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Title: Three Halves of a Whole : Redefining East and West in UNESCO's East-West Major Project 1957-1966

Year: 2017

Version:

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THREE HALVES OF A WHOLE

Redefining East and West in UNESCO's East-West Major Project 1957-1966

In 1946 Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director-General, suggested that two opposing philosophies of life were confronting each other from the East and the West, setting the focus on the cultural aspect of this polarisation and defining the possibility of an East-West conflict as the main threat to world peace. A decade later, in 1957, UNESCO launched The Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values to promote its ideas of intercultural understanding as a means to maintaining peace. The core concepts of the Project, East and West, were not strictly defined. Here East and West, as concepts, fit Reinhart Koselleck's definition of Grundbegriffe, or basic concept – something which by nature is complex, controversial, ambiguous and contested, but also indispensable. The purpose of this article is to trace the evolution of the concepts during the ten years of the Project. The concepts are analysed with the tools of conceptual history and contextualised primarily in a cultural framework. An analysis of the concepts reveals that East and West were, at first, referred to as two opposing elements that could only be understood in relation to each other, leading to a binary opposition. This original depiction developed into the recognition of several civilisations existing within and outside the East-West dichotomy and thus to an ongoing discussion of the nature of intercultural relations within the UNESCO context. The conceptual transformation reflects UNESCO's evolution from an essentially Western European organisation to a forum of intercultural dialogue of a truly worldwide nature. This article suggests an alternative understanding of international cultural relations of the 1950s and 1960s outside both the Cold War and post-colonial frameworks.

Keywords: UNESCO, East, West, cultural conflict, conflict prevention

The march of history has reduced physical distance, multiplied the exchanges between peoples and the opportunities for useful communication, but it has also increased the risks of tragic misunderstanding. Oriental and Occidental people now belong to the same world, and this evolution must lead to solidarity. (Havet, 1958, p. 20.)

Cultural polarisations are, again, rising to the centre of focus of international relations. The threat of a clash of cultures developing into actual armed conflict is constantly present and, as a result, the need for intercultural understanding, as a preventative measure, grows ever greater. Conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. In 2001 Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the UN, called for a move from "a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention" in the organisation's policy (UN A/55/985–S/2001/574, p. 6). Five years later Annan reported that considerable progress had been made but that an unacceptable gap remained between theory and practice, or rhetoric and reality, in the area of conflict prevention (UN A/60/891, p. 4). Over half a century ago the world was divided into polar opposites much like today. Samuel P. Huntington (2011, p. 21) describes the dominant way of perceiving international relations of the 1950s as bipolar.

However, he also describes the world as being divided into three parts: the democratic societies of the West led by the United States; the communist East led by the Soviet Union; and the nonaligned Third World. This model actually combines two different approaches to international relations of the time, both based on polar oppositions. Firstly, from the geopolitical perspective the most commonly thought division of the world into East and West was that of the Cold War. Secondly, the decolonisation process following the Second World War had brought the older paradigm of East and West as opposite cultural forces back to the centre of focus of international relations.

The East and the West as conceptual binaries form the core of both of these approaches. In this article I propose an alternative to the traditional black and white conception of international relations of the 1950s and 1960s by providing a practical example of initiatives taken towards improving international relations outside these two frameworks. In 1957, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) launched the *Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values[1]*. The Project ran for ten years until the end of 1966, under the regime of three Director-Generals[2], with the aim of promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding between the East and the West.

The concepts of East and West in the context of the Project fit Reinhart Koselleck's (1996, p. 64) definition of Grundbegriffe, or basic concept – something which by nature is complex, controversial, ambiguous and contested, but also indispensable. The Project didn't provide a clear definition of the concepts of East and West, or Orient and Occident. This provides an opportunity to examine the concepts of East and West from the perspective of conceptual history by studying the changes, conflicts and debates that surround the various attempts to define the concepts in different discourses and contexts within the Project. Concepts usually serve as analytical and theoretical tools of ontological categorisation. However, they are not static or immutable. In this article the key concepts are looked at as both indicators and factors of

changes in perceptions within the Project. They are treated as contested and controversial, and thus as an object of politics. As Quentin Skinner (1989, pp. 11-13) points out, concepts are not individual entities that can be studied separately from context. One of the main challenges then becomes perceiving the relationship between the concepts and the world with which they interact. However, the contexts in which the definitions are given are not to be seen to strictly determine the different uses of the concepts but, instead, as an arena where struggles over meaning making take place. In this article, the concepts are contextualised primarily in a cultural framework.

