

Shifting Soviet Attitudes towards Collective Security and Its Impact on the Korean War

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This present study provides a historical grounding for understanding the nexus between the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Soviet Union's complex relationship with the United Nations (UN). Its focus is on the normative foundations of the principle of collective security in the high-stakes politics of the twentieth century. The Korean War marked the first major test of the nascent UN's capacity to act as a military unit in enforcing its Charter. This paper plugs into an ongoing discussion among diplomatic historians regarding the inherent tension between the theory and praxis of Moscow's puritanical allegiance to the principle of collective security. Drawing on an analysis of Marxist doctrines of war and peace and its contending dynamics, it argues against the prevailing assumption that Moscow's allegiance to the principle of collective security was tenuous. Instead it contends that Moscow's shifting attitude towards the UN was the outcome of a poorly conceived strategic realignment from the incapacity of the League of Nations to the institutional challenges posed by the Korea question. It concludes by explaining how the Korean War marked one of the rare moments of the triumph of the principle of collective security in the postwar international order and how it served to reinvigorate Moscow's resolve to engage with the multilateral process.

Keywords: Collective Security, United Nations, Soviet Union, Korean War, League of Nations

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I. Introduction

There is a wealth of work on the Soviet Union's benign and open complicity in the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-53). Some of the commentary has focused on the mercurial personality of Joseph Stalin and the complex dynamics of Kremlin palace intrigues.¹ Another school of thought is inclined to find the sources of the conflict's trigger in the Kremlin's desire not to be outdone by Mao Zedong's brand of revolutionary communism. Others have attributed the outbreak of the hostilities to a varied combination of each of the above factors but principally driven by the incandescent indigenous Korean political landscape.² Yet in the midst of all these details, what makes the Korean War stand out in the general historiography of the 20th Century is how it marked arguably one of the rare moments of the triumph of the principle collective security in the postwar international order. Crucially, it also represented a seminal test of the nascent United Nations (UN) machinery's capacity to act as a military unit to enforce its Charter.³

This rare moment of triumph, however, bellies the dissenting role of the Soviet Union through its actions or lack thereof in this intriguing saga. This paper plugs into an ongoing discussion among diplomatic historians regarding the inherent tension between the theory and praxis of Moscow's puritanical allegiance to the principle of collective security. Getting to the heart of this debate helps illuminate the proximate factors

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- 1 Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 79-87.
 - 2 Henderson Gregory, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) pp. 26-48.
 - 3 Questions about the UN's role in military intervention are rooted in Chapter VII of the Charter. But due to political bottlenecks and the imperative to save lives, there has been a growing acceptance of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention. An immediate example is the conflict in Somalia. An American-led multinational force was authorized in 1992 to deploy force to pave the way for urgently needed humanitarian missions. The doctrine of humanitarian intervention was invoked to justify NATO's military action in 1999 during the Kosovo War. NATO's action was informed by the threat of Russia and China to veto any Security Council Resolution to authorize the use of force in the conflict.

that gave rise to the multilateral intervention in the Korean War. It is argued here that the Soviet Union's place in the broader historiography of the Korean War cannot be treated in isolation to Moscow's general disposition to the UN in the early postwar years. Thus, it asks why did the Soviet Union balk at the United Nations Security Council Resolution 84? To answer the foregoing question, this study will focus on the complex relationship between the Soviet Union and the UN and how that laid the foundation for the spark that ignited the Korean War. Despite not formally being a belligerent, a critical review of the historical records is able to account for the link between Soviet strategic priorities and the geopolitical powder keg that engulfed the Korean Peninsula during this tortured period of 20th Century history.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to provide a historical grounding for understanding the normative foundations of the principle of collective security through the lens of the Korean War. Widely considered one of the most sacrosanct principles undergirding the Charter of the UN, the essence and limits of the principle of collective security were robustly tested by the reckless invasion of South Korea by the Korean People's Army in 1950. It was an ill-conceived act of chauvinism by the Communist North, which was to unleash a snowball of strategic blunders by all the belligerent sides until the inevitable armistice. This paper thus highlights the inherent tensions between the Soviet Union's imperative to be an exporter of socialist revolutions and its commitments to responsible global citizenship within the UN Charter's demands for international peace. By way of structure, this paper is divided into five subsections. The first introduces readers to the dialectical basis of Marxist thought on the question of war and peace. The purpose is to place it within the context of Soviet foreign policy traditions. The second provides a historical overview of the confluence between the theoretical foundations of Soviet foreign policy and the geopolitical realities of the interwar years, through the eyes of Maxim Litvinov, its premier diplomat. Much of the discourse is focused on the complex machinations of collective security at the League of Nations (LoN). It then transitions to Soviet interaction, mostly how it struggles to situate its foreign policy priorities within the grand scheme of

the UN Charter. Soviet conflicts with the UN on the Korea question are discussed in the fourth section and the final follows the evolution of Soviet foreign policy to reflect standard international norms, in large part thanks to the experience of the Korean War.

II. A Marxist Dialectics of the Concepts of War and Peace

The purpose of this section is to provide a grounding for understanding the link between the methodology of Marxist cognition and its impact on the Kremlin's view of the issues it considered objective reality as it grappled with collective security at the LoN and the UN. As a political project built on a value system deeply rooted in a perceived objective reality of historical materialism, much of its foreign policy choices and constraints can best be understood through this framework. Suffice it to start with the lofty idealism of Bolshevism as was conceived within space and time. Notwithstanding being the committed Marxists that they were, it did not take long for the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution to find themselves confronting real world war and peace questions that had no immediate answers in traditional dogma.⁴

Granted, Marxist literature routinely attempted a dialectical inquiry into these concepts, but it was often tinged with a strange degree of conceptual vagueness. As a basic rule of thumb, war has always been conceived in Marxism as a distinct political process of violent struggle occurring between classes within a given state or between states.⁵ For Friedrich Engels, this form of political violence dates back to the early history of the material conditions that shaped social interactions. He talks of a critical juncture of human history when a subjugated group is able to rise above their disorienting consciousness and in doing so work to assert themselves against the structures that momentarily holds their

4 Vasily, Kulikov, *Aktdemiia general'nogo shtatba: Istoriia v Oennoi ordenov, lenina i Sui'oroi'a I stepeni akadovemii general'nogo shtatba* (Moscow: Voennoe Ixdatel'stvo, 1976), pp. 20-22.

