The Significance of Intercultural Communication in a Global Society

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Views of Our Global Community

There are more than 1,000 KFC restaurants in China, and they are increasing at a rate of 200 per year. A new KFC opens in China almost every other day.[1]

Films from Bollywood, the film capital of India, reach up to 3.6 billion people around the world — a billion more than the audience for Hollywood. Some Bollywood films, like the popular "Slumdog Millionare," have grossed millions in the United States.[2]

The final text of the UNESCO Treaty on cultural diversity was adopted in June 2005. The treaty would allow nations to subsidize their own local cultural productions and impose limits and tariffs on imported cultural products like films, TV shows, music, or books. The aim of the treaty is to curtail the spread of American popular culture.[3]

"The average Nigerian youth tends to want to be as westernised as much as his or her present circumstances allow. Because smoking cigarettes is common in the Western societies of Europe and America he or she feels that smoking should be cultivated, to make him or her belong. This partly fuels the intense peer pressure that leads youths to smoke because they do not want to be left out. The idea that smoking is a Western thing is conveyed mainly through films, music, and advertisements."[4]

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation is an anti-globalization movement in Mexico that seeks to maintain their unique agrarian traditions and a system of communal property in the face of the North American Free Trade Agreement.[5]

A survey in the International Herald Tribune said that "66 percent of consumers polled in Germany said they were less likely to buy US product as a result of their opposition to US foreign policy."[6]

Those who argue in favor of cultural identity and against globalization, betray a stagnant attitude towards culture that is not borne out by historical fact. Do we know of any cultures that have remained unchanged through time? To find any of them one has to travel to the small, primitive, magical-religious communities

made up of people who, due to their primitive condition, become progressively more vulnerable to exploitation and extermination.[7]

Red and blue are states of mind, not actual states. Red and blue aren't absolute predictors of political leanings, either. There are plenty of blue cities in red states, red enclaves in blue states, red-leaning governors of blue states, people who vote Republican but are of a blue state of mind, and so on. It's not as simple as liberal vs. conservative, elite vs. populist, urban vs. rural, religious vs. nonreligious, educated vs. uneducated, rich vs. poor — if it were, the terms "red" and "blue" wouldn't have taken off as the best shorthand for a divided America.[8]

The Italian garment industry is facing increased competition from China, but also, like the rest of the world recognizes China as a growing market. "China is both a problem and an opportunity . . . It's indisputable that every garment produced in China is a garment less made in Italy but, at the same time, China's average income rate and taste level are growing steadily."[9]

Most immigrants today are from Latin America and Asia, and it is projected that by 2050 the US population will be only 50.1 percent European-American desent.[10]

Somebody would look at Pizza Hut in Thailand and say this is American cultural imperialism . . . But wait a minute — where did pizza come from? We're a country of immigrants. Our culture is constantly changing, and we often repackage things that were cultural exports to this country.[11]

In Talibanized Afghanistan, in 1997, all aspects of culture — movies, music, photographs, art — were strictly forbidden. Yet smuggled copies of "Titanic" (which many an American pastor preached against) found their way into Afghan homes. The movie was so popular that young men in the capital of Kabul wanted their hair cut in the style of star Leonardo DiCaprio. At weddings, cakes were shaped like the Titanic.[12]

Americans, after all, did not invent fast food, amusement parks, or the movies. Before the Big Mac, there were fish and chips. Before Disneyland, there was Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens (which Walt Disney used as a prototype for his first theme park, in Anaheim, a model later re-exported to Tokyo and Paris).[13]

Donald Trump is planning a Chinese version of his hit reality TV show The Apprentice. *Beijing real-estate mogul Pan Shiyi will be the host and do the hiring and firing.[14]*

We live in an increasingly complex, diverse, divisive, and global society. As the international system is saturated with natural competitions and struggles for power, much of our entertainment media today is fueled by the spirit of competition. For example, in addition to situation comedies and dramas, some of the most popular television shows now are reality-based programs like *Survivor* and *The Apprentice*. These shows pit contestants against one another in a no-holds-barred contest to win the prize money or the job. Others, such as the *Surreal Life*, force a group of very dissimilar celebrity roommates to live together in what the producers of the show describe as "a twisted sociological lab experiment in communal living."[15] We seem to enjoy seeing people compete

with one another; we find competition and even conflict entertaining. This focus on competition and conflict is perhaps why some scholars argue that international anarchy continues to prevail.

On a daily basis, the news media bombard us with both political information and opinions that highlight competition and conflict in our political system. A good example is the major television networks' Sunday news magazines, like NBC's *Meet the Press* and CBS's *Face the Nation*, during which the media reporters often set one political figure against another, show the political rivalry within the US Congress, or put forward an issue for debate among competing leaders or rival media members. These practices have led some to suggest that the media is the fourth branch of government, and that the national media has three major tasks: gatekeeper, scorekeeper, and watchdog.

We are also seeing great political sophistication and also polarization within our nation. Americans used to identify themselves with only one political party. Today, however, Americans display a much more sophisticated and complex array of ideas and identifications, and do not necessarily limit themselves to only one political party. This is not to suggest that political parties are not important, although many argue that the power of political parties has declined in America since the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is hard (if not impossible) to force a typical American into a pre-constructed political party box, when he/she may vote for a Democratic President and a Republican member of Congress. Moreover, an American who shows a pro-business Republican attitude may also vote for the protection of the environment — a Green characteristic often associated with the Democratic Party.

Some of the causes of conflict within our nation have to do with differing opinions about the role we should play in world affairs: This is directly impacted by how we view the international system. We are engaged in a conflict in Iraq. We are concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in states like Iran and North Korea. We are focused on homeland security in the wake of the events of September 11, or 9/11. All of these issues and a host of others involve our relationships with other nations or at least with their governments. This is why it is so important to study international relations (IR) in association with intercultural communication. We also have many contacts with members of other nations that are based on cooperation and collaboration. We participate in world events like the Olympics. We provide aid to victims of natural disasters like the 2004 tsunami and Haiti's 2010 earthquake. Americans play a role in many international organizations at the global (or international system) level, the national level, and at the individual level — a typology borrowed from a prominent scholar of international politics, Kenneth Waltz.

