

African Research Review

An International Multi-disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia

AFRREV @ Ten, Vol. 10(5), Serial No.44, September, 2016: 109-125

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v10i5.8>

United Nations and Multilateralism: Appraising USA's Unilateralism in World Affairs

Okeke, G. S. Mmaduabuchi

Department of Political Science

University of Lagos, Akoka

Email: gokeke@unilag.edu.ng

Nnubia, H. Nnaemeka, Esq

M.Phil/PhD Student

Department of Political Science

University of Lagos, Akoka

Legal Practitioner and Notary Public

Abstract

Multilateralism as symbolized by the United Nations Organization, seems to have come under threat today, and nowhere is this more evident than in the United States-United Nations relations particularly in the area of military interventions around the world. The aim of this paper is to appraise the practice of the principle of multilateralism over the years and the implications of the growing disregard of the principle by the United States as its unilateral actions in world affairs in recent times indicate. Using realist approach as the framework of analysis, and data from secondary sources, this paper argues that the U.S. unilateral actions are mainly driven by its national interest of global hegemony which it strives to consolidate by demonstrating and reinforcing its military

power across every nook and cranny of the world. It concludes that these unilateral actions (like the US invasion of Iraq) are not only at variance with the Charter of the United Nations which the U.S. is signatory to, but also constitute a serious threat to global peace and security, as well as the survival of the United Nations. This is because such actions are partly responsible for the skyrocketing global arms race, the increasing aggression of strong states against weak states, and the decreasing power and influence of the United Nations in world affairs as the lingering crisis in Syria demonstrates. All these events could lead to the collapse of the United Nations, and likely another world war in foreseeable future unless urgent and proactive measures are taken by all the concerned stakeholders in the international system.

Key Words: United Nations, multilateralism, United States, unilateralism, national interest, UN Charter

United Nations and Multilateralism: Appraising US's Unilateralism in World Affairs

Introduction

At the end of World War I, the League of Nations was created and given a mandate to prevent future world war. Regrettably, the refusal of the United States to join the League of Nations not only undermined the League's claim to universality, but also its ability to take effective actions that would have prevented World War II by nipping in the bud the aggression against some relatively weak states (Poland, China, Ethiopia) by the then great powers such as Germany, Japan and Italy (Archer, 2001). Following the failure of the League of Nations and its resultant demise, the United Nations was established at the end of World War II in 1945 with a primary mandate to maintain global peace and security and prevent future world war.

United States was among the pioneer members of the UN and one of the five permanent members of the Security Council which is the major organ of the UN, charged with the responsibility of executing its primary mandate. United States membership of the UN gave both strength and teeth to the organization such that it had the capacity to bark and bite in respect of its mandate unlike its predecessor. For the past seventy years of its existence the UN has discharged its mandate and achieved a great measure of success. Apart from being able to prevent another world war since its creation, the UN through its philosophy of collective security, via the principle of multilateralism has made in-roads in the promotion of global development and the fight against war crimes, climate change, terrorism and endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, etc.

However, in recent times, the basic principle of multilateralism upon which the UN was founded has come under threat by the unilateral actions of some of its member

states particularly the United States. Thus, “many of the challenges confronting multilateral institutions have been associated with US military and economic preeminence in a unipolar world, and the attendant pattern of US unilateralism” (Newman, Thakur and Tirman, 2006, p.2) as it has demonstrated in some of its international engagements such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003 without the approval of the United Nations Security Council; the misapplication of the UN Resolution on Libya by the US-led NATO; the refusal to ratify the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is empowered to try war crimes and bring perpetrators to justice, and so on. “Since 1990, skepticism has increased in the U.S. foreign policy community about the value of multilateralism in the country’s global engagement” (Patrick, 2002, P.13) and this has manifested in its blatant disregard of the principle of multilateralism whenever it has found it convenient to do so in its international undertakings.

