

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ISSN: 2384-5341 | Volume 12, Issue 2 | August, 2019 | pages 38 – 45

Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

Functionality and Viability of the United Nations in the Prevention of Third World-War Using a Four Level Indicator (1945-2018)

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A SPECIAL ISSUE CONFERENCE PROCEEDING PAPER

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Special Issue Theme: "Sustainable Development in Nigeria"

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International Journal of Sustainable Development

ISSN: 2384-5341

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Abstract: *This paper examined the functionality and of the viability of the United Nations in the prevention of third world-war, using a four level indicator. The quest to maintaining international peace and security as well as promote social progress and better standards of living has remained the hallmark of the United Nations. This study employed historical method of analysis while relying on the Liberalism as a theoretical framework. The study revealed that the United Nations has succeeded to a large extent in bringing about the relative peace since the end of the Second World War. The UN has succeeded in bringing all stakeholders and getting them to sit on a table and talk. By means of international laws and international sanctions rogue states have been tamed and prevented from causing further provocative actions. It was therefore recommended among others that if the four levels are strictly adhere to by the United Nations, states behaviours toward war or arms race will be highly reduced.*

Key words: *Peace; world war; security; United Nation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the formation of the UN, the League of Nations founded in 1919 was the international organization responsible for ensuring peace, security and international cooperation between world nations (Briney, 2015). However, the League of Nations was considered by many as a failed organization. As core of its mandate, the efforts of the league did not however succeed in removing the major obstacles to peace which occurred in the early 30s and to finish, it was powerless in the face of the Second World War, especially the rising influence of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). In fact, by 1939, the league as a world organization has failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War.

Towards the end of the second world war which many consider as the largest and deadliest war in history, the then United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated talks with other leaders from the Allied powers (USA, Britain, Soviet Union (now Russia), china and France) on how to form another international organization that can protect and security of world

peace. These leaders embarked on several conferences namely, the Moscow Declaration of 1943, the Dumbarth Oaks, the Yalta conference of 1945 and the San Francisco conference on April 1945. The aftermath of the San – Francisco meeting was the signing and adoption of the United Nation Charter by all the participation states and opened for ratification by states on June 26, 1945.

According to Ayah (1999), the Charter was finally ratified on October 24, 1945 (the day known as and called the United Nations day). According to Jakobsen and Thruelsen (2009), the UN was established to make the enforcement of international human rights law, security, economic development, social progress, and human rights for countries around the world. The general Assembly of the UN was convened for its first session on January 10, 1946 on April 16, 1946; the League of Nations was dissolved by a simple resolution of its Assembly. Since then, the UN membership has grown steadily as a result of the widespread decolonization and the fragmentation of large states in mini-states in 1960s, 1970s and 1990s. The example, it rose from 104 by 1961, to 159 by 1990 and 192 by 2006. However, with the admission for south Sudan on July 14, 2011 there are currently 193 member-states (Ite and Eminue, 2017).

In spite of the experience of first and second wars, the drum of third war is still beating around the globe. The real challenge today is the huge arsenal of Nuclear Weapons held by various nations. These are existential threats to entire mankind. The reality of which is understood by all major powers of the world and despite their disagreements they prefer to sit in UN and resolve their disputes rather than going to a war (Kaushik, 2018). The question therefore is: to what extent has the United Nations succeeded in bringing about the much desired peace in the world stage? How can the present status quo of world peace be maintained?

In this study, attempt shall be made to analyse the UN operations towards conflict prevention, conflict management and peace-keeping towards prevention of World War II.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we shall adopt the theory of the Liberalism as a framework of our analysis. After the First World War, liberal thinkers began to recognise that peace is not a natural condition, but one that must be constructed. (Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens, 2014). 2014).

Accordingly to Jackson and Sorensen (2007) liberal thinkers had some clear ideas and strong beliefs about how to avoid major disasters in future; e.g. by reforming the international system, and also by reforming the domestic structures of autocratic countries. The chief exponent of these liberal ideas was President Woodrow Wilson of USA. He formulated a fourteen-point peace agenda.

