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War with the Terrorists, or Rebuilding a Nation in Need?

Dutch Public Opinion on Afghanistan: The Theory of the Principal Policy Objective Revisited

By Lars Wikman*

Introduction: Why Do Citizens Support Military Interventions?

While domestic support for foreign military interventions is important for troop morale, it can also be argued that it is a vital sign of a healthy democracy where politicians are in line with their constituencies. This is one of the reasons why public sentiments on military interventions have drawn the attention of scholars and policy-makers ever since the unpopular US military interventions in Korea and especially Vietnam. Over time, scholars have found that the perception of the nature of a foreign military intervention matters for public support.¹ For certain audiences, and for certain military interventions, it matters more, for others less. Previous research has mainly treated variation in support by using surveys experiments or a semi-experimental setting in already issued surveys.² This article argues that the kind of analysis which results from such approaches is too simple since it only accounts for one measure of a mission objective for each measure of support on an aggregate level. This research will expand our knowledge of the relationship between the Principal Policy Objective (PPO) and public support by using a unique monthly survey of the Dutch public opinion on Uruzgan,³ administered between August 2006 through August 2010, which features separate questions on support and two possible PPOs: fighting terrorism or reconstructing Afghanistan (Vos, 2010). This allows for a methodology that will capture the individual citizen's perception of the PPO instead of relying on the effect of question wording, assumptions on media influence, or experiments. So instead of having one measure of an interaction between a given PPO and support, we now have two separate measures of the PPO for each value of support. In the case of

* The author would like to acknowledge Amber Vos at the Dutch Ministry of Defence who granted me access to the individual level data. He would further like to thank Per Adman, Niklas Karlén, Ariel Young, Cecilia Josefsson, Jason Klocek, Stuart Soroka, Pär Zetterberg, Nynke Salverda, Anna Jarstad for discussions and feedback on the main themes of this article. Finally, thanks are due to the anonymous reviewers and the editors of *Res Militaris* for their comments and work on the manuscript.

¹ Cf. Jentleson, 1992 ; Jentleson & Britton, 1998 ; Eichenberg, 2005 ; Perla, 2011.

² Experiments mainly use question wording to stimulate respondents and guide them toward one specific mission objective and controlling the sample against a neutral setting or a conflicting objective. Semi-experiments mostly use surveys that are already in the field and use the question wording to determine which mission objective is framed in the question and consequently links this to the aggregate answer.

³ In the Dutch context, a controversy arose around the province of Uruzgan in southern Afghanistan, where the Dutch military took responsibility for a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) in 2006. Before that, the Dutch had been involved in other provinces and in other ways. This issue is raised here since this study addresses Dutch public opinion specifically on Uruzgan. It could be argued that the Dutch people can differentiate between Afghanistan as a whole and the specific province of Uruzgan. Support for the Uruzgan mission could be different from being in favour of involvement in Afghanistan, and vice versa.

conflicting PPOs, this makes it possible for both to be accounted for in the analysis. Such a methodology is apt to produce a more complex theoretical understanding of the PPO and its relationship to public support. This opens the possibility for citizens to have a greater understanding of military operations than previous research has given them credit for. As the results will show, the Dutch citizens apparently view the mission to Uruzgan as both a fight against terrorism and an effort to rebuild Afghanistan, not either/ or.

When the Netherlands joined the multinational effort in Afghanistan, the mission was supposedly geared to civilian reconstruction rather than to combat operations. However, the reason behind the military intervention was not always as simple. Was the military deployed to Afghanistan in order to help a war-torn country in need of humanitarian assistance, or contribute to its security, or perhaps both ? From the very start of the controversy over the Dutch involvement in Uruzgan, the linkage between security and reconstruction was manifested in the political discourse. The polarity between these two objectives eventually brought the coalition government down, a collapse attributed to the political stalemate resulting from a loss of public support for the mission (De Graaf, Dimitriu, & Ringsmose, 2015, p.360).⁴

The erosion of public support for the use of force was for long assumed to stem from the number of casualties suffered in the conflict – a lesson drawn from the costly and unpopular US wars in Korea and Vietnam, and later supported by subsequent debacles in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, etc. This view of the people as casualty-phobic has been called into question in a continuously expanding research field which has included additional variables that interact with both casualty tolerance and support.⁵ Consistent with the theory of the Principal Policy Objective, this article argues that there is a significant relationship between public support and the nature of the military mission: a relationship that appears to eliminate the effect of rising casualties on public support, thus belying a still strong conventional wisdom in the West – one that has received mixed empirical support at best.⁶ While recognizing the cross-national differences within this research area, this study will use previous US-centred research to establish a theoretical background and conduct a regression analysis with a view to investigating the relationship between the PPO and public support. It seeks to advance our theoretical understanding by stressing the importance of the individual's perception of the PPO, and by addressing the complexity of military interventions. Most interventions could indeed be perceived to have different objectives, perceived differently by different individuals.

Before presenting the theoretical framework (one that places special emphasis on Jentleson's theory of the Principal Policy Objective), this article will briefly touch upon previous research and the relationship between public opinion and the use of force. It will

⁴ For a detailed account for the Dutch political process and controversy on the Uruzgan mission, see : van der Meulen & Mantas, 2012.

