# Watching, Writing, and Waiting: Canadian Participation in Observer Peacekeeping Missions, 1948-1956

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Abstract:

On 24 July 1956, Jordan's Arab Legion occupied a house inside the disputed armistice line of Jerusalem's Mount Scopus enclave. Israeli fire was soon brought to bear on the position, precipitating a protracted firefight. Canadian officers Major Marcel Breault and Major George Flint, serving as observers with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), managed to secure a ceasefire. However, while attempting to reach the house in question and confer directly with the Jordanians, one of the men triggered an anti-personnel mine, severely wounding both soldiers.

Why were Canadians even so intimately involved in such an incident? Most Canadians take peacekeeping missions, and their country's participation in them, for granted. But a look back to the earliest mediation and observation taskings, especially those before the innovation of the armed United Nations Emergency Force in November 1956, paints a very different picture.

UNTSO, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP), and the International Commission of Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Indochina represented the initial peace missions of the post-war world. Canada was the largest contributors to all three, whose observing officers dutifully watched, wrote, and waited. Of course, they also mediated disputes, helped deliver food and medical supplies, assisted refugees, and occasionally interposed themselves directly between opposing sides. These delicate tasks required military proficiency, diplomatic skill, and cultural understanding.

What did these observers think of their duties? How did they feel about the parties involved? What did their comrades from other nations, as well as the opposing sides, think of the Canadians? How did domestic public, media, and defence opinion perceive these assignments? What, if anything, did they and their taskmasters accomplish? What may this tell us today about attitudes towards peacekeeping

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## Introduction

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Why were Canadian soldiers so intimately involved in such an incident? Today, many Canadians take peacekeeping missions, their country's participation in them, and the motivations behind that participation, for granted. A look back to the earliest mediation and observation taskings, especially those predating the innovation of the armed United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in November 1956, paints a very different picture.

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The once undisputed Canadian claim of participation in every United Nations peace mission is based upon observer postings. These taskings are, by official definition, the true "classical" peacekeeping.[1] Yet, the duties carried out by observers, the reactions of the parties involved, and domestic public and defence opinion were all very different during 1949 to 1956 than they are today. It did not help that peacekeeping accomplished very little in this period.

All three of these peacekeeping operations were in response to inter-state conflicts following independence from British or French colonial rule. Although they met with some success in particular instances, the outside observations failed to foster, or in two of three cases even 'keep,' peace. That said, many lessons may be learned from these seven years of observation-only operations, with peacekeeping first openly promoted and its early doctrines codified. Furthermore, for the Canadian military, these missions did not represent the "roots of complicity," but nor were they solely in the "interests of peace."[2]

The concept of peacekeeping, described here as a politically neutral non-aggressive military element placed between or among belligerents, is not enshrined in the United Nations Charter or any other weighty document. Indeed, the phrase itself only came into popular use following the 1956 establishment of UNEF. The contemporary term for observer missions, keeping the peace, is very similar. Significantly, the original phrase sounds more active, even if operations carried out during these seven years were not. Of course, peacekeeping did not spring forth magically from the fount of the United Nations. Earlier in the twentieth century, peacekeeping based on economic and imperial interests, such as the troops sent to pacify the Boxer Rebellion and the Siberian expeditionary force in the Russian Civil War, predominated. The UN's much-maligned predecessor, the League of Nations, also led multinational observer missions to oversee European plebiscites and the Leticia dispute between Peru and Colombia.

In principle, the United Nations had been created in 1945 to ensure a united front against future aggression. Unfortunately, the Cold War got in the way, even as one of the first episodes of this new epoch, the Korean conflict, witnessed a UN military action against the North Korean

invasion of its southern neighbour. Before those hostilities, the UN had also led a fact-finding operation to Greece and brokered a truce between the Netherlands and Indonesia.

The United States pioneered and led this method of peacekeeping, with assistance from the smaller Western powers. Canada was just one of many countries in this category. To a limited extent, even France and Great Britain made acceptable peacekeepers, at least until the Suez campaign of 1956. The Americans and many of their allies, predicating world peace on the containment of international communism, saw peacekeeping and the collective sanction of the Korean police action as flip sides of the same coin. Concerted Soviet opposition to peacekeeping developed only in the mid-1950s, as the West outmaneuvered the USSR, especially with the 1950 Uniting for Peace resolution, allowing the Western-dominated General Assembly to bypass the Soviet veto in the Security Council. By 1954, with the Cold War expanding throughout the world and the USSR more active at the United Nations, the United States withdrew from peacekeeping.

This era also represents the height of Canadian diplomatic prestige, the nation's first non-wartime collective security commitments, and a rare circumstance when political rhetoric fostering peace could be backed by military action, notably through observer peacekeeping. Nevertheless, active operations in Korea or service with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces took precedence for Canada. Peacekeeping never approached these commitments in importance, exemplified by the fact that Canada maintained 7,000 troops in South Korea from the 1953 armistice until 1956, while the military devoted about 500 personnel to peacekeeping. The Defence Department's annual reports for 1949 to 1955 do not even mention peace operations.[3]

The quality of those 500 peacekeepers was not in doubt, however. Drawn mainly from senior army officers with Second World War experience, these observers composed some of the best the military and the country could offer. This alone demonstrates the esteem accorded peacekeeping. The United Nations' response to one of the first crises of the post-war world opened Canadian involvement in keeping the peace.

