

**Losing Heart:**

**Explaining the Decline in Public Support for  
Canadian Military Participation in Afghanistan**

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### *Abstract*

Public support for Canada's military participation in Afghanistan has become a hot-button issue. From 2006 to present, Canadian public opinion has shifted markedly against the mission, despite government efforts to bolster support. In this paper, we trace the erosion of public favour to four factors: attitudes toward peacekeeping, political knowledge, emotion and gender. Our findings show that public support was fractured, and opposition consolidated, by Canadians' cognitive and emotive responses to the mission. Moreover, the government's strategy to inform the public about the mission failed to connect with many Canadians at an emotional level. The analysis is based on two national surveys by the Strategic Counsel measuring Canadian attitudes toward participation in Afghanistan, the necessity of continued engagement, and willingness of Canadians to bear casualties. Our findings suggest that public preferences respond to more than simple facts and knowledge; there is also an important emotive element to public preferences as well. These findings point to the need for nuanced interpretations of shifts in public support for war, and highlight the interplay of cognitive and emotive responses.

Public support for Canada's military participation in Afghanistan has become a hot-button issue, yet while there is some research investigating factors that influence support amongst the general public, and how it may differ among sub-groups of the population, little attention has been given to why overall support has changed over time.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we look specifically at interplay among three factors that together lead to the erosion of public support for Canada's military presence in Afghanistan. The first involves changes in the way Canadians view our country's appropriate role upon the world stage. The second is the level of political knowledge about the mission, and the third is the emotional reactions of Canadians toward the mission.

Our analysis is based upon national survey data collected by the Canadian polling firm Strategic Counsel. These surveys provide us with measures of the Canadian public's attitudes toward participation in Afghanistan, the necessity of continued engagement, and willingness of Canadians to bear casualties. We proceed in three steps. The first highlights something of a paradox. Just as Canadians' understanding of their country's international role has begun to change, it has come to exert less influence on policy preferences toward the mission. More specifically, as a new realist perspective becomes the majority viewpoint, support for its implementation in Afghanistan becomes less common. The second step of our analysis explores this paradox. Our approach centers upon what Canadians learned at both the cognitive and emotional levels as they learned of their forces' combat role in Afghanistan. We find that support for the mission was undercut by a splintering of support among those with a neo-realist outlook and a consolidation of opposition among those with more peacekeeping orientation. The final step in our analysis examines the effect of government efforts to shore up support for the mission by promoting greater information and knowledge among Canadians regarding the actions of their forces in Afghanistan. In this regard we trace the limited success of these efforts to the government's focus upon information and knowledge while failing to address the emotional core of the issue which drives public opinion. But first, we will place this effort into context.

### **Background: A Changing Canadian Identity**

There was little fanfare or controversy when Prime Minister Chrétien initially committed up to 2,000 peacekeeping troops to Afghanistan in 2003.<sup>2</sup> Only six months after the first combat soldiers returned home from the war, this commitment was lauded as brilliant strategy on the part of the Prime Minister. It afforded the government ability to placate its American neighbours, while appeasing their "peaceable kingdom" at home.<sup>3</sup> And although by the defense minister's own admission, the assignment would be "tough and dangerous," it was also to be seen as "in the

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<sup>1</sup> As a hot button see Noah Richler, "And now we are warriors: whatever happened to peacekeeping in the country that invented it?" *Macleans*, vol 121 (20-21) May26-June2, pp 43-45; Létourneau, Charles and Justin Massie, "L'Afghanistan : archétype d'une 'nouvelle' politique étrangère canadienne?" *Policy Options*, December 2006-January 2007. On change over time see John J. Kirton, "Two Solitudes, One War: Public Opinion, National Unity and Canada's War in Afghanistan" 2007. Accessed online at <[www.g7.utoronto.ca/scholar/kirton2007/kirton-afghanistan-071008.pdf](http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/scholar/kirton2007/kirton-afghanistan-071008.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> Tonda MacCharles, "Canadian troops get role in Afghanistan," (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), February 13, 2003. pg. A01.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Travers, "Leadership' a triumph of twisted logic," (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), February 15, 2003. pg. E02.

peacekeeping tradition of Canadians.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he assured Canadians that there should be no concern that soldiers who were trained earlier as combatants would have any difficulty performing in their new peacekeeping roles, as their British counterparts were able to do.<sup>5</sup> By all appearances Canada’s initial decision to participate in Afghanistan was the proverbial best of both worlds; it served to allow Canada to contribute to the international war effort in a way that honoured its citizens’ peacekeeping values. But this “triumph of twisted logic” would not persist indefinitely.<sup>6</sup>

According to Stein and Lang, commitments by Prime Minister Paul Martin in 2005 shifted Canada’s role in Afghanistan towards one involving active combat in February 2006.<sup>7</sup> As casualty numbers mounted, Canadians began to question the wisdom of participation in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Stephen Harper replaced Martin on January 23, 2006 but continued the mission in Afghanistan with Canadian forces in a combat role. By September 2006, members of the opposition Bloc Québécois called for urgent debate and withdrawal from the mission as it “strayed from Canada’s historical position of “mediation and balance” and from the “major values of the Québécois and Canadian populations which are...resolutely peaceful.”<sup>9</sup> There were not only contrary opinions as to whether we should be there, but also why Canada was there in the first place.<sup>10</sup> The debate was soon articulated in terms of differing conceptions of the role Canada *should* be playing in the world generally and in Afghanistan in particular. Those opposed to the mission typically expressed the view that Canada’s role should be in the classic tradition of noble peacekeeper, maintaining “peace by monitoring and observing peace processes and implementing peace agreements.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast, those in support of participation were more likely to see Canada’s role as one “...to enforce peace, and defend countries or groups around the world that are being attacked by terrorists.”<sup>12</sup> These contrasting views remain part of today’s debate as the reality of the circumstances in Afghanistan has become clearer to both ordinary Canadians and their leaders.

“Kandahar means combat...” the headlines now read.<sup>13</sup> The truth is that the mission in Afghanistan is, as previously touted, “tough and dangerous,” but it can no longer be considered peaceful. Canadian soldiers are undeniably playing a combat role, if only to maintain or lay the ground for order and peace to follow. The Manley report was quick to argue that although the

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<sup>4</sup> John McCallum as quoted by Tonda MacCharles in, “Canadian troops get role in Afghanistan,”(*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), February 13, 2003. pg. A01.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Jim Travers, “‘Leadership’ a triumph of twisted logic,” (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), February 15,2003. pg. E02.

<sup>7</sup> Janice Stein and Eugene Lang, *Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Penguin Group: Toronto, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Toronto Star Editorial, “Three more are fallen” (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), June 23, 2007. pg. AA.7.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Chase, “Bloc wants urgent debate on foreign file,” (*The Globe and Mail*, Toronto), September 5, 2006. pg. A.9.

<sup>10</sup> These editorials challenged whether Canadian soldiers were there to extend American hegemony. Toronto Star Editorial, “Three more are fallen” (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), June 23, 2007. pg. AA.7.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Laghi, Freeman, Alan, “Canadians cool to extending mission,” (*Toronto Star*, [Ontario Edition], Toronto), July 19, pg. A13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The Canadian Press, “Kandahar means combat, Hillier says,” (*Globe and Mail*, Toronto), February 1,2008. <[www.globeandmail.com](http://www.globeandmail.com)> accessed February 3, 2008.

mission places soldiers in combat situations, it is still in keeping with long standing Canadian tradition of support for the UN, defense of democratic values, and protection of individual rights.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the panel called for, “sustained resolve and determined realism.”<sup>15</sup> It further recommended that Canadians should be *realistic* about the expectation of combat, and (assuming support from other countries was made available), should commit to the long haul. Neo-realism and the embrace of combat emerged as the new narrative surrounding the mission as well as the official position of the Government of Canada.<sup>16</sup>

This new realist narrative was quickly contested. Liberal opposition leader Stéphane Dion while committed in principle to assisting UN and NATO forces, was adamant that the combat role must end in February of 2009, or at least, that a rotation to withdraw troops from harms way should begin then.<sup>17</sup> Either way, a line was clearly being drawn in opposition to combat, albeit in the changing sands of Canadian political life. Editorials supporting this position suggested that Canadian soldiers focus on training and aid, and wind down direct involvement in the counter-insurgency war.<sup>18</sup> Both the Bloc Québécois and New Democratic parties also rejected the position of the Manley panel; their arguments calling for a complete withdrawal from the mission.<sup>19</sup> The main issue of contention was the appropriate role for Canada in Afghanistan and, more generally, in today's post-9/11 world with an emergent neo-realist conception of Canada as combat-ready confronting the familiar Canadian self-image as a peacekeeper. As their leaders wrestled with these issues and ultimately decided to extend the mission until 2011, support for the mission among the Canadian public dwindled from a majority to a minority position. We explore the dynamics of this latter process in terms of the Canadian public's response to the competing identities on offer as well as increasing public knowledge and emotional responses.

## The Data

Our data were provided by Strategic Counsel.<sup>20</sup> Over the last two years they have been tracking Canadian attitudes towards the Afghan mission across a dozen national surveys. The earliest of these polls, conducted in March 2006, shows a majority of Canadians (55%) expressing overall support for the mission with a substantial minority (41%) opposed. In each of

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<sup>14</sup> John Ivison, “Manley report invokes the spirit of Pearson,” (*National Post*, Toronto), January 23, 2008. <[www.nationalpost.com](http://www.nationalpost.com)> accessed February 2, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> The Toronto Star Editorial, “Recast Canada's Afghan mission,” (*Toronto Star*, Toronto), January 23, 2008. <[www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)> accessed February 2, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> For a description of ‘neo-realism see David Dewitt and John Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power*. (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1983); and more recently John J. Kirton, *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World*. (Toronto: Thompson-Nelson, 2007), 118-20, 132, 198. ; for a recent portrait of the Harper Government's principal power foreign policy see Kirton “Canada Shows its Strength” *Toronto Star* (31 October 2006), A21.

