Role Of The Canadian Armed Forces In Real Conflicts In The 21st Century

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are used not very often in real conflicts in the 21st century, with only a few hundred troops deployed. Back in the 20th century, it was quite the opposite, Canada fought many major wars. From the fields of Vimy to the shores of Juno and to Peacekeeping in Yugoslavia, Canadian forces were prominent in society. Those struggles and battles helped shape and, in some cases, created the Canadian identity.

The biggest and first contributor to the Canadian identity was the battle of Vimy Ridge where Canadian forces working together for the first time and took a ridge that had stopped French attacks many times (The Government of Canada, 2017). Their victory was hard earned, and it was only Canadians troops attacking. It was a big deal because this was the first time that they were able to fight with only their countrymen. Once the Canadian public heard about the victory, they were proud of their troop's efforts. Everyone was very patriotic after the battle, it helped unite and give confidence to the young country (The Government of Canada, 2017). The battle helped created an identity at a crucial time because not many people thought of themselves as Canadians, but this battle helped change that. People started being proud of where they are from. The monument of Vimy is Canada's biggest monument overseas to remember the dead from World War 1 (The Government of Canada, 2018). Recently in a speech at the centennial anniversary of Vimy Ridge (at Vimy), current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, "Canada was born here" further acknowledgement that the troops here did more than winning a battle.

Over 100 years after the triumph Canadians still recognize the importance of the battle and how it helped create a sense of national identity. In the second World War Canada volunteered to fight the Axis countries a week after Britain declared war. When then Prime Minister Mackenzie King said Canada would be "bringing her cooperation voluntary" it helped to continue the cultural separation from Britain (King, 1939). During the war, Canada fought some major battles like the storming of Juno beach. That battle is still remembered as one of the greatest military victories for Canada. The victory helped instill a renewed pride of Canada after the depression which was hard on everyone. In the war, Canada helped liberate Europe and Canadians were proud of that effort. Over 4 million Canadians were involved with some part of the war effort, including 1 million who served overseas in the military (The Government of Canada, 2018) out of a population of only 11.3 million (The Government of Canada, 2017). The victory was a huge team effort and people at home when through many struggles such as rationing. This war helped build the Canadian identity into what it is today by uniting the country against an external evil.

Canadian Peacekeeping back in the second half of the 20th century was a big part of what Canada did globally. From the Suez Crisis to Korea to Yugoslavia Canadians were helping people around the world. Canadians immediately went work to fulfill their UN commitments when they went to Korea in 1950 to help protect the South Koreans. Then in 1956 with the work of Leaster B. Pearson of Canada helped avoid an all-out conflict between major powers and preserved the peace in the Suez Channel region. He won the Nobel Peace Prize for this work in preventing conflict. Canada also when to the former Yugoslavia when a brutal civil war broke out. Canadians when to separate the fighting armies and protect the civilians under the United

Nation banner and enforced peace (Canada's Secret War, 2009). After all that work as Peacekeepers Canadians thought of themselves as a helpful country and peacekeeping became something that Canada was known for. It became something that Canadians were proud of and are always looking to be a part of. A recent survey found that almost 80% of Canadians were in favour of peacekeeping (McPhedran, 2016). Almost no political issue has that kind of support from a large and diverse nation.

The conflicts that Canada was a part of /prevented through Peacekeeping missions in the 20th century is something that Canadians are proud of. Conflicts in the last century helped create a Canadian identity, as the Canadian Commander at Vimy, A.E. Ross commented, “in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation”. What the Canadian Armed Forces were able to do united a nation and helped a young country become recognized internationally recognized and gave confidence to a nation. The soldiers who participated in these conflicts helped Canada become the country it is today culturally and in many other ways, their efforts and sacrifices should not be forgotten.