

Military and the Media
Examining the Wartime Framing of Canada's Involvement in Afghanistan

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Criminology

In

The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities

Program

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

November 2015

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Abstract

Through a content analysis of 72 print news articles and 12 official sources disseminated following the 2010 troop surge in Afghanistan, this study contends that the relationship between the major print news media and the Canadian government in times of war is characterised by a broad and diffused array of media frames. The *National Post*, *Toronto Star*, and *Globe and Mail* were found to publish a variety of politically and thematically diverse articles. Robert Entman's framing theory will be used to explain how the Canadian print media framed the war in Afghanistan. It will be shown that the Canadian print media is best described as heavily influenced by the official framing but free to offer dissenting options and divergent frames. These findings offer insight into the role of the press within Canada's liberal democracy and contribute to the research surrounding the normative theories of the press and their applicability in Canada.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
Rationale for the Study.....	2
Outline of Sections.....	3
A Backgrounder.....	3
<u>Literature Review: The Government, the News Media and War</u>	5
Current Research on Wartime Framing.....	5
Lack of Canadian Research.....	7
Normative Theories of the Press.....	8
<u>Methodology</u>	12
Mobilizing Framing Theory.....	12
Data Sources and Collection of Articles.....	13
Keyword Searches.....	13
Content Analysis: Framing the War in Afghanistan.....	14
Study Limitations.....	15
<u>Results</u>	16
Sample.....	16
Prevailing Themes in Government Publications.....	19
Prevailing Themes in Major Canadian Newspapers.....	19
Comparison of Newspaper Framing and Political Leaning	21
<i>National Post</i> Framing and Political Leaning.....	21
<i>Toronto Star</i> Framing and Political Leaning.....	22
<i>Globe and Mail</i> Framing and Political Leaning.....	22
<u>Discussion</u>	23
Dissecting the Official Framing.....	23
Prevailing Themes and Framing within Major Canadian Newspapers.....	25
Study Implications on Normative Theories of the Press.....	28
<u>Conclusion</u>	31

Introduction

Warfare can be considered one of the most contentious and impactful acts of state. Throughout the war in Afghanistan, the battlefield has only represented one critical arena of the overarching act of war, albeit the most visceral and costly. The other front, often as critically important, is the battle for public opinion. It is the relationship between the state and the media that serves to help or hinder the process of creating informed citizens who can function as educated voters in a liberal democracy. In the West, there are numerous studies that consider the relationship between the state and the media in times of war. However, the body of evidence that speaks to the Canadian state/media relationship is relatively small. The recent war in Afghanistan presents an opportunity to assess the government framing of the war, the resultant media framing, and ultimately to comment on the normative theories of the press. Terrorism, and by extension, the war in Afghanistan have dominated Canada's history for the majority of the 21st century thus far and should be considered a vital area of research for those interested in politics, the media, and Canadian foreign policy. New research is required to shed light on the otherwise neglected issue of print media and its role in the maintenance of Canadian democracy during the war in Afghanistan. The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. What were the prevailing themes within the NATO/government narrative about the rationale, objectives, and expected outcomes of the war in Afghanistan?
2. How did Canada's newspapers with widest distribution (*Toronto Star*, *National Post*, *Globe & Mail*) frame the war in Afghanistan from 2010 to the end of the war in 2014?
3. How do the findings of this case study confirm, challenge or extend existing theories of the foreign policy/news media relationship and more generally, theories of the press's normative role in a democracy?

Rationale for the Study

This study is required to advance the understanding of the government-media relationship in Canada during wartime. There is a substantial body of academic works detailing this relationship in the United States and parts of Europe (see Shabir, Ali, & Iqbal, 2011; McCrisken, 2012; Barker, 2008) but the Canadian contribution is lacking. A body of literature surrounding Canada's framing of the war in Afghanistan matters because Canada is a unique nation with its own political climate and media culture. An understanding of Canada's wartime framing and the media's adoption of official frames is relevant to scholars, policymakers, governments and the greater Canadian population.

This research may be employed by the federal government to craft media releases that will further the official framing while mitigating the risk of an unfavourable story. This can be considered a crucial part of successes in foreign policy endeavours where public support is paramount. It can also be used as a tool for those with a critical understanding of Canadian politics to better understand how government framing is translated by media stories. The official framing is not automatically the most objective narrative. Policymakers can also benefit from this study. A more informed policymaker can better use the media as a vehicle to communicate their policy agenda in a way that will be well received. Additionally, other researchers will benefit from this study as it contributes to the understanding of how the Canadian government and media framed the war in Afghanistan.

Ultimately, the narratives provided by news media have the ability to inform and direct public opinion surrounding contemporary issues. The citizens are the largest and most important group of stakeholders when the decision to wage war is made. The government-media relationship must be better understood as an informed citizenry is

required for deliberating major acts of state in a democracy where the media can help or hinder the democratic process.

Outline of Sections

The following section explains the major events that occurred during the war in Afghanistan. This section serves as a brief introduction to the war that will contextualize the articles examined in this study. The next section is a review of current literature surrounding wartime framing and the media's adoption of government frames. This section provides delves further into the issue as it is understood primarily through the study of the United States. It will demonstrate both the foundation from which this study is conducted and also highlight the absence of the Canadian contribution. Additionally, this section will detail the major theories of the press that will be examined in the Canadian context. Following this, the methodology section will introduce Robert Entman's framing theory and explain how it will be mobilized to explore the media's interaction with official government framing. Following the results, the discussion portion will explain the major findings of the study as it relates to the government and media frames. Finally, the latter part of the study will examine the how the results influence the applicability of the normative theories of the press in Canada.

