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A hegemon, Dan O’Meara argues in Chapter 1, is able to socialize its allies with its “security imaginary” -- the way in which “representations of states, of relations among states and of the international system are created” (Weldes 1999, 10). The implication, however, is that these patterns of socialization flow unidirectionally outward from the hegemon as it propagates and reproduces cultural practices that help entrench smaller allies into the hegemonic imperium. But is it possible for an ally to try to rethink the security imaginary and recast it in a way that challenges the hegemon’s imaginary? My purpose in this chapter is to examine a period in foreign and defence policy when Canada’s political leaders were openly encouraging Canadians to question dominant American assumptions about international politics, and to reconsider not only their country’s role in the world but also its relationship with the hegemon. Between 1993 and 2006, during the prime ministerships of both Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, Canadians were consistently encouraged by their governors to rethink their assumptions about the country’s place and role in global politics, a rethinking that went well beyond the well-established rhetoric of internationalism and multilateralism that had been a staple of Canadian foreign policy discourse in the 1970s and 1980s (Keating 2002; Munton 2002-03). Of course, political leaders can encourage new thinking, but to what extent were Canadians actually moved to embrace such a new reconceptualization of Canada in world affairs? The case of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan offers us a [108] useful way to assess the degree to which the efforts of Canadian leaders during this period had a longer-term political impact on the attitudes of Canadians. In particular, I argue that the case of the mission in Afghanistan presents us with ambiguous evidence about the longer-term effects of the efforts to recast the security imaginary. On the one hand, it is clear from opinion polls that Canadians have accepted much of the reconceptualization of security being articulated by the Chrétien and Martin governments. On the other hand, it is equally clear that efforts to cast the mission in Afghanistan in terms consistent with these new conceptions of security have been unsuccessful,

since Canadian support for the mission remained consistently tepid, suggesting that the revisioning, such as it was, remained incomplete.

Rethinking the Security Imaginary

The so-called revisioning that occurred during the Liberal governments of both Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin had several distinct but interrelated elements. First, the idea that national interests -- the selfish ends of the political community -- should drive Canada's international policy was rejected. Indeed, the very term "national interest" was dropped from the government's lexicon (Granatstein 2003, 4-5; Nossal 2003; Gotlieb 2004b, 2). Lloyd Axworthy (2003, 3), Canada's minister of foreign affairs from 1996 until 2000, openly disparaged what he called the dominance of "naked self-interest" in world politics. In a similar vein, Paul Heinbecker, Canada's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, dismissed the idea when he wrote in 2000: "Canadians are moved by humanitarian impulse, not by the cold-blooded or rational calculations of realpolitik ... Principles are often more important than power to Canadians" (quoted in Granatstein 2003, 12). Instead of naked self-interest, broader conceptions of interest were invoked: Axworthy (2003, 1, 5) argued that Canadians were "on the road to global citizenship" in articulating notions of a global "common good."

Second, Canadians were encouraged to see their country as a generous and activist contributor to the global good. Canada, it was commonly said, was a "norm entrepreneur" -- an "innovative player" working to entrench global rules (Axworthy 2003, 4). In this view, Canada was also a selfless power, expansively seeking to "build lives of freedom for all people" based on "the fundamental human rights of every man, woman and child on earth" (Canada, DFAIT 2005, 20). To this end, Canada willingly contributed to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, deploying what Axworthy (2003, xii) referred to as "our blue-helmeted constabulary" on UN-sponsored missions, [109] thus adding to and entrenching an already well-established "peacekeeping myth" that Canada was not only the inventor of peacekeeping but also the world's leading peacekeeping nation (Granatstein 1986; Hillmer 1994; Maloney 2002; Wagner 2006-07).

To be sure, such portraiture tended toward the narcissistic and self-congratulatory. Axworthy (2003, 6, 378) celebrated Canada as a "value-added nation" and an "agent of change." One of his successors, Bill Graham, minister of foreign affairs from 2002 to 2004, touted "our long-standing advocacy of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, respect for diversity, gender equality and good governance ... and [Canada's] unique opportunities to contribute to their realization in virtue of our population and our experience" (Canada, DFAIT 2003). For his part, Paul Martin took self-flattery to extraordinary heights, boasting, for example, that Canada was "a progressive force in the world" (Canada, DFAIT 2005, foreword). On more than one occasion, he cited, with evident approval, the slogan of Indigo Books and Music Inc. -- "The world needs more Canada." And with Jennifer Welsh's idea of Canada as a "model power" (Welsh 2004; see also Cheung-Gertler 2007) as his cue, Martin frequently claimed that Canada had much to teach others: "We are an example to the world of what a country should be. Showing others the way is at once our destiny and responsibility" (Martin 2004). A year later he would claim that "we will set the standard by which other nations judge themselves" (quoted in Nossal 2005, 1031).

