

# GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS



## United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Creating norms for a complex world

J. P. Singh

ROUTLEDGE

The Routledge logo, which is a stylized white profile of a person's head facing right, set against a dark blue background.

# United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

This book traces the history of UNESCO from its foundational idealism to its current stature as the pre-eminent international organization for science, education, and culture, building a well-rounded understanding of this important organization.

The book:

- provides an overview of the organization and its institutional architecture in the context of its humanistic idealism;
- details the subsequent challenges UNESCO faced through the Cold War and power politics, global dependence and interdependence, and the rise of identity and culture in global politics;
- analyzes the functioning of UNESCO administration, finance, and its various constituencies including the secretariat, member states, and civil society;
- explores the major controversies and issues underlying the initiatives in education, science, culture and communication;
- examines the current agenda and future challenges through three major issues in UNESCO: Education for All, digital divide issues, and norms on cultural diversity;
- assesses the role of UNESCO in making norms in a complex world of multiple actors and intersecting issue areas.

Reflecting on UNESCO's vision, its everyday practices, and future challenges, this work is an essential resource for students and scholars of international relations and international organizations.

**J. P. Singh** is Associate Professor at the graduate program in Communication, Culture and Technology at Georgetown University, USA.

# **Routledge Global Institutions**

Edited by Thomas G. Weiss

*The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA*

and Rorden Wilkinson

*University of Manchester, UK*

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The “Global Institutions Series” is designed to provide readers with comprehensive, accessible, and informative guides to the history, structure, and activities of key international organizations as well as books that deal with topics of key importance in contemporary global governance. Every volume stands on its own as a thorough and insightful treatment of a particular topic, but the series as a whole contributes to a coherent and complementary portrait of the phenomenon of global institutions at the dawn of the millennium.

Books are written by recognized experts, conform to a similar structure, and cover a range of themes and debates common to the series. These areas of shared concern include the general purpose and rationale for organizations, developments over time, membership, structure, decision-making procedures, and key functions. Moreover, current debates are placed in historical perspective alongside informed analysis and critique. Each book also contains an annotated bibliography and guide to electronic information as well as any annexes appropriate to the subject matter at hand.

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Craig.Fowlie@tandf.co.uk

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# **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Creating norms for a complex world

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First published 2011  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the U.S.A. and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2011.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Singh, J. P., 1961–

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization  
(UNESCO): Creating norms for a complex world / J.P. Singh.

p. cm. – (Routledge global institutions)1. Unesco. I. Title.

AS4.U83S56 2010

001.06'01–dc22

2010021069

ISBN 0-203-83858-0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 978-0-415-49113-6 (hbk)

ISBN 978-0-415-49114-3 (pbk)

ISBN 978-0-203-83858-7 (ebk)

**For Chuck and my mother  
for their love and support**



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# Foreword

The current volume is the forty-fourth new title—two have already gone into second editions—in a dynamic series on “global institutions.” The series strives (and, based on the volumes published to date, succeeds) to provide readers with definitive guides to the most visible aspects of what many of us know as “global governance.” Remarkable as it may seem, there exist relatively few books that offer in-depth treatments of prominent global bodies, processes, and associated issues, much less an entire series of concise and complementary volumes. Those that do exist are either out of date, inaccessible to the non-specialist reader, or seek to develop a specialized understanding of particular aspects of an institution or process rather than offer an overall account of its functioning. Similarly, existing books have often been written in highly technical language or have been crafted “in-house” and are notoriously self-serving and narrow.

The advent of electronic media has undoubtedly helped research and teaching by making data and primary documents of international organizations more widely available, but it has also complicated matters. The growing reliance on the Internet and other electronic methods of finding information about key international organizations and processes has served, ironically, to limit the educational and analytical materials to which most readers have ready access—namely, books. Public relations documents, raw data, and loosely refereed web sites do not make for intelligent analysis. Official publications compete with a vast amount of electronically available information, much of which is suspect because of its ideological or self-promoting slant. Paradoxically, a growing range of purportedly independent web sites offering analyses of the activities of particular organizations has emerged, but one inadvertent consequence has been to frustrate access to basic, authoritative, readable, critical, and well-researched texts. The market for such has actually been reduced by the ready availability of varying quality electronic materials.

