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REVIEW ESSAY

Stephen Harper's Rise to Power: Will His "New" Conservative Party Become Canada's "Natural Governing Party" of the Twenty-First Century?

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Tom Flanagan. *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power*, 2nd revised edition. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009 (2007), 369 pp., CAN \$24.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 0 773 53545 9

Chantal Hébert. *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2007, 288 pp., CAN \$32.95 (cloth), ISBN 978 0 676 97907 7

William Johnson. *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada*, revised and updated edition. McClelland & Stewart, 2006 (2005), xiv + 494 pp., CAN \$24.99 (paperback), ISBN 978 0 771 09554 2

Lloyd Mackay. *Stephen Harper: The Case for Collaborative Governance*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2006, 246 pp., CAN \$19.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 550 22752 9

Bob Plamondon. *Full Circle: Death and Resurrection in Canadian Conservative Politics*. Key Porter Books, 2006, 472 pp., CAN \$36.95 (cloth), ISBN 978 1 552 63855 2

Paul Wells. *Right Side Up: The Fall of Paul Martin and the Rise of Stephen Harper's New Conservatism*. Toronto: Douglas Gibson Books, 2007, 336 pp., CAN \$22.99 (paperback), ISBN 0 77108 8551

My long-term goal is to make Conservatives the natural governing party of the country. And I'm a realist. You do that two ways. . . . One thing you do is you pull conservatives, to pull the party, to the centre of the political spectrum. But what you also have to do, if you're really serious about making transformations, is you have to pull the centre of the political spectrum toward conservatism. (Stephen Harper, 17 September 2008)¹

If one concurs with Prime Minister Harper, Canadians are experiencing a watershed political realignment, the kind of political paradigm shift that occurs but once a century. In light of the 2004, 2006, and 2008 minority government elections,² a great many journalists, political advisors, and politicians argue that a new political party paradigm is emerging, one based on the drive for a right-wing political party capable of reconfiguring the role of the state – federal and provincial – in twenty-first-century Canada. Are Canadians truly witnessing the slow and disruptive demise of the once hegemonic Liberal Party, one that functioned very effectively as a unifying centrist

national force within a multi-party system? A close examination of how Stephen Harper's Conservative Party came to power in 2006 reveals that a genuine political realignment is underway. Whether or not this realignment will be consolidated remains to be seen.

Liberal Party dominance reached its apogee in the aftermath of the 1993 election, when former Prime Minister Mulroney's beleaguered Progressive Conservative Party was reduced to a bare rump of two MPs. This compelling defeat resulted from a convergence of factors: the rise of two sectional movements – the secessionist Bloc Québécois and western Canada's populist Reform Party – and a revived Jean Chrétien Liberal Party that was dominated, according to one analyst, by the "Blue Grits" (i.e., right-wing Liberals).³ Preston Manning's western Canadian populist Reform Party was created by social and fiscal conservatives intent on transforming and reducing the role of the state in the economy as well as in the lives of Canadians. Reform was the product of an ebullient, prosperous New West, especially Alberta, whose expansive economic and political classes were determined to gain greater control over the national political agenda and turn it to their advantage. "The New West wants in" was Manning's oft-repeated mantra!⁴ Lucien Bouchard's separatist Bloc Québécois, thanks to its dramatic 54 seats in the House of Commons, formed Her Majesty's Official Opposition. Bouchard's mantra was: "Quebec wants out! But, on its own terms!" The Bloc and the Parti Québécois (PQ), founded in 1967–68, championed the cause of the Québécois secessionist movement revived in the wake of the failed Mulroney/Bourassa 1987 Meech Lake and 1992 Charlottetown accords. Bouchard and the hard-line secessionist PQ Premier, Jacques Parizeau, came within 50,000 votes of achieving Quebec independence in the 1995 referendum.⁵

All the while, Canada's two-party-plus-one system had been transformed abruptly into a fragmented multi-party system in which the Liberal Party was clearly dominant. None of the four opposition parties, either separately or in concert, was capable of forming the government! And yet a floundering Chrétien Liberal government was forced to impose draconian cuts to health, social services, and defense programs, as well as cut-backs to transfer payments to the provinces, in order to deal with the ballooning deficit and debt. Chrétien scrambled to win re-election with a reduced majority in 1997.⁶ In the wake of the humiliating referendum result, he was compelled to address the threat of secession via a Supreme Court reference in 1998. The Supreme Court's *Reference re Secession of Quebec* landmark decision was followed up by the Chrétien government's Clarity Act, which set out the terms – a clear question and a substantial majority – for any future referendum on secession. It appeared to most observers that Prime Minister Paul Martin, whose team pressured – some argue it was a coup – PM Chrétien to resign prematurely in 2003, was well on the way to consolidating the Liberal Party's hegemony. How and why was the Martin government reduced to a minority in 2004? How was Stephen Harper's nascent Conservative Party able to form a minority government in 2006 and then again in 2008?

Winning in politics is not the same thing as governing. These activities require very different political skill sets and, very often, different advisors. Harper mastered the political skill set to take over the Canadian Alliance, merge it with the Progressive Conservative Party, become leader of the Conservative Party, and then win two minority governments. His challenge now is to demonstrate that he can master the far more complex role of governing. If he convinces Canadians that he has the ability to govern, he will win a majority and move closer to his goal of transforming his Conservative Party into Canada's "natural governing party." In a post-recessionary climate, PM Harper will then have the opportunity to reduce, even more extensively than he has done so far, the role of the state, thereby

transforming in fundamental ways the nature and scope of Canada's federal system of governance.⁷

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney: A failed Progressive Conservative political realignment

Stephen Harper's Conservative Party is the most determined, and potentially the first successful, attempt by a right-wing national party to challenge the Liberal Party's (the Big Red Machine's) hegemony over national politics and government.⁸ The first major, but ultimately fruitless, challenge to Canada's Liberal Party was made by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's Conservative government, 1984–93. His grandiose but very badly executed attempt to reconfigure national politics by recreating a fragile coalition of Red Tories, Blue Tories including New West fiscal conservatives, and Québécois *nationaliste* conservatives crashed and burned in the federal election of 1993. Mulroney's "coalition" Progressive Conservative party, led by a beleaguered Kim Campbell, was reduced to a mere two seats in the House of Commons. An overly ambitious conservative prime minister was his own worst enemy. The first group of his highly volatile three-legged coalition represented Progressive Conservatives – essentially Diefenbaker Red Tories – from small-town, rural Canada. In a defiant frame of mind, Red Tories remained committed to the social service state and its myriad of increasingly expensive social, health, and education programs. Indeed, Red Tories prevented the Mulroney government from making any substantial cuts to social and health funding transfers to the provinces. The failure to curtail and eventually reduce the size of the national government alienated "values" and fiscal conservatives in the ebullient New West. This failure, fueled by the very strong perception that PM Mulroney pandered to the constitutional and economic interests of Quebec, accelerated the creation of Preston Manning's populist Reform Party in 1987, a heady mixture of "values" and fiscal conservatives.

The second part of Mulroney's coalition comprised Blue Tories – traditional *laissez-faire* conservatives – representing established corporate sectors in Toronto and Montreal. Blue Tories, like the new corporate sector in resource-rich western provinces, were intent on reducing the role of the state via balanced budgets, substantial reductions in public debt, and curtailed economic regulations. The primary goal of these fiscal conservatives was a comprehensive free trade agreement with the United States that would all but eliminate the economic barriers represented by the 49th parallel. In 1986, PM Mulroney, a long-time protectionist, embraced the emerging free trade movement in an attempt to cement his political alliances with the western Canadian and Quebec governments and their respective economic elites. The third, far more volatile element of Mulroney's coalition was made up of disenchanted Québécois nationalists and secessionists of all stripes – Conservative, Liberal, and Parti Québécois. Mulroney used their respective constituency organizations, militants, and funding to get a large number of Québécois *nationaliste* MPs of all political stripes elected in 1984 and 1988. These Québécois *nationaliste* MPs and their supporters were collectively enraged at Prime Minister Trudeau's long overdue achievement, the Constitution Act, 1982. This transformative constitutional development created a constitutional democracy and made Canadians, at long last, a truly sovereign people.

The Act, which patriated and Canadianized the British North America Act, 1867, included a series of amending formulae based on the equality of the provinces, a very comprehensive national Charter of Rights and Freedoms entrenching both individual and collective rights, and a strong reaffirmation of provincial jurisdiction over non-renewable natural resources. In order to attract disgruntled Québécois voters, Mulroney, pressured by

Lucien Bouchard, made several rash promises during the election of 1984, the central promise being the recognition of “special constitutional status” for the province of Quebec. Once in office, Mulroney and his Quebec ally, Premier Bourassa, set out to transform Canada’s Constitution Act, 1982, by entrenching Quebec’s demands. The Meech Lake Accord, 1987–90, never achieved the required ratification by all ten provincial assemblies, while the far more complex and radical Charlottetown Consensus Report, 1990–92, was categorically rejected by a majority of Canadians in their first constitutional referendum on 26 October 1992. In his determination to displace the Liberal Party as Canada’s natural governing party, PM Mulroney destroyed the Progressive Conservative Party. His government’s constitutional deals with the Quebec government of Robert Bourassa completely alienated “values” conservatives and fiscal conservatives throughout Canada. When these constitutional deals failed, Québécois nationalists were outraged. Denouncing the rest of Canada for rejecting both deals, they participated, along with Québécois secessionists who never supported the deals, in stoking the flames of secession by backing the creation of the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa. Nationalists and secessionists pressured Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau’s Parti Québécois government to hold a referendum on secession in 1995, a referendum they almost won.⁹

Power abhors a political vacuum. Will Canadians endure the reality of living indefinitely in a quasi one-party state? Will a new Conservative Party, like a phoenix rising from its ashes, constitute the first successful effort at establishing a new political paradigm in national politics? Will Stephen Harper’s right-of-center Conservative Party become Canada’s natural governing party for the twenty-first century? On 23 February 2006, to the utter surprise and consternation of his critics and the unbridled jubilation of his militant supporters, Harper, leader of the newly constructed Conservative Party of Canada, was elected prime minister of a minority government. To even greater surprise, Harper’s Conservative Party won the 2008 election with a larger minority of MPs. His long, arduous, circuitous, but ultimately successful, drive to occupy the prime minister’s office and residence at 24 Sussex Drive is, indeed, a remarkable but largely unknown and misunderstood story. The degree to which Harper’s rise to power will become part of the lore of Canadian political history will depend on what PM Harper accomplishes during his remaining time in office.

