

Canada's options for re-engaging in United Nations Peace Operations

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We made at least a beginning then. If on that foundation we do not build something more permanent and stronger, we will once again have ignored realities, rejected opportunities and betrayed our trust. Will we never learn?

Lester B. Pearson, Nobel Peace Prize Address, Aula, Oslo, Norway, December 11, 1957.

Abstract:

This paper suggests nine options for re-engaging in United Nations peace operations. Drawing on lessons learned from previous experience, it sheds light on what may work and, equally important, what won't. The emphasis on pragmatic, incremental reforms to existing arrangement has been helpful, but insufficient to address the long-standing challenges of prevention, protection and rapid deployment. Along with partnerships and mediation, these will be the immediate priorities. Canada can help with each. With a volatile combination of overlapping crises ahead, it's time to aim higher.

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It won't be easy for Canada to re-engage in United Nations peace operations, but it should be worthwhile. Three of the toughest challenges the UN encounters were identified by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in setting a [new course for Canada](#): prevention of armed conflict, rapid deployment and appropriate training for UN peace operations. With a few bold steps in each direction, we might build a better foundation for the United Nations and improve our prospects for sustainable common security.

The UN's problems haven't diminished. Rather than [rapid deployment](#), routine delays are the norm. UN response times have slowed. Frequently, it now takes six months to a year or more to deploy a new operation. Many still remain under the authorized strength required. With slow responses, conflicts tend to escalate and spread, and then demand larger and longer operations at far higher costs.

Insufficient national [training for UN operations](#) continues to compound problems, often incurring risks to vulnerable civilians, peacekeepers and the reputation of the UN itself. Without sufficient preparation, [screening](#) and [selection](#), some contingents from the North and the South jeopardize the laudable efforts of the other 120,000 UN peacekeepers working to improve conditions.

On a yearly basis, the UN Secretary-General pleads for assistance to prevent armed conflict and protect vulnerable civilians – both [R2P priorities](#) – that all too often reveal the Organization's [limits](#). Routinely, its Member States narrow the menu to early warning and further cooperation with regional organizations. In raising the need for an immediate deployment of troops to the Central African

Republic – while on route to address the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide – UN Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#) conceded that “we have not made the difference that we promised we would make – to prevent the preventable.”

Now there is added urgency. Since 2008, the incidence of violent conflict has tripled. Last year, the [Global Peace Index](#) reported the annual cost of war at a staggering \$14.3 trillion. As if extremism and terrorism were not enough, there are growing concerns over another [Cold War](#), along with the [threat multipliers](#) of climate change, resource depletion, and growing inequality. Overlapping crises are inevitable. With sixteen peacekeeping operations already straining the UN system at a cost of \$8.2 billion (U.S.), the near-term forecast likely includes more, with [Syria](#), Yemen and Libya looming large.

Yet the UN has vast experience in conflict management. To date, there have been seventy-one [UN peacekeeping operations](#) in physically difficult and politically charged conflicts. With only four-to-five outright failures – that still saved thousands of lives and billions of dollars – the Organization has a reasonably high rate of success.

In numerous ways, UN peace operations have improved. With the 2008 release of new [principles and guidelines](#) (aka capstone doctrine), including over 200 areas as diverse as aviation control, fuel storage and protection of civilians, it's no longer a case of re-inventing the wheel. Explicit UN policy details [command and control](#) of civilian-led, multidimensional operations. System-wide policy also guides [integrated assessment and planning](#) of peace operations. To attract and improve national responses, there is a new [strategic force generation](#) and capability planning cell.

[Financial incentives](#) are now provided for those providing critical enablers for mission start-up and for contingents assuming risk. The Department of Field Support recently completed its [global field support strategy](#) to ensure prompt delivery of logistic support (supply & services) world-wide.

UN modernization: pragmatic, incremental reforms seldom work well enough

Improving the UN foundation for peace operations is an important, ongoing process. Canada can definitely contribute with innovative ideas, resources and expertise. Yet reform in the UN system is no easy task.

