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# THE UNESCO UNVEILED

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UNRAVELLING  
CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY  
& CHINA'S CURRENT  
INFLUENCE

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## 1. Introduction

UNESCO, short for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency of the United Nations. Established in 1945, its fundamental purpose is to promote international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication.

Ij-Reportika presents to you a comprehensive report on the which aims to shed light on the organization's intriguing past and its current controversies, providing an in-depth analysis of key areas of focus.

In recent times, the relationship between UNESCO and China has been a subject of growing interest and scrutiny. Chapter one examines the dynamics of the UNESCO-CHINA alliance, encompassing various aspects such as increased funding, the presence of Chinese personnel in top management roles, the controversial blockade of Taiwan's participation, and the alleged rewriting of history to suit China's narrative. Moreover, we analyze China's rising influence within UNESCO and the ensuing reactions from other global players, most notably the USA, as they gear up to counter China's actions within the organization. Additionally, we explore the controversies surrounding the publication "The UNESCO Courier" and UNESCO's handling of intangible cultural heritage, particularly the inclusion of Sowa Rigpa and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Chapter two takes a deep dive into UNESCO's tumultuous history, unearthing significant controversies that have shaped its reputation over the years. We scrutinize UNESCO's involvement in conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine dispute, the Palestinian youth magazine controversy, and the Islamic University of Gaza controversy. Furthermore, we investigate instances of corruption within the organization and explore the contentious issue of the New World Information and Communication Order. The report also delves into UNESCO's role in mediating the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, assessing the challenges faced and the outcomes achieved.



## 2. The UNESCO-CHINA Alliance



Figure 1 The Silk Road Programme of UNESCO

China has been increasing its influence in UNESCO in recent years. This is evident in a number of ways, including:

### 2.1 Increased funding

China is now the largest contributor to UNESCO's annual budget, providing **around \$65 million**. This gives China a significant say in how UNESCO's resources are allocated.

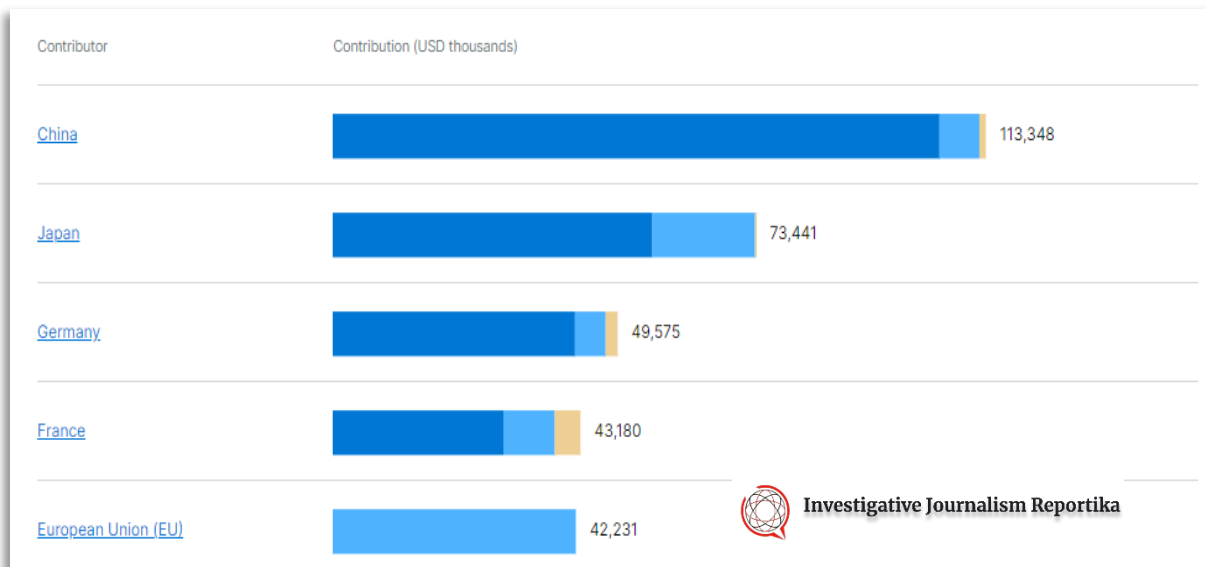


Figure 2 Top Contributors to UNESCO (Source : <https://www.unesco.org/>)



## 2.2 People in top management

China has **several people in top management positions** at UNESCO, including Xing Qu, who is the deputy director general. This gives China a strong voice in decision-making at the agency.

