

# *The Inaction of International Organizations in Times of War*

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**Abstract:** The role of international organizations in wartime has attracted much attention. However, despite the existence of international organizations, there are still many wars and conflicts in the international community. This article explores the limitations of international organizations and the reasons for the inaction of international organizations during wartime, including international law, the political will of member states, and the ability to act. This article will start from a historical perspective, review the establishment of some early international organizations, the development of international law and its role, and then analyze the role of the United Nations as a modern international organization in depth. This article will further examine how international organizations should play a more active role in the conflict by comparing it to a successful case of international organizations in conflict resolution - the Sudan and Ethiopia conflicts. Finally, this article will discuss some possible solutions to improve the role of international organizations in wartime.

**Keywords:** international organizations, inaction, international law

## 1. Introduction

In the modern era, conflicts and wars persist despite the existence of international organizations tasked with maintaining peace and security. The failure of these organizations to intervene effectively during times of war raises fundamental questions about their legitimacy and effectiveness. This paper seeks to analyze why international organizations often remain inactive in the face of armed conflicts, the consequences of such inaction, and potential solutions to enhance their capacity to respond to crises.

## 2. Interview lecture

### 2.1. International organizations

The United Nations is one of the most important international organizations dedicated to maintaining international peace and security [1]. Through diplomacy, coordination and mediation, the United Nations works to prevent the outbreak of war, resolve conflicts and promote peace [2]. For example, the United Nations took diplomatic measures during the Ukraine crisis, calling on all parties to exercise restraint and de-escalate the situation.

The role of the EU in other international organizations. In the European region, the EU promotes peace and stability through economic cooperation, political dialogue and diplomatic efforts. The African Union is committed to resolving conflicts on the African continent and promoting peace

processes. These international organizations help coordinate cooperation between countries and avoid wars and conflicts. They provide a platform for dialogue and consultation between countries on issues of common concern. International organizations play a key role in humanitarian assistance, environmental protection, human rights and other fields [3].

## **2.2. The inaction of international organizations**

First of all, the Security Council, as the main decision-making body of the United Nations, is often hindered when dealing with international conflicts and crises. It is unable to reach a unanimous position on key issues, resulting in resolutions being vetoed or unable to be adopted. Secondly, the inaction of international organizations in humanitarian crises is reflected in their inability to effectively provide assistance, protect victims, and resolve conflicts, such as in the Syrian civil war and the Darfur crisis in Sudan. In some cases, the lack of necessary financial, human and material support makes it difficult for international organizations to respond effectively to crises. In addition, the actions of international organizations often rely on the contributions and support of member states, which can lead to slow responses and inefficiencies. Third, there is a lack of conflict prevention and mediation [4]. The inaction of international organizations in preventing and mediating international conflicts has resulted in some conflicts not being resolved in a timely manner, or the situation further deteriorating. Finally, there is the inability to deal with war crimes. The inaction of international organizations in dealing with war crimes and human rights violations may be due to insufficient international legal frameworks and imperfect enforcement mechanisms. At the same time, the actions of international organizations will also be restricted by international law and their own charters. International organizations cannot carry out military intervention or coercive actions in conflict areas without the consent of the conflicting government or authorization from the Security Council. These legal and rule restrictions limit the role of international organizations in conflicts to a certain extent.

## **2.3. International law**

International law plays a pivotal role in promoting global peace and stability by actively encouraging nations to seek resolution of conflicts through nonviolent means. According to Article 2(3) of the United Nations Charter, member states should adopt peaceful means to resolve international disputes, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement. According to Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, states are prohibited from threatening or using force to threaten the territorial integrity and political independence of other states. The use of force is legal only in self-defence or with authorization from the United Nations Security Council. Security Council Resolutions: According to Articles 39-42 of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council has the power to investigate any threats to peace and decide how to act to maintain international peace and security. Security Council resolutions are legally binding on member states [5]. International law requires countries to abide by signed peace agreements and actively fulfill their obligations therein. Violations of peace agreements may constitute breaches of international law and may be subject to sanctions and criticism from the international community. International law provides a variety of mediation and arbitration mechanisms, such as the International Court of Justice and the International Court of Arbitration, to resolve disputes between countries. States may choose to apply to these bodies for dispute resolution to seek a just and lasting solution [6].

