

# **Canadian Institute for Peace and Sustainable Common Security:**

## **A proposal**

### **Summary**

This proposal envisages the development of a new Canadian Institute to enhance peace, conflict and security research, cooperative outreach and educational programs. It suggests a distinct niche is available for Canada to fill with the umbrella concept of sustainable common security as a means to guide operational prevention and protection, as well as to address the deeper causal factors of heightened insecurity.

### **A useful precedent**

In 1984, the Government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau established the [Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security](#) (CIIPS) through an Act of Parliament. When initially proposed, the text of the Throne Speech noted,

Improving the climate among nations requires knowledge, creativity and a determination to find solutions. Reflecting Canada's concern about current international tensions, the Government will create a publicly funded centre to gather, collate and digest the enormous volume of information now available on defence and arms control issues. Fresh ideas and new proposals, regardless of source, will be studied and promoted.

CIIPS subsequently focused on four priority areas: arms control, disarmament, defence and conflict resolution. The four functions of the institute were in: collecting information, distributing information, fostering research and education, and suggesting proposals for government policy. 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.

Within two years, CIIPS was widely recognized and central to collaborative projects with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies, as well as numerous universities and centres of expertise world-wide.

CIIPS provided a valuable contribution that elevated discussions of international peace and security in a period of high-risk and high public and official concern. In hindsight, it also provides a positive model that may be emulated in planning a similar institute in response to contemporary and future challenges.

## **Revitalizing a comparative advantage**

For sixty years, successive Canadian governments accorded a priority to war prevention, a more effective United Nations, a rules-based international system and a diverse multicultural society. Abroad, Canada was regarded as a constructive middle-power with a deep commitment to cooperative multilateralism. The clichés of a ‘helpful fixer’, an ‘honest broker’ and a ‘useful intermediary’ reflected not only Canadian, but also international appreciation. Understandably, Canadians continue to expect leadership on UN peace operations, nuclear disarmament, conflict resolution, human rights, peace initiatives and more effective global governance.

## **The problem**

Over the past decade, Canadian capacity on issues of peace, security and global challenges diminished. Government departments and agencies lost valuable expertise. Similarly, proficiency within civil society, NGOs and academe suffered with limited resources to conduct related research or educational outreach. Opportunities for peace education, including numerous university-based peace and conflict studies programs declined. The [UN decade to advance a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world](#) (2001-2010) received insufficient support as it coincided with the global war on terrorism and a political emphasis on ‘war-fighting’. With a few exceptions, Canadian leadership, expertise and educational programs need to be revitalized.

Our international security environment is turbulent. Aside from new extremes and terrorism, concerns over another Cold War arise along with the threat multipliers of climate change and resource depletion, inequality and desperation, armed conflicts and preparation for more war.

A strategic re-think of global priorities and approaches is underway. Despite agreement on the R2P priorities at the 2005 World Summit, to date, the international community has made little progress in operationalizing the prevention of armed conflict and the protection of civilians. With the [Global Peace Index](#) reporting the cost of war and armed conflict reached \$14.3 trillion over the past year, there is added urgency.

## **Renewed interest in Peace and Security**

Canadian ideas, even ideas developed within the former CIIPS, continue to resonate. For example, in June, the report of the [UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations](#) (HIPPO) revived interest in three former Canadian priorities: a UN rapidly deployable mission headquarters, a strategic reserve and the vanguard concept. The HIPPO also proposed a new Global Prevention Forum. In his follow-up report, on the ‘[Future of United Nations Peace Operations](#)’, the Secretary-General asked the Secretariat to explore options for a ‘more rapid and reliable first responder’, another former Canadian priority.

The July report of the [Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance](#) asks governments and civil society to prepare ideas and networks now to develop a more receptive political environment for global governance. They call for a World Forum on Global Institutions in 2020.

In May, the UN General Assembly will host a [high-level thematic debate on peace and security](#). As with emergency planning, prior preparation is now critical if Canada is to contribute meaningful solutions to longstanding and recent global challenges.

## **A new niche: ‘sustainable common security’**

In the 1990s, Canada played an important role in the development of the concept and agenda for human security. While helpful, recent events and trends suggest the need for a new concept and agenda, at least, one more aligned to pressing global challenges.

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.

[The Oxford Research Group](#) identifies four interconnected trends that are most likely to lead to substantial global and regional instability, and large-scale loss of life, of a magnitude unmatched by other potential threats:

- Climate change
- Competition over resources
- Marginalization of the majority world
- Global militarization

[Sustainable security](#) shifts the emphasis toward the long-term impact and consequences of our policies, as well as the underlying causes of insecurity, desperation and conflict. The central premise is that the consequences of insecurity are beyond control and fighting the symptoms will not work sufficiently; the focus must shift to resolving the deeper causes.

[Common security](#) provided a blueprint for survival that helped to stem the last Cold War, stopped provocative deployments, calmed tensions and cut both conventional and nuclear weapons, largely by stressing our interdependence and mutual vulnerability. In this ongoing nuclear era, our security dilemma is similar to that of two people in a canoe; one can't be destabilized without jeopardizing the other. That's an understanding governments and citizens cannot afford to forget. A common security approach relies on deeper cooperation; there is less reliance on the competitive pursuit of national security at the expense of others.

A synthesis of sustainable security and common security may be timely and widely helpful. A conceptual definition is attempted below, but recognized as both preliminary and open to revision:

*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.*

Clearly, both a revitalized United Nations and a more preventative approach to security are needed, to ensure that whenever possible challenges are addressed before they manifest as threats. Sustainable common security is an umbrella concept and a progressive ideal.

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 coalition of Canadian non-governmental organizations.

## **A new Canadian Institute for Peace and Sustainable Common Security**

Over the past decade, there have been calls for the Canadian government to establish a [Federal Department of Peace](#), as well as two [private members bills](#) in the House of Commons for such a development, including [Bill C- 373, An Act to Establish the Department of Peace](#).

There are also numerous models world-wide of government sponsored peace and security institutes. Prominent among these are 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) and the [Geneva Centre for Security Policy](#) (GCSP).

Canada played a key role in the foundation of the [United Nations University for Peace](#) in Costa Rica, although with initial expectations that a branch would be established in Canada.

In short, there is a constituency of support for a Canadian Institute of Peace and a nascent yet expanding constituency of support for an emphasis on sustainable common security.

The initial four functions of CIIPS, as well as its four intended audiences remain relevant. Does the proposed option merit further exploration and a more substantive review?

**Dr. H. Peter Langille**  
**Global Common Security i3**  
conflict • security • peace  
*insights ideas initiatives*  
340 Riverside Drive  
London, ON N6H 1E9  
CANADA  
<http://www.globalcommonsecurity.org/gcs/>  
[hpl@globalcommonsecurity.org](mailto:hpl@globalcommonsecurity.org)  
tel: + 1.519.709.1360