Describing and explaining the slow and convoluted construction of a right-wing Conservative Party to replace the moribund centrist Progressive Conservative Party following the 1993 national election has been a difficult challenge for Canada’s leading journalists, political advisors, and seasoned observers of the political scene. Their respective interpretations of Harper’s rise have been influenced heavily by their particular biases and their vested interests in the drama unfolding before their eyes. This review essay will focus on the respective contributions of Johnson, Mackay, Flanagan, Wells, Plamondon, and Hébert to the emerging debate on how, why, and with whose help Stephen Harper rose to power between 1986 and 2006.

Stephen Harper: A “values” conservative and a fiscal conservative

William Johnson, a retired journalist and long-time supporter of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s conception of Canada, provides the most thorough account of Stephen Harper’s long and difficult rise to power. Johnson’s *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada* has all the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary political journalism. This political biography calls for very close scrutiny. Why? Because Johnson proposes a new interpretation, one that largely corresponds to what he believes is Harper’s conception of a center-right Conservative Party with a long-term agenda of becoming Canada’s new natural

governing party. Johnson's account, based on long conversations with Conservative insiders such as Tom Flanagan, was written to dispel the "perceived" transformation of Stephen Harper from a young, immature "values" conservative¹⁰ and fiscal conservative ideologue into a political leader who understands power and how to wield it. According to Johnson, Harper was always and remains a moderate conservative who took over the overly ideological Reform/Canadian Alliance movements and created a moderate center-right fiscal Conservative Party. What Johnson's account is not is comprehensive, analytical, and balanced. Johnson does not place Harper's rise to power in the much broader context of the rise of the new "right" in Canadian politics.¹¹ Johnson, who belongs to the school of "engagement" journalism, projects his evolving personal vision of Canada onto Harper. This distorts to a considerable degree his largely descriptive narrative of Harper's rise to power by obfuscating some of the possible negative consequences of this development while playing up all the positive aspects.

The central theme of Johnson's biography is to demonstrate why and how Harper was so successful in taking over Preston Manning's "radical" populist Reform movement once it was transformed by Stockwell Day into his largely Christian fundamentalist Canadian Alliance movement. Harper, according to Johnson, skillfully used both these marginal "values" and fiscal conservative protest movements to catapult himself onto the national stage. Once in charge of the Canadian Alliance, Harper quickly transformed it into his very own pragmatic, right-wing Conservative Party, and one based on an ideology of fiscal conservatism with an occasional strategic nod to "values" conservatives and Québécois *nationaliste* conservatives. In Johnson's view, Harper's new Conservative Party (CP) is a center-right party shorn completely of Manning's prairie populism and Day's extreme Christian fundamentalism. Unfortunately, Johnson exaggerates the religious and ideological differences between Manning and Harper. Today, Harper's CP government holds office thanks to a coalition of diverse conservative factions – western populists, Christian "values" conservatives from across the country, nationalist and separatist Québécois conservatives, Red Tory Progressive Conservatives, and old and new corporate Blue Tories. Thanks to Harper's superior leadership skills and perceived moderate conservative vision of Canada, Johnson concludes that Harper "rates better than any other leader on the federal scene since Pierre Trudeau" (480; all page references that follow are for the specific book under discussion). Harper's right-of-center Conservative Party, according to Johnson, proved that it was capable of gaining power in 2006 thanks largely to Harper's good judgment, integrity, and substantial political experience. Johnson is confident that Harper's Conservative government will remain in office for a considerable period of time and, in doing so, Harper will transform the federation, and Canada's political culture and political party system, in conservative ways that are not yet fully understood or appreciated.

Johnson supports his interpretation of Harper's rise to power via his right of center CP by focusing on several main themes: Harper's personal adherence to fiscal conservatism; his preference for a decentralized classical Canadian federalism; his evolving conception of Quebec's role in the federation; and, finally, his rebranding of Canadian nationalism from one based on universal health and social programs, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and soft power on the international stage to a Canadian nationalism based on a transformed state that promotes a stronger economic union, narrowly targeted social programs, law and order, and a much more robust and forceful exercise of Canadian military power on the international scene.

According to Johnson, Harper – who was brought up in a small-c conservative, Protestant, British-Canadian family living in the Leaside suburban community of Toronto – never was, and never became, a "values" conservative. Lloyd Mackey, a well-known journalist

in the Canadian parliamentary press gallery and short-term Reform Party communications director and editor of the *Reformer*, quite appropriately and accurately challenges this interpretation. In his narrowly focused yet very revealing biography of Harper, Mackay describes how and why Harper, in moving to Alberta, experienced deeply personal inter-related religious and political transformations. In Calgary, Harper, “the United-Presbyterian-raised religious skeptic,” joined the evangelical Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, the church of choice of his spiritual mentor, Preston Manning, and his wife Sandra.¹² He then joined the Bow Valley Alliance church. Harper readily embraced the “values” conservative theology of evangelical Christianity. But, in Mackay’s telling, Harper did so as a “customizing” Christian, one whose faith is grounded in a “thoughtful, reflective, and respectful approach to the Christian gospel.” Harper and his family have long attended the international East Gate Alliance church in east-end Ottawa. These profound personal transformations elucidate the role that Harper’s evangelical Christian faith played, and continues to play, in his conception of political leadership and policy formation. Harper and his wife, Lauren Tesky, Mackay reveals, worked hard, and continue to work hard, to keep social conservatives in the Conservative Party’s big tent. In this way, party leaders and organizers at all levels can reap important and very necessary political benefits from these connections while keeping radical “values” conservatives and their controversial, disruptive, and politically damaging “cultural wars” under close supervision and ultimate control.¹³

Mackay’s emphasis on the crucial importance of Harper’s evangelical religious beliefs has been confirmed by Harper himself. In May 2003, Harper gave a highly revealing, candid speech to members of the ultra-conservative Civitas Society, founded by William Gairdner, in which he made the point that there was no fundamental incompatibility between “neo-cons” and “theo-cons,” between economic and social conservatism. He went on to state: “Conservatives need to reassess our understanding of the modern left. It has moved beyond old socialistic morality or even moral relativism to something much darker. It has become moral nihilism . . . a post-Marxism with deep resentments, even hatreds, of the norms of free and democratic western civilization.” Harper went on to add that on “a wide range of public policy questions, including foreign affairs and defence, criminal justice and corrections, family and child care and health care and social services, social values are increasingly the big issues.”¹⁴ Harper remains a deeply committed “values” conservative, as was made amply clear in a 24 June 2009 interview with a Quebec City journalist, Marie-Josée Turcotte. When asked how the public and historians will view his legacy, Harper responded: “It is far too early to respond to such a question.” He then went on to state: “[T]here is in my view something more important than what history will say about me. What is more important for me is to preserve family ties. I can win elections, but if I lose my family, it’s a disaster! To be honest with you, I am a lot more preoccupied by God’s verdict regarding my life than by the verdict of historians.”¹⁵ A comprehensive account of why and how Harper won office and then governed Canada requires that authors take into account the central role that religion plays in his life, both private and public, since Christian fundamentalists do not espouse the principle of the separation of church and state.

Furthermore, according to Johnson, Harper was never a disciple of Manning’s radical western populism, a viewpoint aimed at creating a new Canadian political party that included supporters from every point on the political spectrum. According to Johnson, Harper and his supporters considered that Manning’s idealistic populism was impractical and unrealistic. Manning’s populism, based on the participatory group government philosophy of the United Farmers of Alberta, 1921–35, and the plebiscitarian populism of the

Social Credit Party of Alberta, 1935–71, found little currency outside western Canada. It was based, according to Harper, on a highly questionable analysis of Canada's political system as well as very old-fashioned tactics and strategies, including constituency initiatives, referenda, and recall mechanisms. The far more pragmatic Harper – heavily influenced by Tom Flanagan and several other members of the University of Calgary's school of "values" and fiscal conservatives – rejected Manning's utopian vision in favor of a class-based, right-wing, values and fiscally conservative party along the lines of Ronald Reagan's Republican Party and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party. What Johnson fails to explain is that Harper and Flanagan, like Manning, are "phony" populists skillful at exploiting "ignorant gladiators." They are highly elitist when it comes to policy-making but use high-tech, anti-elitist, tactical, and strategic tools to recruit compliant members and raise funds. Harper and Flanagan derided Manning's preference for boisterous town hall meetings or referenda. Relying on a close analysis of extensive databases, Harper and Flanagan targeted their appeal directly to specific groups of actual and potential working-class and lower-middle-class conservative voters. They relied heavily on extensive polling, electronic canvassing, and sophisticated electronic fundraising to reach the several constituencies and single-issue groups that comprise the Conservative Party coalition.¹⁶

According to Johnson, by 2003 Harper's small team had succeeded in building a clearly defined and well-articulated, class-based, right-wing Conservative Party, thanks to several converging developments. Harper and his coterie of supporters focused on the political economy of western Canada – that is, on the political and economic elites' ongoing struggles to end what they believed was the exploitation of western provinces by corporate Canada and both the Liberal and Conservative parties (113). Harper and his group, all disciples of Friedrich Hayek's ideology of fiscal conservatism, derided the "socialist" Trudeau government's use of an expansive and interventionist Canadian state to control – via the much detested National Energy Program (NEP) – the development of, and the profits flowing from, Alberta's very lucrative oil and gas industry in the 1970s and early 1980s. Even after Mulroney dismantled the NEP, Harper and his entourage became completely disenchanted with the Mulroney Progressive Conservative government's abject failure to implement, as promised in the 1984 and 1988 elections, fiscal conservative measures that would reduce quite drastically Canada's deficit and debt by making large cuts to national health and social welfare programs and equalization grants.