### Mr Xing Qu | Deputy Director-General - DDG

Mr Qu served as Assistant President of CFAU where he was responsible for the organization of teaching at the University. He was Permanent Representative of China to the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China**, where he managed Chinese cooperation with BIE and coordinated preparations for the World Expo2010 **Shanghai China** (Expo 2010). At the same time, as Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr Qu served as Minister at the Chinese Embassy in France. He was responsible for bilateral affairs and administration of the internal functioning of the Embassy. He also supervised the Permanent Delegation of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO.



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*Figure 3 Mr. Xing Qu, DDG UNESCO*

**Qian Tang:** Qian Tang is the President of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education. The International Bureau of Education is a specialized agency of UNESCO that is responsible for promoting education around the world. Qian Tang has been a strong advocate for China's educational policies in UNESCO. She has worked to promote China's experience in education and to ensure that China's voice is heard in the organization's decision-making process.



*Figure 4 Qian Tang, President of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education*

**Zhang Xu:** Zhang Xu is the Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of China to UNESCO. He is responsible for representing China's interests in the organization. Zhang Xu has been a strong advocate for China's cultural heritage in UNESCO. He has worked to promote China's World Heritage sites and to ensure that China's voice is heard in the organization's decision-making process.

### **2.3 Blockade of Taiwan**

China has consistently blocked **Taiwan's attempts to become a member of UNESCO**. This is seen by many as an attempt to **undermine Taiwan's sovereignty**.



## Taiwanese shut out of UNESCO events

**SCIENCE CONFERENCE:** China has become powerful within UNESCO, and it is shameful to see the organization constricting Taiwanese scientists, a member of a think tank said

By Lu Yi-hsuan and William Hetherington / Staff reporter, with staff writer



Taiwanese are to be excluded from participating in all UNESCO-affiliated events, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) has confirmed, sources said yesterday.

The confirmation came after Taiwanese researchers — some at institutions abroad — had their applications to join a conference last month rejected.



The ICTP — an organization run jointly by the Italian government and UNESCO — is holding a virtual conference on quantitative biology, which began on Monday last week and runs until Friday next week.

“China has grown quite powerful within UNESCO, especially post US withdrawal under Trump. Shameful to see UNESCO further constricting not just Taiwan as a government, but individual scientists, as part of the PRC’s political agenda,” he wrote on Twitter on Thursday, referring to the People’s Republic of China.

Citing another researcher, Sullivan wrote that Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) has also been influencing archeology through UNESCO “as a way to tell the whole world a good story of Chinese history.”

Meanwhile, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on Tuesday published its annual report, whose Chapter 5 outlined concerns about Chinese encroachment on Taiwan and laid out recommendations for US action.

The commission recommended that the US secretary of state report on actions planned and taken by the US government to counter Beijing’s isolation of Taiwan, and to “strengthen support for Taiwan’s engagement with the international community, including [outlining] actions the administration will take should Beijing increase its coercion against Taiwan.”

Figure 5 Blockade of Taiwan in UNESCO (<https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/12/07/2003748256>)

## 2.4 Rewriting history of China

Although a number of sites in Taiwan have been proposed for the World Heritage Sites, interference from **China has prevented any site on the island from being listed.**

UNESCO has also tried to set a narrative against Hong Kong and Taiwan by undermining their current status. **Ij-Reportika discovered that UNESCO has published several articles and reports mentioning them as parts of China.**



## The Overseas Chinese: A long history



China, after India and Mexico, accounts for the largest number of people who have left their home countries to migrate elsewhere. The history of Chinese immigration, marked by successive waves, dates back to the opening of the ancient maritime Silk Road.

From 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, to the late 1970s, large-scale migration was no longer permitted. The tide of overseas Chinese immigration that had continued for more than 300 years was interrupted.

