

# UNESCO AND THE U.S. AT THE PALESTINIAN IMPASSE: USING A BOOMERANG PATTERN TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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## ABSTRACT

There is vast literature on the influence of nonstate actors (NSAs) on intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Successful cases have been documented in which transnational advocacy networks (TANs) use the platforms provided by intergovernmental organizations for their own participation in treaty making, agenda-setting, policy formation and implementation, and to change repressive and norm-violating states' behavior. However, little has been said about IGOs engaging NSAs to influence their own member states' preferences. This paper uses the case of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United States on the eve of Palestine's admission as a member state of the U.N. agency as an illustration of the need for IGOs to implement public diplomacy strategies as a means of influencing member states' decisions. Using Keck and Sikkink's "boomerang pattern," this paper demonstrates how the pattern, classically associated with TANs, can be used by UNESCO to influence U.S. domestic politics and regain its funding. It concludes that public diplomacy can be a means for UNESCO to tackle two important challenges: the lack of public awareness about the organization and the negative perceptions from both publics and elites.

## INTRODUCTION

There is vast literature on the influence of nonstate actors (NSAs) on intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engage with states at a domestic and transnational level to engage their home governments and other states in international issue areas<sup>1</sup> or to seek representation within IGOs to affect state practices.<sup>2</sup>

Successful cases have been documented in which transnational advocacy networks (TANs) use the platforms provided by intergovernmental organizations for their own participation in treaty making;<sup>3</sup> agenda-setting, policy

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1 Shamima Ahmed and David Potter, *NGOs in International Politics*, (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2006): 58.

2 Richard Langhorne, "The Diplomacy of Non-State Actors," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 16, no.2 (2005): 331-339.

3 Thomas Risse, "The Power of Norms Versus The Norms of Power," in *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*, ed. Ann Florini. (Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

formation and implementation<sup>4</sup> or to change repressive and norm-violating states' behavior.<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, it has been argued that the use of naming and shaming campaigns by states and NSAs has resulted in "mixed coalitions of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental actors that try to influence publics and governments through public diplomacy."<sup>6</sup> However, little has been said about IGOs engaging NSAs to influence their own member states' preferences.

It might seem antagonistic for IGOs to leverage the support of NSAs to influence member states' behavior. IGOs are responsible first to the nation-states that have created them. They tend to be conformist and status-quo oriented, as they look to their member states before creating policy.<sup>7</sup> However, IGOs need to accommodate member states' preferences to ensure that funds for their operations remain a priority. Particularly for international development-oriented IGOs, such as some of the U.N. agencies, ensuring that member states continue to contribute is vital for adequate aid-delivering capacity.

In spite of the declining numbers of their financial contributions, developed nations still contribute the largest share of the total funding for the U.N.'s operational activities in development.<sup>8</sup> However, states make rational choices regarding whether to allocate their resources through multilateral or bilateral aid. They deliberate on the basic tension between "the desire for control and accountability over how resources are spent," versus "the wider benefits of pooling resources, presence, and expertise" provided by multilateral organizations.<sup>9</sup> U.N. agencies know how hard they have to press to maintain the flow of state contributions for aid through international rather than bilateral channels.<sup>10</sup>

The case of the relationship between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United States on the eve of Palestine's admission as a member state of the U.N. agency illustrates the urgency of an IGO to secure funding by influencing a member state. Additionally, it serves as a case study to analyze the need for IGOs to implement public diplomacy strategies as a means of influencing member states' decisions. As the U.S. was forced to withhold its contributions – 22 percent of the IGO's budget – due to legislative restrictions aimed at halting Palestine's efforts for statehood recognition via the U.N. system, UNESCO had to approach American NSAs to help raise awareness about UNESCO's mission and restore financial contributions from the U.S.

Theoretical frameworks on the impact of NGOs in world politics can be helpful to explore possible avenues for IGOs to affect NSAs for the purpose of influencing a member state. This paper argues that Keck and Sikkink's "boomerang pattern" can be an avenue for IGOs to attempt to harness transnational networks and pressure member states from the outside.

