

The Evolution and Future of Peacekeeping

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Since its invention by Lester Pearson at the time of the Suez crisis in the Autumn of 1956, peacekeeping has become the international conflict resolution of choice. It has undergone many revisions in definition and approach, necessitated by changing national, inter-national and intra-national circumstances. Yet, the word “peacekeeping” still resonates positively with informed citizens around the globe. No matter how it is defined, no matter the various additional terms that have been devised in the last few decades to describe various facets of peacekeeping, that word, more than any other, evokes a realistic hope in the minds and actions of those who would like to see our universe become a more peaceful, stable and secure place in which to live.

I will take advantage of the opportunity afforded me through these few pages to outline some of my views, emphasize a number of points and look to the future.

Notwithstanding such terms as peace operations, peace enforcement, peace support operations, preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, peace restoration, peace establishment, special political missions, and peacemaking, to name but a few of the newcomers, it is *peacekeeping* that brings a warm glow to the faces of individuals who are asked to name what is perhaps the most significant contribution of the United Nations to world betterment.

Media researchers and commentators find it very difficult to differentiate between and among several of the new terms and, for that reason, tend to place virtually all conflict resolution operations under the *peacekeeping* rubric.

What flows is the first point of my short remarks. It is simply that the word *peacekeeping* is an honorable one and will continue to be used more than any other by theorists, practitioners and members of the general public alike well into the future. To try to insist that the word be employed in narrow meaning is a futile exercise and indeed, will subtract from the good works being carried out in a great many countries.

In early 1994 as planning for the establishment of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre commenced, those involved were insistent that due and balanced recognition be paid to the often-unrecognized and sometimes-criticized reality that peacekeeping writ large was not a purely military activity but was surely a cooperative endeavour between and among military, good governance, political/diplomatic, humanitarian and civilian police individuals,

organizations and units. Thus programs and courses were conducted with classes of international, multi-disciplinary civilian and military personnel.

It very quickly became apparent to students and faculty alike that each of the representatives of the various disciplines had much to learn about the other. Information was shared, lessons were passed on and relationships were forged that have proven to be of immense value in the planning, preparation, conduct and assessment of peacekeeping missions.

Some military personnel and a number of representatives of non-governmental organizations are still hesitant about the possibility of being too far into one another's camp. However, it is virtually universally recognized that military and civilian expertise is too valuable to be cast onto the sidelines simply because of organizational envy. Each discipline must be encouraged to participate to the maximum extent possible in times of necessity and emergency. It was not too long ago that extraordinarily military/civilian cooperation was regarded as exceptional by most and abhorrent by some. My second point is that military and civilian organizations will be working together far into the future and must, in a markedly unselfish manner and with the utmost positivism, explore every avenue of enhancing and increasing that essential cooperation.

My third point is that various nations adopt various ways and means to support and participate in UN and non-UN peacekeeping missions and other peacekeeping-linked activities and while such support and participation wax and wane from time to time, it does not imply a diminished commitment to international peacekeeping.

Currently, there are approximately 105,000 uniformed personnel (troops, police and military observers) and in excess of 20,000 civilians (international, local and UN volunteers) taking part in UN peacekeeping-related missions. Other operations such as the non-UN but widely supported Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) account for hundreds if not thousands more. They come from over 120 countries.

In the early years of peacekeeping and continuing until a few years ago, Canada was a major troop-contributor to UN missions and to a number of non-UN operations. While the number of Canadian military personnel in UN service has declined drastically due to Canadian troop effort being concentrated at present in Afghanistan, Canada continues to support peacekeeping and to contribute via other means.

It maintains a substantial contribution to peacekeeping research, education and training through the welcoming to National Defence Headquarters of representatives of countries wanting to learn more about peacekeeping and the dispatch of teams of experts around the globe to assist in expanding the number of countries capable of participation. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre continues to provide a strong Canadian intellectual and support presence by conducting courses on various aspects of peacekeeping, assuming leading roles in the design and conduct of national and international multi-disciplinary exercises and study sessions, by establishing the Canadian Peacekeeping Press to provide a publishing venue for papers and books on a wide range of topics, by the founding of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IATPC) and by assisting in the formation of training centres in other countries.

In a 1957 article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, written and published before he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his invention of peacekeeping the previous year, Lester Pearson knew that peacekeeping principles and practices would continue to evolve and be enhanced. He indicated that the world must build on the foundation of that first United Nations Emergency Force to deal with future conflicts or else a magnificent opportunity would have been lost. Build the world did, led by the UN with the support of its Member States, and it must continue to do so well into the future. If it does not, it would have squandered Pearson's legacy and failed to improve the state of the world's citizens.

The Cornwallis Group, an organization of professionals interested in the broad disciplines of international peace and security, has long provided an annual opportunity for reflection, discussion, and the taking of decisions relating to future research and actions. Its members are to be commended for their dedication and for their far-reaching results. I am proud to be a member and a Fellow of the Cornwallis Group.