

How Can the United Nations Enhance Its Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention Mechanisms to Effectively Address the Outbreak of Hot Wars?

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Abstract: This research aims to explore how to improve the United Nations' early warning, intervention, and conflict prevention capabilities in response to the outbreak of hot wars through multi-level institutional reforms. Through in-depth analysis of typical cases such as the Ukrainian crisis, the Rwandan genocide and the South Sudanese civil war, the research reveals the serious deficiencies of the traditional UN peacekeeping model in terms of intelligence sharing, decision-making mechanisms and resource allocation, and analyzes the legal and institutional challenges brought about by new hybrid wars and non-traditional conflicts. Based on theoretical and empirical research, this research proposes reform suggestions such as building an international legal framework that adapts to new conflicts, optimizing the Security Council's decision-making mechanism (including restricting the veto power and granting the Secretary-General emergency intervention authority), and building an efficient resource and intelligence sharing system. These suggestions not only focus on the supplementation and revision of legal provisions but also emphasize multilateral coordination at the political and technical levels, in order to provide practical and feasible institutional support for the United Nations to achieve "early warning, rapid intervention and strong execution" in global security governance. The research finally points out that future research should further focus on the application of new technologies in intelligence integration and risk prediction, as well as the actual effects of relevant international law revisions and political practices, so as to provide more systematic and in-depth theoretical support and practical guidance for the continuous improvement of UN peacekeeping operations.

Keywords: UN peacekeeping, hot war, hybrid warfare, international law

1. Introduction

In the contemporary context of highly unstable global security, the recurrence of "hot wars", i.e., large-scale violent conflicts, has posed an unprecedented challenge to the UN's peacekeeping and conflict prevention mechanisms. Although the UN has long been the core institution for global peace governance, its traditional peacekeeping system often focuses on post-war stability and conflict mitigation, and is unable to cope with early warning and intervention in conflicts. As hybrid warfare, cyber warfare, and transnational proxy conflicts become the new normal, this institutional logic centered on "post-intervention" is gradually exposing its lag and lack of adaptability [1,2].

Existing research shows that UN peacekeeping operations have structural limitations in terms of resource mobilization, decision-making mechanisms, scope of authorization, and intelligence processing [3,4]. For example, the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council on key resolutions not only weakens the UN's ability to respond quickly but also paralyzes the organization when faced with conflicts involving the interests of major powers. The Ukrainian crisis and the Rwandan genocide both reflect the serious constraints of the Security Council system on the efficiency of crisis response [5]. At the same time, the United Nations' legal response to non-traditional conflict types such as hybrid warfare is also insufficient, lacking a new legal framework applicable to cyber warfare, information warfare, and terrorism [1]. In addition, even in the context of no interference from the Security Council veto, as shown in the South Sudanese civil war, the United Nations has failed to effectively prevent the escalation of conflicts due to its weak early warning mechanism, regional coordination failure and weak execution.

In view of the above background, this research intends to explore how the United Nations can improve its response and intervention capabilities in the early stages of hot wars through reform from the three dimensions of system, law and mechanism, and fill the theoretical and practical gaps in existing academic research on early intervention, hybrid warfare adaptability and institutional coordination.

2. Thesis and road map

This research argues that if the United Nations hopes to maintain its substantial influence in increasingly complex global conflicts, it must enhance its early warning response, legal adaptation and multilateral coordination capabilities through multi-level institutional reforms. Specifically, first, the peacekeeping authorization system under Chapter VII of the UN Charter should be optimized to allow for more flexible deployment of peacekeeping forces in the context of hybrid warfare to adapt to non-traditional conflict forms such as cyber, information and proxy warfare [6]. Second, the United Nations must establish a more efficient global intelligence sharing and conflict prediction mechanism, and give the Secretary-General substantive intervention authority at the beginning of a crisis to avoid missing opportunities due to information lags and political resistance [2]. Third, reforming the Security Council veto mechanism, especially limiting its use in humanitarian crises and systemic violence situations, is a key path to achieving the feasibility of early intervention.

Based on this argument, the structure of this research is arranged as follows: First, the literature review section systematically evaluates existing peacekeeping theories, conflict prevention paths and institutional bottlenecks, and points out the research gaps in the United Nations in resource mobilization, legal response and regional cooperation. Second, the methodology section explains the qualitative research path adopted in this research, combining international law texts, academic analysis and field cases as the basis for analysis. The following case analysis covers three typical conflict scenarios: the Ukrainian crisis reveals the institutional failure under the background of Security Council veto and hybrid warfare, the Rwandan genocide reflects the failure of early warning and external intervention, and the South Sudanese civil war reflects the powerlessness of traditional peacekeeping mechanisms in the absence of mandatory authorization and intelligence support. Finally, this research will comprehensively analyze the institutional commonalities and differences of each case, put forward specific reform suggestions, and provide theoretical support and policy paths for the transformation of the UN peacekeeping mechanism under new conflict forms.

