

Instead of Bombing the Islamic State

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#), [SYRIA](#)

This two-part article offers a pro-peace perspective on the present war on ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

First some principles to stimulate another discourse, another way of thinking that is not militarist – and then some concrete proposals – 27 in all for your deliberation, discussion with friends and perhaps to share through your social and other media.

Neither war nor doing nothing

The principle of "An eye for an eye will one day make the whole world blind" – said Mohandas K. Gandhi who was born on October 2 145 years ago. Since then, human civilisation has not advanced much when it comes to handling conflict.

Let's recognise that it is a difficult situation – the Middle East is in a mess and the West is deeply co-responsible if you look at the last roughly 100 years – Sykes-Picot, Balfour, coup d'états, occupations, bombings, bases, oil greed etc.

So, there are no easy solutions.

However, *three simple principles will help us all:*

- A) Be aware of the West's co-responsibility,
- B) Don't make everything even worse – and
- C) Remember that violence begets hate, wish for revenge and more violence – blowbacks.

Unfortunately, A to C is totally ignored by the bombing nations – the US, France, Britain, Belgium and my native Denmark together with some small Arab states which paradoxically have financed ISIS – Al-Qaeda in Iraq – for years.

It is easy to be for war. The intellectually lazy are in the sense that before they arrive at war as a solution, they have seldom contemplated or tried civilian means. *It is also fairly easy to cry 'Down with all wars and weapons!' – but good peace hearts alone also won't solve the problems we are facing.*

What the pro- and anti-war people have in common is a focus on war as such. We need to move that focus and ask: *What are the alternatives **to** war and militarist pseudo solutions?*

Most people don't seem to know what the UN Charter states in its preamble – that humanity shall "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" – *i.e. abolish war entirely.*

That is the vision: What are the alternatives to war? And *how can humans learn to deal in civilised ways with the – unavoidable – conflicts* any and every human system will always display?

That is *what peace researchers grapple with* who take their profession and academic responsibility serious. TFF is one of them – pro-peace and not just anti-violence.

It speaks volumes about the (Western) world *that war-related research is the largest single research field with billions of dollars at its disposal*, that there are military academies everywhere and countless books, films, entertainment etc. about war.

Now, *ask yourself and your country*: How much research, how many academies and how many books, films and teaching programs are there for non-violence, forgiveness, reconciliation etc., i.e. for the UN norm of peace by peaceful means?

The proposals that follow are *not prioritised* – each has some importance and some can be combined – linear thinking won't work anyhow.

Toward a new way of thinking and a less militarised world

Learn something from earlier wars. They have not been that successful and most of the assumptions they were based on turned out to be wrong.

We are back in Iraq because of the invasion, occupation and mis-management of the entire country by woefully ignorant foreigners.

Recognise that *terrorism cannot be eradicated by killing terrorists – as little as you can rid the world of criminality by killing criminals*. Try to understand the *underlying* driving forces and why people become terrorists.

Make a *comprehensive conflict analysis or diagnosis* and look at the problem(s) to be solved more than on some particular actors.

Shape you own policy creatively and draw upon *values* that characterise your own democratic society.

If it is wrong to kill your neighbour why is it OK to kill thousands for some 'national interest'?

Secondly, the foreign policy of a small state cannot consist in setting up a telephone answering machine only responding to calls from Washington or Brussels with the message: We'll be there when you want us to! (*Denmark's foreign policy in a nutshell*).

Think in accordance with the UN Charter (read it if you haven't). It states with abundant clarity *that all civilian means shall have been tried* and found to have yielded no result before military means are introduced.

Don't act in panic – *take a longer time perspective* and define the participants to a conflict broadly (there are no conflict with only two parties). In that longer perspective, *include the role of the West*, colonial legacy, arms trade as a problem, etc.

Use empathy – ask yourself how your opponent is likely to perceive your actions; don't be fooled by your wishful thinking: If we do this to them, they will probably obey and do what

we tell them to do! Think through several moves and counter-moves, not just one round.

Don't get carried away by the military power/superiority you may possess – at the end of the day wars are only won and conflicts solved exclusively by the *intellect* and *bymoral superiority*. *Hubris* is a very very dangerous partner in all international – and human – relations.

Try to understand what ISIS is, where its hate and brutality comes from – don't see them as just mad men who must be killed. To understand is not the same as defending someone. The West has a certain responsibility for ISIS's existence – while the Caliphate and the brutality with which it is established may be repulsive, it has historical roots both in Islam and in the West's high-handed treatment of the region.

To go to war is the single most important decision any government can make. Ensure that you have superb expertise – many and diverse – giving their advise in proportion to that importance.

Be sure also that you have *parliamentarians* who are knowledgeable about international affairs in a broad sense and don't just follow someone else's opinion or orders.

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