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Foreign Policy Under A Conservative Government: An Interim Report Card

Prepared for:

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Introduction

The Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFAI) commissioned Innovative Research Group Inc. (INNOVATIVE) to conduct a national online poll of Canadians to explore issues surrounding the topic of CDFAI's Annual Conference. This year, the conference theme is "Foreign Policy Under A Conservative Government: An Interim Report Card."

The survey focuses on the following questions:

1. What does the public think about the Conservatives on foreign policy (broadly speaking) so far?
2. Are the Conservatives seen as different on foreign policy than the Liberals? If so, how so?
3. Which Liberal has the best chance of challenging the Tories on this issue?
4. Does how the government handle foreign policy really matter?
5. Has the minority status of the government made a difference?

As well, this survey built on the tracking surveys CDFAI has been running for the past few months and tracks support for the Afghanistan mission as well as investigating the impact of the casualties on that mission on Canadians' willingness to put their military in harm's way.

Building on our original CDFAI study, we pay particular attention in our analysis to those who pay particular attention to this issue.

Key Findings

When it comes to foreign policy, the Harper government is not making a lot of new friends. On most measures of government performance, Conservative party voters generally approve of the government and its positions and opposition party supporters generally disapprove.

The good news for the government is that people who follow foreign affairs the closest are the most supportive. That suggests that as Canadians learn more, the government's ratings may approve.

There is no doubt in Canadians minds that Canada's foreign policy has taken a major turn. However, for most Canadians, it's a turn for the worse. While some Canadians see positive changes such as a more decisive leadership style, most Canadians see the changes as becoming too aligned with the Bush administration and lacking accountability.

While Canadians note a change in foreign policy most do not attribute this to minority status. Among the one-third who do perceive a difference, generally cite differences related to the change in government rather than the status of the government.

Looking at the Prime Minister, Canadians are divided as to whether he has been competent on foreign policy, but more believe he is behaving politically than think he has been statesman-like.

Turning to issues, this year's CDFAI conference poll shows that not all issues are equal when it comes to public reaction.

Most issues reflect a basic foreign policy ideological paradigm that has a strong demographic foundation and is closely aligned with partisanship. There is a small-conservative point-of-view that involves a close relationship to the US, support for Israel and commitment to combat. Then there is a small-Liberal perspective that involves more distance from the US and Israel and a reluctance to embrace military deployments. Then there are issues that stand apart.

North Korea's nuclear test and Iran's nuclear program are outside the standard foreign policy frame. Whether it is because they are relatively low profile or because they are both nuclear weapon-related is unclear from this survey.

The evacuation of Canadians from Lebanon also cuts across the standard paradigm. Again, it is unclear why. It could be because of the emphasis on questions of competence, or because of the Citizenship issue, or some other reason.

Finally, Quebec's expanded role on the international is completely outside the box and is dominated by language rather than any other consideration.

On the issues within the core foreign policy paradigm, the public is at best divided on the Conservatives with slightly more disapproval than approval. On the other issues many people are uncertain, but those who are sure of their views tend to approve of government action.

One of the government's biggest challenges is its relationship with the US. Canadians believe the new government is much closer to the Americans on foreign policy than the Liberal government. For half the public, the government is now too close to the US. In fact more than half agree that when it comes to foreign policy, the Conservative government just does whatever the Americans want them to do.

The other major challenge is Afghanistan. The Afghanistan mission bridges across the Liberal and Conservative governments, and perhaps as a result, support for mission is much broader than support for the government.

A majority of Canadians believe Canada should be ready to commit troops to combat even if no Canadian lives or interests are at stake. A majority of Canadians support sending troops to Afghanistan. And a majority of Canadians believes the Canadian military is providing critical assistance. However, support for the mission and believe the Canadians in Afghanistan are making a difference has dropped since June

The Canadian troops in Afghanistan are suffering significant casualties, more casualties than at any time since Korea. What is the impact of those casualties on Canadian willingness to commit troops generally? A majority of Canadians say they feel for the soldiers and their families but still believe Canada must be ready to commit troops when necessary. However, in Quebec, that number drops below 50%. The key group in Quebec are those who say I have been willing to commit troops, but the more Canadians I see killed, the more I question we should ever send Canadians to fight wars.

Francophones emerged as a critical audience in this study. They are frequently one of the toughest audiences for the government on a wide variety of issues. The government also has challenges with women who are slow to rally to the government and quick to oppose. Younger Canadians and lower income groups are also problem segments for the government.

But does it all really matter? For all the media attention foreign affairs receive, just 10% of all top of mind issues relate to foreign affairs. Three out of four Canadians agree there a lot of other issues that are more important to me than foreign policy when it comes to deciding which party to vote for. When we ask Canadians to choose among foreign affairs priorities, they choose security at home.

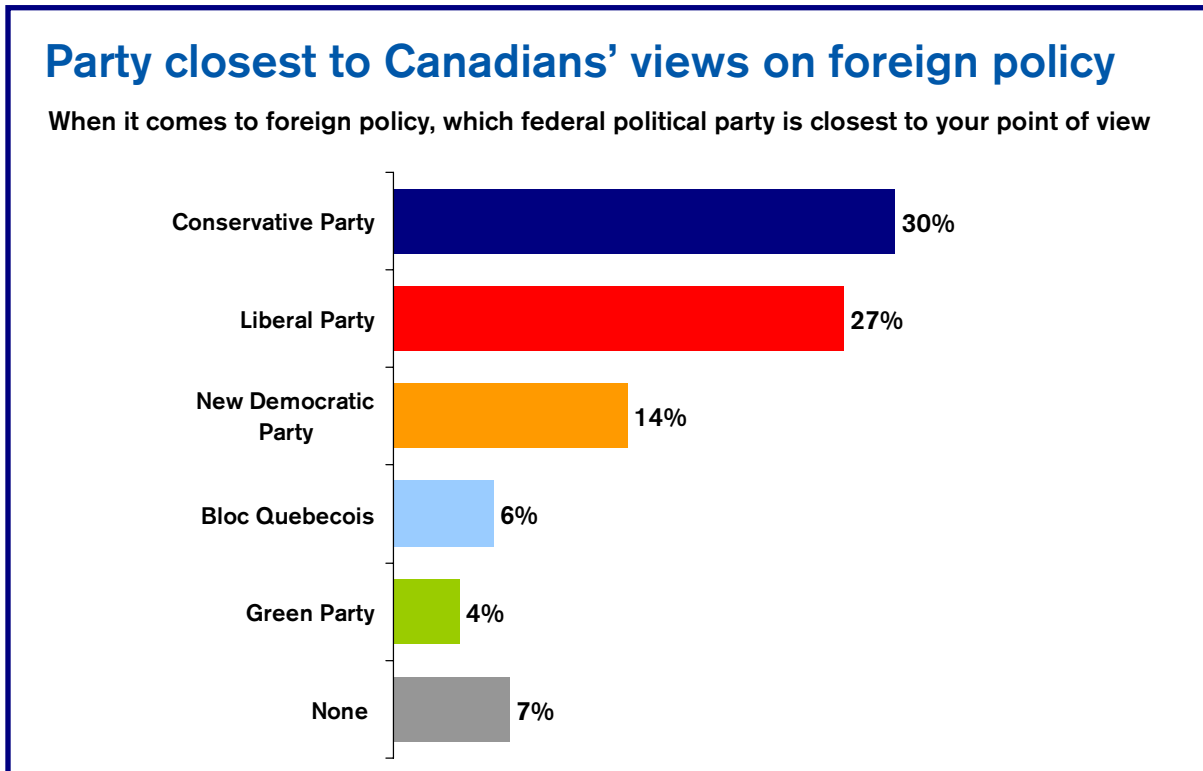
Canadians do pay attention to foreign policy. What happens on these files gets through to voters at home. But at this point foreign policy appears to be re-enforcing existing political allegiances rather than generating any independent change.

1. Key Segments for Analysing Public Opinion on Foreign Policy

1.1 Partisanship

Public opinion on any issue, including foreign policy, does not exist in a vacuum. It is anchored by pre-existing values and attitudes. Looking at the political dynamic of foreign affairs, the key attitudinal anchor to watch is partisan ship.

Two political variables determined our analysis. The first is the panellist’s 2006 election vote. For new panellists, this is based on their responses when they joined the panel. For older panellists, this is based on what they reported at the time of the last election. The second is a question from this survey: “when it comes to foreign policy, which federal political party is closest to your point of view?”



Overall, the Conservatives are the most preferred party of foreign policy, enjoying the support of 30% of the electorate. However, a combined majority (51%) prefer one of the four main opposition parties. Not surprisingly, results for this question are closely related to respondents 2006 vote as almost two-thirds (64%) of Canadians who voted for the Conservatives in the last election feel the Conservatives are the party that comes closest to their view on foreign policy. The same basic relationship holds for other parties, but to a lesser degree. The Liberals are most effective opposition party at winning their 2006

voters on best party on foreign policy (60%) but the NDP (51%) and Bloc (53%) are only holding onto about half their supporters on this question.

The Conservatives tend to be the choices of those 65 years or older, (39%), men (39%), those with the highest incomes (36%) and English speakers (34%). Strong support exists for the conservative foreign policy in Alberta (45%); in sharp contrast, Quebec (17%) is the least supportive.

Liberals are more likely to be English speaking (28%), from Ontario (31%) and have at least some university education (30%). The Liberals also do well among those with the highest incomes (32%).

The Bloc (26%) is the preferred choice of Francophones but by no means dominates among that group.

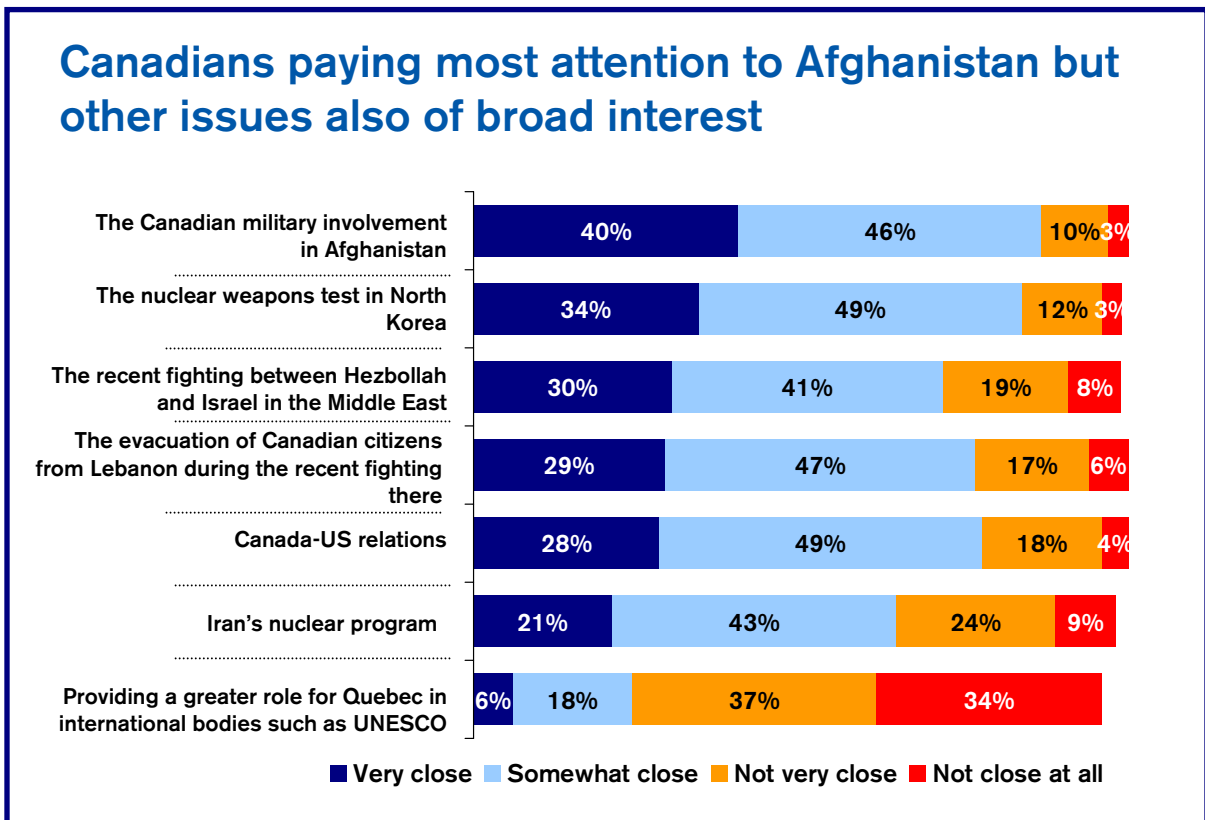
The NDP does best among those under 35 (22%) and worst (9%) among those 65 and older. In the Prairies (22%), B.C. (17%) and Ontario (15%), as well as among lower income groups (19% less than \$20,000, 16% between \$20,000 and \$40,000), the NDP also performs well.

1.2 Attentiveness

The 2004 CDFAI survey demonstrated that Canadians often differ in their views based on their level of issue engagement. People who follow foreign policy issues more closely are more likely to have stronger opinions on foreign policy. They may also act as bellwethers, indicating where the broader public may move if they learn more about the issues.

