



Public opinion and military action

1. Conditions for support

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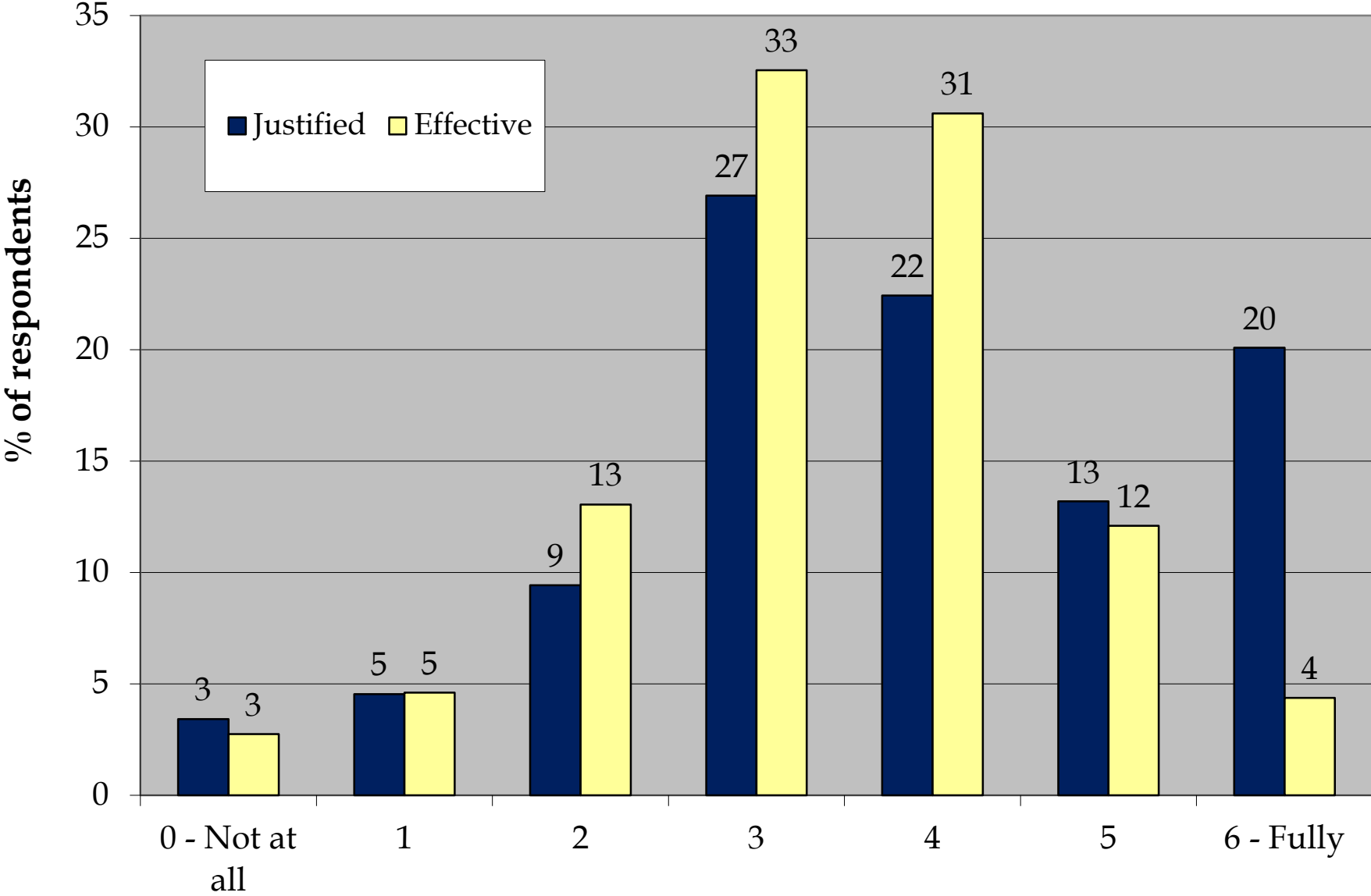
How we know what the public thinks

- ESRC-funded project “Foreign policy attitudes and support for war in the British public”
- Major survey conducted on-line by YouGov
- Sample size \approx 5,000
- Same respondents surveyed three times within a month, Jan-Feb 2010
- Many new questions
- Many drawn from other surveys for comparison across time/ across countries