United Nations Military Observer Group in India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP)

The Indo-Pakistani conflict over the disputed area of Jammu-Kashmir dates from 1947. Upon the British withdrawal from the sub-continent and the creation of India and Pakistan, the independent Principality of Kashmir remained free to join either of the new countries. The prince, a Hindu ruler of a heterogeneous population with a Muslim majority, stayed aloof until an Islamic insurgency broke out. Desperate for assistance, the monarch acceded to India in exchange for the support of the Indian army. After a bout of vicious and inconclusive fighting, the two sides produced the 1949 Karachi Agreement. Significantly, the parties – commanded by British officers previously part of the same army – supported this bilateral arrangement. They accepted the ceasefire line and a demilitarized zone (DMZ) around it, leaving the area relatively calm until war re-erupted in 1965.

Conciliation attempts aimed at a more lasting solution failed miserably. The first bid, led by one of the leaders of America's victorious drive across the Pacific, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, quickly floundered. General Andy McNaughton, the original commander of the Canadian army in the Second World War, then led a personal UN-authorized mediation attempt. General McNaughton became persona non grata in India when his spurned peace proposals did not reflect Indian claims of Pakistani aggression.[4]

Despite McNaughton's frustrated mediation, Canada accepted service in UNMOGIP for two reasons: then current non-permanent membership in the Security Council and the ability to supply English-speaking officers in peak physical condition.[5] Of course, Canada's non-colonial

past, its membership in the British Commonwealth, and the involvement of other Western nations helped. Canada more than pulled its weight, providing 50 of the 250 total observers, some of whom served two annual tours, between 1950 and 1956. Only the United States provided more observers in the same interval.

Canada provided the second Chief Military Observer (CMO) for UNMOGIP, British Columbia Dragoons Brigadier H.H. Angle. Brigadier Angle's earlier service while attached to the UN's civilian conciliation committee in the region, "so impressed the officers of India, Pakistan, and the United Nations officials that the Secretary-General made a special request to the Canadian government for his services."[6] He became the first Canadian to be killed in the service of the UN, perishing in a Himalayan air crash in July 1950.

From February 1949, UNMOGIP's 50 commissioned military observers (MOs) supervised the ceasefire and investigated breaches of the Karachi Agreement. Mission guidelines distinctly proscribed interpositioning between the two sides. Orders also specified that observers, "must be capable of conducting a thorough and impartial investigation of alleged Ceasefire violations and be able to prepare in writing a report covering all the facts and circumstances resulting from his investigation."[7] This was the prototypical watch, write, and wait mission.

The extremes of Kashmir weather meant severe winters and scorching summers. The headquarters and many observer stations practiced the ancient nomadic custom of transhumance, seasonally shifting their lodgings. The logistical difficulties were many, and terrible food and primitive living conditions were major themes running through observers' reminisces. Posts were located on both sides of Kashmir and observers spent six months with each army, attached to specific units in twos. Despite the title of the United Nations' official peacekeeping record, no literal blue helmets existed until UNEF, so MOs served in national uniform with a United Nations armband. The UN flag denoted observer vehicles and fixed UNMOGIP posts.

Although the most common breaches of Karachi were farmers crossing the ceasefire line, MOs had great difficulty reaching many investigation sites, especially at altitudes of up to 7,000 metres. Yet, speed was of the essence, as MO and former Seaforth Highlanders commanding officer Colonel Syd Thomson noted, "everything seems to start with a small incident, and if the observer doesn't get there quickly to assess the violation, the incident may grow to a major clash as tempers rise."[8] Furthermore, with transport and radio communications at the behest of their hosts, true freedom of movement was curtailed. Witnesses could be interviewed, but the MOs would be accompanied by liaison officers.[9] Col. Thomson mentioned another common difficulty:

> It is a favourite trick for a soldier to shoot some lone person across the [ceasefire] line, then move the body to his side of the line and claim he shot a spy suspect. It is almost impossible for the Observer to correctly determine what actually did happen.[10]

Observers found themselves in the thick of renewed fighting as well. Although ordered not to interpose between the parties, Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Garneau arranged a local ceasefire in 1951 by driving his jeep (after dropping off his liaison) in-between the two sides and dismounting, diffusing the situation and arranging a stand down of troops. The CMO noted that his action, showed "courage, determination, and a high sense of duty."[11]

The most recent Canadian peacekeeping survey claims that Royal Canadian Air Force intelligence officers in Kashmir reported on the feasibility of launching a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union from the region. This claim is at odds with all other sources, particularly Karl Th. Birgisson's assertion that both superpowers, "saw the dispute for what it was, primarily a religious and nationalistic one, and could not make much use of it in a Cold War context."[12] Even if the former work's assertion has merit it would not have been neither ordinate to the UN assignment. Whatever the case, the Cold War did come to Kashmir before long, as the region's

proximity to Tajikistan assured it would, when American military aid to Pakistan brought Soviet support for India. The fallout for UNMOGIP saw Canada and Australia increase their contributions with Americans banned from India in 1954.