A Backgrounder:

Following the attack on the World Trade Center buildings on September 11th, 2001, the world was thrust into a new political and security environment that would define the next decade and beyond. The United States led Operation Enduring Freedom in an attempt to eradicate security threats in Afghanistan and bring stability to the Middle East. Canada, a long-time ally and NATO member, would become an active participant in the new fight against terror. This war was fought between a NATO coalition, the

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Originally, the military mission was a success and saw the destruction of much of the al-Qaeda strongholds in Afghanistan (NATO, 2014b). However, as the mission transitioned from one of warfighting to reconstruction the success of the mission came into question.

President Obama ordered a “troop surge” in Afghanistan during in the first months of 2010 in response to requests from military commanders (BBC News, 2009; Wall Street Journal, 2009). The calls for more troops came at a time when the Taliban and Al Qaeda threatened security in Afghanistan through the establishment of operations based in Pakistan. The increase in International Security Assistance Force troops facilitated the expansion of security zones in Afghanistan and improved nationwide control of key militarized areas (NATO, 2012). The number of Canadian troops in Afghanistan increased as well. According to NATO reports, the number of Canadian troops rose by 14% from 2007 to 2011 (NATO, 2014a). However, the success of the overall mission and the ongoing stability of Afghanistan in the long term is still in question.

The Canadian government’s official framing of the war is one that casts the Canadian contingent’s efforts as a valorous pursuit for a stable, secure, and morally just democracy in Afghanistan (Puzic, 2014). The government praised the work of the Canadian Forces and stated that the work done in Afghanistan was a testament to Canada’s history of standing up for human rights. This opinion is echoed by the official framing put forth by NATO. According to the official NATO press releases, Canada’s mission was one of great human sacrifice for the good of safety and security. Earle (2009) takes a more measured approach. He argues that much of Canada’s foreign policy decisions were born of political necessity. According to Earle’s review of contemporary

works in Canadian foreign policy, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin were forced to make difficult choices in order to appease Canada's American allies. This is supported by other scholars who assert that Canada's shift from peacekeeping to peacemaking was a decision required to realign with American interests (Holland & Kirkey, 2010). Critical scholars have argued that the war in Afghanistan was not the moral victory the government touted, but instead an exercise in futility and wastefulness. An example of this is Albo and Klassen (2013) who describe Canada's commitment to nation building as one that has been left unfulfilled. It remains to be seen if this divergence of opinion is present in the relationship between the Canadian media and the state. The following sections will examine current literature surrounding this relationship in times of war.

Literature Review: The Government, the News Media, and War

Current Research on Wartime Framing

Outside of the official governmental framing, the media is able to construct the war in Afghanistan favourably or offer a dissenting frame. The ubiquity of United States media outlets has led to a substantial American influence on Canadian media consumption (Dowler, Fleming, & Muzzatti, 2006). As a result, Canadians are subject to American media frames surrounding the war in Afghanistan. Ingram and Dodds (2011) analyzed the media frames surrounding counterterrorism efforts in North America. The authors describe a dichotomy in the media between a generally favourable opinion of "homeland security" and the often negative vitriol associated with the "war on terror" (Ingram and Dodds, 2011, p. 95). Although these are strictly American terms, they illustrate the competing frames offered by the government and the media. In the Canadian context, this media dichotomy may not arise from fear of actual terrorist attacks. Lemyre, Turner, Lee, and Krewski (2006) argue that Canadians do not consider terrorism to be a

significant domestic threat. At the national level, there is a disconnect between wartime policymaking and public opinion surrounding the threat of terrorism. Herein lies the need for research into the Canadian government's framing of the war in Afghanistan and the media's dissemination of frames supporting or opposing these frames.

Louw (2003) argues that any competent politician or military strategist should appreciate the power of the media to convey messages and mobilize action. The Pentagon has played a major role in the media's access to the War on Terror. Ryan (2004) explains that, historically, military actions carried out by the United States have been characterized as humanitarian missions. The American government's framing of these military engagements is such that it is received by the population through the lens of a morally just humanitarian aid initiative as opposed to an imperialistic military action. This practice can sometimes have extreme consequences. For example, Zaller and Chiu (1996) suggests that the United States government actively frames foreign policy events to either create or ignore a crisis. The result is that the state can more easily mobilize a response in an effort to achieve foreign policy goals.

Murphy and White (2007) suggest this type of framing can decide the outcome of a war based upon ongoing public support. However, the necessity of public support for war is debateable. Ultimately, the framing process is not always successful. This is especially true when discussing international foreign policy decisions and the public's reception of such initiatives. In the United States, the government's attempt to create a homogenous narrative surrounding the War on Terror ultimately failed. Callahan, Dubnick, and Olshfski (2006) found that there was no coherent sentiment among the public but instead a collection of opinions fostered by one's own ideological and professional situation. This

presents a difficult problem for governments as they must constantly react to changing circumstances as they craft the official framing.

Baum and Groeling (2010) suggest that, in the early stages of a conflict, it is possible for political elites to influence the framing of military action. The authors suggest that as time wears on the initial politically created framework holds less weight and may be replaced by alternative frames. Public support in Canada seems to have followed this trajectory as support waned and steadily decreased throughout the duration of the war (Boucher, 2010). Robert Entman, a contemporary media studies researcher, has dedicated multiple articles to addressing the relationship between the official government framing in the United States and the ultimate reproduction and dissemination of this information by the media. His research suggests that media frames are carefully crafted by the political elite and reproduced by the media in order to produce a positive response amongst the populace (2007). The following section highlights the need for further research into this relationship in Canada.