Third, in Axworthy's reconceptualization of Canada's position in world politics, historical approaches to strategic culture (Nossal 2004) were set aside. Canada was not portrayed as a *willing* partner and ally of the United States in global affairs; rather, if Canada was in the American orbit, it was because of American hegemonic power. In this view, the connection was therefore necessarily begrudged, and one could sense a deep frustration in Axworthy's description and analysis of American global behaviour. Anti-hegemonism and anti-Americanism overlapped: while in opposition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Axworthy had demonstrated a deep vein of antipathy toward the power of the United States (Nossal 1994). As the Liberal Party's external affairs critic, he had contributed to the party's campaign platform in 1993 that promised that under a Liberal government Canada would cease to be a "camp follower" of the United States (Liberal Party of Canada 1993, 106; see also Axworthy 1992-93). During his tenure as minister of foreign affairs from 1996 to 2000, he left little doubt that his views about American hegemony and American unilateralism had not changed (Nossal 1997). Nor had his views about the inappropriateness of following [110] the United States in global affairs: as he put it euphemistically -- without actually naming the United States -- Canada had little interest in associating itself with "the way of the warrior, using the immense reach of a military apparatus to seduce, shape and when necessary coerce compliance with its own set of goals, values and interests, increasingly disdainful of any international rules of restraint" (Axworthy 2003, 407). On the contrary: Canada was conceived of as an alternative to the hegemon, a country with the "strengths ... to take a special kind of leadership in helping manage a world dominated by the power and influence of our continental neighbour" (6). However, such views were not unique to Axworthy: Chrétien's decision not to join the United States in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and Martin's decision in 2005 not to participate in the Ballistic Missile Defense scheme were motivated by comparable views of the proper relationship between Canada and the United States.

Fourth, and deeply connected to the concern about the growth of American hyperpower and American unilateralism, Canadians were encouraged to regard multilateralism -- support for the United Nations and for international action to solve global problems -- as the core and overriding principle for Canadian foreign policy. As Axworthy (2003, 235-36, emphasis in original) put it, "The UN is *vital* to Canada, affording us a place in which we can exercise influence, lessen our dependence on bilateral relations and help establish policies and practices consonant with our values and interests." Certainly, the Canadian campaign to create the International Criminal Court and the articulation of what Gotlieb (2004a) has called the Chrétien doctrine -- the requirement that the United Nations approve any use of force before Canada would contribute forces -- were both in keeping with the premium put on multilateralism and the United Nations during this period.

Fifth, Canadians were encouraged to rethink the nature of national security. When he came to office in 1996, Axworthy explicitly rejected the dominant fixation with the *state* as the traditional object of security. Building on critiques of national security that dated back to the paradoxes of security during the Cold War era itself (Ullman 1983; Mathews 1989; Buzan 1991), and following the tendency to adorn security with descriptive adjectives (see Nossal 1995), Axworthy championed the notion of human security -- the idea that the proper focus of security policy should be on *people* rather than on *states* (Axworthy 1997, 2003; also Maclean 2000),

arguing that Canada was willing “to take risks on behalf of victims of war in far-flung places” (Axworthy 1999). The concept was also formally enshrined in Canadian policy (Canada, DFAIT 1999; McRae and Hubert 2001), even if [111] only briefly. Moreover, Axworthy put the idea into action, seeking to galvanize a global ban on anti-personnel landmines (Axworthy 2003, 126-55; Tomlin 1998) and pressing for global action on children affected by war (Sorger and Hoskins 2001), among other initiatives (see Shaw’s Chapter 10). Human security was used to justify Canadian participation in the bombing of Serbia in early in 1999 (Axworthy 2003, 177-99; Nossal and Roussel 2000) and in the intervention in East Timor later that year (Hataley and Nossal 2004). It was reflected in the increased emphasis on the role of women in Canada’s development assistance policies (Keeble and Smith 2001). Under Axworthy, the Canadian government also sponsored the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) a blue-ribbon panel of experts to examine the notion of national sovereignty and how it could be fitted to the requirements of human security (Welsh 2002; Thakur, Cooper, and English 2005; Welsh, Thielking, and Macfarlane 2005).

As Julie MacArthur (2008, 422) has noted, the notion of human security had “immense appeal for scholars and practitioners interested in the creation of a more just world order,” and Axworthy’s embrace of the concept spawned a considerable academic debate over both the meaning and the applicability of the concept in Canada’s case (for example, Hay 1999; Stoett 1999; Owens and Arneil 1999; Paris 2001; Irwin 2001; Bosold and von Bredow 2006). Now, it is true that, as Furtado (2008, 420) has argued, human security “never became the animating concept of Canadian policy.” Formally, at least, it did not even survive Axworthy’s departure from politics in 2000: *Human security: Safety for people in a changing world* was quickly “disappeared” from the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade almost immediately upon the minister’s departure (and is now available only on an Organization of American States website). However, there can be little doubt that what Allan Gotlieb (2004b) has called the “romantic streak” in Canadian foreign policy under Axworthy continued to find expression in Canadian foreign policy. Certainly, when Paul Martin took over as leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister in 2003, he keenly embraced the focus on human security, promising, for example, that his government would “always express the concerns of Canadians about the poor and underprivileged of the world; the frightened and helpless victims of battle-torn societies” (Martin 2003b).