3. Literature review

With the profound changes in the global conflict pattern, the United Nations, as one of the most important peace and security mechanisms of the international community, has shown many

limitations in the face of increasingly complex global conflicts. Traditional peacekeeping mechanisms are often constrained by resources, political support, and troop deployment when dealing with the outbreak of "large-scale violent conflicts" or "hot wars". Through an in-depth analysis of relevant literature, this research will explore how the United Nations can effectively enhance its peacekeeping and conflict prevention mechanisms to cope with complex and changing modern conflicts, especially in the context of increasing hybrid warfare and transnational conflicts. Finally, this research will summarize the research gaps in the existing literature and provide innovative directions for future research.

3.1. Legal framework for UN peacekeeping operations

The legal basis of UN peacekeeping operations mainly comes from the UN Charter and subsequent Security Council resolutions. First, the basic purpose of the UN Charter clearly states that maintaining international peace and security is the primary task of the United Nations. Among them, Chapter VI advocates that member states settle disputes by peaceful means, while Chapter VII empowers the Security Council to take necessary measures in the face of aggression, destruction of peace or other acts that threaten international peace [7]. Logically, these two chapters constitute the fundamental basis for the United Nations to intervene in international conflicts and take collective security actions, ensuring that the United Nations has the right to use a variety of means to maintain peace in emergencies in theory.

However, from a strict logical perspective, the applicability of this legal framework in practice is not without controversy. This ambiguity is particularly evident in the context of new hybrid warfare, because modern conflicts often have multidimensional and asymmetric characteristics, such as information warfare and cyber-attacks, and traditional legal provisions are prone to disputes when interpreted [1]. In addition, a series of resolutions adopted by the Security Council, such as Resolutions 1325, 1612 and 1674, provide additional guidance for peacekeeping operations, but these resolutions are also subject to the political will of member states in their specific implementation [8]. Take Resolution 1325 as an example. It emphasizes the importance of women's participation in peace and security, but in actual peacekeeping operations, the degree of implementation of the resolution by various countries varies, making it difficult to form a unified standard [9]. Similarly, although Resolutions 1612 and 1674 have positive significance in protecting children's rights and civilian safety, their actual effects are often restricted due to the lack of a mandatory enforcement mechanism [8].

From the overall correctness of international law provisions, the United Nations legal framework theoretically provides a multi-level and systematic normative system, but its limitations are becoming increasingly prominent when dealing with modern complex conflicts. Legal texts reflect an ideal state when setting principles and authorizations, but in actual operation, they are affected by multiple factors such as politics, economy, and geography. For example, although the veto system of the Security Council is considered a mechanism to balance the interests of major powers in the UN Charter, it often leads to the failure of key resolutions in practice, thus weakening the UN's ability to intervene. This is clearly reflected in the Ukrainian crisis and the Rwandan genocide [2,10].

3.2. Limitations and effectiveness of the United Nations peacekeeping mechanism

The limitations of the United Nations peacekeeping mechanism are the core issues studied by many scholars. Sheehan [3] proposed that the "free-rider" problem faced by United Nations peacekeeping operations is one of its biggest challenges. As a global public product, peacekeeping is often not equal to its providers and beneficiaries, and many countries choose not to bear the due costs and responsibilities when enjoying the fruits of peacekeeping.

As pointed out through empirical research, Hultman et al. [4] emphasized that the size of peacekeeping forces and their staffing are important to reduce conflict violence. The intervention of the army is more effective in averting combat violence than police and observers. However, such massive military intervention often requires huge funds and resources, and "free-riding" behavior tends to make UN peacekeeping look overwhelmed in the case of large-scale wars. While this is true, UN peacekeeping is still seen as a "cost-effective" intervention at the global level.

3.3. Challenges of hybrid warfare and the applicability of international law

Hybrid warfare refers to a comprehensive conflict mode that combines conventional military forces, irregular armed forces, cyber-attacks, information warfare, economic means, and other forms of warfare. It does not rely on a single military action, but is implemented simultaneously through multi-dimensional means, with the aim of achieving strategic goals without triggering a full-scale war [11]. Hybrid warfare is, most of the time, the cooperation and confrontation between states and nonstate actors with an ambiguous and highly asymmetric form of conflict of a state nature. Combining traditional military occupation, proxy warfare, information warfare, cyber-attacks, and other means, hybrid warfare consists of a mixture of all of the means identified by Korhonen [1] as being part of the Ukrainian conflict. Lanoszka [12] added that the main characteristic of hybrid warfare is the coexistence of states and nonstate actors. More often than not, it is a cross-domain and crossfield form of warfare, such as cyberattacks and traditional military operations, which makes the response to said war more complicated.

Hybrid warfare has emerged gradually as another new normal of international conflict, as the forms of conflict are evolving. According to 2015 research by Korhonen [1] on the Ukrainian conflict, hybrid warfare is when state and nonstate actors intertwine, and it is hard to use the traditional international law framework to play its useful role in such a conflict. Hybrid warfare extends beyond military conflicts and involves not only different forms of traditional military means, such as information, proxy, and terrorism, but also makes the United Nations confront an unprecedented number of challenges of this kind [12].

