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Panel A5a. Canadian Conservatism and Populism

The Three Crises of the Centre Right in Late 20th Century Canada and Stephen Harper's Response.

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In this paper I argue that from the 1970s onwards the parties of the centre right faced a series of ideological crises that had by 2000 left both the Progressive Conservatives and the Alliance without a relevant and distinctive political narrative. These were: a crisis of the post war consensus that began in the 1970s, and then a crisis of convergence in the 1990s when the Liberal Party took a neo-liberal turn. Finally, there was a third crisis, the inherent contradictions between neo-liberalism and traditional Toryism that had opened up by the late 1990s. This suggested that the right was now irrevocably split and a pan Canadian conservatism would be impossible.

Thus by 2000 both the Progressive Conservatives and the Alliance seemed to have reached a point of ideological exhaustion. However, only six years later there was a reunified Conservative party in government in Ottawa. Was this due simply to a failure of the Liberal government's statecraft or has Stephen Harper discovered a relevant and distinctive narrative for conservatism? Analysing these three crises, my paper will therefore finish with a reflection on to what extent Harper has found ideological answers, and a viable statecraft.

I will argue that Harper is attempting to move beyond valence politics and that there is political project at work. His renewal of Conservative statecraft has two aspects. Firstly, Harper has sought to create a pan Canadian Conservatism relevant across the nation: including Quebec. In addition there is an ongoing, and gradual, attempt to shift the consensus rightwards; already apparent (and successful), in the area of defence.

This paper grows out of my wider research comparing attempts at ideological renewal by the parties of the centre right in Australia, the UK, and Canada at the start of the 21st century. My principal focus here will be on the Canadian parties of the centre right at the federal level and their ideologies. My approach to ideology is to focus on what Hay terms the "strategic use of ideology" (1996 p. 149). Thus, read this way, ideology is not an all powerful force that explains party behaviour, rather, it is part of a wider political project (Gamble, 1994 p. 4); a tool in a party's statecraft that helps create "a winning electoral strategy", achieve "political argument hegemony", "governing competence" and ultimately another winning strategy (Bulpitt, 1986 p. 21 - 22). This concern with statecraft in turn leads to a focus on the party leadership and the leader's role as 'communicator in chief.

Part 1 of the paper begins with a discussion of the three ideological crises that would affect centre right statecraft in the final decades of the 20th century. Part 2 then focuses on how these crises were played out in the Canadian context. Finally Part 3 gives an initial reflection on Harper's response and his attempt to develop an effective statecraft for the 21st century.

<u>Part 1: Three types of Ideological Crisis.</u>

A number of social and political scientists have developed theories of ideological crisis. However, three particular understandings of ideological crisis will be shown to have had a crucial impact on these parties. Firstly, there is the idea of a breakdown in political consensus as the hegemonic ideology of the post war years failed in the 1970s. The result was the collapse of one political paradigm, which took with it the consensus ideology that had sustained the centre right parties. However for these parties there was also the opportunity/challenge to draw on new right thinking and create a new hegemony. This crisis scenario utilises Hall's Gramsci inspired reading of British politics that he developed in the 1970s and 80s, (1978) & (1988).

The second crisis scenario to impact upon the centre right was a crisis born out of political convergence. During the 1980s and 1990s the main opponents of the centre right accepted the new political paradigm and signed up to neo-liberal ideology. This encroachment on the centre right's territory began to create an existential debate over what was a centre right party for if the opposition offered a similar narrative. This scenario draws on the "End of Ideology" prediction made by Daniel Bell (1960) in the 1950s, and Fukuyama's "End of History" (1992) thesis made at the end of the Cold War.

The third crisis scenario argues that the new right thinking that the parties drew on in response to the Hall/Gramscian crisis had by the 1990s ceased to be part of the solution and was now part of the ideological problem. John Gray began to articulate this crisis narrative in the early - mid 1990s (1997). He argued that the neo-liberal project threatened to undermine much of the rationale for a traditional centre right agenda, and against the background of the Bell/Fukuyama convergence narrative, would leave centre right parties without a future direction (Gray, 1995). This first part of the paper will explore these three crisis scenarios and the potential consequences of the crises for a centre right party.

i. A Breakdown in the Hegemonic Ideology: the Hall/Gramscian crisis scenario.

Hall and Gramsci theorised an ideological crisis that occurred at a societal level which involved the whole polity. The Gramscian worldview saw society in the grip of a 'hegemonic ideology' which consisted of one or another form of capitalism, and dominated civil society and the state (Gramsci et al., 1971). The ultimate expression of this hegemonic ideology will be an 'expansive hegemony' that holds power through the creation of a consensus where the hegemonic group brings the 'subaltern' classes over to share its worldview (Gramsci et al., 1971).