⁵ Baum & Groeling 2010; Berinsky, 2007; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006, 2009, Eichenberg, 2003, 2005; Everts, 2001, 2002; Gartner & Segura 1998; Gelpi et al, 2009; Jentleson, 1992; Jentleson & Britton, 1998; Knecht, 2010; Kreps, 2010; Larson, 1996; Sullivan, 2008; van der Meulen & de Konink, 2001.

⁶ Eikenberry, 1996 ; Everts, 2001, 2002, 2003 ; Shiraev & Sobel, 2003 ; van der Meulen & de Konink, 2001.

then outline the author's research design, the context of the case study, as well as the operationalization of the theory of the PPO and the rest of the variables. The section devoted to the findings will be followed by a discussion of the results and their implications for future research and policy.

Literature Review : Citizens and the Use of Force

It is in the nature of a democratic society that decision-makers need to be responsive to the mainstream orientations in the society that lies behind the political process because, as V.O. Key so famously put it, “[u]nless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense” (Key, 1961, p.7). In the face of brute force and warfare, the core of the problem for democracies in general is that the visible costs of war in blood and treasure generate high political stakes which in turn lead to democratic tensions between the people and their leaders. These tensions are consequential in understanding how military force is used as a political instrument. Research on public opinion and the use of force has mainly been focused on three core parts: the rationality, the structure, and the policy influence of public opinion. While being a rather narrow field, in the sense that it is very specific in research questions and methodological choices, it attracts considerable scholarly attention and is very influential on policy.

The obvious US military failure in Vietnam together with widespread public opposition to the war (after 1967) created a context which stimulated an outburst of research activity confronting the dominant view that public opinion should be left out of the decision-making process (Holsti, 1992 ; Powlick & Katz, 1998). This strongly questioned the elitist view of foreign policy and led to an “*increased need [by officials] to find public support for their policies*” (Powlick, 1995). In a second wave, the end of the Cold War fuelled additional scholarly activity as military operations took on a different form, concentrating less on superpower relations and more on humanitarian crises and the threat of failed States.

The traditional view, seeing common people as either too uninformed or too irrational to have a say when it comes to the security of the State, was replaced with a view of the people as “*pretty prudent*” (Jentleson, 1992) and indeed a factor that *ought* to be considered in politics. Important decisions such as these *should not* be left for the elite to decide, the argument goes, as the people *need* to have an influence. Nowadays few question the assumption that citizens (somehow) should have an influence on policy when it comes to foreign affairs, especially military matters.⁷

On the methodological side, ever since the introduction of the mass public survey, scholars have had the opportunity to use these surveys as an indicator of public opinion. Aggregate the results from a given survey and you are left with what the public as a whole wants, in a sum of its parts kind of way. Empirically – as well as theoretically – this field has been very casualty-centric. Over the years this has contributed to a conventional wisdom

⁷ Everts, 2000 ; Powlick & Katz, 1998 ; Russett, 1990.

among the elite that the public is reflexively ‘casualty phobic’. This has led to an obsession with force protection and to a certain extent a will to use other options than ground troops. Americans clearly display a propensity to use airpower over ground troops (with a lesser risk for individual soldiers) which has had an impact on doctrines and tactics (Eikenberry, 1996; Eichenberg, 2005). The Dutch and other European nations seem to have had similar problems.⁸ National caveats, as seen in the multinational missions and heavily debated within NATO in regard to the ISAF mission, could be an example of casualty phobia among the elite.

With the high tolls of the Korean and Vietnam wars as the starting point, the early stages of research focused solely on the numbers of casualties suffered in conflicts, measured either cumulatively (Mueller, 1973) or later marginally (Gartner & Segura, 1998). This view of the public reacting reflexively to casualties was later adjusted to a view of the public as weighing pros and cons about the use of force, and ended up conceptualizing an elasticity of demand in the public influenced by a number of different variables. This last step also opened up to a wide flora of theoretical possibilities to understand public attitudes towards foreign military interventions. The success of the mission⁹ and the grounds to go to war¹⁰ became important explanations for public support, together with different institutional constraints,¹¹ sunk costs,¹² the relationship between the public and leadership rhetoric/elite cues,¹³ and issue salience as measured by media contents.¹⁴

Grounds for the Use Military Force: The Theory of the Principal Policy Objective

Having identified a “post-post-Vietnam era” of US public opinion on the use of military force, Jentleson (1992) in the same breath introduced the theory of Principal Policy Objective, which has since gained much recognition and support. This theory, later expanded through a collaboration with Britton (1998), centres on the rationale that an individual’s support of any given military operation and acceptance of casualties are contingent on the principal objective of the mission. In the original 1992 article, there were two PPO categories: Internal Political Change (IPC) and Foreign Policy Restraint (FPR). IPC was military intervention in its classical sense of direct or indirect “*efforts to influence the ‘domestic political authority’ structure of another State*” (Jentleson, 1992, p.53). FPR on the other hand was more of a conflict situation where aggressive behaviour threatened the US, or its allies. Analyzing the post-Cold War era, the 1998 version of the theoretical framework added a category to the previous two to account for military interventions with the purpose of providing “*emergency relief through military and other means to people*

⁸ Cf. Van der Meulen & de Konink, 2001.

⁹ Eichenberg, 2005 ; Gelpi, Feaver & Reifler, 2006, 2009.

