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Intercultural Communication, Human Rights, and Global Power: A Critical International Relations Perspective on Contemporary US Foreign Policy

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Abstract:

Drawing on Critical International Relations theory, this paper reconceptualizes intercultural communication as a global ethical and political issue deeply entangled with power, hegemony, and human rights. It argues that contemporary foreign policy practices of powerful states pose significant challenges to intercultural competence at a global level by undermining principles of sovereignty, equality, and self-determination. Through a critical analysis of selected cases, the study demonstrates how hegemonic state behavior reproduces asymmetrical intercultural relations that contradict the normative foundations of intercultural communication.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication (IC) has emerged over the past three decades as a central concept in education, applied linguistics, international studies, and professional training. Broadly defined as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006), IC has been widely promoted as a solution to intercultural misunderstandings in an increasingly globalized world. Within language education, IC is commonly framed as a pedagogical objective aimed at fostering openness, empathy, cultural awareness, and communicative skills among learners.

Despite its growing prominence, intercultural competence research has been largely depoliticized. The dominant body of literature emphasizes individual attitudes, skills, and knowledge while paying limited attention to the structural and geopolitical contexts in which intercultural encounters take place. As a result, IC is often presented as a neutral, universally desirable capacity, detached from issues of power, inequality, and domination that characterize international relations. This paper argues that such an approach is insufficient, particularly in a global context marked by deep asymmetries between states, cultures, and political actors.

Recent developments in global politics have made these limitations increasingly visible. The foreign policy discourse and actions of the United States under President Donald J. Trump have foregrounded questions of sovereignty, coercion, hierarchy, and cultural devaluation. Statements and policies targeting Venezuela, Greenland, and several African and Global South countries illustrate a mode of international engagement that challenges fundamental principles of equality and mutual recognition. These practices do not merely have political or economic consequences; they also shape the symbolic and discursive conditions under which cultures encounter one another globally.

From a human rights perspective, IC cannot be reduced to interpersonal effectiveness or cultural sensitivity (Barrett & Borghetti, 2025). It must be understood as a normative project grounded in respect for dignity, equality, and human rights (Byram, 2003). Naturally, it is safe to claim that when powerful states engage in practices that undermine these principles, they erode the very foundations upon which meaningful intercultural relations are built. This insight necessitates a shift from pedagogical and communicative models of IC toward a critical, structural, and political understanding of intercultural competence.

Critical International Relations (IR) theory offers a valuable framework for such a reconceptualization. Unlike mainstream IR theories that prioritize state interests or systemic stability, critical IR approaches foreground power relations, ideological domination, and the historical construction of global hierarchies (Cox, 1981; Linklater, 1998). By applying critical IR

theory to intercultural competence, this paper seeks to illuminate how global power asymmetries shape intercultural encounters and how hegemonic practices undermine human-rights-based intercultural engagement.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it critically examines dominant conceptualizations of intercultural competence and highlights their limitations from a human rights perspective. Second, it situates intercultural competence within the normative and political concerns of critical IR theory. Third, it analyzes selected cases of contemporary US foreign policy to demonstrate how hegemonic state behavior challenges intercultural competence at a global level. In doing so, the paper argues that intercultural competence must be reimagined not merely as an educational outcome but as a global ethical and political imperative inseparable from human rights and international justice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical International Relations Theory and the Question of Power

Critical International Relations (IR) theory emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of mainstream IR approaches, particularly realism and liberal institutionalism, which tend to naturalize existing power structures and treat the international system as politically neutral. In contrast, critical IR theory views global order as historically constructed, ideologically sustained, and deeply shaped by relations of power

and domination (Cox, 1981; Linklater, 1998). Rather than asking how states can manage international relations efficiently, critical theorists ask whose interests are served by prevailing arrangements and how alternative, more just forms of global interaction might be imagined.

A foundational assumption of critical IR is that power is not merely material or military but also discursive and normative. States exercise influence not only through coercion or economic leverage, but also by shaping meanings, norms, and categories through which international relations are understood (Ashley, 1984). This insight is particularly relevant for intercultural competence, which itself relies on normative assumptions about respect, recognition, and mutual understanding. When powerful states define which cultures are legitimate, civilized, or worthy of respect, they shape the very conditions under which intercultural relations occur.