Lack of Canadian Research

The media's reporting on the war in Afghanistan and its relationship with the government remains an unexplored frontier in Canadian foreign policy and media research. Within the study of media and its relationship with foreign policy there is a great depth of information surrounding the American and British wartime narratives (Shabir, Ali, & Iqbal, 2011; McCrisken, 2012; Barker, 2008). In a post-9/11 media landscape, different thematic buzzwords like "sacrifice" and "safety" emerge in the rhetorical justifications for the conflicts overseas (McCriskin, 2012; Jensen, 2011). In Canada, there is lack of research about how the government framed of the war in Afghanistan. A Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (2007)

report takes a different approach from American counterparts in that the maintenance of human rights becomes a central focus. Interestingly, this framing of the war's purpose differs from NATO's security focused mission statement (NATO and Afghanistan, 2013). This one Canadian source is just an example of the potential for the Canadian government/media relationship to be vastly different than those of other NATO countries. Further research surrounding the Canadian political construction of the war in Afghanistan is required and could include many different elements not seen in the US or UK.

Normative Theories of the Press

An explanation of the normative theories of the press is important as these theories form the foundation from which the government/media relationship can be understood. The authoritarian model is one such theory that is not applicable to contemporary Canadian democratic society. Authoritarian systems are characterized by the overt and total control of the media by the state. This system is typical of the USSR during the Cold War and currently only applies to a small number of other states like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The authoritarian model of the media is carried out by states that have a carefully controlled monopoly on broadcasters and print media. Dissent is not an option and those who oppose the government are censored or persecuted (Vivian, 2009). The central premise of this model is that the citizenry can be controlled and influenced by the state's messages (Benson, 2008). Total control of the media can be used to prevent political dissent, guide the norms and morals of society, or rally the population for war. The authoritarian model is usually associated with communism and other non-democratic models of government.

The libertarian theory is the antithesis of the authoritarian model. There are fundamental differences in freedoms, ownership, and most importantly, the power structure of the media apparatus. The capitalist libertarian system is inherently distrustful of the government and the state. The government's involvement in the media is avoided as it is a perceived breach of free speech (Ostini & Fung, 2002). Furthermore, the model suggests that the government has no place in the for-profit "marketplace of ideas" that the libertarian system creates (Vivian, 2009). In a libertarian system the media is privately owned and operates independent of the government. This tenet also speaks to the need for total freedom from censorship. The aim of society is to further the interests of individuals (not political elites) as opposed to the social collective (Ostini & Fung, 2002). This ideology is meant to maximize human freedom within society.

The libertarian model encourages the criticism of the state. Due to the private ownership of the media and no state control over the content, it is assumed that dissenting opinions and productive debate will flow naturally (Siebert, Peterson, & Schraam, 1956). This is especially relevant to the present study because the major Canadian newspapers may or may not choose to criticize the government actions in Afghanistan. The ability for the media to dissent is seen as a critical component of the libertarian model that assists in the maintenance of democracy (Benson, 2008).

The Herman-Chomsky Propaganda Model (PM) is one theoretical approach that attempts to explain the interaction between governments and the media from a different perspective. The PM follows critical-Marxist principles in that its central tenets are concerned with the power wielded by political and corporate elites in a capitalist society (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Mullen & Klaehn, 2010). Interestingly, the PM challenges the notion that the media is an inherently liberal apparatus within democratic societies. Instead,

the PM argues that the media is predisposed to present views favourable to the “power elite” (who are a combination of corporate and private interests) because of institutional/structural constructs within a given society. Furthermore, the upper class wields the most communicative power via the media because they also possess the most economic power. The PM assumes that the political, media, and financial elite are comprised of a relatively homogenous group that allows dissent, but only within the given confines of the overarching propaganda system (Sparks, 2007). Ultimately, the PM purports that the public’s consent is not forced by a totalitarian nanny state, but is instead manufactured through implicit power dynamics.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) acknowledge that the PM’s departure from the social responsibility and libertarian models is not immediately apparent due to the diffused nature of Western media. However, the authors assert that there are a number of factors or “filters” that influence the way the media presents a story. First, ownership of the media affects what stories receive the most airtime. Second, funding via advertising is another form of economic control that asserts an influence over media coverage. Third, the source of the story will affect how a story is presented to the public. Fourth, expected “Flak” or pushback created by special interest groups influences the framing of a story. Finally, anti-communist/anti-terrorism rhetoric drive news stories through a fear driven framing of stories (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Herman and Chomsky assert that these filters coalesce to produce and direct the media frames created for the public.

The last theory considered, the social responsibility model, exists as the ideal framework for Western democracies. In this model, the press is driven by a moral obligation to present the truth. It is important to note that this truth should be objective to avoid as much inherent bias as possible. The model was born of the 1947 Hutchins

Commission in which a postwar United States, inherently distrustful of the media, sought to refocus the role of the media in a democracy (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947). In the social responsibility model, the media not only focuses on preventing false claims, but also has the duty of creating an informed citizenry that can make logical political decisions based on solid evidence. The state exercises some control in this model as well. Governments have the ability to level fines and penalties for media outlets that deviate from the morally just tenets of objective and honest reporting (Vivian, 2009). This state control is supposed to create a unified code of conduct for journalists that holds all media outlets to the same standard. Metzgar and Hornaday (2013) distilled the Hutchins recommendations down to the following standards:

- Provide “a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning”;
- Serve “as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism”;
- Project “a representative picture of constituent groups in society”;
- Present and clarify “the goals and values of society”; and
- Provide “full access to the day’s intelligence.” (p. 259)

Like the libertarian model, the social responsibility model allows for criticism of the state. Discourse and debate are encouraged as a healthy part of the democratic process. However, the government exercises more control over the media than the libertarian model. The state has laws in place that prohibit hate speech and potentially offensive content. This can be considered a form of censorship, and some libertarians might argue it stifles the marketplace of ideas. The following sections will explain how Robert Entman’s framing theory was used to analyze Canada’s most widely distributed newspapers. The results offer insight into what normative theory best fits in Canadian

media and which theoretical models fail to offer a valid summation of the government/media relationship.