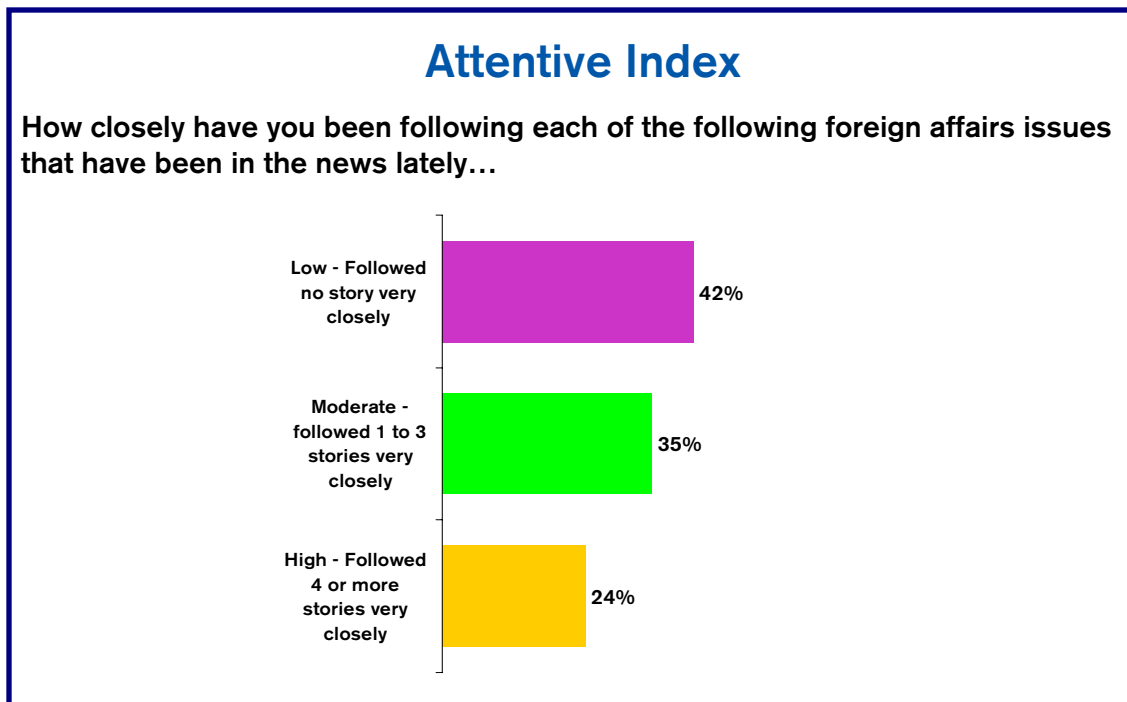
The 2006 CDFAI survey asked Canadians to report how closely they have been following a list of seven major foreign affairs topics:

- The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan
- The nuclear weapons test in North Korea
- The recent fighting between Hezbollah and Israel in the Middle East
- Iran’s nuclear program
- Canada US-relations
- The evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon
- Providing a greater role for Quebec in international bodies such as UNESCO



As might be expected, Canadians paid the most attention to the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan. However, Canadians were also broadly aware of most other foreign affairs stories tested. Only the increased role for Quebec had slipped by generally unnoticed.

To help distinguish between those who pay more or less attention, an Attentive Index was created where respondents scored one point for each story they followed very closely for a maximum score of 7 and a minimum score of 0.



Many of the Canadians (59%) who do not have a preferred party when it comes to foreign policy simply do not follow foreign policy. Among those who voted in the 2006 election, Conservatives (31%) were most likely to be in the most attentive group.

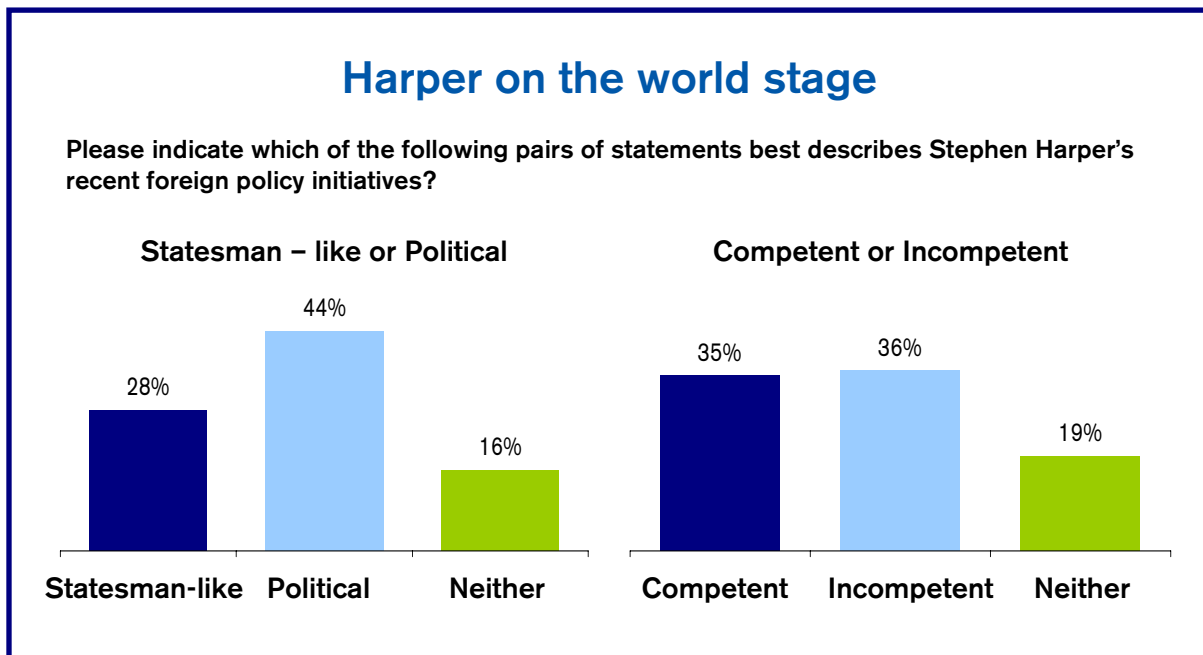
Among other key segments, New Canadians are particularly attentive with 32% in the highly attentive category, as are Canadians over 65 (34%), men (28%) and those with higher incomes (26%) or higher education (25%). Francophones (46%) are more likely than English-speaking Canadians (41%) to not follow any of the stories tested very closely.

2. Assessments of Government Performance on Foreign Policy

2.1 Harper on the World Stage

How do Canadians perceive the performance of their new Prime Minister as he deals with foreign policy and international issues? So far Harper's performance leaves Canadians divided with key differences based on partisanship, attentiveness to foreign affairs, language and ethnicity.

While roughly equal numbers believe Harper has presented himself competently rather than incompetently, they are inclined to see him as political (44%) rather than statesman-like (28%).



Not surprisingly, assessments of Harper are strongly coloured by partisanship. 2006 Conservative voters tend to feel Harper is a statesman (46%) and definitely feel he is competent (65%). Those who currently prefer the Conservatives on foreign policy are even stronger in their perceptions of Harper as a statesman (64%) and competent (87%). Partisans on foreign policy of opposition parties generally see Harper as political (62% Liberal, 56% BQ and 66% NDP) and incompetent (54% Liberal, 75% BQ and 65% NDP).

Among those who do not feel any party is best on foreign policy or do not know, Harper fares poorly. Those who have an opinion on the PM perceive him as incompetent (30%) rather than competent (18%), and partisan (36%) rather than statesman-like (16%). However, many of these unaligned voters (49% on statesman versus political and 52% on competence) remain unsure or neutral in these assessment, leaving the Prime Minister

with an opportunity to win these key swing voters over on his performance between now and the next election.

One very encouraging finding for the Prime Minister is his rating among more attentive Canadians. Harper performs best among those paying the closest attention. On the first comparison, he almost closes the gap with 38% saying he is statesman-like versus 44% saying he is acting politically. On competence, more of the most attentive Canadians say he is competent (44%) rather than incompetent (41%).

Harper also performs better on foreign policy among New and First Generation Canadians than among Established Canadians. More New and First Generation Canadians see the Prime Minister as competent (40% and 39%, respectively vs. 32% of Established Canadians) rather than incompetent and are also more likely to see him performing as a statesman (33% and 28%, respectively vs. 25% of Established Canadians).

Among the standard demographics, language is the big story. Harper's foreign policy performance is viewed much more negatively among Francophones in Quebec. Francophones in Quebec say Harper is incompetent (54%) rather than competent (22%) and political (56%) rather than statesman-like (20%). Anglophones in Quebec mirror the attitudes of English-speakers elsewhere in Canada. More English-speaking Canadians see Harper as competent (39%) rather than incompetent (31%) although they still tend to see him as political (41%) rather than statesman-like (30%).

Men are more likely to hold positive views of the Prime Minister while women tend to be more undecided. Older Canadians view Stephen Harper more favourably on foreign policy than younger Canadians. More educated Canadians are much more likely to see the PM as political, but are average on competence. Higher income Canadians give Harper more positive ratings than those with lower incomes.

2.2 Assessing Government Performance on International Issues

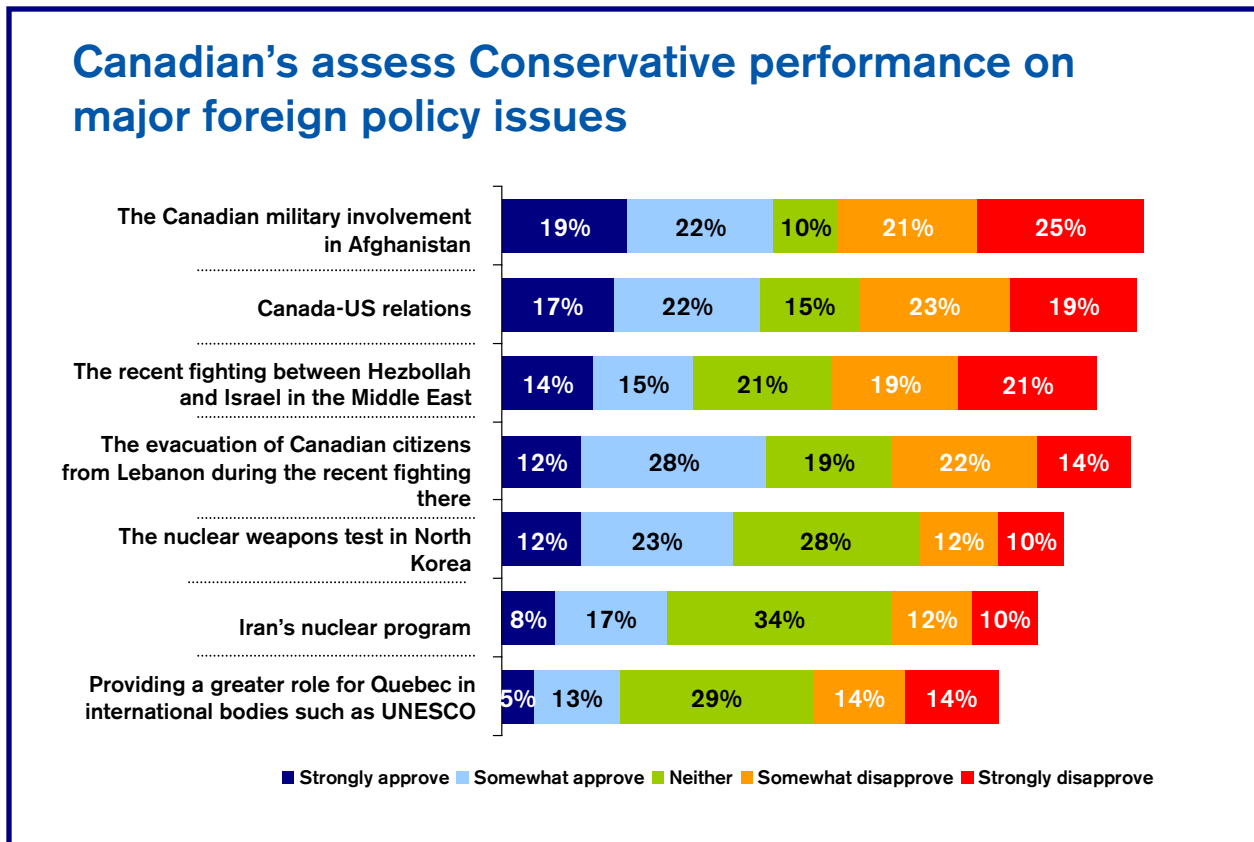
The CDFAI 2006 Conference Survey asked Canadians to assess the government's performance on seven issues:

- The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan
- The nuclear weapons test in North Korea
- The recent fighting between Hezbollah and Israel in the Middle East
- Iran's nuclear program
- Canada US-relations
- The evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon
- Providing a greater role for Quebec in international bodies such as UNESCO

There appear to be some clear patterns in how Canadians react to those issues. Afghanistan, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, and Canada US relations seem to evoke a common set of partisan and ideological responses with strong demographic anchors.

The North Korea weapons test and Iran's nuclear program leave people less certain. While Tories rally, other partisans are less negative, particularly in English Canada.

The evacuation of Canadians from Lebanon tends to break down partisanship evoking stronger approval than typical among opposition partisan and more criticism than is typical from Conservatives. Regional and linguistic lines dominate when it comes to Quebec's role in foreign affairs.



2.2.1 *'Ideological Issues'*

On the three most 'ideological' issues, Canadians were equally divided on the government's management of Canada-US relations, with equal intensity. On the government's management of the military mission in Afghanistan and the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, Canadians tended to disapprove. On Afghanistan, 46% disapprove and 41% approve of the government's performance, while on the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel Canadians were even more negative (40% disapproval and just 29% approval).

The patterns of approval and disapproval were stable across various segments. Conservative partisans consistently supported the government, although less so on the Mideast dispute (47% support among 2006 Conservatives) than on US relations (68% approval) and Afghanistan (63%). Opposition partisans tended to disapprove of the government, especially Bloc supporters with disapproval levels around 70%.

Consistent with the Bloc numbers, Francophones consistently disapproved of the government's performance on Afghanistan (56% disapproval), the Israel/Hezbollah conflict (55% disapproval) and Canada – US relations (50% disapproval).

The most attentive were most supportive of the government. Those who were closely watching 4 or more of these issues providing 45% approval on the Israel/Hezbollah conflict, 48% approval on Canada – US relations and 53% approval on the Afghan military mission.

Consistent with that, we find New Canadians, the most attentive ethnic group, are also more supportive of the government on these issues. New Canadians give the government a 37% approval on the Israel/Hezbollah conflict, 42% approval on Canada – US relations and 45% approval on the Afghan military mission.

Men, older Canadians and people with higher incomes are all more likely to approve of the government on these issues while women, younger Canadians and lower income Canadians are all more likely to disapprove of the government than women with most of the difference in undecided in this case.

2.2.2 *The Nuclear Issues*

The two nuclear issues – the North Korea weapons test and the Iran nuclear program – find many more Canadians uncertain about the government's performance. Among those with an opinion, 35% approve while only 22% disapprove of the government's response on North Korea and 25% approve with 22% disapproving on Iran.

