

6. Collective Security

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Collective Security: Meaning

Security concern in International Politics has been a pressing issue as the nations took all measures to make themselves safe internally but the external conditions, at times, exacerbate the issue and the nation which is weak domestically and economically strive very hard to go for alliance or even counter-alliance to meet out the threat or even the very perception of it. The strategy to form an alliance to create architecture of safeguard has been held as "Collective Security". The basic principle of "one for all and all for one" is the principle underneath it. Andrew Heywood defines it as "the theory or practice of states pledging to defend one another in order to deter aggression or to punish a transgressor if international order has been breached..."¹. He further went on elaborating the conditions that would ensure its success are as follows:

1. The states must be roughly equal;
2. All states must be willing to bear the cost and responsibility of defending one another; and
3. There must be an international body to take moral and effective action.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM UNDER THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The collective security system, as laid down by the League was defined in Article 10, 11, and 16 of the Covenant.

Article 10 – to respect and preserve territorial integrity of all the members of the League.

¹ Heywood, Andrew, Global Politics, Palgrave foundations, UK, 2011 (P.440)

Article 11(1) – any war or threat of war is hereby declared a matter of concern of the whole League and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise an effectual to safeguard the peace of the nations.

Article 11(2) – it is also declared to be the friendly right of each member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council circumstanced affecting international peace.

Article 12, 13, and 15 of the Covenant listed the peaceful means which the members could use for the settlement of their disputes.

Article 16 – it is the bedrock of the collective security system of the league.

Article 16(1) - should any member of the League resort to war, it shall be deemed to have committed an act of war against the league which undertakes immediately to subject it to the severance of trade and financial relation.

Article 16(2) – it shall be the duty of the council to recommend to the several governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force shall be necessary and the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces.

Article 16(3) – the members of the League agreed further that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures taken against the aggressor and in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their members by the covenant breaking state and to afford passage through their territory to the league forces.

Article 16(4) – any member of the league which has violated the covenant may be declared to be no longer a member of the league.

Article 17 – tried to cover the non-members also.

WORKING OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM UNDER THE LEAGUE

In the Manchurian crisis of 1931-1932 the League branded Japan as the aggressor but the decision proved counter productive in so far as it led to the withdrawal of Japan from the League.

In 1935-1936, another bold attempt was made to operationalise collective security system in the Ethiopian crisis by branding Italy as aggressor. But the members of league did not apply sanctions automatically, simultaneously

and comprehensively but haltingly, gradually and piecemeal which defeats the very purpose of the sanctions.

The Nazi conquest of Austria followed by the obliteration of Czechoslovakia and finally the invasion of Poland that led to the outbreak of war and hence to end to the collective security system and the league.

The failure of the USA to join, the rise of the Soviet Union outside the League, the reluctance of Britain to assume international obligation, the French quest for her own security and the open defiance of the system by Japan, Italy and Germany, all these combined to wreck the collective security under the League.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS

The charter of the UN gives primacy to the task of maintaining international peace and security as the most major objective of international relations. The collective security has been laid down in chapter 7 of the UN charter. It contains 13 articles from Article 39-51, which together provide for detailed measures in respect of the collective action which the Security Council can initiate and which all the members are duty bound to uphold and undertake.

Article 39 – makes it the responsibility of the Security Council to determine the existence of any threat to the peace

Article 40, 41 and 42 specify the nature of measures that Security Council is called upon to undertake. Article 40 lays down Security Council can take provisional measures. Article 41 refers to the enforcement action which includes complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio and other means of communication and severance of diplomatic relations. Article 42 empowers the Security Council to take military action.

Article 43 – makes it the responsibility of all the members of the UN to contribute their efforts, support, resources and forces.

The next four articles of the UN charter (44-47) lay down the procedure for raising, maintaining and using the UN peace keeping force.

Article 48 – the action required to carry out the decision of the Security Council shall be taken by all the members of the UN or by some of them as the Security Council may determine.

Article 49 – the members of the UN shall join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out measures decided upon by the Security Council.

Article 50 – relates to the possible ways in which non-member states or members can adjust their policies and actions towards the decision that may be taken up by the Security Council under article 41 and 42.

Article 51 – accepts the right of the states to individual and collective self-defense.

WORKING OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM UNDER THE UN

Since 1945, the collective security system has been tried in a number of cases but due to several reasons its working has not been satisfactory.

- Korean crisis (1950)
- Suez crisis (1956)
- Iraqi aggression by USA on account of Iraqi's occupation of Kuwait (1991)

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM

- It is idealistic in nature and scope
- At times it is not possible to identify the aggressor
- It admits war
- Rules out 'neutrality' in times of war
- A limited concept
- Absence of a permanent international peace keeping force
- Lack of provisions for the termination of collective security system
- Unhelpful environment of the cold war era
- Dependence of the system on powerful states

The weakness of the UN further made its operation difficult. The nuclear age further rendered its application very difficult. Morgenthau holds that collective security is not only unworkable but also an unwise and dangerous principle which can lead to extension of a local war into a world war².

² Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p.30