The research frame provided by conceptual history is utilised here through asking questions related to the use of the concepts, such as what the temporal or geographical context is, what the analogous and opposite concepts are, who is using them and for what purpose, and what the relationship between the changes in the use of the concepts and the surrounding cultural, political and societal changes is. The purpose of this article is to trace the evolution of the concepts in the Project from the perspective of the threat of an intercultural conflict. The documents of the International Advisory Committee for the Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values covering the whole duration of the Project, from 1957 to 1966, are analysed[3]. I aim to trace the transformations of the key concepts within the Project focusing on a form of conceptual change Skinner (1999, pp. 66-73) calls rhetorical redescription. According to this approach, changes take place when it is argued that something can be described by a term that would normally not be used in the given context and others are successfully convinced that the term can, in fact, be applied to the case in question. For Skinner, concepts are mainly rhetorical moves and thus the use of concepts can be seen as almost like a rhetorical game of chess.

Laura Elizabeth Wong (2006; 2008) discusses the Project as an attempt to provide an official space for Asian and Arab states in presenting their cultural values as both distinct from and on an equal footing with Western cultural val-

ues. Chloé Maurel (2010) argues that the Project illustrates a turnaround in UNESCO's conceptions from an initial will to encourage cultural unity to promoting both cultural unity and cultural diversity. Besides Wong's and Maurel's input, the several authors discussing UNESCO's history only mention the Project briefly, without analysing the impact it has had on both UNESCO's policies and conceptions of intercultural relations further[4]. In this article, the Project is looked at as a means of preventing an alleged cultural conflict between the East and the West. During the Cold War, the UN and its agencies became one of the key instruments of settling international disputes, and UNESCO aimed at positioning itself as a diplomatic actor between the two counterforces defining the international relations of the time. Conflict prevention, as one of the central aims of conflict resolution, is the focal point of this article.

Peter J. Katzenstein (2009; 2012a; 2012b) suggests adding a civilisational level to international relations analysis thus providing an opportunity to focus on the cultural context of world politics. Building on the work of Shmuel Eisenstadt, Randall Collins and Norbert Elias, Katzenstein discusses civilisations as constellations which are not fixed in time or space. Like the East-West Major Project, he highlights the importance of the multiple forms of inter-civilisational encounters and trans-civilisational engagements. Katzenstein's constructivist approach, which looks at civilisations primarily as processes, is utilised here as a loose theoretical tool. The concepts of culture and civilisation were often used interchangeably in the Project and thus no clear distinction between the two is made in this article.

Background of the East-West Conflict in the UNESCO Context

Historically, the East-West paradigm has been a determining factor in UNESCO's actions. The founders of UNESCO recognised the need for better understanding of one another's cultures among different peoples of the world and included promotion of such understand-ing in the main objectives of the organisation. The core of UNESCO's thinking is that the lack of intercultural understanding and "ignorance of each other's ways and lives" is the essential reason for international conflicts (UNESCO Constitution, Preamble, 1945). Thus, UNESCO fosters the idea of mutual understanding as a means to maintain world peace. In 1946, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Great Britain, stated that the Iron Curtain had divided Europe into two. The same year, Julian Huxley (1946, p. 61), UNESCO's first Director-General, suggested that "two opposing philosophies of life" were confronting each other from the East and the West thus posing the main threat to maintaining peace as "East and West will not agree on a basis for the future if they merely hurl at each other the fixed ideas of the past". Churchill's conception of the East-West border was geopolitical; Huxley's conception of what in fact separated the East from the West was based on a cultural border.

Huxley based his idea of what was to form the philosophy of UNESCO on deriving cultural values from evolution, which he defined as all the historical processes of change at work in the universe. Huxley used the term tradition to describe the cultural basis of values and his *tradition* often seems synonymous to *civilisation*. According to Katzenstein (2012b, p. 211) civilisations provide the broadest cultural context for world politics not only in space but also in time, in opposition to Huntington's (2011) conception of civilisations as almost state-like actors evaluated by their sources of power. Huntington's essentialist argumentation follows the realist tradition of international relations theory placing the alleged clash of civilisations in an anarchical international system[5]. Katzenstein (2009, p. 10), in contrast, roots his theory in one overarching civilisation of modernity shaped by civilisational encounters, engagements and, occasionally, clashes, where the broader context for the relations between civilisations is not provided by anarchy but rather by a form of an international or world society[6]. This line of thinking is present both in Huxley's writing and in later debates surrounding the subject. Huxley (1946) defined the vision of UNESCO as that of

a universally valid culture, or a world unity, as an alternative to nationalism as the basis of the political structure of the world, and emphasised the idea of unity fostered through maintaining a diversity of cultures. Huxley's term of office was cut short as his scientific-humanistic views were considered too radical. However, his ideas of unity in diversity still shape UNESCO's policies today.