5 Gat Azar, "Clausewitz and the Marxists," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 2, no. 27 (1992), pp. 363-384.

condemned fate.⁶

Vladimir I. Lenin was to also lend himself to this dialectical analysis. He builds on Engel's critique with an emphasis on how to build the mechanism (institutional and rhetorical) by which the crucial transition occurs.⁷ That mechanism is triggered by conflicts arising from when two or more groups have diametrically opposed interests and must be mobilized through armed struggle to force a solution. As an illustration, he references the transition from feudal societies to the capitalist order. It took a bourgeois revolution to facilitate the transition to capitalism from feudalism, and thus Lenin contends it will take the socialist revolution to transition from capitalism to socialism. This process of perpetual conflict will only be halted when society reaches the natural progression to a universal state of communism. The inference here being that war will be an implausible proposition once we reach that yonder of communism.⁸

The Korean question, with all its complex dimensions and high stakes implications, thrusts Joseph Stalin into Marxism's war and peace quandary. By early 1947 the Soviet Union had suffered a string of diplomatic setbacks, which left Stalin confronted with a dilemma not dissimilar to that which Lenin faced during the February Revolution of 1917. Given the precarious conditions of the international order, Lenin had come to the sober conclusion that the only path to a successful socialist revolution would be through the bayonet. Writing to his comrades, the Bolshevik patriarch all but abandoned any pretension about the utility of peaceful uprisings in upending entrenched political systems.⁹

6 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975-), pp. 678-690.

7 Jacob, W., Kipp, *Lenin and Clausewitz The Militarization of Marxism, 1914-1921* (Moscow: Soviet Army Studies Office 1985), pp. 76-88.

8 Andriy S. Milovidov and V. G. Kozlov, *Filosofskoe nasledie V. I. Lenina i problemy sovremennoi voiny*, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1972), pp. 95-96.

9 B. Byely, G. Fyodorov, V. Kulakov (eds), *Marxism-Leninism on War and Army* (Moscow: Progress, 1972).

By 1948 it was clear the Soviet Union wasn't just being muzzled on the world's biggest stage for peace and diplomacy but also the signs were increasingly pointing to international socialism being on borrowed time. As things ominously stood, the cadres of Marxism-Leninism asked themselves if it would be in keeping with Marxist doctrines to impose socialism on another state?¹⁰ As alluded to earlier, the main challenge lies in the dearth of canonical basis to provide a consistent guide for adherents. For the zealous internationalist, the main guide they can find is the Marxist advice against rushing to impose socialism in foreign states through armed intervention. They, instead, should be able to have an accurate assessment of prevailing conditions. In other words, there was no definitive proscription against that. The key barometer for determining whether or not to resort to armed intervention is predicated on deference to specific local conditions. For better or worse, this amounted to nothing short of clinging to the whimsical if the subjective cannot be readily excused.¹¹ Hence, failing this test could unwittingly unleash a blowback, which could ultimately engender a crude distortion of socialism. Premature armed revolutionary action, it is warned, would achieve nothing but sullen socialist ideals in the eyes of the world rather than the aspirational model it purports to represent.¹² That the threshold for such an intervention was met in Korea will be taken up later in this paper.

With that said, Marxist commentary has been far more generous on the question of peace than it does for war. Peace is conceived as a quintessential virtue that is naturally at home with the working class. By their very nature, the working class has a singular desire of living peaceably and in friendly coexistence.¹³ As the purported natural

10 Walter Bryce Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 129-204.

11 *Ibid.* and Bernard Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 69-109.

12 Julian Lider, *The Political and Military Laws of War: An Analysis of Marxist-Leninist Concepts* (Stockholm: Gower Pub Co, 1980), pp. 78-80.

13 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International (May-June 1915)*, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), pp. 205-212.

custodians of this virtue, the global working class and the socialist states to which they owe their allegiance reflexively gravitate towards the peaceful settlement of all disagreements on the negotiation table.¹⁴ For Marxists, the condition of peace is never an abstract construct. The condition of peace has to be delineated between when peace is constructed towards the progression of human development or when peace is a veneer for when a lethargic consciousness is programmed into accepting the unacceptable.¹⁵ Which is why Marxists were in the habit of describing the real test of peace as being whether it is a condition constructed on freedom or in slavery. There is, however, an important caveat on the actual dialectics of the objective reality of the condition of peace. It is worth highlighting that for all their analytical rigor, both Engels and Marx would say sporadically that it was very plausible that the transition to socialism would be peaceful. They reckoned that such an outcome would necessarily be determined by conditions in individual countries, as mentioned earlier.¹⁶

In line with this, when it ultimately mattered, the Korea question appears to have fallen on both sides of Marxism's allure. By the time minor skirmishes had escalated into full scale conflict, peaceful coexistence had ceased to be an ideal as both belligerent sides aimed to shape the social order in their own image.¹⁷ It was unmistakably clear that Marxism's adherents North of the 38th Parallel had a far greater belief in the potency of armed revolution than a peaceful coexistence as far as determining the future social order was concerned. As we will see later, Moscow's failure to achieve a peaceful outcome at the UN, rather than reflect a dearth in diplomatic dexterity, served to confirm the imperative of armed revolution. Revisionist historians would however

14 For more details, see Alexander Prokhorov, *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1969).

15 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975-), pp. 678-690.

