

Canada's foreign policy

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This paper will discuss about Canada's foreign policy towards war. Canada maintained different yardsticks in the two wars against Iraq. It joined the Gulf War I in 1991, but stayed away from the Iraq War in 2003. I will provide logics and arguments in support of Canada's foreign policy decisions. I strongly support Canada's decisions in both the cases. I will discuss the following issues in details: ? Introduction of Canada's Foreign Policy ? Canada's participation in Gulf War I in 1991 ? Reasons behind the decision to participate in the war ? Implications of Canada's participation in Gulf War I ? Why Canada did not participate in Iraq War in 2003? ?

Was the decision justifiable? While discussing the topic, I will follow a number of scholarly sources such as books and journals to provide the facts and support my arguments. I will also use some reliable web-based articles. Besides using these sources, I will provide own logic in support of my argument and discuss the important points in details. All the issues will be co-related with each other to establish the validity of the thesis. Canada's Foreign Policy Canada has been seen as a supporter of the United States for years.

The long border between Canada and the United States is undefended and both the countries have close relationship. For decades, the Canadian economy has been dependant on the United States. The US is the major trade partner of Canada. The US investment in Canada has helped to boost Canadian economy to a great extent. The manufacturing industry of Canada is largely controlled by the United States. Canada also has military partnership with the Unites States (Keating 1993). Despite of the influence of

the US, Canada has maintained a different foreign policy to protect its own interests.

In the last century, Canada made efforts to reach out to the rest of the world by participating in world affairs. It played a major role in UN Peacekeeping operations. Canada is the largest contributor of troops in the UN peacekeeping operations worldwide. Due to the contributions towards world peace, Canada is known as a "middle power". Canada is a member of leading international organizations such as the United Nations, Commonwealth, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), G8 and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Keating 1993).

National Security is a part of Canada's strong foreign policy. Security issues always played important role in influencing its foreign policy decisions. The main priority of successive governments of Canada has been to restore peace and order in the country. With a liberal attitude, Canada always allowed immigrants to settle on its soil without any discrimination. Canada has received accolade worldwide for its open nature. Canada always showed its determination in building a system that would enhance the security of its own citizens and at the same time contribute to create a safer world.

Its participation in wars, peacekeeping operations and other world affairs has been guided by its strong foreign policy. Canada's Participation in Gulf War in 1991 The 1991 Gulf War was a result of illegal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, 1990. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was opposed and condemned by the UN and its member countries. They urged Iraq to leave Kuwait and restore the status quo. However, the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq did not

pay heed to the suggestions of world community and was adamant on his stand (Bulloch and Harvey 1991).

When Saddam Hussein did not relent, the UN Security Council passed a resolution, placing economic sanctions on Iraq. The United States first sent its troops to Saudi Arabia, when there were reports that Iraq might invade Saudi Arabia to show its supremacy over Arabian countries. The United States and its allies started mobilizing their military and naval capabilities in the Gulf region (Bishop 1992). When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Canada was a non-permanent member of the UN. Initially, Canada committed itself to a three-ship task group.

However, later it upgraded the force with dispatching two destroyers and a supply ship to the Gulf region. Canadian Task Group took charge of the Coalition Logistic Forces at the height of the war. While the Canadian ships were in operation in the Gulf, a squadron of CF-18 Hornet fighter aircrafts joined them to strengthen the military power. They were involved in patrolling the sea and monitoring the Iraqi movement (Lynch 1991). The coalition forces coordinated with each other and continued increasing their military strength to launch a final assault.

The UN Security Council passed a resolution on 19 November, 1990 authorizing all the necessary means to evict Iraq from Kuwait by 15 January, 1991. However, it was not easy to mobilize troops from various countries within a short period. It was also necessary for the participating nations to get the nod in their respective parliaments and legislative houses. On January 12, 1991, the United States Congress gave the go-ahead for the use

of military force against Iraq. Other countries in the coalition also received the green signal from their legislative houses (Clifford 1991).

The United States led a coalition of 34 nations to wage war against Iraq. Canada was also a part of the coalition forces. The war against Iraq was intended to liberate Kuwait. It was known as the "Operation Desert Storm". Canada played an important role in the "Operation Friction" with its troops, ships and fighter aircrafts. The first assault of the coalition forces was launched on 17 January, 1991. The war continued till 28 February, 1991 and ended with the defeat of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait (Bishop 1992).

The coalition forces encountered a strong resistance from the Iraqi forces, but ultimately they emerged victorious. About 3, 000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and aircrew took part in the operations in the Gulf War I (Lynch 1991). Reasons behind Canada's participation in Gulf War I Canada has a history of participating in peacekeeping operations sponsored by the United Nations. As mentioned earlier, Canada is the largest contributor of troops in the UN peacekeeping operations. The Gulf War I between Iraq and the coalition forces was sort of peacekeeping operation. The war was not intended to attack any sovereign nations.

In fact, the main objective of the war was to liberate a sovereign nation from the illegal occupation of a hostile neighbor. The US and its allies were not against Iraqi people. They were up against a despot who believed in invading other countries for his own ambitions. The United Nations had no hesitation in authorizing the use of force to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait soil. The UN approval was a strong reason for Canada to participate in war for the cause

of international peace. Even after the end of war, Canada continued its operations in the Gulf region under the auspices of the UN.

Canada joined the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM). The UNIKOM was responsible for the demilitarization of the war-affected areas. It also actively participated in providing humanitarian aid to Kurdish refugees. Canada provided its officials to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) under "Operation Record" that worked for investigating and destroying Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" (Lynch 1991). By participating in these operations, Canada only did justice to its reputation of a middle power. It's not that Canada participated in the Gulf War I to show its military capabilities.