3.4. Political support and resource guarantee in conflict prevention mechanism

Unusually, UN peacekeeping and conflict prevention mechanisms are often blamed for the failure to have sufficient political support due to resource guarantees. Rubin and Jones [2] studied the three levels of work that UN actions on conflict prevention are at: the operational level, then the structural level, and finally, the systematic level. Among them, operational prevention usually involves UN intervention in the early stages of conflict, such as diplomatic mediation and military deployment; structural prevention focuses on eliminating the root causes of conflict through economic and social development; and systematic prevention focuses on global security governance and mechanism building.

Although the United Nations has achieved certain results in conflicts between small countries, in conflicts between big countries, and civil wars, the United Nations often fails to achieve effective intervention due to the lack of sustained political support and resource guarantees. In this regard, Jones [5] emphasized the leadership problem of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations and proposed that the United Nations must enhance the decision-making ability of its leadership and improve the efficiency of its internal resource allocation through reform. In addition, the United Nations needs to increase its support for regional peace agreements and multilateral cooperation mechanisms in the early stages of conflict prevention, and create a favorable peace environment on a global scale through political and diplomatic means [13]. In this process, the United Nations should

not only rely on its own strength but also cooperate with regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union to achieve multi-level and multi-dimensional conflict prevention.

3.5. The role of regional cooperation and multilateral coordination

UN peacekeeping operations in dealing with complex global conflicts cannot be conducted in isolation, and they depend on transnational and regional cooperation mechanisms [14]. During a conflict's later stages, the United Nations should work more with regional cooperation, particularly by helping to bolster regional peacekeepers from taking on their own share and taking pressure off the United Nations [15]. According to Jones [1], UN peacekeeping operations should cooperate with other international mechanisms as well as regional organizations to tackle complex conflicts. In addition to making peacekeeping operations more effective, this multilateral cooperation model will make peacekeeping operations more multilateral in dealing with the transnational nature of global conflicts. Future UN reforms should be oriented towards the empowerment of mechanisms of cooperation with regional organizations and the promotion of an effective combination of global governance and regional governance^[16]. In addition, Oppusunggu [17] stated regional organizations often have a deep understanding of the local geopolitical landscape and the ability to deploy quickly, and can fill the intervention gap when the UN response is limited. This coordination mechanism not only improves the geopolitical adaptability of peacekeeping operations but also helps to build a sustainable mechanism for regional responsibility sharing.

3.6. Direction of UN peacekeeping reform: improving efficiency and effectiveness

The UN must undergo deep reforms of its peacekeeping mechanism in order to cope with new challenges to global security. According to Hegre et al. [18], through the statistical simulation, if the UN had more resources to put on peacekeeping missions and the UN could give stronger authorizations to peacekeeping missions, the outbreak rate and overall conflict intensity would be greatly reduced. This makes the UN's existing peacekeeping missions need to boost the budget and allocation of resources in line with more complex forms of conflict. Furthermore, the peacekeeping forces used by the UN should, when possible, be of higher quality, in particular, increase the percentage of military personnel in such forces in order to effectively curb violence during active conflicts.

In addition to increasing resources, the UN's peacekeeping reform should also better make its mandates more flexible and adaptable. The UN's intervention mechanism should be more targeted and operational when managing new types of conflicts, such as hybrid wars and transnational conflicts [6]. More effective conflict prevention and violence control on a global scale can be provided by the UN through the improvement of the combat effectiveness and political flexibility of peacekeeping forces. On the other hand, the United Nations should not aim for a 'one size fits all' universal authorization approach for peacekeeping missions; instead, the differentiated authorization mechanism for different conflict situations should improve the mission's adaptability and practical pertinence [19]. As a response to hybrid warfare, the participation of non-state actors, and information warfare, the United Nations should add more technical forces to peacekeeping missions such as cyber defense, public opinion monitoring, and unmanned system operations.

3.7. Research gaps

In light of the above literature analysis, it can be identified that there are still gaps in the research of the United Nations' conflict prevention and peacekeeping mechanism for the outbreak of the "hot wars." First, despite the fact that the existing literature investigates the function of the United Nations in peacekeeping and conflict prevention, research on how to efficiently intervene before the outbreak

of war in the "hot wars" is mostly still lacking. The current research literature fails to recommend targeted intervention approaches or improvement plans for the interference of hybrid warfare and transnational conflicts. Research currently emphasizes peacekeeping force size and configuration yet fails to present any particular method or strategy for their optimization.

Moreover, while the lack of resource allocation by the United Nations and the "free-rider" problems have been discussed, there is no definite solution. Therefore, based on the existing literature, this research will explore how the United Nations can respond to increasingly complex global conflicts by optimizing resource allocation, improving the structure and deployment of peacekeeping forces, and strengthening transnational and regional cooperation, especially to effectively intervene in the early stages of the outbreak of "hot wars".