The need to secure consensus among diverse member states often stymies adaptation. Progress is hard-won at the level of the lowest common denominator. With austerity and the mantra of 'do more with less', there is little tolerance for any further cost or ambitious departure. When combined with the huge investment in conventional responses to conflict, it becomes very difficult to introduce new approaches.

Since 1995, the official preference has remained for pragmatic, incremental reforms to existing arrangements. This tippy-toe approach hasn't delivered on prevention, protection or rapid deployment. Worse, it can't.

There is simply no consensus, beyond lofty rhetoric. And, the UN can't inspire wider support without big and better options. Good ideas may prompt shifts, but only if they address multiple needs, are cost-effective, appeal globally and attract a broad-based constituency. For now, coping may not be ideal, but continuity is better than failing.

As a result, UN officials and panels simply re-label and recycle previous reform

proposals, hoping for a better reception. UN reform exercises and outcomes are predictably far short of what's needed.

This pattern is evident in the recent reports of the [Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance](#), the [UN High-level Independent Panel on peace operations](#) (HIPPO) and the UN Secretary-General's response, [The future of United Nations peace operations](#).

The Commission offers pragmatic transition steps to prepare for better options once the political environment shifts to recognize the current challenges as urgent. "By almost any yardstick" they note that "preventing armed conflict is less costly than either its conduct or its consequences." With respect to UN peace operations, they acknowledge:

"All UN troops and police are borrowed from its Member States for each mission, most forces come with national caveats on their use, and national and UN processes together usually mean nine to twelve months are needed to fill out mandated mission strength. The UN also relies on civilian recruitment mechanisms whose lag times have resisted multiple rounds of improvement ... If dangerous missions continue to be assigned, the UN will need more ready and rapid sources of deployable capacity."

To this end, their solutions to strengthen UN military, police and civilian response capacity for peace operations are to:

- encourage the designation of Member State military units available for UN or regional peace operations on short notice by renewing the Brahimi report's call for brigade and battalion size forces on 30 to 60 days' notice;

- enhance UN ability to rapidly deploy military planning and support teams to new and existing UN missions;
- encourage Member States to designate formed police units available for UN deployment on short notice by asking more contributors for more units;
- establish a sizable standing and reserve capacity to support rapid and sustainable deployment of police to UN peace operations⁸⁵; and
- establish standing and reserve capacities to meet rapid deployment needs for civilian specialist skills.

The HIPPO repeated the imperative of conflict prevention and renewing partnerships for peace operations. The Secretary-General also called for restoring conflict prevention and mediation to the fore. And the UN is to renew efforts for a rapidly deployable mission headquarters, further national and regional standby partnerships, specialist support packages of key enablers, a strategic reserve and a vanguard capability.

Here it may help to recall Canada attempted very similar priorities over twenty year's back in the Government report, [Towards A Rapid Reaction Capacity For The United Nations](#). Hopefully the lessons learned from previous experience will help to clarify our options.

Rapid deployment is a complex demanding task for any Government, but all the more so within the UN system. Prior planning, advance preparation and extensive training are essential to expedite a process where any missing element may cause delays and failure. For the UN, rapid deployment is more than a frequent task and arduous process; it's also an aspiration and a

longstanding reform objective. As rapid deployment can both deter to prevent armed conflict and intervene to stop it, it's also key to protecting civilians and thus to cutting the phenomena of later, larger, longer operations at higher costs.

In the UN system and in complex emergencies, an ounce of prevention tends to be worth more than a ton of cure. That we need a more preventative approach to sustain peace may be increasingly accepted, but our available means remain largely inappropriate. As [Youssef Mahmoud](#) writes, "the three 2015 UN global peace and security reviews that frame the debate have conveyed a common message: that the political instruments, tools, and mechanisms the world body deploys to address violent conflict all attest to the failure of early prevention." It will be powerfully resisted, but it's time to encourage a shift from the destructive means of war-fighting towards providing prompt help and useful services. A sequence of modest steps now should build a stronger UN foundation for the more ambitious jumps ahead.

