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Ph.D. Dissertation

Collective Security
Theory and Practice of an Institution for Peace in the XX Century

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ABSTRACT:

The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I will concentrate on the theoretical debate and will put forward hypotheses on the functioning of security institutions. This section updates the classical literature on collective security with contemporary contributions and original insights and it attempts to shed light on the limits of the current debate between paradigms on the question of international institutions. Chapter 2 will summarize the arguments of the main paradigms. The two main positions -the neorealist/pessimistic one and the liberal/optimistic one- will be analyzed and a new concept of the conditional utility of institutions in international relations will be proposed, attempting to overcome the "all or nothing" deadlock of the current debate.

The other three chapters of Part I will concentrate on the central concept of the work. Chapter 3 will introduce the various definitions of collective security and their position within the wider contest of the theory of international relations. In particular, it will be argued that there are two different conceptions of collective security. A maximalist one defines the concept as a security system replacing all other mechanisms. A minimalist one sees collective security as an international regime which can operate alongside other mechanisms. Chapter 4 will analyze the limits and the shortcomings of the maximalist conception, which is both unrealistic and even counterproductive. Chapter 5 will look at the positive effects of collective security either as an instrument for dealing with specific contingencies or as a general framework for facilitating cooperation and improving international standards of behaviour.

X Part II applies the findings of the first section to the historical record and to three case studies: the Abyssinian crisis, the Korean War and the Gulf Conflict. The cases were selected because they are the only uncontroversial instances in which collective security has been applied and because they are conveniently placed in three different international systems: the multipolar inter-war period, the bipolar Cold War and the post-Cold War period. Finally, in the conclusion, crucial issues for practitioners will be highlighted with special reference to the prospects for a more stable system in the future.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
PART I: THEORY	
2. <i>Anarchy, Institutions and Peace</i>	12
i. <i>Neorealism and Neoliberalism</i>	13
ii. <i>Anarchy and Its Effects</i>	21
iii. <i>International Institutions</i>	25
3. <i>The Definition of Collective Security</i>	41
i. <i>The Concept of Collective Security</i>	42
ii. <i>Collective Security and World Order Proposals</i>	53
iii. <i>Two Conceptions of Collective Security</i>	59
4. <i>The Limits of Maximalist Collective Security</i>	72
i. <i>The Conditions for a Multilateral System</i>	73
ii. <i>The Chimera of Maximalism</i>	83
iii. <i>The Dangers of Automaticity</i>	89
5. <i>The Merits of Minimalism</i>	99
i. <i>The Utility of Minimalism</i>	100
ii. <i>Collective Security as a Tool for Cooperation</i>	103
iii. <i>Collective Security and the Abolition of War</i>	114
PART II: PRACTICE	
6. <i>The Origin and History of Collective Security</i>	125
i. <i>The League of Nations</i>	126
ii. <i>The United Nations</i>	141
7. <i>The Abyssinian Crisis</i>	157
i. <i>History</i>	158
ii. <i>Italian Motivations</i>	167
iii. <i>Britain's Policy</i>	172
8. <i>The Korean War</i>	183
i. <i>History</i>	184
ii. <i>China's motivations</i>	196
iii. <i>US Policy</i>	199
9. <i>The Gulf Conflict</i>	212
i. <i>History</i>	213
ii. <i>Iraqi Strategy</i>	226
iii. <i>The US, the UN and the International Coalition</i>	232
CONCLUSION	244
i. <i>Theory and Evidence</i>	245
ii. <i>Prescriptions for UN Reform</i>	253
iii. <i>Prospects for Collective Security</i>	258
BIBLIOGRAPHY	264
MAPS	281

INTRODUCTION¹

* * * *

Man, Aristotle said, is a social animal. As long as memory goes back, humankind has always been organized in communities based on family, tribe, religious or national identities. However, man is also a competitive animal. Eversince there has been a recorded history, human communities have fought one another for scarce resources and have identified themselves in negative terms. Egyptians distinguished themselves from Hyksos, Jews from Philistines, Romans from Carthaginians. Part of the meaning of being Egyptian or Jew or Roman was that one was not Hykso, Philistine or Carthaginian. Competition between diverse communities has indeed been part of the fabric of history and it has at times even determined the evolution of civilization.

The tension between cooperation and conflict characterizes international relations because -unlike in domestic politics- there is no world government to guarantee the safety of states and to impose peace on them. A world government is unattainable because the various communities are too diverse to tolerate each other in a single entity and -following Freud's remarks in his famous letter to Einstein- domestic violence would readily replace international rivalry. It is as unlikely that China endures American policemen as Europeans would not tolerate Islamic schools. As Kant remarked two Centuries ago, a truly global government would necessarily be perceived as tyrannical because it would have to impose itself on too many different and distinct cultures. Until power is decentralized into a constellation of multiple and equally sovereign units, there will always be the possibility of a war.

Rousseau perceptively emphasized this point when he affirmed that

"It is quite true that it would be much better for all men to remain always at peace. But as long as there is no security for this, everyone, having no guarantee that he can avoid war, is anxious to begin it at the moment which suits his own interest and so forestall a neighbour, who would not fail to forestall the attack in his turn at any moment favourable to himself, so that many wars, even offensive wars, are rather in the nature of unjust precautions for the protection of the assailant's own possessions than a device for seizing those of

others. However salutary it may be in theory to obey to the dictates of the public spirit [which counsel peace], it is certain that politically and even morally, those dictates are liable to prove fatal to the man who persists in observing them with all the world when no one thinks of observing them towards him".²

War is therefore inherent in the international system. There has never been and there is in fact no single state which does not have an army of some sorts. This was even recognized by neoscholastic theologians like Francisco De Vitoria, who quoted St. Augustine and the Holy Scriptures to prove that a Christian may lawfully fight and wage war as Abraham had done four times according to the Genesis:

"It is lawful to draw the sword and use weapons against malefactors and seditious subjects within the commonwealth; therefore it must be lawful to use the sword and take up arms against foreign enemies too. [...] There can be no security for the Commonwealth unless its enemies are prevented from injustice by fear of war".³

However, international relations are not a state of perpetual war. Human loyalties and identities do not exhaust themselves with the nation state and its interests. Another neoscholastic theologian, Francisco Suarez wrote:

"The human race, though divided into no matter how many different peoples and nations has for all that a certain unity, a unity not merely physical, but also in a sense political and moral bound up by charity and compassion; wherefore though every republic or monarchy seems to be autonomous or self sufficing, yet none of them is, but each of them needs the support and brotherhood of others, both in material and a moral sense".⁴

Above all, war and conflict are costly emotionally and materially. As civilization progressed, so did the technologies of armed conflict and they reached a point in which they could threaten the very survival of civilization itself. Human communities have therefore always tried to devise methods of peaceful cohabitation, which have generally been short lived because each wanted as favourable as possible an arrangement and because the established

conventions would soon fall victim to changed realities. History has therefore oscillated between periods of peace and periods of war. Peace has by no means been rare, but it has always been precarious. This is the essence of the issue of international order.

The XX Century was hailed as a messianic time for perpetual peace. Norman Angell wrote an influential book, *The Great Illusion*, which explained the reasons why war, which had become counterproductive, would soon fall into oblivion. Fatefully, the book was published only months before the guns of August broke the peace in 1914. However, the First World War was supposed to be the "war to end all wars". After the Second World War which followed only 20 years later, the world has indeed experienced its longest spell of stability in modern times. Yet, it was a stability based on the horrors of Hiroshima and which had followed the Holocaust, arguably the lowest point ever touched by human civilization.⁵ Peace in the XX Century has so far been achieved more because of necessity than because of virtue. If progress is possible in human affairs, it is also reversible.

Although the questions of war and peace and of stability and conflict have always been central in history, the modern form of the debate on international order has been contemporaneous to the emergence of the system of states in XVII Century Europe. Eversince the end of the 30 Years' War in 1648, statesmen have tried to devise systems to avert war and its evil consequences, even if they have also jealously defended other values which were at times incompatible with the cause of peace. In the words of Hinsley:

"At the end of every war since the end of the XVIII Century, as has been the case before, the leading states made a concerted effort, each one more radical than the last, to reconstruct the system on lines that would enable them, or so they believed, to avoid a further war. [...] These initiatives are as characteristic and distinctive of the operation of the system as are the dynamic of its wars. So is the fact that they came to nothing".⁶

The Peace Conferences of Westphalia in 1648, Utrecht in 1713, Vienna in 1815, Versailles in 1919 and the Conferences at the end of the Second World War have all engineered a mechanism for the

prevention of wars like the ones which they were closing. Some of the mechanisms were explicit, other implicit. Some systems rested on one major power taking responsibility for the maintenance of international order, other identified the collectivity of states as the guarantor of peace. Some of the systems have lasted longer, but all -sooner or later- have eventually broken down. The question of international order is certainly not an easy one.

This dissertation examines one of the possible answers on which the hopeful experiments of the League of Nations and of the United Nations were based. Collective security was introduced in international relations at the end of the First World War, which had brought such devastation that the peacemakers thought that civilization would not have survived another similar conflict. The idea was simple: there may be many background reasons and motives for wars, but in the final instance wars occur because one state attacks another. If all states agreed not to commit aggression and to support the victims of an attack, no state would be in a position of invading another and face the combined opposition of all others. War -it was expected- would soon fall into oblivion. Given the lack of a world government to ensure peace, an international institution backed by the collectivity of states would take that responsibility.

The concept failed to fulfill its promises. Kalevi Holsti counts almost 100 wars which have occurred since it was introduced.⁷ Collective Security was unable to stop the combined expansionism of Germany, Italy and Japan before the Second World War. After 1945, the concept has proved to be an insufficient cause for peace as it did not inhibit the Cold War between the superpowers. The end of the Cold War has also demonstrated that collective security is not even a necessary cause for peace as the conflict was overcome completely outside the established institutional framework. Both if the Cold War ended because of the internal collapse of the Soviet Union or if it ended because of shrewd American policies, collective security and the United Nations were cut off from the key processes.

Yet, the idea has displayed an extraordinary appeal and resilience. President Wilson took the concept from proposals originating in liberal circles during the war and turned it into American policy. The concept was embodied in the League of Nations

which emerged from the Versailles Peace. Despite the collapse of the League in the 1930's, collective security was chosen also after the Second World War, with the founding of the United Nations. This attempt was even less successful than the first one because the Cold War soon undermined the new system, which was not allowed to operate. Nevertheless, after the end of the Cold War, the concept has reemerged as one of the main foci for the construction of a new international system.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolar confrontation, the main powers -as it has happened after the end of all other major conflicts- have engaged in consultation in order to find a new stable international order. Collective security has yet again been prominent in these attempts. In 1990, the formal end of the Cold War has been acknowledged at a special meeting in Paris of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the appropriate regional collective security instance. Even more relevant has been the new activism which has characterized the collective security instance par excellence, the United Nations. It was believed that the reasons which had inhibited the operation of the system had now been removed and that the international community could finally unite its forces in the establishment and maintenance of peace throughout the globe.

The first major disturbance to peace, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, was successfully dealt with within a multilateral framework. In the wake of victory in the Persian Gulf, US President Bush called for the establishment of a New World Order based on collective security. The resulting enthusiasm pushed the international community to collective interventions in all kinds of contingencies. Since 1989, the UN has been actively involved in such different places as Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Somalia, Haiti, Croatia and Bosnia. UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali suggested a new role for the blue helmets which could be dispatched without the previous consent of the parties concerned which had been "hitherto necessary".⁸ The foreign policy agenda of President Clinton when he was elected was based on "assertive multilateralism".

Yet, some of the problems which had rendered the system ineffective before 1989 soon begun to reemerge. Most of the new operations ended inconclusively or with unexpected costs which were

not deemed worth the effort. Especially in the former Yugoslavia, the frustrations of the international community -torn between the will to "do something" and the reluctance to be drawn in a bloody conflict- were most evident. The initial enthusiasm therefore increasingly gave way to disillusionment. New operations were seen with reluctance. In 1995, Boutros Ghali returned on his steps and abandoned his peace enforcement dreams when he announced that peacekeeping operations required the consent of the parties involved. Also in the United States the mood swung against multilateralism. A May 1995 Presidential directive spelled new criteria for American participation in UN operations. The criteria were very restrictive and excluded that US troops could serve without an American commander.⁹

These two extreme positions reflect the two main views on the prospects for institutions in the realm of international security. On the one hand, neoliberal enthusiasts argue that collective security is able to solve all types of conflict situations and that it could replace all other traditional security mechanisms. On the other hand, neorealist critics argue that collective security is bound to fail in all situations and that it is illusory or even dangerous to rely upon it. However, both positions underline only parts of the truth. The "all or nothing" approach does not capture the essence and the complexity of international politics. The argument of this dissertation is that collective security is useful, but with significant conditions and limitations.

Although collective security sometimes fails to operate, other times it may work. The Gulf conflict, and earlier the Korean War, have demonstrated that at least in some instances multilateral operations can succeed. Furthermore, collective security and the norm that aggression should be resisted are today an integral part of the fabric of international society. The fact that institutions are not always useful does not necessarily imply that they are always useless. The search for perfection is often an enemy of the search for the good because it leads to overlook significant -although incomplete- improvements.

The fact remains that collective security cannot always be relied upon because it is dependent upon the changing mood of states. Like financial corporations, institutions cannot act independently from their shareholders and board members.¹⁰ The Cold War competition

which inhibited the United Nations is by no means the exception in international relations. Furthermore, competition of that sort hinders multilateral solutions especially when they are most needed, that is when global peace is in danger. This means that enthusiasts are wrong when they point to the successes of collective security and argue that it therefore should be applied to all situations. As adding a pound of sugar does not necessarily improve a coffee, so more of a good thing is not necessarily a better thing.

The fact is that in an anarchic international system states face compelling duties which at times may lead them to disagreements. Cooperation can never be taken for granted because there is no overarching authority to enforce it. A multilateral system which is dependent on cooperation will necessarily be conditional upon the specific situation. Sometimes states will be unable to follow the international rules because they are perceived as conflicting with their own security. Other times state security will not be affected, and states will have no incentive to invest in a multilateral system. Even democracies, which are the most enthusiastic proponents of collective principles which resemble their domestic organization, are particularly reluctant to risk their blood, treasure and electoral fortunes in remote areas.

Ultimately, the worse damage can arise from the gap between the capacity of international organizations to deliver and the expectations which are associated to them. We should clearly identify the shortcomings and the merits of institutions so that we can avoid the former without ignoring them and concentrate on the latter. We should therefore stop expecting the UN and other institutions to do what they cannot do and to act as a panacea for all global problems. We risk otherwise to undermine the credibility of the institutions and inhibit them even when they are useful. If progress can be achieved in the question of international order, it must necessarily be modest and cautious.

My central conclusion is that the conditions for the operation of institutions profoundly affect the concept of collective security. If the conditions are not respected, like in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, collective security could be unrealistic or even counterproductive as it would force states to intervene when they

should not. Furthermore, the application of multilateralism against all odds would undermine the support for the collective effort and would divert resources from the real problems. If on the other hand the conditions were taken seriously, then collective security would be sheltered from failure but in such a diluted form so as to be a very different concept from the one originally intended by its founders. Collective security would in fact not be much of a security system at all but would rather modestly resemble the systems for consultation which flourished in the XIX Century.

This work aims at proposing answers to these crucial questions: what is the relevance and role of institutions in international relations? Are the current paradigms appropriate in this respect? What kind of institution is collective security? What are its major strengths and its major weaknesses? What has been its relevance in history? How did it perform in the three instances in which it has been applied? Finally, what are the lessons that can be drawn from the theory and evidence of collective security and how can they be used to increase the prospects for stability in the future?

The following dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I will concentrate on the theoretical debate and will put forward hypotheses on the functioning of security institutions. This section updates the classical literature on collective security with contemporary contributions and original insights and it attempts to shed light on the limits of the current debate between paradigms on the question of international institutions. Chapter 2 will summarize the arguments of the main paradigms on the question of the role of international institutions. The two main positions -the neorealist/pessimistic one and the liberal/optimistic one- will be analyzed and a new concept of the conditional utility of institutions in international relations will be proposed, attempting to overcome the "all or nothing" deadlock of the current debate.

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other mechanisms. A minimalist one sees collective security as an international regime which can operate alongside other mechanisms. Chapter 4 will analyze the limits and the shortcomings of the concept and especially of its maximalist conception, which is both unrealistic and even counterproductive. Chapter 5 will look at the positive effects of collective security either as an instrument for dealing with specific contingencies or as a general framework for facilitating cooperation and improving international standards of behaviour.

Part II applies the findings of the first section to the historical record and to three case studies: the Abyssinian crisis, the Korean War and the Gulf Conflict. The cases were selected because they are the only uncontroversial instances in which collective security has been applied and because they are conveniently placed in three different international systems: the multipolar inter-war period, the bipolar Cold War and the post-Cold War period. Furthermore, new material has been considered for the last two cases. Finally, in the conclusion, crucial issues for practitioners will be highlighted with special reference to the prospects for a more stable system in the future.

NOTES:

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³Francisco De Vitoria: Political Writings, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 297-8

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2. ANARCHY, INSTITUTIONS AND PEACE

* * * *

i. Neorealism and Neoliberalism

Classical theories of international relations rested on simple and basic assumptions about the nature of individuals and societies. On the one hand, realists tended to see these in negative terms. Their pessimistic conclusion that conflict was endemic to international politics stemmed from their assumption that human beings are dominated by what Morgenthau called "striving for power".¹ In this view, working international institutions were either impossible or even dangerous distractions from the eternal and inescapable struggle for power.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, liberals assumed a positive view of human nature. It followed that the natural state of international relations was one of harmony. Conflict was exceptional and senseless. It was therefore caused either by misperception or by a handful of aggressive rulers failing to realize that the "true" interests of their societies laid in peace. In this view, institutions were welcome but unnecessary since states were naturally inclined to cooperate.

Both schools attributed their optimistic or pessimistic conclusions to equally optimistic or pessimistic assumptions about the nature of states. The modern debate introduced systemic factors into the analysis instead. In particular, the focus shifted from the nature of states to the anarchic condition of the international system. Conflict and cooperation were no longer to be explained simply by states' propensities, but also by the constraints and opportunities presented by the international system to all states, irrespective of their specific characteristics. Anarchy became "the Rosetta stone" for deciphering international relations.²

The anarchic system acts like a prism, mediating and distorting between states' policies and international outcomes. War can arise even if no state specifically wants it. Conversely, good intentions are not sufficient for a peaceful outcome whereas bad intentions are not necessarily conducive to war. For example, an excessively tolerant policy may positively invite other states to take advantage of one's own moderation, thereby increasing the chances of a conflict.³ On the other hand, an aggressive policy could trigger a counterbalancing

coalition of other states, resulting in a stable balance. State policies can therefore lead to unintended and perverse consequences.⁴ Whereas in the classical literature anarchy brought wars simply because "there was nothing to stop them", contemporary theories investigate the effects of anarchy as an "efficient" cause of conflict.⁵

A system is not in fact only an arena in which units are interconnected so that the actions of one influence all others but it is a black box which independently affects outcomes. Positive and negative feedbacks interact with the inputs which therefore do not have a linear and monotonic relationship with their output. In other words, a system is such when outcomes are different from the sum of the inputs.

One of the simplest systems in everyday's life is that for regulating heat in a house. It is composed by the radiators (the input), by a thermostat (the feedback) and by the heat actually warming the house (the output). The radiators produce heat until the thermostat shuts them down. The final outcome -heat at about 21° C- is different from the heat that the radiators would have produced if the thermostat had not been working.

Both major schools in the contemporary debate -neorealists and neoliberals- seek to uncover the effects of anarchy on state behaviour. Both schools therefore maintain similar assumptions about the nature of international relations. The basic unit of analysis is the state which is a unitary and rational actor motivated by a set of given and neutral preferences. Systemic effects should in fact be operating on all states regardless of whether they are "good" or "bad".

According to a systemic treatment of international politics, like units should operate differently in different systems while different units should behave more homogeneously in the same system. It is not that contemporary scholars assert that factors at the state level are unimportant and that the difference between Hitler' Reich and Adenauer's Federal Republic are irrelevant. Nevertheless, in order to explore systemic factors, these must be isolated from other processes operating at different levels of analysis.

While assumptions are similar, neoliberals and neorealists disagree on their consequences. The neorealist view of anarchy emphasizes the lack of a world government capable of protecting

states. If these want to survive, they must resort to self help because they have no-one to look to for guaranteeing their own security. Since all states are potentially dangerous to each other and since they can never be sure of each other's intentions, states ensure their survival by maximizing their capability to defend themselves from other states.

In particular, states not only will choose conflict when -like in a classical realist world- their interest directly clash with those of others but they will also forego cooperation when this can favour a potential adversary. In other words, even when it brings them absolute gains, cooperation is dangerous in a neorealist world because it can bring even higher relative gains to a potential adversary.

According to Kenneth Waltz, states, when faced with an opportunity to interact, do not ask themselves: "will both of us gain?" but "who will gain more?".⁶ There is always the danger that today's partner will become tomorrow's enemy and will use offensively its enhanced capabilities. It is important to emphasize that the maximization of relative gains (that is of one's own capability to defend itself vis-a-vis others) is not irrational: states therefore deliberately and rationally forego cooperation if it risks to strengthen a potential future enemy. In such a situation, conflict is not unintended but the only choice.

The focus on relative gains renders cooperation rare and difficult to maintain. Grieco writes: "a state will decline to join, will leave, or will sharply limit its commitment to a cooperative arrangement if it believes that gaps in otherwise mutually positive benefits favour partners".⁷ Even economic cooperation is inhibited by security considerations because economic advantages can be translated into crucial elements of military superiority. There is therefore a "hierarchy of issues" in which the primacy of security concerns influences the prospects for cooperation also in other areas.

Conflict is thus not caused by the inherent wickedness of states, but by the structural conditions in which states operate irrespective of their good or bad intentions. This paradox is epitomized by the logic of the security dilemma which applies not only to states but to any unit in a system without central authority.

"Groups and individuals living [in anarchy] must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked,

subjected, dominated or annihilated by other groups or individuals. Striving to attain security from such attacks, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on".⁸

The security dilemma is an unintentional consequence of the will to survive. It acts as a perverse positive feedback on instability, widening and amplifying any eventual conflict of interest. It is also characterized by a self defeating but inescapable dynamic. Even if states are motivated only by defensive objectives, they will decrease their security by provoking the reaction of their counterparts. However, a failure to take care of one's own defense may be even more disastrous. A perpetual competition is still preferable to extinction.

Until anarchy persists, states will thus be doomed to play a cautious game if they do not want to "fall by the wayside", whatever their intrinsic propensities.⁹ In Hobbes' words, they are forced to acquire the "state and posture of gladiators". Conflict is -according to neorealists- endemic to anarchy as there is no chance of excluding the possibility of a war.¹⁰ The security dilemma can only be ameliorated but cannot be escaped even if states wanted to. State behaviour is not the result of deliberate choice but is dictated by the necessities of survival under anarchy.

However, cooperation is not impossible in a neorealist world.¹¹ The pessimistic analysis of the behaviour of individual states leads paradoxically to relatively optimistic conclusions about stability at the systemic level. Like in a perfectly competitive market the profit maximizing urge of firms leads to structural equilibrium, also under anarchy competing states can unintentionally bring about peace. It is the famous mechanism of the balance of power.¹²

The concern for relative gains brings in fact states to coalesce against the stronger side which is also the one which threatens their independence the most. Cooperation is in this sense a function of conflict as states gang up only in order to face other states. In Liska's

words, "alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something".¹³

Furthermore, "joining the weaker side increases the new member's influence within the alliance because the weaker side has the greater need"¹⁴. As the study of political coalitions has shown, alliances will tend to form if there are multiple players because none can achieve its goals independently.¹⁵ However, winning coalitions will tend to be as small as possible because the players will not want to share their payoffs with other players if these are unnecessary to win. In short, states will generally choose balancing over bandwagoning.

This acts as a negative feedback on destabilising differences in power differentials. The stronger a state, the more resistance it will encounter, thereby increasing the incentives to be moderate. Together with mechanisms of emulation -in order not to be left behind- this process allows states to preserve a mutually deterring balance. In short, the system displays a natural propensity to stability.

Cooperation is necessary in a neorealist world at least for what balancing alliances are concerned.¹⁶ However, also cooperation -like conflict- does not result from deliberate choice but is dictated by circumstances: either it is imposed by a stronger state on its weaker partners or it is the consequence of the necessity to form a balance. As soon as the circumstances -that is the distribution of power- change also the behaviour will accordingly be adjusted. Coalitions -like the Quadruple Alliance against Napoleon or the Grand Alliance against Hitler- will break up as soon as their common goal is attained.

In this view, cooperation is spontaneous and institutions are unnecessary to attain it. Systemic factors will in fact determine state behaviour with respect to both conflict and cooperation. Eventual institutions coupled with cooperation will merely be epiphenomenal, that is without an independent intrinsic value because "institutions largely mirror the distribution of power in the system".¹⁷ This view recuperates the Hobbesian idea that "covenants without the sword are but words and breath."¹⁸

On the other side of the debate, neoliberals are more optimistic on the prospects for cooperation and the role of institutions.¹⁹ Neoliberals discount the neorealist focus on relative gains and assert

that states are mainly concerned with absolute gains instead. In this view, the main point about anarchy is the absence of an agency capable of forcing states to meet their commitments, rather than the lack of a protector which forces states to compete for their security. Anarchy is more an opportunity than a constraint. There is therefore more freedom of action than in relative gains competition: states are free to cheat each other but they are also free to cooperate if they so choose.

The problem for cooperation will therefore originate not in the preoccupation of favouring another but in the temptation to maximize their utility by cheating their counterparts or in the fear of being cheated themselves. Conflict arises -in short- because of the ambition to maximize one's own absolute gains rather than because of the fear of increasing other's relative gains. States have sufficient reasons to inhibit cooperation even without competition for relative gains.

This situation can be described by what Thomas Shelling has called mixed-motive games in which incentives to cooperation and conflict coexist in the preferences of the actors.²⁰ Despite its simplified form this class of games can capture many of the processes at work in international relations. Even the closest allies maintain in fact some divergent interests as each would still prefer -if it could- to reduce the share of the costs it pays for the production of the jointly desired good.²¹ Similarly, even the most competitive adversaries usually share at least some common interest. For example, both combatants in a war generally prefer that the conflict does not escalate to the use of weapons of mass destruction quite disproportionate to the stakes of the war.

The classic examples of a mixed motive game are the prisoner's dilemma and the question of public goods. In the first case, the problem is that the short run attempt to maximize utility by free riding generates the counterpart's retaliation, leaving both sides worse off than if they had cooperated in the first place.²² If the game is played only once, both sides will try to reach their best outcome by cheating and the result will be mutual defection.²³ The prisoner's dilemma is an instance in which individual rationality collides with collective rationality. Cooperation under anarchy may fail despite the fact that it may be in everyone's interest. "Taken individually, the

states of the world are more often than not rational; taken together, they constitute an international system which is usually irrational".²⁴

The dilemma arises between two states, because each will try to minimize its share of the costs of the interaction, but it is particularly acute when there are many actors. As the number of states increases, the allocation of roles for collective action will become more problematic because the importance of the contribution of each single one will accordingly decrease and its temptation to free ride will therefore be strengthened. As Mancur Olson has masterly demonstrated, public goods -which benefit a whole group and from which no one can be excluded if it defects- are typically underproduced.²⁵

However, conflict is not a foregone conclusion. Since states are concerned with their absolute payoff rather than with relative gains, if the game is reiterated states have an incentive to move to a cooperative equilibrium which is more mutually advantageous. Cooperation arises "when the states realize that a desired distribution of 'the goods' cannot come about by way of autonomous action".²⁶ In a neoliberal setting, cooperation is thus more easily attainable than in a neorealist one. If mutual cooperation brings to each state a higher absolute payoff than mutual defection, states will soon abandon their attempts to cheat their counterparts if only they realize that the other's retaliation to their own free riding will damage their own utility. The same desire to maximize utility which fosters the temptation to free ride also fosters cooperation if this is more advantageous for each counterpart individually.

In a neoliberal world as in a neorealist one, cooperation and conflict are the result of structural interaction rather than of states' social propensity.²⁷ Like in microeconomic theory, the interests governing the units' intentions are given. What determines the final outcome is the setting where interaction takes place. Cooperation arises when a situation offers "jointly accessible outcomes [which] are preferable to those that are or might be reached independently".²⁸ Both the prisoner's dilemma and the problems of collective action -unlike the security dilemma- leave some room for manoeuvre to improve outcomes.

Neoliberals do not deny that sometimes relative gains will make cooperation impossible. Relative gains transform mixed motive games into a 0-sum game in which mutual conflict is always preferable to mutual cooperation. Nevertheless, they dispute the claim that cooperation is always structurally inhibited and that competition is the only reason for the absence of cooperation. When the problem is free riding rather than competition, cooperation can and does emerge in the interest of the parties.²⁹

Institutions are in these circumstances a useful tool of statecraft. As will be argued in chapter 5, institutions can tame free-riding by raising the costs of defection and the effects of retaliation; by increasing the value of future cooperation vis-a-vis short term free riding; by establishing rules and focal points around which actors' expectations converge and by fostering cross-issue-area linkages.

In the words of two of the foremost neoliberal scholars:

"International institutions may therefore be significant since institutions embody and affect actor's expectations. These institutions can alter the extent to which governments expect their present actions to affect the behaviour of others on future issues"³⁰

If institutions help to avoid free riding, they allow cooperative outcomes when the actors would otherwise choose mutual defection. Far from being epiphenomenal or unnecessary, they help to bring about an outcome otherwise impossible. Especially in the absence of a world government, institutions are in fact the main instrument for states to avoid suboptimal mutual conflicts and to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation.

Both paradigms highlight the systemic causes of conflict and cooperation. Anarchy can be an efficient cause for international outcomes. However, the two schools point to different mechanisms. While "neorealist" relative gains force states to forego cooperation in fear of strengthening a future adversary and conflict is therefore irreversible, "neoliberal" conflict emerges out of "political market failures" which damage absolute gains and lead states to attempt to reach a more satisfactory cooperative equilibrium. Neoliberals are

therefore more optimistic in their hope that conflict can be averted in the interest of the actors involved.

ii. Anarchy and Its Effects

Usually, the differences between neorealism and neoliberalism are attributed to different assumptions about states utility functions. On the other hand, they also derive from the two different definitions of anarchy employed. For the first school anarchy shapes actors' preferences and leads to a high sensitivity to relative gains.³¹ For the other school, anarchy leaves states free to maximize their absolute utility.³² In the real world however, the effects of anarchy are not constant and vary between the compelling situation described by neorealist and the one in which cooperation is more easily attainable, as argued by neoliberals.

Although the lack of a world government forces states to keep security considerations always in the background, not all systemic configurations produce the same risks of wars and the same threat to state survival. Relations between India and Pakistan are different from those between Belgium and France, because the probabilities of a conflict are different in the two cases. Similarly relations between Hitler's Germany and Churchill's Britain and different than those between Attlee's and Adenauer's. If the intensity of the tyranny of survival varies, states will enjoy varying degrees of freedom of manoeuvre.

Arnold Wolfers has put forward the metaphore of a house on fire. In this instance:

"general fear of losing the cherished possession of life, coupled with the stark external threat to life, would produce the same reaction whatever the [...] peculiarities of the actors". If on the other hand "the house in question merely were overheated [...] the reaction of different inhabitants might range from hurried window opening and loud complaints to complete indifference". In short: "where less than national survival is at stake, there is far less compulsion and therefore a less uniform reaction".³³

Anarchy means that without a hierarchical authority capable of allocating roles, states will pursue their own interests and will

autonomously decide what those interests are. Yet, this does not necessarily imply that states will always consider their own survival as the most urgent and pressing of their goals.³⁴ When the security of a state is not directly threatened, concern for relative gains will decrease and states will be free to pursue their absolute gains and -if convenient- to engage in cooperation. As Axelrod and Keohane have put it: "World politics is not a homogeneous state of war: cooperation varies among issues and overtime".³⁵

This means that anarchy produces two quite distinct and different problems for cooperation. If tension is high, relative gains considerations will be in the forefront and cooperation will be impossible. When tension is low, prisoner's dilemma and public goods will make cooperation difficult but possible and desirable.

Neorealists themselves concede that, although anarchy remains a constant, its effects on the security of states -and thus on their behaviour- vary.³⁶ According to Joseph Grieco, sensitivity to relative gains "will increase as a state transits from relations in what Karl Deutsch terms a 'pluralistic security community' to those approximating a state of war".³⁷ In a security community conflict is not physically impossible but it is so improbable that it is not considered as a potential option. Anything that affects the probability of war will therefore influence the chance of cooperation and of establishing working institutions.

For example, the power transition strand of neorealism points out that hegemonies can more easily bring about stability. When power differentials are large, the leading state needs not to worry about the others' relative capabilities while the less powerful states might as well concentrate on their absolute gains because they would not be able to compete with the hegemon anyway.³⁸ In Robert Gilpin's words: "the Pax Britannica and the Pax Americana, like the Pax Romana, ensured an international system of relative peace and security".³⁹

Other times, even in a multipolar world, states coalesced against an aggressor in a balancing alliance put their conflicts of interest aside and may even be interested in their allies' absolute gains in the interest of the allied cause. "States worry more about relative gains of enemies than of allies".⁴⁰ Before making decisions on

the issue at stake, states make metadecisions (about amity and enmity) concerning who they are dealing with.⁴¹ If the alliance systems are sufficiently stable, as during the Cold War, a significant portion of international relations becomes ripe for collaboration.

In any case, the presence of multiple major states in the system decreases the emphasis on relative gains because a state cannot allow itself to forego too many absolute gains if it does not want to lose its position in the international hierarchy of power.⁴² In a multipolar system, the necessity to distribute one's attention decreases the probability that any pair becomes locked in a 0-sum game. As Robert Axelrod has pointed out, a state which consistently defects in an environment in which everybody else cooperates would also fall by the wayside because its aggregate payoffs are lower.⁴³

Stability will also result from the nature of prevailing military technology. The predominance of defensive weapons over offensive ones could well reassure states to forego relative gains considerations because they will feel reasonably secure from outside attack and to pursue mutually advantageous activities instead. "If the cost of war is sufficiently high that the use of force is no longer at issue, then cooperation again becomes possible".⁴⁴

For example, the introduction of atomic weapons has brought stability to the relations among the great powers. The sheer cost of a nuclear war would be such that it renders states cautious about initiating hostilities. Furthermore, the destructive potential of nuclear weapons favours the defensive because their use is much more credible by a state whose independence is threatened than by one which wants to conquer.

Finally, the relative propensity of a system is determined by its relationship with the nature and intentions of the units. It is in fact impossible to examine a system without any reference to the units that compose it. For example, the system of tides provoked by the gravitational interplay between the moon and the earth would not be the same if the seas were made of mercury rather than water. Waltz himself accepts that although structures "shapes and shove, they do not determine behaviours and outcomes not only because unit-level and structural causes interact, but also because the shaping and shoving may be successfully resisted".⁴⁵

In other words, the intentions of the major powers are important. States react to threats -that is to capabilities coupled with intentions- rather than to raw capabilities by themselves.⁴⁶ It is clear that, although even a system with moderate states can lead to conflict, a system which contains virulently revisionist powers like Nazi Germany will be more conducive to wars than a system in which all powers wish to preserve the status quo. Domestic variables are important in determining systemic stability.

In such situations, as Barry Buzan suggests, "An anarchy of states may or may not result in chaos, but certainly does not necessarily, or even probably, do so". He therefore distinguishes between "mature anarchies", which are prone to collaboration, and "immature" ones, which are prone to conflict instead.⁴⁷ Also Jervis highlights this possibility in his perceptive analysis of security regimes: "if the connections between outcomes and national power are indirect and mediated, there is more room for choice, creativity and institutions to refrain and regulate behaviour, and to produce a regime".⁴⁸

Anarchy is not sufficient to explain the relative propensity of states. The decentralized nature of the international system leads states to pursue their independent interests and to resist attempts to limit their ability to do that. However, depending on circumstances, the pursuit of self interest can dictate cooperation as well as conflict. Anarchy alone does not therefore determine the level of stability in a system, which in fact varies across space and across time despite the fact that international politics has always remained anarchic. As Professor Hinsley has pointed out, "if international anarchy invariably caused war, thus the states of Europe should have never have known peace since the close of the Middle Ages".⁴⁹

In this sense, the lack of a world government does not lead to a Hobbesian state of war of all against all. Rather, it approximates a Lockean state of nature in which individuals do not necessarily slip into a state of war although the possibilities of a conflict are always present.⁵⁰ "Possibility is not probability".⁵¹ The crucial variable for the emergence of cooperation and institutions is the probability of war. If this is high, like during the Cold War, states will be very sensitive to relative gains as they are afraid to concede advantages to a

potential adversary which may soon use against them. If the probability of conflict is low, as in the case of a security community like the one among Scandinavian countries, states will be able to afford to concentrate on their absolute gains.

It is important to point out that these variations do not necessarily occur only across different international systems in time, but that they affect different pairs or groups of states within the same international system, which is therefore characterized by zones of peace and zones of turmoil. Unlike the ideal types of pure conflict -where cooperation is impossible- and pure harmony -where cooperation is unnecessary- described by the classical debate, in a given international system both conflict and cooperation are present at the same time. What matters is their relative proportion. Both global and regional international relations swing back and forth from the polar situations of a state of war and a troubled peace, to use Hoffmann's terminology.⁵²

Neorealists are right when they point out that sometimes states cannot allow themselves to cooperate because they are constrained by competition. States will therefore always resist cooperation if it damages their long-term ability to defend themselves if circumstances should change. In general, states resist permanent transfers of sovereignty. However, neoliberals are also right when they assert that under certain specific circumstances states will be relatively free to cooperate in their own interest.

iii. International Institutions

International institutions are a set of rules which influence actors' roles and expectations with the aim of establishing a predictable pattern of behaviour.⁵³ They constitute the watershed between what is deemed as normal, expected and acceptable and what is considered deviant, unexpected and unacceptable. Institutions can be constituted by formal rules -like those of a written constitution- or by informal conventions, like the restraints of belligerents during a war or the expected behaviour of a gentleman at a formal dinner.

Unlike in domestic politics, where institutions are coupled with agencies capable of enforcing their precepts, in international politics this executive power is lacking. One of the key issues in the theory of

international relations is therefore whether they can affect states' behaviour in a substantive manner or rather whether they must limit themselves to rubber-stamp an existing state of affairs.

Both schools are inadequate in their treatment of the role of institutions. Each emphasizes only one of the two structural problems which anarchy creates for cooperation. Neorealists highlight relative gains considerations, whereas neoliberals point to free rider problems. Recent attempts by both groups of scholars have attempted to incorporate in either paradigm also the processes emphasized by the other school of thought but with only incomplete success. The problem is that while neorealist overestimate the power of structural variables to determine systemic outcomes, neoliberals underestimate them. X

In particular, neoliberals exaggerate the value of institutions as independent variables capable of affecting outcomes independently⁵⁴. This view wrongly assumes that in fact anarchy always allows cooperation to emerge, which -as we have just seen- is not the case. There are contingencies in which states are unwilling or unable to cooperate because of competition for relative gains, irrespective of the presence of institutions in the system or even of the abstract absolute preferences of states. Institutions can help cooperative preferences to emerge when they are present, but they cannot bring them about.

On the other hand, neorealists are wrong when they dismiss institutions as useless tools of statecraft because structural constraints suffice to bring about systemic outcomes. For example, in a recent statement on the neorealist view of institutions, Mearsheimer writes: "My central conclusion is that institutions have minimal influence on state behaviour". States do not follow models of behaviour but their own interests; when the two converge it is only by accident. This view is based on the incorrect idea that relative gains are always the main obstacle to cooperation. When -as between two enemies- relationships are governed by relative gains, cooperation would be impossible. When -as between two allies- relationships are not governed by relative gains considerations, cooperation would be spontaneous and structurally determined.

The problem is that cooperation is difficult even when structural conditions dictate it. Cooperation is distinct from harmony

because compatible behaviour is not automatic but requires active coordination instead. Neorealists discount the possibility that free rider problems will inhibit collaboration even when relative gains considerations allow it. The prediction of balancing behaviour rests indeed on the absence of free riding.⁵⁵ However, it is as impossible to exclude problems of this kind in an anarchic setting as it is to rule out relative gains considerations.

Even when faced with a grave common danger, states still have a temptation to let others shoulder the costs of containment. For example in the Napoleonic period, the First, Second and Third Coalitions collapsed despite the fact France was growing stronger and therefore the incentive to balance was increasing. Also the Fourth Coalition, which eventually managed to destroy Napoleon, was created only after France had been defeated in Russia.⁵⁶ According to Richard Rosecrance: "such a response was not surprising: in the balance of power system, European nations each waited for the other to take the lead against a disruptive state".⁵⁷

Another instance relates to the origins of the Second World War. Both Britain and France employed military doctrines which transferred onto its allies the burden of restraining Nazi Germany.⁵⁸ More significantly, when Germany's power and intentions were clear to all, the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of non-aggression, in an attempt to divert Germany's expansion towards the West.⁵⁹ In other words, Moscow chose to free ride even though Germany was growing stronger.

Neorealists overlook the fact that, by reducing the incidence of free riding, institutions allow the emergence of cooperation in those situations in which cooperative interests coexist with conflictual ones. Institutions have a role any time free riding is a possibility. These situations do not only refer to minor questions and peripheral issues but include the crucial operation of the balance of power. The ancient Greeks -not only despite but because of their well known cynicism- introduced the institution of hostage exchange between allies because they did not completely trust the "spontaneous" systemic mechanisms to work.⁶⁰

Institutions should therefore be conceptualized as intervening variables between systemic characteristics and the behaviour of

states.⁶¹ They are not independent variables because they necessitate certain systemic conditions in order to emerge.⁶² Since they are created by states (and not viceversa) without independent enforcement power, institutions cannot force states to cooperate unless they already willing to do so. In Giulio Gallarotti's words: "order is institutionally assisted rather than managed [that is] the environment in which [international institutions function] must [already] be conducive to the effectiveness of supranational management in general".⁶³

However, institutions -when they exist- are not merely epiphenomenal as they contribute to bring about outcomes which would have been otherwise impossible. Free riding could in fact inhibit cooperation even when interests converge. Inasmuch as they tame free riding, institutions are not useless. Their utility will be limited because they will not operate in all systemic configurations, but it is also not negligible.

Specifically, institutions act as a positive feedback on cooperation: states must already be willing and able to cooperate in order to establish them but, once they are in place, they allow for a higher degree of cooperation than if they had not existed. If no will to cooperate is present, institutions will be helpless but if it is present, they can accomplish it and increase it. Once in place, institutions can facilitate further attempts to coordinate policies.

Institutions will be especially necessary since the lack of hierarchy in the international system excludes an authoritative allocation of roles. Some form of decentralized coordination is therefore needed when states want to collaborate and avoid free riding. It is ironic that neorealists -with their emphasis on conflict- overestimate the simplicity of cooperation under certain conditions. Institutions are useful and significant precisely because -as neorealists maintain- cooperation is difficult and precarious.

Anarchy causes two problems to states: it forces them to mind about their relative power positions and it exacerbate their problems of collective action. While institutions are useless for the first kind of problems, they are useful for the second one. Their utility is conditional on what type of dilemma states are facing in the particular contingency in question. The conditional utility of institutions can be

thought of as the relationship between a priest and a Christian. The priest cannot guarantee the Christian's salvation, especially if the latter is unwilling to be saved. In some circumstances the priest might even be counterproductive. However, if the Christian is willing to be saved, the priest may help and direct him.

The first conclusion that can be reached about institutions in international relations is that they are precarious and helpful at the same time. In the anarchy of states, institutions will be difficult to establish and to maintain. Success can never be guaranteed in the absence of a hierarchical authority capable to guarantee compliance. However, institutions are useful precisely because cooperation is difficult and not a foregone conclusion.

In sum, the following analysis of collective security will therefore be a liberal one, because it seriously considers the claim that institutions have a role to play in international politics. However, it will be a moderate, conditional and modest brand of liberalism. Moderate because it recognizes that institutions can be counterproductive if excessively rigid. Conditional because it recognizes that institutions cannot operate under all systemic configurations. Modest because it recognizes that institutions under anarchy cannot change the behaviour of states unless these are already disposed to collaborate. Institutions, short of the establishment of a world government, can help us to limit the perverse effects of anarchy and competition in the international system, but they cannot eliminate them.

The effectiveness and the probability of success of institutions depends not only on the context but also on their specific characteristics and on how these are adapted to the context. Not all situations are suited for all kind of institutions and some forms are better than others in certain situations. Institutional forms may in fact range from the highly articulate United Nations with its network of specialized agencies to the simple Morse code for ship-to-ship communication.

A useful distinction has been put forward by Oran Young, who has compared the concepts of "order" and "regime". The first are "broad framework arrangements governing the actions of all (or almost all) the members of international society" while the latter are

“more specialized arrangements that pertain to well defined activities [...] and often involve only some subset of the members of international society”.⁶⁴

The two types can be drawn on the same continuum with respect to their degree of institutionalization.⁶⁵ Orders are highly institutionalized in the sense that they prescribe very different behaviour than the one which could be observed if they were not in place and that they require states to comply with the international rules even against their interests. Regimes are less institutionalized arrangements which do not prescribe behaviour incompatible with the actions that would emerge spontaneously.

The distinction between the two is not merely in their form, but also in the philosophy behind them. Orders are more ambitious institutions which seek to change the way international relations have operated until they came into existence. In a way, orders seek to change state preferences and to reinforce the conditions which gave rise to them. Orders are centralized and “strong” in the sense that the institution would be independent from its members and would take on a life of its own.

On the contrary, regimes are more modest arrangements which depend more heavily on the existing preferences of states and on the prevailing conditions in the system. Regimes do not seek to change states’ preferences, but merely to accommodate them.⁶⁶ Regimes are decentralized and “weak” because their members are independent vis-a-vis the institution which would therefore require states to follow its precepts only when it is convenient for them to do so.⁶⁷

The relative utility of orders and regimes is heavily influenced by the analysis of the effects of anarchy. Given that these are variable, the way institutional forms adapts to changes in the propensity to stability of the system is crucial. The second conclusion about institutions is that there is a tradeoff between their credibility and their effectiveness. If an institution is not adaptable enough to accommodate the variations in the effects of anarchy, it will collapse and it will become ineffective. If on the contrary an institution is too adaptable, it will not make any difference to outcomes. In short, whereas orders can be hyper institutionalized, regimes can be hypo institutionalized.⁶⁸ In turn, this depends on three variables which

concern the issue area in which they operate, the way they are organized and the membership they encompass.

* The question of the issue area is a crucial one because the willingness of states to cooperate varies according to the subject in question. Technical issues are the most manageable because they are usually least threatening for a state's independence. The standardization of international telephonic codes could hardly put in jeopardy the sovereignty of a state. For what more substantive issues are concerned, the general rule is that institutionalized cooperation is more difficult in the security realm than in the economic one. This is due mainly to two reasons.

On the one hand, security matters are "inherently more conflictual".⁶⁹ The stakes are higher in the security realm because it is the very survival of a state which is in play rather than its prosperity or the possession of a material good. The immediate losses of a breakdown of cooperation are more serious and, in case of complete defeat, cannot be recuperated. The ultimate cost is not the loss of a few percentage point of market share, but it is loss of life. States therefore tend to avoid putting themselves in a situation in which they have to trust others for their own very survival.

On the other hand, measurements in the field of security are more difficult than in economics. Military power cannot be estimated with precision and states can therefore never be sure. If indeed a precise and transparent method of measuring military power was uncovered, wars would be unnecessary as both combatants would know the exact outcome in advance and could settle their differences on the basis of the new equilibrium of forces without firing a shot. Moreover, defensive power cannot always be distinguished from offensive power. States are therefore more sensitive to relative gains in the security realm because they can more easily be translated into decisive advantages.

* Secondly, institutions can be drawn along a continuum ranging from rigid to flexible according to the way they are organized. The first element of institutional organization concerns the degree of formalization. Institutions may be structured around formal organizations with a written constitutions, a headquarters and an international bureaucracy entrusted with its implementation or

-alternatively- they may be informal agreements with a minimum of codification.⁷⁰ NATO, with the North Atlantic Treaty, its Brussels offices with branches in all the allied capitals, its integrated command and its political organs, is an example of the first type. On the other hand, the Missile Technology Control Regime, which is an informal agreement on the part of a handful of states geared to the control of exports of technology which could be used by third parties to build ballistic missiles is an example of the latter.⁷¹

Another element regards the agenda of the institution which may be diffuse or specific.⁷² For example, UNESCO covers a wide range of subjects all relating to culture and can enlarge its scope to include new subjects whereas the regime governing responses to hijacking refers only to very specific contingencies codified in the 1963 Tokyo Convention and 1970 Hague Convention. Usually, the more sensitive the issue at hand to the sovereignty of a State, the more specific the institution has to be because states do not tolerate to take open-ended commitments in areas crucial for their own prerogatives. Conversely, in questions which do not directly influence the essence of the state, members can sustain a certain independence on the part of the institution in setting its own agenda.

A related element is that of the intensity of the commitment. An institution may demand compliance or it can admit non-systematic violations of its principles. An example of the first type is the Non-Proliferation regime which would be significantly weakened if one of the signatories acquired nuclear weapons because it would invite its neighbours to do likewise in retaliation. On the other hand, the system of international monetary relations presided over by the International Monetary Fund has survived despite the fact that it has been violated in many single instances. The more formal, specific and demanding is an institution, the more it can be defined as rigid. The more informal, general and tolerant, the more it can be defined as flexible.

* The last dimension concerns the kind of membership. An institution can be either universal or circumscribed to only a subset of the international community. The World Trade Organization, comprising most states in the international system, is a universal institution while the North American Free Trade Agreement includes

only a subset of those states even if it concerns similar subjects. Obviously, there is a trade-off between the number of members and their relative homogeneity. The larger the membership, the more heterogeneous it is likely to be. The Be-Ne-Lux agreements for the free movement of goods and people between their shared borders is only possible because of the profound homogeneity of the three countries. On the contrary, certain institutions must by their nature apply to a heterogeneous and vast membership, like for example the Conventions relating to the treatment of diplomats.

These three factors determine the likelihood of success for an institution. An institution will encounter increasing difficulties the more the issue area influences the survival of a state, the more rigid its organization and the more heterogeneous its membership. Conversely, the prospects are encouraging if the issue area is less contentious, its organization is flexible and its membership is homogeneous. The risk is that order will be too ambitious to be realistic with respect to one or more of the three variables while regimes can be too modest. Too ambitious an institution may be impossible; one which is too modest, useless. Between the Scylla of impossibility and the Carybdis of inutility institutions must find their role in a complex environment in which anarchy makes their establishment and preservation difficult but in which they are one of the most precious and longed for mechanisms to further the interest of states and of the international community.

NOTES:

¹Hans J. Morgenthau: Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948, p. 13

²Charles Lipson: International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs, World Politics, V. 37, October 1984, Reprinted in David A. Baldwin, ed.: Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 80

³The classic example is the British policy of Appeasement in the 1930's which stimulated, rather than moderate, Nazi Germany's appetite for conquest with a policy of concessions.

⁴An example is the British guarantee to Poland in the Spring of 1939, which diminished the prospects of an alliance between London and Moscow instead of increasing them because the British commitment ensured that Nazi Germany would have been involved in a war with the West.

⁵Kenneth N. Waltz: Man the State and War, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959, p. 232

⁶Kenneth N. Waltz: Theory of International Politics, Addison Wesley, Reading Mass., 1979, p. 105. "When faced with the possibility of cooperation for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. [...] If an expected gain is to be divided [unevenly], one state may use its disproportionate gain to implement a policy to damage or destroy the other. Even the prospect of large absolute gain for both parties does not elicit their cooperation so long as each fears how the other will use its increased capabilities". The most systematic treatments of relative gains and their importance for the neorealist paradigm are Richard M. Grieco: Cooperation Among Nations: Europe, America and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1990 and Joseph M. Grieco: Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism, International Organization, V. 42, August 1988, pp. 485-507. Cfr also John J. Mearsheimer: The False Promise of Institutions, International Security, V. 19, N. 3, Winter 1994/5; John J. Mearsheimer: Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War, International Security, V. 15, Summer 1990, reprinted in Sean Lynn-Jones, ed.: The Cold War and After: Prospects for Peace, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1991; Stephen D. Krasner: Global Communications and National Power: Life on the Pareto Frontier, World Politics, V. 43, April 1991, pp. 336-66; Michael Mastanduno: Do Relative Gains Matter? America's Response to Japanese Industrial Policy, International Security, V. 16, Summer 1991, pp. 73-113; the last two articles are reprinted in Baldwin: op. cit.

This position borrows from Rousseau: "Though the advantages resulting to commerce from a general and lasting peace are in themselves indisputable, still, being common to all states, they will be appreciated by none. For such advantages make themselves felt only by contrast, and he who wishes to increase his relative power is bound to seek only such gains as are exclusive", quoted in George W. Downs, ed.: Collective Security beyond the Cold War, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1994 p. 3

⁷Grieco, Cooperation..., cit., p. 10

⁸John H. Herz: Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma, World Politics, Vol. 2, N. 2, January 1950, p. 157. Jervis summarizes: "many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others; [...] one state's gain in security often inadvertently threatens others". Robert Jervis: Cooperation under the Security Dilemma, World Politics, V. 30, January 1978, p. 168. Elsewhere, Jervis even goes as far as suggesting that: "the security dilemma can not only create conflicts and tensions but also provide the dynamics triggering war. If technology and strategy are such that each side believes that

the state that strikes first will have a decisive advantage, even a state that is fully satisfied with the status quo may start a war out of the fear that the alternative to doing so is not peace, but an attack of its adversary", Robert Jervis: Perception and Misperception in International Politics, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 67

⁹"Whether man is by nature peaceful and cooperative, or domineering and aggressive, is not the question", Herz: op. cit., p. 157

¹⁰In Aron's words, the "shadow of war" is always present in international relations. Raymond Aron: Peace and War: A Theory of Peace and War, Doubleday, Garden city NY, 1966, p. 6

¹¹Mearsheimer: False Promise, cit., p. 13

¹²Much confusion surrounds the definition of the balance of power which, as Inis Claude has pointed out amongst others, has been used in many different ways some of which are contradictory with each other. Broadly speaking, the balance of power has been referred to as a synonym for the current distribution of power; as an ideology opposed to the excessive concentration of power; as a way to describe containment policies; or as the natural tendency of states to coalesce against the most pressing danger. Inis L. Claude, Power and International Relations, Random House, New York, 1962, p. 13-37. In line with a systemic treatment of international politics, here the term will be used in the latest sense, in line with Doyle's definition as "a system of interaction among states that assures survival of the system of independent states by preventing the empire or hegemony of any state or coalition of states", Michael W. Doyle: Balancing Power Classically: An Alternative to Collective Security?, in Downs: op. cit., p. 134.

¹³George Liska: Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Md., 1962, p. 12

¹⁴Stephen M. Walt: The Origins of Alliances, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1987 pp. 18-9

¹⁵Cfr. William H. Riker: The Theory of Political Coalitions, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 1962, passim

¹⁶Morgenthau: op. cit., pp. 137-142

¹⁷John J. Mearsheimer: False Promise..., cit., pp. 7, 13. Cfr. also John J. Mearsheimer: A Realist Reply, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, pp. 82-93.

¹⁸In Wight's phrase: "It is roughly the case that, while in domestic politics the struggle for power is governed and circumscribed by the framework of law and institutions, in international politics law and institutions are governed and circumscribed by the struggle for power." Martin Wight, Power Politics, 2nd Edition, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1978 p. 102.

¹⁹Key neoliberal works include: Arthur Stein: Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World, International Organization, V. 36, Spring 1982, pp. 294-324; Lipson: op. cit.; Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane: Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions, World Politics, V. 38, October 1985, pp. 226-54; Duncan Snidal: Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation, American Political Science Review, V. 85, September 1991, pp. 701-26; Robert Powell: Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory, American Political Science Review, V. 85, December 1991, pp. 1303-20; all these works can now be found in Baldwin: Neorealism and Neoliberalism, cit.; Robert O. Keohane: After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1984; Robert Axelrod: The Evolution of Cooperation, Basic Books, New York, 1984; Duncan Snidal: Coordination vs. Prisoners' Dilemma: Implications for International Cooperation and Regimes, American Political Science Review, V. 79,

1985, pp. 923-942. Arthur Stein: Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1990; Kenneth Oye: Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies, World Politics, V. 38, N. 1, October 1985, pp. 1-24; Robert O. Keohane and Lisa Martin: The Promise of Institutional Theory, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, pp. 39-51; Lisa L. Martin: Institutions and Cooperation: Sanctions During the Falklands Island Conflict, International Security, V. 16, N. 4, Spring 1992, pp. 143-178

²⁰Thomas C. Shelling: The Strategy of Conflict, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1960, p. 89

²¹For neoliberals, cooperation is not spontaneous under anarchy because states always maintain an incentive to minimize their share of costs in an interaction. "Cooperation does not imply the absence of conflict [as harmony does]. On the contrary, it is typically mixed with conflict and reflects partially successful efforts to overcome conflict." Keohane, After Hegemony.... cit., p. 54-5

²²Two prisoners are to be interrogated separately by the police and have the choice of either confessing or maintaining a conspiracy of silence. The game is characterized by strategic interdependence, that is the payoffs of each are influenced also by what the other one does. If one confesses and the other one does not, the first wins a free ride and gets the minimum sentence while the second gets the maximum one (the sucker's payoff). If both accomplices remain silent they get an intermediate sentence which is higher than if they both had talked.