UNMOGIP constituted a reporting exercise, with the power of sanction vested in the Secretary-General. Since both sides had worked out what constituted a breach of the Karachi Agreement, the Security Council supported the mission, and incidents were minimal, the operation looked like a success.

Among these three examples, UNMOGIP alone is lauded as effective. As one work stated, “that few people outside of Asia and the contributing countries know of its existence is a measure of its success.”[13] The UN and UNMOGIP did successfully pause hostilities. But they failed to make any further progress. For one, the plebiscite allowing Kashmaris a say in their political future was never held. To Pakistan and many in Kashmir, this meant that the region’s accession to India had never been ratified. India refused to remove its troops from the area to allow the plebiscite, fearing incursions by Pakistani-backed irregulars. At heart, India saw Kashmir as an integral part of its secular state, whereas Pakistan felt, as the homeland for southeast Asian Muslims, that Kashmir was definitive to her territorial integrity. Disillusioned that the UN did not declare Pakistan the aggressor, calls for the removal of UNMOGIP reverberated from all sides of the Indian political spectrum.[14] Rather than a successful mediation crowned by a lasting peace, UNMOGIP merely institutionalized the Kashmir conflict.

United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)

The Middle East has been the site of the most vicious and protracted conflict since the Second World War. Brian Urquhart, the UN’s mandarin par excellence, has noted that “the United Nations’ actual role in critical situations was, to a considerable extent, pioneered in Palestine.”[15] The international body has devoted a tremendous amount of time, blood, and treasure to diffusing regional strife. Not surprisingly, the Middle East has also borne witness to the organization’s failures.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the beginnings of the Palestine Question/Arab-Israeli conflict. Suffice it to say that Britain’s 1948 withdrawal from Palestine led to Israel’s declaration of independence, which precipitated war with its Arab population, its four neighbours, and three regional states. In June, the Security Council threatened Chapter VII intervention to enforce the first of many truces, lasting four weeks. The UN then established an observer formation, with members drawn from Belgium, France, and the United States. Israeli victory in the field resulted in the conclusion of separate armistice agreements, mediated by American Ralph Bunche, between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria in 1949.

The supervision of these documents, the most important peace effort of the UN’s early years, grew from circumstance, close Western ties, and the danger of political instability to the regional oil supply.[16] Although the Soviets resented the Western monopoly on the force, they abstained from vetoing it. Indeed, the Soviets overtly backed Israel, supplying the country with many of the arms used to win its independence.

No permanent peace followed the armistice agreements, with the winner attempting to solidify its gains, while the defeated girded their collective loins for a second round. The UN proffered its good offices to effect mediation, and its good officers to report on reality. In essence, UNTSO watched the oft-violent interval until a fresh outbreak of open war in 1956.

UNTSO formed four separate Mixed Armistice Commissions (MACs), consisting of equal numbers of the countries’ members, plus a chairman who cast the deciding vote in any violation investigation. The observers’ responsibilities consisted of investigating complaints brought by one or both parties and watching the ceasefires. Unlike UNMOGIP, the truce

supervisors did not merely report, theoretically they also supervised. The partiality mechanism inherent in MAC voting soon damaged relations with both sides. UNTSO chairmen sided with one of the parties during an investigation, but they had no effective mechanism to sanction the guilty. UNTSO's role was simply to supply the UN with "adequate and objective information of such kind as may be required, rather than to enforce agreements or make peace."[17]

Headquartered in the divided city of Jerusalem, with offices in Amman, Beirut, Damascus, and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip, UNTSO's overall strength varied from 35 to 50 military observers. All MOs ranged in rank from Captain to Lieutenant-Colonel or their equivalents. Travelling in white jeeps, the unarmed observers were equipped with radio, compass, maps, binoculars, paper, pens, and all the personal attributes they could muster. Ideally, observers would be on the scene of a violation quickly. Realistically, this seldom happened, a more common occurrence being arrival after the fact or during, when frantic attempts to secure a ceasefire, as in the example of Majors Breault and Flint, could be made. Americans spearheaded the operation. Besides the mediator, the third Chief-of-Staff, Lieutenant-General William E. Riley, the long-term Chairman of the Israel-Hashemite Jordan Kingdom Mixed Armistice Commission (IHJKMAC), Commander Elmo Hutchison, and the largest proportion of the MOs were provided by the United States.

The MACs were very different from one another, bringing about four unique UNTSO peacekeeping missions. Disputes on the Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission (ISMAC) centred around the most precious Middle Eastern commodity: water. Contentions in the IHJKMAC concerned the divided city of Jerusalem, the enclaves each side held in the other's territory, and Arab infiltration across the armistice demarcation line. Israel's frustration with the UN and the other parties led to their withdrawal from ISMAC in 1951 and IHJKMAC in 1954 (although they retained membership in the smoothly functioning Lebanon MAC). Disputes with Egypt, who banned Israel-bound shipping from the Suez Canal and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba, pertained to the al-Auja DMZ and sponsorship of Palestinian fedayeen (self-sacrificer) raids. By 1955, Israel ceased attending the Egyptian MAC and stepped up raids into the Gaza Strip and Sinai. The full-scale 1956 Israeli invasion soundly defeated the largest Arab state, demonstrating UNTSO's irrelevance in the process.[18]

The Canadian decision to contribute to the mission was not an automatic one. Throughout the first decade of Israeli independence, Canada supported Palestinian rehabilitation through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and sold arms to Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon.[19] Moreover, despite Canada's prominent role in the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, in the UN debates on the Palestine issue, and its support of Israel's admission to the international body, no Canadians were posted to UNTSO during the first five years of its existence.