We have a diverse society composed of members of multiple cultural groups. Despite minor anti-immigrant sentiments, Americans have traditionally been a *nation* (a concept generally defined as a group of people with common characteristics that want to be independent) that welcomed immigrants. The US has also played a significant role in world affairs throughout its history. Nowadays, via the revolution in communication(s) technology, American

popular culture spreads all over the globe at a faster pace than ever before. This presents America's *soft power* (often defined as the non-military capability of a state to influence others), whose effects tend to be more enduring than the US military might. Some nations fear the spread of American popular culture because they see it as a corrupting force. However, the argument could also be made that the reason for the global appeal of American culture is due at least in part to the fact that Americans are such a culturally diverse nation. Further, amid all the concern about the exporting of American popular culture, the US is also increasingly importing culture from other nations. Such global reciprocity is essential to the understanding of the rules regarding intercultural communication. For these and many other reasons, we are continually faced with challenges related to communication across cultures both domestically and internationally.

What's the Difference between Multicultural and Intercultural?

The term *multicultural* refers to nations that have diverse cultural groups, usually as a result of immigration, while the term *intercultural* refers to the diversity among separate nations. We frequently hear people refer to US society as multicultural. Certainly, the United States is culturally diverse, and has always taken pride in the fact that it entails a nation of immigrants. Some people attribute America's strength as a *state* (a concept generally defined as a political/legal unit that includes at least a nation, territory, government, sovereignty, and diplomatic recognition) to its cultural diversity, which is a source of pride for many Americans. Earlier in US history, when a majority of the immigrants came from European nations, there was an emphasis on cultural assimilation; that is, immigrants were urged to "become Americans" and leave behind their cultural identities. The "melting pot" was the metaphor used to describe a nation where immigrants all blended together to become one as Americans. Historically, many nations have dealt with immigrants by requiring that they assimilate to the majority culture; this approach is sometimes referred to as *monoculturalism*.

Today, we have moved away from the "melting pot" view of immigration, and have adopted a policy of multiculturalism (sometimes referred to as the "salad bowl" approach). The term multiculturalism refers to the view that immigrants should preserve their cultures and that all the different cultures within a state should interact peacefully; all cultural groups should be treated with respect as equals. Such ideas are currently and often associated with the liberalism perspective in international relations literature. The term "multiculturalism" was first used in 1957 to describe Sweden. Then in the late 1960s in Canada the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* recommended the implementation of an official government

policy of multilingualism and multiculturalism.[16] While multiculturalism is a viewpoint regarding immigrants, in many states, it has also become an official social policy, as it is in both Australia and Canada. Although multiculturalism is practiced in the US, it is not an official policy at the federal level.

In Canada and Australia, some of the governmental policies that are associated with multiculturalism include the granting of dual citizenship; support for newspapers, television, and radio in minority languages; support for minority festivals, holidays, and celebrations; and acceptance of traditional outfits in schools, the military, and in society in general. For example, in Australia, the government-funded Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) provides multilingual and multicultural radio and television services to educate and entertain all Australians and also to reflect the diversity of the society.[17]

Like the term multiculturalism, the term intercultural refers to interactions among members of diverse cultures. However, when we use the term intercultural we are usually referring to cultural diversity among nations rather than among cultural groups within a single nation. For example, we would describe cities like New York or Montreal that have diverse cultural groups living in them as multicultural; an event like the Olympic Games brings together individuals from many different nations, and we would describe the Games as intercultural.

Mostly ignored by IR theorists, cultural differences, whether they occur among diverse groups within a nation or between two or more individuals from different nations, present both challenges and opportunities for communication. Cultural differences have the potential to lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, dispute, and even conflict. Sometimes diverse cultural groups within a nation will come into conflict with one another; one example is the tensions that exist in cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles

Figure 1.1 An event like the Olympic Games is the scene of many intercultural encounters. The Olympic Village is composed of athletes from all over the world who come to compete with one another. Spectators, too, come from far and wide to witness this international event and to interact with members of diverse cultures.

among diverse ethnic groups that include Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, and European Americans. With some reservations, one may even posit that such domestic conflicts are a microcosm of many global conflicts. These tensions are related to cultural differences, particularly differences in languages, values, lifestyles, and world views. Violence has resulted from these tensions. However, cultural differences can also open up opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and learning. People can learn from their differences and create something together that is greater than they could produce separately. International cooperation has the potential to lead to advances in technology and to our ability as a global community to combat world environmental and health concerns. Many corporations have global teams of employees working together. We have seen international cooperation in space exploration, in searching for cures to diseases, in seeking to preserve our environment, and in times of crisis. At times, people come together as part of international organizations, often called intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), like the United Nations or as part of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that consist of ordinary individuals rather than government officials, like Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders (see Chapter 2). Often cooperation among cultures leads to great accomplishments and to significant humanitarian efforts. In fact, there are the interactions among cultures and nations that contribute to the modern meaning of the international relations (IR) field. The latter implies relations among ordinary people and nations, beyond the regular ties between government officials and states. This discussion refers to the debate between the traditional *State Centric Model* and the modern *Complex Interdependence Model*, as explained later (see Chapter 10).

What Is Intercultural Communication?

To define intercultural communication, we will begin with a definition of communication. Communication is a complex term for which there are numerous definitions. However, most definitions agree that communication is a symbolic process by which people create shared meanings.[18] Intercultural communication occurs when the people creating shared meanings have different cultural perspectives and values. Typically, it is the differing world views of members of different cultures that make intercultural communication challenging. Intercultural communication may occur between individuals; it occurs when you travel abroad and talk with someone in a culture that is different from your own. Intercultural communication may also occur between groups of people or within nations; for example, an intercultural encounter would occur when a group of US doctors who are specialists in emergency care travel to Brazil and meet with their counterparts at a Brazilian hospital to exchange knowledge and

techniques. Of course, intercultural communication also occurs between and among states, often through global intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, through alliances, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and via regional arrangements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). With more than 5,000 NGOs in the world, a great deal of intercultural communication happens outside of the official governmental channels and among ordinary people, who can be called "citizen diplomats" (see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of citizen diplomats).

