

Efficacy of United Nations Collective Security System to Prevent another World War

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Abstract

The condition of humanitarian crises and conflicts around the world is growing tremendously. Today we are dealing with a classic repetition of history to the close calls of world war. Though the UN collective security system tried to solve the contemporary issues, their efforts are deprived of proper effectiveness. If the contemporary crisis of the Russia-Ukraine and China-Taiwan conflict continues at this speed, it is not very late that the world will face a third world war. Therefore, to avoid a Third World War regarding this issue, the UN and world leaders should take immediate steps to solve this destructive crisis and increase the protection of this crisis. History very rarely teaches people lessons. The Second World War teaches us a destructive form of war. This paper uses the doctrinal methodology to discuss the efficacy of the UN Collective Security System in preventing the next world war. The author analyzed historical implications and different international law concepts to assess the efficacy. The author also tries to discover the strengths and loopholes of the current UN Collective Security System and Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The author identifies the bifurcation of the current world, which may lead to the next world war.

Keywords: World War, Collective Security System, United Nations, Responsibility to Protect, Contemporary World

Introduction

The current world is facing different humanitarian crises repeatedly. War and conflict issues are constantly arising. The Collective Security System became a popular and helpful peacekeeping tool in the last decade of the 20th century. However, in recent decades, the international community ignored many requests for "humanitarian intervention." At the start of the 1990s, there were no agreed-upon regulations for Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. For intervention, a firm foundation is needed. During NATO's 1999 operation in Kosovo, Security Council members were divided; the legal case for action without UN authorization was asserted but largely unargued, and enormous doubts about the allies'

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combat tactics.¹ When widespread crime against humanity occurs, including genocide, mass killing, rape, and ethnic cleansing, what should our world do? This question led to a new concept called 'Responsibility to Protect. The Responsibility to Protect and United Nations Collective Security System are correlated and sometimes referred to as the same term. UN collective security system and Responsibility to Protect both concepts are sometimes successful. The Russia-Ukraine and China-Taiwan conflict may be the two most close calls of world war in recent times. Moreover, there is debate regarding the effectiveness of both of these concepts. Some believe these concepts prevent the next world war, and some also believe these concepts may lead to the next world war.

Historical Implications

First World War, or WWI, also called the Great War, was a global conflict. 1914 through 1918, most of Europe, Russia, the US, the Middle East, and other countries were involved. WWI began with the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in 1914. Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire (the Central Powers) fought the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan, and the United States (known as the Allied Powers). Several treaties between Europe, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and others existed for many years. However, political unrest during this war hinders their growth.²

The Great War ended in 1918 at 11 a.m. Lack of troops and supplies, Germany signed an armistice with the Allies. However, the number of affected people in this war may stun anyone. The First World War killed 9 million men and injured 21 million. Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, and the UK lost a million people. In addition, 5 million died of disease, hunger, or exposure. Due to the slaughter and damage, WWI was called "the war to end all wars." The 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which concluded the war, imposed stringent requirements on Germany, destabilizing Europe and paving the way for World War II.³

World War II, or the Second World War, happened from 1939 to 1945 and affected almost every nation. France, the UK, the US, the USSR, and, to a lesser extent, China were on the Allies' side. The Axis powers were Germany, Italy, and Japan. In many ways, the war continued for the problems that World War I did not solve. World War II was the most critical and deadly war. Between 40 and 50 million people died in it.⁴

¹ Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge University Press 2017).

² Gerhard L Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge University Press 2005).

³ Andrew N Buchanan, *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931-1953: A Short History* (John Wiley & Sons 2019).

⁴ *ibid.*

World War II led to the 1945 San Francisco Conference, where the UN Charter was adopted. The beginnings of the UN were a great initiative, but the primary motive for creating a new international collective security system was the sense that a new order was needed to prevent this recurrence. The founders wanted to prevent a third global war in the 20th century. This concept is mirrored in the preamble of the UN Charter, which begins, 'We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.'⁵ A new post-war international order was planned early. The Atlantic Charter of 1941, a joint declaration of principles by Roosevelt and Churchill, was the first step toward creating a new worldwide collective security organization. The concept that all states must forgo force became a fundamental pillar of the UN Charter.⁶

Collective Security System

Collective security refers to an agreement where states guarantee each other's safety. In an ideal collective security system, each state understands that the security of one is the responsibility of all and resolves to respond collectively to threats to the peace. "The idea of collective security is broad and can include conflict avoidance, crisis management, peacekeeping, or peace."⁷

Collective security commentators have outlined its implementation needs.⁸ Firstly, collective security requires an institutional system. Secondly, universality, preponderance, and power diffusion; thirdly, great powers must support collective security. Finally, acceptance by states is the ultimate pillar of collective security.

