

# ***Idealism and Realism in Educational and Cultural Exchange: International Intellectual cooperation or ‘soft power’?***<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The purpose and practice of international educational exchange has been interpreted ambivalently especially since the Second World War. The aftermath of that war saw new global and regional institutions aimed at international political, economic, and social co-operation, most notably the United Nations with its Specialized Agencies such*

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as UNESCO. However, the period was also one of an ideological 'Cold War' between the capitalist democracies led by the United States and the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. There was also a retreat from colonial imperialism and the emergence of a loosely organized group of 'non-aligned' countries, with India and the then Yugoslavia prominent. There was also the Commonwealth that developed from the former British Empire. Armed conflict continued with varying degrees of intensity, often in support of national liberation movements. Recent decades have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the People's Republic of China. More recently there has been uncertainty about the purpose and direction of regional organizations such as the European Union, and a significant threat to peace from faith-based international terrorism. It is in this context that ambivalence in international educational exchange may be found. Such exchange has been justified by an humanitarian ideal of a global common good. At the same time, it has been an instrument of ideological 'soft-power' or cultural diplomacy, using propaganda, and exploiting the arts, sciences, and intellectual life, including educational exchange. The paper considers this through a critical review of important examples since the end of the Second World War. It aims to clarify and make coherent key issues for international educational exchange, identifying lessons for today.

## Introduction

I should begin by explaining why I am interested in this topic and why it may be of interest to others. First, I have been for many years involved in both academic and policy issues concerning international education and development. This has many dimensions. I have written or edited several books on this, together with journal articles and reviews. I was for six years (2002-2008) a Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner for the United Kingdom. Further, I was for four years (2010-2013) President of the United Kingdom's National Commission for UNESCO which I followed as Co-Chair (with Mrs Amina Mohammed, Nigeria), of the UNESCO Director-General's Senior Experts' Group (2013-2015) on *Re-thinking Education*:

*Towards a global common good?*<sup>2</sup> This paper considers such International educational and cultural exchange as intellectual cooperation or 'soft' power from the perspective of idealist and realist theories of international relations.

The purpose and practice of international educational and cultural exchange have been interpreted ambivalently, especially since the Second World War. The aftermath of that war saw new global and regional institutions aimed at international political, economic, and social cooperation, most notably the United Nations with its associated Specialized Agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO.) However, the period was also one of an ideological 'Cold War' between the capitalist democracies led by the United States and the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. There was also a retreat from colonial imperialism and the emergence of a loosely organized group of 'non-aligned' countries, with India and the then Yugoslavia prominent. An example of a benign post-colonial collaboration is the Commonwealth of Nations, a voluntary political association that developed from the former British Empire.<sup>3</sup> However, global armed conflict continued to varying degrees of intensity, often in support of national liberation movements.

It is in this context that ambivalence in international educational and cultural exchange may be found. Such exchange has been justified by an humanitarian ideal of the global common good. At the same time, it has been an instrument of ideological 'soft' power or cultural diplomacy, using propaganda, and exploiting the arts, sciences, and intellectual life, including educational and cultural exchange. There is also an element of neo-colonialism in practice. These issues are considered through a review of

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2 UNESCO, 2015, *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good*, UNESCO Publishing, Paris. [www.sdg4education2030.org/rethinking-education-unesco-2015](http://www.sdg4education2030.org/rethinking-education-unesco-2015)

3 It was actually founded on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1931. It now has 54 nation-states in membership.

important examples from the inter-war years and since the Second World War: specifically, the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the Cold War. It aims to clarify and make coherent key issues, identifying lessons for today.

### **International Relations and Educational and Cultural Exchange**

Educational and cultural exchange should be seen as important aspects of the politics of international relations. In the modern world, the latter has been conducted from the two competing theoretical perspectives of *idealism* and *realism*. This debate saw the emergence of an academic discipline of international relations between the wars. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) was founded in 1919. The advocates of the *idealist* perspective believe that foreign policy should be guided by universal moral values set within an agreed framework of legal norms. It assumes a fundamental common interest in minimising conflict and in peaceful cooperation creating political conditions in which humanity can flourish economically, socially, and culturally. It is fundamentally an ethical, legal, and humanitarian perspective.

