a Western point of view, the current *European identity crisis*, illustrated by the paralyzation of the Constitutional ratification process, gained special attention. In fact, one of the reasons for the present crisis was seen in Europe's unwillingness to cut the umbilical cord to the United States. The question of to what extent the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands constituted any reliable evidence of the European population's general unhappiness with the development of the European Union, or even meant the failure of the European project, was controversially discussed.

25. The issue of a possible future *Turkish EU membership* was agreed to be greatly relevant for the inquiry after the European identity. With regard to the present seminar, one participant noted that the fact that Turkey was singled out as the only country to be assigned a special notion in the program of a seminar on the Alliance of Civilizations suggested that "Turkey was trouble", an attitude which greatly reflected the general European posture towards the country. At the same time it was admitted that as a matter of fact, there were many reasonable objections to Turkey's EU membership. Officially, it is a candidature like any other, with criteria such as human rights and democracy, social-economic development, etcetera. However, participants largely agreed that in spite of all well-intended attempts to claim the opposite, the main reason why Turkey, unlike Eastern European countries, was not being immediately accepted as a future EU member state was not its economic or human rights situation, but its Muslim identity.

26. Since the country's possible accession has come closer and has thus become a frequent issue of debate, Islam has increasingly been seen as an obstacle to EU accession on both sides. Turkey is a country hard to classify; depending on the criteria applied, it could be included both in Western and in Islamic civilizations. Europeans fear that the presence of millions of Muslims might challenge European cultural integrity – a fear that neglects the fact that a broad Muslim presence in Europe has been a reality for decades. But even though such fears are present, there is no total majority opposition against Turkey's accession within the EU population. Nevertheless, according to the Turkish perception of the inner-European debate, the issue of their country's accession is seen through the "prism of the Christian club". Even though Turkey's "bridge role" has been often exaggerated, it was noted that paradoxically, Turkey was probably one of the non-European states which most resembled the pattern of a Western European nation-state. But again, by labelling Turkey with the emblem of Islam, religion and state are mixed up. Participants stressed that, if Europe really understood the practical meaning of *laïcité*, it would not be discussing Turkey's EU accession in terms of Islam.

27. The case of Turkey reveals a lot of the European identity debate, because the central question, whether or not the EU can integrate millions of Muslims in their midst, ignores the detail that there are already millions of Muslims living in the heart of Europe. Islam in Europe, or *European Islam*, is not an option but a reality. All too often, it was bewailed, Islam is treated as if it were a problem in itself. In the debate on how Islam fits into European societies, again, the issue of how Europe defines itself is crucial. So far the European Union has been stating negatively attributes which did *not* form part of the alleged European identity, but failed to clearly define itself positively, and in this sense, Islam has always been a factor of distinction. The perception of Islam being an eastern religion is so deeply rooted that even after

four generations, Muslims in Europe are denominated as foreigners. The idea that Islam might be European, too – and Christianity Middle Eastern – does not enter into people's heads, in spite of the obvious realities. Muslims in Europe are eternally immigrants, and Islam is considered the religion of immigrants, thus non-European. How many generations will it take European Muslims to be recognized as full citizens? There has to be a moment when people are granted the label "integrated", meaning European citizens. Multiculturalists, who only want to build bridges, and only bridges, pave the way for the construction of walls.

28. The issue of the separation of state and religion, *laïcité*, is of considerable importance in the immigration debate, but also in the interplay of perceptions between Western and Muslim countries. The West is all too ready to criticise Muslim countries for their lack of secularism in the public sphere. In the Middle East, many people found their identity on Islam. A lot of political parties have been founded in order to conform politics with Islamic principles. Most of these are respectable, but some are immeasurably orthodox, and some of them want the religious law (Shari'a) to be also a political one. But also in the West, even though Christian political parties are essentially secular, protestant movements – namely in the US – are having a great political impact. In this sense, participants argued that the West was not entitled to praise its own superiority in terms of secularity of public space.[4]

29. We live in an era of a "re-enchantment of the world" (Morris Berman), a parallel spreading of technology and religion through globalisation, through which religion seems to live a comeback. But the revert to religion is not a return. What returns is not religion, but religious practices. Globally speaking, there is an increa-

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[4] In the United States, American nationalism is formally secular but in fact functioning according to a Biblical archetype, since its defenders see themselves as a people with a mission to bring salvation to humanity, even if it were by force.

sing social pressure to exercise religious practices, mostly transmitted by the media and boosted by the process of globalisation, resulting in a "merchandization" of religion. American neoliberalism supports the revival of religion in the US, but in fact it is not a real religious comeback but a political recourse to the religious as a means to secure imperial dominance. In Europe, too, *laïcité* has not been real. In spite of all secularisation throughout history, the formally secular nationalism has maintained a strong underlying sense of the religious, which has been often instrumentalized to gain and secure power. Nowadays, discourse in many European countries is double-faced: people easily claim superiority in terms of *laïcité* and judge Islam, but on the other hand, in convenient occasions, it does not bother them that religion enters the political sphere.

30. But is there a problem with European Islam after all? Today's difficulties with Islam in Europe are not of a legal or religious nature. Muslims do not have per se any problems with European legislation. However, secularisation and *laïcité* have in the Muslim World often been perceived as being anti-Islamic. This perception becomes more understandable when looking at the different models of imposed secularisation, which left in many countries the footprint of secularisation as being anti-religious, and which has above all served as a means to impose autocratic regimes. Fortunately, in Western immigrant societies this perception is today changing. Muslims who migrate to the West should have a very clear understanding of the meaning of secularism, citizenship, etc. Europe, on its part, must be very clear and coherent as to what are the non-negotiable principles of public space.

31. So instead of a true understanding of *laïcité*, there is a great confusion between nationality and religion. Frequently, the term "Islam" is being used as if it were an ethnic group or nationality, while as a matter of fact it is a religion with a universal vocation, not limited to any ethnic, geographical or linguistic group. Some parti-

cipants noted some kind of hysteria about Islam in Western public discourse, with a little bit of Islam being mingled in everywhere. At the same time, cultural relativism, which tries to explain terrorism with a lack of true understanding of Islam in Western societies, thereby establishing a direct connection between Islam and terrorism, was considered unacceptable. A clear distinction of religion, ethnicity and nationality, a real understanding of *laïcité*, must be the basis of any discourse on European identity.