In other words, the payoffs are distributed -symmetrically for both players- in the following way: the best outcome is free riding, in which one passes onto the other all the costs and keeps all the benefits. Second best is mutual cooperation. Third best is mutual defection. The worst outcome is when the other free rides and the player in question cooperates and therefore pays all the costs by itself.

We can think of the problem of free riding as the construction of a house by two workers. Each prefers that the other one does all the work (free riding) and wants to avoid being the only one to work (sucker's payoff). However, each also prefers that the work is done properly (mutual cooperation) rather than it is not done at all (mutual defection).

²³As Grieco has shown, if relative gains are inserted in the players' utility function and if sensitivity to them is sufficiently high, the prisoner's dilemma turns into a deadlock game in which mutual defection is the only possible equilibrium. In any case, neorealists would point out that, given the high stakes in play in international politics, many times players will free ride even without reference to relative gains considerations because the risk of the sucker's payoff is too costly. In other words, the payoffs of future cooperation are discounted vis-a-vis the risk of being double-crossed today. Cfr. Grieco: Cooperation.... cit., Chap 2

²⁴Mancur Olson: Increasing the Incentives for International Cooperation, International Organization, V. 25, Fall 1971, p. 873

²⁵The classic work on public goods is Mancur Olson: The Logic of Collective Action, Cambridge Mass., 1965. A more recent work is: Russell Hardin: Collective Action, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982 Applying the concepts to international politics and especially to NATO are: Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser: An Economic Theory of Alliances, The Review of Economics and Statistics, vol. 48, 1966, pp. 267-268; Olson: Increasing.... cit.; Bruce Russett and John D. Sullivan: Collective Goods and International Organizations, International Organization, V. 25, Fall 1971, pp. 845-65; Klaus Knorr: Burden Sharing in NATO, Orbis, V. 29, Fall 1985, pp. 517-36; Todd Sandler and John F. Farber: Burden Sharing, Strategy and the Design of NATO, Economic Inquiry, V. 18, July

1980, John R. Oneal: *The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO*, International Organization, V. 44, N. 3, Summer 1990, pp. 379-402

²⁶Ernst B. Haas: *Words Can Hurt You; or, Who Said What to Whom about Regimes*, in Stephen D. Krasner, International Regimes, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1983, p. 28

²⁷Keohane, After Hegemony..., cit., p. 69. In other words, both paradigms fall within the third image as defined by Waltz, cfr. Waltz: Man, The State..., cit., Chap. 5

²⁸Stein: Coordination..., in Baldwin: op. cit., p. 41

²⁹"When states elites do not foresee self interested benefits from cooperation, we do not expect cooperation to occur, nor the institutions that facilitate cooperation to develop. When states can jointly benefit from cooperation, on the other hand, we expect governments to attempt to construct such institutions". Keohane and Martin: The Promise of Institutional Theory..., cit., pp. 41-2

³⁰Axelrod and Keohane: Achieving Cooperation, cit., in Baldwin, p. 94; Cfr. also Oye, Explaining Cooperation..., cit., p. 1

³¹For example, according to Grieco, anarchy means that "there is no overarching authority to prevent others from using violence, or threat of violence, to destroy and enslave [states]". Grieco, op. cit., p. 126

³²For Powell, anarchy is "the lack of a common government to enforce agreements", op. cit., p. 227

³³Arnold Wolfers: Discord and Collaboration, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1962, pp. 13-15

³⁴Cooperation collapses when the use of force is at issue, but anarchy in the sense of a lack of common government to enforce agreements is not in and of itself the cause of this collapse". Powell, op. cit., p. 227

³⁵Axelrod and Keohane, op. cit., p. 85. Cfr. also Keohane, After Hegemony..., cit., p. 62, Keohane and Martin, op. cit., p. 44; Helen Miler: *International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses*, World Politics, V. 44, April 1992, pp. 446-96; "The outcome can range from pure conflict to no conflict at all" Stein, op. cit., p. 30

³⁶Even Kenneth Waltz admits that "a relative harmony can, and sometimes does, prevail among nations" although "always precariously so". Kenneth N. Waltz: *The Emerging Structure of International Politics*, International Security, V. 18, N. 2, Fall 1993, p. 78

³⁷Grieco, Anarchy and the Limits..., cit., p. 129. Grieco emphasizes that the factor of sensitivity to relative gains varies. In theory, when it is zero, his "neorealist" utility function becomes the same as the neoliberal one. This is in line with Krasner's assertion that "in general, the extent to which state behaviour exhibits a concern for relative gains will vary, depending upon whether interaction involved allies or adversaries and economic or military relationships". Krasner: Global Communications..., cit., p. 256. Michael Mastanduno, another neorealist, writes that "in general, the extent to which state behaviour exhibits a concern for relative gains will vary, depending upon whether interaction involves allies or adversaries and economic or military relationships" Mastanduno, Do Relative Gains Matter?..., cit., p. 256

³⁸Buzan writes that "the greater power will feel no vital threat and the smaller will, of necessity, learn to accommodate itself. When the difference in power is great, both sides are secure in the knowledge that their relative status will not change quickly". Barry Buzan: People, States and Fear, Simon & Schuster, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, 1991, p. 318; Cfr. also Keohane, After Hegemony..., cit., p. 49; On hegemonic theory see A.F.K. Organski: World

Politics, 2nd ed., Knopf, New York, 1968; Robert Gilpin: War and Change in World Politics, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1981

³⁹Gilpin, *ibid.*, p. 145

⁴⁰Baldwin: *Introduction*, in Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 7

⁴¹Arthur Stein: Why Nations Cooperate..., *cit.*, p. 193

⁴²"Relative gains have their greatest impact when the number of players is small", because in this case states can and must concentrate all their attentions and concerns on a few other actors. Therefore, "cooperation is easier under multipolarity" Snidal: *op. cit.*, pp. 197, 200

⁴³"More actors enhance the possibilities of protecting oneself through forming coalitions and, generally the less united one's enemies, the safer one is", moreover "states that do not cooperate fall behind other relative gains maximizers that cooperate among themselves. This makes cooperation the best defence when your rivals are cooperating in a multilateral relative gains world", Snidal: *ibid.*, p. 201. Also Axelrod argues that cooperation is achievable with a large number of actors, cfr. Axelrod, *op. cit.*, *passim*

⁴⁴Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 226. Robert Keohane: Institutionalist Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War, in Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 281. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 151: "the dialectics of threats and vulnerabilities is strongly shaped by the technologies of interaction". Jervis: Cooperation..., *cit.*, p. 193

⁴⁵Kenneth N. Waltz: *A Response to My Critics*, in Robert O. Keohane: Neorealism and Its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 343-4

⁴⁶Walt, *op. cit.*, Chap. 1.. On the importance of the domestic propensities of states cfr. for example Raymond Aron: *Le tensioni e la guerra dal punto di vista della sociologia storica*, and idem: *L'analisi delle costellazioni diplomatiche*, both in Aron: La politica, la guerra, la storia, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1992

⁴⁷Buzan writes that the effects of anarchy are variable and fluctuate between all-out war everywhere and absolute security. Buzan, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-9, 175

⁴⁸Barry Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 148. Wolfers: *op. cit.*, pp. 13-5. Robert Jervis: *Security Regimes*, in Krasner: *International Regimes*, *cit.*, p. 173. Alexander Wendt: *Anarchy Is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, International Organization, Vol. 46, 1992, pp. 391-425

On regimes, see also Krasner: *op. cit.*, *passim*. Oran Young: International Cooperation, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1989, esp. chap.s 1 and 3. Arthur Stein, *Coordination and Collaboration...*, *cit.*

⁴⁹F.S. Hinsley: *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1963, p. 324; cfr. also Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 230

⁵⁰John Locke: Two Treatises on Government, II, 3, 19

⁵¹Alexander Wendt: *Constructing International Politics*, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, p. 77

⁵²Stanley Hoffmann: *Balance, Concert or None of the Above*, p. 196

⁵³Luca Lanza-Luca distinguishes four possible definitions of institutions. First, they can be seen as constraints to behaviour identifying a range of acceptable actions. Secondly, they can be descriptively seen as "stable, valid and recurrent models of behaviour". Thirdly, they can be seen as prescriptive models of how actors should behave. Lastly, institutions can be thought of as constitutive elements of how actors perceive reality. My conception falls within the first type of definitions. Cfr. Luca Lanza-Luca: Istituzioni, Organizzazioni, Potere, La Nuova Italia, Roma, 1995, *passim*

⁵⁴In Keohane's words "variations in the institutionalization of world politics exert significant impacts on the behaviour of governments", Robert O. Keohane:

International Institutions and State Power, Westview Press, Boulder Co., 1989, p.

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⁵⁵Neorealists assert that their theory incorporates free riding but this is contradictory with their claim that institutions are marginal. Whenever free riding exists, institutions have a role.

⁵⁶The First Coalition of 1792-7 was abandoned after 1793 by Prussia, Tuscany and some German states. The Second Coalition of 1798-1801 was abandoned by Russia. In short, France was able to repeatedly attack a single isolated enemy (Britain in 1803 and 1807, Prussia in 1806, Spain in 1808, Austria in 1809, Russia in 1812) without a balancing coalition being formed. Paul Schroeder: *Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory*, International Security, Vol. XIX, N. 1, Summer 1994, pp. 120-121

⁵⁷Richard Rosecrance: *A New Concert of Powers*, Foreign Affairs, Vol. LXXI, N. 2, Spring 1992, p. 66

⁵⁸Barry Posen: The Sources of Military Doctrine, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1984, pp. 232-3

⁵⁹Stalin's temptation to free ride was so clear that -if Krushchev's memoirs are trustworthy- his decision to bandwagon with Germany was taken after Britain's guarantee to Poland, that is after he had the assurance that Britain would enter a war with Germany. Schroeder: *op. cit.*, p. 123-4; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder: *Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity*, International Organization, Vol. LXIV, N. 2, Spring 1990, pp. 156-165

⁶⁰The debate between the proponents of international institutions and their detractors should not therefore be seen as a debate between those who emphasize negative freedom and those who want institutions because they want positive goals pursued by the international community. Institutions can be necessary even in the realm of negative freedom to avert undesired outcomes.

⁶¹Stephen D. Krasner: *Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables*, in Krasner, *op. cit.*, passim; Keohane, After Hegemony..., *cit.*, p. 64

⁶²"The same factors that explain regime formation also explain regime maintenance, change and dissolution. Regimes are maintained as long as the patterns of interest that gave rise to them remain", Stein, Coordination and Collaboration..., *cit.*, p. 50

⁶³Giulio Gallarotti: *The Limits of International Organization, Systematic Failure in the Management of International Relations*, International Organization, V. 45, N. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 214, 217

⁶⁴Young, *op. cit.*, p. 13

⁶⁵Keohane: International Institutions..., *cit.*, p. 7

⁶⁶In Young's phrase, "regimes supplement rather than supplant spontaneous mechanisms", Young, *op. cit.*, p. 14

⁶⁷Lanzalaco, *op. cit.*, pp.61-65.

⁶⁸Lanzalaco, *ibid.*, pp. 143-4, 190

⁶⁹Lipson, *op. cit.*, p. 71. Lipson also writes that "what is typically different in economic and security affairs is: the immediate and grave losses to a player who attempts to cooperate without reciprocation and the risks associated with inadequate monitoring of others' decisions and actions", *ibid.*, p. 72

⁷⁰Donald J. Puchala and Raymond F. Hopkins: *International Regimes: Lessons from Inductive Analysis*, in Krasner, *op. cit.*, p. 65

⁷¹It is important to point out that neither form is necessarily better than the other. NATO is successful both in general terms and vis-a-vis its predecessors precisely because its structure is so well developed while the MTCR is valued by states because it is informal not excessively elaborate.

⁷²Puchala and Hopkins, op. cit., p. 64-5

3. THE DEFINITION OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

* * * *

i. The Concept of Collective Security

Collective security is a multilateral institution set up by states to establish and preserve peace throughout the international system. It is a universal agreement to regulate the use of force which applies to all states under its domain and aims at establishing preponderance against an eventual aggression. It is based upon the general principles of the indivisibility of peace and of diffuse reciprocity. The fundamental assumption is that war is not inevitable either because there is a fundamental underlying harmony of interest among states or because reason is sufficient to reconcile eventual conflicts of interests.¹

Collective security addresses the problem of war in a direct manner: the unilateral use of force is forbidden (or even outlawed) and collective sanctions are set up against eventual transgressors. The aim is a more stable world for the whole international community. The means is a universal response to aggression. Global order would be predicated on the nation of one for all and all for one. "The aggressive and unlawful use of force by any nation against any nation will be met by the combined use of force of all other nations".²

Collective security is therefore composed of three elements. First, an agreed procedure -usually a treaty- is identified for the organization of the decisions of the international community. Secondly, states explicitly renounce war as an instrument of policy except in self defence. Thirdly, states pledge to support any state victim of an attack should somebody disregard the first element.

An eventual aggressor would therefore be isolated and would have to face the organized power of the whole international community. The choice would be between yielding and being overwhelmed. In theory, no state should be able to face alone all the others together. Even without a world government, the international community would provide a function similar to that of the police or -rather- of vigilantes. Individual states would renounce their monopoly of power to the collectivity, which would then use it to keep the peace against eventual disturbances. "Having made arrangements to name the aggressor by community decision, nations

-instead of reserving their power to defend or enforce their national interests- would be lined up like a police force to strike against any country, friend or foe, that has been declared an aggressor".³

The theory rests on the simple notion that overwhelming power is more effective than mere equilibrium to maintain the peace. In the words of A.F.K. Organski: "the relationship between war and the balance of power appears to be exactly the opposite of what has been claimed. The periods of balance, real or imagined, are periods of warfare while the periods of known preponderance are periods of peace".⁴ The objectives of collective security are therefore those to deter aggression by envisaging a disproportionate reaction and to defend victims effectively should deterrence fail. An overwhelming international sanction would in fact be added to the spontaneous reprisal of the victim. "The logic of collective security is based upon the deterrent effect of aggregate, preponderant power".⁵

The idea is to render aggression fruitless so as to punish violations and deter future wars. "Preponderance provides a more robust deterrent than equality and eliminates the possibility that war might break out because the aggressor misperceives the strength of the opposing coalition".⁶ If Wilhemine Germany and inter-war Japan had known in advance the amount of power that eventually ganged up against them, they would probably have thought twice before pursuing their aggressive intents. Collective security seeks to organize that power before, rather than after, the aggression has taken place.

As an important by-product, collective security also promises to reduce tensions because it is based upon the cooperative principle of one for all and all for one rather than on a competitive balance. Each state would be reassured by a universal guarantee and could allow itself to behave confidently with counterparts rather than assessing each event vis-a-vis worst case scenarios. Unintended action-reaction spirals would thus be defused. In turn, the confidence allows states to fulfill at less risk their first pledge not to use force unilaterally.

The multilateral character of collective security does not only concern the quantity of states involved but also the kind of relations among them. As John Gerald Ruggie has pointed out "what is

distinctive about multilateralism is not merely that it coordinates national policies in groups of three or more states, which is something that other organizational forms also do, but additionally that it does so on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states".⁷ In other words, collective security is based upon a generalized principle rather than on a coincidental convergent sum of individual and particular interests. The principle is then applied impartially and indivisibly throughout the domain of the institution irrespective of the specific circumstances involved and of the specific concerns of participants. In the words of Lord Bryce, one of the prophets of the concept at the time of the Versailles Peace Conference: "What we contemplate is not a league of some states against others, but a union of as many as possible in the common interest of all".⁸

Not only the means but also the objectives must be multilateral. International actions based on unilateral rather than multilateral motivations are not therefore collective security even if they involve a multiplicity of states or are endorsed by an international organization. In this way, Russian "peacekeeping" operations in the former Soviet Republics of Georgia or Tajikistan do not constitute an example of collective security and rather resemble the exercise of a sphere of influence on Russia's near abroad. It would in fact be difficult that Moscow acquiesced to a Tajiki peacekeeping force in Chechenia.

Similarly, any imposition of an imperial stability, like the Pax Romana, is not collective security because it serves the interests of one party while affecting the collectivity only indirectly. On the contrary any coincidence of collective security with the interests of one or more of the parties involved should be purely fortuitous.

Decision-making has to be joint rather than independent and inspired by generalized principles.⁹ The predictable and restrained behaviour of the superpowers during the Cold War was also not the result of collective security even if it resulted in a stable environment. The mutual restraint did not originate from a negotiated adjustment of interests but by mutual nuclear deterrence. The Soviet Union and America did not choose to cooperate in a multilateral framework but were rather forced to moderation by the prospect of a nuclear holocaust. Inter-bloc and intra-bloc relations during the Cold War

were collective and they brought security, but they were not collective security.¹⁰

The principle on which collective security rests is the indivisibility of peace.¹¹ According to the main prophet of collective security, President Woodrow Wilson: "Every matter which is likely to affect the peace of the world is everybody's business".¹² War anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere. It is therefore in every state's interest to stop aggression wherever it occurs.

This may be for one or more of three reasons. Firstly, states may feel part of a moral cosmopolitan community which is hurt anytime an aggression is unleashed against a fellow nation. Although not a direct threat to their own security, states may see any act of brutal aggression as a violation of their peace of mind requiring a response. Societies may feel empathic to one another and outraged by violations of individual and collective human rights. Also in domestic society individuals expect the police to punish criminals even if they have not been victims of a crime or they do not live in an unsafe neighbourhood because they feel part of a community.

Secondly, states may prefer to stop aggression before war gets out of control and involves them. This is either because of the intrinsically perverse nature of war or because the appetite of the aggressor increases with each success. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in his attempts to convince American opinion of the necessity to support Britain in the Second World War, used to refer to the Nazi menace as a contagion or a fire which needed to be eradicated before it was too late. "Suppose my neighbour's house catches fire and I have a length of garden hose".¹³ Each particular war is dangerous because, once started, it is difficult to end it.

Thirdly, states may feel that their own security would be better served in a world in which aggression is punished severely because they themselves may become victims of aggression in the future. As the Haitian delegate to the 1935 League of Nations' Assembly discussing the Abyssinian crisis remarked: "Let us never forget that, one day, any of us could be somebody's Ethiopia". In this way, even if the particular war in question is unimportant, the very institution of war is in general a danger to states' survival.

The indivisibility of peace means that the unilateral use of force is always unjustified as it puts in jeopardy the whole international community. In this sense war is illegitimate because no nation has the right to single handedly break global peace for its own interests. States should no longer be the sole judges of their own conduct. As Hoffmann has highlighted, the only legitimate use of force is in self defence or for non-selfish -that is multilateral- purposes.¹⁴

Collective security punishes whoever uses force as an instrument of policy irrespective of the merits of that policy. For what aggression is concerned, there can be no distinction between "good" and "bad" purposes. The concern is with the method of dealing with a dispute rather than with the dispute itself.¹⁵ In this view, a state can wage a just war only if it does not initiate the hostilities. However, once the hostilities have begun, a just war becomes a duty more than a right.

This also means that aggressors are not punished for the wrongfulness of their objectives or for their threatening posture but qua violators of a general norm of conduct. In other words, Saddam Hussein was to be punished because he committed an act of aggression rather than because he was a danger to the stability of the Persian Gulf. Similarly, it should be indifferent whether the aggressor is a ministate or a superpower.¹⁶ In both cases the threat to the multilateral norm is the same because both challenge the indivisibility of peace equally even if they affect systemic stability very differently. For collective security, all wars are born equal.

The general principle behind collective security means that states have to be motivated by universal, rather than particularistic, motivations.¹⁷ A collective security operation is one explicitly endorsed by a collective security instance like the United Nations, the League of Nations, the Organization of American States or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. However, in order to be really different from the spontaneous mechanisms it seeks to replace, the multinational action must include at least one state which would not have intervened had collective security not been in place. If all states involved would have intervened anyway, collective security would not bring any multilateral value added.

Both the moral force and the functional utility of collective security rest on the involvement of states unaffected by the particular dispute and which can therefore offer a more effective and disinterested support to the victim of aggression.¹⁸ After all, as Arnold Wolfers has pointed out, states would not exchange their traditional security practices for a multilateral system if they had no reason to expect a more effective protection.¹⁹ In theory, all aggressions should be met with the same amount of support: that of the whole international community.

The indivisibility of peace principle is therefore incompatible with the age old concept of neutrality. Every dispute should concern equally all states as if their own security were directly threatened. In these circumstances, "partiality becomes a duty".²⁰ If the initiation of violence is banned, then there can never be a moral equivalence between two combatants because who fired the first shot is always unequivocally wrong. It is therefore impossible to maintain an equidistant posture in a conflict.

This is the reason why the German request in 1926 to be exempted from a series of potential conflicts was turned down. The Weimar government wished to ensure, in the negotiations for its accession to the League of Nations, that it would not have been forced to fight against its newly found Soviet ally. However, the League powers felt that if Germany could opt out from particular operations, other nations would have followed suit and the whole concept would have been irredeemably compromised.

Collective security is also different from alliances. While the latter are geared toward a specific threat, the former operates against an unspecified aggressor. Collective security is based on the notion of all against any one rather than on the traditional and unilateral idea of some against some specific others. In Henry Kissinger's words: "alliances always presume a specific potential adversary, collective security defends international law in the abstract".²¹ Alliances take the form of states A+B+C against states Y+Z. On the contrary, a collective security system takes the form of an agreement between A+B+C+Y+Z against any one of them (A, B, C, Y or Z) who commits an aggression.²² There is no prearranged direction for the agreement,

no "us" and "them". All states are potential aggressors and all are potential enforcers. Collective security operates tous azimuth.

Such a definition also highlights that other major difference between collective security and alliances. While the first is an inward-looking and inclusive institution aimed at regulating relations among its members, the latter is aimed at an outside threat and is therefore an exclusive institution. "The focus on internal regulation distinguishes it from an alliance that is organized for the purpose of effectively reducing threats that originate outside the membership".²³ This is the reason why collective security requires a universal membership. Eventual disputes must arise from within for the institution to be able to tackle them. According to Charles Lipson: "all security is internal" to the collective security system. States must in fact explicitly and positively endorse the system before it can apply to them.²⁴

It is possible to envisage a system on a regional basis, like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or the Organization of African States, but even in this case membership must be universal -or quasi-universal- in the region in question.²⁵ Collective security is not aimed at the equilibrium between opposing forces, but at their union in the common cause of peace. Furthermore, the inclusiveness of collective security means that the aggression in question must take place within the regional domain of the institution. For example a OSCE intervention in an Arab-Israeli conflict would not constitute a collective security operation unless it was endorsed by an organization like the United Nations which included both the combatants and the enforcers.

In this way, it is therefore possible to exclude -contrary to what some analysts have suggested- that a collective defence organization like NATO is a collective security organization.²⁶ NATO is an innovative institution because it has fostered an unprecedented degree of political and military integration. Never before had an integrated command been established in peacetime nor the obligation to intervene on behalf of any ally was spelled more clearly than in Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty. Nevertheless, some of the crucial elements of collective security are lacking.

Firstly, NATO was formed because of a specific threat: the Soviet Union. Secondly, its membership was limited to those who had

a common interest in containing Communism and did not include the potential threat but tried to keep it as far as possible instead. Thirdly, NATO never entertained the ambition of regulating relations among its members. When the Greco-Turkish conflict over Cyprus broke out in the 1970s, NATO allies were not called to intervene to stop aggression and to support the victim.

Not only is collective security different from an alliance, but it can even be incompatible with it. As in the case of neutrality, the principle of the indivisibility of peace does not easily tolerate exceptions. States would be required to punish friends as well as foes.²⁷ It would otherwise be impossible to isolate the aggressor and a powerful alliance of many states could therefore hope to defy the will of the international community. Alignments should therefore be shaped by general norms which are beyond the states' control rather than by their interests and choices.

While without any legal obligation states would naturally seek to favour their allies and undermine their enemies, under collective security states may be forced -depending on the legal circumstances- to fight an ally or side by side with an arch-enemy or even in defence of a most brutal dictatorship. In theory, Canada should have declared war on the United States for its invasion of Panama in 1989 if this had been declared unlawful. Similarly, the international community should have defended the infamous regimes of the Khmer Rouges in Cambodia or of Idi Amin in Uganda against aggression at the end of the 1970's.

Collective security seeks to substitute the short term interest of allies against a common threat with the long term universal interests of global peace. It asks to forego alliances but it promises an harmonious world in which each is guaranteed by all and in which alliances are therefore superfluous. For example, according to Senator Vandenberg, who was commenting on Soviet post war foreign policy: "the alternative is collective security which is better in the long view, from a purely Russian standpoint: to forcefully surround herself with a cordon of unwillingly controlled states thus affronting the opinion of mankind or to win the priceless asset of world confidence embracing full and whole hearted cooperation with and reliance upon

a vital international organization".²⁸ Unfortunately, the Kremlin did not take the Senator's advice.

In other words, states are asked to renounce the specific reciprocity of alliances for the sake of the diffuse reciprocity of collective security.²⁹ Following Robert Keohane's terminology, while the first involves a specific quid pro quo every time it is invoked, the latter implies a higher long term benefit although not necessarily a reward for each single compliance.³⁰ The distinction resembles the difference that exists between a firm's investment on material resources, which necessitates a syntagmatic return for the expenditure made, and an investment on the firm's image (like a publicity campaign) which can bring more or less profits according to a set of circumstances. The return may in the latter case be indeterminate but if the long term benefits seem sufficiently large, it may still be worth it.

It is important to point out that collective security is only one of many possible types of multilateral intervention. The fact that an operation is not governed by unilateral motives does not automatically make it an instance of collective security. In particular, collective security should not be confused with peacekeeping, as the two concepts entail different and mutually exclusive philosophies. Peacekeeping envisages an impartial intervention involving only passive use of force. An intervention of this type can only take place with the consent of the parties involved and in the presence of a ceasefire.³¹

On the contrary, collective security entails opposite ends and opposite means. An aggressor is identified and then temporarily evicted from the family of nations. Collective security is impartial in the sense that it applies equally to all states without prejudice but it is partial in the sense that it does identify an enemy. It would otherwise be as if the police, summoned for a burglary, rounded up the house and waited for the parties to settle their differences rather than going in and arresting the burglar.

Not only does collective security, like the police, identify a culprit and a victim, but it also positively invites states to punish the first and protect the latter. Nor is such an intervention limited. Rather than waiting for an agreement between the parties, collective security

imposes the will and the norms of the international community and enforces a termination of the hostilities with superior force whatever the desires of the parties.

In this sense, peacekeeping and collective security are alternative methods of multilateral involvement which do not lie on a same spectrum but are divided by a distinct and discrete interval.³² The intervention in fact can be either partial or impartial and either limited or unlimited. The force structures, rules of engagement and objectives of the two types of operations are diametrically opposed and should not be confused. A military presence endowed with only passive force cannot be partial, and viceversa.

The blurring of the distinction can only spell the failure of the multilateral action as the contingents on the field need to know whether they should shoot at one of the combatants or whether they should retain an impartial outlook. Once the impartiality is broken, it cannot be regained. As the 1994 British Army Field Manual imaginatively puts it, while a peacekeeping operation resembles the role of a referee in a rugby match, a collective security operation resembles instead the role of a team playing the match. In the first case, a single man in a neutral outfit is sufficient to fulfill the task. In the other case, 15 men with their own uniforms are actively involved in the game. Clearly, the two roles are fundamentally different.

The classification along two dimensions -partiality and use of force- suggests that there are two further types of multilateral intervention which are often overlooked and confused with either peacekeeping or collective security.³³ Firstly, an operation can be impartial but involving an unlimited use of force. In this view, the international community would actively impose its will on both sides in what is commonly referred to as peace enforcement. There would be neither aggressor nor victim but -for the sake of international peace and security- the conflict would be crushed by superior outside force. This type of operation can be envisaged especially in case of the collapse of authority within a state as was the case in Somalia in 1992.

Secondly, the operation can be partial, like collective security, but entailing only a limited amount of force. In other words, in a similar manner to the gunboat diplomacy of colonial powers in the XIX Century, the multilateral intervention would support one side in

a conflict but would do so for well defined and limited objectives short of the crushing of the other side. Examples of this type of interventions are the establishment of safe areas protected by the international community in Northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War and in Bosnia during the Yugoslav Civil War. In both cases, the multilateral operation was aimed against one combatant without necessarily seeking its complete defeat.

To sum up, we can therefore sketch a taxonomy of different types of intervention of which collective security is only one of four, as can be seen in table 1. First, a peacekeeping operation is partial and limited. Secondly, a peace enforcement operation retains an impartial outlook but involves an active and unlimited use of force. Thirdly, a multilateral intervention can be partial but aimed at limited objectives. Finally, a collective security operation is partial in that it identifies an aggressor which must be punished and unlimited in that it aims at its unconditional defeat.

Table 1. Types of Multilateral Intervention

		<i>outlook</i>	
		<i>partial</i>	<i>impartial</i>
<i>use of force</i>	<i>limited</i>	intervention	peace keeping
	<i>unlimited</i>	collective security	peace enforcement

ii. Collective Security and World Order Proposals

Martin Wight has divided the various ideas on international order into three main groups, also called the three R's. Firstly, Realists -or Machiavellians- are rather pessimistic on the prospects of changing either the international system or the units that compose it. The forces which urge states to compete are so strong that they cannot be overcome. The main instruments for avoiding war are therefore the prudent policies of states and the mechanism of the balance of power. Secondly, Rationalists -also called Grotians- aim at producing stability by improving the way in which the international system works, without radically changing its nature. By introducing institutions such as international law or conventions like those of an "international society", rationalists aim at taming the competition between states and at facilitating collaboration. Finally, Revolutionaries -or Kantians- propose a radical transformation of the international system and of the units that compose it in order to overcome altogether the dilemmas of anarchy.

The concept of collective security represents an attempt to bring peace to international relations without altering their fundamental characteristics. It is therefore grounded in the second tradition. It is a way to moderate anarchy, which is deemed unacceptable, without establishing a world government, which is deemed unattainable. Collective security therefore represents an attempt to square the circle between universal motivations toward peace and the retention of national sovereignty. Peace is considered possible within the present system of sovereign states. The crucial new factor introduced is a legal obligation. Collective security seeks neither to change the organization of states nor of the international system. In this way, collective security is distinct from other liberal views of international relations, and especially from the revolutionary tradition.

The Kantian school sees in the domestic organization of states the key to perpetual peace. Republics -or as we would call them today, democracies- are based on the principles of the division of powers and of popular sovereignty. Since the citizens will have to bear the direct costs of fighting, they will be naturally reluctant to start a war if they have the right to decide over such questions. In Kant's words: "if the

consent of citizens is required to decide whether war should or should not be waged, nothing is more natural than the fact that, since the burdens of war will fall upon them, [...] they will meditate for a long time before initiating such an evil game".³⁴

This will be especially so if the counterpart is another republic which is based upon the same legitimacy of popular sovereignty. The tendency to solve domestic conflicts under the rule of law would therefore be transferred -provided certain conditions are met- at the international level in the relations between republics, which would thus be free to establish a pacific confederation. Nevertheless, insofar as collective security attempts to bring peace to the whole international system -and not just to its democratic segments- it should be kept separate from "Republican Liberalism".

Collective security does not address the question of the domestic organization of states. By its universal aspirations, it rather seems that collective security assumes the sufficiency of legal obligations irrespective of domestic politics. This is the reason why all sorts of states -democracies and not- have been founding members of the League of Nations and of the United Nations and that their constitutional rules do not refer to any specific type of domestic organization of states. While collective security rests on the notion that *pacta sunt servanda*, both if the counterpart is a democracy or not, revolutionary liberal theories point out that *cum hereticis fides non servanda*, that is relations should be different if the counterpart is a democracy or not.³⁵

Furthermore, collective security aims at preserving state sovereignty and would not concern itself with domestic questions. On the contrary, revolutionary liberalism believes in the messianic function of a certain political system and would therefore actively attempt to promote it. While collective security is solely concerned with interstate wars, revolutionary liberalism considers processes within states as crucial variables.

A certain amount of confusion derives from the fact that many proponents of collective security also believed in the Kantian proposition of a separate peace among democracies. Woodrow Wilson remarked that "only a nation whose government was its servant and not its master could be trusted to preserve the peace of the world. [...]"

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith with or observe its covenants".³⁶

Democracies are indeed steadfast supporters of the concept, which has been introduced by democratic states in international relations and mainly upheld by them. Without democracy, it is even conceivable that collective security would have never been applied. Collective security appeals to democracies because it resembles their domestic organization based on the rule and impartial enforcement of law. Collective security also rigidly distinguishes between peace and war, in accordance with the democratic characteristic of rejecting the idea of a continuum in which war is simply the continuation of politics by other means. Public opinion -on which democratic politics depends- demands clarity on these issues and tends to support collective security because it provides an aura of moral legitimacy and clarity to a situation.

However, if Republican Liberalism and collective security were merged into a single theory, the latter would become irrelevant if it required that the participants were democratic. For example, according to James Mill: "it is only in countries the rulers of which are drawn from the mass of the people, in other words in democratic countries, that the sanction of the laws of nations can be expected to operate with any considerable effect".³⁷ Similarly, Professor Zimmern wrote in the 1930's that:

"collective security, the safety of all by all, cannot, at the present stage of human history, be a policy for the world as a whole. It can only be brought into practical effect between the free peoples who, if they are sufficiently powerful, can form the nucleus of what, as the social and political advancement of mankind proceeds, will become an increasingly large and important political constellation".³⁸

In this view, it is clearly democracy, rather than the law of nations and international institutions, to bring peace.

Collective security is more pessimistic about the prospects of reforming international society as we know it than other idealistic schools of thought while being more optimistic about reaching peace within the present international system. In this view, the concept

belongs to the Grotian tradition which believes that world order can be attained largely with processes endogenous to international society without recourse to a radical transformation of domestic or international politics.³⁹

According to Grotius, the best way to obtain order was through international institutions: "It would be useful and in some fashion necessary that the Christian powers should make between themselves some sort of body in whose assemblies the troubles of each should be determined by the judgment of others not interested and there should be sought means of constraining the parties to come to an agreement within reasonable conditions".⁴⁰

Although it rejects a revolutionary transformation of international society and wants to build on it instead, collective security still is a proposal for world order opposed to the doctrine of the balance of power in its realpolitik connotation. In Roosevelt's view, collective security "spells -and it ought to spell- the end of the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances and spheres of influence and balances of power and all the other expedients which have been tried for centuries and have always failed".⁴¹

The balance of power relies exclusively on states' unilateral interests in stopping aggression. Global peace is a desirable -but unintended- byproduct of the competition of states. No state aims at an actual balance but since each does not want that another becomes predominant, the consequence will be a mutually restraining equilibrium. Each attempt at altering the balance will preoccupy the other states which would respond to the instability by retaliating in kind thereby restoring the equilibrium.

On the contrary, collective security assumes all states to uphold the values of the international community. States are expected to act together not because of a temporary coincidence of their self interest against a greater danger, but because they all share the long term goal of global peace. If they all act accordingly, also their individual interests will be met. In other words, collective security reverses the relationship between individual and community goals implicit in the balance of power theories. While under anarchy the independence of

the state is the primary goal and peace is a by-product, under a multilateral system it would be viceversa.

It is therefore not a coincidence that both major attempts to establish a collective security system took place after major wars -World War I and World War II- for which the balance of power was largely held responsible. The spontaneous mechanism of balancing under anarchy were deemed insufficient and criticized on both moral and functional grounds. The balance of power is considered immoral because it relies on the selfish interests of states rather than on the welfare of societies and of the international community. It is also considered unjust because, by leaving security to spontaneous and unilateral reactions, it leaves stronger states in a better position to protect themselves than weaker ones. The prototypical example of this is the partition of Poland at the end of the XVIII Century in the name of the equilibrium between Prussia, Austria and Russia.

On the contrary, collective security aims at peace throughout the international system rather than at the security of individual states. Furthermore, the international guarantee is extended to all states alike irrespective of their position in the international hierarchy. Each state is entitled to the same security and collective security therefore satisfies the principle of equality. As Michael Doyle has pointed out: "collective security presupposes a collective commitment to defend all its members from aggression, no matter who is the aggressor. A balancing system is directed against capabilities, not aggression and it does not presuppose anything but individualistic decisions. Balancing, indeed, presupposes the possibility of aggressive war as an instrument in righting an imbalance of power".⁴²

Alternatively, the balance of power is criticized because it fails to maintain stability. A policy of equilibrium indeed sometimes even demands war as an instrument of balancing. Moreover, the balance of power can break down if states unilaterally decide that they are either unwilling or unable to fight the aggressor. This was the case with the Napoleonic Wars and with this Century's World Wars. According to Organski: "nations are reluctant to fight unless they believe that they have a good chance of winning, but this is true for both sides only when the two are evenly matched".⁴³

The theory of the balance of power correctly indicates that in front of a systemic threat there will be a tendency on the part of states that a balance will form. However, it cannot predict that an effective balance will actually form in each and every circumstance.⁴⁴ In the age of total war, this lack of certainty may seem enormous as even a single failure could represent the end of civilization. The balance of power thus seemed obsolete and a different type of system appropriate. Collective security is seen as a more reliable alternative because it gathers overwhelming power against the aggressor and because it provides a clearer standard of conduct.

Collective security is therefore an attempt to improve the way in which international relations work and to provide a more solid basis for security than the spontaneous "natural" mechanisms operating under anarchy. "Collective security was originally developed in reaction against and in the hope of providing a substitute for the traditional system of competing alliances".⁴⁵ In this way, it is an expression of the belief in the power of reason to alter social behaviour. By introducing a set of norms and legal obligations, collective security seeks to introduce an element of voluntarism into international politics.

The assumption is that if only states convince themselves that peace is a desirable goal, it is then possible to devise a mechanism for the attainment of such an objective. States are assumed to be sufficiently free from structural constraints to be able to change their behaviour according to the obligations they have undertaken. Moreover, it is also assumed -in a reductionist fashion- that if the behaviour of states changes, also systemic outcomes will change.

This implies a volitional and voluntaristic view of international relations which is epitomized by the fact that collective security does not spontaneously emerge from the international system but requires positive and explicit codification in international agreements. According to Claude, "it has no real significance unless and until affirmative arrangements are made for its establishment".⁴⁶ In other words, collective security is a social, rather than a natural, construct. Clearly, this view stands in opposition to the laissez faire approach implicit in the balance of power.⁴⁷

As other Grotian approaches to international politics, collective security occupies the middle ground between realist cynicism and the more revolutionary forms of idealism. It lies in the middle ground between an intolerable anarchy and an unattainable world government.⁴⁸ The traditional practices are seen as unsatisfactory. However, the key to reform is not a fundamental alteration of the nature of states or of the international system, but the innovative use of an age-old instrument of international relations: a treaty.

iii. Two Conceptions of Collective Security

The core of the concept of collective security is the introduction of a legal obligation to renounce war and to collectively punish any violator. According to Downs and Iida: "the *sine qua non* of collective security is collective self-regulation", which is the right and the duty of the international community to enforce the collective norms. In a way, each state should internalize world order into its individual security considerations. War is not made physically impossible but is limited by self restraint. However, this same core can be applied in different ways.⁴⁹ Specifically, it can be interpreted -in a maximalist fashion- as the only and exclusive principle governing the relations among states or it can be applied -in a minimalist mode- as one possible principle alongside other and more traditional ones.⁵⁰

A maximalist conception of collective security aims at the establishment of a rigid, universal and formal international order as described in the previous chapter. It stems from a radical critique of balancing under anarchy and it seeks a qualitative change in the way international relations operate. In the literature, this conception coincides with those analysts who see collective security as the antithesis to the balance of power.

Maximalism is based on the idea that war can be abolished by fiat by replacing traditional security mechanisms. It is a firmly voluntaristic proposition implying that states could abandon their traditional concerns for the sake of universal motivations. Even without a world government to enforce the multilateral norms, states are expected to behave as if that government existed. Stability and peace would be attainable by mere force of will.

If no other security mechanism is at work, the active solidarity to a victim of aggression must be considered as legally binding. Multilateral norms would be applied in each and every contingency. Like a trip wire, any violation must trigger a symmetric response. The whole international community would be *ipso facto* at war with any aggressor. In Claude's words, collective security would mean "security for all states, by the action of all states, against any state. [...] Ideal collective security [...] offers the certainty, backed by legal obligation, that any aggressor would be confronted with offensive sanctions".⁵¹

States would be required to completely abandon their discretion over the use of force and would react to any aggression unconditionally. Not only they would renounce war as an instrument of policy, but they would be required to renounce to decide over the opportunity to send their own troops on the side of the victim. In other words, they would lose what Carl Schmitt considered the central element of their sovereignty, that is their ability to decide unilaterally when a state of emergency occurred requiring the use of force.

A maximalist type of collective security does not seek to work on the independent policies of states and coordinate them more efficiently. Anarchy is the problem and it is caused precisely by those independent policies. Collective security in this sense seeks to remove -rather than reconcile- sovereignty from states in the field of their security. Collective means that multilateral measures are different from a sum of unilateral ones.

The maximalist conception represents a radical break with traditional practices. Martin Wight termed it "revolutionary". No opt outs or excuses could be tolerated. States would be forced to resolve any eventual discrepancy between their individual interest and the collective norms in favour of the latter. States would become mere agents of the collective will as defined in multilateral treaties and procedures. Once acknowledged the principle of the indivisibility of peace, states would completely substitute universalist motivations for their national interests. The pursuit of unilateral goals would not be tolerated if the system is to work. In exchange, the problem of aggression would be tackled by the most direct route as each violation would immediately be met by overwhelming force. This is the view

held by President Wilson" who wanted "not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries but an organized common peace".

Like in a hobbesian social contract, states would give up to an international organization their right to decide on matters involving the use of force. The organization would then have the executive powers -like the police- to provide security for all. Although it would still not be a full-fledged world government, because the organization would still be composed of states and it would therefore not enjoy a monopoly of force, it would be an embryo of it.⁵²

The necessity to intervene in each and every case requires that the collective security organization has an efficient process of decision making. The other analogy with domestic politics is that unanimity could not always be afforded and, like in a Parliament, decisions would necessarily be taken by some form majority voting. If a veto was allowed, collective security could not in fact operate always.

Operationally, a maximalist type of collective security would be constructed to work in as many situations as possible: (a) decision-making would adopt majority-voting rather than consensus (b) military forces would be under multilateral command or at least earmarked for multilateral use and (c) collective principles and actions would be invoked in an increasing number of situations expanding the scope of the institution from flagrant interstate aggression to all kinds of violence and beyond.

On the other side of the spectrum, a minimalist conception would aim only at an incremental improvement of international politics. It is an attempt to complement, integrate and reinforce traditional policy of balancing with an international regime rather than to completely replace them with a new international order. Collective security would not be the exclusive means of conflict resolution but it would coexist alongside other, more unilateral mechanisms. Its main characteristic, distinguishing from the maximalist type, would be its selectivity.

Rather than implying a rigid legal obligation to intervene in each and every contingency, the minimalist conception acknowledges the fact that, unless sovereignty is removed from states, the functioning of a multilateral regime requires their consent. States

would remain judges of the opportunity of their use of force and could opt out if unwilling or unable. In other words, the institutions would operate conditionally to the desires of the states which compose it. Sometimes states will prefer to employ multilateral mechanisms, other times they will prefer other solutions.

More than a World Parliament, a minimalist collective security organization would therefore resemble a forum for diplomatic discussion. This implies that problems would be faced as they arose rather than ironed out of existence. The scope of the institution would remain limited. Multilateral sanctions would not be mandatory, but recommended in case of aggression. Decisions would be reached by consensus rather than by majority voting while the actual use of military force would remain firmly in the hand of states. Furthermore, the minimalist conception would tend to remain specifically concerned with interstate aggression rather than with the use of force in general.

The objectives of the minimalist conception of collective security are more modest. Global and perpetual peace would not be imposed, but encouraged. This implies a more realistic view of the willingness of states to renounce to their sovereign discretion in the field of security although it also promises a less watertight system for the abolition of war. Minimalism does not promise a new world order but a functioning regime. Since opt outs are allowed, it is recognized that under certain conditions collective security just will not be able to operate. Minimalist collective security is therefore less effective -because it does not work always- but also less vulnerable -because it does not need to work always.⁵³

Nevertheless, although it does not seek to reform international relations, it still tries to improve them. A minimalist conception seeks to introduce incentives for moderate behaviour and sanctions for aggression and expansionism. Even if not applied automatically, these mechanisms would be inserted in the menu of possible reactions to aggression, strengthening the idea that the unilateral use of force is unacceptable in a society of responsible states. In this way, it does not seek to replace traditional motivations with universalist ones, but attempts to make the two converge.

If every ten aggressions the spontaneous mechanism of the balance of power triggered a response to five, minimalist collective security would try to bring the rate to seven or eight while maximalist collective security demands a response in each and every one of the ten contingencies. In other words -as can be seen from table 2- while the balance of power implies unilateral motivations applied on a selective basis, maximalist collective security would on the contrary entail multilateral motivations applied automatically. A minimalist conception would retain the multilateral motivations of collective security but it would apply them on a selective basis.

Table 2. Types of Security Systems

<i>Security System</i>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Application</i>
Balance of Power	unilateral	selective
Minimalist	multilateral	selective
Maximalist	multilateral	automatic

The minimalist conception is based on a less radical critique of traditional balancing policies and on a more optimistic assessment of the ability of international society to reach and maintain stability with institutions which are endogenous to it. Whereas the maximalist model relied on the possibility of creating the conditions for its effectiveness, the minimalist one is more skeptical on the likelihood of forcing states to follow binding principles and rigid mechanisms in the absence of a world government. In other words, it has less faith in legalistic and supranational institutions and more faith in diplomatic and international ones. In this sense, collective security would not seek to reject traditional mechanisms, but rather to build on them.

According to Gulick, one of the major students of the balance of power:

“Collective security, far from being alien to the ‘age-old tradition of the balance of power’, not only derives from the latter, but also must be regarded as the logical end point of the balance of power system, the ideal toward which it has been moving, slowly and haltingly, for several hundred years. The contention leads to the hypothesis that the League of Nations and the United Nations, when considered as instruments for maintaining the ‘continuing coexistence of governments in contact with one another’, were merely further refinements in balance practice”.⁵⁴

Also Quincy Wright adheres to the same -minimalist- view:

“Policies of balance of power naturally lead to policies of collective security which become institutionalized through common organs, procedures and rules of law to assure that aggression will always be confronted by insuperable force. International organization to promote collective security is, therefore, only a planned development of the natural tendency of balance of power policies. It is the natural tendency of states, when faced by an emergency, to gang up against the aggressor who, if successful against his first victim, will eventually turn on the others”.⁵⁵

A useful historical precedent of an institution between a voluntaristic conception and a laissez-faire one is the Concert of Europe which emerged from the Congress of Vienna and which “allowed the great powers to cooperate effectively over more limited collective goals [...] What made the Concert work was its focus on communication among great powers to avoid deepening conflicts over third party disputes”.⁵⁶ The statesmen which convened to rebuild the foundations of European peace after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars did not attempt to construct a rigid maximalist system of automatic intervention transcending the will of the states that composed it, but they also did not want to return to the completely unilateral system of the XVIII Century. That system had in fact brought about too many wars for them not to worry about the vulnerability of their domestic social systems, exposed by the revolution. Furthermore, that system had been slow and uncertain and it had failed to check French power until 1812.

They therefore introduced a new mechanism by which all the great powers (and only the great powers) had a collective responsibility toward the maintenance of stability. A necessary condition for this was the innovative solution of including France in the settlement's negotiations from the start despite the fact that it had lost the war; in other words, the Concert was not geared “against” anybody. Revisions of the status quo could be reached only by consensus and that any unilateral violation could be sanctioned by all others, irrespective of their particular interests involved. Although

they were not mandatory, the principles of multilateral responsibility and of collective interests were made explicit.⁵⁷

According to Hinsley:

“the impressive thing about the behaviour of the Powers in 1815 is that they were prepared, as they had never been previously been prepared, to waive their individual interest in the pursuit of an international system. This fact is not rendered any less impressive by the recognition that they were prepared to waive their individual interests because it was in their individual interests to do so. They had recognized for the first time that it was in their interest to do so”.⁵⁸

The Concert was a weak institution in the sense that it depended on the good will of the great powers. When this vanished, the Concert simply collapsed. In Elrod’s judgment: “Concert diplomacy broke down because statesmen refused to abide by its rules”. Nevertheless, it brought about one of the longest spells of peace in European history and it managed to establish a code of conduct concerning the proper and admissible aims and methods of international politics which was respected throughout most of the Century. It was -in short- more than a reflection of great power politics.⁵⁹

The distinction between the two conceptions highlights a crucial dilemma for collective security. If -in accordance with maximalism- collective security is considered as a way to radically reform the international system, it can become unrealistic. If on the other hand the legal obligation is interpreted more loosely, collective security can become irrelevant as it would not be different from the system it seeks to improve. Too rigid a system may be a chimera, one which is too flexible, may be useless.

NOTES:

¹The theoretical literature on collective security can be divided into two generations: the classical and the contemporary. Classical studies are Inis L. Claude Jr.: Swords into Ploughshares, Random House, New York, 1956; idem: Power and International Relations, Random House, New York, 1962; Marina S. Finkelstein and Lawrence S. Finkelstein, eds.: Collective Security, Chandler Publishing Co., San Francisco, 1966; Roland Stromberg: The Idea of Collective Security, Journal of the History of Ideas, April 1956, pp. 250-65; idem: Collective Security and American Foreign Policy: From the League of Nations to NATO, Praeger, New York, 1963; Walter Schiffer: The Legal Community of Mankind, Columbia University Press, New York, 1954; Quincy Wright, ed.: Neutrality and Collective Security, Chicago, 1936; Kenneth W. Thompson: Collective Security Reexamined, American Political Science Review, V. 47, September 1953, pp. 753-72; Maurice Bourquin, ed.: Collective Security. A Record of the Seventh and Eighth International Studies Conferences, International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, Paris, 1936; G. F. Hudson: Collective Security and Military Alliances, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight: Diplomatic Investigations, Essays in the Theory of International Politics, Allen and Unwin, London, 1966; Arnold Wolfers: Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore Md., 1962; Ernst B. Haas: Types of Collective Security: An Examination of Operational Concepts, American Political Science Review, Other classical works discuss the concept at length: Hans Morgenthau: Politics Among Nations; A. F. K. Organski: op.cit.; Aron: op.cit.; George Liska: International Equilibrium: A Theoretical Essay on the Politics and Organization of Security, Harvard University Press, Boston Mass., 1959; John Herz: International Politics in the Atomic Age, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959; Edward H. Carr: The Twenty Years' Crisis, Macmillan, London, 1939 and 1984, part IV.

Contemporary scholarship has concentrated again on the concept since the end of the Cold War: Gregory Flynn and David J. Sheffer: Limited Collective Security, Foreign Policy, N. 80, Fall 1980, pp. 77-101; Inis L. Claude Jr.: Collective Security after the Cold War, in Gary L. Guertner ed.: Collective Security in Europe and Asia, Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks Pa., 1992, p. 7-27; Richard K. Betts: System for Peace or Causes of Wars? Collective Security, Arms Control and the New Europe, International Security, V. 17, N. 1, Summer 1992, pp. 5-43; Josef Joffe: Collective Security and the Future of Europe: Failed Dreams and Dead Ends, Survival, V. 34, N. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 36-50; Malcolm Chalmers: Beyond the Alliance System: The Case for a European Security Organization, World Policy Journal, V. 8, N. 3, Summer 1991; Gene M. Lyons: A New Collective Security: The United Nations and International Peace, The Washington Quarterly, V. 17, N. 2, Spring 1994, pp. 173-199; Brian Urquhart: Beyond the Sheriff's Posse, Survival, V. 32, N. 3, May 1990, pp. 196-205; Richard H. Ullman: Enlarging the Zone of Peace, Foreign Policy, N. 80, Fall 1990, pp. 102-120; Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan: Concerts, Collective Security and the Future of Europe, International Security, V. 16, N. 1, Summer 1991, 114-162; Charles A. Kupchan: The Promise of Collective Security, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, pp. 52-62; Andrew Bennett and Joseph Legpold: Reinventing Collective Security after the Cold War and the Gulf War, Political Science Quarterly, V. 108, N. 2, 1993; John Mueller: A New Concert of Europe, Foreign Policy, N. 77, Winter 1989-90, pp. 3-16; Jack Snyder: Averting Anarchy in the New Europe, International Security, V. 14, N. 4, Spring 1990, pp. 5-41; Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury: Roles of the United Nations after the Cold War, Oxford International Review, Spring 1995; George W. Downs and Keisuke Iida: Assessing the Theoretical Case against Collective Security, in George W. Downs, ed.:

Collective Security Beyond the Cold War, Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 1994; Charles A. Kupchan: *The Case for Collective Security*, in *ibid.*; Emerson M. S. Niu and Peter C. Ordeshook: *The Prospects for a New International Order Based on Collective Security*, in *ibid.*; Charles Lipson: *Is the Future of Collective Security like the Past?*, in *ibid.*; Michael W. Doyle: *Balancing Power Classically: An Alternative to Collective Security?*, in *ibid.*; Robert C. Johansen: *Lessons for Collective Security: The United Nations and the Gulf War*, World Policy Journal, V. 8, N. 3, Summer 1991; Thomas R. Cusack and Richard J. Stoll: *Collective Security and State Survival in the Interstate System*, International Studies Quarterly, V. 38, 1994, pp. 33-59

²Claude: Swords... *cit.*, p. 224

³Wolfers: *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁴Organski: *op. cit.*, p. 292.

⁵Downs and Lida, *op. cit.*, p. 21. According to Charles Kupchan: "collective security makes for more robust deterrence by ensuring that aggressors will be met with an opposing coalition that has preponderant rather than merely equivalent power", Kupchan in Downs: *op. cit.*, p. 43

⁶Kupchan, *ibid.*, p. 45

⁷John Gerard Ruggie: *Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution*, in Ruggie, ed.: Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Practice of an Institutional Form, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 7. Ruggie also writes: "The term 'multilateral' is an adjective that modifies the noun 'institution'. Thus, multilateralism depicts a generic institutional form in international relations....Multilateralism is an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of 'generalized' principles of conduct [...] Bilateralism, in contrast, is premised on specific reciprocity, the simultaneous balancing of specific quid pro quos by each party with every other at all times", *ibid.*, pp. 10-11. In other words not all institutions with three members or more are multilateral. Caporaso in the same volume distinguishes multilateralism from other institutions on three counts: indivisibility, generalized principle of conduct and diffuse reciprocity; James A. Caporaso: *International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations*, in Ruggie, *ibid.*, p. 53

⁸Quoted in Claude, Power... *cit.*, p. 152

⁹"As long as international state behaviour results from unconstrained and independent decision making, there is no international regime. [...] International regimes exist when patterned state behaviour results from joint rather than independent decision making". Stein, Coordination and Collaboration... *cit.*, pp. 30-1. According to Krasner: "It is the infusion of behaviour with principles and norms that distinguishes regime-governed activity in the international system from more conventional activity guided exclusively by narrow calculations of interest", Krasner, *op. cit.*, p. 3

¹⁰I am indebted to Prof. Christopher Hill for suggesting this view to me.