Cox's (1981) distinction between problem-solving theory and critical theory is especially useful for framing IC. Problem-solving approaches to IC aim to improve communication within existing global structures, implicitly accepting the status quo of international power relations. Critical approaches, by contrast, question whether these structures themselves produce intercultural inequality and symbolic violence. From this perspective, IC cannot be meaningfully developed without addressing the political and economic asymmetries embedded in the international system.

Central to critical IR theory is the concept of hegemony, understood not simply as domination by force, but as leadership

through consent and norm-setting (Gramsci, 1971; Cox, 1983). A hegemonic state is able to universalize its own interests and values, presenting them as natural, inevitable, or globally beneficial. In the contemporary international order, USA has long occupied a hegemonic position, exercising influence over political, economic, and cultural norms worldwide.

Hegemony operates at the level of discourse as much as policy. Through diplomatic language, media narratives, and institutional practices, powerful states define which actors are rational or irrational, democratic or authoritarian, civilized or backward (Jackson Lears, 1985). These discursive practices, we believe, may have profound intercultural implications worldwide. Cultures associated with states deemed illegitimate or inferior are often subjected to stereotyping, delegitimization, and moral exclusion, undermining the possibility of symmetrical intercultural engagement.

From a critical IR perspective, IC cannot be divorced from these hegemonic processes. When it is framed as an individual skill set (emphasizing tolerance or openness) it risks obscuring how global hierarchies systematically privilege some cultural voices while silencing others. As Linklater (1998) argues, ethical international relations require not merely dialogue, but the removal of structural barriers to inclusion and recognition. Without such structural transformation, intercultural encounters remain constrained by unequal power relations.

Human rights also occupy a central place within critical IR theory as both a normative ideal and a contested political project.

While liberal approaches often treat human rights as neutral universal principles, critical scholars emphasize their political deployment, selective enforcement, and instrumentalization by powerful actors (Douzinas, 2007; Hopgood, 2013). Nevertheless, human rights remain one of the few globally recognized normative frameworks capable of grounding claims to dignity, equality, and self-determination across cultural boundaries.

From an intercultural perspective, human rights provide a minimal ethical baseline for interaction between cultures and political communities (Healy, 2006). The principles of equality, respect for human dignity, fundamental freedoms, and democratic principles are preconditions for meaningful intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008). When such principles are violated through coercive interventions, territorial claims, or dehumanizing discourse, the structural conditions for intercultural dialogue and equal engagement are undermined (Council of Europe, 2018). This indicates that intercultural competence requires more than interpersonal effectiveness: it must be grounded in the human rights values of dignity, equality, and self-determination.

That said, critical IR theory highlights a key tension: while human rights discourse is often invoked to justify intervention, such interventions frequently reproduce the very hierarchies they claim to challenge. This contradiction is particularly visible when powerful states present themselves as guardians of universal values while simultaneously disregarding international law or the agency of affected populations. In such cases, human rights rhetoric becomes a tool of domination rather than a

foundation for intercultural respect.

2.2 Intercultural Communication beyond the Individual Level

Mainstream models of intercultural competence, such as those proposed by Byram (1997) or Deardorff (2006), have made important contributions by emphasizing attitudes of openness, knowledge of cultural practices, and skills of interpretation and interaction. However, these models largely operate at what can be called the micro level, focusing on individuals rather than institutions or global structures. While valuable in educational contexts, such approaches risk treating intercultural misunderstandings as technical or psychological problems rather than political ones.

A critical IR approach challenges this limitation by insisting that IC must also be conceptualized at the macro level (Cox, 1981). States, international organizations, and global elites engage in intercultural practices through diplomacy, policy-making, and discourse, where norms, legitimacy, and meanings are continuously produced and negotiated (Kratochwil, 1989). When these actors fail to demonstrate respect for sovereignty, equality, and human dignity, they model forms of intercultural interaction that contradict the values promoted in educational settings, reproducing moral hierarchies and patterns of exclusion at the global level (Linklater, 1998).

Building on critical IR theory, this paper proposes a

reconceptualization of IC as a structurally informed, rights-based capacity that operates across individual, institutional, and global levels. Intercultural competence, from this perspective, is not merely about effective communication, but about the ethical organization of intercultural relations within an unequal international system.

