

## Instead of Bombing the Islamic State

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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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