A third wave of new Chinese migrants started in the 1980s, and was an integral part of the surge of global migration. The majority of migrants came from mainland China, but also from **Taiwan**, and **Hong Kong**. They moved mainly to industrialized countries – the top destination for overseas Chinese at the time was the United States.

*Figure 6 Controversial articles by UNESCO*

### 2.5 China's influence in the recent times

The following are some examples from UNESCO's official website that illustrate China's influence in the organization:

- **In 2018**, China hosted the **40th session of the UNESCO General Conference**. This was the first time that China had hosted the conference since 1980.
- **In 2019**, China launched the "**Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue**" initiative, which is a UNESCO-led project to promote cultural cooperation along the ancient Silk Road.





- **In 2020**, China was elected to **the UNESCO Executive Board** for a four-year term.
- **In 2023**, the United Nations celebrated Chinese Language Day on April 18 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. The theme of 2023 event, **“Chinese Wisdom for a Green World,”** reflected China’s growing influence in the multilateral body.

Vice Minister of Education and Director of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO Chen Jie in the event emphasized the importance of **Chinese as a medium for China to participate in international cooperation** and its positive role in promoting cultural exchange and people-to-people connections.

During the event, China’s Permanent Representative to **UNESCO, Yang Jin, highlighted the importance of the Chinese language** in international cooperation and cultural exchange. **Tawfik Jelassi**, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, emphasized that Chinese is not only a language but also a window into unique ways of thinking, culture, history, and centuries of civilizational exchange.

**French writer Nicolas Idier** mentioned that the French government places great importance on **Chinese language education**, with over 40,000 French middle school students learning Chinese between 2022 and 2023.

## **2.6 USA gearing up to counter China in UNESCO**

The Director-General of UNESCO, **Audrey Azoulay**, gathered representatives of the Organization’s 193 Member States to inform them that the United States of America had officially notified her of its decision to rejoin UNESCO in July 2023, on the basis of a concrete financing plan. According to our experts, **U.S. intends to rejoin UNESCO in bid to counter China's growing influence.**



China hopes the decision of the United States to rejoin UNESCO will be a responsible move designed to support multilateralism and international cooperation, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Wang Wenbin told the media. Wang told the press that the United States has withdrawn from UNESCO twice, which has had a negative impact on UNESCO's work. **"International organizations are not public parks. Countries can't just come and go as they please."**

## 2.7 Controversial Publication: The UNESCO Courier

Created in 1945, The UNESCO Courier magazine states its mission to **"promote UNESCO's ideals, maintain a platform for the dialogue between cultures and provide a forum for international debate"**. UNESCO has been accused of publishing its Courier, with a bias towards promoting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's interests. The magazine's content consistently emphasizes the benefits and positive aspects of the BRI while downplaying or overlooking potential concerns or criticisms. Through articles, interviews, and opinion pieces, the Courier portrays China's involvement in the BRI as a catalyst for economic growth, infrastructure development, and connectivity, often presenting a narrative that aligns with China's strategic goals



Figure 7 The UNESCO Courier promoting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's interests



Following are some of the controversial pages from the **UNESCO Courier** publication: **Tales of Silken Times**.

**“**  
**From China, knowledge of paper, printing, gunpowder, cast iron, the crossbow, the magnetic compass and porcelain was disseminated throughout the world via the Silk Roads**  
**”**

**WIDE ANGLE**

## Tales of silken times

First coined in the 19th century, the term “Silk Road” refers to a much more ancient reality, dating back to the first exchanges between China and the Roman Empire. Beyond their purely commercial dimension, these maritime and land routes, which enabled the spread of ideas, knowledge and religions, remain an invaluable source of exchange and cooperation.

**Peter Frankopan**  
*Professor of Global History, Oxford University, Peter Frankopan has authored numerous books, including “The Silk Roads: A New History of the World” (2015). He is a professor of the Silk Roads Studies at King’s College, Cambridge (United Kingdom).*

**“**  
**The Tang dynasty (618–907) was a time of great expansion in shipbuilding and maritime trade**  
**”**

**WIDE ANGLE**

## Sea, silk and sutras

Many stories tell of the exchanges between ancient **China** and other countries along the “**Silk Road**” which wound across the deserts of central Asia. Little is known, however, of the seafaring exploits which also made such commercial and intellectual exchanges possible for over 2,000 years.