Finally, Martin carried forward Axworthy’s efforts to rethink national sovereignty. In his acceptance speech as Liberal Party leader, Martin promised to embrace “new thinking about how the international community governs itself, and how sovereign nations take action together in tackling global issues” (Martin 2003b). As prime minister, he encouraged Canadians [112] to rethink the deeply entrenched notion of national sovereignty. Eight months before taking over as prime minister, Martin (2003a) had argued in a speech that “in appropriate circumstances, and when consistent with our values, we should be prepared to use the means necessary to achieve our international goals [even] when full consensus on the right steps is not possible.” Once in power, Martin consistently and explicitly supported the idea of humanitarian intervention, endorsing the main findings of the report of the ICISS (2001) that sovereign states had a “responsibility to protect” their citizens, rejecting orthodox views of state sovereignty. As he put it, “Failed states more often than not require military intervention in order to ensure

stability," arguing that military intervention was "indispensable," though not enough to provide long-term security (Martin 2004). His government's International Policy Statement, released in April 2005, formally promised that Canada would "hold governments accountable for how they treat their people, and to intervene if necessary to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe" (Canada, DFAIT 2005, 20).

In sum, over a twelve-year period, Canadian leaders articulated a security imaginary -- a fundamentally different vision of international politics and Canadian foreign and security policy -- that was significantly at odds with orthodox American ways of conceptualizing a country's role in international politics. The refusal to conceive of international policy in terms of the national interest, the embrace of such ideas as human security and the responsibility to protect, the advocacy of the idea of Canada as a model power, and the willingness to denigrate the hegemonic power of the United States and defy the hegemon on issues such as the invasion of Iraq or the Ballistic Missile Defense scheme -- these indicated what Axworthy (2003, 420) called finding "alternatives to the present ideological and conceptual straitjackets" on thinking about Canadian foreign policy.

To be sure, this revisioning received a mixed reaction within the Canadian state apparatus. The main opposition party, the Conservative Party of Canada and its predecessors -- the Reform Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Canadian Alliance -- never bought into the reconceptualization being articulated by the Liberals. At the bureaucratic level, officials in the Department of Finance loved it because it was so cheap to implement and fitted well the overweening objective of reducing the deficit. Officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade liked the increased prominence it afforded their department. But it was fundamentally at odds with the orthodox security imaginary in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. If the Canadian Armed Forces [113] recognized that peacekeeping provided them with considerable public support, they had little use for notions of a constabulary force, preferring to retain multi-purpose, combat-capable forces, and in particular those capable of interoperability with the armed forces of the United States (Charbonneau and Cox 2008). However, the relative power position of the Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence in the bureaucratic firmament in Ottawa in the 1990s meant that the national defence establishment was unable to oppose some of these efforts at reconceptualization. The Somalia Affair had deeply discredited the military (see Bercuson 1996), and Chrétien himself left no doubt that he had little time for National Defence, whose budget was dramatically cut year after year (Bland 2003; Granatstein 2004). Even after 9/11, which radically transformed the security environment in Ottawa, the military had to watch in dismay as the Chrétien government's policies on Iraq and Ballistic Missile Defense threatened its relationship with its American military counterpart. Indeed, it was not until Paul Martin came to office in December 2003 that the military budget was dramatically increased, and not until General Rick Hillier was appointed by Martin as chief of defence staff that what Hillier took to calling "the decade of darkness" (Blanchfield 2007b) largely came to an end.

In addition, it is not clear that the revisioning being urged on Canadians by their governors was not driven largely by domestic political purposes. Stairs (2001, 44), for example, has argued that many of these policy initiatives appeared to be "guided by a domestic politics that had been manufactured by its own myths, or even that it had finally fallen victim itself to

the spins that it had doctored." For Stairs (2003a, 503), the "inflated and self-serving rhetoric" of this era was "clearly designed to appeal to the preferences and prejudices of a population indoctrinated by its own myths." In a similar vein, I have suggested that we should see much of the discourse of this period as "ear candy" that had overt and barely disguised domestic political purposes: "Government ministers tended to speak about Canada's role in the world in terms that were so sweet-sounding to Canadians that not only did the rhetoric convince listeners that their government was actually doing something worthwhile in their name, but it also generated considerable political support for those engaging in the rhetoric" (Nossal 2005, 1018).