According to Jackson and Sorensen (*Ibid*) Wilson's peace programme calls for an end to secret diplomacy; agreements must be open to public scrutiny. There must be freedom of navigation on the seas and barriers to free trade should be removed. Armaments should be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety. Colonial and territorial claims shall be settled with regard to the principle of self determination of peoples.

Finally, a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity of great and small nations alike (Vasquez, 1996). The last submission by Wilson and its adoption at the Paris peace conference in 1919 led to the establishment of a League of Nations; the above has raised two major points in Wilson' ideas for a more peaceful world (Brown, 1997). First

concerns his promotion of democracy and self determination. Here the liberal thinking is that democratic government do not and will not go to war against each other. The second major point in Wilson's agenda concerned the creation of an international organization that would put relations between states on a firmer institutional Foundation. Therefore, liberal thinkers' belief that International institution will promote peaceful cooperation among States (Jackson and Sorensen, 2007).

In more specific terms, Wilson holds strongly that peace could only be secured with the creation of an international organization to regulate the international anarchy. Both the league and the UN should be able to have the military power to deter aggression and when necessary to use a preponderance of power to enforce its will. Here again lies the notion behind the collective security system that was central to the League of Nations and by extension the present United Nations.

The UN Charter

The UN charter is an international treaty that set out basic principles of international relations. According to the charter cited in Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (*Ibid*), the UN has four purposes:

- i) To maintain international peace and security;
- ii) To develop friendly relations among nations;
- iii) To cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;
- iv) To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of Nations. (Uwem Ite and Okon Eminue, 2017) posit that in addition, the principles of the UN as indicated in Article 2 of the charter are:
 1. The organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members,
 2. All members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from members, shall fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by the in accordance with the present charter,
 3. All members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered;
 4. All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of the United nations,
 5. All members shall give the United National every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present charter, an shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action.
 6. The organization shall ensure that states which are not members of the United Nations act in accordance with these principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security;
 7. Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic Jurisdiction of any state or shall require the members to submit such matters to settlement under the present charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under chapter VII.

The UN and its Principal Organs

The UN has six main organs: the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Council of Justice (Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (2014).

The Security Council

The Security Council of the UN serve as the executive wing of the organization. Nwakuwibe and Ubani (2011) opined that the council also acts as a gatekeeper within the world system. In other words, it determined the inputs and outputs of the global body. As Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (2014) put it, the UN Security council was given the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The council initially has eleven states and then, after 1965 of fifteen states. It includes five permanent members; namely, the United States, Britain, France, Russia (Preciously the Soviet Union) and China. Unlike the League of Nations, the UN recognized great-power prerogatives in the Security Council, offering each of the P.5 a veto power over all Security Council decisions. More importantly, the decisions of the Security Council are binding and must only be passed by a majority of nine of the fifteen members.

According to Lemy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens, (2014), they were granted a veto on the view that if the great powers were not given a privileged position, the UN work not work. Also, it is the Security Council that consider and determine a threat to international peace. The council takes measures to enforce its decisions under chapter VII of the charter. For example, it can impose economic sanctions or orders an arms embargo against any member-states. The Council makes a sweeping recommendation to the General Assembly on the Appointment of a new secretary – General and on the admission for new members to the UN.

The General Assembly

The UN charter allows all member-states to be represented in the UN General Assembly. It is a “parliament of Nations”, which meets to consider the world’s most pressing problems as Nwakuwibe and Ubani (2011) puts it, the General Assembly acts as the legislative body of the United Nations. Each member-state has one vote. Again, a two-thirds majority in the General is required for decisions on key issues such as international peace and security, the admission of new members, and the UN budget. A simple majority is required for other matters (Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (2014). There are six functional committees. The bulk of the works of the General Assembly are discussed in the following committees; Disarmaments and security; economic and Financial; Social, Humanitarian and cultural; Political and Decolonisation; Administrative and Budgetary; and legal. The decisions of the General Assembly are non-binding, they cannot force action by any state, but the Assembly’s recommendations are important indication of world opinion and represent the moral authority of the community of nations.