32. Even though Islam does not per se clash with democratic principles, the European capacity to integrate Muslims in their societies is rather decreasing. In European collective memory, three chapters of crucial importance for the relationship between Europe and the Muslim World are practically absent: the memory of the Muslim philosophical heritage (which is currently reduced to name-dropping), the memory of colonialism, and an awareness of the contribution of Muslim exile workers in the context of European reconstruction. In order to solve the problems of the present, public memory must be complete and vivid. For example, unlike in the case of Christian philosophy, the establishment of a link between religion and rationalist philosophy is being categorically denied to Islam. This imposed separation constitutes an intolerable limitation, and ignores the long rational Islamic tradition. By denying Muslims the ability to rational thinking, they are implicitly denied the ability to participate in public debate. People who build the present today have to understand that rationality belongs to everyone and not, as *selective memory* suggests, to the West only.

33. With regard to the view on Islam in Western discourse, a major criticism was that the religion of Islam was being treated as a monolith, with an image of unvaried and inflexible backwardness, while in fact it is a religion with many different expressions and with a long tradition of rationalist philosophic thinking. The Western discourse is characterized by a strong *essen-*

tialization of Islam, in the sense that all Muslims are being lumped together, in order to facilitate the terms of reference for the West. This essentialization constitutes a powerful weapon of domination, because essentializing the other, presupposing it being a monolith immovably caught in the status quo, is a violent simplification and thereby inferiorization of the other.

34. An example for the essentialization of Islam is provided by the current debate on democracy and terrorism, and in security policy in general, where Islam and terrorism are frequently equated with each other. In a debate on terrorism, Muslims are supposed to talk. In a debate about democracy, Muslims are supposed to listen. The fact that nobody considers the possibility that a European citizen, democrat and of Islamic confession, might have something to contribute to the debate on the future of European democracy is very telling. Terrorism indeed requires a political response, but this response cannot consist in security policies which institutionalise discrimination, racism and a supply of evidence based on a general suspicion.

35. In line with its selective memory, Europe fails to remember that the Greek-Latin heritage has led to a break in the Mediterranean, and to an expulsion of the Jewish-Arab heritage, the Arab origins of European culture, our "forgotten heritage" (Alain de Libera). It was repeatedly stressed that, in the context of the Alliance of Civilizations, Spain would be perfectly suited to move the northern Mediterranean towards a re-appropriation of its *Jewish-Arab heritage*. This heritage is of particular significance for the civilizational dialogue, because it proves, once more, that neither civilization can be seen as a stereotyped single block, since there has been a long history of mutual influence and exchange. Moreover, it was emphasized that "al-Andalus" as a symbol of tolerance and tri-cultural and religious coexistence very well reflected the idea of the Alliance of Civilizations.

36. Some Spanish participants expressed their view that, despite the positive chapter of al-Andalus, taking into account most of the rest of Spanish history up to the present, Spain could not possibly serve as a good example as the "country of dialogue" between cultures and civilizations. In addition, they stressed the general importance of avoiding mystification, and to rather focus on finding solutions for the present and the future rather than dwell too much on the past in the sense of historical revisionism. Al-Andalus and the Jewish-Arab heritage must not be neglected, but neither mystified.

37. The crisis of identity is by no means an exclusive matter of the West. The issue of *identity in the Arab-Muslim World* is a pressing question in many ways, especially in relation to the development of Islam and its traumatic clash with modernity. There are problems in today's *Umma*, but these religious issues are not to be discussed by Christian or Jewish interlocutors, but must be discussed between Muslims, in the Muslim World.

38. During the colonial era, a sensation had emerged in the progressive parts of Islamic societies that, compared to the West, they had somewhat stayed behind. Independence movements were founded whose aim was to lead their societies into the modern era and enable them to compete with the West on an equal foot. They appealed to religion in order to gather support, but were opposed by the traditionalist clerics, who rather thought Islamic societies were behind for not having pursued religious principles strictly enough. Thus the key to salvation was believed to be found in the fundamental principles of Islam. Among the militant subgroups there was by that time a sensation that they had reached a historical moment in which their religion suffered an attack by the West, whose secularism had turned their societies profane and decadent, and was thus the one to blame for the loss of the Golden Age of the Islamic Empires.

39. However, during the same period, there was also a strong exchange of knowledge and ideas between the two civilizations, through scholars, embassies, and travellers. In fact, contrary to a frequent Western belief, the Muslim World has never been sealed-off, not to the Enlightenment, not to the World Wars, and nor is it today. The Muslim youth, participants argued, knows perfectly well what is going on in the West; so rather, one should be worried about the lack of knowledge in the dominant Western countries.

40. Today it is an acknowledged fact that the achievements of medieval Muslim scholars built the bridge that connected Hellenism with Renaissance. To the degree that Europe and the New World progressed, the era of science in the Islamic World declined. Four schools of Islamic jurisprudence represented by that time different interpretations of Islamic Law. The more liberal *Ulema* favoured independent reasoning and the effort to reach consensus, whilst the orthodox condemned these liberal interpretations. The latter won the struggle, and in the 14th century, the clerics declared the doors of Ijtihad (independent interpretation of Islamic Law by Muslim scholars) closed – a decisive moment in which a big paving stone closed up the development of Muslim rationalism and controversy.

41. As a consequence of this development, as well as of the colonial domination, many Islamic societies remain in relative stagnation up until today. They are drowned in a decidedly unequal relation of power especially with the West. Domestically, they are often incapable of providing their youth the education and opportunities to empower them, and in many cases, they cannot even provide employment and the most basic social services their people need.