Several analysts (Cohen 2003; Stairs 2003b; Gotlieb 2004b; see also Nossal 1998-99) have noted that the "new vision" articulated for Canada's role in the world reflected the dramatic decline in the resources allocated by the Canadian government to international affairs in the 1990s as the Liberal government sought to reduce the huge deficit and national debt it [114] had inherited in 1993. As Stairs (2003a, 489-90) has acidly argued, in times of financial restraint, "the vocabulary of values -- always a cheap concoction -- assumes a greater prominence. The premise is that it will warm the mood and cool the criticism. The spinning of tales -- tales not false, perhaps, but certainly canted -- becomes an increasingly valued and admired art as the policy establishment struggles to bridge the gap between what well-intentioned Canadians think and what the government really is doing."

We can certainly see the efforts of the governments of both Chrétien and Martin to distance Canada from the United States, and from American power, as an attempt to play to the deeply entrenched anti-Americanism that is evident in Canada, particularly English-speaking Canada (Granatstein 1996; Nossal 2007a). In 1997, Chrétien himself had admitted, albeit inadvertently, how he had made defying the United States "his policy" because "it's popular" (Nossal 2008, 136). Particularly after the election of George W. Bush as president of the United States, Chrétien and many of his ministers and backbenchers essentially encouraged anti-American sentiments in Canada for precisely that reason: because there are often clear electoral gains to be had from such a policy. And although Martin came to office promising a different approach to the United States, when push came to shove, he was too tempted by the electoral gains on offer: both the 2004 and 2005-06 election campaigns featured planks that were unambiguously designed to tap anti-Americanism in Canada (Nossal 2008).

Even though the Conservatives under Stephen Harper clearly had a very different outlook on Canadian foreign and defence policy when they were in opposition (Nossal 2007b), we cannot conclude that the January 2006 elections, which resulted in a Conservative minority government, was a rejection by the electorate of the Liberal attempts of the previous decade to reconceptualize Canadian foreign and defence policy. Rather, we can ask whether more than ten years of a very different articulation of foreign and defence policy goals might have longer-term effects on Canadian public attitudes toward security.

A Longer-Term Impact? The Case of Afghanistan

What longer-term impact did these efforts to get Canadians to reconceptualize foreign and defence policy have? There is some public opinion poll evidence that the campaign had an impact. In 2008, for example, the Department of National Defence commissioned Ipsos Reid to

conduct an extensive public opinion poll, using both telephone interviews and focus groups, on Canadians' views of national defence. The poll, leaked to the [115] media in September 2008 (Brewster 2008), revealed that Canadians largely rejected the idea that the purpose of the Canadian Armed Forces was to use force in international politics. On the contrary: 92 percent of those polled believed the purpose of the Canadian military should be to respond to natural disasters around the world. When focus group participants were asked about their image of the Canadian military, one responded: "I do not picture a Canadian soldier carrying guns." Only half of the participants believed that Canadian forces should participate in international security operations; the other half believed that Canadian troops should act as ceasefire observers.

Although the 2008 poll provides important evidence of the attitudes of Canadians toward the alternative security imaginary, another indication of whether the so-called revisioning had a longer-term impact can be found in the attitudes of Canadians toward the multi-dimensional Canadian mission in Afghanistan. This mission began in 2001 with Canada's contribution to the initial American-led Operation Enduring Freedom; it then shifted to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Kabul from 2003 to 2005, and then to Kandahar in 2005 to head the Provincial Reconstruction Team in that province (for a history, see Stein and Lang 2007; Manley et al. 2008). Because the Afghanistan mission meets so many of the criteria that were being articulated as ideal characteristics of Canada's global engagement, it is a useful test of David S. McDonough's assertion (2007, 628) that "Canadian interventionism in Afghanistan appears to be informed by the human security agenda."

First, all phases of the Afghanistan mission have received the authorization of the UN Security Council. The original US-led invasion to overthrow the Taliban government by force in 2001-02 after the al-Qaeda attacks of 11 September was approved by the Security Council, which unanimously adopted the well-established code phrase authorizing the use of force -- "all necessary steps" (UN Security Council Res. 1373, 28 September 2001). The invasion not only was aimed at removing a regime that had given al-Qaeda sanctuary but could also be painted as a humanitarian mission, since the Taliban had also engaged in a wide range of human rights violations, including well-documented atrocities and the systemic oppression of girls and women.

Second, the Afghanistan mission has been a deeply multilateral exercise. The elected government of Hamid Karzai that resulted from the overthrow of the Taliban in 2002 invited the international community to assist it in creating stability and generating economic development. In particular, the Afghanistan Compact of 31 January-1 February 2006 that provides the [116] framework for international support for the Afghanistan government involves fifty-one "participating governments," including all five permanent members of the UN Security Council; thirteen "observer governments"; and ten participating organizations, including the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, NATO, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, two development banks, and the Aga Khan Foundation (Afghanistan Compact 2006).