Methodology

Mobilizing Framing Theory

Robert Entman, the seminal figure in framing analysis, asserts that there is a hierarchical cascading network that explains how framing is able to guide public opinion (2010). First, a nation's overarching cultural norms affect the framing of a particular issue. Second, the political elite (such as the Canadian Government) frame stories strategically before releasing them to the media who then disseminate and non-strategically reframe the stories. These stories are eventually released and public opinion is influenced by the information they are subjected to. Application of Entman's (2007) model suggests that a political victor is able to act with less fear of voter retribution and political loser's ability to act is diminished by media framing. Essentially, framing is a tool that is strategically employed to boost political clout by influencing the public's perception of the government's actions.

In this study, framing theory is employed as a means to understand how the Canadian government justified its actions in Afghanistan. Additionally, framing theory allows the researcher to identify and explain how the political message direct from the government is transformed and recommunicated in major Canadian newspapers. Framing is the term used to describe how the media can present a story in a particular way such that the public receives a carefully crafted narrative that guides the dialogue surrounding the issue at hand (Cassino, 2007). The main objective of this study is to conduct a framing analysis that locates the similarities and differences between the Canadian government framing of the war in Afghanistan and the stories produced by major print media.

Data Sources and Collection of Articles

The data that was analyzed for this research came from three different news sources. The sources were The *National Post*, the *Globe and Mail*, and the *Toronto Star*. These papers were selected because they had either national distribution or high circulation rates and thus highest audience reach. Three papers were selected so that they may provide a depth of articles and opinion that can be extrapolated to explain the overall narrative within the Canadian media. Additionally, the use of multiple newspapers allowed for further analysis surrounding the differences in article content. The articles that were selected for analysis were from a time period following the beginnings of the American troop surge until the end of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. This time period encompassed the last quarter of 2010 to mid-2014 in order to capture the articles produced following the NATO decision to continue the mission with much larger troop numbers. The total number of articles analyzed was 72(24 per newspaper) and 12 government sources. The following section will explain how individual articles were selected.

Keyword Searches and Sampling

Individual articles were obtained by using keywords within the University of Ontario Institute of Technology library search engine. This method is preferable to using the newspaper online publications for multiple reasons. First, the search engines embedded in the newspaper websites do not allow for restricting results by date. Second, a cursory search showed that the relevance of articles obtained via the search functions within the newspaper websites was lacking. Finally, the library search engine provided a highly customizable and powerful platform from which article attributes like publication, date, and author can be selected. In order to retrieve useful data, keywords must be

selected so that articles adhere to the time period restrictions and contain content that is relevant. Additionally, keywords must not lead discussion or draw out themes that remain embedded in the content of the articles. For this reason, search terms relating to the specific goals and talking points created by the Canadian government were not used. Additionally, terms like success or failure were also omitted. In order to avoid searching for articles of a specific framing, only the keywords Canada, War, and Afghanistan were used. These same keywords were used for each newspaper and the first 24 relevant articles were analyzed for each paper. Any article that was not written about Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan was excluded.

After conducting the sampling detailed above the study analyzed 24 articles from the *National Post*, 24 articles from the *Toronto Star*, and 24 articles from the *Globe and Mail* for a total of 72 newspaper articles analyzed between 2010 and 2014. The government framing was determined using a sample size of 12 official government sources including the Prime Minister's Office and parliamentary reports.

Content Analysis: Framing the War in Afghanistan

In order to answer the research questions the following data was collected:

- Article Title
- Article Date
- Article Length
- Article Author
- Central Themes
- Article Source (Press Release, Editorial, etc.)

Each newspaper article was then classified based on how the ongoing mission in Afghanistan was framed. Articles were classified based upon their overall framing as dominant, ambivalent, or oppositional. These three categories are used to create an

understanding of which articles support the official government framing, those articles which offer dissenting options and those that are neutral. This process is an accepted practice in media studies and has been employed by other researchers such as Bauder's (2008) article detailing newspaper reporting on immigration and Greenberg's (2000) study of Canadian print and racism against Chinese immigrants. The notion that the examination media frames can lead to a more accurate picture of the government/media relationship is laid out in Pan and Kosicki's 1993 article *Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse*.

Dominant Articles. The articles that are classified as "dominant" follow the official government framing of the war in Afghanistan. That is, the article must adhere to the same agenda and major themes as the official government sources (e.g. security, democracy, etc.). Additionally, these articles do not offer criticism or dissenting opinions.

Ambivalent Articles. Ambivalent articles occupy the middle ground between dominant and oppositional. These articles follow the government framing but may criticise some aspects of the mission in Afghanistan. However, these articles are not overtly oppositional or critical of Canadian involvement.

Oppositional Articles. Oppositional articles are critical of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan and the Canadian initiatives overseas. These articles may critique the mission outside of the confines of the official government framing. Additionally, these articles generally infer that the War in Afghanistan is not just, necessary, or sustainable.

Study Limitations

There are countless sources of information within Canada which may offer differing opinions in regards to the war in Afghanistan. The ubiquity of television and radio must be considered when examining the overall media landscape. Furthermore, the

growth of social media websites and the availability of crowd-sourced reporting present alternative sources of news. Ultimately, the major Canadian newspapers remain a worthy medium in light of other sources. The national distribution and audience reach of the *National Post*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Star* make these newspapers an “official” source of information about Canadian issues. Due to the far reaching and diverse media landscape in Canada this study will not address a number of outlets and media sources that will influence Canadian citizens. However, the newspaper remains a staple of Canadian news dissemination and will remain the sole medium of analysis for unofficial frames.

