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# Arts and International Affairs



## LONGFORM

# The Enduring Vision of a World without War: UNESCO's Orient Catalogue 1959 and the Construction of an International Society

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**Abstract**

Propaganda is a term one rarely comes across in the UNESCO context. However, the organisation's constitutionally embedded strategy to build the defences of peace in the minds of men is based on its suggested power to move actors by influencing attitudes and opinions. This article analyses UNESCO's early attempts to communicate its principles of peace, understanding and solidarity, and to shape values accordingly. Through the methodological approach of propaganda, understood here as a tool for analysing processes of influence, this article analyses a film catalogue titled *Orient. A Survey of Films Produced in Countries of Arab and Asian Culture*, published by UNESCO and the British Film Institute in 1959. Through a discussion of the agendas at play, the article addresses the questions of power, politics and ideology in the UNESCO context. Conceptualising UNESCO as a manifestation of an international society, the analysis sheds light on the politically motivated negotiation processes typified by contradicting preferences, emphasising the need to address UNESCO as both a political actor and a platform for political action.

## **Introduction**

Since its outset, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has been the topic of conversation of a rather ontological nature. Should it be addressed as a political institution or just a political product, an instrument for its Member States? Does it merely reflect the intellectual, political and ideological trends of the surrounding international society or can it actually contribute to social change? Perhaps most descriptively, is it the hope and faith in the creation of a peaceful world or the shortcomings and limitations of the human endeavours towards such a goal that are epitomised in the organisation? Big questions with no obvious answers. J.P. Singh (2010:1) quite aptly captures the ingrained tension labelling these debates: "At its best, UNESCO is the heroic intellectual and moral force of the idealism encapsulated in its Preamble. [...] At its worst, UNESCO, like many other UN agencies, is a functional tragedy of our making, suffering from power politics, lack of resources, ineffectiveness, and material ineptitude."

On the ideological level, UNESCO is full of good intentions, having sprouted from the ideological tradition of humanism in the long shadow of the World Wars. From the beginning, the organisation's mission was clear: To make sure that the world would never again find itself in a situation where a "great and terrible war" such as the one that had just ended would be made possible by "the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races" as vividly described in the UNESCO constitution (1945:Preamble). In practice, however, the organisation suffers from imprecision and inefficiency in the implementation of its multiple resolutions, declarations and conventions. Despite these internal issues, UNESCO's constitutionally embedded idealism provides it with a mandate to implement change in order to steer its members towards a peaceful world.

The latest example of the potential for conflict and confusion around and within the organisation was given on the 12th of October 2017, when the United States Department of State formally notified that it was withdrawing its membership from UNESCO for the

second time (foreignpolicy.com 2017). The withdrawal was officially stated to reflect their concerns with “mounting arrears at UNESCO, the need for fundamental reform in the organization, and continuing anti-Israel bias at UNESCO” (U.S. Department of State 2017). Following the U.S.’ lead, Israel soon announced it had suspended cooperation with UNESCO as a result of a newly adopted draft resolution, which denied the Jewish connections with the holy sites in Jerusalem. These developments were by no means the first time UNESCO’s credibility has been called into question, and despite its somewhat rocky history with the organisation, the U.S. has been merely one of the founding members to shake the very foundations of UNESCO. The Republic of South Africa, too, withdrew from the organisation in 1956, citing the criticism of its apartheid policy within the organisation (Sewell 1975:326–328), and joined again in 1994 under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. 1984 witnessed the first withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO. Back then, the decision came about as a result of a claimed bias in favour of the Soviet Union and accusations of politicising matters under its authority—especially to do with the communications sector (see Coate 1988). The United Kingdom, for reasons much resembling those of the U.S., cut its ties in 1985, only to join again in 1997. The U.S. rejoined UNESCO in 2003, but withdrew its funding in 2011 as a result of the admittance of Palestine. This led to a financial crisis within the organisation and gave birth to speculations about the need for deeper, structural reforms (Hüfner 2016).

These events must be looked at as a serious obstacle to the achievability of the driving ideal behind UNESCO: the construction of a new world built on the principles of peace, understanding and solidarity. Through these same principles, UNESCO should have the ability to reconcile these situations. The manifestation of the political and cultural divisions within an organisation dedicated to dialogue and peace questions UNESCO’s capability to smooth the tensions created by such polarisations. The accusations made against UNESCO as manifesting itself as a biased, highly politicised organisation not only attack its decision-making practices and policies, they also demand we turn our attention back to UNESCO’s constitutionally embedded principles. They remind us that political motivations must not be ignored when evaluating UNESCO’s policies and practical initiatives. While some of UNESCO’s contemporary initiatives, such as the World Heritage Programme (see e.g. Foster & Gilman 2015) and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity (see e.g. De Beukelaer et al. 2015), have been a source of major controversy and criticism, the ideological basis of the organisation has remained solid since its outset. The high idealism of the humanist philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Auguste Comte and Jan Amos Comenius provided the foundations for UNESCO and has continued to label its quest for a better world to this day (Singh 2010:3–5).