4. Method and research hypothesis

This research adopts qualitative research methods, with text analysis and case studies as the main paths, and comprehensively uses original international law documents, UN official documents, judicial decisions and authoritative academic documents to systematically explore the institutional bottlenecks and reform directions of the UN peacekeeping and conflict prevention mechanisms in the context of hot wars. First, at the legal level, this research selects Chapter VII of the UN Charter, relevant peacekeeping authorization resolutions of the Security Council (such as S/RES/1973, S/RES/2709 [20]), and relevant decisions of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court as the main first-hand materials to analyze the legitimacy basis and legal application limitations of UN peacekeeping. Secondly, at the theoretical level, this research reviews and compares the different interpretations of scholars such as Rubin & Jones [2], Korhonen [1], and Sheehan [3] on the UN peacekeeping mechanism, hybrid war response, and early intervention dilemma, and sorts out three research hypotheses.

H1: The existing UN conflict prevention mechanism nevertheless continues to serve the usual purpose of dealing with traditional conflicts and does not need to be fundamentally changed.

The current UN intelligence sharing mechanism is weak and does not have sufficient capabilities to detect the risks of war at the time. If the UN can construct a global intelligence-sharing system and a predictive system of conflicts, it can determine and report the possibility of conflicts in advance, devising peacekeeping or diplomatic ways to mitigate the risk of wars.

H2: Improving the UN's early warning and intervention efficiency to handle emerging conflicts would involve increasing the capacity of the UN's intelligence sharing and conflict prediction mechanisms.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5) have veto power, which often hinders the UN's rapid decision-making and action when their own national interests are involved. If the veto power can be reformed, such as limiting the use of the veto power in certain types of conflicts (such as humanitarian crises) or introducing a more democratic voting mechanism, the UN's response efficiency can be significantly improved, enabling it to take effective action in the early stages of a crisis.

H3: The use of the Security Council veto power limits the UN's ability to respond quickly to conflicts, and reforming the veto mechanism will help improve the efficiency of peacekeeping operations.

In addition, this research selects three typical cases for comparative analysis: the Ukrainian crisis reveals the institutional failure of the United Nations in dealing with hybrid warfare and the constraints of the Security Council veto; the Rwandan genocide reflects the obstacles to early intervention in conflicts caused by intelligence lags and lack of political will; the South Sudanese civil war, as a case not affected by the Security Council veto, further reveals the fundamental limitations of the traditional peacekeeping mechanism itself in terms of execution and coordination.

By horizontally comparing the actual operating logic of the United Nations peacekeeping mechanism in these cases, this research aims to verify various research hypotheses, summarize its institutional defects, and put forward feasible institutional reform suggestions, so as to respond to the core issue of this research on how the United Nations can effectively respond to the outbreak of hot wars.

5. Case analysis

5.1. Ukrainian crisis (2014-present) -- the challenge of hybrid warfare

The Ukrainian crisis is not only a conflict in which Russia secretly occupied Crimea through Operation Green Man in 2014 and then announced its annexation, but also a full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine that broke out in 2022. This crisis is not only a severe test for international law and the global governance system, but also deeply exposes the fundamental flaws of the United Nations in early warning of conflicts, intelligence sharing and decision-making mechanisms [21]. Although the United Nations legal framework and international humanitarian law provide a global peace and security framework, the applicability and enforceability of international law are particularly weak in the face of such complex hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare not only includes traditional military occupation and proxy conflicts, but also incorporates non-traditional means such as information warfare, economic warfare and cyber attacks [21]. This diversified form of conflict has led to disputes over the applicability of the UN Charter and existing international humanitarian law, especially in how to deal with emerging threats such as cyber attacks, information manipulation and proxy wars. The United Nations lacks an effective legal framework to deal with it.

In terms of decision-making mechanisms, the Ukrainian crisis clearly demonstrates the serious constraints of the Security Council veto on the United Nations' ability to act. In 2014, the Security Council attempted to pass a resolution condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea, but the resolution failed to take effect due to Russia's veto. Similarly, after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, several resolutions condemning Russia also failed to pass, again due to the political game of the permanent members of the Security Council [10]. This decision-making paralysis has prevented the United Nations from taking timely and effective action in the face of major humanitarian crises, and has also seriously weakened the enforcement of international law in restricting acts of aggression, further verifying the hypothesis in this study that the Security Council's veto power limits the United Nations' ability to intervene (H3). In addition, the Ukrainian crisis has also exposed the United Nations' shortcomings in intelligence sharing and conflict early warning mechanisms. In fact, Russia had already infiltrated eastern Ukraine through information warfare and economic means long before the Crimean incident in 2014 [22]. However, the United Nations has failed to establish a global, unified, real-time and efficient intelligence integration platform, resulting in an inability to accurately assess Russia's strategic intentions in the early stages of the crisis. During the implementation of Operation Green Man, the international community still lagged behind in understanding Russia's true intentions, which ultimately led to the rapid deterioration of the crisis [21]. This fact fully verifies the hypothesis proposed in this study that strengthening intelligence sharing and conflict prediction mechanisms can enhance the United Nations' early warning capabilities (H2).

