

# Canada in the United Nations

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## Canadian Peacekeepers: A Unique Contribution to Global Security

The development of practical, workable mechanisms for international peacekeeping ranks as one of the most significant achievements of the United Nations. While the UN has not always been successful in resolving conflicts, it has played an important role in defusing international tensions and helping to create a more stable international order.

As an active participant in every major peacekeeping operation the UN has organized, and in the discussions that have guided the development of the peacekeeping process, Canada has demonstrated the important role that a responsible middle power can play in helping to defuse international conflicts.

## Meeting the Challenge

When representatives of 50 nations met in San Francisco shortly before the end of the Second World War, their primary concern was to create an organization whose main objective would be the maintenance of international peace and security. While the Security Council was charged with primary responsibility for this task, the Canadian Prime Minister of the time, William Lyon MacKenzie King, underscored the importance of broad participation in UN decision-making. "Experience has shown," he said, "that the contribution of smaller powers is not a negligible one, either to the preserving of the peace or to its restoration when peace has been disturbed."

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Canadian participation in the United Nations Force in Cyprus.

Mr. King's words proved prophetic. A lack of unanimity amongst Security Council members, along with radical changes in the nature of war with the development of atomic and hydrogen weapons, made the security system envisaged in Chapter VII of the UN Charter largely impractical. Peacekeeping was not mentioned in the Charter and when efforts to enforce

peace failed, the organization instinctively searched for alternative ways to deal with conflicts and the concept of "peacekeeping" was born. Canada has been a strong proponent of peacekeeping and is the only member of the United Nations to have participated in every UN peacekeeping operation except one, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM).