

Lynn Meskell

A FUTURE IN RUINS

UNESCO, WORLD HERITAGE, AND
THE DREAM OF PEACE



Conflict

The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY (MISQUOTING DANTE), 1963

TURKEY HOSTED THE World Heritage Committee meetings in Istanbul in July 2016 amidst a taut atmosphere of high-profile attacks perpetrated by ISIS and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Ten days before the meetings commenced on July 10, gunmen had killed scores of people and injured hundreds more at Atatürk International Airport in Istanbul. In light of the instability, some national delegations, such as Australia, withdrew from the meetings; many international observers did the same. The World Heritage Committee meetings were held in the Istanbul Congress Center, close to Taksim Square, known for its anti-government demonstrations, like those protesting the urban development of nearby Gezi Park. We were flanked on one side by a police station and on the other by the Harbiye Military House, making us a potential target for ISIS and PKK insurgents. With such intense armed military and police presence surrounding us, nerves were frayed. Delegates entered the Congress Center daily through police barricades and body scanners, with heightened security checks and screening. Then midway through the meetings, on the evening of July 15, a military coup was staged in Istanbul and Ankara. Military aircraft fired on targets in both cities, tanks rolled through the streets, civilians joined in the fighting. More than three hundred people were killed during the night and many thousands were detained in the immediate aftermath. A further 160,000 have been purged since the coup: military officials, police officers, judges, governors, university deans, professors, teachers, journalists, and civil servants. Torture, detention, and social unrest ensued, leading many to speculate without evidence that the coup was staged and orchestrated

by President Erdoğan himself in order to justify a brutal crackdown and extend his already significant personal powers.

In the midst of this suspension of democracy and human rights, UNESCO was put in an awkward position: accede to the UN security directive and return to Paris or bow to Turkey's pressure to resume the Committee meetings as if nothing had happened. Given the constraints of diplomacy, the UNESCO webpage for the live-streamed sessions on July 16 simply said "suspended until further notice." UNESCO's staff and some national delegations, including those serving on the Committee, were staying in the adjacent Hilton Hotel—its construction, backed by the US Marshall Plan, is a monument to midcentury Cold War tensions.¹ Those participants had ample security, briefings, and travel assistance, whereas other delegations and observers were left to fend for themselves. Some woke up to find shattered glass and blood on the pavement; others actually slept through the bombardment and turned up the next day expecting a regular session. Many participants complained that neither assistance nor information had been offered, and since international flights had been cancelled, they felt left to the mercy of others. Moreover, their continued presence in Istanbul was being used domestically for political purposes.

A compromise was reached whereby the Committee would resume its work for one more day and then postpone the rest of the agenda till they could meet again in November at UNESCO's Paris headquarters. Significantly, since the meetings had been interrupted in the midst of the all-important nominations to the World Heritage List, the impetus to continue was strong, not just for Turkey but for other States Parties to get what they had come for. During his speech on July 17, the Turkish minister for culture and tourism, Nabi Avci, disagreed with the decision to postpone, stating that Turkey "would have liked for the 40th Committee [to continue], right through to the 20th, and the highest possible security measures were taken. So despite the re-assurance that security was ensured, the UN security division and UNESCO [decided] the final day of work would be today."² The Turkish Committee chair, Lale Ülker, repeated this same statement several months later in Paris. Turkey saw the UN decision as a lack of recognition of its resolve and control of the situation. Turkish authorities had guaranteed the safety of participants, since the Congress Center would be heavily secured. But in reality the place was deserted in the wake of the coup; with so many arrests and the detentions, the armored water cannon and police vehicles at the entrance were unmanned. Another lasting image was the Turkish ambassador corralling

Committee members in a corridor, interviewing them about their experience in Turkey, all of which was recorded on a shaky iPhone video, echoing Erdoğan's now famous FaceTime call to arms during the coup only two days earlier.

After the night of the coup and the resumption of the session on July 17, States Parties that took the floor first expressed their sympathy and solidarity with Turkey. Each scripted performance was captured in a live stream and archived on UNESCO's website. This was also a moment when UNESCO and its Secretariat could have been co-opted. Previously Turkish representatives had distributed Turkish flags to the members of the Secretariat on the podium, perhaps hoping that they would be inclined to wave them in a global show of support for the government; they did not. All around Taksim Square vast flags were draped over buildings, and lines of flags hung up and down all the streets in an orchestrated show of defiance. This had been a momentous meeting for Turkey, demonstrating not only its resilience and resolve against insurrection but also its resources for, and commitment to, World Heritage. Both had come together on July 15, 2016.

The day had started with a political victory, with Turkey's controversial nomination of the archaeological site of Ani.³ This historic landscape had been considered part of Armenian territory in the Treaty of Sèvres, signed in 1920 at the Paris Peace Conference, only to be awarded to Turkey under the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. At present Turkey and Armenia have no diplomatic relationship, only a bitter hostility in large part fueled by Turkey's denial of the Armenian genocide (1915–1922).⁴ Starting at 4:40 p.m., the live transmission of the Committee session was blocked and did not resume till Turkish ambassador Huseyin Botsali took the floor, after all discussion of Ani had concluded and the site was inscribed.⁵ Turkey had banned the UNESCO broadcast, as the government does for all events that it finds problematic. Later that evening coverage of the coup would also be blocked in Turkey, and updates were only available through foreign news agencies.

Ani is an archaeological landscape, with the remains of churches, mosques, temples, ramparts, palaces, and rock-carved dwellings. But most celebrated are the Armenian churches from the tenth through thirteenth centuries CE. Known as the "City of 1,001 Churches," Ani was the capital of the medieval Armenian Bagratid Kingdom.⁶ ICOMOS had commissioned an extraordinary number of site evaluators for Ani, knowing the transnational significance and potential volatility: its

recommendation had been for deferral.⁷ Turkey's proposed cultural landscape concept was not developed, the management plan was not coordinated, the comparative analysis was lacking, and there were only nods to multiculturalism. In their view, another expert mission to Ani would be required after their numerous recommendations had been implemented. Enormous pressure was placed on ICOMOS representatives during the nomination process and in the lead-up to the meetings. For some of the less-experienced evaluators this was both shocking and frightening. Turkish officials had previously met with ICOMOS in Paris and dismissed their findings, responding that no matter what the report said, Turkey would have Ani inscribed. They were holding the meetings in Istanbul and it would go through. While Turkey had lobbied hard amongst the Committee members, Korea resolutely called upon Turkey to actively work with others to present the full and complex history of the site. When the paragraph pertaining to this issue was "accidentally" cut from the final decision, Korea again spoke up to have it reinstated. This was an important recognition for Armenia.