The irony of these unfolding events is that it is the same US whose non-membership of the League of Nations contributed to its eventual collapse, and whose membership of the United Nations has been regarded as the bedrock and strength behind the successes of the organization over years, is now engaging in unilateral actions that seem to be threatening the power and influence of the United Nations in world affairs. In November 2003, the then United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan observed that events around the world and the actions of the major international state actors have “shaken the foundations of collective security and undermined confidence in the possibility of collective responses to our common problems and challenges” (United Nations Press Release, 2003). This paper would examine this increasing disregard of the principle of multilateralism by the US and the possible consequences for the survival of the United Nations and by extension, international peace and security. The paper is divided into seven parts. Parts one and two contain the introduction and the theoretical explanation respectively. Part three contains the clarification of the concept of multilateralism. Part four highlights the application of the principle of multilateralism and the successes it has yielded over the years. Part five appraises the growing disregard of the principle of multilateralism by the US as demonstrated in its unilateral foreign policy posture. Part six brings to the fore the implications of the unilateral actions of the US for the future of the UN and global peace and security. Part seven is the conclusion and recommendations.

Underpinning US approach and Clarifying Multilateralism

For the purpose of our analysis, we adopt the realist theoretical framework as approximating the US behaviour in world affairs amidst UN multilateralism. The approach places much emphasis on power which Morgenthau (1954) defined as “man’s control over the minds and actions of others”. Power entails both intangible and

tangible capabilities (military capability, economic resources, etc.) of a given actor (such as a sovereign state) to alter or influence other actors' policies, actions and reactions in the international system. The realists "assume that sovereign states...are the ontological building blocks of the international system" (Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 1984 cited in Krasner, 2001, p.230). The central argument of Realist School of thought is that "struggles between states to secure their frequently conflicting national interests are the main action on the world stage...[and] that power determines which country prevails...hence politics is aimed at increasing power, keeping power or demonstrating power" (Rourke and Boyer, 2004, p.14). Elaborating further on the idea of realism, Rourke and Boyer note that since the "Essence of politics is the struggle for power, realists maintain that countries and their leaders, if prudent, are virtually compelled to base their foreign policy on the existence of what realists see as a Darwinism; country-eat-country world in which power is key to the national survival of the fittest" (p.15). In the words of Krasner (2001) the international system is characterized by anarchy. Hence, Sterling-Folker (1997, p.18) warned that "in an environment as dangerous as anarchy", countries that ignore the realist argument "would ultimately not survive". The realist approach is relevant to this paper because it would help us comprehend how the US quest to demonstrate and reinforce its sophisticated military power with which it could consolidate its global hegemony is behind its growing disregard of multilateralism cum UN resolutions on one hand, and its increasing unilateral actions in world affairs on the other hand. The paper also notes that in as much as realism does not explain everything, because of its shortcomings and the continuous and emergent new global centres of power in world affairs, like the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, BRICS states, which is expected to counter-pose or checkmate the excesses of US unilateralism, it is still central and relevant to our discourse.

On the other hand, multilateralism is "an institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct: that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence". It is premised on the logic that collective and cooperative actions yield more effective result and mutual aggregate benefits over time (Ruggie, 1993, p.11). Institutionally, "multilateral arrangements are...persistent sets of rules that constrain activity, shape expectations, and prescribe roles" (Keohane 1994, pp.48-49). It entails cooperative and collective responses by states in tackling those common problems that are transnational or that are national but surpass national capacity and as such are best managed through joint actions at the global level. It also encompasses state actors liaising with and working collaboratively with non-state actors to deal with those global challenges that cannot be tackled effectively with maximum result through unilateral actions. Examples of challenges that require

multilateral actions include: maintenance of global peace and security, international trade, global warming, terrorism, pandemic diseases like HIV/AIDS, underdevelopment and global inequality, etc. Multilateralism manifests through the actions of universal organizations like the United Nations (UN), or regional organizations like the African Union (AU), or subregional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Furthermore, “multilateralism is premised upon functioning and autonomous sovereign states” (Newman, Thakur and Tirman, 2006, p.3).