In what follows, UNESCO’s constitutionally embedded ideological aspirations are contextualised through a set of concepts associated with what is known as the English School of International Relations theory. The English School intellectual tradition is based on a triad of concepts for theorising the conduct of international relations: international system, international society and world society—sometimes labelled Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian, respectively. The basic idea as explained by Barry Buzan (2001:474–475) seems simple enough. International system is all about power politics among states, placing the structure of international anarchy at the centre of IR theory. International society is about the institutionalisation of common interests among states, placing the

construction of shared norms, rules and institutions at the centre of IR theory. World society, then, takes individuals and non-state organisations as the focus, placing transcendence of the states system at the centre of IR theory.

Standing for the belief that ideas, rather than material factors, shape world politics, the English School explores the option of peaceful cooperation within the international system. The concept of international society is the practical manifestation of such a possibility, forming one of the most enduring meta-narratives of IR theory. International society is essentially grounded in the simple idea that if there can be a society within states, there can also be a society between or among states. An infinite source of both criticism and praise, along with countless attempts at practical implications and redefinitions, the concept was defined by Hedley Bull (1977:13) as follows: An international society exists “when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.”

My approach to the English School’s conceptual contribution is that of common values—more specifically, the common value of peace. UNESCO’s existence is based on a firm belief that the reasons behind the wars and conflicts ravishing humankind throughout history have been misunderstanding and ignorance. To set focus on the apparently endless need for mediating between conflicting values to promote peace and implement change in the surrounding world, I return to the early decades of the Cold War, when—much like today—simplified cultural polarisations were utilised to aggravate political tensions. For an organisation reaching its teenage years in the midst of the early, heated and ideologically defined stages of the Cold War, tackling the dreaded consequences of the lack of knowledge and understanding specifically between East and West came to be of key importance. For UNESCO, the division of the world into the East and the West was not defined by the geopolitical realities of the time. Instead, the border between the two was a cultural one. “The promotion of mutual understanding between East and West has been adopted by Unesco as a Major Project. The emphasis, during the current period is mainly on enhancing understanding of the East in countries of Western civilization,” a UNESCO proposal for conducting a Survey of Asian Films from 1957 declares (UNESCO 1957b). Film “can efficiently serve to promote an understanding of these countries,” it continues. In 1950, it was estimated that around 44 per cent of the world’s adult population was illiterate, and UNESCO was well aware of this (UNESCO 1957c). Thus, turning to film as a means of spreading information and ideas between East and West was both smart and practical.

Consequently, in 1959, UNESCO together with the British Film Institute (BFI) published a catalogue of films produced in UNESCO’s Eastern Member States titled *Orient. A Survey of Films Produced in Countries of Arab and Asian Culture* to contribute to a better understanding between the Eastern and Western halves of the world. The catalogue became a means of educating, enlightening and influencing the general public. Through a reading of the catalogue with an emphasis on the actors involved in the project, I argue for the necessity of studying UNESCO not only as a reflector of sociopolitical shifts, currents and developments, but as an active, and perhaps surprisingly agile, contributor to the construction of the world system. Within a framework of a value-based understanding of

the English School conceptual contribution combined with theories of propaganda and their relationship with the cultural mission of UNESCO, this article provides an inquiry into the persuasive powers UNESCO possesses. The negotiation processes resulting in the publication of the catalogue were no exception in the world of UNESCO. Rather, they were merely an early manifestation of the peculiar problems UNESCO still continues to face. They serve as a reminder that the ideological background is not the only defining factor that has followed the organisation through the decades—the negotiations and clashes between the organisation’s cultural approach and political engagement have also played their part since the outset.

Approaching the catalogue project as peace propaganda, I suggest UNESCO aimed to manifest itself as a form of international society built on the ideals of peace, understanding and solidarity. I understand peace propaganda to be about *the conscious, coherent process of employing techniques of persuasion by any media available in order to unite people behind the ideal of peace*. The purpose of turning to propaganda as a methodological approach is to focus on both the process and the idea behind the acts of propaganda, to conceptualise UNESCO as a political actor, and to shed light on the underlying tension of the interplay of ideology, power and politics in the UNESCO context. This approach will provide the means to address the organisation’s aspirations towards a peaceful world not as an unattainable dream of a better world, but as concrete endeavours towards a world finally free of the horrors of war. But how on earth were they planning to achieve such a goal through something as seemingly meaningless as a film catalogue?

### **Propaganda as a Method of Inquiry – The English School and the Mediation of Values**

What is perhaps considered a more classic definition of the concept of international society, is a later elaboration by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (1984:1): “[A] group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.” While this definition is very handy in the sense that it clarifies the coexistence of the Hobbesian system element and the Grotian level of order as socially constructed, it lacks the reference to values made in Bull’s earlier definition, even though some form of a common identity or ideology could be seen to function as a basis of common rules, institutions and interests. As values are of specific interest to my discussion, I will take as a starting point Bull’s original understanding of the concept.

