

During the general discussion on rapid deployment, conference co-chair, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, broached the subject of creating a standing UN constabulary or UN Legion as initially proposed by Sir Brian Urquhart. Several proponents argued that a standing UN force with no national ties to complicate and slow decision making and deployment would be the only way to provide a reliable, rapidly deployable force capable of halting conflict before it could escalate and spread. It was argued that the cost of developing and equipping a force of 5000, estimated at \$1 billion USD, as well as annual recurring costs of approximately \$1 billion USD, would still be relatively cost effective because the constabulary or legion would help to prevent prolonged armed conflict, damage to infrastructure and harm to civilians.

When probed on where a constabulary force could be useful, Dr. Axworthy noted that if the UN had such a force now, it might have been of use in Iraq, and thus prevented the US from unilaterally waging war on the country. He also cited the example of Italy dumping radioactive waste off the coast of Somalia, explaining that a UN constabulary force could enforce law in and off the coast of failed states.

Those opposed to the idea of a UN constabulary argued that, although the logic is sound, there is little point in discussing the development of a UN standing army, as the idea remains both politically and economically unfeasible. One participant pointed to the difficulties already encountered in the financing of UN peacekeeping – with insufficient money for reimbursing troop contributors – the option of a new UN force was deemed a ‘non-starter’. Another questioned the composition of such a force, its potential leadership and whether it would be legal if the force was not provided from national contingents. The opposition of the U.S. administration to a standing UN army was also cited as major impediment.

This provoked a brief discussion on appropriate terminology. One participant claimed that the term ‘standing army’ attracts political opposition and unwarranted fear. He suggested there was likely to be a better reception to the more appealing and politically marketable concept of a ‘UN Emergency Service’. Aside from being less offensive in some regions, the term would provide a more accurate depiction of the purpose for such a UN service. To address contemporary armed conflict with a broad