Conservatives are generally supportive of the government, with 2006 Conservative voters providing 52% approval on North Korea and 40% approval on Iran. Most of the remaining Conservatives are neutral or do not know. The opposition is also generally

uncertain, although somewhere between 30 and 40% of the Bloc voters are ready to disapprove even on these issues.

Again, consistent with the Bloc voter attitudes, a plurality of Francophones disapprove of the government's performance on North Korea (30% disapprove vs. 22% approve) and on Iran (30% disapprove vs. 18% approval). A plurality of English-speaking Canadians approve of the government's job performance on both issues.

The most attentive strongly approve of the government's performance on these issues. Half of the most attentive (50%) approve of the government's job handling the North Korea weapon's test issue with only 23% disapproval. On Iran, 43% of the most attentive approve while just 24% disapprove.

Again, New Canadians are also more supportive than average with 41% approving of the government's response to North Korea and 31% approval on Iran.

On these lower profile issues, men were more likely than women to approve of the government while women were more likely not to have an opinion. We see a similar pattern on age where older Canadians are more likely to approve of the government and younger Canadians are more undecided.

As we saw on the more ideological issues, higher income Canadians are more likely to approve of the government while lower income Canadians are more likely to disapprove.

2.2.3 The Lebanon evacuation

On the Lebanon evacuation, Canadians leaned towards approval (40% approve – 36% disapprove).

This issue gave the Conservatives their greatest problem with their own base: 30% of 2006 Conservative voters disapproved while 51% approved. Ironically, this issue gave the Conservative their highest ratings with opposition partisans including 35% approval among Liberals and New Democrats and 29% among Bloc voters. However, Bloc voters still highly disapproved of Conservative policy in Lebanon (45%).

Given the Bloc reaction, it is not surprising to see a plurality of Francophones disapprove of the government's performance on this issue (33% approve, 41% disapprove). Meanwhile, 41% of English-speaking Canadians approve of the government's performance on the Lebanon evacuation while 35% disapprove.

The most attentive Canadians were also tough on the Conservative government on this issue. While 45% of the most attentive approve of the government's performance, almost as many (42%) disapprove.

New Canadians broke from attentive Canadians on this issue with 42% approval and only 33% disapproval.

On the other demographics, another key Tory support base was upset over this issue. While younger Canadians tended to approve of the government's performance on the evacuation, older Canadians are divided with equal numbers approving and disapproving of the government. There was absolutely no gender gap on this issue and little variance based on income.

2.2.4 An expanded international role for Quebec

Finally, few Canadians have a firm view on the government's policy of an expanded international role for Quebec; those who have a view are more likely to disapprove (28%) than approve (18%). Like Lebanon, this issue breaks the regular patterns with language emerging as the key dividing line.

The expanded international role for Quebec is the one issue where the government secures a plurality of support from 2006 Bloc voters (43% approval vs. 22% disapproval). However, while most Conservatives have no view on the issue, those who do are divided with 21% approving and 19% disapproving. Liberals disapprove by a 2:1 ratio.

As might be expected, a plurality of Francophones approve of the government's Quebec initiative (37% approve, 21% disapprove) while English-speaking Canadians tend to disapprove (13% approve, 29% disapprove).

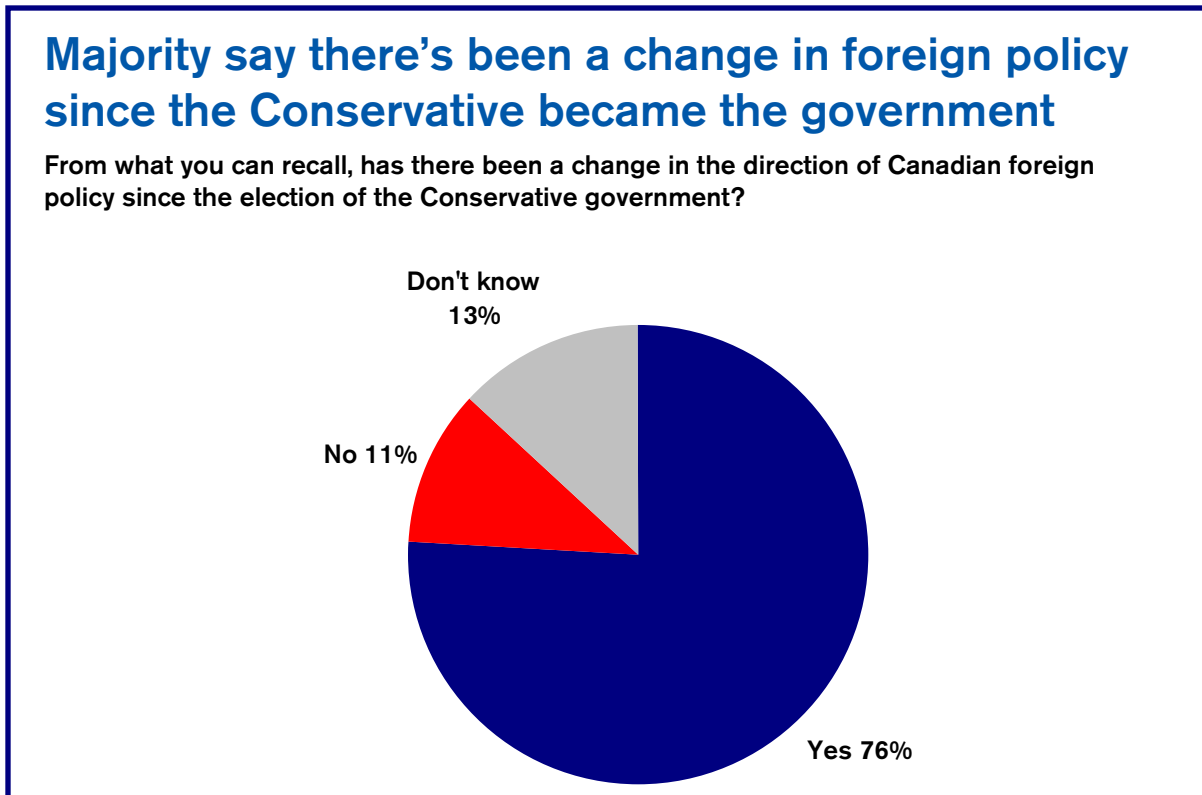
Attentive Canadians are sceptical on this issue, with 25% approval and 31% disapproval. Similarly, even New Canadians slightly disapprove (21% approve, 25% disapprove).

As we have seen in other lower profile issues, men are more likely to approve of the government while women are more likely to have no opinion. The oldest and highest income Canadians are most opposed to this policy.

3. Is Foreign Policy Changing and, if so, for Better or Worse?

3.1 Times are changing

Three out of four (76%) Canadians believe foreign policy has changed with the election of the Conservative government and there is a consistent pattern of more Canadians feeling things are worse rather than better as a result of those changes.



The most attentive Canadians (92%) are more likely than others to feel there has been a change in foreign policy with the election of the Conservative minority government. Men are also more likely than women to feel there has been a change (84% vs. 69%). Those with at least some university are also more likely (81%) to say there has been a change.

Among those who perceive a change in foreign policy, the mentions included being pro-Bush, or siding with Bush, having strong US ties, having more aggressive, decisive foreign policy and lack of accountability on Afghanistan.

Comments about the change in foreign policy that has resulted in being more pro-Bush include: (I assume you do not want to edit these responses for grammar and spelling?)

“Harper seems to be sitting in Bush’s back pocket and seems to agree with everything he does”

“very pro George Bush”

“much more in line with George Bush's policies”.

Strong US ties comments include:

“more warm to US policies”

“better cooperation with the USA”

“much better relations with our U.S. neighbours and overseas countries. And we seem to have a coherent policy.”

Comments on a more aggressive, decisive foreign policy included:

“stronger and more decisive”

“more pro active. More ready to get involved in the trouble spots in our world”.

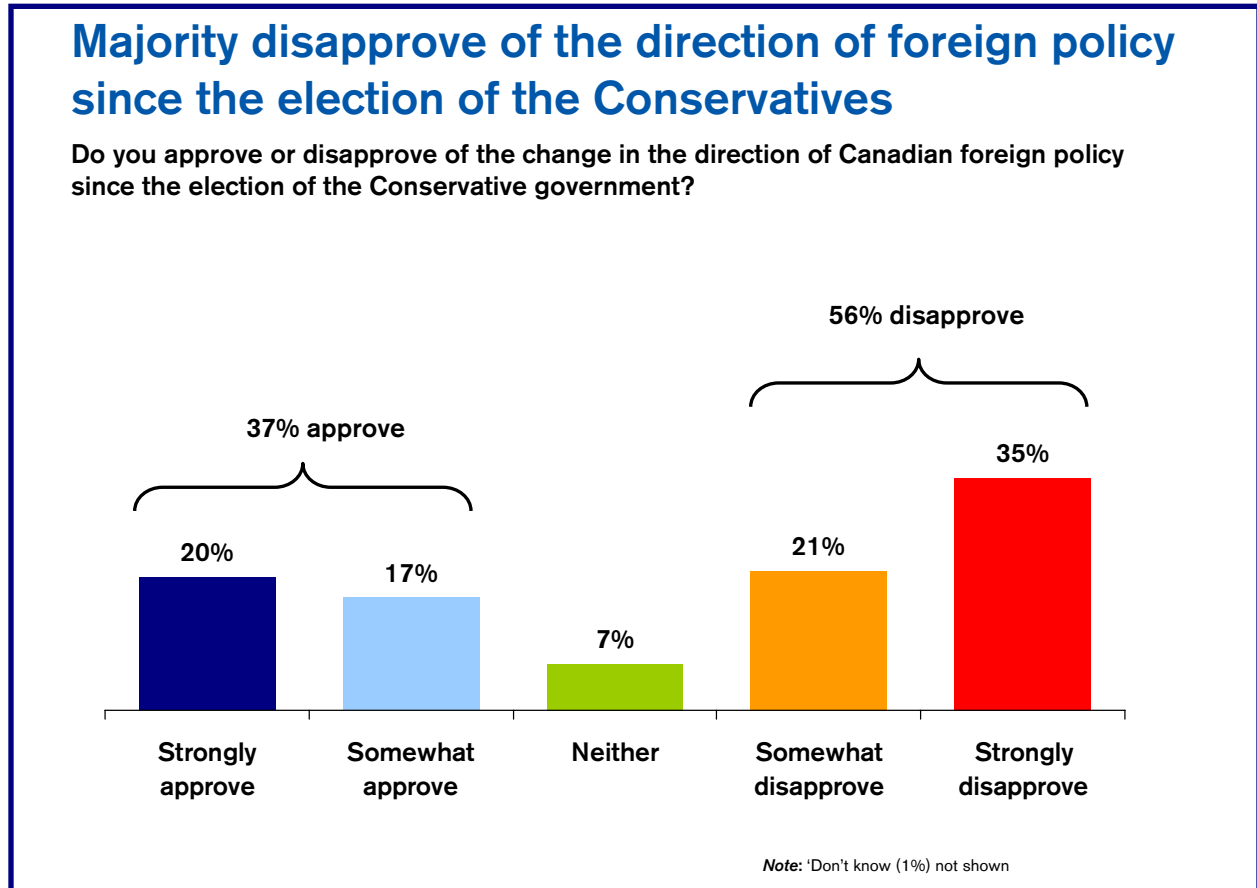
Examples of comments of lack of accountability on Afghanistan include:

“Harper unilaterally committed us to another two years in a shooting war which is un-winable and our armed forces are ill equipped to fight”

“it is different - like Afghanistan war he want to continue without the consent of people”.

3.2 Conservative Change: Not making new friends

When it comes to foreign policy, the Conservatives are not making many new friends. A majority of Canadians (56%) disapprove of the changes they are seeing from the Conservatives while just 37% approve. However, approval and disapproval tends to align strongly with which party people voted for in the last election.



Canadians who voted for the Conservatives last election are more likely than others to approve of the changes in foreign policy that have been made by the Conservative government (70% approve). One-in-five who voted for the Conservatives do not approve of these changes (21% disapprove). NDP voters are the most likely to disapprove of the Conservative's changes (82% disapprove), followed by Bloc voters (72% disapprove) and then Liberal voters (69% disapprove). Just under one-in-five Liberal voters approve of the changes (17% approve).

There is very strong disapproval (68%) of the government's changes among Francophones.

