Rethinking Canada's 'Ready, aye, Ready' Peacekeeping

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World Security: The New Challenge
by the Canadian Pugwash Group
Science for Peace, University College
(University of Toronto)
282 pp. $19.95

Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney
by Arthur Andrews
James Lorimer & Co.
186 pp., $29.95/$16.95 pb

Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s
by J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer
Copp Clark Longman
373 pp., $19.95 pb

What could have been done? First of all, we should have showed more determination to stop the bloodbath in Bosnia and done it right away. Threats backfire if repreated. Now, no one takes them seriously. Together with the U.N., many great nations have been ridiculed.
-Elie Wiesel, *Time*, 7 August 1995

If something is worth fighting for, it is worth sacrificing for. [...] We don't stop policing because policemen get killed. We don't stop peacekeeping because soldiers get killed.
-Gen. John de Chastelain, 13 January 1995

The Croatian army's sudden success in retaking the entire Krajina region from the Bosnian Serbs in August has had a meaning far beyond military conquest. With no Serb and Croat forces to keep apart, the United Nations peacekeeping presence is now obsolete. Now that there is no longer any 'peace to keep,' the Canadian government has decided to bring home half of its 2,200 troops in the former Yugoslavia ahead of schedule, and speculation has it that all are due to leave before the winter season. Furthermore, reports abound that the government is 'non-committal' about reinforcing Bosnian forces which are 'chronically short of experienced and well-equipped units.'

Still, the defeat of Bosnian Serbs in Krajina ought to be seen as good news for members of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). Since February 1993, when the *New York Times* reported that Bosnian Serb leaders could 'exhaust' UN forces by delaying, diverting or halting aid convoys at will, the strategy seemed to be working. The UN's refusal to respond to Serb aggressions with force, showed the latter that they could aid or hinder the UN effort at will.

But this good news is also an utter humiliation for Canada and peacekeeping in general. Canada has been the loudest and staunchest critic of any armed resistance to Bosnian Serb aggression when most consider the term 'peacekeeping' (in a war zone no less) an oxymoron. That our soldiers in Bosnia could benefit from the Croatian action exposes the utter folly of Canadian peacekeeping policy.

Throughout this drama, Canadian politicians were happy to use the issue for cheap political gains when they could, but seemed utterly unable to define the Canadian role in the area. In the spring of 1993, Liberal MP Lloyd Axworthy led a vigorous, sustained attack on the Mulroney government for its dubious defence of the UN's Bosnia mandate and on the lack of leadership from Defence Minister Kim Campbell (who was too preoccupied with running for prime minister). Government House Leader Harvie André, Foreign Minister Barbara McDougall and other cabinet ministers tried to parry these criticisms, but could muster little more than simple contrary assertions, attacks on the motives of opposition members, and digressions.

Particularly significant was a response from André to a challenge from Axworthy concerning the mandate: 'Our troops are there in Bosnia to try to provide humanitarian aid to the Bosnians,' he said. 'They are not there on a peacekeeping mission.' Three weeks later, in response to a question about what new rules of engagement were given to Canadian troops in Bosnia, André gave Axworthy a different answer: 'The Canadian military now in Srebrenica is there to enforce the cease-fire, to *disarm* the Bosnian Muslims *and* (my italics) to provide humanitarian aid to the wounded and the weak.' The first UNFROPOR commander Major-General Lewis MacKenzie seemed to confirm the 'non-peacekeeping' view: 'The (UN) force had no mandate to protect anything — it was simply there to run an airport and deliver humanitarian aid.'