16 Walter Bryce Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 129-204.

17 Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 234.

have us believe that, instead of an indictment, the crunch days leading up to June 25, 1950 was when a deft Kremlin was able to up the diplomatic ante to get socialism's foes marching along its tunes.¹⁸ To be sure, Marxist scholars have never shied away from emphasizing that violence has always been an indispensable facet of every revolution, peaceful or otherwise.¹⁹ The only issue up for debate has always been the severity of the violence in question. Just like with nearly all facets of its canonical structures, the Soviet Union has on occasion found reason to make this issue a moving target.

III. Litvinov's Travails with European Collective Security

This section discusses the evolution of the principle of collective security and the challenges of institutionalizing its norms during the postwar and interwar years. It provides a basis for understanding the contending dynamics that shaped the resulting geopolitical stakes, especially as the Soviet Union saw it. Arguably, one of the Soviet Union's foreign policy priority goals, collective security was vigorously tested through the crucible of the interwar and postwar years. Mainstream diplomatic historians routinely agree that had the LoN been equipped to live up to its ideals and the mandate it was charged with delivering by the Paris Peace Conference, then the history of the 20th Century would have been less bloody than it turned out. Beginning with the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-37), when the Fascist government of Italy defied the entreaties of the LoN to invade fellow Charter Member Ethiopia, thus exposing the impotence of the international body, it raised questions about the principle of collective security.²⁰ Needless to say, this failure not only doomed the LoN to oblivion but crucially set the stage for the outbreak of World War II.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Julian Lider, *The Political and Military Laws of War; An Analysis of Marxist-Leninist Concepts* (Stockholm: Gower Pub Co, 1980), p. 78.

20 Sbachi Alberto, "The Italians and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936," *Transafrican Journal of History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1976), pp. 123-138.

Collective security is premised on “regulated, institutionalized balancing predicated on the notion of all against one provides more stability than unregulated, self-help....under collective security, states agree to abide by certain norms and rules to maintain stability and, when necessary, band together to stop aggression.”²¹ Maxim Litvinov, the astute Soviet diplomat once derisively described the LoN as “not a friendly assimilation of peoples working for the common benefit, but as a masked union of the so-called Great Powers who have arrogated to themselves the right of dictating the fate of weaker peoples.”²² Litvinov’s curt remark quite rightly sums up the Soviet Union’s early interaction with the realities of the inadequacies of Marxism in the increasingly combustible international order. Hard to fault the good old diplomat’s insight nor the rigor of his analysis. In the apparent absence of the convenience of a Marxist-centered way out of the gathering storm, Kremlin top ideologues like Viacheslav Molotov demurred. Call it a modest strategic recalibration intended for a high stakes game of chicken, Moscow demonstrated a remarkable degree of pragmatism as they sought accommodation with a perceived implacably hostile West.²³

Moscow’s effusive collective security gambit particularly did not sit well with Great Britain. It is worth highlighting that Britain up until this point hardly looked kindly on the Bolshevik government since their consolidation of power in 1921.²⁴ A fact hardly lost on the Soviets. Despite recognizing the Soviet state in 1924,²⁵ British diplomats

21 Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan, “The Promise of Collective Security,” *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1995), pp. 52-53.

22 Nikolai Ivanov, “Liga Natsii,” *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, no.1 (1930), p. 16.

23 Roberts Geoffrey, *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War: Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933-1941* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), p. 87.

24 Following the withdrawal of the Russian Empire from World War I, Britain engaged in a massive campaign of military sabotage, often backing the sides fighting Lenin’s Bolshevik movement in the ensuing bloody war for power. See Keith, Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 76-89.

25 The diplomatic recognition was rescinded in 1927, triggered by an alleged Soviet

routinely accused the Kremlin of speaking with a forked tongue. On the one hand was the Foreign Commissariat's polished statements about collective security, but then it granted a free hand to the Communist International (COMINTERN), a quintessential Marxist front organization, to export international socialist revolutions.²⁶ Besides, Moscow further undermined its credibility by its intervention in the Spanish Civil War against its expressed commitment to the LoN. Through its proxies, the Soviet Union conveniently chose to ignore the arms shipment ban imposed by the LoN to any of the factions in the Spanish Civil War.²⁷ To call this a schizophrenic policy would be missing the larger picture of Moscow's strategic ambitions. For the most part, there was no love lost between Britain and the Bolsheviks and their COMINTERN acolytes.

Similarly, Stalin's secret pact with Hitler regularly comes in for intense commentary—so much that it is cited by critics of Moscow's flirtation with collective security as definite proof of the primordial orientation of Marxism's implacability.²⁸ A fair critique of this posture cannot be made without appreciating the context of the strategic peremptory impositions the Western states dealt Stalin.²⁹ To that, Alan J.

espionage conspiracy that turned out to have been a hyperbolic reaction to the prevailing extremely anti-communist landscape of Great Britain. British police raided the All-Russian Co-operative Society (ARCOS) on suspicion of being a conduit for Soviet covert activities. See British White Paper, *Russia no. 2 (1927): Documents Illustrating the Hostile Activities of the Soviet Government and the Third International against Great Britain* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1927). In 1929, the new Labor government keen on maximizing the economic benefits of trading with Russia restored full diplomatic relations once again.

26 Robert Tucker, "The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy," *Slavic Review*, vol. 36, no.4 (1977), pp. 35-45.

27 Allan J. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 66-89.

28 Aleksandr Nekrich, *Pariahs, Partners, Predators: German-Soviet Relations, 1922-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 36-67.

29 Zara Steiner, "The Soviet Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the Czechoslovakian Crisis in 1938: New Material from the Soviet Archives," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1999), pp. 751-779.