The study of intercultural communication is a subfield of the larger area of international and/or communication studies. Most US colleges and universities have schools and/or departments devoted to study of the field of international relations (also known as international studies) and/or communication. It was the development and proliferation of communication technologies such as the telephone, radio, television, satellites, and computer technology that led to the study of international communication becoming a major topic of interest in the twentieth century. However, early studies were dominated by the study of advertising, and it was not until after World War II that the study of international communication gained recognition as an important scholarly pursuit.[19] The subfield of intercultural communication also came into its own after World War II with the development of the Foreign Service Institute (see Part II Introduction).

Although the study of intercultural communication is sometimes housed within the communication discipline, scholars from many other disciplines also focus on intercultural communication. The study of intercultural communication is incorporated into the fields of international studies, political science, psychology, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, comparative literature, education, technical communication, and history. Of course, in each discipline the study of intercultural communication is subordinated to the study of the discipline, and it is approached differently in each. For example, in political science, the field of international relations is directly concerned with the role of intercultural communication in the political relations among nations. In war and peace studies, the role of communication in soft power is essential to maintaining peace in a region. In sociology, scholars view intercultural communication as one of many social factors. In education, scholars are concerned with preparing students to function in a global society and with multicultural issues in the classroom. In technical communication, scholars focus on the preparation of documentation that can meet the needs of diverse audiences internationally and on the use of communication technologies across cultures. Just as many other fields incorporate the study of intercultural communication in some fashion, in this book, we will study intercultural communication from the perspective of the field of international relations, particularly in terms of the issues of soft power and conflict/cooperation. We believe that these issues are crucial ones in today's global society.

Do We Live in a Global Society?

What does it mean to say that we live in a global society? Certainly, many factors have combined to increase the ease and frequency of international communication among members of different cultures. These factors include developments in international politics; advances in transportation systems and in telecommunications; increased social challenges related to health, the environment, and security; increased opportunities for international cooperation; changing immigration trends; as well as the rise of e-commerce and multinational corporations whose growing power challenges many governments.

Increased mobility

While international travel is nothing new and dates back to well-known travelers in history like Marco Polo, today the peoples of the world are much more mobile. Because of advances in transportation systems, a trip that would once have taken days now takes a matter of hours. Ease of mobility together with an increase in international business ventures has led to increased business travel. A worldwide growth in tourism means that more and more people are traveling for pleasure and many of them to destinations farther from home than in the past. The World Tourism Organization reports significant changes in the world's top tourism destinations in the past ten years, most notably the growth of tourism to China and Hong Kong. China has become the world's fourth most visited destination.[20] These changes in the frequency and speed with which individuals travel mean that people today are often in contact with members of other cultures.

Technological advances

Even those individuals who choose to stay at home experience many opportunities for intercultural contact. The development of new technologies like the internet, email, and collaborative software programs has enabled international communication among individuals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses all over the world. As Thomas Friedman says in *The Lexis and the Olive Tree*, "thanks to the Internet, we now have a common, global postal system, through which we can all send each other mail. We now have a common global shopping center, in which we can all buy and sell. We now have a common global library, where we can all go to do research . . ."[21] It is not unusual today for individuals from different nations to establish friendships, and even to develop romantic relationships, online. The internet and new courseware technologies have also made possible distance education and the rise of "virtual universities," composed of faculty and students who never meet face-to-face. Similarly, many corporations now rely on global virtual teams. Multinational corporations like VeriFone use virtual teams to run their daily

business operations. Microsoft is one of many organizations that service global clients by using virtual teams for customer sales and support.[22]

Whether its political implications are positive or negative, popular culture is also spread via the internet and global communication media. Many television programs, films, recordings, and other cultural artifacts that might once have been consumed only by members of the culture where they originated are now widely available to other cultures around the world. Many popular programs are also taken from one culture and adapted to another culture as in the case of the Chinese version of *The Apprentice*, the Indian version of *Dancing with the Stars*, the American version (i.e. *American Idol*) of the British program *Pop Idol*, and the Russian version of *Skating with Celebrities*.

Shared global concerns

At the same time that international communication has become easier and more prevalent than ever before, many social and political factors have developed to make the need for meaningful communication across cultures a vital one for all peoples of the world. The world faces many challenges that cannot be solved by any one nation or state alone and that have the potential to affect every person on the planet. Such challenges require what political scientists call "collective action." Some of the most prominent of these challenges are rising population growth and diminishing natural resources, ecological concerns including global warming and the destruction of the rain forest, and issues related to world health, most notably the AIDS epidemic. In addition to these challenges, none of which developed overnight, we face increased concerns about terrorist actions in the wake of 9/11, the Madrid bombings, and the London bombings. What is evident from these global concerns is that meaningful cross-cultural communication is vital for the survival of humanity.

Clearly, what happens in one part of the world has the potential to affect other parts of the planet. In international relations literature, this phenomenon is called "interdependence," which necessitates that states and nations cooperate, regardless of their political agendas. Epidemics, natural disasters, and environmental pollution do not respect national boundaries. There are many promising instances of international cooperation to address the challenges we face. For example, there are many non-governmental organizations working hard to safeguard the environment and to fight epidemics and other health issues. Some of the organizations working to protect our environment include Greenpeace, the International Center for the Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas, and the International Coral Reef Association. Similarly, organizations like the International Red Cross, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the Peace Corps are devoted to improving world health both through education and prevention efforts, and by assisting victims of war, famine, and disease.

Related to concerns about the environment and world health is the issue of *sustainable development*. The United Nations World Commission on

Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[23] Sustainable development is a global issue that can only be addressed by cooperation among the states of the world, since the trade, economic policies, and natural resources management of individual states will impact the whole. Effective communication among leaders in government, industry, and NGOs is necessary to implement policies that will benefit the global economy, the environment, and society.[24] Meetings like the Earth Summit 2002 bring together leaders from government, business, and the private sector to address these global concerns. As a result of the numerous international and intercultural interactions that take place within the global community, the use of soft power is essential to avoiding conflict as well as providing clarity in communication.

