

The United States Unilateralist Foreign Policy Propagates its National Security Interest in the Post-9/11 International System Undermines the United Nations Multilateralism

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Abstract

Using the United Nations multilateral platform to promote international peace and security has become more popular since it was founded in 1945. This was further reinforced during the Cold War. Nevertheless, the United States is well-known among nations that often pursue unilateral foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Although unilateral foreign policy has been adopted for a number of years, it is concerning that following the 9/11 attacks, successive administrations in the US (Presidents George W. Bush (Jr.), Barack Obama, and Donald Trump) have routinely used it as a foreign policy doctrine. The US considers the UN system to be impractical in achieving its foreign policy and national security objectives. It, therefore, routinely undermines and devalues the UN system, despite having been instrumental to its formation. In reaction to different problems, the US has taken unilateral actions, chosen to abandon international organizations, and withdrew from international agreements. The US views the UN with such ambivalence and ambiguity. This has caused significant decline in UN multilateralism, while progressive acceleration of US unilateralist foreign policy as a result of the predisposition to act independently in defense of national security interest; thereby creating tension, insecurity and instability in the international system.

Keywords: Foreign policy, International system, Multilateralism, National security, United Nations, United States, Unilateralism

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Background to the Study

Different approaches are used by different nations when determining their foreign policy. While some states pursue unilateral foreign policy, others use bilateral or/ and multilateral platforms to accomplish their national interest objectives. The adoption of any approach is determined by a nation's power and resources, leadership and the issue at stake (Robert, 2019). Adopting a unilateral foreign policy means acting without the backing of other countries or organizations, including the United Nations (UN) multilateral framework. Using a multilateral platform under the UN's auspices appears to have gained popularity since the organization's founding in 1945 to promote global peace and stability, which was further reinforced during the Cold War (Clement, 2003). However, the United States (US) is well-known among countries that often pursue unilateral foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. It seemed the US believes that the UN system has no practical bearing on its ability to pursue its goals in national security and foreign policy. Although unilateral foreign policy has been adopted for a number of years, it is concerning that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, successive administrations (Presidents George W. Bush (Jr.), Barack Obama, and Donald Trump) have regularly used it as a US foreign policy doctrine to combat international terrorism and insecurity (Robert, 2019).

On September 11, 2001, two commercial planes were hijacked by al-Qaeda militants and were crashed into the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center in New York. A third plane struck the Pentagon, while a fourth, slated to target Washington, DC, crashed in a Pennsylvanian field after passengers and crew assaulted the cockpit. In an attempt to find the terrorists responsible, President George W. Bush (Jr.) authorized the US military to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, which ignited "the war on terror." However, the strategy has not been successful in eliminating international terrorism; rather, it has made the US more enemies than allies. Notably, several other countries, including Singapore, Italy, Spain, Britain, and France, have made significant efforts to combat international counterterrorism operations without taking a unilateral stance (Robert, 2019).

The US-UN relationship, which Robert (2019) referred to as a 'love-hate relationship' in the years prior to 9/11, has never seen a golden age. Despite having played a key role in the creation of the UN system, the US continues to perceive the organization with such ambivalence and ambiguity that it consistently sidesteps and devalues the UN system in its foreign policy planning and exploration (Clement, 2003). In response to various issues, the US has on several occasions moved independently, requested exclusions from UN-organized global systems, and withdrawn from international agreements. The US tends to act independently when it comes to foreign policy that reinforces its national interest, which has led to a major reduction in UN multilateralism, while at the same time a progressive acceleration of US unilateralist foreign policy. The US is a notable powerhouse that possesses unmatched strength, power, and influence globally. Undoubtedly, the US has unparalleled military, economic, and political clout within the UN system, which it leverages to further its strategic national interest. Due to its power, the US is able to decide on national security policies independent of UN multilateral initiatives (Hussain, 2011).

However, in the contemporary global setting, the military and unilateral strategy used by US has not proven to be an effective means of tackling the security risks posed by transnational security agents. Due to the interconnectedness of today's world, acting alone and depending only on military force is insufficient. Furthermore, globalization has caused national borders to blur and transnational security threats to emerge, necessitating cooperation and multilateral approaches to effectively address emergent problems. The UN offers the most effective multilateral platform for nations to come up with a shared solution to shared global issues (Hussain, 2011). Therefore, proponents of multilateralism contended that the US's 'go-it-alone' approach to foreign policy is incompatible with the current state of globalization, which places a premium on collaboration, interdependence, and networking between states and other international actors (Aysha, 2005). Researchers have conducted a great deal of research on unilateral and multilateral initiatives, but very little has been done to explain why successive administrations in the US prefers to act unilaterally in the post-Cold War era.