In contrast, NATO, as a regional military alliance, has demonstrated a more rapid and flexible response capability. When the Ukrainian crisis broke out, NATO was able to quickly mobilize member states, provide military assistance in accordance with the Collective Defense Treaty, and quickly deploy defense forces to support the defense needs of Ukraine and other frontier countries in Eastern Europe [10]. For example, after Russia occupied Crimea in 2014, NATO quickly strengthened its military deployment in Eastern Europe and supported Ukraine's defense by providing military assistance to Ukraine, deploying defense lines, and providing defensive weapons [10]. These measures reflect NATO's rapid response and coordination capabilities in dealing with regional

conflicts. NATO's advantage lies in its ability to quickly assemble the military resources of its member states and take immediate action, which is in stark contrast to the United Nations, which is constrained by the veto power of the Security Council and cannot make effective decisions quickly. Although NATO's intervention did not completely curb the escalation of the conflict, its rapid mobilization and effective response demonstrated NATO's flexibility and decision-making efficiency in crises.

However, NATO is not omnipotent. As a regional military alliance, although NATO has great advantages in military deployment and regional defense, its role is still limited, especially in complex conflicts involving global governance. NATO lacks the global legitimacy of the United Nations. Although NATO's military response to the Ukrainian crisis was rapid, its actions did not receive widespread support from all members of the international community, and its intervention mainly relied on political consistency among member states [23]. On the Ukrainian issue, although NATO was able to provide military assistance and deploy defense lines, it was not able to provide a global solution like the United Nations in law. As a global institution, the United Nations has the ability to mediate conflicts and organize multi-party coordination through the framework of international law [24]. The role of the United Nations is usually focused on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance in the later stages of a conflict, but its decision-making is often affected by the game of great powers and the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council, and it fails to intervene in time in the early stages of a conflict [25].

Therefore, the roles of NATO and the United Nations in responding to the Ukrainian crisis are complementary. NATO has demonstrated rapid response capabilities and efficient decision-making mechanisms in military intervention and regional defense, which enables it to take decisive action in the early stages of the crisis. The United Nations, on the other hand, provides a role of legitimacy and comprehensive coordination under the framework of global governance, although it failed to intervene effectively in the early stages of the crisis. Cooperation between the two, especially in the multi-stage response to conflicts, is necessary. NATO can play a role in the military and defense fields, while the United Nations can provide political and legal support to promote a peaceful solution on a global scale.

5.2. Rwanda genocide (1994) -- security council veto affects UN decision-making

The Rwandan genocide was one of the most brutal atrocities of the 20th century, with about 800,000 Tutsis massacred in just 100 days. This tragedy not only profoundly revealed the long-standing ethnic conflicts in Rwanda, but also exposed the serious defects of the United Nations in crisis warning, intelligence sharing and decision-making execution, providing important empirical materials for this research to test the second (H2: insufficient intelligence sharing) and third (H3: veto power restricts decision-making) core hypotheses.

From a historical perspective, the roots of the Rwandan genocide can be traced back to the manipulation of Rwanda's social structure by European powers during the colonial period. German and Belgian colonists artificially strengthened the division between the Hutu and Tutsi, implemented policies that favored the Tutsi, and then intensified ethnic conflicts after independence [26]. As the decolonization process progressed, the Hutu gradually took power and implemented anti-Tutsi policies, causing a large number of Tutsi to flee the country, laying a deep, hidden danger for subsequent conflicts. In 1990, the exiled Tutsi organization, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), launched an armed invasion, further exacerbating domestic tensions. Although the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in 1993 attempted to ease the conflict, radical Hutu forces used the state media to incite hatred, which eventually led to the outbreak of genocide.

In terms of intelligence and early warning, the United Nations received multiple early warnings from the commander of the UN mission in Rwanda, Dallaire and Roméo [27] pointed out that Hutu

radicals were stockpiling weapons on a large scale and planning large-scale massacres. However, due to the imperfect intelligence sharing mechanism within the United Nations, intelligence reports at all levels failed to be timely and effectively integrated and analyzed, resulting in a lack of full awareness of the impending disaster at the decision-making level [28]. The United Nations' intelligence processing process is cumbersome, and there are lags and inconsistencies in information reporting. This series of deficiencies made it impossible for the United Nations to formulate targeted intervention measures on the eve of the genocide, thus failing to prevent the tragedy from happening [2].

At the same time, the existence of the Security Council's veto power has become another major obstacle to the rapid intervention of the international community. In April 1994, despite the initial signs of the crisis, the United Nations attempted to expand the size of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) to increase military involvement. However, Western countries such as the United States, Britain, and France opposed direct military intervention in the Security Council and vetoed the resolution to expand the peacekeeping mission [29]. Resolution 912, adopted on April 21, 1994, drastically reduced the strength of UNAMIR from 2,500 to 270, limiting it to providing humanitarian assistance rather than taking substantive military action. Western countries' declining strategic attention to African affairs after the end of the Cold War made it difficult for the United Nations to obtain sufficient political and military support in this crisis [30]. This phenomenon not only confirms the institutional limitations of the Security Council's veto power in crises, but also verifies the hypothesis of this research that the veto power severely limits the United Nations' ability to intervene quickly (H3). In addition, the Rwandan genocide also highlighted the weakness of the United Nations' intelligence sharing and decision-making process in global crisis governance. Due to the lack of effective verification and integration, the early warning report of Dalaye did not attract enough attention, causing the United Nations to miss the critical opportunity to prevent the disaster. The dispersion and inefficiency in the information reporting process prevented the United Nations from taking necessary military or diplomatic actions on the eve of the genocide, thus exacerbating the scale of the tragedy (H2).