<sup>17</sup> The Canadian Press, “Dion insists Afghan combat role end in '09,” (*Globe and Mail*, Toronto), January 30, 2008. <[www.globeandmail.com](http://www.globeandmail.com)> accessed February 3, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> The Toronto Star Editorial, “Recast Canada's Afghan mission,” (*Toronto Star*, Toronto), January 23, 2008. <[www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)> accessed February 2, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Panetta, “Can't Beat the Taliban so let's leave, Layton says,” (*Toronto Star*, Toronto), January 31, 2008. <[www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)> accessed February 2, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> We would like to thank Sebastián Dallaire at Strategic Counsel for providing us with access to the March 2006 and July 2007 survey data sets which we have used both in our teaching and this research. Strategic Counsel, of course, bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations offered here.

the eleven subsequent polls, however, the picture is reversed.<sup>21</sup> By July 2007, a clear majority of Canadians express opposition to the Afghan mission; only a minority is in support. Our goal is to understand the basis for this change of heart. In other words, why has Canadian public opinion abruptly reversed itself regarding the mission in Afghanistan?

While most of the Strategic Counsel tracking polls contain only a few questions relevant to our concerns, two of their twelve surveys provide specific and sustained attention to Afghanistan. As such, they offer a fairly extensive array of questions pertaining to Canadian public support for the Afghan mission. The first of these two more detailed surveys was carried out in March 2006. It corresponds to the high water mark in public support for the mission. The second survey was conducted in July 2007, corresponding to the low water mark. Moreover, its results remain essentially current as they are in line with those of the most recent (January 2008) tracking survey. By focusing upon these two more detailed surveys, we can better appreciate just what has changed in the views of Canadians regarding the Afghan mission.

As a prelude to our analysis we first discuss the construction of the dependent variable using three questions about support for the Afghan mission which were asked as part of both the 2006 and 2007 surveys. Building upon these technical considerations, we document a precipitous fall in public support for the mission. Our investigation proceeds in three stages. The first stage in the analysis constructs parallel regressions using the 2006 and 2007 data sets. This reveals that not only have Canadians' views as to the appropriate role for their armed forces changed over time but the influence of these considerations on support for the mission have declined. The second stage of the analysis attempts to elaborate upon this discovery because finding that the influence of views as to Canada's role in the world changed does not tell us why specifically this influence changed. The essential change here is that Canadians seem to be struggling at both cognitive and emotive levels to reconcile their understanding of themselves as a peacekeeping nation with the evolving demands placed upon Canada and its military in the context of the Afghanistan mission.

### **Construction of the Dependent Variable Support for the Mission**

There are three available indicators of support for the Canadian Afghan mission in the two detailed data sets collected by Strategic Counsel: support for the decision to deploy troops, support for a long-term engagement, and tolerance for casualties (see Appendix B for question wording). The panels of Table 1 show the decline in support along each of these dimensions across the two time periods under investigation.

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix A for overall frequencies across time.

**Table 1: Panel A**  
**Support for Deploying Troops in Afghanistan by Date of Survey**

	March 2006	July 2007
Support	59.4 %	38.8 %
Oppose	40.6 %	61.2%
Total N	955	943

Phi= .20562      p=.0000

**Panel B**  
**Support for Long-term Engagement by Date of Survey**

	March 2006	July 2007
Support	46.8%	28.5 %
Oppose	53.2%	71.5%
Total N	949	977

Phi= .18932      p=.0000

**Panel C**  
**Tolerance of Casualties by Date of Survey**

	March 2006	July 2007
Price Must Pay	61.6%	37.7 %
Price Too High	38.4%	62.3%
Total N	974	960

Phi= .23893      p=.0000

In considering how best how to handle these variables we recognize that some scholars view questions such as the third one about casualties as an independent variable which affects one's support for or opposition to the mission as measured by the other two items.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, others view questions about the tolerance for casualties as an indicator of overall support.<sup>23</sup> We side with the latter perspective for several reasons. The first is that as an indicator of support for the mission, the tolerance for casualties item loads well on the latent variable in a confirmatory factor analysis for both years (.73 in 2006 and .74 in 2007). Moreover, as suggested by their very similar values, constraining them to equivalence does not affect the fit of the model. By this rigorous standard, tolerance for casualties does not significantly differ across years as a measure of support for the mission. Perhaps most important in our thinking, however, is that treating tolerance for casualties as an independent variable accounts on its own for over half of the variance in the dependent variable of support for the Afghan mission (53% in 2006; 54% in 2007). This strongly suggests that the item is simply an alternative measure of support for the mission. Taken together, these considerations suggest that tolerance for casualties can best be conceptualized as an indicator of support for the mission rather than a predictor. Even so, re-running the analyses using the tolerance for casualties question as a predictor rather than an indicator of support for the Afghan mission does not substantively change the findings or interpretations offered below.<sup>24</sup>

Creating an index for the dependent variable using the three available items yields a reliability coefficient for both the 2006 and 2007 samples that exceeds .8.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, confirmatory factor analysis suggests that the measures are not fully equivalent across time. In particular, the indicator of support for a 10-year commitment is a stronger measure of support in 2006 than in 2007. This suggests that in assessing their support for the Afghanistan mission Canadians weighed considerations of a long-term commitment more heavily in 2007 than they did one year earlier. This makes sense, of course, so we treat the three items as an index which serves as our dependent variable. Scores on the index range from zero to one. A score of zero indicates agreement with none of the questions and a score of one indicates agreement with all three. Intermediate values of .33 and .66 indicate agreement with one and two items respectively.

When this index is compared across time it is once again clear that there has been a plunge in support for the mission, with a mean of .518 for March 2006, compared with a mean of .348 in July 2007. The median scores are .66 in 2006 and .33 in 2007.<sup>26</sup> This drop in support for the combat effort is not news.

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<sup>22</sup> Scott Sigmund Gartner, "The Multiple Effects of Casualties on Public Support for War: An Experimental Approach", (*American Political Science Review* Vol. 102, No. 1 February 2008), pp. 95-106.

<sup>23</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, and James N. Druckman (2007). "Public Opinion Research and Support for the Iraq War," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1, pp. 126-141.

<sup>24</sup> The reason for this is that using tolerance for casualties as a predictor does not adequately fit the data in either year unless tolerance for casualties is itself predicted by neo-realism. And the connection between neo-realism and tolerance for casualties is substantially stronger in 2006 than in 2007 (.35 vs .21). In other words, the differential effect of neo-realism discussed below is simply displaced one step back in the model.

<sup>25</sup> Reliability analysis produced a standardized alpha of .8209 for March 2006, and of .8491 for July 2007.

<sup>26</sup> The Chi Square value is 89.5 with 3 degrees of freedom with the resulting probability of less than .001. The Gramercy is equal to .217.



## Consistent Foundations of Public Support for the Mission over Time

We first analyze the effects of four basic demographic predictors of support for military engagement: region of residence, age, gender and education levels. When comparing support for the mission over time as predicted by these factors, the data show little change between March 2006 and July 2007 (see Model 1 of Table 2).<sup>27</sup> Hailing from Quebec, being a young person (30 years and under), being female, and having completed less education, all predict lower levels of support for the mission, when controlling for the other variables included. Looking for any sort of change over time, however, it is important to note that these negative effects are not significantly stronger in July 2007 than in March 2006.<sup>28</sup> The one significant change is in the constant which is substantially lower in July 2007 than in March 2006. Since the effects of the demographic variables considered in Model 1 do not differ across the two time periods, these traditional measures do not explain the change in support for the mission. A similar pattern reoccurs when partisanship is introduced into regression.

Turning to Model 2, which controls for partisanship, the difference between the constants remains essentially stable, and the effects of the demographic variables are largely the same. It is worth noting though that being from Quebec ceases to have a statistically significant effect on support in July 2007. In looking at differences over time, however we also note that the two effects are so weak as to not differ significantly across years. Similarly, while support for the Bloc emerges as significant in this time period, the difference across time is not really different. With respect to partisanship more generally, we see that those who support the NDP and Green parties are each less supportive of the mission than the Conservatives who serve as the reference category for partisan effects. In neither case do the relationships change over time, as was the case for the Bloc. And although a Liberal party supporter is less likely to embrace the mission in 2006, and the relationship remains negative in July 2007, being a Liberal is no longer a significant predictor of support for the mission.

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<sup>27</sup> This takes into account the standard errors on both coefficients which can be used to calculate 95% confidence intervals by adding and subtracting 1.96 (roughly 2) times the standard error.

<sup>28</sup> Note that the effect of youth is not significantly different from zero in July 2007; the 2006 and 2007 coefficients do not significantly differ from one another.