Despite its rhetoric when in opposition, however, the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien has made little difference. In December, 1994, Foreign Minister André Ouellet rejected out of hand any talk of withdrawal. 'We must be optimistic,' he said. 'Any peace agreement will take some time.' On March 30, 1995, Reform Party leader Preston Manning challenged the government on the quality of the peacekeepers' equipment, safety and the UN mandate just as the Liberals did to the Tories a year earlier, but Manning got the same evasions. 'Every mission has to be viewed on its own merits,' Defence Minister David Collenette replied, stressing the need to evaluate the strategic reasons, costs and the likelihood of success for each engagement. Some 40 seconds later he expressed understanding for the previous government's commitment to Bosnia and added incongruously: 'It is a commitment that we are prepared to continue indefinitely.'

To Manning's charge that the ministry of defence lacked leadership and that morale among soldiers of the Royal 22nd Battalion was low, Collenette replied: 'Mr. Speaker, what a sad situation when the leader of one

Keeping Guard in Dubrovnik

of Canada's political parties on the eve of reengagement in Bosnia and Croatia [...] makes unfounded allegations about the nature of equipment and the nature of morale.' It would be interesting to know what went through Axworthy's mind as he sat next to Collenette in the House applauding the same feeble excuses that he condemned less than a year earlier. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on July 5 betrayed the confusion inherent in Canada's policy. 'We're there to maintain peace. We're not there to make peace, and sometimes there is no peace to keep. It's an extremely difficult role to play.'

Despite the rhetoric coming from Ottawa after the Croatian advance, there has never been any peace to keep in Yugoslavia, because the violence never stopped. But the real tragedy of the Bosnian civil war is that the three years of the UN's mission to bring humanitarian aid to Bosnia's civilians has been an unmitigated disaster marked by cowardice and incompetence on scale unknown in the history of peacekeeping. It was on this very point in mid-January, 1995, that Croatian president Franjo Tudjman demanded UNPROFOR leave his country. He said the UN presence had become an impediment to peace because Bosnian Serbs were using it as a screen behind which to carry out attacks. For Tudjman, UN peacekeeping wasn't part of the solution; it was part of the problem.

II.

What made Canada take part in such a disaster?

A recent collection of essays by the Canadian Pugwash Group, *World Security: The New Challenge*, depicts the fallacious notions about war and peace that has led Canada into a state of denial about the true nature of conflict. The Group began in 1957 in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, when 22 prominent nuclear scientists gathered at the home of tycoon industrialist Cyrus Eaton to discuss the dangers of nuclear war. Today, the Group's interests cover all aspects of human habitation, ecology, population, and disarmament.

The first third of *World Security* presents optimistic solutions for solving world tensions through the promotion of peace and UN peacekeeping. (Peacekeeping is only one factor in an overall plan to build world peace, which is intimately linked with global action to solve world poverty, environmental destruction, and other problems of economic and social development.) The kind of peacekeeping found in these pages, though, is not rational policy but a secular Scholasticism. In the canon of modern peacekeeping, war and peace are moralities representing good and evil. Because peacekeeping is an agent for 'good,' one need only assert that it is the only solution to a conflict and then create rationalizations to defend the assertion.

There is no attempt in this book to reconcile theory with practice or exercise critical reasoning to test the efficacy of the theories offered. William Epstein's essay, 'The Strengthening Role of the United Nations in Peacekeeping and Peacemaking,' is an excellent case in point. In mounting a defence for the UN and peacekeeping as keys to a new peaceful world order, Epstein writes: '[...] it would seem that the easiest and most effective way to maintain and promote international peace and security is to strengthen the UN in all its peacebuilding activities and to ensure that it has adequate resources to

meet all the peacekeeping tasks it is called upon to perform.'

As for conflict resolution, Epstein writes: 'For this, the UN is ideally and uniquely competent and qualified. [...] It thus seems inevitable that the activities and role of the UN will continue to expand in the future. In this regard [...] there is now an opportunity and need for the 'middle powers' to resume the active and useful leadership role they had played in the early years of the UN.'