The Secretariat

The UN secretariat performs the administrative work of the UN as directed by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the other organs (Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens, 2014). It consists of various departments and offices. The secretariat is headed by the secretary – general; with a total of 8,900 staff. He is the Chief Administrative officer and spokes person of the UN. In the words of Mingst (1999), the role that the Secretary-General plays has expanded significantly having few formal powers; the authority of the Secretary-General depends on persuasive capability and an aura of neutrality. The independence of the secretariats is enshrined

in Article 150 of the UN charter.

The Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council exists to promote functional international co-operation. According to Ayah (1999), one of the objectives of the charter is to solve “international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character” by means of functional international co-operation. The charter also proposes that the UN shall promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development.

The ECOSOC also consults with NGOs, thereby maintaining a vital link between the UN and Civil Society”. It has subsidiary bodies as the functional commissions, such as the status of women; regional commissions; like the Economic commission for Africa and the bodies.

The Trusteeship Council

Like the League of Nations, the UN also created the UN Trusteeship council to provide International supervision for eleven Trust Territories administered by seven member states and to ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the territories for self-government or independence. By 1994, all the Trust Territories had attained self-government or independence, either as separate states or by joining neighbouring independent countries. The Trusteeship council consists of all permanent members.

The International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the main judicial organ of the UN. It has fifteen judges elected jointly by the General Assembly and the security. The ICJ decides disputes between states. However, state participation in the judicial processes is voluntary, but it is obligated to comply with the court’s decision. The court provides advisory opinions to other UN organs and Specialized Agencies on request, only states may bring cases before the court. The court is located in Hague, Netherlands.

Levels/ Indicators of Analysis

In this section, we are going to use four levels of analysis to access the viability of the United Nations ability to prevent the occurrence of a third world war:

The Possession Veto Power:

The United Nations is established on six principal organs. The Security Council occupies the apex position and may be regarded as the executive body that seats the great powers – China, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – the focus sponsoring powers and France (Ayah, 1999). The council consists of five permanent members that have veto powers. During one of the conferences held at Dumbarton Oaks, the Russian delegation insisted that they agreed on the Unanimity rule – which imply that each of the five permanent powers should have a veto power on issues concerning peace and security, Shaw (1997). That is to say, that in any issue raised, a permanent member may cast a veto or double veto is the situation may require in order protecting its interest. According to Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (2014), they were granted a veto on the view that if the great powers were not given a privileged position, the UN would not work. In contrast to the league, where any government was free to reject any recommendations, or there was no mechanism for coordinating military or economic actions against miscreant states; the UN provided this platform to discipline caring state. The central argument here, is that the institution of veto power have made great Nations not abuse or take action that will lead to another world war. For example, the fear of veto power instrument has made the Korean crisis to be at balance. The USA would have gone to full war with North

Korea, if not the fear of veto powers from Russia and China. Again, the USA effort or action to force president Saddam of Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait would have resulted to another war due to the fact that the Security Council in 1990 had passed a unanimous Resolution authorizing the use of all necessary means to enforce the UN embargo (Ite and Eminue, 2017). In Syria, the domestic crisis that have enveloped the state, which the UN has viewed as a threat to international peace and security, would have led to global war if the great powers supporting each parties in the dispute had taken a unilateral military action.

The Use of Sanctions:

In the twenty-first century, the world had continued to witness wars and conflicts within failed or fragile states. According to Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens, (2014),, about 39 percent of these conflicts are in Africa, another 39 percent are in Asia, and most of the rest are in the Middle East. Again, since 1945, other states outside the signatories to the Non proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) i.e. The P.5 in the Security Council, have the capability to construct nuclear devices; thus, there is the proliferation and the gradual spread of nuclear weapon by these additional states. As we all know, nuclear weapons are always dangerous, because they can destroy the world. When it is used in a conflict, nuclear weapons have indiscriminate effects – it may lead to civilian deaths and injuries.