Opportunities for international cooperation

Cooperation across cultures may also occur at more local levels with exchange programs and linkages. For example, many study-abroad programs give individual college students and faculty the opportunity to study and teach at universities in other countries. Such individual efforts can do much to increase understanding across cultures; we should not underestimate the ability of effective communication among individuals to enhance cooperation among cultures. In Chapter 2, we will introduce the concept of the "citizen diplomat" to demonstrate the power of private citizens to contribute to global understanding. This is one of the major topics in the field of international relations.

At the level of local government, cities around the world participate in Sister Cities International (SCI), which teams a city in one country with a city of comparable size in another country. SCI has its headquarters in Washington, DC. The Sister Cities movement was developed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 during a White House summit on citizen diplomacy. The movement was started as a way to promote world peace in the wake of World War II. Sister City programs are locally based and run by the municipal governments in collaboration with citizen volunteers. Each community together with its sister city determines what type of projects and activities they want to pursue. These activities may include humanitarian assistance, economic development, and youth exchanges; the purpose of the partnerships is to "increase global cooperation, promote cultural understanding, and stimulate economic development."[25]

Immigration trends and diversity

Certainly, trends in immigration have also contributed to the global nature of our society. Many countries are experiencing increasing numbers of immigrants. For example, as US immigration trends change so do the demographics of the US population. Earlier in US history, the majority of immigrants came
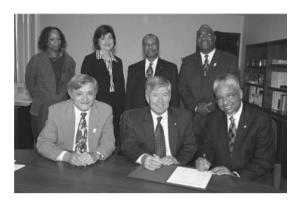
Figure 1.2 The U.S. workforce is becoming increasingly diverse. Even Americans who do not travel abroad may find that they will encounter many intercultural communication challenges at work. Developing intercultural communication skills will help them succeed within our nation's diverse workforce.

from European countries. Today, approximately 69.4 percent of the US population is European American.[26] However, most immigrants today are from Latin America and Asia, and it is projected that by 2050 the US population will be 50.1 percent European American,[27] 14.6 percent African American, 8.0 percent Asian, and 24.4 percent Hispanic.[28] These demographic shifts are creating a change in the US workforce, which is becoming increasingly diverse.

As the workforce changes, Americans will face many of the same challenges at work that they face when communicating with members of other cultures internationally. Many businesses have recognized the need for diversity training. Similarly, many colleges and universities offer courses that focus on understanding the diversity of the many cultures that co-exist within the United States. Diversity training will become increasingly important as major shifts in the demographics of the workforce come to pass (see Part II Introduction).

MEDIA IMPACT
The Influence of the Tobacco Industry on Youth Addressed through International Cooperation

Dr. Marvin E. Goldberg of Pennsylvania State University studied the smoking patterns of 1,300 high school students in Thailand. He found that Thai teenagers who smoke are more likely to have been exposed to Hollywood movies. Goldberg says that teens in developing countries admire "Hollywood-made teenagers" and want to emulate them. The influence of smoking in movies has been noted in several other countries as well. Some teenagers in Nigeria have spoken out about this influence. One high school student in Lagos, Nigeria, is quoted as saying: "I love American films . . . but I wonder why must there be so much smoking in them, I don't want my friends to imitate this to be like Americans."

However, Hollywood is not the only moving-making capital that is responsible for this negative influence on teens. Bollywood, the center of India's film industry, has also turned out a large number of films that depict glamorous stars smoking cigarettes. In fact, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) survey, three out of four films produced by Bollywood during the past decade depict smoking, and teenagers who watch these movies are three times as likely to smoke. These facts are particularly troubling since one-third of the estimated three million people who die every year from tobacco-related causes are in India.

International organizations like the Smoke Free Movies Action Network are striving to ban depictions of smoking from films that are targeted to youth. Other organizations like the Global Youth Action Network and UNICEF's Voices of Youth are working to raise awareness and to combat the negative effects of media portrayals of tobacco use on the younger generation. Like many challenges facing our world today, the issue of the influence of the tobacco industry on the youth of the world is one that is most effectively addressed through international cooperation.

Sources: Rory McCarthy, "Bollywood Blamed for Teenage Smoking,"*The Guardian*, February 17, 2003; World Health Organization Report (WHO), "'Bollywood': Victim or Ally? A WHO Study on the portrayal of tobacco in Indian Cinema," by Strategic Mediaworks, February 21, 2003.

International business and the global economy

Of course, beyond the increased diversity within any one country's workforce, there is the inescapable fact that today nearly all business is at some level international business. Many American multinational corporations including Ford, GM, Texaco, Dow Chemical, Philip Morris, Coca-Cola, and Eastman Kodak make a significant percentage of their sales outside the United States; they also have plants located in many other countries. Moreover, the same is true of many large non-US corporations like Sony and Michelin.[29] The rise of e-commerce, the flattening of traditional corporate structures, and the loosening of boundaries between markets have all contributed to a global marketplace that is not restricted by national boundaries. In his book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Thomas Friedman refers to the global marketplace as an "Electronic Herd" of "often anonymous stock, bond and currency traders and multinational investors, connected by screens and networks."[30] The global marketplace means that the world economy is interconnected, and what happens to one country's economy has the potential to affect the economies of other countries. This is the same process that Robert Keohane and Joe Nye called "Interdependence," in their classical work titled *Power and Interdependence*. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 started with a weakening of the economy of Thailand, but it spread to other Asian nations. Indonesia, The Philippines, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Malaysia were all affected by the crisis. Even the United States and Japan were affected, although

to a lesser degree, because of the efforts of the United States, other major Western powers, and the International Monetary Fund to remedy the negative impacts of the crisis. However, the Asian flu did precipitate a mini-crash of the US stock market in October 1997. The Asian monetary crisis also contributed to the Russian and Brazilian crises in 1998 because of the reluctance of banks to lend to emerging states after the crisis. Moreover, the 1998–99 currency crisis resulted in problems for the Argentinean economy that lasted into 2002.

