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Internationalizing The Discipline: Past, Present and Future

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FOR the past fifteen years, I have been ineligible for membership in your association, but a redeeming aspect is that during those years I've never had to prepare or defend a departmental budget. And I haven't missed it a bit. But this noon it's good to be, even briefly, among the contemporary movers and shakers of my profession. And it's a pleasant challenge to talk about a world problem that I believe our profession is uniquely capable of doing something about.

The internationalization of any political or professional institution begins with self-examination. A world view derives from a personal view, and for most of us a world view is not carried in our genes, but is acquired, and then mostly through serendipity.

For example, eighty years ago I was born into a world that a year later exploded into World War I. Growing up on the south side of Chicago, the war was quickly incorporated into our daily play as a two act drama. First, we fought a pitched battle to decide who would be the Americans and who would be the Germans. Of course, the biggest and oldest, though not always the smartest, got to make their choice. Then in the second act the war began for real in a vacant lot where my more mature American playmates commanded the trenches and killed off with wooden guns those of us compelled to fight under the banner of Kaiser Wilhelm.

As children, we failed to realize that we had internationalized our backyard games. Indeed, our attitudes were caught perfectly by the refrain of that popular song, *Over There, Over There*, though we were very unsure about where "there" was. For us, bad things, like real wars, were always "over there," and we accepted that the Yanks had to cross an ocean to "there" in order to make things right.

By the time of my mid-grade school years, we lived in a suburb of Chicago and internationalism crept faintly into my consciousness because now some of my classmates had foreign sounding names and heavily accented English speech, and we knew that their parents spoke little or no English. Thus I came to realize that there was a Sweden, a Lithuania, and

a Belgium, from whence some of my classmates had migrated.

Beyond that awareness of somewhere “over there”, my clearest vision of the world was a result of becoming a stamp collector. Through that hobby, I learned place names and geographical locations, who was king of what country, who national heroes were, and what wonderful wildlife there was in the nations and colonies of Africa.

You may well imagine how these lessons in world geography and hagiography, dating back six and seven decades, have been revived by the tragedies of today. By their postage stamps ye shall know them: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldavia, Montenegro, Rumania, Serbia and Slovenia were for me separate national entities. More than four decades ago most of these countries were folded into a political entity called Yugoslavia. That jerry-built nation is collapsing today because it could never build upon cultural unity. As Mahatma Gandhi warned long ago, “no culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.” And today we are painfully aware that “ethnic cleansing” is an inhuman means of practicing cultural exclusivity in the Balkans.

When I entered college in 1930, the required freshman Contemporary Civilization course was internationalized, but only by occasional citations of foreigners who had some influence upon western institutions, like explorers Diaz, and Erik the Red... philosophers like Rousseau and Milton... and benevolent rulers like Genghis Khan and King George the Third.

In 1932, one of my major professors thought it time to recognize the Russian Revolution, but decided that he couldn't offer a course under that name. In those days, Hoosier Hysteria didn't mean IU basketball and Bobby Knight, but the KKK, isolationism, and anti-communism. Thus, in what I suggest may have been the first academic subservience to political correctness, Professor Gronert called this pioneering course *The History Of Russia, 1917 to date*.

From that course, and an International Relations Club, my classmates and I experienced a limited world view and a suspicion that in the USA we were not alone. Perhaps there was some irony in the fact that the following year the national debate topic was “Resolved: That the United States should extend diplomatic recognition to the USSR.”

I must not prolong long this narrative of my personal evolution toward a commitment to pluralism among the nations of the world and the diverse cultures of its peoples. But I must emphasize that few of us arrive at internationalism and interculturalism all in one piece. Instead, the process is incremental. For example, in the same year that as a department chair I caused to be created a course called “Communication in Black America,” as an advisory editor for Harper & Row, I caused Arthur L. Smith (now known as Molefi Asante) to be given a contract for a book entitled *Language, Communication and Rhetoric in Black America*, and as a professor, I directed a dissertation that analyzed the international impact of post-coup d'état speeches by Central American heads-of-state.