This has its origins in 18th and 19th century European utopian thought. Prominent philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill, together with religious leaders such as the Quaker William Penn are examples. Each of them, albeit in a variety of ways, offered prospectuses for 'perpetual peace' and universal concord, with the benefits to humanity that would follow. This ideal could be achieved through the application of reason in an appeal to the human conscience. The foundation of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 should also be noted.<sup>4</sup> The Prize was and is awarded in recognition of those who have '... done the most or the best work for fraternity between

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.nobelpeaceprize.org/History>

nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses' It includes organizations, as well as individuals, the first being the Institute of International Law, founded by the Belgian lawyer Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, in 1904. It followed a fundamental of the idealist perspective in that it assumed that the international political framework comprised nation-states and that the rule of law should be applied internationally to the common benefit.

The idealist perspective became prominent in international relations theory and practice following the disastrous human consequences of the First World War (1914-1918). Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States (1913-1921), is the best known of its political advocates, notably during the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919. The analogy with a domestic rule of law resulted in the formation of the League of Nations and the doctrine of collective security. This would, it was believed, replace the selfish international anarchy that led to the First World War. In Britain, among the prominent academic and public intellectual advocates of this approach to international relations were Norman Angell, Arnold Toynbee, Alfred Zimmern, and the Welsh philanthropist David Davies. Ironically, President Wilson's vision met with the isolationist political opposition in America and was rejected by Congress. The result was that the United States did not join the League of Nations, although it participated in some of its economic and social activities.

The League of Nations provided for cooperation among member states in health services, finance and economics, labour conditions and relations, and in communication and transport. However, its Covenant did not provide for international intellectual cooperation in the arts, sciences, literature, and learning generally. On the initiative of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation (ICIC) was formed at the League of Nations' Second Assembly on September 21, 1921, meeting formally on

August 21, 1922. The invited membership over time included distinguished intellectuals and scholars, such as Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Johan Huizinga, and Gilbert Murray. It encouraged national committees and developed subcommittees, such as Arts and Letters, Museums, and, importantly, Intellectual Rights.

The ICIC was joined in 1926, again following an initiative by Henri Bergson, by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), sponsored by France and based in Paris. It was the Institute that delivered specific programmes and projects, supported, by among others, the Rockefeller Foundation in the United States. Nevertheless, neither the ICIC nor the IIIC had any significant impact. Apart from France, there was no meaningful support, the activities were seen as ineffectual, while it was frustrated, like the League of Nations itself, by the *realpolitik* of the 1930s which ended with the Second World War. The Committee and Institute ceased activity in 1939 but were not dissolved formally until 1946, together with the parent body the League of Nations.<sup>5</sup>

The *realist* perspective on international relations also had its origins in the political philosophy of earlier centuries, notably Nicolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532), Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), and Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* (1832). It asserts the primacy of the State in politics including foreign policy. The core argument is that the State is not subject to higher authority but must engage in a continual process of relations with other states. Politics, including in its international dimensions, is fundamentally about maintaining the survival and integrity of the State, through the acquisition and exercise of power and influence in its relations with others, both potential friends and enemies. This takes place in conditions of competition and often conflict. It is what is in the national interest that should

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<sup>5</sup> See Laqua, D., 2011, 'Transnational intellectual cooperation, the League of Nations, and the problem of order, *Journal of Global History*. 6, 223-247.

determine policy and action. These may include cooperation in terms of military alliances, trade relations, and the development of influence or soft power. Finally, realism dictates that as von Clausewitz says: 'War is nothing but a continuation of politics with the admixture of other means.'<sup>6</sup>

The English historian Edward Hallett Carr was a prominent critic of the idealist perspective and an exponent of realism in international relations during the interwar years. Ironically, Carr held the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, between 1936-1947, in contradiction of the views of its founder David Davies, and predecessors in the Chair such as Alfred Zimmern and Charles Webster. In *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939*, published just before the Second World War, Carr argued that the idealist perspective was a wishful thinking utopianism, that ignored '...what was and is in contemplation of what should be.'<sup>7</sup> The consequence was a failure to cope with the international crises of the inter-war years. The well-meaning attempts at international intellectual cooperation were considered to be part of this *utopian* dream. It is interesting to consider by comparison the international relations theories of Carl Schmitt, the German legal philosopher and National Socialist, in whom there has been a cautious revival of critical academic interest. Schmitt argued that politics, including international politics, was fundamentally about distinguishing between 'friends and enemies' and acting accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

Realism as a theory of international politics offered a persuasive explanation of the failure of appeasement and an ineffectual

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6 See Clausewitz, C.M., von, 1968, *On War*. A. Rapoport (ed.), Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth.

