

“Responding to ISIS: The role of Canada and the International Community:

background on multilateral military responses to crises and emergencies, with particular emphasis on how the UN could be better equipped to manage such responses, including a discussion of how a UN emergency peace service might be employed in the kinds of circumstances the international community now faces in Iraq and Syria.

three points:

In brief, my first point: There is no good or better military option currently available for Iraq or Syria. Our existing options for intervention are problematic. We should be thinking about what might work better and how.

Second, a comment on substantive shifts: Why? While there has been progress with war and armed conflict declining, it now appears we may be heading towards overlapping crises with more extremes.

Third: We’ll be in need of a more comprehensive response and far more than multilateral military operations can now provide. The UN is likely our best hope for developing global solutions and for dealing with complex emergencies. It’s time we had a system-wide serious push for a global culture of peace.

Yes, a UN emergency peace service would also help too. It’s for complex emergencies. Our world needs to rally around a big unifying project that restores hope and wider cooperation.

There is no good or better multilateral military option **currently** available for dealing with the IS or for the violence in Syria, or for dealing with Libya, Gaza, South Sudan, CAR, Mali, the Ukraine, wherever.

With respect to responding to terrorism Gwynne Dyer suggests the key insight from much experience is **this**: terrorist movements always want you to overreact, *so don't do it*.

At the outset, there was the political option of just saying “no” but, to no one’s surprise our government was keen to react, to get in and do more.

Operation Inherent Resolve –the American name for this messy war—is a multilateral coalition response of 18 countries, with the U.S. as the lead nation, engaged largely in air strikes on a messier, complex, cross-border insurgency in two failed states, now driven by competing

sectarian power struggles, religious nationalism and numerous militias with some, particularly the IS, also hoping to turn this into more.

Yet rather than accept this as a **complex mess**, Western states prefer to box it up into **another tidy war** on terrorism.

Defence planners do know better, but they will **go with what they have** in air power to bomb insurgents and advisors to re-train soldiers. That's the only way most governments will now agree to participate. This multilateral coalition has a **very restricted menu**.

It may claim to use all dimensions of power, but the other aspects are not as prominent as they might or should be.

So, early on (4 months) into Operation Inherent Resolve—what Canada has termed operation impact -- there are mixed results with some suggesting IS has slowed and been forced to hide, while others suggest it's consolidating quietly before pushing further.

With respect to Iraq and Syria, **this isn't a region that suffers** from insufficient armed forces. There are four large armies in the neighbouring countries of Iran, Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Israel also has a professional military nearby, but be careful of what you wish for. Iran will re-arm and re-train its allies to restore what remains of the Shia crescent. The Saudis usually do the opposite, but stemming that may be another coalition objective.

Others including, George Montbiot, are correct to question a moral or humanitarian imperative, noting this is the seventh occasion Obama has directed the bombing of a largely Muslim nation.

As you can appreciate, air strikes and bombing are **one odd way to stem** an insurgency, protect civilians or to prevent worse. From above, in a jet it must already be tough to distinguish between Shia, Sunni, Christian, Iraqi army, militias or IS. (thats seldom how targets are selected, but that process seems very iffy too)

It would seem that **what's available highlights our rather destructive means** of projecting power, as well as the limits of multilateral military coalitions

It's not easy to see how one develops better multilateral military approaches for Iraq and Syria.

Most of the military resources now available are largely inappropriate. Our existing options for multilateral intervention are problematic. What are the problems?

1. Few, if any, militaries prepare for protection operations, few prepare for rapid deployment to peace operations and even fewer prepare seriously for complex emergencies.

2. Most governments establish clear conditions and limits before agreeing to participate in any multilateral military coalition.
3. For now, no country will provide the 'boots on the ground'. A multinational ground force coalition doesn't seem likely or better, although that may still happen.
4. Some countries will only deploy behind a lead nation like the US and most only want to deploy in safe-mode using advanced weapons from a distance.
5. The militaries of many other countries are unavailable as already committed elsewhere in either regional or UN peace operations
6. Some militaries are simply inappropriate as they're either configured for Cold war contingencies or other national priorities like domestic control.

That's a short list. Notably, Operation Inherent Resolve isn't a UN authorized operation. It's not peace enforcement, it's definitely not peacekeeping or any form of peace operation. And, there aren't many decent options available for those operations either.