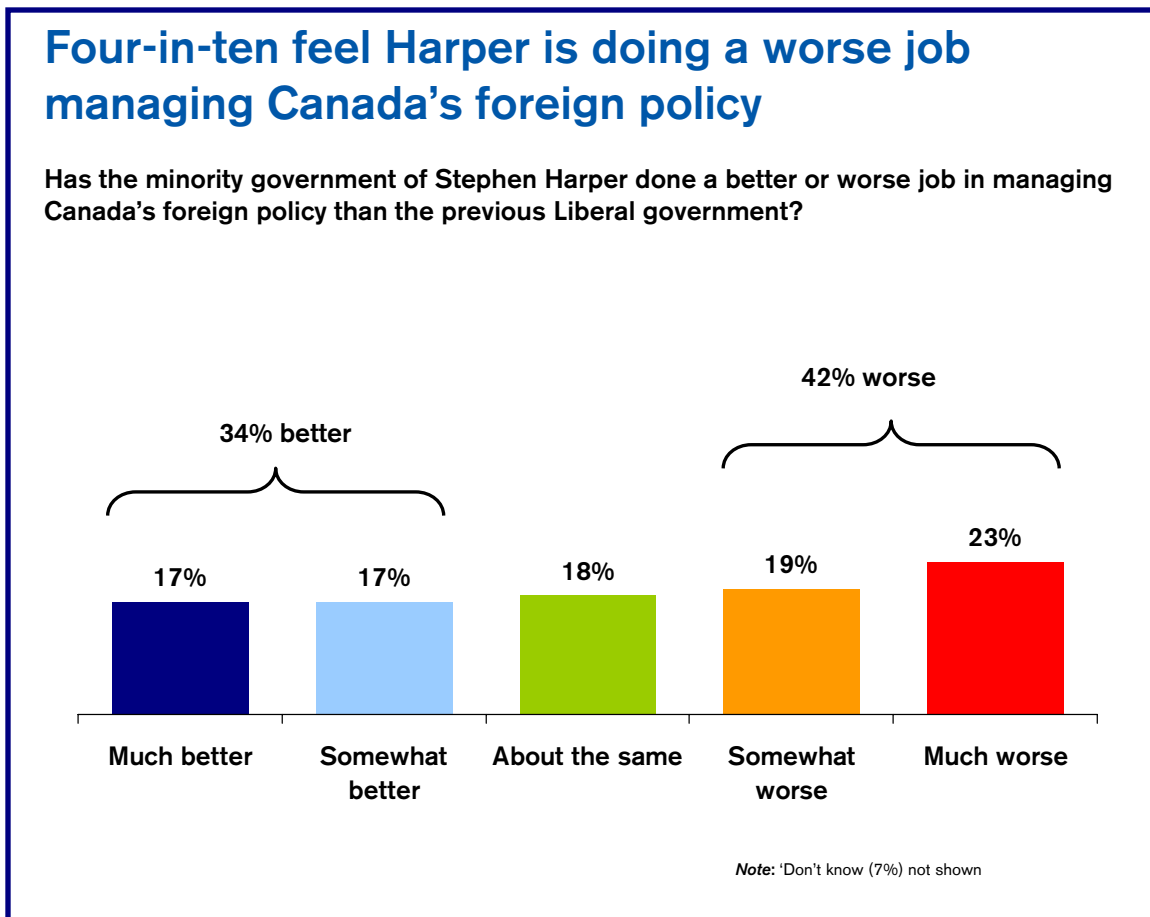
Canadians who are very attentive to foreign policy issues in the news are split in their approval of the changes the Conservative government has made (46% approve – 50%

disapprove). Those who are not very attentive are more likely to disapprove of the changes (58% disapprove).

Women are much more likely than men to disapprove of the changes the Conservatives have made to foreign policy (65% vs. 47%). Quebeckers (65% disapprove) are more likely to disapprove than Canadians in other provinces. Albertans are the most likely to approve (52% approve) of the government's policy changes.

3.3 Comparing Administrations

Consistent with the change result, a plurality of Canadians feel the minority government of Stephen Harper is doing a worse job than the last Liberal government managing Canada's foreign policy (42% worse – 34% better).



Partisanship is a key factor in Canadians opinion on the Harper government's foreign policy performance. Canadians who voted for the Conservative in 2006 (64% better) are significantly more likely than voters of other parties to feel that Harper's government has done a better job managing foreign policy than the previous Liberal government. Among Liberal (53% worse) and Bloc (54% worse) voters, a majority feel that foreign policy is worse under Harper than the Liberals. Almost two-thirds of NDP voters (63%) feel that

foreign policy is worse. Those who have no preferred party on foreign policy are more likely to say worse (34%) than better (15%).

Language is also a key divider on the opinion of Harper's foreign policy, as French speaking Canadians are more likely to feel the foreign policy has gotten worse than English speaking Canadians (53% vs. 39%). Given that, it is not surprising that the Canadians who live in Quebec are the most negative about Harper's foreign policy with a majority (52%) saying that Canadian foreign policy is worse under Harper's minority government than it was under the previous Liberal government. Harper receives the most support from residents of Alberta, where a majority say foreign policy has gotten better (52%). Residents of the Atlantic Provinces, the prairies and BC are split in their opinion, while Ontarians lean negative.

Canadians who are paying close attention to foreign policy issues are more positive in their assessments of the Harper government with 44% saying foreign policy has gotten better under Harper, while 46% say it has gotten worse.

Men are far more likely than women to feel that foreign policy is better under Harper than the previous Liberal government (41% vs. 25%).

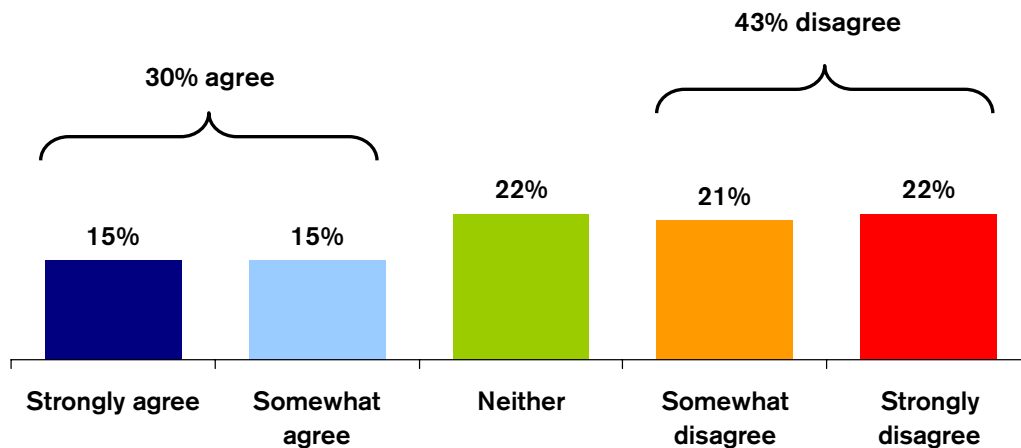
3.4 Impact of Change on Canada's Security

One of the key areas of focus for the Conservatives has been national security. Does the public feel the government has made progress on Canada's security?

Generally speaking, Canadians are unimpressed. Most people do not believe the Conservatives have a better handle on our security challenges than the Liberals, and most people feel Canada's security has either been unaffected by the change in government or is actually worse. Just 30% agree the Conservative government understands the security threats that Canada now faces better than the Liberals did, while 43% disagree.

Four-in-ten disagree that Conservatives understand security threats better than the Liberals did

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Stephen Harper and the Conservative government understand the security threats that Canada now faces better than the Liberal government did.

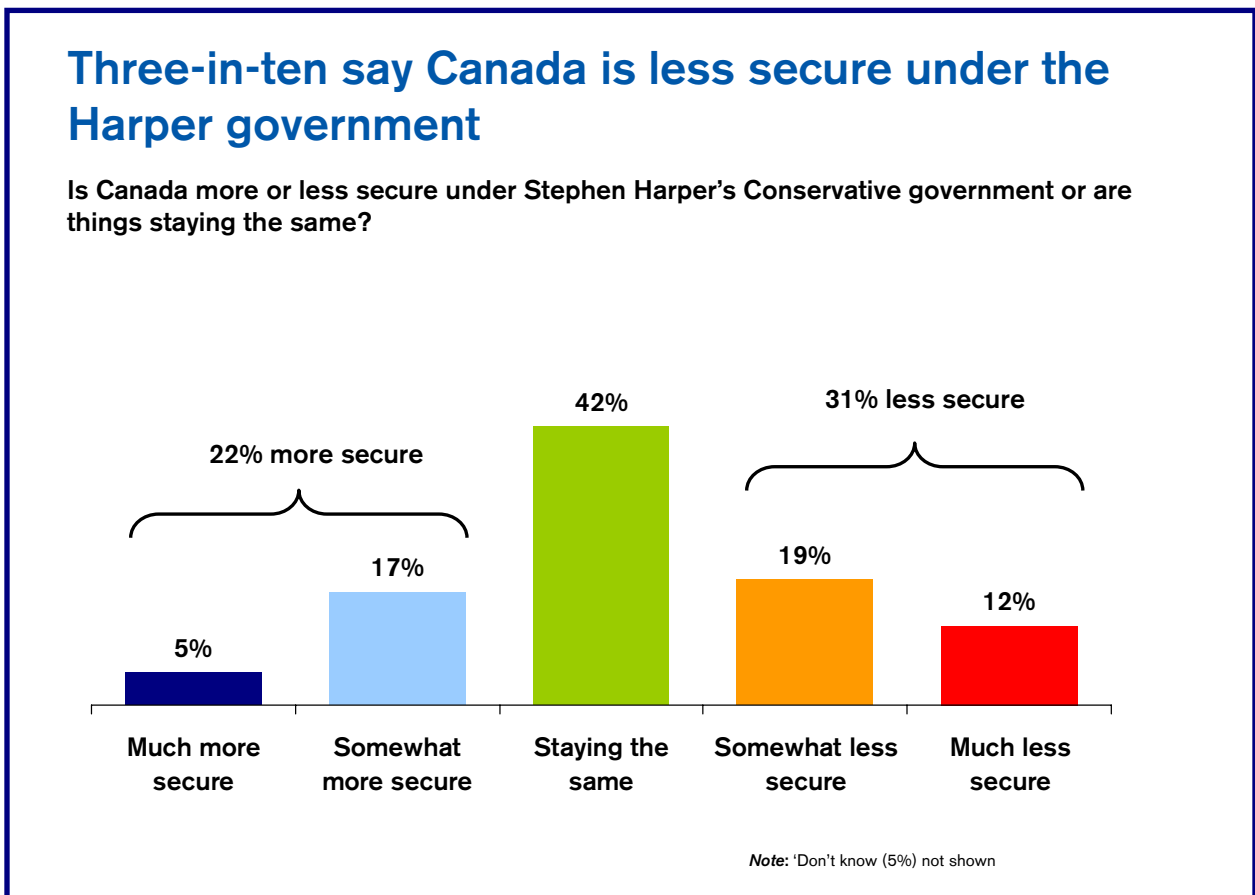


Note: 'Don't know' (4%) not shown

Partisanship is a key driver of views on this question. Two out of three 2006 Conservative voters (65%) agree the Conservatives understand security threats better than the Liberals did. Interestingly, New Democratic voters are more likely to strongly disagree (38%) than Liberals (29%).

Those paying the most attention to foreign policy issues in the news are more likely to agree that the Conservatives understand the security threats that Canada faces better than the Liberal government did. Canadians who do not follow foreign policy in the news as closely are more likely to disagree that the Conservatives understand the security threats to Canada better than the Liberals. French-speaking Canadians are more likely to disagree that the Conservatives understand the security threats that Canada better than English speaking Canadians.

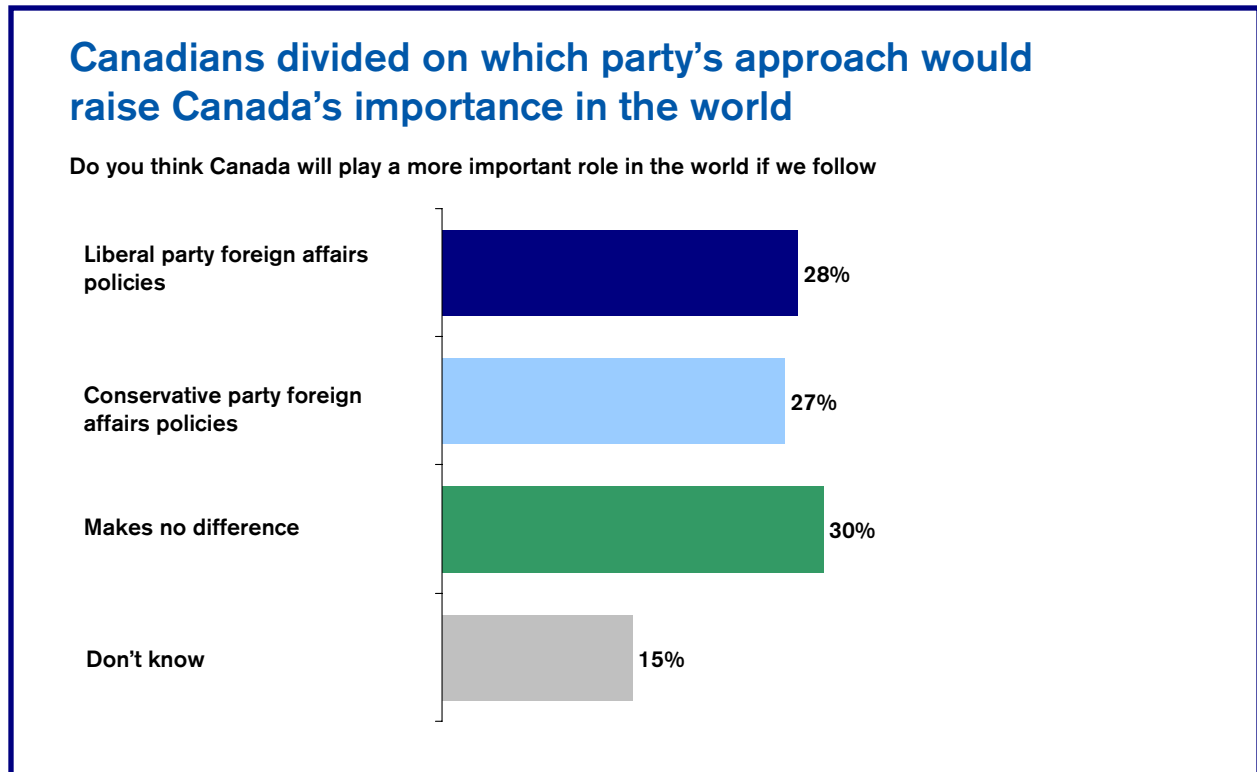
Despite the Conservative image (at least self image) as strong on defence and security, most Canadians do not think Canada is any safer. In fact, while 42% have perceived no change, only 22% believe Canada is more secure under the Conservatives while 31% believe the country is less secure.



Conservative voters (47%) are more likely than voters of other parties to feel that Canada is more secure. Canadians who are less attentive to foreign policy issues are more likely to feel that Canada's level of security has stayed the same under the Conservative government, while the most attentive are far more likely than average to say Canada is safer (34%). French-speaking Canadians are also more likely than English speaking Canadians to feel that Canada's security level has stayed the same (48%) or become worse (36%).

3.5 Impact of party policy on the importance of Canada's role in world

When asked whether Canada will play a more important role in the world if we follow Liberal or Conservative policies, Canadians are divided: 28% state the Liberals, 27% respond the Conservatives and 30% say it makes no difference. Again, partisanship is a main factor among those supporting Liberal party foreign affairs and Conservative party foreign affairs. Bloc and NDP voters are more likely to say that it makes no difference.