Paradoxically, given the specter of the Armenian genocide, Ambassador Botsalı claimed that "Anatolia is not a cemetery of cultures and civilizations, Anatolia is a museum of cultures and civilizations." Using every opportunity to recast the insidious politics underlying the inscription, he purported

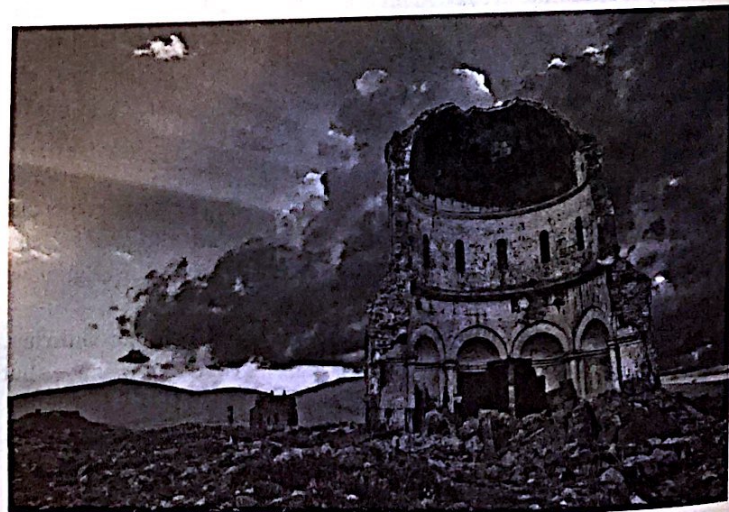


FIGURE 6.1 Archaeological landscape of Ani, Turkey, courtesy of Sarah Murray

to be "happy to see that our neighbors Iran, Georgia and Armenia also are present during the deliberations of this important resolution. I was also happy to see my counterpart from Armenia came to congratulate us." Given the overt politics and history of violence, including Turkey's official denial of the genocide, the State Party of Armenia then took the floor, saying, "If it is a jewel it belongs to humanity not to just one nation." Drawing upon their diplomatic reserves, Armenia acknowledged that theirs was a nation "70% of whose cultural heritage is situated outside its administrative borders," with many neighboring states responsible for the protection and preservation of its patrimony. No mention was made of the Turkish overrestoration in the 1990s that erased Ani's Christian symbols, its fictional reconstructions, and its excessive use of cement, much less the genocide.⁸

Resurrecting the Past

Ani is a potent example of a recent trend in World Heritage inscriptions where sites are explicitly selected because they both signify and materialize nodal points in historical conflicts and territorial disputes. UNESCO is increasingly drawn into these global disputes, yet its conventions do not make adequate provision for the adjudication or resolution of such conflicts. Moreover, when a State Party is shown to be in direct violation of a convention, there is no effective mechanism to hold it accountable, much less impose a penalty or reverse the conflict. It is noteworthy that in some cases involving historical conflicts it is the aggressors that nominate contested sites and then celebrate anew those hostilities. For Turkey, the "new truth regime" of the AKP, as it has been termed, hides behind the rhetoric of multiculturalism and rapprochement that agencies such as UNESCO hope to promulgate. Thus heritage recognition can be mobilized to "open new domains for manipulation, injury, and re-victimization."⁹ Sites such as Ani constitute the cultural battleground for hearts and minds, for recognition and social justice, as well as being physically embroiled in struggles over national sovereignty.

Like Preah Vihear in Cambodia, Ani is strategically situated along a sensitive international border; the boundary once divided NATO from the Soviet Union. The border between the Republics of Armenia and Turkey has been closed since 1993.¹⁰ The nomination of Ani could well have been a transboundary effort between Turkey and Armenia, just as Preah Vihear's nomination could have included Thailand. If, as Ambassador

Botsali stressed, inscribing Ani reflected a new era of "dialogue, compromise and reconciliation above all other considerations," then why not collaborate with Armenia in the nomination? After all, Turkey claimed the inscription was "a gift, a vision, a vision of hope for future generations, generations across the border not only in Turkey but in the neighboring states." Botsali's rhetoric, summed up by the phrase "a moment of hope, a time to heal," was merely a performance for the international community. Yet on the ground, the Armenian presence in Anatolia and even use of the term "Armenian" in Turkey today remain negatively inflected. Given the AKP's antipathy toward free speech and the harsh penal code against insulting the Turkish nation, public intellectuals have been prosecuted for even engaging in debate over the Armenian genocide perpetrated during the final years of Ottoman rule.¹¹ A century ago Henry Morgenthau, the US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, published his chilling encounter with Turkish officials and in doing so revealed that the atrocities were not religiously motivated but "a cold-blooded, calculating state policy." Morgenthau considered that Turkey had brokered new "methods of massacre" and, moreover, "that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this."¹²

What motivates a country like Turkey to nominate a conflictual landscape like Ani? Conservation of its historic remains had not been a priority in the past. In fact, as architectural historian Heghnar Watenpaugh documents, Ani was in the international spotlight precisely because its future was endangered under Turkey's management. The integrity of its monuments has been threatened by natural disasters over the course of the last hundred years, and by the human ravages of war, neglect, looting, and intentional damage. Given its precarious position, Ani regularly featured on the World Monuments Fund's high-profile watch list of monuments in danger.¹³ Another conservation NGO, the Global Heritage Fund, recently designated Ani as one of twelve cultural heritage sites on the verge of vanishing altogether. Given the negative report from ICOMOS, it is safe to conclude that the conservation of Ani remains a low priority for Turkey and will likely continue to be so. The real gains here are international: recognizing Turkey's sovereignty and regional dominance, crafting an image of Turkey's modernity and civility in multicultural matters, and rewriting history to systematically erase an Armenian past. Redrawing the lines involves a rewriting of history in the UNESCO dossier, recasting Ani as the entry point of Turkic peoples into Anatolia, followed by the widespread adoption and dominance of "Turkish culture."¹⁴ World Heritage

inscription thus provides an internationally sanctioned instrument for manufacturing the past, dispensing with historical justice and reconciliation, and potentially reviving old hostilities anew.

In previous decades only a small number of properties received World Heritage recognition on the basis of their intensely negative heritage. Yet such sites have been included from the beginning of the Convention.¹⁵ The Island of Gorée, in Senegal, was inscribed in 1978 as a reminder of human exploitation during the international slave trade; Auschwitz Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, inscribed in 1979, reveals the conditions within which the Nazi genocide took place and remains a potent symbol of humanity's cruelty; and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, listed in 1996, was the only structure left standing in the area where the first atomic bomb exploded on August 6, 1945.¹⁶ A negative historical value conveyed a lesson for the future, from this perspective, and served a "dreadful warning against any recurrence of the events which took place there." Importantly, all of these sites were listed on the basis of World Heritage criterion (vi), being directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, with beliefs, or with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. However, it has been the preference of the World Heritage Secretariat and Committee that this criterion not be used alone, but rather be taken in conjunction with other criteria.¹⁷ There has also been a general unwillingness to inscribe more sites of violence on the List. And yet Rwanda would like to list sites associated with the 1994 genocide, while South Africa is eager to enshrine its liberation struggle and has two such nominations on the Tentative List. Moreover, Thailand has expressed dissatisfaction with being deterred from nominating conflict sites such as the Death Railway, the Burma-Siam Railway built by Japan using forced labor and prisoners of war. Thailand has developed its portion of the railway as a major tourist attraction, and inscription and UNESCO branding would further boost these initiatives.¹⁸ Irrespective of UNESCO's position, the Thai Fine Arts Department wants this dossier to move forward. When asked about the potential for igniting conflicts with other countries, one Ministry of Culture representative in Bangkok explained to me that he did not consider this to be the pertinent issue. Instead he asked why European sites from the Second World War should be inscribed as World Heritage but not Asian ones. This was surely just another example of European exceptionalism.