For Bull, society was constituted through a diversity of political practices: international law, the balance of power, diplomacy, the great powers and war. These primary institutions are built around shared understandings, but they can also be seen to be institutionalised in international organisations. As Bull himself hesitantly noted, the part international organisations play in the maintenance of order in world politics is an important one, and one best understood in terms of their contribution to the working of what he defined as the basic institutions. The role of these organisations, Bull argued, should not be approached in terms of their aims and aspirations, let alone through the hopes projected onto them. However, one could argue that these are precisely the factors

which define the shape of the contribution by a given organisation to the maintenance of the basic institutions. Despite the limited amount of attention given in Bull's theory to international organisations, the emphasis on the dual challenge of not only managing power, but also mediating between conflicting values allows us to draw a direct connection with UNESCO. UNESCO does not aim to establish itself as a form of world government or a universal authority above the state level, nor does it have the means to do so. Instead, it aims to position itself as a balancing mediator between conflicting interests and a constructor of shared values in an international system defined by the lack of an unchallenged authority above the state—in other words, international anarchy as defined by G. Lowes Dickinson (1916). UNESCO's actual powers of enforcement are not much to speak of, and thus the organisation aspires for a position of a moral force in global politics (Singh 2010). In the context of UNESCO, it thus all boils down to the question of possessing and exercising the power to move actors by persuading them what is right and what is wrong. As E.H. Carr (1939:120) reminded us at the wake of World War II: "Power over opinion is not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power [...] The art of persuasion has always been a necessary part of the equipment of a political leader."

Johan Galtung (1996:2) defines this as a form of cultural power, which legitimises certain acts and structures while delegitimising others, thus distinguishing it from political, economic and military power. Following Joseph S. Nye (1990, 2004:x), this could also be understood as an expression of, or a claim to, soft power: The idea that there exist instruments of power rooted in one's ideological and cultural appeal, which promises "a way to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion." In the case of UNESCO, the main difference between these two frameworks lies in the focus on attraction versus persuasion. While it is not entirely clear whether Nye sees attraction as a natural objective experience or a social construct (Mattern 2005:591), there is no doubt that persuasion comprises a conscious process of conversion and enticement. Indeed, as is evident in the UNESCO Constitution (1945:Preamble), its strategy is based on its suggested ability to actively influence attitudes and opinions: "That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." To clarify the conceptual map used here, the persuasion-influence-power continuum is understood in a simple, instrumental manner: influence as a mechanism of power, and persuasion as the act of influencing.

The idea of influencing opinions lies at the heart of politics. Power over opinion is also the basic principle behind a concept tying together the questions of power, influence and persuasion: propaganda. More importantly, propaganda functions as a tool for constructing and spreading values. While definitions of propaganda are as varied as those attempting to define it, one common denominator is an agreement that propaganda is concerned with influencing opinions. As the United Nations specialised agency with a mandate to promote the free flow of ideas by images and words, addressing UNESCO as an organisation engaging in propaganda might seem farfetched, for it is precisely the free flow of ideas and information we normally accuse propaganda of restricting. This conception is largely labelled by a modern understanding of the term. Writing about persuasion in the sense of rhetoric, Plato already approached the topic with reservation in his early criticism. In *Gorgias*, he contrasted the art of persuasion with philosophy, the art

of truth, positioning the former as morally unacceptable (Plato 380 B.C.E.). Modern understandings often follow this approach to propaganda as an ultimately negative endeavour, closely tied with power, politics and the ultimate evil: war. In modern usage, propaganda is a nasty word. It is biased; it is evil; it is unfair. No wonder then, that we do not often see the words UNESCO and propaganda in the same sentence.

Propaganda might be an age-old practice (see e.g. Taylor 2003), but as a concept, it has its roots in the Roman Catholic Church. As a response to the threat to the spiritual unity of Europe posed by the Reformation, a commission of cardinals was established to spread Catholicism in heathen lands. In the seventeenth century, the commission was made permanent as the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Holy Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) (Welch 2014). Propaganda as a word is derived from the Latin *propagare*, the gardening practice of planting shoots to reproduce new plants—thus one implication of the sense in which the Roman Catholic Church used the term was that spreading ideas this way was a cultivated dispersion to “lead the heathen from darkness into light” (Brown 1963:10–11). The term was soon applied to any organisation spreading a doctrine; then it came to be applied to the doctrine itself; and finally to the methods employed in putting the dissemination into force (Welch 2014). The latter sense is how we understand the term in modern usage.

