A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Barnabas Obiora Idoko*
http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/og.v17i1.7

Abstract
Man is a social animal. As such, throughout the long history of mankind, men and women from different cultural backgrounds have had cause to interact, both on the level of individual and as cultural groups bringing about cultural crosspollinations. Sometimes, this intercultural encounter leads to the enrichment of the cultures involved or to a cultural hybridization birthing a new culture altogether. At other times, the encounter results in conflict or what has come to be described in international studies as the 'clash of cultures'. No other time in history is this phenomenon of cultural conflict more prevalent than in our time and no area is it more emphasized than at the level of international relations where globalization has enhanced the meeting and interaction of people and nations from different cultures. This paper applies the philosophical method of analysis to investigate how inter-cultural dialogue can be deployed as a means of fostering international peace. The paper discovered that culture, though an under-emphasized element in mainstream international relations studies is a key determinant of how nations conduct their affairs internationally. To this end, it recommended that encouraging the respect of other people's cultures and intercultural dialogue, especially at the level of the relations between states is one of the most effective ways of mitigating conflicts in this age of globalization and multiculturalism.

Key Words: International Relations, Culture, Cultural dialogue, Conflict, International peace.

Introduction
Since the emergence of nation states as the principal authors on the international arena, scholars have recognized that cordiality amongst nations is paramount for the achievement of global security (Ogugua, 2014). This realization has led political theorists to identify and promote those elements they think influence the

behaviour of states on the international level. In the past, realism and liberalism dominated the scene. Recently, however, constructivism (one of the many theories called critical or the middle group theories) arose as the main challenger of realism and liberalism. Realism sees human nature as fundamentally sinful, egoist, interest oriented, aggressive and all the time power seeking in character. Thus, international relations for the realist, is anarchistic as nations are driven by rivalry and their interests to get more powerful ((Buzan, 2004, 50). The main tenet of realism is lucidly summarised by Wendt (1994, 385) as follows:

> Realism holds that international politics is shaped by the rational behaviour of egoist actors who pursue their interests by making utilitarian calculations to maximize their benefits and minimize their losses, hence the materiality of international structures.

Contrary to realism, liberalism sees man as good by nature and freedom seeking. Because the liberal believes that freedom accumulates through cooperation, he claims that international relations is a scene of cooperation, interaction and interdependence between nations ((Nye, J. 2008). Despite their many disagreements, one thing the realists and liberals share in common is the belief that Culture is not an important element in international relations theories to be paid attention to. Against realism and liberalism, constructivism identifies culture as the key element in international relations. For the constructivists every human behaviour, whether motivated by self-interest or the desire for cooperation is influenced and determined by the individual's cultural orientation. For example, in Realism, international behavioural pattern is explained according to anarchism which for the realist creates conflict and fear of security dilemma in the international system. This explanation is more meaningful in the context of cultural behaviour premised on the basis of lack of security, distrust to others, self- interest and reduction of co-operations in international relations. Also, in Liberalism, formation of international community through cooperation makes more meaning in the context of cultural behaviour. In other words, the structure of international system is not

only explainable by the individual cultures of the participating nations but when seen as the arena where new culture(s) are created through the interaction of different cultures (Ghavam, 2005, 298).

Based on the following, this paper has undertaken to deploy the method of literature review to investigate the relationship between culture and international relations with the view of mapping out how incorporating intercultural dialogue into relations between nations can enhance peaceful coexistence on the international level. Hereto, the paper is divided into seven sections. The first section is the outlay of the work and the second part operationizes key concepts. Furthermore, while section three discusses the major theories in international relations, section four explores the relationship between culture and international relations. The fifth section examines how culture influences international relations in practice and the increasing rate of conflicts emerging from intercultural misunderstandings. Section six looks into how how a better understanding of culture and intercultural dialogue can help to resolve these problems. Finally, the concluding section makes recommendations and summarises.

Understanding of Culture in International Relations

When UNESCO was created in the aftermath of the Second World War, culture essentially referred to artistic production, the fine arts and literature (Matsuura, K. 2007). Besides, the Memorandum of Association of the Organization urged it to work towards "ensuring to the member states independence, integrity and the rich diversity of their culture" postulating thereby the existence of distinct cultures coinciding with the frontiers of the United Nation. In the 60s, in the context of decolonization, more stress was laid on recognition of the equal dignity of cultures and the need for policies aimed at cultural cooperation in the service of the countries having just attained independence. This step made culture acknowledged as a factor determining identity development, a key for the endogenous development of countries. It is the declaration of Bogota, at the culmination of intergovernmental conference on the cultural practices in Latin America and the Caribbean, in 1978, which put the finishing touches to this evolution by clearly setting forth that

"culture as a set of values and creations of society and that very expression of life is essential to this and is not just a means or ancillary instrument of social activity" (cited in Matsuura, K. 2007).