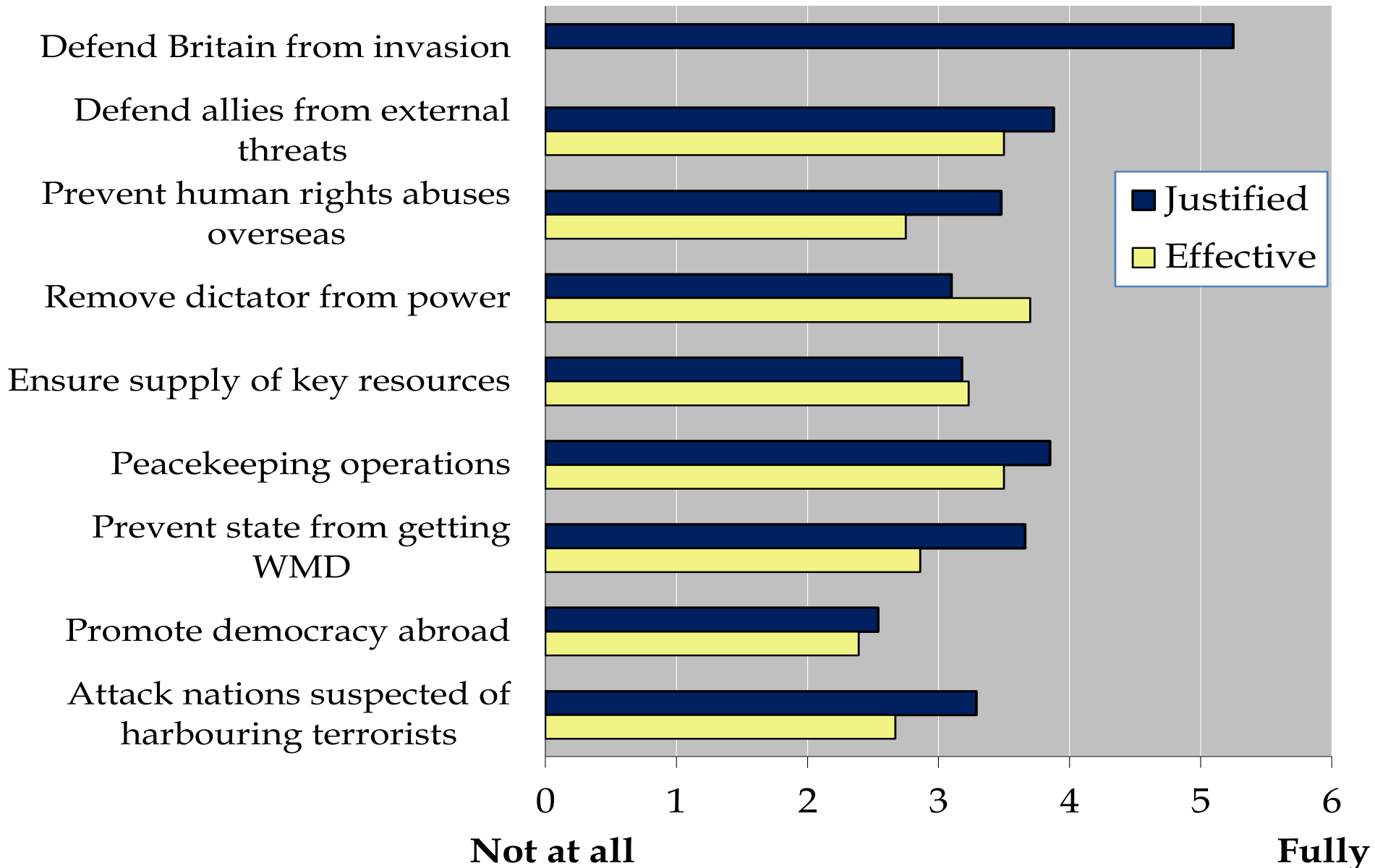
Public opinion on military questions

	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %
Britain should be strong and tough in dealing with other nations	18	43	30	7	2
The best way to ensure peace is through military strength	5	18	38	30	8
The use of military force only makes problems worse	9	26	42	21	4
Innocent lives are always lost in war	66	28	5	1	0
There is nothing wrong with refusing to fight in a war	27	42	21	7	2

