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THE UNESCO: POLITICS OF WITHDRAWAL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

International Organizations may be viewed as the institutionalized expressions of shared consciousness that in an age of growing interdependence national interests would be best served through some multilateral mechanism for facilitating international cooperation. While international institutions tend to develop certain degree of corporate interest and pursue some common objectives, in the ultimate analysis they serve as instruments of foreign policies of member States. Therefore, they also reflect the diversity of purposes and viewpoints prevailing among national governments.

The twentieth century is said to be the century of global international organizations. The two devastating Wars created demands for supra-national organizations that would oversee and ensure the maintenance of global peace and security. A revolution in communication system made inter-governmental gatherings easy to arrange. On the other hand, disintegration of colonial empires has increased manifold the number of nation-States and reinforced their new nationalism. Hence super-nationalism did not come in any form of world government, because nationalism was too strong and universal to yield any adequate degree of sovereignty to a central body. Rather, official supra-nationalism came in patches from the fact of functional interdependence and the need to concede a degree of authority to participatory institutions in a multitude

of activities, such as, health measures, trade, economic and technical aid, the movement of ships and aircraft, refugees and so on.¹

But functionalism on which the proliferation of specialized agencies in post-war years was based tended to isolate excessively the specialized and technical functions of the individual organizations from some of the more political and general goals of the United Nations. However, in the 1960s this dichotomy became more subtle as people began to speak of 'peace-maintenance' and 'peace-building' and from 1970s onward the difference was gradually blurred. The work of the UN system in the area of socio-economic development, including human rights and decolonization, was recognized as a peace-building effort and as an indispensable complement to the political maintenance of peace and security.²

In fact, an area of activities which uses up more than 80 percent of the human and material resources of the UN system cannot but be of great political significance. The functions of the Specialized Agencies do not take place in a vacuum; they involve the determination of commonly agreed upon goals, the allocation of resources and a decision-making process, all of which represent problems of policy choice. This naturally brings into play the interests and motivations of the member States with differing political and economic 'weight', resulting often in the failure of articulation of collective interests. This has produced frustrations, widening gaps and serious setbacks in implementation of the goals of the UN organizations. In fact, there has been a trend towards polarization, both of power and purpose, in most of the international organizations including the Specialized Agencies.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is very much a case in point where contradiction in

1. T.B. Miller (ed.), *Current International Treaties* (London and Sydney : Croom Helm, 1984) p. 93.
2. Mahdi Elmandjra, *The United Nations System : An Analysis* (London : Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 319-20.

goals among the member states finally crystalized into withdrawal from the Agency by some members, such as, the US, the UK and Singapore. The US and Britain allege that the UNESCO in its current goals and operations has gone away from its original purposes and constitutional competence. How far is this true? Or, are there other motivations that guided their withdrawal? What are the prospects of a US comeback to the UNESCO? These are some of the queries the author of the present paper intends to deal with. The first part of the paper makes a brief review of the objectives and directions of the UNESCO activities. The second part analyses the issues of controversy in the UNESCO. Finally, the third part attempts to bring out the implications of withdrawal from UNESCO and makes some observations on the prospects of US return to the UNESCO.

I

‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.’

This celebrated remark by the American poet Archibald McLeish opens the Preamble to the Constitution that set up the UNESCO forty years ago on 4 November 1946, the day that the 20th State ratified the Constitution. The above remark sums up the *raison d’etre* of the Organization whose preamble further adds :

‘A peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind’.

With such a conception of peace, the purpose of the Organization has been defined by its founders to “contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education,

science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of race, sex, language or religion."³

More than four decades have passed since then. The membership of the UNESCO has increased from 28 only in 1946 to 161 in early 1980s. Together with great changes in the world, UNESCO has also changed, specially in terms of expansion of its activities aimed at adapting to the new realities. Let us have a brief stock of the functions of UNESCO activities which usually take three forms.