This reconceptualization rests on three key principles:

1. Power awareness: IC requires recognition of power asymmetries shaping intercultural encounters.
2. Normative grounding: Human rights and international law provide essential benchmarks for evaluating intercultural practices at the state level.
3. Structural accountability: States and global institutions must be held accountable for intercultural harm produced through coercive or dehumanizing policies.

By integrating these principles, critical IR theory enables a shift from depoliticized notion of IC toward an understanding that confronts domination, exclusion, and injustice in global affairs.

3. The Present Study

This paper positions itself at the intersection of IC research, human rights scholarship, and critical IR theory. It addresses a significant gap in the literature by examining state-level intercultural practices and their implications for global IC. By analyzing contemporary US foreign policy actions and discourse, the study moves beyond pedagogical and

interpersonal models of IC to interrogate how power and hegemony shape intercultural relations between nations and peoples. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to politicize IC and align it with struggles for global justice and human rights.

The analysis is grounded in Critical IR theory, which emerged as a challenge to positivist and problem-solving approaches that treat existing global power relations as given. Foundationally articulated by Robert W. Cox (1981), critical IR theory insists that theory is always produced "for someone and for some purpose," and therefore must interrogate the historical, ideological, and material conditions under which international orders are constructed and maintained. Subsequent scholars such as Andrew Linklater (1998) and Richard Ashley (1984) extended this critique by foregrounding issues of emancipation, exclusion, and ethical responsibility in world politics, while Friedrich Kratochwil (1989) emphasized the constitutive role of norms, rules, and discourse in shaping international practices. Collectively, these scholars reconceptualize international relations not merely as interactions between sovereign states, but as socially and discursively produced arenas in which power, legitimacy, and moral boundaries are continuously negotiated. Drawing on this tradition, the present analysis treats state policies, diplomatic discourse, and global governance practices as sites of intercultural interaction embedded in unequal structures of power, thereby enabling a critical interrogation of intercultural competence at the global and normative level.

In this study, Critical IR theory functions as an interpretive and normative lens**,** rather than as a variable-based explanatory model. Drawing on Cox's (1981) distinction between problem-solving and critical theory, the analysis does not ask how existing international arrangements can be made more efficient or stable. Instead, it interrogates how these arrangements are historically produced, whose interests they serve, and how they normalize asymmetrical intercultural relations. For example, foreign policy actions and immigration regimes are examined not as technical responses to security or economic challenges, but as social practices embedded in broader structures of power and ideology**.**

Building on Kratochwil's (1989) emphasis on norms and discourse, the analysis treats diplomatic language, policy justifications, and public statements as constitutive acts that define legitimacy, belonging, and moral worth in the international system. In the cases examined, the labeling of certain states or populations as "threats," "failures," or "undesirable" is analyzed as a discursive practice that shapes intercultural relations by producing hierarchies between cultures and political communities. These discourses do not merely reflect power relations; they actively produce and stabilize them, thereby constraining the conditions for symmetrical intercultural engagement.

Finally, drawing on Linklater's (1998) critical concern with exclusion and human emancipation, the analysis evaluates state practices against normative criteria derived from human rights, such as respect for human dignity, equality, and collective self-determination. Policies involving territorial claims, coercive diplomacy, or restrictive immigration measures are

thus interpreted as forms of moral boundary-drawing that exclude certain groups from the sphere of ethical consideration. From this perspective, such practices are not only political or legal acts but also intercultural failures at the global level, as they undermine the ethical foundations necessary for meaningful intercultural dialogue.

Taken together, Critical IR theory enables the analysis to move beyond interpersonal understandings of intercultural competence and to conceptualize global politics itself as a field of intercultural interaction structured by power, discourse, and normative struggle. The cases examined are therefore analyzed not as isolated events, but as manifestations of broader hegemonic patterns that challenge IC as a human-rights-based project.

1. How can IC be reconceptualized as a macro-level, normative project grounded in human rights and critical international relations theory rather than as an interpersonal pedagogical skill?

2. How do the discursive and policy practices of powerful states operate as forms of intercultural interaction that reproduce global hierarchies, moral exclusion, and asymmetrical relations between cultures?

