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Managing International Conflict

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REVIEW ESSAY

Managing International Conflict

McRae, Rob, and Don Hubert, eds. *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace*. Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

Crocker, Chester A., Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001.

The end of the Cold War and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 prompted one author to declare "the end of history" to much affirmative nodding as many tried to make instant and lasting sense of the end of the Soviet regime in the 15 republics and in Eastern Europe. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington, DC were instantly and still are described as "the end of the world as we know it." There has, as yet, been no quick turn of phrase devised for the dispute between the USA and Iraq that has, for many reasons been expanded to include most of the world's countries in one manner or another. It will be surprising if one is not crafted as there appears to be a need for quick, short and catchy slogans to which we can attach our feelings and which serve as shorthand for the complicated reasoning that must accompany such major events.

In the two books being reviewed here, over 80 knowledgeable and eminent academics, diplomats and government officials discuss such topics as the sources of conflict, military and civilian intervention strategies, methods and modalities of dealing with conflict and its aftermath, international humanitarian law, human security, and international relations and the new diplomacy. They agree, they disagree, and they offer idealistic solutions and pragmatic suggestions. In the end, of course, whether the world will be more peaceful, more secure, and more stable because of their beliefs will depend on the extent to which they are heeded and implemented.

Human Security is a collection of papers written by serving civil servants in the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade that "is an account of the early years of a Canadian initiative to develop and lead a radically new foreign policy agenda built around the concept of human security." The chapters, of design, deal with various aspects of human security, although some of the subjects, such as peacekeeping, are retroactively included under that heading although they were in existence long before the concept was developed.

On the other hand, *Turbulent Peace* is a massive work by some 50 experts dealing with various aspects of international conflict and the methods of dealing with it.

A future world of greater peace, of lesser conflict will be the product of cooperation between citizens at large and their governments. Public knowledge of, and interest in world affairs including the economy, environment, education, conflict, among others, is greater now than it has ever been. Individuals have discovered that they can have an effect on events that affect their lives, even if governments would be happier if they were left alone to make the decisions. Citizens are, more and more, becoming comfortable with displaying public agreement or disagreement with government policies and programs. To speak loudly and publicly, to insist on being heard between elections is being regarded as a non-negotiable characteristic of democracy. It is clear, however, that the demonstrations and protests that are occasioned by specific issues and events and that now accompany virtually every international gathering of government representatives have a better chance of exerting influence if those who march are better informed.

It is also clear that, in some democratic countries, elected leaders are quite willing to make decisions and lead their countries down paths and to ends that are opposed by a majority or a sizable minority of their constituents. How these unilateral decisions will be received in future elections is the subject of much speculation.

How interested citizens, (both those who agree and disagree with their government leaders), policy makers, and political leaders can harmonize their approaches to preventing and resolving conflict and dealing with its aftermath is a subject that is explored throughout these two books. Sometimes the exploration techniques are loud and clear, other times they are subsumed. The editors have chosen the contributors with care; the latter have written with equal care, and have included verve, imagination, and strong recommendations in their writings.

In his Foreword to *Human Security and the New Diplomacy*, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan notes that:

> . . . the Government of Canada paints a stark picture of life today for many of the world's people: civilian victims of internal armed conflicts; poor and marginalized people who have yet to experience the benefits of globalization; hundreds of millions of men, women, and children around the world who live in squalor, without even the most basic of life's necessities. But this book also offers hope.

The editors of *Turbulent Peace* point out that:

> And just as there is no single cause of conflict, there is no single solution. Understanding complexity and the dynamics of the various

levels is as important to the analysis of conflict resolution as it is to the analysis of conflict.

Human Security, written by serving civil servants and diplomats, begins its "stark picture" with an Introduction by the Honorable Lloyd Axworthy who at the time of writing was Minister of Foreign Affairs. He later resigned that post to become head of an influential west-coast think tank. Using the power of his office, he insisted that the concept of human security, as introduced by the UN Development Program, play a leading and central role in Canadian foreign policy. He writes "The human security agenda is an attempt to respond to a new global reality." Notwithstanding his insistence that the concept and the planned reality of human security permeate every area of Canadian foreign policy, his two successors have been much less inclined to advance it. John Manley championed Canada's relationship with the USA to be a cornerstone of his foreign policy agenda. Bill Graham, the current office holder, is occupied with dealing with an enormously full plate of international crises under the eye of a prime minister who has evidently discovered the enjoyment of being his own foreign minister a great deal of the time.