42. But all these frustrations in Islamic societies alone cannot explain the authentic lethal threat that has undeniably emerged. As mentioned above, the rise of terrorism is often rooted in desperation and anger of a long-term suffering and injustice from the hands of a powerful opponent, especially under foreign occupation. Crucial in this respect is the issue of *Palestine*. The daily suffering and humiliation of the Palestine people are transmitted on TV and inflame the hearts and minds of Muslims worldwide. The same is true for Israelis and Palestinian suicide bombers. Some participants argued that, the atrocities on both sides are the result of an occupation protracted for almost forty years, and will not stop before there is an agreement to guarantee security in Israel and a viable independent Palestinian state. Besides, one should not forget that the Palestinians responsible for the attacks also consider themselves as a legitimate armed resistance group, although they are labelled "terrorists" by others.

43. The presence of Western troops in *Afghanistan* is another factor fostering resentment in the Islamic World. The 9/11 attacks were so severe that they did not leave the US any other choice than to overthrow the Taliban regime. For Taliban supporters and al-Qaeda, the presence of Western troops equals a continuation of the 80´s Soviet occupation. Likewise, the presence of Western troops in Saudi-Arabia was another source of anti-Western resentment, especially with the country being the guardian of Islam's two holiest shrines.

44. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the invasion and occupation of *Iraq* has left in Muslim societies the conviction of Islam being an objective of Western aggression. In addition, people all around the world are extremely angry about the sanctions imposed on Iraq that let half a million children under five years old die. However, Saddam's dictatorship and his invasions of Muslim countries (Iran, Kuwait), are hardly being taken into account. Instead, the foreign occupation of Iraq is being compared to the occupation of Palestine. The Iraq issue is clearly becoming part of the confrontation between Islam and the West, and provides a great source of inspiration for al-Qaeda and other mili-

tant groups, who see in Iraq another hot spot for their *Jihad*.

45. On top of all this, the revealed *torture of prisoners* by Western guards such as in Abu Ghraib undermines the credibility and trustworthiness of the West which preaches democracy and human rights while at the same time spurning them. The impact of these terrifying acts on the symbolic level is substantial, since it plainly confirms the Muslim perception of the West, and especially of the demon USA, nourishing a particular hostility against Islam.

46. In order to stop violence in the Middle East, it was considered that the most urgent things for the West to do was to end the American occupation of Iraq, and to put massive pressure on Israel to grant Palestinians their rights. With regard to the latter, scepticism was expressed that the political weight American Protestantism had under the Bush administration, rather showed an America that would most likely support Israel unconditionally in its continued colonialism. Civilizations can close up intellectually as an act of resistance. The longer these situations continue without a viable political solution, the more the mutual hostilities among the civilizations will grow, and the more recruits al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations will get.

47. One participant expressed astonishment on the relative absence of two aspects in the present debate: on the one hand, why only so few mentioned Guantánamo and the embarrassment before this action of an allegedly free and democratic country such as the US which on top claimed moral superiority. And on the other hand, in more general terms, why nobody mentioned that the Muslim World should also make an effort to earn itself the trust of those members of other civilizations with good faith?

48. Looking at how negative perceptions in both civilizations are created and nourished, the role of public political debate and especially the mass media was strongly emphasized. In the seminar there was general agreement that in both civilizations, people live in an atmosphere which was denominated "*ideology of fear*": a wanted strategy to make people fear the other and maintain conflictive perceptions. In Europe, fear is mostly directed towards immigration and terrorism, and creates a local suspicion which itself nourishes those political problems that seem to confirm Islam being a threat in itself. This fear is created in part by the emotionality that dominates the debate. Political forces try to keep this emotionality as negative as possible with regard to Islam, in order to keep up the fear, which they deliberately instrumentalize for political ends. Most surprisingly, this very questionable kind of political agitation is not even necessarily being questioned as a legitimate political tool; one participant noted that even the renowned sociologist Anthony Giddens had recently stated at the UK House of Lords that at certain times in history, it was necessary to create cultural fear.

49. The strategic use of such an ideology of fear has been a very important tool of the Bush administration, both domestically and internationally. Most importantly, this fear has successfully been used to boaster acquiescence and support for the so-called "war on terror". However, it was expressed that the Western fear had a very strong racist element. The fact that, in the European context, nobody feared white Bosnian Muslims but only ethnic non-Europeans, gave evidence that actually it was not a fear of Islam in European societies, but fear of Arabs, an expression of the old fear of the different and the unknown which always constitutes a key component of racism. Paradoxically, the uninformed people in the US and Europe probably know more about Islam than about Confucianism or Buddhism, which shows again that the fear used to foster the present religious antagonism has its roots not only in culture or religion but also in racism.

50. Similar patterns of fear of the unknown in the population, with political forces creating and deliberately nourishing fear

for political ends, can be observed in Islamic and Arab societies. It was expressed that in both civilizations, the ideology of fear was fostered by extremists, Islamic as well as Christian, so that one of the main threats consisted not in Islam or Christianity, but in the dangers inherent to religious fundamentalism in general, which countering must be the main aim of an Alliance of Civilizations.

51. Within Western societies, the described ideology of fear leads to several consequences. Firstly, ideas that until recently had been stigmatised as belonging to extreme right-wing discourse, are now adopted and advocated by classical conservative discourse and thereby made acceptable, a development which is very dangerous. Secondly, it reinforces the fear of a loss of cultural uniformity/ integrity in Europe. In many European countries, Muslims were first told to integrate, and once they have done so, they are explicitly being distinguished, since their integration might put in danger the cultural uniformity of the country. This is a very subtle and dangerous discourse, bordering racism.

52. Finally, the ideology of fear has an impact in the field of *citizenship*. As mentioned above, Muslims must do much more than others to prove they are genuine citizens. This leads to the emergence of a relationship between state and citizen which is not based on trust, but on control. Citizens of Muslim confession may be tolerated, but are not valued as equal, because people cannot imagine that a Muslim citizen can be completely and fully part of their society. Instead, control is exercised over what they do. But citizenship is per definitionem not attached to religion or ethnicity, but is a personal choice, an exercise of personal freedom to adopt the rights and duties of a society.

53. In a general view on identities and perceptions in Arab and Islamic societies and the West, the most central issue was considered to be the lack of genuine information and knowledge of each other, which form the basis for all distorted perceptions.

Both civilizations were asserted to have stereotyped images of the other, and that religion, as well as imperial dominance in the past and present, played important roles in this regard. It was emphasized that those stereotypes must be cleaned up through massive means, and that the culture of confrontation arising from it must be counteracted. An Alliance of Civilizations which managed some impact in this regard would be a very valuable contribution.