A UN Rapid Deployment Mission Headquarters

Central to Canada's earlier effort was a global campaign to develop a standing UN rapid deployment mission headquarters (RDMHQ). While described as the 'skeleton' of a mission headquarters, eight full-time planners were to draw on 24 officers earmarked in their home countries, as well as 29 personnel within the UN Secretariat. This initial team was to fill the recurring gap at the operational level by coordinating rapid deployment, and then planning, staffing and managing an operational level headquarters.

The idea was widely popular, with the former UN Secretary-General describing it

as a kind of dissuasion that fostered a culture of prevention. Unfortunately, once this RDMHQ was approved, our then Minister of Foreign Affairs surprisingly refused to help fund it. Enthusiasm waned as a group of member states insisted there be no further use of gratis personnel (cost-free experts on loan to the UN).

Now, when new operations arise, the UN confronts a complex race under pressure to plan, organize and staff mission-start-up and headquarters start-up. Individuals within the UN Secretariat and field operations are routinely double-tasked to implement both. A coherent, pre-designated RDMHQ would help to address a longstanding gap. The lead departments (DPKO and DFS) are soon to release plans for an integrated, civilian, military and police rapidly deployable mission headquarters capacity that can be fully functional within two-to-three months, presumably drawing on UN staff, existing rosters and the standby personnel offered by contributing member states.

Yet rapid deployment is usually thought of in terms of hours and days for light formations, with heavier assets arriving within weeks. Notably, in a previous era, the UN prevented the escalation of several high-risk crises when it was able to [deploy forces](#) to the Suez via the UNEF I mission in 1956 in seven days, to the Congo in 1960 in three days and to UNEF II in 1973 within 17 hours.

Canada should, at least, offer to help. Response times of eight-to-twelve weeks would be a welcome improvement, especially for a standby headquarters. Yet that's also a considerable extension on any interpretation of rapid deployment. Without a permanent, immediately-available, standing headquarters capacity, UN responses are at risk of remaining too-little, too-late.

Standby partnerships, vanguard capacity and strategic reserves

The Standby High Readiness Brigade for UN peace operations (SHIRBRIG) was an earlier compromise over the proposed vanguard capacity; one that was briefly regarded as the most advanced partnership available for UN peace operations. Denmark, Canada and the Netherlands assumed a lead role with ten other countries participating at varying levels of commitment. The SHIRBRIG became operational in 2000 and served as a very useful headquarters and planning element. For a period, it was viewed as the [future of Canada's contributions](#) to UN peace operations.

A number of [advantages](#) were cited. For one, it was deemed more cost-effective to pool our defence resources in co-operative arrangements. Second, deployments might be tailored to draw on a broader pool of contributors. This would increase the prospect that some would actually help. Third, it was to offer the UN relatively prompt access to a pre-established, versatile force comprising a balance of peacekeeping capabilities for a limited period. As the Danish Chief of Defence Staff suggested, it should provide the UN Stand-by Arrangements with a 'jump start capability' to deal with the first phases of an emerging or spreading conflict. Fourth, coalitions in other regions considered adopting a similar model. The idea had wider appeal. At least, those were the hopes.

Unfortunately, this partnership was [disbanded](#) in 2009. It never worked as intended. It couldn't attract participating governments to help in deploying at brigade strength and they couldn't agree to deploy under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which had become the norm by 2001. The participating governments did not assign or

earmark formed units to be on standby for SHIRBRIG deployments.

The SHIRBRIG failed largely because the majority of participants refused to contribute tangible resources to make it work. It entailed no obligation to contribute when there might be costs or risks. Government decision-making regarding overseas operations tends to be cautious and slow. Even within the SHIRBRIG, some participating governments required full parliamentary approval prior to any deployment. In Canada, the SHIRBRIG was deemed a low defence priority. Few knew of it, despite Canada sharing a lead role and having exemplary commanding officers in Dutch Major-General Patrick Cammaert, Swedish Brigadier-General Sten Edholm and Canadian Brigadier-General Greg Mitchell. In turn, the SHIRBRIG couldn't inspire public or political support.

