



The Failure of Collective Security in the Far East——Take the Japanese Invasion of Northeast as an Example

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Abstract: Collective security was originally based on a reflection on the cruel reality of centuries of European international relations. 17th-century William Penn, 18th-century Saint Pierre, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, 19th-century Saint-Simon, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson at the beginning of the 20th century and others have designed different blueprints for peace. Their peaceful ideals of "idealists" and "utopians" were adopted in the collective security theory of the 20th century. The first attempt at collective security was the establishment of the "International League" after the end of the First World War. However, because the balance of power system of the international community is declining and flourishing, and the organization has no coercive force and no clear obligations for member states to participate in military disarmament, the concept and practice of the international alliance ended in failure. Japan occupied Northeast China in 1932, and the Chinese government subsequently appealed to the League of Nations and sought help, but the League of Nations did nothing but send a delegation. Subsequently, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933, which accelerated the disintegration of the League of Nations and had to say that collective security failed in the Far East.

Keywords: Collective Security Theory, Northeast China, Japan, International Union

1. Collective security theory

Collective security is a security guarantee system envisaged by the international community to use collective forces to deter or stop possible aggressors and acts of aggression within it and protects the national security of each country. ^[1]Representatives are the League of Nations and the United Nations. Collective security organizations generally have three elements. First, the members of the collective security must be universal (it can be regional or global); second, the collective security organization has a set of legal and effective security mechanisms to prevent aggression; third, the collective security' purpose is to prevent internal member states from aggression (collective security is inward-looking, it's purpose is to achieve internal peace, if it becomes an international organization that resists external aggression, it will lose the nature of collective security and become a regional military group). ^[2]Collective security organizations must have the above three elements at the same time, and collective security and alliances cannot be confused.

In addition to meet the three requirements, a collective safety organization must have the corresponding conditions for success. It is mainly divided into two aspects. On the one hand, all member states must voluntarily put their destiny to collective security and must absolutely trust collective security. On the other hand, the global situation should be suitable for collective security operations. The distribution of power in collective security is decentralized, and the approximate balance of powers of major countries is crucial to collective security; the universality of member states has created an imbalanced possibility internally, so that the power of any country cannot exceed the collective power. The establishment of a legal institution, including a legal system for determining acts of aggression and certain sanctions. It is difficult to meet the above two conditions, so this is one of the reasons why the League of Nations cannot become an

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effective collective security.

Each collective security organization has its own different rules and characteristics, but they also have similar manifestations. First, collective security is expressed as an international security system. It is an organized international political relationship, and the “mutual insurance system” established between member states has become the “rule of the game” in countries. Obvious characteristics of the collective security system are: first, the overall stability and the instability of the relationship between internal actors; second, collective security is expressed as a security guarantee mechanism. The core issue of an effective collective security system is that it must have a set of mandatory security mechanisms, and the establishment of such mechanisms can play a role in the definition of international disputes. Third, collective security manifests itself as a method of protecting national security.

Collective security, as a method of protecting national security, it is an inevitable development of international politics and history, it also is an important manifestation of the progress of human civilization. ^[3] Although collective security is an improvement, collective security, it also has deficiencies. No matter whether a country adopts "self-help" or "alignment" method, it is difficult to get rid of the "security dilemma", and it is forced to find a relatively small risk and reliable method to solve national security problems. However, a country that takes collective security as a foreign policy tool and goal can only be a world power. For the effect, collective security cannot guarantee countries security. ^[4] Therefore, when Japan invaded China's Manchuria region in 1931, the collective security organization (International League) did not impose substantive sanctions on Japan, nor did give China due assistance.

2. The League of Nations and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria

The International League (“LON” or “National League” for short) is a universal international organization established after the end of the First World War. Its purpose is to reduce the number of weapons and settle international disputes. [5] On April 28th, 1919, the “Covenant of the League of Nations” was passed at the Paris Peace Conference. As an integral part of the Versailles Treaty, in January 1920, the “International League” was formally established, with the signatory country of the Versailles Treaty as the founding member countries, and later joined member countries (small and medium-sized countries) are non-founding countries. Initially, the number of countries joined were 44 and later developed to 63. The main institutions are the national assembly, the permanent secretariat, the international labor organization and the international permanent arbitration tribunal. It is composed of 5 permanent directors and 4 non-permanent directors. Initially, the permanent directors included four countries: Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. Soon afterwards, United States joined the League of Nations as a permanent director. [6] As an institutional test of collective security, the League of Nations has never been truly recognized by major powers, and it has not been able to effectively change international anarchy. The League of Nations stated on the surface that for the purpose of “promoting international cooperation and maintaining international peace and security”, its essence is the product of the contradiction and development of western powers after the World War II. [7]

Japan’s territorial claims on China have been brewing for a long time. In order to achieve this goal, Japan participated in the first battle and acquired German privileges on the Shandong Peninsula through World War I. They proposed “Article 21” to the Chinese government in 1915. If the Chinese government accepts the terms of “Article 21”, China’s rights and interests in Shandong will be completely lost, and even China will become a protector of Japan. [8] But Japan’s “Article 21” was successfully resisted. On the one hand, it is because of the strong opposition of the Chinese people and the death of Yuan Shikai who is the signatory of the treaty. On the other hand, because the treaty also greatly affected the interests of other countries in China, such as US Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan warned Japan, he said that the United States will not recognize any damage to China’s territorial integrity or treaties that violate the “open door” principle. At the Paris Peace Conference, Japan ensured that it lived in the former German islands, but only as a tertiary trust site rather than as an authentic territory. Under the circumstances full of contradictions in President Wilson’s heart, on the one hand, made his political proposition supportable, and on the other hand, the Japanese government demanded and contradicted the morality which it was strongly advocated, so American government strongly opposed Japan’s demand for China’s Shandong territory. [9] As a compromise, Japan was allowed to “temporarily” occupy the peninsula, but Japanese government stepped back and admitted that its “policy” was to

return the territory to China on a certain date; and retained the economic privileges that had always been granted to Germany.