¹¹Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2; Claude, Swords... *cit.*, p. 229

¹²Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein: *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹³Quoted in Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 756

¹⁴Stanley Hoffmann: Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse NY, 1981, p. 61

¹⁵ Claude, Swords... *cit.*, p. 227; Quincy Wright: *Peace and Political Organization*, International Conciliation, N. 369, April 1941, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 128

¹⁶Claude, Swords... *cit.*, p. 233

¹⁷Claude, *ibid.*, p. 230

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- ¹⁸Unlike economic institutions, which function effectively when they are congruent with the interests of the actors, in international relations institutions are detectable especially when they push actors to behave differently than if they were not in place.
- ¹⁹Wolfers, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-9
- ²⁰Liska, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Thompson asserts that "self-help and neutrality, it should be obvious, are the exact antithesis of such a treaty", Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 755
- ²¹Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1994, p. 247
- ²²G.F. Hudson, *op. cit.*
- ²³Downs: *Beyond the Debate on Collective Security*, in idem: *op. cit.*, p. 2
- ²⁴Lipson in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 113
- ²⁵"Universality of membership for the region involved and the obligations that the members have assumed toward each other in the preservation of peace within their own area against threats emanating from within that area", Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 3
- ²⁶A. Leroy Bennett: *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*, 4th ed., Simon & Schuster, Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1988, p. 136. Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2; Wolfers, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 186; Claude, *Swords...*, *cit.*, pp. 225, 233, 242; Lipson in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 113; Walt in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 170
- ²⁷Claude, *Swords...*, *cit.*, p. 233
- ²⁸Quoted in Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 763
- ²⁹Keohane, *International Institutions...*, *cit.*, p. 146. The concept of diffuse reciprocity borrows from sociological theories which identify reciprocity as a mutual obligation rather than as a mutual exchange.
- ³⁰Keohane, *ibid.*, p. 146
- ³¹"A peacekeeping force shooting to kill is a contradiction in terms", Urquhart; *op. cit.*, p. 201
- ³²For a view that sees peacekeeping and collective security on the same spectrum, cfr. Donald J. Puchala: *Outsiders, Insiders and UN Reform*, *The Washington Quarterly*, V. 17, N. 4, pp. 161-73. For a view emphasizing the distinction cfr. John Gerard Ruggie, *Peacekeeping and US Interests*, *The Washington Quarterly*, V. 17, N. 4, p. 180: "war fighting of that sort is everything that peacekeeping is not"
- ³³Richard K. Betts: *The Delusion of Impartial Intervention*, *Foreign Affairs*, V. 73, N. 6, November 1994, *passim*
- ³⁴Immanuel Kant: *Per la pace perpetua* [1795], Editori riuniti, Roma, 1992, p. 13 [author's translation]
- ³⁵Wight: *International Theory...*, *cit.*, p. 241
- ³⁶Quoted in Ian Clark: *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 214
- ³⁷Quoted in Hinsley, *op. cit.*, p. 89
- ³⁸Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 242
- ³⁹Grotius had not ruled out the possibility of war, but had sought to contain it and moderate it. Cfr. Hedley Bull: *The Anarchical Society*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, p. 239; Hedley Bull, Benedict Kingsbury and Adam Roberts: *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 15; Wight, *International Theory...*, *cit.*, pp. 13-15, 37-40
- ⁴⁰Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 24
- ⁴¹Quoted in Brian Urquhart: *Who Can Police the World?*, *New York Review of Books*, May 12, 1994
- ⁴²Doyle in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 138

⁴³Organski, *op. cit.*, p. 294

⁴⁴Especially because -to some extent- power is exogenous.

⁴⁵Quoted in Claude, *Swords...*, *cit.*, p. 247.

⁴⁶Claude, *Power...*, *cit.*, p. 151; cfr also Kupchan and Kupchan, *op. cit.*, footnote 31; In Young's words, institutions are "social not natural", Young in Krasner, *op. cit.*, p. 94, Young, international Cooperation, *op. cit.*, p. 29, Betts, *Systems for Peace...*, *cit.*, pp. 10, 12

⁴⁷Bennett and Legpold, *op. cit.*,

⁴⁸Claude: *Swords...*, *cit.*, p. 224.

⁴⁹"Just as there are different kinds of alliances or oligopolies, there re different kinds of collective security systems. These will generate different amounts of security" Downs and Iida, in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 17. For Charles Kupchan, collective security can take different institutional forms along a continuum ranging from ideal collective security to concerts, Kupchan in Downs, *ibid.*, p. 43; Walt in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 169; Bennett and Legpold suggest that there are two types of collective security; also Ernst Haas distinguishes between two types, one requiring unanimity and automaticity and the other, which he terms "permissive enforcement", which can be selective, Haas, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁵⁰According to Suganami, world order proposals can be drawn along a "legalistic-diplomatic" spectrum. Proposals near the first term imply a hierarchical reform of the international system and the employment of a domestic analogy whereas those nearer to the latter term rely more on endogenous institutions of international society like interstate diplomacy and negotiations; Hidemi Suganami: *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 182

⁵¹Claude, *Power...*, *cit.*, pp. 110, 168

⁵²Flynn and Sheffer, *op. cit.*, p. 86

⁵³Roberts and Kingsbury write that "the UN owes some of its effectiveness (vis-a-vis the League of Nations) to going with rather than against the grain of the system of states", Roberts and Kingsbury, *op. cit.*, p. 5

⁵⁴Edward V. Gulick: *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft*, W.W. Norton, Ithaca NY, 1955, pp. 307-8.

⁵⁵Quincy Wright: *The Study of International Relations*, New York, 1955, p. 204. Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*; For Martin Wight, the minimalist model corresponds to what he called the "realist" conception of collective security which "simply institutionalizes the balance of power. Instead of attaining a grand alliance on an ad hoc basis painfully and against a disturber of the peace, as for example against Napoleon, the alliance would already be functioning before the event and thus might be a successful deterrent". Martin Wight: *International Theory...*, *cit.*, p. 261. In this light, it is significant that a recent study of various types of security systems quotes the famous Memorandum of Sir Eyre Crowe as evidence of collective security rather than of the balance of power.. Charles W. Kegley and Gregory Raymond: *A Multipolar Peace? Great Power Politics and the XXI Century*, New York, 1994, pp. 164-5.

⁵⁶Lipson in Downs, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109, 125

For the Kupchans, concerts are a form of collective security. I agree with this view although in the next chapter I will distinguish myself from their analysis. Cfr. Charles Kupchan in Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 44. The opposite view is taken by Mearsheimer who considers concerts as a variation of the spontaneous balance of power. cfr. Mearsheimer: *False Promise...*, *op. cit.*, Cfr. also Betts: *Systems for Peace...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27

For the Concert of Europe, see Richard Elrod: *The Concert of Europe: A Fresh Look at an International System*, World Politics, V. 28, N. 2, January 1976, pp. 156-74; Edward V. Gulick, op. cit., passim; Harold Nicolson: The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity, 1812-1822, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1946

⁵⁷Gordon Craig writes of "national self-restraint", Richard Elrod of a "genuine sense of solidarity" Paul Schroeder asserts that "the XIX Century international system fundamentally guaranteed the existence, security and vital interests of all the European great powers". Cfr. Gordon Craig: New Cambridge Modern History, Cambridge, 1960, p. 267; Richard Elrod, op. cit., p. 162, Schroeder, op. cit., p. 12

⁵⁸Hinsley, op. cit., p. 197

⁵⁹Jervis, Security Regimes..., cit., p. 178

4. THE LIMITS OF MAXIMALIST COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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i. The Conditions for a Multilateral System

Maximalist collective security rests on the assumption that a majority of states will always abide by their legal obligations and will go out of their way to implement it. If it did not always work, it could not in fact replace the other security mechanisms and establish itself as a new world order. Furthermore, if it worked only intermittently, not only it could not claim to have radically reformed the international system, but it would also induce states to pursue alternative methods of defence, thereby further undermining its multilateral base.

The maximalist conception implies an exceptionally demanding commitment. Not only does the concept concern a difficult subject like security and applies it throughout the international system, but it also requires a rigid and automatic application. States would be asked to intervene irrespective of their interests and desires. This claim is unrealistic on three counts. Firstly, states demand certain conditions in the international system in order to be willing and able to forego discretion over the use of force. Since these conditions cannot be guaranteed, also the abandonment of discretion will necessarily be conditional. Secondly, even when conditions are present, states are not easily drawn in multilateral endeavours when the lives of their soldiers are at stake. The incentives of a purely voluntaristic system may simply be insufficient and active participation can by no means be taken for granted. Thirdly, if collective security is applied when the conditions are less than ideal, it could even be counterproductive.

The proponents of collective security themselves admit that it needs some preconditions in order to work.¹ Even after a multilateral agreement has been concluded, implementation in each particular instance presents difficult problems. Although collective security has been formally introduced on the international scene in 1919, it has been able to operate only under exceptional circumstances because usually either the will or the ability of states was lacking.

The ability to intervene in a multilateral operation depends upon four factors. Firstly, there must be a clear and recognized definition of aggression. Without previously agreed procedures, states would argue on who was to be punished rather than mounting a

multilateral operation. Worse still, states which disagreed could find themselves fighting on opposite sides frustrating the attempts to isolate the aggressor.

For example, during the Bosnian War in the early 1990's Russia and the West had different perceptions on which one was the aggrieved party. While the West, and most of the United Nations, wished to support the government in Sarajevo against what it believed was Bosnian Serb aggression, Moscow wished to defend the rights of its Serbian ally and its associates in Bosnia. If the situation got out of hand, Russia and the West could have stumbled in a major confrontation between each other rather than uniting their forces under the banner of collective security.

The League of Nations tried unsuccessfully during the inter-war period to negotiate a common and indisputable definition of aggression. When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 it took more than a year for the League's Council to consider the Lytton Report which explained that a violation had occurred. By this time however, the occupation was complete and no sanction was imposed on the aggressor. The United Nations has never even attempted to find a prearranged definition and leaves interpretation on a case by case basis to the Security Council.

The problem is not easily solved as the following example demonstrate.

* When the United States attributed a string of terrorist attacks to Libya in 1986 and consequently mounted a bombing operation against Tripoli, a maximalist conception of collective security would have dictated an international response against the United States. The problem is that the multilateral operation should have been against Libya if a terrorist attack was considered an act of aggression or, viceversa, against the United States if its retaliation was considered unjustified.

* In the occasion of the 6 Days War between Israel and its Arab neighbours in 1967, Tel Aviv pleaded that its offensive was just preempting an imminent enemy attack. Was Israel to be punished because its troops crossed the border first or was it to be supported by the whole international community against a major threat to its very existence?

* Similarly, in 1981 the Israeli Air Force trespassed into Iraqi air space and bombed the nuclear facility at Osiraq. Although this was an unequivocal unilateral use of force against another sovereign country, also in this case Israel argued that it was acting in self defence to avoid the risk of being confronted by an hostile Iraqi offensive nuclear capability.

* In 1992, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Serbia because of its support for the Bosnian Serb militia fighting for independence from the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. Yet, in this case aggression was defined very broadly as no regular Serb troops from the Yugoslav National Army crossed the internationally recognized border with Bosnia.

* On the contrary, the Tanzanian invasion of Uganda at the end of the 1970's to depose the ruthless dictator Idi Amin involved a full scale military operation of a member state of the United Nations against a fellow member but was not considered an aggression given the humanitarian objectives of the operation.

From these examples it is clear that a purely legalistic definition of aggression -that is who fires the first shot- is not universally accepted by the international community. In Lipson's opinion: "there are serious practical difficulties in specifying aggression or other significant violations that call for collective action".² If an objective definition is impossible and it is necessary to inquire on the subjective aims of the use of force, disagreements will arise as each state will uphold its own interpretation of events. According to Organski: "friends of the aggressor agree; friends of the victim protest".³ An automatic type of reaction is therefore impossible because states must first, if at all, agree on the aggressor's identity before they can mount an operation against it.

A related problem is that of the proportionality of the sanction. States may agree on the identity of the aggressor but might still disagree on the appropriate reaction. In particular, the question is whether the response should be commensurate with the violation or whether it should punish the aggressor irrespective of the damage it has provoked. Should the multilateral troops stop at the disputed border or should they go on to destroy the aggressor completely?

For example, in the Korean episode there was a fierce debate between those who wanted only a restoration of the status quo ante and those who wanted to punish North Korea and reunite the country. Similarly, during the Gulf War many wished that the international coalition advanced to Baghdad to depose Saddam Hussein. While in the first instance a disproportionate reaction was granted, in the second case the operation did not go further than liberating Kuwait.

The problem concerns means as well as objectives. If the deterrent power of the international community is not sufficient and positive action is required, a question arises on what instruments should be used and how they are going to be selected. In particular, a crucial threshold lies between forcible and non-forcible means like a diplomatic embargo or an economic blockade. If the former are chosen, another threshold arises between counterforce means, like a ground offensive, and countervalue strategies aimed at destroying the aggressor's capacity to resist, like indiscriminate bombing or even nuclear retaliation. Given the complex and intricate nature of many situations, the answer to these questions is not a foregone conclusion.

Secondly, collective security requires a certain **distribution of power**. In general terms, power must be diffused throughout the international system so that each state is vulnerable to collective sanctions. If power is excessively concentrated in few hands, the international community would not be able to reverse the aggression of the stronger powers. Some states would simply be too powerful and an international operation against them too costly.⁴

In this view, the ideal situation for collective security would be a multipolar system in which no state is stronger than a coalition of the others. For example, in the XIX Century, a coalition of states was able to contain the strongest power in at least three instances: against Napoleonic France first, Czarist Russia secondly and lastly against Wilhelmine Germany in the First World War.

The worse situation is that of a bipolar system -like that of the Cold War- in which each superpower commands such a proportion of global resources so as not to fear a collective sanction. When the Soviet Union intervened in Hungary in 1956 or when the United States troops entered the Dominican Republic in 1965, it would have been physically impossible to stop them short of a nuclear war. At most,

each superpower should worry about the other superpower, as would be the case even without collective security.

Furthermore, in a bipolar system the structural constraints of competition are stiffer. Since only two states belong to the class of superpowers, neither can hope to offset any change in the distribution of power to the other's advantage with a balancing coalition of third states. Only direct responses would do. In other words, each must counter every move of the other if it does not want to lose the bipolar struggle. The whole world becomes an arena ripe for competition.

This means that states cannot be indifferent to the adversary's gains even if they take place in a remote region. International relations become therefore a zero-sum game in which one's gain is the other side's loss. Collective security is thus inhibited not only by the wish to save resources for the bipolar struggle, but also by the fear that the other will use the multilateral interventions to its own advantage for penetrating regions otherwise inaccessible.⁵

It should therefore not be a surprise that when Moscow offered to the United Nations a Soviet airborne division for "peacekeeping" during the Yom Kippur War between Israel and its Arab neighbours in 1973, Washington reacted to the prospect of Soviet troops in the Middle East -albeit under a UN banner- with a grade III nuclear alert. States in a bipolar system are therefore more constrained than their counterparts in a multipolar setting to enter into a cooperative security system.

A special case is represented by unipolar -or hegemonic- systems. If one state was predominant, the others would not organize an effective coalition against it. However, collective security could work in all the other situations. Although the hegemon would be immune to collective security it could actually favour its operation under the other circumstances as all other states would be vulnerable to the international community if it could count on the hegemon's support. A situation of this kind resembles the Pax Britannica imposed by the British Empire in extra-European issues at the zenith of London's power in the middle of the XIX Century.

In other words, if the predominant state did not hold expansionist designs, collective security could effectively work in a unidirectional way under the tutelage of a benign hegemon. If on the

contrary the hegemon committed an act of aggression, the international community would be helpless and could do no more than to bow to the will of the strongest. In this case, no security system at all could do anything about it.

There is not therefore a linear and monotonic relation between polarity and collective security. Its chances are best when there is either only one or many powers in the international system. Its success is least probable when there are only two powers in the international system. Since the polarity of a system may change over time with the emergence of new powers and the disappearance of old ones, it follows that also the prospects for a multilateral system will accordingly change.⁶

Thirdly, even if power is diffused, **global tension must be low**. Collective security is like the export of security from a stable region to one in which aggression has taken place. However, states must enjoy a surplus of security if they are to export it and to invest it in areas where they have no direct interest. If global international relations are unstable and there are high expectations of an international conflict, states would probably prefer to maintain their stock of resources for the worst contingencies rather than to afford the luxury of defending remote victims of a distant attack.

This is precisely what happened in the 1930's, as will be seen in chapter 7, when Britain and France were so preoccupied with the prospect of a German threat after Hitler's rise to power that they felt they could not afford to waste resources in the containment of Japanese aggression in the Far East and of Italian aggression in East Africa. As the Admiralty kept repeating like a mantra, the Royal Navy just did not have sufficient power to restrain one of the two regional aggressors while keeping Germany at bay in Europe.

Fourthly, weapons of mass destruction must not have proliferated. If an aggressor possesses **nuclear weapons**, it will probably be immune from a collective reaction motivated by less than vital interests. It is difficult to expect that a state subjects its own troops in the field or even its cities to the threat of nuclear retaliation in order to fulfill its treaty obligations under a collective security system. If nuclear weapons are widespread, too many states will be

immune from collective security for the system to work effectively. According to Inis Claude:

“The threat of thermonuclear war poses new problems which make collective security irrelevant. [...] Who can imagine that a contemporary superpower, brandishing its fiendishly powerful modern weapons, could be deterred from aggression by the threat of the United Nations to improvise a collective military venture?”.⁷

Objective factors are insufficient to explain the relative incidence of a collective system in different systemic configurations.⁸ Not only must states be able to follow the precepts of multilateralism, but they must also be willing to do so. In particular, only if states believe that the system is legitimate will they want to establish a mechanism to maintain its stability. If one or more states have heterogeneous and revolutionary designs over the international system -because it holds low stakes in the status quo and is willing to run risks for a revision of the international order- this will inhibit collective security. In other words, most states must be sufficiently motivated to defend the status quo. Moderate revisionism could be tolerated but the foundations of the system should not be doubted. In Kissinger’s words, states must seek “adjustments within the existing international order rather than in its overthrow”.⁹

It is essential that states perceive that such a change will entail direct risks or losses for themselves. Not being a revisionist power is not enough. An isolationist power which does not hold expansionist aims but is indifferent to the fate of the system as a whole -like America in the two decades after the Treaty of Versailles- is not an asset for collective security. In short, states must see positive incentives for avoiding a war.

Even those states which do maintain revisionist objectives must not be excessively virulent. The international community must in fact be in a position to deter them. If a state is so opposed to the international order and feels it has so little to lose that a war is its preferred outcome, collective security will not operate as it should. States should join the system in good faith if the necessary reciprocal trust is to develop. Not only in fact no Hitler would enter sincerely into any kind of security system, but also other states would not

choose multilateral systems if they believe they are confronted by a Hitler.¹⁰

If a virulently revisionist state is present in the international system, no accommodation is possible and collective security would in this case rather resemble a permanent alliance to contain the specific threat. In short, the system must exhibit a minimum of political solidarity. Most states should hold compatible views of the existing order and must identify positively with each other's security. Also revisionist states must be willing to suspend their claims in order to avoid the need for specific countermeasures inhibiting the operation of a generalized system.

For similar reasons, collective security cannot tolerate permanent rivalries. There could otherwise not be any expectation of reciprocity. If during the Cold War South Korea had attacked North Korea, the United States would hardly have coalesced with the Communist bloc against the aggressor in the expectation that the Soviet Union would have attacked North Korea in case of an aggression against South Korea. In the pre-1914 system, collective security would have been impossible because of the Franco-German dispute over Alsace-Lorraine. France would never have helped Germany against Russia in case of an attack of the latter on the former while France could not expect German support in case of an aggression perpetuated by Berlin's only ally Austria-Hungary.

The conditionality of collective security questions the validity of the maximalist conception at its foundations. The very fact that collective security needs certain conditions excludes the possibility that it will always work. A conditional maximalist system is a contradiction in terms. If either the willingness or the ability to defend the multilateral principles is lacking, collective security collapses because both are necessary preconditions. However, neither is sufficient. The limit of maximalism lies in the impossibility to guarantee that collective security will work in each and every circumstance. In turn, the impossibility of certainty stems from the lack of a central government capable of forcing states to implement the universal system. If compliance is voluntary or corroborated only by moral sanctions, the legal obligations can always be evaded.

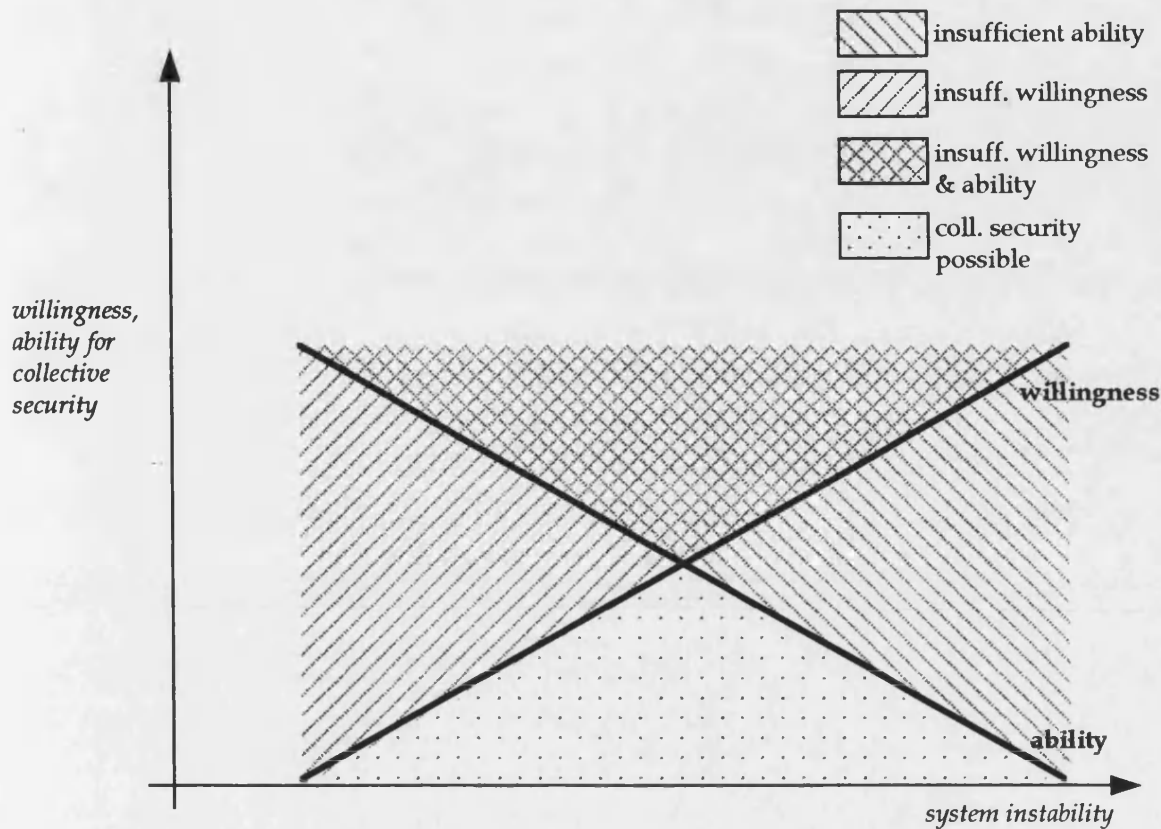
The conditions for collective security are further complicated by the fact that in general willingness and ability are inversely related. Both factors are structurally influenced by similar variables but are affected by them in opposite ways. In general, the ability of states to join a multilateral framework necessitates a reasonably low level of international tension so that resources for individual security can safely be diverted to collective security. On the contrary, the willingness of states to fight for the international order is a function of the vulnerability of that order. In a stable system the incentives to be involved in remote areas and the need to invest in security systems are accordingly reduced.

In other words, if tension is too high -as in the late 1930's or during the Cold War- states will not afford collective security while if tension is too low they will not desire it. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, with Germany in defeat and Bolshevik Russia bent on its civil war, the international system displayed so few immediate dangers that the major powers wished to cash in their peace dividends rather than to involve themselves in any minor quarrel. Only in the area between these two extremes can a security system be expected to function effectively.

Ultimately, in the absence of a world government capable of forcing states to comply, there can be no guarantee that they will always willingly do so. In at least some instances, states will not afford a multilateral system. If collective security needs the presence of certain conditions in order to function effectively, the maximalist claim to replace all others security systems will be unrealistic. Furthermore, if applied in less than ideal circumstances, collective security could -as will later be seen- even be counterproductive.

Finally, the conditionality challenges the claim that maximalist collective security can function as an autonomous security system. For any given state, international politics does not display an homogeneous level of danger. The world is divided between actual and potential allies and actual and potential adversaries. The required willingness and ability for a multilateral system is more easily attainable for what concerns relations with the first and it is more difficult for the latter. Unfortunately, it is precisely in these kinds of situations that collective security would be more useful.

Figure 1. Requirements for a collective security system



As instability rises, so does the willingness to establish a security system, but the ability to do so diminishes because states must take care of their own unilateral security. Conversely, in a stable system, states can invest in multilateral security but they will not have the incentive to do so because they will already feel secure. Collective security will thus be possible only in certain situations, when states will have both the willingness and the ability to implement it.

ii. The Chimera of Maximalism

It is indisputable that if maximalist collective security worked, it would provide a more stable and peaceful world which most states would find more congenial. In such a situation states would either autonomously refrain from using force or would readily be forced to abandon it by the immediate and overwhelming reaction of the whole international community. There would be fewer wars and those few ones would terminate quickly and decisively. Those analysts which seek to demonstrate the abstract superiority -in terms of stability for individual states as well as for the international system as a whole- of collective security over other security systems therefore limit themselves to expressing a tautology.¹¹ As George Kennan has wisely pointed out, the desirability of collective security is beyond dispute, what is at stake is its feasibility.¹²

In particular, collective security has been officially part of the international system since 1919 and not only multilateral sanctions have never been made mandatory on states but also the collective use of force has been authorized only three times in the almost 100 wars which have taken place since. The point is that, without a world government capable of enforcing compliance, states will not necessarily follow their legal obligations. The moral pressure of collective security is in fact insufficient to change a government's mind once it has decided that the issue in question is not worth the bones of a grenadier.

The problem lies in the principle of the indivisibility of peace to which the maximalist conception appeals. If peace is truly indivisible, why have states not applied collective security so far? If conversely peace is mostly divisible, why should states do so?¹³ It is unclear in this sense whether the indivisibility of peace is a normative or a descriptive concept. What is clear is that it has not been a sufficient rationale for the radical alteration of states' motivations.

Some scholars have pointed out that it is not collective security that has failed in the last seven and a half decades but the policies of states.¹⁴ For example, Charles Kupchan has argued that "the League and the UN might have failed to preserve peace, but the historical record suggests that military, economic and political conditions at the

national level, not collective security itself, were the root of the problem. [...] The core of the problem was the unwillingness of the major powers to act decisively, not the existence of the League itself".¹⁵ Commenting on the collapse of the League, Arnold Toynbee has remarked that "the reason why the League failed was that the enforcement of the Covenant had been backed by insufficient armed power and insufficient resolution to use such power as was available".¹⁶

Yet, this is precisely the problem. As Professor Hinsley has perceptively pointed out: "The League, as it was constructed, was bound to fail; and it was bound to be constructed as it was constructed".¹⁷ The question is therefore not what kind of collective security works but why have states have chosen a type of collective security which has not worked. The structural deficiencies of the League of Nations and of the United Nations are not so much important in themselves but "as indicators of how far the member states are willing to go in their support of collective security".¹⁸

Simply put, the problem is that collective security is an institution created by states and these -unless compelled- are not prepared to give up the necessary amount of sovereignty for a maximalist system to work.¹⁹ It is unrealistic to expect states to willingly renounce one of their defining prerogatives. It is therefore not an accident that states resist the automaticity implied by maximalist collective security, they simply do not want it.²⁰ Morgenthau puts it succinctly: "collective security expects the policies of states to be inspired by the ideal of mutual assistance and a spirit of self sacrifice which will not shrink even from the supreme sacrifice of war should it be required by that ideal"; this would constitute "a moral revolution infinitely more fundamental than any moral change that has accrued in the history of Western civilization".²¹

This may not be only -or necessarily even mainly- because states have sinister objectives. More often, states will feel that in a world in which no central authority can guarantee their safety, it is unwise to renounce that freedom of action which is sometimes their only instrument of defence. While institutions in general -as we have seen in chapter 2- only require that security dilemmas and competition are moderated sometimes, a maximalist conception

requires them to be attenuated always. At the very least, states will not renounce discretion irrevocably and unconditionally because in the absence of "institutions or authorities that can make and enforce international laws, the policies of cooperation that will bring mutual rewards if others cooperate may bring disaster if they do not".²² The chimerical nature of the maximalist ideal largely stems from the impossibility, on the part of states, to evade the structural lack of certainty under anarchy.

Furthermore, there are reasons for which states are willing to fight and violate international norms even at the risk of collective sanctions. Virulently revisionist states are not uncommon in the international system. Most analysts explain the failure of collective security with the presence of states of this type like Germany before 1945 and the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Yet, it is precisely against this type of states that the effectiveness of a security system must be weighed. It is curious that many proponents of collective security assume states to be willing to fight -at any time and at any place- for the sake of peace but discount the possibility that states will use force for reasons closer to their own national interests.

On the contrary, there is often a motivational gap between the aggressor -fighting for what it holds as a vital interest- and the enforcers of the collective will, who by definition do not have unilateral interests in play. The concentrated benefits of aggressors are likely to prevail over the diffused benefits of collective security. This creates a problem of credibility for the special kind of deterrence implicit in the concept. It is not in fact a matter of capability, since the international community usually commands enough power to overwhelm most potential aggressors, but of the will to use them. The threat of a collective reaction may be sufficient to restrain many states with moderately revisionist objectives but its credibility may not be enough for states resolved to risk everything -even their eventual destruction- to reach their goals.²³

Some revisionist states, like Hitler's Germany or Saddam Hussein's Iraq have not surrendered to the will of the international community even after devastating bombing campaigns. The threat of collective economic or military sanctions was therefore insufficient to divert them from their aggressive intentions. Only the actual

imposition of superior force was able to achieve that. Short of that, sanctions may even favour the aggressor because they generate a “rally around the flag” effect which can be exploited to mobilize nationalist sentiment in favour of the aggressive government’s domestic standing.

Other times, states will not respect their pledge to renounce force not because of expansionist objectives but because they feel that they have no choice. For example, Britain and France during the Suez crisis of 1956 countervailed their obligations under the UN Charter because they felt that Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal was simply unacceptable. Similarly, Israel in 1967 entertained an offensive against its neighbours because it sought to preempt what it believed was an imminent attack.

Secondly, even if many states are prepared to abandon their prerogative to use force aggressively if they so choose, they will not renounce their ability to abstain from a multilateral operation they do not believe essential. This is because they will not want to be forced to invest their scarce diplomatic and military capital in actions which have no direct relevance to their own security. Furthermore, if they intend to free ride, “who, among the informal policemen, will punish their partners if some fail to participate in joint action?”.²⁴

Under anarchy, there cannot be in fact any certainty that they will not need their resources for more urgent matters. Unlike in domestic society, where individuals can freely and confidently invest their energies and capital, in international relations states have to think about their survival, which is a prerequisite for any further goal. The stakes are simply too high for states to take chances and afford to renounce their discretion over the use of their means of defence in exchange for an uncertain and vague reciprocity.²⁵ As the British Foreign Secretary in the run up to the Second World War, Viscount Halifax, remarked, collective security involves “dangerously indefinite commitments quite disproportionate to the real security that these commitments [give]”.²⁶

The paradox is that while states need concrete proof that it will work before entrusting their security to it, collective security needs faith on the part of states in order to work.²⁷ A vicious circle ensues in which collective security does not work because states do not have

confidence in it while states will not trust it unless and until it works. It is enough for states to fail sometimes to induce states to retain an ability to act independently in case multilateralism does not work. In turn, this causes collective security to fail even when it could have worked in the absence of structural impediments, because states do not trust it.

States in an uncertain and insecure world will not in fact renounce to safer and tested instruments of defence, like alliances, in exchange for less secure multilateral mechanisms. George Marshall, who was serving as US Secretary of Defense during the only instance in which the UN applied the concept during the Cold War, was quite skeptical of collective security which he sarcastically considered "a generalized notion of all nations bonding together in undertaking a vague obligation to hypothetical events brought about by some unidentified state".²⁸ Another former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, argues that while

"the purpose of an alliance is to produce an obligation more predictable and precise than an analysis of national interests; collective security works in the exact opposite way. It leaves the application of its principles to the interpretation of particular circumstances when they arise, unintentionally putting a large premium on the mood of the moment and, hence, on national self will".²⁹

Even democracies, in which collective security is most popular, will be reluctant to implement the automatic mechanisms of the maximalist conception. Democracies like collective security because it is an international analogy of their domestic techniques of conflict resolution and because it lends a strong footing for a moral and legitimate foreign policy crucial for maintaining public support. Democratic powers have therefore been in the forefront of the creation both of the League and of the UN. Furthermore, every time an international crisis arises, democratic public opinions have always called on the world organization to deal with it in a multilateral fashion.

However, there is a discrepancy between the desirability of maximalist collective security and the practical consequences it

entails. The desire for peace involves in fact the willingness to fight wars wherever and whenever they occur. According to Claude: "collective security is fundamentally an attempt to mobilize the world's anti-war forces for the prevention of war by the threat to make war".³⁰ Not only this contradicts their stated peaceful intentions but it also erodes the very foundations of democracies. Automatic sanction would deprive parliaments and other elected institutions of the right to decide on the most crucial issue of the involvement of national troops in foreign wars. International obligations of this sort would override the very principle of popular sovereignty on which democracies rest.

In short, until anarchy persists, maximalist collective security is unrealistic because it fails on its own stated goal to guarantee security to all and at all times. Such a conception is in fact plagued by the syndrome which affects all mechanisms based on voluntaristic premises, that is the attempt to remove an undesirable effect without dealing with its causes. In changing state's legal obligations and moral duties without changing either the states or their environment, a maximalist system cannot guarantee that a universal reaction will always take place because it cannot influence the determinants of states' behaviour under anarchy.

Furthermore, also like other voluntaristic solutions to complex social problems, the maximalist idea risks to become counterproductive. In an international system in which there are a multiplicity of actors, processes and events which interact with each other in a non-linear and counterintuitive way, to change only one factor may have undesired consequences on all others. A symmetrical geometric figure may be symmetrical despite -or because- its components are asymmetrical and it may lose its symmetry if one component is changed. Also in international relations, good intentions may not necessarily lead to a desirable outcome.

As Friedrich Von Hayek has warned, interference with a complex social system generally tackles only one aspect of a process and thus, "even though it aims at reaching some particular and predictable result, it is unknown what it will end up inhibiting. [...] We will never be completely aware of all the costs that the pursuit of a particular result implies when it is sought by such interference".³¹

Hayek was criticizing command economies which only superficially seem to be allocating resources more rationally, but in reality they bring inefficiencies because they undermine individuals' natural incentives to work for profit. Similarly, tinkering with the incentives of states in the security realm may in fact have disastrous consequences by inducing them to refrain from action when they should intervene and to intervene when they should not.

iii. The Dangers of Automaticity

A recent collection of essays proclaims that "collective security at its worst is roughly equivalent to balancing under anarchy at its best".³² The idea is that although collective security cannot always work, it will improve international relations at least in some instances while when it will not be able to work it will give way to spontaneous balancing. Since it is better to improve traditional mechanism sometimes rather than never, the reasoning goes that it is always worth it to switch to a collective security system. At best, it will provide a more stable world. At worst, it will not work and states will have the same chance to contain aggression than before.

However, arguments of this kind are simplistic because they overlook the systemic consequences of institutions which can have unintended effects. Not only they can fail to make any difference, but they could also do more harm than good. Structural failure can in fact arise not only despite multilateral institutions but precisely because of them.³³ Collective security is no exception and can have counterproductive consequences in at least five counts if applied in less than ideal circumstances. In this way, the conditionality of collective security implies not only the danger that it will not work, but also the danger that it will work when it should not. In Morgenthau's words: "the supreme paradox of collective security is that any attempt to make it work with less than ideal perfection will have the opposite effect from what it is supposed to achieve".³⁴

Firstly, the introduction of voluntaristic elements in a complex social arena can have **unforeseen byproducts**.³⁵ The formal banning of inter-state war may not in fact have reduced violence at all but may have fostered the tendency to wage undeclared and covert wars instead.³⁶ Collective security may even favour aggression by

forbidding preventive wars or discouraging alliances which may be useful to deter a potential aggressor. The latter can therefore enjoy a sanctuary until it will feel ready to begin offensive operations.³⁷

Once a war had actually started, collective security could prolong a war rather than putting an end to it. If the multilateral intervention fell short of the crushing of the aggressor, the international community could not negotiate with the attacker in fear of appearing to be rewarding aggression. Unless it could gather overwhelming strength, collective security therefore eliminates compromise solutions and forces states to pursue an unconditional surrender and other rigid diplomatic stances.

In general terms, collective security raises the stakes of any dispute increasing the difficulties for any negotiated endeavour. Collective security turns any issue into a matter of principle. For the states directly involved, the question can become one of loss of face. In a polarized environment like that of the Cold War, any problem can become an occasion for an ideological contest, as can be seen for example from the endless battles in the United Nations over the future of the Middle East in the 1970's and 1980's.

Issues are emptied of their concrete value and become symbolic struggles in which the very future of international society is at stake. For the system as a whole, maximalist collective security turns any violation into an example to deter future aggressions. It is sufficient that the multilateral response fails once for the whole edifice to be put in doubt. In this way, the international community cannot allow itself to compromise because it would otherwise erode its own credibility and encourage other states on an expansionist course. This can exacerbate, rather than moderate tensions as any minor instance becomes a test for the whole system.

Secondly, an automatic system of collective security could waste precious resources by forcing states to intervene in each and every case of aggression. States could thus deplete their military potential in fighting lesser threats while their attention could be required to contain a major danger instead. Collective security requires a symmetrical response -one aggression, one reaction-irrespective of particular circumstances. However, not all aggressions are equally destabilizing for the system as a whole. In the presence of

multiple threats, states should concentrate on the most dangerous one because they do not command unlimited resources. On the contrary, a maximalist conception would impose to state to intervene to their exhaustion.

One of the main fears in Washington at the time of the Korean War was that the Communist attack was designed to tie down US resources -committed to the peninsula in the defence of a principle rather than of its intrinsic strategic value- to prepare for an aggression elsewhere. Similarly, at the time of the Japanese invasion of China in the late 1930's Britain felt that it would overstretch its resources if it opposed the aggression while it desperately needed all of its forces in Europe.

The erosion does not just involve material resources. Especially, but not only, for democracies also the political will for foreign operations is not unlimited. An excessively sensitive trigger would force states to intervene beyond the desires of domestic opinion, overstretching willingness to be involved in foreign affairs. This problem is compounded by the fact that collective security requires states to fight even in remote areas with no interests involved. The ensuing disillusion could provoke an isolationist backlash inhibiting states from intervening also when it would really be necessary.

For example, the very limited losses sustained the United States in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992-1994 were sufficient to provoke a complete change of mood in American public opinion. After the humiliation of US forces in the streets of Mogadishu, Washington has been reluctant to be involved in any further United Nation operation and has introduced guidelines which make American unconditional participation in future UN operations virtually impossible.³⁸

Collective security could also force states to fight against a potential ally in the containment of a greater threat.³⁹ If no excuses are allowed, states may find themselves fighting with each other instead of against an imminent danger if one of them is found guilty of aggression. "If several states refuse to shoulder the burdens required by sanctions against aggression, collective security paralyzes defensive alliances without substituting them with a universal alliance".⁴⁰ Such a situation arose in 1939 when, after Hitler's attack on

Poland, the League of Nations was forced to expel the Soviet Union from the organization because of its attack on Finland. Following the precepts of collective security, Britain and France could have ended up fighting the Soviet Union instead of establishing an anti-Nazi coalition. As will be seen below, the Abyssinian episode is another prototypical example of this danger.

Finally, collective security can lead to the escalation of a minor crisis into a world war provoking precisely that event which it was created to prevent.⁴¹ If each aggression involves the whole international community, in a divided and polarized environment any minor conflict could -like in a universal domino- escalate into world war. If during the Cold War the superpowers had abided literally to collective security, there probably would have been a nuclear war. Every time that one moved its troops around -as in Afghanistan or Grenada- the other would have been forced to retaliate. Instead of an indivisible peace, there would have been in this case an indivisible war.

In the words of Hans Morgenthau:

“Wars between any two nations anywhere in the world is tantamount to war among all or at best most nations in the world. [...] By the very logic of its assumptions, the diplomacy of collective security must aim at transforming all local conflicts into world conflicts. If this cannot be one world of peace, it cannot help being one world of war.”⁴²

If, as FDR maintained, wars are indeed like epidemics, sometimes they should be isolated to limit the contagion rather than globalized.

Collective security could also induce states not to intervene when they should. It can in fact bring about a process of **adverse substitution**.⁴³ States could feel confident that the international community or an international organization will deal with a certain issue and could thus withhold their individual efforts. Collective security would become an alibi for inaction as well as a scapegoat for failure.⁴⁴ According to Hedley Bull: “the attempt to apply [...] the solidarist formula has had the consequence not merely that the attempt to construct a superior world order is unsuccessful, but also

that classical devices for the maintenance of order are weakened or undermined".⁴⁵

Why should states defend others with substantial expense of resources if collective security does just that? The existence of international organization could reduce the incentives for involvement. For example, the UN activism after the Gulf War may have partially contributed to the major states' unwillingness to become involved in regional disputes. The public pressure to "do something" was in this way conveniently and cheaply appeased with a simple act of nominal or token support for the multilateral initiative.

However, if most states follow the same reasoning, international organizations would not be able to implement any of its precepts with no state actually supporting it. Not only this would render collective security impossible but it would also weaken spontaneous mechanisms. Even states which have some interest in the solution of the crisis might refrain from action if they see that the international community is already dealing with the problem. Incentives to involvement in a remote crisis are already small enough even without the prospect of adverse substitution.

Since the allocation of responsibility is such a delicate matter in the international system, after the failure of the collective system, states would be left worse off than if the multilateral principles had never been applied. It may in fact be too late or too difficult to prepare an alternative -more unilateral- solution, also because states have to recover from the disillusion brought about by the failure. It would indeed be better if states knew clearly in advance that they do not have no one to turn to for the solution of the crisis.⁴⁶

States may also fall into the trap of **moral hazard**.⁴⁷ Collective security can be thought of as an insurance against aggression which may induce states to incur in irresponsible behaviour confident that they will be bailed out by their insurance.⁴⁸ States may actually facilitate and invite aggression by underpreparing in the hope that a collective reaction would support them even if they do not pay the costs for their own defence. Czechoslovakia in 1938 had the military capability to resist Nazi Germany. However, Prague preferred to rely

on Anglo-French support and this allowed Hitler to conquer the Sudetenland bloodlessly.

By increasing the number of actors responsible for security, collective security may transform the private good of defence into a public good, thereby increasing the chances of its underproduction. Paradoxically, it is precisely when it is most credible that states will rely upon it and incur in the moral hazard of undermining deterrence.

It is also worth to point out that sometimes the very logic of collective security imposes moral hazard even on states which would be willing to defend themselves. For example, the embargoes imposed on all combatants in the Bosnian War begun in 1992 forced the government in Sarajevo to rely on international support even against its wishes. Similarly, during the Abyssinian crisis Ethiopia was constrained in its defence preparation against the forthcoming Italian aggression by the fear of providing Rome with an excuse to appear as the aggrieved party.

Not only collective security will not operate under all circumstances, but it may even be dangerous if applied in the wrong instances. This means that collective security -contrary to the tenets of the maximalist conception- cannot replace traditional security mechanisms and bring about a new type of international order. The dream of altering state behaviour by treaty without changing either the internal composition of states nor their environment is destined to remain a chimera.

Maximalist collective security is plagued by the syndrome of those institutions which are too ambitious. By trying to do too much, it will risk to fail in those situations which it is not suited to tackle. In turn, this risks to undermine confidence in the system as a whole and to erode support even in the type of multilateralism which could be effective. The utility of institutions is conditional by its very nature. In the case of collective security, given the sensitivity of the issue and its universal scope, it is especially so. Failure to recognize this may spell disaster for the institution as well as for the states that compose it.

NOTES:

¹Claude, Swords, cit., p. 237 cites four: diffusion of power, universal membership, legal apparatus and commitment to enforcement; Doyle counts four as well: definition of aggression, subjective commitment to the international order, technical capacity to defeat aggression and diffusion of power, Doyle, cit., p. 133. Bennett and Legpold suggest three: diffusion of power, common definition of aggression and concert of interest of at least the great powers. Thompson cites three: agreement on the status quo, collective interest superior to the national interest and diffusion of power. Also Morgenthau names three conditions: sufficient power to defeat aggression, community of views among enforcers and subordination of national interest to principles, Morgenthau, cit., p. 331. A. Leroy Bennett quotes three: power dispersion, peace is the paramount goal for all and consensus on interpretation in each instance, Bennett, cit., p. 136. Organski lists five: a working definition of aggression, a widespread interest in stopping aggression, freedom for joint action, preponderance over any potential aggressor and vulnerability of the aggressor itself; Aron highlights three: definition of aggression, sufficient interest in the maintenance of the status quo and favourable distribution of power between status quo states and revisionist ones, Aron: cit., pp. 664-5

²Lipson, cit., p. 107; cfr. also Walt in Downs, cit., pp. 174-9; Betts: Systems for Peace, cit., p. 17; Joffe, cit., p. 40; Wolfers, cit., p. 188

³Organski, cit., p. 409

⁴Cfr. Kupchan and Kupchan: op. cit., Aron: Pace, cit., pp. 664-5. Bennett: op. cit., pp.135-6

⁵"Each has been afraid that the other would insist upon participating in UN actions and treat such a participation as a privilege to be abused", Inis Claude: The United Nations and the Use of Force, International Conciliation, N. 532, March 1961

⁶Since collective security by no means affects the distribution of power its prospects for success are therefore completely dependent upon the number of major powers in the system.

⁷Claude, Power and International Relations, Cfr. also John Herz: cit., pp. 87-95

⁸The subjective requirements for a maximalist system may indeed be the ones in shortest supply. Cfr. Claude, Swords, cit., p. 252

⁹Henry Kissinger: A World Restored, New York, 1964, p. 5. Kissinger also writes elsewhere: "All nations, adversaries and friends alike, must have a stake in preserving the international system. They must feel that their principles are being respected and their national interests secured. They must, in short, see positive incentives for keeping the peace, not just the dangers of breaking it". Henry Kissinger: The White House Years, Boston, 1979, p. 55. Cfr. also Wolfers: op. cit., pp. 67-8.

A member of the Drafting Commission on the Security Council at the birth Conference of the United Nations, Grayson Kirk, has explained the idea behind the veto power of the permanent members: "the organization must depend for its strength upon the essential solidarity of the great powers. If this solidarity fails, then the security enforcement arrangements will surely fail", Grayson Kirk: The Security Council, International Conciliation, N. 413, September 1945, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, cit., p. 144

¹⁰Jervis: Security ..., cit., p. 177.

¹¹Charles A. Kupchan, The Promise..., cit., p. 52; Downs, cit., p. 6. Cusack and Stoll even devise a highly sophisticated model to find out that "defending other states from aggression benefits not only the system as a whole, but also those individual states that follow such a strategy". However, their model accounts for

possible misperceptions about war initiation. If a state follows collective security, it will therefore never initiate war and incur in the risk of defeat by misperception. Secondly, the system is naturally more stable if aggression is met with overwhelming reactions; in turn, this will reduce the number of wars and thus the probability of defeat, but this is obvious.

¹²George F. Kennan: American Diplomacy, 1900-1950, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951, p. 99

¹³"To make the harmonization of interests the goal of political action is not the same thing as to postulate that a natural harmony of interests exists". Carr, cit., p. 151

¹⁴Claude, Power..., cit., p. 155

¹⁵Kupchan in Downs, cit., p. 47

¹⁶Arnold Toynbee: Survey of International Affairs, 1939, London, 1952, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, cit.

¹⁷Hinsley, Power and..., cit., p. 309

¹⁸Organski, cit., p. 422

¹⁹In the words of Nicholas Spykeman, collective security "has changed the legal obligations of states" without basically altering "the organization of force in the international community", Spykeman: American Strategy in World Politics, p. 109, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein: op. cit.

²⁰Mc George Bundy expresses this view forcefully: "no problem is ever solved by the slogan 'take it to the UN'. The United Nations cannot be anything but what its members do, or fail to do, in helping to make its choices and carry them through". Bundy in New York Review of Books, July 15th, 1994

²¹Morgenthau. Stromberg agrees: "if we are to expect nations to act in a disinterested and international way, we must expect them to cease to be nations, Stromberg, The Idea of ..., cit., p. 260

²²Robert Jervis: Cooperation under the Security Dilemma, World Politics, 1978, p. 167

²³As Rappard has pointed out in the case of Abyssinia: "had Italy been completely isolated or had she been governed by a weak or a truly pacific government, this would doubtless have sufficed to bring about a negotiated settlement with Ethiopia". William E. Rappard: The Quest for Peace, Cambridge, 1940, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, cit., p. 107

²⁴Lipson in Downs, cit., p. 111. This problem is called the sanctionist problem by Axelrod and Keohane, cit., p. 97

²⁵"Foregone gains are less painful than perceived losses" because "pain is more compelling than pleasure" Janice Gross Stein: International Cooperation and Loss Avoidance: Framing the Problem, in Janice Gross Stein and Louis W. Pauly eds.: Choosing to Cooperate: How States Avoid Loss, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993, pp. 5, 15; Also Lisa Martin points out that multilateral institutions are highly demanding because they "require states to sacrifice substantial levels of flexibility in decision making and resist the temptation of short term gain in the interest of long term benefits. [...A merely generalized obligation] may not outweigh the temptation to free ride because without the threat of specific retaliation the temptation to cheat in order to maximize immediate payoffs rises substantially", Martin in Ruggie, cit., pp. 94, 97

²⁶Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, cit., p. 14. As the 1938 Chatham House report on international sanctions stated: "no government can give a blank cheque; it must know the [specific] liabilities before it will assume them. Governments cannot take the necessary powers unless they have before them not vaguely but clearly defined the actions required of them", quoted in ibid., p. 225

²⁷Claude, Swords..., cit., pp. 234, 237

²⁸Quoted in Claude, Power..., cit., p. 200

²⁹Kissinger, Diplomacy..., cit., p. 247. According to Kenneth Waltz, states have two main methods of dealing with a threat: either they balance it "internally", that is with rearmament, or they do it "externally", that is with alliances. From the state's point of view, the first kind is more reliable because it does not require dependence on others' decision. However, collective security is the strategy in which involves reliance on external balancing is at a maximum and thus it is the least trusted.

³⁰Claude, Swords..., cit., p. 237; cfr. also Betts, Systems for Peace..., cit., p. 17

³¹Friedrich Von Hayek: Law, Legislation and Liberty, 1982, Italian translation Legge, legislazione e libertà, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1986, p. 75, [author's translation], cfr. also pp. 48-50

³²Kupchan, The Promise..., cit., p. 55; Kupchan in Downs, cit., p. 45

³³Gallarotti, cit., p. 219 offers an excellent review of the possible counterproductive consequences of international organization.

³⁴Morgenthau, cit., p. 334

³⁵Gallarotti, cit., pp. 192-99

³⁶Collective security "certainly has encouraged the more insidious forms of intervention which, by avoiding the illegal use of overt force, deprive the victim of any juridical recourse whatever. The gunboat has given way to the fifth column", Liska, cit., p. 74; Dulles remarked that: "it seems that the potentiality of sanctions is responsible, in some cases, for the tendency of undeclared wars" John Foster Dulles: War, Peace and Change, New York, 1939, quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, cit., p. 183

³⁷Liska, cit., p. 79

³⁸The fact that democracies tend to swing from extreme activism to extreme passivity in foreign affairs has been pointed out long ago by Tocqueville. More recently, cfr. George F. Kennan: American Diplomacy..., cit., p.66

³⁹Betts: Systems for Peace..., cit., pp. 18-9; Organski, cit., p. 414; Wolfers, cit., p. 186

⁴⁰Aron: Pace e guerra..., cit., p. 665 [author's translation]

⁴¹Betts: Systems for Peace..., cit., pp. 20-22; Liska, cit., p. 79; Gallarotti, cit., pp. 204-209

⁴²Morgenthau, cit., p. 335. Cfr. also Roland Stromberg's comment that collective security "may, of course, succeed not in preventing the growth of a small war, but in helping to make a great war out of a small one". Stromberg, The Idea..., cit.

⁴³International organization "discourages nations from seeking more substantive and longer term resolutions to their problems", Gallarotti, cit., p. 199

⁴⁴Kissinger mentions American reluctance to intervene in France's support at Dien Bien Phu after the United Nations had started a mediation effort. Kissinger, Diplomacy..., cit., p. 633

⁴⁵Bull, cit., p. 239

⁴⁶Stromberg, The Idea ..., cit., "if British opinion was hopelessly muddled in its thinking about foreign affairs, that was in part because of the illusions fostered by collective security. It was fatally easy to push the terrible burdens of national responsibility onto the shoulders of the League".

⁴⁷Kupchan admits that there is a "reasonable assumption that a given state's output of defense goods will be lower under collective security than under balancing under anarchy", but he then claims that states would anyway have

the time to prepare unilaterally if the multilateral guarantee failed, Kupchan in
Downs, cit., p. 60;

⁴⁸Gallarotti, cit., pp. 209-211

5. THE MERITS OF MINIMALISM

* * * *

i. The Utility of Minimalism

Although the conditions which allow collective security to work can by no means be guaranteed, they are also not impossible. In other words, even if it is certain that collective security cannot operate always, it may still work sometimes. In certain conditions the incentives to cooperate will be insufficient. In other circumstances in which states are well disposed to collaborate they may very well suffice. Even if anarchy prevents general and irreversible forms of cooperation because there is no guarantee that conditions will not switch back to a harsher system, more partial, conditional and specific forms can be afforded and attained.

There is no reason why ~~should~~ states who find themselves with a surplus of security should not be willing to invest it in a security system which may bring them some protection in the longer term. Diffuse reciprocity may sometimes be preferred to specific reciprocity. Similarly, there is no reason why states who have to confront a threat anyway should not be willing to face it within a multilateral framework if this is more effective. The impossibility of a maximalist system is therefore not the whole story. If the mechanism cannot be 100% effective, this does not necessarily mean that its utility is 0%.¹

The problem with the radical critiques of collective security is that they test only an idealistic and maximalist conception of it. Since this is unrealistic, they assume that the whole concept is flawed and unworkable. If states cannot trust collective security always, they should then revert -by default- necessarily and exclusively to the spontaneous mechanism of the balance of power. The radical critics discount the possibility that the system may be useful on a conditional basis.

Part of this idea stems from the fact that, since the prerequisite for collective security are so demanding, it can operate only very rarely and when it does so it is really an epiphenomenon of others' processes at work. If all the conditions are met -that is if the system's polarity, stability and military technology and if the states' intentions are conducive to a multilateral system- then the conditions, by themselves, suffice to bring peace and the multilateral system itself is

redundant. In other words, collective security would be able to work only when it is unnecessary. For example, Shiffer argues that "It may be said that, as far as the prevention of war was concerned, the League's successful functioning depended on conditions which, if they had existed, would have made the organization unnecessary".²

This claim is excessively harsh. The position claiming that "perfection is the only standard of evaluation" is too extreme.³ It is true that collective security cannot work when it is most needed, that is when the system is unstable and/or there are one or more virulently revisionist states on the verge of a major expansionist enterprise. However, it is also true that even when conditions are favourable, cooperation is not a foregone conclusion. It is therefore untrue that when it works, collective security is unnecessary. After all, if institutions did not have an impact on state behaviour, they also could not be counterproductive.

The same structural distortions which turn the good intentions of collective security into the perverse outcomes mentioned in the previous chapter also account for the difficulty of implementing a cooperative system even if preferences converge in that direction. Cooperation may in fact not result even if it is in everyone's interest. If institutions tame free riding and facilitate cooperation, they contribute to bring about outcomes otherwise impossible. Although it cannot change -at least in the short term- the interests of states, collective security may still allow outcomes which, given states' preferences, are different than if it was not in place. In this way, it is not only cosmetic or epiphenomenal.

There is in fact always a temptation to defect and to let others pay for the costs of the collective good. Unlike the security of individual states, global security is in fact a public good -that is it is non-rival and non-excludable- and runs the risk of being underproduced. Without institutions, cooperation would be more difficult even if in the interest of all the parties because free riding and problems of collective action would take their toll. There are thus various functions which a minimalist conception of collective security can perform. On the one hand, it facilitates cooperation by decreasing transaction costs and by reducing the incentives to free ride. On the

other hand, collective security could in the long term influence the prevailing standards of behaviour in favour of stability.

It is somewhat paradoxical that those same scholars who highlight the circumstances in which cooperation is impossible also assume that cooperation is automatic under the opposite circumstances. This is an overestimation of the capacity of cooperation to emerge spontaneously. On the contrary, it is precisely because cooperation is not a foregone conclusion that collective security has a role and a positive utility. The conditions outlined in the previous chapter are indeed necessary for cooperation to emerge in the sensitive security area, but they are not sufficient.

A minimalist conception does not seek to change states' preferences but merely to facilitate cooperation when states are already willing to collaborate in the first place. As in last Century's Concert, collaboration is strictly on a conditional, selective and horizontal basis. There is no hierarchy between the institution and the members that compose it. Counterproductive consequences should therefore be avoided because states could withdraw their support from the regime if it clashes with their national interests.⁴

In this way, collective security is marginal if conceptualized as an international order because it will fail precisely when it would be most needed; but it is not marginal as an international regime because it can make a difference for a series of single episodes. A regime is a less ambitious institution than maximalist collective security because -instead of seeking to alter behaviour in favour of multilateral cooperation- it merely facilitates the attainment of cooperative expectations when these are already present. Instead of a way of transforming the international order, collective security should be conceptualized as an institution within the existing order. It is therefore a complement, rather than a replacement, of traditional state policies.