National stand-by resources and regional standby partnerships are seldom rapid or reliable. At best, standby arrangements are simply conditional lists of member states with resources that might help. To date, most have been more proficient at standing by than standing up. Since former Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the [European Union Battlegroups](#) as a contribution to UN rapid deployment in 2004, not one of their 18 Battlegroups have deployed to a UN operation. The five [African Union standby brigades](#) announced in 2003 are still being developed, along with the AU Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) and the more recent [African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises \(ACIRC\)](#). While AU members are routine contributors to UN operations, slow decision-making and a lack of appropriate equipment continue to stymie rapid responses.

Of course, our prior experience doesn't preclude making better plans for a modestly more binding partnership for a UN vanguard

and strategic reserve. Another SHIBRIG could be very useful, especially with a standing, integrated RDMHQ and planning element. Denmark and the Netherlands were exceptional partners and both have numerous useful assets. Chile and Argentina may be interested, as may Norway and Sweden, Ireland and Spain, Jordan, perhaps Cuba and possibly Iran. The objective is to encourage better cooperation in support of UN peace operations. We might actually learn and benefit more by moving beyond coalitions of the like-minded. For its part, Russia should be encouraged to follow China's recent example of establishing an [8000 troop standby contingent](#) for UN peace operations.

A UN vanguard might draw on the CF Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) and one of the army's three mechanized brigade groups. Each could be assigned to a rotation where one remained on standby at high readiness for UN operations. Having CF units specifically earmarked for UN deployment might also help to encourage a deeper level of commitment.

There are benefits to partnerships that encourage a coherent division of labour, drawing on respective strengths and available assets. Joint planning, training, exercises and shared field experiences are valuable.

Specialist packages of key enablers

The UN Secretary-General is inviting member states to propose and provide specialist support packages of key enablers to address temporary gaps and urgent field requirements. The three areas specifically identified are engineering capabilities for infrastructure construction, immediate medical facilities and strategic airlift.

Canada can help. We have useful assets ready and available.

[Engineers](#) are critical to prompt mission start-up. Within Canada's regular force (Army) are four combat engineer regiments, two engineer support regiments and two construction engineer squadrons, as well as ten combat engineer regiments in the CF reserve. Could the Canadian Government assign approximately one third of these (two combat engineer regiments, an engineer support regiment and a construction regiment) to standby at high readiness for UN peace operations? Aside from helping with UN operational needs, the CF engineers should also benefit from related training, readiness and field experience.

Now, even the construction of a UN base camp for headquarters, accommodation and transport can take two – to – three years. Clearly, this is an area where considerable time might be saved. Canada has indigenous industries that make pre-fabricated, modular camps that can be promptly shipped, established and then recycled into future operations. A UN base camp could be developed here to await the next large request, with roll-on, roll-off shipping pre-contracted, along with the engineers and assembly teams required.

The Canadian Forces have a [mobile field hospital](#) that has specialized in providing rapid humanitarian surgical relief in operations abroad. Rather than sit idle, it might either be prepared for a UN operation or be available to help prepare and train other medical contributors.

With respect to strategic airlift, Canada could designate three of our five [CC-177 Globemaster III](#) planes in support of UN peace operations. Similarly, for tactical airlift, Canada might offer eight of our sixteen [C-130J Hercules planes](#).

A Canadian contribution of key enablers (e.g., engineers, a mobile field hospital and strategic lift) should be manageable within the year. Unlike personnel for a mission

headquarters or a formed military or police unit, these assets are unlikely to need the extensive preparation and re-training for UN peace operations.

A Canadian defence specialization?

In 2004, the UN made a bold call for [defence transformation](#), encouraging Member States with advanced militaries to transform their capacity for war-fighting towards UN peace operations. More recently, NATO officials called for '[smart defence](#)' around the twin ideas of specialization and cooperation; an option that is equally applicable to UN peace operations. Rather than try to mount the entire symphony orchestra of defence, but in the miniature version of inter-operable forces that are now affordable, it makes much more sense to play the instruments we play best, especially when they correspond to pressing global needs.

