

International Progress Organization



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Dialogue of Civilizations and the Requirements of a Just World Order

Lecture

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Outline of Presentation

Upon the end of the Cold War, when a hegemonial, unipolar world order began to unfold, it was no coincidence that the notion of “clash of civilizations” suddenly became the basic paradigm for the interpretation of global power relations and, subsequently, for the legitimization (or justification) of neo-imperial policies. In a unipolar environment, enemy stereotypes such as those triggered by the clash of civilizations doctrine are an indispensable ideological tool to bolster the respective hegemon’s claim to power (which is virtually directed at the entire world).

A just world order, however, requires a *balance* of power, which can best be achieved in a *multipolar* framework (and for which the multilateral mechanisms, including those of collective security, of the United Nations Organization, were originally created). One of the basic principles on which a just and harmonious world order is to be based, is the notion of “dialogue of civilizations.” An international system that is stable and ensures peaceful development of all the members of the international community, and not just the privileged few, must be founded on the norms of *sovereign equality* and *mutual respect*. This makes it imperative that no country impose its own civilization upon the others, a policy that – through all of history, until the most recent project of a unilateral “New World Order” – has been proven to increase tensions and even provoke armed confrontations.

Unlike in a hegemonial (unipolar) constellation – where the dominant power claims civilizational *supremacy* and aims to indoctrinate the rest of the world about democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, etc. –, a multipolar balance of power, in order to be stable, requires *harmonious* relations that are characterized by mutual respect, peaceful interaction, coordination and integration of policies among equal partners. Since, in such a constellation, no party will try to subjugate the others or to interfere into their sovereign domain, whether in the political, economic, social or cultural field, harmony among nations will not lead to uniformity.

Dialogue among civilizations and cultures is one of the basic elements, or preconditions, of harmony – at the domestic as well as the transnational (or global) level; it promotes *unity in diversity* and directly contributes to durable peace among nations. As proactive approach, dialogue goes one step further than mere (static) co-existence between different cultural communities and states; it involves *co-operation* and *mutual engagement*. This kind of positive interaction between cultures and civilizations allows each civilization

to develop and prosper according to its own parameters, while benefiting from the others' experience. Such an orientation will eventually ensure the humane dimension of globalization, providing fair and balanced opportunities for all states and peoples in the development of their potential and in the use of the world's resources, in the material as well as the spiritual sense.

The maintenance of peace and the promotion of human rights, two of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations, require harmonious relations between states that cannot be achieved with a unilateral approach or with traditional power politics since they negate the sovereign equality of nations. A just world order, indeed a harmonious world, can only be built on *dialogue*, which incorporates the very essence of the principle of *mutuality*.