On a much lighter note, I confess that I once thought international and intercultural problems were simple difficulties in word choice or social gaffes. For example, some years ago Eleanor and I were in Brindisi, a drab port city near the heel of Italy's boot, waiting for a ship to Patras, Greece. To insure our comfort while on board, we needed a bottle of wine. So we stopped in a taverna and managed by means of pantomime to conduct the transaction. Then the proprietor decided to find out where we were from. “New York” he asked. I shook my head. “Los-an-go-lees?” he tried. I shook again. His knowledge of American cities then apparently exhausted he spread his hands in an international gesture that asked “Where then?” “Indianapolis,” I replied. “Ah,” he smiled, “Een-di-an-apolees,” and gripping his hands as though steering a race car, shouted “Zoom! Zoom!” Into the spirit of this cross-linguistic exchange, and mindful that I was communicating with an Italian, I reached for common ground and said “Viva! Viva Mario Andretti!” “No! No!” he responded, “A. J. Foyt! A. J. Foyt!” And thus I learned about the pitfalls of intercultural stereotyping, and assuming that an Italian tavern keeper would revere any race driver of Italian ancestry.

Some years later, Eleanor and I led the first international foray of the Speech Communication Association when we took thirty fellow professors on a four week tour of China and Russia arranged through the People-to-People organization. The project was predicated on the assumption that if Americans could meet face-to-face with professional counterparts in China and Russia they could easily find common ground and talk about mutual interests. Surely if pig farmers from Iowa could meet pig farmers from the Ukraine, discussing their vocations would surmount nationalistic prejudices or cultural misunderstandings. Or if Florida lawyers could meet Shantung Province lawyers....and so on.

Ultimately, hoped Ike Eisenhower who inspired the development of this People-to-People concept, conversation could move from pigs or scofflaws to such issues as war and peace. I cannot say that meeting with linguists, child development specialists, and communication teachers, improved by much our understanding of communism, or theirs of democracy; but we did come away, and so apparently did our counterparts, with a better understanding of each other as people, and teachers who shared similar educational goals and eagerly sought greater classroom effectiveness.

That successful international experience took place in 1984, and despite America's withdrawal from the Olympic Games, and tension creating problems with Russia and China. The SCA planned a second effort for 1986, involving meetings with counterparts in Bavaria, Belgrade and Dubrovnik, but midway into filling out our delegation (you may remember the year) unfriendly fire from behind the Iron Curtain began blowing non-communist planes out of the sky, and we were obliged to cancel our plans...although some of us noted that it was probably safer flying behind the Iron Curtain than on the west side of it.

Since that first People-to-People enterprise the SCA leadership has changed, and apparently other matters have loomed larger in its plans than similar forays into international relations. As always, of course, SCA welcomes overseas members, though an examination of its directory shows a very modest enrollment. And there is within the SCA structure a division of International and Intercultural communication, but it gives little evidence of outreach in the People-to-People spirit.

It is my impression that the International Communication Association seems not to work at providing close relations across national boundaries except for its laudable first step of holding some conventions outside of the United States. Let me say, however, that I am not currently a member of the ICA, and thus report only impressions, not informed judgments.

We should, of course, recognize that many of our colleagues work out their own arrangements for foreign visits, exchange teaching assignments, and visiting lectureships, and under various auspices, including their own universities. Increasingly these assignments are reported to and published in *Spectra*. Indiana University, for example, has a revolving staff of four professors of communication who teach in a coordinate college near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. There are also philanthropic and political funds available for various kinds of assistance, especially in central Europe and in former states of the USSR. The distinguished Harvard Law School professor, Lawrence Tribe, was probably a first emissary of democracy in Hungary when he aided in drafting its modern, democratic constitution.