Axworthy was no fan of the USA and, since his retirement, has written numerous articles and delivered many presentations that have, in effect, repudiated the policies he defended while he was a member of the government. It was conventional wisdom that he chafed at the necessity of defending government policies with which he did not agree and his post-ministerial utterances were eagerly awaited. It is a reflection of the sincerity with which he holds his opinions that his words have been tempered and mature. He can be satisfied that, while the term human security may not have survived in as prominent a place as he would have liked, its concepts and philosophical foundation have found their place in Canadian views of world events.

The Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and Their Destruction; and the establishment of the International Criminal Court are but two examples of the results of Axworthy's ceaseless insistence that his policy ideas move ahead in a practical way. The Ottawa Convention is now in effect simply because of the determination (some would say stubborn determination) of the Canadians to take every effort, to use diplomatic surprise and sudden public announcements to move the process and ensure its adoption and coming into effect. That it is not adhered to by many of the leading mine-producing and mine-deploying countries of the world is not at all sufficient reason to criticize it in a negative fashion.

The International Criminal Court is another international instrument designed to deal with conflict that has not found favor with the USA. Author Darryl Robinson's claim that "The world has taken a step away from a history so often characterized by inaction and helplessness in the face of atrocities, and toward a consistent response affirming the rule of law," is so patently true that

one wonders how any reasonable being can oppose it. In an unusually strong statement for a government official to make, he says, "Regrettably, the United States was one of the seven states voting against the statute. This is part of an unfortunate trend, in which the United States has declined to join its traditional allies on an issue of human security."

During all of the political and diplomatic manoeuvres surrounding the recent Iraq crisis, Canada deviated from its general policy of not criticizing or disagreeing with the USA in public. Normally, Canada prefers not to antagonize the USA too much lest differences in one area cause retaliatory action in another. In this case, however, Prime Minister Chretien was particularly strong in his statements. In a speech in Chicago, the heartland of America, he used words and displayed an attitude reminiscent of that of Prime Minister Pearson's speech in Philadelphia during the Vietnam War. In this case, however, there was no physical reaction from President Bush, unlike the response shown to Mr. Pearson by President Johnson.

Turbulent Peace pays little attention to either the Landmine Convention or the International Criminal Court. In the case of the former, it is cited merely as:

> an interesting coalition of network organizations working with middle-power governments such as Canada and some individual politicians and celebrities; this grouping was able to capture attention and set the agenda in a way that overcame resistance by the US government.

With regard to the ICC, William Schabas notes that there is little for the USA to fear from the court as, "defenders of the court argue that the statute would not allow it to assume jurisdiction to extent that the United States shows its willingness to prosecute its own soldiers for war crimes."

One of the frustrations faced time after time by experts, civil servants, and diplomats is how to profit in the future from the lessons of the past. The "lessons learned" process in place in government and non-government organizations alike is very often only a "lessons recorded and discussed" process. After a crisis has passed and has been dealt with in some way that is satisfactory or otherwise, there is a tendency to forget it and move on to the next item on the international or national agendae of governments. Finances that were put into place to deal with the crisis suddenly dry up or disappear altogether. Measures that were implemented are discarded, as the climate for coercive action of any type is much less hospitable when the crisis no longer occupies front and centre stage with the public, governments, and non-government organizations.

Persons in charge are rotated to other jobs, retire or move to different organizations. The institutional memory is often nothing but files recording what happened in the past; their existence may not even be known to incumbents. How many times has one heard at a conference or seminar an intervention by one who

had experience during a past crisis but is no longer with the same organization that ends with the words "we studied this before, wrote up the lessons learned and our recommendations for the future. I am sure if you had searched the files, you would have found them."

Oft-times, there is simply no political imperative to deal with a matter until it has reached crisis proportions. Two examples; the first dealing with the UN financial situation. A few years back when the UN was approaching bankruptcy, there were two approaches adopted by Member States. The first was that, as it appears that the UN may run short of funds, steps must be taken now to deal with the situation so as to ensure a sound future. The other was that no action be taken until the bankruptcy actually occurred. In other words, do not deal with the crisis while it is developing but wait until it has reached a stage where drastic action must be taken.

The second example illustrates how we deal with international crises and concerns the situation of Iraq after the first Gulf War. As pointed out by Michael Krepon and Lawrence Scheinman in "Arms Control Treaties and CBMs as Management Tools" in *Turbulent Peace*:

> Following Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council mandated the destruction or removal of all of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capabilities. Moreover, by asserting in 1992 that "the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security," the President of the Security Council formally linked compliance with non-proliferation treaties.

In other ways as well, Saddam Hussein dragged his feet and refused to adhere to the appropriate Security Council resolutions that are binding on all Member States. However, the international community did not take action of any type and, by its procrastination, is partly to blame for the current situation.

National leaders simply refuse to try to find ways to deal with difficult situations until they have reached crisis proportions and often then do not act. All the books, articles, and recommendations in the world will not prevent or deal with conflict unless there is national political will. Those who criticize the UN for not acting would do well to remember that the world body is, quite simply, composed of representatives of national governments. Until those governments decide to take action, the situation will fester and become worse.

One subject dealt with in both books is that of peacekeeping and its component parts of peacebuilding and peacemaking. Patricia Fortier's "The Evolution of Peacekeeping" in *Human Security* begins with a piece of conventional wisdom: "every Canadian school child learns that Canada is a peacekeeping nation." She then goes on to compare peacekeeping as practised from 1956 and its invention by Lester Pearson at the time of the Suez Crisis in the

autumn of that year (for which he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize, the only individual Canadian so honoured) and the version of the 1990s and today. After describing the multi-disciplinary approach of today that encompasses humanitarian aid workers, legal officials, prison experts and others as well as the military component, she concludes "A tin cup would be permanently affixed to the base (of the peacekeeping monument in Ottawa) with a polite but patently desperate request to donate to the worthy cause."

She then goes on to outline the aims of the new types of peacekeeping missions as stability, human rights, justice, and development. To carry out these new tasks, there is a need for civilians and military personnel to plan and work together, for rapid deployment, for flexibility, for adequate funding and for long-term commitment. She notes that, "No mission has yet met all of the requirements, but the model reflects a new sense of purpose."

Canadian influence and participation in international peacekeeping is seen by many to be on the decline. The steady reduction in the personnel strength of the Canadian Forces coupled with inadequate financing has meant that Canada is no longer the military peacekeeping force it once was. Of course, the number of civilians abroad on peacekeeping missions of all types has increased but there is no doubt that the international community would like to see the military contribution increased.

Although peacekeeping is still very popular in Canada, the story in the USA is somewhat different even though the American military participated in peacekeeping missions before the Canadians arrived on the scene. This is because, after its invention, as now practised, by Pearson in 1956, the term was applied retroactively to the UN Truce Supervision Mission (UNTSO) and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), in both of which America served before Canada.

The American public approves of its membership in the UN and its participation in peacekeeping; its elected representatives in the Congress are less enthusiastic. Further, a number of UN Member States, for a number of reasons, would rather that the world's only superpower not participate in traditional peacekeeping missions. On the other hand, some countries like to have the Americans along as, in their eyes, it elevates the seriousness of the mission and, hence, increases the importance of their component.

Richard N. Haass, in *Turbulent Peace*, maintains that:

There is little reason for US involvement in traditional peacekeeping, a mission that many countries can readily undertake, unless it is expressly sought by the protagonists and is in an area where US interests justify the contribution, such as the Middle East.

He feels that US forces should be used only for combat roles.

Human Security and *Turbulent Peace* are both excellent books. Each complements the other. One gives a detailed description of human security efforts by Canada within the international arena. Written as it is by civil servants and diplomats, it delivers much inside information and a genuine flavor for what happens in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The other is a massive work by over 50 authors that deals with all aspects of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and the ensuing peace. Highly recommended for practitioners and members of the interested public.

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