

## Preventing armed conflict and protecting civilians: A defence agenda for Sustainable Common Security

By [H. PETER LANGILLE](#) |

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Next week, U.S. President Barack Obama is co-hosting a summit on United Nations peacekeeping. Governments world-wide are encouraged to provide contributions to improve UN peace operations on the organization's 70th anniversary. Will Canada step up to the plate? Unlikely. Our political and military leaders skipped out on their last invitations to participate.

It's a bit out of sync with Stephen Harper's plans for an election campaign premised on insecurity and fear. And, the United Nations probably doesn't provide the best optics when you're trying to divide and scare Canadians into voting Conservative again.

Worse, it's likely to prompt questions—Obama's summit on UN peacekeeping is on Sept. 28—the same day as the Munk debate on foreign policy.

At least, it's a chance to recall a government that ditched Canada's hard-won reputation for 50 years of leadership in UN peacemaking and peacekeeping. With our Prime Minister disparaging the UN General Assembly as hardly worthy of an effort, it's not hard to see why Canada lost a seat on the Security Council to Portugal. Parents and students also want to know why our PM is cheerleading for Canada as a 'warrior nation.' Until Harper, successive Canadian governments actually accorded a high priority to war prevention.

Canada's record at the UN might even attract brief mention. Now, Canada ranks 68th in its contributions of troops and police to the UN (with 85 civilian police, 12 military experts and 18 troops), just behind Djibouti, Mauritania, Turkey and Paraguay, but we're ahead of Mali. To be fair, it's hardly uncommon for northern countries to overlook a UN request for contributions. Yet despite numerous pleas for assistance, the Canadian Forces haven't provided a formed unit to a UN peace operation since 2001.

But more importantly, a new Canadian government will soon be expected to contribute ideas and appropriate resources.

Clearly, this will entail substantive policy shifts. A few points may be noteworthy.

First, it's been over a decade since the UN asked governments worldwide for help with the transformation of national defence efforts to provide appropriate units for UN peace operations. A transformation from war-fighting to peace operations will take time, coherent planning and committed leadership.

Second, NATO has also called on allies to consider niche specialization (rather than attempt to wage the entire symphony orchestra of defence in miniature). While NATO views specialization as a better way to pool alliance resources within a sound division of labour, it is also one means to cut exorbitant defence expenditures, which are now unsustainable. With the global cost of war rising to \$14.3-trillion this year, we don't want to compound the problem. Given the absence of a direct military threat to Canada, we're relatively well positioned to specialize in demanding UN peace operations.

Third, while the incidence of war between states, particularly great powers is clearly in decline, the number of intra-state and civil wars increased from four in 2010 to 15 in 2015. In turn, the demand for UN peacekeeping has been unprecedented, with approximately 120,000 peacekeepers deployed to an average of 16 operations worldwide.

Fourth, overlapping crises are now inevitable. National capacity to help, particularly in the prevention of armed conflict and protection of civilians will be highly valued as such capacity tends to be unavailable and what currently exists is inappropriate (e.g., primarily destructive as designed for war-fighting). Being valued as a useful and helpful contributor to pressing global challenges is a key determinant of security.

Fifth, the recent reports of the UN High-level Commission on Security, Justice and Governance and the UN High Level Independent Panel on peace operations have heightened interest. Notably, the latter revitalized support for three former Canadian priorities (a UN 'vanguard force,' a UN rapid deployment mission headquarters and the development of a more rapid and reliable first responder). Clearly, Canadian ideas continue to influence, despite a government that doesn't.

Sixth, as no government wants to deploy its citizens, even its armed forces, into pressing emergencies and volatile armed conflicts, Canada could take a lead-role in developing the proposed UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS). Composed of professionals,

volunteering to serve, work and be paid by the UN in a standing service, a UNEPS would clearly be more rapid and reliable than renting national assets through the current UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS). Effectively, a 'UN 911,' this option was specifically designed to prevent armed conflict and mass atrocity crimes, to protect civilians at extreme risk, to ensure prompt start-up of demanding operations and to address human needs in areas where others either cannot or will not. Aside from the urgent need for a UNEPS, it's another Canadian idea that deserves a boost.

Seventh, UN peace operations are deployed in remote, high-risk conflict zones worldwide. Authorized under Chapter VII with mandates to protect civilians, demanding operations will continue to demand rapid deployment of highly-mobile, robust multinational contingents. The Canadian Forces have an array of useful assets and related expertise, which the UN needs. While new defence priorities, preparation and training are required, Canada is well-positioned to help.

Eighth, despite several longstanding challenges, UN peace operations have improved markedly over the past 15 years. Operations are now more complex, comprehensive (integrated) and carefully sequenced. Peacekeepers are expected to be familiar with new policy and guidelines, doctrine, command & control, rules of engagement, etc. Having been 'out of the loop' and largely removed from UN discussions and operations for over a decade may be discomfoting, but the learning curve will be steep and, rather than lead operations, we'll have to catch-up for a few years.

Finally, sustainable common security should help to provide a relevant sense of purpose to Canada's defence effort. A specialization in demanding UN peace operations would be a substantive contribution to address Canadian, UN and global needs. The following will help to ensure legitimate, cost-effective Canadian and UN responses to complex emergencies:

- Elevate UN peace operations to a clear and distinct defence priority of the government of Canada and DND and the Canadian Forces.
- Designate a CF base as a UN peace operations training centre with a comprehensive training system for both specialized skills and integrated courses for all ranks, police and civilians. (Revise and update the initial plans for the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre, that was privatized and downsized by the Liberals in 1994 and cancelled by the Harper government in 2013).

- Assign the CF Special Operations Regiment to be on standby (high-readiness) within the recently proposed UN vanguard group.(A lead role in the similar SHIRBRIG was rejected by the Harper government in 2008, leading to the SHIRBRIG's demise in 2009.)
- Assign on a rotating basis, one of the four divisions of the Canadian Army with a mechanized brigade group to the UNSAS(at the rapid deployment level of commitment).
- Ensure one of Canada's five combat engineer regiments is available at high-readiness to support UN peace operations.
- Designate six of Canada's 16 C-130J Hercules planes for tactical lift to support UN peace operations.
- Designate two of Canada's 5 CC-177 Globemaster III planes for strategic lift to support UN peace operations.
- Develop a second CF Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) of approximately 200 personnel(only 10 full-time, with the remainder drawn from across the CF).
- Develop a second CF mobile field hospital to augment the limited multinational capacity currently available within the UNSAS.
- Review Canada's defence budget and planned acquisitions to determine potential cost-savings from the proposed specialization. The highlight of the Conservatives' 'Canada First Defence Strategy' (2020) was a major capital acquisition programme announced by Rona Ambrose as entailing a \$490-billion investment over 20 years. With wider austerity, this exemplifies unsustainable security.

In sum, Canada's safety and security can be assured at lower cost, less risk and wider benefits. Although we'll likely miss out on contributing to the UN's 70th anniversary, it's more important to inspire this generation to aim higher and do better.

*H. Peter Langille is a senior adviser to the Rideau Institute who specializes in conflict resolution, independent defence analysis, peace initiatives and UN operations. He is on the advisory board of the World Federalist Movement-Canada and wrote the initial plans for a Canadian multinational peacekeeping training centre at CFB Cornwallis, served on the 1995 Government study on improving UN rapid deployment and developed the proposal for a United Nations Emergency Peace Service. He can be reached at [hpl@globalcommonsecurity.org](mailto:hpl@globalcommonsecurity.org)  
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