Chapter 2

Origins of Peacekeeping

1. Embryonic Rise of Peacekeeping

The idea of distinguishing just and unjust war to be determined by relative and contextual rules under the given circumstances was commonly found in ancient jurisprudence including that of ancient India, ancient China, ancient Israel, ancient Greece, the Christian world and the Islamic world. Even before the establishment of the League of Nations, states were generally prompted to avoid a declaration of war and had to have a justifying cause for the use of force short of war. While the self-reliant justification for the use of armed force might well have contributed, more or less, to the prevention of war in a negative sense, little attention was drawn to positive action to prevent war until the League of Nations set out on unprecedented peacekeeping operations, which led to a full incarnation in the UN period. Before turning to the study on peacekeeping action under the League

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3 ‘The origin and development of peacekeeping operations largely parallel those of international organizations in general’: Paul F. Diehl, International Peacekeeping (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) at 14. Although peacekeeping operations are generally seen as a product of UN activities, the League of Nations had already studied and undertaken what can be seen as the prototype, as will be shown below.
of Nations, however, it is worthwhile first to follow the preceding movement that underlay the subsequent development of an idea to undertake peacekeeping action under a collective authority.

An embryonic rise of the idea of peacekeeping in the modern age can be seen in the response to the report that cruelties had been committed upon Armenians in Turkey in August 1894, contrary to Turkish obligations under a treaty concluded at Berlin in 1878.\(^4\) The British government, supported by France, Italy and Russia, suggested a mixed commission of inquiry be established and composed of their representatives and Turkish delegations. The Turkish government responded by appointing a commission of five members composed entirely of Turks, allowing the states concerned to send their Consuls as the representatives attached to the commission. The British Consular delegate to the commission presented a report to the British Parliament in September 1895, observing that hundreds of deaths had been caused by the atrocities in August and September 1894.\(^5\) Extensive discussions about possible steps to be taken subsequently followed in the British Parliament to prevent the recurrence of the atrocities.\(^6\) Yet there was a call for caution not to interfere in Turkey, given the Russian reluctance in responding to the Armenian massacres, unless other states concerned had given support or approval to the British action,\(^7\) which would have otherwise resulted in running the risk of igniting a European war.

Another relevant incident is the ‘Boxer Rebellion’ that started in December 1899 in China whereby the Boxers avowed to drive out foreigners and Christians, resulting in a collision with the Chinese authorities.\(^8\) Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States urged the Chinese government to suppress the troubles without delay, but the disorders continued to increase. Having thought that the Chinese government was unable or unwilling to suppress the disorders, the United States decided to take action concurrently with other concerned states, addressing four purposes, one of which was ‘to prevent a spread of the disorders to the other provinces of the Empire and a recurrence of such disasters’.\(^9\) When

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\(^5\) United Kingdom, *Report of the Consular Delegates Attached to the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Events at Sasun*, Parliament Command Paper No. C.7894 No. 252 (15 August 1895) at 161–189. It was reported that the commission held 107 sittings and heard 190 witnesses.


\(^7\) *Id.* at 42 (Samuel Smith).


\(^9\) *Id.* at 482. Other purposes were related to rescuing and protecting American nationals’ life and property.