**Table 2: Comparing the Foundations of Public Support for the Afghan Mission: May 2006 (N=860); July 2007 (N=715)**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	5/06	7/07	5/06	7/07	5/06	7/07
Constant	.538 (.029)	.359 (.030)	.594 (.030)	.405 (.034)	<b>.428</b> <b>(.031)</b>	<b>.355</b> <b>(.034)</b>
Predictors						
Atlantic	.014 (.041)	.078 (.050)	.013 (.040)	.067 (.048)	.011 (.037)	.051 (.047)
Quebec	-.103*** (.027)	-.088** (.030)	-.112*** (.032)	-.060 (.033)	-.050 <sup>ms</sup> (.030)	-.076* (.032)
West	.029 (.025)	.047 (.029)	.015 (.025)	.050 (.029)	.027 (.023)	.041 (.028)
Youth	-.073** (.029)	-.014 (.034)	-.057* (.029)	-.004 (.033)	-.048 <sup>ms</sup> (.027)	-.008 (.027)
Female	-.084*** (.021)	-.146*** (.024)	-.075*** (.020)	-.145*** (.023)	-.052* (.019)	-.138*** (.023)
Education	.015** (.005)	.018** (.006)	.017*** (.005)	.019** (.006)	.017*** (.005)	.019*** (.005)
Lib			-.101*** (.027)	-.054 <sup>ms</sup> (.030)	-.065** (.029)	-.044 (.029)
NDP			-.152*** (.029)	-.175*** (.039)	-.111*** (.027)	-.160*** (.038)
Green			-.170*** (.042)	-.206*** (.044)	-.128*** (.039)	-.183*** (.043)
Bloc			-.073 (.042)	-.167*** (.051)	-.053 (.039)	-.160*** (.049)
NeoReal/ Paxkeep					<b>.229***</b> <b>(.019)</b>	<b>.145***</b> <b>(.025)</b>
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.060	.081	.098	.128	<b>.223</b>	<b>.168</b>

\* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\* p<.001; <sup>ms</sup> p<.10

## Peacekeeping or Combat Role?

In addition to asking about overall support for the Afghan mission, basic demographics and partisan preferences, the Strategic Counsel surveys also probed Canadians' general conceptions as to what should be Canada's role in international conflicts. The specific question wordings differ somewhat across the surveys, but both versions offer respondents an opportunity to choose between either the neorealist or peacekeeping orientation discussed earlier.<sup>29</sup> In the 2006 survey a narrow majority opted for the neo-realist perspective. One year later, the neo-realist option was selected by two in every three as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Support for Neo-Realist vs. Peacekeeping Orientations by Date of Survey**

	March 2006	July 2007
Neo-realist	52.8 %	66.5 %
Peacekeeping	47.2 %	32.5%
Total N	977	970

Phi= -.112      p=.0000

When the neo-realism versus peacekeeping questions are added to the regression model we find a provocative difference between opinions held over time (see Model 3 in Table 2). Many factors, such as education levels, remain the same, and Quebec reemerges into significance for July 2007, but the difference over time is incidental. The overall models for both 2006 and 2007 increase in strength with this new addition, as the peacekeeping/neo-realism variable is not only significant for both survey years, but the relationship is also relatively strong, producing a b value of .229, and .145 respectively. This finding illustrates that those who believe that Canada's international role should include enforcing peace and defending those under attack are more likely to support the mission, whereas those who see Canada's role as peacekeeping are less supportive. In itself, this is not much of a revelation.

More important for understanding the basis for change in support for the mission over time, however, is that the neo-realism/peacekeeping question seems to drop considerably in the magnitude of its impact on support for the mission. This suggests that something about neo-realist versus peacekeeping viewpoints concerning the role that Canada should play on the world stage contributes to explanation of change in support for the mission over time. But there is also another likely contributor; the influence of gender also noticeably increases. Unlike each of the other variables in the equations, the changes in both gender and neo-realism versus peacekeeping

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<sup>29</sup> Question wordings appear in appendix B. Less than 3% of respondents did not choose one of the substantive options in either year.

scrape at the edges of significance.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, these two variables each seem to have a part to play in explaining change over time. This conclusion is further bolstered by a difference in  $R^2$  (explained variance) for the same set of variables over the two years. And most importantly, the constants no longer differ significantly across the two survey years. The small apparent difference is likely due to chance as their confidence intervals overlap. That women should be less supportive than men of a combat mission in Afghanistan is hardly a surprise. Less clear is why the difference between women and men should become greater over time as indicated by the larger coefficient in 2007 than in 2006. Similarly, connecting support for a combat mission with one's view of Canada's role in the international arena is somewhat intuitive; neo-realists should be more supportive and peacekeepers less so. Moreover, as willingness to use force associated with a neo-realist perspective becomes less important in predicting support, it makes sense that support for the mission should subsequently decline. But what explains the marked decrease in the strength of this variable as a predictor over time? That neo-realists should become less willing to translate their general outlook into specific action in Afghanistan is something of a puzzle.

### **Losing Heart: Unpacking the Diminished Effect of Neo-Realism**

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that neo-realism had markedly less influence on Canadian attitudes in 2007 than in 2006. In order to investigate why this is so we employed a form of regression analysis, known as analysis of covariance or ANCOVA. It provides a way to focus upon the interaction among particular variables of interest while controlling for the effect of additional variables as covariates.<sup>31</sup> Data from the 2006 survey will be examined in this section, and we will return to the 2007 data shortly. Our investigation into gender's changing influence will be pursued later using the 2007 data, insofar as no additional significant effects involving gender were uncovered in the analysis of the 2006 data. So our focus here is upon the diminished effect of peacekeeping and neo-realist orientations.

Two elements are involved in this exercise, each with two dimensions. Knowledge is the first element and has a subjective and objective component. Subjective knowledge is measured based on how respondents rated their own knowledge of the Afghan mission, whereas the objective component is measured by the correct realization (at the time of the 2006 survey) that the mission was oriented more towards combat than peacekeeping. Emotion is the second element and it takes the form of a more positive (martial) emotion such as pride as well as a less well-defined negative emotion. The covariates employed are the same as those in the foregoing regression analysis, including respondents' region of residence, age, gender, education and political partisanship. This approach is used to unpack the significant effect of neo-realism/peacekeeping on support for the Afghan mission.

The more knowledgeable Canadians say that they are (subjective knowledge) about the mission in 2006 survey, the more supportive they also prove to be. In light of this, and recalling that more educated respondents are also more supportive of the mission, one might be tempted to

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<sup>30</sup> The confidence intervals (calculated by multiplying each standard error by 1.96 and adding and subtracting the product from its coefficient) overlap by .002 units for the neo-realism/peacekeeping variable and by .004 units for gender.

<sup>31</sup> The data on which the figures in this and subsequent sections are based appear in Appendix C.

infer that support for the mission is rooted in political sophistication. However, this is clearly mistaken by the standard of correctly identifying the mission as involving combat. In March 2006 Canadians were not as well informed as they understood themselves to be. In particular, only about one in every four (27.7%) was aware that the mission was a combat one. And, as adding this variable to the regression for 2006 makes clear, awareness of this fact was inversely related to support for the mission (-.201).

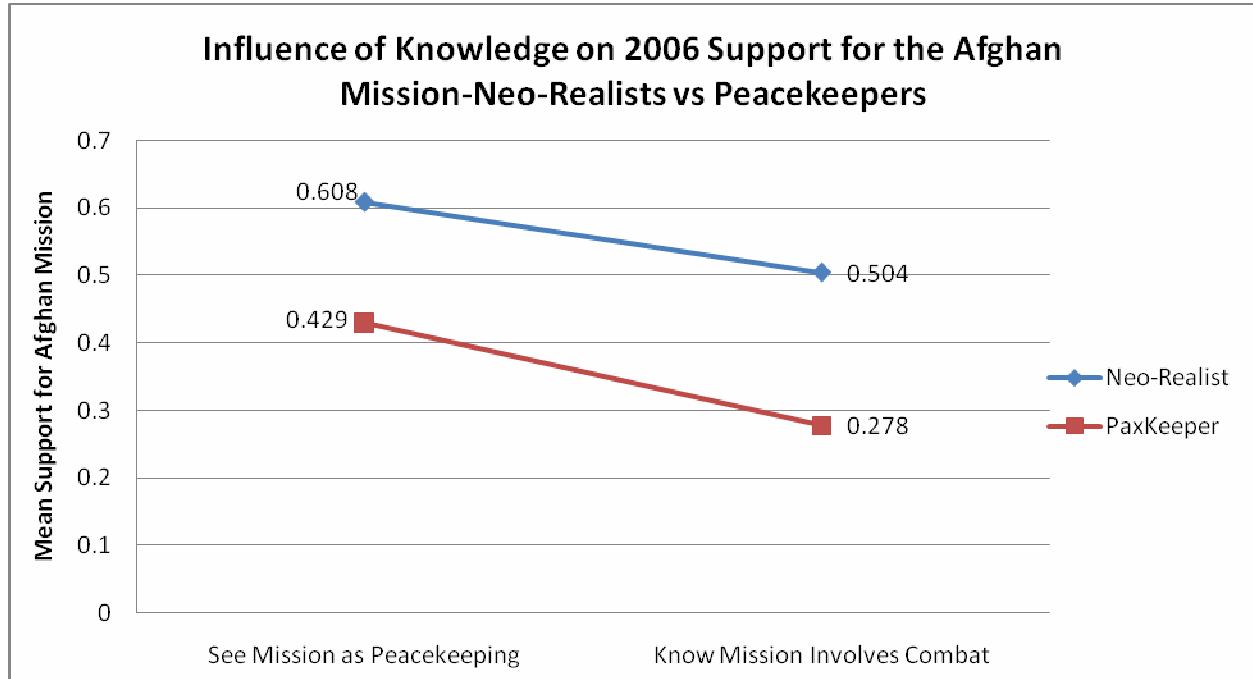
Given such levels of misinformation, it is important to control for both subjective and objective knowledge in our efforts to unpack the role Canadians' outlook regarding neo-realism/peacekeeping has had on support for the mission. But cognitive understanding about the mission is far from the whole story; there is also an emotional component.

The 2006 survey posed two questions touching upon Canadians' emotional responses to their armed forces role in Afghanistan. The first asked "when you think of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, do you have any emotional feelings one way or another?" Nearly three in every four (72.3%) replied that they did have emotional feelings, while one in four said no. Although this question does not ask about any emotion in particular, the sign of effect as estimated in regression analysis suggests that the overall tenor of these feelings was negative. And the correlation between this question and support for the mission, while modest, was significant ( $r = .075$ ;  $p = .025$ ). In other words, those who report emotional feelings are somewhat less supportive of the mission. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to infer that Canadians' feelings toward the mission were, on balance, more negative than positive. Unfortunately, the survey questionnaire does not enquire further as to what those negative feelings may be, making it difficult to explore the darker aspect of feelings about the mission. Instead, those who replied that they had feelings about Canadian troops being in Afghanistan were further asked only whether they feel proud. Nearly 90% obliged by replying in the affirmative. And, those who are proud are more supportive of the mission, and significantly so.