International politics

Like the global economy, international politics involves the interrelationship of states; typically, political relations among states include a range of activities from diplomacy, cooperation, and alliances, to disputes, conflict, and war. In general, any international relationship can be either cooperative or conflictual in nature. The actions of governments and political leaders can have repercussions not just for individuals living within a particular state, but potentially for all people in the world. These actions may be aggressive, as when one nation or state invades another seeking to seize territory and/or resources; of course, from a historical perspective the invading nation or state may perceive its action as reclaiming its rightful territory. Such actions may also be aimed at enhancing cooperation, as when governments send aid to less developed countries (LDCs). Enhancing international cooperation, and focusing on the benefits of soft power, two of the themes of this book, can benefit us all, not merely by avoiding violent and destructive conflict, but by making possible collaborative efforts to address global challenges. Today, cooperation is not just the politically correct avenue to take in modern international relations; it also makes good business sense since conflicts are typically expensive in terms of human loss, wasted resources, and misused scarce capital.

Our global community

We live in a world in which even superpowers such as the United States cannot resolve all global challenges without the cooperation of others. This situation is due to the fact that no matter how powerful a state is, no state is able to control everything. Further, many modern challenges are international as opposed to national in nature. Despite the lack of a global government, states tend to recognize each other's sovereignty (a key assumption of the Realist School) and organize themselves for the collective action to work according to neorealism. The greenhouse effect, which is associated with the increasing intensity of the hurricane seasons, is not just an American environmental challenge, even though we Americans contribute more than our fair global share to the production of CO_2. We need to address this problem, but we cannot do it alone. Beyond such environmental problems are global medical crises from the movement of HIV and AIDS from Africa to the rest of the world, to the movement of bird flu and swine flu from Asia to the other parts of the globe.

In terms of global terrorism and security, we also need the help of others to manage the problem at hand, even though the United States has the most professional and powerful military machine on the planet. If our military might was the solution, we would have solved the problem of the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Iraq crisis years ago, as top American military leaders have observed. In fact, the relative success of the "surge strategy" was not really because of quantitatively increasing our forces by 30,000 troops in Iraq. The recent success is mainly due to the changing quality of our operation as US military leaders began to listen to local Iraqi demands, emphasizing common values and challenges, and implementing shared ideas. Thus, we should be more modest in our typically exaggerated military power claims, less nationalistic in our general approach to issues, and more culturally mindful of others to meet such challenges beyond the control of our national abilities and ingenuity. These are some concerns of international relations.

As global citizens in the twenty-first century, we live in a society where we can easily communicate with members of other cultures, where we can travel quickly to other countries, where popular culture and other ideas are rapidly disseminated via the internet and mass media. We also live in a society of dwindling natural resources and rising population, where we face many challenges related to world health and sustainable development of our environment. We also face challenges related to conflict within and among nations or states and to acts of terrorism. Precisely what relevance does the study of intercultural and international communication have to our existence in this global society?

Why Is Intercultural Communication Important?

Intercultural and international communication has relevance to our lives now more than at any other time in history. Recently, the Association of American Colleges and Universities Presidents' Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning stated: "Especially since September 2001, Americans have been catapulted into a powerful sense of engagement with peoples, places, histories, and ideologies that many of us previously knew only dimly. Our entire society is now caught up in quests for deepened understanding, and in re-examinations of the most basic questions about social trust, civic duty, international justice, world cultures, and sustainable health."[31] Of the four aims of liberal education cited in the Campaign, two have to do with intercultural knowledge: "expanding cultural, societal, and scientific horizons," and "cultivating democratic and global knowledge and engagement."[32] The study of intercultural and international communication has great relevance for all citizens; however, students and professionals are especially well positioned to

appreciate the importance of intercultural communication and connections to help them value the past, understand the present, and prepare for the future.

Valuing the past

Our world changes rapidly, and you may find yourself struggling to keep up with the demands of work, family, and school with little time to reflect on the past or the future. However, the study of international communication can provide you useful insights into current situations and help you prepare to address the future. Many world situations that exist today have their roots far back in history. Many conflicts among states; between nations or ethnic groups or even within states have a long and complex history behind them. Conflicts between nations or ethnic groups are often rooted in historical disputes over territories or natural resources. Many ethnic (or nationality) conflicts center on the desire to gain territory or redraw borders, often with the goals of establishing one group as a separate state. These types of conflicts have fueled many wars, such as the ones between Armenia and Azerbaijan and between India and Pakistan. Religious differences are another source of conflict between individuals, groups, nations, and states; the longstanding conflict in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants is one example of a conflict fueled by religious differences. Other conflicts are related to a desire by one nation or group to be free from the domination of another; many wars have been fought to break free from colonial rule, including the American Revolution against British rule and the Algerian Revolution against French rule.

When we have an understanding of the influence of the past on current situations we can communicate much more effectively with members of other cultures and prevent avoidable conflicts. Any time we can understand the perspective of another person, we are much more likely to be able to have a meaningful exchange with that person. Then we can identify common values and concerns to succeed in achieving results at minimum cost. We cannot expect to be successful in our business and social dealings with members of other cultures if we do not have an appreciation of their world views. Additionally, you may even find that study of other cultures will give you a better understanding of your own ideas and world view as one viewpoint among many.

Understanding the present

The greatest personal benefit you are likely to derive from the study of international relations, especially intercultural communication, is self-knowledge. Many individuals find that they gain a much better understanding of the grammar of their native language when they undertake the study of a foreign language. In a similar way, studying other cultures will lead people to better understand their own cultures. Often, we do not set out with the intention of learning about other cultures, but our life experiences give us the opportunity

to do so. We might be assigned roommates or have co-workers who are from other cultures. Some individuals may even grow up in multicultural families with parents who come from two different cultures. Whatever our background, the exposure to other cultures is a great opportunity for personal growth in a global world.

Individuals can only truly become aware of their own culture and their own identity in comparison to that of other cultures when they set aside the notion that their culture is the norm and begin to see the values, beliefs, and rituals of their culture as one way of doing things — not the "right" or the "only" way. The more we learn about the deeper levels of other cultures the more clearly we can see the reasons for cultural differences that may not make sense to us at a superficial level. It is only by learning about other cultures via using "mindful" international relations and communication that we can develop a mature appreciation of our own culture and our relationship to it.

