

“A Canadian Defence Policy that moves towards Security without nuclear weapons or War “

- remarks by Peggy Mason to Panel Session I of the International Conference “Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World”, in Astana, Kazakhstan (28-30 August 2016)

President Nazarbayev in his “Manifesto of the World for the 21st Century” set out a visionary, yet clear and practical programme for achieving security without reliance on nuclear weapons or war of any kind. He builds his plan on the central principles of the UN Charter: the peaceful resolution of disputes, the non-threat or use of force, the importance of human development and the common security of all states.

A key stumbling block in this urgent programme of action to replace the dead end of militarism with common security has been the role of nuclear deterrence (so called) in the security doctrines of nuclear weapons states and those in alliance with them. The Inter Parliamentary Union in 2014 (supported by the Canadian parliament) called on parliaments to work with their governments to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines in order to support multilateral negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements. Similarly the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (also supported by the Canadian delegation) adopted a text calling for lowering the role of nuclear weapons to no-first-use and for supporting multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in 2017.

But the governments of the nuclear weapons states and their allies are not heeding these myriad and powerful parliamentary calls. Speaking of my own country,

Canada, even the new Liberal government, despite its stated determination to re-engage constructively with the United Nations, continues to place a higher priority on the NATO alliance and its misguided Strategic Doctrine than on our binding obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to negotiate in good faith the elimination of nuclear weapons. What could be more depressing evidence of this tendency than Canada's recent, disgraceful vote in Geneva against the Report of the Open-Ended Working Group. Doug Roche, my predecessor as Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, and well-known to most of you here as someone who has dedicated himself to nuclear abolition, described the report as containing a "wide range of well-considered measures, including negotiations to break out of the nuclear disarmament logjam that continues to endanger the world community".

Even if Canada had serious misgivings about the proposal to begin negotiations without the express support of the nuclear weapons states, we still need not have voted against the Report. We could have abstained with an explanation that, while we strongly support the goal of nuclear disarmament and share the frustration of other NNWS on the lack of progress toward that goal and their concern over the massive nuclear weapons modernization programmes underway, we regrettably could not vote in favour of the resolution because of our belief that the process was unworkable without the participation of the NWS from the outset. While this would still have been an abdication of leadership on Canada's part, at least it would have been a position which did not align us with the NWS and their recalcitrance, as our obdurate "NO" vote has done.

So what to do? How do we begin a security dialogue that offers the prospect of real progress away from nuclear deterrence?

As President Nazarbayev outlined in his Manifesto, I too fervently believe the answer lies in returning to the vision of common security embedded in the UN Charter.

This is the approach that the Rideau Institute and a range of other Canadian non-governmental organizations took in developing our submission to the government of Canada, as part of the Defence Policy Review now underway. The full text of that submission is available as a supplement to my remarks today. In the time I have left, let me just reference a view of the main points.

A Shift to Sustainable Peace and Common Security

We called on Canada to restore and expand emphasis on war prevention and peaceful conflict resolution and to give priority to building the United Nations envisaged by its Charter. Canada should pursue and promote, wherever possible, conflict prevention, the peaceful resolution of disputes and sustainable peace-building. We should press for multilateral over unilateral responses. We should be a constructive, innovative problem solver, striving to bring conflicting parties closer together to resolve their differences. We could thereby stave off or hasten the repair of breaches of the peace, limit human suffering and environment degradation and minimize costly military interventions.

This year the United Nations proposed a refreshing reorientation towards prevention of armed conflict by embracing the language and perspective of sustainable peace¹. Prevention costs 60 times less than late response and often

¹ [Freeing Prevention from conflict: Investing in Sustaining Peace](#) (Youssef Mahmoud , IPI) 2016. See also: [Concurrent Resolution #2282 of UNSC and UNGA \(2016\)](#)

futile or counterproductive military interventions.² Additionally, 85 per cent of armed conflicts do not end on the battlefield but through negotiated settlements.³

We urged Canada to forthrightly embrace this framework, to work for cooperative solutions to violent conflict, and to help proactively to guide others towards this shift to a sustainable, common security outlook. Common security puts a premium on the machinery and diplomacy of international cooperation; there is less reliance on the competitive pursuit of national security at the expense of others. It is therefore a more perfect reflection of the UN Charter provisions against the use of force, and in favour of the peaceful resolution of disputes and of the equal right to security of all states.