In this paper, multilateralism is operationalized to mean collective collaboration of nation-states in dealing with world issues through the framework of the United Nations as expressed in joint decision-making in the General Assembly and the Security Council where every state is entitled to one vote irrespective of its size, wealth and strength, and resolutions or important decisions are made through the concurring votes of the five permanent members. However, what obtains in practice is most of the times the actions or inactions of states are largely determined by their foreign policy pursuits and calculations.

Application of Multilateralism in the United Nations’ Engagements

With a membership of over 200 nation-states cutting across different continents of the world, the United Nations (UN) today is indeed a universal organization. The UN was created at the end of World War II with a primary mandate to prevent future wars by maintaining global peace and security through the principle of collective security which is to be pursued via dialogue and cooperative multilateral actions. Thus, the UN is regarded as “the site for multilateral diplomacy” (Karns and Mingst, 2010, p.95). Apart from equality of states and respect and defense of state sovereignty, the UN was founded on the principle of multilateralism. What makes the UN the cream of multilateralism and gives it legitimacy and acceptability is its universal structure and broad scope of agenda as well as emphasis on cooperation and collective response to world problems.

Over the years, multilateralism has been the basis of the activities and operations of the UN as it pursued its primary responsibility. Under the rule of multilateralism, global security is the responsibility of all sovereign states, and what affects one affects all, thus any act of aggression against one state is considered as an aggression against all. This translates to what Luard (1982, p.7) describes as “the principle of each for all and all for each”. Whenever there is an aggression, every member state of the UN is expected to rally behind the victim against the aggressor irrespective of its bilateral ties or any other multilateral bond with the aggressor. In the spirit of multilateralism, the whole international community would join forces and resources together to protect and defend the victim, and by so doing, enhance global

peace in the long-run (Eminue and Dickson, 2013). Also, under multilateralism, the treaties and decisions of a universal international body like the United Nations are binding on its member states and even non-member states or actors, and matters that touch more than one nation or that either directly or indirectly have global security consequences are expected to be referred to the UN for adequate collective and cooperative actions to be taken by the member states (Laski cited in Ekpe, 2004). Conceivably, the UN universal membership makes the adoption and application of the principle of multilateralism a moral duty just the same way the UN lack of its own army makes multilateralism inevitable for the organization's international engagements since it must rely on the contribution of member states to mobilize troops and other resources for its peace-keeping and peace-making operations.

Nevertheless, in its seven decades of existence, the UN has relied on multilateral actions to maintain world peace and security. Although the major principal organs of the UN include: The Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat, it is only the Security Council which has five permanent members and ten non-permanent members that is charged with the primary responsibility of maintaining global peace and security, and it is the only organ that has the power to issue resolution on any issue referred to the UN (Okhovat, 2012). Accordingly, Article 24 of the UN Charter provides *inter alia* that:

In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.

With the support of its Security Council, the UN has mediated in intra and inter-state conflicts around the world and deployed multinational troops to troubled regions and countries for peace-keeping and peace-making missions. Some of these UN peace missions include: United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNMIT), United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), United Nations Mission in Cote D'Ivoire (UNOCI), and so on (Sanda, 2010). Through these peace missions, and with the support of regional and other multilateral institutions, the UN has reduced genocidal tendencies, de-escalated some conflicts and mitigated humanitarian crises around the world (Jega, 2010). Countries such as Congo, Sudan, Mali, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Kosovo, to mention but a few, have all benefitted from the UN multilateral peace-keeping missions. Suffice it to note that the multilateral composition of the various UN peacekeeping missions is partly responsible for the successes it recorded over the years.

Also, part of the beauty of multilateralism is that it places premium on a collective response to issues as well as a regulated international order, and protects the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor and the interests of smaller nations, rather than leaving them to the whims and caprices of the great powers.