Film has been linked with propaganda since its outset (Reeves 1999), and the connection has also drawn attention in the UNESCO context. As Suzanne Langlois (2016:76) phrases it, “propaganda for peace, education and international cooperation” has been a defining characteristic in UNESCO’s approach to cinema since the early years of the organisation. Following Langlois, the Orient project’s aims are analysed here through peace propaganda. “The propaganda of peace is the work of a variety of social forces through a range of media and cultural forms, and its purpose is to bring society, culture or nation behind a core idea or principle, in this case, the promise of peace and its economic dividends after decades of conflict,” as defined in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process (McLaughlin & Baker 2010:11). While a rather well-functioning definition, this formulation does not address the global level as a possible target, nor does it mention individuals—it addresses people as collectives or social units. As UNESCO specifically aims to address the minds of men and does it on a worldwide scale, this definition requires some massaging. Combining this with Philip Taylor’s (2003:7) definition of propaganda as “a deliberate attempt to persuade people, by any available media, to think and then behave in a manner desired by the source” helps to address these issues and to emphasise propaganda as an ethically neutral concept. It also sets focus on propaganda as a process, again reminding us of the connection between propaganda and rhetoric, but in the likewise neutral Aristotelean sense—as the ability to detect the available means of persuasion in any given situation (Aristotle 350 B.C.E.:Book 1, Part 2).

Building on the definitions by Taylor, and McLaughlin and Baker combined with the Aristotelean approach, peace propaganda in the UNESCO context is understood here as the conscious, coherent process of employing techniques of persuasion by any media available in order to unite people behind the ideal of peace. Like Taylor’s, the focus of this definition is on the process of propaganda, but also on the idea behind the acts. In addition, this definition does not suggest that the ones targeted are merely passive



recipients—they can also become active participants involved in the production and dissemination of ideas, ideologies and values. It also steers away from two widely held misconceptions as distinguished by David Welch (2014): The belief that propaganda serves only to change attitudes and opinions, and the assumption that propaganda operates only through lies and falsehoods. The definition used here instead leaves room for the option of enhancing existing ideas and ideologies and recognises the possibility of several levels of truth, be they subjective or taken out of context. Propaganda thus becomes merely an instrument, a means to an end. Following this line of reasoning, peace propaganda can be harnessed to function as a methodological approach for a quest to uncover the motives and the means behind the construction of UNESCO's international society.

### **Modern beyond Its Means—The Construction of a World Order According to UNESCO**

During the Cold War, art and culture became one of the key instruments of propaganda, utilised to aggravate tensions through simplified cultural and ideological conceptions. The Cold War was a new type of a conflict, a war over hearts and minds, although labelled by the underlying fear of a nuclear war. Within the context of the “communication revolution,” the propagandists on both sides attempted to sell their own ideological truth not only to their own citizens, but to the whole world (Welch 2014). Instead of falling into an outright panic over the ideological muscle bulging between the two superpowers, UNESCO took a wider approach, while the intensifying Cold War polarisation called for the organisation to put its strategies to the test like never before. Recognising the urgency of increasing mutual appreciation between the East and the West, UNESCO's 9<sup>th</sup> General Conference decided to authorise a ten-year-long Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values to promote intercultural relations (UNESCO 1956). The project opened up a space for Asian and Arab states to present their cultural values as both equal to and distinct from their Western counterparts (Wong 2006, 2008), placed focus on the questions of cultural unity and cultural diversity (Maurel 2010), and marked the development of UNESCO to a truly worldwide forum of intercultural dialogue, initiating an ongoing discussion of the nature of intercultural relations within the UNESCO context (Huttunen 2017). It was within this frame that the Orient catalogue project was initiated.

The Orient catalogue is in two parts. Part one introduces 139 feature films suitable for festival screening from the following 13 countries: Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Malaya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, the United Arab Republic and the U.S.S.R.. Part two includes 209 documentaries and short films for television distribution, covering a wider collection of countries than part one: Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Malaya, Morocco, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Thailand, Turkey, the United Arab Republic, the U.S.S.R. and Viet-nam. Even though the core of the catalogue is the films themselves, what is of interest here is the way the contents are framed. The context the films are placed in is created through the one-and-a-half page introduction to the catalogue, which explains how the films have been selected and how they should be looked at. The introduction also tells us about the three key actors behind the catalogue project: UNESCO, the British Film Institute and the National Commissions for UNESCO.

UNESCO was founded in November 1945 as a part of the attempts to reconstruct the post-war world transitioning from war to peace. UNESCO came into existence as a result of a firm belief that the origins of World War II lay in a grotesque perversion of basic human values, “the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men” (UNESCO 1945:Preamble). A new order of peace in the world was to be built on mutual understanding and a better knowledge of each other’s lives; assuming that removing ignorance and prejudice will automatically eliminate war itself. Much had, however, changed in the decade following the organisation’s founding. The Korean War broke out in the summer of 1950, leading to a painful realisation that wars were not a nightmare of the past after all, and testing people’s faith in international organisations dedicated to the promotion of peace. Nevertheless, during its first decade, UNESCO almost doubled in size, suggesting that not all hope was lost. The expansion of UNESCO, resulting from decolonisation, along with abandoning the political divisions of World War II through the admission of Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany in the first half of the 1950s, brought about a heterogenisation of the organisation. Questions of mutual understanding and appreciation became ever more topical. The geographical areas previously closed to UNESCO were now open, but the world had slipped deep into the Cold War ideological polarisation. With these developments, the questions of peace would have to be addressed with deeper determination than ever before.