Third, although the initial invasion was led by the United States, the international effort to stabilize the Karzai government quickly morphed into an operation that was manifestly *not* dominated and run by the United States. Indeed, one measure of the lack of US control in Afghanistan has been the degree of blunt and open grumbling by Americans that the NATO-led

mission is a “spaghetti sandwich” that needs to be “cleaned up” by the assertion of greater American control (Lubold 2008).

Finally, the Afghanistan mission has unambiguous humanitarian and development objectives that fit well with the precepts of human security. For example, the Afghanistan Compact outlines objectives to provide the people of Afghanistan with security, good governance, and economic development. The mission also has openly gendered goals: to prevent a return of the Taliban and thus a return of the discriminatory treatment of girls and women that was the mark of Afghanistan politics during the Taliban period. In short, if one considers the rearticulations of security being embraced by Canadian leaders from 1995 to 2006, and then looks at the Afghanistan case, one might readily conclude that this was a mission that would be eagerly embraced by Canadians if they had in fact bought into the reconceptualizations of security and foreign policy of their leaders (on the Canadian mission, see Charbonneau and Parent’s Chapter 3).

However, this has manifestly not been the case. All the evidence available suggests that support among Canadians for the mission in Afghanistan has been tepid at best. Although there is considerable rhetorical support for Canadian troops in Afghanistan, manifested in such political phenomena as Red Friday/Vendredi rouge rallies, “Support our troops” stickers, and spontaneous public tributes to those Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, public support for what the Canadian Armed Forces and the other agencies of the Canadian government are doing in Afghanistan is much less evident.

On the contrary: although the Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the Department of National Defence in the summer of 2008 revealed that two-thirds of respondents supported what Canada was doing in Afghanistan (Brewster 2008), every other public opinion poll taken between 2006, when the [117] Martin government committed Canadian troops to the Kandahar region, and September 2008, when Afghanistan was in essence taken off the political agenda, shows that Canadians are essentially split on the mission. For example, in a Decima poll in April 2006, 45 percent of Canadians polled approved of the mission; 46 percent were opposed (Angus Reid Global Monitor 2006). In February 2007, an Angus Reid poll showed that 46 percent wanted Canadian troops brought home. In May 2008, 54 percent of Canadians opposed an extension of the mission (Angus Reid Strategies 2007, 2008). Polls by the Strategic Counsel, which have asked the same question since 2006 (“Overall, do you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan?”), show that between 2006 and 2008, national overall support for the mission was never above 48 percent, while overall opposition ranged from 44 percent to 61 percent (Strategic Counsel 2008). Importantly, as Table 4.1 shows, the degree of “strong” opposition is clearly more marked than the degree of “strong” support: strong support ranges between 5 and 11 percent over this two-year period; by contrast, approximately 25 percent of respondents registered consistently strong opposition to the mission. Moreover, there is no clear trend line in public attitudes: the polarization has remained remarkably steady and has not changed with the large number of casualties suffered by Canadian troops in Afghanistan since March 2006 (Boucher 2010).

The split in public opinion revealed by polls is reflected in the marked lack of enthusiasm and the high level of doubt expressed in public discourse about the mission. There are notable exceptions (such as Blatchford 2007), but much of the commentary has been marked

by a certain dubiousness about the mission, much of it expressed by mainstream voices. For example, in a 2007 report, Gordon Smith, a former Canadian ambassador to NATO and former deputy minister of foreign affairs, concluded that “current NATO policies and programs in Afghanistan are not on course to achieve that objective, even within a period of ten years” (G. Smith 2007, 4). Likewise, a blue-ribbon panel chaired by Chrétien’s former deputy prime minister, John Manley, which was appointed by Stephen Harper in 2007 to advise the government on options in Afghanistan, recommended continuing the mission, but the tone of the report of the Independent Panel on Canada’s Future Role in Afghanistan was cautious and measured, admitting that there were “no simple solutions,” that there was a high degree of unpredictability, and that success was by no means certain (Manley et al. 2008, 30, 39). Finally, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence reported in 2008 that the Canadian mission was hampered by an “array of [118]

Table 4.1
Canadian attitudes toward sending troops to Afghanistan, March 2006-August 2008

	Mar 06	May 06	Jun 06	Jul 06	Aug 06	Sep 06	Oct 06	Dec 06	Apr 07	May 07	Jul 07	Jan 08	Aug 08
Total support	55	40	48	39	37	42	44	35	36	40	36	39	35
Strongly support	11	6	11	8	6	11	10	5	6	10	7	7	9
Support	44	34	37	31	31	32	34	30	30	30	29	32	26
DK/NA/Ref ^a	4	6	8	5	8	8	3	4	7	5	5	6	4
Oppose	26	31	26	31	31	26	26	35	31	27	31	31	28
Strongly oppose	15	23	18	25	24	23	27	26	26	28	27	25	33
Total oppose	41	54	44	56	55	49	53	61	57	55	59	56	61

Question: “Overall, do you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan?” As Boucher and Roussel (2008, 151, fn 6) note, the Strategic Counsel polling sample was exceedingly small; individual provincial results are based on such a small *n* that the margin of error climbs to what they argue is an unacceptable 6.3. Source: Strategic Council 2008.