A Canadian specialization in UN peace operations isn't a new idea, but one that has resurfaced since the 1950s. In the mid-90s, a unique specialization was proposed by the Canada 21 council. Their report, *Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century*, emphasized diverse UN peace operations yet eschewed combat-capable armed forces. Within the military, this was viewed as a challenge and threat to defence traditions, budgets and priorities. Canada 21 was an elite attempt. Little, if any, effort was devoted to developing a constituency or organizing follow-up. It quickly became an easy target for military traditionalists and the wider, disinclined defence establishment. Canada 21's chair, Professor Janice Stein concluded that ideas, even good ideas, were simply not enough to shift policy. Yet a more coherent and complementary defence specialization is possible.

The Canadian Forces could be well positioned to contribute rapidly and effectively to UN peace operations. Among

their noteworthy attributes are recent operational experience in austere, high-threat environments, the standard of multi-purpose combat capability, disciplined, cohesive formations, as well as key enablers in engineers, both tactical and strategic airlift and protective vehicle fleets. With respect to the latter, Canada's Army also retains 500 [LAVIIIIs](#) and it will soon take delivery of 500 [tactical armoured patrol vehicles \(TAPV\)](#) as a replacement for the Coyote surveillance and reconnaissance armoured vehicles. There would be considerable savings in dropping heavy mechanized, tracked armor such as the 100 main battle tanks, (Leopard 2A4 & 2A6M), which are unlikely to be deployed or needed in UN operations. Further, the new version of the [LAV 6](#) – now a medium armoured vehicle, with the option of two larger guns – largely obviates any need for a Canadian main battle tank.

As a country that faces no direct military threat, Canada could help to encourage an overdue shift with a specialization in rapid deployment to demanding UN peace operations. In the complex emergencies ahead, a capacity to provide prompt help will be highly valued.

Such a specialization would definitely help, but it's not an assurance of rapid and reliable help when it's most needed. Of course, the Canadian Government, like others world-wide, will remain reluctant to address UN requests that entail deployment of highly-valued national standby personnel and units into areas of high risk. That's an understandable reservation yet one which raises the need for another option.

Leading on Training for Peace Operations

In the early 90s, a series of [detailed reports](#) documented the need for a comprehensive, integrated training program for all levels at a dedicated training centre. With this

background, peacekeepers are ready for intense mission-specific training, thus reducing response times to pressing crisis.

A 2016 report by [Walter Dorn and Joshua Libben](#) confirmed a worrisome decline in related military training over the past decade and the requirement, given the complexity of contemporary peace operations, for a modern training system to deliver in-depth, detailed courses and education.

Canada's experience in this respect shows ample room for improvement. In a hasty political decision announced in the 1994 budget, the Lester B Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre (PPC) was privatized and downsized to focus primarily on short courses for officers and training officials from other countries at CFB Cornwallis, a largely empty former, tri-service training base. Simultaneously, a separate CF Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC) in Kingston was announced to provide training assistance teams for military units. Both were useful, but insufficient. Combined, the PPC and PSTC represented an unduly fragmented approach that failed to secure the modernization of preparation required. Neither encouraged a deeper commitment to UN peace operations.

A more substantive civilian and police training program, along with rosters for rapid mobilization, was established by the Ottawa-based NGO, [CANADEM](#). An array of related courses is also offered by the [Peace Operations Training Institute](#). There are useful lessons to be drawn from the [recent European experience](#) in returning to UN peace operations.

Leading on training for peace operations may be easier said than done; there are now 265 institutes and centres listed on the [International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres \(IAPTC\)](#).

Clearly, there will be a need for a dedicated training centre that can provide general and skill-specific training courses and exercises for all levels of military, police and civilian participants. Ideally, this should be on a designated base with sufficient space for joint exercises and simulations. Proximity to an international airport and related services would be helpful.

An independent review of the diverse training requirements and options for helping others with training may be prudent. Canada retains expertise in this area, but the review should also draw on the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' [Integrated Training Service](#), as well as the wider network of centres abroad. If Canada intends to lead, it's imperative to get off to a good start.