Gradually, in the wake of the work carried out in cultural anthropology, we have come to consider culture or rather cultures as no longer a homogenous whole of distinct and static isolates but as a node of active and dissymmetrical relations. This lays the foundation from 80s onwards of numerous debates on cultural development, cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, and necessary "dialogue between cultures and civilization." Today, the reference definition of culture as written down in the Universal Declaration of UNESCO on Culture Diversity of 2021, is inspired by the conclusion of Global Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico in 1982, (Mondiacult) the works of the Global Commission of Cultural Development (our creative diversity, 1995), and the Intergovernmental Conference on cultural policies for development (Stockholm, 1998). It stated that, "culture must be considered as the entirety of the spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional distinctive traits that characterize a society or social group; it includes besides arts and literature, the life styles, the manners of collective living, the value system, the tradition and beliefs" (Matsuura, K. 2007).

Overall, the underlining impression from the various definitions and historical development in the understanding of culture reviewed here is that culture was originally seen as the product of man's work of art. However, with the passage of time, culture eventually come to be seen as the opposite of nature, that is, everything produced by man in the cause of his interaction with his environment. These would include: language, custom, work, values etc. Thus, culture is dynamic and is continually on the process of creation and recreation. International Relations refers ultimately to one thing, namely, a phenomena circumscribed in the attitudes of nations on the international scene and the general manifestation or outcome of that behaviour. Once again the relationship between International Relations and culture cannot be overemphasized. This is because it is not only true that culture determines the behaviour of states on the international system but moreso because the behaviour of states has and will continue to give rise to new culture or what could be called international culture.

Theories in International Relations

As indicated at the introductory part of the work, there are many theories in International Relations Studies. However, in the midst of these myriad of theories, three strands can be identified: liberalism, realism and critical theories. Basically, liberalism and realism are the two foundational theories. The critical theories are the outcomes of the conflicts of agreements and disagreements between the two. Here, the basic presuppositions of these theories will be discussed. Since many theories are usually grouped together as classical theories and want of space will not allow all to be discussed here, constructivism will be singled out and discussed as an example of the critical theories.

Liberalism: The proponents of liberalism view human beings as innately good and believe peace and harmony between nations is not only achievable, but desirable. Immanuel Kant developed the idea in the late eighteenth century that states that shared liberal values should have no reason for going to war against one another. In Kant's eyes, the more liberal states there were in the world, the more peaceful it would become, since liberal states are ruled by their citizens and citizens are rarely disposed to desire war. His ideas have resonated and continue to be developed by modern liberals, most notably in the democratic peace theory, which posits that democracies do not go to war with each other, for the very reasons Kant outlined (Gold, D. &McGlinchey S. 2017).

Further, liberals have faith in the idea that the permanent cessation of war is an attainable goal. Taking liberal ideas into practice, US President Woodrow Wilson addressed his famous 'Fourteen Points' to the US Congress in January 1918 during the final year of the First World War. As he presented his ideas for a rebuilt world beyond the war, the last of his points was to create a general association of nations, which became the League of Nations. Dating back to 1920, the League of Nations was created largely for the purpose of overseeing affairs between states and implementing, as well as maintaining, international peace. However, when the League collapsed due to the outbreak of the Second World War in

1939, its failure became difficult for liberals to comprehend, as events seemed to contradict their theories. Therefore, despite the efforts of prominent liberal scholars and politicians such as Kant and Wilson, liberalism failed to retain a strong hold and a new theory emerged to explain the continuing presence of war. That theory became known as realism (Gold D. & McGlinchey S. 2017).