This may not constitute a revolution in international relations, but it could still be an incremental and evolutionary improvement in the way states conduct international politics. Some restraint is better than no restraint at all. A regime may in fact be useful even if it worked intermittently and alongside other mechanisms. Rather than an unconditional surrender of sovereignty, such a conception implies

only the more modest but more realistic and less demanding proviso that states may wish to cooperate on a case by case basis. Sometimes they would employ collective measures, other times they would find it wiser to retain more traditional practices.

The bottom line is that under anarchy collective security can operate only with the prior consent of states which cannot be given unconditionally. The effectiveness of institutions is subject to circumstances. If the situation is such that consent cannot be given, collective security will not operate at all. However, if the situation allows for the operation of collective security, then its utility may be significant as the outcome may be different than if it had not existed. In particular, collective security can be seen as a positive feedback on cooperation. If there is no will to cooperate, collective security is useless. If the will to cooperate is present, collective security may facilitate and amplify it.⁵ In a world in which cooperation is so difficult especially in the realm of security, the functions performed even by the minimalist version of multilateralism are precious and still worth pursuing.

ii. Collective Security as a Tool for Cooperation

Collective security offers a series of services to those states who want to cooperate but -in the absence of a world government- cannot guarantee each others' compliance. Specifically, it reduces transaction costs by setting up useful focal points and prearranged procedures and it strengthens the incentives to cooperate by introducing clustering of issues, reiteration, reciprocity, reputation and legitimacy considerations. These functions together facilitate cooperation by taming free riding and decreasing the risks and costs of collaboration which so heavily influence behaviour under anarchy.

One of the foremost theorist of transaction costs, the economist Olivier Williamson, has compared their role to the one of attrition in physics. Simplified models excluding the impact of attrition are necessary because they highlight certain fundamental processes. However, real physical elements interact in a world in which attrition exists. Similarly, social units must take into account the limits of rationality, the opportunistic nature of counterparts and the difficulty of converting resources from one use to another. Institutions and

agreements (“contracts” in Williamson’s language) -on top of their specific merits- are necessary precisely because they allow states to forego transaction costs.⁶

First, collective security explicitly codifies what constitutes acceptable behaviour. “Collective security facilitates the identification of aggressor states”.⁷ It is no longer left to each state’s best judgment whether its actions are legitimate or not but this is determined by the international community in explicit treaties. This reduces the risks of misunderstandings and misperceptions about the significance of a certain action, thereby reducing the risks of cooperation. In Oye’s words: “explicit codification of norms can limit definitional ambiguities”.⁸ States cannot justify aggressive actions with defensive motivations if this is not explicitly allowed by the collective norms.

Even if states were in good faith and did not try to exploit the normative void for their own selfish purposes, the absence of explicit rules could produce arguments about the appropriate response. If in the Korean and Iraqi instances the international community had to decide on a case by case basis whether an illegitimate act had been committed before taking action, the reaction would have been delayed so as to jeopardize its effectiveness. On the contrary, international sanctions could begin within days of the attack only because pre-arranged norms, procedures and rules of thumb had been established. In other words, collective security increases the amount of information available because it gives significance to state’s actions and it reduces information asymmetries as each state can weigh another state’s actions against a common normative framework.⁹

Interpretations become standardized throughout the whole system and transaction costs are accordingly reduced. An explicit set of rules about the use of force exploits economies of scale and spares the pain of negotiating an ad hoc interpretation every time an instance arises. For the international community as a whole, this means saving time and effort. For individual states, it means that the collective norms can become a focal point for their expectations. Instead of negotiating from scratch all the details of an understanding, states would already have a ready set of norms to use as a blueprint. Focal points are especially useful because states do not easily trust each other and therefore prefer to rely on a “neutral” set of rules.

As a by-product, intentions are more transparent because certain actions become unequivocal decreasing “the likelihood of unintended spirals”.¹⁰ If aggression is explicitly outlawed, states could no longer claim a defensive motive for a preemptive attack. This would not necessarily inhibit preemption as a form of defence, but it would be easier to identify behaviour incompatible with the collective norms. Although, as we have seen, an operational and universal definition of aggression is not guaranteed to work, explicit rules can act as a prearranged guideline for the determination of a breach to the multilateral rules.

Given the limited capability of individuals and groups to process information and the consequent tendency to “satisfice”, states prefer to converge to focal points rather than spending the effort required to find the best possible solution every time. “The alternative to [...] recalculation is to follow the established rule”.¹¹ The abandonment of an established arrangement implies sunk costs as it is much easier to maintain an existing state of affairs rather than to set up new one. Since it would be costly to consider the advantages and disadvantages of compliance every time it is called into question, institutional norms therefore become part of governments’ standard operating procedures. In a word, institutions become a habit.

Secondly, collective security provides a framework for dealing with specific events. The institution envisages a meeting place for continuous contacts among states which may be conducive to mediated and negotiated solutions. The permanent forum also provides prearranged procedures. This means that crises cannot simply be ignored because they are automatically brought up by the institutional schedules.

Moreover, formal decision making structures may assign roles which are more difficultly eluded with defection. An example is constituted by the restricted membership of the Security Council and in particular by its permanent members, who are invested by responsibilities concerning the maintenance of international peace and security. Similarly, also the XIX Century Concert of Europe envisaged a privileged role for great powers.

The identification of roles may also be informal. Although there was no special rule specifying its responsibility, during the

1930's it was clear that the main burden of enforcing collective security rested on Britain's shoulders because it was the only power in the League of Nations with the sufficient military and naval strength. After the Cold War, the United States have found themselves in a similar position. In the Gulf War, as well as in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, Washington has been placed in a leading role for the multilateral effort.

The assignment of roles is crucial because the struggle against free riding must begin with the identification of a culprit for inaction. If no special role were assigned, all states would be equally responsible and if no one intervened, nobody in particular could also be blamed. If on the other hand responsibility is only in few hands, it is easier to apply pressure on those states which are attempting to pass the buck onto others.

The identification of special roles helps to reduce free riding because it decreases the number of relevant actors necessary for an operation to be carried out. Smaller groups are more privileged than large ones because they have fewer problems of collective action. Even if the international community displays pathologies of coordination, a smaller group (K of N) may have the incentives and capability to supply the public good regardless of what the other states do.¹² As shown above, the best situation is that of a hegemony, in which the decision of a single state suffices to provide the public good.¹³

This is why collective interventions usually take place when one state takes upon it shoulders the responsibility of leadership. As Lisa Martin has shown, in the more than 100 cases on economic sanctions in this Century, without exception it was possible to identify a leading sender. It is in fact much more convenient to send a token participation once the operation has already been mounted rather than to shoulder a substantial share of the costs. In the three case studies examined below, it is also clear the leading role performed by Great Britain in the Abyssinian Crisis and by the United States in the Korean War and the Gulf War.¹⁴

A collective security regime can also strengthen the incentives to cooperate. Firstly, a multilateral framework allows cross-issue area linkages favouring agreement.¹⁵ If the collective security institution

becomes a place for general discussion, the increased number of actors and issues available compared to a web of bilateral negotiations allows creative agreements based on log rolling. States agree to comply in one issue area even if they do not have direct interests because they can receive compensations in other issue areas of their concern. In Keohane's words: "clustering of issues under a regime facilitates side payments among these issues: more quids are available for the pro".¹⁶

For example, during the Gulf War, the United States ensured a large support at the United Nations by a mixture of inducements and threats in other issue areas. In particular, promises of increased foreign aid as well as menaces to reduce it were made to guarantee the success of the international coalition. The cited work of Lisa Martin also highlights the importance of side payments. In the case of the Falklands' War, the United Kingdom was able to convince its European Community's partners to set up economic sanctions against Argentina because it made concessions over the EC budget. The crucial role of this bargain is demonstrated by the fact that the EC sanctions were harsher and were imposed earlier than those of the United States and Japan, with whom London did not negotiate over other issues.¹⁷

Secondly, states are less likely to free ride if their future payoffs are affected by their present actions. As Robert Axelrod has masterly shown, the "shadow of the future" invites states to cooperate because today's increased benefits from defection may be offset by tomorrow's retaliation of the other actor.¹⁸ Free riding is accordingly profitable only if its effects on others' future behavior are contained or if states heavily discount the future. Institutions, by putting each interaction into a wider perspective, increase the value of future interactions.

Without an institutional setting, states would prefer not to comply with their obligations incurring in certain present costs in exchange for less certain future benefits. However, the institutionalization provided by a collective security system ensures that the likelihood of being reciprocated increases. "In this way, international regimes help to link the future with the present".¹⁹ In other words, if states do not excessively discount the future, they may be prepared to shoulder some immediate burdens if they expect the

system to be useful in future contingencies which may involve them more directly.

Institutions favour strategies of reciprocity which are conducive to cooperation.²⁰ States who fear to become victims of aggression in the future may prefer to invest resources in a generalized system which -in theory- also covers them rather than to protect a remote state in a specific agreement which does not promise future rewards. Since collective security is a universal agreement, it augments everybody's expectation of reciprocity. During the Korean War, most NATO allies contributed troops to the UN effort because they thought that if America stopped aggression in Asia, it would also have done so in Europe where their immediate concerns laid.

In this sense, states would participate in a collective security operation because they would like to be defended themselves if they fall under attack. States support the multilateral regime because they fear that the multilateral system may not support them when they need it. " If a member free rides on others in a conflict, it can be threatened with exclusion from the collective security umbrella or denied special benefits such as a role in determining when and how interventions will be conducted and how the final settlement will be structured".²¹ States therefore comply because they do not want to undermine the regime in general even if they are not directly concerned with the particular issue in question.

Naturally, this will not be sufficient if states believe that compliance with international norms will imperil their survival. However, when states dispose of resources in excess, they may want to invest them in the protection of multilateral norms which they may later invoke in their own national interest. A certain degree of order in international relations is in fact desirable for many states which fear to become victims of aggression in the future as well as for others which need a stable international system to pursue their political or economic objectives. In less than radical situations, states may afford and seek a less specific and more diffuse kind of reciprocity.²²

States may participate in a collective venture because they want to increase their reputation or because they are afraid to decrease it. Specifically, besides being interested in the construction of a multilateral system, states may be interested in accumulating an

amount of political capital which they can then use for other purposes. Collective security is important as a source of reputation.

Reputation is not only a cosmetic, chivalrous, romantic and useless concept. Prestige is sometimes a goal in its own right and leadership in a multilateral organization may be seen as a way to acquire recognized status in the international community. Classical realist among others highlighted the importance of reputation in international relations as "the shadow cast by power" which could amplify the effects of the stock of physical resources in the hands of a state. Power -like beauty- is in fact in the eye of the beholder.

However, more often reputation is a useful instrument for other goals.²³ In a world where no government enforces agreements, states will look at each others' reputation before making reciprocal commitments. "Since governments with good reputation can more easily make agreements than governments with bad ones, international regimes can help to facilitate cooperation by making it both easier and more desirable to acquire a good reputation".²⁴ To paraphrase Hobbes, without the sword, the word counts "all the more so since there is no external guarantee that promises will be kept".²⁵

By forcing free-riders to explicitly break their pledges, collective security increases the costs of defection. States run in fact the risk of being considered unreliable, and this will damage their ability to enter into advantageous agreements in all sorts of areas. Ultimately, they will fear to become pariahs emarginated from the family of nations.²⁶ This is the reason why states do not like to break their word. Henkin has wisely remarked that, although there are very significant exceptions, "almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations almost all of the time".²⁷

States which are undecided about whether to intervene or not in a certain crisis may thus be convinced by the need to sustain collective security. After all, "ceteris paribus, a state is more likely to join an opposing coalition if it has made a commitment to do so than if no such commitment existed; states have at least some incentives to fulfill international obligations".²⁸ Although the merits of the case in question may be insufficient on their own to motivate the involvement of troops, the commitment to the multilateral norms

may induce states to intervene to sustain their reputation within the international community and the reputation of the international community itself.

In this sense, while alliances rest on previous interests which are exogenous to the institution, collective security can develop some endogenous interests which were not present when the institution was established in the first place. For example, the United States has considered intervention in the Bosnian War as unworthy of a direct commitment for the first three years after its outbreak in 1992. However, the blatant and continuous defiance of multilateral norms on the part of the Bosnian Serbs has pushed Washington into a situation in which, despite its tangible interests were not at stake, it risked to lose its face. Consequently, in the Summer of 1995 it pressurized the United Nations and NATO into executing massive retaliatory air strikes despite the fact that it had previously declined any active military involvement.

The last effect on cooperation is less tangible but not less important. The concept of collective security introduces the idea of an international community capable of articulating its own collective interests. This means that any action of any state can be categorized as compatible or incompatible with the goals of the international community. In a system exclusively based on unilateral and decentralized policies, this would clearly be impossible.

In other words, collective security implies an operational definition of legitimacy, which is expressed by the endorsement of states' policies by the international community.²⁹ International legitimacy is here defined as a wide (or universal) consensus among states on the fundamental elements of the international system so that physical coercion for its operation is unnecessary because states take it for granted and do not use force to overthrow or challenge the existing order. Before the introduction of collective security, a system, and a state's actions within it, could of course be legitimate but there was no procedure for an explicit recognition of this.

The multilateral character of collective security provides such a procedure. On the one hand, the principle of the indivisibility of peace claims its own neutrality and impartiality, that is its nature *super partes*. On the other, the fact that collective security is a universal and

inclusive institution reassures all states that they have a stake in the operation and preservation of the system. The legitimization is therefore provided horizontally, with the consensus of states which renounce the use of force to change the international system, rather than vertically imposed on states.

In a way, the global organization becomes a source of legitimacy because states do not find it threatening to their own interests. According to Inis Claude: "it authorizes and endorses in compensation for its inability to effectuate commands, and it condemns and deplures in compensation for its inability to prohibit and prevent". The result is that the institution "has come to be regarded, and used, as a dispenser of politically significant approval and disapproval of the claims, policies and actions of states".³⁰ Even their very existence can be sanctioned, as the role played by the United Nations in the consolidation of the state of Israel or during the process of decolonization shows.

This does not mean that the United Nations or other collective security organization can determine, like a domestic court, specific solutions because its decisions do not enjoy an immediate executive application. Drawing again from the Middle Eastern example, the relevant General Assembly resolutions did not bring about Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories or the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. However, the conferral of collective legitimacy to a certain solution increases the chances of its application.

The explicit endorsement of a claim by the collectivity of states is not only a source of personal satisfaction, but is "an important stake. [...] Legitimacy not only makes states rulers more comfortable, but makes them more effective, more secure in their possession of power".³¹ According to Weber "experience shows that in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or effectual or ideal motives as a basis for its continuance. In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy".³² Legitimacy -in short- far from being antithetical to power, is an important element of it.

For a small state, its legitimacy means protection under the collective security umbrella. This is demonstrated by the importance lent by developing states to their status as members of the United

Nations. For great powers, legitimacy means increasing its influence beyond the mere calculation of its material resources. By definition, a "legitimate" state does not threaten the interests of the collectivity of states. A hegemonic power recognized as "benign" by the international community may not trigger a counterbalancing coalition.³³ European states accepted American predominance whereas they resisted the prospects of Nazi or Soviet hegemony.

The legitimization accorded to an operation by the explicit endorsement of the collectivity of states, expressed through the deliberation of a collective security organization like the United Nations, can increase the level of domestic and international support. Within domestic societies, collective security can count on sympathetic constituencies. During the Gulf War, the Congressional authorization to use force was approved by such a narrow margin that without UN endorsement its fate would have probably in jeopardy as many Democratic senators had expressed their loyalty to the multilateral principles.³⁴

Sometimes public opinion even favours multilateral doctrines to an extent which forces governments to justify national interests in universal terms rather than the other way around. President Roosevelt thought of the United Nations as a way to sway America away from isolationism more than as a useful institution in its own right. "The only appeal which would be likely to carry weight with the US public [...] would be one based upon a world-wide conception".³⁵ Given the rise of mass politics in the XX Century, this factor has become a crucial element in foreign policy.

At the international level, neutral or undecided states may decide to flock to one side of a conflict if this acts in accordance with the precepts of collective security.³⁶ As will later be seen, the international coalitions fighting under the UN banner in Korea and the Gulf were supported by a number of countries unprecedented before or since. During the Korean War, the collective operation was supported even by non-aligned countries such as India. In the Gulf War, the deployment of Western troops in Arab countries might well have been impossible outside a UN framework.³⁷

This is the main reason why governments spend so much time and effort trying to obtain favourable resolutions and to stop

unfavourable ones. After all, "how are we to account for the willingness of major states to invest resources in expanding international institutions, if such institutions are lacking in significance?"³⁸ States may still act against the wishes of the international community, but they prefer not to do so in fear of losing domestic and international support. The reluctance of the superpowers during the Cold War to appear as violators of collective security was not grounded simply on their good manners.

The United States was prepared to pay a price for the attainment of a legitimate status, thereby demonstrating the importance of these aspects. During the Suez crisis, the United States opposed its closest allies -Britain and France- because they were challenging the Charter.³⁹ Similarly, the quarantine solution endorsed by the Organization of American States during the Cuban crisis was also influenced by the acknowledgment that the Soviet missile deployment provided an insufficient rationale for an invasion of Cuba pleading a self-defense motivation.⁴⁰ According to Downs and Lida: "the quest for UN bestowed legitimacy as a prelude to military adventures remains high and may even have increased".⁴¹

The maintenance of collective endorsement may even imply the tolerance of a degree of interference over national policies. As will be seen below, both in Korea and in the Gulf War, the United States was prepared to go out of its way in its strategic planning for military operations in order to appease its UN allies. Roberts and Kingsbury point out that commitment to collective security "brings valuable allies and political support on particular issues, but it also leads to a degree of entanglement which may propel states into involvements they might otherwise prefer to evade".⁴²

In sum, although compliance with the legal guarantee cannot be guaranteed, it will be facilitated by the reduction of transaction costs and by the increased incentives to cooperate provided by issue linkage, reiteration, reciprocity, reputation and legitimacy considerations. A diminished range of expected behaviour should therefore reduce uncertainty in the international system. In these circumstances, we can expect ~~the~~ under the appropriate conditions a reaction to aggression will be more likely and larger than if collective security was not in place. X

iii. Collective Security and the Abolition of War

Beside facilitating cooperation, the institution of collective security also enjoys a potential for influencing states' preferences in the longer term. Although its existence depends on the prevailing intentions of its members, once in place it can "strengthen and deepen" the foundations for cooperation. In other words, collective security may begin as an ad hoc mechanism for cooperation to be applied selectively, but it could end up as an established and given feature of international politics capable of affecting behavior in its own right.

The analysis has so far concentrated on rational choice, but will briefly turn to so-called reflectivist factors.⁴³ Institutions can be considered as constitutive of as well as constraints on states' behaviour.⁴⁴ It is in fact impossible to understand the significance of the concept of collective security without considering its normative character, which is predominant in the thinking of many of its proponents. However, one should be cautious about the use of these factors because it is difficult to detect them and to determine their causal significance.

Part of the difficulty in treating normative elements stems indeed from their very success. When they are at work, events contrary to their precepts should not come about. Since it is impossible to count and measure non-events, their effectiveness cannot be accurately estimated. In the case of collective security, the normative relevance of the concept -as opposed to its functional utility- could only be judged by knowing how many conflicts have not occurred which would have if the concept had not been introduced.

Nevertheless, although its precise significance is unclear, the normative character of collective security is far from unimportant. As Kratochwil and Ruggie have pointed out, institutions are necessarily characterized by an "intersubjective quality".⁴⁵ For example, constructivist scholars claim that material power structures are meaningless without shared understandings and practices constituting the "language" of state action. Normative frameworks are necessary to decipher state actions as "identities are the basis of interests. Actors

do not have a portfolio of interests that they can carry around independent of social context".⁴⁶

Even classical realist thinkers like Hedley Bull or Martin Wight accept the crucial role of norms as constitutive of an international system. The fact that the international system is anarchic does not mean that it is an anomie.⁴⁷ For Bull, the balance of power system itself would be based on ideas like sovereignty and independence as well as on spontaneous incentives.⁴⁸ In a recent contribution, also Michael Doyle adheres to this view:

"the balance of power is not the default model of international systemic behaviour [...] It, too, makes particular demands on the character of statesmanship and international order. [The requirements for the balance of power] are not far short of those conventionally seen to produce collective security. But they only served to establish the conditions for balancing".⁴⁹

Even without going as far as critical theorists who assert that ideas and social contexts are the main independent variable in international relations capable of determining outcomes such as peace and war, normative factors should be taken into account.⁵⁰ It is in fact possible to highlight at least some of the contributions of collective security to the normative framework of international relations and the way they come about and operate.

In particular, collective security has contributed to the process by which war is decreasingly accepted as a legitimate instrument of state policy.⁵¹ When Frederick the Great invaded Silesia in the middle of the XVIII Century, he needed no justification and could appeal to Prussia's *raison d'etat* as his only motivation. On the contrary, when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia two centuries later, the Kremlin had to claim its defensive purposes and to devise the superficially multilateral "Breznev Doctrine" as a smokescreen despite the fact that Czechoslovakia lied in the USSR's recognized sphere of influence.⁵²

State actions must indeed be inserted in their social context. Italy was not considered dangerous to the stability of the international order when it declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1911. On the

contrary, Iraq was branded as a destabilizing threat for its invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Although the two actions were in practice not very different, they triggered very different responses from the international community because the idea that aggression is unlawful has taken ground and renders any violation much more serious. Collective security has contributed to alter these "deep psychological beliefs" which influence the "conscience collective", that is the moral consensus on which the cohesion of the international community is based.⁵³

As John Mueller has suggested, the process of obsolescence of aggression may resemble the fate of other social institutions which have become anachronistic. Slavery and dueling have disappeared even if they were once considered as normal, appropriate or even necessary elements of life. Furthermore, these institutions have not disappeared simply because of their unlawfulness since they had thrived also in ages when they were already unlawful. What caused their demise was rather a change in social beliefs about their utility and relevance in modern society.⁵⁴

"War in the developed world may be following once-fashionable dueling into obsolescence: the perceived wisdom, value and efficacy of war may have moved gradually toward terminal disrepute [...] The conviction has now become widespread that war in the developed world would be intolerably costly, unwise, futile and debased".⁵⁵ This "does not mean that conflict will vanish, but only that war and military force will not be used by important developed countries to resolve their conflicts".⁵⁶

This process is influenced by the decreasing relevance of territory as an instrument of economic and military power which has accordingly diminished the advantages of conquest.⁵⁷ It is also influenced by the increasing destructiveness of modern weapons, which has reached a level in which war has become counterproductive -if not catastrophic- even for the winning side. The diminished limits to destruction within war -the *ius in bello*- have accordingly led to a greater restraint in the resort to war itself -the *ius ad bellum*.⁵⁸ Also collective security has a role to play.

According to Claude:

“the point remains that the theory of collective security has inspired the growing recognition that war anywhere is a threat to order everywhere [...] and has stimulated the rudimentary development of a sense of responsibility to a world community on the part of governments and peoples”.⁵⁹

Although normative frameworks originate from states' practices and preferences, most states taken individually- do not have the capability of imposing their own standards of conduct. In other words, states generally perceive normative standards as part of their given environment.⁶⁰ If states want to be accepted as members of the international community, they have to accept the rules of the game. International institutions “have the capacity to set aspirational standards, and to draw upon [their] prestige and aura of standing above governments in order to achieve more than [their] material power and resources would otherwise allow. In these respect [they do] shape the values and behaviour of states and individuals and curb some of their excesses”.⁶¹

The institutional setting of collective security could thus “transform the minimum political solidarity into an international community in which states share similar values and normative orientations. [...] Regular meetings and conferences allow ideas and values to cross national boundaries and circulate around different communities of elites. Similar values are conducive to compatible policy preferences”.⁶² This process could in time moderate some of the effects of the security dilemma even more than the mechanisms set up to challenge aggression directly. The freedom of anarchy can be moderated only by a sense of common destiny constraining eventual abuses.⁶³ The pacifist ideals may not be designed to abolish war by *fiat*, but to initiate a process that “over time, perhaps a long time, would bring behaviour into greater congruence with those ideals”.⁶⁴

This is especially true when new states emerge in the international system or when new systems emerge after the end of major wars. In these instances a process of socialization occurs in which states' define their policies in terms compatible with the prevailing view of what constitutes acceptable behaviour.⁶⁵ At least, they feel obliged to pay lip service to the existing norms and the

continued profession of faith in them may in the long run become part of their established belief. Like when a person is first invited to high society, states try to follow the precepts of etiquette.

The significance of these processes should not be exaggerated. Anti-social state behaviour is by no means restricted to newly developed states. A belief of this kind seems to have been expressed by the US Secretary of War, Stimson, when he remarked during the Manchurian crisis that: "the peace treaties of modern Europe made out by the Western notion of the world no more fit the great races of Russia, China and Japan who are meeting in Manchuria than a stovepipe hat would fit an African savage".⁶⁶ Yet, only a few years afterwards those very same peace treaties were shattered not by Russia, China and Japan nor by African savages but by modern Germany where Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann and Henry Kissinger were born.

The strength of normative constraints is relative under anarchy and relies mainly on states' willingness to abide by them voluntarily. This willingness is always linked to the intentions of a state on which the international community has only limited influence. Many wars have been initiated not only when they appeared to be inconsistent with prevailing behavioural standards, but also when they were plainly incompatible with the national interest of the aggressor. Sensible predictions -like the ones exposed by Norman Angell in *The Great Illusion*, fatefully published the year before the First World War- that war was irrational due to the changed nature of technologies and societies have -so far- all been disproved.

Nevertheless, even if normative standards can go backwards as well as forward, the pedagogic function of collective security has contributed to an environment in which it is increasingly difficult to explain the rationale for aggression both to one's own public and to the international community. This indirect function of collective security, emphasizing more its normative and pedagogic nature rather than its mechanism for conflict management, may very well be one of its most useful elements.

The strength of the minimalist conception rests on its explicit acknowledgment that it is subject to other factors. It does therefore not

incur in the danger of becoming counterproductive because -unlike its automatic version- it does not operate when it should not. Like a fuse in an electrical system saves it from a short circuit because it cuts the power when there is a contact or a surge, so minimalist collective security simply shuts the multilateral system off when tension reaches critical levels. It is better that the lights go off than that the house catches fire.⁶⁷ States themselves would decide when to apply it and would therefore avoid its use when it can be dangerous.

This does not mean that institutions are worthless. The fact that institutions cannot always work does not necessarily imply that they will never work. A few defectors do not undermine laws even in domestic society, the question is rather to maintain compliance at an acceptable level. According to Herz:

“that collective security is based on trust and distrust simultaneously is true, but this is only an apparent paradox. All law is based on the possibility of law violation. It expects the citizen to be law-minded, knowing that there will be instances where the expectation fails. Without that failure law would be superfluous. With too much failure however it would be ineffective and unenforceable. Law, as a functioning institution, is suspended between a certain minimum and a certain maximum of effectivity”.⁶⁸

Institutions simply cannot remove the security dilemma from international politics, but they can indeed make it more manageable. Institutions cannot replace the prudent balancing mechanisms of alliances nor the domestic developments which bring about stable relations between nations. Yet, if they facilitate cooperation in at least some instances, they justify both their existence and the efforts to their improvements.

Contrary to prevailing views, this is not necessarily tied to high levels of institutionalization, which is not a positive development for its own sake but must instead be judged on its merits. An excessively institutionalized arrangement could in fact be counterproductive. The utility of the minimalist conception of collective security stems rather from the continued demand for mechanisms facilitating cooperation in a decentralized environment lacking the authority for effective enforcement of compliance. Despite their limits and conditionality,

minimalist institutions are the main instrument for the management of cooperation in international relations. This necessity may even cause the regime to outlast the conditions which gave rise to it and to grow as a permanent and acknowledged feature of international society.

As an ancillary function, also its normative standards for the prevention of war is also on demand on the part of states which find war increasingly counterproductive for their own purposes. This indirect function on the intellectual *milieu* in which states operate may be one of its most important. Even if they may be insufficient to banish war, multilateral sanctions may therefore still be worthwhile because they perpetuate the idea that war is illegitimate and discourage aggression by imposing at least some costs on expansionist states. Even purely moral sanctions are sufficient for aggressors not to get away with it unscathed. This is clearly much less than what was expected from the institution by its most ardent proponents, but it is still a very precious constraints on the abuses of anarchy.

Yet, even these limited functions need a constant effort in order to be effective. Minimalism runs the opposite risk with respect to maximalism. If the institution was so hypoinstitutionalized that it did not constrain the behaviour of states, but provoked only their lip service, it would not make any difference whether it existed or not. An excessive degree of selectivity and optionality could turn the institution into irrelevance and deprive it even of its value as an instrument of cooperation. Focal points are useless if everybody recognizes that they are never used; procedures and schedules become a nuisance if they are not respected and incentives to cooperate become misleading and fruitless.

NOTES:

¹"It is not necessary to choose between the League of Nations and nothing [...] States may still cooperate in more modest forms of collective security", Downs and Iida, *cit.*, pp. 33, 37. Thompson argues that: both those who believe that collective security can substitute the balance of power and those who believe that it has no use at all are wrong: the "use of collective security is more modest and limited than its most ardent proponents appreciate. Yet, [...] it need not be a blind alley", Thompson, *cit.*, pp. 771-2

²Shiffer, *cit.*, p. 199. Also Hinsley adheres to this view: "If we must wait for a 'normal' world before there can be a successful international political organization, for a world in which there is no instability and no aggressor, it would never be possible to have one; and if there was no instability, it would be unnecessary to have one"; Hinsley, *Power...*, *cit.*, p. 311. Cfr. also Claude, *Swords...*, *cit.*, p. 284. Richard Betts claims that proponents of collective security have confused cause and effect: rather than collective security causes peace, it is the other way around. Betts, *Systems for Peace...*, *cit.*, pp. 7, 23; Strange in Krasner, *cit.*, p. 338

³Downs, *cit.*, p. 7, Downs and Iida, *cit.*, p. 17

⁴Downs and Iida, *cit.*, p. 31. Even in alliances, states can pull out if they perceive that they are being exploited. For example, Italy in 1914 did not respect its pledges under the Triple Alliance pleading that Austria's attack on Serbia did not involve the defensive proviso of the treaty.

⁵Robert O. Keohane: *After...*, *cit.*, p. 57.

⁶Olivier E. Williamson: *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism. Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting*. The Free Press, New York, 1986, especially chap.s 1 and 2.

⁷Kupchan in Downs, *cit.*, p. 45

⁸Oye, *cit.*, pp. 17, 19: "The very act of clarifying standards of conduct, of defining cooperative and uncooperative behaviour, can permit more effective resort to strategies of reciprocity. [...] Conventions provide rules of thumb that can diminish transaction and information costs"; Keohane agrees "institutions may also affect the understanding that leaders of states have of the roles they should play and their assumptions about others' motivations and perceived self interest", Keohane, *International Institutions...*, *cit.*, p. 6

⁹Keohane, *After...*, *cit.*, pp. 92-97; Kupchan in Downs, *cit.*, p. 50; Caporaso in Ruggie, *cit.*, p. 63

¹⁰Kupchan in Downs, *cit.*, p. 53

¹¹Abraham Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes: *On Compliance, International Organization*, V. 47, N. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 178-9. Cfr. also Keohane, *cit.*, p. 57

¹²Olson, *cit.*, pp. 33-6, Chayes and Chayes, *cit.*, p. 128, Oye, *cit.*, p. 19, Axelrod and Keohane, *cit.*, p. 97: "the way to solve sanctionist problems is to construct international regimes to provide standards against which actions can be measured and to assign responsibilities for applying sanctions". For Lipson: "enforcement is likely to be underprovided unless there is a privileged group for which enforcement is rational or some institutional arrangement to modify incentives for enforcement", Lipson in Downs, *cit.*, p. 115

¹³Niou and Ordeshook, *cit.*, p. 99, Downs and Iida, *cit.*, p. 21; Caporaso in Ruggie, *cit.*, pp. 58-9

¹⁴Another solution is that of a regional arrangement.. Cfr. Downs and Iida, *cit.*, pp. 18-19; Kupchan in Downs, *cit.*, p. 43, Lipson in Downs, *cit.*, p. 116

¹⁵Downs and Iida, *cit.*, p. 28; Niou and Ordeshook, *cit.*, p. 74

¹⁶Keohane, *cit.*, p. 91; Oye, *cit.*, p. 17

¹⁷Not only may the leading states in an operation alter the incentives for free riding, but also the regime itself could set up mechanisms toward the same objective. Neighbouring states which are hurt by the war or by the connected sanctions to the aggressor may receive compensation, as has been the case for the Balkan countries which suffered from the embargo imposed on Serbia in 1992.

¹⁸Oye, *cit.*, p. 14-15, Axelrod and Keohane write that "the more future payoffs are valued relative to current payoffs, the less incentive to effect today, since the other side is likely to retaliate tomorrow" Axelrod and Keohane, *cit.*, p. 91; cfr. also Caporaso in Ruggie, *cit.*, p. 60

¹⁹Axelrod and Keohane, *cit.*, p. 94

²⁰Niou and Ordeshook claim that retaliatory strategies are effective for maintaining cooperation "but are no help in getting cooperation started", Niou and Ordeshook, *cit.*, p. 88

²¹Downs and Lida, *cit.*, p. 27

²²Reciprocity can also be more general. A state prefers not to break its word if it can because it is fearful that -if it does so- other states will break their word too in matters which affect its own interests. Although unaffected by the particular crisis in question, states may therefore decide that they should contribute to the international effort either because they are interested in the maintenance of the regime in general or even of other regimes.

²³According to Young, "a reputation for trustworthiness in one of the most valuable assets that any member of international society can acquire", Young, *International Cooperation...*, *cit.*, p. 75

²⁴Axelrod and Keohane, *cit.*, p. 110. "A government's reputation becomes an important asset in persuading others to enter into agreements with it. International regimes help governments to assess others' reputations by providing standards of behaviour against which performance can be measured, by linking these standards to specific issues and by providing forums, often through international organizations, in which these evaluations can be made". Cfr. also Keohane, *cit.*, pp. 94, 105-6

²⁵Lipson, *cit.*, p. 63

²⁶Young, *cit.*, p. 69

²⁷Louis Henkin: *How Nations Behave: Law and Foreign Policy*, Preager, New York, 1970, p. 47

²⁸Kupchan in Downs, *cit.*, p. 45

²⁹According to Kissinger, legitimacy "means no more than an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy. It implies the acceptance of the framework of the international order by all major powers, at least to the extent that no state is so dissatisfied that, like Germany after the Treaty of Versailles, it expresses its dissatisfaction in a revolutionary foreign policy". Kissinger, *A World...*, *cit.*, p. 1. Haas distinguishes, in a fashion, between compliance brought about by legitimacy, that is despite national interests, and compliance provoked by authority, that is by compulsion or by its threat.; Ernst B. Haas: *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organization*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1990, pp. 87-8

³⁰Inis L. Claude: *Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations*, *International Organization*, V. 20, 1966, pp. 267-279

³¹Claude, *ibid.*, p. 193

³²Quoted in Iklenberry and Kupchan, *cit.*; Also Gramsci highlights the importance of legitimacy as an element of power. For the Italian Communist thinker, legitimacy is what distinguishes empire, characterized only by objective

physical domination, from hegemony, which has also a subjective element. Cfr. Keohane: After ..., cit., p. 44-5

³³Ruggie, cit., p. 25

³⁴Bennett and Legpold, cit.

³⁵John Gerard Ruggie: *The False Premise of Realism*, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, p. 63

³⁶The collective security organization could perform a "balancer" function similar to that attributed to Britain in the last two Centuries.

³⁷Claude, Collective..., cit.. In other words, one could argue that Korea was different from Vietnam or that the 1994 intervention in Haiti was different from the 1983 operation in Grenada or Lebanon and Gulf because of the collective legitimization brought to the action by UN endorsement.

³⁸Robert O. Keohane and Lisa Martin: *The Promise of Institutional Theory*, International Security, V. 20, N. 1, Summer 1995, pp. 39-51. Claude, Collective..., cit., p. 197

³⁹Eisenhower reportedly instructed his Secretary of State: "Foster, you tell 'em, goddam it, we' re going to apply sanctions, we' re going to the UN, we' re doing everything that there is so that we can stop this thing. Quoted in Ruggie, The False Premise..., cit., p. 63.

⁴⁰"The State Department knew that the United States could not lawfully react unilaterally since the Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba did not amount to an armed attack sufficient to trigger the right of self defence in Article 51 of the UN Charter", Chayes and Chayes, op. cit., p. 192

⁴¹Downs and Lida, cit., p. 22

⁴²Roberts and Kingsbury, cit., p. 5

⁴³According to Keohane: "it is not sufficient to treat the preferences of individuals as given exogenously; they are affected by institutional arrangements, by prevailing norms and by historically contingent discourse among people seeking to pursue their purposes and solve their self-defined problems", Keohane, International Institutions..., cit., p. 161

⁴⁴Caporaso in Ruggie, p. 77

⁴⁵Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie: *International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State*, International Organization, V. 40, 1986, pp. 753-775. Janice Gross Stein agrees: "choice is contextual, embedded in a specific historical and political setting", op. cit., p. 30. Haas claims that: "interests cannot be articulated without values. Far from values being pitted against interests, interests are unintelligible without a sense of values to be realized", Haas: When Knowledge..., cit., p. 2

⁴⁶Alexander Wendt: *Anarchy Is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, International Organization, V. 46, 1992, pp. 391-425. John Mueller: *The Impact of Ideas on Grand Strategy*, in Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, ed.s: The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1993, p. 52; Ruggie: The False Premise..., cit., pp. 62-70; Alexander Wendt: Constructing..., cit.

⁴⁷Axelrod and Keohane, cit., p. 85

⁴⁸For example, Wight states that "it would be impossible to have a society of sovereign states unless each state, while claiming sovereignty for itself, recognized that every other state had the right to claim its own sovereignty as well. This reciprocity was inherent in the Western conception of sovereignty", Martin Wight, *System of States*, cit., p. 135

⁴⁹Doyle in Downs, cit., pp. 162-3

⁵⁰Critical theorists include Richard K. Ashley, Robert W. Cox, Friedrich V. Kratochwil, John G. Ruggie, Alexander Wendt and John A. Vasquez

⁵¹Claude, Swords..., cit., p. 227. For Flynn and Sheffer: "if any obligation binds all nations under international law today, it is the prohibition of aggression", Flynn and Sheffer, cit., p. 85

⁵²As Michael Howard has pointed out, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact were explicitly defensive alliances. In Roberts and Kingsbury: op. cit.

⁵³The concept of "deep belief" is George's; cfr. Alexander George: The Operational Code, cit.; Durkheim's idea of "conscience collective" has been recuperated by G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan: *Socialization and Hegemonic Power*, International Organization, V. 44, N. 3, Summer 1990, pp. 283-315

⁵⁴John Mueller: Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War, New York, Basic Books, 1989, pp. 9-12. Cfr. also Carl Kaysen: *Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay*, International Security, V. 14, N. 4, 1990, pp. 42-64

⁵⁵Mueller, cit., p. 78

⁵⁶Mueller, The Impact..., cit., p. 61

⁵⁷Cfr. Kaysen, cit.

⁵⁸Peter Calvocoressi: *Attitudes to War: Is the XX Century Different?*, International Relations, V. 9, N. 6, November 1989, p. 476. Calvocoressi claims that war has not been eradicated from the international system, but increasingly limited, p. 477. Also Barry Buzan claims that the emergence of collective security is related to the idea that war is no longer a legitimate instrument of policy. Buzan, People, States and Fear..., cit., p. 279

⁵⁹Claude, Swords..., cit.

⁶⁰"Statesmen nearly always perceive themselves as constrained by principles, norms and rules that prescribe and proscribe varieties of behaviour"; Hopkins and Puchala in Krasner, cit., p. 86s

⁶¹Roberts and Kingsbury, cit., p. 7

⁶²Kupchan in Downs, cit., p. 51

⁶³Holsti, cit., p. 45. In Jervis' opinion: "if actors care about what happens to others and believe that others care about them, they will develop trust and can cooperate for mutual benefits", Jervis, Perception and Misperception..., cit., p. 82-3

⁶⁴Chayes and Chayes, cit., p. 197

⁶⁵Socialization is here defined as a learning process in which beliefs, norms and ideals become standardized and uniformed throughout a given community.

⁶⁶Quoted in Thompson, cit., p. 769

⁶⁷Claude, Power, cit., p. 158

⁶⁸Herz, cit., pp. 87-95

6. THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

* * * *

i. The League of Nations

Collective security -despite the fact that the term was coined only in the 1930's- is not a novel concept and finds its roots in earlier schemes for the prevention of war. Its prehistory lies in the ancient Greek Amphytrionic Leagues and in the Mediaeval Councils which envisaged tight rules for the use of violence and the collective responsibility of all those subject to the rules for their implementation. According to the 1209 Council of Avignon, violators were to be excommunicated, attacked by all other princes and even their subjects should have rebelled against them.

After having been recuperated by Hugo Grotius,¹ the intellectual high water mark of the idea was during the Enlightenment, after the consolidation of the modern state system and at a time of fervour for rationalistic projects. William Penn proposed a Diet of European Sovereigns to act as a tribunal for international disputes. The Duc de Sully alleged that he had arranged a scheme for peace which commanded the hearts and minds of the British and French courts. The most famous scheme for collective security in this period was written by a French delegate to the Peace of Utrecht, Abbé de Saint-Pierre. His "Project du Paix Perpetuelle" stated that:

"a sovereign who shall take up arms before the Union, has declared war, or who shall refuse to execute a regulation of the Society [of European states] shall be declared an enemy of the Society, and it shall make war upon him, 'till he be disarmed, and 'till the judgment and regulations be executed".²

At the Congress of Vienna, an embryo of a formal collective responsibility for the elimination of the causes of wars -then attributed mainly to revolution- was the Holy Alliance. Tzar Alexander proposed an ambitious agreement among all the great powers to support each other against external and especially internal threats. Britain and France, who were suspicious of Russian motives, did not join the scheme which was adopted in a much diluted form only by the three Eastern autocracies of Russia, Austria and Prussia. Instead of the maximalist Holy Alliance, the Congress of Vienna

inaugurated a minimalist Concert of Europe, in which the great powers informally pledged to consult each other in case of crisis.

A watered down version of the Concert survived throughout the Century, but it was not until the First World War that the concept had any real chance of being actually applied in practice. The idea of an international organization to abolish war had already circulated before the outbreak of hostilities. Leon Bourgeois had published a book entitled "Societe des Nations" in 1908 while Professor L. Lowes Dickinson had coined the term "League of Nations" in August 1914. These ideas were the natural continuation of the process of institutionalization of international relations begun after the Congress of Vienna and culminated with the two The Hague Conferences at the turn of the Century.

During the war, the British and French governments had therefore set up special committees to deal with the planning for an organization which would have avoided a repetition of the great conflict they were fighting. In 1916, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, proposed a revitalization of the European Concert of the early XIX Century based on an Anglo-American core. Meanwhile, Robert Cecil sponsored within the War Cabinet the establishment of the Phillimore Committee. The report, together with other contributions such as a famous pamphlet authored by the South African Ian Smuts, was an important blueprint on which the later drafts of the League's Covenant were based. The French equivalent committee was chaired by former prime minister Leon Bourgeois.

However, the impact of the Great War provided a catalyst which was to give a new flavour to this impetus. Firstly, the devastations of the war were largely attributed to a failure of the balance of power policies and to the lack of an institutionalized forum for dealing with international crises. Secondly, the war had witnessed the entry onto the world stage of America as a global power, with its peculiar political culture bent on optimism and on the rejection of the practices of the European tradition. The attempts to construct a new world order at Versailles cannot therefore be considered simply as a continuation of earlier efforts.

The end of a major war is a propitious moment for the establishment of a new institution. The memory of the war is still

fresh in everyone's mind and it is an important incentive to find alternative solutions. The ground is also relatively free from obstacles. The major conflicts of interests have just in fact been resolved by the war while new ones have not yet arisen. Moreover, the distribution of power and of interests are also in an ideal state. The victors have the power to impose new rules and are accustomed to cooperating amongst themselves while the losers have no choice but to accept the new principles.

The peacemakers at Versailles deliberately sought to find an unprecedented solution to the problems connected to anarchy. They had promised to do so to their own public opinions when they had justified the terrible costs of victory arguing that this would have been "the war to end all wars". It is difficult to justify to an electorate the immense sacrifices of a four-years war for less than ideal principles. Furthermore, the victors were also faced with the dangers brought about by the Bolshevik Revolution and with the possible spread of the revolutionary contagion to war-torn Central Europe. The grand vision of collective security was seen as an antidote with respect to the Leninist promises of a proletarian peace.³

The victorious powers were all liberal democracies and they found it congenial to introduce a mechanism for conflict resolution resembling the rule of law on which their internal politics was organized. An autocratic or dictatorial government would have drawn different conclusions from a domestic analogy. Furthermore, as they were in the midst of their transition to mass politics they needed an aura of moral clarity and legitimacy in order to command domestic support for their foreign policies. The inherent normative nature of collective security was particularly appealing to governments which had to gather domestic consensus. A universal organization could be both the justification for past costs and the legitimating forum for future enterprises.

The birth of the League of Nations owes especially to the American President, Woodrow Wilson, who mentioned the idea of collective security as early as 1916, well before the United States' entry into the Great War. Wilson sincerely believed in the possibility of banishing war by international agreement and was in a unique position to impose his views at the Versailles Peace Conference. He

completely dominated the American delegation while the United States enjoyed an enormous degree of prestige after they intervened as a *Deus ex machina* to save the fate of the old continent.

At the prompting of the US President, the Conference decided to draft the Covenant of the League of Nations before discussing any other matter and to include it in the final treaty. Wilson wanted to offer the American Senate a “take it or leave it” choice at ratification between accepting the organization as part of the settlement or rejecting the two together. The Covenant was written in February and March 1919 by an ad hoc committee of the Peace Conference, chaired by Wilson himself, where the different positions of the various countries emerged.

Wilson was the most optimistic and radical about the cause of international institutions. He insisted that the Conference should not be influenced by the “odor of the Vienna settlement” and that an enduring peace was incompatible with the “turgid, selfish, greedy relationships of the old diplomacy”.⁴ His scheme was certainly a maximalist one because the League was seen as a replacement of traditional practices. Wilson was determined to create a multilateral arrangement: “No special or separate interest of any single nation or any group of nations can be made the basis of any part of the settlement which is not consistent with the common interest of all”.⁵

In Wilson’s view, the peace settlement was to lead to the creation of states based on the principle of nationality and self determination. This family of civilized nations would then have joined into a universal League of Nations upholding peace and justice. America therefore proposed a mutual guarantee of independence and territorial integrity. Much reliance was based on the assumed good faith of self-governing nations. The mechanism of eventual enforcement was to be largely and rather optimistically based on publicity and public pressure. The League: “provides for placing the peace of the world under constant international oversight, in recognition of the principle that the peace of the world is the legitimate and immediate interest of every nation”.⁶ According to Wilson, the policies of the Central Powers prior to the outbreak of the war would not have stood two weeks in the face of public scrutiny and moral condemnation.

British proposals were less dramatic and reflected a desire to reconstitute an improved and permanently institutionalized Concert of Europe. More than on collective sanctions, the emphasis was on instruments of conciliation and with the connected "cooling off" period that such an arrangement would have provided in case of crisis. London based its views on its assessment of the causes for the outbreak of war in 1914, which was largely attributed to a breakdown in diplomatic communications and to the haste induced by the speed of military mobilizations. British views were more minimalist than America's. Diplomacy was not to be replaced but improved by the League of Nations.

Also important for Britain was the possibility of territorial revision. After Germany had lost its colonies and its navy with the sinking at Scapa Flow, London had already reached most of its war aims and could afford a flexible approach toward the German question. It therefore acknowledged the German desire for an improvement of the territorial arrangements of Versailles and it looked with a certain scepticism to Wilson's proposals for a guarantee of the 1919 status quo. In Lloyd George's fateful view: "would we go to war over Danzig?"⁷ More than a rigid collective security system, Britain sought a forum for great power consultation and discussion.

France's attitude toward the idea of a League was ambivalent. After four years of devastation, the main problem was not international order in general, but security from Germany in particular. France was therefore interested in a League of Nations only as far as it could offer an effective guarantee against a German revival. For this reason, the French delegate Bourgeois favoured a radically maximalist approach. He proposed in various occasions the establishment of tight military sanctions and of a military organization endowed with a permanent staff and international contingents capable "to overcome, in case of need, any forces which may be opposed to the League of Nations in the event of a conflict".⁸ Since Germany was to be excluded from such an organization, the French proposal basically equated to the continuation of the war-time alliance against Germany.

The French Prime Minister, Clemenceau, did not share Bourgeois' faith in international mechanisms and preferred a more

unilateral approach instead. He therefore insisted on two elements which undermined the credibility of the League from the start. First, he pushed for a very harsh treatment of Germany. Backed by Marshall Foch, the Allied Military Commander, he attempted to reduce Germany's frontiers to the Rhine and obtained a temporary allied occupation of its West bank in order to diminish France's structural vulnerability. Second, Clemenceau insisted for a traditional treaty of guarantee by Britain and the United States, thereby demonstrating that the multilateral security granted by the League was insufficient. As Harold Nicolson, who was present in Paris, wrote: "the Treaty of Guarantee with France had dealt a blow to [Wilson's] Covenant from which that messianic doctrine was never to recover".⁹

In the event, the Covenant was drafted on the basis of the British and American proposals. The two delegations introduced a common draft -the Hurst-Miller proposal- which was used as the basis for discussion. The Covenant emerging from the Conference was therefore an hybrid between the maximalist aspirations of the United States and the less ambitious desires of the British Government. This was due both to British reluctance to enter open-ended commitments and to domestic political considerations in America which led Wilson to avoid a direct challenge to the prerogatives of Congress in declaring war and in disposing of US troops. After the President's brief return to the United States in March, the original draft was amended to appease Congressional worries about its loss of sovereignty. In particular, clear provisions were introduced by which states could withdraw from membership and could resist League action on the basis of their exclusive domestic jurisdiction.¹⁰

In accordance with Wilson's wishes, members pledged in the preamble not to resort to war and to abide by international law. In Articles 12-15 members agreed to settle their controversies by negotiation or arbitration. War was not outlawed, but regulated so that it was illegal to use force before the settlement procedure and a "cooling off" period had been exhausted. Furthermore, according to Article X, the League undertook a guarantee of all members' independence and territorial integrity. The following article invested the League as a whole of the responsibility for implementing the guarantee.

However, the mechanisms of enforcement were left to the discretion of states. Article 5 determined that all substantive decisions were to be reached -despite the protests of France and the smaller powers- by unanimity. Article 16 introduced the notion of economic and military sanctions, but their application was not automatic nor mandatory and depended on the members' best judgment. While the first draft of the Covenant read that: "Should any Contracting Power break or disregard its covenant [...], it shall thereby ipso facto become at war with all the members of the League"; the final draft stated that a violator "shall thereby ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against the members of the League".¹¹ Clearly, the latter highlighted only the right of members to implement collective security if they so chose, while the former expressed their duty to do so.

The Covenant was presented to and approved by the Peace Conference in April 1919 and became operational on January 10th, 1920, with the coming into force of the Treaty of Versailles. Despite the ceremony and great hopes surrounding its birth, its weaknesses were clear from the start. Two features in particular mined the edifice at its foundations. Firstly, the collective security provisions were both too ambitious and too vague. On the one hand, Article X invited -in principle- the League's intervention in any matter which was likely to threaten a change in the status quo. On the other hand, the discretionary and selective nature of sanctions ensured that the League did not have the capability to achieve its objectives.

Secondly, the task was made even more impossible by the tight linkage -in the same treaty- of the Covenant with the territorial settlement of Versailles which ensured German and Soviet disaffection with a peace they did not like. More than peace in general, it seemed that the mechanism had been set up to protect the Versailles settlement in particular. While the first factor brought about divisions between the victors, the latter brought the permanent enmity of the revisionist powers to the whole multilateral structure. Given these two premises, the success of the League was undermined from its very inception.

In the United States, a fierce battle arose over ratification between Wilson's supporters, who saw the League as an instrument

for the United States to exercise its benevolent influence over European affairs in order to avoid the need for another armed intervention, and his detractors in Congress, who saw collective security as a threat to American independence. In the words of Senator Borah: "It is a deliberate attempt to sell our country to the domination of foreign powers".¹²

The argument of Republican senators, who commanded a majority in Congress, was two-fold. On the one hand, the United States was to avoid being entangled in any quarrel whenever it may arise. Senator Root explained that: "The people of the United States certainly will not be willing ten or twenty years hence to send their young men to distant parts of the world to fight for causes in which they may not believe or in which they have little or no interest".¹³ On the other hand, the United States did not wish to grant to the Old Continent the right to interfere in the affairs of the New World. According to the leading reservationist, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge: "It is as important to keep the United States out of European affairs as to keep Europe out of the American Continents".¹⁴

The Republican majority in Congress was in fact willing to ratify the treaty and the annexed Covenant provided that the United States included a list of very tight reservations. However, Wilson felt that this would have torn the League's spirit to pieces and preferred to reject a negotiated solution.¹⁵ The Senate therefore failed to ratify the treaty and it inaugurated an era of isolationism, depriving the League of a fundamental pillar. Not only the United States had contributed so much to the intellectual foundations of the organization, but also its presence was necessary -as it had been decisive during the Great War- for an adequate concentration of power on the part of the League.

The American withdrawal reinforced French suspicions that the League did not provide an effective guarantee against German revenge. While the commitment was too much for the United States, it was too little for France. Paris therefore began a course of unilateral and traditional policies which were incompatible with the multilateral character of the Covenant. Firstly, it negotiated a series of defensive alliances with Eastern European countries which replaced its traditional entente with Russia. Secondly, it made an ill-fated attempt

at coercion of Germany with its occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, which countervailed the spirit of collective security.

Aversion to the League was even greater in those countries which despised the Treaty of Versailles. Germany was in the forefront because it had been excluded from the negotiations and because it thought that the harsh settlement contradicted the idealistic statements -like the famous Fourteen Points- made by the allies before the armistice. Popular feelings were so dissatisfied with the "Diktat" that the association of the Weimar Republic with the signing of the Treaty was one of the chief motives behind its overthrow in the 1930's. The wisdom which brought the Quadruple Alliance at the end of the Napoleonic Wars to negotiate the peace together with France so as to give Paris a stake in its maintenance was not followed in 1919. Germany never accepted the status quo of Versailles and even when it became a member of the League for a brief spell between 1926 and 1933, Berlin did not renounce to seek for a revision of its Eastern frontier which would have directly challenged Article X.¹⁶

The intellectual basis for Germany's disaffection with the organization at Geneva are well summarized by the work of Carl Schmitt. According to the German scholar, the Treaty of Versailles was illegitimate because it rested on the presumption of German guilt for the outbreak of the war which he rejected because between equal states there can be no jurisdiction: "war between sovereign states which mutually recognize themselves and which exercise their right to go to war cannot be deemed as a crime".¹⁷ Furthermore, the League was illegitimate because it was not grounded on a *nomos*, which is the "radical title" or the sovereign control of a territory. Schmitt rejected the idea of collective security on which the Covenant was based because aggression in a world of equals was a relative concept, implying that the revision of the status quo could sometimes be a legitimate justification for the use of force.¹⁸ The League was simply an attempt by the victors to dominate the losers of the war:

The Treaty of Versailles "gave origin by no means to a new world order, but it left the world in its preceding disorder, suppressing two European powers, two pillars of the spatial arrangement which had existed until then, and promoted a new partition".¹⁹

Schmitt's own solution, which sinisterly resembled the idea of Lebensraum, was of a world divided into regional blocs, each dominated by a great power endowed with a nomos. The scholar, who supported the Nazi movement, suggested that the precedent was the Monroe Doctrine and was advocating a German Monroe Doctrine for Europe.²⁰

The same argument was echoed in Britain by E.H. Carr's judgment of the League. In his pathbreaking critique of idealism, Carr dismissed the universal principles of the Covenant as hypocritical and just an instrument in the hand of the victorious powers to perpetuate the Versailles settlement. Even international law "cannot be understood independently of the political foundations on which it rests and the political interests which it serves. [...] Morality can only be relative, not universal. Ethics must be interpreted in terms of politics".²¹ Far from guaranteeing the interests of the international community as a whole, collective security was -according to Carr- an attempt on the part of states which had built their favourable position with violence, to remove the main instrument -force- by which that power could be eroded. Collective security was -in short- the expression of the particular interests of the status quo powers. Britain and France were not defending world peace but their own privileged position in the struggle with the revisionist states: Italy, Japan, Germany and the Soviet Union.