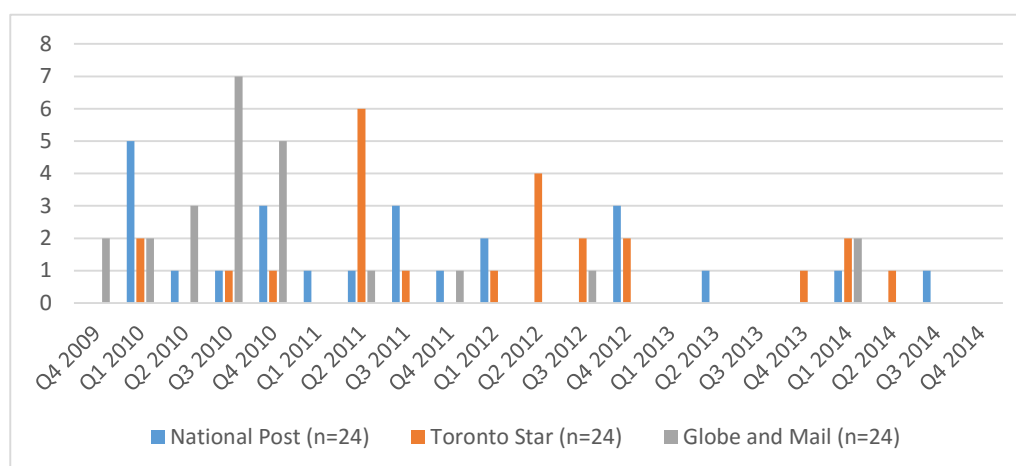
Outside of the Canadian media there are other political and foreign policy based assumptions that underpin the research. For an accurate comparison to be made between the themes within media and the Canadian government/NATO only the political narrative provided by the Conservative party was considered. Within the Canadian political landscape there are a multitude of dissenting opinions from opposition parties in regards to the conduct in Afghanistan. However, in order for accurate conclusions to be drawn regarding the interaction between government and media, only the narrative framing put forward by the Conservative Party will be considered.

Results

Sample

Among the newspaper articles that were analyzed there was no significant variation in article length or page placement within each respective newspaper. All three newspapers placed the articles relating to Afghanistan in the “A” section of the newspaper and averaged between 600-900 words per article.

Fig. 1: Article Publication Dates by Newspaper



The publication dates of each newspaper article are clustered around major mission milestones and political points of contention. There is an observable increase in articles published beginning in 2010 and ultimately tapering off near the end of 2012. This coincides with the debate surrounding the extension of the Canadian mission past the 2011 deadline. The articles by the *Globe and Mail* were more numerous during this time in Canada's mission. All three newspapers showed a small resurgence of articles in late 2013 to 2014 which coincides with the end of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

Fig. 2 Government Publication Sources (N=12)

Source Type	Number Analyzed
Government Website	5
Parliamentary Information	2
Prime Minister Speech	1
Public Statement	1
NATO ISAF Website	1
Senate Report	1
Parliamentary Report	1
Cabinet Report	1

The government publications that were analyzed were from a variety of different official sources. The majority of the sources were from government websites with this source type comprising 5 of 12 articles total. Parliament information publications that

detailed the history of parliamentary action were used in 2 instances. The remainder of sources were taken from a speech by the Prime Minister, official statements, the ISAF/NATO website, and reports from different levels of government. These sources were selected to create a holistic picture of the official framing drawn from numerous media outlets.

Fig. 3 Publication Source by Newspaper

Newspaper	News Service	In House	Editorial	Outside Expert
<i>National Post</i> (n=24)	13 (54%)	6 (25%)	1(4%)	4 (17%)
<i>Toronto Star</i> (n=24)	0 (0%)	17 (71%)	4 (17%)	3 (12%)
<i>Globe and Mail</i> (n=24)	0 (0%)	10 (42%)	9 (37%)	5 (21%)

Figure 3 outlines the publication source or author type of each newspaper article examined. The *National Post* utilized information from a news service in 54% of articles examined where the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail* used none. For the purposes of this study a news service is any external company that distributes stories to the media such as Canadian Press or Reuters. The *Toronto Star* used in house writers in 71% of articles compared to just 25% in the *National Post* and 42% in the *Globe and Mail*. Editorial and Opinion articles accounted for 37% of articles in the *Globe and Mail* with the *Toronto Star* at 17% and the *National Post* at only 4% overall. Outside experts or writers not routinely employed by the newspaper were utilized in 21% of articles studied from the *Globe and Mail* with the *National Post* at 17% and the *Toronto Star* at 12%. This information is relevant because it allows researchers to consider how different author types might influence the articles classification. For example, news services by nature are generally sanitized stories without interpretation. This may have contributed to the *National Post*'s predominantly ambivalent stance.

Prevailing Themes in Government Publications

Fig. 4 Prevailing Themes in Government Publications (N=12)

	Publications Mentioning
Development/International Aid	12 (100%)
Ending Terrorism/Security	10 (83%)
Democracy/Governance	9 (75%)
Training Afghan Police/Military	6 (50%)
Rule of Law	6 (50%)
Human Rights	5 (42%)
Women's Rights	5 (42%)
Aiding NATO Allies	4 (33%)

The government framing was uniquely consistent across each of the 12 sources that were analyzed. The prevailing themes are detailed above in Figure 4 in order from most mentioned in government publications to least mentioned. Development and international aid were the most commonly discussed topics from within the government publications. Development and international aid were discussed in 100% of the analyzed publications. Following development, ending terrorism/security and democracy/governance were key topics with 83% and 75% respectively. Training the ANA/ANP and the rule of law were prevailing themes in 50% of all government publications. Human rights and the rights of women were mentioned in 42% of analyzed content.

Prevailing Themes in Major Canadian Newspapers

This section contains an outline of the prevailing themes in the most widely circulated Canadian newspapers. Figure 5 shows the most prominent theme by newspaper. The most often discussed topic in the *National Post* was democracy and governance with 14 of 24 articles commenting on the state of the Afghan government. Security and terrorism as well as development were the next leading themes with 9 and 8 mentions respectively. The least discussed prevailing themes in the *National Post* were

the mission's economic cost with only 2 of 24 articles and domestic politics with 3 of 24 articles addressing this subject.