For its first decade UNESCO, like the whole of the UN, was essentially a Western organisation[7]. This set-up was criticised as early as 1948, when Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, a key figure in India's independence movement, the political heir to Mahatma Gandhi, and a strong but critical supporter of the UN, addressed the UN General Assembly stating that "[m]ay I say, as a representative of Asia, that we honour Europe for its culture and for the great advance in human civilization which it represents? […] But may I also say that the world is something bigger than Europe, and you will not solve your problems by thinking that the problems of the world are mainly European problems?" (Nehru, 1948). In 1951 UNESCO organised a round-table discussion on the cultural and philosophical relations between East and West in New Delhi. In his memoirs of the discussion, Professor A.R. Wadia of India emphasises a One World ideal as a basis of UNESCO's thinking. "To its credit let it be said", Wadia states, "that it does not gloss over the differences between the East and the West and yet in the political and economic developments of today in the whole world it sees the possibility of "the one civilisation of tomorrow"" (UNESCO/PHS/ND/A.3, 1951). Discussions, such as the round-table, were seen as a means to seek ways to achieve this goal. On what basis this universal world civilisation would be built was not clarified. This closely resembles Katzenstein's (2009) concept of civilisation of modernity which draws on the values of all the cultural groups of the world. In Katzenstein's theory the precise form of this universalism also remains unclear. In the discussions surrounding this subject it was never implied that it should be based on one dominating culture, but rather built as a combination of Eastern and Western

cultures, despite them being referred to as polar opposites. Wadia goes on to state that in the recent years it had become fashionable to speak of East and West as monolithic entities without recognising the diversity of cultures existing within both of these regions. In the changing world, he concludes, philosophy can no longer be seen as being that of the East or the West, but as a combination of the two.

In 1952, Nehru warned that Asian and African nations might eventually withdraw from the UN if their initiatives would continue to be blocked by more powerful Western states (The Times, 1952). This reflects a shift within the UN system, as the set up no longer was that of the opposing forces of the United States and the Soviet Union, but rather those of the West and the Third World. In 1954, UNESCO's 8th General Conference held in Montevideo selected mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values as one of the priorities on which emphasis should be laid in the organisation's future programme (UNESCO/ Records of the General Conference, Eighth session, Montevideo 1954. Resolutions). In 1955, representatives of 29 governments of countries from Asia, Africa and the Middle East gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss the role of the Third World in the Cold War, decolonisation, and economic and cultural cooperation (CVCE, 2016). The majority of the countries had just gained independence and represented over half of the world's population. The Bandung Conference laid the foundations for the nonaligned movement during the Cold War and marked the attempt of emerging Asian and African nations to demonstrate that they, too, demanded to be seen as equal actors in world politics.

In 1956, representatives of UNESCO's Asian Member States[8] gathered in Tokyo for the Regional Conference of Representatives of National Commissions for UNESCO in Asia. A proposal made by the Indian delegation and strongly supported by the Japanese, recommended that a major project on mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values should be included in the Draft Programmes of 1957-1958 for presentation to the 9th session of UNESCO's General Conference to be held later the same

year (UNESCO/ODG/9, 1956). The role of both India and Japan as representatives of the East was to be major in the Project. However, defining these two countries as purely Eastern is not without problems[9]. Similar ideas leading to the launching of the Project were presented by the Regional Conference of Representatives of National Commissions for UNESCO in Europe the same year. Recognising "the special urgency" of increasing mutual appreciation between the Orient and the Occident UNESCO's 9th General Conference held in New Delhi decided to authorise an initiative to promote intercultural relations through a ten year long Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values (UNESCO/Records of the General Conference, Ninth session, New Delhi 1956. Resolutions). The resolution of the General Conference emphasised the need for a "study of the radical changes which have recently taken place in the life of both Eastern and Western nations" (Ibid.).

The "special urgency" and "radical changes" are a reference to the three major historical factors of the 1950s that UNESCO recognises as having an effect on the organisation's development. All three offer a different approach to both the alleged East-West conflict and conceptions of East and West. Firstly, the decolonisation process in the UNESCO context sets focus on the cultural aspect of post-colonialism. Secondly, the Cold War adds a geopolitical dimension to the East-West paradigm. A third factor can be traced back to the expansion of the organisation. By the mid-1950s, the number of UNESCO's Member States had almost doubled since the founding of the organisation in 1945. At the time, UNESCO had 78 Member States[10]. According to the organisation's own categories, out of these 23 were European, 23 Asian, 20 Latin American, 8 African, 2 North American and 2 Oceanian. During the early 1950s Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, Spain and the U.S.S.R. had become members marking an abandonment of the political divisions of the Second World War and reflecting UNESCO's expansion to a truly worldwide organisation. However, as Nehru's earlier speeches indicate, the East was positioned as the underdog in re-

gard to the Project as a means of conflict prevention. This can be defined as an asymmetric conflict, where the only way of resolving the conflict is to change the initial structure of power imbalance (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse 1999, p. 12). This is exactly what the Project aimed to do by working towards the goal of East and West as equal actors.

