

Editorial Note

<https://doi.org/10.22151/politikon.60.0>

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As the United Nations turns 80, the contributions in this volume of *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science* ask us to take stock not just of where we are—but how far we have veered from where we hoped to be. In 2005, on the UN’s 60th anniversary, optimism and ambition filled discussions of reform. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was newly enshrined. Global leaders promised that “never again” meant more than rhetoric. The collective security framework, though imperfect, was imagined to be improvable.

Nearly two decades later, Abigail Georgison revisits Andrea Charron’s critique of the UN’s security framework—originally published in *Politikon* in 2007. Through a retrospective assessment of the R2P doctrine and its failed implementation in Libya, Georgison applies Claude and Naidu’s seven ideal elements of collective security to evaluate both Charron’s original argument and the doctrine’s evolution. Her article reflects a wider reality that many multilateral ideals—however noble—struggle to withstand geopolitical rivalry, inconsistent application, and the absence of sustained post-intervention support. The R2P, Georgison suggests, has now become more of a thematic commitment than an enforceable mechanism.

This concern—the distance between principle and practice—is echoed in Mohammad Amaan Siddiqui’s analysis of how the state’s use of language, especially in defining “terrorism” and “resistance,” shapes who is heard, who is silenced, and who is criminalized. His comparative analysis of the United States and India—two of the world’s largest democracies—shows that even within systems that claim to protect dissent, counterterrorism frameworks can be used to reinforce dominant power structures. The politics of security, much like humanitarian intervention, often involves not just action but framing—deciding which voices are legitimate and which are not.

Lloyd George Banda and colleagues explore a different aspect of governance. Using time-series data, they probe whether transparency reforms have meaningfully curbed corruption in Malawi. Their findings are sobering: while transparency is essential, it is ineffective without institutional strength and political resolve. This empirical contribution

resonates with the broader question of this issue—what happens when good governance ideals meet structural constraints?

Greta Comedini charts the Eurozone's shift toward technocratic governance during the sovereign debt crisis, highlighting how economic emergencies can override democratic norms. Her study complicates the narrative of European integration, asking whether the concentration of authority in unelected institutions undermines democratic legitimacy. Just as Banda and colleagues show how reform can be hollow without robust implementation, Comedini illustrates how crisis-driven reforms, even when efficient, may erode the democratic foundations they aim to protect. Comedini's findings raise fundamental questions about legitimacy: who governs in a crisis, and what democratic costs are we willing to accept in the name of expertise and efficiency?

Together, these contributions reflect a growing interest among a new generation of scholars in exploring the structural challenges of governance, security, and legitimacy across global, national, and regional contexts. Each paper acknowledges that theory and practice rarely align perfectly, and that reform is often a matter of negotiation, compromise, and realism about institutional limits. We hope the articles in this issue inspire deeper reflection and dialogue. The questions they raise are far from resolved, but asking them remains essential to understanding and improving the world we live in.