However, Gramsci does not see this situation as fixed. He envisions an ideological 'war of position' occurring through crises of the hegemonic ideology. According to Gramsci there are two types of crisis: There is the deep ongoing organic crisis that is the result of the contradictions inherent in capitalism, and a conjunctural crisis where "contingent events"(Jones, 2006 p. 96) call into question the worldview of the ruling group. Moments of conjuncture are historically specific points where events can either elicit or inhibit social change (Rojek, 2003 p. 12) Therefore, failure in a "major policy undertaking" or political agitation by "huge masses" can create this:

"crisis of hegemony, or a general crisis of the state"(Gramsci et al., 1971 p. 210).

Hall develops Gramsci's framework and applies it to the post war British state. Hall identifies a period of consensus and "social democratic hegemony" from 1945 – 1964 (Rojek, 2003 pp. 142 - 144). This is followed by increasing 'dissensus' in the late 1960s, and then attempts to reassert the authority of the state in the face of economic crisis, and political and social conflict in the 1970s (Hall, 1978). Thus Hall charts a move within Britain from an 'expansive hegemony' to a crisis of the "state's authority"(Gramsci et al., 1971 p. 210). This would then need a new hegemonic ideology that could convincingly answer the 'crisis of the state' and end the discourse of crisis and conflict.

The centre right parties like all the mainstream parties were part of the post war hegemonic group. Girvin notes that across Western democracies the centre right had chosen convergence with the social democratic hegemony after 1945 (Girvin, 1994 p. 195). Indeed, in many English speaking democracies, Australia, Canada and the UK, the centre right had played a key role in the consolidation and development of this hegemony. Thus the centre right's narratives were firmly rooted in the "social democratic hegemony" (Rojek, 2003 pp. 142 - 144). So, like their main opponents the move from consensus to crisis called into question the relevance of their vision for the nation.

On the other hand this ideological crisis had the potential to be an opportunity for the centre right. Just as Kuhn argued that a scientific paradigm shift opened the way for a new 'revolutionary science' (1996), so a political paradigm shift could open the way for a new 'revolutionary' politics. From some perspectives the fact that the centre right had chosen convergence was essentially a "process of appeasement"(Adonis and Hames, 1994 p. 150). What Keith Joseph called a "ratchet effect" where the political consensus was shifted leftwards had been created (Kavanagh, 1990 p. 116). However, as consensus crumbled and with it the "parameters that bound…policy options"(Kavanagh et al., 1994 p. 13) there was the opportunity for the centre right to build a new hegemony on _their_ terms. Indeed, this is exactly what Hall had predicted and feared as early as 1978 (1988 p. 43). He argued that by the 1970s the Conservative agenda was not simply a defensive attempt to restore a limited hegemony, but a response that aimed to:

> *"put together a new 'historic' bloc', new political configurations and 'philosophies'…a profound restructuring of the state"* (Hall, 1988 p. 43).

Therefore, the crisis identified by the Hall/Gramscian scenario seriously threatened the consensus narrative shared by all mainstream parties including the centre right. However, the crisis also created an opportunity for a more radical narrative to be developed. If this narrative had convincing answers to the 'contingent events' that had caused the crisis then a new hegemony could be created.

ii. The End of Ideology/History: the Bell/Fukuyama crisis scenario.

Bell in 1960 (1960), and then Fukuyama in 1989 (1992) made claims that declared the ideological struggle between extremes of left and right to be over. Politics across industrial democracies would henceforth happen within the parameters of liberal capitalism. Bell observed that the binary opposition of collectivism vs. the free market was essentially "exhausted" and that the extremes of these ideologies had "lost their 'truth' and the power to persuade" (Bell, 1988 pp. 402 - 403). There was by the late 1950s (in the USA) a "rough consensus...and acceptance" as to the desirability of the

welfare state, a mixed economy, and political pluralism thus "the ideological age had ended" (Bell, 1988 pp. 402 - 403).

Thirty years later Fukuyama echoed Bell's claim that the ideological age had ended. His argument was that after the collapse of the communist bloc only one ideology was left standing: liberal capitalist democracy. Modern society had reached its "ideal state" as liberal capitalism "cannot be improved upon" and "there can be no further progress" (Fukuyama, 1992 pp. xi - xii). Thus History had reached it endpoint with an ideological 'winner' that would set the parameters within which politics would be conducted. For Fukuyama it was not so much that politics would now converge on the centre ground. Rather with socialism wiped off the map the convergence would be focussed on the centre right.