2.3. GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, MULTILATERALISM AND COSMOPOLITAN DEMOCRACY

54. Beyond the idea of what constitutes the self and the other, resentment and hostilities between nations and civilizations might also be created by some more tangible disagreements regarding the way the current international system is designed and operated. Particularly in the weaker countries, resentment is increasing to the degree that the powerful take advantage of their superiority to dominate the way the international economy, peace and security and other global issues are being dealt with, according to their national or regional interests, thereby contradicting the very idea of the United Nations. Controversial issues in this regard which were discussed during the present seminar include the call for multilateralist solutions (especially in the context of UN Reform), the development and enforcement of International Law, and the promotion of democratic values, including human rights.

55. The current system of global governance, institutionally represented by the United Nations, starts from the principle that any threat to global security must be dealt with on the grounds of *multilateral decision-making*. However, with the US left as the only superpower, politically, economically and militarily highly superior to any other, the multilateral system faces the difficulty of enforcement of International Law vis-à-vis an invincible power,

which is naturally tempted to submit its sovereignty under the rule of the UN only where it matches its interests.

56. The United States today takes advantage of its unique position in a selective application of values, in particular related to what is declared the universal value of democracy. The United States, it was expressed, imposed on the world their rules, challenging International Law and the United Nations, down-playing the role and significance of the UN. Nevertheless, in sixty years of its existence, the UN had never been more relevant than when it stood up against Washington and said "No" to war.

57. To the extent the US applies unilateral ad hoc solutions, instead of leaving the task of managing global governance and particularly peace and security to the UN, anger is generated in the rest of the world. Particularly those who are target of US unilateral action and lack the strength to counteract, are filled with indignation before the absence of effective mechanisms to implement multilateral solutions and the impotence of the global community and especially the UN, which is supposed to be safeguarding the rights of the weakest. The most significant case in point is the unilateral US invasion of Iraq, which was not backed up by the UN Security Council and thus illegal under International Law.

58. The invasion of Iraq provoked the mobilization of civil society around the globe, of people on the streets saying "No" to war, disgusted at the US' single-handed action. Even though this was not the first time anti-war demonstrations were held, governments around the world were forced to listen in a collective and collaborative manner. Due to the global scope of protests, powerful governments could provide a kind of political backing for the smaller ones, a group called the "Uncommitted Six"[5], six countries each of them too weak to oppose the US on its own. To-

gether, backed by larger, more powerful countries, they were able to provide the core of a governmental challenge to Washington's drive towards unilateral war. How was that possible? Because people in the streets massively demanded it, so at some point the price governments would have had to pay for giving in to Washington turned higher than the price for saying no and standing up against the US as a part of the global resistance movement. Even though this opposition of the masses this time was not enough to prevent unilateral military action, it illustrated the power of the people and showed that, where there is union, an opposition against a single superpower's unilateralism can have an impact.

59. The distribution of power and effective multilateralism are central issues within the ongoing process of *UN Reform*. How can the United Nations be consolidated as a reference point for effectively safeguarding global peace and security, based on multilateral decision-making? Again, one faces the dilemma of how such a reform can possibly be adopted with the consent of the only superpower if it aims to force that very superpower under the rule of law. Some participants emphatically underlined the need that the world reclaimed what the UN charter stands for, that the global community's interests must not be driven by the powerful, but by all. In this sense, the unique opportunity of the process of UN Reform must be taken advantage of to make multilateralism accountable to stand up even to superpowers.

60. Is this a feasible aim? A talk about reform is a talk about power, is a talk about the Security Council, which up to today is so often the representative of the strongest, as well as of the least democratic agents of the UN. Participants considered that in theory, a reasonable reform of the Security Council would have to abolish the veto and expand the Council in order to make it a truly representative organ. In practice, a more realistic proposal to make the Security Council accountable was seen in the creation of an oversight panel, composed

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[5] Cameroon, Guinea, Angola, Pakistan, Mexico and Chile.

not of country representatives but of individuals, influential jurists foremost in International Law, to ensure that Security Council decisions did not themselves violate International Law.

61. Moreover, there must be a shift of power from the Security Council to the General Assembly. Legally, according to the Uniting for Peace Resolution, when the Security Council is paralysed for any reason – which could be a veto, or threat of it – the General Assembly is authorized to take up issues that ordinarily would only be allowed to be taken up in the Council.[6] There are ways the General Assembly can reclaim power to reflect the interests of the non-powerful. The run-up to the Iraq war, even though it did not stop the war in the end, already gave an idea of how that could work.

62. Some wondered whether the very call for an Alliance of Civilizations was not a proof that the project of the United Nations, founded in 1949 as a true Union of Nations, had failed, for not being able to conduct a global policy that safeguarded national politics by placing itself above it. In response, it was admitted that in some ways, the UN had failed to fulfil its objecttives, and thus the Alliance of Civilizations should contribute to its renewal. On the other hand, people argued that the huge efforts and achievements made by the UN in some fields, e.g. in the Palestine issue, had been too often neglected. Moreover, it was not a failure inherent to the UN if its members lacked the common sense to apply laws and agreements. The UN, it was argued, had its strengths and weaknesses, and among its strengths, UN action in the field of humanitarian intervention and the development of the rule of law were mentioned. The necessary UN Reform, participants added, must not be reduced to "slashing budget and firing staff", but instead be a reform aimed at openness, democratisation, transparency, and broadening to include civil society.

63. Some participants argued that even if it was viable to establish a true multilateralism, it would not suffice to satisfy contemporary requirements. Multilateralism, it was argued, included only governments in the decision-making process, so what was needed for a democratic global governance was a system based on a new kind of *multi-levelled "internationalism"*, involving the UN as both actor and venue, national governments, as well as the most important non-state actors of civil society, in order to challenge the whole range of issues relevant to global governance.