French-speaking Canadians are more likely than English-speaking Canadians to feel that the party makes no difference (36% French, 28% English), or to say that with Liberal party foreign affairs policies Canada will play a more important role in the world (33%).

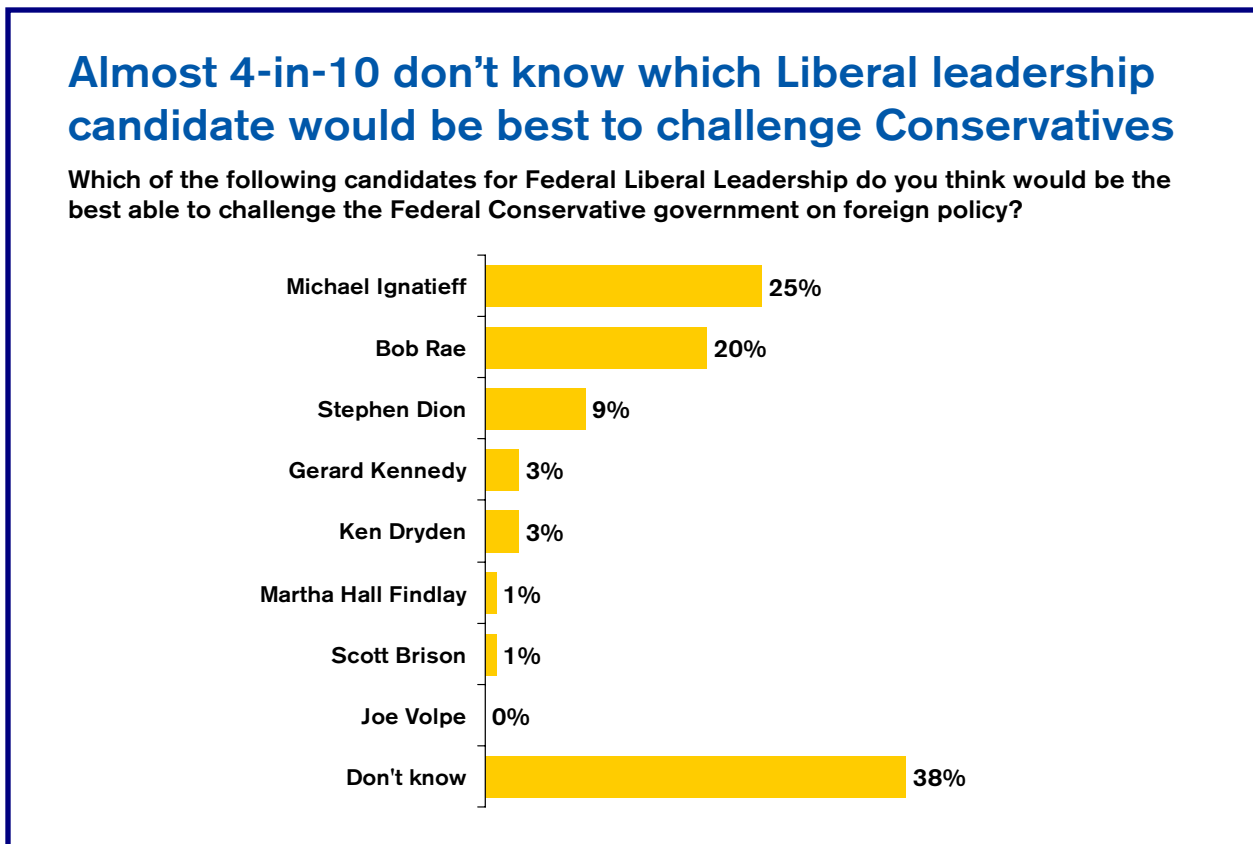
Canadians who pay attention to foreign affairs issues in the news are more likely to feel that Canada would play a more important role under Conservative party policies (41%) than Liberal policies (33%). In contrast, Canadians who do not pay attention are more likely to say that it makes no difference in Canada's international role (36%).

Men believe Conservative policies will work best (35%) while women think Liberal policies (30%) are more likely to help Canada play a more important role in the world.

Canadians who live in the Atlantic Provinces (38%) and Quebec (36%) are more likely than others to say it doesn't make a difference in the party policies.

3.6 Challenging the Conservatives: The Liberal Leadership

Which Liberal would be best able to challenge the Conservatives on foreign policy? Two potential leaders stand out. Just one in four pick international scholar and member of various prominent international commissions Michael Ignatieff (25%) while one in five say former Rhodes Scholar and international federalism expert Bob Rae (20%). Former Environment Minister Stephen Dion does the best among the other contenders with almost one in ten support (9%).

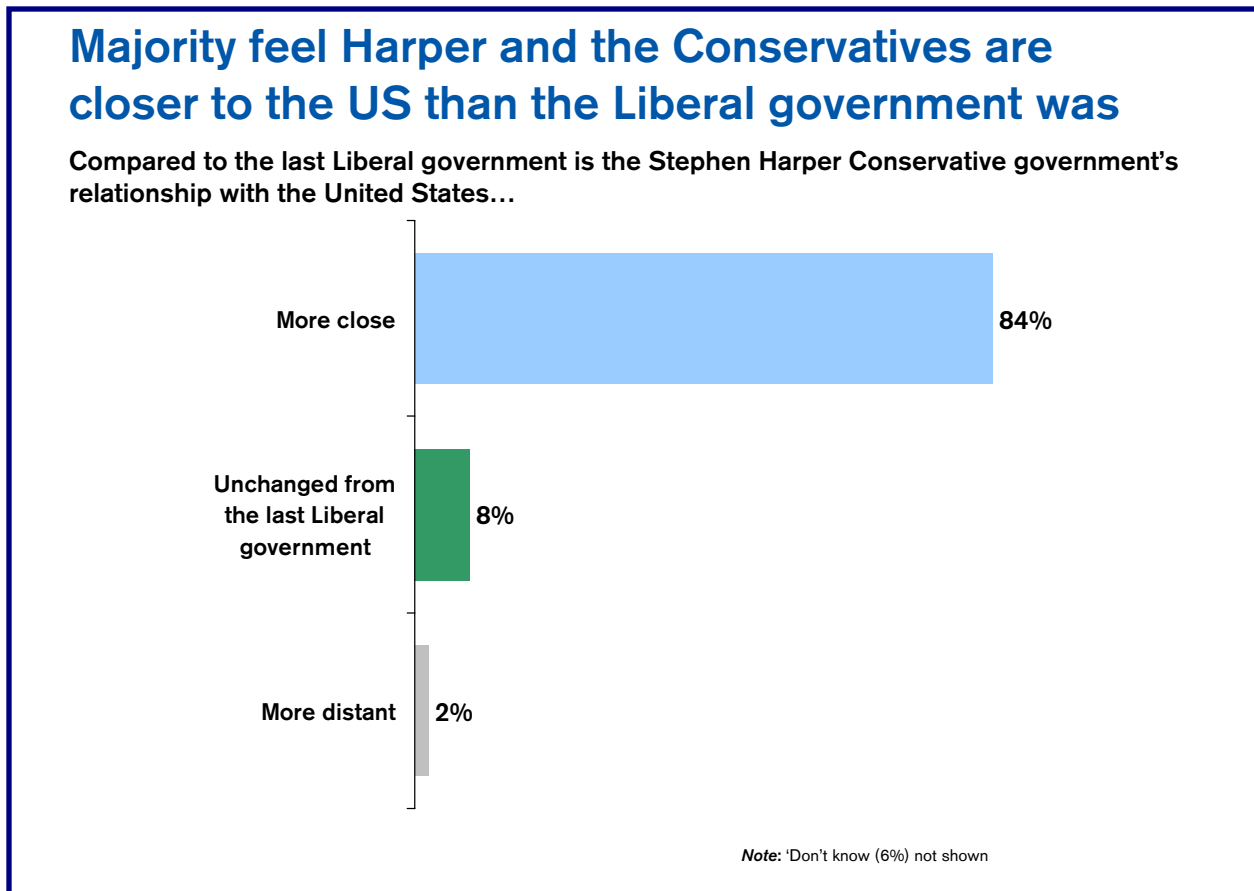


Ignatieff receives the most support in Quebec (36%), followed by Rae (14%), while Rae receives the most support in Ontario (28%) followed by Ignatieff (23%). Among Canadians who voted for the Liberals in the last election, Ignatieff is only slightly ahead of Rae (2 points). Past Conservatives voters overwhelmingly say they don't know which candidate would be the best to take on their party, but those Tories who do have an opinion choose Ignatieff. Bob Rae is seen as best by New Democrats while Bloc supporters prefer Ignatieff. Attentiveness has no impact on this question.

Not surprising given his support in Quebec, Michael Ignatieff is the favourite among French-speaking Canadians, while Bob Rae and Ignatieff are in a virtual tie among English-speaking Canadians. Women are much more likely than men to say they don't know which Liberal leadership contender would be the best to challenge the Conservatives.

4. Too Close for Comfort: The Conservatives and the U.S.

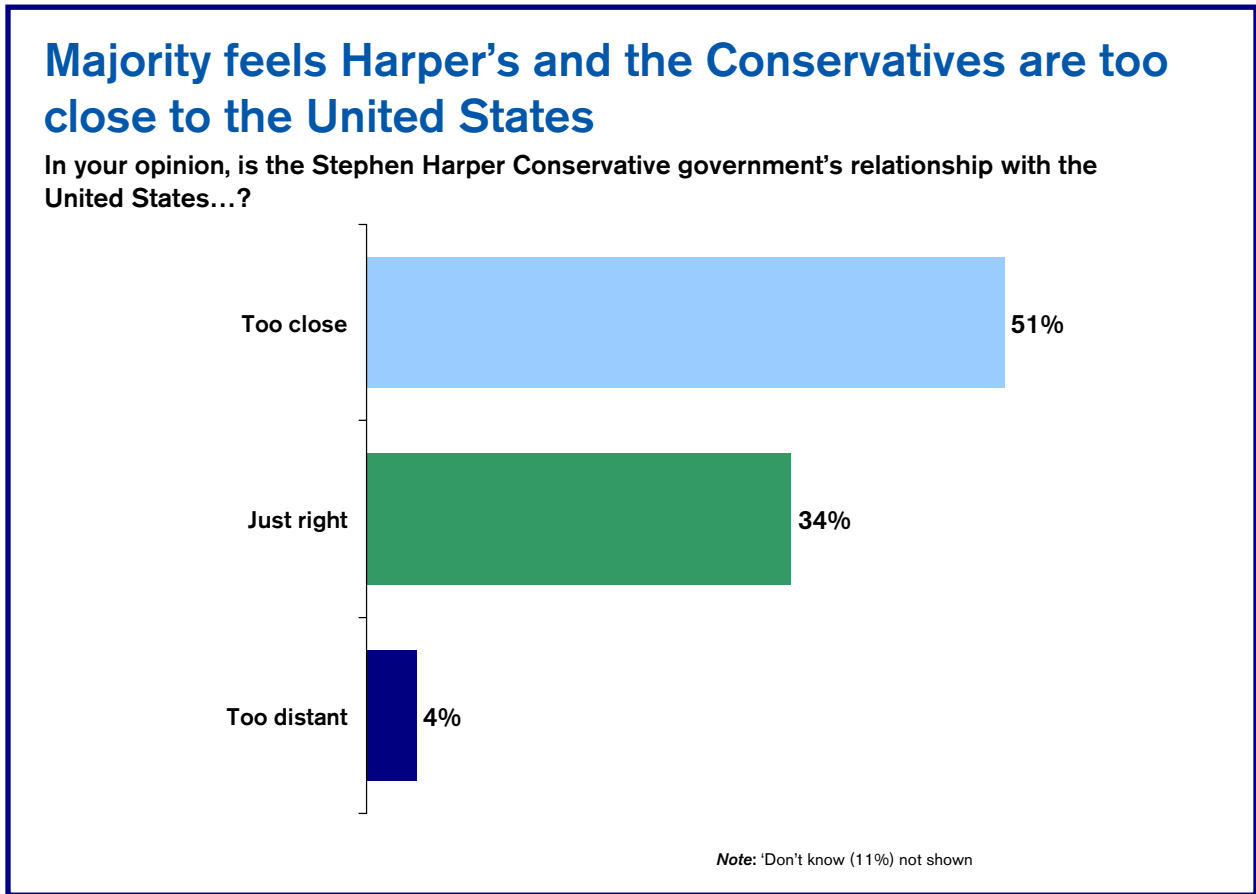
More than four out of five Canadians (84%) say the Stephen Harper Conservative government's relationship with the US is closer than that of the last Liberal government. Older Canadians are more likely than younger Canadians to feel that Harper's government is closer in its relationship to the United States than the last Liberal government. Unlike other views on foreign policy, partisanship did not have an impact on opinion.



While all Canadians regardless of partisanship acknowledge that the relationship between Harper's government and the United States is closer than the relationship between the last Liberal government and the United States, partisanship colours how close Canadians want Canada's relationship with the United States. It also affects the view of the Canadians government as a puppet for the Americans. While some Canadians were looking for a closer relationship, half (51%) say the relationship is too close. Just 4% say it needs to be closer.

Canadians who voted Conservative in the last election are more likely to feel that the closeness of the relationship with the US is just right (66%), while Liberal (17%), NDP (13%) and Bloc voters (19%) are much less likely to view it as such. French-speaking

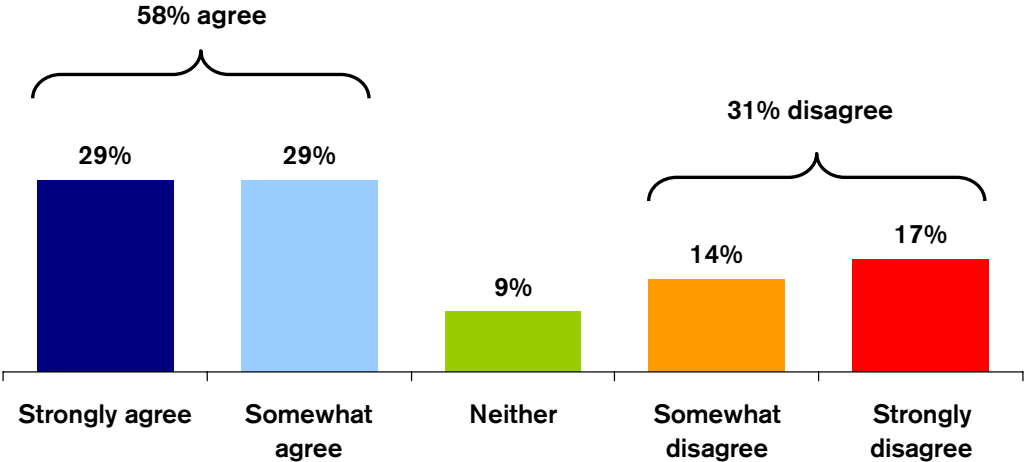
Canadians (61%) are more likely than English-speaking Canadians (48%) to feel that Canada's relationship is too close to the US.