¹⁰ Eichenberg, 2003, 2005 ; Jentleson, 1992 ; Jentleson & Britton, 1998 ; Perla, 2011.

¹¹ Kreps, 2010 ; Risse-Kappen, 1991.

¹² Sullivan, 2008 ; Boettcher & Cobb, 2009.

¹³ Zaller, 1994; Larson, 1996; Berinsky, 2007; Drury, Overby, Ang & Li, 2010; Kreps, 2010.

¹⁴ Knecht, 2010 ; Baum & Groeling, 2010.

suffering from famine or other gross and widespread humanitarian disasters”); namely Humanitarian Intervention (HI).¹⁵ Their findings, derived from empirical material based on US cases, suggest that a mission categorized as IPC secures far less public support in the aggregate than either HI or FPA.

Perla expanded this theoretical tradition in his 2011 article where he concentrates on how the PPO is framed, since “*a policy’s principal objective is not as important as what the public perceives it to be*” (Perla, 2011, p.144). In order to understand public support, the emphasis should be laid on the perceptions of the citizens as there is no such thing as an identifiable “true” PPO. Perla introduces prospect theory as a compliment to the individual level: perceptions of gains or losses can help to understand why a mission that is framed to prevent losses draws higher support than one that tries to achieve gains (Perla, 2011). This theory relates to Jentleson’s categories as FPR tends to be framed to prevent losses while IPC and HI seek to achieve gains. Perla still points to an interesting aspect as he turns the focus to individual perceptions. How the public interprets military interventions is an open question empirically.

Gelpi and colleagues added an extra PPO category to designate the specific terrorist threat towards national security, namely the War on Terrorism (WoT).¹⁶ One could argue that WoT is simply an integral part of FPR. However, the additional PPO points to a weakness in the original theory : it does not distinguish between State and non-State actors. This could be of great importance for the formation of attitudes in the domestic constituency. So on the basis of the theoretical discussion on national security in Jentleson’s FPR category and Gelpi *et al.*’s additional WoT dimension, this article advances a hypothesis that centres on an individual’s propensity to support a military intervention, irrespective of casualties, if the primary objective is to fight terrorism. A similar hypothesis deals with humanitarian intervention and captures the theoretical linkage between citizens’ perceptions of the PPO and support.

Hypothesis 1 : The perception that a specific military intervention’s primary objective is to fight terrorism increases the likelihood that the military intervention will be supported.

Hypothesis 2 : Likewise, the perception that a military intervention primary objective is humanitarian aid relief increases the likelihood of support.

While these two hypotheses are theoretically separate, there are reasons to believe that they are not entirely independent of each other. A way to address terrorism could be to provide humanitarian aid or to rebuild a society – a theme that will recur throughout this article.

The Support of Dutch Citizens for the Military Mission in Uruzgan

The present analysis will rest on data from public opinion surveys conducted in the Netherlands between August 2006 and August 2010 (Vos, 2010). During these four years, the Dutch military was in charge of a Provincial Reconstruction Team in the province of

¹⁵ Jentleson & Britton, 1998, pp. 399-400.

¹⁶ Gelpi *et al.*, 2009, p.100.

Uruzgan in the south of Afghanistan.¹⁷ This was a significant contribution to the NATO-led effort to stabilize the country and the largest Dutch deployment of troops since the Korean War.¹⁸ The Dutch deployment to Uruzgan sparked domestic controversy, and opposition gradually increased as the mission proceeded. Those opposed to sending troops to Afghanistan made clear that they should in principle be dedicated to stabilization missions in line with Dutch support of UN-led military missions (Gallis & Morelli, 2008), and the public debate seemed to concentrate on a dichotomy between a ‘combat mission’ and a ‘reconstruction mission’ (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2010, 2014). With the shift in strategy to counterinsurgency and the request from Brussels for additional troops in late 2009, Uruzgan turned into such a controversial issue that it eventually brought the government down in February 2010. This directly led to a Dutch withdrawal of all combat troops, which echoed throughout the multinational alliance engaged in the NATO-led campaign. From the moment the debate started over the Dutch part in the expansion to the more dangerous southern parts of Afghanistan, risks were placed in the forefront of the discussion. This would be a far greater risk than previous deployments in Afghanistan and several previous political decisions, such as the decision to support the US-led invasion in Iraq in 2003, haunted the coalition government.

Previous research on Dutch public opinion during the military operations in the Balkans in the 1990’s had placed a lot of explanatory power on the perception of success and effectiveness of the mission as important for support and casualty tolerance amongst citizens.¹⁹ The purpose of this research was to counter the casualty-phobic political elites who used the public as “*an alibi for non-intervention policies, to such degree as to create a self-fulfilling prophecy*” (van der Meulen & Konink, 2001 p.132). The events in the village of Srebrenica, where Dutch soldiers withdrew under pressure from Bosnian Serbs allowing a massacre of the Muslim population, clearly had an impact on Dutch self-image and on the Netherlands’ international military involvement. It primarily reinforced the resolve of the Dutch to contribute and raised a desire for a second chance to amend this mistake (Everts, 2003). This research on the Balkans concluded that the public, far from being volatile, acts rather rationally, balancing the aim, length and effectiveness of a military mission. Following the military involvement in the Balkans, the Dutch public was found to be a “*resilient but confused public*” (Everts, 2003, p.233).