Thus, this paper fundamentally aims to answer, Can UNESCO use the boomerang pattern that characterizes TANs to influence U.S. domestic politics? This paper explains the boomerang pattern and adjusts it to the UNESCO-U.S. impasse. Then, it assesses the conditions under which UNESCO can activate transnational advocacy networks as well as use the networks' persuasion tactics. Finally, the paper outlines some implications of UNESCO's public diplomacy efforts in the U.S.

## WHAT IS THE BOOMERANG PATTERN AND WHY CAN IT BE APPLIED TO THE UNESCO-U.S. IMPASSE?

In their well-cited work, *Activists Beyond Borders, Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink outlined the "boomerang pattern." This model was conceived from the observations of the

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4 Ahmed and Potter, *NGOs in International Politics*, 54.

5 Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

6 Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2008): 103.

7 Ahmed and Potter, *NGOs in International Politics*, 82.

8 "Analysis of funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for the year 2010," *Development Cooperation Policy Branch Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, last modified May 31, 2012, [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/oesc/pdf/2012\\_funding\\_report-figures\\_and\\_tables.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/oesc/pdf/2012_funding_report-figures_and_tables.pdf).

9 "2011 DAC Report on Multilateral Aid," *OECD*, last modified 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/aid-architecture/49014277.pdf>.

10 Richard Hoggart, *An Idea and its Servants UNESCO from Within*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978): 33.

effects of transnational NGOs' pressure on repressive or unresponsive states. Keck and Sikkink's model was inspired by the advocacy campaigns regarding issues such as human rights, the environment, women, children, and indigenous rights. Consequently, they observed that, "boomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target is a state's domestic policies or behavior."<sup>11</sup>

Keck and Sikkink's work sought to define the conditions that make TANs possible and the factors that trigger their emergence. Accordingly, setting the boomerang pattern into motion commonly requires that the channels between domestic groups and their governments be blocked, hampered, or ineffective for resolving a conflict.<sup>12</sup> Using this, it is the inability of the domestic political or judiciary arena to recognize or enable the participation of domestic civil society actors that makes domestic NGOs bypass their states, bringing pressure from the outside.

This does not mean that the use of boomerang strategies can be limited to NGOs working on human rights issues. Although, international and domestic NGOs play a central role in all advocacy networks, parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations are also considered.<sup>13</sup> This implies that IGOs may use boomerang strategies to trigger transnational advocacy support for their causes in order to produce policy or behavioral change by a specific actor.

The effectiveness of TANs not only depends on the actor's capacity to throw a boomerang, but in the actual support it can bring to its cause. In this regard, Keck and Sikkink examine the conditions for transnational campaigns to affect political outcomes by: 1) identifying the resources that make a campaign possible, such as the set of tactics to persuade, socialize, and pressure their targets, and 2) the institutional structures that encourage or impede particular kinds of transnational activism. Moreover, since advocacy campaigns are "processes of issue construction constrained by the action context in which they are to be carried out,"<sup>14</sup> the authors looked into the characteristics of the issues that networks advocate for, as well as the characteristics of the networks, and the "vulnerability" of the target they seek to influence.

In order to proceed with Keck and Sikkink's assessment, a review of the UNESCO and the U.S. impasse is necessary.

## The UNESCO-U.S. impasse following Palestine's admission to UNESCO

On October 31, 2011, the 194 state members of UNESCO convened at the organization's 189<sup>th</sup> General Conference in Paris to accept Palestine as a full member-state. According to UNESCO's admission rules, states that seek full membership require a recommendation of UNESCO's Executive Board<sup>15</sup> and a two-thirds majority vote by the General Conference.<sup>16</sup> UNESCO members' support for Palestine's admission was strong in both of its governing bodies, making it the first U.N. agency to admit Palestine as a full member.

Palestine's admission forced the U.S. to withhold its financial contributions to the U.N. agency. The U.S. decision obeyed two public laws that date back to 1990 and 1994. The first law prohibited the appropriation of funds "for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as a member state."<sup>17</sup> The second law expanded those prohibitions by halting contributions to U.N. organizations that "grant full membership as a state to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood."<sup>18</sup>

The suspension of U.S. funds left UNESCO with "a serious cash-flow shortfall," mostly because the U.S. alone provided 22 percent of the organization's annual budget.<sup>19</sup> UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova, took prompt action to reduce expenditures and staff costs. Despite fundraising mechanisms, the delivery capacity of

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11 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 12.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 9.