7 Carr, E. H., 1946, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*, Macmillan, London, p. 11. Published first in 1939.

8 See for instance Schmitt's *War/Non-War: A Dilemma*, 2004, Plutarch Press, . First published in 1937. See also Scheuerman, W. E., 2007. "Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond." In *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau*, ed. M. C. Williams. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 62-91.

League of Nations in the inter-war years, especially in the 1930s. Its influence continued in the post-war decades, with the Cold War between the capitalist parliamentary democracies led by the United States and the state-socialist bloc led by the Soviet Union. E. H. Carr's general intellectual influence continued, although he was criticised, not for realism but a perceived empathy with the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> Prominent advocates of realism during the Cold War from the perspective of what became known as 'the West' included Hans J. Morgenthau, George Kennan, Raymond Aron, Hedley Bull and, later, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. The protracted end of colonialism and the emergence of non-aligned states was another key factor, as the Cold War protagonists competed for influence with them. Educational and cultural cooperation and exchange were used extensively towards this end by both sides.

### **Idealism: The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.<sup>10</sup>**

This is not to say that idealism ceased to be an important perspective on international relations during the Second World War and in the post-war decades. In an article published in the United States in 1944, Gilbert Murray, an Australian and professor of Greek at Oxford University and a leading member of the League of Nations' International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation, argued that its work should be renewed after the Second World War. Murray called for reflection after another disastrous war and the recreation of conditions conducive to dialogue between individuals and among nations. A

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9 See his 14 volume *History of Soviet Russia, 1950-1980*, Macmillan, London. Also, *The Soviet Impact on the Western World*, 1946, Macmillan, London. Carr's general intellectual influence is seen in his best-selling and still in print *What is History?* 2018, Penguin Modern Classics, London.

10 There is an extensive literature on UNESCO, including its own publications. See Duedahl, P., (ed.), 2016. *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York.



fundamental obstacle, he said, continued in the assumptions and prejudices created by language, culture, religion, and traditions. Such attitudes and beliefs were, he said, "...like the submerged parts of an iceberg, which are eight times as great as the part that shows above the water." Consequently, "...one of the first necessities for successful international co-operation is to discover these assumptions and get them understood. That can be done only by the method of conference; that is, by personal intercourse and conversation between the people concerned."<sup>11</sup>

The devastating cost to humanity of the Second World War was ironically both a dramatic illustration of von Clausewitz's maxim and a cogent appeal to a weary world. The appeal was for a rational idealism aspiring to a post-war international society of harmony and cooperation. The interdependence of the wartime Allied Powers, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, had been crucial to the victory over the Axis Powers of Germany, Japan, and Fascist Italy. This demonstrated the fundamental advantages of cooperation against a common enemy. Why should not the same advantages be used in pursuit of the common interest in peace, prosperity, and international justice? The foundation of the United Nations Organization on 24 October 1945, after protracted negotiations among the Allies, was the answer.

Part 4 of the Four Power Declaration of October 30th, 1943, of the Moscow Conference of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of China, was in favour of an international post-war organization for the maintenance of peace and security. This was developed at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C., between 21st August and 7th October 1944.<sup>12</sup> Outstanding issues from this conference

11 Murray, G., 1944, "Intellectual Cooperation." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 235 (1):1-9. Cited in: Morgan, W. J., 2020, 'Peace Profile: Gilbert Murray'; *Peace Review*, 32:3, 401-408.

12 The administrative secretary to the conference was the American diplomat Alger

were resolved at the Yalta Conference, 4-11 February 1945. The Second World War ended in Europe on 7th May and against Japan on 14th August 1945. The Charter of the United Nations was signed in San Francisco on 26th June 1945 at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. It came into operation on 24th October 1945 with headquarters in New York. The United Nations was established as a successor to the League of Nations: for the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations; and international cooperation in solving economic, social, and other humanitarian problems, including education, science, and culture.