Bell's 1960 claim differs from Fukuyama's position in that Bell initially seemed to argue that politics would converge towards the mid point between left and right. However, Bell's original thesis arguably failed to account for the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s (Waters, 1996 p. 81). However, by 1988 Bell had moved the End of Ideology thesis closer to what Fukuyama's End of History claim would be. He had revised his position and argued that his main focus had been the irrelevance of Marxian Socialism to modern society (Bell, 1988 p. 421).

Gamble synthesises Bell and Fukuyama's claims into a single discourse of "Endism" (Gamble, 2000 pp. 13 - 14). However he challenges their claims for an End of Ideology/History and argues that in reality what they describe is a particular moment in the cycles of ideological conflict that characterise modernity (Gamble, 2000 p. 36). Thus:

"The end of history is being used as a code for the end of ideology, and the end of ideology in turn is code for the end of socialism...the dwindling appeal and declining relevance of a particular form of ideology" (Gamble, 2000 pp. 36 - 37)

Further, to be exact what is at an end is the state socialism once advocated by mainstream political parties (Gamble, 2000 p. 35).

The ideological landscape described by Bell and Fukuyama is therefore one where half of the left right dualism that had characterised politics is missing. The parameters within which politics happens had shifted to the right. As Pilbeam notes the apparent triumph of liberal capitalism was seen as a vindication by many commentators on the right (2003 p. 1). However, this rightward shift of the political consensus created a second crisis for the parties of the centre right.

Initially, this shift in the ideological landscape would seem to pose more problems for the main opponents of centre right parties. It would be many of their narratives and policies that were now outside the parameters of the consensus. If these centre left opponents held firm to their ideology they were likely to be marginalised. However, if the opponents of the centre right sought to adapt and shift towards the right there were also problems: internal divisions within the party would be created, and its ideological conversion may well fail to create a narrative that convinces the electorate (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment, 2005).

So, at first the 'endism' of Bell and Fukuyama does leave the centre right with the only convincing narrative. However, if/when their centre left opponents manage a successful shift then the parties face a new crisis: what narrative can a centre right party offer that is still both distinctive and relevant. This crisis is exacerbated by the fact that the centre left opposition can now turn their ideological baggage into an advantage.

Economic liberalism "sugar coated"(Garnett, 2003 p. 121) with a social democratic conscience could prove to be a more relevant narrative than a continued emphasis on the virtues of the free market, distinctive though it may be.

This ideological convergence thus creates a crisis for parties of the centre right as it leaves them with little room to manoeuvre. Their opponent's convergence with their ideology makes it considerably more difficult for them to construct narratives that are both relevant to society and actually different from their opponents. Furthermore, there is the potential for the crisis to become even more problematic for the centre right. The endism of Bell/Fukuyama, and the consequent convergence, was primarily focussed on the economic organisation of society. However, a convergence over economic ideology could also become a wider convergence as centre left parties set in motion a broad 'modernisation' of what they stood for. Narratives concerned with security, social morality and national identity, which were part of the centre right's distinctiveness, could also become sites of convergence, and thus crisis.

iii. Neo-liberalism's Destruction of Centre Right Ideology: Gray's crisis scenario.

The Hall/Gramscian crisis scenario created the opportunity for centre right parties to take a neo-liberal turn and deploy the ideas of the new right in an attempt to build a new hegemony. The success of this narrative in answering many of the economic questions that had caused the hegemonic crisis of the 1970s in turn created an ideological convergence. This was between the centre right parties and their opponents who engaged in a politics of "catch up" (Heffernan, 2000 p. xi). This then led to a second crisis scenario where it would become more difficult for centre right parties to maintain distinctive and relevant narratives.

However, this was not where the ideological impact of the neo-liberal turn ended. In the 1990s John Gray began to argue that neo-liberalism was a "self undermining"(1997 p. 2) and "self limiting project" (1997 p. 3) that would have the effect of destroying those parties that had initiated, and most strongly advocated it. Gray's scenario is thus specifically concerned with the parties of the centre right, and though Gray focuses on the British Conservative Party he extends his thesis across Western democracies (1997 p. viii).

For Gray the seeds of the centre right's destruction lie in an inherent contradiction within new right thinking which:

"has always been between the free market as an engine of wealth-creation and its role as a destroyer of traditional institutions and cultural forms." (1997 p. vii).

The "capture of conservative parties by neo-liberalism"(Gray, 1995 p. 88) meant that these parties unleashed the engine of wealth creation at the expense of "traditional institutions and cultural forms". The problem for the centre right though was that its political success and the coherence of its ideology had depended upon the very institutions and cultural traditions it had destroyed (Gray, 1995 p. 86). Thus it undermined much of its own ideological narrative and its support base within society.

