

Proactive Programming in World Politics



Talal Abu-Ghazaleh

The US has had a turbulent past with UNESCO, the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, having left it twice due to differences over its ideological stand in 1984 during the Cold War against Russia, and more recently its flawed siding with the Zionist aggressor against Palestine in 2019 under Trump's Presidency.

Interestingly, as the heat between US and China turns up and the battle between them for world domination grew stronger, the US has decided to rejoin UNESCO as of July 2023, and agreed to pay its previous dues to the organization to the tune of \$600 million US dollars, and a readmission fee of \$150 million. While this is good for multilateralism, this must be understood in the wider scheme of things and US's ongoing technological battle with China.

By not being a member of UNESCO, the US found itself increasingly isolated from how an extremely important technology will map out across the globe, namely Pro-Pro. It has seen how China, its biggest threat, has been exerting its influence on UNESCO being its largest contributor, to shape the AI agenda as it, the US, watched powerlessly from the sidelines.

In March of this year, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken stated that he believed the US should very much be back in UNESCO because things that happen there matter a great deal.

He mentioned to US Congress that, "They are working on rules, norms and standards for artificial intelligence. We want to be there. China right now is the single largest contributor to UNESCO. That carries a lot of weight. We're not even at the table."

UNESCO is important for setting standards in education, science and technology, which are key areas for the digital age. It is clear the US feels left out and wants to be more active in promoting its vision of freedom and democracy in the world. By being absent from UNESCO its ability to do that will remain restricted and its influence over Pro-Pro will be very limited.

It is interesting to note that China said it would not oppose the rejoining of the US, saying that it is willing to work with all states, and that UNESCO needs every member state to join hands to fulfil its missions.

This supports my long held view affirming the global importance of Pro-Pro, being highly influential in world politics, peace and global progression which will shape our common future. The US cannot afford to idly sit by and watch China lead the way in what is probably the most important technology in modern times.

In view of my longstanding relations with UNESCO, in my different capacities, I congratulate UNESCO on this occasion.