The detailed work implied by this mission was delegated to autonomous specialised agencies, of which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was one.<sup>13</sup> This had its origins in the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education which considered the problems of post-war reconstruction. It was established formally on the 4th of November 1946 after a further London conference and preparatory commission. Its mandate was to be a vehicle for international educational, scientific, and cultural exchange. Gilbert Murray had anticipated its core mission set out in the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO. This declared: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."<sup>14</sup> This indicated that the idealist philosophy of the inter-war years would continue. The UNESCO inherited the limited assets of

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Hiss, later identified as a Soviet agent,

13 There are 17 autonomous Specialised Agencies associated with the United Nations through the latter's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The most important of these are: The International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or World Bank), and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

14 This now reads: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed.'

its predecessors the ICIC and IIIC. However, realist issues were obvious from the beginning, with the politics of the restricted two-year appointment of the British biologist and humanist Julian Huxley as the first Director General at the insistence of the United States<sup>15</sup>; and the non-participation of the Soviet Union and its satellites until 1954.<sup>16</sup>

UNESCO played a significant role in educational and cultural reconstruction between 1946 and 1956, in Europe especially. This was in accord with its idealist founding mission, as set out in the Constitution agreed in London in 1946. This was to provide support for the United Nations Charter to protect the peace, justice, the rule of law, human rights, and freedom of thought through international intellectual cooperation. After years of savage war, with millions either dead or displaced with their families and communities broken. there was widespread political, social, and economic devastation. The tasks of reconstruction were immense that required moral and social renewal as well as economic re-building through the allocation of material resources. Nevertheless, UNESCO was soon constrained by the political rivalries of the dominant powers.

UNESCO's membership and institutional structure had changed considerably by the 1970s, as decolonisation gathered pace. Decolonised countries joined UNESCO in increasing numbers and asserted their influence, recognising the Organization's potential for their development. Consequently, UNESCO became a site of fresh conflict and tension over cultural cooperation. It combined the "politicisation" of UNESCO with the pressure on it to meet a global remit for international intellectual cooperation. The campaigns for universal literacy and cultural, educational, and economic equality through a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)

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15 Julian Huxley was suspect as an atheist humanist.

16 The Soviet Union at first considered UNESCO as an instrument of capitalism and imperialism.

and a New International Economic Order (NIEO) are examples. The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, known as the MacBride Commission, was set up in 1977 by the Director-General Ahmadou-Mahtar M'Bow (1974-1987, a Senegalese and the first black African to head a United Nations Specialised Agency.

The Commission's Report proved controversial although approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1980. It was a factor in the withdrawal of the United States in 1984, and the United Kingdom in 1985 from membership of an organization of which they had been founding members. Again, idealism versus realism. Such tensions continued in subsequent decades and are still found in political attitudes towards the other Specialised Agencies such as the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization, and the relations between the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly. UNESCO, with its core mission to promote international intellectual cooperation and exchange, became, perhaps inevitably, a site of ideological competition; and an important although a relatively neglected example of what became known as the Cultural Cold War.

### **Realism: The Cultural Cold War<sup>17</sup>**

The Truman Doctrine was set out by President Harry S. Truman to a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947. He argued that the national security of the United States depended on its leadership in an emerging global conflict over the right to democratic governance. He argued that: "...it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures". The Truman Doctrine, accompanied by

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<sup>17</sup> There is an extensive literature on the Cultural Cold War. See Romjiin P., Scott-Smith, G., and Segal, G., 2012. *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, NL.

the European Recovery Programme or Marshall Plan of 1947, was an ideological shift in American peacetime foreign policy. The Doctrine is regarded by most scholarly opinion as to the beginning of the Cold War.

It should be remembered that the Cold War was a power struggle. It took place initially in Europe but became global with the war in Korea and the struggle for influence over non-aligned countries and others in the so-called Third World. The Cold War saw intense political intervention in Europe by the United States and the Soviet Union within their respective spheres. Similar conditions were found in Japan and East Asia, complicated by the victory of the Communist Party in China in 1949; and later by the Korean War, 1950-53, which has continued in a political stalemate, although UNESCO made an important contribution to the reconstruction of education in post-war South Korea. The ideological competition was a key dimension. It began with a well-funded campaign of cultural diplomacy aimed initially at the political re-education of Nazi Germany and its allies<sup>18</sup>; later at countering the ideological challenge of communism.