The newly liberated free market may well have increased GDP but there were consequences for individuals and their families. The resultant deregulation of labour markets in order to respond to the free market's needs undermined job security and increased the level of economic uncertainty for the middle classes and the upwardly

mobile; i.e. those who were, or should have been, core supporters of the centre right. As Gray puts it:

"Neo liberal policies had extended to the middle classes the insecurities of working class life." (Gray, 1995 p. 89).

This need for continual economic and social change in order to keep pace with the free market created another ideological contradiction. Freeden asserts that conservative ideology has been "predominantly concerned with the problem of change" and that one its goals has been to "render it [change] safe" (1996 p. 332). However, the neo-liberal turn had transformed centre right parties into agents of, and advocates for, a very unsafe form of change.

Therefore, through prioritising the free market the centre right parties had damaged a lot of what their ideological narrative had been based upon. They had called into question or destroyed many of the traditions and institutions that had underpinned their narratives. They had increased levels of insecurity for many of those they claimed to speak for, and were now *the* parties of economic change, rather than the parties that sought to mediate and moderate change. The apparent solution centre right parties had found to the Hall/Gramscian crisis, had thus itself become a source of crisis by the 1990s.

Part 2: The Canadian Context.

This part of the paper focuses on how the three ideological crises of the centre right unfolded in Canada, up to when an existential crisis was reached with the 2000 election failure for both parties of the centre right. The first section examines how Canadian politics moved from consensus to dissensus during the 1960s and 1970s. It then looks at how in the 1980s a Progressive Conservative (PC) government did seek to shift the consensus rightwards and create a new hegemony. However, for some on the right this shift failed to break sufficiently with the old consensus and deliver a new settlement. This, combined with a failure to secure economic stability, and to resolve constitutional issues, created the opportunity for a second party of the right to come into being; one more openly committed to a new right agenda. The result was the emergence of Preston Manning's Reform party. The consequence of this split in the right was electoral disaster for the PC government and triumph for the centre left Liberal opposition in the 1993 general election. However, there was now a potential opportunity for the right, in the shape of Reform, to make a clean break with the old consensus and seize the chance to create a new hegemony.

The next section moves on to look at how after 1993 Chrétien's Liberal government created an immediate crisis of convergence for the right. Within a year of its election Chrétien had adopted what one right wing commentator called a "quasi Conservative agenda" on the economy (McLaughlin, 1994 p. 304). By 1997 economic stability, combined with a containment of constitutional issues had begun to resolve the Hall/Gramscian 'crisis of the state'. Thus the centre right were effectively deprived of the opportunity to create a new hegemony.

The final section looks at how after the 1997 election there was a Canadian version of Gray's crisis scenario. For the centre right in Canada this was not about ideological contradictions within one party's narrative. Instead the narrative of Reform, the new neo-liberal party, was in fundamental conflict with the Toryism of the

established centre right party, the PCs. This was then coupled with an almost 'perfect storm' of a convergence crisis at the 2000 election.

The Hall/Gramsci Crisis in Canada: a centre right government tries, and fails to establish a new hegemony.

The aftermath of World War Two saw the establishment of Hall's 'social democratic hegemony' in Canada. Liberal prime minister Mackenzie-King, built upon the legacy of the state's expanded role in WW2, to build a Keynesian welfare state (Bliss, 1994 pp. 168 - 173). Laissez faire economics were a thing of the past and the 1950s were characterised as the "great compromise between labour and capital" (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 124). This settlement was then accepted by the first post war conservative government led by John Diefenbaker (Bliss, 1994 p. 192).

However, as in Australia and the UK, by the early1970s political, economic and social changes had translated consensus into dissensus. There was a social revolution as the state stepped back from attempts to control private morality (Bliss, 1994 p. 246) and deference became a thing of the past. In Quebec a 'Quiet Revolution' saw the Union Nationale's brand of authoritarian catholic nationalism replaced by a new ideology. This nationalism was social democratic and modernising, but assertive of Quebecois identity and sovereignty (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 pp. 42 - 43). This led to the creation of the Parti Quebecois (PQ) as an electoral vehicle for this ideology. By 1976 the PQ formed the provincial government and the break up of Canada was becoming a possibility. Finally the early 1970s saw a full blown "economic crisis of the Canadian state" (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 140) as unemployment, inflation, and government debt rose while growth fell.