5.3. South Sudan civil war (2013-present)

Since the outbreak of the South Sudanese civil war in 2013, it has become one of the most destructive conflicts in Africa. Its severity is not only reflected in casualties and large-scale displacement, but also in the fact that this conflict exposes many fundamental institutional flaws of the United Nations in civil war and non-traditional conflict environments. Although the United Nations has tried to stabilize the situation by sending about 15,000 peacekeepers (UNMISS), it has been proven that the traditional peacekeeping model is often incapable of dealing with complex civil wars. Its limitations are mainly reflected in insufficient execution capabilities, a lack of intelligence sharing mechanisms, and imperfect regional coordination mechanisms.

In a deeper analysis, the emergence of the South Sudanese civil war is not only due to the power vacuum and economic collapse left over from the country's independence, but also the inevitable result of the intensification of long-term political and ethnic conflicts. After South Sudan's independence in 2011, the existing historical grievances between ethnic groups have not been effectively mediated, but have rapidly escalated due to the imbalance of the power structure. In July 2013, Salva Kiir fired Vice President Riek Machar, triggering internal ethnic conflict that turned into full-scale armed confrontation in a short period of time [31]. This kind of civil war caused by internal conflicts requires international intervention to be extremely flexible and targeted, while traditional UN peacekeeping operations have failed to adapt to this complex and changing situation due to the limitations of mandate and operational capabilities.

From the perspective of execution capabilities, the South Sudanese civil war fully demonstrated the obvious shortcomings of UN peacekeeping forces in actual operations. Although large-scale troops were dispatched, due to the limited scope of the mandate, peacekeepers were unable to actively intervene in the conflict or impose effective constraints on the warring parties, resulting in the conflicting parties still wreaking havoc when UN observers could not play an effective role [32]. When faced with fierce close-range exchanges of fire and attacks on UN facilities, UN peacekeepers showed a dual dilemma of lacking tactical initiative and being unable to ensure long-term stability of the situation [3,20]. This problem not only verifies the hypothesis (H1) that traditional peacekeeping mechanisms have a certain role in conventional wars, but their execution is obviously limited in the context of civil wars, but also reflects that the United Nations urgently needs to reform its intervention model under non-traditional conflict conditions.

At the same time, the lack of intelligence sharing is also an important reason why the United Nations was unable to intervene in time in the South Sudanese civil war. Although the political crisis in South Sudan had already begun to take shape in early 2013, the United Nations failed to establish a unified and effective information integration and early warning system, resulting in the failure to report intelligence about the deterioration of the situation to the decision-making level in a timely manner. Since the start of the conflict, the United Nations failed to act because the intelligence transmission was fragmented, and the analysis has been insufficient to avoid the key opportunity by adopting diplomatic mediation or limited military intervention in the initial early stages of the conflict and the situation has further deteriorated rapidly [4,6]. Thus, this information lag problem verifies the hypothesis (H2) of this research on improving the intelligence sharing and conflict prediction mechanisms to strengthen the United Nations' early warning and corroborates the basic flaw of the United Nations in crisis information management. The South Sudan civil war added to this, too, showing that there is no suitable coordination mechanism between the United Nations and regional organs. Although the African Union (AU) has repeatedly tried to ease tensions through mediation during the civil war, the lack of a formal and institutionalized coordination mechanism between the UN and the AU has prevented the two sides from forming an effective linkage in resource sharing, intelligence exchange and intervention strategies, resulting in a long-term lack of improvement in the situation [33,34]. This defect not only makes the UN isolated and helpless in carrying out its mission, but also exposes the limitations of the traditional multilateral intervention system in the face of highly fragmented and complex conflicts such as civil war.

5.4. Cross case analysis

After an in-depth analysis of three typical cases, namely the Ukrainian crisis, the Rwandan genocide, and the South Sudanese civil war, it can be found that these conflicts have many common problems in nature and in the international intervention mechanism, and also present their own unique institutional challenges [35]. The core research question of this research - how to improve the United Nations peacekeeping and conflict prevention mechanism to deal with the outbreak of hot wars - has been partially confirmed in the three cases, and at the same time, it has also exposed the serious deficiencies of the United Nations in intelligence sharing, decision-making power execution and multilateral coordination.