A disillusioned Harper left the Progressive Conservative Party to help Manning create a new party. The venture did not work out quite as planned. Harper became very irate and outspoken when Mulroney and Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa attempted twice to have Quebec recognized as a distinct society within the Constitution while denying western Canadians their legitimate quest for a Triple-E Senate ("elected, equal, and effective"), one capable of defending and promoting the economic, political, and social interests of western Canadians at the center of the Canadian political system. Finally, both Manning and Day, thanks to their misplaced idealism, their sectarian regional outlook, their intense "values" conservatism, and their lack of connections with the mainstream of Canada's conservative tradition, failed to transform their respective Reform and Alliance movements into genuine political parties. Harper, Johnson argues, disagreed with Manning from the outset on Reform ideology as well as on the Republican-style tactics and strategy required to displace the Liberal Party as Canada's governing party.

Johnson's account reveals that Harper has a very nineteenth-century conception of the role of the state and Canadian federalism. Ottawa must respect the federal and provincial watertight jurisdictions set out in sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867, despite the evolving nature of Canadian society and the needs of its citizens. Harper is a

“constructionist” or “literalist” in his approach to Canada’s 1867 Constitution, and he never really accepted the Constitution Act, 1982, with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What Johnson fails to analyze are the profound consequences for the Canadian federation and for every Canadian if the implementation of Harper’s commitment to expanding provincial autonomy and taxing powers comes to pass. It now appears that Harper is devolving by administrative fiat more responsibilities and taxing powers to the provincial governments at the expense of the national government. As Harper moved in and out of Manning’s Reform movement, 1986–97, and then during his 2000–03 takeover of Day’s Canadian Alliance movement and Peter Mackay’s Progressive Conservative rump, he was a vociferous defender and promoter of provincial autonomy, especially Alberta’s constitutional authority. Harper became an outspoken advocate of a Triple-E Senate as the most effective way of guaranteeing that Ottawa respected the 1867 Constitution’s division of powers between Ottawa and the provinces. A provincially controlled Senate would prevent Ottawa from using its taxing and spending powers to force the provinces into implementing expensive and overly intrusive cost-shared universal health care and social service programs that were not in their interests. A Harper Reform Party would end all universal social programs, starting with state-run daycare (103). A Triple-E Senate would ensure that Ottawa could not impose its conception of official bilingualism, multiculturalism, or cultural institutions on Canadians from coast to coast, since the provinces had exclusive jurisdiction over matters of language and culture.

Beginning in 1988, Harper began a long tirade against the Trudeau and Mulroney governments for using Ottawa’s taxing and spending powers and the Constitution Act, 1982, to expand official bilingualism and official language education at the provincial level. Harper called for “a new approach to federal language policy, one that recognizes that there is a predominantly French-speaking region of the country and predominantly English-speaking regions of the country, that recognizes this in a way that involves no double standards, in a way that respects minorities, and in a way that is fair to all Canadians, including the vast majority of Canadians who are unilingual. I say, let Quebec be Quebec; let the West be the West” (97). Reform’s 1995 *New Confederation* document, co-authored by Harper, proposed to replace the Official Languages Act, 1988, with a Regional Bilingualism Act respecting provincial jurisdiction over language. Reform would also devolve all power over culture and cultural institutions to the provinces (248–9). Harper’s view of a federation of equal provinces was severely tested during Paul Martin’s minority government, 2004–06. Eager to make a much-needed political breakthrough in Quebec, Harper, then Conservative Party leader, endorsed asymmetrical federalism in areas of provincial jurisdiction. This approach would allow every province, including Quebec, to fashion its own health care and social service systems as well as its cultural and language regimes (376–9).

Johnson’s analysis of Harper’s conception of federalism is far from complete. Harper’s very strong commitment to the doctrine of provincial rights borrows extensively from the Reagan/Bush Republican Party’s even stronger promotion of the long-standing doctrine of “states rights.” The doctrine of states rights continues to be promoted very aggressively and very successfully by a wide range of right-wing think tanks backing the Republican Party. One of the most important and successful of these is the conservative legal community’s Federalist Society, founded in 1982, which is now entrenched at the heart of the American legal system.¹⁷ Governance, according to states rights advocates, is preferred at the *local* state rather than the *national* state level for several reasons. It is more democratic and more economically competitive, because state legislators respond to local and regional interests of the corporate community while preventing federal government politicians and bureaucrats from imposing their “national” programs and regulatory oversight

(as well as the taxes to fund these programs) on American corporations and citizens who may not want them. In short, states rights advocates are committed to a decentralized, asymmetric form of federalism whereby each and every state can go its own way. The Harper government, backed by the Fraser Institute and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, is promoting the same conception of decentralized, asymmetrical federalism, because it believes this is the best way to advance the interests of the free market.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Canada experienced two extremely divisive and ultimately unsuccessful rounds of mega-constitutional negotiations concerning Quebec's role within the federation. These spectacular failures were followed by a second referendum on the secession of Quebec from the federation in 1995. As noted earlier, the secessionists came within 50,000 votes of winning the referendum and creating a monumental constitutional crisis for Canada. Johnson is a hard-line opponent of the secession of Quebec, and this theme dominates much of this biography. He contends that it is Stephen Harper, not Preston Manning, who is the true political hero. Harper replaced Pierre Elliott Trudeau as the most clear-sighted, hard-line Canadian politician on the issue of Quebec's role within the federation, as well as on how the Canadian government should deal with any and all threats of Quebec's secession from the federation. Manning, more often than not, was either seeking a compromise or simply missing in action. Harper was always a staunch critic of the Québécois socialist, nationalist, and state-building elites for preventing the realignment of Canadian politics along clearly delineated right-wing and left-wing political parties. It was Harper, with the backing of Tom Flanagan, who pressured a highly reluctant Manning to reject first the 1987 Meech Lake Accord and then the Charlottetown Consensus Report of September 1992. Manning, in his 2002 memoirs, rejects Johnson's categorization of Harper as the hero in this struggle. Manning maintains that he always opposed both deals but that he differed with a very inexperienced Harper on the appropriate tactics and strategy to defeat the secessionists.¹⁸

For Harper and Flanagan, both accords, which recognized Quebec as a distinct society, were completely unacceptable because they rejected the constitutional equality of the provinces and they did not grant western provinces what they so desperately required, a Triple-E Senate, to defend and promote their constitutional rights (Johnson 143, 178–86). Johnson's lopsided account fails to acknowledge that the Reform Party, under Manning's leadership, convinced very strong majorities in all four western provinces to reject the Charlottetown Consensus Report in the October 1992 referendum, Canadians' first experiment in constitutional democracy. Johnson's account pays scant attention to the role played by hundreds of thousands of Trudeau Liberals in every region of Canada, including the west and Quebec, or the well-organized women's movement in convincing Canadians to defend the Constitution Act, 1982; the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; Ottawa's taxing and spending powers; national institutions, including Parliament, the Supreme Court, and the Senate; and the constitutional equality of the provinces. In the larger view, Harper was a marginal player in these two mega-constitutional struggles. Manning then went on to get 52 Reform MPs elected to the House of Commons in the dramatic election of 1993, one that brought about the virtual destruction of Mulroney's totally discredited Progressive Conservative Party. In short, Manning's populist Reform Party prepared the way for Stephen Harper's eventual rise to power in 2006.

Johnson's interpretation of Harper's role leading up to the second Quebec referendum is only slightly more balanced and objective. He acknowledges that Manning led the campaign in Parliament and the media for clear rules on any future referendum on secession and any subsequent negotiations. Yet Johnson continues to portray Harper as the real dragon slayer of the Québécois secessionist leaders' stated intent to carry out an unconstitutional

unilateral declaration of independence following the referendum. Johnson acknowledges that former Parti Québécois member Guy Bertrand in August 1995 challenged in a Quebec Court, with only partial success (since Justice Lesage refused to cancel the referendum), the legality of Premier Jacques Parizeau's Draft Bill 1. Yet Johnson does not acknowledge that there were several very concerned Canadians who pressured the Mulroney government in 1990–92 and then the Chrétien government in 1994–95 to contest the constitutionality of Quebec's referendum laws. Several Canadian legal and political experts questioned the legality of Quebec's referendum legislation and the secessionists' claim that Quebec had a right to make a unilateral declaration of independence under international law. A well-known Quebec jurist, Jacques Brossard, in a 1976 detailed study on Quebec's accession to independence, concluded that a unilateral declaration of independence was categorically illegal and unconstitutional.¹⁹ Another constitutional expert and the highly respected McGill University law professor, Stephen Scott, also warned Canadians and their governments as early as 1991 that Bourassa's 1992 Referendum Bill was patently unconstitutional. Scott argued that Québécois secessionists were intent on an illegal and unconstitutional unilateral declaration of independence.²⁰

Once the federalist forces won a slim but crucial majority in the referendum of 30 October 1995, the Chrétien government, determined to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, proceeded with a timely reference to the Supreme Court on the legality of Quebec's referendum law. Harper, on behalf of the Reform Party, presented a private member's bill known as the Quebec Contingency Act (Referendum Conditions) before the House. The Supreme Court's 20 August 1998 landmark *Reference re Secession of Quebec* ruling stipulated that Quebec did not have the right under Canadian or international law to proceed with a unilateral declaration of independence. The justices then proposed rules and guidelines under which the secession of a province from the federation would be constitutional. The Chrétien government, despite strong opposition from its Quebec caucus, incorporated these rules and guidelines in its Clarity Act, 2000. Chrétien's political instincts were sound. There was no political backlash from Quebec's Francophone community. Johnson maintains that Harper's private member's bill was superior to Chrétien's Clarity Act because it outlined how Ottawa would guarantee the rule of law if Quebec proceeded with a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) prior to negotiations (278). This is an overstatement. Given that section 52 of the Constitution Act, 1982, states that the "Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada," one can reasonably make the counter-argument that Harper's proposals were and are superfluous and unnecessary. Any prime minister would be compelled by the 1982 Constitution to protect the territorial integrity of Canada and preserve democracy and the rule of law.