14 Ibid., 8.

15 "UNESCO's Governing Bodies," *UNESCO*, last modified September 26, 2013, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/governing-bodies/>.

16 Ibid.

17 Foreign Relations Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, Pub.L. No. 101-246, 104 Stat. 3792 (1990).

18 Foreign Relations Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995, Pub.L. No. 103-236, 108 Stat. 2333 (1994).

19 UNESCO, 191EX/26 "Financial Situation of the Organization and its Implications for the Implementation of Document," March 15, 2013, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220045e.pdf>.

UNESCO's programs dedicated to education, sciences, culture, and communication were compromised, leaving UNESCO handicapped in attaining its objectives and expected results.<sup>20</sup>

While Palestine's admission provoked concerted disapproval from the U.S. government, it spurred disagreements over cutting off funds to the U.N. agency. Even though the U.S. Department of State expressed the vote as "regrettable, premature, and undermines our shared goal of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East,"<sup>21</sup> the State Department retained its membership and commitment to UNESCO and showed its willingness to "consult with Congress to ensure that U.S. interests and influence are preserved."<sup>22</sup> The Obama administration actively sought to waive restrictions and requested funds for the fiscal year 2013 and 2014 budgets.<sup>23</sup> However, Congress has shown a reluctant attitude, because the funds withheld are used as a "credible threat"<sup>24</sup> and justified as a means to deter Palestinian attempts for state recognition through the U.N. system.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Palestine was granted observer status in the U.N. General Assembly in 1974, and diplomatic maneuvers to obtain statehood recognition in the U.N. by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) began in 1989. These maneuvers began with attempts to upgrade its status as a state member of the World Health Organization and later to UNESCO. More recently, while peace negotiations with Israel remain stalled, efforts by Palestinian authorities have resumed. A failed attempt to achieve full U.N. membership took place in 2011, but in 2012, Palestine successfully gained non-member-state status at the General Assembly.<sup>26</sup>

U.S. Congress opposition to restore U.S. contributions to UNESCO stems from its support for Israel and its firm conviction that Palestine must return to direct negotiations with Israel. Lawmakers have argued that Palestine's admission hampers the negotiations for a viable peace with Israel. Congress has called Palestinian efforts to seek statehood via the U.N. "unilateral" and pressured for returning to the table of negotiations.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, to the detriment of UNESCO's image, members of Congress are also frustrated by "UNESCO's history of perceived anti-American leanings and disproportionate focus on Israel."<sup>28</sup>

## The boomerang pattern adjusted to the impasse

It is possible to draw some similarities between Keck and Sikkink's examination of the conditions under which the boomerang strategies of transnational networks appear and the conditions surrounding the U.S.-UNESCO impasse. As UNESCO is interested in changing U.S. law, it is toward the legislative process that influence must be exerted. For UNESCO, this is not a viable option due to the legal restrictions that prohibit foreign entities from lobbying Congress. Additionally, Congress has been reluctant to acquiesce to UNESCO's claims, as the defunding of UNESCO serves as a "credible threat" to deter Palestinian attempts for state recognition through the U.N. Since the political and legal conditions embedded in the U.S.-UNESCO impasse are obstructing UNESCO from the restoration of U.S. funds, the U.N. agency, according to the boomerang theory, may find it fruitful to

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20 Ibid.

21 United States Department of State, "Palestinian Admission to UNESCO." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/10/176418.htm>. (accessed May 1, 2013).

22 Ibid.

23 William Bigelow, "Obama Budget Attempts to Resume UNESCO Defunding Over Recognition of Palestine". *Breitbart News Network*, April 12, 2013. <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2013/04/12/Obama-Budget-Includes-Refunding-UNESCO-Which-Recognizes-Palestine> (accessed September 26, 2013).

24 Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "As Palestinian Flag Raised at UNESCO, Ros-Lehtinen Urges Funding Cutoff to Continue," *United States House of Representatives*, December 13, 2011. <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/news/story/?2126>. (accessed May 1, 2013).