Realism: Realism gained momentum during the Second World War when it appeared to offer a convincing account for how and why the worst conflict in known history originated after a period of supposed peace and optimism. Although it originated in named form in the twentieth century, many realists have traced its origins in earlier writings (Gold D. & McGlinchey S. 2017). Indeed, realists have looked as far back as to the ancient world where they detected similar patterns of human behaviour as those evident in our modern world. As its name suggests, advocates of realism purport it reflects the 'reality' of the world and more effectively accounts for change in international politics. Thomas Hobbes is often mentioned in discussions of realism due to his description of the brutality of life during the English Civil War of 1642–1651. Hobbes described human beings as living in an orderless 'state of nature' that he perceived as a war of all against all. To remedy this, he proposed that a 'social contract' was required between a ruler and the people of a state to maintain relative order. Each leader, or 'sovereign' sets the rules and establishes a system of punishments for those who break them. We accept this in our respective states so that our lives can function with a sense of security and order. It may not be ideal, but it is better than a state of nature. As no such contract exists internationally and there is no sovereign in charge of the world, disorder and fear rules international relations. That is why war seems more common than peace to realists, indeed they see war as inevitable. When they examine history they see a world that may change in shape, but is always characterised by a system of what they call 'international anarchy' as the world has no sovereign to give it order.

One central area that sets realism and liberalism apart is how they view human nature. Realists do not typically believe that human beings are inherently good, or have the potential for good, as

liberals do. Instead, they claim individuals act in their own self-interests. For realists, people are selfish and behave according to their own needs without necessarily taking into account the needs of others. Realists believe conflict is unavoidable and perpetual and so war is common and inherent to humankind. Hans Morgenthau, a prominent realist, is known for his famous statement "all politics is a struggle for power" (Morgenthau 1948). This demonstrates the typical realist view that politics is primarily about domination as opposed to cooperation between states. Another point to keep in mind is that both liberalism and realism consider the state to be the dominant actor in International Relations, although liberalism does add a role for non-state actors such as international organisations. Realists on the other hand believe states partake in international organisations only when it is in their self-interest to do so. Many scholars have begun to reject these traditional theories over the past several decades because of their obsession with the state and the status quo.

The Middle Ground Theories

There is a number of middle ground or critical theories including Marxism, the English school, Constructivism, etc. However, as observed already, constructivism will be discussed here. Unlike scholars from the mainstream theories, constructivists highlight the importance of culture: values and shared interests between individuals who interact on the global stage. Alexander Wendt, a prominent constructivist, described the relationship between agents (individuals) and structures (such as the state) as one in which structures not only constrain agents but also construct their identities and interests. His famous phrase "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1994) sums this up well. Another way to explain this, and to explain the core of constructivism, is that the essence of international relations exists in the interactions between people. After all, states do not interact; it is agents of those states, such as politicians and diplomats, who interact. As those interacting on the world stage have accepted international anarchy as the defining principle, it has become part of our reality. However, if anarchy is what we make of it, then different states can perceive anarchy differently and the

qualities of anarchy can even change over time. International anarchy could even be replaced with a different system if a critical mass of other individuals (and by proxy the states they represent) accepted the idea. To understand constructivism is to understand that ideas, or 'norms' as they are often called, have power. International Relations is then a never-ending journey of change chronicling the accumulation of the accepted norms of the past and the emerging norms of the future. As such, constructivists seek to study this process.

International Relations Theories; Culture and Practices

Liberalism, Realism and Culture

The mainstream theories, identified above as represented by liberalism and realism have dominated studies in International Relations in about the last one hundred years. Cultural questions during these years have only been raised sporadically in the field of International Relations, and are not an integral feature of any of the two paradigms of the inter-paradigm debate (liberalism and realism). According to Khodaverdi et al. (2016, 51):

> In mainstream Theories of International Relations (Realism, Liberalism, Neo- Realism, neo- liberalism and …, in general as Rationalists in International Theories) due to accepting positivistic point of views and separation of Science from value, believe that Culture is not an important element in inter-national relations theories to be paid attention.

Another explanation in Thompson et al. (1990), view may be found in the epistemological tradition that has influenced International Relations theorizing. During the 1950s and 1960s, behaviourism (with its logical positivist epistemology), greatly influenced International theorising. The logical positivists' bias for observable and preferably measurable processes and behaviour led to research agenda that excluded ideas, perceptions, meanings and values which did not lend themselves readily to quantifications.

Emergence of Culture in International Relations Study

From 1960s onwards, behaviourism and logical positivism were increasingly challenged by many philosophers' of science, including Wittgenstein, Rorty, Quine, Feyerabend and Habermas. Their criticisms stimulated the well-known linguistic turn in various branches of the social sciences. The linguistic turn led to greater attention to the roles of language and human interpretation in social theory. In the 1980, this increased focus on language and interpretation also hit the field of international Relations with the emergence of critical and postmodernists' approaches to International Studies. Though these approaches have their weaknesses, a major contribution of these forms of thinking is that they have encouraged renewed attention to cultural concerns in International Relations.