The officially stated aim of the catalogue has UNESCO written all over it:

The aim of the Survey is to stimulate the presentation of films which might give audiences in the West a fuller and more informed idea of the ways of life of Eastern peoples. With this end in view a selection has been made from among many thousands of films, of those which best illustrate significant aspects of life, feeling or thought in their country of origin and have outstanding technical and artistic qualities. (Holmes 1959)

The basic idea behind the catalogue as clarified in this quote was to set focus on culture as both a possible source of conflict and a solution to it: In a sense, seeing in cultural distinctiveness—made visible through creative expressions—the possibility of a common culture. It seems UNESCO’s understanding of culture here is two-fold and slightly problematic: On the one hand, it serves as a means of promoting mutual understanding; on the other hand, it has a broader, normative and constitutive sense with aspects of the social embedded in it. A common culture is also a distinguishing feature of international society, an aspect generally approached with deep suspicion among IR theorists. Yet, what exactly is understood by both the concept and its significance to world order is slightly unclear. The catalogue’s approach to culture as a way of life bears significant resemblance to Bull’s (1977:64) understanding of the concept: “By a society’s culture we mean its basic system of values, the premises from which its thought and action derive.” In the culture-as-a-way-of-life sense, the catalogue thus separates the world into two major societies—the Eastern and the Western— suggesting that the idea of an international society resting upon a specific shared culture could all too easily be cast aside.

As one of the founding representatives of the English School, Martin Wight (1977:33), put it, “[w]e must assume that a states-system [referring to an international society] will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members.” Thus, action

needs to be taken to remedy this shortcoming detectable in the introduction. To bridge the gap between the two culturally defined societies of differing values, the catalogue aims to replace ignorance with knowledge, and misunderstanding with understanding by attacking harmful stereotypes and misrepresentations. We don't need to dig very deep to see that in the UNESCO context, the terms understanding and misunderstanding carry a lot of meaning. "[I]gnorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war" and so the UNESCO Member States aim "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" (UNESCO 1945:Preamble). Misunderstanding and ignorance for UNESCO are evidently the root causes of war and conflict, whereas understanding and knowledge are the road to peace. Thus, the basis of an international society according to UNESCO must be a shared culture constructed on the fundamental, universal value of peace. As Bull (1977:316) points out, all the historical manifestations of an international society have had as one of their foundations a common culture, be it an intellectual one facilitating communication or one built on values, reinforcing a sense of common interests. In the case of UNESCO's vision, both of these aspects had a part to play.

Henry Cassirer steered the project at the UNESCO end. He was the first director of UNESCO's department of Mass Communications and ran the department for nearly two decades. For Cassirer, the new forms of media were instruments of social change, education and development (The Guardian 2015). Even though direct action, such as knowledge transmission through different forms of media, textbook translations, and international conferences, has been one of UNESCO's prominent working methods, the ways they wish to change the world are of a rather ideologically profound nature (UNESCO 1950). Cassirer's approach to mass media as not only an indicator but a contributor to social development thus made him a very fitting person to tie together UNESCO's ideological aspirations with the practicalities of the real world, and to safeguard UNESCO's goals during the project. In addition to overseeing the project, Cassirer was in charge of the negotiations with the BFI and assisted with communicating with the National Commissions for UNESCO in the Member States concerned.

The second key actor is the British Film Institute, a charity governed by a Royal Charter. An agreement with an outside organisation was to be contracted to "[a]scertain which are the best films to illustrate the civilisation and contemporary work of individual Asian Member States of Unesco" (UNESCO 1957a). After negotiations stretching over several months, a contract was signed with the BFI, the main role of which was to prepare the catalogue. According to the initial agreement, UNESCO was to pay the BFI £1050 to compile the catalogue (£350 for part one and £700 for part two)—about £23,700 in current value (This is Money.co.uk n.d.). On top of this, UNESCO agreed to an additional payment for including the U.S.S.R. in the catalogue half way through the project after some confusion about whether or not the Soviet Union was to be categorised as an Eastern country. The BFI was founded in 1933, following a recommendation made by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films. The Commission reported that: "A film has a national conception and an international life. [...] No nation which produces films

and no nation which imports films produced by others can afford to ignore the cinema, and any society of nations such as the British Empire or the League of Nations must look on the cinema both as an international force and as an international problem" (Quoted in Druick 2007:36). As Zoë Druick notes, in the early years, there clearly was a nationalistic and imperialistic aspect to the BFI's mandate (ibid.). But of course, a lot had happened since 1933, most notably the collapse of the British Empire, which then called for a change of direction. Since 1948, the focus of the Institute has been on encouraging the development of the art of film and on fostering public appreciation and study of it.

