

Our generation, having ignored the lessons of history, could be condemned to re-live some of history's darkest chapters. Saddam Hussein would become an example for other potential bullies, making the world an even more dangerous place than it is already. Nations would be left alone to defend themselves against aggression and a new arms race would be launched. The U.N. -- designed to prevent a return to the rule of the jungle -- could go the way of the League of Nations. And this at a time when international problems -- from the environment to human rights to debt to development to drugs to the protection of children -- can only be resolved collectively, and when a credible, effective U.N. has never been more necessary.

These are not abstract issues to Canada. They are not someone else's business. They are direct, vital Canadian interests, and they are engaged fully in this question. The U.N. cannot be allowed to fail at this critical moment in history. Some argue that Canada should hold itself back now to play a peacekeeping role later.

Were Saddam Hussein to succeed in his annexation of Kuwait, he would be in a position to threaten the entire Middle East. With the time and wealth he would gain, he could add further weapons of mass destruction to his arsenal, including, in all probability, nuclear weapons. What position would this put his neighbours in? After Iran and Kuwait, who would be his next target? Saudi Arabia? Jordan? Would we hold ourselves back again, waiting for the latest atrocities to end so that Canada might then be invited in as part of a peacekeeping force?

Saddam Hussein has threatened to attack Israel with weapons of mass destruction. In the face of extraordinary provocation from Iraq, as evidenced by Foreign Minister Aziz's deplorably aggressive threat last week in Geneva, Israel has demonstrated remarkable restraint. Should Saddam Hussein move against Israel, would we still hold ourselves back in the hope that we would be called in later to help keep what's left of the peace in what's left of the Middle East? This course is a prescription for neither wisdom nor responsibility.

It is also argued that a peacekeeping role would be more in keeping with Canada's traditions. But there is no reason to believe that a peace-making role now disqualifies Canada for a peace-keeping role later. Participation in the Korean War did not prevent then External Affairs Minister Pearson from helping to create the U.N.'s peace-keeping function. Membership in NATO and NORAD has not prevented us from participating in every U.N. peace-keeping operation but one since the beginning of the international organization. And supporting right over wrong in the Persian Gulf does not preclude a peace-keeping role for Canada there following hostilities.

Like all Canadians, we are justifiably proud of Canada's peace-keeping tradition. But peacekeeping is only one part of Canada's traditions. Standing firm for what we believe in and fighting if necessary is also a Canadian tradition, one that we remember most solemnly every November 11. More than 1,700,000 Canadians participated in World War I and II and Korea. One-hundred-thousand graves in Europe