Cultural Constructivism and International Relations

As indicated above constructivism is a "social theory of international politics" that emphasizes the social construction of world affairs." In Constructivism, the variables of interest like military power, trade relations, international institutions, or domestic preferences are not important because they are objective facts about the world, but rather because they have certain social meanings. This meaning is constructed from a complex and specific mix of history, ideas, norms, and beliefs which scholars must understand if they are to explain State behaviour. (Wendt, 1995, 71-81). Thus, culture as an important concept in constructivism is the newest concept sweeping the literature on international relations, security studies and international economies. A throng of recent essays and books point to culture as the basic force impelling nation- states, other institutions and individuals to act and organize themselves as they do. Many of these writing argue that culture's important is growing (Mazarr, 1996, 177).

Hence, while, classical thinkers and scholars of international relations have emphasized on the political, security and economic areas to explain the factors affecting the international issues, recent thinkers have found that achieving the depth of international relations is possible only with a primary focus on cultures. This

group of thinkers seeks the answers of their questions within their culture and cultural issues and decided to pay a special attention to the cultural issues in addition to adoption of major political, security and economic factors, and study this important dimension of social life in international relations. These thinkers see culture as an important phenomenon that is hidden in the perspective of classical thinkers. Their main criticism is that the previous theories have not paid attention to the role of culture at the international relations. These attitude of constructivists to explain international issues from the perspective of culture beside the political, security and economic issues led to emergence of two ideas. Some people construed culture as the area of conflict and the foundation of tensions in the international relations. The other group believe that culture is the area of dialogue, interaction and integration in the field of international relations. Thus, it appears that the place of Constructivism is unique as it tends to harmonize these two positions.

International Relations in Practice

S. P. Huntington's (1993), highly publicised 'Clash of Civilizations' analysis draws attention to an often-ignored aspect of international relations — culture. This ignorance, as already pointed out is premised on what some modern International Relations theorists call outdated mainstream understanding of international relation. According to this view, most mainstream scholars and policymakers presume that certain 'universal' human traits govern international affairs. Culture was seen only as negligible and of little relevance to international relations. The behaviour of states was simply individual self-interest writ large. While this interpretation of international relation is not entirely wrong, its shortcoming is that it does not question how states define their interests, and whether 'rationality' is always the driver in this definition. Contrary to mainstream theories, modern constructionists promote the view that cultural values impact what people, and therefore states, want and think in world affairs, often subconsciously. It affects what tools of statecraft are used, what national image is sought and how concepts of peace, freedom and development are valued. This is demonstrated in the behaviour of nations in the international scene. For instance,

Nigeria is seen as the giant of Africa and wanting to maintain that place of pride has influenced the way Nigeria behaves and the kind of images she projects to the outside world. Particularly, it has influenced her treatment of immigrants, aid supports to other African countries, even while her own people are starving and her participation in peacekeeping missions in the continent. Not wanting to be seen as a big brother bullying other African countries especially influenced Nigeria's ceding of Bakasi Peninsula to Cameroon and her refusal to fallout diplomatically with South Africa following the killing of Nigerians in xenophobic attacks in that country. This behaviour can be traced to a fundamental Nigerian trait; Nigerians are proud people who feel theirs is a great country and want the world to see and treat them as such. India following the Gandhian tradition, presents itself as adhering to its ancient ideal of non-violence. By contrast, many states in the Middle East, particularly, Iran, Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Palestine, though militarily weak, for reasons of honour, adopt the mantle of dominant aggressor making attacks by more powerful adversaries such as Israel and the US seem more justifiable and damaging to the formers strategic interests. As new powers rise and exert greater strategic autonomy, we see culture's hand in state behaviour as well. Rather than security imperatives as most Western analysts would predict, Indian policy for nuclear weapon is in truth fuelled by the quest for international standing. This is underpinned by the value of hierarchy, as seen domestically in Indian caste system. When combined with the value of non-violence, nuclear weapons become symbolically important but militarily unusable. Contrary to Indian's stance on nuclear weapon, Iran and North Korea's quest for the weapon is seen by other nations especially Israel and the US as fuelled by military imperatives. That is why while India's restrained nuclear posture helped the US and others to justify giving New Delhi differential treatment in nuclear cooperation, Iran and North Korea get sanctioned and isolated. Similarly, Chinese policy is coloured by culture such as through the concept of '*mianzi*' or 'face', where importance is placed on social recognition. A country's place within the international hierarchy is central. Despite the Chinese Communist Party's professed atheism, Buddhism promotes

the acceptance of impermanence and this cultural background has significant implications on how China's foreign policy, including ideology and alliances, is conceived (Canberra K. P. 2014).

