

Introduction and Summary

The notion that every state has an interest in the territorial integrity of every other state—no matter how distant they are and how slight their connections—is peculiar to the twentieth century. To be sure, poets and philosophers had perceived humanity's common interest in preventing wars, and statesmen had found that aggression from outside the community could be deterred by the mutual defense of those within it. But no one had ever tried to organize an all-embracing system that used the collective force of its members to prevent one of them from attacking another.

It took the wide devastation of two world wars—and the failure of the balance-of-power systems that preceded them—to instigate the search for a more effective way to manage power. To the founders of the League of Nations and the United Nations there was nothing extravagant about the idea that peace is indivisible. Their countries had been drawn into wars that were largely not of their making; They had learned that to control their destinies they must act early, with others, to keep the peace. It is this core of national self-interest that drives collective security. If the system works at any moment in history, it is because its members believe they have enough stake in the existing order to warrant taking measures against any nation that threatens to destroy the fabric of that order.

The framers of the League Covenant and the UN Charter did not view the systems they were establishing as permanent methods of international cooperation applicable to all power configurations at all times. They were less interested in theory than in the practical problem of managing postwar relationships more systematically than alliance systems had done in the past. The irony, of course, is that both post-world war periods turned out to be very different from what the framers had anticipated, though not too different from what they had feared.

Because of U.S. nonparticipation in the League of Nations and the Cold War's paralyzing effect on the United Nations, the collective-security measures of the League Covenant and the UN Charter have never been applied in the ways envisaged. We cannot be certain if the system's underlying political assumptions are valid or if it can be made to work under certain conditions of power distribution, great-power relationships,

developing-world interests, and the like. The chief question at the close of the twentieth century, as in 1918, concerns the willingness of states to participate in military enforcement actions at the direction of others in situations that do not affect their vital interests. There is considerable skepticism that nations will behave in this way but not much analysis of how, and in what circumstances, they might be brought to do so—at least not since the end of the Cold War.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, a new international order is emerging with its special problems, relationships, and forms of power. How applicable the UN collective-security system is to this new order—and how realistic its assumptions are in a world of competing national interests—is the first of the two main questions this book tries to answer. For these collective-security issues, the U.S.-led enforcement action against Iraq is the principal case study. The second question concerns the steady run of ethnic and factional wars within states, which have emerged as a central problem of post-Cold War politics. Here the UN intervention in Somalia serves as the main case study. The Somalia crisis illustrates the limits of armed intervention in the internal violence that flows from intercommunal antagonisms and the drive for power in failed states. One thread that runs through the book—from the “peace enforcement” operations in Africa to the great-power tripwire missions in the Balkans and the Persian Gulf—is the relationship between consensual peacekeeping and mandatory enforcement action, and the uses of both in regional conflict prevention.

These issues are examined from the viewpoints of history, theory, and practice. Collective security cannot be fully understood without a grasp of its early uses and theoretical roots, and the opening chapters consider the system from these perspectives. (The specialist may wish to skip Chapters 1, 2, and 4, which are designed primarily to provide background for students of international organizations and foreign affairs.) The case studies were chosen for their contemporary relevance, but they also reflect my own familiarity with a number of UN operations from my work on UN peace-and-security issues at the U.S. Mission to the UN and the State Department. That work persuaded me that a modified version of the UN collective-security system, combined with peacekeeping innovations that have evolved since the end of the Cold War, offers increased flexibility in preventive diplomacy, a greater measure of deterrence, and a means of handling secondary threats with secondary responses. In short, it is a way to avoid the all-or-nothing approach to international involvement.

A main line of argumentation in the chapters on collective security concerns the formation of an international deterrent force under Article

43 of the UN Charter. (Issues relating to Article 43, which requires UN members to make designated forces available to the Security Council on its call, are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.) Any UN force that was established today would look very different from the body the UN's founders had in mind. Changes in the power situation over the last half century would have a major impact on the size, scope, and purposes of a contemporary force. Most important is the change in the nature of the primary threat—from the global expansionism of potential world powers like Germany and Japan in 1945 to the regional ambitions of expansionist middle powers today. Any system intended to contain these regional powers must adjust to two developments in the nature and distribution of modern weapons. First is the huge gap in nuclear and conventional arms sophistication that has developed between the middle powers and the major status quo states. But second, raising the need for an effective system of deterrence to a new level of urgency, is the development of suitcase bombs and anthrax weapons that can be infiltrated into the territory of one's enemies.