**The UNESCO ARCHIVES Courier**

**Rinnie Tang**  
*Ethnologist at the Musée de l’Homme, Paris, she was responsible for the organization of an exhibition on Chinese cave paintings held in Paris in 1983.*

**Pierre Colombel**  
*Specialist in cave paintings at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; he is at present attached to the Musée de l’Homme, Paris.*

Figure 8 Controversial pages from the UNESCO Courier publication



## 2.8 Intangible Cultural Heritage

**UNESCO established** its lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage with the aim of ensuring the better protection of important intangible cultural heritages worldwide and to create awareness of their significance. It aims to draw attention to the importance of safeguarding intangible heritage. **Following UNESCO's 2003** Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:









- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
- Performing arts
- Social practices, rituals and festive events
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- Traditional craftsmanship

The article 36 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage([Link](#)) states that **“The State encourages and supports the citizens, legal persons and other organizations to set up display premises and inheritance premises for intangible cultural heritage and exhibit and inherit the representative items of intangible cultural heritage in accordance with the law.”**

China's expanding influence and keen interest in intangible cultural heritages raise concerns about the underlying motivations and potential consequences. As China takes center stage in promoting and safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage, there are apprehensions about the prioritization of political and economic gains over genuine **cultural preservation**.

Critics argue that China's efforts in this domain are primarily driven by a desire to assert **dominance, enhance its global image, and extend its soft power influence**. By strategically leveraging its cultural heritage, China aims to shape narratives, control the discourse, and gain a greater say in **UNESCO**.



RANK	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ELEMENTS INSCRIBED BY UNESCO
1	 China	43
2	 France	26
3	 Japan,  South Korea	22
5	 Spain,  Turkey	20
6	 Croatia,  Italy	18

*Table 1 Countries with most Intangible Cultural Heritages*

This growing influence enables China to manipulate the understanding and recognition of intangible cultural heritages, potentially sidelining other diverse and equally valuable cultural expressions from around the world. Furthermore, China's active involvement in ICH can lead to the **commodification of cultural practices, dilution of authenticity, and the erosion of local traditions in the pursuit of economic gains**. Such concerns cast doubt on China's true intentions and raise questions about the long-term impact of its growing influence in the realm of intangible cultural heritage.

### 2.9 Inclusion of Sowa Rigpa in ICH:

The inclusion of Sowa Rigpa, a **traditional Tibetan medical system**, in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has sparked a controversy that intertwines with the **longstanding conflict between Tibet and China**. Tibetans and Buddhist communities in the Northern part of India view Sowa Rigpa as an integral part of their cultural heritage, developed and practiced in those areas for centuries. However, China, which considers Tibet as an integral part of its territory, claims ownership over Sowa Rigpa and its



associated knowledge. **China's efforts to promote Sowa Rigpa** within its borders and internationally have been criticized by **Tibetans** and India and some international observers as a means to assert control over Tibetan cultural expressions and undermine Tibetan sovereignty.

This controversy reflects the larger conflict between Tibet and China, where **Tibetans often feel their cultural heritage is being appropriated and exploited for political purposes**. Critics argue that China's involvement in promoting Sowa Rigpa allows it to present a sanitized version of Tibetan culture while downplaying the political and human rights concerns surrounding Tibet.

## Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa, knowledge and practices concerning life, health and illness prevention and treatment among the Tibetan people in China



China



Inscribed in 2018 ([13.COM](https://www.unesco.org/en/ich)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa is a practice developed by the Tibetan people as part of a life view based on the five elements and a view about health and illness centered on three dynamics (Lung, Tripa and Pekan). In Tibetan, 'Lum' indicates the traditional knowledge and practices of bathing in natural hot springs, herbal water or steam to adjust the balance of the body and mind, ensure health and treat illness. Influenced by the Bon religion and Tibetan Buddhism, Lum embodies folk experiences in illness prevention and treatment, and reflects the transmission of traditional knowledge represented by the Gyud zhi treatise (the Four Tantras) in present-day health practice. Bearers and practitioners include farmers, herdsmen and urban residents in Tibetan areas, with the Manpa (physician), Lum Jorkhan (pharmacist) and Manyok (assistant) bearing special responsibilities for its transmission. The element plays a key role in improving health conditions, fostering a social code of behaviour and promoting respect for nature. It has been transmitted over the generations through daily life, religious rituals, folkloric activities and medicinal practices, and has also been incorporated into the curricula of modern medical colleges as a complement to formal education.