Specific Ways Cultures Influence International Relations

The influence of culture in contemporary international relations has caught the attention of quite a few scholars. Lawrence Harrison published his book entitled *Who Prospers? How Cultural Values Shape Economic and Political Success?* In 1992; Samuel Huntington published his article, entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?," in 1993; Thomas Sowell published his book, *Race and Culture: A World View* in 1994; Francis Fukuyama published his book *Trust: The Social Virtue and the Creation of Prosperity* in 1995. Works like these have illuminated the impact of culture on international relations. This can be summed up in five models (*Washington Quarterly*, 1996), which are interconnected in some areas and distinct only according to their particular emphasis.

1. Culture has broad determinant impact on the achievements of the state. Culture plays an important role in providing the spiritual, ethical and economic conditions for human life. In modern capitalist development, nothing can be achieved without attention to the cultural factor. Lawrence Harrison (1992), wrote in the above-mentioned book that cultural values and ideas induce in different ethnic groups such phenomena as persistent volatility and injustice in Latin America, the economic miracle of South Korea and China's Taiwan, and the achievements of Japan. Thomas Sowell (1995), stated in his book, *Race and Culture: A World View*, that race, tribe and cultural differentials have significant impacts on our time, for particular people usually handle the economic and social demands in their life in their own particular way. This basic linkage between national cultures plays an important role in determining the economic destiny of the state and nation, and thus impacts on their status and role in international relations.

2. Culture is the navigator in making decision. Some people see culture as analogous to a filter of knowledge. Leaders approach problems and make decisions through different cultural prisms. Thus, culture plays an important role in leaders' judgement of, and decision-making in, international relations. Specific states, peoples and their leaders are influenced by their distinctive cultures, which reflect their different values, interests, habits and wishes. Mis-assessment of those differentials will lead to misconception, misunderstanding and mis-judgement. No doubt, the cultural systems link closely with international relations. Alastair I. Johnston (1995) indicated that different states have different strategic emphases, which originate from their early or established experience. An individual leader or a leading collective takes its cultural concepts consciously or unconsciously as the coordinate in decisions. Therefore, culture has decisive impacts on leaders in addressing various issues of international relations.

3. Culture is the designer of social and economic structures. Francis Fukuyama (1995), stresses the sociality of culture, or social credit, in his book "Trust". He assumes that the welfare and competitiveness of a state are constrained by a universal cultural identity, which symbolizes the working of social credit and provides a precondition for economic success. Nations are different in their social credit, which inevitably will affect their international cooperation. Therefore, culture controls the degree of the social credit and affects the nature of the cooperative organs. It provides the dominant blueprint for social and economic institutions, and hence exerts tremendous impact on national behaviour and its fate in the international community.

4. Culture is an important variable in international relations. This point was fully elucidated by Samuel Huntington (1993) in his article *The Clash of Civilizations?* He judged that the fundamental source of conflict in the post-Cold War world would not be ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominant source of conflict will be cultural. The principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and

groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. He even asserted that the next world war, if there is one, will be between civilizations. This theory perceives culture as the dominant framework of international relations, the primary base of the national behaviour, and the main source of international conflicts. Most scholars do not agree with the theory of clash of civilizations, but they do agree that culture is an important variable in the contemporary international relations.

5. The commonality and complementarity of cultures provide a crucial base for harmony in international relations. Culture can also be referred to as the booster of international relations. Arnold Toynbee claimed as early as 1934 that there is a strong, concerted and harmonious tendency in the rise and fall of civilizations. In 1948, he stressed further the character of culture and the conformity of different civilizations in social structure; this reached its peak in the era of industrialization. In 1946, Northrop assumed in his book, *The Encounter of the East and West* that the East and West can meet not only because they are talking about the same thing, but also because they are explaining different but complementary things. Ernest Gellner highlighted some of characteristics of the industrialized society in 1983. The consequence of industrialization is a global compound of basically harmonious industrial cultures. This is the theory of the cultural melting pot. One of its important points relates to the framework of eras. Though social structures vary widely the basic character of all advanced economies are relatively uniform. They have identical institutions, such as a central bank, a department of treasury, various research centers, schools of different educational levels, organized systems such as the military and thousands of other corresponding institutions. The application of information technology and its impacts on social development has proven this. The uniformity and complementarity of world cultures gives a huge and inescapable boost to international relations.