Less tangible and subject to shifting perceptions are the changing interests of the major powers, as straight-out threats of aggression have been largely replaced by regional challenges to their economic and political interests. Another change is the nearly fourfold increase in UN membership since World War II, an increase that has occurred mainly through the admission of developing nations, many with a colonial heritage of artificial borders. Finally, the breakup of the Soviet Union has made it possible to think once again about a system for the management of power that rests on the cooperation of the Security Council's permanent members.

My thesis is that these changes open the way to a new kind of UN force that is smaller, cheaper, more realistic in expectations, and more credible in deterrence than the first fifty years of UN history permitted.

The heart of the book, and its principal conclusions, relate to methods of achieving credible deterrence in a collective-security system that stands or falls on deterrence, but now lacks the means to carry out that mission. The proposal that is developed in later chapters for a mobile international deterrent force (or IDF) rests on two premises. The first is that deterrence in today's regional conflicts depends on the capacity to mobilize *coalitions of concerned* states that leave the potential aggressor in no doubt about the identity of the states he will confront and the certainty of defeat. It is no longer necessary, or practical, to establish a worldwide force of such power that it can defeat outright the strongest hypothetical aggressor other than the veto-holding powers, as the Security Council's permanent members believed when they composed the UN Charter.

In these "coalitions of the concerned," the interests of the coalition members will vary from state to state. For the countries of the region, national

security interests are likely to be paramount. For the great powers, the motivating concerns may stem from economic or political involvement in the region or from broader issues of global stability. Still other nations may participate because of cultural and religious affiliations with the threatened country. Legal and humanitarian considerations will also play a part, but their effect on national security policy is so uncertain that they cannot now provide the basis of a realistic system for the prevention of war.

The second premise reinforces the first. It is the need for maximum speed in mobilizing a deterrent force *before* the potential aggressor launches an attack. This is precisely what the United Nations cannot do at present. Because of the absence of standby forces under Article 43, the Security Council must rely on ad hoc coalitions of forces that have not trained together and are incapable of rapid deployment. The nations that do have a substantial rapid-deployment capability are the larger Western powers; that is, the countries that have the fewest shared concerns with the participants in most regional quarrels and the least capacity to influence a decision to go to war.

The path to a quick-response capability lies in the negotiation of agreements in which UN members, or groups of members, undertake to form specified rapid-deployment units and keep them in a high degree of readiness. A quick-response capacity would be developed in the major geographic regions, combining highly mobile forces from the area with airlift and special forces units from the major military powers. The permanent members—and other industrial powers like Germany and Japan that have a large airlift capacity by way of their civilian aircraft—would help to form, train, and (in the poorer countries) finance the regional forces. In each area, rapid-deployment maneuvers would be conducted over time by a number of different airlift providers. In this way several major powers would be available to transport regional forces to an area of dispute, depending on the location of the threat, the lift capabilities of the powers participating in the task force, and the relationships between those powers and the threatened states.

A similar flexibility would guide the selection of regional powers for IDF training exercises. If the Security Council is to be able to form coalitions of concerned states, it must have available to it different combinations of regional forces that have trained with the airlift providers. Flexible composition is important to an international deterrent system for two other reasons as well. First is the desirability of combining local powers with their natural allies outside the area. In Southwest Asia, for example, Pakistan and Turkey could be included in maneuvers with conservative Arab nations—the latter participating perhaps as a group representing the Gulf Cooperation Council. Second is the difficulty of combining the culturally and numerically predominant states of an area with an

adversary from within the region. In the Middle East, to take the most obvious example, a pragmatic approach to composition might pair the United States, France, or Great Britain with Israel and Turkey in rapid-deployment exercises.