Since the two emotion items were nested together in the questionnaire we have combined them into a single indicator in the analysis that follows. The resulting measure obviously does not do justice to the complexity of feelings that Canadians feel about the mission in Afghanistan, but the data do not permit much more. The distribution of this measure shows approximately two thirds of Canadians have some feelings of pride regarding the mission, a quarter admit to no feelings one way or another on the matter, and about 10% say they are not proud. Thus despite, or perhaps because of, relatively low levels of awareness regarding the combat nature of the mission, roughly two out of every three Canadians felt proud in early 2006 of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan.

Consistent with what one might anticipate, Figure 1 shows lower levels of support for the mission accompanying the knowledge of the Canadian forces combat role in Afghanistan. Perhaps less apparent, the effect holds for both peacekeepers and neo-realists, though it is slightly more pronounced among those who favor a peacekeeping role for the forces generally. The net effect is to dampen support for the mission and accentuate slightly an already significant difference between the two groups.

Figure 1:



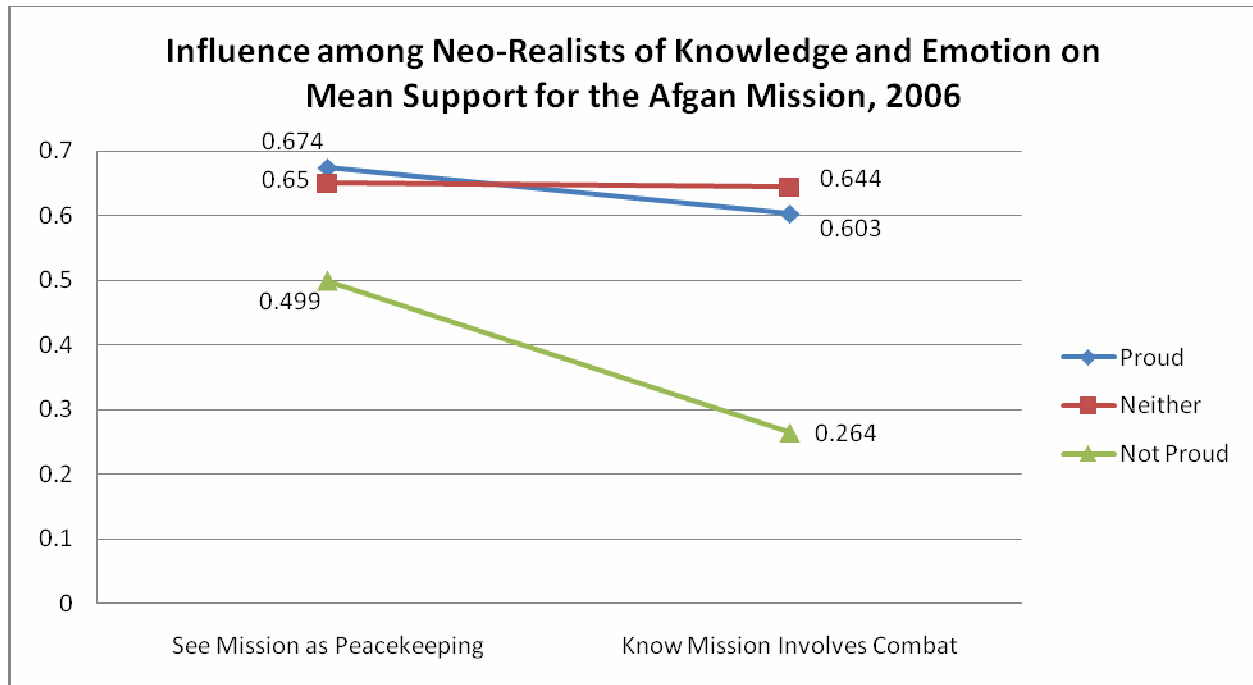
The next two figures show how emotion interacts with knowledge in influencing support for the mission in the spring of 2006.<sup>32</sup> The effect of emotion differs considerably between the neo-realists and the peacekeepers in the Canadian public. Accordingly, these results will be presented separately.

Among neo-realists emotion specifies the conditions under which knowledge has a dampening effect. As shown in Figure 2a, the apparent effect of knowledge concerning the combat nature of the mission in depressing support for the mission actually occurs only among those relatively few neo-realists who report an emotional response other than pride. Those who feel pride or have no emotional response are essentially unaffected by whether or not they have accurate information about the nature of the mission. Their support remains relatively high irrespective of whether they see the mission as one of peacekeeping or combat. The differences here are both statistically and substantively significant. On the left hand side of Figure 2a, among those neo-realists who view the Afghan mission as one of peacekeeping, support is only marginally greater among the proud and the emotionally indifferent than it is among those who report an emotional response but take no pride in mission. On the right-hand side of Figure 2a, however, the difference is both statistically and substantively significant. Among those who are not proud, support is very substantially lower than it is among either the proud or indifferent.

<sup>32</sup> The underlying model contains a significant three way interaction among Neo-Realism, Knowledge and Emotion. Adjusted  $R^2$  for the 2006 is .338. Regarding interactions see: Thomas Brambor, William Roberts Clark and Matt Golder "Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses" *Political Analysis* 2006 14(1):63-82

Among neo-realists, in short, knowledge and emotion combine to open up substantial political differences and splinter support for the mission.

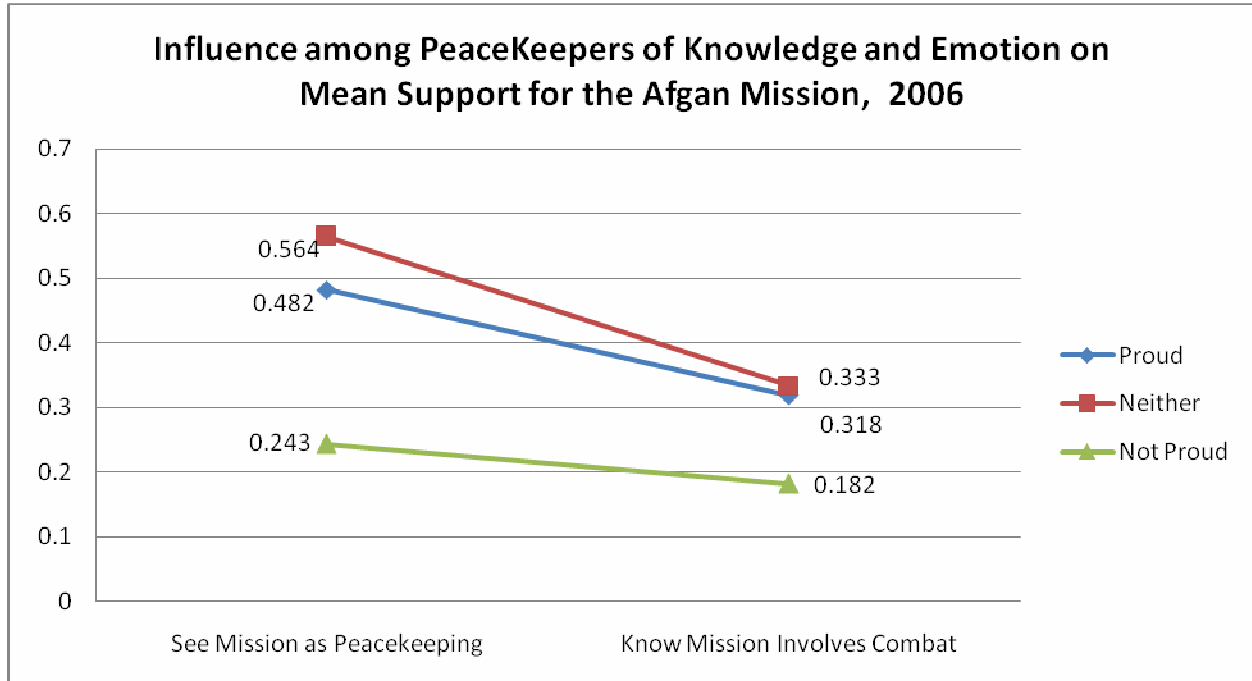
**Figure 2a:**



Among peacekeepers, knowledge and emotion combine to produce a rather different effect; together they work to close up differences among peacekeepers and consolidate their opposition to the mission. This effect can be seen in Figure 2b. On the left hand side of the chart among those who see the Afghan mission as one of peacekeeping, support for the mission varies rather considerably. The obvious difference depicted here is statistically significant, but the substantive difference is perhaps more important to note. Those who say they are not proud of the mission are positioned well towards the lower end of the measure of support for the mission in territory that can only be characterized as opposition. Those who express pride or emotional indifference regarding the mission, in contrast, are clustered at just above the midpoint of the scale in the region that can be characterized as moderate support. Turning to the right-hand side of the chart, however, these differences essentially evaporate. Among those who perceive the mission as one of combat all differences shrink to statistical insignificance. What's more, they take up the position located on the opposition end of the index of support for the mission.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> On average they agree with one or less of the three items constituting the index used to measure the dependent variable.

**Figure 2b:**



Taken together, the results in Figures 2a and 2b provide a portrait of how in the spring of 2006 the growing awareness among Canadians of the combat nature of the mission and at least one aspect of their emotional response to it interact. Working together, knowledge and emotion effectively splinter support for the mission among neo-realists and consolidate opposition among peacekeepers.

In light of the collapse in support driven by the interaction between neo-realism, knowledge and emotion, we now turn to the Government’s efforts between March 2006 and July 2007 to shore up support for Canada’s military engagement in Afghanistan.