© Department of Culture of Tibet Autonomous Region, 2017

Figure 9 Inclusion of Sowa Rigpa in ICH



## 2.10 Inclusion of TCM in ICH:

According to our previous reports, the inclusion of **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** list has stirred controversy due to various concerns. Our findings have highlighted instances of animal cruelty associated with TCM manufacturing, particularly concerning the abusive practices in animal farms such as bear bile extraction. The treatment of animals, specifically bears, in these farms has been deemed inhumane, raising ethical questions about the welfare of animals involved in TCM production.

Additionally, our previous reports have questioned the **efficacy and scientific basis of TCM**, highlighting the lack of robust evidence and scientific scrutiny supporting its claims and treatments.

Moreover, we have shed light on allegations suggesting that China has exerted influence over the **World Health Organization (WHO) to include TCM in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** list, raising concerns about potential political interference in global health policies. These findings continue to drive discussions surrounding the ethical implications and scientific validity of TCM practices within the context of its inclusion in the ICH and the WHO's recognition.

Here are our previous reports on the same:

- China controls the multilateral bodies and academia to expand TCM : <https://ij-reportika.com/china-controls-the-multilateral-bodies-and-academia-to-expand-tcm/>
- The Ruthless animal cruelty by the TCM proponents : <https://ij-reportika.com/the-ruthless-animal-cruelty-by-the-tcm-proponents/>
- Severe Health Impacts of the Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM) : <https://ij-reportika.com/severe-health-impacts-of-traditional-chinese-medicines/>



## Acupuncture and moxibustion of traditional Chinese medicine

China



Inscribed in 2010 ([5.COM](#)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Acupuncture and moxibustion are forms of traditional Chinese medicine widely practised in China and also found in regions of south-east Asia, Europe and the Americas. The theories of acupuncture and moxibustion hold that the human body acts as a small universe connected by channels, and that by physically stimulating these channels the practitioner can promote the human body's self-regulating functions and bring health to the patient. This stimulation involves the burning of moxa (mugwort) or the insertion of needles into points on these channels, with the aim to restore the body's balance and prevent and treat disease. In acupuncture, needles are selected according to the individual condition and used to puncture and stimulate the chosen points. Moxibustion is usually divided into direct and indirect moxibustion, in which either moxa cones are placed directly on points or moxa sticks are held and kept at some distance from the body surface to warm the chosen area. Moxa cones and sticks are made of dried mugwort leaves. Acupuncture and moxibustion are taught through verbal instruction and demonstration, transmitted through master-disciple relations or through members of a clan. Currently, acupuncture and moxibustion are also transmitted through formal academic education.



© Institute of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 2009

Figure 10 Inclusion of TCM in ICH





## 2.11 World Heritage Sites

The influence of China on the World Heritage Sites list of UNESCO has raised significant concerns, bringing to light various issues. One issue of contention is the potential impact of China's political influence and national interests on the selection and recognition of certain sites.

Questions arise regarding **the objectivity and impartiality of the list**, as it should prioritize the universal value and significance of these sites rather than **geopolitical considerations**.

Additionally, criticism has been directed at the inclusion of specific sites in China, with concerns about inadequate conservation practices. **Instances of hasty development, improper restoration, or insufficient protection of cultural and natural heritage have fuelled these concerns**. It is essential to promote greater transparency, rigorous evaluation processes, and a commitment to cultural and natural preservation principles to ensure the credibility and integrity of UNESCO's endeavours in safeguarding global heritage.

**Protected heritage sites: China has 56 sites** on the UNESCO World Heritage List, making it the second most protected nation in the world, after Italy. This gives China a significant say in how UNESCO's heritage protection policies are shaped.