In the end, Canadian peacekeepers became involved at the urging of the Western powers. Major-General E.L.M. Burns, former head of the Canadian Corps in the Italian Campaign, took command of the mission in 1954. The UN, especially those Security Council members – Britain, France, and the US – attempting to limit Soviet intrigue in the region, needed a competent replacement for the resolutely pro-Arab Danish Chief-of-Staff, General Vagn Bennike. Maj.-Gen. Burns' ironic nickname of "smiler" says much about common opinion of his personality, but UN service was Burns' calling. Whatever the reasons for his appointment, as a devoted and impartial servant of the United Nations, he consulted the Secretary-General for instruction, never his home government. He ran into problems early, raising the ire of the Israelis for his declared intention to learn Arabic, but – since most Israelis spoke English or French – not Hebrew.[20] Even though his active attempts at containing the conflict through preventative shuttle diplomacy

failed, Maj.-Gen. Burns did everything in his limited powers to enforce the armistice agreements, and there is no doubt he was the most effective UNTSO Chief-of-Staff in this period.[21]

Shortly after his arrival, Maj.-Gen. Burns increased the strength of the mission, while doubling the number of Canadian officers under his command from five to ten. By the time of Israel's invasion of Egypt, this group included nine officers of field rank, the ISMAC chairman (Lt.-Col. Paul Bertrand) and the IHJKMAC chairman (the newly-promoted Lt.-Col. George Flint). Canadian observers served half of their year-long tour on the Syrian MAC and the other half on the Jordanian, both of which continued to function with varying levels of Israeli involvement. They lived and worked at fixed locations for five days at a time, moving to investigate complaints or reinforce other posts. Canadian women also made an important contribution. Although not listed on strength as observers, civilian female assistants were ever-present at MAC meetings, and they prepared, stored, and reviewed the reams of paperwork that constituted UNTSO's modest contribution to peace in the Middle East.

The nature of the conflict made UNTSO a very dangerous assignment. The day after the wounding of MOs Breault and Flint, a Jordanian mob attacked Swedish observer Lt.-Col. E.H. Thalin. Harassment, physical violence and shooting attacks, up to and including mortar, artillery, armour, and air strikes, were a regular part of supervising the Arab-Israeli truce.[22]

Although the UN halted the original fighting and provided a mechanism to encourage a permanent peace, the parties were not interested. After 1949, Arabs and Israelis talked openly to one another, or hurled invective at least, only in the UNTSO MACs. Since the Arabs and Israelis would not speak to each other without the UN's good offices, the MOs provided a vital service. However, this meant that the Arabs could meet with Israelis without de jure recognition of their state or even entertaining permanent peace.[23] The organization's efforts also failed to place even the smallest brake on the pattern of reprisal and counter-reprisal that dominated the conflict from 1952.[24] The MOs' recorded tabulations and handed down judgments resulted in nothing concrete, not even shaming the parties in the court of world opinion. UNTSO's understaffed and unarmed investigators could not supervise, let alone enforce, the armistice agreements. Moreover, when the organization refused to consistently side with the Israeli version of events, its one common member obstructed the entire operation. For this reason, most Canadian MOs came to the region pro-Israeli, and departed pro-Arab.[25]

The formation of the United Nations Emergency Force in the aftermath of the Sinai and Suez attacks superceded UNTSO and gave the UN a second chance at relevancy in the Middle East. Although Canadian External Affairs Minister Mike Pearson proposed the buffer force idea, it was Maj.-Gen. Burns' experience on the ground that most strongly influenced this development.

In spite of its questionable relevance UNTSO kept on, maintaining an international presence on the ground in Israel proper, nurturing a core group familiar with regional problems, and forming the proto-nuclei for inevitable future peacekeeping operations.[26]

International Commission of Supervision and Control (ICSC)

Established by the 1954 Geneva Agreements governing the withdrawal of French colonial forces from Indochina, the International Commission of Supervision and Control was an observer peacekeeping formation composed of representatives from Canada, India, and Poland. The involvement of the People's Republic of China in the Geneva negotiations meant the ICSC fell outside UN auspices. It also included, for the first time in peacekeeping history, a non-Western component, the Indian delegation. Unfortunately for the ICSC, the fateful composition of a Western, Eastern, and a non-aligned nation doomed the mission, although the intractability of the parties involved, especially in Vietnam, severely hindered it as well.

The Canadian government first learned of its country's proposed involvement with the ICSC from the media, and Canada accepted service only very reluctantly. Although Canadians by and large knew little of the region, Cold War developments had already seen Canada supply arms and monetary support to the French and ensured charter membership in the Commonwealth's 1950 Colombo Plan for Asian development.[27] There was also a chance Canadian and Polish officers may have fought together in Normandy, while Canadian and Indian delegates might have known each other from the Italian Campaign, the Korean War Commonwealth Division, or even from Kashmir.