The rapid-deployment units of a deterrent force need not be large. In past UN enforcement actions, the minimum acceptable troop contribution for the smaller participants has been a reinforced battalion. In a deterrent force, some of the rapid-deployment elements could be smaller still. The point is to prevent a war, not to win it; and if deterrence fails, the task of suppressing the aggression falls to the reserve units of the task force in combination with its advance elements. The reserve forces that members agree to make available to the Security Council would be specified in the Article 43 agreements along with the rapid-deployment units. In an international deterrent system, no enforcement action would be authorized unless the combined forces of the coalition, including its reserves, had the ability to defeat the potential aggressor with ease.

Training exercises involving permanent-member forces and the regional rapid-deployment units would be coordinated in the Security Council's Military Staff Committee (MSC), drawing on the experience and personnel of the UN offices responsible for peacekeeping. To keep costs to a minimum, maneuvers would not normally include the reserve elements of a regional IDF deterrent force. In addition to its training responsibilities, the MSC would handle technical matters such as arms standardization and communications compatibility. In this scheme, regional security bodies, assisted by permanent members, would over time perform an increasingly central role in the training of the regional deterrent forces. The Security Council, however, would retain sole responsibility for the authorization and direction of the task forces it established to maintain or restore the peace.

The purpose of a United Nations deterrent system is to provide a flexible response capability for dealing with the two kinds of violence that are most prevalent today. These are cross-border aggression, usually by middle-power military dictatorships, and internal violence in states divided along ethnic or factional lines. The two categories can be further broken down. There is the aggression that threatens important great-power interests and elicits whatever force is needed to suppress it; and there is the aggression against small and poorly armed countries that threatens no one but the victims themselves. Local aggression of the latter kind raises hard questions, often involving a choice between early preventive action by powers with a broad interest in the stability of the region and escalation into wider war.

Like interstate aggression, internal violence also falls into categories that have different implications for international action. There are civil

insurrections that remain within the domestic jurisdiction of states and ethnic conflicts that connect with kinship groups outside the state. And there are state-sponsored acts of inhumanity against minorities and random clashes among bandits, warlords, and militias that follow the collapse of states. People disagree on the appropriate responses to these types of aggression and civil conflict. But one thing is clear: The *capacity* of concerned states to mobilize fast-reaction units would widen the foreign-policy choices and provide a flexibility that does not now exist.

For example, in the case of threatened aggression—whether of the unambiguous variety in the Gulf or the indirect and piecemeal version in Bosnia—a number of options become available in a collective-security deterrent system that do not exist without it. First is the tripwire response: the interposition of advance units of the regional task force between the would-be aggressor and the potential victim (as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8). Even if an aggressive intent is not certain, the Security Council has the authority to send forces to the area if it determines that a threat to the peace exists. The council can also declare a military alert to underline the seriousness of a threatened action (as illustrated in Chapter 8). To give the potential aggressor a face-saving exit, it can dispatch to the area a mediation team comprising representatives of the council and the troop-contributing nations. The secretary general can be asked to convey the Security Council's requirements and intentions, as is now the case. And while taking these steps, the council can deploy "over-the-horizon" units of the participating permanent members, whose contributions will provide the ultimate deterrent power in most enforcement actions.

Harder to deal with than interstate aggression are the internal conflicts that ravage some of the world's poorest nations. If the mass murder and starvation inflicted by these conflicts is intolerable to civilized society, no one has yet found a way to relieve the suffering while disarming those who cause it and avoiding the entanglement of those who try to stop it. The chapter on Somalia argues that the best that can usually be done—and it is a great deal—is to provide emergency military transport for the distribution of augmented disaster-relief supplies. Only in the early stages of a deteriorating situation is there much chance of the belligerents in a civil war agreeing to a UN separation-of-forces mission. And the window of opportunity is likely to be brief. To take advantage of it, the ability to deploy promptly an observer force whose composition is acceptable to the parties can be crucial. In the Somalia and Rwanda crises, for example, the presence of on-call forces from Africa and the concerned permanent members would have given the Security Council an option it did not have to try to forestall the impending violence.