The Project was launched in 1957. It embodied UNESCO's mandate to "build the defences of peace in the minds of men" by promoting intercultural understanding and thus aimed to conciliate the threat of an intercultural conflict. The basic idea of conflict prevention is that the ways of dealing with conflict can be made redundant if preventive measures can be taken effectively beforehand (Melander & Pigache, 2007, p. 11). Three different approaches to conflict prevention can be distinguished. The aim of the short-term operational prevention is providing an immediate solution to an imminent conflict targeting specific actors. Structural prevention takes a long-term approach, laying emphasis on examining the causes of a conflict. Here, a third conception introduced by Kofi Annan (2006, 5) is the most fitting. Annan's systemic prevention takes an even wider approach referring to measures of addressing issues of conflict that transcend particular states and can only be dealt with through international cooperation. UNESCO's Director-General Luther Evans attempted to address the purpose of the Project in a speech:

The terms Orient and Occident, which are a little difficult to define, do call attention to some of the barriers and the mutual ignorance which have long hampered the development of true humanism. This arbitrary division of the peoples and cultures of the world into two distinct and allegedly exclusive groups is an absurdity which we in our age should no longer tolerate. Nor can we continue to think of the other side as in terms of stereotypes and vague catchphrases. On the contrary, we must make an effort to see things, countries and people as they really are, against the background of their history, their works, their daily lives, their hopes and aspirations. (Quoted in UNESCO DG 82/8, 1982.)

Evans' speech both questions the division of the world into two and at the same time recognises it as an actual source of a possible conflict. This kind of dualism is a defining feature of the discussions throughout the Project. It is not entirely clear whether he criticises the vague nature of the concepts of Orient and Occident, which would imply questioning their boundary areas, or whether he criticises the verbal act of making the division in the first place. What is clear is that Evans recognises that, in practice, people tend to think in dichotomical ways. Also, it is evident that for him the main goal of the Project was to overcome ignorance and prejudice – both of which are dangerous things, and thus worthy opponents for UNESCO to attack. By verbalising the difficulty of defining the core concepts of East and West, Evans also sets the stage for one of the key themes of the Project and the focus of this article: who and what, in fact, were the two sides of the alleged East-West conflict the Project aimed to prevent.

An International Advisory Committee selected by the Executive Board and the Director-General Luther Evans was set up to guide the implementation of the East-West Major Project. The Committee was to consist of 18 members, individuals of different nationalities. The governments of the following Member States were asked to make nominations for members of the Committee to be appointed for a period fixed provisionally at two years[11]: France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United Kingdom (European); Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Vietnam (Asian); United States of America (North American); Egypt (African); and Mexico (Latin American)[12] (UNESCO/ 46 EX/ Decisions, Annex, 1957). Which ones of these were considered to represent East and which ones West, was not stated. However, the members served as individuals, not as representatives of their governments. The members of the Advisory Committee were not to be experts in their own culture as the role of the Committee was not to discuss cultural values as such. Instead – although not stated officially – the members were to be recognised scholars or experts in their own fields and represent a vari-

ety of cultural and linguistic groups. The members included university professors from various disciplines, such as history and linguistics, ambassadors and national delegates to UNESCO. During the ten year long Project the Committee met six times at the UNESCO house in Paris with the working languages being English and French. In total, 31 people from 25 countries[13] served as members of the Committee at all or some of the six sessions.

The Concepts of East and West

The International Advisory Committee met for the first time in 1957. The Committee was provided with a summary of the comments made on defining the core concepts of the East-West Major Project, such as "Orient" and "Occident", "Cultural Values" and "Mutual Appreciation", by the national delegations at the 9th session of the General Conference (UNECO/MAPA/1 AC/3 Annex 1, 1957). Three different approaches to defining the concepts of East and West in different contexts were considered. Firstly, it was suggested that a geographical definition might prove to be a clear one. Thus, Orient would consist of Asia and the part of Africa bordering the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, whereas Occident would include Europe, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. The problem with this approach was the lack of recognition of cultural features, or the role of certain intermediary countries. Also, there was no place for Sub-Saharan Africa in this definition.

Secondly, some delegates, such as Dr. Zakir Husain of India, were in favour of a definition based on the "spirit of cultures" (Ibid.). This was based on UNESCO's earlier studies and meetings which had proven "beyond doubt" the existence of two separate cultural traditions that functioned as foundations of civilisations (Ibid.). The idea of two different traditions was seen to play a significant role in human relations not only between countries but sometimes within a country. This approach recognises cultural borders as not always following national borders and also the possibility of the existence of several, overlapping cultures. As Katzenstein

(2009, pp. 5-6) notes, civilisations are not only culturally loosely integrated but also internally highly differentiated. The underlining problem with this approach was seen to be the danger of excessive simplifications of the two civilisations.