International Intellectual Cooperation

UNESCO plays an invaluable role in stimulating, organizing and promoting the exchange of knowledge and comparison of ideas by specialists from all over the world. Apart from the work of its professional staff, UNESCO cooperates regularly with the National Commissions and international federation of scientists, artists, writers and educators, many of which owe their existence to UNESCO. It convenes conferences and meetings of experts on a regular basis on issues of topical significance. It offers fellowships and scholarships to scientists and researchers worldwide. It also publishes a wide range of general and specialised works, making UNESCO today one of the leading publishers in the world. The Constitution of UNESCO lists the preparation of international Conventions and recommendations among the seven functions of the General Conference. Till 1986, the Organization had adopted 57 instruments of normative kind including the Convention on Copyright, the Convention on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Cases of Armed Conflict, various Conventions on the recognition of higher education courses and degrees and the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice.

3. *Constitution of the UNESCO*, Article I (1)

4. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations, United Nations*, Vol. 1 (New York and Toronto : Worldmark Press Ltd, 1976), p. 103.

Operational Assistance

Over the last two years only (1984-85), UNESCO has carried out more than 1000 operational projects in about 100 countries with a cost of some \$200 million.⁵ That sum came from its own funds and above all, from resources contributed by other cooperation agencies. These projects stimulate and support the member States' own efforts by providing them with the benefits of intellectual cooperation and the material resources under its disposal. With the help of UNESCO expertise, these projects are concerned with the teaching of functional literacy to workers in development undertakings, teacher training, establishing of libraries and documentation centres, provision of training for journalists, radio, television and film workers, improvement of scientific and technical education, safeguarding the historical monuments and the international exchange of persons and information.

Promotion of Peace

Among the abiding objectives of the Organization, the construction of a just and lasting peace and the promotion of respect for human rights which are the two complementary aspects of the same responsibility, are of fundamental importance. In this, UNESCO has devoted its Major Programme XIII on Peace, International Understanding, Human Rights and the Rights of Peoples. A meeting on 'Philosophical Reflection on Peace in the Present World Context' took place in December 1985 and its conclusions were to be published in 1986 in the 'UNESCO Year Book on Peace and Conflict Studies'. Four studies were also carried out under contract with the International Social Science Council on factors conducive to peace within UNESCO's fields of competence.⁶ The ongoing activities of

5. UNESCO Office of Public Information, 1946-1986: *Forty Years of Intellectual Cooperation*.
6. Report of the Director General, *UNESCO 1984-85* (Paris: UNESCO, 1986), p. XXIII.

UNESCO concerning Human Rights and Peace include three major projects: first, definition of human rights, norms and action and study of socio-economic and cultural conditions for the promotion of human rights; second, development of human rights' teaching and third, peace research, concentrating on obstacles to disarmament.⁷

Let us now have a look at the sector-wise UNESCO activities and their directions.

Education : It is the number one priority sector in all of UNESCO activities. Table-I shows that this sector gets 53.7 percent and 26.8 percent of the funds from UN sources and other extra-budgetary sources respectively. The Major Programmes II (Education for All), IV (The Formulation and Application of Education Policies) and V (Education, Training and Society) are directly devoted to this sector. UNESCO has an overall policy of regarding education as a lifelong process. A major UNESCO goal presently constitutes the eradication of illiteracy and providing minimum education for all illiterates including children and adults of the World. With this end, major projects on eradication of illiteracy are already in operation in the regions of Latin America and Caribbean and Africa. A similar project was scheduled to be undertaken during 1986-87 for Asia and the Pacific. Under Major Programme IV, each year UNESCO sends expert missions to member States on request to advise on all matters concerning education and education policies. In building the infrastructures for education system, UNESCO puts priority to the rural regions of developing member countries.

Science : The purpose of the activities under the Major Programme VI (The Sciences and their application to development) is to strengthen international intellectual cooperation and to support national research and training efforts in all spheres of the natural sciences, the social and human sciences and the engineering and technological sciences. In terms of allocation of UNESCO funds, the sector gets

7. Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

second priority (Table-I). UNESCO activities in this sector can be divided into three levels: international, regional and subregional, and national.