The ICSC was tasked with supervising the withdrawal of the French, reporting on any importation of troops or matériel, and facilitating the repatriation of prisoners of war. Opposition came from the communist Viet Minh, whose military success had forced the French to the peace table. Although the Agreements were guaranteed by Britain and the Soviet Union, both 'Vietnams' could not accept de facto partition along the 17th parallel. Portentously, the South Vietnamese refused to recognize the accord and the United States failed to endorse it. Until July 1956, the deadline for completion of the French withdrawal and the holding of general elections, a conciliatory but tense situation persisted.

Canada's ICSC contribution consisted of over 125 officers, including 1 General for each of the three commissions, and 31 other ranks. This represented an especially large commitment of French-speaking personnel to former French colonies. The navy and air force supplied three observers each, acting in the same role as army officers, while a major civilian component encompassed dozens of External Affairs functionaries, clerks, cryptographers, and even a public relations branch.

The Polish delegation mirrored the Canadian, though the Indian contingent, with a peak strength of over 1,000, provided the majority of the logisticians and signallers. All parties ensured the majority of their contingents served on the most contentious Commission: Vietnam.

At first glance, with the word "control" in the organization's title, the ICSC suggests a more robust peacekeeping than the concurrent UN operations. Indeed, chapter VI, Article 36 of the Geneva Agreement tasked the ICSC with, "control of the movement of the armed forces of the two parties effected within the framework of the regroupment plan."[28] The use of the word resulted from an inexact translation of the French contrôler, meaning to inspect or check.[29] Whatever the definition intended by the accords' authors, the ICSC lacked the arms, numbers, unity, or freedom of movement to control anything.

Radically different missions awaited Canadians posted to the ICSC, depending upon service in Cambodia, Laos, North or South Vietnam. Some experiences were common, since the main responsibility of all was best described by Royal Canadian Artillery Captain E.G. de Domenico, "to keep the headquarters informed of developments in their sphere of responsibility by means of hand-written daily, weekly, and special situation reports."[30] Supervision of these spheres of responsibility by foot, vehicle, watercraft, and where French advisors remained, helicopters and light aircraft, took much of the observers' time. Since the Commission travelled in large groups with three representatives, porters, signallers, and interpreters, arrival at an investigation site could hardly be a surprise. Questioning locals posed another problem. Regular format meant a question asked in Polish, translated to English for the Indians, translated to French for the Canadians and the interpreter, and then asked in the local dialect. A response, filtered back in the same time consuming manner, then fostered accusations and counter-accusations of favouritism, poor translation, or outright deception. Likewise, members of fixed teams located in cities, ports, and airstrips were de facto customs agents without weapons or powers. With 93 observers watching fourteen points of entry over 5,500 kilometres of land and sea, arms got in.[31]

Cambodia played host to an early ICSC success. Weak communist forces did not contest free elections held in 1955, after which the Canadians sought to disband the Commission. Since a unanimous decision was required, the Poles resisted, hoping to assist local socialists while channeling Canadian frustration into contempt. The Poles then increased their contribution to the Commission, forcing the Canadians to stay active, and precipitating a downward spiral into the minutiae of Cambodian politics. As Royal Canadian Engineer Major A.L. MacLean described it, "isolation, loneliness, clashing personalities, and eventually boredom, were the main enemies to combat."[32]

Those serving in Laos or Vietnam could have used some of that boredom. Concerns over food, hygiene, and general health, especially in the remote postings, infused observer reports.[33] Captain de Domenico's accounts starkly illustrated the burdens of basic living conditions in Laos, let alone the chance of actually accomplishing anything. The Captain's work with a mobile team in the conflict-ridden Sam Neua province meant interposing between firefights, as he described: "there was not much we could do but walk right into the middle of the fire zones frantically waving our white flags with ICSC letters. Though highly dangerous, it succeeded and the fire died down." Small successes, "such as when we were able to bring to a halt the skirmishes between the former enemies in the Sam Neua area, or witnessed the lifting of a land mine, or saw a family re-united in Savannakhet" were the highlights of Canadian service with ISCS Laos.[34]

In Vietnam, sanctified Polish obstinacy made itself felt. Most decisions went against the non-communist South Vietnamese regime, and anger with this turn of events culminated in a Saigon anti-ICSC riot, directed against the Poles and Indians, in July 1955. Physical attacks on members were not the biggest problem faced by ICSC Vietnam, either. The most contested point was section 14(d) of the Geneva Agreements.[35] Many Roman Catholics residing in the northern zone feared the Viet Minh and wished to move south of the 17th parallel. The Canadians, stirred by the site of Christians fleeing communism, championed these 700,000 refugees and the French-inspired "Virgin has gone South campaign" against Polish opposition and Indian indifference.[36] While difficulties ensued, the relatively safe movement of so many people marked a rare ICSC success.