^aDon’t know/not applicable/refused to answer

[119] disfunctionality [sic]” (Canada, Senate 2008a, 2). Perhaps not surprisingly, these doubts about the effectiveness of the mission were reflected in the editorial and columnist opinion of the mainstream press as well (for example, Simpson 2008; *Toronto Star* 2008; *National Post* 2008; Taillefer 2008).

Canada’s national political parties were likewise split on the mission (for a full discussion of the party positions on the Afghanistan mission, see Nossal 2009). The Conservative government inherited the phase of the mission agreed to by the Martin

government in 2005 (Stein and Lang 2007); indeed, units of the Canadian Armed Forces were arriving in the Kandahar region just as the Harper government was taking office. But the Conservatives remained both united and enthusiastic about the mission. Although it was a Liberal government that had approved the mission, the Liberal Party was essentially divided over the mission. During the contest for the party's leadership, two of the contenders, Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff, supported the mission, while the eventual winner, Stéphane Dion, did not. As leader of the Opposition, however, Dion was essentially forced into voting for an extension of the mission to avoid having the Conservative government fall and calling an election the Liberals were not ready to fight.

For its part, the Bloc Québécois, reflecting not only its desire to avoid an election but also very high levels of opposition to the Afghanistan mission in Quebec, had what Boucher and Roussel (2008, 146) call a "quite nuanced" position. On the one hand, the Bloc favoured an end to the military mission. On the other hand, the Bloc argued that a "sudden withdrawal from Afghanistan would be irresponsible toward the people and the government of Afghanistan, as well as toward our allies, who are counting on Canada's collaboration until then" (Canada, House of Commons 2007).

The New Democratic Party was in the most awkward position. Like the other parties, it did not want to fight an election. On Afghanistan, the party's official position was that this was "the wrong mission for Canada" and that Canada should "support our troops" by bringing them home (CBC News 2006c). However, when in April 2007 the Bloc Québécois announced that it was voting for a Liberal motion to withdraw Canada's forces from Afghanistan in 2009, the NDP ended up voting with the governing Conservatives to defeat the motion, embracing the pretzel logic that they had to vote against any motion that would terminate the mission in February 2009 because they were in favour of bringing the troops home immediately (CBC News 2007).

Finally, one measure of the lack of public enthusiasm for the mission is the development of a small but robust peace movement dedicated to bringing [120] the mission to an end. Without any evident irony, the Canadian peace movement appropriated as their catch-cry an American protest slogan for the Iraq war -- "Support our troops. Bring them home" (repeating what previous generations of Canadian peace movements had done during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and the Gulf War of 1991, when they adopted miniature-replica derivatives of protest slogans invented by Americans for those wars). The campaign to secure a Canadian withdrawal from Afghanistan was coordinated by several pan-Canadian advocacy groups, including the Canadian Peace Alliance, the Council of Canadians, and the Rideau Institute on International Affairs' Ceasefire.ca campaign. However, it also featured numerous local groups, ranging from the Canada Out of Afghanistan campaign (in Victoria) to the St. John's Campaign against the War (in Newfoundland and Labrador) and numerous local groups in between (for a directory of groups, see Canadian Peace Alliance 2008).

How can we explain this low level of support for an international mission that fit so well with the recasting of the security imaginary that had been pressed by the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin? Here we are confronted with a methodological problem, since not one of the public opinion polls that demonstrate so clearly the depth of opposition and

the tepidness of support for the mission actually tries to plumb the reasons for Canadians' attitudes. Thus, we are left to offer plausible explanations.

One possibility is that Canadian attitudes toward the Afghanistan mission are a function of what might be called communications failure. One of the persistent criticisms has been that, as the Senlis Council put it in 2007, "the Canadian government has failed to make a clear, objective argument to the Canadian public for Canada's efforts in Afghanistan" (Senlis Council 2007a, 7). Likewise, the Manley commission's 2008 report argued that "governments from the start of Canada's Afghan involvement have failed to communicate with Canadians with balance and candour about the reasons for Canadian involvement, or about the risks, difficulties and expected results of that involvement" (Manley et al. 2008, 20). Certainly, when prompted by a pollster's question, Canadians in large numbers (61 percent) have not been hesitant to respond that they do not think that the government has explained the mission effectively (Angus Reid Strategies 2007, 3). In this view, if governments had only explained things more clearly, Canadians would support the mission.

The problem with this explanation is that Canadian governments *have* tried to explain the mission, particularly the phase that began with the movement of the battle group back to Kandahar. Since February 2006, there [121] have been three extended parliamentary debates on the mission. In February and March 2008, for example, fully five parliamentary days were devoted to debate on the mission, with 128 MPs (55 Conservatives, 40 Liberals, 11 Bloc Québécois members, 20 NDP members, and 1 independent) contributing. Moreover, there have been numerous attempts by ministers to explain Canada's Afghan involvement, using a range of different arguments.

