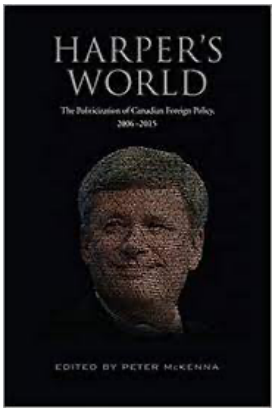

Kim Richard Nossal, "*Primat der Wahlurne:* Ideology and Politicization in Harper's Foreign Policy," in Peter McKenna, ed., *Harper's World: The Politicization of Canadian Foreign Policy, 2006–2015* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022): 24–40. (Pagination indicated thus: [25])

Objects in the mirror, the standard warning has it, are actually closer than they appear. But in the rear-view mirror of history, the opposite tends to occur: with the passage of time we tend to lose perspective, magnifying what we want to remember, overemphasizing factors that were actually less important than in our mind's eye. This is what appears to have happened to our remembrance of the foreign policy of the Conservative government under Stephen Harper. That period in Canadian foreign policy is commonly remembered now as it was so often described while the Conservatives were still in power: as deeply ideological. As Shaun Narine put it in his exploration of Canadian foreign policy between 2006 and 2015, "the Conservative government of Stephen Harper pursued an ideologically driven foreign policy unprecedented in modern Canadian history."[1] That characterization nicely echoes for posterity the perspective that was so widespread during the Harper era that it assumed a certain taken-for-grantedness in analyses of foreign policy for the 2006–2015 period. Often it was served up as normative shorthand to add weight to criticism that was being leveled at some foreign policy initiative of the Harper government. Indeed, the way in which the word was used in Canadian foreign policy discourse during the Conservative government's time in office — and now in retrospect — confirms John Gerring's observation that the word "ideology" suffers from "semantic promiscuity."[2] In particular, given the perpetuation of the pejorative connotation of "ideology" and "ideological" as descriptors of political thought, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the word tended to appear prominently in analyses of the *commentariat* that were critical of the Harper government, while it was rarely, if ever, used as an explanation in those analyses that were generally supportive of the Conservative government's foreign policy.[3]

But the widespread use of the word muddies rather than clears the waters. For it is not clear what "ideology" supposedly drove the Harper government(much of it in a minority situation); nor is it clear whether we can understand **[25]** Canadian foreign policy outcomes between 2006 and 2015 by reference to any particular ideological perspective. Thus the purpose of this chapter is to provide a lens that permits readers to assess the twelve detailed case studies presented in this book. It re-examines the common claim that foreign policy under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper was shaped by a right-leaning or conservative ideology, and proposes instead that factors other than ideology provide a more compelling explanation for the Harper era in foreign policy.

Conservativism and Ideology in Foreign Policy

It is, seemingly, an article of faith among many of those who have analysed Stephen Harper's foreign policy that he was "ideological," and that ideology is crucial for a correct understanding of Canada's international policy between 2006 and 2015. For example, the journalist Frances Russell claims that Harper was "driven" by ideology.[4] Surveying a range of domestic and foreign policy initiatives under the

Conservative government, Jordan Michael Smith concludes, "The consistent thread throughout all this is Harper's fidelity to ideology," particularly in the area of foreign policy, since "foreign policy is the only area in which Harper has been able to act on his ideals."[5] In his analysis of contemporary Canadian foreign policy, Paul Heinbecker, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, asserts that the "ideological proclivities" of the Harper government were clearly evident.[6] And in the conclusion of their edited collection of essays on conservatism in Canada, James Farney and David Rayside note that there was a "clear ideological shift" in foreign policy under the Harper Conservatives.[7] Speaking to the Canadian International Council in December 2013, Colin Robertson described the Harper government's foreign policy this way: "It is brash, it is bold, it is ideological."[8] Haroon Siddiqui has also written that Harper's foreign policy was both "hobbled by ideology" and "tainted by ideology."[9]

What is noteworthy about this discourse is the degree to which "ideology" tends to be used as shorthand, in at least two ways. First, the word tends to be widely used to paint the Conservative government in negative terms. It is thus often used in the abusive sense associated with the very origins of the term in the early nineteenth century, when Napoleon Bonaparte sneered at his political opponents as "ideologues." In this pejorative usage, the word is normally never applied to those on the other side of politics in Canada, as though it was only Conservatives who were "ideological," and as though critics of Conservative foreign policy were not operating with "ideologies" of their own. In a comparable sense, the word tends to be used to convey the equally pejorative intimation that those who are "ideological" are somehow inappropriately overly committed to the particular set of political ideas that guide their both their political thought and their political behaviour.

[26] A second way that "ideological" tends to be used is as a synonym for a particular brand of politics — namely, right-wing and neoconservative thought and practice, emanating in particular from the group of academics centred at the University of Calgary, where Harper was a student.[10] The neoconservative label was commonly applied to the various incarnations of political parties that evolved on the right after the fracturing of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1993: the Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance, and the Conservative Party of Canada that emerged from the "unite the right" movement in 2003.