Taylor's seminal work "The Origins of the Second World War" provides an unequivocal critique of the context shaped outcomes. Stalin, he contends, facing a legion of domestic challenges to his power base, would rather avoid any foreign entanglements that could just as well bring that about. Stalin in essence, rather than picking and choosing whom to align with, was out there seeking peace with every major European power, Nazi Germany's Hitler included. What is often less said is that Nazi Germany took umbrage at the 1935 Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance ostensibly with an eye on the mercurial Hitler.³⁰ Unnerved by Nazi Germany's withdrawal from the LoN, the French proposal in 1934 was naturally welcomed by an all too eager Soviet Union; both incidentally having been spurned by Hitler.³¹ Sensing Moscow's increasing desperation for a multilateral security system, Hitler would only come to realize the pact was wholly France's initiative, perhaps scaling down his resentment of the Bolsheviks one notch. In that context, Stalin is made out to be the victim of history, as nearly every major European power spurned his overtures at one point or another. He thus deviates from the dominant narrative that vilifies in some cases those that blatantly indict Stalin.³²

Alan J. Taylor cemented his place among those who were inclined to see Soviet collective security posturing as benign. Far from the rabid revolutionaries who sought to upend the international order, Taylor and his cohort reckon a surprising degree of conservatism to Moscow's policy positions. It was in Moscow's best interest to advance the European *status quo* instead of risk a future of indeterminate outcomes according to this school of thought.³³ This line of argument appears

30 V. Semyonov, "The Leninist Principles of Soviet Diplomacy," *International Affairs*, vol. 4 (1969), pp. 3-8.

31 Roberts Geoffrey, "Stalin, the Pact with Nazi Germany, and the Origins of Postwar Soviet Historiography," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2002), pp. 93-103.

32 Roberts Geoffrey, *The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact with Hitler* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 287.

33 Richard K. Debo (1994), "G.V. Chicherin: A Historical Perspective," in *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1991, A Retrospective*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (London: Frank

convincing on face value, until it comes up against other incongruent Kremlin moves, critics charge. How can benign attributions be ascribed to either the Soviet invasion of Finland or the division of Poland in 1939? Could it just be the actions of a cynically driven opportunism? We wouldn't have to travel far back to find plausible answers. Maxim Litvinov was among the first to call upon the then feckless LoN to levy sanctions on Nazi Germany for its 1935 violation of the Treaty of Versailles by reinstating general conscription. Nazi Germany rightfully surmised that, bogged down by their own domestic travails, neither Britain nor France would bat an eye. Safe for the Soviet Union, Hitler's reaction barely registered across Western Europe.

Despite assuring the LoN's members of Moscow's "aspirations to collaborate in the creation of an international order under which the infringement of peace...would be hampered to the utmost possible extent,"³⁴ he would be overtaken by the forces of cynicism. Moreover, in the lead up to the Munich Crisis, he once again delivered an impassioned speech warning about the threats to peace thus:

"This attitude of the Soviet Union...is predetermined by its general policy of struggling for peace, for the collective organization of security and for the maintenance of one of the instruments of peace—the existing League of Nations. We consider that one cannot struggle for peace without at the same time defending the integrity of international obligations...One cannot struggle for the collective organization of security without adopting collective measures against breaches of international obligations."³⁵

Litvinov was to learn, to his grief, that not only did the Western powers downplay the threat posed by Nazi Germany, but that his faith

Cass, 1994).

34 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*. 2 vols. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948).

35 Vladimir M. Falin, A.A. Gromyko, A.N. Grylev, M.A. Kharlamov, V.M. Khvostov, S.P. Kozyrev, V. Ya. Siplos, I.N. Zemskov, *Soviet Peace Efforts on the Eve of World War Two* (Moscow: Institute for Political Literature, 1973), pp. 65-98.

in the LoN was misguided. This notwithstanding, Moscow made a habit of repeatedly imploring Europe to rise to the occasion by empowering the LoN to become more than an entity that issued worthless resolutions but develop into a legitimate guarantor of peace. The impotence of the LoN, observed a Soviet analyst, was “in particular, from the fact that the Covenant required unanimity of all its members for the adoption of all political decisions taken by its Council and Assembly.....vitiated the role and responsibility of the several states in the cause of supporting international peace and practically rendered impossible the effective operation of an organization for the maintenance of peace and the prevention of aggression.”³⁶

In the end, whether prophetic or not, Litvinov’s warning against the raging storm of fascism did gain significant currency in the postwar era. Informed by the patent weaknesses of the LoN and the cocktail of chauvinism that lethally condemned it, the Allies were inspired to ensure the UN would be different. Old scores and differences aside, the architects of the UN were keen to ensure that its normative and institutional structure was adequately robust enough to undermine international peace and security.³⁷ In the end, a hapless and helpless Stalin and his desire to find hope in a legitimate global authority to save it from the anguish of superior forces was sealed in the trenches of World War II.

IV. The UN as a Reactionary Bloc

According to historian Paul Kennedy, the creation of the UN from the ashes of World War II benefited significantly from the lessons of the LoN’s failures. Unlike the LoN, the UN was created on this premise of

36 Grigorii Morozov, *United Nations: The main international legal aspects of the structure and activities* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), pp. 22-26.

37 Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), pp. 120-200.

the capacity to imagine a better world in which peace and security was underwritten by universally accepted norms. Most importantly, the UN's most significant difference with the LoN was having the Permanent Five members be the guarantors of the principle of collective security.³⁸ But what its architects never envisaged was how the UN would respond to one of the Permanent Members standing in the way. Some early commentators warned that the Soviet Union's brand of international communism represented a unique strand of chauvinism whose interest was inimical to the interest of international peace.