In the interim, disillusioned with Manning's leadership style and eager to carve out a presence on the national scene, Harper resigned his seat to become president of one of Canada's many right-wing lobby groups, the National Citizens Coalition (NCC). Its mandate was to lobby for less government and much lower corporate and personal taxes. Harper, argues Johnson, deliberately steered away from all social conservative "cultural wars" and assiduously defined himself as a fiscal conservative. He preached the gospel of "more freedom through less government," promoted third-party spending during elections, advocated less meddling of the Canadian state in language and cultural matters, and demanded immediate tax reductions for all citizens and corporations (260–1). Harper and Flanagan continued their analysis of how best to create a right-wing Conservative Party, given that Manning's Reform Party was incapable of leading a coalition of various conservative constituencies into power. During the 2 June 1997 federal election, the NCC campaigned openly against Chrétien Liberal candidates in Alberta. Harper's use of NCC funds

to campaign against the Liberal Party in the 2000 election was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. An enraged and despairing Harper co-authored with his Calgary advisors a highly revealing January 2001 Firewall Letter to Alberta Premier Ralph Klein. They urged Klein to take control over pensions, income tax, provincial policing, health care, and social services, and to hold a referendum on the Triple-E Senate. Johnson alludes only briefly to the fact that a very ambitious Harper skillfully exploited the NCC as a springboard for his re-entry into national politics when the moment was ripe.²¹

Harper was propelled back into national politics by a combination of fast-moving events. The Reform Party, renamed the Canadian Alliance Party by its new leader Stockwell Day, crashed and burned during and following the election of 27 November 2000. Johnson's description of how Harper took over Day's Canadian Alliance and then merged it and Peter Mackay's Progressive Conservative rump into his "new" Conservative Party is the least satisfactory section of the biography. His uncritical account, based on oral evidence, of both of these very crucial developments is heavily biased in favor of Harper. Why was it so easy for Harper to shove Day and his "values" conservative supporters aside? Did Harper receive support from outside the Reform/Alliance network? Furthermore, Johnson's account fails to provide an adequate explanation of how and why Peter Mackay's Progressive Conservative (PC) Party agreed so readily to Harper's entreaties. Until the very last moment, Harper remained one of the staunchest opponents of any merger with a PC Party that he identified with Brian Mulroney. How Mulroney, his loyalists, and their close allies in corporate Canada were able to befriend and then convince Harper to take the lead in the merger remains largely a mystery to Canadians. Johnson reveals that Harper's Alliance was \$3 million in debt. What deal did Mulroney and his loyalists – all remarkably well connected to corporate Canada – offer Harper as an enticement to merge the CA with the PC Party? Was it unlimited funding to ensure that Harper won the leadership of the new Conservative Party? Was it a guarantee of corporate Canada's financial support for the CP in its ensuing campaigns to dethrone the Liberal governing party? Such questions need to be answered so that Canadians have a comprehensive picture of Harper's rise to power.

The national election of 28 June 2004 saw Paul Martin, the new Liberal leader and prime minister, face off against Stephen Harper, the new leader of his coalition Conservative Party. In a very nasty campaign, one that ushered in an era of excessive partisanship in Canadian politics, Martin's Liberals were reduced to a minority of 135 seats with 38 percent of the vote. Harper, in his first campaign, won 99 seats with a respectable 30 percent of the vote and a foothold in Ontario with 24 seats. Yet Harper was dismayed and depressed that he had not won. Johnson's one-sided account focuses on what he considers Paul Martin's excessively partisan attacks on Harper's alleged "hidden agenda" to destroy Medicare, cut public services, prevent abortions, and outlaw same-sex marriage. Liberals, Johnson argues, spread rumors that Harper was ready to make a deal with the Bloc Québécois separatist MPs to govern as prime minister of a minority government. Harper, who was determined to destroy the Liberal Party of Canada and set the stage for a national political realignment, shamelessly exploited the sponsorship scandal in Quebec and the resulting Gomery Commission hearings and findings. The Chrétien Liberal government spent federal funds on programs promoting Canada following the referendum. A significant portion of these funds were siphoned off by corrupt advertising companies and Liberal Party operatives. In Quebec, the Bloc Québécois skillfully exploited the scandal largely for its benefit, while the Conservatives were shut out. Had Harper become the prime minister of a minority Conservative government, he would have been forced to work with the Bloc Québécois MPs if he wanted to avoid a quick defeat in the House. Harper understood this

reality, which explains why he made overtures to the Bloc Québécois and planned to work with Bloc MPs after the election.²²

Indeed, as leader of the Official Opposition and putative PM if the government fell, Harper, as portrayed by Johnson, was overly eager to make a quick political breakthrough in Quebec by making risky overtures to Québécois nationalists and disaffected separatists. To the surprise of the media and political observers, and the consternation of many Reformers, an ambitious, impatient Harper shifted the Conservative Party toward several compromises with the Quebec nationalist Liberal government of Jean Charest. He supported PM Martin's asymmetrical deal with Quebec on health care funding that allowed Quebec to do what it wanted with the transfer payments. Harper called for even more asymmetric deals based on the Belgian model of a binational, territorial-based Quebec/Canada federation, a contradiction with Harper's commitment to the equality of provinces. Harper embraced the Charest government's highly questionable concept of a fiscal imbalance and promised further non-conditional transfers and federal tax dollars and tax points to Quebec, a questionable promise he later fulfilled.

Harper worked very closely with both the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party (NDP) caucuses. Their first goal was to prevent PM Martin from calling a snap election. All three opposition party leaders cooperated in a failed attempt at defeating the Liberal government in February 2005. They were thwarted when Belinda Stronach – a former Conservative leadership contender – crossed the floor to join the Liberal Cabinet, and Chuck Cadman, a disgruntled Reformer, voted in support of the budget. Johnson offers no explanation as to why Harper's advisors failed in their attempts to persuade an ailing and dying Cadman to return to the Conservative caucus and help the Conservatives topple the Martin government. A humiliated but determined Harper was convinced – one suspects it was by Brian Mulroney and some of his surrogates – that the only way to the office of prime minister was through Quebec.

During the spring and summer of 2006, Harper assembled a Quebec team. It was made up of members of Mulroney's Quebec network of nationalist Conservatives and Liberals and disgruntled separatists from the PQ and the Bloc. Lawrence Cannon, a former Québécois nationalist Liberal and municipal politician, was appointed leader of the team. Harper then convinced Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe and an impatient NDP leader, Jack Layton, to join Conservative MPs in bringing down the Martin minority government on 28 November 2005. Harper, Duceppe, and Layton believed that the Gomery Commission Report on the Quebec sponsorship scandal, released to great fanfare and media coverage on 1 November, marked the death knell of the once dominant Liberal party of Canada. At long last, Canadian politics would be realigned along a Conservative right-of-center and an NDP left-of-center paradigm. The elixir of power was just too intoxicating for Harper and Layton to resist. Johnson fails to mention that Duceppe hoped that the political realignment would take place along Quebec/Canada lines, thereby advancing the cause of the secessionist movement.

Johnson argues with some justification that Harper and the Conservative Party ran a very slick, professional election campaign in the lead-up to the 23 January 2006 vote. In fact, it was a very populist campaign specifically targeted to each of the various conservative constituencies identified in extensive polling. Harper's Quebec team ran a separate campaign, one that promised "les Québécois et Québécoises" an "open federalism" and the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society via legislative and administrative measures rather than a constitutional amendment. Harper also successfully countered the Liberal Party's "hidden agenda" charge, and his team shrewdly prevented most of the cultural wars incidents of 2004. The indecisive Martin Liberals, outgunned and outmaneuvered by backroom Conservative strategists and tacticians at every stage in the campaign and

confronted by an RCMP investigation of an alleged but never proven insider leak concerning the budget, waited two weeks before announcing their lackluster platform. The Liberals recovered some lost ground in the final week when Harper made a huge gaffe: he declared that a Liberal Senate, Liberal bureaucrats, and Liberal Supreme Court justices would prevent a majority Conservative government from implementing extremist social conservative policies and programs. In doing so, Harper merely reminded voters of the hidden agenda charge! The Conservatives won the election, but the Harper government was held to a minority of 124 seats, including 10 from Quebec. The defeated and demoralized Martin Liberals were reduced to 103 seats, with only 13 from Quebec. The sponsorship scandal and fear of the “values” conservatism enabled the Bloc Québécois to blunt the swing to the Conservatives and retain 51 seats with merely 42 percent of the votes.²³

Johnson concludes his biography of Harper’s rise to power with a short, rambling, and somewhat defensive epilogue. Johnson supports Harper’s very ambitious plan to realign Canada’s national political parties into two clearly defined brokerage parties: a right-wing Conservative Party and a left-wing Liberal/New Democratic Party. Johnson, like Harper, believes that the Liberal Party is too corrupt to be reformed and that it should be and will be totally rejected by voters. This is a naïve and self-serving assessment. Johnson also supports Harper’s plan to reform the federation by downsizing the role of the Canadian government but warns him that if he fails he will reap the wrath of the premiers and provincial power-brokers. Finally, Johnson warns Harper not to delude himself into believing that “identity politics in Quebec are susceptible to pragmatic negotiations” (474). Johnson suggests that Harper should respond to the Québécois political class’s incessant demand for the recognition of Quebec as a nation by making a clear distinction between the nation and the state.