First, all three cases highlight the shortcomings of the United Nations in intelligence integration and early warning mechanisms. During the Ukrainian crisis, Russia used hybrid warfare to carry out cyber-attacks, information warfare and military intervention, while the United Nations failed to establish an effective global intelligence sharing platform, resulting in a serious lag in the international community's judgment of Russia's strategic intentions during Operation Green Boy and the full-scale invasion in 2022 [21,22]. Similarly, during the Rwandan genocide, Dalaye's early warning report did not attract enough attention, and the crisis deteriorated rapidly within a few months

due to the scattered intelligence reporting links and delayed analysis [2]. The South Sudanese civil war showed that although the situation had already shown cracks in the early stage, the lack of effective information integration and early warning system prevented the United Nations from intervening in the early stages of the conflict, resulting in an uncontrollable situation. This common problem verifies the hypothesis (H2) of this research on "strengthening intelligence sharing and conflict prediction mechanisms to enhance early warning capabilities", and shows that whether it is a traditional international conflict or a new hybrid war, timely and accurate information integration is a prerequisite for effective intervention.

Secondly, the limitations of the Security Council's decision-making mechanism are also reflected in these three cases. The Rwanda and Ukrainian crises were both due to the abuse of the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council, which prevented the United Nations from making quick intervention decisions. During the Rwandan genocide, the United Nations failed to expand its peacekeeping force due to opposition from the United States, Britain, and France, causing the crisis to get out of control [30]; in Ukraine, Russia used its veto to prevent sanctions against its aggression, further exacerbating the conflict [10]. In contrast, although the South Sudanese civil war was not directly affected by the veto, the United Nations was still unable to form an effective multilateral intervention due to slow decision-making and an imperfect coordination mechanism [36]. This phenomenon confirms the restraining role of the veto and decision-making mechanism in conflict intervention in this research (H3), revealing that the United Nations often loses its initiative to act due to internal political games at critical moments, further weakening its global security governance capabilities.

Finally, the flexibility and efficiency demonstrated by regional organizations in the above cases further highlight the shortcomings of the United Nations multilateral mechanism. In the Ukrainian crisis, the EU and NATO quickly adopted economic sanctions and military deployment measures, while the United Nations could only passively wait and see due to internal conflicts in the Security Council [23]; in the South Sudanese civil war, although the African Union tried to mediate, due to the lack of an effective coordination mechanism with the United Nations, regional intervention has always been difficult to form a joint force. This contrast shows that the United Nations urgently needs to establish a closer multilateral coordination and resource-sharing mechanism in the governance of transnational and cross-regional conflicts to make up for its own shortcomings in political and institutional operations.

Thus, the three cases together show that the fundamental problems of the United Nations in dealing with hot wars and new hybrid wars are: first, the lack of intelligence sharing and conflict warning mechanisms has led to the continuous loss of opportunities for early intervention; second, the limitations of the Security Council's veto power and decision-making mechanism have weakened the United Nations' ability to make rapid multilateral intervention decisions; third, insufficient regional coordination has led to a lack of integrity and continuity in international intervention. These problems not only support the hypotheses of this research on strengthening intelligence integration, reforming the veto system, and promoting multilateral coordination mechanisms (H1, H2, H3), but also point out the direction for future reforms of the United Nations system. Only through systematic reform and breakthroughs in law, decision-making, coordination, and other aspects can the United Nations truly improve its efficiency and legitimacy in responding to the outbreak of a hot war and better maintain international peace and security.

6. Recommendations

In the context of the increasingly complex international security landscape and the increasing risk of hot wars, if the United Nations wants to maintain effective leadership in conflict prevention and peacekeeping operations, it must implement systematic reforms at the international legal and

institutional levels and ensure that decision makers can directly put relevant recommendations into action. Based on a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and cases, and referring to the annex on the operability and relevance of policy recommendations to international law, this research proposes the following targeted reform paths, which not only clarifies "how to change" from a legal perspective, but also clarifies "how to implement" in political operations.

6.1. Construct a new international legal framework

In terms of the international legal system, it is recommended to formulate an "Agreement on the Law Applicable to New Conflicts" that adapts to new conflicts to make up for the lack of applicability of the current UN Charter and International Humanitarian Law to hybrid warfare, information warfare, cyber-attacks and proxy conflicts [1]. This means that the international community needs to clarify the rules for the use of cyber-attacks and information manipulation through negotiations and revisions to the agreement, and clarify the legal responsibilities of non-state actors in transnational conflicts. If the agreement is widely recognized by the Security Council and the General Assembly, it will not only provide a legal basis for early intervention, but also provide peacekeeping forces and observers with clearer operational authorizations in practice.

In the current international situation, the challenges faced in establishing this framework include political games and conflicts of interest among countries. In particular, some major powers may have objections to the revision of existing international law, fearing that their sovereignty will be restricted. Therefore, although this framework can theoretically provide the United Nations with a clearer operational basis, in practice, it may require multiple rounds of negotiations and compromises, especially among the permanent members of the Security Council [4]. If it can be promoted through international conventions or resolutions, this obstacle may be overcome to a certain extent, but this process takes time and depends on the broad support of the international community.