Trudeau's Liberal government responded to this Gramscian 'general crisis of the state' with a reassertion of the Federal government's role. He answered Quebec nationalism with a federally imposed policy of bilingualism as central government sought to actively build a pan – Canadian identity. Trudeau also reversed the Liberal's historic policy of continentalism: a commitment to freer trade and engagement with Canada's continental neighbour the USA (Bickerton and Gagnon, 1999 p. 100). Instead he instigated a policy of 'Canadianization'(Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 143). This was designed to 'repatriate' the economy for the benefit of the nation, and protect it from foreign i.e. US, domination. Paradoxically this was an ideological move towards traditional Canadian Toryism which had always resisted free trade, and feared assimilation by the USA (Grant, 1965).

Trudeau retired in 1982, and his party were subsequently defeated by a landslide in the 1984 general election. The ongoing crisis of state was temporarily contained as Quebec was still part of Canada. It was however not yet resolved. The enhanced role of the federal government had bred resentment in both Quebec, and also Anglophone Western Canada (Johnson, 2005 pp. 17 - 19). Furthermore, as an economic policy 'Canadianization' had failed (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 145). Therefore, if Brian Mulroney's newly elected PC government could find answers to the crisis there would be the opportunity for it to reconstitute a 'new expansive hegemony'.

With the benefit of hindsight, the Mulroney administration (1984 – 1993) has been seen as having begun the neo-liberal revolution in Canadian politics. His government set "the stage for this rightward shift" and jettisoned "most vestiges of the Canadian Tory tradition of support for an "interventionist' state" (Laycock, 2002 pp. 8 & 12). Mulroney like Margaret Thatcher "was not a traditional conservative" (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 149). He reversed Canadianization, decentralised, and was enthusiastically pro business, and pro American (Harrison, 1995 p. 4).

Crucially Mulroney negotiated a free trade agreement with the USA. This embrace of continentalism overturned almost a hundred years of Tory tradition. Grant in his book *Lament for a Nation* (1965) had argued that it was through this opposition to free trade and Americanisation that the Canadian conservatism defined itself, and made its distinctive contribution to national politics. This ideology was now consigned to history.

However, while Mulroney was in office this ideological revolution was never that apparent. Mulroney's political narrative was more focused on his personal charisma (McLaughlin, 1994 p. 60), and his ability to build and hold together a grand coalition of support across the provinces (Plamondon, 2005 pp. 49 - 50). As his administration wore on it was increasingly seen as a continuation of the old consensus. This was especially true of conservatives in the Anglophone West (Plamondon, 2005 pp. 87 - 92). In the view of many Westerners:

> *"the conservatives in the 1980s adopted a number of positions shared by the Liberals…official bilingualism, multiculturalism, deficit spending, medicare and other social policies, and several waves of constitutional change"* (Flanagan, 1995 pp. 40 - 41).

The fact that the PCs now also seemed to embody these "elite-centred politics" (Carty et al., 2000 p. 38) would lead to a split in conservatism and the creation of a second centre right party.

In Australia the failure of the centre right to whole heartedly embrace neo-liberalism did result in some moves towards the creation of a new party of the right, though nothing came of it (Kelly, 1994 pp. 252 - 270 & 291 - 314). In Canada though there was a political tradition of Western, 'Prairie' populist parties emerging to challenge the consensus (Laycock, 2002 pp. 94 - 113). Thus in response to Mulroney's failure to break with the consensus, and deal with Western grievances the Reform party was established in 1987.

Reform's founder and leader Preston Manning saw himself as political populist who sought to appeal to and unite the discontented whether they were on the left, centre or right of the political spectrum (Flanagan, 1995 p. 2). Manning however was perhaps the only one who did not believe his party's narrative to be right wing (Plamondon, 2005 p. 101). Harrison notes that from the start Reform's narrative had "begun to congeal around certain right wing principles", and that its supporters were mostly "disgruntled Tories" (Harrison, 1995 pp. 111 & 201).

Furthermore, Reform's narrative suggested that it was not just a conservative party but also *the* 'true believer' when it came to neo-liberalism. Fiscal conservatives who had been influenced by Hayek and Friedman certainly saw Reform as their ideological home (Johnson, 2005 pp. 38 - 57). This included future Conservative Prime

Minister Stephen Harper. Indeed Laycock argues that that Reform blended populism into new right thinking (2002 p. 4), and that Reform became essentially a vehicle for "new right ideology in Canadian politics" (2002 p. 184).