3. In what ways do contemporary state actions challenge or undermine the ethical foundations of IC at the global level?

4. Findings

Five cases emerged from applying IR and human-rights-based analytical lens to contemporary state discourse and policy

practices. These cases are not presented as isolated political events, but as analytically significant instances through which hegemonic power operates interculturally by defining legitimacy, producing hierarchies, and shaping moral boundaries in the international arena. They illustrate how diplomacy, immigration regimes, territorial claims, and dehumanizing political language function as forms of intercultural interaction at the macro level. The findings therefore support the central argument of this paper: that intercultural competence must be understood not only as an interpersonal or pedagogical capacity, but also as a normative project that is structurally constrained by global asymmetries of power.

4.1 US Interventionism and Venezuela: Sovereignty, Moral Hierarchy, and Intercultural Asymmetry

The case of US policy toward Venezuela illustrates how hegemonic interventionism challenges IC at the global level by undermining sovereignty and political agency. Over recent years, US discourse has consistently framed Venezuela as a "failed," "criminal," or "illegitimate" state, justifying sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and coercive measures in the name of democracy and human rights. From a critical International Relations perspective, such framing is not neutral; it constitutes a discursive hierarchy that positions the USA as a moral arbiter and Venezuela as a subject lacking political legitimacy.

Critical IR theory emphasizes that sovereignty is not merely a legal principle but a symbolic foundation of

intercultural equality among states (Linklater, 1998). When powerful states reserve for themselves the right to determine the legitimacy of other governments, intercultural relations become asymmetrical by definition. The Venezuelan case demonstrates how human rights discourse can be mobilized selectively to legitimize coercion while marginalizing the voices and agency of the affected population.

From the standpoint of IC, this dynamic represents a form of structural intercultural incompetence. Respectful intercultural engagement presupposes recognition of the other as an equal interlocutor. Interventionist practices that bypass multilateral institutions and international law erode this recognition and normalize a hierarchical model of intercultural relations, where dialogue is replaced by unilateral action.

4.2 Greenland and the Reassertion of Territorial Power

US statements suggesting a right or intention to acquire Greenland, despite its status as an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, offer another example of how hegemonic discourse undermines intercultural norms. Even when framed rhetorically or strategically, such claims evoke historical practices of territorial acquisition associated with imperial expansion rather than contemporary principles of self-determination.

From a critical IR perspective, these claims function symbolically as assertions of entitlement and dominance. They signal that the preferences and interests of a powerful state can

supersede the political will and cultural identity of smaller or less powerful communities. This dynamic is deeply incompatible with IC understood as mutual respect and recognition.

IC at the global level requires acknowledgment of collective identities and political autonomy. When territorial claims are articulated without the meaningful consent of the people concerned, they reinforce a colonial logic in which cultures and lands are treated as strategic assets rather than as expressions of collective human agency. Such discourse contributes to a global environment in which intercultural relations are shaped by coercion rather than consent.

4.3 Immigration Governance, Mobility Inequality, and the Politics of Exclusion

Migration policy represents one of the most direct sites where IC, human rights, and global power intersect. Recent changes in US immigration governance (including revised Green Card criteria, tightened visa application procedures for specific countries, and heightened scrutiny based on nationality) have intensified longstanding inequalities in global mobility.

Critical IR theory highlights that freedom of movement is unevenly distributed, reflecting global hierarchies rather than neutral administrative necessity. Visa regimes function as instruments of symbolic power, categorizing individuals according to perceived risk, desirability, or civilizational proximity. Nationals of certain countries, often in the Global

South, are subjected to disproportionate surveillance, restriction, and suspicion.

From an intercultural perspective, such policies institutionalize cultural mistrust. They communicate that certain national or cultural identities are inherently problematic, reinforcing stigmatization at both interpersonal and international levels. Even when justified in terms of security or economic rationality, these practices contradict the principles of equality and dignity central to human-rights-based IC.

The restructuring of legal migration pathways also reveals a tension between economic instrumentalism and ethical responsibility. Migrants are increasingly valued primarily for their economic utility rather than their human dignity or cultural agency. This reduces intercultural engagement to transactional terms and undermines the ethical foundations of intercultural relations.

4.4 Domestic Repression, Protest, and the Global Signal of State Violence

Reports of harsh responses to domestic protests against immigration policies, including incidents in which demonstrators have been injured or killed, have further implications for IC at a global level. Regardless of the specific legal or situational contexts of such incidents, the perception of state violence against citizens protesting exclusionary laws carries significant symbolic weight internationally.