Apart from the prevention and management of conflicts and wars in order to ensure global peace and security, the UN has also expanded its sphere of interest and functions to meet the changing needs of the changing time through multilateral approach. Global development through international cooperation has become a major pre-occupation of the UN with the ultimate aim of reducing global inequality and “closing the gap between developed and developing countries” (DESA 2006, p.11). The crucial role of the UN in the year 2000 in the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were declared earlier this year, 2015, attest to this. These development goals which range from the need to reduce global poverty and hunger cum child and maternal mortality to the quest to promote good health, quality education and clean energy, are all geared toward achieving a shared global prosperity through collective mobilization and deployment of resources to various countries of the world especially those in the Third world where development is most needed. These efforts geared toward sustainable global development perhaps, would not have been made in a world that practices isolationism and total disregard of multilateralism.

Moreover, some problems are transnational and as such require multilateral solutions. For example, challenges such as terrorism, climate change, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, etc, are bettered handled through multilateral actions. It is against this background that Karns and Mingst (2010) submit that:

Growing evidence of climate change, along with the continuing threat of global terrorism, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, the rippling effects of higher food and oil prices...has brought home...to people around the world the complex governance challenges we face today. These also include the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation, large scale humanitarian crises and intractable conflicts in several parts of the world, the persistence of deep poverty, and failed states. None of these problems can be managed by sovereign states acting alone, even by the sole superpower, the United States. All require cooperation of some sort among governments (p.3).

Today, the UN impact is felt in every sphere of humanity through the activities of its numerous agencies. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) handles health related issues (like malaria, HIV/AIDS); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) tackles environmental challenges (like climate change); the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) promotes development projects; the United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds (UNICEF) mobilizes and deploys relief materials targeting children and women in emergency situations or experiencing humanitarian crisis. The UN agencies now work together with other governmental organizations and even non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to tackle the numerous challenges facing humanity (Jones, 2010, P.4).

Experiences from the UN activities over the years have shown that better results could be achieved through multilateral actions than by any other means. In the recent past, the world has witnessed a growing collective global response to problems such as Tsunami, tornado, earthquake, etc. Different countries of the world have willingly contributed and deployed aid materials and human capital to any part of the world plagued by disaster(s), including man-made ones like nuclear crisis. Multilateralism has also been demonstrated in international trade. From the emergence of the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) to its metamorphosis in 1995 to World Trade Organization (WTO) was a result of the realization that trade between and among nations of the world could be enhanced through the application of common multilateral rules and regulations. Even though this organization is largely influenced by the advanced capitalist countries particularly the United States.

There is no doubt that much of the successes of the UN would not have been possible if countries of the world had jettisoned multilateralism and operated in isolation of one another, with perhaps some dangerous and untold consequences. Yet, in spite of all these successes of the United Nations which it achieved over the years through the adoption and practice of multilateralism, the United States unilateral military actions in recent times have continued to undermine the organization's power and ability to influence global affairs more positively, particularly as it relates to altering the calculus of conflicts and restoring peace in conflict zones around the world.

United Nations-US Relations: A Violation of the Principle of Multilateralism?

The unfolding but unfortunate observable features of the current international system is the growing lack of consensus among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the P5); the increasing abuse of veto power and disregard of the UN Resolutions; and the resort to unilateral military actions by some of the members of P5 particularly the United States, perhaps arguably because of her global commitment. Although multilateralism has long been accepted as the *modus operandi* for the conduct of world politics (Powell, 2003) and the UN has been generally accepted as the world government, the United States is increasingly discarding the principle of multilateralism and disregarding UN resolutions in some of its international engagements in recent years. This is a bit ironical because the US was once at the fore front of the campaign for multilateral approach to world issues. In this regard, Richter

(2002, p.19) posits that “after the Second World War, the United States became the primary force behind the creation of rule-based international regimes that it saw as vital checks on totalitarianism...[but] of late, the United States has sometimes retreated from its role as standard-bearer of the multilateral order”.