The Clash of Culture in International Relations

One of the basic characteristic of the modern and post-modern ages is the attempt by some states to impose their cultural values systems

on other states. In International Relations, this phenomenon **is** called cultural hegemony, cultural imperialism and cultural colonialism. Although associated with the modern and postmodern times, cultural hegemony has been in existence since the beginning of time. In research on world civilizations, many Western philosophers and historians have elaborated the following view: In the world, there is only one real civilization, that is, Western civilization. Other civilizations either lack vitality or have converged into Western civilization, which is a "universal civilization suiting everyone" just as Western values are global values. However, in its modern form, cultural imperialism is seen in the attempt by America and its Western allies to universalize and impose Western values globally. There are a number of ways through which this manifested.

Human Rights Diplomacy: Western politicians through balance-and-manoeuvre are concerned mostly with their own interests. Western civilization is used as an instrument to pursue these interests. Human rights, which are part of Western civilization, are most broadly applicable. Western politicians view human rights diplomacy as their "sophisticated weapon"; they are the important advantage of liberal democratic nations in the struggle to expand their influence ((Hongyi, 1993). Some Western countries led by the United States have launched attacks time and again at the meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission. Those that have been accused are always developing countries. The attackers are insufferably arrogant, because they think their heavenly mission is to make so-called freedom and social justice popular among the whole of humankind through their demonstration of democratic forms. To them, the Western lifestyle is the beacon to be imitated by other nations, and the Western social system is the role model to be followed by other societies. On human rights, Deng Xiaoping (*1938, 334, 336, 346 & 347)*, pointed out that, on the pretext that China has an unsatisfactory human rights record and an irrational and illegitimate socialist system, Western countries attempt to jeopardize its national sovereignty. Obviously, human rights are used to interfere in the sovereignty of others, to violate their sovereignty,

and even to subvert the regimes of other nations. This is the essence of the Western human rights diplomacy.

Reigning International Institutions: Western countries impose their own will on international institutions in an attempt to make them follow the values of Western civilization and serve Western interests. Professor Huntington (1993) confessed in his "*The Clash of Civilizations*?" that the U.S. controls international political and security institutions, using "the world community" to replace "the Free World." Decisions made at the UN Security Council or the IMF, which reflect the interests of the West, are presented to the world as reflecting the desire of the world community. "The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values."

New Interventionism Implemented via Military Means: The U.S.-led NATO outrageously launched a brutal bombardment on the sovereign state of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for as long as 78 days from March through June, 1999. During that period, NATO used missiles to attack the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, openly violating the principles of international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The atrocity inflicted by the U.S.-led NATO on Yugoslavia is a typical example of hegemonism and power politics under the cloak of civilization; it demonstrates how the U.S. carries out its new international relations concept of "humanitarian intervention". The basic theory of the new interventionism has three aspects: firstly, the superiority of human rights over sovereignty; secondly, that the whole world should be "democratized"; thirdly, that the democratization is not to be confined by national borders. Thus, the West can implement so-called humanitarian intervention in any country once identified according to the West's own interpretation as a human rights violator. As the aftermath indicates, using military means to implement new interventionism is unpopular. The international community should take measures to prevent the hegemonic

behaviour such as the aggression against a sovereign nation and interference in the internal affairs of other nations under the guise of maintaining human rights.

Recourse to the Power of Commodity: Imposing Western civilization on others by force is an increasingly more difficult approach in the new international situation. Therefore, the West resorts more to market forces to advance liberal and democratic ideas and values. This is the very important cultural strategy of the West. The West today is a society with a highly developed market economy, where what usually are spiritual matters are marketized and commercialized. The West led by the U.S. pays great attention to producing and exporting cultural goods, hoping these to be the main channel in enforcing personnel contacts and the exchange of ideas and values. The cultural products of the West and of the U.S. in particular are exported most actively during the advance of the modern market economy towards globalization. Due to modern science and technology, the Western cultural products are becoming more enticing, more attractive and more competitive. Western countries strongly support such ideological industries as film, TV, broadcast, VCD, fax, the internet and so on. They help those industries to develop foreign markets.

