Canada is (Not Quite) Back:
Foreign Policy and the Changing Face of Peacekeeping

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Introduction

It has been nearly two years since Justin Trudeau's Liberals took power in Ottawa with a bold promise to restore Canada's reputation as a constructive force for international peace and security. The centrepiece of this 'Canada is back' strategy was a renewed commitment to UN peace operations: in mid-2016, the government additionally announced that up to 600 troops and 150 police officers would be made available for deployment. Yet amidst considerable speculation about when and where Canadian peacekeepers would be deployed – the UN Stabilization Mission in Mali being the most-discussed option – as of mid-2017 Canada remained where it has been for the better part of the past two decades: on the peacekeeping sidelines. According to the most recent UN statistics, out of some 95,000 uniformed personnel distributed across 16 operations, fewer than 100 (58 police officers, 10 military advisors, and 20 troops) are Canadian.[1] Thus far at least, therefore, Canada's big return to UN peacekeeping appears to be more of a bust.

In response to rumblings of disappointment from New York and growing criticism that Canada's deferral on the peacekeeping file represents a broken promise that undermines Canada's international reputation (Watt/Dorn 2017), governmental spokespersons, especially Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, have advanced various rationales for the lengthening gap between commitment and delivery. Given the

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[1] UN troop and police contributor statistics are available at:
http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml

complexity of contemporary peacekeeping operations, goes one argument, the government is taking the time to get it right, and to find the right mission and the right role where Canadian contributions can have the biggest impact (Campion-Smith 2017). Sajjan has also referred to the 'altered geopolitical landscape' in the wake of recent political upheavals in both the US and the UK as necessitating some sober second thought, lest Canada find itself offside its key allies on global security issues. Relatedly, although less explicitly, the elevation of Chrystia Freeland as Foreign Affairs Minister may also signal that at the highest levels of policy-making, the imperative of maintaining good bilateral relations with a volatile US administration – especially on trade issues – may be increasingly crowding out second-tier issues like peacekeeping.

My intention in this paper is to unpack some of the arguments that have led the Government of Canada to take a second, and perhaps more critical, look at both the upsides and downsides of re-engaging seriously with multilateral peace support operations. I suggest that Canada's false start on peacekeeping is symptomatic of a deeper uncertainty around Canada's role in, and contributions to, the promotion of international peace and security. One important reference point for this uncertainty is the reality that the multilateral infrastructure underpinning peace support operations is, depending on one's perspective, either in transition or in disarray. Amidst a flurry of recent high-level panels and reports on the architecture of global security governance, it remains far from clear, particularly in Africa, that even robust peacekeeping is up to the challenge of stabilizing the continent's most fragile and conflict-affected states. Similarly, the strategic logic linking peacekeeping with longer-term processes of peacebuilding and conflict resolution remains tenuous at best, and may be becoming more so over time. Compounding this challenge, from a Canadian perspective, is the parallel reality that while the Liberal re-commitment to peacekeeping made for good electoral politics, it was – and remains – disconnected from any coherent strategic vision underpinning renewed Canadian engagement. And absent any significant public clamour to see Canadian blue helmets back in action in the service of peace, thus far the Government has largely maintained the

course set by its predecessor, particularly with regard to non-UN engagements in Ukraine and Iraq, the goals of which – countering Russian aggression, fighting ISIS, and being a good NATO ally – are more easily defended with reference to conventional understandings of national interest. Ultimately, then, on the peacekeeping question the current 'light footprint' approach might continue to carry the day in Ottawa.

The Broader International Environment

In important ways, the dilemmas, challenges, and opportunities facing peacekeeping and peacekeepers in 2017 bear a strong resemblance to the turbulent days of the early 1990s. In both eras, the institution of peacekeeping demonstrated its relevance as the go-to multilateral instrument for addressing the challenges of fragile and conflict-affected states, and peacekeepers were, and are once again, among the most visible and prominent actors within the UN system. In the words of the recent report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO), the UN's entire reputation "hinges on its ability to help end wars and sustain peace" (UN 2015a: para 59). At the same time, however, as in the early 1990s UN missions are struggling under both ambitious mandates and high expectations to contain conflict, protect civilians, and lay the foundations for durable peace; and like peacekeepers in the immediate post-cold war period, they are increasingly asked to operate in contexts where there is precious little peace to keep. After nearly 20 years of peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, the current UN mission is in serious danger of being overwhelmed by renewed conflict. In a recent open letter to the UN Secretary-General, the International Crisis Group (Guehenno 2017) warned that "the whole country faces security threats reminiscent of the 1990s, territorial administration is in chaos, social services are collapsing and state institutions violently contested." Across other high-profile UN Missions – in Mali, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic – the limits of peacekeeping as a conflict management tool are also being