### **Winning Minds: Government’s Promotion of Knowledge**

In late 2006, in response to a downward trend in levels of support for the mission, DFAIT<sup>34</sup> commissioned The Strategic Counsel to conduct a series of focus groups with Canadians in seven centers across the country. The purpose of this qualitative research program was to provide “valuable insights” to the Government of Canada by ascertaining “current levels of understanding and beliefs about the mission, factors and issues driving support and/or opposition to the mission, as well as reaction to facts and information both about Afghanistan and the broader international presence in the region.”<sup>35</sup> The emphasis in this statement on *understanding, facts, and information*, and little consideration of emotion, is consistent with the overall tone of the report, presented to DFAIT in December 2006, which framed knowledge as a central driver of support for Canadian engagement in Afghanistan.

<sup>34</sup> The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

<sup>35</sup> The Strategic Counsel (2006). *Public Perceptions of Canada’s Role in Afghanistan*, POR#243-06: p.3.



From these focus groups, The Strategic Counsel divided views on the mission into three groups: the two poles of firm opposition versus overall (but soft) support, and “the grey zone” in between where views waver between support and opposition. They perceive opposition as largely “immovable” and that those who are strongly opposed to the mission tend to “lack a solid understanding of the background to this issue,” “are poorly informed and do not exhibit a strong interest in investing time and effort to enhance their knowledge.”<sup>36</sup> The Strategic Counsel advised the Government of Canada that these people – who tend to be younger and/or from Quebec – should not represent a key target of communications activity since no amount of information would be likely to change their views, primarily for ideological reasons. In contrast, support could be strengthened among those in the grey zone and for the “soft supporters” of the mission through an aggressive “information campaign” emphasizing “concrete examples of progress (focusing on women and children), UN and NATO involvement, and clarity around the need for security and stability in order to provide aid and undertake diplomacy.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, this emphasis on information and knowledge was placed within the context of a disconnect between the “Pearsonian” perception of the Canadian military as traditional peacekeepers and a new global reality:

The Canadian public has not been pre-conditioned with respect to the evolving role of the military within this new global context whereby failed states and the activities of non-state actors have replaced conflict between nations as the pre-eminent threats to global security. Canada’s role within NATO during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina represented a decisive shift for the military. Yet, many Canadians were, and likely remain, unaware both of the full nature and extent of that engagement and of its significance in ushering in a new era for the Canadian Forces.<sup>38</sup>

Many of the key messages highlighted by this report – including the military’s ability to adapt to changing realities, and the importance of rebuilding and supporting human rights – have indeed been incorporated into the Government’s communications strategy on Afghanistan. In January and February 2007, immediately following the Government’s receipt of the Strategic Counsel report, all news releases on Afghanistan save three featured background information on Canadian operations, NATO involvement, and development efforts focusing on women, children, microfinance, landmine clearing and policing.<sup>39</sup> Speeches by the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister highlighted similar points. Speaking in a cross-country tour in January 2007, Minister Gordon J. O’Connor underscored Canada’s “desire to help others in need,” while providing background history on Afghanistan (including years of civil war, and extremist rule) and emphasizing that although Canadian forces were “making a difference,” there was still risk

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*: p.6. This document came to our attention following coverage in Allan Woods “To Sell Canada on War.” *The Toronto Star* 17 February 2007. It was obtained from the Library and Archives Canada by Jennifer Howe, December 1, 2007. A summary is available on line at [www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full\\_path=/2007/august/15/report](http://www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2007/august/15/report)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*: p.9. Women are never grouped among the ‘immovable’ in the report. That much of the communication strategy is couched in terms of aiding Afghan women may even suggest that women classified in the grey zone of ‘soft supporters.’

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*: p.5.

<sup>39</sup> Government of Canada (2008). *Protecting Canadians, Rebuilding Afghanistan*. News Archive 2007. Accessed online May 1, 2008 at <<http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/cip-pic/afghanistan/library/archive07-en.asp>>

of Taliban resurgence.<sup>40</sup> In late February 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, when announcing additional aid to Afghanistan, portrayed Afghanistan as “the front line of the international security challenge of the modern, post-Cold War world.” The security gains that had been achieved by Canadian soldiers would be consolidated by Canada’s commitment to reconstruction “because the long-suffering Afghan people desperately need hope for a better future for their families and communities.”<sup>41</sup>

The success of the Government’s strategy to “inform the Canadian public” was tracked by national polling conducted by The Strategic Counsel in July 2007. In this survey, there are a number of questions that mirror the “talking points” that the Government adopted since January 2007. Survey respondents were asked to rate, for instance, the importance of the following consequences of withdrawal when considering whether Canada should stay in Afghanistan beyond 2009:

- The Taliban will regroup and come back into power in Afghanistan.
- The authority and legitimacy of the United Nations would be severely damaged.
- Canada’s reputation within the international community would suffer.
- The rights of women and children will be negatively affected.
- More terrorist attacks on Western nations such as Canada will occur.
- Afghanistan’s economy would become more reliant on the cultivation of poppies for the production of opium and heroin.

Respondents were also asked whether they agree with two motivations for the mission, namely that “the Afghan people want the assistance of Canada and other countries to remove the Taliban threat,” and that “Canada’s contribution to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan is making a real difference to improving the lives of Afghan people.”<sup>42</sup> In regard to the consequences of withdrawal, respondents tended to agree that the considerations outlined above are important (from a low of 55% believing that greater opium production is an important cost of withdrawal to a high of 81% agreeing that the rights of women and children would be adversely affected if Canada pulled out). A slim majority of respondents (53%) also agreed that the Afghan people want Canadian assistance, and that Canada’s contribution is improving their lives (55%).<sup>43</sup> Yet overall support for the mission remained at nearly the same level as in December 2006 (it was estimated at 36% in July 2007 compared to 35% seven months previous). From these frequencies, we may conclude that other factors complicated the relationship between the knowledge that the Government was attempting to impart and support for the mission among the general public.

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<sup>40</sup> National Defence Canada (2008). *Speaking Notes for the Honourable Gordon J. O’Connor, Minister of National Defence, for the January Cross-Country Tour*. Accessed online May 1, 2008 at <[http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view\\_news\\_e.asp?id=2181](http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=2181)>

<sup>41</sup> Office of the Prime Minister (2008). Speech: *Prime Minister Stephen announces additional funding for aid in Afghanistan*. Accessed online May 1, 2008 at <<http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&id=1555>>

<sup>42</sup> The Strategic Counsel (July 16, 2007). *A Report to The Globe and Mail and CTV: The State of Canadian Public Opinion on Afghanistan, Conrad Black*. Accessed online May 1, 2008 at <[http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our\\_news/polls/2007-07-16%20GMCTV%20July%2012-15.pdf](http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2007-07-16%20GMCTV%20July%2012-15.pdf)>

<sup>43</sup> These points are supported by an Environics-CBC *Poll among Afghans* in September 2007. See [www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/Afghan-survey\\_2007.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/Afghan-survey_2007.html). Accessed October 17, 2007.

## Differential Impact of Government ‘Knowledge’ in 2007

Why did the Government’s emphasis on knowledge fail to bolster support? In seeking to answer this question, we again undertake an analysis of covariance (this time of July 2007 data) to explore the interaction between neo-realism, knowledge and emotion, adding in this case gender, while controlling for the same covariates of region of residence, age, education and partisan preference. To account for the information campaign undertaken by the Government in early 2007, we conceive of knowledge differently than when analyzing the March 2006 data. Rather than distinguishing between subjective and objective knowledge, we use the eight indicators referred to in the previous section to measure respondents’ reception of the Government’s revised communications strategy. In other words, how well did respondents accept the Government’s portrayal of the consequences of withdrawal from Afghanistan in a post-911 world, along with its messaging on motivation centering on the desires of the Afghan people and Canada’s military contribution? Clearly, this information is not impartial, but it is certainly the knowledge that the Government wished to communicate. The reliability coefficient for this knowledge index exceeds .8 and factor analysis similarly confirms the use of these indicators together.<sup>44</sup> With regard to emotion, it is coded in the same way as with the ANCOVA of the March 2006 data to capture those respondents who are prideful, those who are not proud, and those who are neither.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 3 shows the influence of endorsing the government's information regarding the motivations for and consequences of the Afghan mission in 2007. The results demonstrate an interaction between Canadians' general outlook on the role that Canada should play in today's world and acceptance of the government's view of the mission. While acceptance of the government's understanding increases support among both groups, the influence is particularly pronounced among neo-realists. More specifically, as can be seen on the left-hand side of the chart, among those who do not accept government’s view of the facts regarding Afghanistan, there is no significant difference between neo-realists and peacekeepers in their respective levels of support for the mission. Both are located deep in the range of opposition.<sup>46</sup> Among those who accept the government's ‘knowledge’ about the Afghan situation, however, there is a substantial and significant difference between neo-realists and peacekeepers. Of course, accepting the government's view of the situation brings substantially greater support among both neo-realists and peacekeepers, but the effect is stronger and of greater consequence among neo-realists. Neo-realists who accept the government's view of the situation in Afghanistan are well into the middle range of support for the mission. By contrast, support among peacekeepers who accept the very same view of the situation remains relatively low. These results suggest that the government's message was effective only among those Canadians who share the neo-realist outlook on Canada's role in the world. This account overlooks, however, the role emotion plays in public support of the Afghan mission.

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<sup>44</sup> Rather than a simple summary measure, consequences and motivation are equally weighted in the index of knowledge.

<sup>45</sup> The underlying model contains a significant three way interaction among Neo-Realism, Knowledge and Emotion as well as a four way interaction of the same three variables and gender. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> for the 2007 is .375.

<sup>46</sup> They agree, on average, with less than one of the three items in the index.