Life experience and socialization are certainly the most natural ways to learn about other cultures. For instance, one of the authors grew up in a multicultural family in Iran and came to the United States as a youth; his life is enriched by both cultures and also by his extensive travels around the world. His fluency in several languages has enhanced his ability to view the world from many different perspectives. The other author was raised in a traditional American family of European extraction; however, the great contrast between her Italian father's collective approach to family life and the rugged individualism of her mother's New England Yankee background led to many cultural clashes within the family that sparked her interest in studying communication across cultures. We all begin our study of culture from our unique individual perspectives. The only real prerequisite is the willingness to step beyond our belief that our culture's way is the "right" way. In other words, as we begin our study of intercultural and international communication, we need to adopt a "mindful" approach, which is a prerequisite for international studies, without holding to the cultural superiority of our own values.

As a professional (in the work force) or a student (not yet in the workforce), you should know that the business world today changes rapidly and knowledge of international and intercultural communication will be a great asset to you in your career; in fact, your success may depend upon it. Corporations face challenges related to marketing products globally, to developing international user interfaces, to managing culturally diverse employees, and to managing global virtual teams. There are many well-known examples of international marketing campaigns that went spectacularly wrong. When Frank Purdue, chicken entrepreneur, wanted to use his slogan, "It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken" for a Spanish-speaking market, it was translated as "It takes a virile man to make a chicken affectionate."[33] When introducing its Big John products in French Canada, Hunt-Wesson translated the name as "Gros Jos," before finding out that the phrase is a slang term for "big breasts."[34] While these errors may strike us as humorous, for the companies involved they are

very serious indeed and can lead to loss of income and, in some cases, to loss of credibility for the product and the company.

Many high-technology products rely on user interfaces developed within the United States; however, in order for these products to be marketed and sold internationally, designers must develop interfaces that can be used by members of other cultures. There are a myriad of issues involved beyond a good translation that avoids the kind of unintentional meanings found in the advertising campaigns cited here. Designers must recognize differences related to visual language; to references to the physical world, particularly the use of metaphors; and to cultural values, norms, and taboos. For example, when the Macintosh computer used a drawing of a figure that was half cow and half dog — called a moof — as an icon in one of its programs there was a negative reaction from many followers of the Hindu religion, in which the cow is a sacred symbol.[35]

In the global marketplace, managers may find themselves managing employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. Traditionally, managers use "a home-country standard as a reference point when managing international activities."[36] When North American managers are sent to work at locations outside the United States, they must adapt their management styles to the culture within which they are working. The most common reason for the failure of international business ventures is not related to lack of professional or technical expertise, but to a lack of effective international and intercultural communication.[37] In recognition of this problem, many business schools in American universities as well as many corporations have developed formal training programs in multinational and multicultural business practices.[38]

Another challenge faced by managers in the global marketplace is the challenge of managing global virtual teams. Today many managers are charged with the task of leading a diverse group of individuals who are geographically remote and who conduct all their work through the use of collaborative technologies that allow them to share data and work on projects together without having any face-to-face meetings. In order to manage these new work groups, managers must not only understand the cultural values of their team members, but must know how to ensure effective communication and to manage conflict in a completely virtual environment. Although managers of global virtual teams need to have a great deal of knowledge and many diverse skills, one of their greatest needs is likely to be knowledge of international and intercultural communication.

Even in your personal life, you may have many encounters with members of other cultures via the internet and other communications technology that will be enhanced by your knowledge of intercultural communication. In the last two decades, rapid advances in computer technology and in the telecommunications industry have dramatically changed the way many people live their lives. Technological advances have dramatically increased individuals' opportunities to engage in international and intercultural communication. Email, internet chat rooms, instant messaging, and personal websites are all media that can be used by individuals to communicate with members of

other cultures. E-commerce has made it possible for multinational companies, small domestic firms, and individual entrepreneurs to sell their goods and services via websites and for citizens around the world to shop electronically. The internet has also made it possible for researchers to share information quickly and easily. Distance education has been made possible by courseware like Webcourses, Blackboard, and ANGEL. Today students can take courses in universities that are halfway around the world from them without ever leaving their homes. In some instances, students can complete an entire degree program via distance education.

Use of the World Wide Web has grown dramatically during the past decade. It has made possible the linking of diverse regions around the globe that were once separated by geography, space, and time. However, increased opportunities for contact with members of other cultures does not ensure knowledge of effective methods of international and intercultural communication. The growth of the web and of other computer-mediated means of communication has greatly increased the need for intercultural and international communication. Without some background in intercultural and international communication, many people may find themselves experiencing the equivalent on a personal level of what companies unprepared for international business have experienced on the corporate level. As a result, individuals may find that their messages are misunderstood or, worse still, are perceived as offensive. Obviously, miscommunication can also occur in face-to-face communication encounters, but as we shall see in our discussion on non-verbal communication (Chapter 6) computer-mediated communication lacks many of the cues we typically rely on to convey meaning. Thus, intercultural communication knowledge and skills are useful at all levels of analysis, from global and regional levels to corporate, group, and even individual (or personal) levels of analysis.

Preparing for the future

As we work to address global issues, like pollution and epidemics, we all hope to create a future that will be free from many of the ills that plague society today. Knowledge of intercultural and international communication is crucial to our ability to address these issues. Addressing global challenges related to world health and the environment is crucial to our survival on the planet; they are simply too large to be addressed by any one nation or state alone. It is imperative that states, nations, and individual citizens work together to address these issues; in order to do so, people from around the world must be able to communicate with one another. To quote the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan speaking about the challenges that we face in the twentieth-first century:

> The idea that there is one people in possession of the truth, one answer to the world's ills, or one solution to humanity's needs has done untold harm throughout history — especially in the last century. Today, however, there is

a growing understanding that human diversity is both the reality that makes
dialogue necessary and the basis for that dialogue.

