

Book Review

Collective Security within Reach. By Sovaida Ma'ani. George Ronald, 2007. xii + 260 pp, including index.

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This work by Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing is an impressive achievement. It draws attention to one of the key pillars of the Bahá'í peace program—global collective security—on the basis of a compelling critique of existing actions (and inactions) in global security policy. The threats to global security that have emerged since the book's publication have strengthened its arguments, rather than dated them.

Minor victories outlawing landmines and small arms aside, chemical weapons and cluster munitions have now been used against civilians in Syria; acts of genocide have been committed on at least three continents; the reach of nonconventional warfare now includes cyber attacks; the post-World War II security arrangements are no longer respected (particularly the P5 veto power in the Security Council of the United Nations, and lack of effective use of either chapter 6 or chapter 7 of the UN Charter); the lack of progress under the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and the fate of civilian populations, with so many becoming refugees in the care of United Nations humanitarian efforts, all demonstrate the inadequacy of the existing global security architecture during what Bobbitt has termed “the long war” that was the twentieth century (2003).

After setting out the principles on which the Bahá'í approach to collective security are premised (the oneness of humanity; the principles of justice, equity and fairness; the need to recognize the limits to national sovereignty; the principle of international cooperation; and the need to adjust laws and institutions), Ma'ani Ewing reviews the steps the international community has taken in the direction of collective security. These are focused on such United Nations initiatives as “high level panels” on United Nations Peace Operations; on “threats, challenges and change”; and on such other significant assessments as former Secretary-General Annan's critique, “In Larger Freedom.”

Ma'ani also reviews a number of principles that have emerged in an effort to secure peaceful relations between states: the resolution of boundary disputes, the principles of just war, and of the responsibility to protect. Ma'ani follows an account of these principles with a review of mechanisms for arms control and reduction, for collective security as attempted by the UN Security Council, for the establishment of a standing international force, and for the enforcement of judgements of the International Court of Justice.

This review of "What Have We Built So Far?" is followed by a third and final section, "What We Should Build Next," which sets out in a coherent manner the institutional reforms and innovations inherent in a pragmatic plan for global collective security. This final third of the book constitutes an agenda for global governance reform from a Bahá'í perspective: (a) a decision by world leaders to agree to establish a genuine global security pact (Ma'ani Ewing suggests a "core group" to get the process started, rather than anticipating a gathering comprising each and every national leader); based on (b) agreed principles concerning equality of nations and peoples, justice, equity, reward and punishment, and how best to curtail national sovereignty and implement collective action; leading to (c) necessary institutional and legal reform (security council, arms treaties, an international boundaries authority, the World Court, and the establishment of an international executive).

Current thought on collective security and on global governance has embraced some, but not all, of these principles and reform proposals. There has been, for example, growing support for the notion of a "responsibility to protect," which would allow a nation's sovereign authority to be overridden when the international community discerns it is unable to secure its own citizens—although R2P (Responsibility to Protect) has not gained the status of international law. There is similarly growing international support, both by nations and by civil society, for a ban on nuclear weapons, which has grown out of frustration at the inability of parties in the Non-Proliferation Treaty to make the progress on weapons reductions that they promised in that treaty (Thakur and Evans 2013). In March 2013, for instance, the Government of Norway sponsored a conference,

“Reaching Critical Will,” to discuss the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which was followed by another in February 2014, and a third is to take place in December. Although there are just nine nation-states with nuclear weapons, many more have the potential to join their ranks. Although the number of states actively addressing the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has grown—from sixteen at the 2012 Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee in Vienna to 125 at the session of the UN General Assembly First Committee in New York in September 2013—all such efforts rely on current global governance arrangements and do not espouse the need for a more comprehensive security architecture.

By the first decades of the twenty-first century, opponents of nuclear weapons based their campaigns on the scientific facts concerning the impact of nuclear explosions on the human world and the physical environment. If detonated in populated areas, millions would die in the explosion, more millions would die of radiation, and yet additional millions would die of hunger and disease in the subsequent months and years. No country is able to prepare for the humanitarian consequences of such a detonation—this is not the scenario of a mere tsunami or hurricane. Concern at the possible use of nuclear weapons continues to propel a global peace movement, which now includes cities for peace, mayors for peace, a global campaign by the Red Cross, Global Zero, global movements such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and a movement for the establishment of Ministries for Peace.

But the global peace movement’s support for such campaigns as the UN Secretary-General’s Five Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament, an International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations, the Chemical Weapons Convention, documents such as the “Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons” championed by the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, UNFold Zero, not to mention the proposed UN General Assembly resolution affirming the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons—while invaluable steps toward a secure and peaceful world—do not proceed as far as advocacy of world government.

This is where Ma'ani Ewing's study correlates contemporary experience with viable global policy options that are at once principled and pragmatic. Take, for instance, her argument in favor of establishing a global "early warning system" that would provide threat evaluations to an international body, such as a revised Security Council, without the distortions to intelligence that have resulted in recent years from the filtering of vital information through the lens of national intelligence agencies. Equally valuable are her elaborations on reforms to the Security Council and various other organs of the United Nations System, about which Ma'ani Ewing has also published elsewhere (2008).

Although security concerns dominate world leaders' agendas, and fill the pages of scholarly journals and news magazines alike, there is surprisingly little consideration of the prospects of "collective security"—especially on a global scale. Bahá'í contributions to this literature include the volume *Healing the Body Politic*, edited by Charles Lerche (2004), particularly its chapter by Sabet on the historical and theoretic context of Bahá'u'lláh's call to collective security and Lopez's review of UN reform issues. Another valuable contribution by Sabet is her doctoral dissertation on Bahá'u'lláh's concept of collective security (2000), untranslated at this time. But whereas both *Healing* and *Collective Security within Reach* both bring the literature of peace and conflict to a Bahá'í audience, Ma'ani Ewing's volume competently and confidently introduces Bahá'í principles to the peace and security literature. As Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Anwarul K. Chowdhury records in his introduction to Ma'ani Ewing's work, "The Bahá'í writings offer a vision of collective security and the references to them bring a much welcomed freshness to the main focus of Ma'ani Ewing's thought-provoking, well-researched and meticulously put together treatise" (p. xii).

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