tested, in much the same way as they were in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in an earlier era.

One key difference between then and now, however, concerns the willingness of peacekeeping missions – and the Security Council that empowers them – to contemplate the use of force in the name of peace. This shift towards 'robust' or 'enforcement' peacekeeping can be traced directly back to the way in which failures of assertiveness implicated UN peacekeepers in genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica. In the contemporary era, in parallel with the growing tendency to treat non-state armed actors not as parties to the conflict but rather as illegal or illegitimate armed groups (or as simply terrorists), the Security Council has been increasingly open to authorizing offensive military action on the part of peacekeepers against specific actors. The most prominent example of this was the creation of the so-called Force Intervention Brigade in the context of the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), which was mandated to 'neutralize and disarm' all armed groups, including the Tutsi-dominated M23 militia, that had taken up arms against the Congolese government (Peter 2015: 354). This slide from peacekeeping to war-fighting can also be seen in the context of other UN missions, most notably MINUSCA in Mali, where UN peacekeepers have engaged in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, either on their own or alongside French special forces.

Debates around the ethics and utility of using force in the name of peace are long-standing, and the UN in particular has struggled with these dilemmas since the end of the cold war, when rigid adherence to the three bedrock principles of UN peacekeeping – impartiality, consent of the parties, and minimal use of force – became increasingly untenable. Indeed, over the intervening years, and especially after the Rwandan tragedy, the UN has arguably been inching closer towards embracing a fourth peacekeeping principle – the protection of civilians – on the eminently-compelling argument that the organization "could not stand idly by while atrocities were committed" (Karlsrud 2015: 48). While civilian protection mandates

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have become increasingly common in contemporary peace support missions, this principle continues to sit awkwardly alongside the original three and has proven to be exceedingly difficult to operationalize. As Bellamy and Williams (2010: 358) have noted, "it is now widely expected that peace operations should be in the business of protecting civilians, but there is no consensus about what protection entails, how civilians are best protected, or who is primarily responsible for protection."

Beyond the challenge of translating mandates into practice, there also are growing concerns that adding civilian protection and counter-terrorism to the standard repertoire of UN peace support mandates is leading the UN into unknown and dangerous territory. The most immediate danger is that by cutting corners on the principles of impartiality and consent in favour of siding with a specific party (usually the government), UN personnel – and indeed all members of the international community – are increasingly seen as fair game by factions targeted by UN enforcement actions. MINUSMA has, for example, quickly emerged as the UN's most dangerous mission, with some 118 peacekeepers killed over the past four years (Sieff 2017). Similarly, Mateja Peter (2015: 352) has warned that by blurring the lines between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the UN appears to be "going down the path not only of enforcing military solutions through offensive action, but also of presuming and precluding particular political solutions by siding with (often contested) governments." In other words, unless enforcement actions are carefully tailored to a broader political strategy for long-term conflict resolution – one of four 'essential shifts' recommended in the HIPPO report – they risk excluding those very actors, who may have significant domestic support even as they are deemed illegitimate by outsiders, whose inclusion may be required for any sustainable peace process to take hold. While the dilemma is now familiar – the international community has yet, for example, to find the right strategic formula to simultaneously degrade and engage the Taliban in Afghanistan – it has become no less intractable over time. Similarly, the ability of external military forces to decisively alter the balance of power on the ground in ways that open space for the

expansion and extension of legitimate state authority remains limited (Iraq being an emphatic case in point). The HIPPO report underlined both the lack of clear answers and the ongoing discomfort among UN member states surrounding these issues in its suggestion that "extreme caution must guide any call for a UN peacekeeping operation to undertake enforcement tasks and that any such mandate-task should be a time-limited, exceptional measure" (UN 2015a: para 119).