64. The hard end of multilateralism is the enforcement of International Law. Multilateralism can only be effective if International Law is applied universally. However, due to the current distribution of power, there are in practice different measures for the US and for the rest of the world. UN Resolutions are being applied or not depending on whose interests are affected by the envisaged actions. This insufferable hypocrisy, participants criticized, was undermining the credibility of the UN as an impartial global intermediary. As a matter of fact, International Law is currently in a very precarious situation. The system opens no space for an opposition of the weakest to the most powerful, in case the latter decide not to stick to the rules.

65. Why is this so? Since the Middle Ages, the world has been organized in political communities around the *principle of sovereignty*, first monarchs, then nation states. With the development of military technology, wars between sovereign European states reached a level of violence which, after two World Wars, led to the founding of the UN as a system of global harmonization on the basis of a common law. Parallel to that, sovereignty, which had been the symbol of the majesty of power and the independence of people, became the object of desire of the people in the colonized territories, and their elites imitated the political form of the sovereign state in the 20th century process of decolonisation in a universal extension. Sovereignty thereby became the basic principle of International

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[6] UN General Assembly Resolution 377(V): *Uniting for peace*, 03.11.1950.

Law, guaranteed by the UN charter (art. 2 par. 1).

66. The principle of sovereignty of the state still forms the basis of contemporary International Law. Sovereignty means the exclusiveness of competences on a specific territory, itself or by delegation. It is by definition unlimited, which must naturally lead to a clash of different national sovereignties. The principle of sovereignty is characterized by a strong inherent ambiguity: on the one hand, the sovereign is entitled to administer the national law, which constitutes a guarantee of the rights of its citizens. On the other hand, the inconditionality of sovereignty is susceptible to instrumentalization. This leads to an *erosion of International Law,* turning sovereignty from an instrument for the protection of the weak into a tool of the most powerful.

67. On this ground, International Justice must remain weak. The ICC and the ICJ do not have the power to summon anyone without the consent of the home state, and their judgements often stay without practical consequences. Moreover, the inconditionality of sovereignty implies the risk that the rule of law, human rights and other democratic principles may be undermined any moment by a return to the state of emergency as the very last resort of the sovereign. An example is the US "Patriot Act", which constitutes a considerable restriction of human rights and civil liberties in the name of protection.

68. The inconditionality of power inherent to the principle of sovereignty makes the limitation of the stronger sovereignties, by law or legal procedures, impossible. But transnational relations need a legal frame, of which the source cannot be the states themselves. It is true that sovereignty is a constitutive element in the definition of democracy. But the difficulty to maintain multilateralism in a world with an imbalanced distribution of power shows that on a global level, it is in fact the limitation of (national) sovereignty that guarantees democracy.

69. Contemporary International Law is a voluntary law, in essence a contradiction, meaning that those who choose to subscribe to it voluntarily submit their sovereignty under its rule. In legal terms, laws are an expression of general will and/or values, and obligatory for all. "International Law", however, is based on contracts, a tool of interindividual relations on the level of the signatories. Consequently, International Law is relative, not absolute, and no binding rule can be imposed on the sovereign state to which the very has not subscribed (except, indirectly, through political pressure). Hence, on the global level, there is actually no "law" in the above mentioned sense.

70. The big international conventions, which were meant to provide a framework for international society, are ratified only by those states which are in favour of its requirements, without any legal obligation. There is no reference law, and no judge automatically competent, so there is a great space in which the contract partners can fully exercise their interplay of forces, to the disadvantage of the weak. Moreover, what we call today external constraints naturally weigh heavier on the weak than on the strong states. This leads in practice to a hierarchy between the states, a system ruled by the survival of the fittest. At the same time, there are no universal norms to balance these inequalities, and to fight all the pressing problems which fall under the duty of global governance. This situation naturally fosters the anger of the weakest.

71. So what is to be done? The erosion of International Law must be faced through the corresponding improvement in synthesis, but above all in application. The context of UN Reform, and especially the Security Council, provides a unique opportunity to clean up these disparities and establish rules and procedures to guarantee democracy and the rule of law also on a global level, without depending solely on the good will of sovereign states. Given the weakening effect the concept of sovereignty has on the regime of multilateralism, its significance as a basis of contemporary In-

ternational Law should at least be reviewed, and eventually adjusted. In general terms, a redefinition of values on an international level is needed, plus the corresponding mechanisms to ensure its application. However, as long as there is no such set of genuine, complete rules for democratic global governance, the existing ones must be applied.

72. The call for a redefinition of globally applicable principles leads to the question of the *universality of democratic values.* As mentioned above, the credibility of a country's efforts to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the world depends on the integrity and coherence that a nation demonstrates itself in the application of the corresponding values. Since such efforts are based on the belief of democracy as a universal value, it is paradox that apparently, to the degree national sovereignty is being touched, this claimed universality seems not to apply to the only level where a truly universal dispersion of these principles can be promoted: globally.

73. The dominant nations, participants argued, must therefore not be surprised if their noble quest to bring the good to the world is not being met with the expected enthusiasm, since they foil their own credibility in this field by not applying universally themselves what they claim to be a universal value when it fits their interest. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this double-faced discourse, it was expressed, is that not a serious commitment with democracy, human rights and the rule of law stands behind the powerful countries' democratisation efforts, but the attempt to bring about conditions favourable to their own political, economical and geostrategic interests, under the disguise of nobility.

74. Democratisation efforts entail a certain "democratic paradox" (Huntington): permitting genuine democracy throughout the world includes a risk to get regimes hostile to one's own interests. In this sense, most participants did not believe the West and

especially the US to be seriously committed to democracy. Some participants from Arab countries argued that people in the Arab World wanted indeed democracy, but while the West did not take its commitment to democratic values seriously, neither could they.

75. Good governance is rule-based decision-making through transparent institutions which are representative of the people at large. Anything else leads to a concentration of power and a marginalization of the masses. In this sense, the current global multilateral system is exercising bad governance. The concept of *"cosmopolitan democracy"*[7] describes democracy as a truly universal regime, not only applicable within states but also on the regional and global spheres, between states and international organizations. This implies that democracy needs to be understood with certain flexibility, that there is not only one model of democracy that can be applied at all levels. And above all, it implies that the old notion of sovereignty needs to be replaced by some "constitutionalism", meaning that all actors of political life have to be integrated into some constitutional system, so democratic principles are obligatory not only within states, but also between states and within international organizations.