   We understand, as never before, that each of us is fully worthy of the respect
and dignity essential to our common humanity. We recognize that we are
the products of many cultures, traditions, and memories; that mutual respect
allows us to study and learn from other cultures; and that we gain strength by
combining the foreign with the familiar.[39]

We cannot use our combined strength to address global issues unless we have
the ability to communicate effectively. We face many challenges, including
these key international, and increasingly global, issues: overpopulation, world
hunger, depletion of natural resources, global warming, world health issues,
and terrorism.

   The world population is now at 6.5 billion and growing. An increasing world
population creates problems related to the environment and to world hunger.
As the world population increases so too does the consumption of natural
resources. These resources are being used much more rapidly than the rate
at which they can be replaced. It currently takes 14.4 months to replenish the
resources that we use in 12 months.[40] In *Eco-Economy*, Lester R. Brown of the
Earth Policy Institute points to this problem, "Evidence of the intensifying con-
flict between the economy and the ecosystem of which it is a part can be seen
not only in the dust bowl emerging in China, but also in the burning rain forests
in Indonesia, the collapsing cod fishery in the North Sea, falling crop yields
in Africa, the expanding dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, and falling water
tables in India."[41] In addition to depleting natural resources, our consumption
of energy, particularly in the form of fossil fuels, is causing air pollution and
worsening global warming. Global warming in turn can cause many additional
problems like rising sea levels, droughts, and other disruptions of the climate.[42]

   We also face serious problems in the area of world health. Many LDCs
lack the access to basic healthcare that is available to individuals in developed
countries (DCs). According to the World Health Organization, in the year 2000
an estimated 2.4 billion people had no access to basic sanitation and 1.1 billion
lacked access to a safe water supply.[43]

   Of course, the AIDS epidemic is the single greatest challenge in terms of
global health. The rising number of deaths caused by AIDS "marks a tragic
new development in world demography"[44] and the implications of the AIDS
epidemic go beyond the staggering death toll of approximately 14 million. In
Botswana, for example, life expectancy fell from 61 years in 1990 to 44 years in
1999. In addition to lowering the life expectancy in many nations, HIV/AIDS
also reduces fertility and creates a large number of orphans — an estimated
7.8 million in Africa as of 1997.[45] The devastation of the AIDS epidemic in
developing countries is staggering and is undoing much of what was accomp-
lished there in the last decade.

   Another kind of devastation is inflicted by the violent actions of terrorists.
Since the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New

York City and the Pentagon in Washington, and the more recent bombings in Madrid and London, we are all aware of the need for increased security to protect citizens — a tenet of hard power. Beyond the use of the military in countering terrorism, however, we need to seek non-violent methods of ensuring safety and preventing terrorist actions if we wish to avoid escalating violence around the world. The causes of global terrorism are not simplistic, but very complex. Similarly, the means of preventing such actions are also likely to involve many considerations and require a great deal of cooperation among nations. All of the global challenges that we face in the twentieth-first century have one common thread running through them — they are issues that cannot be addressed without cooperation among culturally diverse peoples. That cooperation will require an understanding of political and economic issues and the ability to communicate effectively with members of other cultures.

How Do We Study Intercultural Communication?

As a subfield of international relations (that some call international studies), intercultural and international communication is inherently interdisciplinary, although some consider it only a part of the field of communication. The intercultural field developed in the period following World War II when the US government suddenly reoriented its foreign policy posture from "international isolationism" to "global engagement." Soon, Washington created the Foreign Service Institute to train diplomats who were being sent abroad. The Institute brought together linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists to develop the training programs, and naturally these scholars drew upon their respective disciplines in their work on intercultural communication.

   The influence of these three disciplines is still evident in the classical research techniques used today. The field of linguistics contributed an understanding of the relationship between language and other cultural systems; anthropology contributed the recognition of cultural patterns and realization of the importance of non-verbal communication; and psychology contributed the role of human cognition in understanding and categorizing the patterns of behavior of cultures. Nevertheless, the contributions of anthropology, linguistics, and psychology do not dominate the entire field of intercultural and international communication, which is also enriched by the works of political science and international studies. In fact, the largest global academic and professional association of international relations, the International Studies Association (ISA), relatively recently designated international communication as one of its major subfields and organizational sections (see http://icomm.igloogroups. org). This book is a new effort to reorganize the literature of international communication in order to illustrate the significant recent contributions of the scholars of international relations and/or studies.

All intercultural and international communication scholarship can be divided into two broad categories: **etic** scholarship, that is scholarship based on a researcher-imposed structure and **emic** scholarship, that is scholarship based on understanding a given culture from the perspective of members of that culture. Both approaches have validity. Often, etic scholarship is quantitative in nature; it involves gathering data, particularly data based on comparisons of cultures with respect to some quality or predetermined category developed by the researchers. In contrast, emic scholarship is typically more interested in gathering qualitative information, which is often presented in the form of ethnographies and other narratives. There are four primary approaches to the study of intercultural communication; they are the social science approach, the critical approach, the interpretive approach, and the dialectical approach.

The **social science approach** is based on the assumptions that human behavior is predictable and that there is a describable external reality. Many international relations and/or studies scholars using the social science approach seek to describe and predict human behavior, and they tend to rely on quantitative methods, although not exclusively. While the quantitative methods became popular in the 1960s, there is a resurgence of emphasis on fine qualitative work in social sciences in recent years. The **interpretive approach** is based on the premise that human beings construct their reality and that communication is a subjective experience. Scholars using the interpretive approach are interested in describing human behavior, which they believe to be unpredictable and creative; they believe that culture is both created and perpetuated through the means of communication. The interpretive approach uses qualitative research methods that include field studies, ethnographies, observations, and participant observations. Researchers using the **critical approach** are particularly interested in the historical context of communication and in understanding the role that power and power relationships play in communication. The critical approach focuses on subjective reality and on the importance of studying the context in which communication occurs.

The **dialectical approach**, developed by Martin, Nakayama, and Flores, stresses the processual, relational, and contradictory nature of intercultural communication.[46] There are six dialectics: cultural–individual, personal–contextual, differences–similarities, static–dynamic, history/past–present/future, and privilege–disadvantage. These dialectics are related to the four building blocks of intercultural communication: culture, communication, context, and power. The dialectical approach brings together the strengths of the social science, critical, and interpretive approaches and makes it possible to study the many contradictory aspects of intercultural communication. While not a specific theory in the way that the other approaches are, the dialectical approach is a perspective from which to study intercultural communication encounters. Regardless of the approach we take to the study of intercultural communication, it is important that we do so with mindfulness.