Even further, a majority of 58% believe that “when it comes to foreign policy, the Conservative government just does whatever the Americans want them to do”. Just 31% disagree, although 17% disagree strongly. Conservatives voters defend the government's actions, and are more likely to disagree (54%) that the Conservative government just does what the Americans want them to do, while Liberals, NDP and Bloc voters believe that that is the case. Women (64%) as well as French-speaking Canadians (73%) are more likely to view the Conservatives as just doing what the Americans want them to do when it comes to foreign policy.

Majority feel on foreign policy the Conservatives do whatever the American want

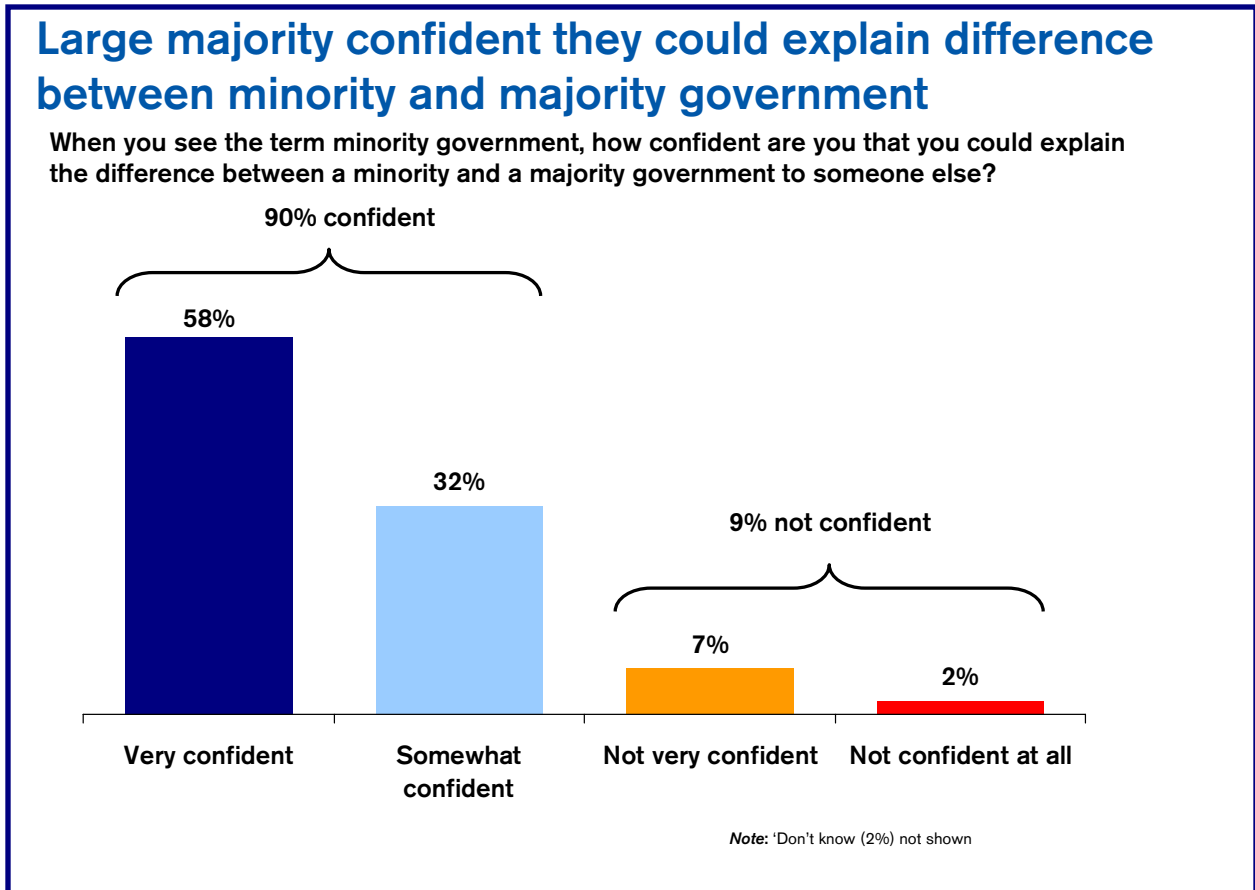
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
When it comes to foreign policy, the Conservative government just does whatever the Americans want them to do



Note: 'Don't know (2%) not shown

5. The Minor Impact of Minority Status on Foreign Policy

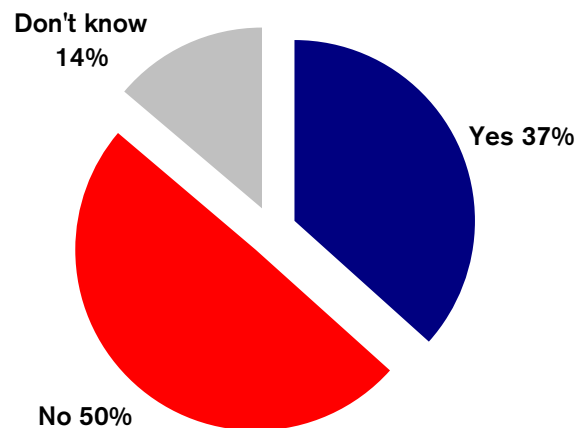
Our panellists feel comfortable talking about minority governments. Almost six out of ten (58%) feel very confident they can explain the difference between a majority and a minority government, while 32% are somewhat confident.



Just over a third (37%) say they have noticed a difference in how Canada conducts its foreign policy as a result of the minority status of the government. The more one pays attention to foreign policy issues in the news, the more likely they are to say they have noticed a difference in how Canada is conducting its foreign as a result of the minority status.

Half say they haven't notice any difference in foreign policy in a minority government

Have you noticed any difference in how Canada conducts its foreign policy now we have a minority government compared to when we have majority governments?



Among those who think there has been a change, the differences listed include siding with the United States, the government being less assertive, being more cautious; some stated the government is being more decisive and taking action. Others felt that many of the actions taken were for political reasons.

Some of the comments about siding with the United States were *“the Harper government is following U.S. foreign policies”* and *“Closer ties with US Sec of State”*. Comments on the government being less assertive and more cautious were *“We seem to be more tentative. It seems a lot of influence is exerted on foreign policy by opinion polls”*, *“more controlled or timid response”* and *“decisions are wishy-washy”*.

Comments on the government being more decisive and taking action included *“decisions are being made not wishy-washy hiding heads in sand”*, *“the government now takes clear principled positions and sticks to them”* and *“present govt is more decisive and sure of what they are doing”*. Comments on actions being taken for political reasons included *“how every move is politicized and second guessed”* or *“the Conservative Party has to be more careful about its acts, not to be too polarized or they me be have to face a vote of confidence.”*

Other comments included that the there was more debate, that the government was acting as if it had a majority, or that there was a greater communication with the public. Generally, the comments were varied and, like the other questions, they were influenced by the partisanship of the respondent.

6. The Importance of Foreign Policy as an Issue

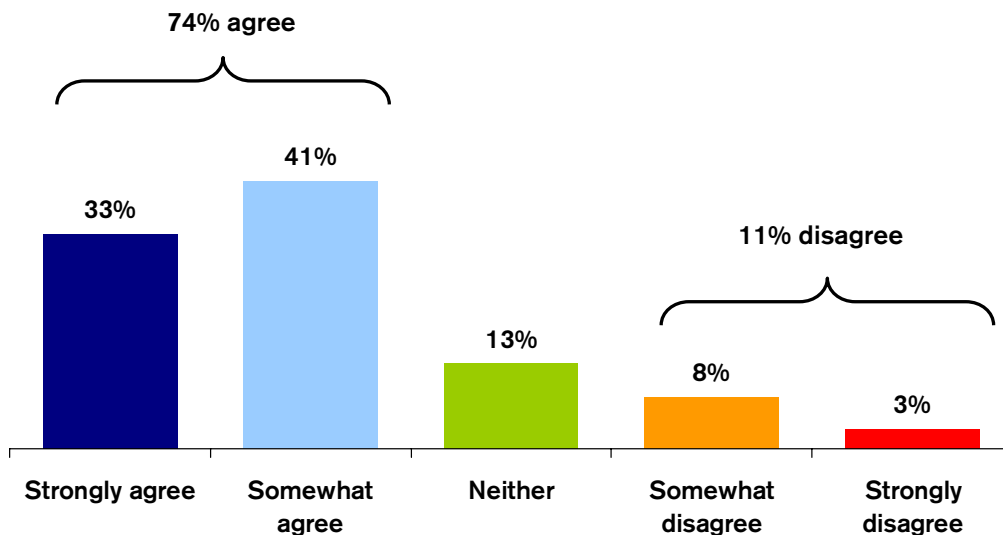
The importance of foreign policy seems to depend on how you pose the questions, but generally speaking it is not a top-tier issue to Canadians.

On one level, foreign policy is not particularly critical. For instance, when we ask our panellists to agree or disagree with the statement “there are a lot of other issues that are more important to me than foreign policy when it comes to deciding which political party to vote for,” we find 74% agree and just 11% disagree. Canadians who voted for the more ideological and single-issue based parties (the NDP and the Bloc) are more likely than Canadians who voted Tory in the last election to agree that there are more important voting issues than foreign policy. Those less attentive to foreign policy in the news are more likely than those who pay close attention to say that foreign policy matters when deciding how to vote.

Majority agree that there are other issues more important than foreign policy when deciding vote

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

There are a lot of other issues that are more important to me than foreign policy when it comes to deciding which political party to vote

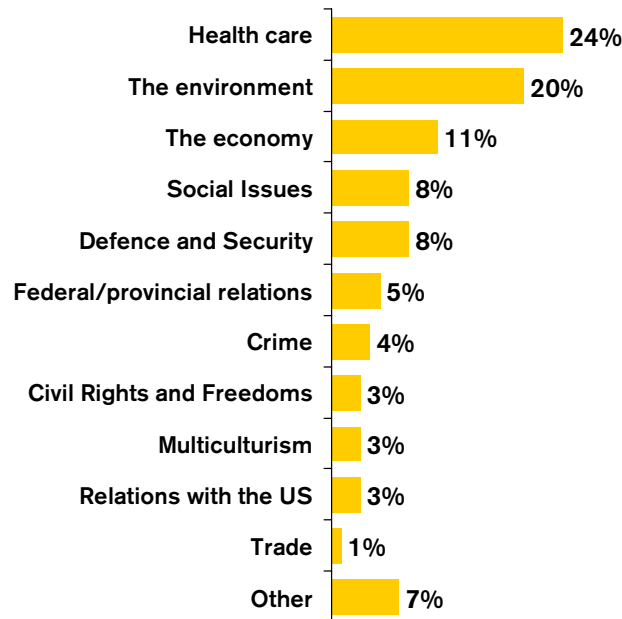


Note: 'Don't know (2%) not shown

When people were asked to choose the most important issue among a list of 11, 'trade', 'relations with the US', and 'Defence and Security' altogether add up to 12%, below the economy (11%), the environment (20%) and health (24%). Not surprisingly, Canadians who voted for the Green Party are more likely than others to say the environment is the most important issue, followed by voters who choose the Bloc. Health care is the most important issue to Liberal and Conservative voters. Even among Canadians following foreign policy issues closely in the news, the environment and health care are tied as the most important issue facing Canada. For Canadians who aren't paying as close attention to foreign policy in the news, health care is the most important issue. Foreign policy is not a make-or-break issue to Canadians.

Health care is the most important issue

What is the most important issue facing Canada today?

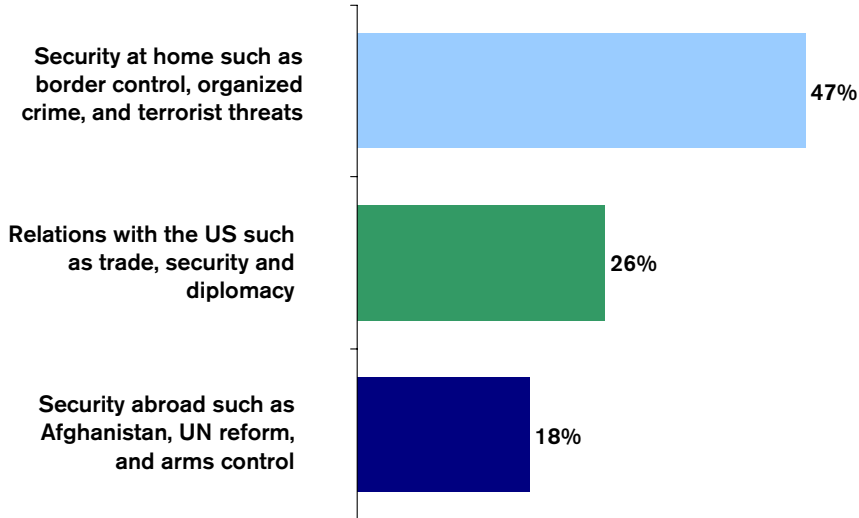


Note: 'Don't know (4%) not shown

When it comes to setting priorities on foreign policy for the government, the closer to home the better. Given a list of three choices, almost half (47%) of Canadians say security at home should be the top priority; just over a quarter (26%) say Canada-US relations and less than one- in five (18%) say security abroad. There are little differences among partisans or those who are attentive to foreign policy issues in the news, as all put security at home ahead of Canada-US relations and security abroad.