With appropriate preparation and training, the Canadian Forces should be well-positioned to make a substantive contribution to UN peace operations. In an earlier era, Canada deployed a larger proportion of its field force on UN operations than any other contributing member state. For an extended period, this entailed over ten percent of the troops deployed on UN operations. At the beginning of 1992, there were 4,700 CF personnel serving in fifteen UN operations world-wide. By late 1993, UN commitments were tying up nearly 14,000 troops; 4,700 on missions overseas; 4,700 who had returned from missions and been given a specific period to rest and; a similar number in training to replace deployed units in the next rotation.

Notably, UN peace operations remain popular in Canada. In 2015, an [Angus Reid Institute](#) survey found 74 per cent of Canadians thought peacekeeping should be their military's priority – with just 26 per cent in favor of preparing for combat.

Canadian support is not only enduring, it extends to more ambitious developments in UN peace operations. A 1995 poll conducted for the Department of Foreign Affairs found 74 percent of Canadians also favored a standing UN rapid reaction force.

Operationalizing prevention, protection and rapid deployment

Recently, the director of the Munk Centre, [Stephen Toope](#) raised a critical question: "Could we imagine pushing finally to create the United Nations rapid-response force, designed to take action against threats or breaches of the peace, envisioned in Chapter VII of the UN Charter?"

It's overdue. On this, Canada has unique experience. In response to the former Secretary-General's [An Agenda for Peace](#), our then Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Foreign Minister announced an in-depth, detailed study into the requirements of a UN standing force. Then as now, however, the focus shifted to the pragmatic, incremental reforms deemed less controversial. Yet it was a Liberal government that identified a dedicated UN standing Emergency Capability as an option that merits further consideration and research, particularly if existing arrangements are deemed to be insufficient. Twenty years on, it's abundantly clear that the existing arrangements remain slow and insufficient for prevention and protection.

Historically, it's understood that such proposals only attract public support and high-level political interest in the aftermath of tragic wars and/or genocide. Over the past century, on the seven occasions when the need was evident the prior preparation of a universally appealing idea was not. In turn, there was little, if any, constituency of support for a specific plan.

That's changed. A Canadian proposal for a permanent United Nations Emergency Peace

Service (UNEPS) stemmed from the process and continues to attract wider interest. Its institutional advocacy base is in the [World Federalist Movement – Canada](#).

With this one development – effectively a UN ‘911’, first responder for complex emergencies – the UN Organisation would finally have a rapid, reliable capacity to help fulfill four of its tougher assigned tasks. A UNEPS was specifically designed to help prevent armed conflict and atrocity crimes, to protect civilians at extreme risk, to ensure prompt start-up of demanding peace operations, and to address human needs where others either cannot or will not.

Unlike previous proposals, a UNEPS is to complement existing arrangements, with a standing UN formation that’s multidimensional, multifunctional and gender-equitable. With a composition of 13,300 dedicated UN personnel, it includes an operational headquarters at a UN base, two mobile mission headquarters, two robust brigade groups and an array of police and civilian services to help.

This option would also address the persistent calls for a UN rapid deployment capacity, an RDMHQ, a vanguard and a strategic reserve. It entails a major investment with a start-up cost of approximately \$3 billion and annual recurring costs of \$1.5 billion. But it’s still likely to be both a [life-saver and a cost-saver](#).

A [UNEPS](#) should help to prevent the escalation of volatile conflicts; to deter groups from armed violence; and, to cut the size, the length and the frequency of UN operations. Even with success in just one of those areas, it would provide a substantive return on the investment.

That the [endorsements](#) of a UNEPS now include many of the architects of R2P speaks to its potential for operationalizing

prevention of armed conflict and protection of civilians.

Ultimately, moving the proposed UN Emergency Peace Service up within the UN system will require courageous leadership, coherent plans and wider support. But mobilizing cooperation on a big idea might be a critical step to overcoming the divisive politics now threatening to produce another Cold War. Clearly, a win-win outcome would be a joint project to provide more legitimate and useful services for addressing serious global challenges.

Then, we might imagine a UN that could actually save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and save enormous resources.

Multilateral networks

For over sixty years, the prevention of war was a shared priority of successive Canadian governments. The United Nations was a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy. Multilateral cooperation worked. It still does. On UN peace operations, it often works within a network or supportive friend’s group. And, good policy also moves wider and quicker when partnered with civil society and networks of NGOs.