Eclipsed by the dystopic destruction of heritage sites in the Middle East, we have perhaps overlooked the more routinized and symbolic

violence that has started to seep into the World Heritage system. UNESCO was, after all, born of war and established in the wake of conflict with the dream of overcoming future conflict. From that perspective, European properties such as the Historic Centre of Warsaw and Auschwitz Birkenau are deeply symbolic sites that not only demonstrate human resilience to overcome the brutality of war but also enshrine something of UNESCO's own story.¹⁹ It was, after all, the devastation and cultural destruction in Europe, rather than Asia per se, that guided many of UNESCO's early efforts, recommendations, and indeed conventions. It should come as no surprise, then, that other regions of the world, particularly in that other arena of war, Asia, consider it only fair and balanced to propose their own historical sites for recognition. However, in several recent cases resurrecting the past has only exacerbated simmering tensions, historical denials, and unresolved territorial struggles. Japan's recent inscription of the Meiji sites, for example, signals the Abe government's hard-line stance on nationalism, militarism, and historical memory. Abe's refusal to apologize for atrocities committed during the Second World War, coupled with the inscription of sites where the forcible exploitation of foreign women took place, has deeply offended both China and Korea.²⁰ While the industrial ruins of Hashima, also known as Battleship Island, served as a dystopian backdrop in the James Bond film *Skyfall*, its twentieth-century history reveals a more pernicious real-life conflict.

The Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining has some twenty-three components dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and was inscribed in 2015 on the basis of criteria (ii) and (iv).²¹ The Meiji sites purportedly show how feudal Japan sought the first technology transfer from the West, industrializing the nation according to its own social traditions. What has not been highlighted are the forced labor and sexual slavery of thousands of Chinese and Koreans in that process of industrialization. Strategically, Japan chose British and Australian experts in industrial heritage to help compile the dossier so as to impress ICOMOS and guarantee a positive recommendation. Given the sensitivities involved, this was always going to be a fraught case, resisting containment and laden with the potential to further inflame hostilities. During the Bonn meetings, the German chair rigidly controlled the proceedings by disallowing any Committee discussion and by reading aloud a prepared text. All the negotiations had been dealt with "offstage." Only Germany would be permitted to take the floor for one amendment, adding a footnote requiring "an understanding



FIGURE 6.2 Gunkanjima or Battleship Island, Nagasaki, Japan one of the Meiji industrial sites, courtesy of Shutterstock

of the full history of each site" in the new interpretive strategy. Whether Germany took this role as host nation or because of its shared role as historic aggressor in the same conflict was never stated.

After inscription, Japan first took the floor, reading a text directly prepared by the government. They were willing "to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions at some sites in 1940s, and that during World War Two the government of Japan also implemented its policy of requisition." The victims would be remembered in an information center. Korea responded by repeating the Japanese admission that their citizens "were forced to work." But they had joined the Committee consensus to inscribe the site, trusting that the Committee would continue to follow up on all measures promised by Japan. Korea concluded by "remembering the pain and suffering of the victims, healing the painful wounds of history and reaffirming that the historical truth of the unfortunate past should also be reflected in an objective manner." China was also outraged about the inscription and circulated a letter of protest but was not called upon to speak, since it was not a Committee member.²² The next day the Japanese foreign minister confirmed in the press that his government's position remained unchanged. Revealing the pretense of diplomacy that was performed in Bonn, Fumio

Kishida countered that being "forced to work" is not the same as "forced labor."²³

Back in Paris one Japanese representative confirmed to me that the impetus for inscribing the Meiji sites had come straight from Abe's office. He and the deputy prime minister had nominated sites from both their prefectures. The dossier was part of a concerted new strategy, departing from Japan's former passivity and acquiescence: the Meiji sites highlighted that Japan was a great power, having a long history of technological sophistication. Asked whether the listing was a direct provocation, he looked down and declined to respond directly, saying, "Culture is political." Japan received significant pressure in the lead-up to inscription from China and Korea to withdraw the nomination, but the country felt that it had to remain forceful and not back down. Japan suffers from a kind of "apology fatigue," and while many of its citizens accept their country's responsibility for its role in the conflict, they also cynically regard China's increasing demands as a diplomatic offensive to gain advantage.²⁴ Japan uses UNESCO very effectively for its own program of cultural nationalism, whereby international recognition of public and politicized culture, based on authenticity, bolsters national identity and autonomy.²⁵ Japan is not frightened of UNESCO, one diplomat announced to me over a lavish lunch, not like smaller Asian nations or small states on the World Heritage Committee. He noted that Japan was now the largest donor to UNESCO after the US financial withdrawal and so would not be put off from nominating other controversial sites. Put simply, Japan was fully prepared for the Meiji sites to spark conflict leading to a protracted negotiation.

Korea, on the other hand, had hoped that Japan would back down during the long process of diplomatic negotiation. One delegate, clearly frustrated that there was no mechanism to incorporate Korea's viewpoint, described how Committee members simply retreated from the conflict, using the pretense of "politicization," when they wished to avoid any involvement. Several States Parties on the Committee explained to him that "we must be immune, insulated from politics." This feigned neutrality struck him as a "false position" given the history and constitution of UNESCO. For Korea this was neither a peaceful process nor one in the spirit of the 1972 Convention. Despite the scripted speeches in Bonn, they remained very unhappy. The live-streaming of the event also added to the pain, since there were still survivors and this history was felt very much at home. The scale of this conflict and its connectivity at the highest levels were reflected in the simultaneous replacement of both the Japanese

and Korean ambassadors for UNESCO relations after serving only two years. The dossier, I was told repeatedly, was so contentious that new faces were needed, with less history and political baggage. Among international diplomats this irregular diplomatic shuffle signaled power plays from the very top. Japan's unwillingness to relinquish the Meiji nomination, despite resurrecting old conflicts and inciting new ones, reveals all the hallmarks of the "internationalization of nationalism."

The doctrine of national self-determination is entrenched as a basic principle in the United Nations Charter and in various treaties, including the World Heritage Convention, and invoked repeatedly in the theater of conflict.²⁶ More than simply deploying nationalistic fervor through affirming territorial jurisdiction and political sovereignty, nation-states must demonstrate a measure of cultural unity and solidarity, as well as cultural uniqueness in terms of language, religion, customs, and cultural history. This is yet another reason World Heritage recognition, with all its systemic entanglements, has become so charged in an international arena. Rather than diminishing the influence of nationalism or dissolving the fabric of nations in aspirations of universalism, world-making processes such as World Heritage inventorying instead "encourage nations to become more participant and distinctive."²⁷ The instrumentalization of culture and heritage in arenas of conflict, both to resurrect historic struggles and to ignite new hostilities, is being played out on a global scale at UNESCO, and there is little within the framework of its "soft" international treaties to take powerful states to task.