"International order and international solidarity will always be the slogans of those who feel strong enough to impose them on others. [...] International government is, in effect, government by that state which supplies the power necessary for the purposes of governing".²²

Also Fascist Italy -despite its position as a victor at Versailles- considered itself as a dissatisfied power rejecting the notion of universal principles in a world of multiple states. In 1923, an Italian delegate at Geneva wrote that:

"Italy cannot but see in the League a force antithetical to the vital necessities of her own future expansion. The League is an organism for the maintenance of peace: i.e. of the territorial

integrity of all states, in their present limits, while Italy is suffocated in its narrow and poor country. [...] It is only natural that England and France should seek to defend the League, standing as they do at the climax of their fortunes. It is equally natural that Italy, deprived as she is of the fruits of her great victory, should regard the League as an international instrument of her own repression".²³

Bolshevik Russia was also naturally opposed to the League. After all, while the Covenant and the Peace were being negotiated in Paris, the same powers were intervening militarily in Russia against the revolution. The Soviet Union did not enter the League until the 1920's because it saw it as an instrument of the imperialist and capitalist states to dominate the weaker states and the oppressed people.²⁴ In the 1930's Moscow, frightened by the rise of Nazism, entered the League and fought for collective security -the very term had indeed been invented by Maxim Litvinov- alongside Britain and France. However, after the Munich Conference had shown all their lack of will, Moscow reverted to its own unilateral course and chose to appease Germany with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The last act of the League was indeed that of expelling the USSR for its invasion of Finland in 1939.

The League failed -in short- because it did not command sufficient support among the great powers. Germany, Japan, Italy and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union were adamantly opposed both to the letter and to the spirit of collective security. France was disillusioned by the mechanisms of enforcement which it did not find reassuring enough. The United States found them too rigid instead and preferred to rely on an isolationist course. The only power which was left to uphold the multilateral principles was Britain. However, London did not have the willingness nor the resources sufficient to guarantee global peace on its own. According to the British Foreign Secretary on the eve of the Second World War, Viscount Halifax, the League "involves dangerously indefinite commitments quite disproportionate to the real security that these commitments give".²⁵

Despite these structural shortcomings, the League of Nations did have a positive impact on international relations in its early years, when Britain and France enjoyed an artificial and temporary position

of primacy. The optimism implicit in the concept was the birthmark of the discipline of international relations which began after the Versailles Conference in the attempt to understand the causes of the Great War. The new institutes in London and New York and all the new chairs in the infant subject were mainly devoted to the study of international organization.

The multilateral rules introduced sufficient goodwill and clout to contribute to the solution of a number of regional issues, such as the Åland Islands dispute between Sweden and Finland in 1920; the Albanian-Yugoslav conflict of 1921, the Corfù incident between Italy and Greece of 1923; the conflict between Greece and Bulgaria in 1925, the war between Bolivia and Paraguay in 1928; the Mosul question between Irak and Turkey; the various clashes between Poland and Lithuania and between Poland and Czechoslovakia. In these instances, the League provided a forum for multilateral discussion, pressure and mediation which was useful to the resolution of the crises.

However, it was also clear during the same period that the League's domain was not universal. The three major events of the early 1920's were not dealt with at Geneva because one of the actors was not a League member. The Soviet-Polish War, the Washington Conference on Naval Disarmament and the Ruhr occupation by France were precluded from multilateral action by the fact that the Soviet Union, the United States and Germany were not members at the time of the events. Even in the case of Corfù, the League simply deferred the matter to the Ambassadors' Conference, which was an informal organization arising from the war-time coalition. In the war between Bolivia and Paraguay, the League's effectiveness was heavily dependent on US support for its deliberations and the eventual economic sanctions. In any case, that war took 100000 lives before it stopped.

In the 1920's there were also various attempts to reform the Covenant and to improve its collective security provisions. In 1923, the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance -presented by Cecil- attempted to strengthen the sanctions regime of Article 16, to devolve to regional powers some of the responsibility for enforcement as well as to produce a genuine disarmament agreement. The proposal was sunk by the Admiralty's reluctance to engage into wider commitments:

“the Naval Staff are opposed to portions of the Navy being practically at the disposal of the League for a series of campaign of indefinite duration and magnitude”.²⁶ Also France was opposed because it resisted the idea of multilateral determination and verification of armaments’ ceilings.

In 1924, the so called Geneva Protocol was introduced for members’ discussion. The agreement sought to close the “gaps” in the Covenant which allowed war in the event the Council did not find a suitable solution to a crisis. The Protocol would have made arbitration obligatory and initiation of hostilities always illegal, even if the League’s Council had reached no definitive conclusion. However, the most important part of the Protocol concerned economic and military sanctions, which -at the prompting of France- were made automatic in case of a conflict. Also the Geneva Pact was rejected mainly because of British reluctance to be drawn into every single conflict, even those provoked by an unjust status quo. Britain felt that -given its leading role- it would have had to pay a disproportionate price for collective enforcement and it wished to make sure that she would not have been involved in wars for the unilateral interests of smaller powers which were exclusively “consumers” of collective security.

The following year, the League reached its zenith because of the newly found agreement of the Western powers with Germany reached at Locarno. The agreement led to the only brief spell of international stability of the inter-war period and to Germany’s entry into the League in 1926. However, even Locarno was not negotiated inside a League framework. The Italo-British guarantee of the Franco-German and German-Belgian borders reflected -yet again- France’s disillusionment with the universal protection offered by the League and its preference for more specific and traditional formats. Significantly, Locarno also concerned only Germany’s Western frontier, leaving the disputed areas in Poland and Czechoslovakia and the status of Austria outside the agreement.

Given the failure of the Geneva Pact to strengthen the second component of collective security -that of the multilateral guarantee- the international community moved on to strengthen its first element, that of the renunciation of war. In 1928, the Briand-Kellogg Pact between France and the United States to renounce force in their

bilateral relationship was soon joined by 63 other states, including Germany, Japan, Italy and the Soviet Union. For the first time in the history of civilization, war was explicitly outlawed by an international agreement. Even if this unprecedented achievement represents the high point of League's idealism in the 1920's, the agreement did not concretely diminish the probability of a conflict. In Carr's bitter words: "the Pact condemned all wars, but it punished none".²⁷

When the Great Depression arrived, exacerbating international relations, the international community was no more prepared to face the forthcoming crisis than it had been before. The economic crisis weakened Britain and France, it further distanced America from the rest of the world and it facilitated the rise to power of radically expansionist regimes in Germany and Japan. When the revisionist powers begun the implementation of their imperial designs in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Albania, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the League powers simply did not have the strength to face these challenges simultaneously, as was later demonstrated by the string of Anglo-French defeats in the first two years of Second World War.

The first major challenge was the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. The action followed an incident in which some Japanese civilians were killed and which had been staged by the Japanese Army, although it was not known at the time. The first League's reaction was to resort to the conciliation mechanisms of Article 11 rather than to impose sanctions on Japan. The Council was in fact following its own wishful thinking that the outbreak of hostilities had been truly accidental. After Japan refused to comply to a call for ceasefire, the League decided to send a fact-finding League Commission under Lord Lytton in January 1932. Military sanctions were excluded due to British weakness in region especially on the mainland and to American unwillingness to support League action in this instance. Meanwhile, the Japanese Army had overrun Manchuria and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in March. The Lytton Report was published at the end of the year and, despite it called for a restoration of Chinese sovereignty, it did not condemn the action of Japan and even recognized its influence in the region. Nevertheless,

Japan withdrew from the League as soon as the report was adopted in early 1933.²⁸

The Manchurian episode was not perceived as a terminal failure because the extent of Japanese ambitions was not clear at the time and because it had been difficult to identify a clearcut violation of collective principles. A different story was the Abyssinian crisis. Italy's aggression was clear and it appeared both premeditated and unjustified to all. However, as will later be seen in detail, the League failed to respond effectively because the main powers were reluctant to strike in Africa one of their allies in Europe. They therefore imposed limited sanctions which were sufficient to alienate Italy but insufficient to stop the aggression. The failure of the League was so complete that it never recovered and it hardly dealt with the following crises in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland which led to the Second World War.

The League was not simply impotent in front of the rise of revisionism, but it also contributed to the débâcle of Western attempts to contain the multiple threats which emerged in the 1930's. Firstly, it forced Britain and France to antagonize Japan, Italy and, in 1939, the Soviet Union, while they would have preferred to ignore their misbehaviour in order to concentrate on the German threat. The League's resources were already hopelessly overstretched and did not need further quarrels. In the Abyssinian case in particular, the League powers lost an ally in the containment of Germany which had proved useful in the two years between Hitler's rise to power and the crisis.

Secondly, the League fostered unrealistic expectations on the capacity of collective security to provide international stability. Public opinion in the West wholeheartedly supported the multilateral organization without considering the costs that effective enforcement would have entailed. The hope was that moral condemnation and mild economic sanctions were sufficient to stop the dictators. When the League demonstrated its weaknesses over Manchuria and Abyssinia, the disillusion was such as to lower the West's guard and to jeopardize further attempts at multilateral or even unilateral containment. If governments and publics had known about their responsibilities in the first place, perhaps they would have gotten

accustomed to them. Instead, the aftermath of the Abyssinian fiasco was appeasement, which was grounded in feelings of impotence and disillusion.

ii. The United Nations

Despite the shortcomings of the League, the idea of collective security was so resilient that the planning for a similar organization began as early as 1941. The failure was seen as a stimulus to try harder rather than as a reason to abandon the enterprise. Months before Pearl Harbor, the United States and Britain stated in the Atlantic Charter that one of their objectives was the establishment of an international institution to promote peace. When the Charter of the United Nations was signed in San Francisco in 1945, hopes were no less high than they had been at Versailles.

There are various reasons for this resilience. Firstly, there was a renewed demand for a mechanism to avoid war. The Second World War had brought devastations even greater than the preceding one and had ended with the first detonations of nuclear devices. If it was the greater interdependence of both peace and war to have prompted the establishment of the League, this was even more necessary in 1945, when the fruits of world trade and the dangers of armed conflict were clearer than they had ever been before. In an atomic world, passivity and laissez faire on security matters were simply not considered as viable options.

It is also impossible to explain the resilience of the idea of collective security despite its own limits and failures without reference to the domestic politics of the founders of the United Nations. As the end point of a process begun with the involvement of mass publics into politics at the beginning of the Century, an increasing number of countries adopted a democratic organization of domestic politics. As noted before, this had a profound impact on collective security as democratic countries value an international forum resembling their internal organization and offering legitimacy to their foreign policies. Public opinions calling for a "Parliament of mankind" were therefore a crucial influence in the establishment of the United Nations.

Lastly, the United States even more decisive in the planning of the United Nations than had been the case in 1919. American might had been displayed with full force and it was clear that, unlike in 1919, it had arrived onto the world stage to stay. America had not lost faith in the capacity of international organization to deal with global problems as it had been sheltered by its own isolationism from the failure of the League. The peculiar ingenuity of the American approach to world politics seemed to have been frozen for two decades only to be defrosted by neo-idealists like the publisher Henry Luce who equated the "American Century" with a new "international moral order".²⁹

The opinion of the administration, led and staffed by Wilsonians like Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, was that the League had failed because collective security had not been applied correctly rather than because it was a mistaken concept in the first place. In other words, it was only necessary to try harder.

In the words of Vice-President Henry Wallace:

"Now at last the nations of the world have a second chance to erect a lasting structure of peace - a structure such as that which Woodrow Wilson sought to build but which crumbled away because the world was not yet ready."³⁰

However, Roosevelt was not as idealistic as Wilson. He knew that public condemnation and moral sanctions were insufficient to stop a determined aggressor if they were not backed up by a credible threat to use military power. The United States had seen the League fail due to the impossibility of commanding sufficient support. This time, the world organization was to have the "teeth" which could have averted the Second World War if used in good time. Deterrence was to have at least an equal role as conciliation in the plans for a future world order. Washington wanted to avoid being drawn, for the third time, into a war which it could have done nothing to stop. The United Nations were therefore seen as cynically instrumental in obtaining the conditions for their own effectiveness: the involvement of the great powers and the agreement among them.

In the first place, it was necessary to avoid a second American retreat into isolation which would have undermined the possibility of gathering sufficient resources. Washington was determined to use collective security to make sure that the United States could intervene before -rather than after- a conflict had started, thereby restricting the costs in blood and treasure. The United Nations offered the general framework for this involvement. A case by case approach would have been painful and at the mercy of a revival of the isolationist spirit as public opinion disliked "entangling alliances" of a traditional nature. Collective security appealed to the American instinct for idealistic enterprises and to the taste for innovative institutions of a multilateral character. An ambitious and universal design more easily justified the psychological and physical costs of a proactive policy than narrow calculations of national interest. In the words of Charles Bohlen -the senior diplomat- the UN was "the only device that could keep the United States from slipping back into isolationism".³¹

Roosevelt wanted to secure US involvement in world affairs from the moods of Congress. He therefore advocated the UN as a way to justify a certain freedom of manoeuvre to the White House in foreign policy. He defended this idea using the metaphor of the police (the US executive) which should not ask the town hall (Congress) for an authorization every time it proceeds to an arrest. He certainly did not want to render the commitment automatic or to transfer sovereignty to a world government. The veto proviso guaranteed both American autonomy and -as the prudent Hull maintained wishing above all to avoid a rejection of the Charter- the approval of Congress.

In the second place, the United Nations could be used to avoid the dissolution of the Grand Alliance after the demise of the common Nazi and Japanese threats. The only way to seduce the Soviet Union into a positive role in defense of the international order was by "offering Moscow a prominent place in it; by making it, so to speak, a member of the Club".³² If the USSR was not reassured by its own position in the new system and was not given a stake in its protection, the tensions between the great powers would have rendered the world organization as powerless as the League had been.

Above all, Roosevelt envisaged a more minimalistic organization than the League. The Wilsonian egalitarian principles of "one state, one vote" were to be formally retained in an Assembly, but the key role was to be that of great powers. "Roosevelt's concept of big-power domination remained the central idea in his approach to international organization throughout World War II".³³ Initially, Roosevelt put forward the idea of "four policemen" -the United States, the Soviet Union, the British Empire and China- each keeping the peace in its own region. He then dismissed this original scheme as too similar to the antiquated idea of spheres of influence and settled for the concept of a great-power collective directorate. From its inception, the UN Security Council was therefore the pillar on which the whole organization rested. The great powers would be its permanent members and their consensus was a prerequisite for any multilateral effort.

American proposals dominated the planning for the United Nations. Of the other great powers, France and China were only nominal ones and it was becoming clear that even Great Britain would not stand on a par with Washington after the war was over. Churchill's own solution resembled Roosevelt's "four policemen" scheme but his generic skepticism of multilateralism precluded a large role for London. The Soviet Union also preferred to concentrate on particular aspects of the organization rather than to set up its own comprehensive proposal. Moscow, not unlike France in 1919, was chiefly concerned on the specific settlement of the German problem and on its own status in Eastern Europe. It therefore attributed a lower priority to wider questions about international order after the war.

The basis of discussion was therefore the American Outline Plan, drafted by Hull and approved by FDR in February 1944. The scheme envisaged a largely ceremonial General Assembly comprising all members and a Security Council composed of the great powers and a number of smaller states on a rotating basis. Roosevelt's idea of a directorate was essentially maintained. The great powers were endowed with a veto power, although its extent was unclear at this time, and would have provided the backbone of any collective effort. It was in fact "a hybrid design: [...] a universal security organization grafted onto a concert of power".³⁴

The plan was discussed by an American, a Soviet and a British delegation at Dumbarton Oaks in the Fall of 1944, where most major issues were settled. An outstanding problem remained the question of the extent of the veto power. Britain wanted it to restrict it to those situations in which a member was not an interested party in a dispute, while the Soviet Union -fearing isolation- preferred an absolute veto right. An American mediation succeeded at the Yalta Conference the following February according to which the permanent members maintained their veto powers even on those deliberations directly affecting them, but they could not use it on procedural matters. In other words, a great power could stop any collective action but it could not avoid a multilateral discussion of a certain issue. As part of the compromise, Moscow obtained two extra seats in the Assembly for Ukraine and Bielarus.

When the UN Conference met in San Francisco in April 1945, the big three adhered to the Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta bargains and resisted amendments proposed by the smaller powers aimed at restricting the powers of the Council and at enlarging those of the Assembly. Instead, the minimalist character of the Charter was further reinforced as the early signs of the Cold War which followed were already affecting the enthusiasm for multilateralism. The United States suggested the insertion of the right to individual and collective self defence which -in its explicit form- suggested the idea that multilateral security might not always be applied. The Conference also excluded the concept of permanent UN military forces and settled for the idea of *ad hoc* agreements with individual countries negotiated on a voluntary basis.³⁵

Neither the League nor the UN were maximalist organizations as they did not fundamentally challenge the sovereignty of members, which is explicitly protected in article 2, comma 1 and 7, of the Charter. In general terms "the gap separating the League of Nations and the United Nations is not large".³⁶ However, this does not mean that there are no differences between the two organizations. For one thing, the United Nations was not coupled with the peace settlement in order to avoid the linkage between collective security in general and a particular *status quo* which had haunted the League in the inter-war period. The UN was therefore endowed with an increased degree

of flexibility which could be used to adapt the organization to changed circumstances.

The final version of the Charter was a more complex document than the Covenant. Apart from the fact that the United Nations was entrusted with a wide range of political, economic and social duties, virtually unthinkable in 1919, even the collective security mechanism set up in San Francisco was elaborate and variegated. According to Article 39, the Security Council can either recommend members to take action against an aggressor or even mandate economic and military sanctions binding on all members. As in the League's document, states pledged in the preamble to renounce the use of force and to uphold this principle collectively. However, there are in Chapter VII of the Charter two different routes for implementing a multilateral peace.

15 } Firstly, the Security Council can recommend or authorize the enforcement of its resolutions. Secondly, unlike in the Covenant, the Security Council could recommend measures by majority vote and could even impose to members to take economic or military measures, as stated by Articles 41 and 42. The implementation of multilateral policies is not optional or voluntary, but a duty for all members under Article 25 of the Charter. Furthermore, unlike in the League, there ~~are~~ no proviso for withdrawing from the organization. However, all crucial decisions of this sort are subject to the veto of any of the five permanent members. No event triggers automatically a multilateral reaction as only the Security Council can determine the existence of a threat to peace. If there is no agreement in the Council, Chapter VII is simply inapplicable and all that remains are the traditional conciliation mechanisms of Chapter VI.

The philosophy of the two organizations can be described using the metaphors of the great classics of the social contract. The Covenant was a Lockean document as it more heavily relied of the goodwill of members. Military sanctions were an *extrema ratio* and were left to the voluntary implementation of members which could withdraw at will from the organization. On the contrary, the UN -designed after the disillusion of the inter-war period- was a more Hobbesian organization. The use of force is much more central in the Charter than in the Covenant. States were obliged to comply to the

deliberations of the Council and could not withdraw from the organization. Nevertheless, the Hobbesian nature of the UN was tamed by the flexibility ensured by the veto power, which could spare the organization an automatic type of reaction.

In a strictly minimalist fashion, the Charter determined that the United Nations could act if the great powers agreed but could neither manufacture that consensus nor act without it. When the Grand Alliance showed its first signs of collapse, the new organization had to adapt itself to the circumstances. Everything rested on the directorate of great powers, if these disagreed, there was little left for the United Nations to do. The edifice of the Charter itself was left unfinished as the Military Staff Committee composed of the Chiefs of General Staff of the permanent members' armed forces collapsed while the agreements between members and the Security Council under Article 43 for earmarking national troops for multilateral use were not concluded.

The disillusion with collective security is epitomized by the search of security relationship outside the multilateral framework which was undertaken by both sides in the years following 1945. Despite frequent references to the United Nations and to multilateral principles, the American initiatives for the containment of the Soviet Union culminating in the establishment of NATO as well as Moscow's responses, were all motivated by the traditional concerns of competition with an identified and specific adversary. The only article in Chapter VII which was widely used between 1945 and 1988 was Article 51, which expressed the right of individual and collective self defence and which therefore somehow contradicted the collective security spirit of the Charter. The UN was impotent in front of the bipolar struggle and what was originally thought to be the exception of Article 51 soon became the rule.

The failure of the collective security system is also reflected in the intellectual academic and editorial debates. Whereas in the inter-war years the infant discipline of international relations had been heavily influenced by the idealism of Wilson's ideas, after the Second World War a new breed of realist thinkers brought about a new and more skeptical consensus. The explanation for the failure of the League was not to be found in the mistaken application of collective

security, but in the concept itself. Not only had the multilateral principles of the organization in Geneva been impotent in front of the fascist aggression, but they had been positively counterproductive as they had lured the Western powers into a false sense of security which had left them unprepared. It was the "lesson of Munich" which chiefly motivated this pessimistic view of the United Nations.

Some, like Walter Lippmann and George Kennan, condemned the characteristic legalism of the United Nations as a recipe for disillusion in an imperfect world or even as a stimulus to dangerous moral stances without the flexibility necessary in a world of sovereign equals. Others, like Hans Morgenthau, plainly attacked the proposition that the collective and national interests could be compatible and dismissed as self-defeating the idea that the first could or should prevail over the latter. Only a prudent defence of the national interest and a careful maintenance of the balance of power could hope to achieve a precarious peace.

The emergence of the Cold War and the consequent stalemate in the UN seemed to lend strength to this view. The United Nations was involved in the first crises of the Cold War, when an increasingly competitive relationship between the Soviet Union and the West was determining the boundaries of the two blocs. The tensions in Iran and Greece were reported to the Security Council in January and May 1946, respectively. However, the Soviet Union's predictable obstructionist tactics inhibited any decision. Both matters were solved outside the institutional framework and the latter was brought by the United States -in September 1947- to the General Assembly, where it became an item of propagandist speeches on both sides. It was immediately clear to all that the UN could not stop the Cold War.

From the beginning, the features of multilateral politics in the Cold War were set. Given the particular nature of bipolarity, in which all crises tend to become items of the central competition between superpowers because one's gain is the other one's loss, almost all security matters were beyond a decision by the Security Council. On no issue could the UN find its prerequisite of great power consensus and it was therefore impotent and incapable of substantive decision. However, the superpowers recognized the organization's potential for

gathering political support for their policies and for embarrassing their adversary.

This was especially true for the United States, which had wanted more than any other state an organization for collective security and whose democratic politics encouraged at least a multilateral smokescreen for their policies. A stand for universalist motives was widely more popular with Congress and public opinion than a traditional "entangling" alliance would have been. The use of the UN on the part of Washington was also convenient given the large majority that the Western camp enjoyed in the organization's bodies in the early years of the Cold War. It was believed that Washington could count on 40 out of 51 votes then in the General Assembly. The United States was therefore willing to use the UN as a tool to strengthen its own coalition in the bipolar struggle.

As will be seen below, the zenith of this attitude was in the occasion of the Korean War, in which Western troops fighting against the Communist aggression were formally placed under the UN banner. The Korean operation was not a classic case of collective security as both camps intervened in the crisis as expected by purely unilateral motives. Nevertheless, it was the only instance during the Cold War in which the provisions of Chapter VII were applied. Many neutral and non aligned nations supported the Western action in defence of South Korea and public and allied support for Washington's stance was probably higher than it would have been outside a multilateral framework. Recognizing this, the Truman administration was careful not to erode the impression that the United States was fighting for collective security rather than against its communist enemy and -short of altering the fundamental tenets of its policy- was even prepared to go out of its way to do so.

The Korean War remained an exception because it had been possible only due to the fortuitous absence of the Soviet delegate from the Council. From then on, the collective mechanisms were allowed to work only when they suited both sides. The United Nations could thus perform a number of ancillary duties as when it sponsored and facilitated the negotiations on the status of Indochina at Geneva after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Nor was collective security completely ignored even if it embarrassed the Western camp, as when

the United States led the multilateral condemnation of Britain and France over the Suez episode despite their alliance. Nevertheless, when an issue was crucial to the logic of the Cold War and it threatened a direct confrontation between the superpowers, the UN was excluded from central considerations. In 1956, in the occasion of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles bitterly remarked: "Does anyone in his senses want us to start a nuclear war over Hungary?"³⁷

A new turning point in the role of the organization in world politics occurred in 1960, with the entry of 16 new African states, soon followed by 10 more. The United Nations had dealt from the very beginning with the issue of de-colonization, when it was faced with the question of Palestine, Indonesia and the former Italian colonies in Africa. The erosion of the French and British empires gave new impetus to this vocation. UN membership became the end point of the process of independence. Later -under the pressure of third world majorities in the Assembly- the institution became a force in its own right in encouraging and supporting independence movements. Although this may have been a desirable process on its merits, the effect on the collective security function was more dubious. The General Assembly no longer reflected the realities of power in the international system. Since neither bloc could safely expect to gather a majority, they both chose to ignore the organization -and the resolutions passed by a non-aligned and often radical General Assembly- altogether.

The UN remained a forum for scoring propaganda coups with the non-aligned nations and with world public opinion, but it also remained hopelessly excluded from the crucial events of the 1960's and 1970's. For example, in the occasion of the Cuban crisis, the United States used a public and televised meeting of the Security Council to show the satellitary evidence of Soviet missiles on the island, thereby embarrassing the Soviet Union. Similarly, Moscow exploited the public forum during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 in the Middle East, when it offered its troops to the United Nations in order to separate the Israeli and Egyptian armies. However, both crises were eventually solved outside the multilateral framework by the direct contact between the superpowers.

Despite its irrelevance in the solution of major crisis, the UN was capable of adapting to the new situation and found itself a role suited to the Cold War. It was in fact in both superpowers' interest that regional crises did not escalate into global confrontations, as it had happened over Cuba and the October War. Instead of contributing autonomously to the resolution of a crisis, the United Nations concentrated on facilitating the solutions found by others, most notably the superpowers themselves. In doing so, it exploited its newly acquired status of impartiality, inconceivable when the United States and its allies dominated the votes in New York. In a way, the United Nations' very impotence was a guarantee of its neutrality and could be exploited to its own advantage.

Specifically, the UN could dispatch peacekeeping contingents which could not enforce a ceasefire, but could help maintaining one once it was in place. What the "blue berets" offered was a small and inconspicuous military presence guaranteeing a neutral and fair treatment of both parties. Peacekeeping was impartial and passive, and it therefore fell short of the hopes of collective security proponents, but it was nevertheless an innovative and creative multilateral method of conflict resolution.

There were fifteen "Chapter six-and-one-half" missions (called so because they were military operations short of the active use of force of Chapter VII) during the Cold War, eight of which were simply observers operations. Five missions involved more than 3000 troops and were: the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Egypt between 1956 and 1967; the United Nations Congo Operation (ONUC) between 1960 and 1964; the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in place since 1964; the UNEF-II in the Middle East between 1973 and 1979; and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) established in 1979. These missions did not bring peace about as they required the consent of the parties in order to operate, but they enhanced the stability of a settlement as they guaranteed both parties and increased the political liabilities of a breach. Especially in the case of the three Middle Eastern operations, they have genuinely contributed to defuse potentially dangerous situations.

In the mid-1980's, the Cold War unexpectedly turned toward its end. Moscow could no longer keep up the costs that the bipolar competition entailed and the arrival of a new leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev catalyzed the efforts to exit from the conflict which was bringing the Soviet Union to bankruptcy. Characteristically, the United Nations was not involved in this systemic change brought about by Soviet domestic conditions which forced a new leadership to pursue more cooperative policies. In 1986, the two superpowers in Reykjavik decided to scrap intermediate-range missiles, in the first agreement which actually reduced force levels since 1945. In 1988, Moscow unilaterally decided to withdraw from Afghanistan. Also in 1988, Gorbachev announced at the United Nations -which was involved as a mere audience- a reduction in its conventional forces without expectation of an American reciprocation. Finally, the Soviet Union decided to withhold from intervening to suppress the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989-1990, reversing previous decisions to bloc militarily any attempt at autonomy and reform in the countries of the Warsaw Pact.

However, also characteristically, the newly found consensus among the superpowers was reflected in an increased role for the United Nations. Although the UN is impotent if great powers disagree -as it did not stop the Cold War nor it actively contributed to its end- it becomes a useful instrument of conflict management once the great powers are already willing to collaborate. The high point of this process was the multilateral intervention in the Gulf in which the Security Council authorized a US-led coalition to use force to enforce UN resolutions. Iraq's aggression of Kuwait was successfully reversed and the world seemed ready for a new era of stability and cooperation.

A number of regional conflicts in which multilateral attention had been precluded by reciprocal vetoes could now finally be considered by the United Nations. Peacekeeping activities were therefore increased exponentially from five in 1988 to 17 in 1994. It was not only a matter of quantity. Traditional concepts of peacekeeping were stretched to include missions with multiple purposes not restricted to monitoring a ceasefire. Unlike before, UN personnel was also unprecedentedly engaged in domestic affairs as for

example in Cambodia where they took charge of large parts of the civil administration. Also the principle of the consent of the parties was abandoned. In Kurdistan, Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, the UN authorized the use of force or intervened directly even without a previous ceasefire and without the invitation of the combatants.

However, the activism soon backfired. The operation to protect a safe haven in Kurdistan faced the increasing determination from Baghdad to avoid a secession. The intervention in Somalia failed because of the lack of an indigenous central government capable of controlling the situation. Food supplies were successfully delivered, but the unwillingness of the countries contributing to the operation to take charge of the administration of the country led to a premature departure of Western troops. The losses in Somalia also led to an increasing reluctance on the part of the United States to intervene abroad, as was testified by the delays in the operation to restore democracy in Haiti.

Above all, the UNPROFOR mission to former Yugoslavia undermined the optimism which had followed the Gulf War. The blue helmets were inhibited by the contradictory pressures of public opinion, which wanted a decisive resolution to the war, and the constraints of a peacekeeping and humanitarian mandate, which forced the troops to maintain an impartial posture in a war-zone. After four years of difficulties, the deadlock was broken only when NATO planes decided to break the impartial outlook of the operation and pushed the Bosnian Serbs to accept a ceasefire in the Summer of 1995. However, the inability of the United Nations to deal effectively with the crisis was a major blow to its credibility.³⁸

“Coming on the heels of a United Nations involvement in Somalia that, rightly or wrongly, was seen as an example of UN ineptitude, the Bosnian episode, in which UN peacekeepers were chained to fences as human shields, deeply hurt the image of the organization as an effective tool for the maintenance of international peace and security”.³⁹

1995 was the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The international community still seemed to be uncertain about the future of the organization and of its collective security

principles. On the one hand, the UN remained prominent on the foreign policy agenda of most countries. Following an invitation of the Secretary General, many countries have filed proposals for the reform of the organization with the aim of updating its form to contemporary realities and of increasing its effectiveness. On the other hand, states remained reluctant to commit their scarce resources to foreign interventions especially at a time, after the Cold War, in which public opinion demands to cash in the peace dividends. A stark example is the considerable debt which the United States has accumulated vis-a-vis the organization. All states favour the United Nations and its multilateral principles, but all also prefer that others pay for the costs of its functioning. 77 years after its introduction into the international system, collective security is still seen in the same way as it was then: a concept with an eternally promising future.

NOTES:

¹See Chapter 3, Section 2, above.

²Quoted in Stephen Possony: *Peace Enforcement*, The Yale Law Journal, V. 55, N. 5, 1946, pp. 918

³Arno Mayer: *Wilson Vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918*, The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1963, passim

⁴Quoted in Holsti, *op. cit.*, p. 184

⁵Quoted in Woodrow Wilson: *Selections for Today*, edited by Arthur B. Tourtellot, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1945, p. 174

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 211

⁷Paul Mantoux: *Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Proceedings of the Council of Four*, Geneva, 1964, p. 82

⁸Article III (i) of the Report of the Committee appointed by the French Government to examine the basis of a League of Nations, quoted in Ruth Henig: *The League of Nations*, London, 1973, p. 31.

⁹Harold Nicolson: *Peacemaking, 1919*, Constable & Co., London, 1933

¹⁰Other amendments were a specific affirmation of the Monroe doctrine and an acknowledgment that states could refuse to become mandatory powers if they so wished.

¹¹Alan Sharp: *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*, Macmillan, London, 1991, p. 51

¹²Quoted in Lloyd E. Ambrosius: *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 139

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 148

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 162

¹⁵According to one of the major historians of the treaty fight: "In making up the personnel of the Peace Commission, he [Wilson] lost sight of the Senate. In making plans for the new and enduring peace, he lost sight of the American people", Thomas Bailey: *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace*, Macmillan, New York, 1944, p. 109

¹⁶Stresemann's letter to the former German Crown Prince of September 7th, 1925 mentions "the readjustment of our Eastern frontiers, the recovery of Danzig, the Polish corridor and a correction of the frontier in Upper Silesia" as one of the three "great tasks" of German foreign policy; quoted in Henig, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60

¹⁷Carl Schmitt: *Il Nomos della terra*, Adelphi, Milano, 1991 p. 337 [my translation]

¹⁸Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 358, 361, 363

¹⁹Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 307

²⁰Suganami, *op. cit.*, p.

²¹Carr: *op. cit.*, pp. 179, 21.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 51, 107

²³Quoted in Henig, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 60-1

²⁵Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 14

²⁶Quoted in Henig, *op. cit.*, p. 51

²⁷E.H. Carr: *International Relations between the Two World Wars*, Macmillan, London, 1947, p. 121

²⁸David Armstrong: *The Rise of International Organization: A Short History*, Macmillan, London, 1982, pp. 30-1

²⁹Quoted in Torbjörn L Knutsen: *A History of International Relations Theory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992, pp. 216-217

³⁰Quoted in Ambrosius, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-3

³¹Charles E. Bohlen, quoted in Arthur Schlesinger Jr.: *Back to the Womb? Isolationism's Renewed Threat*, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1995, p. 4

³²John L. Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 9

³³Robert A. Divine: *Roosevelt and World War II*, 2nd ed., New York, Pelican, 1971, p. 58

³⁴John Gerard Ruggie: *Peacekeeping and US Interests*, *The Washington Quarterly*, V. 17, N. 4, Fall 1994, p.177

³⁵Holsti, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-267

³⁶Leland M. Goodrich: *From League of Nations to United Nations*, *International Organization*, V. 1, N. 1, March 1947, p. 2

³⁷Anthony Clark Arend: *Pursuing a Just and Durable Peace: John Foster Dulles and International Organization*, Westport Ct., Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 189

³⁸Adam Roberts: *From San Francisco to Sarajevo: The Un and the Use of Force*, *Survival*, V. 37, N. 4, Winter 1995-96, pp. 7-29

³⁹Marten Van Heuven: *Understanding the Balkan Breakup*, *Foreign Policy*, N. 103, Summer 1996

7. THE ABYSSINIAN CRISIS

* * * *

i. History

The Abyssinian crisis marks the zenith and the nemesis of the League of Nations efforts to provide collective security in the inter-war years. Never before had the expectations been so high on the capacity of an international organization to deal with a major crisis. The following disillusion was so great that the League never recovered from failure.¹ "The blow suffered by the League was instant and fatal".² Yet the crisis was the ideal test case for collective security: a member state -Italy- had committed a blatant and unequivocal act of aggression against another member of the League, Abyssinia. Furthermore, Italy's war effort was obviously vulnerable to sanctions given the enormous logistical difficulties entailed in a major military operations sustained from a mainland thousand of nautical miles distant.

The Abyssinian crisis was indeed an instance of collective security. It was in fact the only time that Article 16 of the Covenant was invoked. Although the measures adopted stopped short of war, the League did condemn Italy as the aggressor and sanctions were imposed in a multilateral fashion only because there was a collective security system to prescribe them. Not only did the major League powers -Britain and France- have no direct interest in Ethiopia, but Italy's condemnation was even against their interest because Italy was one of their allies. However, in the event, aggression was not stopped and Italy annexed Abyssinia in a fashion typical of earlier centuries.

Italian designs over Abyssinia were not a novelty. Italy had already attempted to colonize the country -which was the only one in Africa independent from European empires- at the end of the XIX Century but had suffered a humiliating defeat at Adowa in 1896. When Benito Mussolini decided to adopt a more expansionist policy at the beginning of the 1930's, Ethiopia was therefore an obvious choice.³ The first serious plans for invasion were developed in 1932 when Fascism in Italy could be said to have established a stable hold over the domestic political landscape and when the Anglo-French hegemony over Europe -which had restrained Italy in the 1920's- was already being put in doubt.

In 1934 -after Hitler's rise to power had dramatically changed the flavour of international relations- Italian policy focused primarily on Europe and especially on Austria. The Austrian Prime Minister since 1932, Dolfuss, was a devout admirer of the Duce and his country was almost an Italian satellite looking for protection from a growing Nazi menace. The Austrian Nazi party had indeed been outlawed -on Italian advice- in 1933. The Austro-Italo-Hungarian agreement of March 1934 was an alliance which underlined Italian influence in the danubian area. When, on July 25th, the Austrian Nazis attempted a coup with German support and murdered Dolfuss, Italy therefore reacted against the prospect of some kind of Anschluss between Austria and Nazi Germany. In a remarkable show of force, Mussolini sent two alpine divisions to the Brenner pass on the frontier between Italy and Austria and Vienna's independence from Germany was -for the time being- guaranteed.⁴

The episode provided Mussolini with a great opportunity. He had accumulated a considerable amount of political capital because he had demonstrated to Britain and France the utility of Italy in the containment of an aggressive Germany. Mussolini concluded that the time was ripe for the African adventure he had been planning. Germany was strong enough to keep the Western allies preoccupied to keep a good relationship with Italy while it was not strong enough to represent an immediate threat to Austria. At the end of 1934 Rome therefore took the decision to invade Abyssinia.

At the end of November a frontier incident occurred between Italian and Ethiopian troops at the Wal Wal wells which were situated in a disputed area between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. On December 14th, Ethiopia reported the dispute to the League of Nations. Italy used the incident in stead as a casus belli. In a secret memorandum of December 30th Mussolini informed the Chiefs of Staff that Italy would have initiated hostilities against Abyssinia "as soon as our military preparations will give us the certainty of victory".⁵ Mussolini explained that Italy should seek the complete annexation of the country and should seek it before the window of opportunity in Europe was closed.⁶

The memorandum also spelled out the importance of obtaining British and French acquiescence to the enterprise. Italian diplomatic

preparations were intensified. In January 1935 Mussolini met in Rome with the French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval.⁷ In exchange for Italian support in case of German rearmament, which included plans for joint staff talks between General Gamelin and General Badoglio to be held in the summer, Mussolini obtained a statement of French lack of interest in Ethiopia. According to E.H. Carr: "France stood so much in need of Italian friendship in Europe that she was prepared to make almost any concession in Africa."⁸ Although Laval may have been ambiguous, Mussolini took the results of the talks as a "green light" for the operation. According to the diary of a major Italian diplomat, the final decision for the invasion was taken only after the meeting and it was "a decision which puts at stake the future of the regime".⁹ A similar approach was attempted with Britain when the Italian Ambassador to London, Grandi, saw Vansittart on the 29th of January, although the British reception of Italian intentions was cooler.¹⁰

On the 16th of March Ethiopia reiterated its request to the League's Council to deal with the dispute but -again- it was turned down.¹¹ The main focus of diplomacy returned to Europe because on the same day Hitler unilaterally declared that conscription was to be reintroduced in Germany, despite the fact that such a measure had been explicitly forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. Britain, France and Italy met at a conference in Stresa in April condemning the German move and declaring their intention to resist to further violations of Versailles and of Locarno.

Exploiting his new position as a fundamental pillar of European peace, Mussolini sought further assurances for his plans over Abyssinia. When the discussion moved to the necessity of proclaiming the determination of the three powers to protect international stability, Mussolini stressed that the stability under consideration was circumscribed to Europe. He then took the following silence as further proof of Western acquiescence. In Carr's words:

"The British delegates [at Stresa], preoccupied with Europe, were doubtless unwilling to sound a discordant note by mentioning the unwelcome Abyssinian problem. But their silence in face of undisguised Italian preparations for war was interpreted by Mussolini to mean that Great Britain, like

France, was content to regard his African venture with a benevolent, or at least an indifferent, eye."¹²

Mussolini was blackmailing the West into tolerating his African ambitions with the threat of withdrawing his support for their European policy.

In the meantime, the Ethiopian dispute had again reached the Council in Geneva where Italy refused mediation by the international organization and offered bilateral negotiations instead under the Italo-Ethiopian agreement signed in 1928. Italy, being the stronger power, preferred a direct confrontation in which she could exploit the disparity to her advantage. In the hope that the two countries involved found an agreement, the League of Nations preferred not to intervene in a dispute which at the time did not seem necessarily to lead to the use of force. This decision was confirmed in a meeting in May in which the formula of arbitration was preferred to that of open discussion in the Council. It was not until the end of July -eight months after the initial Ethiopian appeal- that the League did not directly consider the matter.¹³

Despite Mussolini's hopes, which had led in May to an intensification of military preparations in East Africa,¹⁴ Britain had not given Italy a free hand on Abyssinia. Nevertheless, London wished to avoid upsetting Italy and preferred a negotiated outcome. At the end of May, the British Ambassador to Rome, Sir Eric Drummond, proposed a protectorate solution on the blueprint of the arrangement regulating British influence in Egypt.¹⁵ At the end of June the Minister for League of Nations Affairs, Anthony Eden, went to Rome with a compromise plan. Italy would annex the province of Ogaden and gain extensive economic rights in the rest of the country. Meanwhile, Britain would compensate Ethiopia with the port of Zeila. Mussolini dismissed the offer because he wanted at least all the non-amharic areas and because Abyssinia would gain access to the sea and protection from Britain. Eden returned to London empty handed.¹⁶

June was a crucial month for the crisis. Firstly, the consolidated relationship between France and Britain showed the first signs of strain. The new Baldwin government was beginning to take a tougher line after the failure of Eden's mediation proposal. This was also due

to the publication of the results of the so-called Peace Ballot at the end of the month.¹⁷ The initiative was a very large survey concerning the League of Nations sponsored by the private League of Nations Union. Almost 40% of British citizens over 18 participated and the overwhelming majority expressed its support for the League and its collective security machinery. The British position paper on Ethiopia -the Maffey report- was accordingly changed from a statement of "no interest" in Abyssinia to one of concern for Italy's aggressive intentions.

The French, who did not wish to lose Italy's support against Germany, just reinforced by a meeting between the Chiefs of Staff Badoglio and Gamelin on military collaboration, objected to this new British stance. Paris was also extremely preoccupied by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement which demonstrated the willingness -on the part of London- of tolerating a limited amount of German revisionism. In June it seemed that while Britain was prepared to close an eye on Germany to concentrate on frustrating Italian designs, France was taking exactly the opposite view. The tension between the two Western allies was also highlighted by the fact that Eden's offer had been proposed without prior consultation with Paris.¹⁸

Germany came into the game in another important respect. On June 11th an Austro-German agreement was signed in which German influence over Vienna was clear and precluded ~~to~~ further convergence. Italy, eager to obtain diplomatic support for her African designs, had not objected. The previous January Mussolini had given his approval to closer German-Austrian relations in a meeting with the German Ambassador to Rome, Von Hassel, and even mentioned to a personal envoy of the Führer his intention of forging an ideological alliance with Berlin against the "bourgeois" powers.¹⁹ The tough containment line of 1934 had been completely reversed.

In July the British government reconsidered its position. By now it was recognized in London that a war between Italy and Abyssinia was a distinct possibility and it was therefore necessary to prepare for that contingency. On the 3rd and again on the 22nd sanctions against Italy in the eventuality of aggression were discussed by the Cabinet. Yet, although the pressure of public opinion for collective security -made salient by the Peace Ballot- was great, the

government decided in another two Cabinet meetings on the 24th and on the 31st that it would have renewed its efforts to find a diplomatic solution in concert with France. The League of Nations provided the occasion when it appealed to Britain and France -as signatories to the 1906 Tripartite Agreement with Italy on East Africa- to negotiate.²⁰

The three parties met in Paris on August 16th. The British and French proposed to put part of Abyssinia under an Italian protectorate and to find an arrangement for the economic and political penetration of the rest. However, the whole scheme was to be put under the supervision of the League. The Western powers could not allow Italy to receive a straightforward mandate and therefore offered a face-saving solution. However, for Mussolini this was not enough and, for the third time, he rejected a solution which was largely favourable to Italy. An American offer of mediation -triggered by a personal appeal of Haile Selassie to President Roosevelt- was also turned down.²¹ The Fascist regime had mobilized such expectations in Italy that a negotiated compromise would be seen as a defeat. On August 14th the Italian Chief of Staff had expressed his reservations about war since Italy could not withstand a British retaliation. Mussolini had replied to the East African Commander De Bono on the 20th that war with Abyssinia was by now inevitable. The Duce would settle for nothing less than a military victory in the field.²²

The failure of the Tripartite meeting made the prospect of war closer and induced the British government to prepare for the worst. On August 22nd part of the Home Fleet was sent to the Mediterranean in order to be able to respond to an eventual Italian retaliation to sanctions. The 144-ship-strong reinforcement was sent as ^{Lu} precautionary measure. The admiralty was not eager to engage in combat with Italy but it was felt that the Mediterranean Fleet was not sufficient for eventual enforcement operations. On the 24th, the Cabinet decided that it would react -short of war- to a direct challenge to the League. The dispute between Italy and Abyssinia had become a confrontation between Italy and Britain.²³

However, London had not lost hope for a peaceful way out to the crisis. The League of Nations' arbitration of the Wal Wal controversy had been concluded with a solomonic result at the beginning of September, blaming neither party. The British

government then shaped a double track policy. On the one hand Britain was prepared to defend the collective norms of the League. The Home Fleet arrived in the Mediterranean theatre on the 12th. The day before Foreign Minister Hoare delivered a speech in Geneva emphatically pleading Britain's intention to uphold its obligations under the Covenant. On the other hand, Britain sought to persuade Italy -supposedly softened by Britain's military preparations- to negotiate. On the same day of Hoare's speech Laval and Hoare himself decided that there should be no war between the Stresa allies.²⁴

This strategy did not impress Mussolini, who turned down yet another solution proposed by a League committee composed by Britain, France, Spain, Poland and Turkey. The plan envisaged an Italian mandate over part of Abyssinia, guaranteed by France and Britain. Despite the fact that the Duce's most influential advisers were in favour of acceptance, Mussolini preferred to raise the stakes. He had certainly been informed of the secret meeting between Laval and Hoare. He was probably also influenced by reports of the Italian secret service which indicated the Admiralty's unwillingness to provoke a war with Italy.²⁵

The next step was the invasion of Abyssinia. Hostilities were initiated on October 3rd by a very large Italian force of 400000 men equipped with modern weapons and supported by a conspicuous air-force of 350 planes. The Italians were confronted by only 250000 Ethiopians.²⁶ The response of the League was swift and -initially- remarkably decisive. Four days after the invasion Italy was condemned as the aggressor and within the next two weeks a first contingent of economic sanctions was imposed. The Council also formed a committee -the Committee of Eighteen- to deal with the enforcement of the embargo. It really seemed that this time a collective response would work.²⁷

However, while the public stance of Britain was adamant, behind the scenes it continued its double track policy. At the insistence of France -who wanted a negotiated solution in order not to jeopardize the Stresa front- the Foreign Office specialist on East Africa, Peterson, entered talks with his French counterpart, Saint Quentin, to find a settlement acceptable to Italy.²⁸ France even resisted for some time the British request to use port facilities in the Mediterranean for

the Royal Navy. Only at the end of October did France agree to a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff to discuss military contingencies with Britain.

In November, after the capture of Makallè, the Italian offensive slowed down. Mussolini was seriously worried about the possibility of a long war imperiled by the effects of sanctions. The Lira had to be devalued at the end of November by a quarter of its value. Mussolini therefore relieved the Fascist commander De Bono and replaced him with the charismatic Badoglio. However, the Italians, despite their superiority, suffered an Ethiopian counteroffensive which forced Badoglio into retreat. Meanwhile, Mussolini intensified his telephonic contacts with Laval because he was concerned about an upgrade of the sanctions regime. He also sent General Garibaldi to London at the end of the month to send feelers about a possible compromise.

Britain's double track policy continued. The government ran the campaign for the November general elections on a sanctionist platform and Baldwin was returned in office with a large majority. At the same time, the contacts with France continued both to produce a proposal for settlement and to prepare to stop Italy should the proposal fail. The government had in fact acknowledged -on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff- that any hostilities should be sustained with the active help of the French. Paris was asking for a high price for this possibility: in exchange for French help against Italy, France demanded concrete support on the Rhine against Germany. As Britain had resisted a permanent military commitment on the continent since the end of the Great War, such linkage left the British perplexed.

The climax of the crisis and of London's double track policy was reached in December. On the 2nd, the Cabinet met to discuss the crisis. Ten days later the Committee of Eighteen -who had gathered a momentum of its own- was scheduled to discuss the tightening of sanctions and especially the introduction of an oil embargo which -given Italy's complete dependence on imported fuel- would have crippled Rome's war effort. The oil sanction would most probably have forced Mussolini to back down.²⁹ The Cabinet agreed that a last attempt to negotiate should have been tried before the oil sanction, which was likely to provoke a "mad dog" act of retaliation of Italy against Britain.

7 The ground was set for the Anglo-French talks which brought in extremis to the Hoare-Laval plan, concluded in Paris on the 9th and cleared by the British Cabinet on the same day. The plan envisaged the Italian outright annexation of three provinces -Tigray, Dankalia and Ogaden- with the addition of vast zones for economic exploitation in the South and West of Abyssinia. When it was leaked by a French paper, public opinion was enraged. The proposal rewarded aggression by offering to Italy more than any other plan drawn up prior to the invasion.³⁰ Furthermore, the government had not publicized the negotiations and the public felt it had been double-crossed. Meanwhile, Mussolini had postponed his answer and the plan was killed, before a deal could be struck, by the reaction of the public.³¹ Hoare resigned and was substituted by Eden, who had earned himself the reputation of an uncompromising supporter of the League. The Hoare-Laval plan was the last attempt to find a negotiated settlement.

The new year opened with bad news for Italy which brought Mussolini on the verge of depression and despair. The Ethiopian counteroffensive went on and the Italian troops, after suffering a defeat in the first battle of Tembien, were in some sectors pushed back until Eritrea.³² Secondly, the League of Nations resumed discussions on an oil embargo, which had been delayed by the Hoare-Laval initiative. Thirdly, Mussolini lost an important ally when Laval fell out of power and was replaced by Flandin in a government headed by Herriot.

However, Flandin's policy did not differ substantially from Laval's. When oil sanctions were discussed on January 20th, France asked for a committee of experts to be formed and to assess their effectiveness and technical feasibility. Mussolini had gained a new lease of life. Moreover, the situation on the ground was improving for Italy. Badoglio, also with the widespread use of poison gas and indiscriminate air bombing, regained the initiative and launched the final offensive. On February 15th the Amba Aradam bastion fell to the Italians who also won the second battle of Tembien.³³

On the 12th of February, the League's committee of experts presented its report: oil sanctions would be effective due to Italy's extreme vulnerability. Britain therefore again seized the initiative and on February 25th the Cabinet decided to endorse oil sanctions, which

were finally to be decided upon on March 2nd. Mussolini then used all the diplomatic weapons he had to avoid such a prospect when victory in the war seemed to be within his grasp. On the 24th and again on the 27th of February Italy therefore threatened France to repudiate the Mussolini-Laval and the Badoglio-Gamelin agreements if oil sanctions were introduced. In Abyssinia, Badoglio intensified the final offensive.³⁴

Further sanctions were thus again postponed on March 2nd after a personal appeal by Flandin. They were never to be discussed again because on March 7th Hitler, seizing the opportunity provided by the divisions within the Stresa front, remilitarized the Rhineland, breaching yet another clause of the Versailles Treaty. The attention shifted again on Europe and Britain -and even less France- were no longer prepared to get distracted in Africa. On May 5th Badoglio entered Addis Ababa. On the 9th Mussolini in Rome proclaimed the establishment of the Empire. In June, the British Cabinet -stimulated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain- decided that sanctions on Italy should be lifted. In July sanctions were indeed terminated and the Home Fleet was recalled from the Mediterranean to attend more pressing duties in the North Sea. The Abyssinian crisis was over. The League of Nations had helplessly watched Italy swallow another member state.

ii. Italian Motivations

There are various interesting questions raised by the Abyssinian crisis, some of which are relevant to the discussion on collective security. The first one is why was Italy not deterred by the League's machinery. This leads us to inquire about Italy's motivations. On this matter there are various interpretations, which in turn refer to various levels of analysis. Following a traditional typology of international relations theory, such levels (or, in Waltz's terms, "images") are three: the level of the individual decision makers, the domestic political level and the level of the international system.

Some historians have explained Italian foreign policy in terms of Mussolini's personality.³⁵ They see the Fascist regime as a one-man-show. Since their assessment of the Duce is negative, they also give a negative account of Italian policy in that period. Mussolini was

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an egomaniac obsessed with his own personal position. Foreign policy was simply a tool to increase his prestige leading to improvised and amateurial initiatives. Abyssinia was not the outcome of a thought-out plan but the result of Mussolini's attempts to exploit opportunistically each contingent situation to boost his image. Like Mann's apprentice warlock, Mussolini unleashed forces which he could not control. Once the enterprise had been launched, he could not back down because otherwise he would have lost his face.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, many other (mainly Italian) historians explain Italian policy in the Abyssinian crisis as the result of third image factors.³⁶ While in domestic politics Fascism presented distinct characteristics, in foreign affairs it was "normal" and no different from other countries. Mussolini was therefore motivated only by international political considerations such as the "window of opportunity" opened by the special situation in Europe. Mussolini would have settled also for limited objectives and the blame for the outcome rests on Britain and its lack of a clear policy. For Italy, Abyssinia was indeed a "political masterpiece" as it strengthened the regime internally and brought Italy to empire resisting the pressures of a large part of the international community.

Finally, second image considerations point to characteristics of the domestic political system. Expansion in Abyssinia would therefore have been brought about by such reasons as Fascist ideology and the need to divert public attention from domestic problems. International political factors may have been important for the timing of Italian policy but the real motivations lay elsewhere.

Some highlight the importance of ideology. Fascism was guided by a revision of Marxism in which the Nation replaced Class as the basic unit of analysis. The dialectical notion of struggle, taken from Marx and Sorel, was coupled with the antimaterialistic vision of the nation of Nietzsche and Oriani. In the fight between the "plutocratic" democracies and the young "proletarian" nations such as Italy for a place in the sun, war to conquer vital space for the growth of the nation was necessary and even desirable. Mussolini therefore wanted war because it was consistent with his view of the world and because it could fulfill the ultimate mission of Fascism.³⁷

War was for Fascism the true test of manhood and nationhood. According to Mussolini: "War alone brings up to the highest tension human energies and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it. War is to man what maternity is to the woman. I do not believe in perpetual peace; not only do I not believe in it, but I find it depressing and a negation of all the fundamental virtues of man". It would otherwise be difficult to explain why Italy spent a proportion of national income on defence twice as big as that of France.³⁸ The League of Nations and its mechanisms for peaceful dispute were seen by Mussolini only as instruments in the hands of the weak and corrupt Western satisfied powers to prevent the rise of a new Roman Empire. Far from intending to respect international norms, the Duce thought that only violence could revise this situation. To a major Fascist exponent, Mussolini remarked in December 1935: "A revolution is not such if it does not play at the global level. And the only way it can do so is by war".³⁹

Even more influential domestic factors can be found in the inherent domestic weakness of dictatorships. The lack of established institutional procedures and of elections deprives the regime of ways to test its legitimacy, which is thus an unknown quantity. Dramatic moves in foreign affairs are therefore a way to increase the regime's prestige and to divert possible discontent either for economic distress or for the repressive policies on the opposition. Federico Chabod writes about "the fatal law of dictatorships: success externally is doomed to compensate the loss of liberty internally".⁴⁰ Lowe and Marzari agree: "The conventional explanation of the conquest of Abyssinia as an exasperated nationalism seeking to divert internal discontent into foreign adventures is certainly correct".⁴¹

These interpretations suggest that Mussolini was motivated by reasons which closely related the very survival of his regime rather than the international position of Italy. "Mussolini's main motive appears to have been both political and personal: a demonstration of Italian power to the glory of the regime".⁴² According to Winston Churchill: "his rule, his safety, depended upon prestige".⁴³ The need to bolster his prestige was therefore neither vanity nor a "normal" foreign policy. If motivations were laid at the domestic political level rather than at the international one, then a modification of Italy's

international environment -short of compellence- would not have entailed dramatic consequences. If Mussolini wanted a public military victory for prestige's sake, he also would not have been interested in a negotiated settlement even if it was advantageous for Italy. As the Duce said to an important industrialist in November: "We cannot accept compromises before a military victory".⁴⁴

Clausewitz's maxim that "aggressors always love peace" does not seem to hold in this case. Mussolini wanted war for war's sake because only total victory in the field could provide him with the glory which he felt he needed. Northedge writes that "Mussolini did not want to be prevented from conquering his victim by anything short of superior force. The conquest of Abyssinia was too important in his foreign policy; he had invested too much money, too much of his own political future in it".⁴⁵

The evidence seems to confirm this last argument. Mussolini refused all the plans for peaceful solution which would have spared him the risks of a military adventure and would have allowed him to maintain good relations with Britain and France. Mussolini was after a public and explicit military victory for domestic reasons rather than for the benefits it concretely entailed. All other considerations were therefore secondary. The League powers failed to recognize this and wrongly assumed that the Duce was negotiating in good faith.

