

Should canada be
involved in
international
conflicts?



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Canada is one of the richest nations in the world and is a key member in the G8, and it has the economic resources to allow spending in necessary areas such as military and national defense. Yet people criticize the spending of Canada's military budget when it is only the 13th highest ranked in the world spending approximately 22.2 billion dollars in 2009 and the size of its armed forces is only the 29th highest in the world with 104,243 total number of troops. The number of troops may seem large but it means that there are only 3.1 troops per 1000 Canadians and only 2 active troops per 1000 Canadians. When looking at these statistics it is easy to see that the amount Canada invests is very low and should be spent anyway for basic protection and security.

In the graph beside, according to the SIPRI, Canada is not even a part of the next 10 countries combined! You clearly see how little Canada commits to defense and national security. <http://static.globalissues.org/i/military/10/country-distribution-2009.png>

According to the SIPRI, even the recession is not slowing down international investment in military and Canada should maintain its military power and not lag behind. After a decline following the end of the Cold War, recent years have seen military spending increase

Rapid decline in deficits

Chart 1.1 – Federal Budgetary Deficit

Argument #2- Canada has a Right and Responsibility

Simply and clearly; Canada has both a right and responsibility to protect others in need because the foundation of the Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms states “ Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice” This is NOT just for people that live in Canada but should be a standard that all people should deserve. A revised version can be found in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights “ Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” Another point to remember is that many of us were saved directly or even indirectly from Canada’s involvement in International Conflicts. Below are some of the conflicts Canada has been involved in:

- 1) (UNMIH) United Nations Mission in Haiti 1993-1996 “ Up to 500 Canadian Forces personnel and 100 civilian police.”
- 2) (ONUC) United Nations Operation in the Congo 1960-1964 “ Approx. 300 servicemen at a time, 1, 900 total”
- 3) (MINUSTAH) UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti 2004 500 personnel, 6 helicopters (Operation HALO)

Even here, we can see that one of the smallest countries like Haiti need to constantly be revisited and supported to maintain a basic democratic right to vote and natural disasters and other events we cannot account for, only make the situation worse.

<http://static.globalissues.org/i/military/09/global-peace-index-2009.gif>

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“ The Global Peace Index that the BBC is referring to is an attempt to quantify the difficult-to-define value of peace and rank countries based on over 20 indicators using both quantitative data and qualitative scores from a range of sources. Here is a summary chart from their latest report:

(The top ranking nations on the global peace index were; New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Austria, Sweden, Japan, Canada, Finland, and Slovenia. It is worth looking at the report for the full list of indicators used, which cover a mixture of internal and external factors, weighted in various ways.)”

Argument #3- We have Always Been Peacemakers

Many people have been angered by Canada's growing peacemaking efforts in areas such as Afghanistan and Somalia. But in fact, the roots of Canada's peacekeeping missions were really peacemaking missions. For example, when African-Americans were discriminated against, where did they risk their lives through the underground railways to reach? Yes, it was Canada. This is a very good example because even though Canada was still mainly a colony of Britannica, we subtly created hope without using force. But how long can one make peace with no assertiveness? It is only logical that Canada take the next step and not just wait for a stroke of luck to happen.... or a disaster. Another good example is Somalian Piracy. Although this is an on-going issue today, it has been greatly reduced by Canadian peacekeeping AND peacemaking missions. Even though a full scale Canadian-led attack was not sent, a few, technologically advanced ships (HMCS Fredericton), were sent in along with NATO forces to prevent hijacking and blackmailing of

innocent travellers through the waters along with cargo ships. This essential protection saves millions of dollars' worth of Canadian and international cargo serving both a humanitarian service and economical benefit.

Argument #4- By Protecting Other Countries, We learn how to protect ourselves

One should remember that Canada is not immune to attacks. Time and time again has proven that Canada is waiting for a disaster if it does not take proactive steps to disarm and eliminate terrorism and national security threats. Even in these past few months, a group of terrorists in the safety of our own city planned to mass murder Canadians in the hundreds and were thankfully stopped by one brave man. Still, what will happen when no one takes action? Then Canada will pay the price for lack of involvement.

Thankfully, it is highly unlikely a day like this will come. Canada has been involved for many years, combating against Al-Qaeda, Taliban and even the " Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine"! Through these missions in countries like Afghanistan, we are keeping terrorists and terrorism at bay preventing them from even reaching Canadian soil and the data Canada contains on them is massive! Over the years, we have learned tactics and strategies from other countries that are also involved and we have enriched our knowledge not to mention our international ties by being a partner in conflict situations. Additional skills we acquire include resource management, accumulation of defensive weaponry and even food rationing! It is priceless to be prepared for disaster and the better the job Canada does on protecting its citizens, the prouder we should be.