What passes for evidence throughout this and other essays on peacekeeping are recitations of statistics, specious historical analogies, and reverential treatments of reports and speeches that confirm the particular writer's point of view. Epstein gives us peacekeeping not as policy, but as religion: there is nothing wrong with the UN that better funding and stronger implementation of the Charter can't solve. Thus, it is possible for him to speak of 'peacekeeping,' 'peacemaking,' 'peacebuilding,' 'peace enforcement,' and 'post-conflict peace building' as if these were real words that actually had meaning.

There is much that is inspirational in *World Security*, but little that is useful or relevant, at least to this world. Unfortunately, the kind of self-righteous appeasement that Epstein advocates accurately describes Canada's peacekeeping policy. No matter how bad the news from Bosnia, Canada cannot bring itself to support retaliatory measures or admit that UNPROFOR is a mistake, much less recognize that sending peacekeepers into a civil war is an abomination of logic. Worse still, Canadian soldiers were sent into battle with obsolete equipment, including 30-year-old armoured personnel carriers. (On August 16, Collenette announced the expenditure of $1.2 billion to upgrade the army's 'aging fleet' of Armoured Personnel Carriers, emphasizing that the APCs are a priority for peacekeeping operations.)

Peacekeeping is only possible if Great Powers want it to be successful. The problem for Bosnia, is that nobody cares enough. The Yugoslav conflict was supposed to be Europe's big chance to show the US it could cope with its own troubles, but it seemed easier to denounce, cajole and placate the Bosnian Serbs than to use force to defend Bosnian government. Even after Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb army on July 11, neither Canada nor Britain would follow France's call to arms, saying that they would not permit their troops to die for the sake of Bosnia. French President Jacques Chirac put UNPROFOR's dilemma bluntly: 'if we do not react [...] then we have to ask ourselves what purpose the United Nations Protection Force is serving there and draw the proper conclusions.'

The UN also failed 'to draw the proper conclusions', to borrow from Chirac, 28 years ago. On May 18, 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser expelled the first peacekeeping mission UNEF (United Nations Emergency Force) from the Sinai and Gaza Strip. The force had been put together quickly in November, 1956, to defuse a complicated international military imbroglio over control of the Suez Canal. When Nasser expelled UNEF after more than 10 years of indecision, he singled out the Canadian contingent for condemnation and demanded that it lead the exodus. To Nasser, the Canadian uniforms, the name of their regiment, the Queen's Own Rifles, and Canada's membership in the Commonwealth and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization too closely identified it with Great Britain, one of the invading countries that precipitated the incident.

The expulsion should have taught Canada certain unpalatable, albeit necessary, lessons about peacekeeping and of its own influence in the world. Unfortunately, Canada (and the UN itself for that matter) chose not to hear them, and UN peacekeeping has been devoid of any rational risk assessment or subordination of means to ends ever since. In the end, UN peacekeeping, as an instrument for political reconciliation, has to be seen as an unbroken record of failure from UNEF to UNPROFOR.

III.

Two recent books on Canada's diplomatic history are of particular use in sorting out fact from fiction in the period 1956-1967 — the time when our optimistic illusions about liberal internationalism were set in concrete.

In *Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney*, former External Affairs officer Arthur Andrews examines the story of Canada's diplomatic history from the end of World War II. He treats peacekeeping tangentially as part of a larger discussion of the development of Canada's economic, military and political diplomacy, and of the growth of the Department of External (now Foreign) Affairs in particular.

This is one of the book's strengths: Andrews treats peacekeeping not as an end in itself but as a function of the political times in which it was created. As Andrews notes, Europeans of the early 1950s had difficulty distinguishing Canada from Great Britain or the United States, as if it had no national interests of its own. Thus, Canada needed to shake off the perception that it was nothing more than a colony or a political satellite. The invasion of the Suez Canal and peacekeeping gave it that opportunity.

Pearson engineered a face-saving compromise: he used the power and influence of the United Nations to halt the Anglo-Franco-Israeli assault and refused to blame one side or the other. By condemning the attack, Pearson showed that Canada was ready to come to the aid of a small power (Egypt) and ready to demonstrate its support for the principle that small countries must not be coerced by Great Powers. At the same time, the establishment of a UN peacekeeping body in the canal zone showed that Pearson wanted to protect the national interests of Great Britain and France.