Therefore, the main premise of this paper is that international peace, security and stability are threatened by the UN's diminishing multilateralism against the backdrop of the US's more unilateralist foreign policy in the wake of 9/11. This was accomplished by considering the post-9/11 unilateralist foreign policy stances adopted by three US administrations: George W. Bush (Jr.), Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. Similarly, the paper is anchored on the time series research design. It mainly adopts secondary sources of data collection methods, drawing from pertinent textbooks, journal articles, internet materials and other archival documents. In order to achieve its goals, the paper is structured into six sections. The other sections are the conceptual overview, literature review, theoretical review, discussion of findings and concluding remarks accordingly.

Conceptual Overview

The terms “multilateralism” and “unilateralism” are at the opposing extreme of the spectrum. A president's or state's action may be unilateral or multilateral. The term multilateralism is used to “described as an institutional platform that brings together three or more states on the basis of certain principles of conduct” (Ruggie (1993, p. 11). It concerns diplomatic relations between three or more states in the international system. It refers to foreign and security policies that use international diplomacy to establish, uphold, and expand a particular normative international order (Hanns, 2020).

On the other hand, unilateralism is “a situation where the powerful state disrespects multilateral norms and adopts a self-centered foreign policy” (Wedgwood 2002 in Tago 2017: 5). Unilateralism happens when a president or state makes choices without consulting other states or organizations in any way. The term is frequently used in international relations to describe national initiatives that are undertaken independently of other states' consent (Chu & Williamson, 2022). Unilateralism suggests that one state does not have the veto authority over the policies of another state, and a state can act freely and swiftly; thereby avoiding widespread discussion on policies. This often generates tensions between different values. However, autonomous action can be permitted during conflict situation as the primary authority and states may not subscribe to the divided power of multilateralism (Malone & Khong, 2003).

Literature Review

There are many scholarly arguments that can be used to classify the debate around the US's post-9/11 unilateral foreign policy and national security interest. According to Kagan (2003), the US is strong enough to pursue and accomplish its goals for national security without relying on the multilateral platform offered by the UN system, particularly in terms of containing threats to national security from international terrorism without needlessly jeopardizing its interests at home within the confines of unilateral institutions and procedures. Also, there is the contention that the US has not reached the pinnacle of its power and will continue to be a significant player in the world for many years to come (Kagan, 2003). Again, (Nye, 2002) contended that the superpower is already facing political and economic challenges, while Kagan (2003), averred that the 9/11 tragedy necessitates the need to define the US's post-Cold War national interest and the means of achieving its national security goals. Furthermore, US actions in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrated the US's preference for unilateralism over multilateralism (Hussain, 2011; Powell, 2003).

National security concerns following the events of September 11, 2001, made the US's unilateralism evident (Ikenberry 2003). In order to pursue suspected terrorists involved in the 9/11 attack, and launched an invasion of Iraq in 2003, President George W. Bush (Jr.), for instance, established a 'coalition of willing'. Eventually, the US was able to obtain legal backing for its military operations from the UN in return for its leadership style and advocacy of Western values. However, in a foreign policy crisis situation, acting alone is not a popular position (Damen, 2022; Ikenberry, 2003). Why, therefore, did some former US presidents make this choice in the first place? The president's decision to act alone in any circumstance has the potential to make or break his presidency. Millions of moneys could be lost and countless lives could be affected by his actions (Mahbubani, 2013).

The majority of Republican president's support UN multilateralism (Hussain, 2011). However, the US has never before undergone a flawless or exceptional time of multilateral action, nor have any Democratic or Republican administrations avoided making unilateral judgments on international matters (Damen, 2022). The US earlier presidents had unique multilateral periods in foreign policy (Hussain, 2011).