Table-I

Percentage Distribution of Programme Expenditure by UN Funds and Extra-Budgetary Sources During 1984-85 (in percent)

Sector	UN Source	Extra-Budgetary Source
1. Education	53.7	26.8
2. Natural Sciences	30.3	17.3
3. Social and Human Sciences	5.4	0.7
4. Culture	3.9	37.3
5. Communication	2.0	13.4
6. General Information Programme	4.2	2.1
7. Others	0.6	2.3

Source : Report of the Director General, *UNESCO* 1984-1985. p. 31.

In the field of Natural Sciences and Technology, UNESCO has over the years set up various forms of inter-governmental cooperation, such as, the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB), International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) etc. Another programme, UNISIST ensures worldwide cooperation in the field of scientific and technological information. In the field of Social and Human Sciences, since 1976 the programme has been expanded to ensure strengthening of national and regional institutions, the conceptual development of the social sciences and their applicability in socio-economic analysis. The programme on the application of social sciences to mankind's development problems relates to environmental and population issues, and it lays stress upon the study of the socio-cultural bases to the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO).

Activities of UNESCO related to women in societies under Major Programme XIV (The Status of Women) correspond to three objectives that were set for the UN Decade for Women, namely: promotion of equality, their participation in development and their contribution to peace. Youth programmes are also underway in cooperation with member States and international non-governmental organizations.

Culture : The main idea underlying the Major Programme XI (Culture and the Future) is the recognition of the equal dignity of all cultures and of the fundamental importance of cultural identity. The need to take the latter into account has, among other things, fostered the notion of 'endogenous development'. The progress of any society must give priority to the use of its own resources, one of which is its culture in the broadest sense of the term. An established programme of UNESCO now investigates cultures of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Arab World. In another programme, translations of important literary works of the world are well underway. UNESCO is currently conducting 29 campaigns to safeguard architectural monuments and historic sites.⁸ Table-I shows that although UN sources contribute 3.9 percent of its funds to this sector, extra-budgetary sources allocated 37.3 percent of its funds to the field of culture in 1984-85.

Communication : UNESCO's Major Programme III (Communication at the Service of Man) aims at fostering a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information among individuals, communities and countries, and focuses on the role of mass media in furthering international peace and understanding. UNESCO cooperates with member States, particularly in the developing countries, in strengthening their communication systems and for this purpose executes a number of programmes both in individual countries and at the regional levels. Since 1976 a series of regional intergovernmental conferences on communication problems has been organized under UNESCO auspices which contributed in great measure

8. UNESCO Office of Public Information, *op. cit.*

to the demands raised for a new information order by the Third World. In 1977 UNESCO set up a sixteen-member International Commission with Mr. Sean MacBride of Ireland as its President for the Study of Communication Problems, whose final Report 'Many Voices, one World' was published in June 1980. The basic considerations in the Report were to provide a framework for the development of a new information and communication order. At the 21st General Conference in October 1980 a "New World Information and Communication Order" (NWICO), including plans for an international code of journalistic ethics and for the 'licensing' of journalists, was approved. Following the approval of NWICO, the Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was established in 1981 and since then, a total of 148 projects were undertaken out of the IPDC Special Account.⁹

II

Having made a short survey of the objectives and directions of UNESCO activities, we take up the issues of controversy that presumably led to the withdrawal from the Organization notably by its two premiere founder members, the USA and UK. The USA, in fact, was having a tense relationship with UNESCO since the early 1980s because of often lonely disapproval of some UNESCO programmes by the former. But observers seem still not convinced about the underlying reasons behind the US pullout.

Reports suggest that there was split even within the US Administration about the withdrawal issue. It is reported that George Shultz was asked to sign the notice of withdrawal (on 28 December 1983) three days after the US Ambassador to UNESCO, Edmund Hennelly, had testified before the US National Commission for UNESCO that his main objectives as Head of the US delegation to the UNESCO General Conference in November 1983 had been accomplished. The Conference had been, among, he says "the least