Critical IR theory emphasizes that domestic practices are inseparable from international legitimacy. When a state presents itself as a defender of freedom and human rights while repressing dissent at home, it produces a credibility gap that weakens its normative authority globally. This gap has intercultural consequences: it shapes how the state is perceived by other cultures and how its values are interpreted.

For IC, the issue is not only the violation of civil liberties but the broader message conveyed about whose voices are valued and whose lives are protected. When protest against exclusionary migration policies is met with force, it signals that intercultural inclusion is conditional and revocable. Such practices undermine the moral coherence of IC as a global ideal.

4.5 Discursive Devaluation of African and Global South Nations

Discursive practices targeting African and Global South countries, often portraying them as sources of instability, dependency, or threat, further illustrate how intercultural incompetence is enacted at the level of global leadership. Such rhetoric draws on long-standing colonial imaginaries that position non-Western societies as inferior or deficient.

Critical IR scholars argue that discourse plays a central role in maintaining global hierarchies (Ashley, 1984). When political leaders employ language that dehumanizes or trivializes entire regions, they legitimize unequal treatment and exclusionary policies. This discursive violence directly contradicts the ethos of IC, which requires recognition of cultural plurality and equal dignity.

In the context of migration and diplomacy, such rhetoric contributes to policy environments that normalize discrimination and restrict intercultural exchange. It also shapes public attitudes, reinforcing stereotypes that hinder genuine intercultural understanding.

5. Discussion

The analysed cases demonstrate that IC cannot be adequately understood as an individual or pedagogical capacity detached from global structures of power. Instead, intercultural relations are deeply conditioned by state behavior, international hierarchies, and normative regimes that govern recognition, mobility, and legitimacy. From a critical IR perspective, IC emerges as a structurally embedded phenomenon, shaped by political decisions and hegemonic practices at the global level.

This insight challenges dominant models of IC, which tend to focus on micro-level interaction while assuming a relatively neutral global context. The cases examined in this paper reveal that global politics actively produce conditions of intercultural asymmetry, where some cultures are positioned as authoritative and others as subordinate. Under such conditions, calls for openness, tolerance, or dialogue risk becoming superficial, as they do not address the power relations that constrain intercultural engagement.

IC, therefore, must be reconceptualized not merely as an attribute of individuals, but as a quality of international practices and institutions. States, like individuals, engage in intercultural

interaction through diplomacy, migration governance, security discourse, and public rhetoric. When these practices violate principles of equality and recognition, they represent forms of intercultural incompetence with global consequences.

A central finding of this study is the tension between the normative ideals of human rights and the selective manner in which they are invoked in international politics. Critical IR theory highlights how human rights discourse is often mobilized to legitimize coercive action while ignoring structural violence and power asymmetries. This selective application produces a crisis of normative coherence that directly undermines IC as a global ethical project.

IC presupposes a minimum level of moral consistency. When powerful states claim to promote democracy, freedom, and human dignity while engaging in practices that undermine sovereignty, restrict mobility based on nationality, or repress dissent, they weaken the credibility of these norms globally. This credibility gap has intercultural consequences: it fosters distrust, resentment, and symbolic exclusion among communities subjected to such policies.

From a human rights perspective, meaningful intercultural engagement requires more than rhetorical commitment to universal values. It demands institutional practices that respect dignity, equality, and self-determination across cultural and political boundaries. Without such commitment, IC risks becoming a normative ideal divorced from lived global realities.

Migration governance emerges in this study as a key site where IC is enacted or denied at the structural level. Visa regimes, Green Card policies, and differentiated mobility rights function as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that shape which is permitted to participate in intercultural exchange. Critical IR theory reveals that these mechanisms reflect global inequalities rather than neutral administrative logic.

The restriction of mobility for citizens of specific countries communicates a powerful intercultural message: that certain cultural identities are inherently suspect or undesirable. This institutionalized mistrust undermines the ethical foundations of IC by normalizing discrimination and reinforcing cultural hierarchies. It also contradicts educational discourses that promote intercultural openness while ignoring the material conditions necessary for intercultural contact.

IC, therefore, cannot be separated from questions of border ethics and global justice. A rights-based approach to IC must address the unequal distribution of mobility and challenge policies that systematically exclude certain populations from intercultural participation.