Country	Number of World Heritage Sites
UK	33
Mexico	35
India	40
France	49
Spain	49
Germany	51
China	56
Italy	58

*Table 2 Countries with most Protected Heritage Sites*



In 2015, UNESCO awarded the World Heritage status to the "Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor". This decision was controversial because it included parts of the **Xinjiang region**, which is home to the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority group that has been subjected to cultural repression by the Chinese government. Critics argue that UNESCO's decision legitimized China's treatment of the Uyghurs.

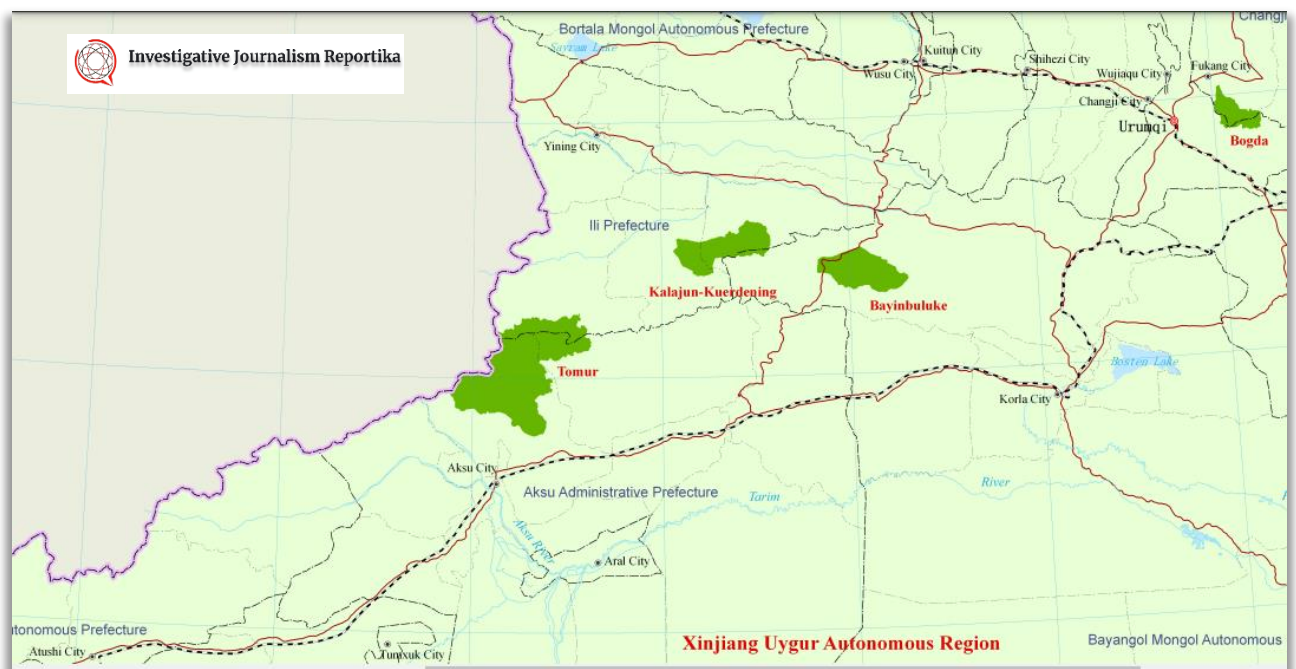


Figure 11 Protected Sites in the Xinjiang Region

## 2.12 Double standards on Press Freedom

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has been criticized for having double standards on press freedom. On one hand, UNESCO celebrates World Press Freedom Day, which is an annual event that honors the fundamental principles of press freedom. **On the other hand, UNESCO is a member of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA),** which includes the **Xinhua News Agency**, a state-run news agency in China that has been accused of censorship and propaganda.

Critics argue **that UNESCO's membership in OANA is hypocritical**, given its commitment to press freedom. They point out that Xinhua News Agency has



been accused of suppressing news that is critical of the Chinese government, and that it has been used to spread disinformation and propaganda.