Unresolved debates around harnessing multilateral military force behind the cause of peace also point to the ongoing challenge of effectively integrating the imperatives of peacekeeping and stabilization with the comparatively longer-term requirements of peacebuilding. While intervening parties – the UN included – no longer appear fixated on short-term exit strategies, and while the language of 'peace support operations' is being increasingly embraced in recognition of the need to marry peacekeeping and peacebuilding at an operational level, in practice the international track record of shepherding conflict-affected states from ceasefire to stabilization to sustainable peace remains uneven at best. If the DRC provides one cautionary tale along these lines, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina is even more sobering. As a comparatively small country on the periphery of Europe, Bosnia has – for better or worse – been the focus of a well-resourced and often-intrusive peacebuilding effort since armed hostilities ended in 1995. While defenders of the international effort can point to 22 years of relative (if negative) peace, Bosnia remains deeply-divided, politically-dysfunctional, and economically-stagnant, and has careened in recent years from one crisis to the next to such a degree that the prospect of renewed warfare can no longer be fully discounted (Bennett 2016). If peace cannot be made self-sustaining in Bosnia, it is hard to be optimistic about its prospects in the constellation of African states where UN missions currently operate. Thus, as a range of Western nations – Canada among them – contemplate renewed engagement with UN peace operations, the prospect of being drawn into open-ended peacekeeping quagmires has curbed enthusiasm considerably.

Ultimately, then, the future of peacekeeping remains inextricably tied to the future of peacebuilding, and peacebuilding – at least in its liberal variant, which has dominated throughout the post-cold war period – is in crisis (Chandler 2017). Beyond the dilemmas of dealing with recalcitrant parties who may prefer the relative predictability of ongoing conflict to the uncertainty of a peace process, ambitious efforts to re-shape war-torn states into functioning liberal democracies have – with few exceptions – fallen so far short of the mark as to throw both the viability and appropriateness of the foundational assumptions upon which such efforts are based into serious question. To borrow a phrase from John Ruggie (1993), the peacebuilding policy community is currently 'wandering in the void', caught between an increasingly untenable set of assumptions about the building blocks of peaceful societies and how to assemble them, on the one hand, and on the other a more critically-inspired push to base future peacebuilding policy on an alternate, bottom-up set of assumptions – still empirically untested – around inclusivity, national ownership, and 'grounded legitimacy'. In other words, after fully a quarter-century of peacebuilding practice, the international community is still searching for appropriate sets of policy levers through which fragile and conflict-affected states can be sustainably guided towards less-fragile and more peaceful futures.

Given that UN-led peace support operations have long been recognized as imperfect yet indispensible, and governed by a flawed, fractious, and far-from-benevolent Security Council, the project of fixing them is almost as old as peacekeeping itself. While the 2000 Brahimi report remains a standard reference for this reform agenda, the past several years have seen a series of fresh studies and reports on strengthening the principles and practices underpinning the UN's peace support efforts. In addition to the afore-mentioned HIPPO report, the year 2015 alone witnessed the publication of the Report of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture as well as a landmark study on the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda, published on the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN 2015b; UN Women 2015). Over the

same time period the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (the successor to the Millennium Development Goals) were also being articulated, with much attention devoted to Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Beyond obvious differences in theme and scope, what all these studies share is a commitment to thinking more expansively about the challenge of sustaining peace in fragile and conflict-affected states, starting with a renewed emphasis on conflict prevention (which the new Secretary-General has made the centerpiece of his mandate). Similarly, the HIPPO report's insistence on 'the primacy of politics' in peace operations speaks to the commonsense – if oft-neglected – wisdom that the solutions to deep-rooted and intractable conflicts are almost always political and almost never military (UN 2015a; para 43-48). In other words, despite the contemporary pre-occupation with boots on the ground, the core role of armed peacekeepers remains, as during peacekeeping's earliest days, to generate and sustain the necessary space within which diplomacy and political dialogue aimed at durable solutions can unfold. Related to this is a common refrain about the importance of taking the principle of inclusivity seriously in peace processes. The AGE report, for example, identifies 'inclusive national ownership' as a crucial determinant of sustaining peace (UN 2015b: 8), while Goal 16 of the SDG's is framed around the twin pillars of inclusive societies and inclusive institutions. While inclusivity remains a somewhat amorphous concept, the growing consensus on its importance in the context of war-to-peace transitions speaks to the weak track record of so-called 'pacted transitions' (those signed by, and addressing the needs of, a narrow set of armed 'parties to the conflict'). Inclusivity, conversely, implies the incorporation a much broader range of societal voices in both the making and implementation of peace agreements, including not only all relevant armed factions but also representatives from civil society, including women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Finally, and more procedurally, all of the reports issue renewed calls for renewed coordination and coherence throughout the UN system across all phases of the conflict spectrum; avoiding excessive fragmentation and duplication,