Given the triumph of the multilateral effort in the Gulf War of 1991, where President George W. Bush (Jr.) was able to reap the benefits of multilateralism, the decision to act alone seems astounding. The invasion of Iraq brought unilateralism to the forefront, with roughly thirty nations endorsing US policy, while allies like Germany, Turkey, and France stayed out of the fray (Chow, 2019). The US initially operated alone in Iraq without the consent of multilateral bodies. Notably, the world is one big global family, and the US, is just one strong state (Chu & Williamson, 2022). The US's unilateralism was met with resistance when Russia and France vetoed resolution 1441 on Iraq, sending a strong warning to the US. However, the US invasion of Afghanistan was deemed necessary and justified in light of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, as expressed by the majority of Western nations who supported Iraq's disarmament. Furthermore, the article 51 of the UN charter allows for unilateral operations in cases of self-defense, the US invasion of Afghanistan was justified.

Similarly, the US needed the full, firm support of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 1991 Gulf War to occur, and any legitimate use of force by the US required international cooperation and legitimacy (Ruggie, 1992). The crucial point is why US presidents, whether Republicans or Democrats, would act alone during a crisis when using multilateral platforms would have been the wisest course of action? Hegemonic power is the answer. As the world's superpower, the US has the capacity to act unilaterally through the use of force, and the obvious disparity in military might between the US and other nations demonstrates the justification for such acts by its presidents.

Moreover, rather than being motivated by a military technology advantage, a state's decision to use its military is a political one (Lieber, 2005). Presidents hold immense influence because they may force others to do things that they would not normally want to do. This is 'realpolitik' (Dahl, 1961). The president controls a formidable power over the state's armed forces and determines whether to act alone or cooperatively. The US military has made considerable technological, tactical, and weaponry advancements. Despite the existence of other global powers, the US has the strongest military. Its military's superiority over other countries' militaries lessens the propensity for multilateral action (Ikenberry, 2003). Due to its technological superiority, the US is able to define and defend its activities in a way that serves its national interest, even when it chooses not to use the UN's multilateral processes (Clement, 2003). A president may opt to select unilateralism based on superior relative military force after they reach the unilateral-multilateral decision point.

Furthermore, when a president faces security issues, domestic politics can have a major impact on his policy. The US citizens are likely to urge a president to act unilaterally when facing threats to national security if they are unsure about when unilateral or multilateral force should be utilized. The US started acting alone in its foreign policy in 2002 after the Iraq War, citing the supposed presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq and Saddam Hussein's affiliation with the al-Qaeda terrorist group as justifications. Pre-emptive measures taken by the US military have always been a component of foreign policy. When it was declared in the US National Security Strategy (NSS) that "the country will not be hesitant in taking unilateral action against perceived terror groups to prevent attacks on US citizens," pre-emption was officially declared as a US doctrine (White House, 2002, p. 157).

Scholars who reject unilateral action frequently point to the post-World War II era's success as evidence that multilateralism is superior in US foreign policy and that using this strategy always yields positive outcomes in the end. The US was dedicated to multilateralism in the years after World War II (McCormick, 2002). Previous US administrations have made significant investments in the creation of international organizations, but their post-war counterparts have only subjected themselves to the constraints imposed by institutional norms. Put differently, the institutional order that the US sponsored was designed to constrain the actions of other states. This method of creating a world order is hegemonic rather than multilateralistic (McCormick, 2002).

Not that the US has never supported the UN multilateral platform, as the US has publicly backed the UN mechanisms on a number of occasions. The US has been involved in most UN-related problems since Roosevelt's administration in 1945. Obviously, US leadership led to the establishment of a number of international organizations, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GAIT), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations Organization (UNO), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in the 1990s, etc. These institutions mostly depend on US leadership to carry out their international operations. As a result, after World War II, multilateralism entered US foreign policy, and the US participated in numerous multilateral initiatives to further its national interest objectives. However, adhering to the norms of these multilateral organizations has proven challenging. The US experienced the second wave of multilateralism after the end of the Cold War, but because the US believed there was little or no need for global action, the post-Cold War concept of multilateralism vanished, as it didn't take long for the US to abandon the UN (Hussain, 2011).