Figure 3:

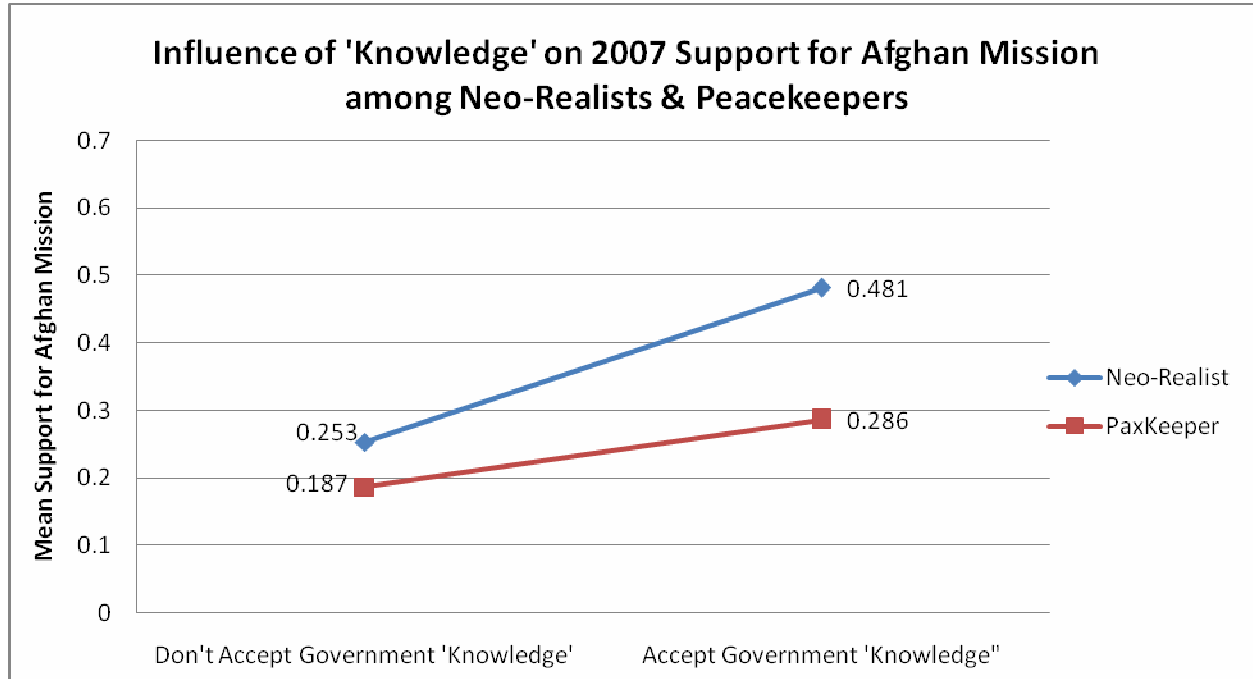
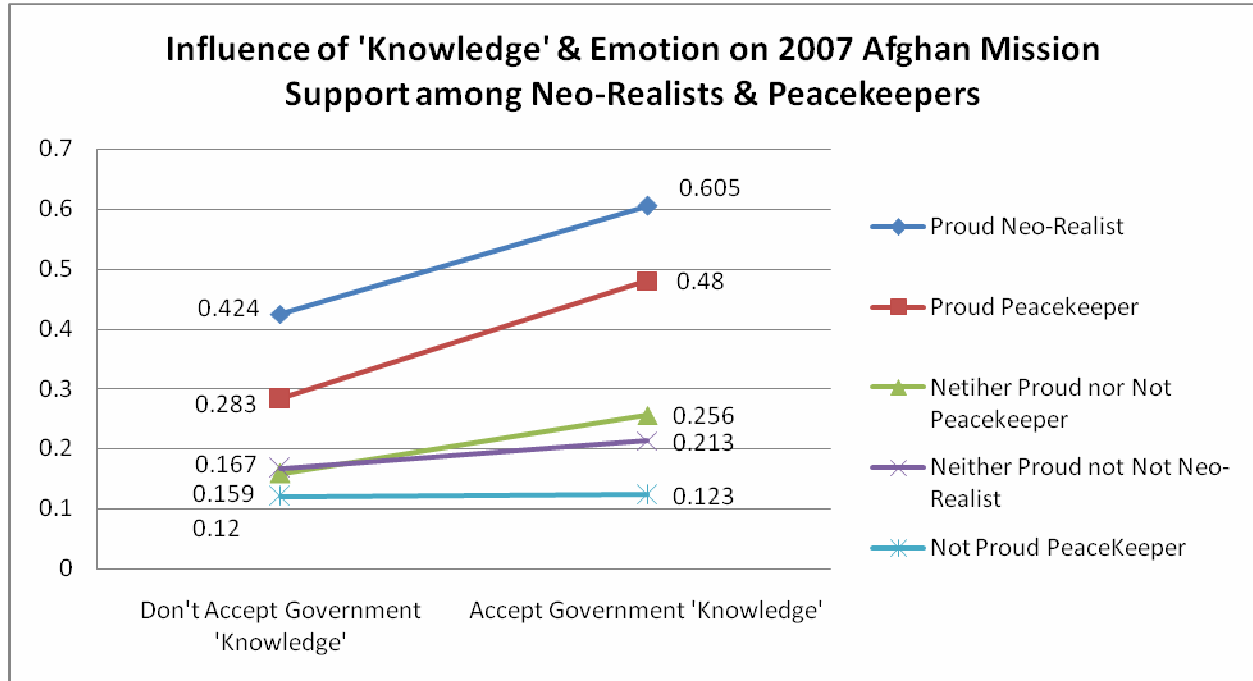


Figure 4 reveals a more adequate portrait of Canadian public attitudes in support of the Afghan mission in so far as it is comprised of both cognitive and emotive factors as well as neo-realist and peacekeeping perspectives.<sup>47</sup> As in the previous figure, on the left hand side of Figure 4 we have those who do not accept the Canadian government's account of the broader political circumstances surrounding the Afghan mission. And on the right we have those who do accept the government's knowledge in this regard. What we see in moving from left to right is a significant increase in support among some groups but not among others. Perhaps most noticeable is the significantly greater support that comes with greater 'knowledge' where we would most expect it, among those who take pride in Canada's contribution to the Afghan mission. But there is something of a surprise here too, for the dramatic increase in support for the mission is not confined only to the neo-realists in the Canadian public. To be sure, the highest absolute levels of support are among neo-realists who take pride in the Afghan mission and accept the government's account of the circumstances on the ground there. Nearly as impressive, however, is the level of support for the mission among proud peacekeepers who appear to accept what the government tells us regarding the situation in Afghanistan. Moreover, in terms of relative differences the effect of government information is at least as strong among peacekeepers as it is among neo-realists. Indeed, the primary distinction that can be drawn based upon Figure 4 is that between those Canadians who take pride in the mission and those who do not.

<sup>47</sup> And, of course, it is important to remember that these results control for the effects of basic demographic, regional and partisan considerations.

**Figure 4:**



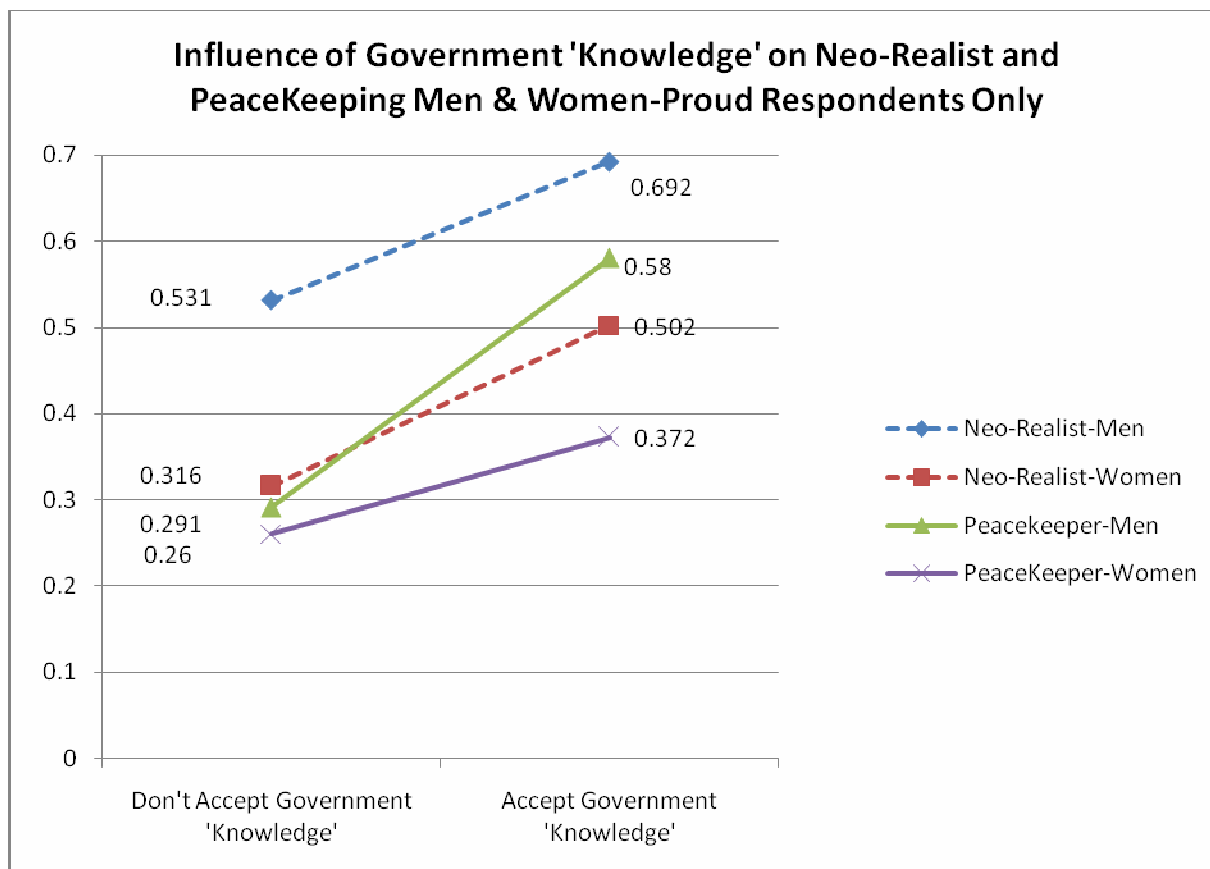
Turning our attention to the three lower lines depicted in Figure 4, none of the differences there are statistically significant.<sup>48</sup> This means that there are no differences in support for the mission due to either knowledge, emotion or geopolitical outlook among these groups of individuals. They exhibit an essentially undifferentiated low level of support for and hence an effective opposition to the mission. The greatest difference depicted in Figure 4 is between the lower three lines and the upper two. And in that difference lies the basis for the current low levels of support for the Afghan mission. The Canadian government was able to win support for its military efforts only among two strata in the population. These are proud peacekeepers and proud neo-realists. The practical implication of this finding is that knowledge without emotion does not differentiate among Canadians in terms of support for the Afghan mission. The government's efforts to 'educate' Canadians failed in so far as it did not adequately address their emotions as well as their cognitions.