The failure to hold a Vietnam election was the irrevocable break. Since the communists would have won, the Southern authorities refused to allow voting to go forward.[37] As a result, the North Vietnamese, backed by the Soviets and Chinese, prepared to unify Vietnam by other means, while the South welcomed support from the United States. By the summer of 1956, disillusion had set in amongst the Canadians, as Commissioner Bruce Williams of the Vietnam component wrote to Ottawa, "the only difference between the situation now and the situation as it was ten months ago is that more paper has accumulated."[38]

This disillusion stemmed from larger problems as well. Unannounced ICSC inspections depended on the parties' consent, making the phrase itself meaningless. The official position of the USSR, as a guarantor of the peace accords, aided the communists, since Soviet respect for sovereignty, and local concerns about personal safety justified obstructing freedom of movement. As a result, the ICSC never discovered a single shipment of outside arms into Vietnam; yet somehow both sides had more weapons in 1956, not to mention any point in the 1960s, than their 1954 levels. Even if an inspection had discovered a violation of the accords, proof could be difficult to furnish with a Northern ban on photography. Violations could only be alleged in the North, but revealed for all to see – often with Canadian observers supporting the Poles and Indians – in the South.[39]

Unequivocal Polish support for the communists and unequivocal Indian neutrality combined to defeat Canadian efforts at impartiality. Even the Poles recognized the Canadian

attempts. Mieczyslaw Maneli, the Polish legal advisor in Vietnam, expected the Westerners to be bourgeois imperialists. Instead he found impartial professionals, as he recounted "whenever there was justifiable suspicion that the Southern authorities were treating their citizens in an inhumane manner, the Canadian delegates never hesitated in condemning the crimes."[40] The cast of the Commission forced the Canadians to take sides, since, in the words of J.L. Granatstein, "fairness was unfair to the anti-communist elements in all three countries."[41]

Importantly, after its creation, the ICSC had no higher organization to turn to for assistance. Ceasefire requests in the name of the Secretary-General or the United Nations were more likely to be effective than those in the name of a tiny, enfeebled observer group. This was doubly problematic because of the composition of the Commissions, as trouble implementing the Agreements came coupled with equally rancorous internal disputes.

The ICSC also watched the interval. The Commissions may have delayed the second round, but they could not have stopped it. Unlike the Middle East conflict, a great power was overtly involved, and once the United States committed itself to propping up the swaying South Vietnamese regime, the ICSC was a dead letter.

Conclusions

"The value of their contribution is relative to the degree of cooperation shown by the disputants."[42] So wrote one of the UN's finest soldiers, the Indian General Indar Jit Rikhye, in 1974. There seems to be a great deal of good sense here, albeit a good sense that conveniently shields the United Nations from direct blame. This is unfair, both to the parties and to the UN, as surely the United Nations does not wish irrelevance upon itself in disputes where the contenders do not support international involvement. If the UN's member states supported this belief, UNMOGIP and UNTSO might never have come about and certainly would not still be functioning.

From 1949 to 1956, the international organization, and the Canadians who contributed so heavily to UN missions and the ICSC (see Table I below) learned valuable lessons toward improving the practice of peacekeeping.

Table I: Canadian Service on Observer Peacekeeping Missions, 1949-1956[43]
[Annual Numbers]

| Mission | Years of Participation | Number of Observers |
|---|---|---|
| UNMOGIP | 1949-1956 | 7-10 |
| UNTSO: | 1954-1956 | 10 + Chief-of-Staff |
| IHJKMAC | 1954-1956 | 5 |
| ISMAC | 1954-1956 | 5 |
| ICSC: | 1954-1956 | 185 |
| Cambodia | 1954-1956 | 20 |
| Laos | 1954-1956 | 25 |
| Vietnam | 1954-1956 | 140 |

The failures of peacekeeping in this period were legion. These missions were hampered by a lack of outside support, no internal intelligence capabilities, irregular reinforcement, over-dependence on the disputants for freedom of movement, and serious logistical problems. UNMOGIP institutionalized the Kashmir struggle, UNTSO was reduced to a spectator in the Middle East,

and the ICSC even encouraged conflict amongst its own members. The UN role in the Kashmir dispute has been lauded because it has been ignored, even as it represents a co-operative version of the same failure as UNTSO (Pakistan and India may have agreed on much, and they certainly warily recognized each others' existence, but it made little difference as far as a settlement was – and is – concerned). During the first seven years of UN and ICSC peacekeeping, in John W. Holmes' phrase, "the function of the intermediary was mistaken for that of the international policeman and found wanting."[44]

At a weighty cost, observer missions gave birth to peacekeeping by armed buffer groups. Operations with clear mandates, controlled logistics, available defences, many deterrent options, and a clearcut time frame for permanent peace would have been more effective in all three of these situations.[45] Ideally, the Canadian-proposed UNEF was to be the first chapter of a different peacekeeping story. Concurrently, the Pearsonian myth of the birth and utility of peacekeeping is endangered by an examination of these operations. For one, the original post-war champion of keeping the peace was not Canada, nor even a neutral or middle power, it was the United States. Dr. Ralph Bunche mediated the Arab-Israeli armistice agreements and was influential in the establishment of the UN's truce supervision machinery, innovations that culminated in his 1950 Nobel Peace Prize. There is no doubt that Pearson and Maj.-Gen. Burns improved on Bunche's idea with UNEF, but the blueprint, failure though it was, existed.[46] The United States provided the largest logistical, financial, and personnel support to the UN until 1954. The ICSC is the watershed of this change, as the Cold War forced the Americans to cede peacekeeping duties to their allies, their neighbour to the north foremost among them.