Almost half feel that security at home should be the priority for the federal government

Which of the following three policy areas do you think should be the most important priority for the federal government?

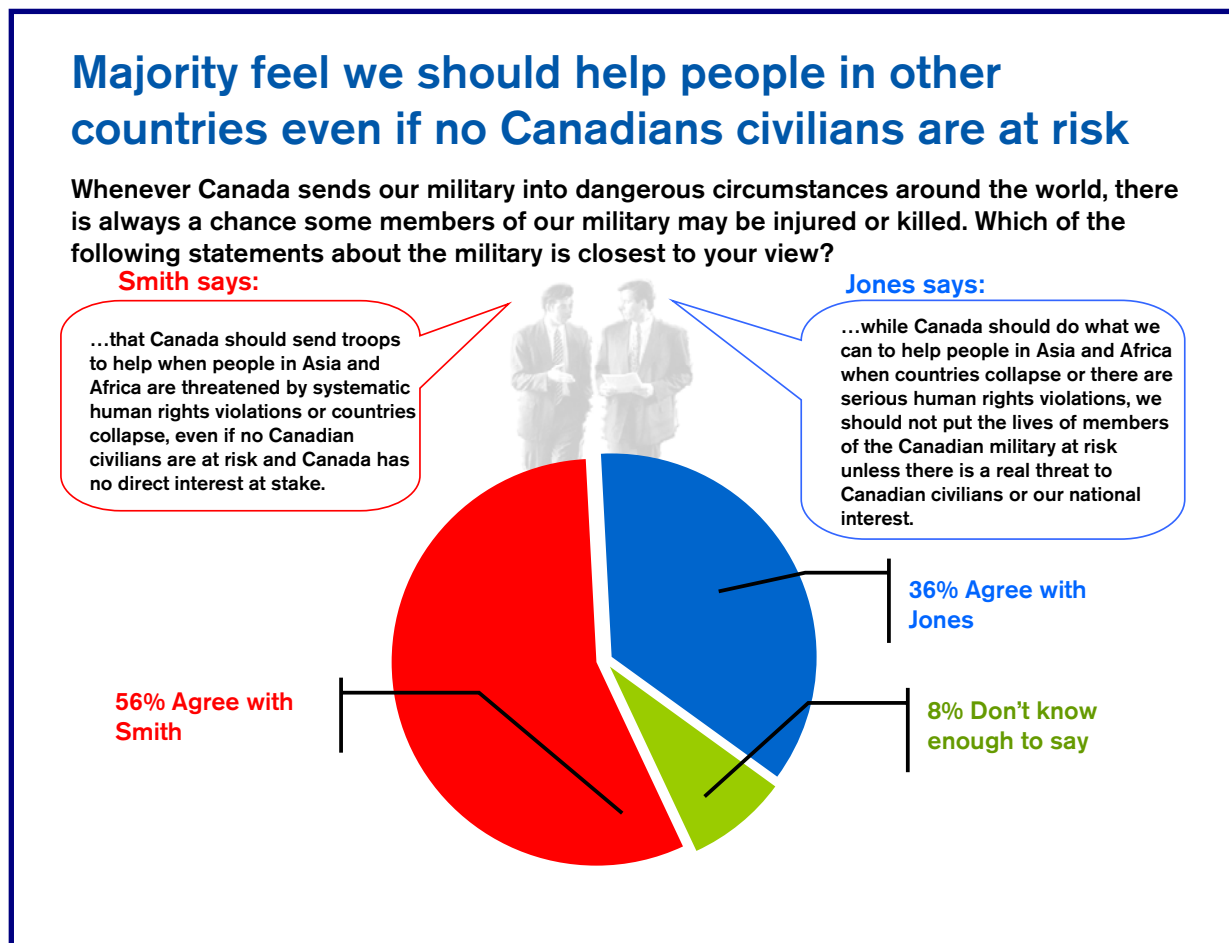


Note: 'Don't know' (8%) not shown

7. The Afghan Mission and Canadian Commitment to War Fighting

7.1 Willingness to commit the military

In theory, most Canadians are ready to put troops in harms way for the right reasons, even if Canada has no direct interest and no Canadians are at risk. More than half (56%) say we should send troops to help when people in Asia and Africa are threatened by systematic human rights violations or countries collapse, even if no Canadian civilians are at risk and Canada has no direct interest at stake. Just over a third (36%) say that while Canada should do what we can to help people in Asia and Africa when countries collapse or there are serious human rights violations, we should not put the lives of members of the Canadian military at risk unless there is a real threat to Canadian civilians or our national interest.



Canadians who voted for the Conservatives or the Liberals in the last election are more likely than NDP and Bloc voters to feel that we should send troops to help when people in Asia and Africa are threatened by systematic human rights violations. Bloc voters are more likely than others to feel that while we should do what we can, we should not put

the lives of members of the Canadian military at risk unless there is a real threat to Canadian civilians.

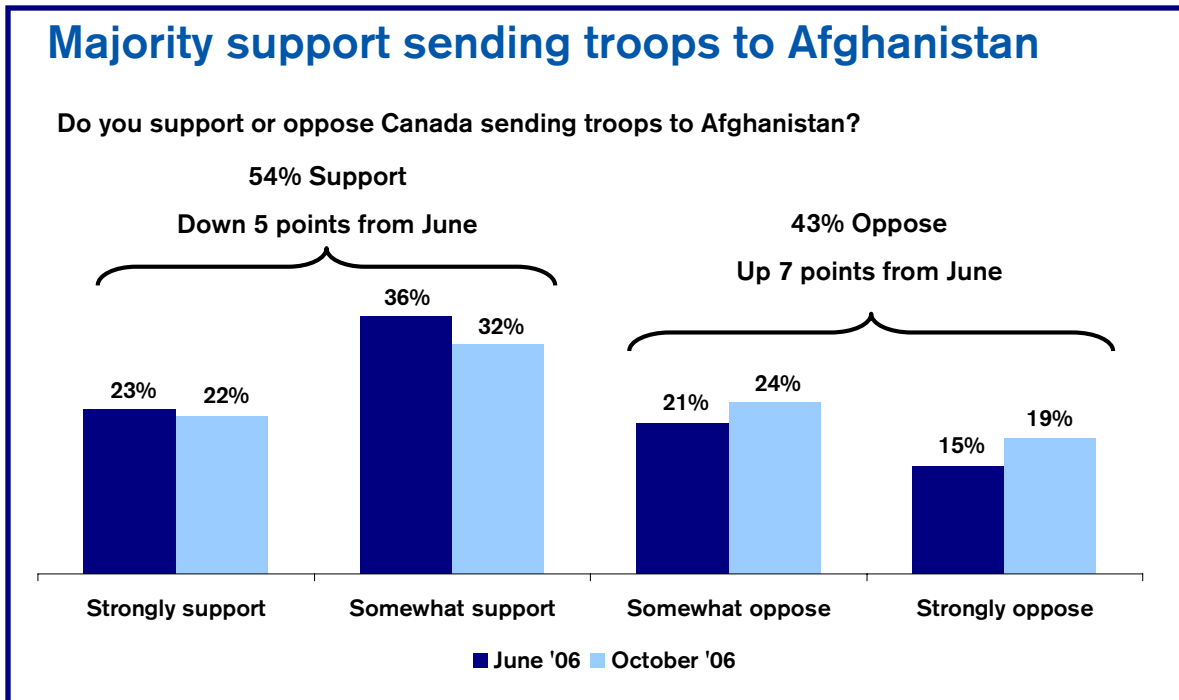
English speaking Canadians (57%) are slightly more likely than their French-speaking counterparts (53%) to believe that we should send troops to areas that are threatened by systematic human rights violations or threats of collapse, even if there is no direct Canadian interest at stake.

The more attentive are also more likely to feel that Canada should send troops when people are threatened by systematic human rights abuses or when countries collapse even if no Canadian civilians are at risk.

There is a distinct gender gap on this topic, with men (60%) more likely than women (52%) to say we should send troops to troubled areas, even if there is no direct threat to Canadian interests. Support for these types of Canadian military actions are stronger among those aged 35 to 44 (59%) and weakest among seniors (51%).

7.2 Support for sending troops to Afghanistan

Canadian commitment to troubled countries translates into practice. A majority of Canadians (54%) support sending troops to Afghanistan. However, over the summer opposition has grown from 36% in June to 43% opposed over the past few days. (I don't have the June numbers to proof)



There is a large partisan divide in support for sending the troops to Afghanistan. Canadians who voted Conservative in the last election are much more likely than others to support sending troops to Afghanistan (71%), while only 46% of those who voted Liberal support sending troops. Bloc voters are the least likely to support sending troops (24%).

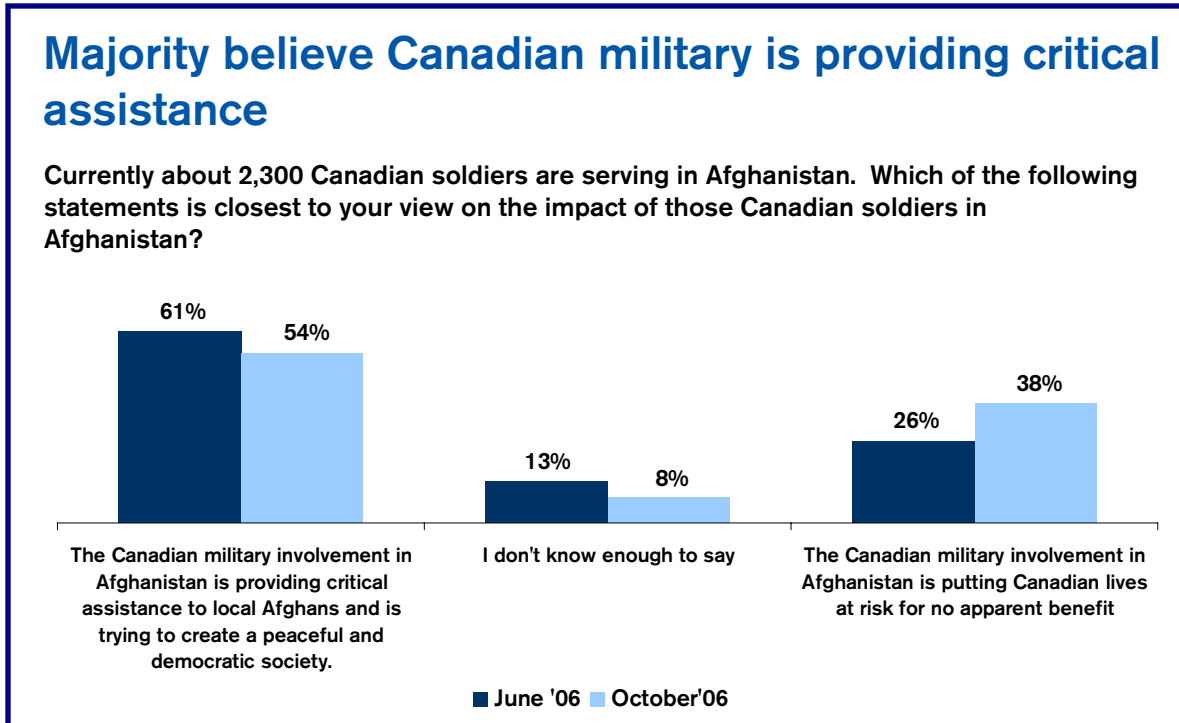
A clear linguistic divide exists on supporting Canadian troops in Afghanistan. Six-in-ten (59%) English-speaking Canadians support this action compared to just four-in-ten (38%) French-speaking Canadians.

Those who pay close attention to many foreign policy issues in the news are more likely to be supportive of sending troops.

There is, once again, a distinct gender split on this subject. Men are overwhelmingly supportive (support 63% versus oppose 35%), while women are more divided (support 46% versus oppose 50%). In general, support for Canadian action in Afghanistan increases with age, moving from a slim majority (51%) among young adults (aged 18 to 34) to close to two-thirds (61%) among seniors (aged 65+).

7.3 Impact of the Afghanistan Mission

One likely reason Canadians support sending troops that they feel their soldiers are making a difference. Just over half (54%) say Canada's military mission is making a real difference, while just over a third (38%) say Canadian lives are at risk for no real benefit.



Again, there is a significant increase in scepticism over the summer. The number who see no benefit has grown from 26% to 38%, pulling equally from 'don't know' and 'those who feel Canada is making a difference'.

Canadians who voted for the Conservatives (66%) are more likely than other to feel that Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan is providing critical assistance to local Afghans, while Liberals voters (45%) are more likely than NDP (34%) and Bloc (34%) voters to feel that way. Bloc and NDP voters are more likely to feel that the military's involvement in Afghanistan is putting Canadian lives at risk for no apparent benefit.

Those who pay close attention to several foreign policy issues in the news are more likely to feel the military's involvement is playing a crucial role.