in other words, necessitates viewing peace as a 'whole of UN project' including, crucially, the individual contributions of member states.

Ultimately, while there is no shortage of suggestions for how to improve the UN's capacity to perform its core mandate of maintaining international peace and security, it is clear that there remain weak links in the broader peace support chain. There is a decided lack of clarity around both the wisdom and utility of deploying force in the name of peace, and deep uncertainty around how to shepherd conflict-affected societies from negative peace (that patrolled by blue helmets) to positive peace, which is self-sustaining and marked by a modicum of 'decent governance' (Call and Cousens 2008: 7). To these long-standing dilemmas have been added, more recently, the dangers of violent extremism, which have exposed the UN's unpreparedness to engage in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency and strained the deeply-held belief that all conflicts are amenable to political solutions through the vehicles of negotiation and mediation. Finally, the persistence of a 'reform gap' between prescription and implementation has reinforced suspicions that the UN itself suffers from institutional sclerosis – "a Remington typewriter in a smartphone world," in the words of one former Assistant Secretary-General (Banbury 2016) – incapable of meeting the challenge of shepherding societies from conflict to peace or of being reformed to make it so.

On the face of it, then, for freshly-elected government looking to differentiate itself from its predecessor and carve out a distinctive (and constructive) place for itself on the global stage, peacekeeping is far from the easiest of arenas in which to do so. There are few appealing missions out there – at least measured in terms of manageable risks and reasonable prospects of success – and it is not clear that a modest addition of Canadian boots on the ground will make a marked difference to any ongoing UN operation. Similarly, the long-standing belief that foreign policy should be a vehicle for the promotion of Canadian norms and values – a key domestic justification for getting involved in other people's wars – no longer appears as self-evident as it once was, given the mounting empirical evidence that

not even the most intrusive and sustained efforts of peacekeepers and peacebuilders can transform conflict-affected states into stable liberal democracies. Indeed, while other Western states are also contemplating a measured return to peacekeeping (in an era when the front-lines of peacekeeping continue to be staffed overwhelmingly by troops from the Global South), it may be the case that the era of 'big peacebuilding' is in fact coming to an end (Chandler 2017). In other words, sobered by the experiences of post-cold war peacebuilding, Western states in particular may be increasingly disinclined to invest troops and treasure in messy, uncertain peace support operations, with the result that the future of peacebuilding might look more like what is unfolding in Libya currently than what unfolded in Bosnia in the mid-1990's. Understanding this broader global context is crucial to understanding the kinds of questions Canada faces as it contemplates renewed engagement with UN peacekeeping.

Canada and Peace Operations: In Search of a Strategy

As Canada prepares to host – in mid-November in Vancouver – the 2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference, the question of Canada's unfulfilled peacekeeping commitment is likely to re-emerge as an awkward counter-point to the government's claim that Canada is "doing its part to make the world a more peaceful and prosperous place for everyone" (Government of Canada 2017a). While it remains possible that the government will use the event – or the lead-up to it – as an opportunity to make good on its earlier promises, it seems equally likely that the Defence Minister will arrive in Vancouver prepared to downplay the commitment as a moment of irrational post-electoral exuberance. Beyond reinforcing the perception that this is a government prone to privileging style over substance – "better to be on the front page of *Rolling Stone* than on the front lines of peacekeeping," as one Ottawa-based observer puts it[2] – the political fallout from the latter outcome would likely be modest.