The United Nations through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) works for the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technology and aims to control the spread of nuclear weaponry. Therefore, if states like Iran, Iraq and North Korea refuse to cooperate with the IAEA, the weight of the United Nations will descend on them. The UN, usually send their inspectors to monitor how states utilizes their nuclear weapons. Where there is reasonable proof that member – states outside the P.5 embark on nuclear/arms race, the United Nations will employ both political and economic sanctions like boycotts, arms embargoes and punitive tariffs against the behaviour of a target state. For example, the United States acting on behalf of the UN, had cause to frozen bank and investment assets from Afghanistan and Iraq as well as several Islamic charity organizations; blocking access to multilateral lending institutions like the World Bank and investment restrictions which helps to create economic crisis in the states. This has become a major tools used by the UN in attempts to influence state behaviour of home and abroad (Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens, 2014).

In addition, there may be travel and business restrictions against that state. Also the United States is working with other members of the UN Security Council to punish North Korea for its production and testing of nuclear weapons. Here the position of this paper, is that the fear of effective sanctions have made the affected states to have restrain in their action, thus reducing the tensions that may result to world war.

The Impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

In 1948, the UN General Assembly established a baseline of human right for its member states for follow. As Lamy, Masker, Bayis, Smith, and Owens (2014) puts it, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out thirty basic political, civil economic and social rights all people share as humans. After independence most of the newly created states embraced the tenets of human rights law. But unfortunately, civil strikes have threatened or split some of these countries. As a way of securing world peace, the UN Security Council have treated most gross violations of human rights by sovereign states which to some analyst they serve as a threats to global peace and security, thus legitimating action under chapter VII for the UN charter. For example, in East

Timor in 1999, and the authorization of measures to protect civilians in Libya in 2011, the Security Council belief that international order is dependent on the maintenance of at least minimum standards of global Justice. Therefore, lay this token, to the desire of the UN to promote a rule-based global society, that include human rights have help to prevent more wars.

The Establishment of International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ancient Roman concept of Jus Gentium (the law of peoples) is the foundation of the general principles of law for all recognized civilized nations (Roukce, 2004). When the UN was formed, the judicial arm (ICJ) adopted this principle. To maintain world peace and security, states are encouraged to enter into international treaties and conventions. So when states or their leader violates these laws, they are brought to book at the ICJ and International Criminal Court. For instance, the ICC was created in 2002 with its headquarters in Hague, Netherlands. It has powers to exercise jurisdiction over persons or groups for serious crimes of international concern (Rome Statute, Article I). The crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes among others.

For example, in 2002 the former president of Yugoslavia Mr. Slobodan Milosevic was tried and sentence by the International tribunal in the Netherlands, for violating specific treaty law, the 1949 General Conventions, the 13 counts of violations of the laws of customs of war, and 10 counts of crimes against humanity (Roukce, 2004) and former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Also the UN through the ICC has created war crimes tribunals in Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Liberia etc. The argument here, is that the setting up of the body to check criminalities by the UN, have help to make statesmen/world leaders that engage in such act or crime to have a re-think, and by so doing help to reduce conflict in the global politics.

CONCLUSION

The international system has witnessed a relative peace since the post second world war till date. This is as a result of the creation of an international organization growth as the United Nations in 1945. The UN and other regional bodies have assisted in regulating the international anarchy that existed prior to the First World War and immediately after the formation of the League of Nations. The framers of the League had envisaged a body that could respond to aggression or a specific external threat through collective defence. But after the demise of the league of Nation, the new supranational body – the UN have been able to maintain global peace through collective security. For example, the world has survived the cold-war period, the Gulf war known as “Operation Desert Storm, the Terrorist threat before and after 9/11, the negative effect of globalization, the issue of humanitarian crisis and treat to human right abuses among others. In spite of all these to advancement by the UN, the United Nations must be flexible an prompt in responding to certain changing circumstances and situations if it is to be effective to stop another third world war to occur. More over since the world is not static but dynamic.

The paper also therefore noted that with the wide scope of UN in areas of peace keeping, humanitarian assistance and in spread of democracy that the fear for another third world war may not see the light of day, since the UN as a supranational government have been able to put in place certain measure which we have indicated some in this paper. Therefore in the final analysis, the paper holds that the UN is capable of fulfilling its mandate of maintaining war peace and by extension preventing another third world war. By providing basic security guarantees and responding to crises, UN operations support political transitions and help fortify

fragile new state institutions. The work of the UN has helped countries to close the chapter of conflict and open a path to normal development, even if major peace-building challenges remain.

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