Here is one example of true outreach by a communication specialist. Professor Scott Ratzan, of Emerson College, visited a few months ago in the newly independent republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, on a "training mission" sponsored by the International Republican Institute, of Washington, DC. The mission focused upon such topics as conflict resolution, coalition building, leadership and political communication skills. "Most of the time people don't talk to each other," Professor Ratzan reported, "they wait for a decision to be made for them." I have some appreciation of this problem, for when Eleanor and I last visited Russia, at Murmansk in 1991, we recorded as our most tragic quotation the statement of one Russian woman who told a reporter, "I don't know what to think. No one has told me."

As I think you know, I am a card-carrying member of the World Communication

Association, and for six of my retirement years it was the center of my professional life, even taking precedence over doctoral students whose dissertations I am still directing. About this organization, I can speak with some authority, though the present leadership is at perfect liberty to prove me wrong. At the outset, let me say that I'm not trying to recruit new members or solicit your endorsement. I only describe the activity of this organization as an example of productive effort in internationalizing the communication discipline, and to suggest some kinds of things that your colleagues or your departments could undertake.

The World Communication Association was created in 1983 when members of the Communication Association of the Pacific, founded in 1971, decided to broaden its horizons from a regional to a world view. In both of these events a leading role was played by Don Klopff from the University of Hawaii. When we restructured a decade ago as a worldwide federation of national and regional communication associations, the WCA statement of purpose went beyond the customary aim of supporting research, teaching and practice of the communication arts. It also provided a philosophical undergirding for its existence by saying that the world organization and its members must "maintain a special appreciation that in an increasingly interdependent world we are all increasingly dependent for peace and understanding upon reasonable communication in international and intercultural environments."

As the organization has grown, it has endeavored to play a facilitating role in relating individual interests of academic scholars and non-academic practitioners with counterparts in other nations and cultures. This aim is reflected in its *World Communication* journal, where over a six year span, 1985-1991, there were articles by international scholars reporting on communication practices in Australia, China, England, France, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Latin America, Malaysia, Mexico, Middle East, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Yugoslavia, and Western Europe.

Doubtless the most significant way that the WCA pursues its international and intercultural aims is in the nature of its biennial conventions, as contrasted with those of the SCA and our regional associations.

First, they are held around the world, and traditionally outside of the United States. To wit: Seoul-Korea, Manila-Philippines, Norwich-England, Singapore, Jyvaskyla-Finland, Pretoria-South Africa.

Second, they attract attendance from around the world, although (perhaps testifying to their relative prosperity) the majority of professors, other than from the host country, are usually from the United States. In recent conventions there have been twenty or more countries represented. And for each convention in Korea, Manila, Finland and South Africa, more than 100 local teachers attended.

Third, papers selected for presentation give traditional and proper obeisance to quantitative research, and measurement of various variables in communication behavior, because of course we recognize that such research is relevant to the teaching process. Nevertheless, program planners encourage culture-specific research papers and reports on significant instructional practices, and practical workshops are much more prominent in WCA programs than in most conventions. What this means is that we are dealing more operationally, and less theoretically, than in SCA or ICA. We do so because that is where the worldwide need is, and we are committed to international sharing of research and instructional practices, and to communication in all forms as enabling instruments in expanding intercultural understanding and world peace.

Fourth, we deliberately incorporate into our conventions a series of half-day intercultural experiences that give us a close appreciation for the society we are visiting. To help us understand cultures that are not our own we have visited and talked with non-professionals in schools, markets, churches, shrines, pubs, and varied congregations of local citizens.

Let me speak briefly about the convention held in South Africa a few months ago. We

were invited to hold our 12th biennial convention in Pretoria, not only by the South African Communication Association, but most significantly by the Human Sciences Research Council, a government agency somewhat analogous to our own NIH, but concentrating on research in education and social dynamics. At this critical point in South African history the Council is sharply focused upon human problems in communication and democratization. The convention's theme was "Unity Through Communication," and President Ronald Applbaum organized it around research reports and workshops that reflected worldwide experiences in intercultural communication. For the better part of six days delegates from more than twenty countries shared their insights and their home experiences with nearly 200 multiracial South African teachers, researchers, government officials, and social and political activists. At the end we hoped that we had made some contribution to the impending birth of democracy in South Africa.