When he first came to power and visited Canadian forces in Kandahar, Harper sought to frame the Canadian mission in national interest terms. First, he argued that Canadian security depended on ensuring that Afghanistan did not again become an incubator for terrorist attacks, reminding his audience of the Canadians who had died in the al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and of the recent inclusion of Canada on the list of countries that al-Qaeda would seek to attack. Second, Harper argued that Canadian security was affected by the opium trade, which, he said, "wreaks its own destruction on the streets of our country." To be sure, the prime minister invoked three other justifications for the mission: the importance of a country such as Canada taking a leadership role in global politics, the importance of the humanitarian mission, and the importance of "standing up for Canadian values" (Harper 2006b).

Such a primary focus on the national interest was hardly unexpected, given that the Conservatives had come to power with clearly little sympathy for ideational initiatives closely associated with the Liberals, such as human security or the responsibility to protect. Thus, this general line of argument was sounded throughout 2006 on numerous occasions by the prime minister (Harper 2006a); Gordon O'Connor (2006), the minister of national defence; Peter MacKay (2006), the minister of foreign affairs; and Josée Verner (2006), the minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency.

However, as the polling numbers showed no sign of change (see Table 4.1), the Harper government increasingly sought to justify what Canada was doing in Afghanistan in terms that mirrored Liberal romantic discourse. Thus, for example, when O'Connor embarked on a cross-country tour in early 2007 to galvanize support for the mission, his speaking notes contained

only a brief opening reference to the threat of terrorism but then immediately turned to a discussion of Canadian assistance for Afghanistan. "As a nation," O'Connor said,

we identify ourselves by our desire to help others in need. Canadians recognize the dire straits of the Afghan people. Decades of civil war, years of [122] extremist rule, a severe lack of basic infrastructure and public services, drought, poverty, drugs and corruption all plague this population. Canada has a long history of helping those in need, and as part of this NATO mission, we are continuing this noble tradition. (G. O'Connor 2007)

Much of the rest of his address focused on how Canada was making a difference in Afghanistan, the positive consequences of Canadian assistance to the Afghan people, the consequences to those people of the return of the Taliban, and a tribute to Canadian forces. Apart from the two brief sentences about terrorism at the outset, O'Connor did not frame his justification in terms of national interests. He never once mentioned the United States. Indeed, the tropes he used to justify what Canada was doing in Afghanistan had a distinctly familiar timbre: his address could easily have been given by Paul Martin or Bill Graham -- or even Lloyd Axworthy. By June 2008, when the government reported to Parliament on the progress being made in Afghanistan, there were no longer any references to the national interest, and only a brief reference to preventing Afghanistan from becoming a base for terrorism. Rather, the report indicated that "these are the objectives of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan -- to contribute to Afghanistan's future as a better governed, more peaceful and more secure country" (Canada 2008a, 16).

In short, the "communications failure" argument fails to account for the fact that the government *was* trying to find an explanation, moving from one rooted in national interest to one rooted in humanitarianism. Given this, we might reasonably conclude that there is another possibility: that the explanations being advanced were simply unconvincing to Canadians. This, in turn, raises the question why. I advance two plausible alternatives. One possibility is that Canadians saw the mission in Afghanistan as nothing more than an extension of the American global war on terror being waged by the administration of George W. Bush, and merely part of the broader American campaign in Iraq, and that their opposition to broader American policy drove attitudes on Afghanistan. That the two wars are deeply connected is a common assertion among opponents of the Afghanistan mission. For example, Steve Staples, the president of the Rideau Institute, reminded viewers in a welcome video that was posted on the institute's "Ceasefire.ca" campaign website during the Bush era, that "right now our government has thousands of Canadian troops stuck in a war in Afghanistan. We're part of a NATO force, but we're really fighting for George Bush," his voice-over said to an unattractive image of Bush giving a speech against [123] the backdrop of an American flag. The video reminded viewers that "we kept Canada out of Iraq, and we kept Canada out of missile defense," and concluded that "we can make Canada a voice for peace again" (Ceasefire.ca 2008). (The video was archived with the election of Barack Obama.)

There can be little doubt that the American push for the invasion of Iraq in the winter of 2002-03 was generally unpopular in Canada, and that Chrétien's decision to not commit combat troops to the invasion and to pretend that there was no Canadian contribution to that invasion -

- when in fact Canadian Armed Forces personnel *were* involved (Stein and Lang 2007, 86-90) -- was extremely popular across the country. The reasons for the unpopularity of the Iraq war in Canada were many. They include the deep unpopularity of Bush himself among Canadians, an unpopularity to which the Chrétien government itself openly contributed (Boucher and Roussel 2008, 144; Nossal 2008, 136-37).