Because prevention of armed conflict should be our first priority in reaching towards global sustainable peace, we also called on Canada to increase overseas development assistance (ODA) towards the target of .7% of our GDP. Canada should ensure that its ODA, as well as its policies on trade, investment and migration, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) articulated in the UN's Agenda 2030. Too often, international aid, trade, and investment initiatives have stoked economic, social and political turmoil by undermining livelihoods, dislocating populations, degrading the environment, and fueling conflict over resources. A coherent foreign policy - involving diplomacy, development, defence, trade, investment and migration - aimed at achieving the SDGs will help to limit negative outcomes and achieve the very positive goals of Agenda 2030. (I note that these recommendations equate very

² Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1994.

³ Disarming Conflict: Why Peace Cannot Be Won on the Battlefield (Ernie Regehr, 2015).

closely to that part of the Manifesto where President Nazarbayev spoke of fair trade and development.)

Making UN Peacekeeping and Sustainable Peace a Canadian Defence priority

We called on Canada to make UN Peacekeeping and building sustainable peace a Canadian defence priority by privileging multilateral, UN-led peace and security efforts.

Full Re-engagement in UN Peacekeeping

We therefore called for Canada to fully re-engage in UN peacekeeping.

The UN has learned that effectively addressing violent conflict is a complex, long-term process of helping the conflicting parties not only to end the violence but also to create the necessary conditions – political, economic, security – for a sustainable peace. At the centre of this effort is the peace process. Complex political problems lie at the heart of violent conflict and require *political* solutions, negotiated and agreed to by the parties. A robust security element may be essential in both the negotiation and the implementation phases but it is a *supporting* element nonetheless, as reflected in its integrated command structure under the civilian authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).

Accordingly UN peace operations and broader UN peace and security initiatives and responses should be elevated to a Canadian defence priority. This in turn means Canada must put in place a comprehensive peacekeeping policy framework, develop the necessary training infrastructure, identify and procure relevant equipment and actively advocate for strengthened UN rapid response mechanisms.

Significantly more Canadian troops must be made available for UN missions and resources need to be re-allocated to support the UN peacekeeping priority.

Criteria for Canadian Military Intervention Abroad

Canada's defence policy must be firmly grounded in our steadfast support of the UN Charter and the principles of international law – a framework that privileges conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Canada's political and military decision makers must keep foremost in their minds the acute limitations of, and risks inherent in, foreign military intervention, as Iraq and Afghanistan so graphically illustrate. Military intervention, outside a clearly defined UN-led peacekeeping context, must be invoked only as a last resort, when Canada's national security is directly threatened, and in full accordance with international law. Canadian military participation in “robust” peacekeeping, variously called peace support and/or security assistance operations – that is, military operations of *choice* – must be regulated by the following:

Canada should establish clear criteria to guide a decision on whether to participate with military forces in a specific UN authorized international security assistance operation. These criteria should include:

- A strong international *legal* framework for intervention based on a clear UN mandate and ideally under UN command; clear rules of engagement and rigorous UN oversight mechanisms; and

- A UN-led and broadly agreed *political* framework for the intervention, ideally in the form of a comprehensive peace agreement or, at a minimum, a broadly agreed negotiating framework to this end.

Improve UN Rapid Response Mechanisms

Responding to violent crises before they spiral completely out of control and providing early support for the implementation of fragile peace agreements will be impossible without significantly ramping up the UN capacity for rapid response.

UNEPS: We therefore called on Canada to support and advocate for the creation of a standing (permanent) United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) for rapid deployment to prevent atrocities.

With the creation of UNEPs, effectively a “first responder” for complex emergencies – the UN would finally have a rapid, reliable capacity to help fulfill four of its toughest assigned tasks: (1) to help prevent armed conflict and genocide, (2) to protect civilians at extreme risk, (3) to ensure prompt start-up of demanding peace operations, and (4) to address human needs where other actors cannot or will not.⁴

Standby High-Readiness Brigade and RDMHQ: Canada should also work to improve other UN rapid response mechanisms including revitalizing support for the Standby High-Readiness Brigade⁵ and advancing the proposal for a UN Rapidly Deployable Military Headquarters (RDMHQ).⁶

⁴ See Annex on UNEPS for further elaboration.

⁵https://www.academia.edu/8868537/Improving_the_United_Nations_Capacity_for_Rapid_Deployment, page 4. See also: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/E2-234-2000E.pdf>

⁶ Ibid., page 4.

UN, NATO and Terrorism

We believe that terrorism is not defeated primarily with military measures but by a comprehensive approach which privileges rule of law and good governance, in order to effectively address root causes and underlying grievances rooted in political, economic or social exclusion. This in turn means that, where a security component is required, the most effective approach will be through a UN-led peace operation/peacekeeping mission.