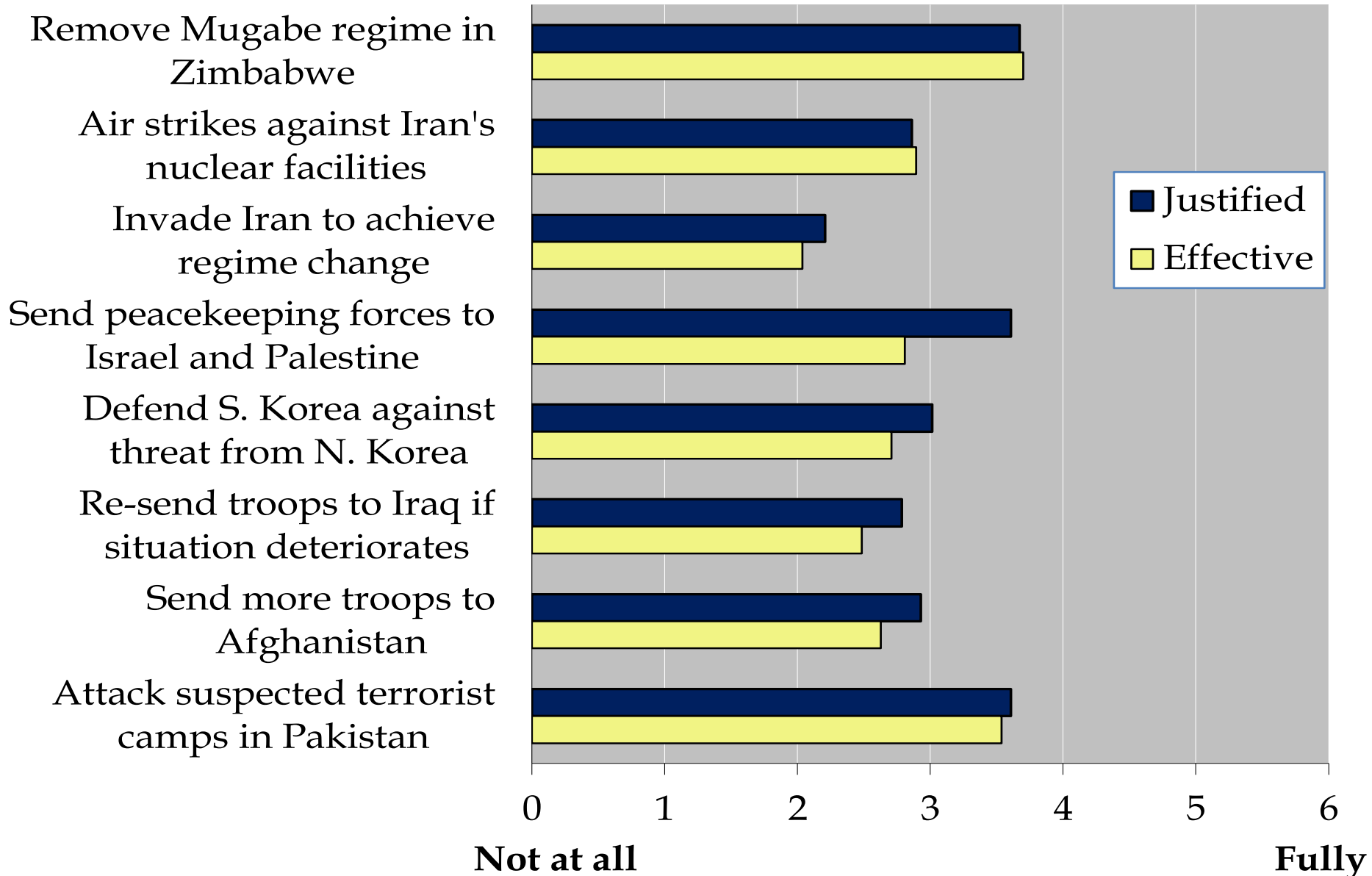
General attitudes to military action



Specific reasons for military action



Possible future military actions



International backing and public support

Q: “Military action could be undertaken by Britain alone or in coalition with other countries. Under which of these circumstances do you think it would be acceptable for Britain to take military action?”

(tick as many as apply)	%
As part of a United Nations Operation	70
As part of a NATO operation	66
As part of a European Union Operation	44
Along with the USA and its partners	30
Acting alone	31
None of these	9

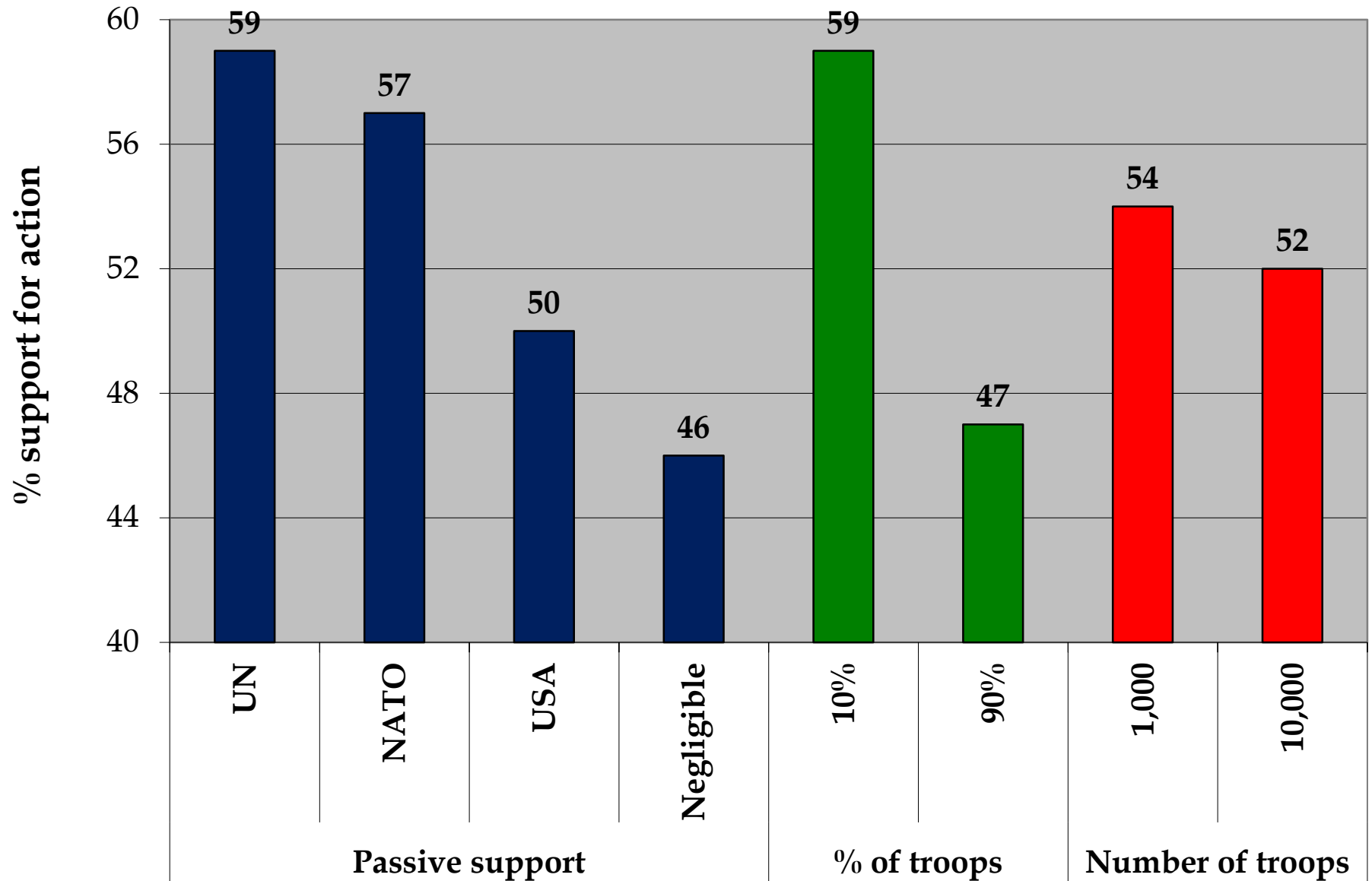
International backing - an experiment

“Here is a question about a situation in which Britain might take military action. Please read the following short newspaper story and then answer the question.”