The casualty hypothesis appeared to draw no empirical support in the public in the context of the Balkans. When it comes to Afghanistan, and more specifically to Uruzgan, casualties seemed to increase support temporarily, and to change the media narrative. In a study by Dimitriu and de Graaf (2014) on the relationship between public opinion and strategic narratives, they write that “*neither the media nor the opposition parties were apparently willing to level criticisms against the mission or the government immediately after soldiers were killed*” (p.14). Regarding the erosion of public support for the Uruzgan

¹⁷ Prior to this engagement, the Dutch had been actively involved in ISAF with Special Forces, F-16 Fighter jets, and responsibility for a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the Baghlan province.

¹⁸ Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2014.

¹⁹ Everts, 2002, 2003 ; van der Meulen & de Konink, 2001.

campaign, they point to the government's inability to provide the public with a credible narrative to explain the nature of the counterinsurgency mission. They reach some very interesting and important conclusions: public opinion covariates with the dominant media narrative of the mission and the oppositional counter-narrative of a "combat mission disguised as reconstruction" dominates the public debate. Therefore,

raising support for complex, lengthy, and burdensome counterinsurgency operations or other expeditionary missions may prove to be(come) an insurmountable barrier in countries that lack a homogeneous party system and where the public attaches great value to issues of mission purpose, prospects of success, legitimacy, and legality (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2014, p.19).

As a result of the binary nature of the public debate, where the opposition claimed combat and the government reconstruction as the primary objective, the public had a hard time understanding the kinetic elements of the mission, but at the same time a narrative accounting for those elements would be a tough sell politically for the government. Given the apparent erosion of public support and the political controversy over military involvement – perhaps both of these indicating a general war fatigue in society following Dutch casualties (van der Meulen & Mantas, 2012) –, this stands out as an interesting case to explore the correlation of different PPOs with support for the military operation.

Data and Methodology

This study will use a multivariate regression analysis to correlate support as a dependent variable with the perceptions of different PPOs together with several control variables to account for the variation in the dependent variable. The data allow for a research design that will separate the indicators of PPO perceptions and support as they are separate questions in the survey that forms the basis for the analysis. The survey sample is representative of the Dutch population on four important characteristics: gender, age, education and region. This monthly survey was conducted in cooperation between the Dutch ministry of Defence and TNS-NIPO.²⁰ The time period considered is the entire duration of the Uruzgan campaign, from August 2006 to August 2010; a total of 48 months and consequently 48 surveys. The sample size for the monthly surveys is rather low, increasing the risk of non-systematic error and the probability that non-representative samples are drawn.²¹ On the other hand, the systematic error will remain constant throughout the study since the dependent and two explanatory variables come from the same data material.

Public Support and the Principal Policy Objective (PPO)

The data on the main variables are on the level of the individual. PUBLIC SUPPORT is the dependent variable in this study and presents the individual's propensity to either

²⁰ TNS-NIPO is one of the most respected marketing information specialists in the Netherlands and part of the global TNS network. For more information on TNS-NIPO, visit their website: www.tns-nipo.com.

²¹ The sample sizes range from 168 to 422 per month, with an average of 224. They increased significantly after the first two-year period, which is reflected in the higher average during the later period (259 vs. 189).

support or oppose the military mission. The measure is derived from a question on the survey where the respondent was asked whether he/she is in favour of or against the military mission in Uruzgan (see Table 1 below, question 1). The respondent had five answers to choose from (“strong opponent”, “predominantly opposed”, “neutral”, “predominantly supportive”, “strong supporter”). In order to be able to analyze the responses, the original ordinal scale was converted into a continuous scale where the higher the value, the stronger the support. For the dependent variable the values of 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 and 1 were chosen as a continuous scale in order to make interpretations easier for the reader as the value of the *b*-coefficients in the regression analysis will be in percentages on the dependent variable. Another option would have been to use the information from the two categories in favour of the mission to have a variable describing the extent of support for the mission ; however, that would have left out a lot of information, for example respondents changing from negative to neutral would have been missed. One must, of course, be cautious when approximating an ordinal scale as a continuous scale because the distances between scale steps may not be the same.²² Yet, with five categories the move from ordinal to continuous scale can be made in order to proceed with the OLS regression with a satisfactory level of confidence.

RECONSTRUCTION is the first of the two main independent variables. It is derived from Jentleson’s HI category which places a focus on humanitarian values as the military intervention’s PPO. The measurement is set to capture respondents’ perception that the mission in Uruzgan is contributing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan (see Table 1, question 2, next page). As with the dependent variable, the ordinal scale response categories were translated into a continuous scale but with values of one to five.

TERRORISM is the second of the main independent variables and comes from Jentleson’s FPR category along the lines of the discussion held by Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler and their WoT objective (Gelpi *et al.*, 2009). It is measured in an identical way as reconstruction and uses the same response categories. Respondents take a position of the statement as to whether the mission in Uruzgan will decrease the threat of terrorist attacks in the Netherlands (see Table 1, question 3).

From the pioneering work of Mueller (1973) onwards, research on public opinion and the use of force has been devoted to casualties as the main explanatory factor for the erosion of public support in military conflicts. Despite the inclusion of additional variables, casualties have remained at the centre of these analytical frameworks.²³ Consequently, two control measures for casualties are included: one to include the actual casualties inflicted in the conflict and one to capture the casualty tolerance on the individual level.