Where this approach is not immediately possible, and bearing in mind the heightened risk of failure where alternative mechanisms are employed, it is essential that any other approach, for example a NATO-led operation, be fully in accordance with international law and, insofar as Canadian military participation is concerned, meet the criteria set out earlier in this document for UN-led peace operations.

Weapons System Choices

Weapons Systems and International Law

It is essential that weapons choices for the Canadian military reflect our steadfast support for international humanitarian and human rights law and the principles of the Geneva Conventions, to which we are bound to comply. Canada must vigorously support the international control of weapons, and a ban on “problem” weapon groups involving weapons that cause indiscriminate or disproportionate harm to civilians. In accordance with our obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Canada should eschew participation in, or support for, nuclear weapons modernization. We should also avoid participation in other destabilizing weapons systems like American strategic ballistic missile defence.

Work to reduce and eliminate NATO reliance on nuclear weapons

We went into some detail in our submission on the need for Canada to give significant priority in defence policy to reducing and eliminating NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons.

We drew attention to the fact that, in the updated NATO Strategic Concept, NATO member States “are resolved to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons...” as well as to play their part “in reinforcing arms control and promoting disarmament of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction...”. (para 26).

Instead five NATO member states, where American tactical nuclear weapons are currently stationed, are poised to receive updated tactical nuclear weapons with lower yields and more precision, exactly the characteristics that the US Congress said back in the 1990's created the “illusion of usability” and on the basis of which they denied the Pentagon authorization to develop them.⁷

It is manifestly urgent that Canada re-enter and re-vitalize the debate within NATO on the role of nuclear weapons with a view to securing agreement to their removal from Europe as a first step toward NATO adopting a deterrent posture that is not reliant on but which excludes nuclear weapons. Such actions would be in keeping with a Canadian approach to the alliance wherein we support diplomacy first, reassurance and de-escalation, and thereby reflect the "sustainable peace" measures we purport to embrace through cooperation within the United Nations.

⁷ [Disarm and Modernize](#) (John Mecklin, FP.com) 2015.

The Humanitarian Pledge, now signed by 127 states, declares that the catastrophic humanitarian harm that would result from the explosion of a nuclear weapon far outweighs any security benefit alleged by nuclear weapons states. No NATO member state has signed the Humanitarian Pledge. Our submission called on Canada to work to reverse this disgraceful logjam by signing the Pledge and cooperating in efforts to stigmatise, prohibit and eliminate all nuclear weapons. To these recommendations I would now add a call for Canada to reconsider its vote against the report of the OEWG when it comes to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in October and, at a minimum, move to an abstention. Ideally, Canada would vote in favour as the Report contains many measures we already support. Any lingering concerns we have about the negotiation process could be addressed in an Explanation of Vote.

Provide global leadership in nuclear abolition

Consistent with Canada's traditional leadership role in promoting nuclear abolition (albeit a tradition suspended for some ten years under the previous Conservative government), our Defence Policy Review Submission also urged Canada to take the following actions:

- Sponsor a resolution in the 71st session of UN General Assembly that seeks a mandate to negotiate a comprehensive, legally binding Convention that prohibits nuclear weapons and requires their verifiable elimination; and
- Seek to undertake negotiations as a matter of urgency, in a forum that is open to all UN member states, employs democratic rules of procedure and welcomes the engagement of civil society.

I will end my short remarks with the closing words of our Defence Policy Submission, in the hopes that they inspire others here to work with their own governments and parliaments to these same ends.

Enhancing sovereignty and security in an interdependent world

Canada, with no direct threats to its territory and a web of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperative security arrangements to draw on, is in a unique position to help build the United Nations as envisaged by its Charter. That visionary document highlights the interdependence of human rights, human development and international peace and security. It places conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law at the heart of its architecture. It limits the national use of force to self-defence and even then only so long as UN-led collective action has not been brought to bear. Canada can give high priority to using our military assets, human and materiel, to strengthen the UN's capacity for rapid response in times of crisis, its ability to shore up fragile peace processes and to implement comprehensive peace agreements which lay the foundation for sustainable peace.

Our careful choice of weapons systems and other military equipment can give value to taxpayers at home while enabling us to best serve UN-led peace and security operations abroad. Our work to curb and prohibit those systems that are excessively injurious or cause undue harm to civilians will help expand the reach of, and respect for, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Our work within NATO to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons to zero, and to secure their removal from Europe, will contribute to urgently needed efforts to step away from the nuclear brink and begin meaningful, comprehensive negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

These actions by Canada aimed at strengthening international peace and security will, in turn, enhance Canadian sovereignty and security in the interconnected world we all share.

Thank you.

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