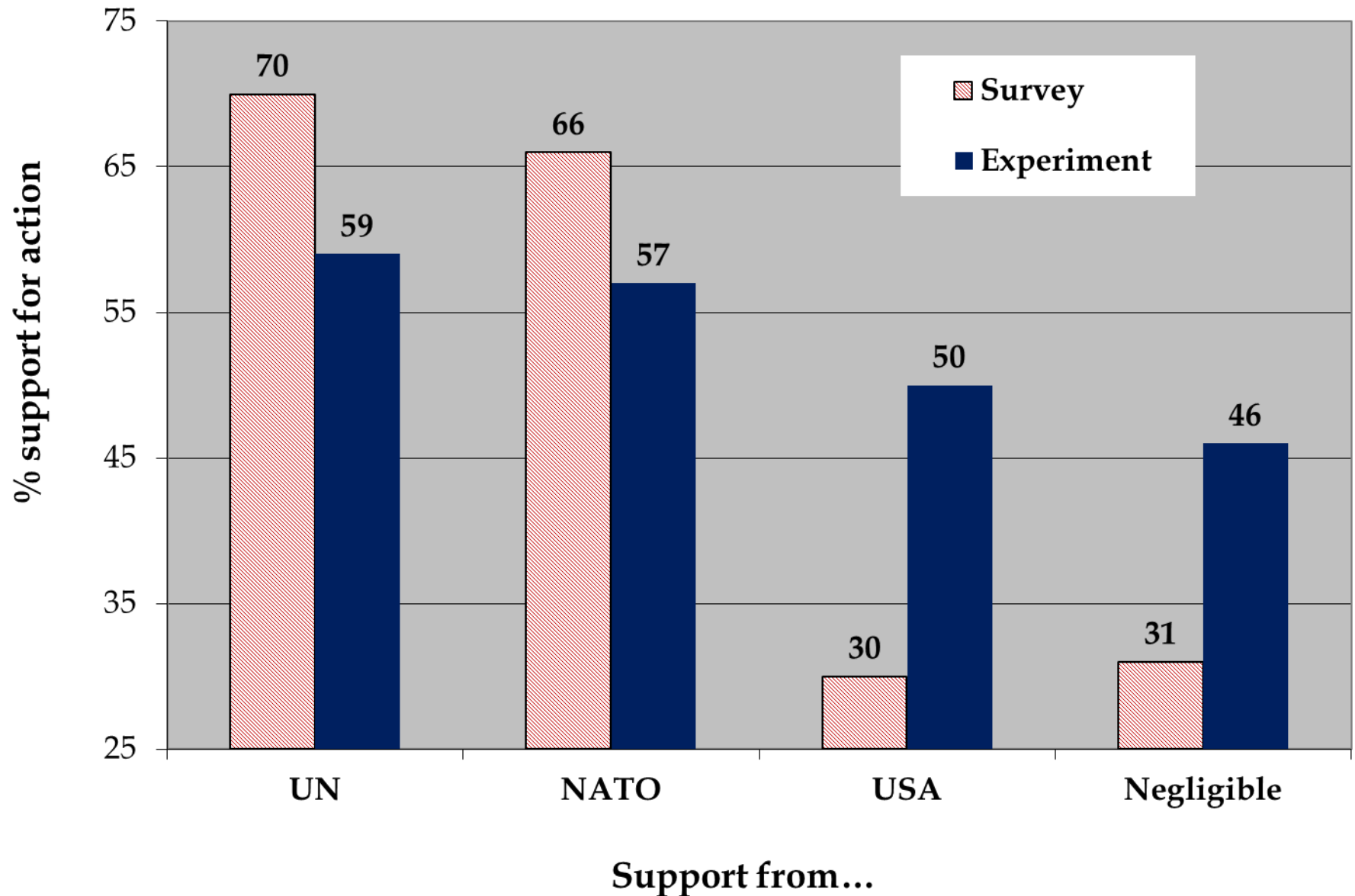
Today the British government announced that it will send troops to Country A to defend it against threats from its larger neighbour, Country B. This mission, which has **the support of the USA/the support of NATO/the support of the UN/yet to win any significant international support**, will send **1,000/ 10,000** British servicemen and women to fight in the region. Other countries have been **willing/unwilling** to commit forces and so British forces will make up **10%/90%** of the total troop numbers.

“Do you support or oppose the decision to send British troops to Country A?”

International backing and public support



Which to believe: survey or experiment?



Other factors investigated in experiments

- Immediacy of threat
- Chances of success
- British military casualties
 - numbers
 - trends
- Foreign civilian casualties
 - numbers
 - 'framing'
- Sources of intelligence
- Political party support/consensus
- Characteristics of target state
 - political
 - religious