State-sponsored violations of the Declaration of Human Rights and the genocide convention require different responses from those needed to

deal with indiscriminate violence within a failed state. Government crimes against humanity that are so grave in the Security Council's judgment as to require the use of force to stop them cannot be dealt with by peacekeeping or peace enforcement. To suppress genocide or ethnic cleansing, the same capabilities are needed as to defeat cross-border aggression. High on the list is the Security Council's ability to deploy a task force of concerned states with great speed. This is a capability that an international deterrent force could provide in the rare case where permanent-member unanimity (and nonpermanent-member support) overrides the charter injunction against intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of states.

Because the path to an international force already exists in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the greater emphasis on war prevention would not require charter revision. Indeed, the changes from the early conception of a UN force that a deterrent system entails—greater burden sharing, smaller military and financial contributions, and a strategy of preventive action that reduces the likelihood of conflict—would facilitate the ratification of Article 43 agreements by governments. Even more important to the non-veto-holding states would be a declaration by the permanent members that member states would not be subjected to any requirement to contribute to collective-security operations that were outside their regions and without effect on their interests. Other UN members might, of course, decide to participate for reasons of international law and principle, as substantial numbers did in the ad hoc, after-the-fact enforcement actions in Korea and the Gulf.

If this is a system of lower expectations than the arrangements devised to prevent a third world war, it nevertheless retains essential elements of the UN Charter system. It keeps the responsibility for maintaining the peace with the powers that must bear the burden in human lives and national treasure. It assigns the authority for the strategic direction of UN forces to the permanent members of the Security Council. It locates the command of UN enforcement actions with the participants, normally the permanent member with the largest military contribution. It obligates the members that have concluded Article 43 agreements to participate when called upon in cases involving regional threats to the peace that affect their interests. And its purpose is to maintain or restore international security through the use of adequate force or the manifest resolve to use it. In many of these respects the IDF concept differs from recent proposals for a volunteer peacekeeping force and from other ideas for a powerful, fast-reaction force drawn from the military powers.

The formation of a deterrent force is consistent with the Clinton administration's "Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations" (PDD 25 of May 1994). First of all, the force would not be "a standing UN

army," which the administration opposes. It would consist rather of standby units from which task forces could be formed and tailored to the challenges at hand. (For Europe, a fast-reaction force already exists in the form of NATO's ACE Mobile Force.) The one departure from PDD 25 may be more apparent than real. The document states that the United States will not "earmark specific U.S. military units for participation in UN operations." This stance is based in part on the pragmatic position of the U.S. military that the United States can best support the UN operations in which it participates by shaping its contributions to the nature of the threat.

But the military's opposition to earmarking also reflects its resistance to any action that would supplant combat-readiness training with peacekeeping exercises. In fact, this is a concern that applies more to traditional UN peacekeeping operations than to enforcement actions, which require the same kind of preparedness that is needed to fight and win a war. Still, the high degree of readiness in which U.S. air transport and special forces units are already maintained argues for the U.S. military's position on the ground of fast response time. One path would be for the Security Council to ask the United States to indicate in general rather than specific terms the "numbers and types" of forces it is prepared to make available to an IDF task force whose establishment it supports.

It is clear that an international deterrent system can only be one resource among many in the armory of diplomatic tools needed to fashion a sophisticated foreign policy. It cannot begin to replace U.S. military strength or collective-defense alliances like NATO. It is not applicable to wars that involve the great powers or to most internal violence in failed states. The one overriding national-security purpose of the system is to help prevent regional aggression that threatens the interests of the major powers and the smaller countries that rely on them.

In Southwest Asia, the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and the Balkans, it is easy to identify festering disputes that could erupt into war. If history is any guide, other challenges will come to take the place of those we know today. The most unlikely prospect, as a new century dawns, is a world that is free from threats to the peace and the need for a system to manage them.