Thirdly, a purely historical viewpoint was addressed. According to this approach, the obstacles to East-West understanding were a result of the historical economic and political expansion of the West in the form of colonialism as well as the technical lead it had gained since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Here, the two civilisations, as primordial social constructions, are seen as developing into political reifications as a result of encountering one another (Katzenstein 2009, pp. 5-6). In conclusion the UNESCO Secretariat established that "[…] it had to take into account of the three criteria together, without attempting to make unduly clear-cut distinctions. It considered Western culture as that prevailing in the European countries and in all others whose culture is of European origin, and it treated as Eastern all non-European cultures, particularly those rooted in Asia and fashioned by an ancient, written tradition" (UNECO/MAPA/1 AC/3 Annex 1, 1957).

This definition would form the basis of the discussions surrounding the subject during the ten years of the Project. It was recognised that this definition posed a problem when it came to non-Islamic Africa as, again, this distinction left no place for it, and the part to be played by non-Islamic Africa "whose cultures, in general, have no written literature or firmly established historical traditions" remained to be solved (Ibid.). Literary traditions, along with religious ones, are what Katzenstein (2012b, p. 211) calls the most distinctive and important features of a civilisation. According to this approach, the UNESCO Secretariat recognised the existence of only two major civilisations. At this stage out of the eight African UNESCO members only three were Sub-Saharan nations and thus not considered a part of the Arab world[14]. The question of Africa's role in the Project would prove of great significance a few years later, in the beginning of the 1960s, due to the decolonisation of Africa leading to the spreading of the geographical scope of UNESCO's Member States.

It was stated that the definition suggested did not imply an artificial unification of the two regions nor did it refer to a violent contrast between them. Also, this approach would make it possible to associate with the Project the countries the culture of which combines Eastern and Western tradition. In the proposed work plan by the Director-General Luther Evans it was noted that, taken literally, the title of the Project referred to two opposing entities. Emphasis was laid on the relative nature of the words Orient and Occident as "[n]either from the geographical point of view, nor still less from the cultural point of view, is it possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the so-called "western" and "eastern" peoples" (UNESCO/MAPA/1 AC/4, 1957).

The differences between Eastern and Western cultural values were seen to be the result of historical factors rather than of fundamental contrasts, and the diversity of cultures existing within the two regions was emphasised. However, the aims of the Project were defined as promoting a better understanding of the culture of the peoples "belonging to the two great areas of civilization commonly known as "Orient" and "Occident"" thus underlining the same binary opposition that the notions above were trying to fight against (UNESCO MAPA/1 AC/3, 1957). It is rather difficult to escape binary notions that are deeply embedded in the vocabulary used within a specific discussion. Even though our world is largely determined by these normative vocabularies, it is important to recognise the potential for change, since one of the ways we can change the world and our perceptions of it is by changing the ways in which we apply these vocabularies (Skinner, 1999, p. 63).

1958 marked the election of a new Director-General, Vittorino Veronese. A meeting of social scientists was held in Calcutta to discuss the role of the social sciences in the East-West Major Project. The discussions were to remain dispassionate and objective, without being obscured by romanticism, myths or stereotypes of the two key concepts. The discussions were also to remain free of "superficial attempts to ignore genuine differences in values" thus essentially regarding the East and the West as two separate

entities (UNESCO MAPA/2 AC/4, 1958). The International Advisory Committee met for the second time and made a significant attempt to address the issue of defining the Project's key concepts. The importance of discussing the concepts in their various contexts was emphasised as this kind of an approach was seen to turn concepts into "items of knowledge calculated to foster greater mutual appreciation" (UNESCO, Joint Declaration of the International Advisory Committee for the Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1958). Also, it was stated that the discussion of the basic concepts of the Project brought out "the main reasons which make it necessary for UNESCO to take action to improve mutual appreciation of each others' cultural values between the people of the Orient and the Occident" (Ibid.). It is clearly recognised here that in order to prevent a cultural conflict by promoting mutual understanding, it is essential to first understand who the opposite sides of the possible conflict are.

The Committee defined two types of obstacles to mutual appreciation. The first type, psychological, refers to feelings of national pride on one hand and wounded self-esteem on the other. The second, political, sets focus on various dependent relationships, such as that between the exploiter and the exploited. These "relationship concepts", such as nationalism, imperialism or colonialism, were to be discussed and explained from the perspective of the true historical facts, taking into consideration the chronological, geographical and socio-economic aspects (Ibid.). This, in the whole of the Project, is the clearest attempt to address the nature of the threat of an East-West conflict on a practical level. Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse (1999, pp. 19-20) define a conflict as "the pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups". Their usage of the term only refers to political conflicts. Emphasising culture over politics was, however, one of the defining elements of the Project. A cultural conflict, in the UNESCO context, seems to be defined as the differences in cultural values that place two parties in opposite positions. But, as Katzenstein (2009, 8) notes, civilisations generally don't form the axis

along which wars are fought, and major clashes tend to occur primarily within, rather than between, civilisations. Also, it is not cultures or civilisations themselves that clash, as they do not act, but the political actors within them – civilisations merely provide the context (Katzenstein, 2012b, p. 211; 236). This notion is also present in the UNESCO Constitution, which states that "wars begin in the minds of men" (UNESCO Constitution, Preamble).