My second two cents worth on extremism:

About ten years back a series of reports and studies indicated a surprising, very encouraging decline in war and armed conflict world-wide, with lower fatalities, as well as lower military spending. These were highlighted in the Human Security reports and in Ploughshares Armed Conflict reports among others.

Now we're not altogether confident that these promising trends will hold. The Global Peace Index reported that the past year was the fifth consecutive slide backwards in peacefulness, with the costs of war reaching \$9.8 trillion in the last year.

To paraphrase from a good book by Steven Pinker--2014 has not reflected the better angels of our nature—more war and too much armed conflict with a probability of higher defence spending.

We don't know if this a just blip or dip from progress or a trend that's likely to spread and get worse.

Thoughtful analysts are now talking about a serious decline in world order with more anarchy ahead. As you may have heard, last week, Mikhail Gorbachev warned the world is on the brink of another Cold War. And, a few weeks back India and Pakistan were on the verge of a big war.

It would appear that we're into an era characterized by overlapping crises and extremes.

Three points about an unfolding process:

First, most have heard of **deep divisions** arising since the Global War on Terrorism and the financial crash of 2008.

Well, it shouldn't be any surprise that wars, especially long wars and inconclusive wars generate further opposition and animosity, even more recruits for more violent causes.

Coinciding with this, our economic system shifted billions up and sent the costs down, spreading the hurt and desperation. Inequality and austerity are diminishing hope and opportunity. You may have noticed that civil society & the UN have also been marginalized. The new mantra is 'do more with less' almost everywhere, except for those 1% at the top who tend to benefit from war & austerity.

Second What's new? We now have a growing vulnerable, **volatile precariat** already manifesting in violent extremes in the Middle East and throughout Africa, but one also evident here in Ford Nation and across the Southern U.S.

Religious nationalism & militarism are the easy choice. More people are angry, marginally employed, confused and desperate. There are fewer life lines, especially for youth.

And, in the near term, our new global precariat will be a very unstable driver. It may improve, but it will need help and hope.

The third driver is our dated state system, which can't adapt to address global challenges so has chosen what Paul Roger's refers to as 'liddism'--applying old coercive approaches to keep the top on a pressure cooker, that is heating up.

As the pressure grows, some weak states have started to label opposition & dissent as terrorism. Yet the new extremism isn't simply from abroad or below, it's evident even in nice places like Canada and Australia.

Arguably, the anarchy from above and extremes from abroad appear to be the two aspects most likely to trickle down. Yet I doubt these will arise as direct military threats, although another Cold war would.

As mentioned, a few years back the world appeared to be moving towards less war and less armed violence at lower levels of military spending. **So how might we now shift course to restore a semblance of world order, offset violent extremes and stem another Cold war?**

Clearly, a **comprehensive approach** to address **human needs** is required as is global governance to develop global solutions. But getting there, taking the first steps required is quite a challenge.

Of course, the UN should be central to this effort. It's still our best hope for dealing with complex emergencies and extremes. Somehow, we have to make it work better.

One alternative route, the promising route not seriously pursued back in 2001 was towards a **global culture of peace**—a UN initiative.

We were to have a decade focused on advancing a culture of peace and non-violence; a **decent way** to mobilize people and unify governments to work for a better world. Youth everywhere would benefit from programs in peace education and cosmopolitan conflict resolution. A culture of peace also seems like the best approach to counter the divisions arising.

Sadly, that promising initiative didn't attract adequate support-- yet it could still go viral worldwide for about the cost of one F-35 fighter jet.

We would probably agree that a UN that can fulfill assigned tasks in a more legitimate manner is also overdue.

To its credit, the UN has considerable expertise and experience from working in **complex emergencies**, as well as extensive work with multilateral military coalitions.

Even its peacekeeping operations now **integrate** an array of useful services, both incentives to encourage cooperation, along with more robust forces, the disincentives to deter and deal with non-cooperation from spoilers. The more **comprehensive** approach works.

Unfortunately, while its understanding has increased, the UN's access to both financial and personnel resources required in many pressing emergencies has not.

On a daily basis, the UN struggles to find sufficient contributors, well trained units and people for its sixteen peacekeeping operations. Regional multilateral military partnerships such as those with the AU or EU have yet to become reliable or rapid sources for dealing with crises.