For those of us who teach, research, and practice in the area, such limited access to information has been frustrating. We were delighted when Routledge saw the value of a series that bucks this trend and provides key reference points to the most significant global institutions and issues. They are betting that serious students and professionals will want serious analyses. We have assembled a first-rate line-up of authors to address that market. Our intention, then, is to provide one-stop shopping for all readers—students (both undergraduate and postgraduate), negotiators, diplomats, practitioners from nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, and interested parties alike—seeking information about the most prominent institutional aspects of global governance.

## UNESCO

Many books in our Global Institutions series focus on topics relevant for the pursuit of economic and social development—indeed, virtually all of them. We were particularly keen, however, to deal with some of the “softest” of the issues normally classified under the rubric of “low politics,” and so the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been high on our list of essential topics for the series. We are fortunate that J. P. Singh agreed to our challenge to author a volume on this topic.

Out of all of the institutions comprising the UN family, UNESCO is familiar to hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide who have visited World Heritage Sites or benefited from textbooks and histories commissioned over the last 65 years, on the one hand, or been offended by the attempt to establish the New World Information Order—which led to the withdrawal from the organization of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Singapore—or else the wasteful spending habits of former directors-general. At the same time, while most people have only the foggiest idea of what lies behind the name, they are quite unaware of the actual nature of the organization or the ideas and values behind its founding.

“States parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge,” states UNESCO’s founding document adopted by the London Conference in November 1945, “are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives.”

Of course, knowledge is certainly the base for human progress, and hence the basis for peace among individuals, communities, and states. Yet, UNESCO's pursuit of education, science, and culture has often been anything except non-controversial. There is little in common between the world of London in 1945 and our own—educational, scientific, and cultural realities have not stood still any more than economic, political, military, and economic ones.

J. P. Singh, an Associate Professor in Communication, Culture and Technology at Georgetown University, in Washington, DC, has jumped into this maelstrom and sought to make sense not only of UNESCO's institutional contributions to contemporary global governance but also the nature of educational, scientific, and cultural challenges of the twenty-first century. This he does with aplomb. J. P. has put together one of the most elegantly written and informative, yet appropriately critical books on UNESCO to date, and we are pleased to have it in the Global Institutions series.

J. P. was an obvious choice for us to approach to write this book. A first-rate scholar with six books (authored and edited)<sup>1</sup> under his belt and a string of publications in leading journals, he has an inside track on UNESCO through his membership of the UNESCO Task Force for Cultural Statistics and his membership of UNESCO's Expert Group on the Measurement of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. J. P.'s capacity to reflect critically on the tale of such a curious institution is not, however, compromised by this inside track. Quite the contrary, it has enabled him to sharpen his analysis such that the end product offers one of the most compelling and comprehensive accounts of the organization. In crafting this book, J. P. has also clearly underlined why better understanding the softer institutions of global governance is as important as focusing on the more notable and notorious headline grabbers.

We thoroughly recommend this book to all interested in the study of world politics, international organization, global governance, and cultural governance, diversity and change. As always, we look forward to comments from first-time or veteran readers of the Global Institutions series.

Thomas G. Weiss, The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA  
Rorden Wilkinson, University of Manchester, UK  
May 2010

# Acknowledgements

Most of us are introduced to UNESCO while visiting the World Heritage Sites, now 890 of them in 148 countries. We find, usually at the entrance of the site, a sign that announces the site's universal and outstanding value. I was elated to learn in 2008, while writing this book, that the 96-kilometer Kalka-Shimla railway line in North India, on which I have traveled since childhood, is now inscribed on the World Heritage list as part of Mountain Railways of India. The British empire's administrators built this railway line as part of connecting the enterprise of the Raj with India House in London, especially as they took to moving the capital of the Raj to Simla (the old spelling) every summer starting in 1864. The railway line was built in the mid-nineteenth century. Simla also had a telegraph link with London by 1870.

I suspect that depending on whether you are a government official, a diplomat, a civil society organization staffer, a scientist, an educator, or a communications specialist, you have been exposed to one or more features of UNESCO while growing up. It retains a prominent stature among UN specialized agencies and, as the following pages show, draws its strengths from the power of its intellectual debates and its moral and ethical position in the world.