Mussolini never appeared to give serious considerations to any of the peace plans. The approaches of Drummond in May, Eden in June, the Tripartite proposals in August and the League's ones in September were all turned down immediately without offering clear counteroffers. The only time in which Mussolini declined to give an immediate answer was in the occasion of the Hoare-Laval plan. In this case the Duce sent the plan to the Fascist Grand Council for approval. However, it is important to point out that the Ground Council's advice was unnecessary and in fact it was not even asked in October when war was declared. Rather, this appears like a move to play for time until the plan was withdrawn, given the fact that the public's reaction was already clear when the proposal was presented to Italy.

Further evidence of Mussolini's eccentric agenda is provided by the repercussions of the Abyssinian crisis on Italy's European situation. If Italy had a clear national interest it was that to keep

Austria independent and benevolent towards Rome. Austria was a valuable buffer protecting Italy's most vulnerable North-Eastern frontier. The Anschluss would have reduced Rome's freedom of maneuver because it would have brought a major revisionist power as a neighbour. This prospect had moved Mussolini to oppose a Nazi takeover in Vienna in 1934.

Italy's Austrian policy was reversed at the beginning of 1935, when Mussolini was planning for the Abyssinian adventure and was anticipating the international isolation which would have ensued. In January, the Duce cleared the way for the June 1935 Austro-German agreement which put the Alpine republic under Germany's sphere. This was reinforced in the 1936 Pact of Steel in which Mussolini again confirmed his acquiescence to Germany's influence over Austria in exchange for Berlin's recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. In 1938, when the Anschluss actually took place, no protests were raised from Rome. As one historian of Fascism puts it: "in one stroke, most of the strategic gains from the First World War were lost".⁴⁶

In other words, Mussolini was prepared to forego one of Italy's most supreme national interests, that of protecting its most vulnerable flank. In purely foreign policy terms, this was not worth the candle but clearly a disproportionate premium on an enterprise with little or no economic or strategic value. In Martin Wight's words: "Abyssinia was a desperate act of self-assertion".⁴⁷ The consequences of the Ethiopian crisis weakened Italy's international position because it alienated her from Britain and France and pushed her into the dangerous embrace of a Germany strengthened by the Austrian quid pro quo. In East Africa Italy fatally overstretched its own scarce resources. Far from being a masterpiece, the Ethiopian episode was therefore motivated by considerations beyond the mere foreign policy goals and rather were at the core of the regime's position within the Italian political scene.

Italy's motivations in 1935 were therefore heterogeneous with respect to the common practice of diplomacy because Italy was prepared to run disproportionate risks to its strategic position in order to reach a prestigious victory in Abyssinia. It follows that, since Mussolini was not following traditional objectives, traditional methods of deterrence would not work. Although economic sanctions,

public condemnation and diplomatic isolation would be sufficient to restrain many states, such measures were insufficient to deter Italy. The international cost of sanctions simply did not match the domestic benefits of victory. Once Mussolini's prestige and that of his regime -his paramount goal- were at stake, probably nothing less than the use of force would have forced him to change his mind.

In this sense, milder sanctions like those actually imposed were even counterproductive because they allowed the Duce to exploit -with a masterful use of propaganda- a "rally around the flag" effect. In front of Italy's isolation, even prominent anti-fascist figures like Benedetto Croce supported the regime for nationalistic reasons. Pirandello devolved his Nobel Prize to the national cause. Although sanctions did impose a cost on the Italian economy, their effect on Italian domestic politics was one of strengthening the hold of Fascism. The regime's popularity reached its peak in those days. In this particular respect, the Abyssinian adventure was indeed a success for Mussolini and his associates.

The problem is that collective security would be useful precisely in those situations in which a state is not deterred by conventional methods. It is no use to relegate Mussolini's Italy in the field of exceptions because it is especially against those exceptions that international security has to be preserved. Collective security through economic sanctions may be useful in many situations. However, it is insufficient to stop a state which -for whatever reasons- is determined to run high risks for the attainment of its goals. It is indeed one of the major problems of collective security that it exposes a deep motivational gap between the culprit, which has high stakes in play, and the would-be enforcers, which by definition have only a tangential and indirect interest in the dispute.

iii. Britain's Policy

This leads us to the question of the behaviour of the League of Nations in the crisis. After all, it seemed at the time that if ever collective security was to work, this was it. Abyssinia was a member of the League and it had appealed to Geneva for protection. Italy's aggression was blatant, unprovoked and could not be disguised as a preventive intervention with defensive motives. Furthermore, Italy's

war effort was vulnerable to sanctions as Italy was heavily dependent on imports for energy and the long supply lines from the mainland to the theatre of operations could easily be choked off by closing the Suez canal.

To examine the reasons why the League failed to stop Italy one needs to look especially at British policy. The effectiveness of collective action was in fact dependent upon the Royal Navy's capability and willingness to enforce it. The smaller powers did contribute to economic sanctions and their armed forces were included in the contingency planning for an eventual military confrontation with the aggressor.⁴⁸ However, the ultimate weight fell on British shoulders as only Britain could credibly sustain an Italian reaction in the Mediterranean. Although it may not have been sufficient, British contribution was certainly necessary, and so it seemed at the time. The League's reactions were thus largely driven from London.

British policy with regard to the Abyssinian crisis can be divided into three phases. In the first one, which lasted until June 1935, Britain preferred to ignore the possibility of conflict in the hope that Italy would content itself with a diplomatic victory. Secondly, when it was clear that war was likely, Britain adopted the double track policy of trying to negotiate a solution with Italy while not renouncing to uphold the principles of the League. In the third phase, after the failure of the Hoare-Laval plan, Britain reluctantly and unsuccessfully tried to tighten the sanctions regime until the Rhineland crisis shifted the attention away from East Africa.

London's diplomacy brought the League into a cul-de-sac. Churchill's comments are sarcastic: "The Prime Minister had declared that sanctions meant war; secondly, he was resolved there must be no war; and thirdly he decided upon sanctions. It was evidently impossible to reconcile these three conditions".⁴⁹ Trying to save both the Stresa front and the League of Nations Britain lost both.⁵⁰ The double track policy was not sufficient to stop Italy but it was sufficient to alienate her.

Certainly, this was partially caused by a misperception of Italy's motives. Britain thought Italy would not jeopardize its position in Austria. "Whitehall's evaluation was that the Italian position in

Europe and Africa was very weak and that Mussolini was therefore vulnerable to international pressure [...] and would find it necessary to accept British terms".⁵¹ Decision makers in London were seriously intrigued by a modern country which refused a compromise solution and risked diplomatic isolation to conquer a distant territory whose worth was -at least- dubious. Foreign Minister Hoare remarked in a meeting with the High Commissioners of the Dominions at the end of July: "If Signor Mussolini would only go slow and proceed by the road of economic concessions and similar securities, he would get all that he could want in a comparatively short time".⁵²

The double track policy may well have succeeded with a less determined adversary. As John Herz has pointed out, even mild sanctions almost forced Mussolini to give up.⁵³ The problem was that Mussolini was "unappeasable" and that Britain chose not to acknowledge this fact. However, there were other and deeper reasons which led to British indecision. On the one hand Britain could not risk a war with Italy without eroding core strategic interests. On the other hand it could not completely and publicly abandon the League of Nations. Given these two constraints, the double track policy was almost a foregone conclusion.

Britain wanted to avoid an open military confrontation both for psychological and for material reasons. The public was opposed to war in general as the Great War had left a bitter memory. Writers such as Remarque had well captured the pacifist mood depicting war as a futile and senseless enterprise. This attitude was compounded by the widespread fear of modern warfare. Pacifist societies were as common before the Second World War as militaristic leagues had been before the First one. The Labour Party, which had reached majority levels twice, had a strong pacifist wing. In 1934, in the East Fulham by-election a pro-rearmament Tory was defeated by a pacifist Labour candidate with a 40% swing. Meanwhile, the Oxford Union voted a motion affirming that under no circumstances it would have fought for "king and country".⁵⁴

Even with a different predisposition toward the use of force, Britain had structural material weaknesses which inhibited its involvement in a League war. Britain simply did not have the resources to preserve the Versailles settlement when this fell under

the attack of multiple revisionist powers. Apart from Italy -which until 1935 had never been considered as a threat- Britain had to deal with the Japanese challenge in the Far East and the latent danger from Germany. As the first two years of the Second World War demonstrate, this was too much for Britain to handle. According to Wight: "It was fear of German action in Europe that inhibited Britain and France from preventing the Italian conquest of Abyssinia".⁵⁵ Even in 1936, Hitler successfully exploited the Abyssinian crisis for the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

As Inis Claude and Raymond Aron have remarked -stressing a point already made by Arnold Toynbee at the time- the conditions for collective security were not met.⁵⁶ Apart from Italy, two other major powers -Germany and Japan- were dedicated to the overthrow of the international system. At the same time the United States was on the sidelines and the Soviet Union -which also had a revisionist programme- was excluded from Anglo-French diplomacy. The distribution of power simply did not concede any security surplus to invest in East Africa.

Although the admiralty was confident that it could successfully manage a war in the Mediterranean, it was strongly opposed to such a prospect. A war would have depleted precious resources especially given Italy's feared (and over-rated) air-force and the Royal Navy's inadequate air-defences. A war would also have absorbed future forces in policing the Mediterranean sea lanes from Italy while the most pressing threats were in Asia and in the North Sea. Not only was London therefore worried about losing an ally but also about enlarging the enemy camp.

The naval build up in the Summer was more a bargaining chip in diplomatic negotiations, an insurance against a "mad dog" act by Italy and a demonstration to public opinion of the government's pro-League policy than a real preparation for war. Of the two measures which would have dramatically stopped Italy and were likely to trigger her reaction, the closure of the Suez canal was never contemplated while the oil sanction was seriously considered only too late and when all attempts at mediation had failed.

While Britain had to confront multiple threats and was reluctant to engage its scarce resources into confronting one of them, it also had

problems finding support from its allies, most notably France. In a multipolar situation, it is easy that states pass the buck of containment onto each other. In this case Britain and France strained their relationship to the point of crisis at least three times. Firstly, when at the end of October the imposition of sanctions led to contingency planning in the event of an Italian retaliation, France delayed the necessary meetings of the Chiefs of Staff. Secondly, when the League was scheduled to discuss the oil sanctions in December, Paris pressed for a further extreme attempt at conciliation which culminated in the ill-fated Hoare-Laval plan. As Hoare explained to the House of Commons, this "was the minimum basis on which the French government was prepared to proceed".⁵⁷ Finally, when Britain unilaterally decided at the end of February that it would have gone ahead with the oil embargo and France opposed this.

France was obsessed with the German threat and was contrary to any enterprise which would have weakened its diplomatic or military position. Under no circumstances would France alienate Italy from the Stresa front or the Laval-Mussolini entente which spared France from deploying 18 divisions on the Franco-Italian border. Mussolini skillfully exploited this situation. "Laval was the key and Mussolini worked hard to keep him in line".⁵⁸ The only possibility would have been if Britain was ready to compensate her ~~by~~ with tangible help on the Rhine, which London was not prepared to concede.⁵⁹

While not openly disconfessing the League, France therefore either disclaimed any responsibility for the enforcement of its decisions or even opposed them. The problem was that in a multipolar system Britain and France had different agendas and perceptions on the relative intensity of the various threats. Each preferred that the costs for the maintenance of stability would have been paid by the other. Military action against a determined Italy entailed too high a cost and too little an interest especially if Britain and France held diverging views. As Haile Selassie bitterly remarked at the 16th Assembly of the League, what was lacking was not the capability to stop Italy, but the will to do it:

"At no time, in no circumstances, could sanctions that were intentionally inadequate, intentionally ill-applied, stop an aggressor. This is not a case of impossibility, but of refusal to stop an aggressor."⁶⁰

Yet, Britain did not bow completely to the exigencies of the balance of power and never openly abandoned the goal of fulfilling Geneva's directives. Indeed, after the Hoare-Laval plan had failed, Britain decided to proceed with tougher sanctions even without French support and was dissuaded only by the outburst of the Rhineland crisis. The reluctance to abandon collective security altogether meant that sanctions -even of a mild nature- where in fact X imposed on Italy which retaliated by seeking a closer relationship with Germany. The reasons behind this reluctance demonstrate that institutions do matter and that they can influence the behaviour of states even when this is damaging to their national interest. Despite its halfheartedness, the British upholding of principles during the crisis meant the loss of an ally in the containment of Germany. This happened despite the fact that -as the original Maffey report had stated- Britain had no major interest at stake in Ethiopia.

On the one hand, Britain could not wholly abandon the League of Nations because of the very nature of collective security. The credibility of the whole system relies on each single operation because it is geared to all aggressions irrespective of geographic location. If Britain left Abyssinia to its own destiny, it would have weakened stability also in Europe and elsewhere. In Walters' words: "If the Covenant were to be torn up in Africa, it would equally cease to provide security in Europe".⁶¹ According to Northedge: "Hoare, conscious of the implications of the dispute for the more serious challenge of the status quo, feared that, if the League failed in this test case, British people would conclude that it was certain to fail in the German case and accordingly would withdraw into isolation".⁶²

Both Germany and Japan -as in fact they did- would have inferred that the Western powers lacked resolve and would have acquiesced even in further aggressions. The primary target of sanctions was indeed Germany.⁶³ According to Speer's memoirs, Hitler convinced himself after Abyssinia that the West was weak and indecisive.⁶⁴ Paradoxically, the Nazi threat was therefore an

ambiguous stimulus. On the one hand, if aggression went unchecked, deterrence would be undermined. On the other hand, also a war with Italy would have weakened the West's capacity to contain Germany.

Secondly, the League of Nations was very popular with public opinion, which was "almost unanimous in calling for action in restraint of an Italian attack on Abyssinia".⁶⁵ The Peace Ballot had an impressive turnout and a vast majority expressed itself in favour of the collective security provisions of the Covenant. Despite the fact that most of the establishment in London held little faith in the League, no democratically elected government could openly disregard its popularity. Baldwin's Conservative government run the campaign to the November 1935 general elections on an openly sanctionist platform. The public outrage when the Hoare-Laval compromise was publicized was sincere and it forced the government to sacrifice its Foreign Minister. According to Churchill, the news of the Hoare-Laval compromise "shook Parliament and the nation at its base."⁶⁶

Although it is by no means clear that public opinion would have been enthusiastic about a war with Italy, an open rejection of collective security would have costed Baldwin dearly in domestic political terms. The constraints set by public opinion on the Conservative government were therefore extremely demanding. On the one hand it pressed the government to "do something" about the rape of Abyssinia. On the other it wanted the government to do so without jeopardizing the security of the Empire or spending blood and treasure in a war with Italy.

This highlights one of the major contradictions of collective security. Since its popularity stems from a willingness to solve the question of war, it is not easily reconciled with the fact that in practice it may actually involve a state in more conflicts than if it was not in place. As Hoare remarked to the House of Commons in his defence of the Hoare-Laval Plan, this contradiction lied at the very heart of the League, which imposed the task "of trying to find a basis of settlement for this unfortunate dispute" while at the same time pushing states "to take the full share in collective action".⁶⁷

The double track policy which resulted from this set of constraints "falling between the stools, truncated collective security and left Britain and France with the worst of both worlds".⁶⁸ Britain

did not save Abyssinia and the credibility of the League but she still lost Italy as an ally. The alienation of Italy from the Stresa camp meant that Germany had broken its isolation and found a major power on its side. Since the Big Four of Versailles had lost yet another member after America's withdrawal into isolation, the settlement was no longer tenable. The application of collective security in this particular case was counterproductive for general stability.

The failure of the Baldwin government to make these ends meet and to recognize that it faced "two mutually exclusive options" provoked the complete breakdown of the League of Nations collective security system which was never again invoked in the crises which followed.⁶⁹ Even more damaging may have been the disillusion tied to the unrealistically high expectations which had been put on the League at the beginning of the crisis. Such disillusion was certainly a factor in the passivity of the Western governments in the Spanish civil war and in the set of policies which is remembered under the name of appeasement.

NOTES:

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- ¹An entire generation of realist thinkers was enlightened by the lesson.
- ²Northedge: The League of Nations, cit., p. 221
- ³C.J. Lowe and F. Marzari: Italian Foreign Policy, 1870-1940, London, 1975, p. 240; Renzo De Felice: Mussolini Il Duce: Gli anni del consenso, Vol. IV, Einaudi, Torino, 1974, pp. 597-605; Guariglia: Ricordi, p. 235
- ⁴Lowe and Marzari: op. cit., chap. 1; De Felice: op. cit., pp. 465-512
- ⁵Lowe and Marzari, op. cit., p. 255; Giorgio Rochat: Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d' Etiopia: studio e documenti, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1971, p. 45, De Felice op. cit., pp. 606-608
- ⁶De Felice op. cit., p. 615; Arianna Arisi Rota: La diplomazia del ventennio: storia di una politica estera, Xenia Ed., Milano, 1990, p. 107; Lowe and Marzari op. cit., p. 255
- ⁷D.C. Watt: The Secret Laval-Mussolini Agreement of 1935 on Ethiopia, Middle East Journal, V. 15, 1961 in E. Robertson: Origins of the Second World War
- ⁸Carr, International Relations cit., p. 222
- ⁹Aloisi quoted in Watt op. cit., p. 230
- ¹⁰Lowe and Marzari op. cit., p. 260, De Felice op. cit., pp. 646-7
- ¹¹F.P. Walters: A History of the League of Nations, cit., p. 632
- ¹²Carr, International Relations, cit., pp.223-4
- ¹³Walters op. cit., p. 638
- ¹⁴Rochat op. cit., p. 146
- ¹⁵De Felice op. cit., p. 662; Lowe and Marzari op. cit., p. 267
- ¹⁶Toscano: Eden's Mission to Rome on the Eve of the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, in Sarkissian, 1961, pp.126-152; Lowe and Marzari op. cit., p. 273; De Felice op. cit., p. 672
- ¹⁷Martin Ceadel: The First British Referendum: The Peace Ballot, 1934-1935, English History Review, 1980, pp. 810-839; George W. Baer: Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia and the League of Nations, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford Ca, 1976, pp. 90, 202-7; Paul Kennedy: The Realities behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980, p. 283
- ¹⁸R.A.C. Parker: Great Britain, France and the Ethiopian Crisis, English Historical Review, April 1974, pp. 293-332
- ¹⁹Robert H. Whealey: Mussolini's Ideological Diplomacy: An Unpublished Document, Journal of Modern History, 1967, pp. 432-437; De Felice op. cit., p.667
- ²⁰James C. Robertson: The Origins of British Opposition to Mussolini over Ethiopia, Journal of British Studies, 1969, pp. 122-142
- ²¹Henderson B. Braddick: A New Look at American Policy during the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1935-6, Journal of Modern History, 1962, pp.64-72
- ²²According to a leading industrialist with access to the Duce, he said that: "We cannot accept compromises before a military victory", Alberto Pirelli: Tacquini 1922-43, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1977, p. 140 [author's translation]
- ²³Arthur Marder: The Royal Navy and the Ethiopian Crisis of 1935-6, American Historical Review, 1970, pp.1327-1356; Rosaria Quartararo: Imperial Defence in the Mediterranean on the Eve of the Ethiopian Crisis, Historical Journal, V. 20, N. 1, 1977, pp. 185-220
- ²⁴"Two expedients remained. The first one was the threat of sanctions, which could be applied only after the war had started. The second was to go still farther along the road of concessions to Italy in the hope of buying her off before the war begun. The government in London decided to try both", Walters: op. cit., p. 646. Cfr. also Steven Morewood in Boyce and Robertson: Anglo-Italian Rivalry in the Mediterranean, p. 173; Baer?

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- ²⁵Lowe and Marzari: op. cit., p. 282
- ²⁶Rochat and Mazzobrio: Breve storia dell' Esercito Italiano dal 1861 al 1943, Torino, 1978, p. 250; De Felice: op. cit., p. 695; Angelo Del Boca: La guerra d' Abissinia, 1935-1941, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1965, p. 53
- ²⁷Walters: op. cit., p. 654
- ²⁸James C. Robertson: The Hoare-Laval Plan, Journal of Contemporary History, 1975, pp. 433-464; Henderson B. Braddick: The Hoare-Laval Plan: A Study in International Politics, Review of Politics, V. 24, 1962, in Hans W. Gatzke: European Diplomacy Between Two Wars, 1919-1939, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1972, pp. 152-172; Parker, pp. 317-324; Baer, pp. 113-123
- ²⁹Robertson: The Hoare-Laval Plan, cit. p. 457
- ³⁰Walters: op. cit., p. 669, Lowe and Marzari: op. cit., pp. 285-290; De Felice: op. cit., pp. 722-723
- ³¹Daniel Waley: British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-6, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1975, pp. 67-9
- ³²Del Boca: op. cit., p. 109
- ³³Del Boca: op. cit., p. 146
- ³⁴Parker: op. cit., pp.-324-332
- ³⁵Dennis Mac Smith: Le guerre del Duce, Laterza, Bari, 1976, pp. 28, 85; idem: Mussolini's Roman Empire, Longman, London, 1976, p. vii; Salvemini: Prelude to World War II, p. 79.
- ³⁶De Felice: op. cit., pp. 642, 650, 706; Quartararo: Roma tra Londra e Berlino, pp. 162-5, Arisi Rota: op. cit., pp. 107, 109
- ³⁷Mac Gregor Knox: Conquest, Foreign and Domestic, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Journal of Modern History, V. 56, 1984, pp.1-57; idem: Il Fascismo e la politica estera italiana, in Bosworth e Sergio Romano: La Politica Estera Italiana, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1977, p. 323; Emilio Gentile: Le origini dell' ideologia fascista, Laterza, Bari, 1975, p. 7; Yvon De Begnac: Tacchini Mussoliniani, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1989, p. 568; Zeev Sternhell: Nascita dell' ideologia fascista, Baldini e Castoldi, Milano, 1993, pp. 9-14; Emilio Gentile: Fascism as Political Religion, Journal of Contemporary History, V. 25, 1990, pp. 229-251
- ³⁸Rochat and Mazzobrio: op. cit., p. 218
- ³⁹Bottai, Vent' anni e un giorno, p. 63 [author's translation]
- ⁴⁰Federico Chabod: L'Italia Contemporanea: Lezioni alla Sorbona, Einaudi, Milano, 1950, p. 92 [author's translation]
- ⁴¹Lowe and Marzari: op. cit., p. 241; cfr. also Rochat and Mazzobrio: op. cit., p. 249, Alexander De Grand: Italian Fascism: Its Origins and Development, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1989, p. 100; Del Boca: op. cit., p. 23 Rochat, p. 105; Esmonde M. Robertson: Mussolini as Empire Builder: Europe and Africa, 1932-36, Macmillan, London, 1977, p. 122; John Coverdale: Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1975, pp. 171-2
- ⁴²P.M.H. Bell: The Origins of the Second World War in Europe, p. 63
- ⁴³Churchill, p. 166
- ⁴⁴Pirelli: op. cit., p. 140 [author's translation]
- ⁴⁵Northedge: The League, cit., p. 243
- ⁴⁶De Grand: op. cit., p. 121, Cfr. also Salvatorelli and Mira: Storia d' Italia nel periodo fascista p. 821.
- ⁴⁷Wight: Power Politics, cit., p. 47
- ⁴⁸In the plans, Turkey should have attacked the Dodecanese and Yugoslavia should have occupied Istria. However the ultimate weight of a war would rest on

France, which was to attack the North-West of Italy, and on the Royal Navy.
Lowe and Marzari: *op. cit.*, p. 285

⁴⁹Churchill: *op. cit.*, p. 175

⁵⁰Morgenthau: *op. cit.*, p. 337

⁵¹Braddick: *A New Look*, cit. p. 70

⁵²Quoted in Robertson: *The Hoare-Laval Plan*, cit. p. 440

⁵³According to Herz: "if one studies the Ethiopian case in detail, the alleged inevitability of failure becomes a bit doubtful", Herz: *International Politics*, cit., pp. 87-95

⁵⁴Kennedy: *op. cit.*, p.242. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker, ed.s: *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1983, *passim*.

After all, Britain had nothing to gain and much to lose from war. This was compounded by the fear of modern war -especially air bombing- which was at the time seen as threatening the very fabric of civilization. This is a major reason why Britain felt that economic sanctions would be sufficient to restrain Mussolini's Italy.

⁵⁵Wight: *op. cit.*, p. 209

⁵⁶Claude: *Swords into Ploughshares*, cit. p. 240, Aron: *Pace e guerra*, cit., pp. 663, 813

⁵⁷Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, p. 104

⁵⁸Braddick: *A New Look*, cit., p. 72

⁵⁹Morewood: *op. cit.*, p. 147

⁶⁰Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, p. 33

⁶¹Walters: *op. cit.*, p. 635

⁶²Northedge: *The League of Nations*, cit., p. 230

⁶³Baldwin: *Economic Statecraft*, p. 157; George W. Baer, *Sanctions and Security: The League of Nations and the Ethiopian War*, *International Organization*, XXVII, Spring 1973, p. 178

⁶⁴Quoted in Baer: *op. cit.*, p. 303

⁶⁵Northedge: *The League*, cit., p. 228

⁶⁶Churchill: *op. cit.*, p. 184

⁶⁷Quoted in Finkelstein and Finkelstein, p. 104

⁶⁸Betts: *Systems for Peace*, cit., p. 19

⁶⁹Kissinger: *Diplomacy*, cit., p. 298

8. THE KOREAN WAR

* * * *

i. History

The Korean War at the beginning of the 1950's is one of the most important turning points in post-war international relations. It is the only instance to date of a hot war between two great powers since 1945. The Korean War is also the only time in which the principles of collective security have been applied during the Cold War. To be sure, Chapter VII enforcement was not mandatory for UN members and the use of force to counter aggression was only recommended and authorized.¹ Furthermore -as will be argued below- many more of the requirements for an "ideal" collective security operation were not met. Nevertheless, the forces under the United Nations Command were officially fighting under the auspices of the world organization, a fact that was greatly emphasized at the time and was never repeated again during the Cold War.

UN involvement was not decisive as probably the United States, which supplied the overwhelming majority of the troops for the operation, would have intervened anyway even without multilateral recommendation. However, the UN was far from irrelevant in the crisis as it strengthened American resolve and provided legitimacy useful at the domestic and international levels. These advantages were accompanied by a set of constraints on American policy with regard to the military means employed and the diplomatic objectives sought for. Even if it was not the single most important factor in the crisis, as enthusiasts of collective security would maintain, the UN was in certain respects an element which could not be ignored. In this limited respect, the Korean War can be depicted as a qualified success for collective security.

The immediate origin of the war -the division of Korea into two distinct entities each claiming to represent the whole country- was a by-product of the Cold War. The wartime conferences had concluded that Korea was to be unified and independent after the defeat of Japan. However, the worsening status of Soviet-American relationships in the closing days of the Second World War had prompted the US Army to improvise an unplanned occupation of the country up to the 38th parallel in order to avoid the complete loss of the peninsula to the Red

Army. Nevertheless, until 1947, the occupation and the ensuing division were considered to be temporary.

Only the emergence of the Cold War with its full virulence convinced the United States to support the establishment of the Republic of Korea south of the parallel under the leadership of Singman Rhee. The division crystallized in 1948 after the failure of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea to get access to the Soviet-occupied areas to arrange for an all-Korean election. The founding of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the parallel birth of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north did not settle the issue. The two governments were engaged in a covert war culminating in 1949 in a series of border incidents and in a guerrilla campaign in the south bloodily defeated by Seoul in the winter of 1950.²

Contrary to American estimates at the time, the North Korean attack was not instigated by Moscow but the initiative came from the DPRK's leader Kim Il Sung.³ Nevertheless, the Soviets knew and approved of Pyongyang's intentions as they provided the weapons and the training necessary for the forthcoming offensive. Recent documents have indeed underlined Moscow's encouragement of North Korea.⁴ In this sense, the war was more an international than a Korean affair. Moscow acquiesced to Kim's plans because after the split with Yugoslavia it was more sensitive to its allies' requests and above all because it expected a quick victory unobstructed by American intervention.⁵ This idea rested on the fact that the United States had withdrawn their troops from South Korea in June 1949 and on a public statement by Truman's Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, which placed Korea outside the American "defensive perimeter" of vital interests in the Far East running "through the chain of islands fringing the coast of Asia".⁶

Acheson's January statement at a Press Club lunch, which echoed a previous declaration in a similar vein by the Supreme Commander Allied Forces-Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur, was based on the fact that the United States was at the time planning for a general war in which Korea's strategic value was not significant compared to other crisis points such as Berlin, Turkey or Iran where American defences were thus concentrated. Acheson remarked in May

1950: "We cannot scatter our shots equally all over the world. We just haven't enough shots to do that".⁷ Washington simply did not contemplate a limited attack by a proxy on a peripheral interest.⁸

While the Soviets interpreted American pronouncements as evidence of its lack of interest in Korea, when the attack actually came, its blatant nature forced Washington to question its previous assumptions and prompted the United States to intervene.⁹ In particular, in a domino vein, the United States thought that its credibility was at stake and that if this particular aggression was left unchecked, others would follow suit. Incidentally, Acheson had specified that, although the US would not defend South Korea directly, its security would anyway be guaranteed by the UN. It is ironic -given the aftermath- that this contingency was not considered credible by the aggressor.

"Should an attack occur -Acheson stated in the 'perimeter speech'- the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations".¹⁰

When the North Korean attack was unleashed, the American response was -probably to Moscow's surprise- swift and decisive. At 4 AM on June 25th, 135000 North Korean troops equipped with heavy weapons crossed the 38th parallel into ROK's territory. On that same morning, the State and Defense Departments were already recommending military action to oppose North Korea. That afternoon, meeting in the fortuitous absence of the Soviet delegate Ambassador Malik,¹¹ the Security Council condemned in Resolution 82 the North Korean invasion and demanded an immediate ceasefire and the return to the status quo ante. In an evening meeting at Blair House President Truman endorsed Acheson's suggestions for US response. The 7th fleet was to move between Taiwan and mainland China to shield the Nationalist Chinese from a Communist attack while US Navy and Air Force units were to be employed in support of Seoul.¹²

On June 27th, the Security Council met again and voted an American resolution (Res. 83) urging members to support the government of the ROK against the North Korean invasion and "to

return peace and security to the area".¹³ After the fall of Seoul on the 28th and in the face of a rapidly deteriorating military situation uncovered by a visit of MacArthur to the frontline on the 29th, US ground troops were committed to the war. On July 7th the Security Council (Resolution 84) requested the United States to designate a commander for all the forces being offered by UN members. However, despite the arrival of two divisions by July 18th, the situation on the ground was not improving and by the end of the month ROK and US troops were besieged at a small bridgehead on the peninsula around the port of Pusan. A fierce battle followed in August in which, before repulsing the North Korean attack, the American commander of the VIII Corps at Pusan even contemplated evacuation.

After the stabilization of the Pusan perimeter, the UN forces staged on September 15th a daring and almost reckless landing at Inchon 240 kilometers behind the enemy's line. The operation was authorized only at MacArthur's insistence and despite the doubts of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁴ In the event the gamble succeeded and MacArthur's bold strategy completely devastated the North Korean troops caught between the advancing VIII Army and the X Corps landed close to the 38th parallel. By September 27th Seoul was liberated and the fortunes of the war had been -for the time being- reversed.

It was in the atmosphere of euphoria generated by these victories that the most crucial decision of the entire war was taken. Truman, eager to punish aggression and to score a clearcut political success against Moscow and his domestic Republican opponents, authorized MacArthur to cross the 38th parallel at the beginning of October with the aim of unifying Korea. On October 7th, the UN General Assembly, bypassing the Security Council which was deadlocked by the threat of a Soviet veto (Malik had returned to his post in August), voted a resolution recommending that "all appropriate steps are taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea".¹⁵ Unification of the country, a long-standing goal of the UN, was now within reach. On the same day, MacArthur's troops entered North Korea and advanced rapidly occupying Pyongyang on October 19th.

Military opportunity was thus fatally allowed to precede political considerations. The US, blinded by its own successes, did not expect either a Soviet or a Chinese reaction to this more ambitious objective.¹⁶ The United States had not considered that Western troops on the Manchurian border would be considered by China as a threat justifying intervention. China was considered too weak to act as it was recovering from decades of internal and external strife. Furthermore, MacArthur estimated that China did not possess the logistics to cross *en masse* the Yalu river on the border. When the UN Commander exposed his assessment to Truman at the famous meeting on Wake Island on October 15th, no-one present from the State Department, the Defense Department or the Joint Chiefs of Staff contradicted him.

The Chinese had in fact explicitly warned the US that it would consider the crossing of the 38th parallel as an act of war.¹⁷ The Indian Ambassador met in Peking with Nieh Jung-chen -Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army- on September 25th and with Premier Chu En-lai on October 3rd and both made it clear that China was ready to intervene.¹⁸ Chou warned that: "American intervention into North Korea would encounter Chinese resistance."¹⁹ Washington dismissed such warnings as a bluff. Even when UN troops approaching the Yalu were attacked in strength by Chinese troops at the beginning of November, the United States underestimated the danger of this extreme warning. The US refused a British proposal for the establishment of a demilitarized buffer zone south of the Chinese-Korean border and preferred to seek a decisive military victory instead.²⁰

MacArthur was therefore authorized to proceed with an "end the war" offensive launched on November 24th but immediately blunted by a massive Chinese counterattack which forced the UN forces to face "an entirely new war".²¹ While the US had estimated that about 50000 Chinese troops were in Korea, there were in fact 300000 Chinese "volunteers". The result was "the longest retreat in the history of the US Army" until then. On October 5th the Communist forces retook Pyongyang; on Christmas day they crossed the 38th parallel and on January 4th they recaptured Seoul.

This was the moment of highest tension during the war. The UN Commander fell into a state of panic while Washington had to rethink

its whole strategy. It was at this time that pressure mounted (from MacArthur and others in the Pentagon) for an expansion of the war both geographically and in terms of the military measures employed. In particular, it was advocated that American fighters could fly over Chinese airspace in "hot pursuit" of Communist planes; that Nationalist Chinese troops be used in Korea and that the bridges on the Yalu be bombed. MacArthur even envisaged the use of atomic bombs and submitted on Christmas' eve a list of targets for 26 such devices.

The Truman administration decided not to take any of these measures in order to avoid the risks of escalation. Firstly, Washington feared that an escalation would trigger a Soviet reaction bringing about World War III. The erroneous American assumption that Chinese troops had acted under the Kremlin's direction substantiated these fears and reversed previous optimistic assessments.

Secondly, especially since global tension was high, the US did not wish to deplete its scarce resources in a conflict with China while its main interests and threats lay elsewhere, mainly in Europe. Acheson warned that it would be a mistake to enter into a major confrontation with "the second team". The Chairman of the JCS, General Omar Bradley, stated that a war with China would be "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong enemy".²²

Thirdly, such an expansion would not have commanded allied support. For example, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee asked for an urgent meeting with Truman after the latter had mentioned at a press conference on November 30th that the use of nuclear weapons had been under active consideration. The two leaders met at the beginning of December Attlee made clear that Britain could not tolerate the use of nuclear weapons and did not favour the enlargement of the war.²³ The limited war strategy employed after the Chinese intervention was therefore more the outcome of external constraints rather than the result of deep American convictions. In other words America, traditionally eager to obtain unconditional victories, resolved to pursue limited means and objectives by default.

The peak of tension was overcome in the first months of 1951 when the situation on the ground markedly improved. The new

commander of the VIII Army, General Matthew Ridgeway, managed to stop the Chinese offensive in the first week of the new year and regained the initiative. Seoul was retaken, for the last time, on March 15th. The Chinese, instead of settling for a prestigious limited victory fell to the same temptation which had bewitched MacArthur and, stretching their supply lines beyond their limit, launched a final offensive which ended disastrously.

Meanwhile, the diplomatic situation at Lake Success and in the major capitals had evolved. The Commonwealth countries and some Asian neutrals like India sponsored a Draft Resolution for a ceasefire. The initiative was not welcomed in Washington because it hinted to subsequent discussions on other Far Eastern issues, like the status of Taiwan or the PRC's UN seat, on which the US did not want to concede as it would have been tantamount to rewarding aggression. However, Washington decided to support the resolution in order not to isolate itself from its UN allies by appearing uncompromising. The United States voted in favour also in the ardent hope that the offer would be rejected by the Chinese,²⁴ which is what happened on January 17th because Peking wanted the political issues settled before, rather than after, a ceasefire.

Washington capitalized on this success by introducing a new resolution branding China as an aggressor. Initially, Washington wished to attach a series of harsh sanctions to the resolution. However, when its UN allies made clear that they were not in favour, Washington preferred a watered down resolution without automatic sanctions rather than unilateral action. On February 1st China, despite the fact that its forces were fighting as "volunteers" and that no formal declaration of war had occurred, was condemned by a large majority of the UN General Assembly (44 to 7 with 9 abstentions) as the aggressor.

Soon afterwards the difference of opinion between General MacArthur and President Truman became unsustainable. The UN commander did not accept the concept of limited war and wished to expand the war to China as an occasion to deal a decisive blow to international Communism. The problem was that the General was expressing his views publicly and to the extent of insubordination. Already in August 1950 he had gone to Taipei promising to the

Kuomintang a degree of support for which he was not authorized. Later in that month he had sent a statement to the veteran organizations in support of Taiwan in open disregard of the government's policy to avoid excessive entanglement with the Nationalists. On March 24th 1951, he issued an unauthorized radio message to the Communist commanders suggesting direct negotiations on the field. Finally, the straw which broke the camel's back was the publication of a letter to a Republican congressman criticizing the Truman administration's concept of limited war and its whole Asian strategy. The President was enraged and decided to substitute him with General Ridgeway.

Once the United States had decided that it would neither expand the war nor pull out and it had achieved a favourable position on the battlefield, it was ready to send feelers to the other side. Before Inchon, Washington felt too weak to negotiate; after Inchon, it felt too strong; after China's intervention, again it felt too weak. Only after the failure of China's spring offensive were both sides reasonably certain that they could not gain much by fighting nor lose too much by compromise. At the end of May, George Kennan, who was on leave from the State Department, met Ambassador Malik in order to explore the basis for a ceasefire. After two meetings on May 31st and June 5th, on June 23rd Malik announced that an agreement was possible.

The two sides met at Kaesong on July 10th. However, the negotiations soon stalled and proceeded slowly and intermittently, producing an agreement only 24 months later. Once resigned to a conditional victory, neither side renounced using confrontational military and diplomatic measures to obtain the best possible deal. The Chinese counted on war weariness and on the fragility of domestic support in America for a war in a remote area while the United States counted on its superior firepower to impose a level of punishment which China would find unbearable.

In a sense, a limited war is more difficult to resolve because by definition there is not a clearcut identification of winner and loser and therefore of who imposes and who makes concessions. All possible solutions are by their nature negotiable, and without decisive victories it is difficult for either side willingly to concede. Only when both sides have either exhausted themselves, or when they have

realized that they cannot obtain further gains with the amount of force they are prepared to use, can negotiations be brought to a fruitful conclusion. This can be a very long and cumbersome process. The US lost 45% of their casualties after the beginning of negotiations.²⁵

It took three months to agree upon a venue of the talks, moved in October from Kaesong to Panmunjon, and on their agenda. The issue of what was to be the ceasefire line was resolved in November 1951 in America's favour as the present line of contact, which was a defensible one, rather than the 38th parallel. In May 1952 China renounced its demand that the Soviet Union be included in the Neutral Supervisory Commission. The only outstanding question remaining, which took another 14 months to resolve, was the one of the prisoners of war.

The United States, wishing to show that they were fighting in the name of freedom, and remembering the miserable fate of the prisoners transferred to the Soviet Union after the Second World War, introduced the principle of non-forcible repatriation. China, after it became known that only 70000 of the 132000 communists in UN hands was willing to return home, soundly rejected the idea. However, Washington wanted a propaganda victory and at least on this topic it did not want to give in, attributing to the issue a symbolic importance. Moreover, mounting domestic opposition to the administration's supposedly soft handling of the war (especially from the Republican right) did not leave the Truman administration much room for manoeuvre.

Given the stalemate in the negotiations, the United States reviewed its policies. Firstly, it stepped up military activity in an attempt to bring the talks to a favourable conclusion. Washington also wished to teach China a lesson while it could, avenging the defeats of December 1950. In 1951, the United States had already relaxed the restrictions on "hot pursuit" and even authorized the bombing of Manchurian air bases if a communist air attack imperiled the UN troops, although such measure was never actually taken.²⁶ The following June, Operation Pressure Pump was launched which destroyed the power installations on the Yalu. In August, Pyongyang was flattened down. In October, UN forces performed a mock amphibious landing at Wonsan, deep in the enemy's rear. In Autumn,

Nationalist Chinese troops launched a series of commando operations on the off-shore islands.²⁷ These measures raised fears in allied capitals that the United States was deliberately trying to provoke the Chinese into a wider war. In the Summer of 1952, the State Department tried to invoke the aggressor's resolution in order to impose an embargo of China but this initiative failed because of the allied reluctance to escalate the conflict.

Secondly, Washington began planning for an enlargement of the conflict in case the negotiations brought nowhere in a reasonable amount of time. The administration was growing impatient with an increasingly unpopular war and it had never completely resigned itself to the prospect of negotiations with a government which it did not even recognize. In December 1951 NSC 118/2 sketched out American initiatives in such an event. In particular, UN troops were to advance to the narrow "waist" of Korea north of Pyongyang; US naval and air forces were to bomb Chinese territory and block its lines of communications while Nationalist Chinese troops were to be supported in covert operations against the mainland.

When negotiations were indefinitely recessed in October after the rejection of yet another American offer, General Mark Clark (who had succeeded Ridgeway) was authorized to prepare OPLAN 85/2, an operational plan for the directives of NSC 118/2. However, the plan was not implemented because of the unavailability of the three further US Army divisions which General Clark had requested and because of the impending presidential elections.

The last act of the Truman administration was instead a diplomatic one. Towards the end of 1952 many countries at the UN were trying to find a compromise solution to the problem of the POWs. For fear that its own uncompromising attitude undermined UN support just when an expansion of the war became a possibility and in order to avoid a transfer of the negotiations from Panmunjon to the uncontrollable General Assembly, Washington was forced to acquiesce.²⁸ In particular, the United States supported an Indian motion introducing the idea of entrusting the prisoners unwilling to return home to a neutral country, although it managed to set a three-months deadline for such procedure.

However, apart from UN activity, the Truman administration had already reached a consensus on the fact that the actual or threatened use of military force was the most effective way to conclude an armistice. As Marc Trachtenberg has pointed out, this idea rested heavily on the success of Western rearmament which had begun after the North Korean attack. An almost quadrupled military budget had changed America's perception of its own strength and had transformed a "window of vulnerability" into a "window of opportunity". The possibility of Soviet intervention, an important constraint in the winter of 1951, was by the end of 1952 heavily discounted. If the Soviets had not attacked when America was weak, Washington believed it would certainly not do so now that America was strong. In this sense, there is much more continuity with the Eisenhower administration than the traditional accounts concede.

Yet, certain crucial differences existed between the Eisenhower and the Truman administration which enabled the former to pursue a more aggressive policy in 1953. Firstly, Eisenhower had an entire presidential term to look forward to as he had just been elected by a landslide.²⁹ Certainly, also the new President had to deal with domestic opposition but his popularity allowed him a much larger freedom of manoeuvre than that enjoyed by his predecessor, who had seen his approval ratings decrease steadily since the beginning of inconclusive negotiations. Moreover, Eisenhower's military prestige was enormous. When, during the electoral campaign, he stated (rather defensively) that he would "go to Korea" to assess the situation, many equated this with the certainty of victory as the old General was associated with the successes of World War II.

Secondly, certain attitudes of the new administration contributed to the adoption of a tougher policy. In particular, there were less constraints to plan the use of nuclear weapons. Both the President and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, repeatedly and publicly declared that they thought about the atom bomb as "just another weapon".³⁰ In this case, the cost in blood and treasure of both breaking the communist lines and of bombing China proper would be drastically reduced and an expansion of the war therefore became feasible. The fear of a Soviet retaliation had also diminished since Stalin's death had inaugurated a softer line on the part of the Kremlin.

Of course, Eisenhower's willingness to use nuclear weapons was never put to the test. Nevertheless, the movement of the newly tested tactical nuclear weapons to the theater of operations in the spring of 1953 and their inclusion in the military plans for an eventual offensive indicate that their employment was by no means out of the question. If the war had dragged on into 1954, there is a strong possibility that a drastic escalation would have occurred in American military strategy. Eisenhower later attributed the achievement of a ceasefire to the possibility of an American atomic attack.³¹ Dulles agreed that the armistice was linked to the fact that the United States "had already sent the means to the theater for delivering atomic weapons. This became known to the Chinese through their good intelligence sources and in fact we were not unwilling that they should find out."³²

The new administration was also less constrained by the attitude of the allies, which had forced Truman to rule out the use of nuclear weapons and other types of escalation. The Eisenhower administration was more conscious of Europe's dependence on the United States. European doubts would eventually have been overcome by a swift and decisive US victory in the Far East. Initial scruples would give way to the reassurance of a powerful American ally. Washington was therefore ready to embark on a more unilateralist policy certain that consensus would later be regained.³³

This does not mean that Eisenhower wanted a war with China. He knew that above all the American public wanted an end to the conflict. Yet, 1953 witnessed a significant change in preferences. While a ceasefire remained the most valued goal, the expansion of hostilities in search of a decisive victory was -unlike with the previous administration- thought of as a preferable alternative to the indefinite protraction of the stalemate. In short, American patience with the Korean war had reached the limit.

The familiar strategy of increased military pressure to bring the negotiations to a climax while planning for an escalation should the negotiations fail was therefore pursued with increased vigour. Between April and May, six new ROK divisions were activated. Meanwhile, the US Air Force proceeded to the bombing of dams and rice fields with the deliberate intent of provoking a famine. On May 20th, the National Security Council decided to expand the war to

China if a last American offer was rejected. Two days later, Dulles communicated to Nehru the novel American resolve. On May 25th the American ultimatum was delivered at Panmunjon: either a ceasefire agreement was reached within a week or negotiations would be terminated.³⁴

China complied and the discussions proceeded swiftly from then onward. On June 8th, the question of the POWs was settled. On June 17th a revised demarcation line was settled. On the same day, in an attempt to sabotage an agreement, South Korea unilaterally freed 20000 North Korean prisoners who did not wish to be repatriated. However, after a brief resumption of hostilities, on July 27th the armistice was signed at Panmunjon. After more than three years and hundreds of thousand/ of casualties, the war was finally over with the two sides of Korea divided more or less where they had been before the invasion.

ii. China's motivations

The Korean war was hailed at the time as a clear instance of collective security: the international community standing, under the UN banner, up to the North Korean aggression. Yet the reality of the war was quite different from the ideal of collective security. Not only the "international community" was represented chiefly by the United States and its allies but also the "aggressor" was not quite as isolated as it would usually be expected from theoretical accounts. In this way, more than "all against one", the Korean War appeared similar to the traditional "some against some" in which the identity of either side can easily be forecasted before the crisis actually breaks out being determined by particular alignments rather than universal principles. Far from being isolated by the international community, North Korea was indeed saved from disaster by Soviet supplies and China's intervention. It is therefore convenient to analyze more closely developments on the communist side.

American assessments of Soviet and Chinese reactions ranged throughout the war between fear of full scale intervention and confidence that North Korea would receive only token support, but nobody held the illusion that Moscow or Peking would have taken the South Korean side as their obligations under the UN Charter dictated.

The logic of bipolarity excluded such an eventuality. According to Martin Wight: "the Korean War was a struggle between the two great coalitions in which international society was divided" rather than a genuine collective security operation.³⁵

UN involvement had indeed been possible only due to the coincidences of Soviet absence from the Security Council in protest of the PRC's exclusion from Lake Success and of the fact that China's seat had not yet been assigned to Peking. According to Max Hastings: "the UN intervention was a fluke of history, made possible only by the unique accident of the Russian boycott".³⁶ If either of the communist powers had been present on the day of the invasion, it would certainly have vetoed any direct multilateral involvement. When the Soviet delegate returned to his post in August, Washington was forced to bypass the Security Council and to refer exceptionally to the General Assembly for a resolution authorizing the crossing of the 38th parallel.

Later on, not only did the communist powers not join the collective effort, but China even intervened -albeit under the disguise of volunteers- on the side of the aggressors. In this sense, the UN forces had to face a negative contribution. It is also worth to point out that China did not intervene because of radically expansionist reasons, but because it felt threatened by the UN forces' advance toward its own territory. The Chinese crossing of the Yalu was only a defensive move. According to the classic account of the event: "the final step seems to have been prompted in part by general concern over the range of opportunities within China that might be exploited by a determined, powerful enemy on China's doorstep. [...] Contrary to some beliefs, the Chinese communist leadership did not enter the Korean War either full of self assertiveness or for primarily expansionist goals".³⁷ Clearly, China did not concede to the US-led UN effort the aura of impartiality which is connected to collective security operations. Perceiving a conflict between the precepts of the world organization and its own national interest, China chose to follow the latter without remorse.³⁸

Washington grossly misunderstood Chinese intentions. After the communist victory in China, the Truman administration expected the new regime to acquire "Titoist" tendencies and to resist becoming

a Soviet satellite.³⁹ However, as soon as the North Korean aggression occurred, American perceptions changed. The attack was considered as directed by Moscow and every move by any communist country was seen in this light. A Chinese autonomous intervention was therefore ruled out. Either the Soviet Union intervened *en masse* or it would stay out of the conflict and its allies would do likewise. A Chinese intervention was even more discounted given Peking's weakness after the Civil War as well as its eagerness to obtain its UN seat.

The United States therefore underestimated the power of the will of a state to protect its borders. China was indeed absorbed by the overwhelming problems of reconstruction but it saw American policies as a direct threat to its very existence which therefore took absolute priority. The immediate American linkage between the Korean question and the problem of Taiwan with the sending of the VII Fleet had already worried Peking. The approach of MacArthur's armies to the Yalu was deemed unacceptable despite, and not because, the Soviet Union which wanted to maintain a low profile.⁴⁰ Despite the fact that Stalin urged China to intervene, the Soviet Union did not meet its promises of active support for fear of a dangerous escalation.⁴¹

The *casus belli* was the crossing of the 38th parallel. When the US advance had seemed inevitable, on October 2nd, Mao wrote to Stalin that: "We have decided to send some of our troops to Korea [...] to fight the United States".⁴² Nevertheless, China would have been interested in a peaceful solution as late as October 3rd, when Premier Chou told Indian Ambassador Pannikkar that: "We advocate that the Korean incident be solved peacefully."⁴³ Peking issued the order of intervention on October 8th, the day after American troops advanced into North Korea. Truman's attempt to reassure Peking on November 16th that the United States would respect the Chinese border was insufficient. Peking wanted the preservation of a North Korean entity as a buffer to protect its border and this was not granted by Washington.

America misperceived -in naive good faith- the extent to which its own armies were considered as a threat by Peking and it chose to ignore the warnings delivered to Ambassador Pannikkar as well as the limited Chinese intervention at the end of October.⁴⁴ Assuming

that a UN operation would be seen as *super partes*, Washington wrongly presumed that if China had no expansionist aim then it had no reason to intervene at all. Peking had in fact stronger and more traditional motives to intervene than global revolution. This mistake cost the Americans dearly. On the first two days of the main Chinese offensive at the end of November, UN casualties amounted to 11000.⁴⁵

The active opposition of a great power and the passive one of a superpower altered the nature of the collective endeavour. The operation could not in fact collect overwhelming force against the aggressor. Instead of resembling a police action, the war was almost a contest among equals in which an objective could be achieved only if sufficient force could be gathered. The final outcome was a compromise which more or less restored the status quo ante rather than punished aggression. So modest an outcome was, according to Aron, "little coherent with the spirit of a sanction".⁴⁶

Paradoxically, MacArthur's eagerness to destroy North Korea, although it aroused the strongest reaction from Washington's UN allies, was more in line with the uncompromising principles of collective security than the limited war strategy of the Truman administration. However, the methods necessary to obtain the objectives which MacArthur advocated (which included the extensive use of nuclear weapons against China) would probably have provoked a global war and therefore sent shivers down the spines of the international community.

iii. US Policy

The most relevant aspect of the case study to collective security is of course the attitude of the United States which was by far the leading member of the United Nations' effort. The classical accounts are divided into two groups. Enthusiasts of collective security point out the importance of the first military action under the UN flag. On the other hand, realist writers dismiss the UN involvement as cosmetic and describe the war as a purely American operation. Both positions are extreme. Certainly the leading role was played by the United States, which was following also its own national agenda. On the other hand however, the role of the United Nations cannot be ignored and had significant consequences on the unfolding of events.

The role of the UN was not overwhelming because the most fundamental decisions of the war would have been taken by Washington even without UN involvement. The UN commander reported only to Washington and even the negotiators at Panmunjon were doing so. The first American response to the news of the invasion envisaged US involvement and took place before the Security Council met. Truman's Secretary of State admitted that "American action, said to be in support of the resolution of June 27th, was in fact ordered, and possibly taken, prior to that resolution".⁴⁷ The United States intervened because of the Cold War rather than because of its obligations under collective security.⁴⁸ As Wolfers has put it:

"Because the resort to force against North Korea served to maintain and even, to strengthen this country's power position relative to its major national adversary, it cannot be considered the kind of break with tradition earlier defined as a prerequisite of effective collective security".⁴⁹

Collective security reinforced the conviction that something had to be done but did not bring it about. Washington saw the aggression in Korea as part of a major test of its credibility by Moscow.⁵⁰ According to Aron, the US intervened "not to save South Korea but to preserve their honour".⁵¹ In Acheson's own account, at stake was "prestige, by which I mean the shadow cast by power".⁵² Korea was not considered strategically significant prior to the war as is demonstrated by the withdrawal of American occupation troops in June 1949 and by Acheson's remarks in January 1950. The fact that the United States did not intervene because of Korea's intrinsic importance but for other strategic reasons only appears to coincide with the tenets of collective security.

The crucial point is that in the first half of 1950 the United States had shifted its Cold War strategy from a selective policy distinguishing vital interests (like Europe and Japan) from peripheral ones (like Korea) to one in which each Soviet challenge had to be resisted. The perimeter strategy had been rejected. The symmetry inherent in such an approach resembled the automatic reaction inherent in the UN Charter, but it was caused by particularistic, rather

than universalist, motivations. In this way, it was more US action which involved the UN rather than the other way around.

The key document of this period is NSC 68 of April 14th, 1950 -the most significant review of American strategy after the "loss" of China, the Berlin crisis, and the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb- which pessimistically argued that America could no longer afford to lose positions with the Soviet Union.⁵³ The uncertainty of "natural" indigenous forces resisting Soviet pressure and the belief that the Soviet Union would soon gain a military advantage prompted Washington to a more active type of containment before the balance of power was damaged beyond repair. The document advocated American rearmament in order to regain a clear military edge vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and to be able to stand up to communist challenges wherever they arose. Korea epitomized this globalization of American commitments, which was therefore decided well before Pyongyang challenged the principles of the Charter.

American commitments were not geared towards aggression in general, but against Soviet aggression in particular. According to Bernard Brodie, the foremost American strategist at the time, "the indivisibility of peace everywhere depended very much on who was breaking it somewhere".⁵⁴ The identity of the aggressor, unimportant for collective security, was instead crucial in Washington's calculations. It would have been extremely difficult to envisage a similar American response if the aggression had been committed by the Republic of Korea at North Korea's expense, a prospect described by Osgood as sheer "folly".⁵⁵

The fact that the United States were reacting against the Soviet threat rather than against the North Korean action is also demonstrated by the fact that the defence of Korea was immediately linked to the protection of Taiwan (where the VII Fleet was sent), of Indochina (where aid to France increased) and especially of Europe (where the bulk of American rearmament took place). The Korean War almost quadrupled the defence budget, but only a fraction was due to the fighting on the peninsula.⁵⁶ America entered the war with only one commitment (NATO) outside the Western hemisphere; by the end of the decade, it had 20 security pacts outside Latin America and 450 military bases abroad distributed in 36 countries. In an

unprecedented step, a unified military command was established for NATO. The impact of the war was so relevant only because it was placed in the midst of a fundamental and gigantic strategic review which was already taking place anyway. US and UN interests largely coincided in 1950, but they were far from identical.