25 Dan Coats, "Coats Amendments Protecting Peace Efforts in Middle East, Cutting Aid to Pakistan Pass Appropriations Committee," *United States Senator for Indiana Dan Coats*, May 24, 2012. <http://www.coats.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/coats-amendments-protecting-peace-efforts-in-middle-east-cutting-aid-to-pakistan-pass-appropriations-committee> (Accessed May 1, 2013).

26 Robert McMahon, "Palestinian Statehood at the U.N. Backgrounder," *Council of Foreign Relations*, November 30, 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/palestinian-authority/palestinian-statehood-un/p25954#p1> (accessed May 12, 2013).

27 "Statements by Elected Officials: UN General Assembly Grants Palestine Non-member Observer Status," *Jewish Community Relations Council of New York*, November 30, 2012.

28 Luis Blanchfield and Marjorie A. Brown, "The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)," CRS Report R42999. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, March 18, 2013: 15.

seek out leverage from transnational NSAs. This would amplify UNESCO's demands by opening "spaces for new issues and echo demands in the domestic arena of the state."<sup>29</sup>

## APPLYING THE RESOURCES AND TACTICS TO MAKE THE CASE FOR UNESCO IN THE U.S.

### UNESCO's Director-General's advocacy through informational, symbolic, accountability, and leverage politics

The most visible display of UNESCO's advocacy has been the planning of two official trips to the U.S. by UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova. Bokova has actively sought to communicate "why UNESCO matters to America and why America matters to UNESCO," through op-eds, speeches, high-level visits and meetings, public events, and conferences held with the U.S. government and NSAs. This paper focuses on Bokova's second trip because it focused on meetings with NSAs and illustrates their support for UNESCO.

Informational politics is the ability to generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact.<sup>30</sup> UNESCO's information politics was based on stressing the relevance of UNESCO to the U.S. In the days following the withholding of funds, Bokova addressed the situation in a public statement. Bokova's statement showed that UNESCO needed to appeal to the U.S. Congress, highlighting that the agency's key education, communication, and science projects were advancing U.S. interests, particularly in the Middle East.<sup>31</sup>

Credibility and drama seem to be essential components of a strategy aimed at persuading publics and policymakers to change their minds.<sup>32</sup> In a similar vein, the messages delivered at several public events stressed the relationship between female education and security in Afghanistan to fight extremism.<sup>33</sup> Some of the messages could be considered "accountability politics" since their intention was to "hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles."<sup>34</sup> Bokova has insisted that UNESCO and the U.S. share the same priorities and values in working toward building free and open societies.

By arguing that the U.S. values are embedded in UNESCO's mission, and that the lack of U.S. engagement with the organization implies a renouncing of global leadership, UNESCO is making use of accountability politics to keep the U.S. engaged.

### *Symbolic politics*

As a member of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention since 1972, the U.S. is able to add its cultural and natural heritage sites to the World Heritage List. On March 19, 2012, Bokova stopped in Philadelphia to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. The venue for the celebration was the first U.S. monument added to the World Heritage List, Independence Hall. This location, and other World Heritage activities during the celebration, were suitable for enacting the power of "symbolic politics." Symbolic politics refers to the process of persuasion of framing issues by "identifying and providing convincing explanations for powerful symbolic events."<sup>35</sup>

In her remarks for the celebration, Bokova linked the significance of Independence Hall with the values of the UNESCO mandate.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the head of UNESCO made a visit to the Everglades National Park, a site listed as in danger; her visit was a strong reminder for the need to preserve the site.<sup>37</sup> She recalled that the concept

29 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*, 13.

30 *Ibid.*, 19.

31 Irina Bokova, "Statement by the Director-General of UNESCO on Withholding of Funds by the United States." UNESCO.org, November 2, 2011, [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/statement\\_by\\_the\\_director\\_general\\_of\\_unesco\\_on\\_withholding\\_of\\_funds\\_by\\_the\\_united\\_states](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/statement_by_the_director_general_of_unesco_on_withholding_of_funds_by_the_united_states) (accessed May 1, 2013).

32 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*, 19.

33 Irina Bokova, "Address by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO" (address, Women and Global Development Forum Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Chicago, IL, March 16, 2012).