It consisted of a sophisticated campaign of propaganda and the ideological use of education, science, the arts, and intellectual life generally, by the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. This was conducted primarily through the United States Information Agency (USIA) with the support of wealthy American private philanthropic organizations such as the Ford Foundation. There was also covert financial support from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for anti-communist intellectuals notably through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (1950) and the literary magazine *Encounter* (1953). These were elements of what has been described as a *cultural cold war*, first in Europe, and then elsewhere. It had a fundamental impact on the financing and conduct of international educational and

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18 See Pronay, N., and Wilson, K. (eds.), 1985. *The Political Re-Education of Germany & Her Allies After World War II*, Croom Helm, London.

cultural exchange.<sup>19</sup>

The response of the Soviet Union had its origins in the Zhdanov Doctrine (1946) a cultural policy according to which the world was said to comprise two irreconcilable camps: an 'imperialist and anti-democratic' camp led by the United States and an 'anti-imperialist and democratic' camp led by the Soviet Union. It was followed in 1947 by the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform) in Europe. Its political purpose, in response to the Truman Doctrine, was to maintain ideological unity among communist parties in Europe. It was an important aspect of Soviet cultural policy, in the satellite states, and ideological and cultural influence among supporters outside the Soviet bloc until 1956. In parallel was the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) set up in 1949 to promote economic mutual aid. This was the Soviet response to the Marshall Plan and was dissolved only in 1991. The period between 1953 and 1970, has been described as one of a Soviet 'cultural offensive'. It was during these years that the Soviet Union's activity in educational and cultural exchange was at its most intense, given the ideological struggle for influence with the non-aligned and in the so-called Third World generally.

The tensions between idealism and realism in achieving educational and cultural cooperation are clear. They are seen in the internal affairs and programmes of UNESCO itself after the Soviet Union and its satellites joined in 1954, and with the anti-communist political investigations conducted by the United States Congress during what became known as the McCarthy era.<sup>20</sup> As the Cold War developed, there was an emphasis by both sides on propaganda to potential sympathisers in the rival camp and, crucially, to those in non-aligned countries emerging

19 There is now an extensive literature on the Cultural Cold War.

20 A Republican Senator for the State of Wisconsin (1947 until his death in 1957), Joseph R. McCarthy was a leading figure in public investigations of alleged communist subversion in the United States.

from colonialism. The distinction between international intellectual cooperation, UNESCO's ideal, was blurred by the realist attempts of the rival powers to practice cultural diplomacy and exercise 'soft power'. This led to allegations of the politicisation of UNESCO which questioned its value as a common vehicle for disinterested international intellectual cooperation. This was damaging to its idealist mission.

### **Contemporary International Politics**

The idealist v realist debate became less important in academic and other assessments of international politics in the final quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet, as we have seen, the post-war years saw determined efforts at international cooperation; through the United Nations and its associated Specialised Agencies; and regional attempts at economic, social, and political integration, notably in Western Europe. This was enhanced by intellectual, educational, and cultural exchange and cooperation, including large scale movements of students in higher education. This is well documented. Another crucial factor was doubt about the efficacy and morality of armed intervention to settle political differences among nation-states.

However, tensions and conflict have persisted together with changes in the balance of power in international relations. Recent decades have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union which, despite a fatuous claim to the contrary, did not see 'the end of History'.<sup>21</sup> There is also the emergence of the People's Republic of China as a global political and economic actor which is increasingly adept in its use of cultural diplomacy and soft power, with its Confucian Institutes and international student markets as examples.<sup>22</sup> The United States is still economically, culturally, and politically dominant, but there has also been a

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21 See Fukuyama, F., 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguin Books, London.

22 See Zhang, W., 2012, *The China Wave: Rise of a civilizational state*, World Century Publications, Hackensack, N.J.

decline in its international political commitment and resilience, as seen in the chaotic retreat from Afghanistan, which continues to threaten peace through faith-based international terrorism. This might become known as the Biden Doctrine.

Yet, armed conflict continues globally to varying degrees of intensity, including in Europe through a resurgent and aggressive Russia. There is also an obvious problem of growing international migration, legal and illegal, motivated by conflict (asylum seekers) and by poverty (economic migrants), together with the exploitative gangs of people smugglers. This has consequences for national domestic policies which cannot be ignored, especially the feasibility of integration and multiculturalism.<sup>23</sup> Each of these factors and commentaries has implications for international cultural and educational cooperation and exchange.