76. The current US administration, it was argued, referred only to democracy on an inner state level. It permitted itself to determine how other states have to design their democracies, and showed no inclination to follow the rules of democracy on a transnational level. This was considered an anti-ethical program, based on a schizophrenic understanding of democracy: internal democracy, external free style. But democracy as a universal value cannot be applied selectively.

77. In the promotion of democracy, there must be a consistency between means and ends. Democracy means also the rule of

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[7] See Daniele Archibugi and David Held (Eds.): *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge Polity Press, 1995.

law, and consequently, democracy cannot be imported by breaking the law. Neither can democracy be imported where it is not wanted and there are no societal forces to preserve it. For example, the fundamental difference between the liberation of Italy in 1945 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was that in Italy, the Americans stopped the war started by the fascist government, while in Iraq, it was the Americans who started the war. Whilst the former was a true and welcome liberation, the latter was an aggression. But aggression is no political option to promote democracy.

78. In terms of human rights, it was bemoaned that the effective protection of human rights still depended on the good will of the states. An Alliance of Civilizations committed to human rights was seen confronted with two choices: either provide a rather limp reference point for human rights without explicit effort in this area, or fundamentally claim the *primacy of human rights* and International Humanitarian Law. Given the already mentioned incoherence in the application of human rights, democratic principles and International Law in general, an explicit notion of the primacy of International Human Rights Law was considered necessary in order to secure the basic human rights of everybody and defend their universal validity against cultural relativism. In the context of the Alliance of Civilizations, as well as of UN Reform, it was demanded to treat civil and political, economical, social, and cultural rights as a non-negotiable socket of law – be it called international republican law, common patrimony of humankind, or other – as a whole, single block which enjoys explicit primacy. A simple reference to those rights, it was repeatedly emphasized, is not enough if the universal application of human rights is to be secured.

79. Against the background of all these challenges, how must such an Alliance of Civilizations be designed in order to make a valuable contribution to tackling them?

3. Implications and Ideas for a Tangible Alliance of Civilizations

80. One of the immediate reactions to the idea to form an Alliance of Civilizations was a certain doubt on whether and in which way this Alliance would provide an *added value* to the field of already existing initiatives aimed at building bridges and establishing ties between different countries, peoples and cultures (e.g. Iranian President Khatami's Dialogue of Civilizations). Especially in the Mediterranean, given that several similar activities have already been implemented in that region (Forum for the Future, EuroMed Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy, etc.), there might be a certain danger of duplication, further adding to what is already a rather confusing array of initiatives.

81. In response, it was stressed that the main virtue of the Alliance of Civilizations in comparison to other, similar initiatives was that it did not remain in getting to know each other in order to overcome stereotypes and mutual hostility, but that it aimed at urging concrete measures of common action beyond simple exchange. This difference, it was stated, was also perceived at the UN Headquarters, and had even been recognized by initiators of other initiatives, like the aforementioned Dialogue of Civilizations. The Alliance of Civilizations will be a long-term initiative which aims to go beyond any other initiative which has advanced, but maybe not managed to mobilize universal conscience. The Dialogue of Civilizations has opened a door but has been practically exhausted, so now it is time to start a new impulse with a different strategy. Moreover, the Dialogue of Civilizations is limited to the framework of the UNESCO, while the envisaged framework for the Alliance of Civilizations is the whole UN.

82. A major criticism regarding the proposal to form an Alliance of Civilizations consisted in it being still too vague and

lacking substance in terms of concrete ideas. In the present seminar, a broad debate lead by the explicit desire to generate such tangible ideas and give substance to the Alliance of Civilizations, treated semantic questions, actors involved, scope of action, and possible fields of activity.

83. First of all, the very term *"Alliance of Civilizations"* was being challenged as a title for the present proposal. Among the immediate criticisms to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative was the argument that the term "alliance", unlike "dialogue" or "cooperation", had a conflictive connotation, implying there was a confrontation with an enemy against whom allies must be sought. Some participants found the term "Alliance *among* Civilizations" more suitable for the envisaged undertaking than "Alliance *of* Civilizations" because the former described better the element of cross-fertilization, cosmopolitanism, and the idea of a shared process in which none of the partners must sacrifice its cultural integrity. Others argued that the term "Alliance *among* Civilizations" turned that alliance into a self-fulfilling prophecy by conveying the message that the alliance was urgently needed due to existing conflicts, a message which might provoke a boomerang-effect. Again, others took the posture that the term "Alliance of Civilizations" should not be dwelt on too academically, since they considered the idea behind it perfectly comprehensible without a need for semantic adjustments.

84. One participant defined the term *"alliance"* as different components finding each other on a certain subject and working together in order to achieve a common goal. In this sense, it was argued that the formula "Alliance of Civilizations" missed a definition of its common ground, the very goal towards which that alliance had been formed. It was therefore suggested to call the initiative after its goals rather than after its participants, concretising which values the Alliance stands for (e.g. "Alliance for Democracy, Peace and Sustainable Development", "Alliance against the recruitment of extremism"). The

term "alliance" itself was mostly seen as very suitable to name the envisaged initiative, since it described the political notion of a partnership with common goals, interests, and challenges.

85. No consensus could be reached as to what might be a suitable definition of the term *"civilization"*, despite its being excessively used. Hence, several participants were in favour of dropping the term, since it allowed for too many interpretations. Civilizations, it was argued, are a construct with no body, no address and no representatives; a blurred character which paved the way for an instrumentalization of the term. The term *"culture"*, which described a different concept, did not provide a suitable alternative either, and the frequent, misleading use of both terms as synonyms especially after 9/11 was bewailed. One argument against the use of both terms in a UN context was founded in a certain fear that these terms, with their unclear, blurred meaning, might infiltrate International Law, an option which was seen out of question since countries were not to be grouped by culture or religion.