The United Nations Charter stipulates: According to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, member states retain the right to self-defense. If an armed attack occurs, they may take necessary self-defense measures without authorization from the United Nations Security Council. Actions in self-defense must be necessary and immediate. That is, a country has the right to self-defense only when it is attacked by force and must take immediate action to protect its own security [7]. The

exercise of the right of self-defense must comply with the principles and provisions of international law, including the principles of limitation and proportionality. Self-defense actions should be targeted, cannot go beyond what is necessary, and must not harm the interests of innocent people or third countries. The right of self-defense can only be directed against states or non-state actors that carry out armed attacks. Self-defense actions by non-state actors must comply with relevant international law, such as counter-terrorism. Although member states retain the right to self-defense, according to the United Nations Charter, if an armed attack causes a threat to international peace and security, it should be reported to the United Nations Security Council and take action under the authorization of the Security Council.

### 3. Methodology

There are many ways to study the inaction of international organizations. First, through literature review and archival investigation, the role and actions of relevant international organizations (such as the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc.) in the conflict were sorted out. Secondly, through in-depth interviews with relevant international organization officials, experts and relevant national decision-makers, we understand their positions, policies and considerations in the conflict, as well as the reasons and obstacles behind them. In addition, comparative analysis methods can also be used to compare the inaction of Chinese international organizations with the actions of other international organizations to explore their differences and influencing factors. Content analysis and event research can also be used to analyze the statements, resolutions and actions of relevant international organizations at critical moments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, revealing their influence and role in the conflict. Finally, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to construct a theoretical model or regression analysis to explore the correlation and impact between the inaction of international organizations and the development of conflicts, international order, and related national policies. Through the comprehensive application of the above-mentioned multiple research methods, the inaction of international organizations in conflicts can be analyzed in depth and comprehensively, providing reference and inspiration for solving similar problems.

### 4. Discussion

In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has veto power [8]. It uses its veto power to prevent the Security Council from taking any action on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The first reason for the inaction of international organizations is external interference. Powerful countries often exert influence on international organizations to advance their own geopolitical interests, leading to hesitation or obstruction in taking decisive action in conflicts [9]. The second is conflict of interest, where member states within an international organization may have conflicting agendas or alliances, making it difficult to reach consensus and coordinate actions. Russia and Ukraine have been in a state of hostility for a long time after the 2014 Crimea incident [10]. After this political change, Ukraine made joining NATO a priority, believing that only in this way can it protect its national sovereignty and prevent Russian threats. However, Russia strongly opposes it, fearing that Ukraine will try to take back Crimea after joining NATO, posing a direct threat to it. Members of other organizations, such as NATO members and members of its Security Council, are unwilling to take a tough stance against Russia for their own interests and are unable to formulate coherent policies quickly and effectively. The third is the shortcomings of international law, ambiguities and gaps in the international legal framework, coupled with a failure to address emerging forms of warfare, limit the ability of international organizations to enforce accountability and intervene effectively. Russia claimed that its military actions in this conflict were for self-defense, but this triggered controversy in the international community over the definition and application of

the right of self-defense. International law stipulates that the right to self-defense can only take form when receiving an actual armed attack, and it must be urgent, necessary and proportionate [11]. However, there is controversy over whether Russia's actions meet these standards and reflect the ambiguity of international law in dealing with such conflicts.

Failure to act against international organizations will lead to humanitarian crises, create instability in the international community, and damage the credibility of international organizations [12]. The failure of international organizations to intervene in conflicts results in widespread human suffering, including displacement, violence against civilians, and human rights violations.

Inaction by international organizations during wars can lead to an escalation of violence, the spread of extremism and instability throughout the region, posing a threat to international peace and security [12]. And continued inaction by international organizations will damage the credibility and legitimacy of international organizations and undermine public trust and confidence in their response to global crises and instability.

