



Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FINAL BACHELOR'S DEGREE
THESIS**

**Canada's foreign policy alignment with liberal values: case study of
Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan between 2008 and 2011.**

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Between 2001 and 2014, over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel served in Afghanistan under NATO's International Security Assistance Force, marking Canada's largest military deployment since World War II (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). Initially focused on Kabul, NATO's mission expanded to the entire country by 2006, with Canada leading efforts in Kandahar province. The Canadian government established six priorities, four centered on Kandahar, emphasizing security, governance, humanitarian aid, and border stability, alongside two national-level goals where established, promoting governance and reconciliation (Government of Canada, 2008c). Quarterly reports to Parliament tracked progress on these priorities. This paper examines Canada's Afghanistan policy (2008-2011) alignment with liberal values. It conducts a literature review of parliamentary reports, analyzing actions through liberal IR characteristics to conclude on policy alignment. In the first part of the paper, the main characteristics of liberalism in International Relations are presented, and from this contextualization, the variables used in the analysis are extracted. In the second part, the analysis is developed through a comparative table, where it is sought, through the analyzed texts, which facts, decisions or intentions can be explained by the main characteristics of liberalism. In the final section, conclusions are drawn in order to answer the analysis question.

This study falls within the field of study of foreign policy analysis. The liberal normative framework is used, particularly focusing on neoliberalism, and drawing upon concepts from scholars like R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye. It highlights the centrality of interdependence in liberalism, where economic and social connections between states shape political dynamics, necessitating cooperation to address global challenges (Barbé Izuel, 2020). The analysis revolves around seven key arguments of liberalism, including the objectives for cooperation, the plurality of actors and the importance of international organizations, the diversity of the international agenda, the possibility of change and historical progress, the dynamics of transnationality, and the relevance of international norms. Liberals advocate for increased cooperation among diverse actors to navigate an interconnected world, emphasizing the importance of institutions and international organizations in fostering trust and facilitating cooperative foreign policies. (Barbé Izuel, 2020;

Keohane & Nye, 2012) Ultimately, liberalism contends that collaborative efforts among various stakeholders can bring about positive transformations in international relations (Jørgensen, 2010).

In order to carry out the analysis, a comparative table is prepared that analyzes the cooperation and security policy that Canada have applied in Afghanistan, specifically in the Kandahar's province between 2008 and 2011. The fourteen reports that have been presented to the parliament reporting the progress on Canadian priorities during this period are used and later compared to seven variables of neoliberalism mentioned above. In this analysis, the six priorities are used as object of study, and the factors, decisions or intentions that can be explained through the seven variables of liberalism are searched . The six priorities present in the reports are:

1. *Enable the Afghan National Security Forces in Kandahar to sustain a more secure environment and promote law and order*
2. *Strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth, enhancing the confidence of Kandaharis in their government.*
3. *Provide humanitarian assistance for extremely vulnerable people, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.*
4. *Enhance border security, with facilitation of bilateral dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani authorities.*
5. *Help advance Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and electoral processes.*
6. *Facilitate Afghan-led efforts toward political reconciliation.*

Firstly, the reports emphasize improving Afghan government services with international cooperation, highlighted by Canada's role in humanitarian aid and mediation between Afghan and Pakistani authorities (Government of Canada, 2008b, 2009b, 2010b). Secondly, significant cooperation with international organizations like the UN is noted, aiding in security forces training and development initiatives (Government of Canada, 2008b, 2008a, 2009b, 2010c).

Thirdly, non-state actors, including civil society and sub-national institutions, play crucial roles in policy implementation, especially in areas like community development and security arrangements (Government of Canada, 2008c, 2009b, 2011b). Fourthly, beyond military concerns, priorities stress human security through governance capacity building and democratization efforts. Fifthly, historical progress is pursued through initiatives promoting liberal values such as women's rights, human rights, and economic growth (Government of Canada, 2009c, 2009b, 2009a, 2009d, 2010a, 2010c, 2012). Sixthly, transnational dynamics, notably insurgency, pose challenges to development goals, necessitating local involvement and international economic engagement (Government of Canada, 2008a, 2010c, 2011a, 2012). Lastly, the introduction of international norms, exemplified by conferences and cooperation agreements, underpins Canada's efforts to promote peace, human rights, and regional stability in Afghanistan (Government of Canada, 2009c, 2010a, 2012).

The paper concludes that Canada's foreign policy in Afghanistan from 2008 to 2011 aligns with liberal principles. While aimed at enhancing security, it prioritizes regional development, indicating a potential for historical progress. The involvement of non-state actors, like local entities and civil society, underscores Canada's comprehensive approach. Furthermore, Canada's adherence to international norms and institutions, evident through cooperation with UN agencies and participation in international conferences, highlights its commitment to liberal values. Notably, Canada actively promotes human rights and women's rights through humanitarian aid and development initiatives, reflecting its broader liberal agenda in foreign affairs. Thus, despite being able to state that Canada follows a liberal logic in its foreign action between 2008 and 2011, further analysis should follow to determine this alignment over time.

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