CASUALTIES is a binary variable referring to combat-related casualties, defined here as combat deaths – and not as the word is used in military jargon, which most often also

²² Blalock, 1979 ; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013.

²³ Berinsky, 2007, 2009 ; Eichenberg, 2003, 2005 ; Feaver & Gelpi, 2004 ; Gelpi *et al.*, 2006, 2009 ; Jentleson, 1992 ; Jentleson & Britton, 1998 ; Larson, 1996 ; Sullivan, 2007, 2008.

includes wounded soldiers). Thus, the casualties dealt with in this article follow the definition adopted by *iCasualties*, an Internet-based US NGO tracking military deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁴ In the dataset, the effect of casualties has been lagged by one month, so that for a casualty (or casualties) inflicted in a given month the value of the variable will be 1 the following month.²⁵ A total of 19 Dutch soldiers lost their lives due to hostilities during the period considered.²⁶ These deaths are evenly distributed over the four years. The opinion survey also included a question which conveniently made it possible to control for CASUALTY TOLERANCE (see Table 1, question 4). Controlling on the individual level for this kind of information enriches the analysis as the previous control variable, measuring casualties *per se*, is not on the individual level.

Table 1 : Survey Questions on Public Support, Reconstruction, Terrorism, and Casualty Tolerance

Q1. Do you support or oppose the mission in Uruzgan ? <i>Bent u voor- of tegenstander van de missie Uruzgan ?</i>
Strong opponent (0.0), predominantly opposed (0.25) , neutral (0.5), predominantly supportive (0.75), strong supporter (1.0)
Q2. The mission in Uruzgan will contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. <i>De missie in Uruzgan zal bijdragen aan de wederopbouw van Afghanistan.</i>
I completely disagree (1), I disagree (2), neutral (3), I agree (4), I fully agree (5).
Q3. The mission in Uruzgan will decrease the risk of terrorist attacks in the Netherlands itself. <i>De missie in Uruzgan zal de dreiging van terroristische aanslagen in NL zelf kleiner maken.</i>
I completely disagree (1), I disagree (2), neutral (3), I agree (4), I fully agree (5).
Q4. If Dutch soldiers were killed, for me that would be a reason to withdraw from Afghanistan. <i>Als er Nederlandse militairen worden gedood, zou dat voor mij een reden zijn de Nederlandse militairen terug te roepen uit Afghanistan.</i>
I completely disagree (1), I disagree (2), neutral (3), I agree (4), I fully agree (5)
<i>Source: Vos, 2010. Monitor Steun en Draagvlak, Publieke Opinie Missie Uruzgan, augustus 2006-augustus 2010. [Public support monitor: public opinion on the Uruzgan mission], Den Haag, Ministrie van defensie, Dienstencentrum Gedragwetenschappen.</i>

Out of the information gathered from the survey, three individual demographic control variables were chosen for inclusion in the analysis : age, educational level, and gender (see Table 2 below). This to a large extent mirrors conventional approaches in similar studies (see for example, Feaver and Gelpi’s analysis of civil-military relations and the use of force: Feaver & Gelpi, 2004). Van der Meulen & de Konink (2001) also include the same control variables in their analysis of Dutch public support for military involvement in the Balkans in the 1990’s. AGE is the respondent’s age in years and GENDER is the notified sex of the respondent, where 0 is male and 1 is female. Previous research points to a tendency for older people and women to be generally less supportive

²⁴ See www.icasualties.org, formally known as Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, which monitors the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and is a trusted source for the BBC, AP, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*.

²⁵ This was done in order to fully capture the effect that the casualty might have had on the individual. The survey was opened on the first Monday every month and was open for a week (private correspondence with Amber Vos, Dutch MoD, e-mail dated 29 April 2010).

²⁶ A total of 25 soldiers lost their lives during the time of the Uruzgan campaign. Excluded from this analysis are deaths as a result from non-hostilities, such as suicides and accidents. The six excluded deaths occurred on 26 July 2006 (2), 31 August 2006, 11 October 2006, 6 April 2007, and 16 November 2010.

of the use of military force regardless of purpose.²⁷ Two variables were created as regards education and time. EDUCATION LEVEL first gave rise to a dummy variable which gave all categories from high school eligibility for college and higher a value of 1 and the rest a value of 0 or missing value.²⁸ However, seven dummy variables were also created for each of the categories : E1, E2, E3, etc. Later in the analysis, both are presented in different models to show that there is no significant difference between them. In addition to these, the TIME variable is included in the analysis to control for general war fatigue stemming from a protracted conflict. This variable began to count at the onset of the mission in August 2006 and increased by one measure for each elapsed month ending in August 2010, 48 months later. One way of organizing this variable so it can also control for unknown omitted variables is to divide it into 48 dummy variables (t1 through t48) instead of it being a continuous variable. As will later be shown, regressions have been run with either the dummy variables or the continuous variable with no significant change in either the *b*-coefficients or the *p*-value.²⁹

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N=10787)