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[2] Confidential phone interview, August 2017.

Regardless of what is or is not announced in Vancouver, however, it is clear that what has been missing from the broader debate about when and where Canada would re-engage with UN peacekeeping is any overarching strategy both underpinning and justifying such re-engagement. While early in the current government's mandate there was talk of developing a whole-of-government 'peace operations strategy' (Smith 2016) that would articulate a coherent vision for how, what, and where Canada could contribute (as well as why), as the government enters the second half of its mandate it remains difficult – at least from the outside looking in – to discern from official statements and publicly-available documents even the outlines of such a strategy. The clearest statement to date on Canada's contemporary international security policy, this summer's report on the Defence Policy Review, does acknowledge peace support operations as one of eight 'core missions' of the Canadian Forces (Government of Canada 2017b: 17). However, beyond nods to the increased importance of civilian protection mandates and gender-sensitive peacekeeping, it is decidedly thin on the specific contributions military force (and Canadian military force in particular) can make along the complex continuum from conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. The absence of such strategic analysis is also reflected in the now-common lament that there are no 'good missions' out there in search of Canadian leadership; such sentiments reflect both a rather nostalgic longing for the simpler, safer days of first-generation peacekeeping as well as a somewhat unrealistic assessment that the benefits of being a peacekeeping player (including a non-permanent seat on the Security Council) can be obtained without any of the downside risks.

Similarly, despite considerable (if imperfect) experimentation during the Afghan mission with the so-called 3D approach – the integration of defence, diplomatic, and development assets in support of a coherent strategy for conflict management/transformation – the current government has yet to demonstrate much allegiance to this approach vis-à-vis peace support operations. As one example, PSOPS – the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program, which replaced

the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) in 2016 with a budget of $450 million over three years – has begun distributing Canadian funding across a range of thematic and geographical initiatives. Regardless of the value or merit of individual projects – the most recent funding announcement promised support for, among other projects, mediation efforts in Syria, dialogue promotion in Eastern Ukraine and in Cyprus, and peacebuilding capacity development among key stakeholders in Colombia and Venezuela (Government of Canada 2017c) – PSOPS funding appears, at least to date, to be more *dis*integrated than integrated, with tenuous connections at best to existing development or defence commitments. Moreover, PSOPS has already come under criticism for being more focused on getting money out the door and into the field, and less focused on measuring impact on the ground.[3]

The relative lack of movement on the articulation of a coherent peace operations strategy – as well as on the Defence Minister's stated desire to ensure that Canadians are educated about the realities of contemporary peacekeeping – is also indicative of a relative paucity of peacekeeping champions across various levels of the federal government. Interviews conducted both within and outside of government over the past two months paint a picture of a Cabinet that likes peacekeeping in principle but has little appetite for putting Canadian soldiers in harm's way à la Afghanistan, as well as of a military hierarchy that remains ambivalent about both the value and appropriateness of peacekeeping as a central function of the Canadian military. Combined with a certain inertia within the ranks of Canada's foreign service – reinforced by a senior leadership that, in the words of one insider, is disinclined to "deliver an activist foreign policy agenda or … creative, imaginative policy leadership" (cited in Tsalikis 2017) – what emerges is a portrait of a public policy initiative that is at risk of being orphaned through excessive caution and growing indifference.

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[3] Confidential phone interview, August 2017.

The current moment, then, stands in relatively sharp contrast both with previous eras of Canadian foreign policy leadership and with the experience of other middle-power states that have found ways to punch above their weight at the international level in large part through consistent and coherent engagement with (and occasionally around) the UN's multilateral security architecture. It is not long ago, of course, that Canada played a strong, even decisive, role on the international stage as a norm entrepreneur through its leadership on key initiatives such as the Responsibility to Protect, the International Criminal Court and the Landmines Treaty. While none has had quite the transformative impact their architects hoped for, each has demonstrated in different ways that strategic initiatives on the part of middle powers – even when opposed by the world's great powers – can make a difference in terms of "altering the normative architecture of peace and security" (Bjorkdahl 2013: 333).