In the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, international organizations adopted these solutions. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sends a monitoring mission to eastern Ukraine to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and promote dialogue and negotiations between the Ukrainian government and separatists. In addition, OSCE is also involved in election supervision and humanitarian assistance in eastern Ukraine. The United Nations has issued multiple statements on the Ukraine crisis, calling on all parties to exercise restraint, cease hostilities, and resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations. At the same time, the United Nations condemned Russia's actions and emphasized respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. NATO has provided political support to the Ukrainian government while strengthening its military deployment in eastern Europe to address regional security challenges. In addition, NATO also cooperates with Ukraine to provide support such as military training and equipment assistance. The United Nations Security Council has held several meetings on the Ukraine crisis to discuss how to ease tensions and resolve the conflict. However, the Security Council was unable to reach a unanimous position on the conflict due to disagreements among its permanent members. Despite the above-mentioned measures and actions taken by international organizations, the conflict in Ukraine continues, and differences and tensions between the parties still exist. The international community needs to further strengthen cooperation and continue to improve conflict resolution [13].

International organizations did not play an effective role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and some conflicts, but they also actively and effectively mitigated the escalation of problems in some conflicts, such as playing a key role in mitigating conflicts in Sudan and Ethiopia. The two countries have long been plagued by internal conflicts and external interference, causing thousands of civilian casualties and humanitarian crises. In this crisis, international organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the European Union actively intervened and tried to use diplomatic mediation, humanitarian assistance, and peace-building [14]. First, international organizations issued resolutions or statements through the United Nations Security Council and other institutions to condemn the violence, calling on all parties to cease fire and seek a peaceful solution. These resolutions may include the imposition of sanctions on parties to the conflict to induce them to comply with international law and humanitarian principles. The Security Council also authorized the dispatch of peacekeeping forces to conflict areas to monitor the implementation of ceasefire agreements and ensure the protection of civilians. Secondly, international organizations send special envoys or mediators to Sudan and Ethiopia to conduct contact and negotiations with all parties. These envoys often have extensive diplomatic experience and conflict-resolution skills. The two sides are committed to establishing dialogue channels, promoting trust-building, assisting all parties in seeking common interests, and promoting the peace process. They can also work with neighboring countries and regional organizations to develop solutions to prevent conflicts from spreading. In addition,

international organizations also play a role in humanitarian assistance. During conflicts, civilians often become the most vulnerable group and face severe existential crises. International organizations provide emergency relief, including food, medical care, shelter and other supplies through United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and other channels, to reduce the impact of humanitarian crises and protect civilians' basic right to survival [15]. Finally, international organizations also support subsequent peacebuilding and national reconstruction efforts. International organizations can provide assistance to support the reconciliation and reconstruction efforts of the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments and all sectors of society and promote the long-term stable development of the two countries. This may include support for promoting economic development, strengthening governance capacity and promoting democratic processes.

Analyze how the practice of international organizations can be improved by comparing past successes and failures in conflict mitigation. Improving the inaction of international organizations can strengthen the legal framework, in response to which international organizations should work to clarify and strengthen international law, close loopholes and establish mechanisms to hold perpetrators of war crimes and atrocities accountable [16]. Promoting transparency and accountability in international organizations, increasing transparency within international organizations and ensuring accountability for the actions of member states can reduce external interference and conflicts of interest. Strengthening the capacity of international organizations to prevent conflicts and investing in early warning systems, mediation and peace-building initiatives can help prevent conflicts from escalating into full-scale war and reduce the need for reactive intervention.

## 5. Conclusion

The lack of responsiveness from international organizations during times of conflict is a multilayered issue necessitating collaborative action. Addressing underlying factors such as external interference, conflicting interests, and gaps in international law is essential to improve the effectiveness of these organizations. By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and conflict prevention measures, international organizations can better meet their obligations and contribute to fostering global peace and stability. Through continued reform and innovation, international organizations are expected to play a more active and effective role in maintaining international peace and security. Enhancing cooperation among nations and fortifying the international legal framework will further empower international organizations to fulfill their mandates and promote a more harmonious world.

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