Over the years, my other contacts with UNESCO, albeit from an intellectual distance, included studying the feisty debates on the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1980s that questioned the communication order or, in the words of its supporters, the neo-colonial communication empire that replaced the old one. My interest in development exposed me to the report from the World Commission on Culture and Development, which UN secretary-general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar headed. A few years later, the report's lessons were applied to another passionate debate at UNESCO, this time on culture and trade. This issue pitted the United States and Hollywood against a coalition of cultural industries and policy-makers from

around the world led by France and Canada. Writing about this last debate, and participating in two groups at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics on cultural statistics, introduced me to officials at UNESCO offices in Paris and in Montreal who were far more willing to indulge in interdisciplinary and intellectual debates than the organization to which I had paid most scholarly attention until then, namely the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the WTO, someone told me once, everything has a dollar value and all prerogatives can be translated to tariffs and trade protections. At UNESCO, such instrumental monetary calculations are derided, although the organization has a hard time defining its identity beyond its compelling preamble statement regarding constructing the defenses of peace in the minds of human beings.

I am indebted to Rorden Wilkinson for encouraging me to write this book and to Tom Weiss for providing various kinds of assistance and good cheer along the way. Thanks to Nicola Parkin for her patient reminders and help. Thanks to Martin Burke and Megan Graieg for seeing me to the finish line. As I headed into the final phase of writing, I worried that I needed to corroborate my analysis with more materials from first hand exposure to UNESCO offices. UNESCO officials told me that I would be best placed to make my contacts via the US Mission to UNESCO because they prefer academics to be recommended by their home governments! It was as if a god of research and scholarship—perhaps Pallas Athena of UNESCO’s emblem—heard me. A week later I received an invitation from the US State Department for the swearing-in of the Obama administration’s ambassador-designate to UNESCO, David Killion. I wondered if this was the same David Killion with whom I taught international relations in 1992–93 at Scripps College, Claremont. Both graduate students at that time, we were, in fact, the Department of International Relations—David Killion taught security and theory and I taught international political economy, development, and international ethnic politics. Our paths had converged again, this time in the “real world” of international relations, namely UNESCO.

I cannot thank enough Ambassador Killion, the US Department of State, and various officials at UNESCO for making available numerous resources and sharing their ideas in frank and open conversations. If I am in any way critical in the following pages, of the UNESCO secretariat or of US engagements with UNESCO, it is because I am a scholar and my task is to analyze and provide a perspective for understanding these engagements. Fortunately, there’s also much to praise both within UNESCO and in other countries’ engagement with it. The United States left UNESCO in 1983 amidst NWICO and other politicized controversies, and rejoined in 2003. At his swearing-in, Ambassador

Killion said that “the United States remains committed to working through the Organization to advance education for all, support science and engineering, preserve the world’s heritage, and promote freedom of expression, gender equality, human rights, and tolerance.” As UNESCO confronts a new century and new politics, it has a great deal to offer in these and other complex issues.

My thanks also to Ambassador Killion’s staff, especially Holly Hubler, for its generous assistance. Director-General (DG) Kōichiro Matsuura and his office provided all manner of help. DG Matsuura noted at our meeting that he looked forward to a book on UNESCO from an American perspective. While my perspective regarding UNESCO has been shaped as much by the Kalka-Shimla railway line connecting my hometown to an old empire as it is by teaching a bicycle ride away from the White House, I hope that I have, at least, tried to provide a “balanced” perspective in the following pages, even if it is chiefly “American” and definitely not from someone who is a UNESCO “insider.” At UNESCO, I express my gratitude to Guiomar Alonso Cano, Anne Candau, Cécile Duvelle, Jonathan Baker, Nicholas Burnett, Ricardo de Guimarães Pinto, Walter Erdelen, Kang “Rock” S. Huang, Elizabeth Longworth, Françoise Rivière, Pierre Sané, Mogens Schmidt, and Susan Schneegans. I have gained immensely from participating in UNESCO Institute of Statistics’ (UIS) Cultural Statistics Taskforce and the Expert Group on Measuring the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. At UIS, I thank Simon Ellis, José Pessoa, and Lydia Deloumeaux. At the US Department of State, my thanks to Elizabeth Kanick, Kelly Seikman, and Laura Gritz. I have also gained from my conversations with various scholars interested in UNESCO issues and would in particular like to thank Françoise Benhamou, Tyler Cowen, Phyllis Magrab, and Vijayendra Rao.