In Canada, a wider ‘peacekeeping partnership’ was developed in the mid-90s to draw on the expertise of government, academe, civil society and related agencies. To advance educational outreach and informed analysis, Peacebuild – the Canadian peacebuilding network – coordinated a [Peace Operations Working Group](#) and published the [Peace Operations Monitor](#). Networking proved its worth, both here and abroad.

Unfortunately, numerous related programs and partnerships were decimated over the

past decade by the Conservative's jump to war-fighting.

A 'peace operations forum' is now needed to restore this partnership and informed constituency.

Notably, Canada wasn't alone in carrying out its former study on UN rapid deployment options, but one of three respected UN contributors to produce reports. These were immediately followed by a wider multinational support group – the Friends of UN rapid deployment, comprised of 27 member states – co-chaired by Canada. This group worked closely with UN officials to implement shared priorities.

With the HIPPO calling for a global prevention forum, Canada might renew related efforts within a revitalized 'Friends of rapid deployment'. This is the optimal way to develop partnerships and to initiate better reforms, even to generate support for more substantive developments.

The Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance was correct to call for "... new smart coalitions to study, innovate, and mobilize political support ...". Their proposed World Conference on Global Institutions in 2020 is likely to be influenced by profound shifts, including the emergence of a one-world cosmopolitan perspective. More ambitious options for UN peace operations will be on the agenda.

A meaningful Canadian contribution will depend on prior preparation and research.

A Canadian Institute for Sustainable Common Security

A new [vision of security](#) coupled to a strategic re-think of contemporary approaches is definitely overdue. Both should help to inform UN peace operations and Canadian contributions. In "[A world in need: the case for sustainable security](#)", Paul Rogers writes that,

"A hurricane of crises across the world – financial meltdown, economic recession, social inequality, military power, food insecurity, climate change – presents governments, citizens and thinkers with a defining challenge: to rethink what "security" means in order to steer the world to a sustainable course. The gap between perilous reality and this urgent aspiration remains formidable."

For Canada, an important step is to revive expertise within a sound, supportive institutional base. In 1984, the government of Pierre Trudeau established the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security (CIIPS), partially to foster research and educational programs, as well as policy-relevant proposals on arms control, disarmament, defence and conflict resolution. An emphasis was accorded to a four-pronged approach of creative and innovative research, education, outreach and proposals. Four audiences were identified: the public, the scholarly community, the government and the international audience.

CIIPS was cancelled by a previous Conservative government. Similarly, our former human security agenda and consortium were also dropped.

Our Canadian knowledge and research base is now relatively thin on the critical issues of peace, conflict and security, even UN peace operations. There is no longer any Canadian equivalent to the [United States Institute of Peace](#) (USIP), the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#) (SIPRI), the [Peace Research Institute of Oslo](#) (PRIO), the [Peace Research Institute Frankfurt](#) (PRIF), the [Geneva Centre for Security Policy](#) (GCSP), the [Indian Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies](#) (ICPS) or the [Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies](#) (RUSI).

A new Canadian Institute – under the

umbrella concept of [sustainable common security](#) – would help to shed light on the core challenges ahead, and help to build a much-needed bridge between government and civil society to deal with our shared challenges. The former CIIPS provides a useful model to emulate in planning a new institute. Its initial four functions, as well as its four intended audiences remain relevant. A focus on sustainable common security is timely:

[Sustainable common security](#) is an organizing principle that provides for the deeper understanding and cooperative action required to address both our longstanding and future human and planetary challenges and needs.

A revitalized United Nations and a more preventative approach to security are now central to international discussions. Increasingly, it's understood that, whenever possible, challenges must be addressed before they manifest as threats. Notably, a preliminary case for sustainable common security as an umbrella concept for [Canadian foreign](#), as well as [security and defence policy](#) recently attracted wider support within civil society and a network of Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Mediation: a useful institutional niche

Mediation is new as a Canadian priority, but it's another timely one. It could be a central niche within a new Canadian institute.