Prime Minister Harper, eager to build upon the 10 Conservative MPs elected in 2006, took Johnson’s suggestion to heart and passed a resolution in the House of Commons recognizing “les Québécois et Québécoises” as a nation within Canada. This was foolhardy in the extreme. Why? Because the vast majority of Québécois and Québécoises, since Quebec’s Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, equate their secular Québécois nation with their technocratic, interventionist Quebec state. For them the fusion of nation and state is primordial. The more appropriate resolution for a Canadian prime minister to have supported is one recognizing all of Canada’s Francophone majority and minority communities as nations within the Canadian state. But Harper, who has a very narrow conception of Canada’s Official Languages Act, 1988, has virtually no sympathy for, or interest in, Canada’s Francophone communities. In the election of 2008, Harper failed to win a majority by gaining additional seats in Quebec when his government foolishly slashed funding for cultural programs in the province. This made it patently clear to all Québécois voters that Harper has very little understanding of Quebec’s majority Francophone community and its aspirations. It now appears that Harper’s response to the rebuke by Québécois voters has been to turn his back on the province and seek his majority in Ontario and British Columbia.²⁴

Harper’s team: Implementing the tactics, strategy, and policies of the Reagan/Bush Republican Party

It’s amazing what you can persuade them [party members] to do once you convince them that it’s the leader who is telling them. (Stephen Harper)²⁵

The top advisor behind Harper’s rise to power after 2001 is a University of Calgary political science professor, Tom Flanagan. His well-structured and clearly written *Harper’s*

Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power is one of the most candid and revealing accounts penned by a political operative in recent decades.²⁶ Flanagan's account adds considerable depth and breadth to Johnson's one-dimensional study of Harper. Flanagan's focus is on the team – of which he was the leading campaign strategist – that mentored Harper from the time he was an economics graduate student at the University of Calgary. The team was responsible for getting Harper elected as leader of the Canadian Alliance Party, 2001–02, and then leader of the merged Conservative Party, 2003–04. An expanded team advised Harper in the lead-up to and during the election of 2004, encouraged him to persevere when he failed to win, and then succeeded in getting him elected prime minister in 2006. The strength of Flanagan's account is that it is based on over a decade of firsthand experience in the political trenches. Flanagan raised funds, answered phones, learned and applied all the new technologies, attended to a myriad of crises within the party and with the media, and helped formulate tactics, strategy, and policy on the run. He candidly admits that he learned far more from his many mistakes than from his successes as a political advisor and campaign strategist.

Flanagan cut his political teeth working for Preston Manning's fledgling Reform Party.²⁷ When disillusionment set in with Manning's overly idealistic and populist Reform movement, Flanagan and Harper focused their time and energy on analyzing how to build a right-wing Conservative Party, one that could eventually obtain power. A skeptical Flanagan was convinced that the best approach was to assist Harper in taking over the leadership of Day's faltering Canadian Alliance Party (CAP). Flanagan outlines their highly effective grassroots fundraising and membership recruitment tactics, their evolving political strategies, and the consensus-building process and policy triangulation that enabled Harper to defeat Day in the leadership race by a comfortable first-ballot margin of 55 to 38 percent. The leadership campaign saw the CAP's membership rebound to 125,000, and Harper's clear victory allowed him to reunite the CAP and attract increased donations to deal with the party's debt.

Flanagan then reveals why Harper, who was strongly opposed to any merger with Joe Clark's Progressive Conservatives, changed his mind. The CAP's National Council remained under the control of social conservatives and was not very cooperative. Harper and Flanagan concluded that a merger with Joe Clark's Progressive Conservative Party was essential. It would expand the fiscal conservative majority within the merged party, thereby reducing the influence of the very vocal and often disruptive social and theological conservative militants and MPs who were frightening off moderate conservatives and Red Grits. These marginal but important constituencies stood in the way of Harper being able to adopt the above-mentioned strategy of triangulation – that is, appropriating, as Dick Morris²⁸ advised Bill Clinton, specific Liberal policies, beginning with expanded health care funding, so that these would be taken off the national agenda (78). Finally, according to Flanagan, corporate leaders from all sectors of the Canadian economy, starting with executives from Alberta's oil and gas industry who despised the Chrétien/Martin Liberals, put enormous pressures on Harper to initiate merger talks with Joe Clark's Progressive Conservatives or they would withhold funding for the CAP and the PC Party (72).

Flanagan recounts how Harper outmaneuvered Peter Mackay once merger talks got underway. Yet he fails to provide a full and convincing explanation as to why Harper was so confident that he would win the leadership of the new party whatever the merger terms were. Flanagan argues, with some justification, that Harper had more experience, a stronger team, and a far superior organization than his two rivals: Tony Clement, an Ontario right-wing Mike Harris Conservative, and Belinda Stronach, a wealthy auto-parts manufacturer and well-connected Progressive Conservative. When on 20 March 2004 the

electronic balloting for the leadership race was completed, Harper won by 56 percent while Stronach came in a surprising second with 35 percent and Clement a distant third place with 9 percent. But surely Flanagan's version is not the whole story. One very important factor was that Canadian business leaders perceived Harper as the only political leader capable of challenging and defeating Paul Martin's Liberal government in central Canada, Alberta, and British Columbia. Unlike Manning's Reform Party, Harper's Conservative Party team succeeded in attracting support and extensive financial resources from Canada's old and new "Blue Tory" and "Blue Grits" corporate and political elites.

Flanagan recounts the crucial adjustments that were made to Harper's team as well as the wide range of innovative tactics and strategies put into action by the CP war room in the lead-up to and during the 2004 federal election. Flanagan uses a prescient analogy of the Punic Wars to explain the CP's long-term strategy of destroying the Liberal Party as Canada's natural governing party (190–2). In the First Punic War, the 2004 election, the CP's objective was to reduce the Liberals to a minority government by making significant gains in Ontario. In the Second Punic War – the election would come within two years – the CP would win, at the very least, a minority government. A Harper CP government would then prepare itself for a Third Punic War, in which the CP would win a majority government. In doing so, a CP government would reduce the Liberal Party to a rump of 20 percent of the electorate – one with reduced financial resources, unstable leadership, and fighting with the NDP for control over the left-of-center portion of the political spectrum. The CP would then take over as Canada's natural governing party for an indefinite period.

How has Flanagan's scenario worked out? To date, the PC Party achieved its objectives in the first two Punic Wars, 2004 and 2006, but came up short by not winning a majority government in the Third Punic War, the election of 2008. Flanagan's and Harper's shared goal of obliterating the Liberal Party of Canada remains work in progress. Canadians, deeply divided along old and new cleavages and experiencing a major economic recession, are left to endure a prolonged period of minority governments in an unstable multi-party system. However, the three minority elections (2004, 2006, and 2008) were indeed veritable political Punic Wars, thanks to the excessively partisan nature of all four parties' campaigns. These were overwhelmingly dominated by negative advertising and dirty tricks. The increased Americanization of Canadian politics was well underway, a development that Flanagan does not comment on because he believes that this process is necessary if the CP is to achieve its goal of moving the center further right on the political spectrum, which would usher in a curtailment in the role of the state.

In the 2004 election, Harper's CP, by making a significant breakthrough in small-town, rural Ontario and adding to its base in western Canada, reduced the Martin Liberal government to a minority, one dependent on the support of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois for its political survival. Flanagan recounts how Harper's team, disappointed with the CP's 30 percent of the vote, worked overtime to remedy the many mistakes and flaws of their 2004 campaign. Harper was convinced that the CP had to make a breakthrough in Quebec if he was to become prime minister. He built a separate Quebec team and organization, drawing from Québécois nationalists of all stripes, and supplied them with funding from the CP's National Office. Harper articulated a distinct "Quebec Platform" that made explicit overtures and some questionable promises to Québécois nationalist Conservatives and Liberals. It was all very reminiscent of Brian Mulroney in 1983–84. Flanagan does not comment on Harper's new Quebec strategy, perhaps because it resulted in 10 Quebec seats in 2006.

In the 2006 Second Punic War election, Harper's team, according to Flanagan, having fixed most of the campaign problems associated with 2004, ran a very successful,

take-no-prisoners, front-runner's campaign. During the election Harper successfully redefined his CP as a center-right party by triangulating Liberal policies and by keeping his social conservatives under tight control. He then wrapped himself in the Canadian flag with the campaign slogan "Conservatives Stand Up for Canada" on sensitive identity issues concerning Canada-US relations, foreign and defense policies, and the fight against Québécois secessionists. Harper offered the various groups comprising his Conservative coalition – as well as young, upwardly mobile, middle-class urban families – a limited number of well-targeted populist policies, including cuts to the GST, child-care allowances of \$100 per child per month, and corporate tax cuts.

Flanagan reveals that Harper's Conservative Party victory in 2006 owes a great deal to the NDP. Why? Because NDP leader Jack Layton and Harper, through intermediaries on both sides and leader-to-leader conversations, agreed to work together to defeat the Martin government. Having helped prop up the Liberals in the previous budget vote, the NDP risked condemning itself to political irrelevance unless it demonstrated greater opposition to the governing party. Moreover, Layton was convinced by his advisors – as well as by Flanagan and Harper – that if the CP Party and the NDP cooperated they could destroy the Liberal Party of Canada. The NDP would then form the Official Opposition Party and be in position, one day, to form the government of Canada. Layton and Harper cooperated, with the support of the Bloc leader (who was keen on further exploiting the sponsorship scandal in Quebec), in defeating the Martin government. During the 2006 campaign, Layton mercilessly attacked the Liberal Party and portrayed the NDP as Canada's only viable left-of-center party. According to Flanagan, Harper became prime minister in 2006 largely thanks to a strong and loyal team that learned from its mistakes and skillfully exploited the NDP attack on the Liberals. The team was flexible and shrewd enough to adopt new and risky tactics and strategies and to triangulate on policy in order to beat the dominant but weakened Liberal Party at its own game.

Harper's Conservative minority government, in Flanagan's estimation, will make "Canada a conservative, or Conservative country" if it carries out a complex set of inter-related strategies outlined by Dick Morris (274). These include: stand on principle, triangulate, divide and conquer, reform his own party, and mobilize the nation in times of crisis.²⁹ In executing some or all of these strategies, Harper will have to exercise an effective but not overbearing discipline. Journalists, while agreeing that Harper has mastered the discipline of power, have noted that he consults a few close advisors and delegates very little responsibility to his Cabinet ministers, his caucus, and the bureaucracy.³⁰ Harper's autocratic style of governance created a serious problem. Flanagan, in a chapter entitled "The Fall Fiasco" (2nd edition of *Harper's Team*) analyzing the 2008 election, reveals that Harper's reputation as a stellar tactician has been severely damaged. During the election, Harper's arrogant war room team made several stupid mistakes – a pooping puffin on Stéphane Dion ads, cuts to arts grants particularly in Quebec, and much harsher sentences for young offenders – that cost Harper his majority by alienating a great many Québécois voters.³¹ Once back in office with a larger minority, an overconfident, excessively partisan Harper did the unthinkable by uniting the opposition with his decision, laid out in a "politically maladroit" economic update, to legislate an end to public subsidies for votes obtained by all political parties.³² Harper's very provocative populist threat provoked the NDP and Liberal parties into forming a formal coalition – with the informal support of the Bloc – to defeat the government and then call on the governor general to allow the coalition to form the government. A panicked PM Harper denounced the NDP/Liberal/Bloc coalition as a danger to national security, since it required, he claimed, the full cooperation of Bloc Québécois separatist

MPs. These dreaded separatist MPs would gain access to important and highly sensitive matters of state.

Facing an imminent and humiliating defeat in the House, Harper met with Governor General Michaëlle Jean to persuade her of his questionable national security concerns regarding the emerging Liberal/NDP coalition. He was desperate to obtain the prorogation of the parliamentary session that had just convened for his budget, one that totally ignored the deepest recession since the 1930s. A normal fifteen-minute courtesy call turned into a very lengthy two-hour in camera session that left journalists, constitutional experts, and Canadians speculating about the constitutionality of Harper's unusual demand and the real nature and scope of their prolonged discussions.³³ PM Harper, while visibly relieved that he had obtained his prorogation (thereby saving his government from imminent defeat), gave a very somber press conference while standing alone in a snowstorm just outside Government House. Harper's untrue allegations about the nature of the Liberal/NDP coalition bolstered the popularity of the Bloc, cost Harper and the Conservatives any chance of making further inroads into Quebec, and catapulted Michael Ignatieff into the leadership of the Liberal Party. At great risk to national unity, PM Harper had deliberately stoked the fires of identity politics and populist democracy to ensure his government's political survival, but at the expense of parliamentary democracy.³⁴

Harper's most important strategy, according to Flanagan, is to triangulate on policy with the goal of moving the CP to the center-right of Canada's political spectrum. This process, underway since before the election of 2004, has gained tremendous momentum since the re-election of the Harper government in 2008. When confronted with the strongest recession since the Great Depression, Harper triangulated very quickly by committing his Conservative government to five years or more of deficit budgets and much higher national debt. Harper also promised not to cut services or raise taxes during the recession. For orthodox fiscal conservatives like Flanagan, this is seen as a dramatic turn of events, and they are none too pleased with Harper for having abandoned his economic principles and for putting the large fiscal conservative base of the Conservative Party at serious risk. In order for an enduring Conservative Party to become Canada's new governing party, Flanagan argues that it is essential that Canada's overly liberal political culture be transformed into a conservative political culture.³⁵ But surely this is a challenge that goes far beyond the capacity and the resources of a single political party and its leader. Such a major transformation will occur only if there are deep and widespread demographic, economic, and social changes taking place in Canadian society. Political parties respond to such changes; they rarely make them happen.

The nature of the Conservative Party's coalition creates severe constraints on the Conservative Party's capacity to nurture and consolidate a right-wing political culture within Canada's majority urban/suburban middle-class communities. In fact, "values" conservatives, including increasing numbers of evangelical Catholics, are a very well organized, highly vocal, and growing minority within the Conservative caucus and Party."³⁶ Most assuredly, "values" conservatives will revolt if Harper abandons their views and issues. When "values" conservatives in and outside the party became aware in June/July 2009 that the Harper Conservative government was providing grants to Gay Pride organizations across the country, they became outraged. Harper was forced to announce that his government would re-evaluate the \$100,000 Marquee Tourist Events program to ensure that grants to Gay Pride organizations met the criteria for stimulus funding.³⁷ It is highly unlikely that such grants will continue, given that Harper needs to keep social and theological conservatives within the Conservative Party. The \$100,000 Tourism/Stimulus program was moved to the Industry Ministry under fiscal conservative Tony Clement, well

out of the hands of Tourism Minister Diane Ablonczy, a founding member of the Reform Party, who was photographed giving a \$400,000 check to Toronto's Gay Pride organization. The Gay Pride organizers' public defense of the Harper government's decision to provide the grants most certainly increased Harper's political predicament. A devout and practicing Christian fundamentalist, Harper does not want their support or their votes.³⁸ Relentless pressure from the social and theological conservatives will prevent Harper or his successor from transforming the Conservative Party into a centrist party.

Full circle: Has Mulroney's Progressive Conservative Party been restored to office?

The story of Harper's rise to power would not be complete without a clear understanding of the remarkable dynamic that took place within the highest echelons of the Progressive Conservative Party, with the caucus and party members largely left out of the process. It is this dynamic that led ultimately to the reunification of all the various conservative factions in a united Conservative Party by October 2003. This very revealing and relevant story is recounted in Bob Plamondon's well-documented *Full Circle: Death and Resurrection in Canadian Conservative Politics*.³⁹ A fiscal conservative, a chartered accountant, a university professor, a very loyal Mulroney Progressive Conservative insider, and a political journalist, Plamondon provides a fascinating and highly original version of the creation of the new Conservative Party of Canada. He does this by analyzing in considerable detail the central role played by a very young, ambitious Peter Mackay, who replaced Joe Clark as PC leader on 1 June 2003.

Plamondon's version of events makes it abundantly clear that a somewhat naïve, compliant, and very ambitious Mackay was handpicked by Brian Mulroney and his large coterie of senior loyalists in the party and the corporate community for the job of negotiating the PC Party's merger with Harper's Canadian Alliance. Mulroney was responsible for destroying the Progressive Conservative Party, thanks to his two rounds of unsuccessful mega-constitutional politics with Quebec, the controversial North American Free Trade Agreement, the Goods and Services Tax, and an economic recession. He was determined to refurbish his badly tarnished legacy by rebuilding the party, even if it meant that the ideological and political bases of the "new" Conservative Party of Canada would reside in western Canada.

According to Plamondon, following Harper's quick and successful takeover of the Canadian Alliance, Mulroney came to perceive Harper not as an ideologue but rather primarily as an intelligent, extraordinarily ambitious, very pragmatic, and highly flexible politician. What brought Mulroney and Harper together was their determination, for different reasons, to build a new national Conservative Party, one that could win power and displace the Liberal Party as Canada's natural governing party. Mulroney and his coterie of loyalists quickly favored Harper as the one to become leader of this new Conservative Party. Mulroney, while supporting Mackay's bid to lead the PC Party, was already having exploratory discussions with Harper soon after he won the leadership of the Canadian Alliance. Their friendship continued to grow until it was necessary for a very ambitious Prime Minister Harper to break off all ties with Mulroney when the latter was catapulted into the infamous Schreiber–Mulroney affair. The allegations that Mulroney received kickbacks from Karlheinz Schreiber, a lobbyist for German armaments companies and the European Airbus corporation, for lucrative government contracts were scrutinized first by a highly partisan public Parliamentary Committee.⁴⁰ To protect the integrity of his government and prevent Reform MPs and Cabinet members from revolting, PM Harper was then compelled to set up, in June 2008, a formal Commission of Inquiry into the

Schreiber–Mulroney affair led by Honourable Jeffrey Oliphant.⁴¹ Canadians are still waiting for the final report of the inquiry that is now due out in May 2010.

Plamondon's central thesis is that Harper's Conservative Party and minority government of 2006 have come full circle. In his view, both closely resemble the Mulroney Progressive Conservative Party and government of 1984–93. He maintains that the rift between the Reform/Alliance movement and the PC Party was largely a clash of personalities rather than a clash of conflicting old and new conservative ideologies. Plamondon's partisanship gets the best of him. His biased account lacks balance and objectivity in one important respect. It is a prolonged diatribe against Preston Manning and his western Canadian populist Reform movement. He portrays Manning's Reform/Alliance movement as thoroughly misguided and deliberately destructive, and condemns it as an unnecessary and highly damaging episode in the long history of Canada's Progressive Conservative Party. By destroying the powerful and very successful Mulroney Progressive Conservative Party and government, Manning ensured that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien governed Canada with impunity for over a decade. Apart from nearly destroying the PC Party, Manning's utopian protest movement failed to realign the Canadian political party system in the way that he intended. Plamondon concludes that Reformers' presence and Reform's impact are barely visible in PM Harper's Conservative government. On the contrary, he argues that Harper's *modus operandi* and policies resemble very closely those of former PM Mulroney. He fails to point out the irony, considering Harper's unrelenting criticism of PM Mulroney prior to his resignation in 1993.

Plamondon's overly simplistic interpretation reflects his take on the political realities facing PM Harper's minority Conservative government in 2006, a situation that prevailed after his re-election in 2008 with a larger minority. It was imperative that Harper reach out to the mistrusting Progressive Conservatives in central Canada and the Atlantic provinces. He very deliberately played down Reform's "values" conservatism and policies and appointed a majority of Progressive Conservatives and corporate Blue Tories to his Cabinet. When Harper failed to win a majority government with this strategy, his triangulation of policy, and his reaching out to Québécois nationalist voters, his western Reform/Alliance base threatened to revolt. This process was accelerated with the rapid onset of the recession that forced his government to embrace an ever-expanding deficit and growing debt over several years as a result of an over \$40 billion dollar stimulus program.

Following the near defeat of his government at the hands of a Liberal–NDP coalition government in the fall of 2008, PM Harper moved quickly to salvage his government from certain defeat and shore up his western base. He made a blunt threat to go over the head of Governor General Michaëlle Jean by an appeal to voters if she did not grant him the previously discussed prorogation of the parliamentary session so that his government could avoid a motion of non-confidence by retooling its unrealistic budget. Harper shored up his Reform base by promoting tougher legislation on crime, imposing visa requirements on the Czech Republic to curtail the flow of Roma refugees and on Mexico to stem refugees and the flow of drugs, and curtailing state funding for gay and lesbian organizations in light of the Reform/Alliance outburst about federal grants. It is now becoming increasingly clear that Harper's Conservative government – influenced to an important degree by Reform/Alliance's conceptions of fiscal and social conservatism – is not a mere replica of Mulroney's Progressive Conservative Party of the 1980s. Harper's Conservative Party, well grounded in the Reform movement's fusion of "values" conservatism and fiscal conservatism, is a moderate version of the United States Republican Party in terms of its policies, its communication techniques and style, and its approach to funding and campaigning.

Harper's Republican-lite Conservative Party has, and will continue to have, a profound influence on Canada's political culture over the ensuing decades.⁴²

The painful death of Liberal Party hegemony: Harper capitalizes on a perfect political storm

Johnson and Flanagan provide the general outline and similarly sympathetic interpretations of Harper's rise to power. Plamondon's emphasis on the PC side of the equation adds depth and scope to the story. Paul Wells, former journalist for the *Montreal Gazette*, the *National Post*, and currently chief Ottawa correspondent for *Maclean's*, offers readers a slightly more balanced, revealing, and witty account of Harper's quick rise to office. On the Harper side of the ledger, Wells's account relies uncritically on the Flanagan/Johnson interpretation. What is original in Wells's version is his interpretation and analysis of the decline of the once dominant Liberal Party of Canada. In *Right Side Up*, Wells argues, very convincingly, that Harper would never have become prime minister had it not been for the slow but inevitable collapse of the Liberal Party, a decline that set in under Jean Chrétien after 1997. The full collapse occurred under PM Paul Martin in 2003–04. Some of the blame goes to PM Chrétien who, following his remarkable third election victory in 2000, failed to deal effectively with Finance Minister Paul Martin, who was openly conspiring to take over the party and the prime minister's office. Chrétien simply rested on his laurels and thought he could keep Martin from becoming leader and PM. Wells correctly attributes the lion's share of the blame to Martin, whom he portrays as a misguided, ineffectual, and dithering leader. In short, Paul Martin Jr was certainly not in the same political class as his illustrious father, Paul Martin Sr, who had been a powerful political force in the Liberal governments of William Lyon Mackenzie King, Louis St Laurent, and Lester B. Pearson.

An overly ambitious Martin Jr set the stage for Harper's rise to power by generating a vicious and destructive civil war in the Liberal Party, one that brought about its utter collapse during and following the 2004 election. According to Wells, the collapse was the unintended consequence of several interrelated factors: an inexperienced Martin team's ill-conceived, graceless coup against Prime Minister Chrétien; the team's unnecessary and counterproductive exploitation of the Quebec sponsorship scandal; Martin's misguided creation of the Gomery Commission and his political misuse of its report; Martin's appeal to Blue Grits and fiscal conservatives, which moved the Liberal party to the center-right and drove away progressive liberals, leaving Martin's Liberal Party open to Harper's triangulation tactics; and, finally, Martin's ill-founded and politically inept critique of the Supreme Court *Reference re the Secession of Quebec* and Chrétien's Clarity Act in order to curry the support, unsuccessfully, of Québécois nationalists. Wells argues convincingly that Martin's team, whose inexperienced members isolated themselves and their leader from outside contacts and the full electoral resources of the party, suffered all the debilitating symptoms of "true believer" group think.

"The Board," as Martin's team called itself, functioned on the highly questionable theory that Martin's Liberal Party must break all ties with the Pearson, Trudeau, and Chrétien Liberal traditions and policies. When PM Martin called the 28 June 2004 election, a great many Pearson, Trudeau, and Chrétien Liberals simply refused to work for Martin Liberal candidates or even to cast their ballots. A dithering, inept PM Martin managed to salvage a minority Liberal government of 135 seats rather than grow the party to over 200 seats as he had promised to do. This was largely because Canadians were not willing to embrace the relatively unknown Stephen Harper and his Conservative Party. PM Martin's team,

according to Wells, learned absolutely nothing from its near-defeat and proceeded to govern as if the Liberals had a majority. Little attempt was made to heal the destructive civil war between the Martin and Chrétien camps. Neither was the Martin Liberal government able to deliver on its central promises of a national daycare system and the rebuilding of Canada's very popular but badly managed and underfunded Medicare system.

Wells contends that the Martin government did Harper a great service by defeating his non-confidence vote in May 2005. It showed that PM Martin would stoop to anything to stay in office. He convinced Belinda Stronach to join his Cabinet but, in doing so, lost the trust of Canadians. Harper's humiliating defeat, which included his failure to obtain Chuck Cadman's vote, convinced him to beef up his team and be far better organized for the second attempt. Wells provides a succinct account of how Harper's team engineered, with the help of the NDP and the Bloc, the defeat of the Martin Liberal government in November 2005, and then, until the last week, completely dominated the election campaign leading up to his victory on 23 January 2006. Yet the account adds very little to the Johnson/Flanagan interpretation. Harper kept the social conservatives in check. He offered Canadians a down-market, populist five-point agenda including an accountability act, improvement to health care wait times, tougher penalties for crime, a reduction of the detested Goods and Services Tax from 7 to 5 percent, and a \$100 per child per month daycare allowance.

Wells reminds readers that Harper's minority government victory was aided and abetted by the opposition parties. PM Martin's war room ran a totally disorganized and poorly focused campaign that never gained any traction. Martin was kept off his game by the fact that the NDP leader, Jack Layton, targeted relentlessly the Liberal Party in the rather unrealistic belief that he would be crowned the leader of the Official Opposition. Wells concludes that Harper's rise to power was not a fluke; he became prime minister as a result of his tactical and strategic prowess, his populist, down-market policies, and his canny ability to exploit successfully both the deepening leadership crisis within the once dominant Liberal Party of Canada and the misguided, utopian ambitions of Jack Layton.

French Kiss: Quebec's place in Harper's right-wing conservative vision

When Harper failed to obtain a majority government in 2006, his team carried out a detailed post-mortem and came to the conclusion that the road to a majority government was through Quebec, not Liberal-dominated Ontario. The Conservative Party won a surprising 10 seats in Quebec City and the surrounding region and came second in 40 other Quebec ridings. Harper was convinced by Mulroney and his Québécois loyalists that if his government made the appropriate policy overtures to Québécois nationalists and the Charest Liberal government, the Conservative Party could win many more seats. Chantal Hébert, award-winning national political columnist for the *Toronto Star* and Montreal's *Le Devoir*, is Canada's leading political commentator on Quebec and Canadian politics. In her insightful and lucidly written *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec*, Hébert analyses Harper's conversion – one that would prove to be short-lived, as the 2008 election results revealed – from a Reform/Alliance hard-liner on the issue of Quebec and Québécois nationalists into a prime minister fully committed to wooing “les Québécois et Québécoises” into electing a greater number of Conservative MPs.

Hébert makes the valid observation that Harper's long-overdue reconstruction of the Conservative Party of Canada was both necessary and beneficial, because it “restored competitiveness to the federal system” (263). She contends that the lack of a formidable Official Opposition gave the Chrétien and Martin Liberal governments a false sense of

comfort. It explains Chrétien's failure to take the threat of secession seriously in the early 1990s, leading to a near-defeat of the federalist forces in the 1995 referendum. The absence of a strong opposition also explains Chrétien's tolerance of the ongoing destructive civil war within the government and party between the Chrétien and Martin factions. It accounts for the Chrétien government's inadvertent stumbling into the destructive sponsorship scandal. Finally, it explains Martin's ill-conceived attempt to exploit the scandal to his advantage by blaming it on PM Chrétien and his loyal coterie of Liberal Party militants and operatives in Quebec. This approach not only damaged Liberal Party political prospects in Quebec but also inflicted long-term damage on the renowned Liberal Party brand.

Hébert's central thesis is that Harper's rise to power in 2006 and his blind date with Quebec can be explained by "two missed rendezvous with history" (1). The first was the Québécois secessionist movement's failure to achieve independence in 1995. This monumental failure destabilized the Parti Québécois party and government for a generation by setting in motion a slow decline of the secessionist movement. Most Québécois and Quebecers welcomed the death of identity politics as epitomized by the clash of divergent Quebec and Canada language regimes. This shift encouraged the vast majority of Québécois to reassess their place within the federation and to look for a political alternative to the discredited national Liberal Party and the marginalized Bloc Québécois. Hard-line secessionists and federalist vote-splitting kept the Bloc alive in Parliament, but Charest's Liberal government gained and retained control of Quebec politics and the state.

The second missed rendezvous was Paul Martin's failure to fulfill his alleged destiny as one of Canada's great prime ministers. Hébert paints a very unflattering but largely accurate portrait of Prime Minister Martin – the darling of Québécois nationalists and corporate Canada in the early 1990s – as a dithering prime minister who achieved very little while in office. Martin, in Hébert's estimation, was completely out of touch with the premiers' very real concerns, ones that he had helped foster by his massive budget cuts in the mid-1990s, as well as with the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of Québécois voters by 2004. It did not help that the Quebec wing of the troubled national Liberal Party was merely an empty shell by the time Martin became leader and prime minister in 2003. Chrétien had rejected sound advice from many prominent Quebec liberals from the Trudeau era to renew the Liberal Party in Quebec. Martin's team did little to improve the situation, because they did not perceive the crisis.

These largely unexpected but converging developments, in Hébert's opinion, gave Harper's perceived more centrist-oriented Conservative Party and government several opportunities to make overtures to conservative-minded Québécois voters. They were attracted by Harper's old-fashioned conception of a disciplined, classical view of watertight federalism, one that he astutely labeled "open federalism." Hébert might have added that Harper's "open federalism" was articulated to broaden the base of his conservative coalition by making inroads into Quebec. He promised to do away with any and all conditional shared-cost programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction and transfer even more jurisdictions – communications and culture – and taxing powers to the provinces. This would transform Canadian federalism from a competitive, often combative and tension-driven federal system into a politically driven, highly decentralist system.⁴³ Canada would emerge, observers noted, as a fiefdom of powerful and less powerful states left to fend for themselves. There would be no more creative tension or close collaboration in the Canadian federation. Most assuredly there would be no more gang-ups by the premiers on the prime minister in those pesky federal-provincial conferences that have gone the way of the Dodo bird.⁴⁴

Hébert, like William Johnson, makes a highly questionable claim that Harper's long overdue overture to nationalist Québécois federalists and disenchanting secessionists,

while clearly out of character, was both necessary and beneficial to Canadian unity. Pushed by the Bloc Québécois as well as by Michael Ignatieff – who, in pursuit of the leadership of the Liberal Party, promised to recognize Quebec as a nation – PM Harper called upon all parties in the House to support a government resolution recognizing that the “Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.” Many observers, including myself, have made the counter-argument that Harper overplayed his hand, fell into the nationalists/secessionists’ trap, and inadvertently refueled the dying embers of identity politics. In short, the symbolic resolution all but guaranteed that Harper’s blind date with Quebec would not blossom into a long-term mutual partnership between Harper’s Conservative Party and the Québécois people. Harper, responding to strong opposition from Reform/Alliance MPs and supporters from western Canada, refused the Bloc Québécois’ incendiary demands to make the symbolic recognition of Quebec as a nation meaningful by transferring more jurisdictions and taxing powers to Quebec. Bloc demands included amending the Official Languages Act, 1988, to allow all federal government employees and institutions in Quebec to function exclusively in French. Most assuredly, PM Harper could not and would not accept any of these proposals. Harper’s dabbling in Québécois identity politics backfired.