Few, if any, militaries responded favorably to the UN's call for defence **transformation** to prepare forces for peace operations. We can't give up on national defence transformation, but we & the UN can't rely on it either.

So, rather than **rapid deployment** officials concede, it now takes six months to a year or more to deploy any new operation, irrespective of what's happening to people.

As a result, the **UN now faces** its own contradictions in having raised expectations over conflict prevention and protection of civilians **without the means** to do either job rapidly, reliably or adequately.

So what might work?

A United Nations Emergency Peace Service might help in a few key areas.

The UNEPS proposal is intended to create such a "UN 911" first-responder for complex emergencies.

This **option was specifically designed** to help prevent armed conflict and genocide, to protect civilians at extreme risk, to ensure prompt start-up of demanding peace operations, and to address human needs where others can't.

Many in Pugwash heard of this idea at the Halifax conference in July 2003, before it attracted others. Very little has changed. David Krieger added peace to the title and Rebecca Johnson suggested a gender equitable composition, a good idea.

Among the **core principles** underlying this UNEPS proposal are that it be: a *permanent standing*, integrated UN formation;

highly trained and well-equipped;

ready for immediate deployment upon authorization of the UN Security Council;

It must be **multidimensional** -- with civilians, police and military; and **multifunctional** -- capable of diverse assignments with specialized skills for security, humanitarian, health and environmental crises;

It's **to be composed** of approximately 16,000 dedicated personnel (recruited professionals, selected, trained and employed by the UN); developed to ensure regional and gender equitable representation;

It's a **service to complement** existing UN and regional arrangements – by filling the critical gap of managing the initial six months of complex emergencies.

So aside from providing a military formation to deter aggression and maintain security, there would be sufficient police to restore law and order, as well as an array of civilian teams to provide essential services.

Of course, it's **no panacea** or cure-all, and there are some conflicts it shouldn't attempt.

It should work in both civil and inter-state conflict. Although robust & prepared for Chapter VII operations, **it's not a war-fighting mechanism** that can manage opposed intervention. With the modest size projected, it would likely need host nation consent to deploy.

That **doesn't mean it couldn't help** in situations like Syria and Iraq. **Paul Rogers** wrote of UNEPS being a vital proposal for such, but regrettably, one not available.

If developed, we think it might have been useful in a preventive role or a limited protective role -- possibly to manage 2 safe havens, establish a humanitarian corridor or provide a buffer to a small city. But it couldn't stop either war now or play central role once wider fighting occurred.

UNEPS is a **really a core capacity for rapid deployment** to complex peace operations. As it has a **modular formation** it can be scaled up or down. As it's a standing formation it should be able to stand alone but also have the flexibility to complement others who can reinforce, augment, rotate extract etc.

Writing in Global Policy Forum, **Robin Collins** made a compelling case for shifting debate over tried and failed rapid deployment reforms to the substantive potential of a UNEPS. Robin has also noted that a UNEPS might be a solution to **the R2P dilemma of 'how and with what to protect civilians'**.

Notably, a UNEPS would be a far more rapid, reliable and legitimate deterrent to bad behaviour and war crimes.

Yet perhaps **what we need as much** as a solution to Syria and Iraq, which is likely to remain elusive, is to simply point to a better way of doing things, some means of **intervention that is less destructive and more** helpful; something that inspires wider cooperation and hope for a better future. I think we need a **big idea** to renew cooperation between the Security Council, the international community and 'we the people. Yes, developing a **UNEPS might help** with that too.

Senator **Doug Roche** provided another persuasive case for a UN Emergency Peace Service in a recent address to the UN, where he noted,

"The barbarism the world has witnessed in the summer of 2014 cannot be allowed to define our time. I believe a permanent, highly-trained UN Peacekeeping Force, capable of rapid deployment by the Security Council in emergency situations, has now become essential ... A UN emergency peace service – what might be called an international "911" – would, if

established, protect civilians and prevent regional conflicts from turning into wars. We must express our global citizenship by protecting the most vulnerable in the global community. This is a path to the culture of peace.”

Right, you won't be too surprised that I agree with Doug.

A culture of peace and a UN that can fulfill assigned tasks might put us back on the path to a **more cosmopolitan future**; one where our shared values are respected and our common human needs are met.