Alexander Dallin's seminal work on the Soviet Union's relationship with the UN was the leading voice of this school of thought. Moscow's relationship with the UN is described as one in which the Soviet Union with its "two-camp worldview" struggled to operate in a "one-world" organization.³⁹ To understand Moscow's relationship with the world body, Dallin reckons that one had to come to terms with the complex roots of the Soviet Union's deeply engrained Marxist orientation, the crux of which was discussed earlier. For it to operate as fully paid up member of the UN, it had to be able to cross this inherently rigid two "camp theory," if it was to live up to the ideals and principles of the Charter.

As a corollary of the Zhdanov Doctrine, Dallin's two camp theory draws from the same well as the legion of confrontation theorists that thrived in Cold War scholarship. As the poster child of international communism, Dallin, like his intellectual ilk, projects an image of the Soviet Union as a dissenting and distinct international project.⁴⁰ In other words, the USSR was resolute to international revolution on the political front and commitment to economic autarky at home. Bolshevism, he argued, lacked the institutional dynamism and capacity to conceive of

38 *Ibid.*

39 Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union at the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives*, (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 23-65.

40 Vladimir Pechatnov, "The Soviet Union and the World, 1944-1953," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1. eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 86.

an alternative worldview, thus concluding Moscow's ambivalent attitude towards multilateralism. This attitude, he contends, has its antecedents in the early postwar attempts by the Allies to resurrect the failed interwar multilateral architecture. Going to the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organizations in San Francisco, Dallin tells his readers the Soviet representatives were under strict instructions not to be drawn into making commitments outside the putative peace and security questions of the day. They were to stick to a dogmatic interpretation of the geopolitical issues at the heart of Soviet foreign policy interests. As it stands, the core interest of Soviet foreign policy was premised on getting agreements on collective security. The Soviet Union's appraisal of the framework of the new multilateral organization reflected a peculiar understanding of the urgency of the peace and security questions that animated the post-war milieu.⁴¹

Just like it did with the LoN, Moscow's participation in the new UN was to be entirely premised on using it as a medium for collective security. This was the puzzling conservatism of the Stalin era that this meant safeguarding the Soviet Union's security without equivocation. Moscow's failure to impress upon its Western interlocutors to have a narrowly construed mandate for the UN would be indirectly playing to Stalin's skepticism and commitment to the UN. Dallin thus asserts that Joseph Stalin consequently took a very ambivalent posture towards the UN, short of working away with his marbles.⁴² Moreover, a beaming sense of self-assurance took hold in the Kremlin, as the Soviet Union was making significant achievements in weapons technology coupled with a buoyant economy, thus making the autocrat in the Kremlin less inclined to see any real value in the UN. Just to be sure, the UN is barely ever mentioned in any of the most important domestic policy documents during much of the Stalin days. For example, important global issues such as the Korean War are discussed in the handbook of the

41 This thesis remained the core of Dallin's work on the Soviet relationship with international organizations.

42 Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union at the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives* (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 23-65.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union but virtually has no mention of the UN. The UN is also omitted as a factor of world affairs in the final Declaration put out by over 4 dozen communist parties convened in the Winter of 1960.⁴³

Among some of the changes that occasioned Stalin's demise was a somewhat benign change in Soviet attitude towards the UN. Nikita Khrushchev demurred from Stalin's broader inward-looking foreign policy orientation. In particular, he took issue with the Stalinist intransigence that ordered the UN boycotts of the 1950s which did nothing but exact a heavy price through the UN intervention in Korea.⁴⁴ The boycotts in other words ceded crucial grounds to the band of reactionary monopoly forces of imperialism, according to Soviet commentators. This sentiment aside, one can hardly ignore both the scope and impact of the strategic bind the Soviet bloc collectively were confronted with during the early days of the UN. A distinct minority, they regularly came up against an insurmountable group of Western-leaning states that fed at the trough of the anti-communist milieu of the 1950s.⁴⁵ It gave rise to further resentment not just against the Western bloc but fed a suspicion that the world body was far from acting as a disinterested entity in the unfolding ideological fault lines.

In breaking with the conservatism of the Stalinist era, a Communist Party of the Soviet Union propaganda described the UN thus "the historic struggle taking place on the world stage in our days find expression within the walls of that Organization, where the world is represented in all its manifold and of course contradictory complexity."⁴⁶

43 Otto Kuusinen, *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), p. 88.

44 Nikita, Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Little Brown and Company: 1974), pp. 230-280.

45 Nikolai, Inozemtsev, "Razvitie mirovogo sotsializma i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia i novyi etap mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii," *kommunists*, no. 9 (1961), pp. 93-100.

46 See Editorial, "Za mir, za razoruzhenie, za svobodu narodov," *Kommunist*, no.14 (1960), p. 5.

Khrushchev's departure from Stalin's posture was significant to the extent that it no longer subscribed to a very narrow view of the UN's authority, as described in the foregoing remarks. Think of it as signaling the era of the coming age for Soviet diplomacy. Despite being chastened by the unexpected outcome of the Korean War, Khrushchev's policies differed from Stalin before him. Where Stalin chose to walk away with his marbles from the UN when the going was tough, Khrushchev was convinced a positive outcome could still be derived from engaging the world body. At the core of this policy was a conviction that the UN in and of itself remained an instrument of value except that it remained in the hands of so-called reactionary forces. To realize the UN's fullest potential therefore meant wresting control away from the Western reactionary axis. The 1960s was certainly pointing towards just that direction with the admission of new member states from the developing world and the Kremlin's posturing to the Third World.