Interestingly, under article 43, the UN was meant to have a global army developed in order to promptly address threats to transnational security. But no international armed force was established, and the UN failed to foresee the rival US-Soviet bipolar world where most international solutions to humanitarian crises would be stalled by the permanent members of the Security Council's veto power (Keohane, 1990). Although most people view the UN as the global government, but the US has been breaking multilateralism rules and UN resolutions in its recent foreign policy initiatives (Powell, 2003). This is concerning since the US used to be a proponent of using a multilateral approach to find lasting solutions to global issues. However, the reason for their ambiguous relationship over time is that strong states like the US cannot be constrained by the ideals of multilateral institutions. Though, the US has been a UN supporter, it has however, frequently disregarded the Security Council and insists on taking independent action (Hussain, 2011; Powell, 2003). The UN multilateralism seems to be in jeopardy recently, as evidenced by US-UN relations, particularly when it comes to national security.

Over the years, US support for the UN has been seen as its cornerstone, however, at the moment, US involvement in unilateral acts appears to be endangering the UN's influence in international affairs. Due to its overall organization, agenda, and emphasis on cooperation and collective response to alleviate humanitarian problems, the UN was founded on the multilateral principle. Therefore, the basis of the UN's operations as it fulfills its mandate has been multilateralism. According to the principles of multilateralism, sovereign states are responsible for maintaining international security, and issues that affect one state affect all of them. As a result, any attack aimed at one state is considered a threat to all. This explains "the rule of each for all and all for each" (Luard, 1982, p. 7). Notwithstanding, bilateral or multilateral ties, all UN members are required to defend the victim against the aggressor in the event of internal or external threats. States in the international system are expected to pool their resources and forces to defend the victim, thereby bolstering international security.

However, the US has sometimes withdrawn from its role as a strong advocate of the multilateral principles, but the US became the strongest force behind the formation of rule-based global regimes that was seen as very important checks on authoritarianism. There are two main ways in which this terrible situation is presenting itself. The first unpleasant possibility was that the US would act unilaterally without the UN's approval. The second argument was that, in order to serve US national interests, such an action amounted to either rejecting, or misapplying, or violating the UN resolution (Newman, Thakur & Tirman, 2006).

An instance of US justification for using unilateral action was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, in which the US government designated certain states (Iraq and Afghanistan) as part of the 'axis of terror' and charged Saddam Hussein, the then-president of Iraq, with being aware of and the leader of the terrorist organization that attacked the US (Newman, Thakur & Tirman, 2006). The UN resolution 1414 on Iraq, which US policy makers consistently cite as justification for the invasion, never advocates for unilateral action; rather, it issues a warning if Iraq declines to cooperate with UN investigators by granting them unrestricted access to the site where the alleged WMD were hidden. However, the invasion was in fact in violation of the UN Charter (Annan, 2004). Even while the US is legally permitted to employ force in response to an attack, the action must adhere to international law (Okeke & Nnaemeka, 2016). Both unilateralism and multilateralism, however, are tools for accomplishing foreign policy goals, and a superpower is free to rely on whichever approach best serves its needs at any given moment. When it seems necessary, the US can act with the UN, but it also possesses the power, means, and capacity to act alone.

Theoretical Review

The soft power theory serves as the foundation for this paper. The term "soft power theory," which was first propounded by Joseph Nye, can be interpreted from various theoretical perspectives (Nye, 2017, 2011, 2004, 2002). It is a blend of various forms of power. According to (Nye, 2017, p. 2015), soft power is "the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one prefers, and that can be accomplished by coercion, payment or attraction and persuasion. Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment." It includes culture, morals, and foreign policy. In order to achieve the desired outcome, the concept was expanded to include the capacity to influence others by working together to frame goals, persuade, and arouse interest (Nye, 2011).

It can also be defined as the ability based on ideational and cultural traits that are used, consciously or unconsciously, by global political actors to achieve strategic imperatives. This type of power encompasses not just cultural influence, but also political ideals and ideologies, socioeconomic and educational frameworks, and acceptable internal policies that are recognized by other states. A state's soft power increases when other states come to believe that its policies are justifiable and even essential. Many states have realized how crucial it is to engage in competitive politics of appeal, legitimacy, and credibility by utilizing soft power resources. This is due to the fact that, since the purpose of using force is to accomplish a state's objectives, alignment with national ideals and interests might be important.

