

In those first few days of August, it appeared to many of us in New York that the Security Council might be by-passed, and that the traditional American preference for unilateralism might triumph. Canada insisted, at every level, and in every forum, that a successful international coalition could only be constructed by using the United Nations, by channelling our efforts at negotiation through the Secretary-General, by submitting all resolutions to the Security Council for debate, and by ensuring that sanctions and eventual military action – if it came to that – were buttressed by the full force of international law and by the weight of the entire international community.

Canada's insistence on the primacy of the United Nations during that crisis was not due to some eccentric or wistful yearning for a bygone age. Rather, it very much had to do with compelling traditions of Canadian foreign policy. It derived from the value which Canadians place on a world based on rules, on law and on forging international consensus. Geography and history have made Canada a "glacis state", nestled beside the world's most powerful nation and, for more than forty-five years, poised between the two nuclear super-powers. We have, in consequence, become adept at mediation, compromise, peacekeeping and the search for international order and stability. Geopolitical realities have assigned us a particular role, and our proximity to the elephant down south has cemented this vocation.

More than fifty years ago, Lester Pearson made the classic case for Canadian dedication to multilateralism. He wrote:

"Canada cannot occupy her rightful place in international society so long as its security is dependent on American benevolence. If we are to escape from permanent inferiority, our security must be found in an organisation to which we ourselves contribute."

This organisation was to be the United Nations and the Gulf crisis gave us yet another opportunity to demonstrate that Lester Pearson was prescient.

When, in July 1992, the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued his manifesto for reform of the UN, *Agenda for Peace*, I had returned to "private life" – though that phrase has an ironic ring to it now which I had not appreciated before. After I relinquished my diplomatic post, as I surveyed the UN's involvement in Yugoslavia and Somalia and, as I considered the UN financial plight, I sometimes felt that my role had been changed from that of envoy or emissary to one of missionary! For I have not lost my faith in the United Nations. Far from it. On the contrary, my belief and commitment, developed from personal experience, have been sustained and vindicated by observation as well as by participation from a very different vantage point in the past few years.

I was pleased to note that the most recent review of Canada's international relations, which culminated in a statement whose publication coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the UN, reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the