Bombs and Mines

Describing the lead-up to the 2008 World Heritage Committee meetings, the director of the World Heritage Centre at the time, Francesco Bandarin, shared with the US delegation "certain issues that are already sure to spark intense debate, which he called the 'bombs.'" In the leaked diplomatic cable, American diplomats further divulged that the director's "concern is trying to identify the unseen 'mines' which have not yet been anticipated."²⁸ In Quebec that same year the Preah Vihear Temple was inscribed and immediately sparked a cross-border conflict with Thailand, as described in Chapter 5. UNESCO responded to the crisis by sending a Reinforced Monitoring mission in 2009, the objective being to assess "the State of Conservation of the World Heritage property . . . without attempting to determine the dynamics of events or the

responsibilities of the parties involved."²⁹ Military standoffs continued to flare up almost to the brink of full-scale war, not only damaging bilateral talks but also threatening the unity of ASEAN.³⁰ In February and April 2011 tense border clashes resumed, with many casualties and the displacement of thousands of civilians. That conflict lasted several years, resulting in loss of life and livelihoods and destruction to property, including to the Shiva temple itself. To document the disaster, Cambodia had prepared a booklet of photographs for the 2011 World Heritage Committee meetings in Paris showing the evidence of real bombs and mines around the site.

Leading up to the World Heritage meetings in Paris, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova convened a dialogue between Thailand and Cambodia, hoping to "foster common understanding of the issues affecting the World Heritage site, and to reach agreement on enhancing its State of Conservation following recent threats to the property."³¹ In an example of failed diplomacy, the latent cross-border struggle was revived through the processes of nomination and inscription and the subsequent deliberations.³² Given that UNESCO listing sparked the most recent spate of violence and that other measures might have been taken beforehand, the organization was in a weaker position than usual to forge a peaceful outcome.³³ Legal scholars have written extensively on the need for an explicit mechanism within World Heritage to consider political disputes under the general principles of international law, some calling for an arbitrational body to be established to deal with cases like Preah Vihear. Unlike other fields of international law, such as foreign investment or human rights, "international cultural heritage law does not have an ad hoc mechanism of norms enforcement and dispute settlement."³⁴ Increasingly, the World Heritage Committee must navigate incendiary conflicts, such as those between Thailand and Cambodia, Turkey and Armenia, and Russia and Ukraine, that entail border disputes and long-standing tensions. And of course there are slow-burning conflicts involving Kosovo and Jerusalem that have extended over many years, in plain sight, but tend to be muted in Committee deliberations. What typically happens in these cases is suspension of all Committee debate, with the agenda item postponed till the following year, stanching overt hostility by papering over the crisis indefinitely. World Heritage with its mantle of shared humanity, cultural Esperanto, and presumed neutrality has clearly been progressively drawn into international conflicts, not simply as reflective fallout of past violence but rather as constitutive of contemporary conflict.

In recent years UNESCO has witnessed a predictable war of nominations and recriminations, often traversing different international treaties, whether the 1972 World Heritage Convention or the Memory of the World Register. Japan and China's conflicts have been played out in both arenas, with China confronting Japan with controversies such as those of the "comfort women" and the Nanjing massacre, and Japan retaliating by listing the Meiji industrial sites.³⁵ Tokyo has challenged UNESCO's neutrality and has threatened to suspend its funding to UNESCO, following the strategy employed by the United States.³⁶ Undeterred by the Meiji conflict, in 2016 Japan entered another controversial property onto its Tentative List, Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island.³⁷ These four islands lie at the heart of a bitter territorial dispute in the East China Sea, where China claims that neither it nor Japan has "carried out maritime delimitation. Therefore the waters beyond territorial water of the islands are overlapping area of the two countries' maritime claims. The unilateral move of Japan will cause prejudice to China's maritime interests."³⁸ Japan, sidestepping the issue of overlapping claims, purports that the islands offer "outstanding examples of speciation and phylogenetic diversification of terrestrial organisms at various stages through varying extents of geographic isolation." The international maneuvers by Japan and China reveal a tit-for-tat trading of insults and injuries by way of different cultural conventions. Moreover, they demonstrate how the materiality of heritage is deployed to further leverage territorial advantage, a strategy that appears to be escalating.

These escalations run counter to UNESCO's central tenet of advancing dialogue and inclusiveness between nations or "learning to live together." According to their Medium Term Strategy covering 2014–21, "UNESCO will promote the role of shared or cross-border cultural heritage and initiatives to build bridges among nations and communities. Efforts will be undertaken to offer new perspectives on disseminating and teaching knowledge of history."³⁹ But instead, the ramping up of conflictual heritage, whereby contentious sites are knowingly proposed and pushed, suggests that World Heritage is being mobilized as a proxy for international conflict. Given culture's soft power potential, UNESCO recognition can easily mask the hostile political intent of states through the pretense of gesturing toward monumental, artistic, and conservation concerns. This public performance in support of global heritage belies the dense network of transactions, exchanges, and consequences that occur offstage. In the case of the Meiji sites, many other Asian States Parties were pressured.

lobbied, and placed in the impossible position of offending either China and Korea, on one hand, or Japan, on the other. The stakes are not insignificant for Asian nations such as Vietnam and the Philippines, which at the time were serving on the World Heritage Committee. Backstage transactions and diplomatic exchanges do not necessarily result in the mutually beneficial economic arrangements that the case of Preah Vihear reveals, but rather may involve webs of coercion, threats, and retaliation.

Like other fictions of neutrality at UNESCO, contentious nominations and listings are typically handled like mines rather than bombs: as threats that have not yet emerged into the open, and which can be defused through diplomatic protocol. In this way the "political" is masked as the "technical" during World Heritage deliberations. Through these restrained performances, difficult issues and conflicts between nations can be aired, and possibly even resolved, without taking sides or apportioning blame. Chairing a difficult meeting on revisions to the Convention's Operation Guidelines, Jad Tabet remarked, "This is not a technical issue. It is a question of sovereignty." Tabet was attempting to ease the friction between Japan and China over putting forward the four islands in the East China Sea on Japan's Tentative List. This was all being done under the guise of revising one paragraph of the Operational Guidelines pertaining to the Tentative Lists that States Parties compile. Everyone in the room was aware of the underlying tensions; however, no delegate would explicitly name the property or the disputing states, so the debate was transmuted into the technicalities of documentation, including how data might be uploaded, verified, and presented on UNESCO's website. Frustrated by the unwillingness of delegates to address the underlying problem of sovereignty, Tabet declared, "We are talking about one State Party nominating a site that another feels it is in their property. Right now any State Party can claim any site on the Tentative List. A few years ago there was a kind of decency that states didn't nominate sites in conflict, but that decency has disappeared and sites are nominated in contested situations." The performance of neutrality, obfuscation, and maintenance of the status quo are all hallmarks of multilateral organizations and, in a sense, allow them to function amidst the conflicts of their Member States.