Along similar lines, Sweden has in recent years oriented much of its own foreign policy agenda around the promotion of conflict prevention, which has both provided a sense of strategic direction for Swedish development and security assistance and enhanced Sweden's stature in multilateral fora. While the conflict prevention norm has proven to be a harder sell within the UN system in general and within the Security Council in particular (despite ongoing efforts to prioritize prevention in operational terms), Sweden has had more success at the level of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, where the prevention norm has been progressively institutionalized (Bjorkdahl 2013: 333). Canada's current hesitation on the question of re-engaging with UN peace operations also stands in marked contrast to Portugal which, as Maria do Ceu Pinto (2014: 391) has pointed out, has leveraged its considerable contributions to UN peace operations – some 25,000 Portuguese soldiers have been deployed since the 1990s – to increase its prestige in the international sphere and its influence in international organizations. Portugal, of course, was the country that beat out Canada for a rotating Security Council seat in 2010, while former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres now serves as UN Secretary-General.

Portugal's experience in particular is a reminder that for states outside the Security Council, the exercise of influence in multilateral security policy – one half of the solidarity/self-interest dyad that leads states to contemplate peacekeeping commitments in the first place – is very much a matter of pay-to-play. In other words, influence flows from credibility, and credibility requires commitment. As a recent blog post by the McLeod Group (2017) framed the issue, "for Canada to have influence, to lead missions and provide force commanders and civilian heads of mission, we need to be a serious political, development and military player; to be strategic; and to invest in understanding the bases of conflict. This is particularly true for Africa, where almost two-thirds of UN missions are concentrated." Nor is it at all clear that the original commitments made by the government – the reference point of 600 peacekeepers in particular – would buy Canada the kind of influence that it presumably seeks. Indeed, Canada reportedly forfeited the opportunity to command the MINUSCA mission in Mali on account of being unable – or unwilling – to put together a sufficiently-robust 'force package' that the UN expects, in a kind of quid pro quo, as the price of mission leadership.[4]

Absent not only a clear and coherent strategy for re-engaging with UN peacekeeping but also a durable consensus that peacekeeping is where Canada wishes to make its mark on the international stage, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that the government has second-guessed the merits of its original peacekeeping commitment. The fraught environments in which contemporary peacekeepers operate (along with the twin spectres of casualties and quagmires), the significant resource commitments required to put Canadians in positions of influence at the mission level, the uncertainty over whether Canada's national interests are best served by closer association with a peacekeeping enterprise increasingly concentrated on the African continent: all have combined to reduce the government's initial enthusiasm for re-engagement. Yet even if such realities have

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[4] Confidential phone interview, July 2017.

led to a scaling-back of the government's initial aspirations – Canada is unlikely to re-gain significant influence within the peacekeeping policy realm within the life of the current government, let alone re-establish its reputation as the world's pre-eminent peacekeeper – it is still worth considering those areas where Canada can still make a meaningful contribution to peace operations either instead of, or in addition to, putting significant numbers of boots on the ground. Indeed, to the extent that the gap between announcement and deployment has been, or could still be, used to shift the Canadian debate from one of style (focused on 'profile-enhancement' and the generic if somewhat smug sense that the world needs more Canada) to substance (where can Canada's resources and assets be most usefully developed and deployed in support of international peace and security), it still may be considered as both useful and justifiable. Three areas in particular can be identified as potential re-entry points through which Canada can make constructive, if relatively unglamorous, contributions to strengthening multilateral capacities for peace promotion: peacekeeper training, so-called 'niche' contributions of critical assets, and the provision of non-military (police and civilian) capacities.

Training

Among a set of eight recommendations issued as part of a recent review of past and future Canadian contributions to UN peace operations, the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence identified training – and specifically the establishment of a Peace Operations Training Centre to prepare military, civilian and police personnel for UN deployments – as a potentially important Canadian contribution to strengthening UN peace operations (Government of Canada 2016: 30). In effect, the Committee was calling for the restoration of a variant of the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre, which was closed in late 2013, on the argument that effective personnel training is a basic prerequisite for effective peace operations. Despite its back to the future feel, the training recommendation underlines the point – made elsewhere by Walter Dorn and Joshua Libben (2016: 8) – that the Canadian Armed Forces "needs to increase the level of preparedness and training for peace operations if it is to be ready to serve in peace operations."