**UNESCO has defended its membership in OANA**, arguing that it is important to engage with all sides in order to promote press freedom. However, critics argue that UNESCO's membership in OANA gives legitimacy to a news agency that is not committed to press freedom.

The issue of **UNESCO's double standards on press freedom is a complex one**. However, it is clear that there is a need for UNESCO to be more transparent about its relationship with OANA and to take steps to ensure that its membership in OANA does not undermine its commitment to press freedom.

Reference : World Press Freedom Day, 3 May each year, to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the press as a basic human right and as crucial components of any healthy, democratic and free society.



Figure 12 Double Standards on Press Freedom By UNESCO



## OANA

The Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) was founded in Bangkok on December 22, 1961 at the First General Assembly of Asian news agencies on the initiative of UNESCO. Organization was formed to secure direct and free exchange of news between the news agencies of a region inhabited by more than one half of the world's population. The Asia-Pacific countries account for 56 percent of world gross product, some 50 percent of its trade turnover, over 60 percent of its maritime and nearly 25 percent of air transport volume. The world's largest financial reserves and science-intensive technologies are concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region. At present OANA brings together 44 news agencies from 35 countries. OANA members are responsible for two-thirds of information circulated throughout the world.

## XINHUA

- . Head : President of Xinhua News Agency - Mr. Fu Hua
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- . Website : <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english>

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- . Founded in 1931
- . OANA member since 1981
- . Provides text news, photos, charts, audio, visual products. Provides economic information service to government bodies and enterprises. Publishes over 20 newspapers and magazines. Runs TV network China Xinhua News Network Corporation and think tank New China Research.
- . Over 12,000 employees
- . Has 181 overseas bureaus, including seven overseas regional bureaus (Hong Kong, Brussels, Cairo, Nairobi, New York, Moscow, Mexico City)
- . News serviced in seven languages (Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese). Multimedia news serviced in eight countries (Japan, Italy, Indonesia, Thailand, Pakistan, Germany, Republic of Korea, Turkey) in their native languages.

Figure 13 Xinhua News Agency a member of OANA (Source : <https://oananeews.org/content/historical-background>)



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U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

Counterintelligence and Export Control Section

Washington, DC 20530

May 18, 2020

**Via FedEx**



Investigative Journalism Reportika

Zhou Xiaozheng  
Director/Chief Correspondent  
Xinhua News Agency North America  
1540 Broadway, 44th Floor  
New York, NY 10036

Re: Obligation of Xinhua News Agency North America to Register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act

Dear Mr. Zhou:

Based upon the information reviewed by this office, we have determined that the North American Bureau of the Xinhua News Agency (“Xinhua North America”), which is an affiliate of the Beijing-based and state-owned Xinhua News Agency (“Xinhua”), is obligated to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, 22 U.S.C. § 611 *et seq.* (“FARA” or the “Act”). Xinhua North America’s obligation arises from its engagement in political activities within the United States as well as its actions in the United States as a publicity agent and as an information-service employee for Xinhua, the Communist Party of China, and the People’s Republic of China, each of which is a foreign principal under the Act.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 14 US Dept of Justice concerns about Xinhua News Agency (Source : <https://www.justice.gov/nsd-fara/letters-determination/xinhua/download> )



## 3. The Controversial Past

### 3.1 Israel-Palestine

UNESCO has been criticized for its handling of the **Israel-Palestine conflict**. In 2011, UNESCO voted to **grant full membership to Palestine**, a move that was condemned by **Israel**. UNESCO has also been accused of bias against Israel in its **World Heritage listings**. For example, in 2012, UNESCO inscribed the **Old City of Hebron**, a site that is holy to both Muslims and Jews, **as a Palestinian World Heritage site**. Israel objected to this decision, arguing that it did not reflect the shared religious significance of the site.

### 3.2 Palestinian youth magazine controversy

In February 2011, an article was published in a **Palestinian youth magazine** in which a teenage girl described **one of her four role models as Adolf Hitler**. In December 2011, UNESCO, which funded the magazine, condemned the material and subsequently withdrew support.

## Unesco cuts funding for Palestinian youth magazine over Hitler praise



Unesco, the UN's cultural agency, is to pull funding for a Palestinian youth magazine that published an article suggesting admiration for Adolf Hitler.