However, there is one further element necessary to complete this story. The effects described by the two uppermost lines of Figure 4 also differ by gender. In other words, the influence of knowledge is not entirely uniform for men and women. And there is more than one aspect to this. As with nearly everything else we have observed, these gender differences are also conditioned by one's outlook on Canada's place in the world. Hence neo-realist women and men

<sup>48</sup> The no pride-neo-realists are omitted from Figure 4 due to the small number of cases. Only three neo-realist respondents were classified as no pride and accepting of government knowledge. The mean score for neo-realists who report no pride and not accepting of government knowledge (N=30) is .167, essentially the same as "neither proud nor not proud" neo-realists who do not accept the government's knowledge. They are thus part of the undifferentiated opposition discussed in the text.

differ from one another in not quite the same fashion as peacekeeping men and women do. The details appear in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**



Look first at the dashed lines representing men and women with a neo-realist outlook. Support for the mission in Afghanistan increases with greater acceptance of the government's message for both men and women with a neo-realist worldview as is readily apparent in the upward movement of the two dashed lines. Nevertheless, acceptance of the details of the government's information campaign has slightly more consequence for female neo-realist women than for their male counterparts. The gender gap does not close among neo-realists, but in both statistical and practical terms it does narrow. At a statistical level the difference that accepting the official interpretation of the mission makes among the men does not quite reach conventional significance whereas it easily does so among women. Beyond such technical refinements, however, there is also a practical difference of note here. While neo-realist men may move higher in the middle ranges of support for the mission, women with a neo-realist outlook move essentially from opposition into the middle ranges of support for the mission. So here is one segment of the population that has perhaps been influenced by the government's message, neo-realist women who are proud of the mission. Still, the gender differences found among neo-realists are more subtle than among those with a peacekeeping perspective.

The solid lines in Figure 5, represent Canadians with a peacekeeping perspective on the role Canada should play in the world and who take pride in the mission. They reveal strikingly different effects among women and men that come with accepting the government's narrative on the reasons for and consequences of the Canadian Afghan mission. On the lower left hand portion of Figure 5, we see no appreciable difference in support for the mission between peacekeeping women and men. Support is quite low for both genders. Following the solid lines across to the right hand side of Figure 5, support moves up only very slightly among women as depicted by the darker of the solid lines. The difference shown here is neither statistically nor practically significant; for peacekeeping women support remains in the lower reaches irrespective of whether or not they accept the government's narrative. And, of course, this holds true despite their taking pride in Canada's role in Afghanistan.

The lighter solid line depicting similarly proud-of-our-role men with a peacekeeping outlook takes an entirely different trajectory than that for women. This has several implications. The first is to open up a sizeable gender gap among 'knowledgeable' peacekeepers that does not exist among those who do not share the official interpretation of the motivations for and consequences of the mission; peacekeeping males who accept the official view support the mission, whereas their female counterparts do not. A further implication of this is to bring this segment of male peacekeepers more or less into line with their neo-realists counterparts, both male and female. And so here is another segment of the population responding, perhaps, to the government's communication strategy: peacekeeping-oriented men who take pride in the mission.

Two further points deserve emphasis here. The first is that the findings regarding gender explain why we earlier found gender playing a greater role in 2007 than it does in 2006 in explaining support for the mission (See Model 3 of Table 2). The government's communication strategy seems to have had more resonance among men than women. This is particularly the case among peacekeeping-oriented males. So the coefficient for gender very likely increases across years not because women grew relatively more opposed to the mission, but because a particular segment of men became markedly more supportive. A second point worth emphasizing is that the relatively high levels of support shown in Figure 5 apply only to the particular subsets of the overall sample. Showing higher levels of support among those who are proud of Canada's role in Afghanistan serves only to highlight the importance of emotion discussed in connection with the findings in Figure 4. Canadian public support for participation in Afghanistan depends upon emotive as well as cognitive underpinnings.

## Conclusion

A common interpretation of dwindling public support for war posits a characteristic “cadence of consent” which moves “rally-to-reluctance.” On this view, support turns to reluctance as war drags on and as prospects for near-term success erode.<sup>49</sup> However, for this rally-to-reluctance hypothesis to hold regarding public support for the Afghan mission, we would expect it to apply more or less uniformly across the Canadian public irrespective of their worldview, knowledge or emotion.<sup>50</sup> We uncover a more complex picture, one that points to a more nuanced interpretation of the shifts in public support for war, and calls for further exploration of the interplay between identity, cognition and emotive responses.

From this perspective, efforts by governments to appeal both to citizens’ hearts and minds are not adequately characterized as “triumphs of twisted logic.”<sup>51</sup> Rather, our analysis suggests that public preferences respond to much more than simple facts and knowledge, and often differentially across subgroups of the population. And although it is beyond the scope of this research to make policy recommendations or advise government on communications strategies, we can say that there is an essential emotive element to public preferences, which is borne out clearly in the data.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, any government which ignores the role of emotion does so at its peril. In the spring of 2006, support collapsed among non-prideful – yet knowledgeable – neo-realists, suggesting that emotion can be at odds with both knowledge and worldview. By summer of the following year, beyond the influence of knowledge, the essential dividing line among Canadians was between those who took pride in the mission and those who did not, irrespective of differences in outlook based on neo-realism or the classical tradition of peacekeeping.

We recognize that our conclusions are somewhat constrained by the limited measurement of emotion available for our analysis.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, our initial intent of this study was not focused on understanding the role of emotion, nor did we specifically seek out emotional indicators.<sup>54</sup> To the contrary, we were primarily interested in understanding the role of information. Having uncovered the role of emotion as an explanatory factor, we acknowledge that a range of emotions should be expected to influence support for war. Nevertheless we are encouraged by the explanation that we are able to offer based on such a narrow range of measures. The plunge in support for the Afghan mission was not driven *only* by the public’s view of Canada’s role on the world stage or by geopolitical knowledge, either alone or in combination. It was also driven by

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<sup>49</sup> John J. Kirton, “Two Solitudes, One War: Public Opinion, National Unity and Canada’s War in Afghanistan” 2007. Accessed online at <[www.g7.utoronto.ca/scholar/kirton2007/kirton-afghanistan-071008.pdf](http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/scholar/kirton2007/kirton-afghanistan-071008.pdf)>

<sup>50</sup> A less precipitous decline in support than that depicted in Appendix A would also seem more consistent with the rally to reluctance hypothesis.

<sup>51</sup> See the article by Travers cited in footnote #3 above.

<sup>52</sup> We note with interest Peter Donolo’s recent observation that neither Mr. Harper nor Mr. Dion connects with their audiences at an emotional level. See Jane Taber, “Turtle Talk Wins the Race” *Globe and Mail*, February 22, 2008. Accessed on line May 13, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> That the Strategic Counsel questionnaires focused nearly exclusively on pride may be in keeping with a rather narrow understanding of emotion as a force that may over-ride reason

<sup>54</sup> For an example of foreign policy studies aimed at emotion see, Nehemia Geva and J. Mark Skorick, “The Emotional Calculus of Foreign Policy Decisions: Getting Emotions Out of the Closet”, in David P. Redlawsk, *Feeling Politics*, (Palgrave MacMillan, New York) 2006.



emotion – and the sometimes counter-intuitive ways that emotion interacts with identity and information.

We also recognize that the study of emotion is relatively new terrain for political science and foreign policy analysis as well.<sup>55</sup> Our findings in no way suggest or encourage the abandonment or rejection of classic reasoning models which focus on the role of cognition.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, we would recommend placing the study of emotion alongside more traditional cognitive approaches.<sup>57</sup> Our analysis of the data demonstrates that we can only gain greater understanding of opinion construction when emotion is considered.

Finally, our work is not meant to endorse a particular position in the emergent debate regarding the role of emotion in decision making outcomes. We view both Marcus et al.'s thermostatic model in which emotion serves as a surveillance mechanism drawing attention to new information which is then processed cognitively to produce decisions, and Lodge and Taber's interpretation that decision-making is biased by emotion as important contributions to the literature.<sup>58</sup> Yet our findings show that emotion and cognition *interact* and often work together, not that one necessarily prevails over, or follows upon, the other. Moreover, we find that this interaction is dynamic and shifts over time. Therefore, we can also expect further research to open new avenues into the temporal dimension of the interplay of emotion and cognition. At this juncture, however, we conclude that for the Canadian public on the issue of support for the Afghan mission, “Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid 210.

<sup>56</sup> For understanding of the classic “psychological approach” see Angus Campbell, Phillip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago) 1960. For understanding of rational choice and bounded rationality approaches see Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Addison Wesley Publishing Company Inc., Boston), 1957; and Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, Samuel L. Popkin, *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*, (Cambridge University Press, New York) 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Michael MacKuen, George E. Marcus, W. Russell Neuman, and Luke Keele, “The Third Way, The Theory of Affective Intelligence and American Democracy”, in Neuman Russell W., Marcus, George E., Crigler Ann N., MacKuen, Michael, *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*, (University of Chicago press, Chicago) 2007.

