

Canada, Do Not Follow the U.S. Into Permanent War

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Oh Canada, to thine own self be true, not to thine heavily militarized neighbor. Robin Williams called you a nice apartment over a meth lab for a reason, and now you're bringing the drugs upstairs.

We write to you as two U.S. citizens, one of whom moved to Canada when George W. Bush became U.S. president. Every wise observer in Texas had warned this country about their Governor Bush, but the message hadn't gotten through.

We need the message to reach you now before you follow the United States down a path it has been on since its creation, a path that used to include regular invasions of your land, a path impeded a little by your generous sanctuary for those refusing war participation, and a path that now invites you to ruin yourself along with us. Misery and addiction and illegality love company, Canada. Alone they wither, but with aiders and abettors they flourish.

At the end of 2013 Gallup polls asked Canadians what nation they'd most like to move to, and zero of the Canadians polled said the United States, while people in the United States picked Canada as their most desired destination. Should the more desirable nation be imitating the less desirable, or the other way around?

In the same poll almost every nation of the 65 surveyed said the United States was the greatest threat to peace in the world. In the United States, bizarrely, people said Iran was the greatest threat — despite Iran spending less than 1% of what the United States does on militarism. In Canada, Iran and the United States tied for first place. You seem to be of two minds, Canada, one of them thoughtful, the other breathing the fumes of your downstairs neighbor.

At the end of 2014 Gallup asked people if they would fight for their country in a war. In many nations 60% to 70% said no, while 10% to 20% said yes. In Canada 45% said no, but 30% said yes. In the United States 44% said yes and 30% no. Of course they're all lying, thank goodness. The United States always has several wars running, and everyone is free to sign up; almost none of the professed willing fighters do. But as a measure of support for war and approval of war participation, the U.S. numbers tell you where Canada is headed if it follows its southern friends.

A recent poll in Canada indicates that a majority of Canadians support going to war in Iraq and Syria, with support being highest, as might be expected, among Conservatives, with members of the NDP and Liberal parties offering less, but still significant, support. All this may be part of the Islamophobia that is sweeping much of North America and Europe. But, take it from us, the support is soon replaced with regret — and the wars do not end when

the public turns against them. A majority of the U.S. public has believed the 2001 and 2003 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq should never have been begun for the majority of those wars' existence. Once begun, however, the wars roll on, in the absence of serious public pressure to halt them.

Recent polling in Canada also indicates that while over 50% of respondents feel uncomfortable with someone wearing a hijab or abaya, over 60% of respondents support their right to wear it. That's stunning and praiseworthy. To accept discomfort out of respect for others is a top qualifying characteristic of a peacemaker, not a warmaker. Follow that inclination, Canada!

The Canadian government, like the U.S. government, uses fear-mongering to implement its war policies. But again, there is cause for some limited optimism. A recently-proposed anti-terror bill, that legal experts have decried as depriving Canada of some basic rights, has received significant opposition, and is being amended. Unlike the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, which sailed through Congress with little if any opposition, Canadian bill C-51 which, among other things, would stifle dissent, has been widely opposed both in Parliament and in the streets.

Build on that resistance to every evil justified by war, Canada. Resist the degradation of morality, the erosion of civil liberties, the drain to the economy, the environmental destruction, the tendency toward oligarchic rule and rogue illegality. Resist, in fact, the root problem, [namely war](#).

It has been several years since the U.S. media regularly showed pictures of flag-draped coffins arriving on U.S. soil from far-flung war zones. And most of the victims of U.S. wars — those living where the wars are fought — are shown hardly at all. But Canada's media may do better. You may literally see the evil of your wars. But will you see your way clear to getting out of them? It is far easier to not launch them. It is far easier still to not plan and prepare for them.

We remember the lead you took, Canada, in banning land mines. The United States sells flying land mines called cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia, which attacks its neighbors. The United States uses those cluster bombs on its own war victims. Is this the path you want to follow? Do you imagine, like some Las Vegas tiger tamer, that you'll civilize the wars you join? Not to put too fine a point on it, Canada, you will not. Murder will not be civilized. It can, however, be ended — if you help us.

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