It has been documented that East Asian nations serve as examples of how soft power may be applied in a variety of ways to advance national goals as well as supplement hard power resources. States like China, South Korea, and Japan have all adopted soft power as a crucial tool for achieving their foreign policy objectives (Nye, 2011). The fact that US culture has created a hegemonic liberal discourse and that US ideals are not universal in every way, but are similar to those of many other countries in the information age where people desire freedom of expression and involvement. Values that are broadly shared can serve as the foundation for soft power that is effective both from and towards the US in a variety of ways (Pamment, 2013). Although the US may have an edge, it may also feel pressure to uphold principles that are widely held by others. Soft power in the twenty-first century was a form of cultural imperialism (Roberts, 2014). Furthermore, the US makes every effort to create soft power through cultural narratives that advance its national interests. Cultural attitudes and public opinion constitute the greatest source of soft power. The soft power theory contends that US power, which pushed these products in post-war Europe, was primarily influenced by ideas and culture in addition to manpower and finance (Nye, 2002).

Similarly, players in the international system use soft power to directly or indirectly affect one another. They also compete with one another to deprive each other of charm and tact, creating a climate that is detrimental to public opinion in the other states or in the eyes of the outsider. In certain situations, leaders are forced to adopt the viewpoint of outsiders, even if it may be inaccurate and referred to as 'world opinion'. In other situations, however, their worries about diplomatic isolation may prevent them from acting. For example, the Iranian parliament established a \$20 million fund to inform the world about human rights violations in the US following the passage of a \$30 million law by the US Senate to document and publicize human rights violations in Iraq (Trunkos, 2013).

Skillful sovereign strategies may convert a wide range of resources—such as culture, values, legal regulations, a strong domestic model, a thriving economy, and a capable military force—into soft power (Nye, 2011). Information agencies, public diplomacy, national intelligence services, exchange, assistance and training programs, and diplomacy are occasionally included in these resources. A wide range of policies can also be supported by shared resources; nevertheless, the effectiveness of these policies in achieving desired goals depends on the context, the goals, and the characteristics of the power tactics. However, the ability to initially foster the desired perception of those attributes as competence and benignity is necessary in order to convert soft power resources into an excellent outcome (Gallarotti, 2011). As a result, people—and organizations in particular—become extremely powerful in their endeavors by transforming the beliefs and standards of behavior that are promoted. It was believed that socially acceptable beliefs, norms, and standards held by powerful nations and non-state actors were changing the way that the world community came to agree on the rules that should govern it.

By utilizing the soft power theory, we may comprehend that the US's involvement in the UN does not have to be a zero-sum game. Additionally, the expansion of US soft power may contribute to a positive sum relationship if it lessens the UN's multilateral influence and the

likelihood of conflict. While the idea of soft power is gradually finding its way into the process of formulating policies and conducting diplomacy, there are still some unanswered questions about how to quantify soft power resources, conceptualize soft power, and apply soft power strategies in international politics.

Discussion of Findings

It is, therefore, imperative that this section makes a critical analysis of the US's unilateral foreign policy as shaped by the character and ideology of its leader. An examination of US unilateralist foreign policy from the President Bush to Trump administrations, to comprehend US national security interest strategies in the post-9/11 era may suffice.

(a) The Unilateralist Foreign Policy of President George W. Bush (Jr.) (2001-2009)

Following the 9/11 attacks, the President Bush administration implemented a mostly unilateral foreign policy doctrine that cut off the US from the rest of the world. This strategy had unfavorable effects and damaged the nation's reputation abroad. In the face of counterterrorism operations, the strategy failed to produce the desired outcome and instead made the US more enemies than friends (Robert, 2019). Erroneous military action during the Bush years impeded more strategic and potentially effective counterterrorism measures. In particular, the administration had difficulty successfully regulating the flow of money to the terrorists. The government also failed to identify a long-term way to form an international alliance against terrorism in the legal domain (McCartney, 2004).

President George W. Bush (Jr.) made the decision on multiple occasions to ignore and circumvent the UN multilateral framework. The Bush administration avoided the UN framework for international environmental cooperation by acting alone in 2001 when it withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. In 2002, Bush unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, a landmark arms control accord, without first consulting other countries. Again, the Bush administration prioritized US interests over multilateral cooperation by going its own way on matters like the creation of the International Criminal Court and the decision to invade Afghanistan in retaliation for the 9/11 atrocities. President Bush made the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 in spite of strong international opposition and a clear lack of UN resolution. Rather than pursuing widespread international backing, the US established a 'coalition of the willing' for the invasion (Forman, Lyman & Patrick, 2008).