Georgetown’s interdisciplinary program on Communication, Culture and Technology parallels the interdisciplinary approaches in UNESCO and has thus been a perfect home from where to contemplate this book. Three tireless, smart, and (very) enthusiastic research assistants at Georgetown University furnished materials, read drafts, and collected data for me. For all this and more, a big word of thanks to Anuj Gurung, Hillá Meller, and Becky Jakob. My thanks to the Conflict Resolution Program at Georgetown, especially Fathali Moghaddam and Craig Zelizer, for making available research resources. My colleague Katherine Marshall’s advice from having written the book on the World Bank in this series was enormously helpful.

Finally, as always, my partner Chuck Johnson’s continued guidance and support for everything I do means the world to me. Daily

telephone calls to my mother also produced “external accountability” as she kept up with the progress of this book. In appreciation, I finished writing this book on her birthday, and completed the revisions on the day that she had been watching a TV program in India on UNESCO World Book and Copyright Day and proceeded to wish me, “happy copyright day.” UNESCO has a way of reaching people all around the world! Lastly, I thank many friends who continue to believe, even when I don’t, that this world can be a better place and they remain an inspiration.

This book has allowed me to bring together and connect my old and new experiences with UNESCO as the organization works toward a culture of peace. I hope that it does the same for you.

# Abbreviations

ADG	Assistant director-general
AMARC	World Association of Community Broadcasters
APC	Association for Progressive Communication
ASNE	American Society of Newspaper Editors
ASPNet	Associated Schools Project
BIE	Bureau of International Education
CAME	Conference of Allied Ministers in Education
C&I	Communication and information sector
COMEST	World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology
CRIS	Communication Rights for an Information Society
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DBS	Direct broadcasting satellites
DG	Director-General
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (UN)
EFA	Education for All initiative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GEF	Global Environmental Fund
GLOSS	Global Sea Level Observing System
GOOS	Global Ocean Observing System
IACOMS	International Advisory Committee on Marine Science
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAHS	International Association of Hydrological Sciences
IBC	International Bioethics Committee
IBSP	International Basic Science Program
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



ICSU	International Council of Science (formerly International Council of Scientific Unions; current title maintains the old acronym)
ICT	Information and communication technology
IGBC	Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee
IGOSS	Integrated Global Ocean Stations System
IGSP	International Geosciences Program
IHP	International Hydrological Programme
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IIIC	International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INCD	International Network for Cultural Diversity
INCP	International Network for Cultural Policy
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IOTWS	Indian Ocean Tsunami Early Warning System
IPDC	International Program for the Development of Communication
ISP	International Science Programmes
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IUGS	International Union of Geological Scientists
MAB	Man and the Biosphere program
MOST	Management of Social Transformations program
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTWS	Pacific Tsunami Warning System
RBM	Results-based management
SCFIP	Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press
SESAME	Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
SHS	Social and human sciences
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UIS	Institute for Statistics (UNESCO)
UNCLOS	UN Conference on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WARC	World Administrative Radio Conference
WGIG	Working Group on Internet Governance
WHC	World Heritage Centre
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Association
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society



# Introduction

That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization represents both the hopes and the limits of human endeavors at creating norms for a peaceful world. At its best, UNESCO is the heroic intellectual and moral force of the idealism encapsulated in its Preamble. This idealism seeks to educate humanity to overcome its worst self through cultural dialogues, scientific collaborations, literacy, and communication. At its worst, UNESCO, like many other UN agencies, is a functional tragedy of our own making, suffering from power politics, lack of resources, ineffectiveness, and managerial ineptitude.

UNESCO came into being after a conference of delegates from 37 countries met on 1–16 November 1945, in London, and 20 signed on to the constitution. This conference framed a charter reflecting three years of diplomacy, begun among the Allied Powers, to institute a post-war organization that would reflect enlightenment values in seeking to end human violence through education. As the negotiations proceeded beyond 1942, the emphasis on education was expanded to include science and culture as central tenets of the emerging institution. Speaking to the London Conference, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, asked the important question, “Do not all wars begin in the minds of men?” The US delegate to the conference Archibald Macleish, Librarian of Congress, adapted these words for the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution (see the Appendix for UNESCO Preamble and Constitution).