During the project, James Quinn as the director of the BFI handled most of the communications with UNESCO. Known as a true cinema aficionado, he is credited as a key architect in the development of the BFI. He established the London Film Festival and during his tenure, 1955–64, the National Film Theatre was built and the regional film theatres system sponsored by the BFI was created. James Quinn was well aware of the geopolitical realities that framed the times of the catalogue project: "A film cleared for television distribution in the West today might be withdrawn for political reasons tomorrow," he explained his proposal for changing the wording of "available" and "cleared" for television to "films suitable for Television" based on more than just legal and technical matters (UNESCO 1958d). Quinn's correspondence also reveals an unwavering attitude towards the quality of cinema and an occasionally poorly concealed disappointment in having to compromise his vision. For example, Pakistan was nearly left out of part one, as the quality of their feature film production was not seen to be good enough for the catalogue (UNESCO 1958a). This was agreed by both the BFI and the Pakistani High Commissioner in London. Later on, it was suggested that it might, in fact, be a preferable option to include "bad Pakistani films" in the catalogue instead of not including any (UNESCO 1958b). The final publication includes four feature films produced in Pakistan. It was noted that because countries not featured in the catalogue would undoubtedly, in the future, be producing films of high enough quality to be screened abroad, the publication should be brought up to date from time to time.

Mrs. Winifred Holmes of the British Film Institute took on the task of compiling the catalogue in practice, although being aware that the process might be prolonged as "it is a common experience not to get replies from these oriental countries 'at least for a long time, sometimes if ever'" (UNESCO 1958a). She was also in charge of writing the introduction to the catalogue, but her narrative choices proved a source of some controversy. An early draft version of the introduction referred to a "surprising number of films of the very highest quality." UNESCO's Department of Mass Communications pointed out that the "reference 'to the surprisingly' high quality of Oriental films had a somewhat condescending flavour" (UNESCO 1959), and the controversial word was deleted.

Some of her personal opinions seem to have nevertheless slipped through the editing net: "Beauty of photography — a marked characteristic of these short films — is sometimes spoilt by inferior scripting and presentation, making the film a surface record rather than a true interpretation. Sometimes a well-meaning desire to reform has marred the fresh vision of the film and loaded it with a heavy commentary of facts and figures. On the other hand there are many films which, however simple their techniques, produce a thrill of direct experience and comprehension, and touch the senses and the heart as well as the mind."

(Holmes 1959). The critical tone might be explained by the fact that Winifred Holmes herself was a filmmaker. Born in 1903, she was raised in India and had previously worked as a journalist, writer and poet. Her film career took off in the 1950s and she made more than a dozen documentaries in the U.K., Afghanistan, Nepal and the West Indies. Perhaps for this reason, her criticism is only directed at the documentaries in the catalogue. Later on, she became an advocate of women's rights in the Middle and Far East as the chairman of the Women's Council (The Times Digital Archive 1995).

Even though the film-makers behind the contents of the catalogue are spoken of in the introduction with both criticism and praise, their voices are only heard filtered through Holmes' interpretation and thus they regrettably will only be mentioned here briefly. As both UNESCO and the BFI seemed unwilling to assist the potential screeners with obtaining the films, the contact information of the distributors was to be included in the descriptions. The catalogue was distributed in 3,000 copies to organisations such as the National Commissions for UNESCO, television stations, film distributors, national federations of film clubs, and film critics. Along with the film-makers, a number of other actors thus helped the catalogue to reach its goals, shedding light on the fact that UNESCO was well aware of the role individual people, commercial actors and NGOs had to play.

Thus, the nation states form merely one, although significant, level of actors within the complex apparatus that is UNESCO. The role of non-state actors is not the only factor widening the scope of the construction of a world according to UNESCO. The catalogue project clearly aims to inspire hope in people's minds that war or peace are not only something decided by governments, but something that can be influenced by people's own attitudes and understandings of each other and their world. One of the most significant principles on which the whole existence of UNESCO is based, is stated in its Constitution: Sustainable peace must be founded "upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind," which in turn can only be achieved through mutual understanding (UNESCO 1845:Preamble). This doctrine, while admirable although gloriously abstract in nature, paradoxically carries with it the same exact problem it is fighting to solve. More importantly, the moral solidarity of mankind quite promptly shifts the focus beyond the confines of the state.

Thus, one might be inclined to inquire whether the concept of an international society is actually adequate to grasp the nature of the world order UNESCO was aiming to establish. The English School theory provides another conceptual option for including non-state actors into the inquiry: that of world society. As Bull (1977:22) noted, the states system is merely one part of the world political system. According to him, the fundamental and primordial units of world order are, in fact, individual people, leading him to conclude that order among mankind as a whole is something wider than and morally prior to order among states. By a world society, Bull understood a sense of common interests and values in addition to a degree of interaction linking together all parts of the human community (ibid. 279). The concept of world society thus is to universal social interaction what the concept of international society is to the international system of states.