86. Moreover, it was expressed that the term "civilization" recalled the Biblical archetype of good and bad, and the 19th-century nationalist fanatism transposed by colonialism. The question was raised whether the aforementioned, old-fashioned notion of civilization as the opposite of barbarism was no longer valid in the sense that in every civilization today, there remained a seed to go back to barbarism in a new form (as illustrated by the many wars and conflicts), and whether in this sense, the Alliance of Civilizations must not symbolize our conviction that the very "value of civilization" must be conserved as a defence against the threat of the resurgence of barbarism in our societies, in order to build and defend a humanistic global society, capable of integration, instead of marginalizing any of its social elements.

87. As mentioned above, civilizations were seen as rather blurred entities with no official representatives. So who can be the

agents of this Alliance of Civilizations? The debate about who should be the main *actors involved* in the corresponding activities mainly circled around the issue of how to involve systematically not only governments and the United Nations, but also civil society. It was argued that on the governmental level, there was already a sort of alliance of civilizations in place, in the sense of the US and EU being in alliances with the leaders of the Arab World. Where there was no alliance so far was in terms of the population, so what we needed was an "alliance from below". This alliance would not replace or run against the existing alliance between governments, but provide a democratic counterbalance to it at a global level. While some parts of the plenary strongly supported this idea, others sceptically added that a general consensus from below would imply the existence of a universal morality, which would still remain to be defined, and by whom? The question whether the UN could provide a suitable framework for such an alliance from below, taking into account that this idea went beyond what had so far been the main nature of that organization, remained unanswered.

88. In the debate on the actors to be involved, there was broad consensus that both governments and civil society must play an important role in the initiative. Without the firm will and power of governments to apply present initiatives, proposals and demands of civil society, no change will be possible. Of course, an adequate civil society representation is crucial, otherwise governments would remain the principal agents and there would be no change compared to the status quo. There was general agreement that a powerful alliance among civil society could not be formed without involving the powerful, that is, the elites, and that an Alliance of Civilizations as a voluntary exercise by civil society only would not lead to great things, so governments must be involved.

89. In principle there was consensus that the Alliance of Civilizations must be an initiative in which governments, the United Nations and civil society worked together hand in hand. However, a major challenge was seen in how this idea could be translated in practical terms so it actually reached the people at the local level. For this aim it was considered crucial that the Alliance be provided with an institutional structure which went beyond current government-based models and allowed the systematic involvement of civil society on an equal foot. It was underlined that in the present seminar, a special session had explicitly been dedicated to civil society because one of the singularities of the Alliance of Civilizations proposal, compared to other initiatives, was precisely to mobilize the people, and to ensure the participation of the organized civil society.

90. The idea of the creation of a forum similar to a "World Parliament" was raised, which was in theory considered a useful instrument for an Alliance of Civilizations to get to know the interests, needs and opinions, as well as the disagreements, among the forces of society. At the same time it was, in this form, admitted to be an utopian idea, but still the hope was expressed that some similar, less far-reaching measures could be taken, such as strengthening the Interparlamentarian Union, the World Social Forum and the UN General Assembly, and establishing the Millennium Assembly of civil society as a permanent institution. Generally, the need for an institutionalised and powerful role of civil society in the Alliance of Civilizations gained special emphasis. At the same time, scepticism was expressed that governments and the UN would grant civil society such a powerful role.

91. With regard to the *geographical scope of action* of an Alliance of Civilizations, the debate concentrated on two alternatives: on the one hand, starting with the Euro-Mediterranean region as proving-ground, and eventually amplifying it to the rest of the world, and on the other hand, designing the Alliance of Civilizations as a global scale initiative right from the start.

92. As mentioned before, on the *Euro-Mediterranean* level, there is already a broad range of initiatives in place to foster dialogue and exchange. The idea of totally reducing the present initiative to the Mediterranean region was mostly rejected. However, the Mediterranean, being a relatively small area where the West and the Arab-Muslim World are almost within sight of each other, was considered a very suitable proving-ground for this new initiative for a systematic cross-fertilization of cultures. In this regard, the Barcelona Process could serve both as a source of synergies as of lessons learned.

93. The geostrategic dimensions of the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy are of highest importance, beyond their being regional partnerships. The Alliance of Civilizations must be independent of the Barcelona Process, but take it into account. A series of key lessons can be drawn from ten years of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which could be applied to the Alliance of Civilizations. First, approaches so far have been elitist, involving a small elite who is already well travelled and socialized. Second, educational exchange has been one-way, south to north. Third, the focus has been on history heritage, going backwards rather than searching common ground for the present. Fourth, governments have been firmly maintaining control over the process, excluding oppositional civil society. Fifth, there is a danger that these initiatives have become exercises just to show up autocratic regimes in the south and are being supported simply as a means of diverting tensions away from the real challenge, which is the lack of political rights, as they are wanted by citizens in all parts of the world, and about which there is nothing civilizational.

94. Those in favour of a *global scale* launch of the initiative right from the start argued that the duty the Alliance needed to fulfil implied per se the need to operate on a much broader scale, not just regionally, but globally. Since the initiative was based on the political will to foster multi-lateralism, it must be a project of universal outreach, which to limit regionally, and be it only temporarily, would contradict its very *raison d'être*. The Alliance of Civilizations as a global initiative could contribute to foster a systematic worldwide process of cross-fertilization of civilizations, cultures and religions. Some participants expressed doubts that, within the framework of the United Nations, the initiative would be able to resist American and Western dominance respectively, and might thus be designed along the wishes and stereotypes of the powerful Western countries. In this case, it was argued, the continuation of hostilities towards the West in the Arab-Muslim civilization would be guaranteed and the initiative would be a failure right from the start.

95. In terms of possible contents of the Alliance of Civilizations, the fields of action it should operate in, a wide range of general and concrete suggestions was made, coming down to five broadly overlapping fields: general information and knowledge, mass media, translations, strengthening civil society participation, and fostering the regime of multilateralism within the context of UN Reform.

96. It was repeatedly noted that the Alliance of Civilizations initiative should rather aim at a more modest approach that worked than at a grandiose one that failed and was soon forgotten. Instead of trying to build a new world order, it was argued, the current dynamics to form this Alliance should be taken advantage of to make up something which might be small but at the same time so deeply rooted and strongly institutionalised that it outlasted governments and UN Secretary-Generals. However, it was added that even though proposals should be tangible and realistic, realism must not dictate the goals. While remaining down-to-earth, utopias are worth preserving.