By the second term of Mulroney's government it had become clear that he would not be able to deliver a new hegemony of the right. Major policy failures over the constitution (McLaughlin, 1994 pp. 5 - 36) and the economy (McLaughlin, 1994 pp. 39 - 41), meant that there continued to be a 'crisis of the state' in the Hall/Gramscian sense. What is more, it seemed as though there was an ideological stalemate with Mulroney's half hearted 'revolution' unable to overcome the old consensus. Read in Gramscian terms:
     "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (1971 p. 275).
    Manning had spent over twenty years "waiting for the wave"(Flanagan, 1995) of popular discontent to grow big enough to sweep aside the consensus. He therefore saw the 1990s as his opportunity to reconfigure politics. In the words of his then close advisor Tom Flanagan, Manning believed his role would now be to "act as a mediator, to bring together the warring factions [of] Canadian society"(1995 p. 2). Indeed, this depiction of Manning as a "populist agent of reconciliation and change"(Plamondon, 2005 p. 95) seems to follow the Hall/Gramsci scenario. They argued that in the event of a stalemate a 'heroic personality' or 'Caesar' will attempt to arbitrate over 'the crisis of the state'(Gramsci et al., 1971 p. 219). Thus, though the 1993 general election saw the virtual annihilation of the PC government, the breakthrough of the Reform party suggested that the right could yet build a new hegemony on its own terms.

A Crisis of Convergence: the Bell/Fukuyama scenario leaves the right without a narrative to call their own.

With the defeat of the 'ideologically compromised' PC party after 1993, the way seemed clear for Reform to become the champion of neo-liberalism in Canada and seize the ideological initiative. The presumably Keynesian, consensus narrative of the new Liberal government would fail to resolve the 'crisis of the state', either economically or constitutionally. If a Conservative government had not been able to break the stalemate, then surely neither would a Liberal government. Indeed the new Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien was one of the party old guard, and had been a part of Trudeau's failed 'Canadianization' and his attempts to placate Francophone Canada. Thus Manning's belief and plan was that Reform would take power before the decade was out and reconstitute a new hegemony (Flanagan, 1995 p. 136).
        However, in reality this was not what happened. The Liberal government did not replay its policies of the 1970s. Instead this was a new liberalism that shifted its narrative away from economic intervention and spending programmes to a focus on fiscal responsibility (Clarkson, 2005 pp. 168 - 172). Chrétien moved the Liberal narrative on to Manning's territory. Furthermore, the problem for Manning was that this "leaner meaner…tough love" Liberalism (Clarkson, 2005 p. 179) was not just empty rhetoric. The Liberals embarked upon "draconian" budget cuts and deficit reduction (Bickerton and Gagnon, 1999 p. 102). They also ended their "flirtation" with economic nationalism, and accepted NAFTA and Mulroney's free trade agenda (Bickerton and Gagnon, 1999 p. 100). On the constitution, despite Chrétien's mishandling of the 1995 referendum on

Quebec's status, he had succeeded by 1997 in the containment of this issue. Chrétien's "Carrot and stick" approach left the sovereignty issue effectively "becalmed" (Harrison and Friesen, 2004 p. 71).

These narratives: neo-liberal economics and a tougher line with Quebec had originated with Reform and the PC. However, as in Australia during the 1980s, the right found that elements of their narrative were "stolen" by the left (Harrison, 2002 p. 27). This new liberalism thus created a crisis of convergence for Reform and the PC. The Liberal party had:

> "*itself moved to the right to co-opt* [the narratives of] *its principal electoral competitors.*" (Bickerton and Gagnon, 1999 p. 102).

The PC and Reform parties struggled to find distinctive and relevant narratives at the 1997 election. There was a push to the right to try and outflank the Liberals. However, the PCs' plan of radical tax cuts left them outside the new consensus. Their economic narrative may have been distinctive but it lacked relevance to the Canadian electorate (Nevitte, 2000 p. 88). While Reform seemed to have run "out of gas", and it was just left with a narrative of "radical decentralisation" and "populist panaceas" (Harrison, 2002 p. 27). Reform therefore also pushed the limits of the ideological "region of acceptability" (Nevitte, 2000 p. 90). Once again Bell's original thesis about the risks for a party that moved too far to the right was borne out.

The Bell/Fukuyama scenario proved especially problematic for the right in Canada, and in particular Reform's fusion of populism with new right ideology. This was because ideological convergence coincided with a resolution of the 'crisis of the state' that had created the opportunity for Reform in the first place. As Harrison states, by the end of the first term of Liberal government in 1997:

> "*The aura of crisis that for a decade had beset the Canadian electorate had largely disappeared by the time Canadians returned to the polls in 1997.*" (2002 p. 27).

In this more stable political climate Manning's 'Caesarism' seemed less of a solution and more like a problem. Thus in 1997 his populist right wing narrative meant Reform were perceived as "extreme" and themselves a threat to unity and social cohesion (Nevitte, 2000 p. 101).