Strengthening Cultural Expansion

The friction and collision in the confluence of world civilizations shock Western civilization. Having always regarded itself as the center of world, the West perceives the challenges as a threat, hence the birth of "the theories of clash and of threat". While hailing the triumph of the liberalism of Western civilization, some are surprised to find that the millennium of an empire under the Western civilization has not yet arrived. Since the end of the Cold War, the world is heading for the multi-polarization. Although it will take a long time to shape a new order of international relations, the key principle governing the new international order incontestably should be "non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and social systems. It won't work to require all the countries in the world to copy the patterns set by the United States and Britain and France"

(Deng Xiaoping (*1938, 334, 336, 346 & 347*). The new world situation has reinforced the collision of the world cultures, due mainly to the fact that Western developed nations forcibly export Western culture by virtue of their advantageous position in economy, politics and the military. This has given rise to a retroactive psychology and resistance in developing nations. The West labels this resistance as a revival of nationalism. Those who say no to the West are listed as "nationalists" and stormed with condemnation.

A Call for Cultural Dialogue

Huntington (1993), claimed that the great divisions among humankind and the dominant source of conflict would be cultural; that the principal conflicts of global politics would occur between nations and groups of nations of different civilizations; and that the clash of civilizations would be the battle lines of the future. As human society approaches the point of accepting multiculturalism, international relations are changing in a dazzling manner. The United States is pressing on with implementing its goal of a unipolar world. But the multipolar tendency is developing through complex struggles. Great power relations are readjusting in the new situation. Countries are formulating their own national strategies in the light of their own interests, and their internal and external environment. Politics and economics, science and technology, the military and culture, all are basic factors in these strategic calculations. In the nearest future, cultural forces will be an indispensable instrument. Contradictory interactions among different cultures exert a dual impact on the change in international relations and this will lead to cultural gaps. Cultural gaps are one of the causes of conflicts. The reshuffling of international forces is invariably constrained by the cultural factor. The most outstanding issue emerging from the Sino-US cultural gaps is that of human rights. The continuous US attacks on China and other developing nations, particularly from Africa at the meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission stem from its strategic goal of forcing those countries to accept U.S. democracy and values. Viewed in a broader context, the U.S. aims at encouraging internal Chinese "forces for economic and political liberalization", and "ensuring the broad and peaceful evolution of

China from communism to democracy" (Lu Liandi, et al, 1995, 353). On the part of Africa, it wants African nations to liberalize their stands on human right issues like abortion, guy etc. The struggles over these human rights issues reflect the conflict between two value-systems and between Eastern, Western and African civilizations. These struggles between ideologies and values have ripple effects on inter-state and state-group relations. They can be resolved through cultural dialogue not the usually Western attitude of imposing its values on others. Thus, the likelihood of the conflicts caused by cultural gaps should not be exaggerated in exploring relations between cultures and changes in international configuration. Leaders and policymakers, as rational agents should approach these conflictual issues in the spirit of dialogue and compromise. Another area of importance which is experiencing cultural conflict and in need of cultural dialogue are the religious and ethnic elements of culture. The influence of contemporary ethnic and religious factors on the transformation of the world configuration is gaining prominence. Culture as a complex whole involves ethnic and religious factors. Divergences in ethnic folklore and religious faiths may invoke contradictions and conflicts. These existed in the Cold War, but were cushioned by the bipolar confrontation as the principal contradiction; now that the Cold War is over the contradictions, erstwhile cushioned, are surfacing. Antagonism between Muslims and non-Muslims can be observed in Kosovo, Bosnia, Kashmir, Nigeria, Chechnya and Afghanistan. Some local conflicts also happen between Muslims. This kind of conflict between Iraq and Iran lasted eight years and cost almost one million lives. Wars between Arab nations and Iraq abounded, and conflicts occurred between Algeria and Morocco in the Sahara. Fundamentalist turmoil has inflicted Egypt and Algeria. People are shocked by ethnic genocide in Somali, Rwanda and East Timor. The rising ethnic and religious tension in Nigeria is as well a source of serious concern to many. Most hot spots in today's international society are linked with ethnic and religious contradictions. The waning in the power of the US as the only superpower after the Cold War and the emergence of other powers such as China, India, Brazil etc., show that the di-polar world created and run by the US and its

Western allies is no longer visible. The world need a new world order, punctuated not by unilateralism but multilateralism, where the voices of every cultural group, especially marginalized groups in the developing countries of Africa and Asia are heard, respected and treated as equals.