This ugly development is manifesting in two different ways. First is through unilateral military actions without consultation or approval of the United Nations. Second is the breach of the UN Resolution by either outright rejection or flagrant misinterpretation and misapplication of the spirit and letter of such resolution in order to suit the U.S. national interest and perhaps that of its allies. There are quite a number of cases of unilateral military actions in the US foreign policy undertakings in recent history. For example, there was unauthorized military action in Kosovo in 1999 by the US-led NATO (Walt, 2000; Newman, Thakur and Tirman, 2006). Also, sequel to 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in 2001, the US government designated some countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq as “axis of terror”. Hence, after accusing Saddam Hussein of being privy to and part of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US and being in possession of the Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), the US unilaterally invaded Iraq in 2003. The invasion happened without the approval of the UN and at a time the UN Nuclear Weapons Investigators could not find any concrete evidence of WMD in Iraq and were yet to conclude their investigation on the subject matter. Prior to the invasion, the UN Security Council had warned against any unilateral actions in Iraq. The UN Resolution 1414 on Iraq which is often cited by the US policy-makers as a justification for the invasion never approved unilateral action but rather warned there would be consequences if Iraq refused to give maximum cooperation to the UN investigators by granting them unrestricted access to the sites where the alleged Weapons of Mass Destructions were hidden. Regrettably, more than a decade after the invasion and the public hanging of Saddam Hussein, no single Weapon of Mass Destruction has been found in Iraq. In fact, the invasion, according to the submission of the then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, was not in conformity with the UN Charter or the UN Resolution 1414 (Annan, 2004). Even though the US has the right to deploy military actions whenever it is attacked or to go after terrorists wherever they may be, especially the perpetrators of 9/11 terrorist attacks, this should be done within the framework of international laws and conventions. The US failure to first and foremost exhaust all the available options for peaceful resolution of conflict such as mediation and negotiation before deploying military action in Iraq contravened Chapter 6, Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations which stipulates that:

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies

or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice. The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means.

The invasion was also at variance with Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations which provides that:

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force, are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

The US unilateral military action in Iraq equally breached even Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations which empowered only the UN Security Council to determine what constitutes an act of aggression or a threat to international peace and security, and when to deploy military action or economic sanctions to punish and contain the aggressor.

Powell (2003, p.3) describes it as a clear case of 16 “flagrant bypass of multilateral norms and institutions and a disregard of international consensus and the will of the United Nations Security Council”. Similarly, the Libyan experience provides a unique case of misinterpretation and misapplication of the UN Resolution by the US-led NATO forces. It would be recalled that on 17th March, 2011, the UN Security Council under the influence of the US and its Western allies, passed Resolution 1973 which authorized a no-fly zone in Libya. Under the Resolution, the UN member states were mandated to deploy all necessary actions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to protect civilians and civilian populated areas against the forces of Moumar Gaddafi. The UNSC Resolution 1973 was the first time in the history of the UN that the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) was approved without the consent of the target state (O’Brien and Sinclair, 2011).

In claiming to be acting under the UN Resolution, the US-led NATO alliance bombarded Libya with little or no regard to the lives of civilians which the Resolution was meant to protect. This was a misinterpretation of the no-fly-zone principle and right to protect policy. Again, in a total misapplication of the Resolution, Gaddafi was removed from power by the NATO forces and gruesomely murdered by the NATO backed Libyan rebels despite the fact he was captured alive. Apart from the fact that the killing of Gaddafi was not among the terms of reference of Resolution 1973, it also contravened the Geneva Convention on the treatment of the prisoners of war which

prohibits torture and, or jungle justice for a person captured alive in war. The killing of Gaddafi was tantamount to war crime, but then, the United States has not ratified the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC). Hence, the US perhaps, cannot for example, be brought before the ICC for the war crimes that its troops and NATO-backed rebels committed in Iraq and Libya, respectively. This raises a question mark on the administration of international justice. It appears that there are different rules and laws for powerful and weak countries. Otherwise why should the United States which has been preaching democracy and justice all over the world refuse to submit itself to the international justice system? Indeed, “the present state of affairs with regard to the use of the International Court of Justice and the Inter-National Criminal Court suggests that the world [particularly the United States] is not yet ready for an international legal regime subordinating national sovereignty to respect for fundamental human rights” and international laws (DESA 2006, p.21).