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Support	9808	0.4822	0.2702	0	1
Time	10787	25.9255	13.8304	0	48
Time (dummy, t1-t48)	10787	N/a	N/a	0	1
Casualties	10787	0.2741	0.4461	0	1
Casualty Tolerance	9982	2.9752	1.1934	1	5
Gender	10787	0.5054	0.4999	0	1
Age	10787	36.8184	17.2247	16	75
Education Level (Dummy)	10781	0.3736	0.4838	0	1
Education level (Dummy e1-e7)	10781	N/a	N/a	0	1
Terrorism	9252	2.4469	0.8314	1	5
Reconstruction	9721	3.1921	1.0158	1	5

Dutch Public Support for the Mission in Uruzgan

This section will present and discuss the results from the regression analysis. The results are presented using six different models (see Table 3). Model 1 simply includes the demographic control variables (sex, age and education) as well as time. Models 2 and 3 test the two hypotheses separately. The results in all three models are fairly consistent with the theoretical expectations and both hypotheses stand firm against the empirical results. The *b*-coefficients are positive and fairly strong. In Model 2 there is significant support for hypothesis 2 that there exists a strong relationship between the belief that the primary objective of military interventions is humanitarian aid relief and the individual's propensity

²⁷ Cf. Eichenberg, 2003 ; van der Meulen & de Konink, 2001.

²⁸ The ordinal categories in the survey were "primary education", "lower vocational training", "high school", "general vocational training", "eligibility for college", "master's degree", "PhD", "not specified" (missing value).

²⁹ The only difference is that the CASUALTIES variable changed signs from negative to positive while being insignificant.

to support the mission. This kind of significant link between the PPO and support is also recognized in Model 3, where Hypothesis 1 is supported, as there is a clear relationship between the belief that the military mission’s primary objective is to fight terrorism and support. Since the dependent variable was given a value between 1.0 and 0, the *b*-coefficients in the table are to be interpreted as changes in percentage. So a perception of the mission being of a reconstructing nature (Model 2) increases support by 13.6%. When controlling for terrorism in Model 4, this is still 11.5%. Terrorism on the other hand holds a significant value in Model 3 with an 11.7% increase in support. Including both PPOs of terrorism and reconstruction in the regression makes it possible to control for the effect of the other as we can see in Model 4. So instead of dividing up the categories, which has restricted previous research to only capture a single PPO in each measure of support, this research can include them both in the same model to see if their assumed influence will remain when the other is held constant. We will thus be able to see whether terrorism still correlates with support when controlling for reconstruction and vice versa. So, when controlling for reconstruction in Model 4, when all variables are included, terrorism drops to 5.7%. In Models 5 and 6, time and education level are simply replaced with the two dummy variables, and as we can see there is no significant difference expect that casualties change signs to a positive influence on support. But returning to model 4 we can see that reconstruction keeps its value while terrorism is almost decimated into half.

Table 3 : Dutch Public Support for the mission in Uruzgan

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Terrorism	---	---	0.117*** (43.75)	0.057*** (21.78)	0.057*** (21.77)	0.057*** (21.64)
Reconstruction	---	0.136*** (67.47)	---	0.115*** (50.98)	0.115*** (50.92)	0.115*** (50.75)
T1 – T48	---	---	---	---	---	N/a N/a
Time	-0.001*** (-7.05)	-0.001*** (-5.56)	-0.001*** (-5.52)	-0.001*** (-6.27)	-0.000*** (-6.39)	---
Casualties	---	-0.000 (-0.01)	-0.008 (1.66)	-0.001 (-0.25)	-0.001 (-0.25)	0.038 (1.99)
Casualty Phobia	---	-0.085*** (-48.02)	-0.110*** (-57.58)	-0.081*** (-45.27)	-0.080*** (-44.91)	-0.081*** (-44.76)
Gender	-0.028*** (-5.15)	-0.014*** (-3.78)	-0.003 (-0.70)	-0.014*** (-3.64)	-0.013*** (-3.60)	-0.013*** (-3.50)
Age	-0.000 (-0.26)	0.000 (1.81)	-0.000** (3.01)	0.000 (0.48)	0.000 (0.80)	0.000 (0.79)
E1-E7 (dummy)	---	---	---	---	N/a N/a	N/a N/a
Education Level	0.068*** (12.03)	0.000 (-0.14)	0.012*** (2.66)	0.006 (1.64)	---	---
Constant	0.508*** (53.57)	0.324*** (26.88)	0.558*** (44.99)	0.232*** (19.17)	0.253*** (19.13)	0.221*** (12.50)
Observations	9723	9162	8775	8615	8615	8615
R2	0.02	0.56	0.46	0.58	0.58	0.59

Note : T-value displayed in parentheses.

*P<.05. **P<.01. ***P<.001.