A threat to one state's security is a threat to the international community. Acceptance of this idea is the most critical criterion for collective security, as it will likely ensure that other requirements are met. Political and legal perspectives are needed for collective security.

The League of Nations was part of the Peace Settlement that ended World War I and was the first worldwide collective security system. The horrors of war caused prominent international leaders of the time to agree that nothing on this scale could ever happen again and that to accomplish this, governments needed to band together in an international system of collective security. The League's principal objective was to 'promote international cooperation and achieve international peace and security. Articles 10–17 of the League of Nations Covenant created its collective security system. However, the League had obvious

⁵ United Nations Charter (adopted 24 October 1945) (UN) Preamble.

⁶ Gary Wilson, *The United Nations and Collective Security* (Routledge 2014).

⁷ Thakur (n 2).

⁸ Nicholas Tsagourias and Nigel D White, *Collective Security: Theory, Law and Practice* (Cambridge University Press 2013).

flaws. While these inspired the UN Charter's idea of collective security, the League's downfall was political.⁹

In the last years of the 20th century, the Collective Security System became a popular and valuable peacekeeping tool. In 1943, Moscow began significant deliberations on a new communal security organization. The USSR, UK, US, and China published a declaration recognizing the necessity to form an international peacekeeping organization as soon as possible. Dumbarton Oaks Conference 1944 and San Francisco Conference 1945 produced the UN Charter's provisions. First, the US, UK, and USSR met in Dumbarton Oaks, followed by separate meetings with China.¹⁰ The international community agrees that a state cannot mistreat its people.

The UN Charter prioritizes international peace and security. This Charter mentions "international peace and security" 32 times. In its first article, the UN prioritizes international peace and security. It establishes a community security system. Collective Security is outlined in Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, "Action Regarding Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression."¹¹ It has 13 Articles, from 39 to 51, that collectively preserve international peace and security. The UN Security Council has the capacity to take collective security action in response to conflict or aggression that threatens world peace.¹²

Article 1 (1) promotes a picture of collective security that goes beyond responding to inter-state aggression to cover other risks to the peace and that also envisions non-military remedies. Article 2 outlines the UN's guiding principles. Contrary to the exceptional status of the Security Council's permanent members, 33 sovereign equality is a basic Charter principle.

Art. 39 requires the Security Council to consider any threat to peace, violation of peace, or act of aggression and to decide how to manage crises to restore international peace and security. Art. 40 states that the Security Council can take interim measures like a cease-fire to avert the escalation of a threat to or breach of international peace and security. Art. 41 pertains to non-military enforcement actions. The Security Council can recommend to UN members that the violating parties stop. In addition, aggressive states can be sanctioned. Art. 42 authorizes the Security Council to use force to protect international peace and security. Accordingly, all UN members must contribute their support, resources, and forces to raise the Collective Security force when the Security Council takes action under Article 42.¹³

⁹ Marit Fosse and John Fox, *The League of Nations: From Collective Security to Global Rearmament* (United Nations 2012).

¹⁰ Thakur (n 2).

¹¹ United Nations Charter (adopted 24 October 1945) (UN) Chapter VII.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid*

Articles 44-47 of the U.N. Charter outline how to raise, maintain and use the Peace Keeping Force for Collective Security. Article 48 states, "All or some UN members shall carry out the Security Council's resolution to maintain international peace and security." Article 49 states that UN members must help each other implement Security Council decisions. Article 50 outlines how non-member states can adapt their policies and activities to Security Council decisions under Articles 41 and 42. Art. 51 recognizes the right of states to "individual or collective self-defense" if a member is attacked until the Security Council takes measures to maintain international peace and security. Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter establishes the Collective Security system for international peace and security. The Collective Security scheme has been used since 1945 and was first used in the 1950s Korean crisis.¹⁴

Responsibility to Protect, Peace Keeping, and Other Aspects

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P¹⁵ or RtoP) is a worldwide political commitment approved by all UN member states at the 2005 World Summit to avoid genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document provides the basis for the inter-governmental agreement on the Responsibility to Protect. The UNGA adopted the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document in resolution 60/1.¹⁶

The responsibility to protect consists of three key and mutually reinforcing pillars, as outlined in the 2009 Report of the Secretary-General on the topic and paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and the intergovernmental agreement to the principle.¹⁷ R2P, or responsibility to protect, has three pillars¹⁸:

- a. Pillar 1: Responsibility: State responsibilities to safeguard its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
- b. Pillar 2: International Cooperation and capacity-building: States commit to helping each other to protect.
- c. Pillar 3: Timely collective response: If a state "manifestly fails" in its protection responsibilities, other governments should step in to defend the population.