At least, that would help to **bring us together**, rather than divide us towards a future of more war and more extremism.

Together, we can do better.

Notes to Canada:

Canadian airstrikes^[edit]

Main article: [Operation Impact](#)

The Canadian contribution has been codenamed Operation **Impact** by the Canadian Department of National Defence. Canadian aircraft left for the Middle East to join in airstrikes on October 21. In total, six [CF-18](#) fighter jets, an Airbus [CC-150](#) Polaris air-to-air refueling tanker and two [CP-140 Aurora](#) surveillance aircraft were sent, along with **700 military personnel**.

Canada also flew an extra CF-18 to Kuwait to be used as a spare if the need arises, however a maximum of six are authorized to fly with the coalition missions.^[189]

On November 4, 2014 the Canadian air force CF-18s successfully destroyed ISIL construction equipment using [GBU-12 bombs](#). The construction equipment was being used to divert the [Euphrates River](#) to deny villages water and flood roads.^[190]

Canada announced it was pleased with its first air strike on November 1, in the area around Fallujah.

Yet Linda McQuaig recently wrote that polls suggest Canadians aren't convinced of our military response.

She cites Frank Graves who points to what Canadians would like to see instead: "Overwhelmingly, Canadians want to see their leaders re-think their reliance on military and security-oriented approaches to the terrorist threat, in favour of approaches more in keeping with our core values as a nation."

Notes to 1: No better military options/complex mess

It is also noteworthy as Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham remind us, that the **central aim of peacekeepers** has not been to defeat a national enemy, but to support peace processes, protect civilians and fulfill legitimate international mandates. Even when traditional military combat capabilities are required in UN operations, the overall use and intention of such capabilities is to enhance peace.

The largest UN peacekeeping operation is in the DRC, with 22,000 personnel, 19,500 military, including a robust force intervention brigade, three infantry battalions, one artillery and one special forces and reconnaissance company.

Will air strikes really help to destroy the threat of Islamic state? It was rumoured that the head of IS was injured in an air strike. But the next in line to take their place might be another Al Qaeda affiliate so not exactly a swell alternative. (the al Nusra front or Jabhat al Nusra)

Is there a risk this mess will spread further and wider? Yes! There is already related fighting in Lebanon. Jordan has a long vulnerable border. As IS control 80% of Anbar province, Baghdad seems vulnerable as is the Baghdad airport, which is a lifeline. Understandably, the bombing option will become far tougher if fighting spreads within the capital city. From above, in a jet it must already be tough to distinguish between Shia, Sunni, Christian, Iraqi army, militias or IS.

As a movement, IS appears to be growing, claiming 6000 new recruits since this coalition operation began last month. One might get the impression they're also out recruiting the U.S. as their coalition of the willing now draws from 80 countries. And, that was helped enormously by the war in Gaza.

Can the American advisers train more than 5000 useful troops per year in Iraq? Not easy, but it's understood they need 15,000 troops to counter IS.

Complexity in Iraq includes external power meddling, mass displacement of people, neighbouring states overwhelmed with refugees, almost a complete breakdown of governance with an absence of services, law, order, policing and security, a glut of weapons, a pressing need for humanitarian assistance, and now daily bombing coming from a coalition, which includes members who are largely responsible for creating many of the problems.

About the only positive development so far is that the White House and Pentagon have not included private military and security companies – the mercenary firms that expanded from earlier contract work in Iraq and Afghanistan. But I fear the pressure for that dubious option will only increase.

It may also appear as if in the rush to do something few considered whether it was do-able, as if the tail wagged the dog again, as if we're into another long war, as if terrorists really knew how to influence a wider Western coalition response.

Notes to regional options:

The AU has improved at UN peacekeeping but isn't readily capable of doing more elsewhere. Three of the five multinational AU stand-by brigades are operational, but many are busy with either AU or UN operations.

The AU RDF isn't yet working. The more recent AU ACIRC mechanism for a pool of battlegroups may be up and ready next year, although there is no consensus within the AU on making it work.

We've seen that some AU peacekeeping contributors can do peace enforcement, which the UN has needed in the DRC. (South Africa, Tanzania,) This generated brief concern in the C-34 as there are diverse perspectives over whether the UN should do peace enforcement. Yet the subsequent mandates for Mali, South Sudan and the CAR also included more robust approaches.