In conclusion, the Liberal party's rapid convergence with neo-liberal narratives meant that the opportunity to establish a new hegemony that had been there in 1993 had gone just four years later. So, as in Australia it was the centre left that created a new consensus; and it was the centre right that was left stranded on the ideological fringes of this consensus.

The Gray Crisis Scenario Revealed; the Convergence Crisis Deepens.

In the aftermath of Reform's failure at the 1997 election the populist element of its narrative started to fade and the neo-liberal agenda came to the fore. Manning's position as the 'spiritual' leader of the new right in Canada came under challenge. In the two wealthiest provinces: Alberta and Ontario, neo-liberal ideology gained momentum as Ralph Klein and Mike Harris led successful conservative governments that were built around new right thinking. Supported by business and media interests, their influence on the right increased at Manning and populism's expense (Harrison, 2002 p. 28). Indeed Manning himself by 1999 had come to accept a conservative label for his party

(Plamondon, 2005 p. 194). This transition from a populist to neo-liberal party was complete by 2000 when the Reform party was disbanded and in its place the Canadian Alliance party was created in a bid to "unite the right"(Harrison, 2002 p. 31). However, Manning, who had initiated the creation of the Alliance party, subsequently failed to become its leader. Instead Stockwell Day, the treasurer in Alberta's neo-liberal inspired provincial government became the new leader.

At the Federal level Canada now had two openly centre right parties: the PCs and the Alliance. However, each party articulated a narrative whose contradictions, in relation to each other, revealed that Gray's crisis scenario had hit the centre right in Canada. On the one hand the Alliance's narrative was a barely diluted strain of new right thinking (Laycock, 2002 p. 3). Theirs was a narrative unencumbered by the Menzian, or One Nation traditions that had 'compromised' their counterparts in Australia and the UK.

On the other hand, the PCs spoke a more centrist, traditionally Canadian language of conservatism. Admittedly under Charest and then Clark they had shifted to the right (Laycock, 2002 p. 174). However, the PC narrative also linked back to the Toryism articulated by Grant (1965). This had sought to protect Canadians from change; especially economic or social Americanisation. Indeed, Clark was closer to the 'Red Toryism' which had always been wary of the economics of liberalism and continentalism (Nevitte, 2000 p. 89). Hence in 1997 the PCs gained considerable support in Atlantic Canada which had "felt betrayed" by Chrétien's neo-liberal inspired budget cuts (Clarkson, 2005 p. 197).

The problem for the centre right as a whole was that these two narratives contradicted each other and thus threatened to make impossible any attempt to 'unite the right' and build a coherent pan-conservative narrative. The Alliance positioned themselves as radical agents of change. This posed no contradictions for Alliance themselves; they were a centre right party without history, whose support base in affluent Alberta had already embraced American style neo-liberalism. However, the Alliance's agenda of radical economic change *did* undermine the "institutions and cultural traditions"(Gray, 1995 p. 86) that were central to the PC narrative. This still drew on Toryism (Plamondon, 2005 p. 172). For many PC supporters the Alliance was thus an ideological enemy rather than a potential ally. Indeed, research showed that in the largest province Ontario, over 60% of PC supporters preferred a centre left party over Reform/Alliance as their second choice (Nevitte, 2000 p. 98)! Therefore, by the time of the 2000 election the contradictions of the Gray scenario, while not destructive to any individual party, did help to confirm the split in the right, and potentially push some former conservative supporters towards the centre left.

By the 2000 election the convergence crisis had also worsened for the centre right. The Liberals seemed to have perfected their "tough love blend" of welfare liberalism and neo-liberal economics (Clarkson, 2005 p. 179). This allowed them to dominate the new political paradigm (Pammett and Dornan, 2001 p. 13). Thus in a bid to develop a distinctive narrative the Alliance sought to outflank to Liberals on the right (Bickerton and Gagnon, 1999 p. 102). However, the Liberals were easily able to use what Kelly in the Australian context called a "theft and assault" strategy (1994 p. 110). They pre-empted the Alliance's proposed tax cuts with a mini budget of cuts just before the election (Harrison, 2002 p. 86).

During the campaign the Alliance's narrative was then assaulted. Its leader Stockwell Day was successfully depicted as an extremist neo-liberal with a "hidden agenda" on issues such as health care (Pammett and Dornan, 2001 p. 81). By contrast the Liberals presented themselves as the protectors of medicare (Harrison, 2002 p. 83). Day's attempt to marry fiscal and social conservatism also made his narrative an easy target. Chrétien used this agenda to present Day as "an American style social conservative", and thus push Alliance's narrative further to the fringes of the consensus (Plamondon, 2005 p. 209).