Conclusion

This paper is an investigation on the impact of culture on international relations. The paper is structured into seven parts. The introduction identifies the problem and states the method of navigating it. The section on clarification of concepts operationizes culture and international relations. While culture is the work of man as opposed to the product of nature, international relations deal with the relation between states. This was followed in section three by an elaborate discussion of the three mainstream theories in international relation: liberalism, realism and constructionism. Liberals and realists see culture as extraneous to international relation and consider time spent on it wasteful. In contrast, constructionism sees culture as the mainstay of international relations claiming that the later cannot do without the former.

Sections four and five examined international relations in practice, clash of culture and how a good understanding of culture can help to put the behaviour of states in proper perspective. Section five particularly highlighted that the problem facing the post-modern world is the clash of culture, as seen in the efforts by the West to impose its civilization on the rest of the world. It identifies this forceful cultural imposition, ethnic disputes and religious conflicts as some of the challenges the world will be bracing up for in the coming years, especially considering the fact that the dipolar world created by the US and its Western allies is gradually disintegrating. In this context, section six recommended intercultural dialogue as the way out of the problem that global multiculturalism is likely to throw up in the coming year.

The last section reemphasized intercultural dialogue as the navigators' mast for navigating the problems of international relations now and in the coming years. In the final analysis, just as a century ago the League of Nations did not survive the disengagement of the then rising America, the current international

system and its key institutions may not survive disengagement by today's emerging powers. The return of culture to the international stage is not just an academic debate. If statesmen are to handle the big issues of global security and prosperity in a multipolar world, culture is the philosopher's stone they can no longer ignore.

***Barnabas Obiora Idoko, PhD**
Department of Philosophy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria.
Email: bo.idoko@unizik.edu.ng

References

Canberra K. P. (2014). "Why cultural values cannot be ignored in international relations"

http://www.eastasiafrum/2013/03/15 (accessed, 11/05/21).

Ogugua C. N. (2014), *Just War Theory: Implication for Global Peace and Security.*Faculty of Theology, Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu.

Buzan, Barry. (2004), from international to world society?English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wendt, Alexander. (1994), "Collective Identity Formation and the International State", American Political Science Review.

Wendt, Alexander. (1995), *Constructing International Politics*, MIT Press, 20 (1).

Nye, N. (2008), *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 616, Public Diplomacy in a Changing World.

Ghavam, Abdolali. (2005), "Culture, Forgot-ten Sector or Natural Element of Inter-national

Relations", Foreign policy Journal, year 19th.

Spencer- Oatey. H. (2012), "What Is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations".Global PAD Core Concepts.

Apte, M. (1994), Language in Socio- cultural Context. In: R. E. Asher (Ed.), the Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics. Vol.4 (pp. 2000-2010). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

GanChunsong: (1998), *Modernization and Cultural Choice*. Jiang Xi People's Publishing House, p. 2-4.

Matsuura, K, (2007). "The Cultural Issues at the Core of International Relations", in *Globalization and Cultural Diversity*, (n. p.).

Goldstein D. M. (2010), "Security and Culture Experts: Dilemma of an Engaged Anthropology" *American Anthropological Association*.

Carr, Edward H. (1981). *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd Edition, London: The MacmillanPress.

Brown, C. (1995), *Understanding International Relations*. London: Palgrave.

Hoffman S.(1977), An American Social Science: International Relations. IMT Press, 106(3): 41-60.

Gold, D. & McGlinchey S. (2017), "International Relations Theory" https://www.e-ir.info (Accessed, 15/04/2021).

Thompson, M. Ellis R. &Wildavsky. (1990), A. Cultural Theory (Boulder, CO,

Westview Press, 1990).

Khodaverdi H. &YosefShahmohammadi, Y. (2017), "The Role of Culture inInternational

Relations Theories."*International Journal of Political Science*, 7 (3), Autumn.

Mazar, Michael J. (1996), "Culture and International Relations"A Review Essay, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

(Danlin, J. (1996), *Eastern Path of Rejuvenation.* Guangdong Education Publishing House.

Cited in *Abstract of Foreign Modern Philosophy and Social Sciences*, (1991), No. 12.

Zhang Hongyi, Ed. (1993), *United States Human Rights and Human Rights Diplomacy* People's Publishing House.

Deng X. *(1938), Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Foreign Languages Press), Volume III.

Huntington, S. "Clash of Civilization?" *Foreign Affairs*, summer 1993.

"Culture and International Relations".(1996), *Washington Quarterly*.

Sowell T. (1995),*Race and Culture: A World View*.

Lu Liandi, et al, (1995), *Track of Sino-U.S. Relations.* Current Affairs Publishing House.