6.2. Optimize the United Nations decision-making mechanism

In the UN decision-making mechanism, the feasibility and efficiency of emergency intervention must be strengthened. The current veto system often leads to paralysis of action due to the interests of major powers. Events such as the Ukrainian crisis and the Rwandan genocide show that large-scale humanitarian disasters often cannot be responded to in a timely manner [5,30]. To improve this situation, it is recommended that the UN establish a "humanitarian veto constraint mechanism" at the Security Council level, that is, when it comes to genocide, war crimes or serious humanitarian crises, any veto should be accompanied by a detailed legal basis and a report on state responsibility, and the UN General Assembly should conduct a legal review. At the same time, it is also necessary to clarify and institutionalize the Secretary-General's authorization mechanism in the early stages of a conflict. It is recommended that the Secretary-General be given the power to directly initiate emergency intervention or humanitarian deployment after obtaining reliable intelligence warnings based on the potential power of Article 99 of the UN Charter [2,18].

In the current international environment, it is particularly difficult to reform the Security Council's veto mechanism. Conflicts of interest between major powers, especially between permanent members of the Security Council, may make reforms difficult to implement. Even if an agreement can be reached on the surface, it is still a huge challenge to ensure that the interests of each country are balanced. However, the establishment of a "humanitarian veto constraint mechanism" may be a relatively feasible starting point, especially when some countries have a consensus on humanitarian issues. Giving the Secretary-General greater emergency intervention powers can be achieved by amending relevant resolutions, but political obstacles in actual operation still exist.

6.3. Build an efficient resource and intelligence sharing system

Improvements in resource and intelligence sharing systems are important safeguards for the implementation of these reforms. Under the traditional peacekeeping model, the contributions of member states in finance, military and intelligence are unbalanced, leading to a long-standing “free-rider” problem [3]. To this end, it is recommended to establish a “Peacekeeping Contribution Index” (PCI) to quantitatively assess the contributions of countries in terms of funding, troops, technical support and intelligence sharing, and link them to budget allocations, appointments to key UN positions and development project priorities. This approach can not only provide decision makers with intuitive and quantifiable metrics, but also form a positive incentive mechanism at the political operation level, prompting more middle powers (such as India, Brazil, South Africa, etc.) to assume more responsibilities in regional and global security [6]. At the same time, it is also necessary to establish a “Global Conflict Prediction and Data Sharing Center” to integrate open source intelligence (OSINT), regional organization databases, non-governmental organization reports, big data and artificial intelligence analysis results to form a real-time global risk map. The center should be authorized by the Office of the Secretary-General and the Security Council of the United Nations, and legally granted formal status through special resolutions to ensure the institutionalization and sustainability of intelligence sharing and data cooperation [37,4].

The difficulty in implementing this proposal lies in how to overcome political differences among member states, especially how to balance resource allocation and political intentions. In particular, the solution to the “free-rider” problem may encounter opposition from some countries, especially when they believe that their resource contributions exceed expectations. Therefore, although this proposal can significantly improve the United Nations' resource integration capabilities, its implementation will be affected by the political positions of various countries. In addition, the establishment of a global conflict prediction center requires huge financial investment and technical support, which may be difficult to achieve in the short term, especially considering the limitations of the United Nations' existing resources. However, once this system is established, it will provide strong support for the United Nations and promote the effectiveness of global security governance.

7. Conclusion

In summary, this paper argues that, in the context of increasingly complex contemporary international conflicts and the frequent emergence of new forms of war, if the United Nations hopes to continue to maintain its substantial influence in the global governance system, it must comprehensively enhance its capabilities in early warning response, legal adaptability and multilateral coordination through multi-level institutional reforms. Through a systematic analysis of three representative cases, namely the Ukrainian crisis, the Rwandan genocide and the South Sudanese civil war, this paper reveals the structural defects of the United Nations in terms of lagging intelligence sharing mechanisms, slow decision-making procedures and unbalanced resource allocation, and empirically verifies the core hypothesis proposed in the study: that is, strengthening the intelligence integration and risk prediction mechanism, giving the Secretary-General greater authority to intervene in crises in the early stages, and institutionally restricting the abuse of the Security Council's veto power are the key paths to improving the efficiency and legitimacy of UN intervention [1,2].

Although some people believe that traditional peacekeeping mechanisms still have certain functions in dealing with conventional conflicts between countries [3], cross-case comparisons show that in the face of new conflicts with characteristics such as high decentralization, information warfare, and proxy behavior, the existing institutional framework is no longer able to effectively adapt. If the traditional peacekeeping model is still followed, it will inevitably weaken the United Nations' intervention capabilities and political credibility in the new security landscape. Therefore, the United

Nations must promote institutional innovation and build a flexible governance system that can cope with multi-dimensional war forms.

Future research can further focus on the specific application of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data in intelligence integration and conflict risk prediction, and explore how to achieve an institutional balance between protecting the principle of sovereignty and improving operational efficiency. In addition, in-depth research should be conducted on the revision path of international law in the process of adapting to the transformation of war forms, as well as the formation of more operational implementation plans in political games and resource sharing mechanisms. Only in this way can the United Nations achieve a fundamental transformation from "passive response" to "forward-looking intervention" in global security governance in the 21st century, and provide systematic and sustainable institutional support for preventing the outbreak of hot wars and controlling the escalation of conflicts.

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