Just a few days ago an Associated Press dispatch from Kwakwatsi, South Africa, a rural township about 90 miles south of Johannesburg, reported that officials of the African National Congress held a two-day mock election to educate persons who had never before in their lives been eligible to cast a ballot. In this exercise campaign literature and voting guides were distributed, and voter registration procedures were explained. We can make no claim for inspiring this exercise, but some of us will recall a meeting in Pretoria where we were asked how we would prepare for an election when over half of the eligible voters were illiterate, had no idea about how to judge competing candidates or fill out a ballot, and were inherently suspicious of any square object, including the traditional square ballot box. Our suggestion was that a troupe of actors visit each village and act out the whole sequence of steps in voting. Could that proposed simulation now be called a "mock election"?

Now, having spoken somewhat about past and present in interculturizing our discipline, let me turn to the future — which is really already upon us, considering the speed with which social and political change is taking place around the world. And it is, indeed, about new evolving perceptions of the world that I would now speak.

Many of you can remember, I'm sure, that inglorious era of super and sometimes pseudo patriotism when the political game was to see who could be the greatest anti-communist of them all — Senator Joe McCarthy, Congressman Martin Dies, or Screen Actor's Guild president Ronald Reagan. In those days, and for many years later the Soviet Union, the Third International and the Cold War virtually defined American foreign policy. So long as Russia was perceived as a threat, realistic foreign policy debate was inhibited. As Charles William Maynes, editor of *Foreign Policy*, pointed out in a seminal essay in the spring issue of 1900, "as the Cold War ends...America will lose more than its enemy. It will lose the sextant by which the ship of state has been guided since 1945." The status quo was no longer viable, and many citizens expected reduced spending for arms, leaving something called a peace dividend. But Maynes' vision was sharper, as he argued that "the peace dividend is not just the money that will be freed up. It is also the categories of thought that will finally be opened up. It is time for a great debate on American foreign policy, and it is not possible to have a great debate without a discussion of clear options."

As we all know the debate was not a great one, but a dragged out squabble that has not been resolved to this day when the tests put to it are greater than ever. Since I have a special interest in foreign policy as it impacts the American presidency, I've followed carefully the still unresolved debate. I am convinced that it persists primarily because we have found no overarching and systematic way of looking at the world around us.

Because I believe that we must have a foreign policy based upon an up-to-date world view, I hail an article in the 1993 summer issue of *Foreign Affairs* by Samuel F. Huntington, Political Science professor and director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard. The title of this lead article is "The Clash of Civilizations?" question mark. Huntington argues affirmatively, clearly and persuasively. I believe that anyone who is considering the

internationalization of *any* discipline must first consider Huntington's case. It is only fair to say that in the current fall issue of *Foreign Affairs* there are some responses, including one by Jean Kirkpatrick, that pick at Huntington's thesis, but not, in my view with effect. There is no way that in the time I have left, or in all of my time, I can do justice to his argument. So I must make a debater's compact summary, using his words where possible.

Huntington's hypothesis: "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."

Huntington's concept of a civilization: "a cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural homogeneity. The culture of a village in southern Italy may be different from that of a village in northern Italy, but both will share in a common Italian culture that distinguishes them from German villages. European communities, in turn, will share cultural features that distinguish them from Arab or Chinese communities. Arabs, Chinese and Westerners, however, are not part of any broader cultural entity. They constitute civilizations. A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have... It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by subjective self-identification of people."

Huntington's classification of civilizations: "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African... The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another."

Huntington's reasons for predicting clashing civilizations: "First, differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion."