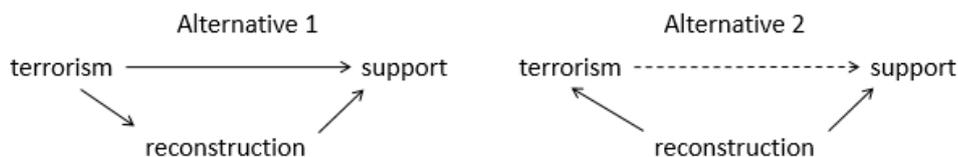
Before elaborating on the results on the two main independent variables, there is a need to examine Model 4 and substantially comment on each variable. TIME has a very small (-0.001) but still negative influence on support. Spread over a period of 48 months, the decline becomes more notable (-0.048 or -4,8%). This is reasonable considering that prolonged conflicts tend to wear societies down, and the longer a conflict endures, the higher the likelihood that, all else equal, support will drop over time. When it comes to CASUALTIES, it is hard to interpret the result as it is insignificant, but it appears to have a negative impact, which is consistent with previous research. More importantly, however, it points to CASUALTIES not being the decisive variable to determine support for a military mission. When the dummy variable on time is included, the *b*-coefficient of casualties receives a positive value. This could be the result of casualties being evenly distributed over time, creating a collinearity between the two variables. Therefore there is a possibility that the effect of casualties could be routed through the TIME variable, when that variable is replaced in Model 6. It could however also be interpreted as resolve and how the casualties suffered strengthen the public's inclination to support the conflict. This is not at all theoretically inconceivable and could go along the lines of Sullivan's discussion of "*sunk costs*" in a conflict (Sullivan, 2008). Another plausible explanation is that during a time of mourning after a casualty has been inflicted, it is hard for the media or opposition to express harsh criticisms against the government.³⁰ However, it is an insignificant result from which not much can be inferred. CASUALTY TOLERANCE holds pretty constant (around minus 8%) throughout the models on support. The more one believes that casualties are a legitimate reason to withdraw troops, the less likely one is to support the mission. In Model 3, when TERRORISM stands without RECONSTRUCTION, CASUALTY PHOBIA increases a little bit, by about 3%, which is not at all odd considering that national interests, in this case fighting terrorists, at least theoretically could trump casualty aversion. When it comes to the control variables, the results are fairly inconclusive. GENDER appears to have a small influence on support as men tend to stand behind this mission to a larger extent than women.

These results confirm the importance of the theory of the principal policy objective when one is interested in overall public support for military interventions. It also points to a limitation in previous research that links one PPO to aggregated data for the measure of public support and thereby misses the relationship between different PPOs and the fact that they are not mutually exclusive. It is worth noting that, since the central objective is to assess the public's attitudes, the subjective perception by the individual becomes the important factor in the analysis. Methodologically, previous studies have used either question wording, linked to a question on support, or experiments – using various hypothetical scenarios – to control for variation. Neither of these methods manages to capture the complexity that multiple and sometimes complementing/ conflicting perceptions of PPOs cause. Clearly, as seen in Model 4, both PPOs of terrorism and reconstruction still correlate significantly with support when they are included simultaneously in the analysis.

³⁰ Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2014, p.14.

It is reasonable to surmise that reconstructing the nation of Afghanistan could be a way of fighting the war on terrorism. This kind of reasoning is supported by the fact that the effect of reconstruction is hardly influenced by the addition of TERRORISM in Model 4. It is of course also plausible, but less likely, that it could be the other way around: that fighting the war against terrorism is a way to reconstructing the nation of Afghanistan. These two alternatives are illustrated in Fig. 1:

Fig. 1 : Potential Theoretical Linkages



Regardless of which alternative is the most likely, the relationship between these two kinds of objectives is more complex than previous research would have it. One could also imagine that one perception of the mission as reconstruction could have an effect on the perception of it being a war or not, and vice versa, since it is not improbable for some to have an understanding that the situation at hand is predominantly peace-like while for others it more closely resembles warlike conditions. There is also the ever present problem of omitted variables, i.e. a missing factor in the analysis that has an effect on both the PPO as well as on support (Z in Fig. 2, below). General pacifism could be one such variable.

Fig. 2 : Omitted Variable



That the two objectives of reconstruction and terrorism are related and inherently problematic is obvious in the public debate prior to the deployment of forces to Uruzgan. After the Netherlands declared that it wanted to take part in the expansion to the south, the debate that followed centred on risks and especially the increased risks that this particular deployment to Uruzgan would entail:

On the one hand, this raised the question of whether the risks for the Dutch soldiers were ‘acceptable’. On the other hand, there were serious doubts whether, in circumstances like these, it was at all possible to really contribute to the goal of the mission : stabilization and reconstruction. Wouldn’t it come down first and foremost to enforcing security by way of combat operations ? [Van der Meulen & Mantas, 2012, p.19].

Also, looking at the answers to a panel questionnaire conducted by *Eénvandaag*, a popular Dutch current affairs programme, it becomes clear that Dutch citizens identify

several different policy objectives of the Dutch military involvement in Afghanistan (Everts, 2009). Both the fight against international terrorism and the reconstruction of Afghanistan were among the most common answers when respondents were asked to identify why he or she supported the mission. Also important were Dutch contributions to international peacekeeping. Among the most common reasons to oppose the mission was that it is a combat, not a reconstruction, mission and that the objectives (security and reconstruction) would not be achieved. Also mentioned were the risks to which Dutch soldiers were exposed and the excessive support of US policies – especially in the wake of the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo scandals (Gallis & Morelli, 2008).

Returning shortly to Jentleson's PPO theory, while it has both commonsensical and analytical appeal, it is empirically difficult to keep its categories separate. In his first article, Jentleson (1992, p.54) recognized the problem of policy complexity and policy ambiguity, but failed to further address it in his work. He himself made "*a relative assessment for each case*" of which policy objective was the primary one. He asserted that all distinctions are not exclusive to a single objective: they relate to a complex mix of goals among which one principal objective dominates the others.