1

Collective Security and Its Antecedents

Early Variations of Collective Security

The first variations on the theme of collective security appeared in the late middle ages, and are instructive for their differences from the twentieth-century concept as well as their similarities to it.¹ These early schemes grew out of the belief that the wars that ravaged Europe during this period could be curbed if all nations agreed to oppose aggression jointly and with overwhelming force. A common thread was the commitment of each state to join in collective action even if not directly threatened. Some of the proposals provided for a council of great-power representatives to determine whether aggression had occurred and, if so, to impose whatever sanctions they deemed necessary. In cases where military measures were decided upon, a multinational force composed of contingents from the European member states was typically assigned the task of enforcing the sanctions.

As much as these ideas resemble the thinking behind the League of Nations and the United Nations, the differences are crucial. The early plans assumed a "we" and a "they," a community of interests, ties, and attitudes that defined itself in terms of its differences from the world outside Europe. The ultimate reason for keeping the peace was to strengthen the Christian community against its enemies. This is apparent in the first comprehensive proposal for collective action, a treatise written by a counselor to Philip the Fair named Pierre Dubois and published in 1306 under the title *The Recovery of the Holy Land*. In this proposal, Dubois recommended that the Catholic sovereigns of the Holy Roman Empire agree to resolve their controversies by arbitration and to act collectively against any one of them that used force in violation of that commitment. But Article 4 of the proposed agreement makes it clear that the object was to promote parochial interests: "The whole commonwealth of Christian be-

lievers that owes allegiance to the Roman Church must be joined together in the bonds of peace. . . . If anyone wishes to make war let him be zealous to make war upon the enemies of the Catholic faith, of the Holy Land, and of the places made sacred by the Lord."² Dubois's proposal is closer to the collective-defense pacts of the mid-twentieth century than to collective security, differing mainly in its frankness as to who the enemy is and its acknowledgement of the offensive potential of the coalition.

Two other peace plans, among the many that were proposed but not implemented between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, illustrate the lack of universality common to all. In 1462, nine years after the fall of Constantinople, King George of Bohemia invited the Catholic sovereigns of Europe to join him in an organization capable of taking collective military action to repel Muslim inroads into Europe. Together the European princes would defend Christianity "against the vilest princes of the Turks [by] joining forces . . . which will be proportionately determined."³ Similarly, in the early seventeenth century, the Duke of Sully proposed in *The Great Design* a federation of states designed to maintain the security and religious balance of Europe. To enforce the peace he proposed a multinational army and navy that would be used, among other things, "to join to [Europe] such parts of Asia as were most commodiously situated, and particularly the whole coast of Africa, which is too near our own territories for us not to be frequently incommoded by it."⁴

If these early proposals assume a world divided between the Christian states of Europe and the uncivilized realms beyond, they also imply a community of interests in the relationships of the West with Africa and Asia. That sense of common purpose waned during the industrial revolution as economic and political nationalism led to the scramble for overseas possessions. The heightened rivalries among the colonial powers in turn caused these powers to search for new ways to manage European relationships. What emerged was the notion of balancing power among the major powers of Europe—an adaptation of age-old practices of alliance politics to the circumstances of imperialism and the industrial age.

The Classical Balance-of-Power System

As the principal alternative to collective security in the management of interstate conflict, the balance-of-power ideas that had their heyday in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shed light on the thinking behind the modern concept of collective security. During and after World War I, when the European alliance system was thoroughly discredited, collective security was designed to replace balance-of-power politics and to be

everything the old system was not. During the Cold War the opposite was the case, with alliance politics proclaimed as the realistic successor to utopian plans for universal security through international organization.

Because of the multiple meanings that balance of power has taken on in contemporary usage, it is worth recalling what the concept meant to the European statesmen who developed and practiced it. At the heart of the idea was the principle that the best way to achieve stability in a system of sovereign, competitive nations was to promote an environment in which power was balanced by equivalent power. To work most effectively, the system needed a balancer. Great Britain frequently played this role, especially in the nineteenth century, shifting alliances when necessary to prevent any one European state from becoming strong enough to mount a successful challenge to the status quo. The British managed on the whole to avoid the Cold War tendency to confuse balance with dominance.

