

Peter Langille: UN peace operations need Canada's expertise

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In light of the Liberal government's commitment to increase Canada's participation in UN peacekeeping efforts and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan's five-country tour in Africa, Peter Langille, a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria, wrote an [article](#) (Policy Options, 10 August 2016) discussing ways in which Canada can uniquely contribute to improving UN response capabilities.

Langille argues that besides Canada simply contributing further to the size of UN peacekeeping forces, it should also look at pushing for a "wider shift from war-fighting to providing prompt help and useful services" through UN reform.

One area that Langille identifies where Canada can contribute is the UN's rapid deployment capabilities. He points out how slow UN responses to conflicts often are:

It frequently takes six months to a year or more to deploy a new operation. Many missions still remain under the strength required. With slow responses, conflicts tend to escalate and spread, and then they demand larger and longer operations at far higher costs.

Langille points out that a permanent base from which the UN can quickly deploy assistance into complex conflict zones has been a long-running policy objective which continues to elude UN officials. He argues that Canada has unique experience in that field. In 1992, the Canadian government ordered an intensive study into the potential requirements of a UN standing force. The proposal which emerged from this study is the United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).

UNEPS would be designed to quickly and efficiently offer important services during the first crucial 6 months of a UN operation. While the initial cost of such a base would be quite high, it would ultimately save costs in the long run because it would help prevent conflicts from escalating.

Langille argues that Canada has unique advantages and skills which lend themselves well to hosting a permanent UN Emergency Peace Service:

Because it is a country that faces no direct military threat, Canada could help to encourage a specialization in rapid deployment to difficult UN peace operations. The Canadian Forces have recent experience with austere, high-threat environments, as well as with disciplined, cohesive formations with multipurpose combat capability, which are required in robust operations authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Peter Langille concludes by calling for the government to commit to substantive UN reform:

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.

For Peter Langille's full article, see [Re-engaging Canada in United Nations peace operations](#) (Policy Options, 10 August 2016).