"Second, the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between people of different civilizations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations."

"Third, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from long-standing local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labeled fundamentalist."

"Fourth, the growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West. On the one hand, the West is at a peak of power. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations."

"Fifth, cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones....the key question was Which side are you on?" In conflicts between civilizations, the question is "What are you?"

"Finally, economic regionalism is increasing. The proportions of total trade that were inter-regional rose between 1980 and 1989 from 51% to 59% in Europe, 33% to 37% in East Asia, and 32% to 36% in North America."

Huntington's capsule summary: "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe. As the events in Yugoslavia show, it is not only a line of difference; it is also at times a line of bloody conflict."

Huntington's future view for the West: [These developments] "will require the West to develop a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their

interests. It will require an effort to identify elements of commonalty between Western and other civilizations."

Let me repeat the source so you may read the whole article for yourself: *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp. 22-48, Samuel Huntington. And let me slip in another bibliographical item: David Rieff, *Harper's Magazine*, August 1993, pp. 62-72, "Multiculturalism's Silent Partner: It's the newly Globalized Consumer Economy, Stupid." Rieff's information will come in handy when you are discussing with your business school buddies the importance of internationalized communication in world trade.

This insight will be especially useful at a time when, as reported in last Sunday's *New York Times* (14 Nov. 93, p. 18), many business schools are adding courses in international culture for their MBA curriculum. Incidentally, it is also good to note that yesterday's *New York Times* (17 Nov. 93, p. 12), reported a resurgence of graduate schools of foreign affairs, and the addition of new courses in conflict resolution, and cultural and ethnic relations.

Now back to Huntington: if you follow his line of reasoning as I do it follows that any internationalization of our discipline must go hand in hand with interculturalization. And it seems logical that the United States and its institutions should take the lead into an internationally oriented intercultural world.

Are we not a nation that has demonstrated that the "melting pot" philosophy *may* have seemed viable when immigrants were drawn primarily from Anglo-Saxons and people from central and northern Europe? And do we not now realize that the pot has never accommodated African-Americans? And that it is not likely to accommodate other non-Caucasians who have come from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean in the past decade, and constitute a majority of immigrants? And is it not clear that a metaphor far more suitable for 1993 than "melting pot" is "mosaic"?

When I was very young I watched my grandmother carefully crafting "patchwork" quilts, made of a variety of fabric pieces....different textures, different colors. I am perfectly content to be a piece in a "patchwork quilt" metaphor, and to celebrate what the editors of last week's special edition of *TIME* herald as "the world's first truly international nation." I believe that if we come to understand the cultural richness in our own nation, not just tolerating differences but accepting them, we will more easily internationalize our discipline, and our own world view.

It would be presumptuous for me to spell out to experienced administrators how to proceed in their own departments. Surely they already know that to stride into the intercultural and international future, there must be curricular additions that will help our students understand, accept and enjoy diversity. That there must be increased diversity in the ethnic makeup of our faculties. And that for those who offer graduate programs there must be more aggressive recruitment of minority students.

In conclusion, I want to offer an endorsement of a 1994 book that I believe may well be a handbook for any administrator who is looking for guidance in the curriculum/recruitment areas. I do not know the publisher or contributors, though as an old textbook editor I am chagrined that I never thought of creating it. The title is *Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity and Communication*, and publisher is Roxbury Publishing Company. The great virtue of the book is that the twenty-two contributors are themselves patches on the quilt, as well as teachers of communication. They know from experience about the intercultural problems they discuss. They are "real people," they know real problems and they make a real and public confrontation of the issues. This book is an intercultural anthology, but like this speech, it has much to say about the large international world in which our patchwork quilt democracy must operate. "In ecology," said Howard Quigley, "the first rule is: everything is connected to everything." And that's the way it is with communication, too. Whether rhetors or communicologists, we must all learn and teach about how to create connections, not only within our own multicultural society, but with a culturally diverse international universe.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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