Another obvious case of US disregard of multilateralism is the ongoing Syria crisis. The US is currently intervening militarily in Syrian conflict with the NATO-led coalition, but without the approval of the United Nations Security Council. Although Russia is also doing same, it at least has the consent of the Syrian government unlike the US. Both the US and Russia claimed that their separate unilateral military campaigns in Syria are aimed at restoring peace by degrading ISIL and other international terrorist organizations operating in the region (Boyle, 2015). However, the extant realities indicate that while President Obama of the United States is more interested in ousting President Bashar al Assad from power and demonstrating the sophisticated military capability of the US than in degrading ISIL and de-escalating the conflict in the country, President Putin of Russia on the other hand, is more interested in keeping President al Assad in power and using Syria to consolidate its assertive military foreign policy and influence in the Middle East, and in the long-run, its economic interest. That said, the US unilateral military actions in recent years particularly invasion and regime change also amount to aggression and a breach of national sovereignty and a proof that although in theory “states in the international system, like individuals in domestic politics, are free and equal” (Krasner, 2001, p.233), in reality, they are neither equal nor free. The strong states are always more equal and could violate the freedom of the weak states. But this usually produces undesirable consequences. We believe that in the case of the US unilateral actions in global affairs, the consequences have been devastating and overwhelming.

Implications of the United States Unilateral Actions for the UN and Global Peace

The “crisis of multilateralism is seen more clearly at the global level, and not necessarily in the regional context, where cooperation in many areas is deepening and thriving” (Newman, Thakur and Tirman, 2006, p.15). The growing disregard of

multilateralism by the US has a lot of consequences for both the UN and the quest for international peace and security. Such actions contribute to the decline of the power and influence of the United Nations in world affairs. Unlike before, the UN Security Council now finds it increasingly difficult to reach a consensus or pass a resolution on issues. And even when a resolution is passed, its enforcement is usually a challenge. The prevailing realities in conflict zones around the world show that the UN now lacks the ability to change the calculus of conflict or influence actions of actors in intra and inter-state conflicts. The inability of the UN to resolve, after several attempts, the Syrian crisis which has lingered for about four years now is a proof of its declining power and influence in global politics. The Syrian conflict has claimed thousands of lives, created humanitarian crisis and turned millions of people into refugees in Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, etc.

Unfortunately, the permanent members of the UN Security Council have repeatedly failed to reach a consensus on how to tackle the crisis. They have instead resorted to abusing their veto power, hence, other member states of the UN are beginning to lose faith in the efficacy of the organization in containing the rising insecurity which now threatens Middle East stability and global peace. This weakening of the UN by the unilateral actions of the P5 particularly the US may lead to the collapse of the organization, and when this happens, the likely consequence would be another world war since no other organization has the universal coverage and level of legitimacy and acceptability as well as huge resources to fill the void that would be created and to call to order or contain actors whose actions endanger international peace and security. But beyond this, the US unilateral actions as opposed to multilateralism have led to forceful regime changes and created leadership vacuum in some Middle East states which in turn paved way for the growth of political instability, insurgency and terrorism in the region. International terrorist organizations such as Islamic State in Syria and Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda now use the Middle East countries particularly Iraq and Syria as safe havens and launching pad for acts of terror threatening international peace and security. These terrorist networks particularly ISIL which intends to Islamize the world starting with the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in the Middle East have hijacked the leadership crisis created by the US unilateral actions and now engage in all sorts of heinous crimes such as beheading of Christians, torture and wanton murder of innocent people, rape, sex slavery of women, etc. Even some of the US policymakers now affirm this bitter truth of the link between some of the US unilateral actions and the growth of terrorism. For example, only recently, the former White House Counter Terrorism czar, Richard Clarke lamented that if the United States had not invaded Iraq, there would be no ISIS today (Global Public Square, 2015). Moreover, the rise of Russian Antagonism, aggression and

revisionism is not unconnected with the increasing cases of US unilateral actions in world affairs.