The Role of Mindfulness in Intercultural Communication

Various definitions of the concept of mindfulness can be found in East and South Asian religion and philosophy. In this textbook we will use the definition of mindfulness posited by Ellen Langer. In *Mindfulness*, Langer defines mindfulness as a state of mind in which a person is open to new information, is continually creating new categories, and is open to new perspectives. A mindful individual is focused on the process rather than the outcome in any interaction.[47]

A mindful approach to the study of intercultural and international communication means that we will approach information about other cultures with an open mind and that we will break free of stereotypical categorizations of members of cultures that are different from our own. In turn, we overcome our own ethnocentrism to create a more understanding and peaceful world. We will also strive to see the world from the perspectives of other cultures. This approach can go a long way toward decreasing and even preventing unintentional conflict. As Langer states:

> The consequences of trying out different perspectives are important. First we gain more choice in how to respond. A single-minded label produces an automatic reaction, which reduces our options.[48]

This is also a major concern in the decision-making process of the fields of international relations and political science. Moreover, to understand that other people may not be so different allows us empathy and enlarges our range of responses. We are less likely to feel locked into a polarized struggle. The importance of mindfulness in intercultural and international communication has been thoroughly discussed by Stella Ting-Toomey. In *Communicating Across Cultures*, she talks about the benefits of being a mindful intercultural communicator, which include creating a feeling of "being understood, supported, and respected" in the individual(s) with whom you are communicating.[49] Ting-Toomey's work emphasizes the need to go beyond our preconceived notions, to strive to gain knowledge about other cultures, and to acquire skills for effective communication and conflict resolution.[50]

In this work, we use Langer's definition of mindfulness and Ting-Toomey's description of the mindful intercultural communicator. We define mindful intercultural and international communication as interactions with members of other cultures in which an individual strives to understand the cultural values, beliefs, and norms of other parties and to use that understanding to adapt his/her communication style to achieve a meaningful exchange and a win-win result. In other words, rather than use one's own preferred style of communication, a mindful intercultural and international communicator will adapt to the style of the other individual, group, or nation involved in the

Figure 1.3   Respect for differences is an important component of mindful intercultural communication. Additionally, it is important to maintain an open mind and strive to see the world from the different perspectives of other cultures. Such an approach to communication can go a long way toward reducing misunderstandings and preventing conflict.

communication encounter. For example, if a US student is communicating with an international student from Japan, rather than begin a conversation abruptly, a common practice in the United States, he/she will begin with a formal greeting, since that would be the way the Japanese student would be used to starting a conversation.

Mindfulness is primarily a question of *awareness*. This is not necessarily a new discovery. Nowadays in contemporary political science literature, it is very fashionable to advocate political "awareness" as a starting point for any political action and solution. If we are aware of the need to be sensitive to and respectful of differences among cultures we will be more likely to carry out the necessary steps to gain the knowledge required to communicate mindfully. Individuals with no knowledge of other cultures but with an awareness of the importance of intercultural communication can begin their journey to becoming mindful intercultural and international communicators with this book. We are sure that the journey will be both personally and professionally enriching and will be good preparation for the challenges of global citizenship in the twenty-first century.

An Overview of This Book

Throughout this book we will emphasize the importance of taking a mindful approach to the study of intercultural and international communication. We also have chosen to approach the study of intercultural communication from the perspective of the field of international relations (also called international studies), that is, we focus on issues of soft power and conflict/cooperation

throughout the book. We will also examine the role of the citizen diplomat, a new concept from international relations, in our global community. We believe that an understanding of these key issues in international relations will enrich our study of communication across cultures and will provide useful insights to help us address the many challenges of global citizenship in the twenty-first century.

This book has 10 chapters and following this chapter we begin with an overview of the core concepts of intercultural and international communication in Chapter 2. Then in Part II, the next two chapters are devoted to approaches to the study of intercultural and international communication: Chapter 3, "Social Science and Interpretive Approaches" and Chapter 4, "Critical and Dialectical Approaches."

In Part IV, the next four chapters focus on intercultural and international communication process and technologies. Chapter 5 discusses verbal communication and examines linguistic differences, translation, multilingualism, and the language of conflict management. Chapter 6 focuses on non-verbal communication and the influence of cultural values on body language, gestures, and the conception and use of space and time. Chapter 7 covers the role of visual communication in intercultural communication and examines how culture influences perception and the use of graphic images. Chapter 8 discusses the effect of mass communication on intercultural and international communication with particular attention to the relationship between media and power and the global impact of US popular culture.

In Part IV, the last two chapters focus on issues in intercultural and international communication. Chapter 9 examines ethical issues as they relate to culture. We discuss ethnocentrism, ethical issues and power, and the dialogical approach to studying ethics. Finally, Chapter 10 concludes by discussing the role of international relations and intercultural communication in shaping the future of our world. Specifically, we give a call to action for the engagement of citizen diplomats and other mindful intercultural communicators to play their parts in addressing global concerns. We take a look at significant contemporary international relations issues and challenges, such as the politics of war and peace, with particular attention to concerns about terrorism, the global economy, and sustainable development.

This book aims to provide a fresh outlook about intercultural communication from the perspective of international relations. It is prepared as a readable research manuscript for general public consumption. Beyond scholars and academics, our target audiences are the professionals in the business, government, and non-profit communities, especially those who already have a basic knowledge of international relations. For professionals who choose this work for classroom or workshop purposes, we have also prepared a companion website that includes extensive supplementary materials in order to make the concepts, theories, and methods presented easier to comprehend and use. Each supplementary chapter section includes questions for discussion and exploration to guide your reflection on the material presented. We suggest

writing and research assignments to use for further exploration of the topics discussed. Finally, each chapter includes a case study for you to analyze in light of the concepts, theories, and guidelines presented. Your development as an intercultural and international communicator is an exciting journey, and we wish you well as you begin it.

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