The same reasoning is also valid for the other turning points of the war. The decision to cross the 38th parallel was taken in NSC 81/1 of September 11th, almost a month before the General Assembly resolution demanding the unification of Korea. There was a considerable consensus in Washington (broken only by the timid objections of the Policy Planning Staff)⁵⁷ that North Korea should be punished for its aggression in order to show to the Kremlin American resolve and to avoid the perpetuation of an unnatural division of the country which would entail the indefinite guarantee of the presence of US troops. Washington wished in fact to escape such a demanding and open ended commitment. In Dulles' words:

"It would be folly to allow the North Korean Army to retire in good order and reform behind the 38th parallel. [...] To permit that would mean [...] the maintenance by the United States of a large military establishment to contain [it]".⁵⁸

The success of the Inchon landing was so clear that Washington and its allies were then swept by the military momentum.

After China's intervention had forced the United States to settle for limited objectives, the American view that these would have to be pursued by military means prevailed over the UN view (embodied in the ceasefire resolution of January 1951) that a settlement needed political concessions to China over its UN representation or the status of Taiwan.⁵⁹ Finally, after negotiations had begun, Washington again unilaterally planned for the expansion of operations if the negotiations failed. Despite the doubts of the UN allies, there is no indication that the United States would not -if necessary- have pursued an escalation as envisaged in NSC 118/2 or in the NSC meeting on May 20th, 1953 prior to the issuing of the final ultimatum to the communist forces.

Although these crucial decisions were taken by Washington quite independently, the role of the United Nations was still far from

irrelevant. Without the Charter, there would have been a Korean War but it would have been a very different one. The blatant nature of the North Korean aggression and the fact that it directly challenged the UN Charter reinforced the Truman administration's determination to intervene. Ambassador Philip Jessup recalled that Truman kept repeating "we can't let the UN down, we can't let the UN down" at the crucial Blair House meeting on the night of the invasion.⁶⁰ In Neustadt's opinion, Truman "wanted to affirm that the UN was not a League of Nations".⁶¹ In short: "Both Moscow and Peking had failed to understand the role of values in America's approach to international relation".⁶²

Nor was the multilateral contribution merely symbolic as when the UN flag, rather than the American one, was raised when Seoul was liberated. The legitimacy inherent in the multilateral endorsement of Western actions produced considerable domestic support both in the United States and in the allied countries. According to Brodie, the popularity of the operation was "enhanced by the protective coloration afforded by significant UN participation".⁶³ In America, 77% of the public declared itself in favour of Truman's actions.⁶⁴ Even Republican opponents of the President had to yield. In London, British participation was also overwhelmingly supported. Even the Labour left was in favour of what it saw as the first operation of collective security. One of its foremost leaders, Michael Foot, remarked that the "North Korean aggression was an international crime of the first order".⁶⁵ Unlike Vietnam, Korea was a popular war and even the critics in the later stages attacked the administration for not doing enough rather than for doing too much.⁶⁶

Moreover, the fact that US troops were fighting under the UN flag allowed the President to bypass a congressional authorization (despite the fact that this had been requested by some Republican Senators like Taft).⁶⁷ This became relevant when Truman's policy fell in disgrace and Congress could not threaten to withdraw an authorization which it had not granted. In this way, 15 years before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and 23 years before the War Powers Act, the Korean War represents -thanks to the UN- the zenith of the imperial presidency.

However, the most important consequences were at the international level. Despite the fact that the United States was by far the leading member of the coalition, its effort was supported by a level of allied contribution unrepeated until the Gulf War. 29 other countries contributed troops. Britain sent two brigades; Canada and Turkey one brigade each; Australia sent two battalions; France, Philippines, Holland, Ethiopia, Colombia, Belgium and Greece 1 battalion; Italy, India and the Scandinavian countries sent medical units. In Kissinger's words: "Though indifferent to the fate of Korea, these countries supported the principle of collective action that they might later invoke in their own defense".⁶⁸

Although these military contributions were not crucial, their political significance was.⁶⁹ After all, it was to maintain American credibility with its allies that Washington intervened in the first place and allied consensus was therefore paramount. Acheson stressed this point forcefully at the congressional hearings which followed MacArthur's dismissal: "The power of our coalition to deter an attack depends in part upon the will and the mutual confidence of our partners".⁷⁰

Multilateral legitimacy was therefore important for United States policy both for its own self-image and for its diplomatic position. A democracy finds it difficult to divorce self interests from ideals and when it does so it still uses the language of one to justify the other. "President Truman and his advisers clearly perceived [...] that the legitimacy of US policy in the Far East rested heavily upon maintaining the concept that a wider cause and greater principles than mere US national interests were being contested in Korea, and were being upheld by a family of nations".⁷¹ Given the fact that legitimacy brought domestic and international support, it was a key element of power.

It would otherwise be difficult to explain the reason why American policy makers went to such length to obtain favourable resolutions and to reject unfavourable ones at Lake Success. Both before the involvement of ground troops in June 1950, before the crossing of the 38th parallel and when it chose to brand China as the aggressor, Washington successfully sought UN resolutions welcoming US initiatives. Similarly, it would also be difficult to explain why,

after his initial absence, the Soviet delegate to the Security Council rushed back to the United Nations to stem further Security Council involvement.

However, the advantages of UN endorsement came at a price for the United States. "UN involvement in Korea had some results that Washington clearly did not intend".⁷² The fact that the multilateral legitimacy was not unconditional further demonstrates that the role of collective security was not insignificant. In particular, the influence of the UN allies was instrumental -together with other factors such as the limited availability of resources and the fear of Soviet reactions- in Washington's decision to maintain the limited character of the war. According to Acheson, both the Secretary of Defense George Marshall and himself believed that the United States should remain agents of the UN rather than entering in a Sino-American war.⁷³

The European allies, especially France and Britain, were weakened by the war and by imperial problems and therefore wanted to concentrate their scarce resources on Europe. Furthermore, Britain believed that Peking could be taken away from Moscow's embrace and was therefore reluctant to take an uncompromising stance.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the non-aligned and neutral nations which had supported America's involvement in the name of collective security were unwilling to antagonize the Communist camp to the extent of effectively becoming Washington's allies.⁷⁵ Even those which had unilateral reasons to contain Peking, like India, were afraid of the possible consequences of a large conflict in Asia. All of America's partners therefore, both in Korea and at Lake Success, wanted to pursue a more restrained policy.

The United Nations grouped all these nations together. Ganging up, the European countries and the Afro-Asian bloc pooled their diplomatic resources. The institutionalized framework was therefore crucial in cementing a large coalition of states which wanted to restrain the United States as well as support them. Although Washington always enjoyed the initiative, the diplomatic pressure was therefore increased by the fact that America could not isolate its allies one by one but had to confront them altogether at Lake Success. Without the mechanism of the UN, it is difficult to envisage such a pervasive influence on US policy.⁷⁶

The traditional accounts overestimate the degree of America's self-restraint during the Korean War. ⁷⁷ Allied advice and allied protests were decisive in changing crucial American strategic decisions which would have risked to expand the conflict. "The Truman's administration's aim of maintaining the support of its Western allies, coupled with the realization that any significant push into North Korean territory would encounter stiffer enemy resistance, encouraged a tampering of American objective".⁷⁸ As in any collective endeavour, the common effort was limited to the lowest common denominator.

In November 1950 America limited its bombing of Yalu bridges to the Korean half with considerable military distress, reiterated its refusal to employ Taiwanese troops and revoked -despite all major US decision-makers' opinion- the hot pursuit order. In December, Attlee's visit to Washington contributed to American reluctance to employ atomic weapons. Finally, on the question of sanctions to China, culminating in the summer of 1952, the allies frustrated US efforts to impose a total embargo.⁷⁹ In short: "American allies, especially the British, deserve much credit for US restraint".⁸⁰

Finally, apart from the military constraints, UN involvement influenced US policy also on the diplomatic side. In order to maintain UN support, Washington was forced to show that its negotiating stance was sincere, reasonable and sensitive to the views of other UN members. In November 1950, the United States endorsed a resolution proposed by France to reassure China that the UN would respect the Manchurian border, even if it managed to water it down before it was voted. Also in November, the United States only narrowly succeeded in sinking a British proposal for the establishment of a demilitarized zone south of the Yalu. However, at the end of the year Washington was forced reluctantly to accept the ceasefire resolution which envisaged negotiations on outstanding political questions only in the ardent hope that China -as it did- would reject it.⁸¹ In December 1952, in order to avoid the transfer of the negotiations from Panmunjon to the uncontrollable General Assembly, America even voted in favour of the Indian resolution on POWs.

In sum, the UN role was ancillary to that of US policy and the Korean War cannot therefore be classified as an ideal case of collective

security. Nevertheless, the Korean War was different from all other Cold War crises because of the unprecedented international moral and material support to the United States due to UN involvement and because of the constraints that this entailed. Aggression was stopped and, even if the UN was unable to repeat a similar performance until the end of the Cold War, the reputation of the institution was not eroded irrevocably as it would have been by a failure. In this limited and minimalistic sense, the Korean episode can be seen as a qualified success for collective security.

NOTES:

¹Anthony Clark Arend and Robert J. Beck: International Law and the Use of Force, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 53

²Max Hastings: The Korean War, Michael Joseph Ltd., London, 1987, p. 28-9.
Peter Lowe: The Origins of the Korean War, Longman, Harlow, Essex, 1986, pp. 43-68

³Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis and Xue Litei: Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1993, p. 214. It is even possible that the Soviet Union was surprised by the timing of the invasion since the Kremlin took 36 hours before releasing a statement and since the Soviet delegate to the United Nations -Ambassador Malik- was not present at Lake Success. Cfr. Robert Simmons: The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War, Free Press, New York, 1975, chap. 5.

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⁵William Stueck: The Korean War as International History, Diplomatic History, vol. 10, n. 4, Fall 1986, pp. 292-4; Geoffrey Warner: The Korean War, International Affairs, 1980, p. 101

⁶Dean Acheson: Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department, W.W. Norton, New York, 1969, p. 357. Department of State Bulletin, XXII, January 23rd, 1950, p. 116

⁷Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis: Drawing Lines: The Defensive Perimeter Strategy in East Asia, 1947-1951; in The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 76.

⁸In the words of a student of the Cold War: "the decision to defend South Korea was not based on a reconsideration of South Korea's military importance, but on a recognition that something had occurred for which American military planning had not been prepared" Morton Halperin: The Korean War, in Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz: The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy, Little Brown, Boston, 1971, p. 221. Cfr also Henry Kissinger: Diplomacy, p. 475.

⁹Gaddis: Drawing Lines, p. 97

¹⁰See footnote 5

¹¹The USSR was boycotting the Security Council because of the question of the People's Republic of China' UN seat and would have otherwise have vetoed any action.

¹²Hastings, op. cit., p. 56

¹³Leland M. Goodrich: Korea: A Study of US Policy in the United Nations, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1956, p. 222.

¹⁴Dean Acheson: Present at the Creation, p. 447

¹⁵Goodrich: op. cit., p. 130

¹⁶It was correctly assumed that the Soviet Union would not intervene directly in the war. The bombing of the oil complex at Rashin, only 17 miles from the Soviet border, the strafing of a Soviet aerodrome and the accidental downing of a Soviet warplane did not elicit more than mild protests. Meanwhile, the Soviets demonstrated their concern by initiating informal contacts in the UN sketching out a potential ceasefire agreement. Cfr. Rosemary Foot: The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1983, pp. 77-8

¹⁷Hastings, op. cit., pp. 152-9

¹⁸Unfortunately, the lack of direct diplomatic channels between the US and the PRC proved fatal. Ambassador. Pannikkar was in fact considered unreliable by Washington.

¹⁹Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, VII, p. 884, October 4th

²⁰Foot, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-3

²¹In the haste of the offensive, UN troops had been divided into two parts in order to reach the planned objectives as soon as possible. However, this allowed the Chinese "volunteers" to attack them separately with maximum effect.

²²US Senate Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations: Military Situation in the Far East, Washington, 1951, 82nd Congr., pp. 731-2

²³Foot, *op. cit.*, pp. 127, 129

²⁴Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 513

²⁵From the American point of view, it was probably a mistake to stop its advance when negotiations started. As Kissinger rightly points out, probably the crucial reason why the Chinese accepted to enter talks was that an American offensive was under way. Truman's decision to stop at the American preferred ceasefire line and to apply pressure frump there with tactical counterattacks and with air bombing was probably not the most appropriate strategy to convince China to concede. The PRC did not in fact value casualties as highly as the Americans and could therefore sustain a considerable amount of attrition. It would probably have reacted differently had the American advanced towards the Yalu because the reason they entered the war was to protect its borders.

²⁶Also in 1951, the refinery complex at Rashin was bombed and air reconnaissance of Manchuria were flown.

²⁷Meanwhile also the fighting on the frontline was intensified in fierce tactical battles such as Heartbreak Ridge, Vegas Hill, Bloody Ridge, Carson Hill and Reno Hill. Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 353

²⁸Acheson in explicit on this point: "Not being eager for further UN initiatives, it was incumbent upon us to devise our own. [...] One conclusion we shared unanimously: that exploration through the public procedures of the UN [...] would be fatal". Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 531

²⁹Mueller notes that unlike the Vietnam War, in the Korean one popularity and confidence in the government's policies resumed after a negative peak.

³⁰Nuclear "New Look" cfr. Freedman: The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy

³¹Foot, *op. cit.*, pp. 214, 230; Betts: Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance, Brookings, Washington, 1987, pp. 38, 47

³²Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-4, V, p 1811

³³The difference was one of emphasis. While Truman believed that American credibility would be maintained if it respected its commitments, Eisenhower stressed the fact that credibility depended on the capacity to act free of entanglements. From this derived the difference between Truman's symmetrical containment and Eisenhower's asymmetrical "New Look".

³⁴Foot: *op. cit.*, pp. 205-13

³⁵Martin Wight: Power Politics, Penguin for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1978, p. 227

³⁶Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 51

³⁷Allen S. Whiting: China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War, New York, MacMillan, 1960; p. 159. Cfr. also Stueck, *op. cit.*, p. 295

³⁸If China had any offensive motive, the best time for intervention was at when UN forces were circumscribed and under siege in the Pusan perimeter rather than when they were victoriously advancing beyond the 38th parallel.

³⁹Even the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance had not drastically changed this assessment since it took Mao almost two months to convince Stalin to sign.

⁴⁰Moscow's prudence was indeed probably a factor which undermined the Sino-Soviet relationship.

⁴¹International Herald Tribune, December 21st, 1995. Goncharov et al.: *Uncertain Partners*, p. 216. Stalin urged China to intervene and claimed that the Soviet Union could eventually even enter the war and defeat the United States. However, Stalin did not really seek war with the West as the subsequent Soviet prudence demonstrates. What he wanted was a Chinese-American War which would have deepened the conflict between China and the West as well as depleting US forces.

⁴²Mao to Stalin, October 2nd, 1950, in Goncharov et al.: *op. cit.*, p. 275

⁴³Chou to Pannikar, October 3rd, 1950, in Goncharov et al.: *ibid.*, p. 278

⁴⁴Robert Jervis: *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1976, p. 352.

⁴⁵It is worth to point out that also for what the Soviet Union is concerned, it appears that the only time that intervention was contemplated was in case of a complete Chinese defeat. Even for the USSR therefore, US intelligence was mistaken. Later, the US estimated (wrongly) that a harsh policy against China would have strained the Sino-Soviet alliance by demonstrating Soviet selfishness. However, the pressure on China in the short-term naturally drew it closer to Moscow.

⁴⁶Aron: *Peace and War*, p. 825

⁴⁷Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 408

⁴⁸According to Osgood: "American action was determined, independently of the UN, by the rapidly developing military situation". Robert Osgood: *Limited War, 1950-1*, p. 166

⁴⁹Arnold Wolfers: *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1962, p. 175

⁵⁰Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 51

⁵¹Aron, *op. cit.*, p. 881

⁵²Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 405

⁵³John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 89-126. Marc Trachtenberg: *History and Strategy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1991, p. 107

⁵⁴Bernard Brodie: *War and Politics*, MacMillan, New York, 1973, p. 62

⁵⁵Osgood, *op. cit.*, p. 168. Wolfers points out that: "Despite the popularity that collective security undoubtedly enjoyed in 1950, American military action against a member of the Soviet bloc cannot be taken as evidence that this country would be prepared to follow the same road in the case of an aggressor who was not a member of the Soviet bloc, or had attacked a member of that bloc". Wolfers, *op. cit.*, p. 175

⁵⁶Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 217

⁵⁷Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 450

⁵⁸Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, VII, p. 386. Quoted in Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 102

⁵⁹Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 353 Foot

⁶⁰Quoted in Gaddis: *Drawing Lines*, p. 97. Truman's own account also stresses the relevance of the world organization and his will to avoid a "Far Eastern Munich": "Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen and twenty years earlier. [...] If this was allowed to go unchallenged it would mean a Third World War, just as similar incidents had brought on the Second World War". Harry S. Truman: *Memoirs, vol. II: Years of Trial and Hope*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1956, p. 333

⁶¹Richard E. Neustadt: *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1960, p. 126.

⁶²Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 476

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- ⁶³Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 58
- ⁶⁴Foot, *op. cit.*, p. 63
- ⁶⁵Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁶John Mueller: *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1973
- ⁶⁷See Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 413
- ⁶⁸Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 478
- ⁶⁹According to Rosalyn Higgins: "in the political field, consultations with the UN and some contributing members were more frequent" qp84 Max
- ⁷⁰Quoted in Foot, *op. cit.*, p. 137
- ⁷¹Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 220
- ⁷²Stueck, *op. cit.*, p. 307
- ⁷³Acheson, *op. cit.*, p. 471. In particular, Marshall "suggested that the UN would deteriorate into a mere forum for debate if the US acted alone in Korea". Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 223
- ⁷⁴Kenneth W. Thompson: *Collective Security Re-examined*, American Political Science Review, vol. 47, September 1953, p. 766
- ⁷⁵Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 225
- ⁷⁶Stueck, *op. cit.*, p. 307
- ⁷⁷Foot, *op. cit.*, "The line between limited and expanded war was finely balanced". p. 23
- ⁷⁸Rosemary Foot: A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1990, p. 1. cfr. also p. 208. Cfr. also Osgood, *op. cit.*, p. 176
- ⁷⁹Foot, The Wrong War, pp. 127-9, 155, 241
- ⁸⁰Stueck, *op. cit.*, p. 304
- ⁸¹M.L. Dockrill: *The Foreign Office, Anglo-American Relations and the Korean War, June 1950-June 1951*, International Affairs, vol. 62, n. 3, Summer 1986, pp. 446-7

9. THE GULF CONFLICT

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i. History

The first preliminary signs of tension from Iraq emerged in May 1990 when Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, denounced the Gulf states of keeping the price of oil artificially low in order to hurt his country. Iraq, which was heavily indebted toward Kuwait and the other oil sheikdoms, was only just recovering from the effects of the eight-year war with Iran in the 1980's and needed to maximize its oil revenues for paying its reconstruction bill. Although the accusations did not catalyze international attention, more serious seemed the explicit threats which Baghdad delivered to Israel in the Spring. Iraq was announcing its newly acquired chemical weapons capability and its intention to use it -if necessary- against the Jewish state. "By God -the Iraqi dictator had said- we will make the fire eat up half of Israel if it tries to do anything against Iraq".¹ The threat triggered worldwide negative reactions but no active measure was taken.

Meanwhile, the quarrel with Kuwait reached a new level of escalation in July. On the 15th, the Iraqi Army begun massing troops and tanks near its Southern frontier. In four days, three armoured divisions were already fully deployed and by the 27th 100000 men from 8 divisions were in place. The following day, the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz, delivered a memorandum to the Kuwaitis which had the aura of an ultimatum. Baghdad demanded \$2.4 billion in compensation for the alleged use by Kuwait of the disputed Rumaila oil field; \$12 billion in compensation for the low price of oil induced by Kuwaiti (and others') overproduction; the forgiveness of Iraq's war debt of \$10 billion and the lease of the strategic island of Bubyian which controlled Iraq's access to the Persian Gulf.²

The general impression at the time, both in Washington and in the region, was that Iraq was using its military prowess to exact diplomatic concession from the Kuwaitis rather than to prepare for a full-scale invasion. When the two sides -following a mediation effort by Egypt's president Mubarak- met in Jeddah on July 31st, the Kuwaitis did not give in to Baghdad's demands and attempted to negotiate. The Iraqi delegate left the meeting in anger the next day. On August 2nd, Iraqi troops crossed the border and occupied the

whole of Kuwait -which could count on an army of merely 18000 men- within twelve hours.³

The United States had failed to deter the Iraqi move because it had underestimated the gravity of the situation and it had therefore sent mixed signals to Baghdad. Its diplomacy of deterrence was "inconsistent, incoherent and unfocused".⁴ On the day of the Aziz memorandum, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney had reiterated the American committed to the defence of Kuwait but his position was retracted on the same evening by the Pentagon's spokesman.⁵ On July 24th, the Department of Defence declined to answer to journalists' questions on whether the US would defend Kuwait.

When Washington finally took notice of the Iraqi build-up, thanks to compelling intelligence reports, it announced joint military exercises with the United Arab Emirates on July 24th. However, when the following day Saddam Hussein called the American Ambassador to Baghdad for an explanation, he received yet another unclear answer. Ambassador April Glaspie, according to the transcript released by the Iraqis in September, stated that "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait".⁶ This soft stance was confirmed in a cable by president Bush to Saddam on the 28th. It was only on August 1st, when the CIA was predicting an attack within 24 hours, that the United States warned Iraq and expressed concern over the situation in the Gulf.

Even if the invasion took everybody by surprise, the international reaction was swift and remarkably decisive. The United States sent an aircraft carrier group toward the Persian Gulf and another toward the Eastern Mediterranean. Due to the fortuitous coincidence of a visit by the Secretary of State -James Baker- to Moscow, the United States and the Soviet Union issued a historic joint statement in which they condemned the Iraqi aggression. The improvement in superpower relations also allowed the United Nations to vote a resolution (Res. 660) within hours of the invasion demanding an immediate and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal and the return to the status quo ante.

The reaction was not limited to verbal condemnations. Washington was not prepared to underestimate Saddam again and preoccupation arose about the fate of Saudi Arabia. Satellite pictures

showed that some of the units which had spearheaded the invasion of Kuwait were being deployed in an offensive formation along the border with Saudi Arabia. There had been three serious border incursions by Iraq. Although Baghdad was probably only trying to scare the Saudis into acquiescence, if Iraqi troops did not stop in Kuwait they could have reached Riyadh in a matter of days, allowing Saddam to dominate the region and control 40% of the known world's reserves of oil. This would have constituted a dramatic shift in the balance of power in the Middle East and, according to a CIA report, a threat to international order. On August 4th, the National Security Council meeting at Camp David decided to commit American ground troops to the theatre.⁷ The following day Bush emotionally responded to reporters that: "I view very seriously our determination to reverse out this aggression. [...] This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait".⁸

The deployment was to be initially limited to a defensive mission on the basis of Operations Plan 90-1002, which had been prepared by CENCOM, the US command responsible for the Middle East and South West Asia. The operation was denominated Desert Shield and involved the deployment of more than 200000 troops within 17 weeks. The United States simply did not have the capability to perform an offensive operation against Iraq before 8-10 months and it therefore let the tail wag the dog.⁹ After all, Iraq had a very large and well equipped army of 1 million men hardened by the war with Iran. The possibility of single retaliatory air strikes was ruled out because if it failed it did not encompass any back up and because it exposed Iraq's neighbour to retaliation. However, more forceful actions were not ruled out at a later stage.¹⁰ In the meantime, the dimension of the force was not publicly released in order to minimize the contingent's vulnerability, which was considerable in the first weeks given the logistic difficulty in transporting units so far.

The problem was that Saudi Arabia jealously cherished its independence and, as the leader of the conservative Muslim world, it could not easily allow Western troops on its soil. For this reason, Washington reassured King Fahd of its intention of sending troops only on a temporary basis. Cheney flew to Riyadh to show the satellite images of Iraqi deployments and to ask Saudi Arabia for

permission to send US troops. King Fahd, concerned at least as much as the United States by Saddam's expansionism, unexpectedly gave his approval. His only doubt was on the seriousness of the American commitment as he did not want to provoke his mighty neighbour only to be later abandoned by the Americans to his own destiny. As National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft remarked: "It's a chicken-and-egg problem. They can't go out front until they know whether we can be counted on".¹¹ Once Cheney had guaranteed him that the United States intended to send a contingent of 200000 men, he willingly gave his assent to the American request. Egypt and Morocco also agreed to send troops. To everyone's delight, the American contingent was therefore going to be part of a larger multinational force.

Baghdad's reaction was the annexation of Kuwait. Iraq had a long-standing but dubious claim to the sheikdom originating in the uncertain demarcations within the Ottoman Empire but had not emphasized it during the July crisis.¹² At the time of the invasion, Saddam was probably thinking of setting up a puppet government in Kuwait City and then retreat the main bulk of his army after the satellization of the country. However, the reaction of Kuwaitis to the aggression was not enthusiastic at all and they rapidly organized a brave and fierce resistance. Above all, the unexpected international reaction had increased the costs of a climb-down as it would have appeared that Iraq was frightened. The stakes were simply too high for an Iraqi pull out.

Neither the international community nor the Arab world could tolerate the outright annexation of a whole state by another. Meeting in Cairo on the 10th, the Arab League condemned the annexation and decided to send an inter-Arab force to Saudi Arabia. Leading states in this drive were Egypt and Syria, which had their own private reasons to loath Saddam Hussein. Both Damascus and Cairo were concerned about Iraq's bid for hegemony over the Arab world and both had reasons to seek American friendship. In particular, Syria gained acquiescence for a final drive against its opponents in Lebanon while Egypt obtained the cancellation of its debt of \$7 billion.

America's successful alliance diplomacy went beyond the Middle East. Moscow's unprecedented and most precious political

support was guaranteed from the beginning and continuously cultivated by intense consultation. Soviet diplomacy had internalized the fact that Gorbachev's Perestrojka needed a stable international environment and Western financial help. Britain was Washington's closest ally throughout the crisis, and Prime Minister Thatcher went even beyond the United States in advocating a tough stance. France, even if somewhat more cautious because of her traditional gaullist suspicion of US motives and her close ties to Iraq, was also supportive. A number of other nations condemned the invasion and followed the American line at the United Nations. The only disappointments were Germany and Japan, which felt constrained by their constitutions in their use of military force and were absorbed by domestic problems.

Saddam was encircled by a formidable coalition led by a determined United States. In an attempt to break the siege and weaken the regional members of the coalition, Saddam Hussein therefore played the Palestinian card. On August 12th, Baghdad introduced the concept of linkage between its withdrawal from Kuwait and the solution of the outstanding problems in the Middle East, including the question of the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. Counting on the anti-Western and anti-Israeli sentiments of Arab public opinion, he was trying to mobilize domestic opinion against the policies of Riyadh, Damascus and Cairo. However, apart from encountering the enthusiastic support of Jordan and the PLO, the proposal was rejected by both Western and Arab members of the coalition.

Iraq also made a dramatic move to break its isolation by offering a very advantageous peace to Iran. After the ceasefire in 1989, no formal peace had been agreed with Tehran and Saddam was therefore risking a two-front confrontation. On the 14th, Baghdad proposed to the Iranian president Rafsanjani to settle outstanding questions on an advantageous basis for Tehran. The offer was to restore the status quo ante, releasing captured Iranian territory, in order to stabilize Iraq's Eastern border. The gains of the 8-year war had been almost instantly dissipated in anticipation of the coming crisis.¹³

The main instrument of international pressure in the early stages of the crisis was economic sanctions. On August 6th, the

Security Council had voted Resolution 661 asking members to refrain from trading with Iraq. However, there were doubts about the effectiveness of such a voluntary regime. In particular, many vital supplies were slipping through via complacent Jordan and its Red Sea port of Aqaba. Washington, supported by London, was initially inclined to instruct its considerable naval task force in the Gulf to enforce the embargo. However, allied opposition, especially from Moscow, induced the United States to seek authorization for the enforcement with a UN resolution (Res. 665) passed on the 25th. Sanctions had effectively turned into blockade. It was the first time that the United Nations had authorized units not under a UN command to use force in defence of its resolutions. This was "an extraordinary diplomatic victory for the [Bush] administration".¹⁴

Iraq's response was the hostage crisis. Foreign nationals -12670 of which were Westerners- were held in good conditions but were not allowed to leave and it was suggested that Iraq would worsen their treatment proportionally with the damages of the embargo or would alternatively deploy them as shields at strategic locations in order to deter an air attack. Hostages also fulfilled a political function for Saddam. They could in fact be used to induce some states in the coalition to negotiate. Baghdad was visited by a number of foreign dignitaries including Kurt Waldheim, Jesse Jackson, Willi Brandt, Edward Heath, Yasuhiro Nakasone, Mohammad Ali and others, each departing with a handful of hostages thereby increasing Saddam's prestige.

But the main targets of the hostage policy were the governments of the USSR and especially of France, which had a reputation of negotiating to free its own nationals.¹⁵ Saddam wanted to tailor a privileged status for his old friends in order to induce reciprocal concessions. On September 18th, the PLO announced that all French hostages were to be shortly released. However, Paris was more embarrassed than pleased by Saddam's special attentions and was angered by Iraq's violation of the French Embassy in Kuwait City. Nevertheless, its own Arab policy and its traditional diplomatic competition with the United States brought France to engineer a diplomatic initiative anyway. In his statement before the UN General Assembly on September 24th, President Mitterand without previous

consultation with his allies, for the first time endorsed linkage suggesting that the Iraqi withdrawal could be coupled with a comprehensive Peace Conference on the Middle East.

The Soviet Union, which had always upheld the idea of a general conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict, also attempted its own negotiation. On October 4th, Gorbachev's envoy Eugenji Primakov flew to Baghdad for talks with the Iraqi dictator. Also the Soviets were proposing to endorse linkage in exchange for the Iraqi withdrawal. However, Saddam rejected both initiatives, because they were proposing the Conference after the withdrawal and not viceversa, as Iraq wanted. Baghdad was already announcing to its soldiers the forthcoming "mother of all battles".¹⁶ When Mitterand and Gorbachev met in Paris at the end of October for the CSCE Meeting, they could only acknowledge that their attempts had failed.

However, even these failed initiatives were sufficient to raise preoccupation in Washington. The Bush administration feared that after having sent 200000 troops to the Gulf, it would have had to retreat them in exchange for an uncertain negotiation in which any concession of the kind proposed by Moscow and Paris would have rewarded Iraqi aggression and turned Saddam into a hero of the Arab world. After the débâcle in Iran in 1979 and the unsuccessful expedition to Lebanon in 1983, the United States certainly did not wish to see their credibility evaporate further in such a strategic theater.

Furthermore, the sanctions did not seem to lead to a quick resolution of the crisis despite the tight enforcement. Experts estimated that it would take at least two years for sanctions to have an impact.¹⁷ In the meantime the Iraqi regime could even be strengthened by justifying the economic mismanagement with the scapegoat of international sanctions. It is actually remarkable how ineffective seemed the first weapons that both sides used to influence the outcome. Sanctions did not soften Iraq but neither did the oil weapon influence the international coalition. Baghdad hoped that the turmoil in the Gulf and its control of over 7% of global production after the occupation of Kuwait would produce an oil shock comparable to the one of the 1973 war. However, although the price of oil reached \$35 in September from its pre-crisis level of \$18 a barrel,

the firm international response and the increased production by other OPEC members lowered the price to \$20 by December.¹⁸

The United States was therefore unhappy with the effect of the embargo and was concerned about the possible negative repercussions of time on the cohesion of the coalition. In a way, even if in theory sanctions and force could have been applied sequentially, they were in fact alternatives as to wait for sanctions to work could undermine the possibility of using force at a later stage. As Kissinger remarked while testifying before the Senate's Armed Service Committee: "by the time it is evident that sanctions alone cannot succeed, a credible military option will probably no longer exist".¹⁹ The US commander in the field, General Norman Schwarzkopf, therefore illustrated the plans for offensive operations on October 21st, which were reported to Washington by the Chief of Staff General Colin Powell and which involved twice as many troops than the 200000 already deployed. In September, when the buildup had reached 150000 troops, Iraq had in fact almost tripled its own contingent to 430000.²⁰

On October 30th, President Bush and his advisers therefore took the decision to prepare for the active liberation of Kuwait. However, the doubling of the US force in the Gulf was only announced on November 8th, two days after a Congressional mid-term election. The polls indicated decreasing support for an eventual war in the Middle East and the administration did not want to transform the elections in a referendum on its policies in the crisis. A great debate ensued in which the administration presented its motivations for a tough stance with Saddam, which ranged from the need to uphold the principle of sovereignty in the "New World Order", to the necessity to punish a Hitler-like dictator on the verge of acquiring a nuclear arsenal to the need to protect jobs by defending the price of oil.

The United States was soon to acquire the military capability of attacking Saddam and it therefore sought -on a parallel path- the necessary international consensus. In the beginning of November, Baker set out on a trip to all major allied capitals to discuss the possibility of a UN resolution authorizing the use of force to solve the crisis. Diplomatic pressure was thus exerted on the members of the coalition and particularly on those with permanent or elected seats in

the Security Council. Colombia was convinced in a negotiation which also involved the discussion of American aid, while Malaysia was left to British pressures. Even Yemen and Cuba were contacted, despite their anti-American stance.

However, the biggest potential obstacles were China and the Soviet Union, which enjoyed the power of veto. Peking, who was trying to upgrade its international image after the massacre at Tienanmen Square, was convinced by extending an invitation to its Foreign Minister to visit Washington right after the UN vote. In other words with China "the technique was purchase".²¹ Moscow proved more problematic because she wanted to actively negotiate about the content of the resolution. The United States were initially inclined toward an authorization to use force which left the maximum freedom -in terms of time and instruments- to the coalition. Gorbachev responded by urging two resolutions: one authorizing the use of force in general, a second one specifying time and means of the enforcement. Moscow also successfully pressed for the substitution of the phrase "use of force" with the vaguer "all necessary means".²² In the event, it was agreed that there was to be only one resolution but which set out a deadline leaving some time for a diplomatic solution in extremis. Washington proposed January 1st, Moscow asked and obtained the deadline to be moved to January 15th.²³ Apart from the consultation, Washington also ensured -as a token of esteem- that Saudi Arabia granted a conspicuous loan to the USSR. Resolution 678 authorizing the use of force if negotiations failed by January 15th was voted by the Security Council on November 29th.

The only requirement still missing was a favourable public opinion in the United States. Partly because the motivations argued by the administration were contradictory, partly because they were unconvincing to a public willing to cash in the peace dividends from the end of Cold War, the president felt that he did not yet enjoy sufficient consensus to launch the greatest military operation since the Vietnam war. On November 30th, after having secured resolution 678, Bush therefore signaled its intention to go "the extra mile for peace" by entering into direct negotiations with Iraq. The dramatic move left the closest members of the coalition -Britain, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria- disconcerted and worried about American

determination, also because they had not been consulted in advance.²⁴ The Saudi Ambassador to Washington Bandar thought that the initiative was inappropriate: "to you -Bandar told Scowcroft- sending Baker is goodwill; to Saddam, it suggests you're chicken".²⁵ For the first time since the beginning of the crisis, the administration had abandoned its tough stance in order to show to domestic opinion that every diplomatic option had been tried.

In this sense, the move was a success because it dramatically increased the ratings in favour of the president. A poll published by the Washington Post showed that 90% of Americans approved of the offer.²⁶ The announcement also inhibited Congress, where a strong anti-war sentiment was present especially in the Democratic majority, from voting in December on the use of force. The main forum for discussion was limited to Congressional hearings in which a substantial body of expert and Congressional opinion expressed itself in favour of postponing the use of force and of allowing time for sanctions to work. Even the former Chairman of the JCS, Admiral Crowe testified that: "I would argue that we should give sanctions a fair chance before we discard them".²⁷ When a Congressional authorization for the use of force was finally sought in January, the shift in the public mood after Bush's 's diplomatic initiative and the approaching deadline allowed the president's resolution to pass by a narrow margin (52-47).

After the American announcement of November 30th, for a brief time it really seemed that a diplomatic solution was possible. The French government reiterated its idea that a Middle East Conference was a possibility while even the American Ambassador to the United Nations, Thomas Pickering, hinted at the possibility of linkage.²⁸ Saddam Hussein released all the remaining hostages on December 6th as a good will gesture. However, soon the negotiation stalled over the date of the meeting. Iraq naturally wanted to postpone it as much as possible, so as to render ineffective the January 15th deadline and to consolidate its position in an indefinite future. On the contrary, America wanted the meeting as soon as possible, so as to increase pressure on the Iraqis and maintain a military option should the negotiations fail. Given the negative prospects of the contacts, on December 11th General Schwarzkopf was instructed to

prepare an attack in the second half of January.²⁹ According to Bob Woodward, Bush's circle had made up its mind by Christmas Eve.³⁰

With the deadline approaching, President Bush made one last attempt by offering a meeting in Geneva between Aziz and Baker on January 7th. However, both sides went to the negotiations with very tight bargaining positions. The United States reiterated the demand for an unconditional withdrawal, while Iraq wanted a tangible and unequivocal concession on the linkage issue. In the event, Aziz did not even take back to Baghdad a letter for Saddam Hussein by president Bush signaling US resolve. The only achievement of the talks was a threat that Baker delivered to the Iraqis about the terrible retaliations in case of the use of non-conventional weapons.

After the failure in Geneva, war became almost inevitable. Last minute attempts at finding a compromise solutions were engineered without success. Soviet and Arab attempts at mediation were rejected by Iraq. A French proposal for a UN resolution explicitly endorsing linkage was also turned down. Finally, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Perez de Quellar, went to Baghdad on the eve of the deadline but he also failed as he certainly could not go beyond the UN resolutions which -having been drafted on the basis of general principles- did not easily lend themselves to compromise. On January 17th, after a 24 hour lag in which no sign of withdrawal came from the Iraqis, the Gulf war begun.

The first part of the coalition's plan -codenamed Desert Storm- involved a massive attack from the air. During the build-up begun in August, the international coalition led by the United States had gathered a formidable air armada composed by 1820 combat aircraft, of which 1376 were American. Air supremacy was gained immediately as the Iraqi airforce chose not to respond and as airports were given high priority by allied targeting. Later in the course of the air campaign, 122 of the best Iraqi planes took refuge in Iran. Iraq's very extensive air defense network was rendered ineffective by the widespread use of stealth fighter-bombers and of cruise missiles on heavily defended objectives. Other high priority targets were Iraq's command and control centres, its communications network and the weapons of mass destruction.³¹ The first two types of objectives were hit with considerable success and were especially valuable given

Iraq's very centralized line of command. The third group of targets was more of a disappointment. As after-war inspections showed, Iraq's chemical and nuclear programmes had been much more extensive than previously thought and they largely survived the war. For what delivery vehicles were concerned, Iraq's Scud launchers were given particular attention even if it has been suggested that, while ground based special forces caught some 60 launchers out of a total of 80, 1500 air sorties were unable to hit a single one.³²

Given the success of the early phase of the strategic air campaign, the coalition moved on to target Iraq's industrial base and armed forces, particularly its feared elite Republican Guard divisions. It was expected that degradation of military equipment in the Kuwaiti theater would reach 50% in the first month of Desert Storm. An even more devastating toll was exacted in terms of troops morale. On the whole 110000 combat sorties were flown in total with an extraordinarily low attrition rate. The main problems for the coalition were indeed of a logistical nature as the sheer number of flying platforms required extreme caution to avoid collisions and damages from "friendly fire". Special attention was also devoted to minimize collateral damages to civilians, which could undermine support for the war effort especially in the Arab world. With the exception of the destruction of the Amyria bunker on the outskirts of Baghdad which the United States claimed as a legitimate military target although more than 300 civilians were taking shelter there, this was successfully achieved as less than 2300 civilians died in the massive air campaign.

Before the war started, Saddam Hussein thought that Iraq could withstand the might of the coalition airforce and could remain fit for effectively fighting a ground offensive. However, after the first few days of bombing, he quickly realized that he had underestimated American air-power. Iraq therefore attempted to regain the initiative by spreading the war beyond the Gulf. A missile campaign was launched with Scud against Saudi and especially Israeli cities in the hope that an Israeli retaliation would break the coalition or even bring unexpected allies because Arab leaders could not be seen to be fighting alongside Israel. However, America successfully reassured Israel also with the deployment of Patriot anti-missile batteries, and the Shamir government therefore chose restraint frustrating Iraqi

hopes and minimizing the embarrassment of the Arab members of the coalition. The failure of the Scud card led Iraq to a desperate attempt at provoking an early ground engagement before its irrevocable degradation. On January 22nd three mechanized followed by three mechanized divisions occupied the Saudi town of Khafji. However, also this measure failed. After having recaptured the town on the 31st, Schwarzkopf was not tricked into a counteroffensive before he was ready.

Given the bankruptcy of his military options, Saddam revived a diplomatic alternative. The new attitude found a willing supporter in the Soviet Union, which was finding it increasingly difficult to face an American military triumph in the Middle East which would have erased its own influence from the region. Despite Perestrojka, some old habits were proving more resistant than expected as the attempted coup in the following August staged by most key members in the Kremlin demonstrates. On February 12th Primakov went to Baghdad and reported a cautious success having found Saddam willing to negotiate. The Soviet envoy's account emphasizes that Saddam was for the first time serious about the possibility of an Iraqi retreat.³³ On the 15th, Iraq announced its readiness to accept conditionally Resolution 660. Although the conditions were unacceptable to the West and there was no mention of the other resolutions, even the partial acceptance of the UN terms was an unprecedented step. Three days later, Aziz flew to Moscow and the ensuing talks gave rise to a six-point plan elaborated by Gorbachev. In exchange for the Iraqi pull out, the UN would have had to abandon sanctions and to promote -in a loose form of linkage- a general settlement for the whole Middle East.

America was not pleased by the Soviet plan because it allowed Saddam to save too much of its face after a massive Western commitment. The United States therefore issued an ultimatum which was much harsher than the six-point proposal. In effect, Washington was asking Baghdad to surrender rather than to negotiate. The Iraqi withdrawal would have to be supervised by allied -rather than UN-troops and sanctions were not to be automatically lifted after the pull out. The Bush administration considered that it could compromise very little after more than 6 months of Iraqi defiance. In a way, the humiliation of Saddam was by now more a war aim in its own right

than an expedient to liberate Kuwait. Baghdad rejected the American terms and the ground offensive, which had been planned for the 24th because it could not take place during Ramadan or after the beginning of the hot season, begun under the name of Desert Saber.

The coalition forces feinted with a mock landing on Kuwaiti beaches and with a frontal assault toward the capital of the sheikdom. In the meantime, the main bulk of the Western forces -the XVII US Airborne Corps strengthened with the French division and the VII Armoured Corps with the British forces- had been moved westward so as to encircle the Iraqi troops entrenched further South. The plan -defined by Schwarzkopf as a "hail Mary" football running game- proved a success. The superior training, leadership, technology, and morale of the coalition's forces could be fully exploited in a war of mobility instead of the attrition warfare which Iraq would have preferred. In two days, the Iraqi front had been breached and Iraqi forces were virtually encircled. In just over 100 hours, the formidable Iraqi army in Kuwait had been torn to pieces.

The success of the ground offensive was indeed such that it pressured Washington for an early end to the hostilities. Domestic opinion could have quickly turned against a war which increasingly appeared as the high-tech slaughter of helpless Iraqis while Egypt and Saudi Arabia counseled restraint as they would have had to sustain the post-war stability of the region. After all, the main objectives of the war -namely the liberation of Kuwait and the downgrading of Iraq's war potential- had been fully achieved. A continuation of the war could only have brought the coalition to occupy Baghdad and to topple Saddam Hussein. Apart from the complications that this would have brought with the Arab members of the coalition and with the Soviet Union, the administration was also concerned about completely destroying the state which had been the main bulwark against Iran. For these reasons, Bush ordered a ceasefire effective on February 28th. On March 3rd, ceasefire talks begun. On April 3rd, a ceasefire resolution (Res. 687) was voted by the Security Council. The Gulf War had ended in triumph for the US-led international coalition.

ii. Iraqi Strategy

Before the invasion, Iraq was recovering from its eight-year war with Iran, which had been opportunistically launched by Baghdad after the Islamic revolution in order to protect the Baathist regime from Iranian-sponsored fundamentalism. The war had soon turned into a stalemate and drained precious resources from Iraq's treasury as some 40% of GNP had to be devoted to the military budget. Baghdad had accumulated \$40 billion in debt from its Arab neighbours and another \$40 billion from the West while the reconstruction bill was estimated at \$230 billion. In other words, Iraq was on the verge of bankruptcy. Undoubtedly, economic considerations were prominent in Iraq's quarrel with Kuwait because the oil-rich sheikdom could grant debt forgiveness and an increase in oil revenues.³⁴

Nevertheless, there were also political reasons in Saddam's decision to invade. Iraq had accumulated a large army which could not readily demobilize because peace had not yet been signed with Tehran and because the fragile Iraqi economy could not absorb large quantities of manpower. Saddam wanted to use this military prowess in order to increase Iraq's prestige and make a bid for the leadership of the Arab world. In turn, this would have strengthened the regime at home as the Baathist ideology rested on a strong pan-Arab sentiment. The May 1990 Arab meeting in Baghdad which preceded the crisis must be seen in this light.

The end of the Cold War also provided both opportunity and incentive to an expansionist course. The end of bipolarity meant in fact the disappearance of superpower restraint on regional clients as well as a decrease in protection. Iraq could no longer count on the Soviet Union to insulate its regime from Western pressure. Once the utility of Iraq to global stability had diminished with the end of the war with Iran, Saddam believed that its regime was in peril. This impression was substantiated by the escalation in Western attempts to control Iraq's rearmament especially in the field of nuclear weapons. Memories of the Israeli attack in 1981 on the Osiraq nuclear reactor were still strong. In the Spring of 1990, further episodes involved the assassination of Dr. Gerald Bull, an engineer who was working for Iraq on a "supergun" capable of delivering tactical nuclear warheads at great distances and the confiscation in London of devices which could be used as nuclear triggers while on their way to Baghdad.

Given these motives, it is difficult that Saddam's invasion could be stopped with diplomatic means. Iraq was after very extensive concessions from the Kuwaiti regime which could have eased its economic plight as well as increase its prestige both at home and abroad while the regime was feeling in danger. Even if Western deterrence in the event was less than skillful, it is likely that Saddam would not have been stopped with minor concessions on the price of oil. Nevertheless, it is also likely that an outright annexation was also not on Iraq's agenda. Rather, Iraq was probably seeking to satellize Kuwait with a puppet regime with a discrete military presence on the model of Syria's relationship with Lebanon.

It was the international reaction to the invasion and the consequent need not to back down in the face of outside pressure which led Baghdad to raise the stakes of the crisis. According to Primakov, Saddam felt that the West was already determined to undermine his regime and that the Iraqi people "after renouncing the results of the eight-year war with Iran, [...] would not forgive me for an unconditional withdrawal of our troops from Kuwait".³⁵ He even went as far as admitting a kind of "Masada complex" by which he preferred to fall fighting rather than surrender. Janice Gross Stein agrees that Saddam's obsession with the safety of his personal rule led him into a kind of paranoia and that Iraq's occupation was "irreversible, short of the use of force to compel Iraq's withdrawal".³⁶

Baghdad therefore claimed Kuwait as "Iraq's 19th province", thereby signaling its intention to call its adversary's hand. Kuwait was different from Lebanon as its ties with America, its oil reserves and key location in the Gulf made it much more important in strategic calculations. Iraq therefore thoroughly underestimated the international reaction to his attack, which was increased by his annexation of Kuwait. Even Cuba and Yemen, Iraq's usual supporters in the Security Council, voted Resolution 662 condemning Iraq's announcement.³⁷ Saddam failed to realize that the international community simply could not tolerate the disappearance of one of its members at the hand of another member.

Baghdad's subsequent handling of the crisis seemed at the time inept and a major contribution to the cohesion of the coalition.³⁸ However, despite some Iraqi blunders, Saddam's strategy was not as

unreasonable as it appears with hindsight. Many of his hopes were shared -as nightmares- by Western analysts throughout the crisis. In general, Iraq tried to break the resistance to its actions by dividing the enemy camp appealing at particularistic motivations against the prescriptions of collective security. Baghdad counted on America's reluctance to risk casualties in remote regions on the world, on Soviet competition with the West and on the anti-Western sentiments on the Arabs.³⁹ In the event, Saddam did not recognize the fact that, although these unilateral motivations were strong, there were other unilateral motivations which reinforced the multilateral ones which appeared to motivate the international coalition. It was America's diplomatic skill in emphasizing the latter at the expense of the former that ultimately frustrated Iraq's strategy.

Firstly, Iraq expected that the United States would not be willing to sustain a large amount of casualties. This belief was expressed by Saddam in his meeting with US Ambassador Glaspie before the crisis broke out when he claimed that America lacked Iraq's readiness to lose 10000 men in a single battle. In the event, the whole coalition lost merely 318 men, even if this figure was considerably below even the rosier Western estimates. However, Iraq was right in the sense that American planners were extremely concerned about casualties -the so called "body-bag" factor- and that Schwarzkopf was instructed to minimize risks. In a January poll conducted in the United States, 63% expressed themselves in favour of war, but this percentage decreased to only 44% if war involved 1000 casualties and shrank to 35% if it involved 10000 casualties.⁴⁰ What Saddam did not take into account was the overwhelming military superiority of the Western troops which could liberate Kuwait almost unresisted and the stakes involved which authorized Washington to take some risks. America -the only superpower left- could not be openly humiliated by a daring but minor power on the global stage. Iraq -in short- underestimated both US willingness and US capabilities.⁴¹

Secondly, Iraq hoped that the Soviet Union would contain the Western response. Aziz expressed to Primakov his disappointment for the Soviet stance every time they met during the crisis.⁴² After all, superpower competition had inhibited many times the response of the United Nations throughout the Cold War and Iraq had always counted

on Soviet protection. However, Gorbachev's new course required international stability and Western financial credit which could only be granted if there was no direct confrontation in the Middle East. For this reason, the Soviet Union supported the United States in all crucial turning points of the crisis: from the joint condemnation after the invasion to all the Security Council's resolutions. There were indeed some differences of opinion between Washington and Moscow, as the two main diplomatic initiatives conducted by Primakov in October and in February suggest. However, these differences were consistently rated as insufficient to break coalition solidarity. Furthermore, Iraq did not consider the fact that the Soviet Union actually had an interest in the strengthening of the UN collective security mechanism. UN involvement was in fact a way for Moscow to gain influence over the events on the cheap, without having to divert -as during the Cold War- many of its resources to foreign affairs. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the USSR gained in fact an automatic influence over UN action. It is in this light that the Soviet proposals in August for the revival of the Security Council's Military Staff Committee must be seen.

Thirdly, Iraq counted on Arab solidarity. Saddam's attempted linkage of the Kuwaiti question with the Palestinian one and his military effort at involving Israel in the war were designed to mobilize the "Arab street" or even to find support among Arab states. However, he did not consider how much Iraq was more threatening to Arab governments than a Western presence in the region. He also underestimated the capacity of Arab governments to influence opinion within their own countries.⁴³ After all, Saddam had been the first to break Arab solidarity by attacking a fellow Arab and his continued threats to Saudi Arabia alienated him from the Arab mainstream. Syria, being Iraq's mortal enemy, had always been a special case, as its support of non-Arab Iran during the Iran-Iraq war already had demonstrated. Far from being suspicious of America, Arab governments -and especially Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia- were suspicious of Iraq and consistently supported the coalition's policies from the Saudi acceptance of Western troops on its soil in August, to their collective participation in all phases of the military operations. One of the main quarrels occurred indeed when America

seemed to be willing to accept a negotiate a diplomatic solution in December.

Although these blunders may not have been completely unreasonable, Iraq also committed a series of additional acts which alienated it from the international community and which dramatically contributed to coalition unity.⁴⁴ The outright annexation of Kuwait has already been mentioned; other episodes include the seizure of hostages, the violation of diplomatic premises and immunity (which enraged even sympathetic France), the mistreatment of Kuwaiti nationals, the looting of Kuwaiti property, the oil spills into the Gulf and the destruction of oil wells, the indiscriminate use of Scud attacks on cities, the unprovoked attack on non-belligerent Israel, the threat to use terrorism as a military weapon.⁴⁵ Although none of these measures was unprecedented especially in the Middle East, the salience of the crisis induced world opinion to use international standards of conduct to evaluate Iraqi behaviour. In this sense, the globalization of the crisis forced Iraq to be judged on the basis of global standards rather than on regional ones.

In sum, Iraq hoped to be immune from the precepts of collective security as many other states had been in the preceding decades. Baghdad also actively but unsuccessfully tried to undermine the international consensus on which the coalition rested. However, it underestimated the importance of the issue lying at the heart of the Kuwaiti crisis and it clumsily escalated the stakes with its own actions. The protection of sovereignty is one of the common denominators of international society and one of the core reasons for mobilizing a response. The blatant nature of its challenge forced unlikely allies to cooperate in defence of the status quo ante. Iraq also misunderstood the special historical moment in which its aggression took place. The end of the Cold War -as all the other similar times in history- was an opportunity for an extraordinary level of great power collaboration. These conditions were ideal for a collective security operation.

When, after the beginning of the war, his hopes of dividing the coalition and of withstanding the military sanctions evaporated, he quickly changed his strategy. First he tried to provoke an early ground war which would have increased allied casualties by attacking Israel and by the Khafji offensive. When also this attempt failed, he

tried to pursue a face-saving negotiated solution, but it was too late. However, Saddam Hussein was neither suicidal nor foolish, as it is demonstrated by his restraint in using chemical weapons which would have modified the coalition objectives to include his own head. He was unfortunate enough to commit an act so blatant that it could not be overlooked and to commit it at a time in which the international community could gather the consensus and the spare resources to punish him.

iii. The US, the UN and the International Coalition

American motivations evolved in three stages. Before the actual invasion, Washington did not recognize the stark nature of Iraq's intentions and it therefore tried to disengage from the crisis with lukewarm reactions. Reassuring messages were added to the pro-forma deterrence. America estimated that Iraq was only sabre-rattling. It must also be said that even the worst-case predictions assumed that Iraq was at most planning a limited invasion for limited objectives, as for example the Rumaila oil field on the border or the strategic island of Bubyian. In such a relatively moderate contingency, the United States could not have gathered neither the domestic consensus nor the Saudi acquiescence for a large military deployment, which was therefore not an option. As argued by Brian Urquhart:

"we shall never know how much preventive intervention even the Kuwaiti government, in its pre-invasion state of mind, would have welcomed or even tolerated or indeed how many governments would have been willing or ready to intervene at an earlier stage".⁴⁶

a) American policy changed dramatically after Iraq's aggression, which overran the whole of Kuwait. In an unclauswitzian manner, Washington responded to the use of force as it was a completely different issue. For this reason its pre-war policy of deterrence and its subsequent policy of compellence were so different. It was the blatant nature of Iraq's attack which completely transformed American stakes and perceptions in the crisis and led to a determined reaction, which had been decided as early as August 4th. On the one hand, it was feared that also Saudi Arabia was vulnerable to the same fate. On the

other, the United States could not ignore such a flagrant violation of the rules of international society as the disappearance of a whole state. The Iraqi subsequent defiant actions such as the taking of hostages and the oil spills merely reinforced Washington's determination.

The third stage in American thinking evolved when confidence in the UN embargo crumbled in the Fall. Sanctions did not seem to achieve the result of an Iraqi withdrawal with sufficient rapidity so as not to endanger the cohesion of the coalition. Furthermore, the nature of the aggression also influenced the means of the reaction.⁴⁷ Since force had already been used by Iraq, the military option was always ranked very highly in Washington despite the preference of many military leaders for a non-violent solution.⁴⁸ Once it became clear that Iraq would not retreat without major concessions, Washington began to plan a military solution. It was Iraq's reluctance to withdraw soon after the invasion made a military clash almost inevitable.

