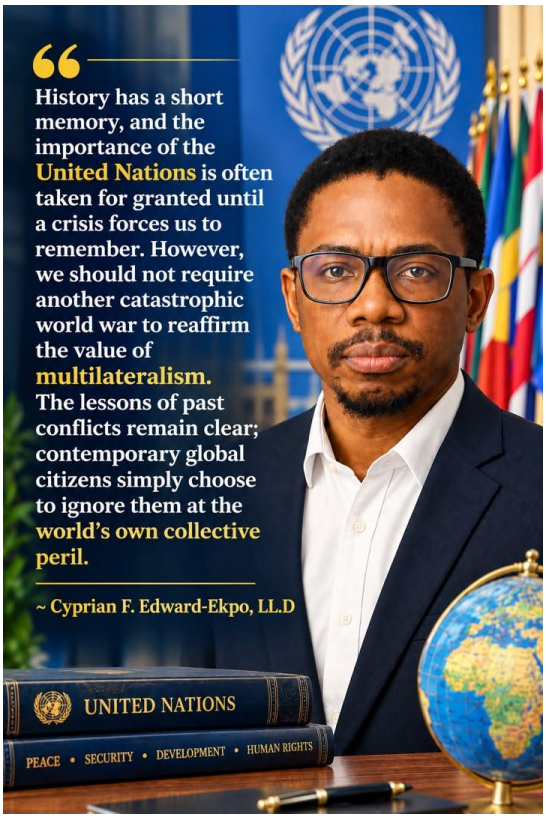
AT OUR OWN PERIL IN A FRACTURED WORLD:
The Cost of Ignoring History and International Law, and the Case for the United Nations

BY

~ ~ CYPRIAN F. EDWARD-EKPO, LL.D ~ ~

Despite the fundamental nature of the right to life—the prime right within the first generation of human rights—proponents of conflict often argue that war is necessary to protect community interests. However, many wars could have been prevented through diplomacy and the elimination of political ego. Imperial authorities have often advanced the illogical rationale that during a grave national crisis, the desire for security may outweigh the desire for liberty. In such times, patriotic fervor can degenerate into a historical attack on those who refuse to conform to authoritarian orders. This dilemma famously compelled Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, to ask at the inception of the American Civil War, thus:

> *"Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"*



The supreme courts of many democratic nations—particularly those of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and India—have frequently faced this dilemma when balancing individual freedom against national security. In no other area of constitutional law have these courts experienced greater difficulty in finding satisfactory solutions. Similarly, independent national judiciaries face a parallel dilemma when weighing state sovereignty against the interests of the international community. This challenge is magnified today as the "sovereignty mantra" is increasingly weaponized against multilateralism, particularly by autocrats who surround themselves with uncritical loyalists and apologists.

Based on this reasoning, my findings conclude that there is a sufficient threat to world peace, and a grave enough danger to planet Earth, to warrant a collective return to international law and multilateralism.

Today's attacks on international law across various jurisdictions threaten global peace and invite chaos. The merit of international law and peaceful coexistence cannot be overemphasized.

Without the United Nations, and regional organizations like NATO, the world would have likely experienced a third, fourth, or even fifth world wars. Such conflicts, fought with nuclear weapons or worse, would have obliterated communities on a massive scale and permanently altered the global map. This assertion is further supported by the words of Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, during his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture on December 10, 2002, thus:

> *" War may be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children. The bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices. God gives us the capacity for choice. We can choose to alleviate suffering. We can choose to work together for peace. We can make these changes—and we must."*

History has a short memory, and the importance of the United Nations in particular and international law in general is often taken for granted until a crisis forces us to remember. However, we should not require another catastrophic world war to reaffirm the value of multilateralism. The lessons of past conflicts remain clear; contemporary global citizens simply choose to ignore them at the world's own collective peril.

~ **Prof. Cyprian Edward-Ekpo** is a globally renowned legal scholar, author, public international law and international environmental law specialist, and human rights advocate. He is widely recognized for his leadership roles in global and regional legal research institutions, as well as his outspoken public commentary on governance, constitutional law, and international relations. He can be reached via email: cyprian.edward@uniserl.education and cyprian.edward@ilawdun.us