UNESCO continues to embody a humanism borne of the Enlightenment in a twenty-first century intellectual milieu uneasy with grand

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narratives, especially when they arise from the minds of the privileged and the few. At its core, UNESCO reflects a scientific humanism “in the sense that the application of science provides most of the material basis for human culture, and also that the practice and the understanding of science needs to be integrated with that of other human activities,” to quote Julian Huxley, its first director-general.<sup>1</sup> To its credit, UNESCO has dodged the controversies about its master narratives through its convening power of bringing together the world’s intellectuals of all ideological hues, even if at times one particular ideology may be dominant in its ranks. From Albert Einstein to Wole Soyinka, intellectual luminaries have lent their weight to an organization with an encompassing agenda but a limited mandate in terms of its resources. This chapter describes three central tensions underlying UNESCO’s norm-making capacity. These tensions also inform the main argument of the book, which balances UNESCO’s high philosophy with its more mundane functional aspects through its history.

### **Idealism and power**

UNESCO’s philosophical leaning comes through in its norm creation role, which can be understood “as a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity.”<sup>2</sup> Norm formation standards generally carry a sense of the just, the good, and the ethical. UNESCO is explicit in its mission to shape ethical and just norms. Herein perhaps lies the first tension. Actors might agree to the broad philosophical principles that guide the shape of the norm but subsequently disagree on the exact ways to implement it. Different cultural understandings among groups may also lead to contested norms.<sup>3</sup> Given various cultural understandings, the broad consensus toward humanism in UNESCO’s Constitution may be traced to two factors: the intellectual history of humanism and the overbearing shadow of the two great wars. Both of these factors, as explained in this sub-section and later, were tempered by rivalries among states and other actors.

The philosophical antecedents of UNESCO can be located in just about every prominent humanist thinker of modern European history. At the broadest level, the idea that human virtue is acquired rather than inherited or that society and governance are better off with the practice of virtue, can be traced back to Beldassare Castiliogne’s *Book of the Courtiers* (1528) and Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1532). Over the next 400 years, the idea of virtue would spread through the proliferation of education, which advanced from being the privilege of the few to being considered a necessity or even a right for all by the

twentieth century. Humanist pedagogies informed a scientific understanding of human nature, which assigned considerable agency to an individual's station in life through the acquisition of wisdom. Three prominent thinkers are often cited as providing the foundation for UNESCO's humanism: Emmanuel Kant, Auguste Comte, and Jan Amos Comenius.

Kant's treatise *Perpetual Peace* (1775) envisioned enlightened and free republics forming a league or a federation of states, which could eventually abolish standing armies and move toward world citizenship. Kant's *Perpetual Peace* reflected directly and indirectly the burgeoning role of diplomacy in the foreign affairs of states. François de Callières had envisioned a prominent role for diplomacy in which he posited European states "as being joined together by all kinds of necessary commerce, in such a way that they may be regarded as members of one Republic."<sup>4</sup> While Kant wrote of republics, Rousseau wrote of the general will governing the affairs of the states, which would in turn move these free states toward democratic peace. By the time of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech to the US Congress on 8 January 1918, the notion of democracy was firmly entrenched in many Western states. Wilson's "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" through diplomacy affirmed this worldview, which emerged at a time when states began to think of an international organization that would lead by a rationale rooted in education.

UNESCO's philosophy is also located in deeper spiritual precepts connected to a human quest for a better world. Vincenzo Pavone provides a compelling account of the almost puritanical ideas of the Czech-born Comenius (1592–1670) who wrote *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1623): "Through education, the Labyrinth of the World could eventually be reconciled with the Paradise of the Heart."<sup>5</sup> The puritanical dualism being evoked here is that of a human's base, violent versus the religious virtuous self. Scientific education was considered necessary in Comenius' and later Puritanical ideas as leading to the highest state of knowledge and a universal community. Comenius' influence began to be explicitly acknowledged as antecedent to UNESCO during Federico Mayor's director-generalship (1987–99), and was most visible in Mayor's Culture of Peace program, which began in 1989. UNESCO had published Comenius' collected works in 1956, and his biography was published in 1991 shortly before the 400th anniversary of his birth. Director-General Mayor frequently cited Comenius in his speeches, noting at the time of the publication of his biography: "As Comenius reminds us, the teachers are the key of the future and the shaper of democracy."<sup>6</sup> Mayor recalled Comenius' notion of