There is also growing uncertainty about the purpose and direction of regional organizations such as the European Union and the global institutions of the United Nations itself and the Specialized Agencies: as criticisms of the World Health Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulty of achieving consensus on climate change have shown. It is in this context that ambivalence in international cultural and educational exchange continues to be found. As we have noted, such exchange has always been justified by an humanitarian ideal of the global common good. The question is whether it can be still be relied upon or even accepted as an achievable aspiration? At the same time, the use of ideological 'soft power' or cultural diplomacy continues, through propaganda, and the exploitation of the arts, sciences, and intellectual life. The clash of civilizations thesis of Samuel Huntington should also be considered as an example of neo-realism in international relations. Much criticised when first published in 1993, it is now

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23 See Morgan, W. J. and White, I., 2015. 'The integration of migrants in Europe: The role of higher and further education', *Weiterbildung*, Issue 6, 34-37.



being revisited.<sup>24</sup> The realist argument has also been renewed with the concept of a 'hybrid war' replacing that of a 'Cultural Cold War'.<sup>25</sup> Cooperation continues to be seen as possible, even desirable, but only if it serves national interests and security.

## Conclusion<sup>26</sup>

Our common aim should still be human development rather than exploitation. International intellectual cooperation through educational and cultural exchange, both formal and informal, should be seen as integral to the human instinct for society and play. They should be the counters to the darker instincts for sadistic aggression, mass hysteria, and alienation from society and its benefits. The purpose of intellectual activity should be the understanding of the human condition and how it can flourish. There is however a paradox in that our knowledge and potential capacity for living in a sustainable environment have never been greater. This continues in that we now have an unprecedented means of global communication in the World Wide Web and the Internet which is also corrosive and splintering in its effects.

A so-called 'social media' has emerged marked by enthusiasm for trivialities and sensationalism resulting in a flood of isolated 'information' and 'opinion'. This is without meaning as the earlier claims of 'authority' have not been replaced by 'rational discussion'. It is reinforced by private capital interests that control both the established commercial media and the new social media platforms, creating an illusion of democratic participation

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24 See Huntington, S. P., 1993, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer, 1993), pp. 22-49. See also his book, without the question mark, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1996, Simon and Schuster, New York, N.Y.

25 See Orenstein, M., 2019, *The Lands in Between: Russia v the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War*, Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y.

26 Parts of the Conclusion were published as 'Impare A Vivere: Un' Epoca in Bilico Tra Lumi E Oscurantismo', *Il Corriere Della Sera*, 01-09-2021, Pagina 40-41, Foglio 1-2.

or, in their slogan, 'Get Involved!' In authoritarian states, the same control is exerted to promote political objectives through 'hybrid war' which has both domestic and international fronts. Consequently, we are confronted by a world of soundbites, of shouts-down of speakers at universities; and in a retreat from discourse based on evidence and reasoned argument. This has damaged humanity's capacity to find solutions to the problems it has in common.

If this capacity is to be renewed and strengthened, non-cognitive qualities will be required if we are to evaluate the cognitive scientific possibilities that will continue to be available. Such qualities include the capacity for dialogue, teamwork, and for assessing and deciding on the merits of alternative courses of action. In short, reasoned judgement and action by individuals as part of the human community. The contemporary world is characterised by bewildering complexity and multiple contradictions. These generate tensions that can only be resolved peacefully and justly by individuals who have been educated to understand and resolve them. The opportunity for a sound basic education for all is fundamental to this.

This is an humanistic vision of education and development, based on respect for life at all its stages, human dignity, equal rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity, and shared responsibility for a sustainable future. As humanity moves through the 21st century marked by persistent armed conflict, obscurantism, fundamentalism, and intolerance of other points of view, intellectual, cultural, and educational cooperation is essential to sustaining our common humanity. In short, a *Re-Enlightenment* of our global society is overdue. However, it would be a mistake to institutionalize this according to "politically correct" formulae as this would make it an élite 'we know best' activity. It is still necessary to consider the complexities of history and culture with their normative values and power relations. In practice, dialogue is dependent

on disposition and situation and is often difficult to initiate, let alone sustain. *Idealism* should be combined with *pragmatism*, which differentiates it from *cynical realism*.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the growing threats from climate change have shown once again the fundamental importance of international cooperation, and especially on intellectual and scientific matters. How to achieve this and to make it effective have been central concerns of global institutions in the twentieth and present centuries. They should also be the concerns of national governments, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations, including private commercial enterprises and religious bodies, and each of us as individuals. The potential of such co-operation for dialogue, conflict resolution, and the maintenance of peace and prosperity is clear, as are the dangers of the alternatives.