9. Report of the Director General, *op. cit.*, p. XI.

politicised and the most constructive from the US point of view in recent history. Israel's credentials were not challenged, anti-Israeli rhetoric was omitted or non-existent, Soviet peace propaganda was contained and the debate on Grenada represented a plus for the United States".¹⁰ A US Citizens' Group established by Congress to monitor UNESCO had urged the government not to pull out, attributing the insufficiency of UNESCO reforms in part to America's delay in spelling out wanted changes.¹¹ The Third world countries, NAM and the OIC have also urged the US to stay and initiate reforms in the Agency from within. The West European group in the UN was also puzzled by the US decision and agreed that urgent reforms were required in UNESCO to prevent further defections. Similarly in November 1984 when Britain planned to give the necessary one year's notice of withdrawal, a group of Commonwealth High Commissioners asked Britain to remain a member, arguing that this was the best way to bring about changes.¹² But the major founder members of the UNESCO—USA and Britain went ahead with their withdrawal policy. In his notice of withdrawal dated 28 December 1983 to the Director General of UNESCO the US Secretary of State stated :

For a number of years, as you know from statement we have made at the Executive Board and elsewhere, we have been concerned that trends in the policy, ideological emphasis, budget and management of UNESCO were detracting from the Organization's effectiveness. We believe these trends have led UNESCO away from the original principles of its constitution. We feel that they have served the political purposes of member states, rather than the international vocation of UNESCO.¹³

10. *South*, March 1984, p. 34.

11. *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1985, p. 32.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Communication from the Secretary of the United States of America Concerning the Withdrawal of the United States of America*, 28 December 1983.

It is evident that the above statement contains the essence of the charges that have been labelled against UNESCO and its functions during the last few years. Let us scrutinize them below:

1. One of the major charges against UNESCO is that it has been overly politicized through inclusion of and giving undue attention to issues of ideological nature which serve only "the political purposes of the member States." The West is dissatisfied with the underlying thrust of the Major Programmes III and XIII where studies on communication and peace, disarmament and human rights have been included. In UNESCO debates wide divergence surfaced on these issues.

In order to trace the reasons behind politicisation of UN Agencies including the UNESCO, one is to understand that they are inter-governmental organizations. The original text of the UNESCO Constitution, however, stipulated that "the members of the Executive Board shall exercise the powers delegated to them by the General Conference on behalf of the Conference as a whole and not as representatives of their respective governments."¹⁴ This provision was modified in 1954 at the initiative of the US government after which every member of the Board was required to represent the government of the State of which he is a national. The Board which was first composed of "independent personalities of the intellectual world on whom the founders of UNESCO had wished to confer the greatest possible freedom of opinion and action vis-a-vis their governments thus lost one of its fundamental characteristics".¹⁵ This is what introduced polemics in UNESCO debates, which were often highly politicised. Delegates of member States who sometimes express opposing viewpoints indeed endeavour to gain acceptance of those positions best serving national interests.

Besides, a distinction should be made between the viewpoints expressed by UNESCO's individual member States or groups of

14. *Reply of the Director General of UNESCO to the Communication from the US Secretary of State*, 18 January 1984.

15. *ibid.*

member States and the activities of the Organization itself, whose role dictates that it should transcend particular ideologies. This has been recognized at the 22nd General Conference by Edmund Hennelly, Head of the US delegation, who recalled that "this distinction between what we as governments discuss, and what we expect this Organization to do, is a critical one, too often neglected."¹⁶ Although there is provision that decisions shall be made by a simple majority of votes present, except in cases in which two-thirds majority is required by the constitutional provisions, since 1976 the vast majority of decisions was reached by consensus, that is by all the states represented.¹⁷ Therefore, there is hardly any possibility of UNESCO serving any interests other than those of the community of member States as a whole.

As a matter of fact, the terms of reference of UNESCO are such that the political aspects of a number of subjects within its mandate cannot be ignored. The United Nations, ILO and UNESCO are the three organizations within the UN system whose activities in the area of international norms and standards are regulatory as well as

Distinction should be made between viewpoints of individual member States and that of UNESCO in so far as the latter transcend particular ideologies

normative in the political and sociocultural sense. This fact comes out very clearly from the content analysis of the programmes of the UN system—these are the only three organizations which have specific activities under the heading of 'Human Rights'.¹⁸ And these issues are very much political in nature which is reflected naturally in UNESCO debates and its decision-making process. Robert Cox maintains that "The international economic and social agencies

16. Cited in *ibid.*

17. *ibid.*

18. Mahdi Elmandjra, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

present a field for the study of the political processes and political consequences of international organization—and this despite the recurrent proclamation by leaders in these organizations that they eschew politics and with only to get ahead with their technical tasks.”¹⁹ Therefore, the politicisation process itself cannot be regarded as something negative. What is required is to avoid undue polemics over political aspect of any issue which often the member States don't do, thus holding the common ground in abeyance.