For a country caught between British colonialism and American imperialism, the success of Pearson's bold initiative cannot be overestimated. It earned for Canada the designation as the world's most able peacekeeper and for Pearson the Nobel Peace Prize the following year. Also, by not condemning the invasion outright, Canada distanced itself from US military policy.

While Andrews focuses on diplomatic history, J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer take a more comprehensive view of Canada's foreign relations, beginning in the late nineteenth century. *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s* spends as much time examining the growth of Canada from British colony to independent world actor (up to WWII) as it does from independence to a reluctant satellite in the American orbit. Unlike *Rise and Fall*, peacekeeping is a major theme and it dominates the second half of the book.

Despite the different approaches to peacekeeping of both books, each clearly shows that Pearson's success in Suez was due more to Canada's uniquely influential circumstances of the time than to its diplomatic influence as a 'middle power.' Canada in the 1950s was certainly a middle power in the traditional sense of a respected country that is economically strong and diplomatically astute; that is, a 'helpful fixer.' But Canada was a also a middle power between Britain and the US by virtue of its close ties with both countries and its wartime experience. Canada was also 'in the middle' between Moscow and the West. As Pearson's biographer John English wrote, the Soviets knew Pearson as an architect of NATO and definitely not a pacifist, but they also saw him as one of the strongest voices calling for greater understanding between East and West.

Canada was in a unique position to mediate not only between Egypt and the invasion force, but between the invasion force and the US. As for Canada, Granatstein and Hillmer argue: 'Canadians were needed in UNEF, not because they were neutral, but because they were Western and NATO — mechanized and efficient.' Thus the elements of 'middlepowermanship' were necessary for UNEF to work. Without Great Power self-interest, UN peacekeeping has no hope of success, and peacekeeping itself has little or no meaning outside a bipolar world.

UNEF was not designed to impose the will of the UN on the disputants, but rather to accomplish peacemaking by bringing about a resolution acceptable to all sides. Unfortunately, by removing the immediacy of conflict, UNEF removed any incentive to resolve the dispute. U Thant, the UN Secretary-General, even conceded that Nasser's was right to claim that UNEF after 10 years had developed into a UN occupation force. Nevertheless, the fact that actual conflict among Egypt, the US, France, Great Britain and Israel had been averted was enough to give the illusion that Canadian diplomacy had achieved a major success. 'The myth of Canadian impartiality began to grow in the public mind,' write Granatstein and Hillmer, 'and [...] in the view of both the government and the public, no peacekeeping force after UNEF seemed complete without Canadian participation.' Moreover, every prime minister since Pearson has behaved 'as though a peace prize were on the horizon.'

Pearson's success in the Sinai, and the prestige it earned for Canada as an impartial middle power, became the defining moment for a country desperately in search of an independent self-image. In peacekeeping, Canadians thought their country had at long last found its national identity: it would be the world's 'helpful fixer' — 'a nation,' as Granatstein and Hillmer put it, 'that sought to explain antagonists to each other, that sought compromise.' Peacekeeping also seemed more 'peaceful' than NATO or NORAD service and engaging in 'peaceful' activities would also help differentiate Canada from other countries.'

However, Pearson's understanding of UNEF had none of this crusading zeal; it was purely a pragmatic stop-gap tactic that would last only until Israeli-Arab differences could be ironed out. Pearson never intended peacekeeping to be permanent solution to conflict, much less a national policy. But none of that mattered: by the early 1960s the myth of 'Pearsonian peacekeeping' had taken root in the Canadian psyche and could not be dislodged. In fact, the early 1960s even seemed to cry out for such a helpful fixer. 'By the time John Diefenbaker had handed government over to L.B. Pearson,' writes Andrews in *The Rise and Fall*, 'the Cold War had become, as one thought, a permanent fixture and the dominant factor in international life.'