Also, in recent times, Russia has been opposing the foreign policy posture of the United States in the UN Security Council. But Russia's opposition to US position in the UN Security Council is sometimes aimed at checkmating its unilateralism in issues of global importance (Eminue and Dickson, 2013). Russia has also become more aggressive to its neighbours and attempted to re-draw the map of its sphere of influence as its invasion of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 attest (see Cecire, 2014). This aggression by Russia has put it against its neighbours and the European Union (EU) with some scholars and countries accusing President Putin of a revisionist agenda. But it is the US unilateral actions and disregard of the Charter of the UN that is partly prompting Russia to tow the line of unilateralism. Also, there is a correlation between the US unilateral actions and the rekindling of global arms race and quest for armament and rearmament coupled with the proliferation of not only light and small arms, but also biological weapons. The US unilateral military campaigns which tend to suggest that might is right in politics among nations, have rekindled the race for re-armament which is eroding "multilateral arms control treaties and conventions...such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty" (Newman, Thakur and Tirman, 2006, p.2).

Some countries such as North Korea and Iran now want to acquire nuclear weapons so as to increase their power to a degree that they could withstand the perceived bully from America and, or at least dominate their neighbours or perceived enemies. This renewed arms race has been hindering the ongoing global disarmament campaign that started at the end of the Cold War and which is aimed at advancing international peace and security by freeing the world from the proliferation of ballistic missiles and other dangerous arms, including Weapons of Mass Destruction. Another consequence of the US disregard of the UN resolutions and multilateral approach is the renewed call for the reform and democratization of the United Nations Security Council. Apart from Africa whose argument for a permanent seat is premised on the need for every continent to have a permanent representation in the UN Security Council, some of the members of the UN are no longer comfortable with being just members of the General Assembly which "has largely been reduced to an annual forum without much influence in world affairs". For instance, the G4 members (Germany, Japan, Brazil and India) were provoked partly by the unilateral action of the P5 to seek permanent seats in the Security Council because they want to be part of the power politics in the Council so as to increase and consolidate their power and influence in international affairs. Although this call by the G4 has been tagged "the tyranny of the majority" owing to their big population, the present unilateral actions of the P5 could best be described as "the tyranny of the minority" (DESA 2006, p.22-23). Nevertheless,

even the Security Council rather than serve as a platform for achieving global consensus and cooperation to tackle world problems, has also been reduced to a forum where the leaders of the five permanent members go to settle their scores and ideological differences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the preceding analysis, this paper has been able to appraise the practice of multilateralism in the United Nations vis-à-vis the growing unilateral actions of the United States. Among its findings is that multilateralism has come under threat because of the increasing disregard of the UN Charter and resolutions on conflict management and the resort to unilateralism by the five permanent members of the Security Council particularly the United States whose endless desire to maintain global hegemony through the demonstration and consolidation of its unparalleled military capability has influenced it to invade Iraq and to misapply the UN Resolution on Libya and to refuse to submit itself to the international justice system.

The paper therefore concluded that the unilateral actions of the United States which is more or less the “tyranny of the strong state” also constitute threat to international peace and security because such actions have forced regime change, created leadership vacuum and political instability which in turn paved way for the growth of insurgency and terrorism with the attendant regional instability and international violence, which endanger global peace either in the Short-run or in the long-run. Based on this fact, it is recommended that the United States should retrace its steps by jettisoning its current unilateral foreign policy actions and embracing multilateralism which is embedded on international consensus, cooperation and joint actions as approved by the United Nations which is the world government. It is only through a multilateral organization like the UN working closely with its counterparts at the regional level that transnational challenges (such as terrorism, climate change, global poverty, pandemic diseases, etc) facing humanity today could be contained and prevented from undermining international peace and security. The UN General Assembly should also be empowered to over-ride the veto of the UN Security Council whenever there is overwhelming evidence that the permanent members of the Security Council are using their veto power to further their selfish national interest to the detriment of the global good.