Canada always believed in sending its troops for working towards restoring peace in different parts of the world. In the beginning of the war, it was predicted that Canada would assume its traditional role of peacekeeping force in the Gulf region. It was proved with the significant contribution made by Canada to UNIKOM mission. Canadian forces were comprised of physicians and technicians who worked in the Field Hospital during war. Canada fully concentrated in providing humanitarian assistance and other logistic support rather than joining the allied forces in direct combat with Iraq.

It was a strategic move made by the government to pacify the public. In the US, the public mood was in favor of the war against Iraq. However, in Canada, situation was different. People saw no reasons of going into war against Iraq. But they were never opposed to any humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations (Keating 1993). After reading the public mood,

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the Canadian government carefully planned its moves and never committed to participate in the ground strikes. Canada had the least number of ground troops, a few ships and aircrafts as compared to other participating nations.

Another major factor that guided Canada to participate in the war was its commitment to international peace. " When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Canada was a temporary member of the UN Security Council" (Clifford 1991). The UN Security Council strictly condemned the invasion and asked Iraq to leave Kuwait immediately. Canada was a part to that resolution. When the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq, then also Canada supported the decision. Hence, it was natural for Canada to join an operation that had the approval of the UN.

Being a part of the UN Security Council resolution, Canada had to prove its stance on the global political forum. Implications of Canada's participation in Gulf War I As discussed earlier, the public mood in Canada was against non-participation in the war. Keeping the public sentiments in mind, the Canadian government decided to make only specific contribution rather than fighting Iraqi troops in a direct combat. By doing so, Canada succeeded in establishing itself as a middle power again. Canadian forces operated independently rather than operating under the direct command of the US or British.

Canadian commanders exploited every opportunity to ensure a strong Canadian role in the war and it was a part of Canadian foreign policy. While the coalition forces indulged in heavy fighting, the Canadian forces were busy in providing logistic support and humanitarian assistance to the affected soldiers and people. The Gulf War I could be seen as a victory of <https://assignbuster.com/canadas-foreign-policy/>

Canadian foreign policy. Canada got everything it wanted. An active and limited participation in the war gave credence to its foreign policy. Canada did not spend much in the war, which could have put much pressure in the economic policy of the country.

With a limited participation and assistance to the peacekeeping operations aftermath the conflict, it curbed the public dissent. At the same time, it gained credibility in the UN and other world forums as a responsible nation. Why Canada did not participate in Iraq War in 2003? The US-sponsored war against Iraq in 2003 was the most controversial war in the world history. Defying the public sentiments and world opinions, the United States prepared the ground for launching attack against Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein from power.

The war was waged after a series of sanctions against Iraq and the inspection of Iraq's weapon programs by the UN weapon inspectors. Several countries such as Britain, Spain, Japan, Australia, South Korea and Italy participated in the Iraq war led by the United States. Canada was a surprise omission on the list of the coalition forces. Canada had its own valid reasons not to participate in the war that caused widespread devastation in Iraq. Unlike the previous war in 1991, Iraq war never got the approval of the United Nations.

Three out of the five permanent members of the UN Security council strongly opposed the use of force in Iraq. However, the US and the UK were not prepared to leave any opportunity of invading Iraq. Without the approval of the UN and other countries in the world, the coalition forces attacked Iraq and ousted Saddam Hussein from power. The operation " Enduring Freedom"

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was seen as a political hegemony of the US President George W. Bush. It was believed that the US and the UK eyed the huge oilfields in Iraq and wanted to gain control over them (Murray and Scales 2004).

Canada always believed in the policies of the UN and strongly supported it. It always played the role of a middle power and contributed largely in the UN peacekeeping operations. It was against the Canadian foreign policy to attack any sovereign nations without the approval of the world's largest body. Hence, it decided to distance itself from the bloodshed. Canadian public always maintained a balanced approach in the world affairs. The public sentiment in Canada was completely against the war propaganda made by the US.

The anti-war campaigns launched in the cities and towns across the country forced the government to think wisely over the issue of participation in the Iraq war. Hundreds of thousands of people joined the mass protest against Canada's participation in the war. All the concerned organizations and political parties urged the government not to join the US-led coalition in Iraq war. Public opinion played an important role in influencing Canada's decision on the war (Jones 2003). The political establishment in Canada was divided on this issue. There were cracks within the ruling party on Canada's participation in Iraq war.

With the federal elections in the horizon, the government was not in a position to afford a split in the party. Also, it was not prepared to defy the public opinion which was largely against the war (Jones 2003). Canada participated in the war against Afghanistan as it strongly denounced terrorism. The war against Afghanistan was a war on terrorism by Taliban

and Al Qaeda (Statement on the Iraq-US Crisis 2002). However, it could not find such a reason to participate in Iraq war. Canada strongly advocated the need of a peaceful resolution to Iraq crisis, saying war is not the answer.

Canada was also concerned about the principles of Bush Doctrine, which asserted the US rights to wage pre-emptive strikes on the nations that are “threats” to world peace (Statement on the Iraq-US Crisis 2002). Canada believed that such policies of the United States would have negative impacts on the geo-political and economical conditions of the world. Although Canada is a strong ally of the United States, it does not approve the unilateralism practiced by the United States in the recent years. Canada had already deployed its troops in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world in the UN peacekeeping operations.

It did not want to endanger the lives of its troops in Iraq by participating in the war. In the past decade, Canadian governments have drastically cut the size of troops as a cost saving measure. It did not want a shortage of troops in the country by sending them to Iraq. The friendly fire incident of April 2002 was still fresh in the minds of people. That incident killed four Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan (Military History of Canada). The Canadian government was not ready to afford any more causality in a war that was neither in the national interest nor in the interest of world peace.