V. Soviet Intransigence and the Looming Korea Question at the United Nations

The Korea question, for better or worse, has a prominent place in the early birth pains of the UN. Coming as it did, it thrust the UN into a somewhat precarious high stakes situation its architects had not anticipated or prepared for. The resulting tensions laid the foundation for what was to become the Soviet Union's charges of the world body holding the line for the Western side on the Superpower two camps conflict.⁴⁷ To its supporters, the Korea question represented a credible testament of the UN's capacity to institutionalize the principle of collective security. To buttress this point, a credible link can be drawn between how Imperial Japan's disdain of the LoN was in many ways a vital teachable moment in the UN's response to North Korea's invasion of the South in 1950. Much like Nazi Germany, Japan's chauvinistic

⁴⁷ See Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union at the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives*, (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 23-65.

orientation was a crucial factor in exposing the flaws of the LoN. Imperial Japan withdrew in March 27, 1933 in protest for being called out as an aggressor in Manchuria.⁴⁸ Having proven the LoN to be a feckless entity following its unilateral takeover of Manchuria, Tokyo's militaristic driven imperial ambitions would go out on a limb.

To understand Moscow's consternation with the outcome of the Korea question, it is worth placing it within the context of the postwar negotiations between the Allies. As a territory under occupation, the Korea question was on the agenda of the Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow on December 27, 1945. A communique was issued at the said meeting laying out the framework to inform the mechanics for future independence.⁴⁹ Towards that end, a Joint Commission representing the Soviet and American military commands on both sides of the 38th Parallel was to be set up to provide relevant recommendation.⁵⁰ The Moscow Conference did also have a cursory review of Franklin D. Roosevelt's earlier proposal to place Korea under a joint Soviet-American trusteeship, in keeping with the practices of the defunct LoN.⁵¹ To the chagrin of nationalist Korean activists, impatient for national self-determination, the Soviet-leaning Korean Communist Party appeared amenable to the trusteeship proposal.⁵²

Beset by mutual distrust, local representatives of the Joint Commission barely got off the ground, a process exacerbated by the early drifting apart of their respective Super-Power patrons. After a couple of years of unproductive negotiation by the Joint Commission, it was

48 Frederick V. Field, "American Far Eastern Policy, 1931-1937," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1937), pp. 377-392.

49 Interim Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

50 Robert Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War 1950-1953* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), pp. 56-88.

51 Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp. 59-60.

52 Fyodor Tertitskiy, "Why Soviet plans for Austria-style unification in Korea did not become a reality," *NK News*, August 7, 2018, <<https://www.nknews.org/2018/08/why-russian-plans-for-austria-style-unification-in-korea-did-not-become-a-reality/>> (date accessed March 22, 2020).

apparent that the polarization of the Korea question, complicated by the American-Soviet differences, was further ensconced by latent indigenous political strife.⁵³ Determined to achieve a neutral resolution, the United States took the liberty in 1947 of laying the Korea problem before the UN. Washington was building on the precedence created by the UN during the 1946 Iran Crisis⁵⁴ on the same question of occupied territories. Reeling from the UN's stern rebuke the previous year, Moscow saw the UN's involvement as an intervention not of a disinterested party but the beginning of a hostile takeover. Recall that Moscow and the Soviet bloc constituted a minority against a UN majority that was overly deferential to the United States in this so-called two camp conflict.

Besides, Moscow saw an interesting opportunity to fall back on a critical concession it had elicited out of the Allies at the San Francisco Conference. And that was raising both the place and role of sovereignty as a sacrosanct condition undergirding the commitment of states to the UN. It warned that by having the UN involved in the Korea question, the world body would be unduly interfering in the domestic political process of Korea, which would amount to a breach of the UN Charter's Articles 107 and 32. Besides, the Kremlin insisted, proceeding would

53 William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 87-96.

54 As part of the Allied Joint Occupation force of Iran, the Soviet Union was required to immediately withdraw its forces from Iran's territory. However, a bellicose Moscow failed to make good on the agreement triggering the Cold War's first major diplomatic crisis. Backed by a protesting Iran, the United States raised the Soviet illegal occupation before the UN in 1946 resulting in the passing of Security Council Resolution 2 which stated: *The Security Council, Having heard the statements by the representatives of the Soviet Union and Iran in the course of its meeting of 28 and 30 January 1946, Having taken cognizance of the documents presented by the Soviet and Iranian delegations and those referred to in the course of the oral debates, Considering that both parties have affirmed their readiness to seek a solution of the matter at issue by negotiation, and that such negotiations will be resumed in the near future, Requests the parties to inform the Council of any results achieved in such negotiations. The Council in the meanwhile retains the right at any time to request information on the progress of the negotiations.*

also be contravening the Moscow Accords of 1945.⁵⁵ Outnumbered, Moscow's objection to the UN's involvement was easily defeated as the resolution calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the establishment of a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) was passed.⁵⁶ The UNTCOK was charged with the mission of supervising the conduct of nationwide free elections. Left isolated as the UN's member states zoomed along, the Soviet Union decided on an indefinite boycott campaign in protest. With hearts rapidly hardening on both sides of the 38th Parallel, Moscow's intransigence further increased animosity to the UN, especially in the North.

Under the leadership of the Indian diplomat K.P. Menon, the UNTCOK proceeded with the elections in the South on May 10, 1948.⁵⁷ In what turned out to be a very chaotic electoral process, Rhee Syngman was declared winner, from whence he proclaimed the birth of the Republic of Korea (ROK) on August 15, 1948. With the recognition of the ROK, the UN further called for the withdrawal of all foreign occupation forces as well as the immediate creation of a revamped United Nations Commission Korea (UNCOK). With the exception of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the UNCOK was essentially composed of all the previous representatives of the UNTCOK.⁵⁸ These measures were ostensibly aimed at ending the partition of the Korean Peninsula and to codify its status as a sovereign state.

Having boycotted the UNTCOK, Moscow brought its acolytes

55 Based on the letter of the United Nations Charter, parties with any dispute according to Article 32 are required to be consulted before any decision is made on a dispute. In the particular case cited by Moscow, the UN never granted audience to the competing Korean factions prior to attempting a settlement. Moscow further resorted to putative juridical language to reemphasize why the Charter's Article 107 clearly excluded the UN from getting involved in decisions on postwar settlement conflicts. See Martin Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification & U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), pp. 11-20.