The Canadian public's love affair with peacekeeping carried on into ONUC (the United Nations Operation in the Congo, 1960-64). In 1960, the UN was called in to quell rioting during the Belgian Congo's transition to independence, and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold asked Canada for badly needed bilingual signalers. Because the Diefenbaker government considered peacekeeping a drain on resources that ought otherwise go toward resisting the Soviet threat, Hammarskjold's request was refused and a token commitment of aircraft and staff were substituted. The public raised such an outcry at this piddling response that they shamed the government into a larger commitment: 500 troops and 200 signalers.

The same year that ONUC ended, Canada embarked on a peacekeeping duty in Cyprus that continues to the present (there are still two officers advising the UN peacekeepers on the island). A dispute between Greece and Turkey over control of Cyprus pitted two NATO allies against each other, and US president Lyndon Johnson actively entreated Prime Minister Pearson to apply his diplomatic skills to resolve the dispute. Wanting to do a favour for its American ally, Canada almost single-handedly put together the Cyprus peacekeeping force (UNFICYP). Within 24 hours of being called, Canada began the process of moving 881 personnel, 170 vehicles and 52 tons of stores to the island and completed the entire deployment within seven days.

The year 1964 was significant for one other event: Paul Hellyer's White Paper on Defence enshrined peacekeeping as the first priority for Canada's military establishment. In order to provide maximum efficiency for peacekeeping, Hellyer unified the three branches of the Canadian armed forces under one integrated command. Unification was thought likely to serve as a model for other countries and, as one observer put it, 'do wonders for Canada's identity complex.' Moreover this new orientation would allow Canada to be ready at a moment's notice to respond to a call for peacekeeping assistance. As Hellyer himself boasted, 'because of this increased capability, Canada today [1964] is less dependent on the United States for territorial defence than it has been since 1939.'

Hellyer, though, had no grounds for putting all of Canada's eggs into the peacekeeping basket. In both ONUC and UNFICYP, rational assessments of peacekeeping itself were secondary. In ONUC, Congolese troops frequently attacked and threatened Canadian peacekeepers whose skin colour identified them with the Belgian colonials against whom the Congolese were fighting. Yet, rather than admit that sending troops was a mistake, Canada stuck out its thankless role in ONUC to the bitter end.

In Cyprus, Pearson insisted that the mandate of UNFICYP contribute to peace and have a fixed duration. Neither condition obtains even today. As Andrews writes, it was rapidly made clear that a speedy and peaceful settlement was obviously not a credible notion for Cyprus: 'Where once UNFICYP was seen as the protector of the Turkish community against the Greek majority, it then became the protector of the

Greek community against the Turkish Army. UNFICYP's role had become completely transformed. It had been set up to stabilize a situation that had threatened international peace and security. Soon after, however, its job became largely humanitarian, not primarily a Security Council matter, and hard to justify in terms of the costs involved for the international community.'

By the late 1960s, peacekeeping was being recognized as an expensive, unsatisfying extravagance that detracted from more vital defence obligations. After the UNEF expulsion, every government since 1968 has officially relegated peacekeeping to a low priority.

Trudeau consciously tried to dismantle Canada's 'helpful fixer' image, yet he never refused to let Canada play its traditional role. 'The trouble,' writes Andrews, 'was that Canadians saw themselves as "helpful fixers"; that was one of those internal "givens" which do influence a foreign policy without too much regard for who heads the government.' Here, as in all peace-keeping ventures, the appeal to anti-Americanism is key. The failure of Trudeau to de-emphasize peacekeeping is due largely to the irrational need to be seen as independent from Washington. Peacekeeping has always mattered far more to Canada and Canadians than to the intended beneficiaries of peacekeeping.

Even Diefenbaker was said to have adopted contrary positions to the United States just to be different. Last December, Foreign Minister André Ouellet said that Canada's presence in Bosnia was necessary to distinguish Canadian policy from that of the US: 'We are not a carbon copy of the Americans.'