The theme that received the most attention in the *Toronto Star* was the training of the Afghan Police and Afghan National Army with 11 of 24 articles making reference to this mission goal. Democracy and governance, development, and security were the next most common themes with 10 of 24 articles commenting on these topics. The *Toronto Star*, similar to the *National Post*, had only a small number of articles addressing mission length with only 3 overall mentions. International politics were largely neglected with only 4 of 24 articles discussing the topic.

In the *Globe and Mail*, the main themes were both development and the training of the Afghan National Army/Police, with 12 of 24 articles mentioning these topics. Democracy and governance were discussed in 10 of the articles analyzed. Finally security and the eradication of terrorism were a major topic of interest with nine mentions. The least popular topic in the *Globe and Mail* articles were mission length with only one article broaching the subject. Additionally, women's rights were only discussed in 3 of 24 articles analyzed by the *Globe and Mail*.

Fig. 5 Prevailing Themes in Major Newspaper Articles by Article Mentions

	<i>National Post</i>	<i>Toronto Star</i>	<i>Globe and Mail</i>
Security/ Terrorism	9	10	9
Democracy/Governance	14	10	10
Women's Rights	5	9	3
Economic Cost	2	9	7
International Politics	5	4	8
Domestic Politics	3	7	6
Development/Foreign Aid	8	10	12
ANA and ANP Training	7	11	12
Mission Length	4	3	1

Comparison of Major Newspaper Framing and Political Leaning

Fig. 6 Article Tone/Stance by Newspaper

Newspaper	Dominant	Ambivalent	Oppositional
<i>National Post</i>	6 (25%)	14 (58%)	4 (17%)
<i>Toronto Star</i>	4 (17%)	6 (25%)	14 (58%)
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	10 (42%)	10 (42%)	4 (17%)

This section outlines how each newspaper framed their articles relating to the war in Afghanistan. Articles are classified as either following the government framing (dominant category), offering dissenting frames (oppositional category), or remaining neutral (ambivalent category). The *Globe and Mail* had the highest concentration of articles adhering to the dominant framing with 42% of overall articles in this category. The *National Post* had 25% of articles in the dominant category. The *Toronto Star* had only 17% of all analyzed articles following the dominant framing of the war in Afghanistan. The *National Post* had 58% articles that can be considered ambivalent. The *Globe and Mail* had 42% of articles that were ambivalent and the *Toronto Star* articles that were analyzed had an ambivalent framing only 25% of the time. Additionally, the *Toronto Star* had the most oppositional articles of the newspapers with 58% of articles in this category. Both the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* had 17% of articles that can be considered ambivalent.

National Post Framing and Political Leaning

Fig. 7 *National Post* Article Tone by Author Type

	News Service	In House	Editorial	Outside Expert
Dominant	1 (8%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	3 (75%)
Ambivalent	10 (77%)	3 (50%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Oppositional	2 (15%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)
Total	13	6	1	4

Figure 7 provides a summary of the *National Post*'s framing of the war in Afghanistan by author type. Articles drawing content from news services comprised 13 of

the 24 articles analyzed. Only 8% of these articles followed the dominant framing, 77% were considered ambivalent and 15% of the articles were oppositional. Articles written by in-house writers comprised six of 24 articles analyzed in the *National Post*. Of these articles, 17% followed the dominant framing, 50% were considered ambivalent and 33% of the articles were oppositional. The single editorial/opinion article had an ambivalent framing. Finally, of the four articles written by an outside expert 75% followed the dominant framing with 25% considered oppositional.

***Toronto Star* Framing and Political Leaning**

Fig. 8 *Toronto Star* Article Tone by Author Type

	News Service	In House	Editorial	Outside Expert
Dominant	0	2 (12%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)
Ambivalent	0	3 (18%)	2 (50%)	1 (33%)
Oppositional	0	12 (70%)	1 (25%)	2 (67%)
Total	0	17	4	3

Figure 8 provides a summary of the *Toronto Star*'s framing of the War in Afghanistan by author type. Among the 24 articles, analyzed no news services were cited. Of the 17 articles by in house writers, 70% were oppositional, 18% were ambivalent, and 12% adhered to the dominant framing. Of the four editorial articles, 50% had an ambivalent framing, 25% of editorials followed the dominant framing, and the remaining 25% were oppositional. Of the three articles analyzed that were written by outside experts, 67% were oppositional and 33% had an ambivalent framing.

***Globe and Mail* Framing and Political Leaning**

Fig. 9 *Globe and Mail* Article Tone by Author Type

	News Service	In House	Editorial	Outside Expert
Dominant	0	3 (33%)	6 (67%)	1 (20%)
Ambivalent	0	4 (44%)	3 (33%)	3 (60%)
Oppositional	0	3 (33%)	0 (%)	1 (20%)
Total	0	10	9	5

Figure 9 provides a summary of the *Globe and Mail*'s framing of the War in Afghanistan by author type. Among the 24 articles analyzed, no news services were cited. In house writers were the authors of 10 out of 24 articles. Of the articles in this category, 44% of these articles were ambivalent, 33% followed the dominant framing of the war and the remaining 33% were oppositional. Editorial and opinion articles accounted for 9 of 24 articles analyzed. 67% of these articles adhered to the dominant framing of the war and the remaining 33% of editorials were ambivalent. No editorial articles were classified as oppositional. Of the 5 articles written by outside experts 60% were ambivalent in their framing, 20% were oppositional, and 20% adhered to the dominant framing.

Discussion

Dissecting the Official Framing

Rationale and Justification. The Canadian government's rationale and justification for the mission centered on two core concepts. These major themes included both the eradication of terrorism and the promotion of security in the Middle East. The government framed the war as a way to help combat terrorism overseas, but also as a means of ensuring security at home. The mission was essentially a calculated answer to the 9/11 terror attacks and many official Canadian sources explained the benefits of aiding our NATO allies in the War on Terror. This first order rationale for the War in Afghanistan represents a similar narrative as that of Canada's NATO allies (McCracken, 2012; Jensen, 2011). An interesting omission in the overall rationale for the war was Canada's binding obligation to NATO's Washington Treaty. NATO invoked article 5 of the Washington Treaty which states that an armed attack on one nation represents an attack on all NATO members (The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). This shifts the mission

from a war created out of a foreign policy necessity to one of a moral obligation to aid our allies.