The system of decentralized power on which balance-of-power politics depended stemmed largely from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.⁵ Like the League of Nations Covenant and the UN Charter after it, the Peace of Westphalia embodied ideas that responded to a failed system ending in a ruinous, system-wide war. The Thirty Years' War, which led to the Westphalian system, flowed from a medieval feudal order that idealized allegiance to a central authority and left no room for dissent. In reaction, the Westphalian order accepted the sovereign equality of all states in a decentralized world: The objective was not to establish a universal order but to limit the ability of some states to dominate others. What made this more than a utopian dream was the growing ability of the European nations to secure their borders, as the duchies, principalities, and electorates of medieval Europe consolidated into a multitude of defensible states of more or less equal power.

One consequence of the consolidation process was the gradual emergence of a few dominant European powers with a special stake in the system. These nations sought allies with similar interests in order to preserve the status quo and offset the aggressive potential of their likely adversaries. If one of the results from their standpoint was a happy continuation of their preeminence, many of the smaller states saw the system as incapable of righting injustices and accommodating change.

In 1815, after the Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna replaced the laissez-faire approach of the Westphalian world with an international order based explicitly on the principles of balance of power. Embodying this shift toward greater system and design was a new institution for the coordination of great-power interests, the Concert of Europe. The continental powers that made up the Concert of Europe succeeded in shaping

a century of relative peace, the longest period of international security that Europe had ever known.⁶

The Concert of Europe was in concept similar to the UN Security Council. Both bodies rose from the ashes of relatively decentralized systems that ended in war, and both were steps toward greater centralization of power. Both were designed to carry out new peacekeeping responsibilities, which the victors had assumed in the expectation that they would cooperate to preserve the postwar order. In the case of the Security Council, it soon became plain that too much had been expected. Yet the habits of consultation that developed in the Security Council and the Concert of Europe limited conflicts that threatened to draw in the great powers. And while the Concert of Europe concerned itself with disputes stemming from the buildup of colonial empires, the Security Council dealt with the quarrels that followed their breakdown.

In the last years before the collapse of the Concert of Europe, new machinery of two kinds emerged that helped shape the international organizations of the twentieth century. First were the "peace conferences" that convened at the Hague in 1899 and 1907. At the 1899 conference, a permanent international court was established to arbitrate "acute conflict[s] threatening to break out between two or more" of the sixteen signatories. No state was obliged to use the court. Its actions, as stated in Article 27 of the Hague Convention, were "only to be considered as an exercise of good offices," and the signatories merely undertook "to remind" the parties to a dispute that the court was open to them. Tentative though they were, these commitments were the source of the voluntary dispute-settlement measures of the League Covenant and the United Nations Charter. In both of these systems, provisions for the peaceful settlement of disputes are part of a sequence from arbitration, mediation, and negotiation to the use of military power. Although the Hague Convention does not deal with the uses of force—and cannot therefore be considered an instrument of collective security—it is a big step toward the collective-security systems of the twentieth century.

At the 1907 Hague Conference, the doors were opened to states from outside Europe. The meetings at the Hague included representatives from forty-four governments, many of them Latin American, and represented the first serious movement toward universality at a peace conference. But formal representation did not translate into an invitation to the corridors of power. The major powers were willing to negotiate uncontroversial issues like codification of the rules of war, but they were less accommodating on issues affecting their own security interests. In other words, these conferences experienced the usual difficulty in achieving a balance between the power of a few nations to enforce the decisions of

peace and war and the interest of many in the nature and implementation of those decisions.

The other model for the League of Nations was the network of global unions that grew up in response to the supranational character of modern science and technology. Bodies like the International Telegraphic Union (1865) and the Universal Postal Union (1874) typically included a policymaking congress of all the members and an executive council of limited membership, which met regularly to oversee the implementation of policy. The public unions established habits of businesslike cooperation among a large multinational membership, a pattern that many hoped could be extended to the harder issues of international security.

The Collapse of the Old Order

In seeking the reasons for the breakdown of a century of relative peace into four years of unparalleled devastation, the architects of the post-World War I order focused naturally on the preceding system and its weaknesses. The precise causes of the First World War were far from self-evident, however, and the remedies even less so. The victors put forward three broad, competing explanations for the collapse of the old order. Since all three were addressed by the League of Nations Covenant, a brief look at each may clarify the objectives of collective security as it emerged from World War I.