34 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 24.

35 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 22.

36 Irina Bokova, "Address by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the 49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention" (address, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, 2012).

37 UNESCO, "World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Agenda in Miami Leg of Director-General's Mission to the U.S.,"



of World Heritage was born in the U.S. from the inspiration of the National Park Service's system and from the contribution of Russell Train, one of the authors of the World Heritage Convention's text.<sup>38</sup>

By remembering the U.S. involvement in the World Heritage Convention Foundation and stressing how the convention functions as "a channel to share its conservation ideals around the world,"<sup>39</sup> UNESCO aimed at conveying a powerful and clear message to appeal to the shared principles between American foundational values and UNESCO's mandate.

### *Leverage politics: The role of think tanks and foundations*

As argued by Keck and Sikkink, in order to bring about policy change, networks need to pressure and persuade more powerful actors to gain influence "far beyond the network's ability to influence state practices directly."<sup>40</sup> UNESCO used leveraged politics when it took its message to the platforms provided by think tanks and when it leveraged the resources of U.S. foundations. As argued by Katz, think tanks have become influential actors in the making of American domestic and foreign policy because of their ability to disseminate messages and impact public opinion.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, as argued by Freund, some foundations have become bold in exercising power through overt political lobbying.<sup>42</sup> Such characteristics were useful for UNESCO to disseminate its core message through the think tank round tables, policy briefs, and backgrounds.

### *The U.N. Foundation and the Better World Campaign*

The relationship between UNESCO and the Better World Campaign (BWC), an American advocacy nonprofit organization, is important because of BWC's lobbying expertise. In March 2012, BWC provided congressional testimony in support of UNESCO funding and requested congressional support for a presidential waiver on the law.<sup>43</sup> As Keck and Sikkink argue, some kinds of pressure and agenda politics that advocacy networks use rarely involve mass mobilization. In the case of the BWC, one of the factors that curtail its ability to call upon mass mobilization is the limited financial resources to run high-profile public campaigns. However, the BWC has focused its activities on educating members of Congress and the media about UNESCO's initiatives in key areas of American interests, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, gender equality, press freedom, and to some extent, world heritage. The BWC briefings and meetings on Capitol Hill, along with the publication of public opinion polls, are informational politics.<sup>44</sup>

## ISSUE AND ACTOR CHARACTERISTICS

Issue characteristics and actor characteristics are important factors that explain how networks affect political outcomes.<sup>45</sup> Regarding issue characteristics, Keck and Sikkink focus on "issue resonance." They argue that some issues can be framed more easily than others to resonate with policymakers and publics. Likewise, the characteristics of both the activist network and its target are assessed based on "network density" and "target vulnerability."

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March 20, 2011, [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/resources/online-materials/single-view/news/world\\_heritage\\_and\\_sustainable\\_tourism\\_top\\_agenda\\_in\\_miami\\_leg\\_of\\_director\\_generals\\_mission\\_to\\_the\\_us/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/resources/online-materials/single-view/news/world_heritage_and_sustainable_tourism_top_agenda_in_miami_leg_of_director_generals_mission_to_the_us/) (accessed May 1, 2013).

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 23.

41 Michael Katz, "American Think Tanks," *Carnegie Reporter* 5, no. 2 (2009), <http://carnegie.org/publications/carnegie-reporter/single/view/article/item/213/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

42 Gerald Freund, *Narcissism and Philanthropy, Ideas and Talented Denied*, (New York: Viking, 1996).

43 Peter Yeo, "Better World Campaign's Peter Yeo Testifies Before Congress Amid Possible Funding Cuts to UN and Peacekeeping," March 14, 2013, <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/news-room/press-releases/executive-director-peter-yeo.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

44 Better World Campaign, "Americans' Global Priorities for Obama Second Term: Support for UN is in Our Best Interest," Last modified January 16, 2013, <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/news-room/press-releases/january-2013-polling-results.html>.

45 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 26.