For Bull, the universal society of all mankind only existed as an unrealised idea — although one to strive for — perhaps to do with a sceptical approach to the existence of shared values of a truly communal nature. As discussed by Barry Buzan (2004:63), there is another way of understanding the concept. This is to use world society as an umbrella term incorporating and ultimately superseding international society, or even as an ontology opposed to statism, as defined by R.J. Vincent (1978, 1986) and his followers. Buzan (2004:90–119) notes that one of the most significant underlying conceptual dyads within the discourse of international society and world society is whether or not the distinction between the state and non-state levels is what defines the difference between the two. For Buzan, three types of units are in constant play: states, transnational actors and individuals. His understanding of the interaction between the three key units or domains forms the basis of his definition of world society: The concept of world society labels situations in which none of the three domains is dominant over the other two, but all are in play together.

For Buzan, the distinction between state and non-state as a feature of analysis must be maintained. This division cannot be dismantled because the primacy of the state must not be ignored. This is also the case in the UNESCO context: The third and final actor distinguishable in the introduction is the National Commissions. The National Commissions are Member State coordinating and advisory bodies to their national governments, and form a unique feature in the UN system. Set up by their respective governments following Article VII of the UNESCO Constitution, the Commissions were initially entrusted with consultation and liaison tasks. The selection process of the films reflects UNESCO's role as essentially an organisation of Member States since the National Commissions had the final say. As the introduction explains, in some cases “the National Commission for UNESCO in the Member State concerned has asked for a film to be withdrawn because it considered it as not representative, as untrue to its country's ideas or way of life” (Holmes 1959). These requests were respected and, as a result, some films which otherwise might have been included were left out. For the National Commissions then, the catalogue apparently functioned as a platform for national image building.

Without deeper thought, it would be easy to address UNESCO as a purely political product, an instrument for the nation states. However, it is questionable whether a direct parallel can or should be drawn between the National Commissions and the nation states they represent. One of the key points that needs to be taken into account in this assessment is the fact that the Commissions consist of individual people, whose interests cannot be assumed to be confined by the state borders — let alone their identities. While the network of National Commissions mainly acts for the purpose of associating their governmental and non-governmental bodies with the organisation and pursues tasks set by their governments, they also function to provide a network of intellectual communities across borders and link the organisation to civil society (UNESCO 2002).

Interestingly, even though the primary actors within the UNESCO system are its Member States, international society in the UNESCO sense is not merely the traditional understanding of a society of nation states. UNESCO presses us to place focus on the role that culture and shared moral ideas play in the construction of an international society. More importantly, it sets focus on the fact that international society as a functional concept

presupposes elements of a world society. As the role of actors beyond the states level needs to be taken into account, the idea of international society in the UNESCO context needs to be understood in a wider and more diverse sense—encompassing actors beyond the state. Thus, UNESCO, as a framework for an international society, can be understood in terms of Barry Buzan's (2004) conception of the idea: An international society indicating situations in which the basic political frame of the international social structure is set by the states-system, while individuals and transnational actors are given rights by states within the order defined by international society in the traditional sense.

To summarise, we can distinguish three major motives at play in the introduction to the catalogue: First, it functioned as a platform for national image building for the Member States; second, it was to promote the art of film; and third, it was to promote UNESCO's objectives to build the foundations of peace in the minds of men through providing information and educating, and to influence opinions accordingly. UNESCO, then, comes across as both a political actor and a platform for political action. The sometimes contradicting aims actually brought about a change in the direction the catalogue was steered towards:

It is true that in the beginning we made the stipulation that films should be chosen for, or shown at, a festival. This was because our understanding was that the Survey was to be highly selective and only films of the best quality included in it. [...] When we realised that a rather wider frame of reference was conceived by UNESCO, follow-up letters to all the countries concerned were sent, in which it was made clear that we were interested not only in festival films but also in films which had enjoyed a large box-office success and films of historical interest. (UNESCO 1958c)

To underline the nature of the negotiation process as labelled by contradicting aims and differing preferences, we need to take a brief look at the selection criteria of the films. The films were primarily chosen based on three criteria: (1) They have been shown or received awards at recognised international film festivals; (2) They have enjoyed box-office success and wide distribution in their own countries; or (3) They are of historical importance in the development of the art of the film in the country concerned. This list is clearly a combination of the aims of UNESCO, the BFI and the National Commissions. The negotiations between UNESCO and the BFI are crystallised in a draft version: "In other words, the basic criteria applied in the selection of films was whether the film contributed to a better appreciation of the Orient and whether it was a good film." As was made clear throughout the process, the BFI was mainly concerned with the quality of films, recognising the value the art form holds on its own, while UNESCO's focus was on the instrumental value of the medium as a means of promoting understanding on the one hand and battling against misunderstanding on the other.