97. An alliance on the *general information* level was considered a precondition for countering hostilities. It is commonplace that stereotypes, prejudices and antagonis-

tic thinking can best flourish on the grounds of a lack of knowledge. Ignorance leads to a lack of recognition and mutual respect, and without recognition and mutual respect, neither true dialogue nor an alliance is possible. Hence, enhancing knowledge of the other beyond stereotypes and name-dropping must form the elementary basis of an Alliance of Civilizations. While the lack of knowledge can be a great danger, where this deficit is efficiently tackled, the "weapons of knowledge" can also be effectively used for the right cause. The creation of more cultural spaces in US, Europe and the Arab World was suggested as one possibility to enhance information. However, in order to reach not only the elites but all people, the pulse of such a knowledge and information alliance must obviously not be political security speeches, UN reports, or similarly intangible channels, but the *mass media*.

98. It was expressed that an alliance on the information level, however, cannot mean imposing one means of information on the other, as so far effectively exercised by CNN and BBC World. Al-Jazeera, today watched in 40 million households throughout the Arab World, was created in response to these basically "Western propaganda networks", in order to provide people in the Arab World with a more balanced information. At the same time, the propaganda machine underlying such biased reporting also works very efficiently in the West itself. The dominance of certain media, which substantially reduce critical and balanced debate especially in the US, but also in Europe, is decisive for the current antagonist thinking. This indirect "thought police", it was bewailed, deliberately spreads stereotypes, in order to keep up the "ideology of fear" with regard to the "foe image" of Islam. A concrete proposal in order to provide some counterbalance to this unhealthy propaganda was to set up – in the Euro-Mediterranean context – a *two-sided TV channel* which aimed at providing genuine, balanced information of either side of the Sea, and which was designed to reach a broad public through a varied and attractive array of

programmes. A similar idea might be developed with a global outreach.

99. A related proposal aimed at enhancing information was to found a Mediterranean *"Open University"* on television (following the British 1970´s example), through which anyone interested could learn and get to know other realities. The cost of such a project was estimated to be considerable, but not out of reach. An Open University, either of the Mediterranean or on a global scale, a TV channel with culture, history etc. with a mainly educational function, was considered to be a lasting way of bringing people of different backgrounds and cultures together, and was believed to be something that would last much longer than conferences. Both proposals, the independent TV channel as well as the Open University, were considered proposals able to effectively reach out to the people, and were thus received with great enthusiasm and broad approval.

100. The same was said to be true about a proposal made to bring underway massive *translations* in order to enhance knowledge and understanding between the Arab World and the West. Given the poor knowledge especially of Arab-Muslim philosophy and literature in the West, there was a broad consensus that spending a substantial amount of money to bring about translations of philosophy, contemporary literature and poetry, and also of school manuals, news and other hard fact sources on a massive scale, was considered a highly worthwhile investment.

101. In order to *strengthen civil society* and involve the people on the national and local levels, first of all, an Alliance of Civilizations should ensure that in all participating countries there actually exists a civil society worth the term. Civil society is, generally speaking, all organized society between public institutions and the market. Civil society is the society organized with the objective of defending some interests, be they economic, social or cultural. Civil society groups must be autonomous, meaning above all not party- or govern-

ment-related, and internally democratic, implying above all representation by election. The framework for civil society action is provided by institutionalised pluralism, which again is manifested by freedom of expression and freedom of association, both not only *de iure* but also *de facto*. However, deficits in practical implementation do not imply that one should not collaborate with civil society unless it enjoys perfect liberties. On the contrary, alliances with local civil societies support them in attaining these liberties to a full scale. One of the most essential elements in a pluralist civil society is the capacity of societal groups to represent their interests and demands, and to be able to negotiate towards a resolution of conflict of interests. Here again, we cannot wait for democracy to enforce civil society. Civil society is a condition to facilitate the progress of democracy and, once it has arrived, to socially assimilate democratic principles in order to maintain democracy.

102. Strengthening civil society and enhancing their participation could be an enormous field of action for the Alliance of Civilizations. At a governmental level, the Alliance could facilitate the adoption of norms in favour of freedom and recognition of civil society organizations. Moreover, it could form alliances between the different civil society organizations in the different countries through exchange and collaboration programs.

103. In terms of global governance, the Alliance of Civilizations initiative could contribute to a government reform on the global level, that is, to *UN Reform*. We are in a special moment of the history of international organizations where there is a meeting of minds and a will to reform global governance in order to prevent a concentration of power, which must be seized. Doubt was expressed on whether it was feasible to change global government prior to national ones, thereby giving more power to undemocratic regimes. In response, it was argued that the first step in a global governance reform must be to deconcentrate power in the United Nations Organi-

zation itself. In particular, the need to put an end to the monopoly of power in the Security Council was emphasized, as well as the need to give a larger role to the General Assembly, especially in the decision-making process regarding peace and security issues. Political pressure, it was argued, is possible even under the present balance of power, and should be built on.

104. Participants were reminded that after all, the Alliance of Civilizations was planned as a UN-based initiative, and thus must take into account how the UN could be involved. While there was general agreement that the Alliance of Civilizations should influence the process of UN Reform, no concrete proposals were made as to how and through which measures such influence could be established.

Outlook

105. Towards the closing of the seminar, the plenary agreed that some important and very tangible ideas had emerged, such as a focus on the role of the media, a Mediterranean or global Open University, translations on a massive scale, etc., which would all provide a wonderful start. Now, beyond the analysis of contemporary problems and the brainstorming for concrete measures, the principles and ideas on the table need to be reframed more concretely. As the UN representative pointed out, the contents of the Alliance of Civilizations will now be laid down in a political concept, which will eventually provide the foundation for an action plan of concrete measures. This political concept, as well as the plan of action containing concrete, tangible measures, will be awaited benevolently by all participants and speakers of this seminar.

106. One participant declared that he had arrived at Madrid with a rather critical attitude towards the Alliance of Civilizations, but had learned throughout the debates of the past two days to grow more positive

about the initiative. Beyond all semantic adjustments, he said, the symbolic value of the initiative must be underlined, and in politics, symbols were of great importance.

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