According to the Committee, some categorisations could be made of groups of cultures by reviewing the evolution of cultural values through different criteria such as social science, religion, history, geography, linguistics or anthropology. However, it was made clear that any definitions of "such complementary concepts" as "East and West", "Orient and Occident" or even "Europe and Asia" would not be provided (UNESCO, Joint Declaration of the International Advisory Committee for the Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1958). In particular, Orient and Occident were not seen to be entities in themselves but were "definable only as the two halves of a whole and in terms of the ideas they hold about each other" (Ibid.). Here, referring to the concepts of East and West in the singular creates a discursive category endowed with actor-like dispositions (Katzenstein, 2012b, p. 216). East and West were thus referred to as two opposing elements which could only be defined in relation to one another. Therefore, the world was of a dialectical construction where entities were either a part of the Orient or the Occident, even though the logical meaning of what that constituted would depend on the other dialectical half.

The Committee members clearly recognised that they were treading on problematic conceptual ground. This type of rhetoric gained a firm footing in the academic discourse twenty years later through postcolonial criticism by Edward Said (1978), according to whom, Western conceptions of the East result in the concepts of Orient and Occident being defined in opposition to one another thus leading to a binary opposition of East and West. The effect of Said's thinking upon the research on constructing the

border between East and West has been massive. Thus, it needs to be recognised here that the issue put under closer attention by Said was already acknowledged in the discussions of the Advisory Committee twenty years earlier, as it was stated that speaking of the East and the West as if they were two different worlds opened the door to the practice of discrimination. Some Committee members pointed out that neither East nor West represented a self-contained unity and that a number of elements were practically impossible to distinguish as either Oriental or Occidental. It was also noted that the majority of people consider themselves as belonging more or less exclusively to one of those groups. Who the minority that didn't fit in this line of thinking were was not discussed.

Two members of the Committee from East and West addressed the challenges of defining the concepts of Orient and Occident. The Federal Republic of Germany's representative, Professor K. D. Erdmann took a geographical approach and noted that consequently the Eastern border of Europe became of great importance. He referred to the border as a conventional and changing defining line between the East and the West, and the concept of Europe as a wider one than that of the West – and vice versa (UNESCO MAPA/2 AC/8 (Revised), 1958). To Erdmann, the difficulty of placing a specific line to mark Europe's Eastern border, as the result of Russia's expansion to the East, meant that Europe was wider than the West. On the other hand, the West had expanded following the discovery of new parts of the world, resulting in Europe losing its central role and becoming a part of the Western world as a whole. Also, the effect the crusades had had, namely causing the East-West division of Christianity to give way to a division based on Christianity and Islam, played a part in his argumentation, emphasising the fact that the threat of an East-West conflict was actually of a much older origin. Erdmann clearly argued with a Europe centred mind-set, with the rest of the world beyond Islam appearing rather hazy. The Lebanese representative Mr. C. D. Ammoun stated that he had difficulties finding an exact definition for the concepts: "Are they to be defined by what they have in common or by

their points of difference? […] Do the concepts of "Orient" and "Occident" have a geographical or a historical sense, a cultural or a materialistic sense?" (UNESCO MAPA/2 AC/9, 1958) "The Orient and Occident exist", he goes on, "that is a fact" emphasising the East and West as actual, separate entities. He thus considered the binary division as being an empirical and material, rather than a linguistic, phenomenon.

The emphasis of the International Advisory Committee's third session in 1959 was on the Project's practical activities and the issue of the key concepts was hardly touched. The following year, in 1960, seventeen African nations joined UNESCO. This change was reflected in the discussions of the Committee's fourth session in 1961. In his opening speech, the new Director-General René Maheu brought up the issues of the geography of the East-West Major Project and the place to be assigned to "tropical African cultures" (UNESCO/CUA/ 108, 1961). It was decided that the African cultures should be given an equal position in the East-West Major Project. It was recognised that a strict interpretation of the concepts of Orient and Occident might appear to impose limitations on any extension of the Project, though its true purpose was presumed to be strengthening understanding and appreciation amongst all cultures. The new African Member States were thus included in the Project, and, when it came to practical activities carried out within the Project, regarded as a part of the East. As a consequence, the option of changing the title of the Project was discussed but never implemented. This reflects the Project's flexible character when it came to the different meanings of the key concepts as here they were clearly altered to make room for the geographical expansion. As Skinner (1999, pp. 63-64) notes, conceptual changes are essentially reflections of deeper societal transformations. They are not necessarily changes in concepts but rather in the use of terms that express concepts.