## Issue resonance

One of the biggest challenges for UNESCO is the lack of familiarity among the U.S. public about the organization. Despite the lack of criticism of UNESCO as an institution or toward its programs,<sup>46</sup> there is also very little knowledge about what the organization does. As Yeo argued, "It is not an issue that breaks through the American public." The lack of knowledge about UNESCO's mission and governance negatively affects the public perception toward the organization and can exacerbate past misperceptions of being a pro-Palestinian organization. Another problem that impedes issue resonance is the low profile of its lobbying activities. The efforts undertaken by the BWC have been in a careful and quiet fashion because of fear of backlash from powerful lobbies that are against legislation to waive restrictions on paying the U.S. contributions.<sup>47</sup>

## Network density

"Networks best operate when they are dense, with many actors, strong connections and reliable information flows."<sup>48</sup> However, some of the links within UNESCO's network in the U.S. are not as dense and well connected to generate strong support for UNESCO's case. This is particularly noticeable in the network of UNESCO clubs, centers, and associations based in the U.S. UNESCO clubs, centers, and associations constitute part of the organization's grassroots base. They are set up in schools and universities and are considered a "genuine movement of influence" because of their role to disseminate UNESCO values and mobilize public opinion.<sup>49</sup> However, as of February 2012, only seven clubs, centers, and associations were registered in the U.S.<sup>50</sup> Although work is being done to expand the number of members, insufficient resources and a lack of qualified people to promote UNESCO appear to be hampering the development of a grassroots base.<sup>51</sup> The lack of a well-developed network of UNESCO clubs represents a serious challenge for the organization. These clubs serve as awareness-raising agents that allow access to the "young people and public opinion often ill-informed of UNESCO's programs, its goals, its works or even difficulties."<sup>52</sup>

Effective networks must involve reciprocal information exchanges.<sup>53</sup> It appears that there is a lack of involvement between NSAs and the U.S. National Commission to UNESCO. As noted by a club, "respected voices of American science, education and culture have been largely silent in the formulation of U.S. policy toward UNESCO and largely absent from delegations to meetings of UNESCO's governing bodies."<sup>54</sup> This is a particular challenge for UNESCO as the national commissions function as "guarantors of the organization's visibility in the field."<sup>55</sup> These commissions are supposed to be best placed "to inform both public opinion and current or potential partners about UNESCO's missions and goals."<sup>56</sup>

## Target vulnerability

As argued by Keck and Sikkink, "Target actors must be vulnerable either to material incentives or to sanctions from outside actors."<sup>57</sup> The material incentives to persuade Congress to restore funding stem from the level of

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46 Yeo, "Better World."

47 Newsteam Staff, "Tracking the Issues: A Waiver for UNESCO Funding Ban," *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 17, 2012, <http://blogs.cfr.org/campaign-2012/2012/02/17/tracking-the-issues-a-waiver-for-unesco-funding-ban/> (accessed September 22, 2013).

48 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 28.

49 UNESCO, "UNESCO and Civil Society," *Sector for External Relations and Cooperation, Sector for UNESCO Clubs and New Partnerships*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2008), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001633/163367e.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2013).

50 United States Department of State, "U.S. National Commission for UNESCO," <http://www.state.gov/p/io/unesco/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

51 Guy Djoken, (Chairman of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO Clubs, Centers & Associations Working Group and Executive Director of UNESCO Center for Peace), interview, April 2013.

52 UNESCO, "UNESCO and Civil Society," 22.

53 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 28.

54 Americans for UNESCO, "AU White Paper," <http://amunesco-org.webs.com/apps/blog/show/16458477-au-white-paper> (accessed May 1, 2013).

55 UNESCO, "UNESCO and Civil Society," 70.

56 Ibid.

57 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 29.

relevance of UNESCO's projects to U.S. interests and how much funding these projects are worth. The sensitivity of Congress has been curtailed because UNESCO is not considered urgent to fund. It has been argued that, because UNESCO is considered a cultural organization, it is difficult to justify funding to culture or education overseas, even if the organization's projects help American interests.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, UNESCO's activities are not seen as high-profile operations as much as other U.N. operations, such as humanitarian relief work or peacekeeping operations.<sup>59</sup> The lack of consideration toward UNESCO activities may also be a reflection of a generalized less respect among the developed nations to the U.N. agency, because the benefits of UNESCO programs have been mostly received by developing countries; wealthy countries can usually afford to care for their own great monuments.<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to explore if UNESCO could use the boomerang pattern that characterizes TANs' influence on U.S. domestic politics. In doing so, the paper served to explore possible avenues that IGOs can follow to engage nonstate actors to influence the majority of member states' preferences. As argued by Keck and Sikkink, the effectiveness of TANs to affect political outcomes is contingent on conditions regarding institutional structures, the activists' tactics to persuade the target, the characteristics of the issue, the activist network, and the target's vulnerability.