Japan's desire for land in China was temporarily lay aside. Since then, Japanese government had turned its attention from foreign to domestic, focusing on economic development and political construction. However, the Great Recession that swept the world from 1929 to 1933, Japan's economy also ushered in an inevitable recession, a large number of urban workers were unemployed. The economic crisis is like a catalyst for the crisis, and Japan was targeting its material-rich continent again. Japanese government hoped to get rid of the dependence of other countries and regions in the world. [10] So the Japanese government would list Manchuria which is rich in natural resources and loosely link with the central government of Nanjing as its first target for expansion.

In 1931, Japan launched the September 18th Incident and quickly captured the three eastern provinces. In 1932, the Kwantung Army captured the entire northeast region. The Japanese government renamed the three eastern provinces "Manchuria". Because of the need for legitimacy, a puppet emperor was fostered, and the Japanese government pushed the emperor Pu Yi, who abdicated in 1911, to the "Manchuria" emperor.

The Chinese government turned to the League of Nations and the United States for assistance according to the Article 11 of the League of Nations Covenant and the Paris Convention (Kellogg-Brian Treaty). [11] The result was only repeated discussions without actual assistance. Secretary of State Henry Stimson expressed "heartfelt sympathy" but refused to quote the article of Paris Convention. The League of Nations Council met three times on September 19th, October 13th and November 16th to discuss the situation in Manchuria; these meetings were characterized by good wishes and greetings, but they were procrastinating and in chaos. Many people in Geneva and Washington have always believed that the Japanese cabinet can restrain the army and end the crisis. [12] On November 21th, the Japanese delegation accepted the original proposal of the Chinese to establish a fair investigation committee, but the members of the committee were not selected until January 14th, 1932, and they were not actually arrived in Shenyang until April 21th. [13] At this time, Manchuria has become a Manchurian country.

The League of Nations investigation team (the Litton investigation team) under the leadership of Lord Litton, collected evidence in Japan, China, and Manchuria. The report it submitted in October 1932 used carefully words to avoid offending the Japanese government. It denied that Japanese aggression was a legitimate means of self-defense and condemned the new Manchuria as a puppet regime for Japan. [14] However, it did not order Japan to withdraw its troops. On the contrary, this report proposes a solution that recognizes Japan's special interests in Manchuria and turns Manchuria into an autonomous country under the jurisdiction of China but under the jurisdiction of Japan. On February 25th, 1933, the League of Nations formally adopted the report, but even so, the second month, Japan still withdrew from the League of Nations. [15]

The September 18th incident was a major blow to the League of Nations. Japan effortlessly acquired a large area of fertile land, so that the influence of the League of Nations in the international community was declining. After the September 18th incident, a series of aggressions occurred in the world. These aggressions eventually led to the Second World War.

3. The failure of collective security

There is no doubt that Japan's invasion of Northeast China and the League of Nations' inaction proved the failure of collective security in the Far East. First, on the three elements of collective security. Although the League of Nations has almost global countries join it, there are also treaties and rules that protect countries against aggression, and even their purpose is to prevent mutual aggression among member states. However, the League of Nations choses to keep silence and symbolically condemn Japan's invasion of Northeast China, lacking effective method to prevent mutual aggression among countries. Therefore, the basic components of collective security are incomplete, so the weak League of Nations is destined to be impossible to implement collective security.

Second, from the perspective of meeting the conditions for collective security. When countries treat the relationship of League of Nations, all countries have not sincerely handed over their own destiny to collective security. For Japan, in the face of the economic downturn in the country, it has chosen to divert domestic conflicts and start aggressive wars

against foreign countries. Countries don't want to follow collective security, and even feels that the collective's restraint is greater than the benefit.

Third, the global situation at the time was not conducive to collective security. The formation of collective security has played an important role in the great powers. However, the major powers at that time were reluctant to undertake substantive obligations for the League of Nations, resulting in the weakness of the League of Nations. From the perspective of member states, collective security requires that the power of any country should not exceed the power of collectives. However, in the Northeast Asia region, it is a dominance of Japan, and all countries in the Northeast Asia region were not enough to initiate effective containment.

Finally, from the perspective of international law and international regulation. The League of Nations has a legal institution, which also includes a legal system for determining acts of aggression and certain sanctions. However, it lacks effective operative power, which directly leads to the failure of justice to be properly implemented.

Whether in terms of the three elements of the establishment of collective security or the satisfaction of the two conditions of collective security, the League of Nations has great problems. This also reflects the shortcomings of collective security theory. Whether collective security is theoretical or not, there are idealized ingredients in practice. Therefore, after the September 18th Incident, the Chinese government tried to pin the hope of opposing Japan's government invasion of Northeast China on the League of Nations, and it only end in failure. There is no doubt that collective security has failed in the Far East era.

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