Public opinion and military action

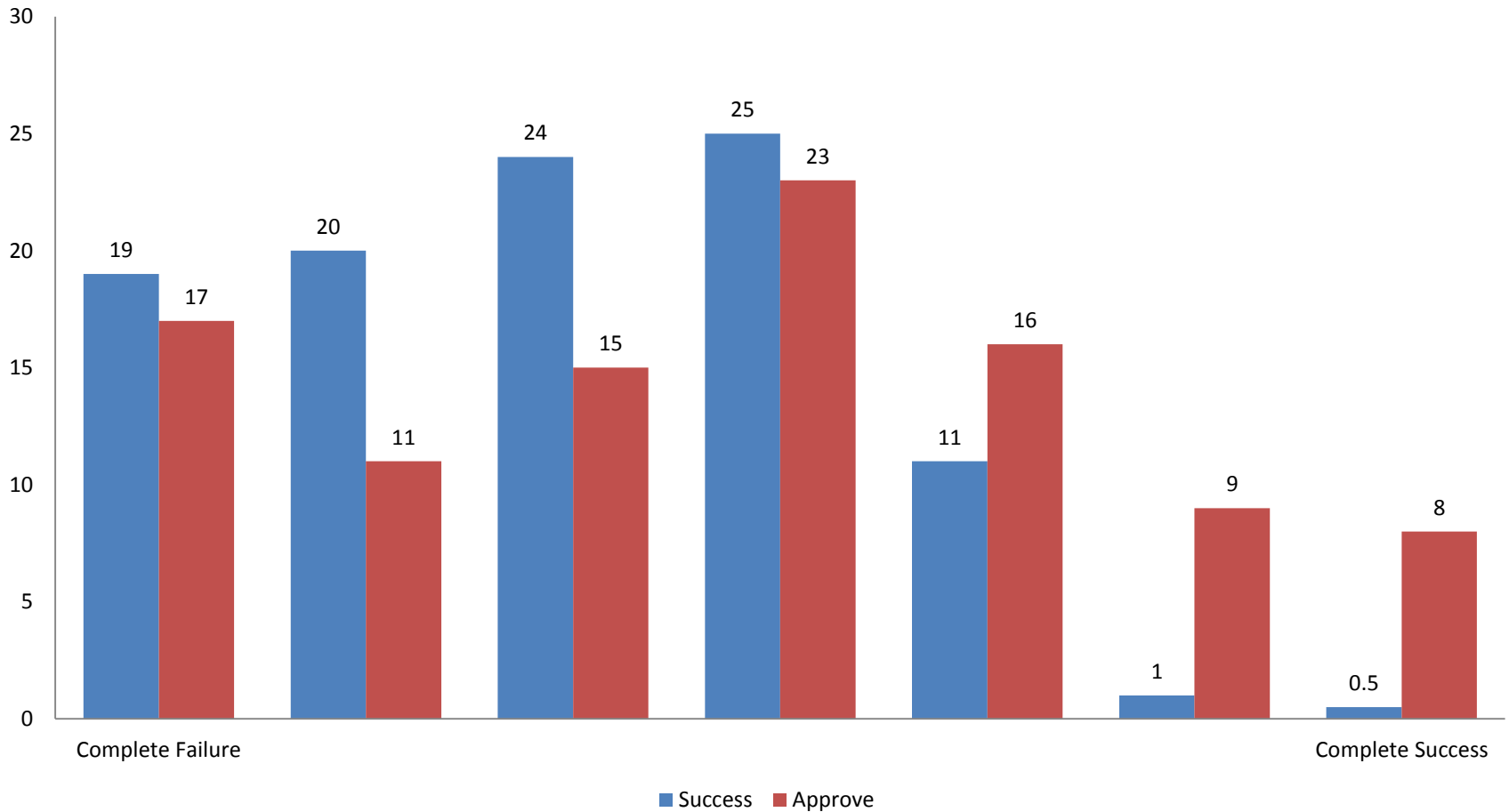
2. Past, present and future wars

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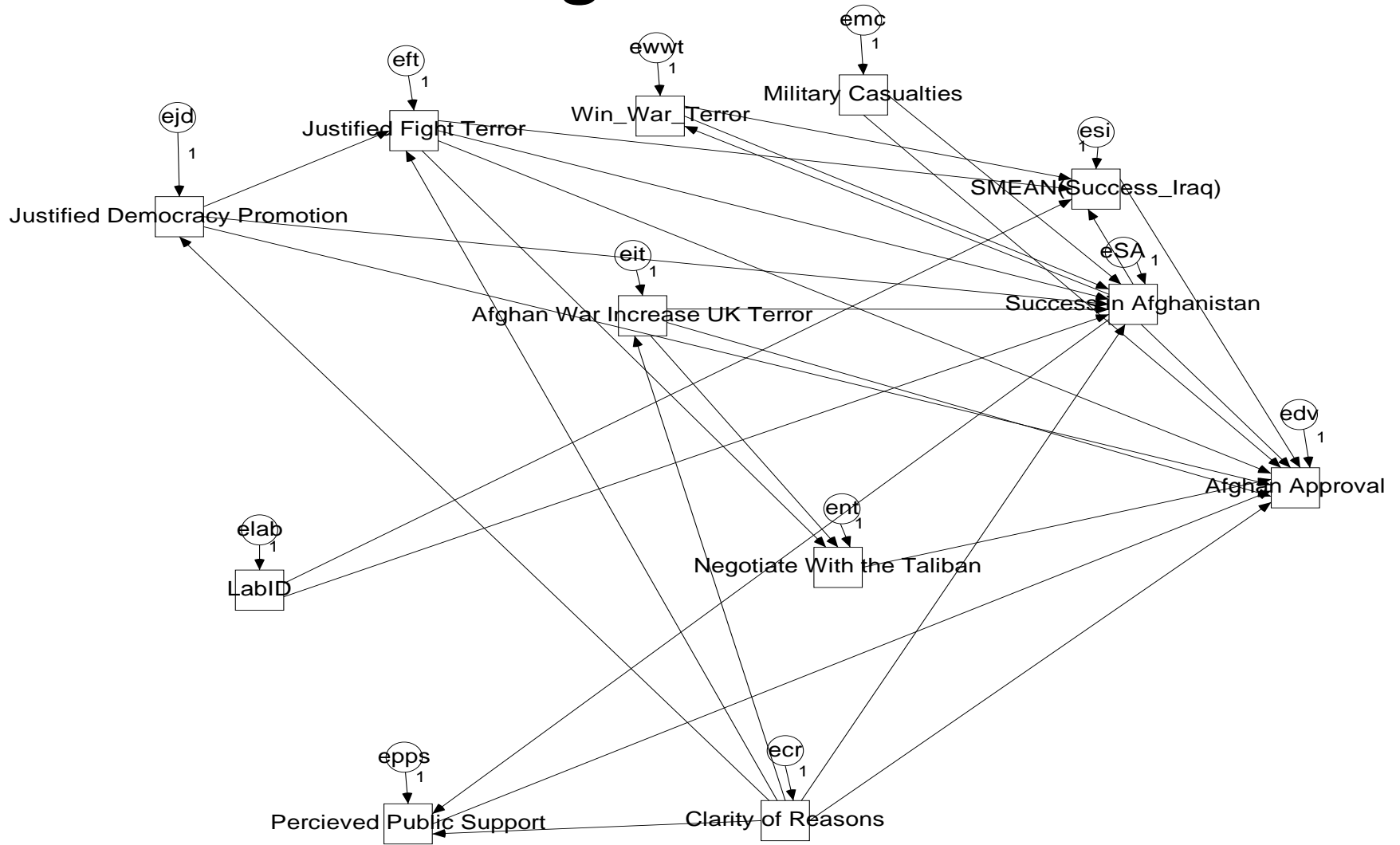
Public Perceptions about Afghanistan