This is further acknowledged in the second article by Jentleson and Britton where they discuss the possibilities to interpret the principal policy objective for Bosnia and Somalia differently, but still end up with an approach where their analysis includes survey questions that "*explicitly mentioned only one policy goal*" and link that to public support (Jentleson & Britton, 1998, p.400).

Complexity can even be said to be worse in the case of Afghanistan as the PPO can in fact be interpreted as being FPR, IPC and HI.³¹ Not only is it possible to interpret the mission differently but these objectives are not mutually exclusive. It could well be argued that the best way to face potential foreign aggression, in the form of an increased terrorist threat, is by rebuilding the nation and providing humanitarian aid, thus reducing poverty and misery and thereby the recruiting base. Jentleson is perhaps correct when he addresses the importance of the PPO; however, creating mutually exclusive sets of categories might be an impossible task. One would even argue that it is redundant since, if the purpose is to understand public support, i.e. the attitudes of citizens, then the explanatory factor would be how the citizens perceive the PPO of the military mission. Then the theory would still have analytical value if we study how the citizens perceive the mission and whether they approve of it or not.

The absence of mutually exclusive categories is perhaps not a theoretical problem, but an empirical and methodological one. Yet, as this article shows, it is a problem that can be overcome.

³¹ **FPR**: the mission is mainly to locate, terminate or reduce terrorist action or at least to deny it a safe haven. **IPC** : foreign forces are meddling in the domestic politics of Afghanistan trying to build a democratic State and helping it control its own territory. **HI**: response to the humanitarian disaster trying to provide relief to the war-devastated country.

Concluding Discussion : War with the Terrorists *and* Rebuilding a Nation in Need

The first thing that must be apparent when contemplating the sort of action which government facing insurgency should take, is that there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity [General Sir Frank Kitson, cited in Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2010].

This study used a dataset which permitted a separation of two different PPO measurements on each value of public support. It has found evidence that different PPOs correlate with support even when controlled for the other. This calls into question the underlying assumption of previous research on the principal policy objective, that one PPO is dominating and driving behaviour. Including them in the same study showed that it is not a question of *either/or*, but of *both/and*. In the Dutch case, it appears that the Government tried to stick to their narrative of reconstruction and struggled to adapt and account for the kinetic activities and combat-related casualties within their narrative. In their study of Dutch public opinion and the Uruzgan campaign, Dimitriu and de Graaf (2014, p.6) emphasize the importance of a strategic narrative³² that “*articulates a clear, realistic and compelling mission purpose (...), pertains to legitimacy (...), holds the promise of wartime success (...), is consistent (...)* [and] *fits within an overall strategic communication plan*” to win public support for the military operation.

The theoretical logic that this article identifies is that the public perception of an intervention could be both war on terrorism and rebuilding the nation as they are not mutually exclusive and together contribute to an understanding of variation in public support over time. Rather than view them as separate entities, as Jentleson does, and include them in the analysis separately, *a* and *b* in Figure 3 (below), this paper argues for the need to recognize the complexity in area *c* where both objectives are present and the risk of including false positives when they are treated as mutually exclusive categories.

Fig. 3 : Illustration of how PPO Categories are Apt to Overlap



Can this be a result of a more civil-military approach to military conflicts and a new and broadened conceptualization of security?³³ This would be very interesting to

³² “*Compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn*” (Freedman, 2006, p.22 – as cited in Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2014).

³³ Take for instance the debate over the security-development nexus (Stern & Öjendal, 2010).

explore further in other cases and in a historical analysis to see if different empirical data sets support such a conjecture. It seems reasonable to argue that the blending of PPOs, in this case terrorism and reconstruction, could be a result of the post-9/11 climate and the advancement of a broader conception of security. Also of particular interest would be an exploration of the relationship between perceptions of different policy objectives. The belief that casualties are a result of a war with the terrorists, i.e. an emphasis on security, perhaps reduces the perception that the mission is of a reconstruction nature, a reasonable argument in the Dutch context. However, a citizen could perceive the mission as both a humanitarian and a foreign policy restraint (FPR): one does not have to exclude the other. For example, the best way to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks (a direct threat towards national security) could be to rebuild failing States and provide humanitarian relief before the society implodes (*c* in Fig.3). But it could also be that a citizen does perceive a mission as either humanitarian (*b*) or a matter of national security (*a*). Separating questions on the questionnaire allows for this more complex understanding of public perceptions of the PPO and their relationship to public support.

This article's findings lead to a clear recommendation to policymakers that the parsimonious view of previous research on the PPO overly simplifies this very complex issue and generates an inadequate view of public opinion. In order to win the hearts and minds of their own constituency, the results of previous research encourage politicians to either frame the military intervention in a popular PPO that dominates the public discourse, or altogether avoid military missions with an unpopular mission objective. This is far too simple a view of people's perception of military operations – one that risks being politically counterproductive. Citizens could in fact be more competent and display a more complex and nuanced understanding of military interventions than we give them credit for. The important lesson should instead be that it is of the essence to have a coherent narrative that accounts for how these different objectives relate and how it all fits together. Otherwise policy-makers will be advocating a single PPO, restricting future policy changes and running the risk of backlash when a conflicting PPO, supported by events on the ground, is introduced in the discourse.

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