<sup>58</sup> David P., Redlawsk, “Feeling Politics: New Research into Emotion and Politics”, in David P. Redlawsk, *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing*, (Palgrave MacMillan, New York) 2006. 4. We also see merit in the view that emotions prime memories which then shape choice mentioned by Gary Marcus in *Kluge: The Haphazard Construction of the Human Mind*, (Houghton Mifflin, NY) 2008, p 89.

<sup>59</sup> Blaise Pascal, “The heart has its reasons, of which reason knows not.” as quoted in Projet Personnel en Humanités de Pascal Bihler, « Qui était Blaise Pascal? Pensées sur un honnête homme, » unpublished paper submitted to INSA de Lyon, July 12, 2005. <[http://www.bi-on.de/mixed/pdf/blaisepascal\\_pph.pdf](http://www.bi-on.de/mixed/pdf/blaisepascal_pph.pdf)>

## Appendix A: Support for Mission over Twelve Time Periods

Overall, do you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan?

	Support	Opposition	DK/NA/Ref
2006			
March†	55	41	4
May	40	54	6
June	48	44	8
July	39	56	5
August	37	55	8
September	42	49	8
October	44	53	3
December	35	61	4
2007			
April	36	57	7
May	40	55	5
July††	36	59	5
2008			
January	39	56	6

† & †† indicate data sets used in this analysis

## Appendix B: Survey Question Wording<sup>60</sup>

### March 2006

Interviews were conducted between March 9th and March 12th, 2006 among a proportionate national sample of 1000 Canadians 18 years of age or older. The estimated margin of error for a study of this size is 3.1%.

Support for the mission is composed of the following three variables:

#### Support

Overall, would you say you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send these troops to Afghanistan?

#### Support 10

The head of Canada's Armed Forces, Rick Hillier has said he thinks it may take up to ten years to rebuild and stabilize Afghanistan. Would you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose Canada having troops stationed in Afghanistan for the next ten years?

#### Casualties

As you may know, the Canadian troops have experienced some casualties in Afghanistan. Some people say this is the price we have to pay to be part of international efforts to achieve security and stability in the region. Other people say this is too high a price to pay and if it means Canadian lives will be lost, we shouldn't be there. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

#### Liberal Internationalism/NeoRealism

Some people say that Canada's role in international conflicts should be limited to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions – that is, we should not be actively engaged in combat situations. Others say that this is unrealistic and that our armed forces have to be prepared to participate in active, armed combat duty. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

#### Knowledge

From what you know, would you say the main purpose of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan is more peacekeeping than combat or more combat than peacekeeping?

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<sup>60</sup> Question wording for March 2006 see:

<[http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our\\_news/polls/2006-03-13%20GMCTV%20Mar9-12%20\(Mar13\)%20Afghanistan%20-%20Rev.pdf](http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2006-03-13%20GMCTV%20Mar9-12%20(Mar13)%20Afghanistan%20-%20Rev.pdf)>

Question wording for July 2007 see:

<[http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our\\_news/polls/2007-07-16%20GMCTV%20July%2012-15.pdf](http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2007-07-16%20GMCTV%20July%2012-15.pdf)>

Question wording for January 2008 see:

<[http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our\\_news/polls/2008-01-14%20GMCTV%20Jan%2010-131.pdf](http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2008-01-14%20GMCTV%20Jan%2010-131.pdf)>

### Subjective Knowledge

Would you describe yourself as very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, not very knowledgeable or not knowledgeable at all about what Canada's troops are doing in Afghanistan?

### Emotion

When you think of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, do you have any emotional feelings one way or another?

### Pride

Do you tend to feel very proud, somewhat proud, not very proud or not proud at all?

Base: Among those who indicate they have emotional feelings about Canadian troops in Afghanistan?

## July 2007

Interviews were conducted between July 12th and July 15th, 2007 with a proportionate national sample of 1000 Canadians 18 years of age or older. The estimated margin of error for a study of this size is 3.1%.

### Support

Overall, do you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan?

### Support10

The Chief of Canada's Defence Staff, General Hillier, has said that it may take up to 10 years or more to make real progress in Afghanistan. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose Canada being in Afghanistan for that length of time?

### Casualties

To date, more than 65 Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan. Some say that is the price that must be paid by countries like Canada to help bring stability and peace to Afghanistan. Others say it is too high a price to pay. Which is closer to your point of view?

(Question wording in March 2006 survey slightly different: As you may know, the Canadian troops have experienced some casualties in Afghanistan. Some people say this is the price we have to pay to be part of international efforts to achieve security and stability in the region. Other people say this is too high a price to pay and if it means Canadian lives will be lost, we shouldn't be there. Which one of these two views best represents your own?)

### Liberal Internationalism/NeoRealism

Given the state of today's world and the changing nature of conflict, which of the following is the most relevant role that Canada can play?

To work with the United Nations as peacekeepers, that is to maintain peace by monitoring and observing peace processes and implement peace agreements.

To work with the United Nations to enforce peace and defend countries or groups around the world that are being attacked by terrorists

#### Pride

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements using a 7-point scale where 7 means you strongly agree, 1 means you strongly disagree, and the mid-point, 4, means you neither agree nor disagree?

I am proud of Canada's role in protecting the rights and freedoms of the Afghan people  
Canada's contribution to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan is making a real difference to improving the lives of Afghan people

#### Consequential Knowledge

Canada has made a commitment to be in Afghanistan until 2009. In considering whether Canada should stay beyond 2009, how important are each of the following

... Would you say this is a very important, somewhat important, not very important consideration, or is it not important at all?

The rights of women and children will be negatively affected;  
More terrorist attacks on Western nations such as Canada will occur;  
The Taliban will regroup and come back into power in Afghanistan;  
Afghanistan's economy would become more reliant on the cultivation of poppies for the production of opium and heroin;  
The authority and legitimacy of the United Nations would be severely damaged;  
Canada's reputation within the international community would suffer.

#### Expectations

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements using a 7-point scale where 7 means you strongly agree, 1 means you strongly disagree, and the mid-point, 4, means you neither agree nor disagree?

The Afghan people want the assistance of Canada and other countries to remove the Taliban threat.

Canada's contribution to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan is making a real difference to improving the lives of Afghan people.

### **January 2008**

Interviews were conducted between January 10th and January 13th, 2008.

#### Support

Overall, do you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan?

### Support 10

If you had your way, would you like to see the Canadian troops return as soon as possible, continue in its combat role against the Taliban, or remain in Afghanistan but hand over its combat role to another NATO country?

### Casualties

If Canada was to stay in Afghanistan, what should be the primary role of Canadian troops?

**Appendix C: Means, Standard Errors and Confidence Intervals for Figures 1-5**

Figure 1

Neo-Realists

Purpose of Mission	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval
		Lower Upper
Don't Know	.608 (.030)	.549 ← → .666
Know	.504 (.029)	.446 ← → .561

Peacekeepers

Purpose of Mission	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval
		Lower Upper
Don't Know	.429 (.021)	.389 ← → .470
Know	.278 (.026)	.227 ← → .328

Figure 2a

Neo-Realists

Purpose of Mission

	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval
		Lower Upper
Don't Know		
Proud	.674 (.017)	.641 ← → .707
Neither	.650 (.028)	.595 ← → .704
Not Proud	.499 (.084)	.335 ← → .664
Know		
Proud	.603 (.030)	.545 ← → .661
Neither	.644 (.048)	.550 ← → .739
Not Proud	.264 (.067)	.132 ← → .396

Figure 2b

Peacekeepers

Purpose of Mission

	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval
		Lower Upper
Don't Know		
Proud	.482 (.019)	.444 ← → .520
Neither	.564 (.028)	.509 ← → .618
Not Proud	.243 (.051)	.143 ← → .342
Know		
Proud	.318 (.034)	.251 ← → .386
Neither	.333 (.054)	.228 ← → .439
Not Proud	.182 (.044)	.096 ← → .268

Figure 3

Neo-Realists

Purpose of Mission	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower	Upper
Don't Know	.253 (.030)	.194	.311
Know	.481 (.060)	.371	.606
Peacekeepers			
Don't Know	.187 (.018)	.153	.221
Know	.286 (.033)	.221	.352

Figure 4

Neo-Realists

Government 'Knowledge'

	Mean (se)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower	Upper
Don't Accept			
Proud	.424 (.037)	.351	.496
Neither	.167 (.063)	.043	.291
Not Proud†	.168 (.049)	.071	.264
Accept			
Proud	.605 (.025)	.555	.655
Neither	.213 (.089)	.039	.387
Not Proud*	.648 (.154)	.346	.951

†not included in figure due to missing corresponding entry

\*not included in figure due to small N.

Peacekeepers

Don't Accept			
Proud	.283 (.026)	.232	.334
Neither	.159 (.035)	.091	.227
Not Proud	.120 (.030)	.062	.178
Accept			
Proud	.480 (.020)	.441	.519
Neither	.256 (.057)	.145	.367
Not Proud	.123 (.081)	-.036	.282



Figure 5

Proud Neo-Realists  
Government 'Knowledge'

	Mean	(se)	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Don't Accept				
Men	.531	(.053)	.427	→.634
Women	.316	(.051)	.216	←→.416
Accept				
Men	.692	(.032)	.629	←→.756
Women	.502	(.039)	.425	←→.579

Proud Peacekeepers

	Mean	(se)	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Don't Accept				
Men	.291	(.038)	.215	←→.366
Women	.260	(.035)	.192	←→.327
Accept				
Men	.580	(.027)	.526	←→.633
Women	.372	(.028)	.316	←→.428

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