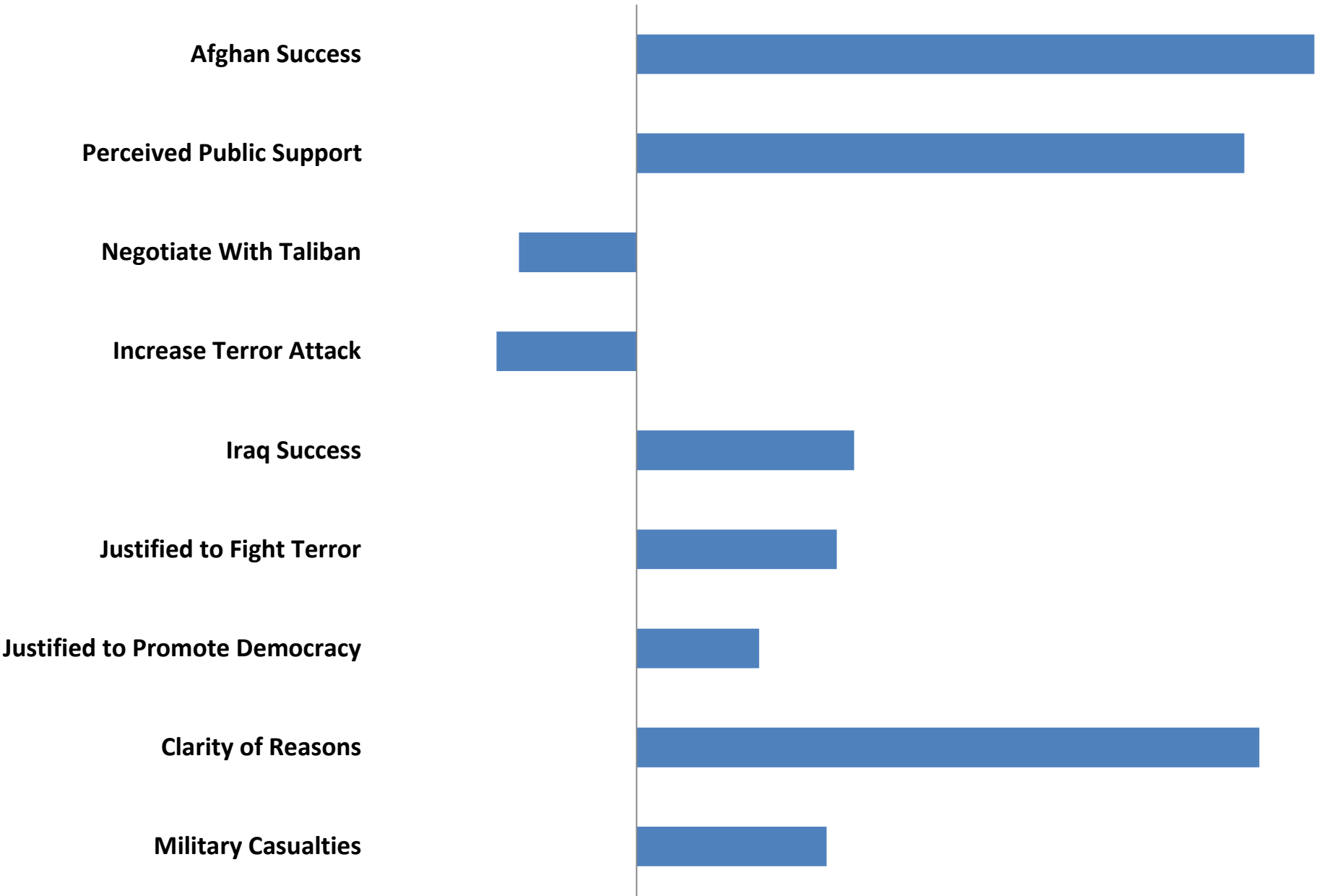
Public Concerns about Afghanistan

	Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd	Ranked 3rd	Not top three	'Mean' ranking
British military casualties	53	21	9	17	2.1
Risk of terrorist retaliation	15	22	19	44	1.1
Uncertainty about purpose	15	13	16	56	0.9
Afghan civilian casualties	9	20	13	58	0.8
Cost of war to taxpayers	5	16	32	47	0.8
Damage to reputation	3	6	10	81	0.3