References

- Annan, K. (2004). Iraq war was illegal and breached UN Charter, says Annan. Accessed 2 October, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq>
- Archer, C. (2001). *International organizations*. Third edition. London: Routledge
- Boyle, C. (2015). Russia strikes in Syria: Why you should be worried. Accessed 2 October, 2015, from <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/10/01/syria-why-you-should-be-worried.html>
- Cecire, M. (2014). *The Russian invasion of Ukraine*. Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI).
- Charter of the United Nations (1945). Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, San Francisco. Retrieved 20 October 2015, from <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>
- Ekpe, A. E. (2004). The Gulf crisis and the future of collective security: An assessment. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), pp.113-123.
- Eminue, O. & Dickson, M. (2013). The United Nations resolutions on Syria: Exploration of motivation from Russia and China. *International Affairs and Global Strategy, Vol.10*.
- Global Public Square – GPS (2015). Richard Clarke interview with Fareed Zakaria, featured in “Long road to hell: America in Iraq”. Global Public Square, CNN Documentary, 8 November, 2015.
- Jega, A. (2010). Nigeria’s foreign policy and the promotion of peace, development and democracy. In Farris, J. W. & Jega, A. (Eds.) *Nigeria at fifty: Contributions to peace, democracy and development*. Abuja: Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation.
- Jones, B. (2010). *Making multilateralism work: How the G-20 can help the United Nations. Policy analysis brief Innovative approaches to peace and security*. The Stanley Foundation.
- Karns, M. P. & Mingst, K. A. (Eds.) (2010). *International organizations: The politics and process of global governance*. Second Edition. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

- Keohane, R. O. (1994). International institutions: two approaches. In Friedrich Kratochwil, F. & Mansfield, E. D. *International Organization: A Reader*. New York: Harper Collins
- Krasner, S. D. (2001). Abiding sovereignty. *International Political Science Review*. Vol. 22, No.3, pp.229-251. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Luard, E. (1982). *A history of the United Nations, Volume I: The year of Western domination, 1945-1955*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Morgenthau, H. (1954). *Politics among nations*. New York: Alfred Knopf.
- Newman, E., Thakur, R. & Tirman, J. (Eds.) (2006). *Multilateralism under challenge? Power, international order, and structural change*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
- O'Brien, E. & Sinclair, A. (2011). *The Libyan war: A diplomatic history, February-August 2011*. New York University: Center on International Cooperation (CIC).
- Okhovat, S. (2012). The United Nations Security Council: Its Veto Power and its reform/CPACS. *Working Paper 15/1*. The Sydney University: The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.
- Patrick, S. (2002). Multilateralism and Its Discontents. In Patrick, S. & Forman, S. (eds.), *Multilateralism and US foreign policy: Ambivalent engagement*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Powell, L. (2003). *In defense of multilateralism. Prepared for global environmental governance: The post-Johannesburg agenda, October 23-25 2003*. New Haven, CT: Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy.
- Richter, S. (2002). Is this Europe's hour to lead on free trade? *The New York Times*, April 1, p.19.
- Rourke, J. T. & Boyer, M. A. (2004). *International politics on the world stage*, brief. New York: McGraw-Hills Companies Inc.
- Ruggie, J. G. (1993). 'Multilateralism: The anatomy of an institution. In Ruggie, J. G. (ed.) *Multilateralism matters: The theory and praxis of an institutional form*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sanda, J. G. (2010). Nigeria's global role in peace-keeping: From the Congo through Lebanon to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Farris, J. W. & Jega, A. (Eds.), *Nigeria*

at fifty: Contributions to peace, democracy and development. Abuja: Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation.

Sterling-Folker, J. (1997). Realist environment, liberal process, domestic-level variables. *International Studies Quarterly*, 41, P.1-26

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs - DESA (2006). *Social justice in an open world: The role of the United Nations.* New York: United Nations.

United Nations Press Release (2003). *Secretary-General names high-level panel to study global security and reform of the international system.* New York: UN Office of Public Affairs, 4 November.

Walt, S. M. (2000). *Two cheers for Clinton's foreign policy.* Gale Group: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc.