

Keeping the Peace

It's not enough to know the neighbors — you need to get along with them, even if you don't particularly like them. They may do things that irritate you, such as boasting and bragging or treating their citizens poorly; nonetheless, we all share one planet, so try to keep your cool.

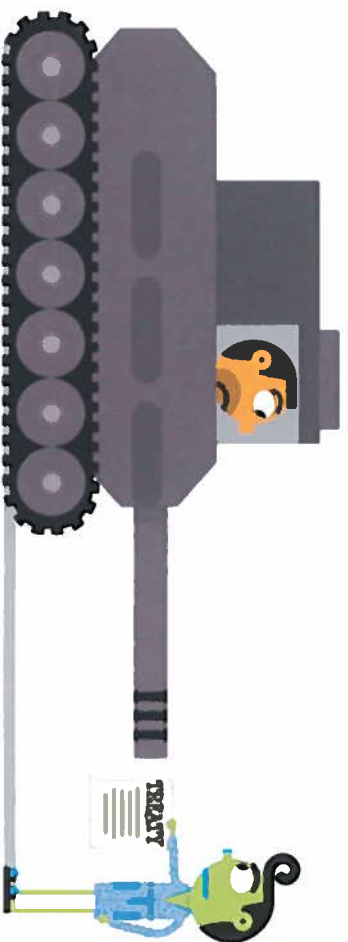
But let's say your neighbor country is a real bully and does something that really bugs you, such as threatening to build nuclear weapons or claiming a corner of your country as its own. Do you roll out the cannons and let them have it?

Not just yet. Before you bring out the big guns, you have another weapon called diplomacy. You can send your ambassador to talk sense to the bully country's head of government. (An ambassador is a person who represents the interests of his or her country in another country.) Or maybe you can persuade the bully to sign a treaty

(agreement) with you to end the problem. You can also have an arbitrator (an impartial person) settle the matter or take it to an international court.

If talking fails, try announcing sanctions, such as refusing to trade or communicate with the bully. Cutting off a country's supply of chocolate or oil or rubber may make them smarten up.

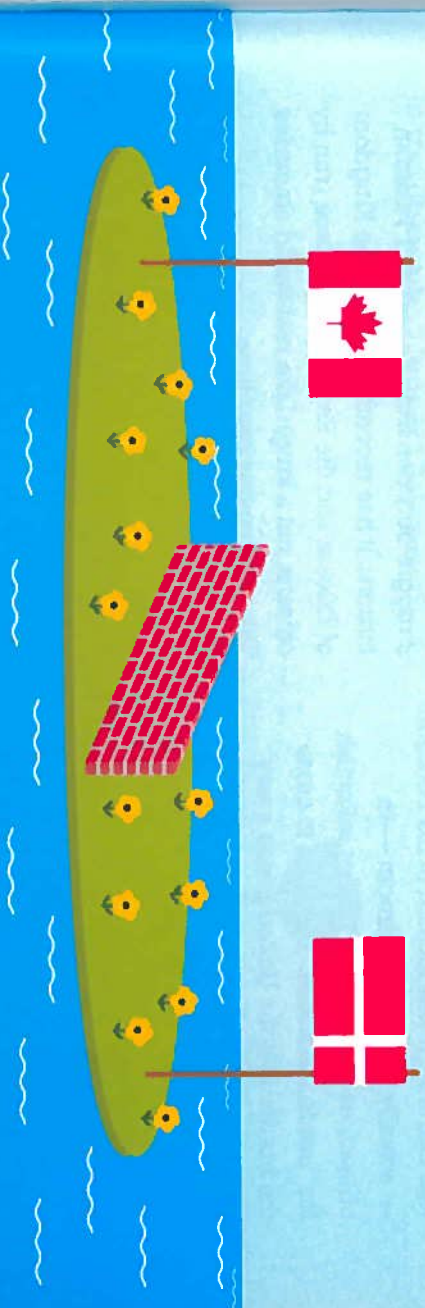
If diplomacy fails, you may have to bring out the cannons, but this should be a last resort. Unless there is a really, really good reason for going to war, such as being invaded, your citizens are not going to approve of the killing and the expense. They're especially not going to be keen on sending troops to another country. Other countries may see you as an invader, which can be just as bad as being a bully. Better to ask for help from others, preferably through the UN, which can send in peacekeepers.



Hans Off

Hans Island, a small rocky island about 1100 km (680 mi.) south of the North Pole, is remote, isolated and unpopulated. But to Canada and Denmark, it's a very desirable chunk of land. It lies in the Northwest Passage, which may become an important northern shipping route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans as ice coverage in the area decreases. Both countries want access to the route and the islands that dot it. So Canada and Denmark, usually good friends, have been scuffling over the island for years. One country erects a flagpole and hoists

up its flag. Then the other takes down the flag and replaces it with its own. Soldiers from both sides have visited the island (at different times), as have government officials. Foreign ministers tried diplomacy. They met to discuss who owns Hans, but came to no agreement. Then, in July 2007, Canadian officials examined satellite images and put the boundary between Canada and Denmark right down the middle of the island, giving both countries a piece of Hans not much bigger than ... well ... a bathmat.



Blue Berets

Suppose civil war broke out in Bathmatia, with the tall people battling the short ones. You need to call in the Blue Berets — United Nations peacekeepers. (They wear blue berets to make sure everyone knows they're from the UN.) UN peacekeepers get sent into all kinds of conflict zones, from civil wars to clashes over borders and more. They are not the UN's own soldiers, but rather soldiers from UN-member countries who believe that peace is preferable to war.