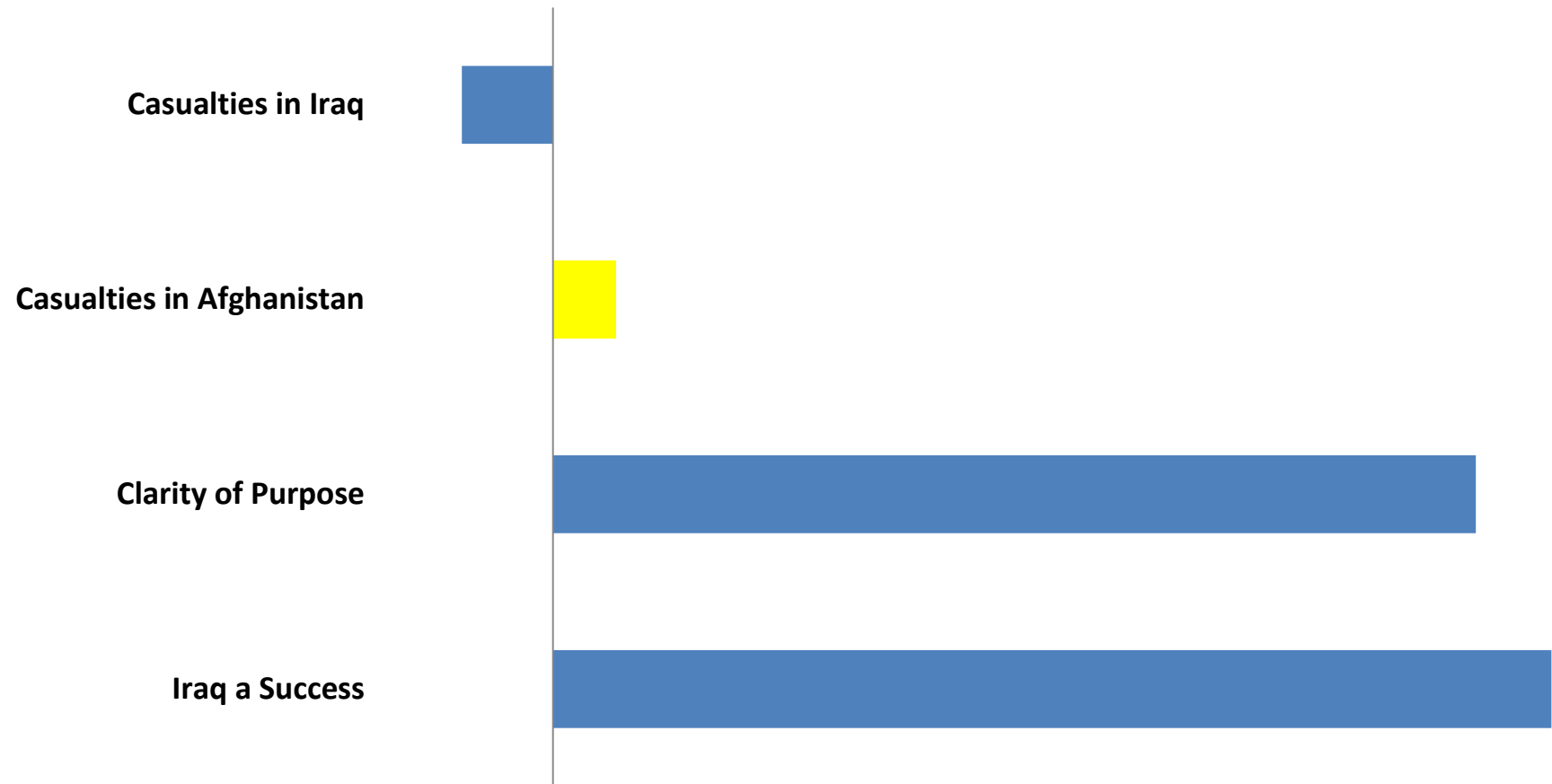
Path Model Public Approval of Afghanistan



Estimates of Afghanistan Approval



The Contamination Effect of Iraq on Perceptions of Afghanistan Success



Clarity of Purpose

- “We are told by politicians that the troops are there to make the UK 'safer'. This is utter rubbish. I think they are there because the government are idiots who do not know what their job is!”
- “we are told it is because of terrorist threats to us. But the latest problem appears to be Yemen- so I am confused”
- “We are told it is to make the streets of Britain safer, but it seems to have the opposite effect. I am not sure I believe this.”
- “What started as a fight against the 9/11 bombers and those who supported them, is now longer clear why they are there.”
- “When we went to war it was to topple Saddam Hussein, that was completed and that is where it should have finished. Then we moved into Afghanistan and I have no idea what the reason is.”
- “Oil “