One of the most significant implications of this study concerns the limitations of pedagogical approaches to IC. While education plays a crucial role in fostering critical awareness and intercultural sensitivity, it cannot compensate for structural injustice at the global level. When learners are encouraged to develop IC in classrooms while witnessing global practices of

domination and exclusion, a form of normative dissonance emerges.

This dissonance risks producing cynicism or disengagement rather than intercultural commitment. Learners may perceive IC as an abstract ideal disconnected from real-world power dynamics. From a critical IR perspective, such outcomes are not pedagogical failures but reflections of broader structural contradictions. This does not diminish the value of intercultural education; rather, it calls for its repoliticization. Intercultural pedagogy must engage explicitly with global power relations, human rights violations, and the role of states in shaping intercultural norms. Without such engagement, intercultural education risks reproducing the very inequalities it seeks to challenge.

Based on the theoretical and empirical analyses presented, this paper proposes a shift toward a critical, rights-based model of IC. Such a model extends beyond interpersonal effectiveness to encompass ethical responsibility, political accountability, and structural awareness.

This model rests on four interrelated dimensions:

1. **Power consciousness:** Recognizing how global hierarchies shape intercultural relations.
2. **Normative consistency:** Aligning intercultural discourse with actual respect for human rights and international law.
3. **Structural accountability:** Evaluating state practices as intercultural acts with ethical implications.

4. **Critical reflexivity:** Questioning how one's own positionality, whether individual or institutional, contributes to global inequality.

By integrating these dimensions, IC becomes a framework for evaluating global practices rather than merely improving individual interaction.

This paper contributes to IC scholarship by bridging it with Critical IR theory, thereby expanding the analytical scope of IC research. It challenges depoliticized and individualistic models of IC and demonstrates the necessity of incorporating power, hegemony, and human rights into IC theory.

Moreover, it positions IC as a global political and ethical practice, enacted not only in classrooms but also in foreign policy, migration governance, and international discourse. This reconceptualization opens new avenues for interdisciplinary research connecting intercultural studies, international relations, and critical human rights scholarship.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to reconceptualize IC through the lens of Critical IR theory and human rights, responding to the limitations of dominant pedagogical and depoliticized approaches. By situating IC within global power relations, the study has argued that intercultural engagement cannot be meaningfully understood, or ethically promoted, without addressing the structural conditions under which cultures encounter one another.

The analysis demonstrated that contemporary U.S. foreign and migration policies function not only as political or security practices but also as intercultural acts with profound symbolic and material consequences. Interventionist discourse toward Venezuela, territorial claims concerning Greenland, restrictive immigration and visa regimes, and the discursive devaluation of African and Global South nations collectively reveal how hegemonic state behavior undermines the principles of equality, recognition, and self-determination. These principles are not peripheral to IC; they are foundational to it.

Drawing on critical IR theory, the paper has shown that IC must be understood as a structurally conditioned and normatively grounded phenomenon. When powerful states violate sovereignty, normalize exclusion, or selectively invoke human rights, they erode the ethical infrastructure necessary for genuine intercultural relations. In such contexts, calls for tolerance, dialogue, or openness at the individual level risk becoming hollow, as they fail to confront the asymmetries shaping global interaction.

The study also highlighted the limitations of pedagogical interventions that isolate IC from global injustice. While education remains a vital space for fostering critical awareness, it cannot substitute for political accountability at the state and institutional levels. IC education must therefore be repoliticized, explicitly engaging with questions of power, mobility, borders, and human rights if it is to retain normative credibility.

Theoretically, this paper contributes to IC research by extending its scope beyond interpersonal communication and

educational practice into the realm of global politics. By bridging intercultural studies with Critical IR theory, it positions IC as a global ethical project—one that demands consistency between proclaimed values and enacted policies. This reconceptualization invites scholars and practitioners to evaluate not only how individuals communicate across cultures, but how states and global institutions enact intercultural relations through their practices.

Future research may build on this framework by examining other geopolitical contexts, comparing hegemonic and non-hegemonic state practices, or empirically investigating how global power dynamics shape perceptions of IC among marginalized communities. Ultimately, IC, if it is to remain a meaningful concept in a fractured world, must confront power, resist domination, and align itself unequivocally with the principles of human dignity and global justice.

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