The World Heritage Committee is not compelled to consider potential conflict or existing hostilities when making its decisions. However, the Convention and guidelines are not entirely silent on the subject of potential disputes.⁴⁰ Article 11.3 of the World Heritage Convention indicates that State Party consent is required for inclusion on the World Heritage

List and that "inclusion of a property situated in a territory, sovereignty or jurisdiction over which is claimed by more than one State shall in no way prejudice the rights of the parties to the dispute."⁴¹ Yet as mentioned above, the 1972 Convention fails to provide a road map for how disputes might be resolved or even considered in the context of site inscription. Furthermore, as legal scholar Allan Galis notes, the provision is silent as to cases where State Parties do not willingly cooperate, such as Thailand and Cambodia, particularly when nominated sites are located on disputed borders. Because the Convention indicates that disputed sovereignty over a property will not prejudice the rights of the disagreeing parties to later seek inscription under their respective names, there is no incentive for states to resolve the conflict themselves before initiating the nomination process.⁴² To remedy such a situation, Galis proposes the establishment of an independent body "composed entirely of neutral state representatives" to enable mediation and arbitration and allow interested state representatives to petition that body.

The proposed body would conduct hearings and consolidate the interested parties' motions, and could be responsive in ruling on cases on a rolling basis, rather than delaying until the annual World Heritage Committee meeting.⁴³ Such a major undertaking would necessitate changes to the Operational Guidelines and support from the World Heritage Committee, which may not accede to yet another authority and level of interference in what most states parties regard as sovereign matters. States are generally reluctant to commit to any compulsory jurisdiction and prefer to engage in direct negotiation, since this affords them greater control.⁴⁴ Yet even if such a body was established, how might such decisions be implemented, especially in light of fundamental disagreement and conflict over such incendiary issues as identity, history, territory, and sovereignty? Given the World Heritage Committee's and the World Heritage Centre's reticence to publicly debate and mediate conflicts, and their preferred recourse to behind-the-scenes diplomacy, imposing any additional structural and legal frameworks upon an already fraught system would prove exceedingly difficult.

A case in point was the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in late March 2014 and the implications for sites on Ukraine's World Heritage List and Tentative List. With Crimea, Russian president Vladimir Putin purported to be embracing international law, but was in effect "exploit[ing] the tension between a fundamental principle that prohibits the acquisition of territory through the use of force and an equally fundamental

right of self-determination to take Crimea as its own."⁴⁵ Putin's legal argument rests on the right of intervention to protect ethnic Russians, appealing to the right of self-determination and subsequently independence. However, in response to Putin's military adventurism the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution affirming the sovereignty, political independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Following that resolution, and at the request of Ukraine, UNESCO drafted a statement after the 194th session of the Executive Board.⁴⁶ It outlined the ever-growing presence of Russian military forces and the resulting negative impact on Crimean cultural heritage. The Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora was a specific concern: dating back to the ancient Greek colonization of the area in the fifth century BCE, this World Heritage site is in close proximity to Sevastopol, where the Russian Black Sea fleet is deployed.⁴⁷ Significantly, President Putin appropriated the World Heritage site as explicitly Russian heritage in his speeches, going so far as to use its history to justify the annexation.⁴⁸ The fight for Crimea, Putin lectured a group of young historians, is the fight for Chersonesus; the site has a sacred significance, considered the initial font of Russia's baptism. Crimea, he concluded, "is an essential part of our cultural life, our cultural code."⁴⁹

Apart from the ancient city of Chersonesus, four other cultural sites on Ukraine's Tentative List have halted all activities with regard to their inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Concerns were also raised by Ukraine over the massive transfer of cultural objects from Crimean museums to the Russian capital, recalling Russia's obligations under international law related to cultural property. In rapid response to the criticism, Russian ambassador Eleonora Mitrofanova claimed that the text "presented by Ukraine is extremely politicized and does not reflect the actual situation in the peninsula. This document not only does not envisage any real assistance to the improvement of the situation in Crimea, but on the contrary, disorients UNESCO Member States and is therefore unacceptable."⁵⁰ However, in a 2016 State of Conservation report, Chersonesus was found to be in poor condition, with some structures being close to collapse.⁵¹ Given the regional instability, neither ICOMOS nor UNESCO can send in evaluators or retrieve reliable information, and so they face another impasse.

In a reflection of the practical difficulties of independent World Heritage arbitration and mediation in the violation of international law, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been adamant that any action

taken by UNESCO in Crimea would first require the consent of the Russian Federation.⁵² Ukraine, on the other hand, continues to report Russia's direct violations of UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention, coupled with its 1954 Hague Convention, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.⁵³ Other reports of gross violations have been widely circulated at UNESCO from partner agencies including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, and Amnesty International. It is one of those cases where the accumulation of paperwork documenting the problem both stands in for and masks the capacity to address issues directly. In some ways the Crimean situation is quite clear-cut, and a UN resolution was summarily passed; UNESCO has, however, been hamstrung in doing more than documenting the conflict, and has not been publicly outspoken in condemning it. The organization, perhaps understandably, takes refuge in its "fields of competence" stance, an assertion that the agency must primarily concern itself with culture rather than conflict.⁵⁴ Yet what is unfolding in Ukraine speaks precisely to UNESCO's fields of competence: cultural heritage, site conservation, protection for journalists, freedom of expression, religious and human rights, and so on.

Russia is patently in violation of the UNESCO cultural heritage conventions it has ratified. The reluctance to discuss this case more fully in World Heritage meetings undoubtedly pivots on the exceedingly powerful position of the State Party of Russia in terms of political and economic capital at UNESCO, on one hand, and its aggressive lobbying and intimidation of other Member States, on the other. As spokesperson for Russia's official position on UNESCO, Ambassador Mitrofanova asserted that "today we are witnessing a struggle for shaping a new world order. There are attempts to impose a pyramidal arrangement on the world, with the US and its allies on top as leaders and the rest doing their bidding and following their rules." Such an arrangement, she argued, ignores the opinion of the majority of Member States, and these "dead-end approaches" further "escalate tensions and instability in the world. Most countries in the world do not agree with them. And it is international organizations that shape common attitudes and formulate future agendas."⁵⁵ The language of a "new world order" ominously harks back to Woodrow Wilson's call for a League of Nations after the devastation of the First World War

and, perhaps also in this context, to the end of the Cold War. Both embody significant meanings for the Russian Federation.

When the Secretariat, States Parties, and Committee have to contend with the "bombs" or "mines" of nomination, inscription, or conservation, each has a limited repertoire of legal mechanisms to assist with its resolution. On one hand, they must face the escalation of conflict through controversial site listing; on the other, they are charged with the conservation and management of those properties during and after episodes of conflict or destruction. The Convention was envisaged as an international treaty for conservation, and its drafters likely never predicted the entanglements of invasion, intentional destruction, and cultural cleansing that have sadly become more commonplace. With UNESCO lacking the legal provisions to check or censure, much less sanction, states are ostensibly free to incite second-order conflicts, this time within the diplomatic sphere, that further contravene the Convention's *raison d'être* and challenge the Committee and Secretariat's capacity. This is intergovernmental UNESCO at work rather than global UNESCO, and it does not always square with the original aims of the organization, its wartime founding, or its aspirations for world peace.