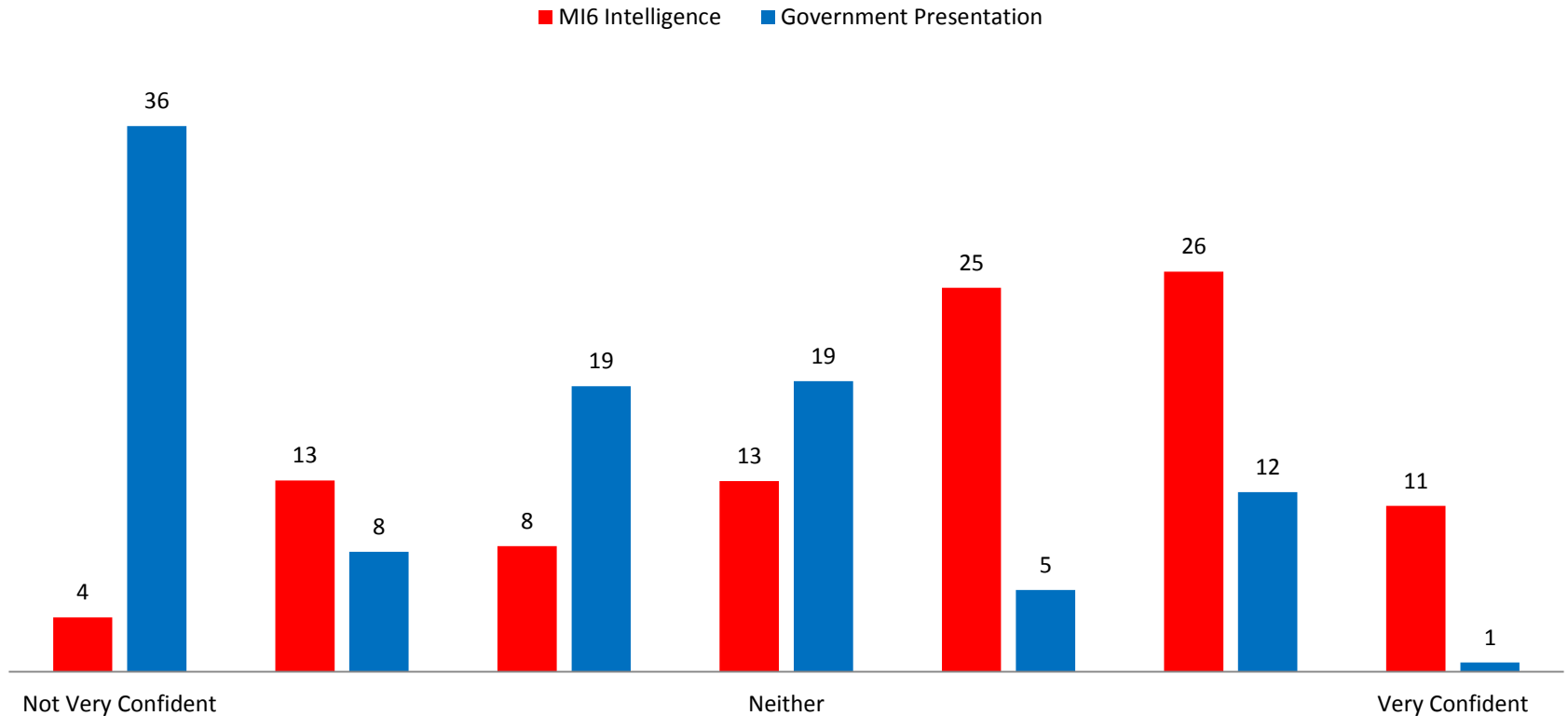
Libya

- Clarity of Purpose- Why are we there? Protect civilians or remove Gaddafi?
- Success- Do we look like we will achieve the objective?
- Public perceptions- what does everyone else think? Public momentum.
- Another Iraq?- Issues related to escalation.
- Catch 22: need more resources to succeed, but makes us believe that we are entering another Iraq.

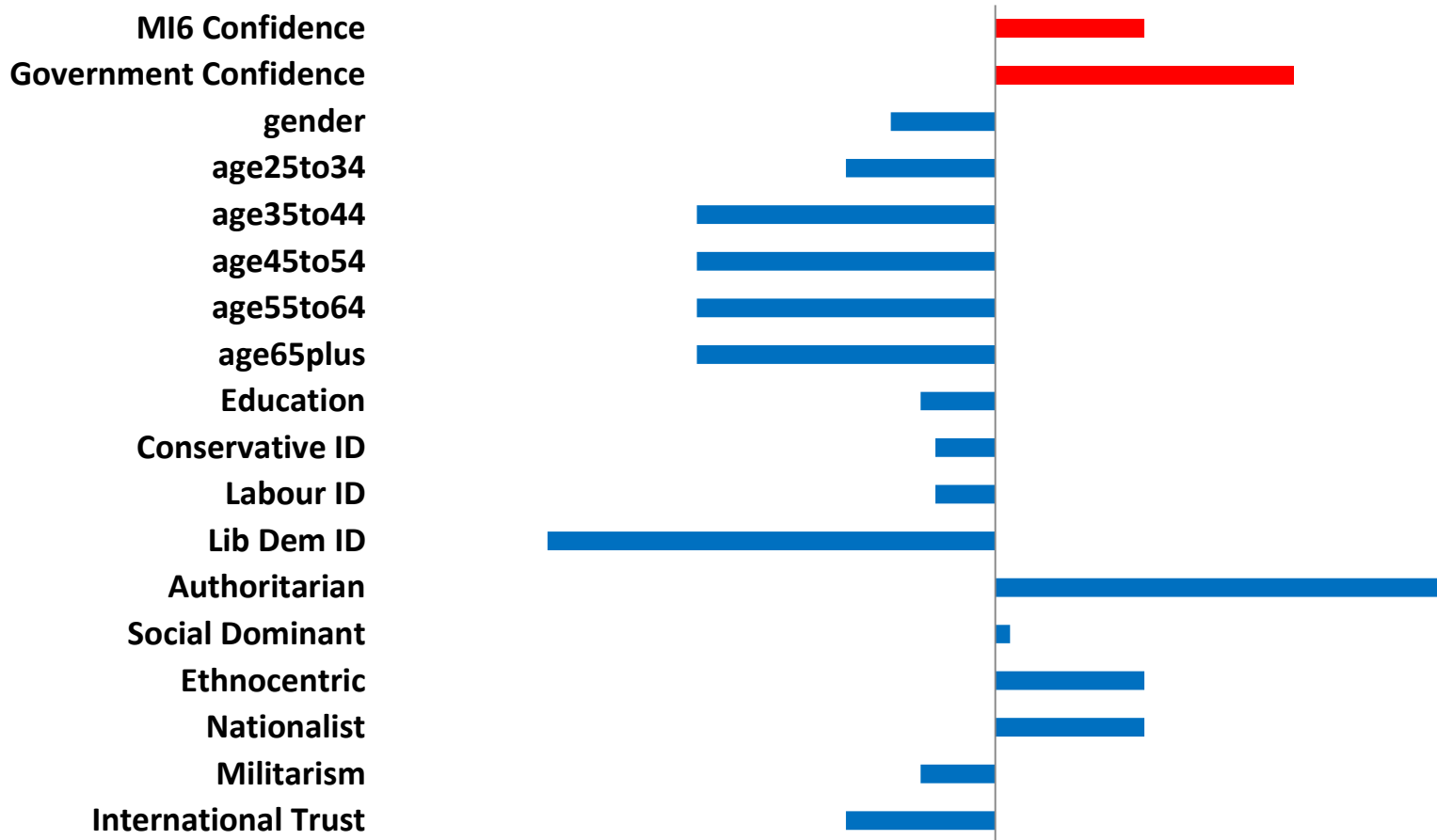
**IRAQ CONSEQUENCES:
INTELLIGENCE AND PREVENTATIVE
WAR**

How Confident is the British Public in Intelligence?

British Public Confidence in MI6 and Government Presentation of Intelligence



Military Action Against Terror Camps in Pakistan



Military Action and Its Consequence

- Ill judged military adventurism:-
 1. Undermines public confidence in future actions.
 2. Undermines confidence in government.
 3. Alters our perspectives on success.



Foreign policy attitudes and support for war among the British public

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