*Figure 15 UNESCO funded magazine called Hitler a role model*

### 3.3 Islamic University of Gaza controversy

The decision by UNESCO to create a chair in the fields of astronomy, astrophysics, and space sciences at the **Islamic University of Gaza in 2012** sparked debate and criticism. Israel attacked the school in 2008, claiming that they **store and develop weapons** there, a claim Israel reiterated in response to Israel's criticism of UNESCO's action.



## B'nai Brith slams UNESCO affiliation with Gaza University

Decision to establish chair at Hamas-linked college 'legitimizes an anti-Semitic institution'

*Figure 16 Hamas linked Islamic University of Gaza controversy*

Asserting that "**the Islamic University is a purely academic university that is interested only in education and its development,**" the head, Kamalain Shaath, backed UNESCO. Nimrod Barkan, the Israeli ambassador to UNESCO, was prepared to write a letter of protest along with details concerning the institution's affiliation with Hamas, a terrorist organization.

### 3.4 Corruption

UNESCO has also been indulged in many cases of **corruption**. In 2016, it was revealed that the organization had **paid millions of dollars in bribes to secure World Heritage status for certain sites**. This scandal led to the resignation of the UNESCO Director-General, **Irina Bokova**.

### 3.5 New World Information and Communication Order

The **NWICO** was a set of proposals put forward by developing countries in the **1970s and 1980s** to reform the global information and communication order. The proposals called for a more equitable distribution of information resources, greater participation of developing countries in the international media, and the establishment of a new international order that would ensure the free flow of information.

The NWICO was met with strong opposition from developed countries, who argued that it would undermine the freedom of the press and the free flow of information. The debate over the NWICO eventually fizzled out, but the issues it raised remain relevant today.



One of the main criticisms of the **NWICO** was that it would lead to censorship and the **suppression of dissent**. Critics argued that the proposals would give governments too much control over the flow of information, and that this would stifle freedom of expression.

Another criticism of the **NWICO** was **that it was unrealistic**. Critics argued that it was impossible to achieve a truly equitable distribution of information resources, and that the proposals would simply lead to more conflict between developed and developing countries.

During the 1970s and 1980s, UNESCO's supported NWICO and it was perceived **as a platform for communists and Third World dictators to attack the West**. In 1984, **the United States withheld its contributions and withdrew from the organization in protest**, followed by the **United Kingdom in 1985**. **Singapore withdrew also at the end of 1985**, citing rising membership fees. Following a change of government in 1997, the UK rejoined. The United States rejoined in 2003, followed by Singapore on 8 October 2007.

### 3.6 Kurdish–Turkish conflict

**Zülfü Livaneli, a poet and human rights advocate from Turkey**, resigned from her position as Turkey's sole UNESCO goodwill ambassador on May 25. The primary cause of this was state of human rights in Turkey and the devastation of the ancient **Sur quarter of Diyarbakir, the biggest city in southeast Turkey, amid combat between the Turkish army and Kurdish insurgents**.

To preach about peace while staying silent about such transgressions, according to Livaneli, is in direct opposition to the core principles of UNESCO.





## 4. Conclusion

Over the years, the influence of China and other countries on UNESCO has given rise to controversies, accusations, and even the withdrawal of nations like the USA from the international body. China's influence, in particular, has raised concerns about the objectivity and independence of UNESCO's decision-making processes, with allegations of political motivations and biases. To ensure a more democratic and impartial approach, UNESCO needs to address these concerns. Transparency in operations, especially in matters like the selection and evaluation of World Heritage Sites, is crucial to alleviate suspicions of undue political influence. Additionally, diversifying the leadership and decision-making bodies within UNESCO, reducing the dominance of specific countries, can help mitigate the disproportionate influence of any single nation. By fostering an environment that promotes open dialogue, values diverse perspectives, and upholds principles of human rights and cultural diversity, UNESCO can enhance its credibility and free itself from undue influence. Such steps are necessary to preserve and promote cultural heritage, foster global peace, and uphold UNESCO's mission on a truly unbiased and inclusive platform.