The major impetus for Canada's involvement in peacekeeping, including UNEF, was the country's vital role in assisting American policy and helping its former colonial masters, Great Britain and France, withdraw with 'honour' from imperial mishaps. In this period, peacekeeping equaled helping the West out, preventing the East from coming in, and keeping the conflict manageable so that things stayed that way. Superpower tensions only became part of UN peace missions following the Korean War. If anything, in the earliest years, tensions between Britain and the United States over Kashmir and Palestine were even more acute. Through peacekeeping operations overseas, Canada played a new version of its very traditional helpful fixer role.

This explains why Canada did not participate in the late 1940s UN fact-finding mission to the Balkans or in mediating the disputes between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Conversely, despite the country's pronounced reluctance, Canada did serve on the ICSC, where its great power allies were involved, and agreed to accept a prominent role in UNTSO in 1954. Clearly, Canada's peacekeeping motivations concerned more than just a idealistic desire for world peace.

Actually, training for war with a multipurpose military is what made the Canadian contribution so valuable to international peacekeeping. Initial opinion suggested observers could be drawn from veteran officers lured out of retirement. Some of the initial officers committed to UNMOGIP, for example, were Second World War veterans enticed into re-enlistment for an exotic annual tour to the subcontinent. The Cold War and NATO brought military expansion, and from 1950 regular force officers were supposed to provide all observer strength, although reservists and augmentees continued to serve in Kashmir until 1954.[47] It goes without saying that Canada does not possess quite the same reservoir of experienced potential peacekeepers, particularly for larger taskings, today.

Wherever they were drawn from, Canadians performed ably as peacekeepers, and held an amazingly disproportionate number of command postings. Almost everything they did set a precedent. Seemingly a burden falling heavily on the army officer corps, observer operations provided admirable field development, encouraging formal training in languages, mediation, negotiation, public speaking, and the formation and writing of clear, concise arguments.

Certainly, these missions broadened the international horizons, cultural awareness, and personal viewpoints of those involved.

In spite of its earliest experiences, Canada soon found a niche in peacekeeping. Therefore, like it or not, where there is peacekeeping, there will usually be Canada. And even if the country ever ceased participating in large or robust missions, Canada will always be a welcome and invaluable participant in observer taskings.

NOTES

[1] United Nations, The Blue Helmets: A Review of UN Peacekeeping. 3rd Edition (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996), 3.
[2] These descriptions are selected from the titles of studies by James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Volume 5: Indochina, Roots of Complicity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) and Douglas A. Ross, In the Interests of Peace: Canada and Vietnam, 1954-1973 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
[3] Alastair Taylor, David Cox, and J.L. Granatstein, Peacekeeping: International Challenge and Canadian Response (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1968), 102. Canada's 'peacekeeping' role in the earliest years of the Korean armistice is outside the purview of this study, since both the country and the United Nations had been parties to that conflict and Canadian forces stationed in South Korea (including an infantry battalion and three destroyers) were clearly not impartial observers.
[4] Josef Korbel, "The Kashmir Dispute and the United Nations," International Organization, 3 (1949): 278-287; John Swettenham, McNaughton, Volume 3 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969); Surendra Chopra, UN Mediation in Kashmir: A Study in Power Politics (Kurukshetra, India: Vishal Publications, 1971), 39; John W. Holmes, The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, Volume 2: 1943-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 72-73; Sumit Ganguly, Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 22.
[5] Sylvain Lourié, "The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan," International Organization, 9 (1955), 22-23; Rosalyn Higgins, United Nations Peacekeeping, 1946-67: Documents and Commentary, Volume 2: Asia (London: Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1970). All original contributors save Mexico were drawn from the 1949 Security Council.
[6] Lourié, "The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan," 24.
[7] Pauline Dawson, Peacekeepers of Kashmir: The UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 50.
[8] S.W. Thomson, "Letter from Kashmir," Canadian Military History, 1, 1 & 2 (Autumn 1992), 97.
[9] Lourié, "The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan," 28.
[10] Thomson, "Letter from Kashmir," 98.
[11] Dawson, Peacekeepers of Kashmir, 52.
[12] Sean M. Maloney, Canada and UN Peacekeeping: Cold War by Other Means, 1945-1970 (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), 26; Karl Th. Birgisson, "United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan," in The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis, ed. William J. Durch (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 276.
[13] Indar Jit Rikhye, Michael Harbottle, and Bjørn Egge, The Thin Blue Line: Peacekeeping and Its Future (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 132. See also Birgisson, "United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan," 273.
[14] Francis Parakatil, India and the United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co (Pvt) Ltd., 1975), 162-165; Sumantra Bose, Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 7; Dawson, Peacekeepers of Kashmir, 126; Ganguly, Conflict Unending, 21, 152-157.
[15] Brian Urquhart, "The United Nations in the Middle East: A 50-Year Retrospective," Middle East Journal, 49, 4 (1995), 572-573.
[16] Rikhye et al., The Thin Blue Line, 125; Maloney, Canada and UN Peacekeeping, 55.