The history of R2P began in the 1990s when the world community could not stop the Rwanda massacre in 1994 and the Srebrenica massacre in 1995. It returned in 2000 when

¹⁴ Wilson (n 7).

¹⁵ Malcolm N Shaw, *International Law* (Cambridge University Press 2021).

¹⁶ Alex J Bellamy and Timothy Dunne, *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (Oxford University Press 2016).

¹⁷ Atiqul Islam Shakil, 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP): Is It a Disguised Blessing or Oppression to the Humanity?' (NILS Bangladesh, 13 February 2020) <shorturl.at/uARV8> accessed 14 January 2023

¹⁸ D Fiott and J Koops, *The Responsibility to Protect and the Third Pillar: Legitimacy and Operationalization* (Palgrave Macmillan UK 2015).

the African Union asked to interfere under Article 4 of its constitution. In September 2000, the Canadian government established "The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty" (ICISS) to answer Kofi Annan's question about intervention in a disorderly state.¹⁹

In 2001, ICISS produced a report titled "The Responsibility to Protect," citing several facts. As the ICISS report was released in 2001, many assumed this was the end of the new norm around the Second Gulf War. At the 2005 World Summit, where most UN state and government leaders met, R2P was overwhelmingly endorsed. Ban Ki-moon issued a report on implementing the Responsibility to Protect on 12 January 2009 to save humanity from mass crimes.²⁰

R2P is a word that's separate from humanitarian intervention. It is a preventive approach, whereas humanitarian intervention solely uses military forces. R2P only concentrates on significant atrocious crimes such as genocide, war crimes, crime against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Therefore, it does not cover every imaginable chaos that happens to citizens. We can mention the examples of the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libya, Burundi, and Yemen. When civilians of a sovereign country are threatened by mass atrocities like genocide, war crimes, crime against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, R2P is a disguised means of protection. We can also cite the Rohingya issue. It is not a new issue, it is like a parasite, but no one wants to get rid of it, and many people die in mass slaughter. Lots of genocidal rape happens. Many people are displaced, but world leaders are brazenly silent. Therefore, the Security Council wants to bring a permanent settlement to the dispute. If R2P is applied as the ICISS report states, it can bring a revolutionary transformation to eliminate injustice against humanity. Anne-Marie Slaughter of Princeton University dubbed R2P "the most profound transformation in our notion of sovereignty since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648." Louise Arbour of the International Crisis Group called R2P "the most important and inventive ideology in decades."²¹

Also, R2P threatens national sovereignty, according to critics. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rejects this concern in the Responsibility to Protect report.²² According to R2P's first pillar, states must safeguard their citizens against mass atrocities and ethnic cleansing, and the international community must aid them. Therefore, R2P can violate national sovereignty.

R2P is a controversial military invention. Some states argue that using the military would violate national sovereignty. However, as R2P's third pillar, military intervention is unclear. Responsibility to Protect has many flaws. As R2P aims to save civilians from 4 big

¹⁹ Atiqul Islam Shakil (n 17).

²⁰ Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All* (Brookings Institution Press 2009).

²¹ Alex J Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect: A Defense* (Oxford University Press 2015).

²² *ibid.*

crimes, it has many flaws. R2P proponent Roland Paris says that the concept's practicality and apparent legitimacy leave it open to scrutiny. More military action based on R2P will lead to its eventual discrediting, but the same will happen if R2P's coercive capabilities are never employed.²³ In addition, Paris lists R2P's inherent faults, making it hard for proponents to defend it and emboldening adversaries.²⁴ The R2P concept is theoretically philanthropic. The difficulty comes when the state mixes in humanitarian aid. To some critics, if R2P succeeds, there is no apparent evidence. When the result of involvement is not evident, damages are questioned.²⁵

Peacekeeping under UN auspices is a significant example of the UN's collective security system. The UN Charter never mentions "peacekeeping," unlike other components. Peacekeeping is an endeavor by the UN to support activities aimed at forming or maintaining peace, or at least conflict avoidance, by deploying (traditionally) non-combatant personnel on the ground to carry out several responsibilities.²⁶

For two basic reasons, drawing strong judgments on the legal basis for UN peacekeeping is difficult. First, there is no common blueprint for UN peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping forces have diverse mandates; therefore, finding a single legal basis is hard. Second, when launching peacekeeping operations, the Security Council and the General Assembly (when founding the First United Nations Emergency Force, generally regarded as the first) tend not to cite a specific legal basis under which it works.