Likewise, there can be little doubt that there was a deep connection between the American war in Iraq and Canadian government decisions in Afghanistan. The Chrétien government's decision in early 2003 to deploy a battle group to Kabul and the NATO International Security Assistance Force was clearly linked to the impending war in Iraq. As Bill Graham, at that time the minister of foreign affairs, admitted to Stein and Lang (2007, 65): "There was no question, every time we talked about the Afghan mission, it gave us cover for not going into Iraq." A clear consensus emerged in Ottawa in early 2005 that a battle group deployed to Kandahar to what at that time was still the American-led Operation Enduring Freedom would be a good way of repairing the damage to the Canadian-American relationship that had been done by Chrétien's decision on Iraq and the decision of the Martin government to reject Canadian participation in Ballistic Missile Defense in February 2005. Although Martin was to claim later that he did not agree with this view (Stein and Lang 2007, 182), the fact is that the cabinet that he headed approved the deployment in May 2005.

An alternative explanation is that Canadians are not so much opposed to Afghanistan because they are opposed to the larger American project in the Middle East or even the global war on terror, but simply because neither of the justifications on offer from their governors make much sense to them. The national interest argument that has been floated -- that billions of dollars in treasure and scores of Canadian lives are needed to keep Canadians safe from terrorists -- is clearly not convincing. And while a national interest argument, couched in *realpolitik* terms, could be constructed for the Afghanistan mission, focusing on the geopolitical need for American control [124] in the Persian Gulf region and the importance of a small country such as Canada contributing to those efforts, it is unlikely that any Canadian minister would articulate such an argument, at least in public, and equally unlikely that Canadians would find such *realpolitik* discourse compelling.

On the other hand, however, neither does the alternative security imaginary -- the one rooted in humanitarianism, human security, global citizenship, multilateralism, and altruism -- seem to appeal to Canadians in the Afghanistan case. For although there might be "good news" about the progress that is being made in Afghanistan in terms of development, education, public health, and gender equality (Pigott 2007, 134-35), it appears to make no difference when this progress is communicated to Canadians by their governors (for example, Canada, Senate 2008a). The polling numbers remain persistently flat and unenthusiastic.

So which of these two alternative explanations is more plausible? Did antipathy toward the Iraq war, antipathy toward Bush, or even a certain antipathy toward American military adventures colour Canadian attitudes toward the Afghanistan mission? Some *assert* this connection (for example, Charbonneau and Cox 2008), and take as a given that other Canadians think as they do, but in fact we cannot know, for there is no unambiguous evidence that the opposition to the Afghanistan mission has been driven by a perceived link to the war in Iraq. But by the same token, there is no clear evidence for the alternative proposition that Canadians

have responded to the Afghanistan mission as they do because they find none of the explanations on offer convincing.

Conclusion

I have argued that we should question the usual assumption that Canadian state officials are simply the uncritical recipients of a security imaginary propagated by the hegemon. During the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin from 1993 to 2006, we saw Canadian political leaders encourage Canadians to rethink the orthodox verities of international relations: the standard (realist/American) lexicon of national interests, national power, national security, national sovereignty, and strong support for one's great-power ally. Instead, Canadians were encouraged to think in terms of global interests and multilateral methods for the management of global problems; new conceptions of security and new definitions of national sovereignty; and to question American hegemony and American power.

I have suggested that Afghanistan provides a useful case study to test how far Canadians bought this encouragement to see the world in ways that [125] challenge American orthodoxy, since the mission in Afghanistan -- from the initial campaign to overthrow the Taliban government in 2001-02 to the stabilization campaigns associated with the Afghanistan Compact of 2006 -- can be seen as emblematic of the redefinitions that Canadians had been encouraged by their governors to embrace.

However, although polls suggest that Canadians have bought into some parts of this alternative security imaginary, it is clear that Canadians have not bought into the Afghanistan mission as it has been constructed for them, either by the Liberal governments that approved it or by the Conservative government that inherited it. Support for the mission has remained flat and tepid, and seemingly not affected by the growing casualty rate, by the mixture of positive and negative news from Afghanistan itself, or by anything that those who speak for government, the agencies of the Canadian state, or the Canadian Armed Forces might say.

The lack of clear and unambiguous evidence leaves us in the frustrating position of not knowing precisely why Canadians have taken the positions they have on the Afghanistan mission, yet one conclusion does seem appropriate: it would appear that Canadians have not been totally moved by the alternative vision of global politics articulated by Liberal leaders from 1993 to 2006, and adapted by the Conservative government to justify the Afghanistan mission since then. Canadians might enjoy the ear candy that has been fed to them about how generous they are, but they appear to be manifestly attached to an orthodox security imaginary when it comes to missions such as Afghanistan that involve putting thousands of their fellow citizens in harm's way and spending billions of dollars for outcomes that promise only limited direct benefits for Canada.

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