The result of the 2000 election was a third successive win for the Liberals. The centre right narrative continued to be in crisis. A version of the Gray scenario had confirmed the centre right as ideologically split between Alliance and the PCs. This was also combined with a highly successful convergence by the Liberals and seemed to leave the centre right in Canada at a point of ideological exhaustion.

Part 3 Harper's Response: Ideological renewal or valence politics?

Despite the centre right's problems at the start of the 21st century within six years the parties of the right had merged and there was a conservative government again in Ottawa. How was this achieved? Firstly, Harper regenerated the territorial politics of Mulroney and sought to seriously compete in Quebec. Unlike his Reform/Alliance predecessors Harper returned to the paradigm of conservative victory based on a tripartite coalition of the West, Central/Eastern Red Tories, and soft nationalist Quebeckers. Harper took the Conservatives from zero to ten seats at the 2006 election, and currently is competing in the polls with the Bloc Quebecois.

The 2006 victory was of course also the result of increased support across Canada. As many of the contributors to Pammett and Dornan's (2006) post election analysis suggest this victory was in large part due to successful 'Downsian' vote chasing and valence politics. The Conservatives sought both to project themselves as a centrist party close to the median voter, and as a more competent party of government untainted by the corruption and sleaze that the Gomery inquiry had revealed. Thus, in 2006 Harper's statecraft minimised ideological difference.

Since 2006 Harper has led a minority government that has yet to embark on any major reforms and lacks the radical sharp edges of a 'classic' new right government. Thus on first reading Harper's response is a 'bloodless' valence politics where, post convergence, ideological difference has little role in Conservative and Canadian politics.

However, an alternative reading is possible; Harper is not becalmed and there is a political project that aims to take the centre right beyond valence politics. Central to this is the acceptance that, as the academic, and Harper's former campaign manager, Tom Flanagan puts it "Canada is not yet a conservative country" and conservatives must stay close to mainstream Canadian values (2007 p. 274). Flanagan continues to say that conservatives have to think long term and work to eventually make conservatism "an entrenched public philosophy" (2007 p. 274). Therefore, conservative statecraft should not be revolutionary but should, in the Burkean tradition, take an "incremental" approach (Flanagan, 2007 p. 282). They should aim to make change safe, even if they are the ones initiating the change. This then amounts to preference shaping (Dunleavy, 1991) not simply chasing the median voter.

Thus, a conservative hegemonic project can be identified: a long term occupancy of government and a gradual attempt to shift the consensus rightward. Young, drawing on Harper's own statements, highlights three key areas: the traditional family, the market economy, and patriotism (2007 p. 10). So far Harper has made little attempt to shift the consensus on the family and the economy. Social issues are likely to be too sensitive for a conservative party that has only recently moved beyond gay marriage controversies.

As regards the economy Harper does not need to initiate change, he can exploit what O'Reilly terms the "new progressive dilemma" (2007). O'Reilly argues that as the centre left in Australia and the UK had to converge and shift rightwards so they in effect legitimised neo-liberal thinking: the 'new progressive dilemma'; a reverse 'ratchet effect'. According to this line of thought then the Liberals in Canada have already done a lot of the 'heavy lifting' when it comes to moving the economic consensus rightwards. They now can only criticise Harper's statecraft at the cost of repudiating their own record when they were in government.

It is in the area of patriotism though that Harper has visibly begun to shift the consensus rightwards. Young argues that Harper has sought to shift Canadian foreign policy away from "multilateralism" to "patriotism" (2007 p. 13). Canada's identity should be less that of UN peacekeeper and more a frontline member of the Western alliance that once opposed the Central Powers, the Axis, and the USSR, and today opposes Terror. Despite this being an "uphill battle" (Young, 2007 p. 13) Harper has successfully maneuvered the Liberals into an acceptance of an extended Afghan mission. This has been followed by a commitment to a 20 year defence procurement programme. Thus, the Conservative's statecraft has slowly begun its attempt to reshape Canadian politics.

In conclusion then Harper's response is more than just valence politics, it has connected back to past conservative strategies with its engagement with Quebec, and begun a process of ratcheting the political consensus rightwards; with initial success in foreign policy and defence. However, Harper does not yet seem to have come to terms with green politics in the way his British counterpart David Cameron has. His stance on green issues has been more reminiscent of the centre right in Australia who while in government failed to integrate the green agenda into their statecraft. Initial election post mortem's have suggested that this was an important factor in why they lost the confidence of the electorate (Brett, 2007) & (Stuart, 2007).

Finally if Harper were to win a clear majority at the next election this would free the Conservatives to embark upon a more radical programme? However, the danger would be that like the centre right in Australia after 2004, they would overestimate the electorate's appetite for conservatism and become a radical agent of potentially unpopular change again.

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