Amongst the national delegations stationed at the Rue Miollis annex of UNESCO's Paris headquarters there is general agreement about the current moment reflecting a heightened period of tension. One Scandinavian delegation opined that the World Heritage Committee operates like many other UN arenas in that nation-states use the cultural platform as a proxy for other political negotiations, typically around territory, rights, and the rehearsing of historical conflicts. Acting more like a stop valve, such international meetings offer a softer setting for Member States to air grievances instead of engaging in open hostilities. This accords with Jan Turtinen's observation that UNESCO affords, in many cases, a nonconfrontational intergovernmental platform for states to engage with each other.⁵⁶ From this perspective, UNESCO fulfills different needs in the current global milieu than it did when it was founded, and thus heritage friction in the diplomatic sphere is not inherently negative. As one experienced Scandinavian diplomat described it, the UN process operates on several levels: the first is the apparent substance of debate, in this case World Heritage sites; the second level is the *realpolitik* at work, whereby the UN is a "stage" for economic, political, and geographical interests to be enacted; and on the third level the UN functions as a "normative policy arena" for dialogue around sensitive issues and normative concepts.

While this formulation effectively captures the tiered operations of today's multilateral organizations, many national delegations also agree that World Heritage machinations are in fact more volatile than those being rehearsed in other UN sectors, in the field of human rights or world health, simply because cultural heritage is so symbolic and emotive. This is most dramatically illustrated with Jerusalem, a site of such countervailing forces of religion, politics, and identity that it could only produce a "*cocktail explosif*," one Middle Eastern ambassador explained in the days after the controversial 2016 Jerusalem Resolution was passed in Paris.

Impasse Management

One hundred years ago the British Empire embarked upon its crusade against the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East in what was called the "Jerusalem Operations." In October 1917 the British were plotting how to secure mandatory power in Palestine, entailing the same effects as colonization but without the political baggage and international censure. Winston Churchill later wrote that there would be no annexation; rather, the mandates would simply be granted to the principal powers. The French had no such qualms about annexation or the quasi-colonizing overtones of the mandate system and saw it as their right as part of the civilizing mission: their crushing of the Syrian Revolt (1925–27) would prove a stark reminder.

On December 11, 1917, General Edmund Allenby made his famous entry on foot through the Jaffa Gate into the Old City of Jerusalem, following plans carefully devised by Colonel Sir Tatton Benvenuto Mark Sykes, one of the architects of the secret Sykes-Picot agreement between Great Britain and France to carve up the Middle East.⁵⁷ The Ottoman governor had written to the British two days earlier, informing them, "Due to the severity of the siege of the city and the suffering that this peaceful country has endured from your heavy guns; and for fear that these deadly bombs will hit the holy places, we are forced to hand over to you the city through Hussein al-Husseini, the mayor of Jerusalem, hoping that you will protect Jerusalem the way we have protected it for more than five hundred years."⁵⁸ General Allenby reportedly claimed that "the wars of the crusades are now complete."⁵⁹ Back in London, the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, awaited the capture of Jerusalem as no less than "a Christmas present for the British people."⁶⁰ Allenby was advised to take the city before the holidays.

The Christian occupation of Jerusalem sealed the fate of the ancient city, with dramatic consequences for all faiths represented therein, their respective heritages, and the safeguarding of historic places. World Heritage has not been immune. Jerusalem has been prominent in UNESCO's programs since the agency's foundation in 1945, from its refugee efforts for Palestinians to education in the West Bank or tracing the impacts of Israel's archaeological excavations in East Jerusalem.⁶¹ No other historic site embodies such conflict as the Holy City—a situation not entirely of its own making, but born of international struggles for territory and religious control, Ottoman and British colonial domination and redrawing of national lines, the war of 1948, the 1967 annexation, and the occupation of East Jerusalem.⁶²

UNESCO has continually found itself in an impossible situation over Jerusalem, and on the occasions when it has taken measures, such as the controversial resolutions of 1974 and 2016, there have been dire consequences for the organization.⁶³ Indeed, as we have seen above, official mechanisms to defuse contentious conservation issues such as those facing Jerusalem for much of the twentieth century are nowhere outlined in UNESCO's World Heritage Convention.⁶⁴ International pressure to preserve the ancient city has devolved into a kind of "impasse management" whereby the conflict continues unabated, little progress is made, and the most difficult issues are routinely avoided. At its highest levels, UNESCO once again demurs, citing its "spheres of competence" argument, despite the fact that the issues are exactly those of heritage and conservation. Impasse management means suspending major issues for fear of igniting greater conflict, though this does not solve the underlying dispute or antagonism, but rather leaves it "in suspense." And as UN official George Sherry quipped after his many years trying to quell crises around the world, "few things are more permanent than temporary arrangements."⁶⁵

Jerusalem presents such a vast and complex case that one can capture only a snapshot of the broader conflict and try to tease apart the different positions held by the Member States as opposed to the organization and, to some degree, its chosen experts. Two salient moments in the site's fraught timeline indicate the agency's attempts to deal with heritage conflict by producing two important sets of resolutions: in 1974 before the site was declared World Heritage, and most recently in 2016. During these episodes it was UNESCO's committees that voiced their concerns, took a position on difficult heritage issues, and attempted to hold states accountable. In the 1970s UNESCO as an organization and its Directors-General

were deeply engaged with the issues: they ordered inquiries and reports and considered seriously any breaches of the international conventions, whereas forty years later, Irina Bokova sought to distance herself from the World Heritage Committee's decision on Jerusalem.⁶⁶ But as the drawn-out decades of heritage conflict in Jerusalem have shown, even specific moments of action by different actors would produce little in the way of enforceable change or progress. The World Heritage Centre's correspondence files on Jerusalem are officially "off-limits" due to their patent sensitivity, and I was duly informed that there was no exception. However, it is possible to partially circumvent the embargo. The many documents and State of Conservation reports published online provide some background, as do the correspondence files in the "Dossiers par Matière Directeur de Cabinet" in UNESCO's Paris archives.⁶⁷

The background to the first set of resolutions began just after the 1967 War. UNESCO Assistant Director-General Richard Hoggart believed then that the "Israel resolutions" constituted the biggest challenge in the agency's history. The substance of these resolutions claimed that Israel had damaged the cultural heritage of Jerusalem, especially through its state-sponsored archaeological excavations.⁶⁸ UNESCO's response might then be considered a logical outcome of a series of earlier grievances about cultural heritage dating from the late 1960s onward that were lodged on technical and political grounds. For example, during the fifteenth session of the General Conference in 1968, UNESCO was already urgently calling upon "Israel to desist from any archaeological excavations in the City of Jerusalem and from any alteration of its features or its cultural and historical character, particularly with regard to Christian and Islamic religious sites."⁶⁹ It considered that Israel was "taking advantage of its military occupation of the territory" to "unilaterally and in defiance of all accepted laws . . . alter the configuration and status of the City of Jerusalem."⁷⁰ In 1969 UNESCO's consultant for Jerusalem, Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat, wrote that "a condemnation or censorship of Israel's action appears to be inevitable if the exact consequences of the existing premises are taken into account."⁷¹ Then in 1971 UN Security Council Resolution 298 censured Israel for "expropriation of land and properties, transfer of populations, and legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied section," all of which impinged upon the possibilities of "a just and lasting peace."⁷² The 1974 resolutions that followed raised the issue of to which regional grouping Israel should belong: Israel had requested membership in the European region, but the UNESCO General Conference rejected the

request.⁷³ Finally, UNESCO was urged to maintain a permanent presence in Jerusalem so as to monitor the situation on the ground.