CON: MAIN ARGUMENTS

Argument #1 – Money

Money is such a big issue with international problems because we are spending money for weapons and things that just aren't as important as other things we could be spending the money on.

– Money from our taxes is being used for the war in Afghanistan. This is such a waste, because we should be spending all this money on more important things. Such as, schooling and education, repairing streets and roads, and making programs and donating the money to help our own well-being. Also, using the money to help make under-developed neighbourhoods safer, and better to live in.

– Canada is ranked the 7th highest military spender on NATO's list of 26 members. Victoria, B. C. – the war is costing their Defence Department more than \$22 billion dollars, for spending money on rebuilding equipment and long term care for the veterans. The number of Canadian veterans of Afghanistan is estimated to be about 41, 000 by 2010. Also, \$2 billion dollars are spent every year towards this war.

Ottawa also decided to spend \$16 billion dollars on fighter jets.

– From 2007, Canada had allocated \$741 million to Afghanistan over the fiscal years of 2001-2002 to 2006-2007.

An estimated 2,500-2,830 Canadian Forces are currently deployed in Afghanistan for International Security Assistance Force. Canada is one of the 47 countries that sent forces to Afghanistan.

Defense

First, spending in 2005-06 by the Department of National Defense on Canada's military forces made up almost 7 cents of each taxpayer dollar (\$15.0 billion).

Canada Revenue Agency – \$4 billion or 2 cents

Public Safety

Next, operating costs of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness were close to 3 cents of your tax dollar (\$6.6 billion). This includes funding for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the federal prison system, and border traffic and security operations.

Public Safety – \$6.6 billion or 3 cents

Argument #2- Peacekeeping to Peacemaking?

Canada has a reputation of being “Peacekeepers”.

– More than 125,000 Canadians have participated United Nations and NATO peacekeeping duties. That's more Peacekeepers than any other country. The Canadian Peacekeepers Medal is awarded to all Canadians who serve on peacekeeping missions. Doesn't this say something about us Canadians?

– Jim Travers, a political columnist with “Toronto Star” says that “Peacekeeping ranks up there with hockey...it is important in our self-definition.”

Canada is mostly credited with inventing peacekeeping because Lester B. Pearson who became Prime Minister in 1963 made the idea and showed it to United Nations in 1956.

– We had a perfect name for ourselves, why are we ruining it with this one huge war? We now have to start peacemaking, and it’s ruining our reputation.

Peacekeeping is getting more and more difficult for us because, since we’re getting influenced by the Americans and other countries, it allows us to get more involved with other things. Less important things, when Peacekeeping is what should be on our minds the most, especially because of what’s going on.

Argument #3- Family and Safety, Health and Poverty

The war in Afghanistan is causing so much trauma and grief for families, relatives and friends of people in the Canadian Army.

– Dead soldiers and Canadians have taken a toll on all of the families who are related to them, because they are put in these situations, that cause grief, and it isn’t easy for their family members to move on.

– Since the start of Canada’s Military Activities in Afghanistan, 152 Canadian Soldiers have died because of this war.

The most recent death was on August 30th 2010 of Corporal Brian Pinksen. He was serving in the 1st Battalion and was a member of the 2nd Battalion.

– We should be helping the people in poverty. What do you think 'Me to We' is for? We recognize the people who live in poverty, but we aren't doing as much to help those people, then we are with the people in Afghanistan.

What about Canadians? We should be helping people in our own country who are living here, than causing more problems for Canadians by putting them in more danger. Terrorists may automatically come to Canada, and we could be bombed. Since we're involved in this war, the Afghanistan's would say they have reason to come here and invade us.

PRO: RUBTTAL

Rebuttal #1- Is it wasteful to support a country in desperation? Canada is not wasting money by helping Afghanistan because millions of lives are on the line. Remember, Canada is very protective of its soldiers and it is not committed to Afghanistan without reason. By 2011, many troops should be moved out of Afghanistan so their own government can slowly take over the anti-terrorism project and soon the country should be able to stand on its own two feet, well that's the plan anyway. Again, many of the resources we pay for defense go directly to us and are never used on the field and are kept in reserve in case of emergency. In many situations, the helicopters Canadians use for foreign aid are repurposed as helicopters for airlifting patients that assists OURSELVES. Also, even if the jets that are being replaced were never used, we would still have to replace them from time to time.