Following the events of 9/11, George W. Bush (Jr.) decided to pursue a unilateral foreign policy strategy, which has angered many of the country's closest allies, especially its European allies, some of whom were adamantly against US intervention in Iraq in 2003. A large number of foreign policy specialists in Washington, both inside and outside the government, have criticized this unilateral approach (Forman, Lyman & Patrick, 2008). By enacting a number of unilateral foreign policies on matters like the environment, the Middle East, and the role of international organizations like the UN, these experts contended that the Bush administration had unnecessarily isolated itself from other countries (Forman, Lyman & Patrick, 2008).

The President Bush's trust in the unilateral 'take it or leave it alone' foreign policy strategy has led to an uncompromising stance that has frustrated allies and produced only temporary gains. Bush announced the US National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2002 (Forman, Lyman & Patrick, 2008). As a new chapter in US foreign policy, the NSS embodied a number of policy pronouncements and committed the country to granting democracy, liberty, and security to every state. It also placed a strong emphasis on military preemption, superiority, and unilateralism (White House, 2002). It asserted that the US is leading an international campaign against terrorism. A certain governmental structure, people-religion, or philosophy does not constitute the enemy. The enemy is deliberate violence against innocent people with political motivations (White House, 2002). These resoundingly demonstrated that President Bush's national security strategy and proof of implementation favor unilateralism over multilateralism and should only be employed when domestic policy objectives coincide with US national security objectives.

(b) The Unilateralist Foreign Policy of President Barrack Obama (2009-2017)

When he succeeded the Bush administration, President Barack Obama inherited the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as some facets of the 'war on terror'. During his first tenure, he successfully brought an end to the war in Iraq and killed Osama bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda's terrorist organization. Although the previous victory enhanced Obama's standing and deviated from Bush's approach, the subsequent decision was heavily censured as a further instance of US unilateralism (Aaltola & Saloniemi-Pasternak 2012).

The 2010 US NSS document states that the US is firmly committed to both reducing its nuclear arsenal and maintaining global non-proliferation (White House, 2010). The US administration's actual policies and rhetoric both exhibit contradictions, despite the Obama administration's multiple attempts at substantial reform. President Obama made it clear that there is no longer a zero-sum game when it comes to power and that states now depend on one another (Patrick, 2010). Even if President Obama claimed to be in favor of the UN's multilateral framework, his administration retained the authority to act alone to protect US national security interests (White House, 2010).

There are numerous examples of his administration's constant use of a unilateral strategy while making foreign policy choices. Cases in point include the unilateral launch of military operations in Libya, the use of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen without full multilateral approval, the approval of the covert operation that killed Osama bin Laden without consulting the Pakistani government, the independent normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba, and the negotiation of the Iran nuclear deal without full UNSC approval all demonstrated a pattern of evading or ignoring the UN's multilateral mechanisms.

Despite the aforementioned incidents, President Obama stressed that the US is powerless to solve global issues on its own. In reality, in order to cope with growing economic and security dependence, the US frequently chooses to share some sovereign functions with other countries or publicly accepts limitations on its policy autonomy (Patrick 2010). The main concerns here are multilateralism without discounting unilateralism as the optimal option,

responsible value leadership, and the idea of US exceptionalism. The President is committed to using all facets of US power, including the strength of US ideals, to achieve US national security goals (White House, 2010). A lot of work was done by the Obama administration to start new human rights and peacekeeping initiatives as well as to improve US position in the UN, especially with developing countries (Patrick 2010; Jones & Gowan 2009; Aaltola & Saloniemi-Pasternak 2012).

(c) The Unilateralist Foreign Policy of President Donald Trump (2017-2021)

According to scholars, the Trump administration has been characterized by indifference and disinterest (Galbrath, 2019). In addition to cutting funding for the UN Secretariat and its agencies, the US had stopped exerting more general political leadership, which has decreased US influence in the UN. Foreign policy under the Trump administration was antagonistic. It revealed a greater inclination to use the UN as a tool, like setting up and directing, as opposed to using it as a stage to achieve US national security interests. With a greater emphasis on sovereignty and fewer allies, US foreign policy in 2017 was transactional, commercial, nationalist, and unpredictable. A power-based international system with state competitiveness was the prevailing global vision of the Trump administration (Blackwill, 2019).