In the Reparations case²⁷, the ICJ acknowledged that UN institutions have implied powers, stating that the organization "shall be assumed to have those powers which, though not expressly provided in the Charter, are conferred upon it by necessary inference as fundamental to the execution of its tasks." In practice, a broad approach to implied powers has been taken, with the ICJ presiding on the legality of the creation of UNEF I. Thus, the UN may create peacekeeping forces if they can be seen to further any of the organization's purposes, and there is no express prohibition of this form of action in any Charter provision.²⁸

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter expressly provides a role for regional arrangements and agencies within the UN collective security system. However, its provisions are relatively brief, limiting themselves to conferring regional arrangements with a role in taking enforcement action under the authority of the Security Council and effectively providing

²³ Evans (n 20).

²⁴ Atiqul Islam Shakil (n 17).

²⁵ Noële Crossley, *Evaluating the Responsibility to Protect: Mass Atrocity Prevention as a Consolidating Norm in International Society* (Routledge 2016).

²⁶ Conor Foley, *UN Peacekeeping Operations and the Protection of Civilians: Saving Succeeding Generations* (Cambridge University Press 2017).

²⁷ [1949] ICJ Rep 174

²⁸ Viljam Engström, *Constructing the Powers of International Institutions* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 2012).

that regional arrangements assume primary responsibility for the peaceful settlement of disputes. In the post-cold war era, more focus has been paid to how these organizations may help the UN Security Council maintain international peace and security. When a peacekeeping operation follows the basic principles that controlled prior UN peacekeeping operations, the UN Charter does not restrict regional entities from deploying it.²⁹

Feasibility of Next World War

The next world war, or World War III, is a possible third global war after WWI and WWII. Some individuals use it to refer to the Cold War or the War on Terror. Others say a global war would be more significant and more catastrophic.

Understanding WWI and WWII are crucial in today's uncertain times. Russia is bolstering its military in Ukraine and pushing the US and NATO into a war.³⁰ On another side, the China-Taiwan conflict has been a burning issue. Many political analysts predict that these two issues may lead to the next world war.³¹

The Ukraine issue has left many people wondering if we are witnessing the beginning of World War III or if it is simply a domestic incident. There is growing concern that Russian President Vladimir Putin's strike, the greatest traditional military invasion since World War II, may usher in a new global confrontation. There has been violence in Ukraine, but it has not yet spread to other NATO countries. The United States and its follower countries have condemned Putin's actions while maintaining their stance of not sending soldiers to Ukraine, indicating a desire to avoid further escalation of the conflict. However, it is not wise to make broad assumptions about whether or not Russia wants another world war.

While considering the China-Taiwan conflict, the arrival of US speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan has heightened tensions. China has initiated one of the most massive military drills in the Taiwan Straits and imposed economic penalties on the island. As a result, Taiwan has strained relations between the US and China. Beijing has criticized Washington's support for Taipei and increasing military exercises around Taiwan Strait.³²

US-Taiwan relations foster Chinese military aggression in the Taiwan Strait. Such a dispute could escalate to a US-China confrontation. Cross-strait conflicts can harm Taiwan's semiconductor chip manufacturing business. Taiwanese companies produce more than 60% of the world's semiconductors. Taiwan Strait is one of the primary worldwide

²⁹ Gary Wilson, *The United Nations and Collective Security* (Routledge 2014).

³⁰ Ron Rosenbaum, *How the End Begins: The Road to a Nuclear World War III* (Simon and Schuster 2012).

³¹ ClearIAS Team, 'The China-Taiwan Issue' (ClearIAS, 1 December 2022) <shorturl.at/drAHJ> accessed 14 January 2023.

³² 'The China-Taiwan Issue' (ClearIAS, 7 August 2022) <<https://www.clearias.com/china-taiwan-issue/>> accessed 31 August 2022.

commerce routes, with roughly 20% of global trade passing through.³³ Any military engagement between China and Taiwan will disrupt the global supply chain, causing a crisis on the international stage.