Unsurprisingly, as Canadian contributions to UN peace operations stagnated and declined over the past decade, so too have the number of programs and courses dedicated to training Canadian personnel to serve in these operations.[5] More generally, as Peter Langille (2016) has pointed out, "Canada's knowledge and research on the critical issues of peace, conflict, security and UN peace operations has become relatively thin," the victim of creeping de-institutionalization.

While it seems self-evident that renewed engagement with UN peace operations requires a renewed commitment to training, what is less clear is how quickly Canada could re-establish itself as a world leader in peacekeeper training, preparing not only Canadians but also personnel from other mission-contributing countries. While the Canadian military remains highly-regarded, and learned relevant lessons from the Afghan experience, the fact that Canada has been effectively out of the peacekeeping game for well over a decade does little to make the case for the Canadian value-added in this area. Canada's own peacekeeping doctrine dates from 2002, for example, and remains far from the cutting edge on issues such as the integration of civilian and military effort, civilian protection mandates, or the links between short-term stabilization and longer-term peacebuilding. In this regard, the experience of front-line peacekeeping nations such as Ghana or Pakistan – each of which hosts one of the some 265 training centres or institutes listed in the database of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (Langille 2016) – suggests that on the training front as well, Canada has considerable catching-up to do.

Critical Asset Provision

While the blue-helmeted, and demonstrably low-tech, infantryman patrolling a zone of separation likely remains, in the minds of most Canadians, the dominant image of what peacekeeping is all about, the realities of contemporary conflict environments

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[5] The Canadian NGO CANADEM has also proposed the establishment of a Civilian Training Centre for UN field operations; see CANADEM (n.d.).

demand increasing technological and logistical sophistication on the part of UN field missions. From strategic air support (including heavy transport planes and helicopters) to mobile medical facilities to surveillance drones, such assets are in chronically short supply within peacekeeping missions, in large part because of the reality that such assets are also in short supply among the UN's major troop-contributing nations. This may be beginning to change as Western countries contemplate renewed peacekeeping roles, and it is not difficult – if not entirely unproblematic – to imagine a future division of labour in which developing countries provide the bulk of peacekeeping's front-line troops while developed countries fill more specialized niche roles. Elements of such a division of labour have already emerged in Mali, for example, where several European states took the lead in the development the All Source Information Fusion Unit, which made MINUSMA the first UN mission to have a dedicated intelligence unit (Karlsrud and Osland 2016: 791). More generally, as Joachim Koops and Giulia Tercovich (2016: 598) have noted, for European states re-engaging with peacekeeping "the emphasis has increasingly been placed on the potential contributions of 'critical enablers' of high-value 'niche capabilities'," such as formed police units, attack helicopters, medevac capabilities or counter-IED companies.

Heading down a similar path should hold considerable attraction for Canada, not just because the provision of niche capabilities can help the UN fill important gaps at the operational level, but also because – depending on the specific roles – the risks of Canadian casualties may be lower, and because of the opportunities to collaborate with traditional (and especially European) allies. Equally importantly, Canada also has existing assets to contribute in these areas. Peter Langille (2016: 4), for example, has argued that in response to the UN Secretary-General's call for member states to propose and provide critical assets in support of urgent field requirements, Canada might consider contributing a portion of its considerable combat engineer resources, as well as its mobile field hospital and a portion of its strategic and tactical airlift capacity. A longer-term perspective – which would add substance to the rhetorical commitment to peacekeeping as a core mission of the Canadian

Armed Forces – would also build the development and enhancement of specialized capacities into defence procurement planning. Niche capabilities can include not only military hardware but also software; here, bilingual Canadian soldiers are a significant asset in francophone conflict-zones, especially given the growing acknowledgment that the effectiveness of front-line peacekeepers is often a direct function of their ability to engage directly with local actors and local communities (UN 2015a: para 60). And one viable alternative to the re-development of a Canadian peacekeeping training institute would involve offering Canadian military trainers to existing national or regional training centres, particularly in Africa.