[17] Farouk Ali Sankari, "The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine," (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1968), 142. For more on UNTSO organization, see David Brook, Preface to Peace: The United Nations and the Arab-Israeli Armistice System (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1964); Rosalyn Higgins, United Nations Peacekeeping, 1948-67: Documents and Commentary, Volume 1: The Middle East (London: Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1969), 4-217.
[18] Good works covering the MACs include Nissim Bar-Yaacov, The Israel-Syrian Armistice: Problems of Implementation, 1949-1966 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Michael B. Oren, Origins of the Second Arab-Israeli War: Egypt, Israel, and the Great Powers, 1952-56 (London: F. Cass, 1992); Benny Morris, Israel's Border Wars: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1993); Nathan A. Pelcovits, The Long Armistice: UN Peacekeeping and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1960 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Raphael Israel, Jerusalem Divided: The Armistice Regime, 1947-1967 (London: F. Cass, 2002).
[19] Zachariah Kay, The Diplomacy of Prudence: Canada and Israel, 1948-1958 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).
[20] E.L.M. Burns, Between Arab and Israeli (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, & Company, 1962), 87; J.L. Granatstein and David Bercuson, War and Peacekeeping: From South Africa to the Gulf – Canada's Limited Wars (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1991), 190-191.
[21] Neil Caplan, Futile Diplomacy, Volume Four: Operation Alpha and the Failure of Anglo-American Coercive Diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1954-1956 (London: F. Cass, 1997), 104-106; Brook, Preface to Peace, 66-70; Sankari, "The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine," 67-68; Holmes, The Shaping of Peace, 35; Pelcovits, The Long Armistice, 90-93.
[22] See Burns, Between Arab and Israeli, 161. Lt.-Col. Flint was killed on Mount Scopus in 1958.
[23] Burns, Between Arab and Israeli, 56; Avi Beker, The United Nations and Israel: From Recognition to Reprehension (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988); W. Andrew Terrill, "The Lessons of UNTSO and the Future of UN Truce Supervision," Conflict, 9, 2 (1989): 197-208.
[24] The best critique of these policies is in Burns, Between Arab and Israeli, 38 and throughout.
[25] Granatstein and Bercuson, War and Peacekeeping, 191.
[26] UNTSO observers led the UN missions to Egypt (1956), Lebanon (1958), the Congo (1960), and Yemen (1962).
[27] Eayrs, Indochina, 26-51.
[28] Excerpted in Rikhye, et. al., The Thin Blue Line, 182.
[29] Paul Bridle, "Canada and the International Commissions in Indochina, 1954-72," in Conflict and Stability in Southeast Asia, eds. Mark W. Zacher and R. Stephen Milne (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 407-450.
[30] John E.G de Domenico, Land of a Million Elephants: Memoirs of a Canadian Peacekeeper (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing House, 1997), 7.
[31] Ramesh Thakur, Peacekeeping in Vietnam: Canada, India, Poland, and the International Commission (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 75.
[32] Excerpted in Fred Gaffen, In the Eye of the Storm: A History of Canadian Peacekeeping (Toronto: Deneau & Wayne, 1987), 183. See also Eayrs, Indochina, 71-87, 300-301.
[33] See R.F. McKay, "A Report on Vietnam," Canadian Army Journal, 17, 1 (1963), 32; Arthur E. Blanchette, Canadian Peacekeepers in Indochina, 1954-1973: Recollections (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 2002); Eayrs, Indochina, 292-299; Ross, In the Interests of Peace, 109-110.
[34] de Domenico, Memoirs of a Canadian Peacekeeper, 59, 94.
[35] "14(d) From the date of entry into force of the present Agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district." Excerpted in Ross, In The Interests of Peace, 390-391.
[36] Holmes, The Shaping of Peace, 211-212; Thakur, Peacekeeping in Vietnam, 104-137; Eayrs, Indochina, 196-197; Ross, In the Interests of Peace, 94-110.
[37] Eayrs, Indochina, 56; Thakur, Peacekeeping in Vietnam, 140.
[38] Excerpted in Eayrs, Indochina, 289.
[39] Eayrs, Indochina; Thakur, Peacekeeping in Vietnam, 67; Ross, In the Interests of Peace, 148, 168, 220.
[40] Mieczyslaw Maneli, War of the Vanquished (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 35.
[41] J.L. Granatstein, "Peacekeeping: Did Canada Make a Difference? And What Difference Did Peacekeeping Make To Canada?" in Making a Difference? Canada's Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order, eds. John English and Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1992), 226.
[42] Rikhye et. al., The Thin Blue Line, 122.

[43] Author's figures, compiled from Burns, Between Arab and Israeli; Higgins, United Nations Peacekeeping, Volume 1: The Middle East, United Nations Peacekeeping, Volume 2: Asia; Eayrs, Indochina; Thakur, Peacekeeping in Vietnam; Dawson, Peacekeepers of Kashmir; United Nations, The Blue Helmets.
[44] John W. Holmes, "Canada and the Vietnam War" in War and Society in North America, eds. J.L. Granatstein and R.D. Cuff (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1971), 191.
[45] See Burns, Between Arab and Israeli, 188; R.B. Tackaberry, "Organizing and Training Peace-Keeping Forces: The Canadian View," International Journal, 22, 2 (1967), 207.
[46] Brian Urquhart, "Ralph Bunche and the Development of UN Peacekeeping," in Ralph Bunche: The Man and his Times, ed. Benjamin Rivlin (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 188-191.
[47] Tackaberry, "Organizing and Training Peace-Keeping Forces," 196; Taylor et. al., Peacekeeping: International Challenge and Canadian Response, 102.