2. It is said that UNESCO has established hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, specially a free press and individual human rights. It may be recalled that the consensus decision that approved the establishment of a NWICO included the US and all other Western nations. But the Western press and media executives began a campaign against the NWICO that its proposals would infringe press freedom through putting the press and newsmen under government control.

But the principles of a NWICO are not intended for curtailing press freedom. One has to comprehend that free press is not the same thing as free flow of information, as free trade is not same as free movement of goods. Free press is a concept, an ideal, whereas what Western news agencies mean by free flow of information is nothing but a commercial proposition. Agency information or news is a commodity or service which is provided at a price determined by a transnational cartel of news agencies. It is therefore important to distinguish between a free press and the business of supplying information for understanding the UNESCO concept of a NWICO.²⁰

What UNESCO, in fact, wants through the NWICO is to redress the problem of imbalance in the flow of information between the North and the South and curtail the domination of Western news agencies in this flow—85% of all news and information circulating

19. Robert Cox (ed.), *International Organization : World Politics, Studies in Economic and Social Agencies* (London : Macmillan, 1969), p. 44.

20. *South*, August 1981, p. 6.

around the world originates from the industrial nations. Studies show that 80% of this material reflects Western points of view.²¹ It may be mentioned that only two US news agencies possessed the wherewithal to receive, edit and pour down more than 30 million words a day, enough to submerge the entire press in the Third World, whereas all the latter's news agencies could put together no more than 200,000 words a day.²² The Director General of UNESCO states, "what UNESCO is after is not censorship but equilibrium in the circulation of information...all peoples have the right to inform others about what they think. In one word, freedom is not monopoly, it is pluralism."²³ The MacBride Commission concludes that the implementation of the NWICO is "an on-going process of change in the nature of relations between and within nations in the field of communications. Imbalances in national information and communication systems are as disturbing and unacceptable as social, economic, cultural and technological, both national and international disparities. Indeed, rectification of the latter is inconceivable in any true or lasting sense without elimination of the former."²⁴

The UNESCO and its leadership are fully aware about the lack of press freedom in the developing countries, where the governments do not inform the people properly and the bogey of destabilisation is often used as an alibi to throttle press freedom. UNESCO, therefore, shares the responsibility to work for the establishment of a free press in the Third World. "UNESCO is the only institution that can do this without being accused of serving the interests of the enemies of the Third World countries," says the UNESCO Director General.²⁵ In a meeting in July 1981 in Cameroon with Ministers of Information he stated: "you cannot ask for the creation of

21. Interview of the UNESCO Director General, *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1985, p. 31.

22. *South*, November 1981, p. 11.

23. Interview of the UNESCO Director General, *op. cit.*

24. Report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, *Many Voices, One World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), p. 254.

25. *South*, November 1981, p. 11.

conditions which will redress the current imbalance in the field of communication without looking at the state of information in your own countries. You cannot legitimately ask for a free and balanced flow of information at the international level while denying this at a national level."²⁶ UNESCO is concerned that Third World journalists lack adequate training who often publish information from Western agency despatches without any check or evaluation. That is why, every year the Organization finances fellowships and training programmes to a good number of Third World journalists.

The notion that UNESCO had compromised individual human rights deserve some scrutiny. The US General Accounting Office (GAO) in a report in 1984 on UNESCO claimed that the agency had injected into some of its programmes "statist concepts emphasising rights of States rather than individuals."²⁷ But there are reports suggesting that UNESCO often takes up the cases of repression of pressmen in the Third World which are not made public for diplomatic reasons. As mentioned earlier, apart from the UN, only ILO and UNESCO have substantive programme activities in the field of human rights. What UNESCO can and should do is to narrow down its all-encompassing campaign for human rights and concentrate on promotion of individual human rights within its own sphere of competence in the fields of education, culture and communication. This will make the Organization more effective in the field.