Non-Military Capabilities

In light of the HIPPO's report's emphasis on the primacy of politics in peace operations, which implies viewing peacekeeping missions as "political operations that require military assets" (Larose-Edwards 2016), it is also worth re-evaluating the ways in which Canadian civilian capacities could be brought more effectively to bear in support of multilateral peace support missions. While less prominent than their military counterparts, for example, Canadian police officers have distinguished themselves as 'police-keepers' across a range of UN missions – Haiti most prominently – over the past several decades. Through the Canadian Police Arrangement, in fact, more Canadian police than Canadian soldiers have served in UN operations in recent years. While there are structural limits on the sheer numbers of Canadian police available for overseas deployment – negotiating releases for individual officers from their domestic policing duties remains an ongoing challenge – the depth of Canadian experience and expertise in this area leaves Canada well-positioned to exercise a stronger leadership role in this area with only a modest infusion of additional resources.

Along similar lines, Paul Larose-Edwards – the executive director of CANADEM, which maintains a roster of some 14,000 Canadian experts available for overseas deployments – has made the case that placing more Canadians into civilian positions within peace operations may in fact represent "the biggest potential for Canada's

renewed contribution to peace operations" (Larose-Edwards 2016). Because the UN's internal processes for staffing the civilian components of peacekeeping missions are notoriously-dysfunctional and often deeply-politicized, there is much that the Canadian government could do – at almost no cost to itself – to facilitate the placement of qualified Canadians in strategic positions across a range of UN missions. Similarly, myriad opportunities exist for Canada to mobilize civilian expertise in specific functional areas – mediation being one such area that has received growing attention of late (Langille 2016) – that could be deployed in support of or as a complement to emerging UN capacities (such as the UN's Mediation Support Unit).

Conclusion

Two years after sending a very strong signal that one of its key foreign policy priorities would be to rebuild Canada's peacekeeping presence in the world, the Trudeau government's inaction on this file continues to generate legitimate questions about the sincerity of its commitment. The upcoming Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference is thus likely to be a watershed event, one which will compel the government to provide greater clarity – after months of drift – on whether (and how) it wishes to re-engage with UN peace operations.

From a public policy perspective, there are of course good reasons for Canada to play up its current, albeit modest, contributions and quietly give up on the notion of making a grand re-entry onto the peacekeeping stage. The UN's most prominent peace support missions – especially those in the Central African Republic, the DRC, and South Sudan – are now squarely focused on avoiding disaster (including the very real prospect of genocide in South Sudan) rather than on progressively putting in place the building blocks of sustainable peace; such missions, as Chris Roberts (2017) has suggested, "are the duct tape of international security efforts." Venturing a significant presence in any one of these contexts, therefore, not only runs the very real risk of Canadian casualties, but also risks associating Canada with missions

where the avoidance of ignominious withdrawal may represent the most optimistic medium-term yardstick for success. Moreover, Africa has never been central to Canada's national interests *vis-à-vis* international security, while scarce resources committed to open-ended peace support missions on that continent are resources that are unavailable for responding to emerging crises elsewhere. If keeping the peace is seen as a global collective action problem, then, the temptation to free-ride on the part of countries such as Canada – which has the luxury of being relatively untouched by the direct consequences of contemporary conflicts – remains difficult to resist.

There are equally good reasons for Canada to live up to its original commitment to re-engage with UN peace operations, not least of which is the opportunity it provides to address the growing gap between Canada's (still-respectable) international reputation and its current contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security. For all its imperfections and shortcomings, peacekeeping also remains a vital instrument for addressing contemporary armed conflict, and contributions – both material and ideational – from countries such as Canada are desperately needed both to buttress existing peace operations and to better prepare the UN to address future conflicts. For Canada to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to both current and future peace operations, however, the government will need to match its extant personnel commitments to both a coherent strategy and a compelling rationale for Canada's engagement, both to ensure ongoing support from the Canadian public for such engagement and to ensure a measure of consistency between specific actions and long-term strategic objectives. In this sense, the focus on finding the 'right' mission for Canada to insert itself into may have been a case of putting the cart of action before the horse of strategy (Roberts 2017); while the government has bought itself some time to reverse this order of priority, it remains unclear whether, in the interim, the momentum behind the original impetus to restore Canada's reputation as a peacekeeping nation has been lost.

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