Since the embedded political and legal conditions of the UNESCO-U.S. impasse obstruct UNESCO from obtaining U.S. funding restoration, the boomerang pattern has the potential to be relevant and effective. However, the issue's characteristics, coupled with UNESCO's network in the U.S. and Congress' vulnerability to be persuaded for fund restoration, impose constraints against an effective activation of transnational advocacy support.

Some of the literature about transnational mobilization points out that the effectiveness of transnational networks depends on their grounding in domestic societies.<sup>61</sup> Risse argues the most important effect of transnational mobilization against a determined government is "not so much to change the behavior of the government but to facilitate social mobilization in the domestic arena."<sup>62</sup> In this regard, even if UNESCO has the institutional structures embodied in the U.S. National Commission and UNESCO clubs, centers, and associations in the U.S., they are constrained because some of the links that connect their networks are not dense or well connected enough to be leveraged. These conditions undermine the social mobilization that could influence the state's domestic policies.

The resonance of UNESCO's defunding is restricted by the lack of familiarity with UNESCO among the U.S. public and the misperceptions that emerge from this lack of knowledge. This lack of UNESCO awareness impacts the effectiveness of lobbying efforts. As argued by the BWC, lobbying efforts are always strengthened when there is public pressure. Part of the reason why UNESCO's defunding does not resonate is also explained by the low profile of its lobbying activities. Since UNESCO's advocates are dealing with an issue that is highly sensitive, they opt to conduct the case in a low-profile manner to prevent backlash from interest groups opposed to Palestine's strategy to gain recognition through the U.N. system. Furthermore, since lobbying practices require specialized knowledge of U.S. politics, U.S. NSAs prefer not approaching global partners because of a lack of familiarity with U.S. politics. Such factors are severely diminishing the resonance of the UNESCO defunding issue in the U.S.

Congress does not heed demands for restoration of funding for UNESCO because UNESCO's activities are not considered urgent. Their projects are lacking the necessary material incentives to leverage Congress' interest. It appears that the moral leverages that can be used on countries that aspire to belong to a normative community

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58 Yeo, "Better World."

59 Colum Lynch, "Will Congress's defunding of the U.N. over Palestine hurt U.S. goals around the world?" *Foreign Policy Blog*, October 25, 2011, [http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/25/will\\_congress\\_s\\_defunding\\_of\\_the\\_un\\_over\\_palestine\\_hurt\\_us\\_goals\\_around\\_the\\_world](http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/25/will_congress_s_defunding_of_the_un_over_palestine_hurt_us_goals_around_the_world) (accessed May 1, 2013).

60 Saragossa Dutt, "The role of intellectuals and non-governmental organizations in Britain's relations with UNESCO," *The Round Table The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 88, no. 350, (1999): 207-228.

61 Risse, *The Power of Norms*, 180.

62 Ibid.



of nations are not stronger than the broad conviction among lawmakers that not funding UNESCO is serving as a “credible threat” to deter Palestine. Furthermore, the strong bipartisan support for Israel plays a major factor that deters Congress’ support for funding restoration.

Finally, this case study sheds light on the public diplomacy challenges for UNESCO. Public diplomacy, understood as an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public,<sup>63</sup> can be a means for UNESCO to tackle two important challenges: the lack of public awareness about the organization and the negative perceptions from publics and elites. As argued before, these two factors result in a weak resonance of UNESCO’s defunding that impedes a strong social mobilization in the domestic arena. The implementation of public diplomacy strategies to engage with NSAs and build long-term relationships seems necessary to create an environment conducive to strengthening the relationship between UNESCO and the U.S.

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63 Nicholas Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past,” *CPD Perspectives*, Paper 2, (Los Angeles: USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2009), 12.

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