On the other hand, the Harper government need not have undermined the CP’s hard-earned inroads into Quebec during the 2008 election campaign. Hébert makes a convincing case that an ill-advised Harper did so by ignoring or rejecting the progressive realities of Québécois society in matters of same-sex unions, gun control, and law and order matters. In a cynical and altogether “Rovian” bid to win votes among those suspicious of the country’s intellectual elites, and in keeping with his own anti-elite bias, Harper also approved minor but highly symbolic cuts to arts and culture programs in the province and then claimed that culture and artists were not important. This move, as should have been anticipated, blew up in the PM’s face.

Harper’s war with Québécois voters reached its apogee when he denounced the Liberal/NDP coalition for getting into bed with the dreaded separatists, something he had done himself to defeat the Martin government in 2006. Clearly, pressured by his western Reform/Alliance base and inspired by successful Republican tactics south of the border, PM Harper made the decision that his blind date with Quebec would not evolve beyond a one-night stand!⁴⁵ Since the 2008 election, the electoral prospects for Harper’s Conservative Party in Quebec have declined steadily. There is little prospect that this trend will be reversed in time for the next election. PM Harper now understands that he will have to obtain his majority in Ontario and British Columbia.

Will Harper consolidate the Conservative Party’s tenuous hold on national politics?

A fundamental political realignment in Canada’s national politics will have major consequences, many hard to predict, for the future of Canada and for our relationship with our closest neighbor, biggest trading partner and long-time ally. The jury is still out on whether or not Harper will obtain the full scope and permanence of the major political realignment – the creation of two new political parties, one right wing, the other left wing – that he has pursued relentlessly since the late 1980s. In the interim, readers will be able to call upon the insights and analyses of all the above-discussed authors, who offer varying interpretations on how and why Harper rose to power via his Conservative Party coalition comprising new and old conservative constituencies of various sizes and strengths. Harper’s party is a very different Conservative Party from those of John A. Macdonald, Robert Borden, John Diefenbaker, or Brian Mulroney. All of these books, if read together

and supplemented by the emerging academic literature,⁴⁶ will allow readers to gain a better understanding of the complex factors behind the creation of a very different Conservative Party and the ensuing process of political realignment that is now underway. Canadians know that Harper can win elections. What they need now is a series of studies and books analyzing PM Harper's governance skills. What has Harper's Conservative government accomplished to date, and what is his government proposing to do in the near future? In what ways and in what direction will Harper's governance transform Canada and the Canadian federation? Will Prime Minister Harper be able to assist the New Democratic Party in becoming the preferred choice of a majority of left-of-center Canadians? If he can't succeed in doing this, the Liberals will eventually return to office and thwart Harper's goal of transforming the political party system. If Harper, by consolidating his right-of-center Conservative Party, is successful in reshaping the left-of-center of the Canadian political party system, will the Canadian Liberal Party follow the British Labour Party into the dustbin of history?

To date, Prime Minister Harper has been successful in convincing increasing numbers of Canadians that he has compromised on, or delayed indefinitely, many aspects of the Reform/Alliance movement's "values" and fiscal conservative agenda. Senate reform has been blocked by opposition parties, the Liberal-controlled Senate, and the premiers. Instead, PM Harper has opted to use his constitutional prerogative to appoint "conservative" senators – they will soon form the majority of the Senate – to ensure that his government can pass its legislative agenda. He is also appointing conservative judges to undertake judicial review of his government's more robust anti-crime laws as well as the numerous Charter of Rights and Freedoms cases.⁴⁷ A majority Conservative Senate and conservative courts will ensure that Harper's legacy will not be unraveled very easily by a future Liberal government. In short, despite the need to compromise, PM Harper remains committed to his primary goal of creating an enduring "values" and fiscal Conservative Party capable of dominating the center-right of Canadian politics for decades to come.

While Harper remains a "values" and fiscal Conservative, the harsh realities inherent in all minority governments have forced him to triangulate momentarily toward the center on a range of policies, including the adoption of a massive stimulus package.⁴⁸ This has provoked the vast majority of "values" and fiscal conservatives to question his commitment to transforming and reducing the role of the state in conformity with their vision of Canada and Canadian society.⁴⁹ The Harper government's actions, more than its ideas and populist rhetoric, will determine whether or not his new Conservative Party will become Canada's twenty-first-century natural governing party – that is, if Canadians really want or need another natural governing party to dominate their national government and agenda for another century. One can only hope that Canadians have become somewhat more sophisticated and more democratic since gaining sovereignty over their Constitution in 1982!

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Notes

1. Cited in Wells (2008).
2. Pammett and Dornan (2004, 2006, 2009).

3. Clarkson (2005, 161–79).
4. Dobbin (1991) analyses the emergence of Manning’s Reform movement from the perspective of a western Canadian social democratic; two western journalists, Sydney Sharpe and Don Braid (1992), emphasize the sectional, populist, and Christian fundamentalist historical roots of Manning’s Reform movement; Dabbs (2000).
5. Martin (1997).
6. Clarkson (2005, 180–205).
7. MacLeod (2009).
8. Clarkson (2005, 237–62).
9. Raymond (2007). Various contributors address the Mulroney government’s evolving social, cultural, economic, and defense policies. Chapters by Ian Peach and Michael Behiels deal with Mulroney’s ill-conceived mega-constitutional negotiations undertaken in response to the demands by Québécois nationalist politicians. Both failed attempts did little but stir up regional and political animosity, helping to bring an end to the Mulroney regime and destroying the Progressive Conservative party coalition he had created in 1983–84.
10. Consult Gottfried (2007). A well-known paleo-conservative, Gottfried characterizes the contemporary American neo-conservative movement as a “values conservative” movement. Social, religious, and fiscal conservatives use eternal “values” to create a sense of permanence and superiority over their opponents on the left whom they charge with being moral relativists and therefore unfit to govern. Yet, neo-conservatives eager to hold office have compromised many of their so-called eternal, permanent values by making important compromises with centrist liberals, a process that undermines their professed values and makes a mockery of all conservative principles (Gottfried 2007, x–xviii).
11. Consult Jeffrey (1999) and Laycock (2001) for excellent analyses of the emergence of the “right-wing” neo-conservative provincial and federal parties in Canada.
12. All of Manning’s biographers acknowledge the role that Manning and his wife Sandra played in persuading Harper to embrace an Evangelical Christian “values” conservatism and to join their church in Calgary: Dobbin (1991); Dabbs (2000); Sharpe and Braid (1992).
13. Mackay (2006, 65, 70); Mackay’s interpretation of Harper’s strong religious convictions is substantiated by another journalist of contemporary religions. Consult Todd (2009).
14. Harper (2003a, 2003b); consult McDonald (2006) for the “values” conservative context of Harper’s speech to the Civitas Society.
15. Turcotte (2009, 13), author’s translation.
16. Jeffrey (1999, 22–23, 376–403). Harper and Flanagan borrowed these tactics and strategies from Paul Weyrich, co-founder of the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation, who advised Ronald Reagan on how to transform his Republican Party into a winning machine by carefully targeting single issue constituencies and raising funds through direct mail campaigns.
17. Teles (2008, 135–80).
18. Manning (2002).
19. Brossard (1976, 272).
20. Scott (1992, 1997).
21. Nichols (2009) provides a very clear picture of Harper’s *modus operandi*.
22. Pammatt and Dornan (2004).
23. For full details of this crucial election, consult Pammatt and Dornan (2006).
24. Hébert (2009); Castonguay (2009).
25. Stephen Harper, Policy Chief, Reform Party of Canada. Cited in Dobbin (1991, 116).
26. Another excellent political insider’s account, by a former special assistant to Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, is Kinsella (2007; 2008, 9).
27. Neither Johnson nor Flanagan gives enough credit to Preston Manning for the creation of the Reform Party and the role it played on the emergence of right-wing provincial Conservative Parties in Canada and the slow transformation of Red Tory Progressive Conservatism.
28. Flanagan had Harper read Morris (2002). Harper has applied successfully five of Morris’s six strategies: stand on principle; triangulate; divide and conquer; reform your own party; use a new technology. Harper, at the moment, has failed to mobilize the nation in times of crisis.
29. Morris (2002, xii).
30. Simpson and Laghi (2008); Travers (2009).
31. Flanagan (2009).

32. Geddes and Wherry (2008); Coyne (2008).
33. Martin (2008); Franks (2009); Murphy (2009).
34. The parliamentarians' position is laid out in Peter Russell and Lorne Sossin (2009); Potter (2009) makes the case for the "democrats" such as Michael Bliss who demanded an election to prevent the coalition from taking over. Bliss (2008).
35. Flanagan (2009).
36. Hutchinson (2009), published by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Between 1996 and 2008 the percentage of evangelicals voting for the Reform/Conservative party rose from 33 to 71 percent Hutchinson (2009, 9).
37. Delacourt (2009).
38. Chase (2009); Ditchburn (2009).
39. Another PC Party insider's account is provided by a former Chief of Staff to PM Mulroney and current Senator. Segal (2007).
40. Wells (2009).
41. Commission of Inquiry into Certain Allegations Respecting Business and Financial Dealings Between Karlheinz Schreiber and the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney (<http://www.oliphantcommission.ca/english/index.php>).
42. Cobb (2009). He analyzes critically Harper's three years as Prime Minister.
43. Consult Dunn (2008).
44. Wells (2008); Macleod (2009).
45. Behiels (2008).
46. For example, Richard Johnson's fascinating "Polarized Pluralism in the Canadian Party System: Presidential Address" (2008).
47. Brennan (2009); Naumetz (2009).
48. Riley (2009).
49. Gray (2009); Coyne (2009); *The Economist* (2009).

Notes on contributor

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