The first and plainest failure of the old system was the absence of effective dispute settlement machinery. Although states were free to bring their disputes to the Hague tribunal if they wished, the major powers did not use its arbitration procedures in peace-threatening controversies. Moreover, the Concert of Europe, which had sometimes acted as the arbiter of international disputes during the nineteenth century, had fallen into disuse. In any case, by 1914 its members had become more a part of the problem than the solution.

The headlong rush to war in the summer of 1914 persuaded many that the postwar system needed a mandatory "cooling off" period in addition to compulsory dispute settlement procedures. The British and Americans, in particular, believed that mistrust and offended honor had as much to do with the slide to war as real or threatened damage to state interests. The two moving spirits behind the League, President Woodrow Wilson and Lord Robert Cecil, were convinced that with adequate time and the help of an impartial third party, reasonable people could resolve the sorts of disputes that had caused the war. Explaining the League to the American people, Wilson noted that in July 1914 the British had asked Germany and Austria to give the European governments time to

confer in order to see if war could be avoided. "It is universally admitted," he added, "that if they had gone into conference . . . the war never would have begun."⁷

The special importance that Wilson and Cecil attached to dispute settlement procedures strongly colored the League of Nations Covenant. In Article 12, at the heart of the peace-and-security provisions that came to be identified with collective security, was the obligation to submit serious international disputes to arbitration and to wait three months before resorting to war. Measures for the peaceful settlement of disputes thus became an integral part of the new system. Yet this Anglo-American view of the League "as an instrument of conciliation, softening all international antagonisms"⁸ was fundamentally different from the French approach. It was a difference that was to have serious implications for the future of collective security.

France's perception of the war and its causes was shaped by a half century of jockeying with Germany for European preeminence. After losing the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, France relied on a series of military alliances (mainly with Russia and Britain) to protect itself from a united Germany that had its own treaties with Austria-Hungary and Italy. It was this system of shifting alliances that caused the chain reaction leading to war after the murder of the Austrian crown prince in Sarajevo. To most French, the reason the system broke down was self-evident. Germany and Austria had taken the offensive because the alliance confronting them was not strong enough to make it clear they could not win. At the Paris meetings in 1919, this attitude translated into a renewed French search for security guarantees, broader and firmer if possible than those that had failed to deter Germany before.

The chief purposes of the League, as France saw it, were to enforce the peace treaties and preserve the wartime alliances. It followed that the organization should have a military arm strong enough to turn back challenges to the status quo. Premier Georges Clemenceau proposed that this take the form of either an international army or a multinational force composed of national contingents.⁹ In either case, he maintained, an international general staff would be needed to organize the force and direct its operations. Clemenceau also argued for binding decisionmaking power for the new organization to strengthen its peacekeeping capacity.

All of this ran counter to Britain's view that the objective of the League was not so much to perpetuate the status quo as to smooth its rough edges and, as passions subsided, to correct its injustices. Wilson was in the middle. He agreed with the British on the central importance of conciliation. But he also believed that a collective willingness to use force was essential and saw the League as playing the central role in deterring aggression—and, if need be, in suppressing it with force.

After four years of devastating conflict, the British had no intention of guaranteeing the boundaries of countries in which they had no security interest. In the end Wilson compromised, Clemenceau had to go along, and the result was a League that was far more a British "conciliator" than a French "policeman." Constitutionally, this was reflected in Article 10 of the covenant, in which League members undertook to "respect and preserve," rather than "guarantee," the territorial integrity and independence of other members. Article 10 also provided that "the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled," thus deciding against the French position that the body should have binding decisionmaking authority. In the end, these issues about the wording of the League Covenant had little to do with the causes of World War II: Germany broke specific treaty commitments and none of the Western powers had the political will to oppose it.