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*Dicasterium Pacis* or world assembly for nations and a *Collegium Lacis*, which would house scholarly members, to name Comenius “as one of the spiritual ancestors of UNESCO.”<sup>7</sup>

Similarly to Comenius’ thought, Auguste Comte’s (1798–1857) “Religion of Humanity” ascribed to science the basis of society and global solidarity that would replace God as its ordering principle. Comte’s positivist theory of humanity reflected science to be not just a source for Enlightenment ideas of progress, but also to be its spiritual core. Comte provides a precursor to the ideas of scientific humanism that became popular in the 1930s. Julian Huxley, UNESCO’s first director-general (1946–48), tried to provide a similar manifesto in his pamphlet *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*: “Thus the general philosophy of UNESCO should, it seems, be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background.”<sup>8</sup> The thrust of Huxley’s ideas was toward human perfection rooted in natural selection, evolution, and one dangerously close to eugenics. Nevertheless, his ideas also reflected the scientific humanism of the 1930s. In 1933, a group of 33 humanists including academics, philosophers, and theologians, penned a 15-point *Humanist Manifesto*. Point Four noted: “Humanism recognizes that man’s religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.”<sup>9</sup>

This humanist thinking and the alternatives it offered sat starkly against the devastation wrought by the two great wars and the effects of Nazism. While most of the post-war thinking shunned ideas of culture, and associated them with the rise of Nazi Germany, UNESCO’s architects sought in humanism the seeds of a better culture. “Against the background of this ruined landscape and of the need to rebuild in such a way that this horror would not be repeated, the dominant feeling of UNESCO’s founders is readily understandable: they felt a duty to address, as a matter of urgency, the task of reconstituting culture in its material and oral aspects alike.”<sup>10</sup> Even as the war progressed, a Conference of Allied Ministers in Education (CAME) met for the first time in 1942 to think of a future international organization in which education would play a key role. CAME ministerials continued until the London Conference in 1945. US Senator Fulbright noted in 1944 at one meeting that education would “do more in the long run for peace than any number of trade treaties.”<sup>11</sup>

As the next chapter will show, while the master narrative of humanism and the shadow of the war informed the thinking of CAME

and UNESCO's architects, state rivalries also deeply affected the shaping of their statutes. First, there were divisions among the allied ministers themselves and jockeying for influence. Switzerland argued that since the Bureau of International Education (BIE) was located in Geneva, the future international organization to come out of their proceedings should also be located there. France argued for Paris and pointed to the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC). The final bargain locating UNESCO in Paris received British and American endorsement in return for the first director-general, Julian Huxley, being British. Second, the Soviets were skeptical of CAME negotiations and US and British intentions. They were especially opposed to communication becoming any part of the organization's agenda and viewed it as propaganda. It is ironic, that among other issues, the United States would leave UNESCO in 1984 partly due to Soviet control of the communication agenda at UNESCO. Third, philosophically, many opposed the scientific humanist agenda as put forward by Julian Huxley.

While power issues seem relatively minor compared to the high idealism of the humanist philosophy, the former reveal the kinds of forces that would guide UNESCO's everyday business. Nevertheless, the moral force of UNESCO's philosophy and its connection with humanism's past remain the organization's strengths. This past is frequently evoked, for example in Federico Mayor's speeches on Comenius or Julian Huxley's references to ideas of virtue and scientific humanism. The UNESCO emblem, adopted in 1954, evokes this past by abstracting from the temple of Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom and reason, atop the Acropolis (Figure I.1). No other post-war organization can command such magnificent evocations of history as UNESCO.

### **Agenda and pragmatics**

Beginning in 1942 the CAME meetings placed significant emphasis on education. The British delegates who convened these conferences envisioned an International Organization for Education. However, all delegates accepted early on that cultural issues would play a role in the organization's future. This was as much due to the denunciation of ideas of racial and cultural purity that existed in Nazi Germany as in the need felt for creating a new culture of peace. If the organization were limited to education and culture, it would have been called UNECO as it was named in the early stages. In fact, officials in the science directorates of UNESCO continue to complain that science has never really been prioritized in the workings of the organization.





*Figure 1.1* The UNESCO emblem

However, the ways science and communication made it into UNESCO are interesting.