3. There have been charges that UNESCO suffers from utter mismanagement, that it is too centralized, both in geographical terms and in terms of decision-making, that many of its programmes overlap and far too high a proportion of the budget is spent in the headquarters and too little for effective action in the field. The Government of the Netherlands is of the opinion that "no significant institutional changes have taken place in it during its lifetime,

26. *ibid*, pp. 10-11.

27. *Asiaweek*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

whereas the world in which it operates has changed considerably."²⁸ The US notice of withdrawal indicated that "a few things done well have more impact than a superficial examination of all the world's ills," as UNESCO's Programme activities tend to suggest. Some member States are also dissatisfied that 80 percent of UNESCO funds are spent at the Agency's headquarters, leaving only 20 percent for the field. That compares rather poorly to Agencies like the UNDP which spends only 20 percent of its budget on administrative costs, the UNICEF which spends about 12 percent and the UNFPA spends only 11.5 percent.²⁹

But such comparisons are misleading, contends Doudou Diene, Head of UNESCO's New York liaison office. Unlike those bodies, he explains, UNESCO is not an operational but an intellectual agency. When UNESCO organises a regional conference in the field or publishes a book in five languages, the expenses come out of the headquarters budget.³⁰

For the last several years, UNESCO was already undertaking measures to improve the functioning of the Organization.³¹ These measures included setting up of several Consultative Working Groups for examining the recruitment procedures and staff management methods, budgeting techniques and budget presentation, evaluation techniques and public information. Measures were adopted for improvement and speeding up of recruitment procedures and powers were delegated to Deputy DG and Assistant DG with regard to appointments, promotions and transfers to posts of P-1 to P-4 grades. The policy of decentralization was vigorously pursued, and as a result the percentage of decentralized activities under the regular programme

28. *Communication from the Netherlands Minister of Education and Science to The Director General Concerning the Netherlands Policy on UNESCO*, 17 July 1984.

29. *Asiaweek*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

30. *ibid.*

31. Report of the Director General, *op. cit.*, para 108-128, pp. XXVII-XXXI.

increased to 23.6 percent in March 1985. The administrative independence of offices away from headquarters has been significantly enhanced. In the field of operational activities, the number of decentralized projects increased from 75 (out of a total of 671) in 1984 to 129 (out of a total of 696) in 1985. The target for 1987 is to double the number of decentralized projects. Also the Secretariat was restructured through reorganization of the Bureau of Personnel, the internal restructuring of the office of Public Information and the establishment of a Central Evaluation Unit for constant self-evaluation.

4. The notion that UNESCO had demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion also deserves close scrutiny. It may be mentioned that the \$ 375 million budget adopted for 1984-85 was \$ 56 million less (13.6 percent) than the previous one. Says M' Bow, "This, if I am not mistaken, is the largest such reduction ever to have been made in the United Nations system."³² This reduction can be compared with a budget increase of 4.35 percent for the ILO, 10.9 percent for the WHO and 14.86 percent for the FAO.³³ The withdrawal by three countries from UNESCO reduced its assessed budget contribution by almost 30 percent (US-25 percent, UK-4.6 percent and Singapore-0.09 percent). Initiatives are underway to compensate this shortfall by 2 ways—adoption of austerity measures in UNESCO programmes and additional donations by several members. The 1986-87 budget envisaged to freeze 570 posts, saving \$ 45 million.³⁴ Other measures to offset financial handicaps included budgetary reductions in several programmes, voluntary contributions and mobilisation of some unused part of the Appropriation Reserve.

III

Observers believe that the US and Britain would eventually return to UNESCO, the way the US in 1979 came back to ILO after

32. Reply of the Director General, *op.cit.*

33. *Asiaweek*, *op. cit.*

34. *Bangladesh Observer*, 14 September 1985.

it withdrew from the Organization in 1975. In months from now a new Director General would be chosen for the UNESCO. That would perhaps remove an important factor behind US dissatisfaction and given the zealous continuation of substantive reforms already initiated within the UNESCO, it might be expected that the Organization would regain its universal character. As mentioned earlier, many professional bodies in the US and the Third World countries urged the US to stay and initiate reforms from within, instead of resorting to such extreme measure. That would also have, perhaps, been ideal in finding commonalities of interests between the US and the Third World.