We know how the two previous world wars ended for Europe: complete ruin and destruction for the defeated and the victors. Even Britain suffered, and not only in terms of lives lost. After the First World War, the continental Empires broke up. After the Second World War, Germany and Europe were divided into East and West.

In discussing the dangers of the third world war, it is impossible not to mention the probability that it will become a nuclear conflict. If we held Russia liable for the third world war, is Putin the type of person who would risk such a war? In order to answer this question, let us formulate it another way: could Adolf Hitler have used nuclear weapons against his enemies? The answer to this question is one that we undoubtedly know, although Germany did not have nuclear weapons. On the other hand, modern Russia does have nuclear weapons at its disposal. So, there is a possibility of a nuclear holocaust in the next world war, and it may destroy humanity.

Some people casually refer to this Russian-Ukrainian and China-Taiwan event as an internal issue; on the other hand, others believe that this event will lead to global fighting that would be more devastating than any previous world war. In any case, the globe is going through a difficult time.

We seldom learn from history. Today, the world is witnessing a historical replication of a pre-world war circumstances which existed during 1938-1939. Great powers and world leaders are making a lot of mistakes. The United States, China, and Russia are all making mistakes. However, we can't generalize that, these conflicts may turn into world war.

Effectiveness of Collective Security System

Despite the limitations of the Collective Security system, it cannot be denied that it has positive aspects. It proposed coordinated steps to preserve world peace through crisis management in case of war. As a result, post-cold war chances for successful use of Collective Security have improved. Several places in the world are currently using it. Collective Security is a modern crisis tool. Members of the community of nations are supposed to act and save humanity from war and aggression through the collective security system. For the collective security system, we are still seeing a world without any big massacres and wars.³⁴

Again, Collective Security is based on idealistic assumptions that make implementation difficult. It implies that all international peace and security hazards can be comprehended

³³ David Brown, 'China and Taiwan: A Really Simple Guide' BBC (London, 8 August 2022) <[shorturl.at/dFGNZ](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-61888888)> accessed 14 January 2023.

³⁴ Fosse and Fox (n 10).

globally. It is thought that all nations may designate the aggressor and adopt collective security measures against him. In collectiveness, not all nations are active in international relations and politics. Another weakness of Collective Security is that it assumes an aggressor whose form of aggression can be easily determined in a national attack. An aggressor typically claims self-defense. Collective Security is self-defeating since it condemns war and aggression as illegal but allows them to persist. It believes the appropriate response is a collective security war. Collective Security requires all nations to pool their resources and act collectively in an attack. Several nations avoid war. All nations are expected to join the Collective Security fight.

Collective Security has several instrumental or UN Charter limitations. It permits states to fight in self-defense. The provision legalizes aggression or war in self-defense. It also lets governments form regional security pacts and organizations. It uses regional peacekeepers. Regional security regimes have stretched global security.³⁵

The Collective Security system has no permanent peacekeepers. The slow, complex process makes raising and deploying a peacekeeping force hard. The interval between the date of aggression and the date the UN can send a peacekeeping force is wide, providing the aggressor plenty of time to reap the rewards. No provisions have been made to end the UN Collective Security System. Powerful states impact security activities and decisions. Only strong governments can take collective security action. Powerful states may not back a collective security initiative against their national interests.³⁶ Collective Security critics fear it can turn a local fight into a global one. Critics call the system utopian and restricting. So, we cannot commonly say that a collective security system always helps to prevent war. Sometimes, it promotes war also.

Conclusion

Historically, the collective security system and R2P sometimes successfully prevent war. However, the collective security system and R2P are unsuccessful in contemporary issues. R2P and collective security systems will always meet some opposition. Some countries' human rights records are poor. We must be vigilant with R2P to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, aggression, and ethnic cleansing. According to some critics, the UN collective security system and responsibility to protect concept can be used as a new form of imperialism and used to hide the western agenda behind the guise of human rights. However, these concepts can save humanity if all processes are followed. If world leaders misuse these, it might become an oppression time bomb, and as a result, a third world war may also possibly happen. If we think that UN collective responsibility will prevent a third world war, this will be our wrong conception. Third world war is not impossible to happen. Day by day, the world is getting more bipolar, and the UN collective

³⁵ Tsagourias and White (n 9).

³⁶ *ibid*.

security system is frequently failing. In 1938, the whole world also thought that world war would not happen soon. Therefore, world leaders should make bona fide use of the concept of a collective security system and the responsibility to protect.

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