CAME established a Science Commission in 1943. Soon, its ideas were linked to the need for a new culture and also a counterweight to German scientific and industrial strength. A Science Commission document noted in 1944: “It is essential that in the new Europe Allied Scientific Culture and outlook shall replace the German.”<sup>12</sup> Joseph Needham, a Cambridge biochemist, was particularly important in rallying for the cause of science within the evolving organization and in providing a scientific rationale and methodology for the work of peace. Another important early factor would be the choice of Darwinian biologist Julian Huxley, who would further bridge the gap between science and culture through a doctrine of scientific humanism.

The “C” in UNESCO stands for culture. However, communication and media comprise the fifth sector of the organization after education, natural sciences, human sciences, and culture. From the beginnings of the organization the Soviets opposed the agenda for press and media freedoms backed by Western allied countries, led by the United States. This opposition may account for the USSR not becoming a member of UNESCO until 1954 and for Poland and Czechoslovakia withdrawing their membership in 1947. Nevertheless, a Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press (SCFIP) was constituted in 1946, and in 1949 the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN gave it a wide mandate to consider such freedoms from the perspective of human rights.<sup>13</sup> However, SCFIP was dissolved in 1952 and the USSR joined in 1954. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the pendulum of

communication and media swung the other way, this time leaning to the left with developing countries and the Soviet bloc accusing the Western world of media hegemony. The United Kingdom and the United States then left UNESCO in 1984–85.

There is no doubt that UNESCO inherited a broad agenda to create a culture of peace through science, education, cultural programs, and communication. Although this agenda may be traced back to Enlightenment philosophical traditions and the great wars, the challenge lies in implementing it through an organization that seems to be divided into five distinct secretariats and competencies. It is one thing to be a moral force in world politics, it is quite another to translate such morality into practice. At a practical level, UNESCO finds itself in intra-organizational battles deciding its priorities and allocating its limited resources. Beyond resource allocation, it is often unclear how the broad mandate of the organization can be translated to the practical level of implementation. What exactly does it mean to create a new culture of peace, for example? Does it require norm formation or also implementation of specific projects? Similarly, the organization must pull its various agencies together for programs that transcend a specific sector. This task creates further practical difficulties.

### **Multiple actors**

While UNESCO includes nearly 200 member-states and observers, it prides itself in also being a philosophical think-tank that can convene the world's intellectuals and civil society to deliberate humanity's most pressing concerns. During the CAME discussions, the French pushed for the creation of a non-governmental organization, and promoted the model of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC). The French vision would only include the world's intellectuals, but this initiative encountered opposition from the United States and the United Kingdom. UNESCO is now a member-state driven organization but includes intellectuals, civil society, and is intimately linked with other international organizations. These multiple actors speak to both the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, the task of arbitrating multiple pressures is not unique to UNESCO—it is a challenge for global governance in general.

UNESCO scholars agree that the organization resulted from two negotiation processes, one in London and the other in San Francisco, which founded the United Nations. The result was that agencies such as UNESCO would become specialized agencies of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Articles 63 and 67 of the UN Charter

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brought these agencies into the UN system. The early directors-general of UNESCO were also avid supporters of the UN system. However, the specialized agencies won support for functional independence of their budgets in terms of getting dues from member states rather than allocations from the UN system. UNESCO would also be subordinate to ECOSOC and subject to UN General Assembly resolutions.

In actuality, UNESCO's role within the UN system is increasingly complicated. As we will see in subsequent chapters, functions that UNESCO performs are overlapped and paralleled in other UN organizations and specialized agencies. Furthermore, it is not a funding or a development organization such as the World Bank. UNESCO must then balance its mandate with the limited role that it can play in actual implementation of its programs. A case in point is the eight Millennium Development Goals framed in 2000 by the 192 members of the UN, one of which is universal primary education and another being gender equity. UNESCO was entrusted as the lead UN agency for fulfilling the education mandate in these two goals but it may not have the resources and staff at the country level to be able to implement the education program. Similarly, UNESCO's recent attempts to link its internal agendas, as in its November 2009 World Report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, to the Millennium Development Goals may be limited by its lack of clout.<sup>14</sup>