56 See UN Resolution.

57 See Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 59-60.

58 UN Doc A\AC\19\SC.1\SR.14, March 7, 1948.

together to form a rival government⁵⁹ with Kim Il-Sung at the helm of what became the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on September 9, 1948. This notwithstanding, the UN General Assembly, acting on the report of UNTCOK, declared on December 12, 1948 the Republic of Korea as the sole legitimate government of Korea. The General Assembly during its IV Session on December 22, 1949 consented to the Republic of Korea's application for admission. The decision was duly tabled before the tense Security Council for final approval. In keeping with the spirit of Moscow's animus towards the UN, Pyongyang took to denouncing the UNCOK as an extension of American militarist ends.⁶⁰ Even as it denounced the UN, Pyongyang was keen to not only have the world body reverse its decision to legitimize the Seoul-based government but also have it rather bestowed with that coveted international legitimacy. With the UN nowhere near considering such an outcome, the diplomatic wiggle room was largely left to Moscow. Acting as the DPRK's vanguard, Moscow did disregard the UN's recognition of the ROK by vetoing its early 1949 application for UN membership.⁶¹ Thus continued several more years of Soviet intransigence against the ROK, even though its general disposition towards the UN itself was to ebb and flow in the succeeding years.

VI. Learning to Balance Means and Ends

By the Spring of 1950, the limits of Soviet diplomacy were becoming manifestly apparent as it suffered one setback after another at the UN. About the same time the Korea question remained a burning issue, as Seoul sought to consolidate its international legitimacy, and Pyongyang

59 Fyodor Tertitskiy, "How Kim Il Sung became North Korea's Great Leader," *NK News*, November 5, 2018, <<https://www.nknews.org/2018/11/how-kim-il-sung-became-north-koreas-great-leader/>> (date Accessed, April 6, 2020).

60 Kim Il-Sung, *For the Independent Peaceful Reunification of Korea* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 39-102.

61 United Nations, *Repertory of Practices of United Nations Organs*, Volume 1, New York, 1955.

was increasingly running out of time to make its case to a skeptical international community. Having lost out on the UNCOK, an outcome in the eyes of the Kremlin that wasn't just an ideological slight, but one that portended where the battle lines were being drawn. If there was any place where the repercussions of these battle lines spoke to the larger fate of international communism, it was in Korea. Its extensive mandate notwithstanding, the UNCOK could barely contain the sporadic cross-border guerrilla activities that ostensibly were to claim the lives of nearly 100 thousand lives, the majority of whom were civilians.⁶²

For all its increasingly limited window of opportunity to undo the UN's perceived adversarial posturing, the communist allies still saw an opportunity in the latent indigenous political consternation to act nimbly in order to alter the facts on the ground. The DPRK's invasion of the ROK on June 25, 1950 was immediately denounced by the UN through Security Council Resolution 82 on June 26, 1950. Soviet obfuscation about its role in triggering the June 25 invasion, benign or overt, has come to be conceived as a costly strategic miscalculation that had its deep roots in the corridors of the UN. As it was still in the throes of the ill-fated boycott of the UN, Moscow's response to the invasion was as puzzling as it was an indictment of its diminutive diplomatic capabilities. Firstly, by boycotting the UN, it left an open lane for an American-led initiative to have the UN take countervailing measures against its clients North of the 38th Parallel. Not only did that move forfeit the veto, it also willingly chose not to protest the UN's intervention. When it finally did on July 4, 1950, the Kremlin's statement amounted to a fictionalized false equivalency that ostensibly attributed the conflict to the South's recklessness.⁶³

It didn't take long for the limits of Moscow's intransigence against the UN to be exposed for its hollowness. By the early Autumn of 1952,

62 Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1973), pp. 23-88.

63 Leon Gordenker, *The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 43-67.

when the tide of the battle was rapidly turning against Pyongyang, a chastened Kremlin ordered its diplomats to table an urgent motion before the UN's General Assembly.⁶⁴ The draft resolution, apart from calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities, was replete with language that reinforced Soviet unease with the UN. Moscow's call for the withdrawal of all foreign troops, UN-supervised national legislative elections and the inclusion of Korea's neighboring states as observers was largely a cosmetic attempt to buy time for strategic recalibration.⁶⁵ At this point in the war, Moscow was starting to count the true cost of the hostilities not in terms of the lives and treasure squandered but on how to gain the momentum in the polemical war.

Having spurned the UN's pre-1950 involvement in Korea on legalism, the Kremlin was confronting a reality of somewhat implausible options. Reverting to the UN was in essence an opportunity to circle its wagons, so to speak. This contention is best illustrated by the point in the resolution calling for the admission of the newly constituted government of Korea to the UN.⁶⁶ The dearth of Soviet diplomacy in the lead up to the outbreak of hostilities is further underscored by a catastrophic misreading of the nimble mechanics of the UN. For the most part, the Soviet focus on the then evolving Great Power contest set about expending much of its strategic capital when working with the Security Council.

While the Security Council was indeed where the high stakes contests played out, the General Assembly incidentally presciently reflected the essence of international public opinion. The General Assembly's Uniting for Peace Resolution passed on November 30, 1950, partly in response to Soviet intransigence at the Security Council, is

64 Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 79-87.

65 Whiting S. Allen, *China Crosses The Yalu: The Decision To Enter The Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 54-98.