The absence of enforcement machinery and central decisionmaking power was aggravated by the exceptionally punitive nature of the peace to which the League of Nations was linked. The territorial transfers, in particular, led to grievances too fundamental to be resolved by mediation or conciliation. And without the deterrence that credible enforcement provisions could provide, the inevitable result was another challenge to the status quo. Ironically, the League probably hastened that challenge by sapping the will of its members to provide for their own defense.

The third, peculiarly American, perspective on the causes of World War I was that the European system of managing power was fundamentally unsound. At bottom this stemmed from contempt for *realpolitik* diplomacy, a sense that the whole system of shifting alliances was corrupt and needed replacing. Unlike the French and British, Wilson was less interested in tinkering with the old system than in building an alternative to it.

There was evidence to support the Wilsonian view that the balance-of-power system had outlived its usefulness. Two changes in the relationships among European powers played a special part in undercutting the premises of the old order. First, the increasingly rigid alignment of the major powers into two rival blocs removed the flexibility that Britain had provided in its role as balancer. From a system in which the main actors had deliberately fostered an equilibrium to forestall challenges to the status quo, balance-of-power politics had come to mean a situation in which opposing military alliances vied for increased power. At the same time, the competing alliances were engaged in an arms race of unprecedented proportions, which further destabilized the situation.

Wilson described the precarious equilibrium of the period as "one great force balanced against another force."¹⁰ Any member of either coalition, by pressing a quarrel of its own, could trigger the mutual defense

provisions of both alliances. In 1914 the controversy between Austria and Serbia was of little direct concern to the rest of Europe. But once Germany and Russia had mobilized in support of the two disputants, the interlocking alliances pulled every major European nation into the war in less than a month. The same system served also to prolong the war, as each alliance member relied on the assurances of the others to continue fighting longer than it might have done had it been without allies.

The second factor leading to the breakdown of the balance-of-power system was the decline of central coordination in European diplomacy. With the great powers' loss of a sense of common interest came increasing neglect of the routine consultations that had helped for a century to prevent major conflict in Europe. In the words of Stanley Hoffmann, a "gradual erosion of the restraints observed by the major actors" had taken place, one of the ways "in which multipolar systems lead to a general war (and balance of power systems are destroyed)."¹¹

Just as earlier wars had led to systems of conflict management at the opposite end of a "centralization scale" from the systems preceding them, the structured nature of collective security responded to the failures of the *laissez-faire* approach. But this time a new element had been added. For the first time, countries from every corner of the globe had been drawn into a conflict that began far from their borders over issues that had little to do with their security. To many it seemed that the interdependence that had widened the net of war required a new form of community action to keep the peace. This notion is embodied in Article 11 of the League of Nations Covenant as the guiding principle of the new system: "Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any Members of the League or not, is . . . a matter of concern to the whole League." Or, as Wilson put it in 1916, the day of the neutrals had passed.¹²

2

Collective Security in the League of Nations Scheme

The Nature of Sanctions Under the Covenant

To the founders of the United Nations, the failure of the League of Nations to prevent the aggression of the 1930s was not so much an indictment of collective security as a result of the major powers' unwillingness to use the system. There was also wide agreement that the League had been seriously flawed by the lack of trained and readily available armed forces. These two defects—the absence of binding obligations and the failure to provide for earmarked military units—were central to the common frame of reference that guided the framers of the UN Charter.

On paper, the sanctions that the League could impose were substantial, although a sharp distinction was drawn between economic and military measures. Economic sanctions were to be imposed automatically on any member that resorted to war in disregard of its obligation to abide by the covenant's dispute-settlement measures. That member, under Article 16 (1), was "*ipso facto* deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members" and was subject to immediate "severance of all trade or financial relations." Thus the trigger for economic sanctions was not a determination that an act of aggression had been committed or that a threat to the peace existed. Rather, it was the fact of going to war without making use of arbitration, mediation, or judicial settlement procedures and without submitting to a mandatory three-month "cooling-off" period.¹

Military sanctions, on the other hand, were voluntary. If the covenant's dispute-settlement procedures were disregarded by one of the parties, the League of Nations Council was obliged "to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute . . . to protect the covenants of the League." However, any such action not only was advisory but, under the voting provisions of Article 5, required the agreement