

The Multilateral Impact of the United Nations on International Responsibilities Concerning War Crimes

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning with “War crimes, as one of the gravest violations of international humanitarian law...” the article makes several normative assertions regarding the “central axes of contemporary international law” without identifying the exact legal basis for these claims. The discussion would be substantially strengthened if the authors explicitly referenced the relevant treaty provisions, including the Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocol I, and Articles 5–8 of the Rome Statute. The current formulation remains overly descriptive and lacks doctrinal precision expected in advanced legal scholarship.

The sentence “The *raison d’être* of this organization is founded on the principle of multilateralism” is theoretically underdeveloped and historically contestable. The United Nations was founded on multiple principles including sovereign equality, collective security, prohibition of force, and peaceful settlement of disputes. The authors should avoid reducing the institutional foundation of the UN to a single principle and instead distinguish multilateralism from collective security, institutionalism, and international cooperation in doctrinal terms.

The paragraph discussing “the principle of individual criminal responsibility” lacks analytical engagement with the evolution from Nuremberg to the Rome Statute system. The authors should discuss the doctrinal transition from state-centric responsibility to individual accountability and explain how command responsibility, superior orders, and joint criminal enterprise contributed to this transformation. Without this, the treatment of international criminal law remains superficial.

The section on the International Criminal Court inadequately addresses complementarity. Since complementarity is the core jurisdictional principle governing ICC intervention, the article should explain how UN multilateralism interacts with domestic prosecutions under Articles 17–20 of the Rome Statute. This omission weakens the legal depth of the manuscript.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The manuscript repeatedly uses the term “multilateralism” but does not operationalize it in a legally meaningful manner. For example, in the paragraph beginning “The importance of examining the impact of United Nations multilateralism...” the article refers to multilateralism as both a political process and a legal mechanism without defining its analytical indicators. The authors should provide a dedicated conceptual framework explaining how multilateralism will be assessed in relation to war crimes accountability—whether through institutional participation, treaty-making, collective enforcement, or judicial cooperation.

The literature review relies heavily on descriptive summaries of authors such as Cassese, Schabas, and Crawford without identifying the specific scholarly disagreements among them. A proper literature review at the doctoral or journal level should not merely report prior scholarship but critically evaluate competing positions. For example, the authors should distinguish between realist critiques of international criminal justice and liberal institutionalist defenses of multilateral accountability mechanisms.

The article cites “Aref Khalil et al., 2025” extensively throughout the manuscript, including in foundational theoretical discussions. However, this source appears to be a conference proceeding closely related to the same topic as the present article. The excessive reliance on this recent secondary source creates concerns regarding originality and intellectual independence. The authors should incorporate more primary legal materials and broader peer-reviewed international scholarship.

In the section “The Concept of Multilateralism in International Law,” the manuscript references Article 1 of the UN Charter but fails to conduct any textual or interpretive analysis of the Charter provisions. The discussion would benefit greatly from engagement with Articles 1, 2, 24, 25, and Chapter VII of the Charter, particularly concerning the legal authority of collective action against war crimes.

The sentence “Multilateralism in international law has both normative and institutional dimensions” introduces an important analytical distinction, but the manuscript does not develop it further. The authors should systematically distinguish normative multilateralism (shared legal norms) from institutional multilateralism (UN organs and procedures), and then assess how these dimensions interact in the context of war crimes enforcement.

The discussion of the Security Council’s veto power is overly general and lacks empirical substantiation. The manuscript should include concrete case studies—such as Syria, Darfur, Libya, or Gaza—to demonstrate how veto politics affected accountability for war crimes. Without practical examples, the critique remains abstract and repetitive.

The section “The Concept of International Responsibility Concerning War Crimes” does not clearly distinguish between state responsibility and individual criminal responsibility. These are doctrinally distinct legal regimes governed by different principles, forums, and consequences. The article should explicitly compare attribution rules under the ILC Draft Articles with criminal liability principles under international criminal law.

The reference to “erga omnes and collective responsibilities” requires much more rigorous legal analysis. The manuscript should explain whether war crimes obligations are erga omnes partes or erga omnes in the Barcelona Traction sense, and how this distinction affects universal jurisdiction and third-state obligations. At present, the discussion oversimplifies a highly contested doctrinal issue.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.