The second half of the Canadian government's rationale for involvement in Afghanistan was the potential to do humanitarian work. The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (2007) wrote, "Only a very callous person would deny that the Afghan people need help" (p.2). Development, foreign aid, and infrastructure building were featured prominently in government press releases and seemed to increase in use during the latter part of the mission. One of the most important findings within the government narrative is that it is unified across all official sources that were studied. Canadian and NATO sources were largely in sync and Canadian press releases always touched on the same core concepts. This is evidenced by the similarities between the Canadian governmental narratives and the articles published by the print media.

Goals and Objectives: Outcomes and Benefits. Where the unity of the rationale and justification were impressive: the objectives of the mission were characterized by a deafening silence. A major criticism of the war in Afghanistan was that it had an unclear end-state and muddled objectives. "Mission creep" or the continuously evolving and expanding set of goals and objectives was an ongoing issue throughout the war. In 2011, the Canadian government elected to continue the War in Afghanistan instead of pulling out the Canadian Forces. This decision caused debate in news media and in the House of Commons. At the time, there was a marked shift in the government framing from a mission based on security and development to one that focused on building democracy and training the ANA and ANP. The one clear objective at this time was the creation of a self-sustaining Afghanistan by 2014 (Canada's Six Priorities in Afghanistan, 2009; PM confirms firm end to Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, 2012).

The anticipated outcomes and benefits of the war in Afghanistan are closely linked with the goals and objectives of the mission. That is, the Canadian government has tried to present a unified message in regards to the War in Afghanistan's purpose. However, within the news media there was a fragmented sense of whether these anticipated outcomes were rooted in real measurable progress. Women's rights and human rights became a hallmark of the Canadian government's releases, listing drastic changes as expected benefits (ISAF, n.d.; Highlights of Progress in Afghanistan, 2007; Canada's Approach in Afghanistan, 2011). This litmus test for success was debated fiercely in the media. Between the different newspapers there was no consensus surrounding how tangible the changes in women's rights and human rights really were. Security, democracy, and the rule of law were key outcomes that the Canadian government attempted to achieve. Again, the success of these endeavours remained contested in the media as evidenced by the oppositional nature of the *Toronto Star* and *National Post*.

Prevailing Themes and Framing within Major Canadian Newspapers

The *National Post*. The *National Post* was generally more ambivalent about the War in Afghanistan than its counterparts. The sheer number of articles with content drawn directly from news services may have influenced this result. Articles from news services are generally written in a technical and apolitical fashion for the purpose of dissemination to media outlets. This is in contrast to editorials or columns that encourage both fact and opinion. The articles published by the *National Post* kept usually within the boundaries of the official framing whether they were classified as subscribing to a dominant, ambivalent, or oppositional overall tone. This phenomenon is mirrored in the

United States where the media sources vary in opinion, but the government wields the power in creating a grand narrative (Aday, 2010).

However, there were some cases where the focus of the articles diverged considerably from that of the official sources. International politics, and the role of Pakistan and Iran in the War on Terror were mentioned in some articles (Motevalli, 2010; Goodspeed, 2010). This was not a common area of interest at the *National Post* but it does have some significance in that it is a departure from the official government framing. Other issues that arose include: i) Julian Assange and the Afghanistan War Logs; ii) the economic cost of the war; and, iii) domestic political issues (Davis, 2012; Goodspeed, 2010). Interestingly, the *National Post* also praised the government in some areas that were outside of the official framing. For example, an author for the *National Post*, Stephenson (2011) commended the Canadian government for increasing the strength and effectiveness of the military and also commented on the positive transformation of the public opinion surrounding the military.

The *Toronto Star*. The *Toronto Star* published the most oppositional articles of the three newspapers studied. Many of the articles did not support the war in Afghanistan and called for immediate changes or withdrawal. The majority of articles analyzed from the *Toronto Star* were from in-house writers. These articles were the most likely to offer dissenting opinions and characterize the War in Afghanistan as a failing or failed endeavour. The *Toronto Star* offered dissenting opinions that addressed the prevailing themes set forth by the official government narrative. Training of the ANA/ANP, security, and governance were all key areas of concern for the authors at the *Toronto Star* (Rae, 2010; Canada's War and its Legacy, 2011; Canada's Future in Afghanistan, 2010).

The *Toronto Star* also had the most articles that addressed issues that were not part of the dominant framing. The human cost of the war, especially civilian casualties, were a common theme in the *Toronto Star* (Walkom, 2011; The Mission in Afghanistan, 2011). Other issues that were addressed include Canada's poor handling of detainees, the economic cost of the war, and Canada's reputation internationally (Harper, 2011; Potter, 2012; Siddiqui, 2012).

The *Globe and Mail*. The *Globe and Mail* followed the dominant government framing the most often of the three newspapers that were analyzed. The *Globe and Mail*'s articles were the most likely to adopt and perpetuate the government framing and the least likely to publish dissenting articles. The articles that were analyzed were predominantly written by in-house columnists or they were editorial/opinion pieces. The most commonly discussed topics were almost identical to those in the *Toronto Star*. The training of the ANA/ANP, security, and governance were central to the writers at the *Globe and Mail*. This similarity with the *Toronto Star* is a somewhat surprising as the results suggest the newspapers are opposites on the political spectrum. The *Globe and Mail* took a pro-government approach where the *Toronto Star* was often dissenting.