66 Rosalyn Higgins, *The Development of International Law through the Political Organs of the United Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 116-124.

illustrative of where public opinion stood.⁶⁷ Granted the vast majority of UN Member states as of 1950 were less inclined to be sympathetic to communism, there was still a critical mass of states who would have been open to Moscow's entreaties, if presented without the sensitive polemics. A good case in point is the Latin America region. In light of their long history of wrestling with American hemispheric hegemony, they were not predisposed to ingratiating with Washington on a broad scope of issues. Yet, in the same breadth (or breath), Latin America remained deeply steeped in Judeo-Christian conservatism, the very sort that Marxism routinely denounced. But they demonstrated through their collective voting records that in the grand scheme of things, they felt far more comfortably hitching their wagons with the Western side. While the colonial territories of Africa and most parts of Asia were not yet a factor in the calculus of postwar international politics, Stalin was nevertheless unreasonably condescending of their relevance to the unfolding international power dynamics.

As stated in the previous section, Khrushchev's break with Stalin's view of the international order was largely informed by this very failure in Korea. Rather than Stalin's narrow-minded view of what became known as the Third World, Khrushchev saw the rapid wave of decolonization across Africa and Asia as being rife with opportunities to launch Soviet diplomacy to a new promising phase through partnerships with these newly independent states.⁶⁸ Khrushchev is quoted as saying "the post-colonialist momentum offered a chance to break into the soft underbelly of imperialism and win sympathies of the millions of people who woke up to the new life."⁶⁹ To buttress this point, Khrushchev embarked on a series of massive charm offensive trips across Afghanistan, Burma, India and Indonesia in 1955. He also had his

67 *Ibid.*: The Uniting for Peace Resolution was first exercised when the Chinese Volunteer forces crossed the Yalu River in direct intervention to repel the UN forces in the tensest moment of the conflict.

68 Lise Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960-65* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 68.

69 Ted Hopf, *Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945-1958* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 302-312.

sights set on Africa, with the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Guinea, Ghana and Mali. Yet, Congo was to be considered the biggest prize for the Soviet gambit in Africa, both for strategic and propaganda dividends. Unlike any of the other states in the region, Congo was by far the largest in terms of territory, home to the richest mineral deposits and arguably bore the worst brunt of colonial exploitation.⁷⁰ The latter point served as both a rhetorical and propaganda boon for the Soviet bloc.

On the floor of the UN General Assembly, the Soviet Union spearheaded a robust anti-imperialist campaign against the West. Tinged as it was in the rhetorical polemics of Soviet propaganda, Moscow's entreaties nonetheless found a compelling resonance with the growing Third World bloc in the UN. The net result was that the overwhelming Western alliance's numerical dominance of the UN was effectively neutralized by the early 1960s. The implications for the unresolved Korea question was becoming very palpable with each new member state from the Third World. What used to pass for a UN consensus on the Republic of Korea's preeminence on the Korea question was increasingly being dampened by the changing voting patterns of the General Assembly. On this score, the lessons for the Soviet Union was unequivocal. The UN body was greater than the sum of its individual parts and to that extent international peace and security was not limited to the narrow constructs of one single state's security interest.

The so-called two-camp theory, the doctrinal basis of Soviet internationalism, proved to be insufficient for the scale of the challenges of operating in a complex world order. As Nikita Khrushchev so admitted in his memoirs, it was Kim Ill-Sung and his acolytes who were the primary initiators of the war albeit with the tacit approval of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.⁷¹ Reading Khrushchev's memoir at face value, one comes out with the impression of the North Korean Communist

70 Elizabeth K. Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World: An Economic Bind* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 145-190.

71 Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Little Brown and Company: 1974), pp. 230-280.

leadership wittingly turning their invasion plan as a test case for the Soviet Union to uphold the core of Marxist commitment to international revolutions. With respect to this strategy, Robert Simmons describes how the Communist Party of Korea was able to “use the stronger power’s ideology as a bargaining counter in seeking aid...”⁷²

In obliging the North, Soviet strategic capacity was exposed in its myriad inconsistencies throughout the Korean War. Yet in the setbacks was a remarkable ability to both adapt and transform to the realities of a complex global security architecture whose ethos could not be found in puritanical doctrinal allegiances. Moscow thus came out of the experience of the Korean War a chastened, albeit, a firm believer in the principle of collective security in addition to becoming far more enthusiastic about the notion of intersectional diplomacy. This we see personified in Nikita Khrushchev’s touting of “peaceful coexistence.”

For better or worse, the post-Korean War would chasten Moscow’s uncritical international revolutionary streak. By the time Khrushchev would tout the Soviet Union’s reversal of policy from the two-camp confrontation worldview to the putative peaceful coexistence, Korea had reinforced not just the utility of the UN as a facilitator of collective security but enabled Moscow to hone its diplomatic dexterity on the back of strategic failures.

VII. Conclusion

This present paper’s goal has been to explore the foundational premise upon which the current United Nations-centered multilateral order of international peace and security evolved within the context of the fractious 20th century by exploring the normative foundations of this era through one of its most sacrosanct tenets, the principle of collective security. For all its diverse historical incarnations and interpretations, the

⁷² Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1973), pp. 23-88.

Korean War (1950-53) was the first and indeed most important crucible through which the exercise of this principle was to be enshrined in the public imagination. The approach in this current study has been to analyze the consternation that gave rise to the Korean War and its legacy on both the theory and praxis of collective security from the vantage point of the Soviet Union. It is precisely because none of the 20th century's Great Powers sought solace in the principle of collective security more than the Soviet Union. Ensnared by the limits of the LoNs to make good this commitment in the interwar years, Soviet diplomacy entered a new and trying phase at the UN on this question. The proximate triggers of the Korean War in this paper have been attributed to the complex relationship between the Soviet Union and the UN. We see the inherent tensions between the Soviet Union's imperative to be an exporter of socialist revolutions and its commitments to responsible global citizenship within the UN Charter's demands for international peace.

On the one side, an attempt is made to find answers to the Soviet attitude towards the UN in the dialectical basis of Marxism and its conception of objective historical materialism. This then is juxtaposed with the constraints and realities imposed on the Soviet interaction with the rest of the world.

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