The French proposal for a non-governmental organization at the CAME negotiations intersected the desire of the negotiators to involve civil society and intellectuals in constructing peace in the minds of human beings. There were two end results; first, member states agreed to form National Commissions for UNESCO. The United States, for example, constitutes a 100-person National Commission that brings together individuals from federal and state government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and at-large individual members representing civil society. Article 1 of the Charter of the US National Commission for UNESCO states: "The purpose of the US National Commission for UNESCO (the Commission) shall be to serve the Department of State in an advisory capacity with respect to the consideration of issues related to education, science, communications culture, and the formulation and implementation of US policy towards UNESCO."<sup>15</sup> However, organizationally this is problematic for member states. The Commission is located in different ministries in different countries, creating a cultural problem at the level of UNESCO for individuals coming from various ministries. Even if they all agreed to house it in the same ministry, the Commissions by their very nature demand inter-agency coordination, which is not easy for governments to undertake.

Furthermore, for a few countries, it is hard to distinguish between National Commissions and official delegations to UNESCO.

Second, as with ECOSOC, UNESCO would work closely with transnational civil society organizations and intellectuals. As noted before, IIC was itself a non-governmental organization. So was the International Council of Scientific Unions founded in 1931, of which Joseph Needham was a member, and which boosted the rank of science in UNESCO's functioning. UNESCO would later avow not to duplicate the work of non-governmental organizations to which it lent support such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM) founded by UNESCO in 1946 or the World Wildlife Fund founded in 1961.<sup>16</sup> Beyond its links with non-governmental organizations, UNESCO has forged links with civil society through its ability to convene the world's intellectuals, artists, and celebrities to deliberate human problems or to be its goodwill ambassadors in other places.

## **Conclusion**

Global governance is a difficult task in that it must attend not only to formal rules and charters but also to intersubjective conceptions among various actors.<sup>17</sup> UNESCO's humane philosophy pervades the organization but it is challenging for the organization to control such a wide agenda, which includes managing the intersubjective conceptions among the world's populations as well as the micro-level implementation rules. UNESCO is a long way from realizing the lofty ambitions of its Preamble, which involve implementing initiatives such as universal education, deliberating climate control, propagating press freedoms, inscribing the world's cultural heritage, or shaping ethical guidelines for textbooks on history.

The chapters that follow describe in detail the negotiations that led to UNESCO and its record in its five core sectors: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information. Chapter 1 details UNESCO's organizational mechanics and agendas. It provides the historical context for understanding UNESCO's creation and its subsequent politics before analyzing the functioning of its administration, finance, and its various constituencies including the secretariat, member states, and civil society. The subsequent chapters detail key aspects and controversies underlying the initiatives in education (Chapter 2), sciences (Chapter 3), culture (Chapter 4) and communication (Chapter 5). These chapters provide a broad outline of the activities in each sector. Furthermore Chapters 3–5 discuss at length the particular issues that provided prominence to the sectors. These

include: Education for All (EFA, Chapter 2) that rose in the 1990s to finally give life to the universal education ideal to which UNESCO has always aspired, science policies (Chapter 3) in national governments that reflected norms elevating the cause of science at the international level; prominent measures of preserving cultures and heritage through the World Heritage Convention, the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of a Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Chapter 4); and, finally, the New World Information Communication Order (Chapter 5) that led to a North–South conflict over media concentration and information flows that contributed to the withdrawal of the United States, United Kingdom, and Singapore in the 1980s from UNESCO. While in education, culture, and communication, one or two major debates provide a “storyline” for the narrative, the case of the sciences is different: here a patchwork of initiatives and programs rather than a resounding debate or two have guided the sectoral missions.

Sectoral classification is used in Chapters 2–5, but the classification as used in this book is issue-based and practical, and not always specific to organizational divisions within UNESCO. Thus, although UNESCO divides natural and social sciences into separate programs or sectors, here they are presented in one chapter. Many of the initiatives mentioned in Chapters 2–5 within UNESCO may also encompass more than one sector in UNESCO itself. For example, the natural heritage program in UNESCO is administered with help from the natural sciences sector but Chapter 4 in this volume describes it as part of cultural efforts at UNESCO.

The three tensions outlined in this chapter—idealism and power, agenda and pragmatics, and multiple actors—pervade the analysis in all chapters of this book. They are woven through an understanding of UNESCO’s role in creating norms in a complex world. I return to the issue of norm formation and complexity in the concluding chapter of the book by offering reflections on UNESCO’s vision, its everyday practices, and future challenges.