The EU has a surplus of multinational standby battlegroups that haven't helped the UN with a single deployment since being announced in 2003. EU decision-making requires consensus of the participants and of the EU members so few expect them to be rapid or helpful. And, if the U.S rules out their own boots on the ground, there is little chance the EU will approve of their boots either.

Both the EU and AU standby arrangements were presented as partnerships with the UN. There is also the Cruz del Sur partnership between Argentina and Chile to have a standby formation available for UN peacekeeping. It hasn't yet helped the UN with a single deployment either.

We started to hear of multinational standby partnerships for peacekeeping within regions over twenty years back so quite a few have been announced, cancelled and largely ineffective.

Some are still enthused about regional arrangements although few have worked and I view the regional option as another way of both encouraging competition between regions and disorganizing to avoid the more challenging global cooperation really required.

And, as Northern member states opted out of UN peacekeeping in the mid-90s, the heavy burden was shifted onto less prepared Southern member states. For a few years this was referred to as the commitment-capability gap, where those who had the capability were not committing and those who contributed lacked the capability.

But to their credit, many Southern troop and police contributors improved markedly and became both quite proficient at peacekeeping and quite dependent on the revenue, the cash provided.

It's therefore understandable that peacekeeping shifted away from preventive deployment and rapid deployment to emphasise post-conflict stability and support of the state. Many of the larger contributors appreciated the phenomena of later, larger, longer and costlier peacekeeping operations. They get paid more.

The one option to NATO is what we see in the war on IS: coalitions of the willing, with support of a P-5 member. Over the past three years, France has taken a lead role in Central Africa.

Notes to 3: A UNEPS would help

Finally, the UN would have a better chance to fulfill assigned tasks in maintaining peace and security, as well as the sort of over-the-horizon security guarantor that gradually offsets the need for 192 independent national defence establishments.

Aside from helping "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and helping to transform a war-prone system, the potential cost-savings might really help.

Incidentally, this option wasn't simply to address the urgent need for rapid deployment or for conflict prevention or for protection of civilians. Those are critically important objectives, but another may be of interest.

The wider potential of a UNEPS or similar entity (for prevention, protection and initiating disarmament) has been understood for over fifty years. As officials in the US State Department formerly acknowledged,

There is an inseparable relationship between the scaling down of national armaments on the one hand and the building up of international peacekeeping machinery and institutions on the other. Nations are unlikely to shed their means of self-protection in the absence of alternative ways to safeguard their legitimate interests. This can only be achieved through the progressive strengthening of international institutions under the United Nations and by creating a United Nations Peace Force to enforce the peace as the disarmament process proceeds.

Clearly, the building-up of a UNEPS would be a supportive step in advancing disarmament, as well as the four priorities of the last World Summit: development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law and, strengthening of the United Nations.

So Governments have known for some time and I suspect you also knew.

What's needed to make headway on the initiative for a UNEPS?

The World Federalist Movement-Canada has supported this initiative since 2000. We have a working group (of five people) and I think we have a fair idea of what's needed to move this further.

This initiative needs a forum to discuss the proposal with UN officials and other civil society groups in New York. We made progress towards this forum over the past year.

As the UN has launched a major review of UN peace operations—the first in a decade – we should have a paper prepared to overview UNEPS potential to help in addressing near-term challenges.

We also need a new book & blueprint to detail the requirements at the political, financial, strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Equally important, is the need for 4-5 UNEPS centres for educational outreach.

Like others, we suffer from austerity and the absence of financial support for even modest steps. We haven't had the funding, which a Canadian provides to the Americans who've only made matters worse.

Where are there likely to be opportunities to build a broader network of support?

There are four to five areas:

-in disarmament discussions, where there is a need for some form of security guarantor to encourage states to start a broader process;

-in the Responsibility to Protect network, where there is now a clear need to identify how and with what to protect more legitimately;

-in the ongoing UN review of peacekeeping, where few can see the existing arrangements or even the proposed reforms as sufficient for prevention, protection or rapid deployment;

-perhaps in the UN Security Council where there is a need for cooperation on a big joint project to overcome the paralysis and deeper divisions arising;

-in the Culture of Peace, where there is a need to mobilise people and provide hope for a better, safer future;