While the aims of the BFI and the National Commissions are clearly acknowledged, in reality UNESCO's aims completely overpower those of the others: There is one, tiny sentence in the introduction that could be used to overrule any choice of film made based on the three criteria. Films dealing with "sources of international misunderstanding" were automatically left out no matter how good or popular they were (Holmes 1959). A draft version clarifies what exactly was meant by this: "In keeping with the spirit of the Survey,

films dealing with recent wars and other sources of international misunderstanding have been omitted. Similarly, films which for other reasons seemed incompatible with the aims of the Survey have not been included, regardless of their box-office success.” The BFI tried to assume “general responsibility for the selection of films”, but this statement did not make its way into the final version. The catalogue was, first and foremost, a UNESCO project, and it was its ideologically constructed value base that was to be spread through the catalogue. UNESCO’s international society was to be one of peace, understanding and solidarity, based on a profound belief that these are unquestionable, foundational social values.

## Conclusions

It could be argued that through the catalogue project, UNESCO aimed to conceptualise the organisation as a manifestation of an international society as a way of building sustainable peace—never mind the fact that they did not yet have the word at their disposal. The trick to conceptualising UNESCO through a non-existent term lies in the distinction between a word and a concept. Following Quentin Skinner (1989:7–8), a concept might exist before we have a word to express it. Like we have seen, the idea was there even if the word was not, and thus the two cannot always be equated. Read against the background of UNESCO’s constitutionally manifested principles, the catalogue project demonstrates that UNESCO’s focus is not on what *is* or even what *could be*. Instead, the organisation functions on the basis of what *should* or *must be*. What should be, is a world order built on the solidarity of mankind, reminding us again of the overlapping nature of the international and world senses of society in the English School conceptual triad. Moral solidarity of mankind as a road to peace is to most of us an indefinitely distant, unachievable dream. For UNESCO, however, it is a pragmatic goal, achievable through addressing and eliminating not merely the acts of war, but its root causes. Bull, like UNESCO, saw the goal of peace as one of the elementary, primary and universal goals of an international society sustained by a pattern of international activity, forming the basis of international order. Bull did not approach the goal of peace—in the sense of establishing a permanent, universal peace—as a goal seriously pursued by the international society. For UNESCO’s international society this, however, is a key priority.

The word peace itself does not appear in the introduction to the catalogue and the exact nature of the term remains slightly hazy. While unarguably a significant line of inquiry, a more detailed discussion of the conception of peace as the driving force behind the catalogue project must remain beyond the scope of this article. However, a brief glance is in order. Does it refer to the absence of violent conflict and war? This would make sense considering that the intensifying Cold War ensured an ever-present threat of the situation escalating into an armed conflict. But war and peace are not absolute antonyms. This type of an understanding would lead to a situation where they are only definable in relation to each other, peace meaning merely the absence of war and vice versa. For everyday usage of the terms, this simplification may be useful, but for an organisation aiming for sustainable peace, understanding the process of achieving it to be simply eliminating war would not be a fertile starting point. Perhaps, the puzzle could be solved by turning to the conceptual binary of peace propaganda. The goal of war propaganda is not war as such, but creating a culture that legitimises and justifies the acts of war or violence—a process of



dehumanising the enemy “so they can be killed without guilt” (Zur 1991). To put Johan Galtung’s (1996:6, 96) terminology to good use, war propaganda constructs and maintains a culture of violence. Likewise, the goal of peace propaganda is not peace itself, but creating a culture of peace. This idea can be extended not only to cover the idea of harmony of interest and ideology in the world implying an integrated community or “the moral solidarity of mankind,” but also to address the integral issues of cultural pluralism within the UNESCO system.

Good intentions or even common values are, however, perhaps not enough. The emergence of an international society might require an additional shared motivation. Cynthia Weber (2005:53) suggests that the actual uniting factor might be fear—be it humankind uniting out of fear of an alien attack or, in this case, the fear of another great war. However, following Bull, the possibility of war would not equal the emergence of an international society. The basis of one is shared values, and fear of one another can hardly be labelled as such. Instead, the key might be the construction of a common enemy. War propaganda aims to unite people against a shared enemy, and peace propaganda is no different. The catalogue insists that the hostilities and polarisations of the past were to be set aside, so that the peoples of the world could unite against an enemy far more dangerous. The catalogue is clearly a call to arms, aiming to unite the peoples of the world in a battle against ignorance, prejudice and misinformation—all of them worthy opponents to attack, although slightly more abstract than a concrete, physical enemy. The idea echoes faith in the fact that there can exist some sort of a community of moral solidarity who will hear their appeal. This might, in fact, be where the source of UNESCO’s power lies: Hope manifested through their practical implementations of a new vision of humanity unified on the basis of shared ethical understandings of right and wrong. As Richard Ned Lebow (2005:557) might phrase it, while “might often makes for right,” “right can also make might.”

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