There are serious concerns among observers and concerned circles that UNESCO crisis may establish a dangerous precedent which could lead to the erosion of the UN's very foundation. The use of withdrawal threats or actual withdrawal as a way to enforce change in an international organization is something alien to UN ideals. When nations unleash the spectre of withdrawal of their membership

Withdrawal threat or actual withdrawals as a means to enforce change undermine the UN ideals specially the democratic process of open discussion and decision making by vote or by consensus.

from universal organizations they threaten to undermine the democratic process of open discussion and decision-making by vote or consensus. The withdrawal threats are also an indication that some countries think their influence in UN organizations should be linked to the level of their financial contributions, as in the Agencies like the World Bank and the IMF. Perhaps the biggest grouse the US harbours about the UN Agencies including the UNESCO is that while the Western nations provide the overwhelming share of the budget, its activities are allegedly controlled by more than 100 Third World Countries. But these latter point out that in voting their

interests at UN organizations, they merely abide by the democratic principles espoused by the Western World. One Third World diplomat asks, "How come they are singing a different political tune when the voting and the democratic processes are heavily weighted against them?"³⁵

There is also concern in UN circles that the US may increasingly use its power of the pursestrings to 'punish' agencies besides UNESCO whose policies it disapproves. In late October 1986 Washington announced that in order to encourage 'cost cutting' the UN would contribute only \$ 100 million to the UN's 1986 budget, less than half of the \$ 210 million US assessment. That shortfall, which equals about 13 percent of the total UN budget, sharply worsened the continuing financial squeeze of the Organization.³⁶ In February 1985 the US announced it was freezing a \$ 23 million contribution to the UNFPA because it believed the money, designated for a population programme in China, might be used for abortions.³⁷ There were also reports, although unconfirmed, that the US was planning to withdraw from the FAO because of its being too bureaucratic and susceptible to anti-US interests.

In fact, since coming to power the Reagan Administration began to put increasing emphasis on bilateral aid policy instead of multi-lateral, because in global institutions the US finds itself increasingly isolated from the mainstream. The US charges that the development Agencies became prone to sponsor policies in the Third World that tend to go against the values and ideologies of a free Western society. In early 1980s President Reagan even publicly pronounced the policy to 'reward' those developing countries that go with US global strategy and 'punish' others that do otherwise. This is indicative from the fact that the lion's share of US bilateral aid goes only to two

35. *Asiaweek*, *op. cit.*

36. *Time*, 17 November 1986, p. 34.

37. *Asiaweek*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

countries, Egypt and Israel, that figure most prominently in US strategic equation. In the notice of withdrawal George Shultz stated that "we can develop other means of cooperation in education, science, culture and communication, which will more clearly embody the principles to which we subscribed in UNESCO many years ago..... we plan to use the resources we presently devote to UNESCO to support such other means of cooperation". This is indicative of a clear preference of bilateralism over multilateralism at a time when the latter is most needed. Referring to the use of aid as an instrument of foreign policy, Willy Brandt, Chairman of the Brandt Commission Report writes, "Its like falling back into the past rather than preparing for the future, or more enlightened relations. The concept of regarding aid an instrument of national policies is outdated. It leads to negative results and to an ideological limitation on what has to be done".³⁸

The US is the strongest world economy and the largest democracy in the west. Washington should therefore be desired to ultimately base its policy towards the UN Organizations on a long-term perspective with a fuller and realistic comprehension of the dynamics of international relations and not with a piecemeal and myopic approach. The Director General of the UNESCO reacted to US withdrawal thus: "It is my wholehearted desire that the US come back to UNESCO. Notwithstanding that we can bypass the (official) US absence to cooperate with American educational, scientific and cultural bodies, the mere absence of a country like America is a blow to UNESCO and to cooperation between the American intellectual community and the Third World."³⁹ The sooner the US understands this, the better. The alternative is only growing polarization between the US and the Third World.

38. *South*, June 1981, p. 13.

39. Interview of the UNESCO Director General, *op. cit.*