On a practical level, the role of Africa in the Project remained minor. However, its role as an initiator of a conceptual change determining the ways intercultural relations were regarded towards the end of the Project was significant. The Advisory Committee took the view that

the East-West dialogue promoted in the Project should actually and increasingly be regarded as just one aspect of multilateral communication between the world's several cultural groups or civilisations. This marked a significant conceptual change reflected in the subsequent development of the Project. The change exemplifies how concepts both alter over time and circumstance, and essentially provide nothing more than a proof of changing perspectives on the world, as the changing concepts essentially are only tools of debate – not static statements of the way the world is (Skinner, 1999, p. 62).

The amount of attention given to the question of Sub-Saharan Africa is quite interesting, as the inclusion of several Latin American countries in the Project since its beginning raised no such discussions. Latin America, at least on a practical level, was considered to be a part of the West and the representatives of four Latin American countries – Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico – were, in fact, granted a spot in the Advisory Committee. In the autumn of 1961 the Berlin Wall was built. This very material development of the East-West division in the form of bricks and concrete was not at all visible in the Committee's documents, which provides strong evidence that the Project operated outside the Cold War paradigm. The Cold War was of course fought mostly with Europe as its centre of attention, while the scope of the project was much wider.

During the Advisory Committee's fifth session in 1963 it was noted that during the past years the Project had "assumed an increasingly flexible character amid greater regional diversity" and had proceeded from an interchange between the East and the West to promoting mutual appreciation of "all cultural values" (UNESCO/CUA/125, 1963). This statement refers on one hand to the inclusion of new regions in the Project, and, on the other hand, to a greater recognition of several cultures existing within these regions. This approach is what Katzenstein (2009; 2012b, p. 211; 214-215) calls an undeniable fact: that the world is comprised of a plurality and pluralism of civilisations. This means that civilisations exist in the plural within one civilisation of modernity and that they

are internally pluralist rather than being unitary. It was also noted that attention should be paid to "identifying the constituent elements of each major cultural system" (UNESCO/CUA/125, 1963). The question of which cultural systems were regarded as major and thus significant enough for further study was not addressed. Conversely, no attention was paid to the fact that this would rule out cultural systems of a more minor character – whatever these were. The Committee emphasised the world-scale nature of the Project, stating that its true significance had always gone beyond promoting East-West dialogue.

The Advisory Committee's sixth and final session in 1965 marked the occasion of the first Sub-Saharan African representative, Dr. Aktilu Habté of Ethiopia, being granted a spot on the Committee. Other African countries with a representative on the Committee during the ten years were Morocco and the United Arab Republic[15]. In his opening speech Mr. L. Gomes Machado, Director of the Department of Culture, speaking on behalf of the Director-General expressed a hope that the members of the Committee would recommend extending the Major Project to "all the major cultural regions of the world, and a study of cultures devoid of all geographical limitations" (UNESCO/CLT/130, 1966). The awareness of the universal nature of the spirit of the Project was noted to be a significant achievement and the Advisory Committee felt that the "still limited idea of cultural values had joined forces with the universal idea of human values" (ibid.). Here again, a direct connection to UNESCO's initial One World ideal can be seen. Thus, the idea of a universal world culture as a means of preventing a cultural conflict was still present, but it had developed from promoting a world culture combining two civilisations to including several, without a conceptual upper limit to the number of cultures and subcultures.

Conclusions

An analysis of the key concepts in the Project reveals that in the beginning East and West were referred to as two opposing elements that could only be understood in relation with each other, leading thus to a binary opposition. This original depiction developed into an ongoing discussion of the nature of intercultural relations within the UNESCO context resulting in the Project turning into a framework for multilateral, worldwide cooperation. A major development during the ten years of the Project was the change in UNESCO's conception of the nature of intercultural relations. The initial East-West polarisation developed into recognition of multiple civilisations existing within and outside the East-West dichotomy. For practical reasons, they were all categorised as a part of either the East or the West – sometimes both. Thus, the words East and West themselves didn't change during the ten years of the Project but the interpretations and meanings given to the concepts did. This conceptual transformation reflects cultural and political changes as the semantic adaptations stretched the concepts to meet their changing surroundings. The initial attempt to define the concepts of East and West in 1957 concluded that the West was to be defined as cultures of European origin and the East as non-European cultures, particularly those rooted in Asia and fashioned by an ancient, written tradition. At the end of the Project the definition seemed to roughly follow the same categorisation. However, the reference to Asian origins and written tradition was dropped. The change resulting from the rhetorical redescriptions of the core concepts during the ten years of the Project is visible in the way the concepts acquired a new prominence in the UNESCO context (Skinner, 1999, p. 71).