The similarities in common news topics are important because they illustrate the success of the government's grand narrative. In keeping with this, the *Globe and Mail* only rarely positioned the war in an alternative frame. These alternative frames were included in articles that focused on politics both domestically and at an international level (Bercuson, 2009; Bercuson, 2010). It is important to note that these stories were still pro-government and pro-Afghanistan intervention, albeit with a commentary that was not within the realm of the official narrative. Ultimately, the *Globe and Mail* was found to be the newspaper with opinions most favourable to the government, occupying a space on

the right politically. The variance in the articles framing of the war in Afghanistan serves as an indicator that can be used to better understand the relevance of the normative theories of the press in Canada.

Study Implications on Normative Theories of the Press

The Social Responsibility Model. The social responsibility model is the best fit when seeking to explain the relationship between the Canadian government and the media. The major Canadian print newspapers published articles that were vetted and not intentionally misleading. That said, the articles analyzed suggest there are major political differences amongst the individual newspapers. The social responsibility model in a utopian world would mandate that articles be written without bias or misleading conclusions. However, the political turmoil surrounding the war in Afghanistan does not lend itself to absolute truths or a single valid opinion on issues of foreign policy, security, or humanitarian aid.

As a result, the Canadian print media presented the war in Afghanistan using many different frames. Some cast the government's rationale and performance in Afghanistan as a successful moral victory (like the *Globe and Mail*) and others found the human and economic cost to be too great (such as the *Toronto Star*). This dichotomy is indicative of a media that is free to present differing and equally valid arguments to the public in order to create a more informed and knowledgeable citizenry. Ultimately, the Canadian government's relationship with the major print media suggests that healthy democratic debate and quality reporting are aspects of the social responsibility model Canadians can enjoy.

The Libertarian Model. The findings regarding both the government framing and the narratives offered by the major Canadian newspapers offer insight into the normative role of the media in Canadian democracy. The carefully managed framing provided by official sources suggests that the government offers media statements from a central consistent source. The state's ability to offer favourable frames to the Canadian media suggests that there are issues with a purely libertarian understanding of the media. In this system, the media should operate completely independently from the government with market interests guiding decisions (Vivian, 2009). Instead, the research suggests that the marketplace of ideas is occupied by a heterogeneous body of political and media elite. The libertarian model that heralds the media's self-determination is not supported by the present study.

However, the libertarian model does accurately describe the government's relationship with the media where censorship and dissent is concerned. The *Toronto Star* was particularly vocal in their opposition to the government's involvement in Afghanistan. This kind of criticism is welcome in Western democratic countries and serves a useful purpose as a tool for debate (Siebert, Peterson, & Schraam, 1956; Benson, 2008). A potential shortcoming of the libertarian model is the de facto censorship of dissenting opinions that occurs as a result of scripted media releases and national security issues. The media briefs provided in Afghanistan were carefully worded and sanitized much to the frustration of the reporters on the ground (Smith, 2013). Furthermore, the War Tapes that threatened the government's monopoly on information were met with a stiff backlash from Western countries (Goodspeed, 2010).

The Propaganda Model. The Propaganda Model, although somewhat antiquated, does hold some weight in the current Canadian media landscape. The sanitized war releases and cohesive framing that was presented to the public is indicative of a state with a high degree of control over some aspects of the media. That is not to say that the relationship between the government and the media is authoritarian but on the contrary it seems to be “managed” within the confines of the social responsibility model. Research in other countries have found that public support and media coverage change with elite consensus (Aday, 2010; Hjarvard & Kristensen, 2014). However, the duality of the major Canadian newspapers that were analyzed in this study suggest that the political and media elites cannot be considered a homogenous body.

The sources used by the newspaper’s journalists challenge some major assumptions of the Propaganda Model. The Propaganda Model suggests that the media’s sources affect their access to information, overall issue framing, and inform the media of what topics are salient (Herman, 2000). This was visible in theatre with the military in Afghanistan as much of the information came from the government or media officers. Although, the actual articles that were published in the newspapers did have a different makeup of editorials, news services, experts, and in-house columns creating their content. In other words, the Canadian print media was not entirely at the will of the government for news stories for sourcing. There exists an array of authors and experts to draw from on any given subject related to the war. This supports the work by Meirick and Edy (2007) which suggests that populations don’t adopt a single frame but instead their own amalgamation of many different frames.

Authoritarianism and Totalitarian Control of the Media. As stated earlier in the section detailing the major tenets of the authoritarian model of media control, there is

no application to the Canadian government-media relationship. The Canadian media landscape is owned by a myriad of private companies as well as government sources. Political dissent and framings that differ from the official source were numerous in this study and present an overwhelming body of evidence contrary to the authoritarian philosophy.

Conclusion

The justifications for the war and the mission's main initiatives were presented with a unified message across all government press releases and reports. The official framing encompassed the primary objectives of security, democratic governance, development, and training the ANA/ANP. Canada's secondary objectives included: protection of human rights, women's rights, and the rule of law. This unified message appeared to filter down to the major Canadian newspapers where the topics of discussion were predominantly centered upon the government's major justifications. There was a great variety of opinion among the *National Post*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Star*. The *National Post* was mostly ambivalent or neutral. The *Globe and Mail* generally followed the dominant framing of the war; and the *Toronto Star* was the most overtly dissenting of the major newspapers.

This study adds to the sparse literature surrounding the framing of Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan and advances the scholarly debate regarding the normative role of the press in Canadian society. In order to fully understand the media's relationship with the Canadian government, more research is required. This is an area of vital importance for scholars, policymakers, foreign policy analysts, and Canadians at large. This is because the media's recommunication of the government framing is a key component of how Canadians come to understand foreign policy events. It is critical that

researchers are able to constantly reassess and challenge the assumptions surrounding the media's place in Canadian democracy. The media's role in disseminating information regarding modern day military campaigns cannot be overstated and should be considered an important topic of discussion for all those seeking to advance the understanding of Canada's foreign policy initiatives.

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