The material specificities have remained constant over many decades: claims of unwarranted excavation and modification of sites in tandem with the refashioning of the city "from an oriental to occidental" one, as one Palestinian diplomat described it.⁷⁴ For more than forty years, UNESCO Directors-General have been caught up in conflicts over the management and protection of Jerusalem, as well as the resolutions that have been generated. Political scientist Simone Ricca, analyzing UNESCO's responses to restoration and excavation in the city, details how the organization has maintained a clear position on such actions since 1969. Though its statements are diplomatically couched, UNESCO has consistently rejected Israeli plans for the city. In 1971 the Belgian art and architectural historian Raymond Lemaire was asked by Director-General Maheu to report on the conservation status of cultural heritage in Jerusalem. His personal view was that the climate in Israel was not favorable to interventions by major international organizations, and he feared that such actions would only aggravate the conflict. Lemaire suggested that adopting an expert, or technocratic, approach was preferable.⁷⁵ Then in 1973 the post of special representative for the city was formed to report on the evolution of Jerusalem's urban fabric: Raymond Lemaire was appointed and held that position for the next twenty-six years. There, by the permission of Israel, Lemaire walked a political tightrope, and his reports reflect a "generally positive attitude to the ongoing transformations."⁷⁶ At the same time he was in "no doubt that, both in conception and as regards certain restoration techniques, the work is often below what one might have hoped." However, closer scrutiny of the substance of his reports, many archived in UNESCO's Paris headquarters, reveals a grittier materiality.

While not trained as an archaeologist, a salient point given the issue of archaeological excavation and UNESCO's understanding of it, Lemaire nevertheless acknowledged "the damage the 1967 and 1969 demolitions caused." He further noted that the digging of a tunnel by Israeli military forces "has nothing to do with any archaeological research programme and did not follow scientific excavation methods."⁷⁷ Furthermore, he indirectly called attention to political and nationalist agendas by openly admitting that "no legal justification may be invoked for excavations undertaken solely in pursuit of archaeological research such as those conducted by Professor B. Mazar."⁷⁸ Lemaire concluded that the "state of Jerusalem's Islamic Heritage is bordering on disaster," so much so that

"the safeguarding and restoration of the Islamic monuments is a long-term undertaking calling for considerable financial resources that are far beyond the means of the authorities who are the owners or are responsible for their management."⁷⁹ Given his observations, Lemaire ultimately agreed with the Director-General to launch an appeal for an international Safeguarding Campaign. Once more it was archaeology, this time in the service of the state, that would capture the international spotlight. Unlike UNESCO's efforts in Nubia or Venice, however, there would be no celebrations for spectacular salvage, monumental findings, or feats of engineering in Jerusalem; what was highlighted instead was archaeology's destructive capabilities, the potential of its practitioners to magnify certain pasts while erasing others, choosing which histories to preserve and which to jettison.⁸⁰

Some forty years later, Decision 40 COM 7A.13 concerning the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in Paris on October 26, 2016.⁸¹ The text was submitted by Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and Sudan and addressed the status of Jerusalem on the List of World Heritage in Danger, documenting the ongoing infractions of UNESCO and Geneva conventions. Of the twenty-six



FIGURE 6.3 Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem, photo by Lefkos Kyriacou and courtesy of Conflict in Cities/Centre for Urban Conflicts Research

points raised in the text, each relates to issues of archaeology and excavation, heritage restoration, or future conservation in the light of proposed infrastructural development: in other words, the familiar threats outlined in the majority of endangered World Heritage properties. For instance, mention is made of "illegal archaeological excavations" and the "continuous, intrusive archaeological demolitions and excavations in and around the Mughrabi Gate Ascent." The text notes that "damage caused by the Israeli security forces . . . to the historic Gates and windows of the Qibli Mosque inside Al-Aqsa Mosque" occurred in 2014. Efforts since to conserve these structures had been blocked by the Israeli authorities. Episodes of violence at Al-Aqsa have continued, more recently fueled by a heightened military presence. Israeli settlers have stormed the mosque, worship has been banned, and restrictions were even placed on children playing in Al-Aqsa's courtyard, leading to an outcry over the violation of international conventions. Further alarm was raised over the "damaging effect of the Jerusalem Light rail (tram line) [a] few meters from the Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem" and, in addition, future "plans to build a two-line cable car system in East Jerusalem." In sum, the document raised concerns for "safeguarding of the authenticity, integrity and cultural heritage" of the site. Lastly, the text urged Israel "to accept and facilitate the implementation" of a UNESCO Reactive Monitoring mission in the Old City.⁸² Since 2003 the frequency of UNESCO's own external State of Conservation reporting has risen exponentially, citing diverse factors negatively impacting Jerusalem, including archaeological excavations, the deterioration of monuments, alteration of the urban and social fabric of the site, lack of planning, governance and management processes, concerns with the urban environment and visual integrity, and problems with transportation infrastructure, traffic, and access.⁸³

Deliberations over Jerusalem, like those regarding Kosovo and other sites of extreme conflict, are typically postponed year after year in World Heritage Committee sessions as an exercise in impasse management, primarily to avoid igniting further conflict.⁸⁴ Yet when destruction is dressed up as reconstruction, as Jordan had implied in 2014, it was "time to put diplomatic courtesy aside." In 2016 matters came to a head and Committee members were forced to consider what was happening to heritage on the ground and indeed to formally vote, by secret ballot, on the draft decision. In the final moments before voting there was an intervention from Tanzania, seconded by Croatia, to vote not on the consensus that had been agreed upon earlier but rather on the text of the decision: a technical

sleight of hand that had political implications for some nations. One experienced ambassador on the Committee confided to me afterward that he had seen "money changing hands." Tempers were frayed, delegates were frustrated, the legal advisor was called upon several times, and finally a five-minute suspension was called so that the Committee could make sense of Tanzania's irregular proposal.

Irrespective of Tanzania's intervention, a majority vote saw the decision adopted. Committee members including Kazakhstan, Cuba, Lebanon, Indonesia, Tunisia, and Kuwait took the floor to affirm that they would not be "held hostage to politics" but would "uphold the spirit of the Convention" in regard to the long-term preservation of Jerusalem. Predictably, the vote immediately sparked a set of hostile responses and gestures, all of which were live-streamed to the world. "This is yet another absurd resolution against the State of Israel, the Jewish people and historical truth," Israel's envoy, Carmel Shama-Hacohen, said following the vote. UNESCO's resolution on Jerusalem, he said, belonged in the "garbage bin of history." Reflecting back on the day in 1975 when Israel's Chaim Herzog physically tore another such resolution to shreds at the United Nations, he said, "I have no intention of doing this today—not because of your dignity, or the dignity of this organization, but because it is not even worthy of the energy needed for tearing it apart." And with that he lifted up a black trash can for all to see, with the word "History" attached to it, and dropped the text inside.