However, Krickovic (2017) noted that close collaboration existed between the Trump administration, and China and Russia. The only person to express US concerns about multilateralism was President Trump (Wainwright, 2018). Some of Donald Trump's first actions as US president were to take a unilateral approach, undermining the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, reauthorizing the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines, and imposing a travel ban on people of seven nations. None of these choices had even the slightest backing from a congressional resolution.

Furthermore, there have been other occasions in which President Donald Trump has pursued a unilateral foreign policy by routinely eschewing or ignoring the UN multilateral framework. In addition, citing perceived bias against Israel and the council's relevance, Donald Trump, in 2018, unilaterally withdrew the US from the Iran's 2015 nuclear deal officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Iran had signed with the five (5) most powerful states in the world, and even though, the UNSC had endorsed the agreement. Furthermore, he ordered the killing of Qassem Soleimani, Iranian military chief viewed as mastermind of terrorist attacks on US vital interests. He also unilaterally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocated the US embassy there, a move that sparked controversy worldwide and went against multiple UN resolutions and international consensus (Krickovic, 2017).

Again, Trump withdrew the US from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization. The world community chastised these actions severely (Galbrath, 2019). Bypassing the existing multilateral trade channels of the World Trade Organization (WTO), his administration levied unilateral tariffs on China and other European allies. Also, the administration withdrew the US from the UN

Human Rights Council and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) due to the need for fundamental reforms and the continuing anti-Israel biases. These unilateral actions further isolated the US in the international system (Galbrath, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

The national security strategies of the administrations of US presidents, George W. Bush (Jr.), Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, clearly favor unilateralism over multilateral action, and that multilateral platform was only employed when it was in line with domestic policy directions that advance US national security objectives. Unilateral military actions have been seen by the US as self-defense. Furthermore, accomplishing US national security goals still comes at a very high cost, particularly when it comes to unilateralist military actions.

The US's unilateral foreign policy of ignoring and circumventing the UN multilateral platform has important ramifications, especially when considering the UNSC and the dynamics of international politics. By disregarding and evading multilateral processes, the US runs the risk of weakening the legitimacy and authority of the UNSC, which was established to advance global peace and security via cooperation and diplomacy. It exacerbates conflict and rifts inside the Security Council and reduces the efficacy of group decision-making on important international matters.

Thus, in order to offset US efforts, Russia likewise was encouraged to pursue a more assertive and independent foreign policy, which intensifies competition and power struggles within the Security Council. Russia has, therefore, opposed the US's foreign policy stance in the UNSC, which is occasionally intended to checkmate its unilateral moves in matters of global significance. Due to its invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2022, Russia has, in these instances, become increasingly hostile toward its neighbors and has made attempts to redraw the boundaries of its sphere of influence. Russia's assertiveness has pitted it against the EU and its neighbors, with some scholars and nations charging President Putin of having a revisionist agenda. However, Russia was acting alone because of US activities that were unilateral and disregarded the UN Charter (Cecire, 2014).

Undoubtedly, the US's unilateral actions exacerbate the complexity of international relations by establishing a precedent that encourages other nations to put their national interests ahead of multilateral cooperation. This could undermine efforts to address common issues like climate change, nuclear proliferation, and conflicts. The intervention of Russia in Ukraine, wherein Moscow circumvented multilateral channels and questioned the coherence and efficacy of the Security Council, is one instance of this dynamic at play. Moscow justified its actions on the basis of its own national security interests. It is crucial to claim, therefore, that US unilateral foreign policy initiatives and circumvention of multilateral forums upend international law, erode UN authority, and create an atmosphere that is increasingly unstable and tense.

Considering the aforementioned, the ensuing suggestions are relevant. First and foremost, the US must adopt shared leadership through the UN's assistance. This is because the world in which we live is increasingly interconnected and globalized, with transnational security threats that are amorphous and do not respect national borders. Despite its immense power, the US is unable to be everywhere at once; for this reason, it needs the genuine international platform that the UN system offers. Second, the US has to commit more funds to bolstering its soft power credentials in order to be able to advance multilateral diplomacy at the UN. By using soft power assets, the US can gain legitimacy in the eyes of other countries and, as a result, face less pushback and resistance when attempting to enforce its goals within the framework of the UN. Lastly, to sharpen the edge of its diplomacy in the UN system, the US must take deliberate steps to refine its diplomatic tactics and manners. It must also avoid the temptations and traps that come with great power in order to improve its image and acceptability to draw other countries to its position and interest.

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