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Rebuttal #2- Firstly, why do we have to consider peacemaking such a bad decision? If a teacher saw 2 students battling to the death, wouldn't we want him to intervene? Of course, it would be wonderful if we had a teacher to watch every student but no one has that kind of resources. Even then, maybe it would not be as aggressive as getting directly involved in a situation but it would still be passive aggressive which is masking its true identity. Although American culture may influence Canada's national identity, we are very unique when it comes to politics. Even though we are in the shadow of the USA, we never agree with them for the purpose of agreeing with them. Time and time again, our decisions were independent of US and even in Afghanistan; we did not pursue the matter of getting involved until it was ALLOWED by the United Nations.

Rebuttals #3- We are not sending our soldiers out to die. Since the war began ONLY 152 Canadians have died and considering the 1000's of troops that Canada has sent in on the front lines, this is miraculous. A reason for the accomplishment is the stupendous amount invested in protecting and better equipping our soldiers with expensive but lifesaving simulators, strategies, weaponry, and training. Again, all of Canada's troops are voluntary; meaning they are putting their own life at risk to help others and Canada is not forcing a single person or group to join. Although, it may sadden some to see soldiers die, it is something they are willing to give up their life in the name of humanity. (Show Vid: <http://video.ca.msn.com/watch/video/anti-war-video-canadian-soldiers-cannon-fodder/185hrynjf>)

CON: REBUTTAL

Rebuttal #1 when my colleague states that “ We have always been peacekeepers”. Well, that may be so, we’re peacekeepers at heart, but our actions speak otherwise.

We are involved in the war in Afghanistan and more and more Canadian soldiers are dying. That doesn’t exactly relay “ peace”.

Protecting ourselves does not mean we have to create violence and a dangerous environment for ourselves. It just means we have to be smart in our actions and words, and keep the name of “ peacekeepers” alive.

Rebuttal #2 If Canada can afford involvement, as my colleague states, why are we willing to go above our call of duty and spend billions of dollars on fighter jets, guns and other forms of weapons? We don’t really need to, because we’re already doing our part. Technically it wasn’t even our fight, to fight in the first place.

As I said in my earlier arguments, we should be spending more money on programs and researches that help causes. Like, to help stop the killing of dolphins in Japan. Also, to help cancer research. I’m sure many of you know someone or has a family member/relative who has cancer or who has died of cancer. These too, are things that are important, but so much of the money does not go to these things.

Rebuttal #3 Also, when my colleague states “ by protecting other countries, we learn how to protect ourselves”. I’m not stating that it’s wrong to protect ourselves. We need to protect ourselves, in these kinds of situations. But we

should do it with reason. We're putting us Canadians at risk of danger, whether we see it or not.

PRO: Conclusion

By being peacemakers and not just peacekeepers, we are protecting millions of civilians with a small cost of money but with massive rewards. In other words, instead of thinking of it as a liability, if we consider the tactical advantage, the improved international relations, the national sense of security and safety, along with the basic human right to life, it is clear to see that it is a great economic investment and is only beneficial to Canada's future. It is also essential to remember the massive portion of the cost Canadians pay to protect our soldiers on the field with the best military equipment and training to make sure that they can do their job to the best of their ability and come back home safely. Before I leave here today, I would like to leave you with one last quote:

"It is the soldier, not the reporter who has given us the freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who gives us the freedom to demonstrate. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag."

– Father Dennis Edward O'Brien, USMC

CON: Conclusion

In conclusion, I say that instead of using all this money the government has and all the money we pay as taxpayers should go to more important things. Things that will help Canadian's well-beings. Like more charities and more money put forth to researches to Cancer Research Fund and Diabetes etc. We're basically asking for trouble when we put ourselves out there for countries to attack us. More grief and stress are put on those families who have relatives involved in these wars, and acts. Maybe one day, we might find Canada to not be so peaceful anymore. It may slowly become that way. It may be said that "we're standing up for our country" but sometimes we have to know when to back down, and ride it out, instead of fighting, because we could be putting ourselves in danger.

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Focus Questions:

How can Canadians follow what's going on in Afghanistan better?

What are 3 main reasons why Canada should not be involved in international conflicts?

Do you know anyone who is currently serving in the war in Afghanistan? Or do you know anyone who has a family member serving? If so, how are you/they dealing with it?

With all this money going to the war in Afghanistan, how do you feel about it?

Is it right or humane to allow millions around the world to die and bear unbelievable tortures while we relax in our illusionary paradise?

Do you know of anyone who was assisted by Canada in their home country in maintaining or creating peace?

Should we wait for the fight to come to us or should we be proactive and stop it now?

How much do you value life and what are you willing to give to protect it?