If these two episodes teach us anything, it is that impasse management is a short-term strategy and not a solution for conflicts that need to be addressed in the international arena, just as UNESCO, as a multilateral organization, has effectively taken on issues like apartheid, racism, and gender equity throughout its history. Neutrality, or the unwillingness to face conflict for fear of repercussion, is no defense, especially when it comes to supporting resolutions and decisions adopted across other UN bodies. Some have explained the silencing of issues around Jerusalem by saying that it is a regional conflict, unlike the cases involving two disputing nations, such as those of Preah Vihear, Ani, or even the Meiji sites. Yet one might conclude that each of these cases has both regional and sovereign territorial implications, albeit less volatile than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In my interviews, several influential European delegations conflated any discussion of excavation, conservation, or development issues in Jerusalem with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, retreating into the impossibility of solving the Middle East crisis and rendering any decisions over

the fate of World Heritage impossible. Delegates from other regions often expressed different concerns and felt strongly that, given the substance of the debate, the Committee could not retreat from adjudicating on heritage conservation issues, which patently fall within UNESCO's sphere of competence. Jerusalem could not continue in its state of exception.

Conclusions

UNESCO was born of war with an explicit mission to end global conflict and help the world rebuild materially and morally, yet its history is increasingly entwined with that of international politics and violence. Tied to the constitution of the United Nations, it was the self-interest of those states, rather than their respect for global goods, that internationalist Gilbert Murray called the "flaw in the machinery" of world government.⁸⁵ In 1939 Murray had argued that "the appeal should be to supreme international authority, as far removed as possible from political passions" and instead committed to a judicial and disinterested atmosphere. The "clue to our tragedy" was that the "safety of civilization depends on the great world issues being settled in accordance with the interests of the world: yet, under the system of national states, any statesman who attempted to settle them would be facing great danger. For it is not the votes of other nations by which he stands or falls, but only the votes of his own people."⁸⁶ The intellectual mission was gradually but deftly surpassed by the political—evidenced in conflicting positions today over matters as diverse as global heritage, human rights, and climate change. The paradox, for insiders like Richard Hoggart, was how UNESCO might retain both the support of Member States and at the same time "the respect of the world's best intellectuals and scientists when they are making free, professional judgments on its performance."⁸⁷ Referring to the crisis over excavations in Jerusalem since the late 1960s, he was not to know how UNESCO's own reputation would be embroiled in the international debacles that would unfold.

Right from the start the organization would be faced with entrenched issues such as the status of colonial powers and their colonies, as well as the emergence of new conflicts around the globe and the impossibility of holding states accountable. Back in 1947, just two years after the foundation of the United Nations, the case of Palestine and colonial rule already suggested that while the organization "could shine a bright light of publicity on colonial rule" when the "superpowers chose to act—the United States was the first to recognize Israeli independence *de facto*,

the USSR *de jure*—there was little the rest of the UN could do."⁸⁸ Today major powers have little to fear from international organizations and their legal instruments, whether UNESCO conventions or prosecutions in the International Criminal Court. As we will see in the final chapters, it is the world's weakest nations that have the most to fear.⁸⁹

In the case of powerful Member States such as Russia, direct confrontation over annexation or other World Heritage infractions is studiously avoided in official forums because of Russia's influence and financial support of the organization. This reticence underlines the hypocrisy of the organization in not addressing Russia's annexation of Crimea, or for that matter its bombardment of Syria. Increasingly UNESCO retreats into its "fields of competence" position in order to recuse itself from political bombshells such as Crimea, the long-standing occupation of East Jerusalem, and the plight of Palestine. Heritage then becomes a proxy for more expansive hostilities and dangers, no less volatile although with seemingly softer contours. Consequently, influential states can deploy the past with impunity. Impasse management as a strategy, however, only masks the danger in the short term, whereas historically we can trace how such conflicts only escalate rather than subside over time. As we have seen, there is little in UNESCO's operational remit that can be mobilized, and any further attempt to remedy these shortfalls by legal intervention would likely be vetoed by vested Member States, as has happened with UN Security Council resolutions.

As the World Heritage Committee meetings in Istanbul recently revealed, UNESCO's creation of World Heritage is now explicitly caught in the crossfire, literally and metaphorically. In our archaeological work at the World Heritage site of Çatalhöyük in central Turkey, just prior to the UNESCO meetings, my colleagues and I were forced to consider all manner of attacks on the archaeological site, whether from an ISIS cell operating in the nearby city of Konya or from other insurgents. Being inscribed on the World Heritage List invited a new suite of clear and present dangers. Steel gates and barriers were erected at our dig house, a security consultant from Control Risk (UK) lectured us on evasive maneuvers during a terrorist attack, and the team was confronted with safety drills, alarms, pepper sprays, and smoke canisters. Research into the past was eclipsed by paranoia and insecurity as a direct result of events in Palmyra and our visible UNESCO status. The project had ostensibly become what our security consultant called a "soft target."⁹⁰ Thus we can see that there

is now a broader range of conflicts in which material heritage is not merely another passive casualty of war but rather a monumental target in the conflict. The examples of destruction in Mali, Syria, and Iraq are salutary. Given their prized status, World Heritage sites are also held for ransom by factions that are alienated from and hostile to the international community, as we have seen with the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan.

Territorial conflicts are now waged, and incursions marked, by cultural properties being nominated, inscribed, claimed, and counterclaimed through UNESCO's instruments. So "while global mobilization may in some respects be an attempt to supersede nationalism," as Michael Herzfeld suggests, "it can also foment it."⁹¹ The Turkish nomination of Ani was destined to inflame an already dangerous history, just as the nomination of Preah Vihear some years earlier signaled the disasters that follow from years of failed diplomacy and institutional mismanagement. Many nation-states' desires in the heritage arena are less about conservation of properties than about redrawing the lines, in terms of both territorial sovereignty and historical narratives. While Preah Vihear exemplifies border conflicts over competing claims to a singular monumentality and ownership, the case of Ani concerns appropriation and an extraterritorial silencing of history. Like Japan's Meiji sites, with their attendant charges of celebrating forced labor and victimhood, inscription on the World Heritage List further serves to sanction the past for powerful nations. Through international recognition one version of history is not only recognized but enshrined, rendering UNESCO complicit in incorporating episodes of illegal occupation, atrocities, war crimes, and even genocide, while the victims are left to relive the trauma. This is the dark side of heritage branding.

Increasingly it is more difficult for UNESCO to fulfill its dream of "justice and liberty and peace [that] are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all these nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern," as its constitution stated so profoundly in 1945. As the example of Jerusalem demonstrates, UNESCO has spent the last fifty years endeavoring to monitor and protect the ancient city, while both matters of conflict and conservation have been nearly impossible to influence, much less regulate. UNESCO's committees and functionaries, in attempting to conduct their business in harrowing times, thus resort to an illusory neutrality, facilitated by retreating into technocracy or performing fictive solidarity, much like the Russian orchestra that played on in the ruins of Palmyra. However, cycles of conflict and occupation that

stretch back to the colonial carving up of the Middle East by competing British and French forces have only been followed by further episodes of violence and alienation. UNESCO's attempts at impasse management have proven to be the most temporary of arrangements. The specter of history repeating itself across the Middle East seems to have been foreshadowed in Nicholas Michell's nineteenth-century verse entitled *Ruins of Many Lands*, published in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire.⁹² He wrote:

Glory to proud Palmyra sighed adieu,
And o'er her shrines Destruction's angel flew.