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CANADIAN ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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Since the creation of the United Nations, Canada has served on the Security Council with considerable regularity, once every decade. It has held a non-permanent seat for four two-year terms — 1948/49, 1958/59, 1967/68, and 1977/78 — and has recently been elected for the 1989/90 term. Among the non-permanent members, only India and Japan, with six terms each, and Argentina and Brazil, with five completed terms, have had a longer period of service. As Canada embarks on another term of duty, this may be a suitable occasion to recall Canadian attitudes concerning the functions of the Council and its past experiences on the Council, and to comment briefly on the prospects facing Canada during the forthcoming term.

THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE UN CHARTER

When the UN Charter was drafted at San Francisco, Canada succeeded in affecting several provisions which define the functions of the Security Council. First and foremost, the Canadian government under Mackenzie King had been determined that the Council should make no decisions on enforcement measures without representation from those countries called upon to contribute to collective security measures. Canada was thus instrumental in the inclusion of Article 44 which gave non-members of the Council the right to "participate in the decisions of the Council concerning the employment of contingents of that member's armed forces."

At the time, this was seen as a major concession to smaller states. However, because the UN has not evolved in the direction of deciding on enforcement measures, Article 44 has become redundant. In contrast, Article 31, which figured much less centrally in the San Francisco deliberations, has become far

more important. It allows non-members of the Security Council, who might otherwise feel disenfranchised, to take part in discussions of the Security Council on matters that directly affect their interests, though not with a right to vote.

On balance, Article 31 has been a mixed blessing and Canada's own attitude toward it is somewhat ambivalent. Although it makes the system of participation somewhat more egalitarian and may, furthermore, bring to bear some particular regional perspective or expertise, it has created certain problems for the functioning of the Council. The number of non-members desiring to address the Council has increased sharply over time. This has frequently overcrowded the Council's agenda; moreover, some of the interventions by non-members are highly rhetorical and emotionally charged, thereby recreating in the Security Council the atmosphere of the General Assembly which is less than ideal for the management and resolution of international conflicts.

Canada influenced two other provisions that deserve mention: one concerns the corresponding security functions of the General Assembly, and the other relates to the "functionalist principle" which gives special recognition to proper qualifications in the election of non-permanent members of the Council. While the Security Council was clearly intended to be the principal UN organ responsible for international peace and security, Articles 10 and 12 vest some parallel responsibilities in the General Assembly. The Security Council was dominated by the five Great Powers which enjoyed permanent membership; the General Assembly could be influenced by the smaller nations.

In addition, recourse could be taken to the General Assembly if the Security Council was unable to discharge its duties. In this spirit, Canada