The risks of a war were preferred to the certain costs -in terms of reputation- that a compromise solution entailed. Any concession to the Iraqis would have been seen as a reward for their invasion and subsequent intransigence, thereby increasing the incentives for other aggressions in the Middle East or elsewhere. During this period, the US evaluated as a "nightmare scenario" a negotiated solution which would have undermined its military option while offering a honourable way out to Iraq after it had openly challenged the United States and the international community. The only superpower left after the end of the Cold War could not suffer a direct humiliation by a defiant regional power.⁴⁹ As Henry Kissinger testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee: "The perception of American failure would shake international stability. Every moderate country in the Middle East would be gravely weakened by a debacle".⁵⁰

America was therefore motivated mainly by a matter of principle. It was more Iraq's means than its objectives which mobilized the response. The total occupation of one UN member state by another was simply unacceptable. Michael Walzer, who is one of the foremost student of the "Just War" theory and certainly not an enthusiastic supporter of military force, wrote unambiguously:

“What makes for confusion [...] is precisely that this would be a clean war, so obviously just that one wants to see it fought. [...] We would be fighting against the Iraqi state and its leader for the sake of another country’s political survival. From the standpoint of morality, it is hard to imagine a better cause or a more appropriate enemy. [...] It is very bad to make a deal with an aggressor at the expense of the victim. For we then make ourselves complicitous in the aggression”.⁵¹

The argument that America’s reaction was chiefly motivated by principles has been virulently attacked at the time and after by those who point out that the Al-Sabah regime in Kuwait was autocratic, antidemocratic and hardly worthy of a crusade. Furthermore, the international coalition included reactionary Saudi Arabia, dictatorial Syria and China, which had recently repressed its own democratic movement at Tienanmen Square. Yet, the crucial point concerned the defence of internationally recognized borders and the domestic sovereignty within those borders. These principles are among the most sacred within the international community, as is demonstrated by the fact that even Cuba and Yemen voted with the United States to condemn the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait. It was not democracy, but the fundamental fabric of international cohabitation which was at stake. President Bush -in short- meant what he said when he referred to a “New World Order” as the basis for the US intervention. However, the Bush’s new world was not a revolutionary one in which democracy and prosperity would be spread around the globe but it was a more minimalistic one in which basic principles of international conduct were to be upheld.

This should also clarify another critique of the policies pursued by the Bush administration. For example, Noam Chomski argued that “principles cannot be selectively upheld” and that Washington was being hypocrite because it chose to resist this aggression and not others. The truth -Chomski accused- was that “the response to Saddam Hussein’s aggression because he stepped on the wrong toes”, that is he threatened oil reserves.⁵² Thomas Friedman on the New York Times also attacked the administration: “Surely it is not American policy to make the world safe for feudalism. This is about money, about protecting governments loyal to America and punishing those that are not and about who will set the price of oil.”⁵³ Similar views were

expressed in the case of Western reluctance to intervene in the Yugoslav civil war, when it was argued that Bosnia had no oil. Yet, Iraq's invasion was indeed unprecedented because it was the first time in the UN era that a state was attempting to swallow another state. It was also unprecedented because it occurred a time in which great power cooperation to punish it was possible as it had never been before. Other cases of violence may be worthy of intervention on humanitarian grounds, but they do not necessarily involve the principles at stake in the Gulf War.

Oil was indeed an important element of the crisis. If Kuwait had not been an oil producing country, it would probably not have been invaded in the first place. However, it would be wrong to limit American motivations to the issue of oil as it also demonstrated by the fact that the price of oil had returned to its pre-crisis levels also before the war started. More important were considerations about regional stability. America's decision to intervene was influenced by the fear that Saddam would also attack Saudi Arabia and by his determined efforts to acquire a nuclear arsenal, which he seemed to be willing to use against Israel.

Even if Washington was motivated by principles in its reaction to Iraq, this does not necessarily mean that its motivations were chiefly multilateral. Iraqi defiance challenged American primacy as directly as it challenged UN rules. Principles can be considered as an intrinsic and organic part of the national interest even when they do not necessarily reflect a preference for a collective policies. According to Kissinger: "in the Gulf War, collective security was invoked as a justification of American leadership, not as a substitute for it".⁵⁴ The United States was indeed prepared to intervene alone in the Gulf even if the international community was unmoved. As Baker argued before Congress, the US remained "the one nation that has the necessary political, military and economic instruments at our disposal to catalyze a successful response by the international community". Bush reiterated this concept: "Among the nations of the world only the United States of America has had both the moral standing and the means to back it up".⁵⁵

Washington behaved accordingly. The military build-up begun in the first decade of August had no UN status at all until Resolution

678 authorized military force. The UN operation "would not have been possible had not the United States already taken action under Article 51".⁵⁶ The US deployed hundred of thousand of troops without seeking a collective endorsement. On the contrary, when the Soviet Union suggested in August to revive the UN's long-forgotten Military Staff Committee to coordinate military operations in the crisis, Washington flatly refused. In August, Washington was even initially reluctant to seek authorization for the enforcement of the embargo.

All major decisions throughout the conflict were taken by Washington before consulting with its allies. Endorsement was sought only after the course had already been set. This is true for the crucial resolution 678, which was voted at the end of November one month after Washington had made up its mind about the military option. Similarly, the decisions to switch from Desert Shield to Desert Storm to Desert Sabre to the termination of the hostilities were unilaterally taken by Washington. Even the peace initiative at the end of November was launched without prior consultation.

Not only did ~~the~~ Washington concentrate in imposing its own policies on the coalition, but it also tried to undermine others' initiatives. Analysts have highlighted "US willingness to act alone if need be and concern that others acted without US leadership."⁵⁷ The United States remained suspicious of French and Soviet diplomatic activity throughout the crisis and it accepted coolly the compromise solutions proposed by Paris and Moscow in October and in January. Furthermore, the timing and content of its February 22nd ultimatum was specifically designed to sabotage Gorbachev's six-point plan. The United States wanted to make sure that the leadership of the coalition remained firmly in their own hands and did not wish to risk its reputation and its soldiers for collective decisions.

Nevertheless, the United States recognized the importance of the United Nations for its policy because international collaboration was absolutely crucial. Charles Krauthammer is wrong when he argues that:

"What we have today is pseudo-multilateralism: a dominant power acts essentially alone, but, embarrassed at the idea and still worshipping at the shrine of collective security, recruits a ship here, a brigade there, and blessings all around to

give its unilateral action a multilateral sheen. The Gulf is no more a collective security operation than was Korea, still the classic study in pseudo-multilateralism".⁵⁸

Without the acquiescence of the Soviet Union, a large military operation would have been impossible. Without a favourable disposition of the Arab world, an American intervention would have been unthinkable as Washington could not have deployed such a large force without the agreement of Saudi Arabia and the other Arab members of the coalition. The United Nations was indispensable because it provided the framework where both the Soviet Union and the Arab world could more easily support the Western coalition than if it was an explicitly unilateral operation. For these reasons, "Washington was convinced that a UN umbrella was essential for political if not for legal reasons".⁵⁹ In Matthew's opinion: "careful UN diplomacy was a precondition of American action, and in that sense the need for the US to work through the Security Council acted to some extent as a constraint".⁶⁰

The necessity to use collective instruments was made explicit by the Soviet Union as early as August, because Gorbachev had to face a strong opposition from those who did not want to openly support their former enemy. The obvious way to overcome these suspicions was to make the intervention collective. The Soviet Foreign Ministry released a note at the beginning of the crisis stating that: "the experience of many years shows that the most correct and sensible way of acting in conflict situations is through collective efforts and the utmost use of UN mechanisms".⁶¹ It is in this light that the efforts to revive the Military Staff Committee and the insistence to obtain a resolution for authorizing force must be seen. The UN was crucial because it gave Moscow some influence over the operation.⁶² It was easier also for the Arab members of the coalition -some of which, like Syria, were certainly not a US ally- to be fighting under a UN banner than under the American flag.

Moreover, although the US contingent was by far the largest, America gained sizable contributions to its military effort as Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Kingdom sent more than 10000 troops each; Bahrain, Bangladesh, Czechoslovakia, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates

sent smaller ground contingents; Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Spain sent naval or airforce units; Germany and Japan lent substantial financial support to the enterprise.⁶³

The authority and legitimacy deriving from the UN cover were also useful at the domestic level, where public and especially congressional opinion was hardly enthusiastic about war. The leadership of the Democratic majority -composed by the Speaker of the House Tom Foley, the Senate's Majority Leader George Mitchell and by the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn- preferred economic sanctions and it would not easily have supported the military option. Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York said:

"It is as if the great armed force which was created to fight the Cold War is at the President's own disposal for any diversion he may wish, no matter what it costs. He will wreck our military. He will wreck the administration."⁶⁴

Bush knew that he could not avoid a Congressional resolution on the use of force because of the large number of troops committed and of the risks involved.⁶⁵ He therefore attempted to win a majority by maximizing the aura of legitimacy to the operation. In the event, 10 democrats defected and allowed the President to pass his resolution in the Senate by a narrow margin. Many of these congressmen would have found it difficult to support a policy which excluded the UN. One Democratic supporter of the president explained that one of the reasons why America should have resisted Iraq:

"lies in our hopes for the establishment of a new world order. How we resolve the first crisis of the Post-Cold War world will have profound historical consequences. [...If] we have to use force it will be essential [for the US] to go to war multilaterally rather than unilaterally. The liberation of Kuwait is not only an American responsibility"⁶⁶

The United States therefore spent much time and effort ensuring that its policies were provided with the legitimacy of the United Nations. The Secretary of State was engaged in virtually constant

consultation with the other members of the coalition, traveling 100000 miles and attending 200 meetings before the November UN resolution, while even President Bush often called his counterparts over the telephone. All major steps were endorsed by Security Council resolutions, even when US military leaders would have preferred a more unilateral approach. Each resolution entailed a risk for the administration because a negative vote would have been worse than no vote at all. For this reason, UN diplomacy was prominent on the US agenda. Egypt and the Soviet Union were incentivated with financial advantages. China managed to break its post-Tienanmen isolation in exchange for its acquiescence over UN resolutions. Considerable pressure was exerted on Latin American countries and especially Colombia, which had a seat on the Council. Old enemies like Syria received the gracious visit of president Bush. Even the Cuban foreign minister had a meeting with Baker.

America's attention for the multilateral coalition did not stop in New York. Even with reference to the policies in the Gulf, Washington took extreme care in not undermining international consensus. In a way, even the timing for the beginning of the war was influenced by coalition diplomacy. According to Bob Woodward, the Bush administration was convinced that "the international is too fragile to hold out indefinitely. To outsiders it might look different, but they knew, from the inside, that arrangements were quite delicate. [It was felt that] it was quite likely that some outside event could absolutely shatter the coalition".⁶⁷ One of these dangerous episodes was the Temple Mount incident in Jerusalem in which Israeli security forces had killed 22 Palestinians, even if it did not provoke the feared international repercussions.

The influence of the coalition on American policies was also evident in the termination of the hostilities, called by the United States barely 100 hours after the beginning of the ground offensive. Certainly, the Bush administration was concerned about upsetting the regional balance, leaving Iran free to dominate the power vacuum which would have followed Iraq's destruction. However, other prominent reasons were the fear that public opinion and many allies would abandon the cause. As Michael Brecher puts it: "one of the reasons for the abrupt termination was almost certainly 'advice' or

pressure from the US's Arab allies".⁶⁸ General Schwarzkopf's own account emphasizes the lack of authority to advance to Baghdad since it was not an explicit UN goal: "We had no authority to invade Iraq for the purpose of capturing the entire country or its capital [...] the coalition would have fractured. Even the French would have withdrawn."⁶⁹ The UN was not merely a tool for American policy.

The multilateral coalition was indeed an instrument of enforcement on behalf of the international community. The real issue at stake was that the main players had -to a certain extent- different definitions of what the international community is. After all, as an ideological concept, the idea of international community is subject to interpretation. Bush's New World Order was different from the brave new world envisaged by the wise men of the Truman presidency, as it was less redemptionist and more exemplarist. Eastern Europe after 1989 was to be welcomed in the West but America was no longer ready to pay "any price" to spread democracy around the globe.⁷⁰ On the contrary, Saddam was to be punished because it had threatened Western interests, but there was no policy of turning Iraq into a liberal democracy. After all, Iraq had a completely different conception of the international community and it expected regional identities to take precedence. Finally, it is important to note that the Soviet Union, in the midst of its Perestrojka, was still a world power which found it congenial to conceptualize the United Nations in global terms. It is doubtful whether its successor, Russia, would not have asked for a higher unilateral price for its acquiescence.

Although the Gulf War was not the cornerstone of a new world order in which any disturbance would be met with a collective reaction, it was certainly a successful enterprise demonstrating the potential of the international community. In particularly stark cases such as the invasion and annexation of Kuwait, states have shown to be able to overcome rivalries and differences. Under the leadership of the United States, supported or acquiesced by the other permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations have proven their ability to resist aggression at least in those instances are particularly ripe for a collective security operation.

NOTES:

- ¹Quoted in Bob Woodward: The Commanders, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991, p. 201. In the same period, Iraq had also executed a British journalist, Farzad Bazoft, on the charge of spying while hard evidence of an extensive Iraqi nuclear programme had emerged.
- ²Janice Gross Stein: *Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-1991: A Failed or Impossible Task?*, International Security, V. 17, N. 2, Fall 1992, p. 149
- ³Cfr. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 218-9
- ⁴Stein: op. cit., p. 150-155
- ⁵Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh: The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order, London, Faber and Faber, 1993, pp. 150-1
- ⁶The New York Times, September 23rd, 1990, p. A19
- ⁷Michael Brecher: Crises in World Politics: Theory and Reality, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1993 p. 434
- ⁸Quoted in Woodward: op. cit., p. 260
- ⁹Woodward: op. cit., P. 249. See also Ken Matthews: The Gulf Conflict and International Relations, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 104
- ¹⁰However, it is not true that Bush was embarked on a "personal crusade" and that the war had been decided as early as August as suggested by Smith. Cfr. Jean E. Smith: George Bush's War, New York, Henry Holt & co., 1992, pp. 1, 98-102
- ¹¹Quoted in Woodward: op. cit., p. 252
- ¹²Although Iraq had never officially recognized the sovereignty of Kuwait, which had been formally part of the province of Basra under the Ottoman empire, its claim was vulnerable to estoppel. Iraq had in fact voted for Kuwaiti participation in a number of UN specialized agencies and had not recently reiterated its claim to the sheikdom. Cfr. Matthews: op. cit., p. 137
- ¹³Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 108
- ¹⁴Woodward: op. cit., p. 285
- ¹⁵Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 157
- ¹⁶Woodward: op. cit., p. 297
- ¹⁷Kimberly Elliott, Gary Hufbauer and Jeffrey Schott: *The Big Squeeze: Why Sanctions on Iraq Will Work*, The Washington Post, December 9th, 1990. Sanctions have indeed failed even after the Gulf War. Iraq has in fact not complied with armed control requirements set by the UN for some years after the end of the conflict, despite the fact that sanctions were still in place. Cfr. also Adam Roberts: *The Laws of War in the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict*, International Security, V. 18, N. 3, p. 178
- ¹⁸Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 180
- ¹⁹Quoted in Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, eds.: The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions, New York, Times Books, 1991 p. 239. Cfr. also Brecher: op. cit., p. 445
- ²⁰Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., pp. 203-5
- ²¹Brecher: op. cit., p. 442
- ²²Woodward: op. cit., pp. 333-4
- ²³Brecher: op. cit., pp. 441-2
- ²⁴Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 241
- ²⁵Quoted in Woodward: op. cit., p. 336
- ²⁶Woodward: op. cit., p. 337
- ²⁷Quoted in Woodward: op. cit., p. 331
- ²⁸Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 238
- ²⁹Brecher: op. cit., p. 452

³⁰Woodward: op. cit., pp. 353-4

³¹The Iraqi leadership was not an explicit target. General Michael Dugan, Chief of Staff for the Air Force had been relieved in the Fall of 1990 because he had suggested that Saddam Hussein and his family were legitimate and priority targets. Nevertheless, eventual accidental damage to the Iraqi leadership would not be unwelcome.

³²Cfr. Lester H. Brune: America and the Iraqi Crisis, 1990-1992: Origins and Aftermath, Claremont CA, Regina Books, 1993, p. 179

³³Evgenij Primakov: Missione a Bagdad, Florence, Ponte alle Grazie, 1991, pp. 83-4

³⁴Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 30

³⁵Primakov: op. cit., p. 33 [author's translation]

³⁶Stein: op. cit., p. 179.

The Iraqi regime was also affected by the logic of groupthink so that discrepant information was eliminated in order to please the leader. Cfr. Matthews: op. cit., p. 122. Cfr. also Jervis, Janis

³⁷Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 99

³⁸See for example Norman Friedman: Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait, Annapolis MD, Naval Institute Press, 1992, which explains the Western victory with the "ineptitude of Saddam Hussein", p. 4

³⁹Stein: op. cit., pp. 173-6

⁴⁰Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 285

⁴¹Brecher: op. cit., pp. 448-9

⁴²Primakov: op. cit., pp. 27, 83

⁴³Shibley Telhami: Arab Public Opinion and the Gulf War, Political Science Quarterly, V. 108, N. 3, 1993, p. 437

⁴⁴Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A. Higgot and Kim Richard Nassal: Bound to Follow? Leadership and Followership in the Gulf Conflict, Political Science Quarterly, V. 106, N. 3, pp. 391-410. The authors argue that the coalition was not the result of US leadership and that Iraq's behaviour proved invaluable to coalition unity.

⁴⁵All these actions represented "especially flagrant violations of international law". Roberts: op. cit., p. 141 and passim

⁴⁶Brian Urquhart: Who Can Police the World?, New York Review of Books, May 12th, 1994

⁴⁷Cfr. Matthews: op. cit., pp. 108, 118

⁴⁸It is well known that both Powell and Schwarzkopf preferred to avoid a direct military confrontation.

⁴⁹This was compounded by the domestic political need to reinforce -for the forthcoming elections- the president's image which, despite his competence on foreign affairs, was inexorably associated with his weak vice-presidency during the Reagan era.

⁵⁰Quoted in Sifry and Cerf: op. cit., p. 239

⁵¹Michael Walzer: Perplexed, The New Republic, January 28th, 1991, reprinted in Sifry and Cerf: op. cit., pp. 302-6

⁵²Noam Chomski: Oppose the War, Z Magazine, February 1991, reprinted in Sifry and Cerf: op. cit., pp. 307-310

⁵³Thomas L. Friedman: Confrontation in the Gulf: US Gulf Policy-Vague Vital Interests, The New York Times, August 12th, 1990, p. A1. This is also the view proposed by Dunnigan and Bay, who write that "the fact that the UN quickly closed ranks against Iraq shows how clearly a wide variety of nations saw the danger of Iraq getting a stranglehold on world oil production". Cfr. James F. Dunnigan and Austin Bay: From Shield to Storm: High-Tech Weapons, Military

Strategy and Coalition Warfare in the Persian Gulf, New York, William Morrow & co., 1992, p. 64. However, this argument does not explain why the Western states more independent from oil, Britain and the United States, were in the forefront of the operation while the more dependent, like Germany and Japan, remained in the background.

⁵⁴ Kissinger: Diplomacy, cit., p. 250. Kissinger also writes that the operation was "hardly an application of the doctrine of collective security. Not waiting for an international consensus, the United States had unilaterally dispatched a large expeditionary force. Other nations could gain influence over America's actions by joining what was in effect an American enterprise", ibid.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Cooper et al.: op. cit., p. 393

⁵⁶ Matthews: op. cit., p. 76

⁵⁷ Andrew Bennett, Joseph Legpold and Danny Unger: *Burden Sharing and the Persian Gulf War*, International Organization, V. 48, N. 1, Winter 1994, p. 50

⁵⁸ Quoted in Cooper et al.: op. cit., p. 407

⁵⁹ Brecher: op. cit., p. 439

⁶⁰ Matthews: op. cit., p. 88

⁶¹ Quoted in Freedman and Karsh: op. cit., p. 125

⁶² Matthews: op. cit., p. 80

⁶³ Matthews: op. cit., Appendix 5

⁶⁴ Quoted in Woodward: op. cit., p. 325

⁶⁵ Despite the fact that in Korea Truman had sought no such resolution and that it was not strictly required by the Constitution, Bush endorsed the idea of a vote because after the Vietnam War he could not afford to use force without Congressional backing.

⁶⁶ Rep. Stephen S. Solarz: *The Stakes in the Gulf*, The New Republic, January 7th, 1991, reprinted in Sifry and Cerf: op. cit., pp. 269-283

⁶⁷ Woodward: op. cit., p. 319

⁶⁸ Brecher: op. cit., p. 473

⁶⁹ Schwarzkopf, It Does Not Take a Hero, New York, Bantam Books, 1992, it. transl.: Non ci vuole un eroe, Milan, Mondadori, 1992, p. 521 [author's translation]

⁷⁰ Christopher Coker: *Britain and the New World Order: The Special Relationship in the 1990's*, International Affairs, V. 68, N. 3, July 1992, pp. 407-21

CONCLUSION

* * * *

i. Theory and Evidence

Part I has put forward the possible definitions of the concept of collective security and has analyzed its limits and merits. A series of hypotheses was presented, constituting a theoretical interpretation of the role of institutions in international security. In Part II, the cases of Abyssinia, Korea and the Gulf were considered in depth. Now, the findings of the two sections will be put together in order to substantiate the theoretical hypotheses with the available historical evidence.

The three case studies provide a general picture of collective security since the concept was first introduced as they are placed in the three main periods after the First World War: the inter-war period, the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. The common features which they present should therefore illustrate the characteristics of collective security more than the ones of the specific historical configurations in which they took place. In particular, they highlight the major strengths and weaknesses of the institutional approach to peace, as indicated by the hypotheses identified in the first part.

The major weaknesses are:

(i) *Collective security needs the consensus of the great powers and their interest in defending the status quo.*

In the Abyssinian case, the great powers were unwilling to cooperate as Italy was the aggressor, Britain and France stood by the League, the United States was bent on isolation and Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union had their own revisionist agenda. The attempt to resist aggression backfired and Italy could annex Abyssinia without being stopped. Also during the Cold War, the concept has never been applied because of the bipolar confrontation between the superpowers which inhibited common action. The only exception was the Korean War, in which UN intervention was dependent upon the fortuitous absence of the Soviet delegate from the Security Council. Finally, the intervention in the Gulf could be staged only because the Cold War was at an end, allowing the possibility of US-Soviet collaboration.

(ii) *Collective security may work only if the aggressor is not a major power.*

Italy, even if it was nominally a great power, was extraordinarily vulnerable either to an oil embargo or to the closure of the Suez canal. Moreover, in the event of war, Rome would not have survived a joint Anglo-French attack. After 1945, the possibility of a collective security operation against a major power was eliminated with the introduction of the veto power for the five permanent members of the Security Council. Both North Korea and Iraq were not global powers and a reaction could be engineered because it did not encompass a direct confrontation between superpowers. In all the other cases in which a great power was directly involved, as in Hungary in 1956, Afghanistan in 1979 or in Grenada in 1983, collective security could not be invoked.

(iii) A collective security operation requires a major power taking the lead in implementing the principle.

Given the public good characteristics of collective security, no state has an exclusively private interest in providing it. This is the reason why major powers, given their larger share of resources and benefits, have a higher interest than smaller players in taking the lead in collective action. In all three historical events considered, there was a clearly identifiable leader: Britain in the first case, the United States in the other two. Without such catalyst, smaller players would each prefer that another provided the good, while enjoying its benefits as a free rider. Collective security is possible only if one state with the large capabilities necessary to enforce the operation also feels the responsibility of doing so.

(iv) The collective interest must not collide with particular interests.

States investing scarce resources and risking the life of their troops for multilateral endeavors will not do so if they hurt their own interests. In 1935, Britain and especially France were reluctant to impose significant sanctions on Rome because they considered Italy as a partner in the containment of Germany. In the other two instances, Washington could uphold the collective principles because they happened to coincide with its particular interest: the containment of Communism in the case of Korea and Middle Eastern stability in the case of the Gulf conflict. The United States could hardly have been expected to engage in similar generosity if the aggressor had been a precious ally.

Yet, as a hardened diplomat from a hardened country put it, the impartial international community and the distant "whole world" may not necessarily be the best brokers for a local solutions: "There is more to be said for negotiation between concerned parties whose destinies will be harmed by failure and served by success".¹ Multilateral principles may often be too abstract to be a useful guide to exit a crisis initiated by national interests.

(v) *The aggression must be blatant and uncontroversial.*

In the cases of Abyssinia and Kuwait, the violation of international norms was so stark as to be unequivocal. In both cases, the invasion was completely unprovoked and led to the unacceptable annexation of a sovereign state by another country. In the Korean case, the situation was more ambiguous even if the massive aggression constituted a significant step on the escalation ladder. If the circumstances had been less clear or the objectives of the aggressor less blatant, as has been the case in most other occasions, the international community would have had a harder time in organizing a unified response.

(vi) *Collective security has been challenged by aggressors.*

Even in the only three cases in which the concept has been applied, collective security has not commanded universal support. Not only did aggressors break its precepts in particular occasions, but they also questioned its foundation in general, implying different definitions of the idea of international community. Italy refused to recognize a super partes standing for the League of Nations and continued throughout the crisis to identify it with the national policies of Britain. In the Korean case, the Communist bloc continued to support North Korea and, in the case of Peking, even intervened against the UN troops. In the Gulf, Saddam Hussein attempted to break the international coalition confronting him by appealing to the particularistic sentiments of radical Arab opinion, obtaining some success with the PLO and Jordan.

(vii) *Collective security is not automatic.*

A multilateral operation has never been made mandatory on members of a collective security instance. States jealously guard their sovereign discretion about how to use their own military resources, and have therefore resisted any attempt to delegate such powers to a

multilateral authority. In 1935, the sanctions regime was voluntary and force was considered only as a possibility. In 1950, the Security Council authorized and encouraged members to actively support the government of South Korea. In 1990, the UN also authorized the coalition to use force but certainly did not mandate it. The last two examples are remarkable because in theory, mandatory sanctions would be within the powers of the United Nations, although in practice the Security Council, which is composed by states, has never applied them. Furthermore, the resolutions supporting the various operations have not been taken as absolute imperatives. The sanctionist states have continued to negotiate with the aggressor even after the commitment of the international community. The Hoare-Laval Plan in 1935 was elaborated well after the Italian invasion. Also in Korea case, the ceasefire did not implement the UN goal of reunification of the country.

(viii) *The compellence value of collective security is insufficient.*

One of the main advantages argued by advocates of multilateralism is that the international community can gather so much power as to render the use of force useless because no single state can hope to withstand the combined power of all the other states together. However, not only this is untrue if the aggressor is a nuclear armed superpower, but it has also been untrue in the three examples under consideration, which demonstrate the deficit in credibility of the concept. In all the three cases moral condemnation, economic sanctions and the threat to use force may have been useful to condemn aggression but they were insufficient to reverse the aggression. It might even have been the case that these measures short of war strengthened the domestic position of the aggressor by allowing him to exploit patriotic sentiments. Only the application of superior force could evict these violators. In the case of Abyssinia, this was not done and Italy could annex the whole country. In the other two cases, only large expeditionary forces of hundred of thousand men could enforce the collective decisions.

The major strengths of the concept are:

(i) *Collective security does have an impact on state policies.*

Far from being irrelevant, multilateral motivations were significant in all three cases. In the Abyssinian case, Britain did not abandon the League even if its national interest would have suggested acquiescence in Africa in order to gain Italian support in Europe. The United States was also influenced by collective principles both in Korea and in the Gulf. Finally, many states which contributed to the last two operations would not have done so if these had been unilateral American enterprises. For example India, proudly non-aligned throughout the Cold War, would not easily have supported the intervention in Korea. Similarly, the Soviet Union and some Arab nations would have found it difficult to favour the American actions in the Gulf if they had been outside the impartial framework of the United Nations.

(ii) *In Korea and in the Gulf collective security worked.*

In both of the UN instances, aggression was first effectively condemned and isolated, and then successfully reversed. After the Abyssinian debacle, the institutional improvements of the Charter allowed collective security to operate only when there were significant chances of success. In other words, although the veto power and the large UN membership make it more difficult for collective security to be applied, when it is invoked it has a high probability of working. Its enhanced credibility should therefore improve its deterrent value in discouraging potential aggressors.

(iii) *Collective security favours cooperation.*

The institutional framework of the international organizations induces reciprocity and inhibits free riding, thereby increasing the chances of collaboration. The three operations considered involved a higher number of actors than most unilateral enterprises, and they successfully coordinated their policies. In the case of Abyssinia, more than 50 states applied sanctions against Italy. In Korea, 29 states contributed troops to the UN effort. In the Gulf conflict, also 29 states joined the US-led coalition with military forces. Naturally, the size of these arrangements was crucial both to its military and to its political effectiveness.

(iv) *Collective security provides legitimacy.*

The prearranged procedures, the impartial multilateral framework and the large number of players involved contribute to

the aura of legitimacy granted by collective security to a specific operation. The fact that the concept is based upon principles rather than interests provides a moral hierarchy according to which one side is right and the other is wrong. In turn, legitimacy is useful at the international level because it can increase the support for a collective security operation as states which are not directly involved by a dispute may still want the principle to be upheld. Again, this helps to explain the large number of states contributing to the three operations studied.

(v) Collective security favours domestic support.

Similarly, the aura of legitimacy lent by a multilateral arrangement also helps to gather support with public opinion. In the Abyssinian case, public opinion was so much in favour of the League that it even pressurized the government to take a tougher stance than it would have done otherwise. In the Korean and Gulf cases, American public opinion was more supportive of the White House than in other -more unilateral- instances, such as the Vietnam War or the intervention in Grenada. In the Korean case, President Truman did not even need a congressional authorization. In the Gulf episode, it may even have been possible that the Bush administration did not obtain a congressional authorization without the UN support.

(vi) The multilateral character forces the leading state to moderate its policies.

The legitimacy which contributes to the international and public support is a valuable asset for the leading state organizing an operation. This leads to moderate policies in accordance with multilateral objectives. In Korea and in the Gulf, the United States was eager to maintain UN endorsement and it therefore did not chose a diplomatic platform and military means which were likely to embarrass its allies. Even if these considerations will not direct a state to undermine its own interests, they will still influence its policies and lead it to compromise between unilateral and collective objectives.

(vii) Collective security enhances peace.

Although it has rarely been applied and it has been successful only twice, collective security has contributed to the idea that war is bad and has to be prevented. States have willingly subscribed to collective security treaties and they have rarely -if ever- challenged

the principle as a whole. Even when aggressions have been committed, states have not challenged the principle in general but its application in particular and they have tried to justify themselves in terms compatible with collective security. Only a Century ago, the use of force was considered as a legitimate instrument of policy and states did not need to find justifications for their actions. Although the principle may not always be sufficient to stop aggressors, it may still constrain aggressive states in many situations and encourage a response if the constraint should fail.

These points reflect the idea of the conditional utility of institutions suggested in Chapter 2. The prerequisites for the functioning of collective security are too restrictive for the institution to become a security system in its own right capable of dealing with all kinds of situations. In many instances, collective security will simply be inapplicable or even counterproductive. In the Abyssinian crisis, collective security failed. In the Korean and Gulf cases, which exhibit many similarities, collective security worked in very favourable circumstances but still showed its inherent limits.

The anarchic setting of international relations works very differently from the hierarchical structure of domestic politics. States are induced by the lack of a world government to retain their resources for their own purposes and for satisfying the desires of their own population. They will therefore often free ride if they do not have a private and unilateral reason to invest in a public good. When they are unwilling or unable to devolve resources to collective endeavours, institutions cannot replace them because they cannot count on autonomous capabilities. Unless and until a world government is created, institutions will remain dependent on the desires of states, with all their deficiencies and limitations. This is not an argument against the institutions for peace but it is rather an explanation of why collective security has failed to deliver its promises eversince the concept was introduced in international relations after the Great War.

Nevertheless, collective security is neither useless nor irrelevant. If applied with caution and moderation, in certain instances it can resist aggression and facilitate collaboration among states, once

they are already willing and able to cooperate. Collective security has also contributed to the establishment of social rules within the international community which penalize aggression as an instrument of national policy. In general, this principle is worthy in itself and it is a prerequisite for further and more ambitious foundations for peace. In particular, this principle may have restrained potential aggressors which may have behaved differently if the principles had not been in place. As with other counterfactual hypotheses, we will never know how many wars have been avoided in this way. It might not seem much to enthusiasts, but in an international system in which there is no world government to impose peace or to arrange agreements, it is one of the precious tools for the cause of stability.

Both of the prevailing views derived from the neorealist and neoliberal paradigms therefore do not capture the essence of concept. According to neorealists, collective security and other institutions "have a minimal impact on state behaviour".² According to neoliberals, collective security "would provide a more stable world".³ The concept does not fit either of these images. Collective security is not irrelevant because it can sometimes contribute to the success of multilateral principles while it cannot be a panacea for all global problems because it cannot always be applied. The problem for both paradigms derives from their extreme and opposing ideas of international institutions, which are seen as completely dependent variables for neorealist and completely independent ones for neoliberals. Institutions should rather be conceptualized as conditionally useful intervening variables, dependent on certain requirements but capable of affecting the outcome.

In this respect, both of the prevailing contemporary paradigms are inadequate and some of the classical literature should be recuperated. Classical theorists like Morgenthau, Wight, Aron, Bull and Wolfers -unlike today's structural realists- fiercely criticized the excesses of legalism and the dangers of an exclusively institutional approach to security without ignoring the significance of institutions in general. Far from sketching an antithesis between the spontaneous mechanisms of the balance of power and institutions, these thinkers recognized the fact that institutions can be useful in reinforcing the

interests of states, especially when cooperation is necessary but difficult because of the anarchic condition of the international system.

ii. Prescriptions for UN Reform

In chapter 3, two different conceptions of collective security were proposed. While a maximalist version would aim at replacing all other security mechanisms, a minimalist one would rather introduce multilateral elements alongside unilateral ones. The first conception would be a substitute for traditional policies, the latter would be a complement. The historical record decidedly points in favour of the second conception. Not only the requirements for collective security are not always present, but also it would be counterproductive to apply multilateral principles in less than ideal circumstances. Even in those few cases in which it has been applied, states have instead relied on a minimalist conception, retaining discretion throughout the operation.

Nevertheless, the faith in a maximalist collective security has withstood both theoretical and historical criticisms. The debate on the reform of the United Nations spurred by the 50th anniversary of the founding of the organization and by the end of the Cold War has been mostly characterized by proposals of a maximalist nature regarding the scope of collective security, its principal actors and the decision making process involved. These ideas rest on the notion that minimalist and maximalist collective security lie on the same continuum and that it is therefore possible and desirable to move incrementally along that continuum in order to strengthen the multilateral mechanisms and increase the number of cases in which they can be applied. According to a major recent study: "collective security organizations can take many different institutional forms along a continuum ranging from ideal collective security to concerts".⁴ The following are examples of maximalist reform.

Firstly, the veto power should be restricted and decisions should increasingly be taken by a (qualified) majority. As Invar Carlsson, co-chairman of the Commission of Global Governance, has written: "It is time to set aside the veto".⁵ These suggestions heavily draw on the metaphore of domestic politics in which parliaments decide by majority voting rather than by unanimity. Alternatively,

the General Assembly -which already decides by majority voting- should be invested with more powers vis-a-vis the Security Council. The idea is to allow the UN to bypass the opposition of a few members and to be able to intervene in an increasing number of instances.

Secondly, the UN should be endowed with a permanent military force composed either of international troops or of contingents lent to the organization by the various states. In this way, the UN could intervene militarily in a situation without necessarily waiting for the cumbersome decision making process of the Security Council and without relying on states' deliberations first. Also in this case, the idea is to increase the operational autonomy of the organization so as to be able to intervene promptly and effectively in more situations. For example, Brian Urquhart has proposed a "relatively small and highly trained" UN volunteer military force which "could make a decisive difference in the early stages of the crisis".⁶ Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali has suggested the creation of "peace enforcement units available on call and [...] consisting of troops that have volunteered for such service".⁷ In 1995, also the Dutch government has put forward a "non paper" proposing a UN rapid-deployment brigade.⁸

Thirdly, there has been an increasing pressure for the collective mechanisms to be used in new types of situations. In particular, the so-called "humanitarian interventions" refer to operations not only restricted to international but also domestic conflicts. Furthermore, the scope of intervention has been enlarged to include -besides the mere peace-keeping or peace-enforcing missions- a variety of tasks such as the provision of supplies to the civilian population or the oversight of elections. In a world in which violence is increasingly used in civil wars, this process aims at covering with multilateral mechanisms the maximum number of contingencies. Yet, rather than elaborate a new code of conduct to the changed realities, the international community has stretched the concept of collective security from international security to all kinds of security. The "humanitarian interventions" in Iraq after the Gulf War, in Somalia and in Bosnia have all been justified in terms of the "threat to

international peace and security" rather than as the violation or breakdown of international norms at the domestic level.

All three possible reforms try to make the multilateral mechanisms more automatic and to maximize the chances that they will be used. The world organization would increasingly resemble a world government with the right and the duty to impose peace throughout the globe. However, such a reform would backfire if not coupled with a simultaneous reform of the way power is organized in the international system. Short of creating a global state, the world organization would see its commitments swell enormously with the states retaining the resources for implementing the multilateral objectives. This would hopelessly overstretch the UN resources and sooner or later critically undermine its credibility. Unless states surrender sovereignty, maximalism will remain a chimera.

The problem is that the two conceptions do not really rest on the same spectrum. There is a discrete interval between a minimalist organization which can be used by states which are willing and able to use it for their own collective purposes and a maximalist organization which is an actor in its own right and must intervene automatically, whatever the circumstances may be. Unless the international system is radically reformed, the United Nations cannot and should not undergo such a radical reform. The present minimalist mechanisms ensure that the most important states agree that force should be used and that they themselves commit the troops for the enterprise, with all the military and political support that this implies. To remove these mechanisms, such as the veto or the absence of multilateral military forces, would mean that the UN could become embroiled in a whole series of difficult situations without states being willing or able to rescue it.

This does not mean that collective security in its minimalist conception cannot be improved. However, rather than transforming the UN into a maximalist organization, what should be done is to maximize the advantages of the present system. Two features in particular can be strengthened. On the one hand, the UN provides a multilateral framework for facilitating cooperation among states, once these have decided to cooperate in a specific circumstance. On the other, the organization is a forum where the international community

evolves standards of conduct on which to evaluate international actions. For these reasons the necessary reforms are different from the ones mentioned above.

Firstly, rather than abolishing the veto power, which is necessary to make sure that an operation does not become counterproductive, a distinction should be made between executive decisions and prescriptive ones. While the veto should absolutely be maintained for the first type, because it involves the commitment of states' resources, it should be limited with concern to the second type, in order to facilitate the elaboration of multilateral proposals for disputes and the condemnation of unacceptable behaviour. In this view, the convention that disputes and threatening situations are to be raised in the Security Council only by the parties which are directly involved should be overcome.⁹ Situations which could lead to war should be considered at an early stage.

Proposals for reform of the Security Council should also concentrate on the enlargement of the forum in order to increase its value as a representative of the international community. More states should be admitted on the basis of their contribution, in economic, military and political terms, to the functioning of the institution. The legitimacy and authority of the collective organization should accordingly increase. Paul Kennedy and Bruce Russett suggest to enlarge "the council's overall size [...] and adding to the permanent membership would permit the Council to reflect the changes in the global balance since the five victorious powers of 1945 insisted that the charter include special provisions upholding their status and interests".¹⁰

However, even a more representative council should not act independently from the policies of the states which compose it. Furthermore, a bigger Council would become less able to take executive decisions. In this respect, there should be no shortcuts; if decision making is difficult it means that states have in fact problems in identifying a common solution. The value of the United Nations is in the legitimacy that characterizes their decisions, placing a premium on its wide, quasi-universal and heterogeneous membership. However, decisions about eventual enforcement should rather be left to the discretion of individual states, which are the ones to provide the

blood and treasure for the multilateral operations. The UN can approximate a Parliament, setting the framework and the broad directions of policy, but it cannot aspire to become a World Government.

Secondly, rather than establishing international military forces, the UN should concentrate on acquiring intelligence and monitoring capabilities, in order to provide the international community with impartial information about specific situations. In other words, a satellite network would be more appropriate than a rapid reaction brigade. According to a recent and influential opinion: "now the central issue is ambiguity about the type and degree of threats, and the basis for cooperation is the capacity to clarify and cut through that ambiguity"; more important than the classical nuclear umbrella is therefore an "information umbrella" which can help states to understand the situation.¹¹ The UN should be able to stimulate and -if need be- impose discussion without necessarily imposing an operation if states are unwilling or unable to intervene.

Thirdly, rather than stretching the concept of collective security to include domestic violence, the international community should devise similar but distinct concepts for these kinds of contingency. With a slow but steady process, the idea that force cannot be used to settle international disputes is today part of the fabric constituting international society. Virtually all states opposed the annexation of Kuwait on the part of Iraq. However, such a consensus does not yet exist for what "humanitarian intervention" is concerned also because many states fear that such a principle could be used against them. A concept for dealing with domestic violence should be created and established with an equally slow but steady process of consensus building without jeopardizing what has already been achieved with international security.

Conceptual clarity is one of the prerequisites for a successful system. This means that there should be a clear distinction between interventions for collective security aimed at protecting the integrity and the sovereignty of states and interventions for humanitarian purposes aimed at solving problems within the sovereignty of states. This also means that there should be a clear distinction between collective security on the one hand, which should seek to organize an

active response against an aggressor, and peacekeeping on the other, which involves the passive use of force to provide an impartial presence between two combatants. Whereas the active use of force cannot be impartial, the passive use of force does not reverse aggression.

iii. Prospects for Collective Security

Maximalist collective security and the dream to abolish war by international agreement have captured the imagination of the three generations which had the responsibility of reconstructing the international system after the three great conflicts of this Century. The prospects for an easy way out of the age-old question of international order have been popular for three reasons which have resisted the critiques of the concept and the failures of the League of Nations and of the United Nations. Firstly, the solution was radical: war was not to be contained or minimized but abolished. Secondly, the responsibility for the implementation of the system fell on a metaphysical multilateral mechanism rather than on individual states themselves. Thirdly, the maximalist conception appeals to popular imagination because it draws on the domestic analogy of the rule of law and of law enforcement.

This approach has been correctly defined by Wight as rationalist because, rather than seeking a radical transformation of the international system, it appeals to the common interests of states within the existing framework of international politics. Even without a world government, if states find war by and large counterproductive, they should pool their resources together in order to avoid such undesired outcomes. Voluntarism is deemed sufficient to establish a proxy of world government allowing states to behave *as if* they were rationally avoiding the suboptimal outcomes of conflict.

Yet this approach overlooks the perverse effects of anarchy on the international system. The lack of a world government compels states to take care of themselves. This means that sometimes they will be competing for scarce resources and that other times they will free ride on multilateral efforts in order to save their resources for other -more unilateral- ends. The bottom line is that the limits and the merits of collective security are those which characterize all other

international institutions. On the one hand, institutions act as a positive feedback on cooperation as they can facilitate the collaboration of many actors which would find it otherwise difficult to coordinate their actions. On the other hand however, institutions are dependent upon a previous disposition to cooperate. Their utility is therefore conditional upon the ability and willingness of states to uphold multilateral principles.

At closer inspection, this restricts the instances in which the concept will be useful. If states already feel secure enough to invest their scarce resources in multilateral principles, then the utility of collective security will be limited because international relations would already be prone to stability. The recent opportunities which multilateral measures have enjoyed through the actions of the United Nations are due more to processes which have operated to change the international system than to the multilateral measures themselves. The relative stability which characterizes the world after the Cold War has not been brought about by collective security, but by the advent of nuclear weapons, the decreasing importance of territory as a source of power and wealth, the democratization of societies, the rapid and transnational spread of information and the rise of a global market economy. The fact that collective security works where these processes have taken place does not necessarily mean that by exporting it elsewhere one would also obtain the same results even where these processes have been less powerful.

The fundamental problem is that collective security cannot work if states are not already prepared to cooperate. This means that collective security is useless in those situations in which it is most needed, that is when the major powers disagree and international peace is in peril. Its direct impact on aggression has been restricted to situations which involved relatively minor threats to global peace compared with the great conflicts of this Century. In this view, collective security seems more a product, than a producer, of stability. If multilateral principles can be afforded by states in an anarchic and pitiless setting only when they feel secure, then there is not much hope that collective security will become the main security system of the future until the international system remains in its present shape.

If on the other hand states do not feel that they can divert their resources, then a collective operation would be dangerous because it risks to be based on insufficient means. Anarchy inhibits voluntaristic experiments because there is no world government which can guarantee states that their investment in multilateralism will not be wasted and will not backfire. If states do not dispose of the willingness or the capability to divert to a multilateral institution, then institutions will certainly not be able to fill that gap because -by definition and unlike supranational organizations- they do not possess autonomous resources. Despite the emphasis on multilateral means, the burden of implementation in the final instance falls onto states.

Furthermore, collective security presents a tougher choice to member states than is detectable with a superficial analysis. The particularly sensitive nature of security exacerbates certain dilemmas inherent in institutions. If deterrence fails and the international community is actually faced with a determined aggression, there are two different and equally difficult routes. Firstly, the international community can make concessions in order to reach a negotiated outcome, but it would then countervene the letter of collective security by rewarding aggression. Secondly, the international community can fight war with war, punishing the aggression but contradicting the peaceful spirit of collective security.

On the contrary, minimalist collective security is unpopular because it does not prospect a messianic perpetual peace and it does not relieve states -and their societies- from the costs for the maintenance of peace. However, the minimalist conception is realistic because it does not claim to be able to solve all types of insecurities irrespective of the prevailing conditions of the international system. There is no easy solution for international order and it is useless to find a multilateral scapegoat for unilateral failures. Minimalism is based on the modest notion that, although a general solution to the problem of war is impossible in the present circumstances, it is still worth to try to avert as many individual wars as it is possible. This conception concentrates on what collective security does best. Firstly, it provides a framework where states which are already willing to cooperate can broaden and deepen the foundations for their

collaboration. Secondly, it establishes a forum where international standards of behaviour can be elaborated and spread by processes of socialization. Since cooperation under anarchy is difficult and precarious even if in everyone's interest, these functions are precious.

Unlike in domestic politics, in international relations there is a tradeoff between *autoritas* and *potestas*. Authority is based on legitimacy and impartiality. Power is based on physical capabilities and the will to use them. In a decentralized system, authority is accumulated especially if it is built on consensus rather than on the direct exercise of power. The role of institutions is precisely that to enhance their authority which can then be used to influence state policy. On the contrary, the direct exercise of power would undermine that authority because it would break the consensus on which it is based and it would challenge states as the ultimate repositories of sovereignty. While minimalism correctly concentrates on *autoritas*, maximalism unrealistically and inconclusively toys with *potestas*.

Institutions cannot create cooperation like matchmakers cannot guarantee that the marriages they fix will work. It is unfortunately not the case that it is sufficient for states to meet to automatically resolve their differences and conflicts. Nevertheless, institutions can promote and facilitate cooperation and should therefore be directed to maximize their inherent qualities. This means that they should be improved as a setting where discussion and diplomacy take place and which amplifies cooperation once states have reached an agreement. However, institutions should not be distracted from these primary roles by the ambition to substitute the deficiencies of states. A policy of replacing the unwillingness and inability of states will fail because institutions can only dangerously increase their own responsibilities but not the necessary resources to fulfill them.

The insistence with maximalist collective security would not only backfire, but would also erode the credibility of the institution to perform even those functions which can be effective. The advocates of collective security should therefore not undermine its utility by raising expectations beyond its capabilities. Unless and until it will be recognized that collective security is not *the* solution to the problem of international order but only one factor in the tension between conflict and cooperation, the international community will be on the wrong

track. Unfortunately, in international politics there is yet no institutional substitute for diplomacy, prudence and patience. The international community will have to make the difficult choice between an unappealing and unambitious system and one which is popular but doomed to fail.

NOTES:

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- ¹Abba Eban: *The UN Idea Revisited*, Foreign Affairs, V. 74, N. 2, September 1995, p.50
 - ²Mearsheimer: False Promise..., cit., p. 7
 - ³Kupchan and Kupchan: Concerts..., cit., p. 115
 - ⁴Kupchan in Downs, op. cit., p. 43
 - ⁵Ingvar Carlsson: *The UN at Fifty: A Time to Reform*, Foreign Policy, N. 100, Fall 1995, p. 8
 - ⁶Brian Urquhart: *For a UN Volunteer Military Force*, New York Review of Books, June 10th, 1993
 - ⁷Boutros-Boutros Ghali: An Agenda for Peace, New York, United Nations, 1992, p. 26
 - ⁸Adam Roberts: *From San Francisco to Sarajevo: The UN and the Use of Force*, Survival, V. 37, N. 4, Winter 1994-5, p. 25
 - ⁹Evan Luard: *Conclusion: The Contemporary Role of the United Nations*, in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury: United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations, Clarendon, Oxford, 1988, p. 222
 - ¹⁰Paul Kennedy and Bruce Russett, op. cit., pp. 60-61
 - ¹¹Joseph S. Nye and William A. Owens: *America's Information Edge*, Foreign Affairs, V. 75, N. 2, March 1996, pp. 26-27

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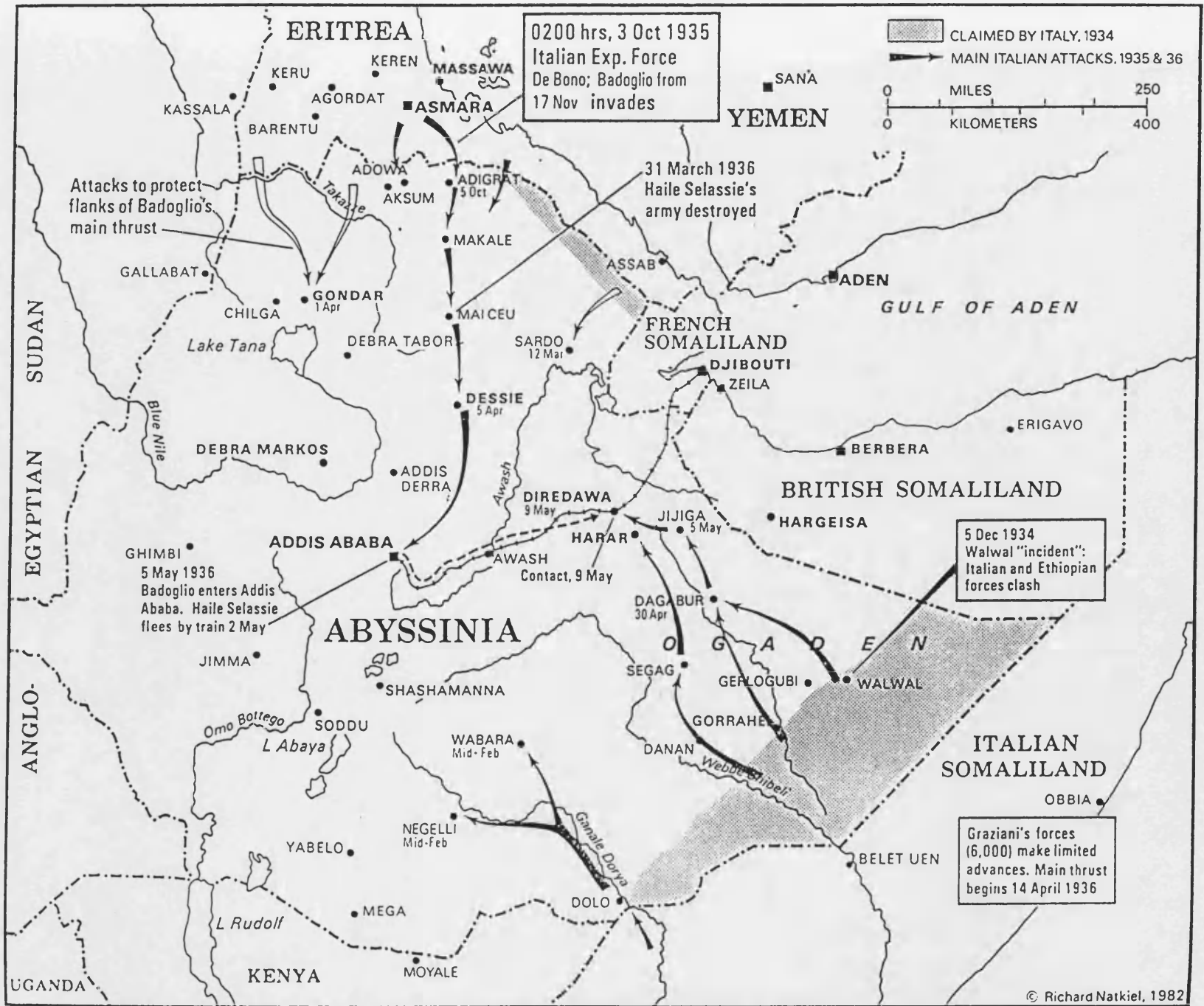
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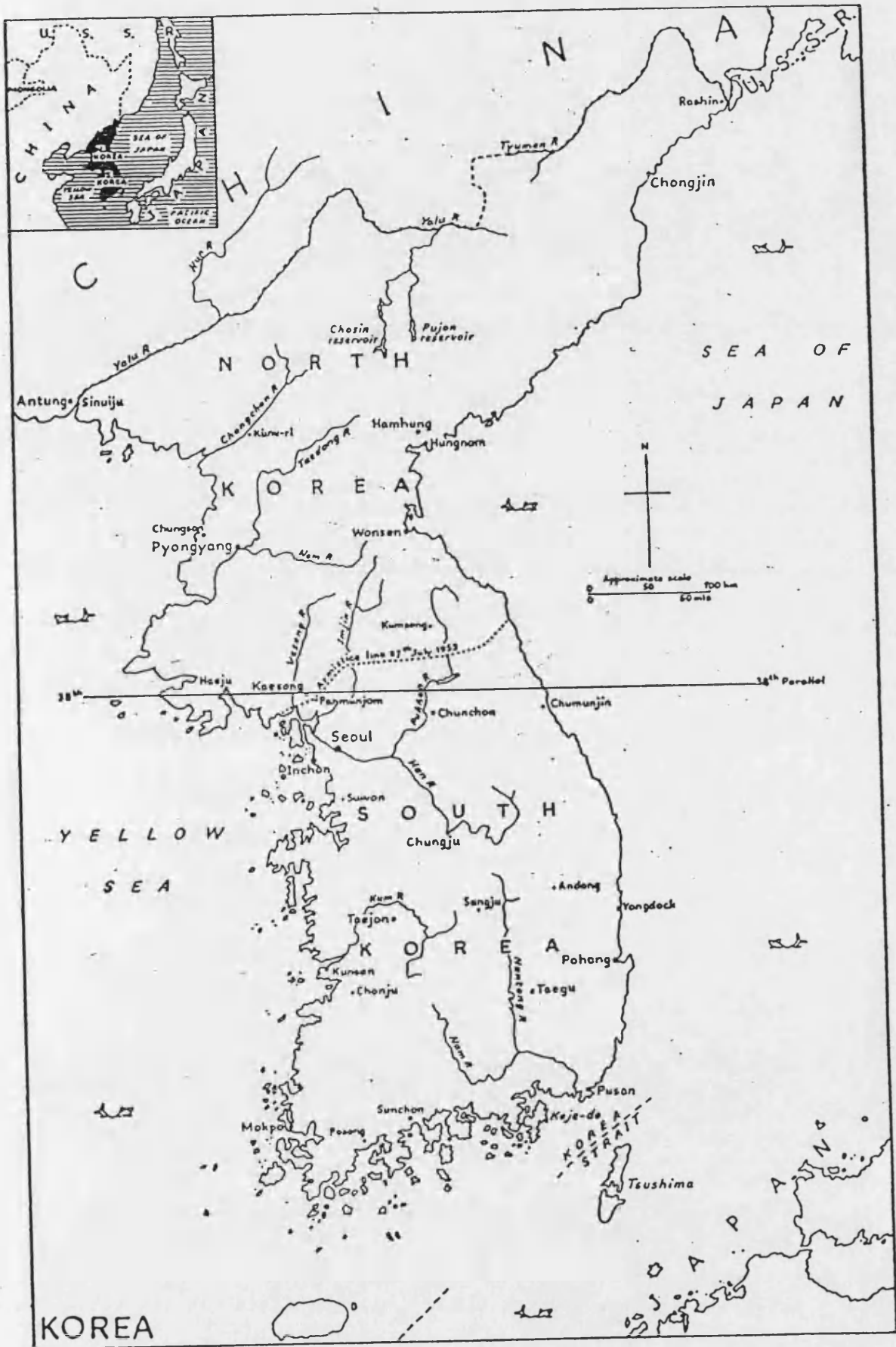
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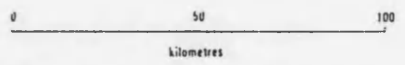
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Beidha

IRAN

IRAQ

Hawr al-Hammar

Basra

Bubiyan Island

KUWAIT

Kuwait City

Wadi al-Batin

Allied Amphibious force

Persian Gulf

- Key to Allied units
- Mechanised Infantry
 - Armoured Cavalry
 - Infantry
 - Airmobile Infantry
 - Airborne Infantry
 - Armour, Tank
 - Division
 - Brigade
 - Regiment
 - Marines
- Sector lines

- Iraqi Units
- Republican Guard Divisions
 - Major Iraqi Air bases
 - Iraqi mines

- Key to Nationalities
- US United States
 - UK United Kingdom
 - SA Saudi Arabia
 - FR French
 - KU Kuwait
 - SY Syria
 - EG Egypt
 - GCC Gulf Co-operation Council

VII Corps

Joint Command-North

Marines Central Command

Joint Command-East

SAUDI ARABIA

TAPLINE ROAD

Al-Jah
Beidha