It's widely accepted that UN peace operations depend upon a credible, inclusive peace process to generate stability, respect for law and order and, establishment of decent governance structures. Conflict resolution and mediation are critically important at every stage and every level of the process. With renewed emphasis on prevention, these two approaches will be at the forefront.

[Norway's contribution](#) to the UN Department of Political Affairs' mediation standby and support teams demonstrates how a small investment can have a substantive impact. On a yearly basis, UN mediators now carry out 100 assignments in over 30 countries. Further, in 2010, a group of [Friends of Mediation](#) was formed "to promote and advance the use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as to generate support for the development of mediation". This Friends group now includes 43 member states, the United Nations and 7 regional organizations. Promoting a culture of mediation in their national policies, as well as regionally and internationally is a shared commitment.

The [UN Mediation Support Unit](#) has already established formal [partnerships](#) with institutions such as the Crisis Management Initiative, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Interpeace, International Security Sector Advisory Team, Nodefic, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Swisspeace.

Contemporary conflict resolution may begin with analysis, mapping and tracking, but it also entails a broad array of approaches to the prevention, management and transformation of violent conflict. Mediation also draws on related specializations in process, constitution-making, transitional justice, power-sharing, confidence-building, human rights, gender, security sector, natural resources and property.

Canada already funds an excellent [Nodefic course](#) on UN ceasefire mediation, held annually. Participation in the Friends of Mediation would seem to be an important next step. It would also help if qualified Canadians also had access to such courses.

State-led peacemaking activities have also increased. These can vary from playing a direct leadership role on peace processes to

supporting efforts conducted by the United Nations or other organizations. As the recent success of Switzerland, Norway and Finland demonstrates, this niche frequently yields wider benefits. While Canada definitely has the expertise required, it is without a coordinated program or agency for civilian mediation and peacemaking.

A Can-do peacemaking advisory team merits consideration. By drawing on a combination of those with regional expertise, conflict resolution and mediation skills, it could help to advise the Federal Government on conflicts abroad, peace processes, preventative approaches and international peace initiatives. Further, as one UN expert suggests, this team might identify opportunities for Canadian involvement in resolving conflicts, devise engagement strategies, and if needed, guide and assist implementation. With the development of Canadian skills and experience, we increase our potential contribution to the UN and peaceful settlement of disputes world-wide.

The international expectations are already high. As a candidate for the job of UN Secretary-General, [Antonio Guterres](#) noted, the fact that Canada has moved "from an unusual suspect to an honest broker" increases its ability to lead and draw participants together to mediate solutions to intertwined conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan. As he stressed, the world needs a "surge" in peaceful diplomacy.

Conclusion

Clearly, Canada has an array of options for re-engaging in UN peace operations. In drawing on lessons-learned from prior experience, we are better informed of what may work and, equally important, what won't.

Ideally, our contribution will entail a combination of innovative ideas on UN reform and packages of key enablers, along with highly-trained, well-equipped military, police and civilian personnel. Ottawa should be open to new partnerships and to developing new approaches. Canada is well-positioned to develop a defence specialization in rapid deployment to demanding UN peace operations. It's also time to renew a Canadian peace operations partnership in a forum that facilitates engagement and outreach. New training and research institutions will also be needed to develop an informed appreciation of contemporary peace operations, international training requirements and the diverse challenges of sustainable common security. A can-do peacemaking and mediation advisory team may be a very useful, cost-effective niche.

Recent UN reports caution that the Organization will be hard pressed in responding to the challenges ahead. To date, official efforts to develop UN rapid deployment capacity and to operationalize prevention and protection have come up far short. We can throw good money after bad at high cost, but we also have a better option. The Canadian proposal for a permanent United Nations Emergency Peace Service complements existing arrangements with a more rapid and reliable first responder.

Obviously, such a shift will be far from easy; it's likely to be resisted in the key departments. A senior leadership team may be needed in the Prime Minister's office to direct and manage related efforts.

Yet with determined leadership here and in multilateral networks Canada might start to attract the support required. Hopefully, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will aim higher, with an agenda that inspires widely.

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