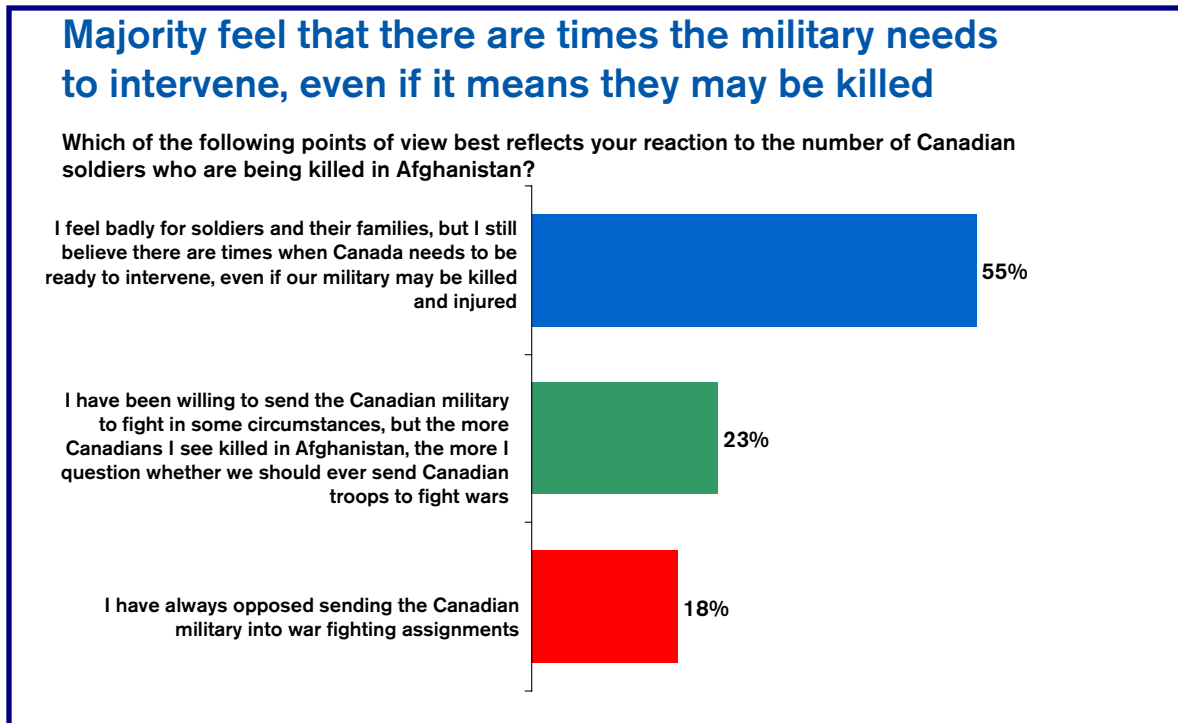
A linguistic divide also exists on this subject: Francophones (49%) are more likely to hold the view that the Afghan deployment is putting Canadian lives at risk for no apparent benefit (compared to 34% of English speaking Canadians). Albertans (66%) are the most likely to believe that Canadian soldiers are making a difference.

Men (62%) are far more likely than are women (47%) to say Canadian soldiers are making a difference in Afghanistan.

7.4 Impact of Afghanistan casualties on willingness to commit troops

Canada has experienced its most significant loss of life since Korea in the Afghanistan mission. Now that casualties are not just a possibility but a reality, what impact are they having on general willingness to commit the military to combat?

Only 18% of Canadians say they have always been opposed to sending the Canadian military into war fighting assignments. However, 23% say that while they have been willing to send troops, the more casualties they see, the less willing they are to send Canadians into battle.



Canadians who voted for the Bloc in the last election are the most likely out of all voters to say that they have always opposed sending the Canadian military into war fighting assignments (47%). Conservative voters are the most likely to say that they feel badly for the soldiers families but there are times when Canada needs to be ready to intervene even if our soldiers may be killed. The Liberals and NDP are split, with more leading towards the Conservatives position, but also a third saying that they have been willing to send the military, but with more Canadians being killed in Afghanistan they question whether we should send our military to fight wars.

French-speaking Canadians (34%) are the most likely to report that they have always opposed sending the Canadian military into war fighting assignments (versus just 14% of English-speaking Canadians).

A majority (59%) of English-speaking Canadians report that they feel badly for the soldiers and their families, but continue to believe there are times when Canada needs to

be ready to intervene, even if there may be some loss of life. This compares to just two-fifths (39%) of French-speaking Canadians who share this position.

Meanwhile there is little difference between English (24%) and French (21%) speaking Canadians regarding the effect of seeing Canadian soldiers killed on their support of sending Canadian troops to fight wars in general. However, in Quebec this group is critical. To build majority support for combat missions in Quebec, any government must win the support of these people.

Canadians who pay close attention to foreign policy issues in the news are more likely than those who don't do so that they feel badly for the soldiers families, but at times it is necessary to intervene.

The position that while they feel sorry for the soldiers and their families, that there are sometimes the Canadian military may be needed to intervene, even if there could be a loss of life is highest among Albertans (64%), followed by those in Ontario (61%), British Columbia (59%), Atlantic Canada (55%), and the Prairies (54%). Residents of Quebec (40%) are least likely to share this view, while they are the most likely to say they have always opposed deploying Canadian troops into war fighting assignments (32%). Atlantic Canadians (30%) are more likely than those in any other region of the country to report that the more they see Canadian troops killed in Afghanistan the more they question where we should ever send Canadian troops to fight wars.

Men (65%) are more likely than are women (45%) to feel that while they may feel for the families and the soldiers, there are some situations where the Canadian military should be ready to step in, no matter if it means a possible loss of life for Canadian soldiers. On the other hand, women (30%) are almost twice as likely as are men (16%) to report that while they have been willing to send Canadian troops to fight in some circumstances, the more Canadians they see killed in Afghanistan, the more they questions whether we should send Canadian troops to fight in wars.

There is little difference on this question between age groups.

8. About This Study

Innovative Research Group, Inc. (www.innovativeresearch.ca), a research and strategy firm with offices in Toronto and Vancouver, surveyed 2,839 Canadians from its online Canada 20/20 panel. The *Foreign Policy Under A Conservative Government: An Interim Report Card* study was commissioned by the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute.

The survey was conducted between October 26th and October 27th, 2006 and has a margin of error of $\pm 1.84\%$, 19 times out of 20. The data was weighted in accordance to the 2001 census. There were enough respondents in each of Canada's four largest provinces to treat them as their own regions, but the smaller provinces were grouped together as noted below:

- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Prairie Region (Manitoba/Saskatchewan)
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Atlantic (PEI, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador).

After weighting a sample of this size the aggregate results are considered accurate to within ± 1.84 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had a representative cross-section of Canadians eligible to vote been polled. The margin of error will be larger within each sub-grouping of the sample.

Anyone interested in participating in these surveys can join the Canada 20/20 panel by going to Canada2020.com and completing the enrolment survey.

Attribution

In the first instance of mentioning the poll results the survey should be identified as a "Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute survey conducted by Innovative Research Group using their Canada 20/20 online panel".

All subsequent mentions can use the convention "CDFAI/INNOVATIVE poll" or "the CDFAI poll".

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9. Questionnaire

SECTION: MOOD

CDF1. What is the most important issue facing Canada today? (**RANDOMIZE RESPONSES 1 - 11**)

- 1 The environment
- 2 The economy
- 3 Defence and Security
- 4 Trade
- 5 Relations with the US
- 6 Multiculturalism
- 7 Health care
- 8 Social Issues
- 9 Crime
- 10 Civil Rights and Freedoms
- 11 Federal/provincial relations
- 12 Other [Please Specify]
- 98 Don't know

CDF2. When it comes to foreign policy, which federal political party is closest to your point of view? (**RANDOMIZE RESPONSES 1 - 5**)

- 1 Conservative Party
- 2 Liberal Party
- 3 Bloc Quebecois [**QUEBEC ONLY**]
- 4 New Democratic Party
- 5 Green Party
- 7 None
- 8 Don't Know

CDF3. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement:
There are a lot of other issues that are more important to me than foreign policy when it comes to deciding which political party to vote for.

- Strongly Agree 1
- Somewhat Agree 2
- Neither/Neutral 3
- Somewhat Disagree 4
- Strongly Disagree 5
- Don't Know 98

CDF4. Which of the following three policies areas do you think should be the most important priority for the federal government? (**ROTATE RESPONSES 1-3, 8 IS ALWAYS LAST**)

- 1 Security at home such as border control, organized crime, and terrorist threats
- 2 Security abroad such as Afghanistan, UN reform, and arms control
- 3 Relations with the US such as trade, security and diplomacy
- 8 Don't know

Impact of the Change in Government

CDF5. Has the minority government of Stephen Harper done a better or worse job in managing Canada's foreign policy than the previous Liberal government?

- 1 Much better
- 2 Somewhat better
- 3 About the same
- 4 Somewhat worse
- 5 Much worse
- 8 Don't know

CDF6. From what you can recall, has there been a change in the direction of Canadian foreign policy since the election of the Conservative government?

- 1 Yes [**CONTINUE**]
- 2 No [**SKIP TO CDF9**]
- 8 Don't know [**SKIP TO CDF 9**]

IF YES

CDF7. How do you think foreign policy is different under the Conservatives than it was under the Liberals? (OPEN-ENDED)

CDF8. Do you approve or disapprove of the change in the direction of Canadian foreign policy since the election of the Conservative government?

- 1 Strongly approve
- 2 Somewhat approve
- 3 Neither approve nor disapprove
- 4 Somewhat disapprove
- 5 Strongly disapprove
- 8 Don't know

CDF9. Is Canada more or less secure under Stephen Harper's Conservative government or are things staying the same?

- 1 Much more secure
- 2 Somewhat more secure
- 3 Staying the same
- 4 Somewhat less secure
- 5 Much less secure
- 8 Don't know

CDF10. Do you think Canada will play a more important role in the world if we follow (ROTATE 1 & 2)

- 1 Liberal party foreign affairs policies
- 2 Conservative party foreign affairs policies
- 3 Makes no difference
- 8 Don't know

Please indicate which of the following pairs of statements best describes Stephen Harper's recent foreign policy initiatives? (**RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS**)

CDF11. Statesman-like or Political

- 1 Statesman-like
- 2 Political
- 3 Neither
- 8 Don't know

CDF12. Competent or Incompetent

- 1 Competent
- 2 Incompetent
- 3 Neither
- 8 Don't know

END BATTERY

How closely have you been following each of the following foreign affairs issues that have been in the news lately... **(RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS)**

- 1 Very close
- 2 Somewhat close
- 3 Not very close
- 4 Not close at all
- 8 Don't know

- CDF13. The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan
- CDF14. The nuclear weapons test in North Korea
- CDF15. The recent fighting between Hezbollah and Israel in the Middle East
- CDF16. Iran's nuclear program
- CDF17. Canada US-relations
- CDF18. The evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon during the recent fighting there
- CDF19. Providing a greater role for Quebec in international bodies such as UNESCO

END BATTERY

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Conservative government has managed each of the following issues: **(RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS)**

- 1 Strongly approve
- 2 Somewhat approve
- 3 Neither approve nor disapprove
- 4 Somewhat disapprove
- 5 Strongly disapprove
- 8 Don't know

- CDF20. The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan
- CDF21. The nuclear weapons test in North Korea
- CDF22. The recent fighting between Hezbollah and Israel in the Middle East
- CDF23. Iran's nuclear program
- CDF24. Canada US-relations
- CDF25. The evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon during the recent fighting there
- CDF26. Providing a greater role for Quebec in international bodies such as UNESCO

END BATTERY

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (**RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS**)

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 8 Don't Know

CDF27. Stephen Harper and the Conservative government understand the security threats that Canada now faces better than the Liberal government did.

CDF28. When it comes to foreign policy, the Conservative government just does whatever the Americans want them to do

END BATTERY

As you may know, Canada currently has a minority government.

CDF29. When you see the term minority government, how confident are you that you could explain the difference between a minority and a majority government to someone else?

- Very confident 1 (**CONTINUE**)
- Somewhat confident 2 (**CONTINUE**)
- Not very confident 3 (**SKIP TO CDF32**)
- Not confident at all 4 (**SKIP TO CDF 32**)
- Don't Know 98 (**SKIP TO CDF 32**)

CDF30. Have you noticed any difference in how Canada conducts its foreign policy now we have a minority government compared to when we have majority governments?

- 1 Yes [**CONTINUE**]
- 2 No [**SKIP TO CDF32**]
- 8 Don't know [**SKIP TO CDF32**]

CDF31. And what difference in how Canada conducts its foreign policy now we have a minority government have you noticed? (**OPEN-ENDED**)

CDF32. Which of the following candidates for Federal Liberal Leadership do you think would be the best able to challenge the Federal Conservative government on foreign policy? **(RANDOMIZE RESPONSES 1 - 8)**

- 1 Michael Ignatieff
- 2 Bob Rae
- 3 Stephen Dion
- 4 Gerard Kennedy
- 5 Martha Hall Findlay
- 6 Ken Dryden
- 7 Scott Brison
- 8 Joe Volpe
- 98 Don't know

Issues: US-Canada Relations

CDF33. In your opinion, is the Stephen Harper Conservative government's relationship with the United States...? **(ROTATE 1 & 2)**

- 1 Too close
- 2 Too distant
- 3 Just right
- 8 Don't know

CDF34. Compared to the last Liberal government is the Stephen Harper Conservative government's relationship with the United States...

- 1 More close
- 2 Unchanged from the last Liberal government
- 3 More distant
- 8 Don't know

END BATTERY

SECTION: Afghanistan

CDF35. Whenever Canada sends our military into dangerous circumstances around the world, there is always a chance some members of our military may be injured or killed. Which of the following statements about the military is closest to your view?

Some people say ... **[ROTATE]**

...that Canada should send troops to help when people in Asia and Africa are threatened by systematic human rights violations or countries collapse, even if no Canadian civilians are at risk and Canada has no direct interest at stake. 1

...while Canada should do what we can to help people in Asia and Africa when countries collapse or there are serious human rights violations, we should not put the lives of members of the Canadian military at risk unless there is a real threat to Canadian civilians or our national interest. 2

Don't know 8

CDF36. Do you support or oppose Canada sending troops to Afghanistan?

Strongly support	1
Somewhat support	2
Somewhat oppose	3
Strongly oppose	4
Don't know	8

CDF37. Currently about 2,300 Canadian soldiers are serving in Afghanistan. Which of the following statements is closest to your view on the impact of those Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan? (**ROTATE RESPONSES 1-2, 8 IS ALWAYS LAST**)

1	The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan is providing critical assistance to local Afghans and is trying to create a peaceful and democratic society.
2	The Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan is putting Canadian lives at risk for no apparent benefit
8	I don't know enough to say

CDF38. Which of the following points of view best reflects your reaction to the number of Canadian soldiers who are being killed in Afghanistan?
(ROTATE RESPONSES 1-3, 8 IS ALWAYS LAST)

1. I have always opposed sending the Canadian military into war fighting assignments.
2. I have been willing to send the Canadian military to fight in some circumstances, but the more Canadians I see killed in Afghanistan, the more I question whether we should ever send Canadian troops to fight wars.
3. I feel badly for soldiers and their families, but I still believe there are times when Canada needs to be ready to intervene, even if our military may be killed and injured.
- 8 Don't know