A gradual broadening of the Project's original geographic spread took place during the ten years. In the beginning it was planned for the Project to concentrate on cultural exchanges between Asia and the Arab States on one hand, and Europe and North America on the other, but countries of Latin America were also included in the Project from its outset. Even more significant was the change brought on by the inclusion of the new African Member States. During the Project, 38 countries joined UNESCO. Out of these, 27 were African. This not only gave the Project a broader geographic dimension, but also resulted in broadening the core idea of dialogue between cultures. Today, Africa is a designated global priority for UNESCO. This is visible in UNESCO's programmes on several levels, particularly in the organisation's response to post-conflict situations.

The idea of who the sides of the supposed intercultural conflict were went through a significant development visible in the form of conceptual change. In the beginning of the Project, the promotion of mutual appreciation was limited to the East and the West. Towards the end of the Project it became clear that a crucial factor in maintaining peace by easing the threat of an intercultural conflict was recognising that there were, in fact, numerous civilisations that needed to engage in dialogue of a multilateral nature. The Cold War paradigm as a defining factor behind the threat of a cultural conflict was not visible in the Project. However, neither was the approach defined by the decolonisation process and the resulting division of the world into the ex-coloniser and the ex-colonised.

Structuring the world based on the idea of the existence of several civilisations has been, according to Huntington (2011), a dominant idea only since the end of the Cold War. As analysing the Project has shown, this line of thinking was actually present half a century earlier, during the first decades of the Cold War. This shows the Project provides an alternative conception of the international relations of the time and reflects its role as not only truly historic in character, but also as a pioneering attempt to discuss the nature of intercultural relations. The Project facilitated a type of intercultural dialogue quite uncharacteristic of an era dominated by strict geopolitical connotations. The nature of the possible conflict between the East and the West was not addressed in detail in the discussions of the Advisory Committee, but the fear of the international situation escalating into war was clearly present.

The discussion of cultural unity and cultural diversity forms another track for reviewing the development of the Project. As shown in this article, on the level of concepts, the ideas of both cultural unity and cultural diversity were present. In the beginning, the emphasis was clearly on promoting cultural unity, but it was replaced by a greater emphasis on recognising cultural diversity in the early 1960s. This is in line with Maurel's (2010) interpretation of the East-West Major Project as an indicator of a change in UNESCO's ideology from promoting cultural unity to promoting both cultural unity and cultural diversity. Analysing the documents has shown that towards the end of the Project, the conceptions turned back towards promoting cultural unity as a means to achieving greater understanding and thus to preventing an intercultural conflict.

In practice, the East-West dichotomy remained undefined throughout the Project. It was this lack of a strict definition of East and West which, in fact, made the discussions in their various forms possible, thus setting the stage for intercultural dialogue of a truly worldwide nature. The legacy of the East-West Major Project is still present in UNESCO's actions today in the form of several initiatives aimed at achieving its mission to contribute to fostering cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and building a culture of peace. UNESCO, recognising that the need for mutual understanding has become ever more topical, was designated the lead agency for the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Four major themes for the year were selected: 1) promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, 2) building a framework for commonly shared values, 3) strengthening quality education and the building of intercultural competencies, and 4) fostering dialogue for sustainable development. These themes repeat the objectives of the East-West Major Project to raise awareness of the significance of intercultural dialogue and the promotion of exchanges between cultures – without the East-West framework.

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Endnotes:

1. Referred to as the East-West Major Project or the Project from here on

2. Luther Evans, U.S.A., 1953-1958; Vittorino Veronese, Italy, 1958-1961; and René Maheu, France, 1962-1974 (acting 1959, 1961-1962)

3. The documents used as primary sources in this article are held by the UNESCO archives in Paris.

4. See e.g. Valderrama 1995

5. See e.g. Dickinson 1916

6. See e.g. Bull 1977; Buzan 2004

7. See Maurel 2014 for more detail

8. Capitalisation of UNESCO's terms, such as Member States, follows UNESCO's own capitalisation conventions.

9. India had just gained independence and remained a part of the Commonwealth of Nations. In the case of Japan, see e.g. Korhonen 2014.

10. The current number (2016) is 195 Members and 8 Associate Members.

11. At the first session of the Advisory Committee it was stated that the term could probably be renewed at the end of the first period (UNESCO MAPA/1 AC/7). As a result, some members served for the whole duration of the Project.

12. Countries categorised according to UNESCO's definition

13. In addition to the 18 Member States listed above: Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland

14. Ethiopia, Ghana and Liberia

15. A 1958-61 political union between Egypt and Syria. Egypt kept this as its official name until 1971. The United Arab Republic could also be categorised as an Asian country.