IV.

Peacekeeping as a surrogate for anti-Americanism was the first great error that Canada took from the UNEF period, 1956-1967. The second was the equation of peacekeeping with pacifism. During the Cold War, Clausewitz's dictum 'War is the continuation of politics by other means' was suspended because war meant nuclear war. The nuclear threat in turn spawned a peace movement that helped to radicalize armed conflict.

Today, the bipolar world has gone, nuclear war has receded and Clausewitz is again relevant. Because superpower interests aren't at stake, the impetus to prevent peripheral hostilities from escalating is no longer acute. One of Pearson's own errors was believing in peacekeeping as the unique prerogative of middle powers. Thus, Great Powers were shut out of UNEF even though they were the only ones capable of supplying the administrative support. The limitations of do-it-yourself middle power peacekeeping were made clear during UNFICYP when the UN effort required the vigorous intercession on three occasions of very senior US officials backed up by the Sixth Fleet.

What has saved peacekeeping's reputation thus far was the Cold War. So long as the superpower conflict paralyzed the Security Council, the UN would never have to make good on its promise to be the guardian of the world. The end of the Cold War did not free the UN to practice peacekeeping as Epstein claims; it made peacekeeping absurd.

Long before UNFICYP, Andrews writes that Canadian governments knew that peacekeeping was of dubious value to Canada: 'It was a necessary part of the archetype of Middle Power, but it was not a reliable source of influence, kudos or any great satisfaction.'

A world government based on morality was supposed to supersede one of pragmatic balance-of-power coalitions. What UNPROFOR proves is that the promise of a moral order based on liberal internationalism is a pious fraud. 'Trudeau could not understand,' write Granatstein and Hillmer, 'that the United States and the USSR did not want the smaller states interfering in what they considered to be their affairs. Nor did he appear to realize that Canada, a small power without much clout had little influence on the course of events.'

Peacekeeping has only succeeded (to the degree that it can be said to have succeeded at all) because it had the permission of the Great Powers. In this regard, Pearson would have praised the UN-sanctioned, US-led coalition force that was arrayed against Saddam Hussein. In the late-1940s, Pearson recognized that the UN was incapable of fulfilling any central security role and that the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization would have to serve as the peacekeeping arm of the UN until the UN itself could function as a guarantor of security.

Pearson saw no contradiction in the principle of using a military coalition of nations to enforce a peace. Yet, UN supporters like Audrey McLaughlin, leader of the New Democratic Party condemned the action as a 'militaristic vision of the United Nations.'

Granatstein and Hillmer believe there is still a need for 'umpires' in the world, and Andrews also feels that Canada should continue to pursue 'middleness' and be a voice for moderation in world politics. Canada must face up to the unpleasant fact that the UN's days as a security force are over. UN missions can no longer be used to promote pacifism and anti-Americanism, and perpetuating an instability is no virtue. UNPROFOR was consciously planned to be just the sort of indefensible 'humanitarian' mission that marks the failure of UNFICYP. On this score, at least, there is no excuse for UNPROFOR. Also, Canada must realize that not every problem can be solved by diplomacy; sometimes, as in Bosnia, war is the lesser of two evils. Canada has to rediscover the backbone that helped it emerge from WWII as a nation in its own right in order to avoid the ridicule Wiesel talked about last August. 'Most Canadians,' write Granatstein and Hillmer, 'forget that their country may produce the best hockey referees, but it also breeds hockey players who go into the corners with their elbows up and frequently jab the other team's players in the ribs with their sticks. Canada has never been a choir boy in the concert of nations; it has fought wars and bargained for advantage like all the rest.' Eighty years ago, Arthur Meighen was ridiculed for his 'Ready, aye, Ready' policy of support for the British. Canada's 'Ready, aye, Ready' peacekeeping should end with Bosnia.