Certainly Heinbecker uses "ideology" to indicate right-wing politics. In *Getting Back in the Game,* he makes it clear that the ideological orientation of the Conservative government is derived from "the Canadian Right" — which he always capitalizes, thereby attributing to it a putative formal unity and institutionalized existence — and in particular "neo-cons" and "theo-cons," the pejorative terms for neoconservatives and Christian evangelical conservatives respectively. Indeed, Heinbecker has his own pejorative term for those in Canada who are "miniature replicas" of their American neoconservative counterparts: "Canadian mini-cons."[11]

This perspective is echoed by some former members of the Progressive Conservative party. For example, Joe Clark has argued that the rise of a particular kind of conservatism in the United States that sought to oppose "liberal elites" has its clear echo in the Conservative Party of Canada that resulted from the "unite the right" movement of the early 2000s. These American influences, in Clark's view, "shape the thinking, prejudices and priorities of ministers and partisans who determine current Canadian international policy."[12] Likewise, Tom McMillan, a minister in the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney, offered a similar characterization: "In a corrupted incarnation of its former self, the party ended up being led, in the person of Stephen Harper, by the chief talent scout for a farm system for right-wing political ideologues and activists hostile to the very bedrock of Canada's social safety net."[13]

In short, despite their very different political (and ideological) perspectives, Heinbecker, Clark, and McMillan all share a set of common assumptions about the ideological orientation of the Harper government's foreign policy. But it can be argued that their assumptions were more widely shared: when the Conservative government's foreign policy was characterized as "ideological," invariably what was meant was that the policy is driven by conservative, neoconservative, or "right-wing" ideas.

But if in Canadian foreign policy discourse "ideological" is merely synonymous with conservative, neoconservative, or "right-wing" ideas and practices, that raises a further question: Was

Stephen Harper's foreign policy truly conservative? To answer this question, we need to ask what constitutes a *conservative* foreign policy.

We could start with the exploration of foreign policy conservatism by Jennifer Welsh, who extrapolated from conservative writers in the British **[27]** tradition — David Hume, Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, and Sir Roger Scruton.[14] Welsh argues that a conservative foreign policy is characterized by three core concepts or "tendencies." First, conservatives are attached to a particular global political *order* that is "assumed rather than accounted for," but needs to be entrenched, legitimized, and given authority and longevity. This "duty to conserve," Welsh reminds us, comes from a basic conservative belief "that we all belong to a continuing and pre-existing order." The centrality of order focuses on the effects of disorder not only on the international system, but also on domestic politics. The second tendency of conservatives, Welsh argues, is a *scepticism* about progressivist assumptions about humankind's perfectibility and an embrace of "prudential" politics. Conservatives are sceptical about the possibilities of radical change given the structural realities that create significant boundaries that hem us in, pushing us to embrace a prudential approach to world politics. Finally, Welsh argues that the third tendency was a veneration of *tradition*, including established institutions and practices. In foreign policy, this is most clearly manifested in the attachment to long-lived institutions, such as the principles of sovereignty or the privileged position given to the great powers on the United Nations Security Council. [15]

Alan Bloomfield and I have argued that a fourth "tendency" should be added to the three tendencies outlined by Welsh — that is, the pursuit of the "national interest." From an international relations theory perspective we have argued that conservative leaders tend towards a *realist* position, accepting that international politics is conducted in conditions of anarchy, and that leaders are less inclined to pursue multilateral solutions to foreign challenges or to promote or rely on international law and institutions.[16]

By contrast, American reflections on what constitutes a conservative foreign policy differed considerably from this formulation. For example, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, an American political scientist and diplomat, puts forward what is widely regarded as the iconic discussion of a "traditionalist" conservative foreign policy.[17] In some respects, Kirkpatrick's argument shares some similarities with the British view of a conservative foreign policy. She argues, for example, that a conservative expects the future to look not very different from the past, and is sceptical of utopian claims that humankind can rid itself of the scourge of war. But in other respects, Kirkpatrick's definition of a conservative foreign policy is distinctly American: she claims that a conservative foreign policy should be characterized by a respect for history, a respect for individual freedoms, a suspicion of overly large government, and patriotism. In a similar vein, George F. Will, an American conservative commentator, offers a brief recipe for a conservative foreign policy for the United States: "Preserve U.S. sovereignty and freedom of action by marginalizing the United Nations. Reserve military interventions for reasons of U.S. national security, not altruism. Avoid peacekeeping operations that compromise the military's war-fighting proficiencies. Beware of the political hubris inherent in the intensely unconservative project **[28]** of 'nation-building.'"[18] But like the approach identified by Welsh, what was common to these American traditionalist conservative approaches to foreign policy was the emphasis on *prudence* in the exercise of US power.

After the Cold War, however, a group of American conservatives emerged who rejected such prudence. These "new" conservatives, or neoconservatives, articulated a very different idea. William Kristol and Robert Kagan, for example, argued that the United States should capitalize on its enormous power by "resisting, and where possible, undermining dictators and hostile ideologies; … supporting American interests and liberal democratic principles; and … providing assistance to those struggling against the more extreme manifestations of human evil" — in other words, regime change.[19]

William's father, Irving Kristol, expanded on these ideas by expounding four "theses" that supposedly encapsulated what a neoconservative foreign policy should look like. The first was patriotism, described as a "natural and healthy sentiment." The second thesis argued that "international institutions … should be regarded with the deepest suspicion." These two theses do not differ much from the traditional position described above. However, Kristol's third thesis posited that leaders of states should "distinguish friends from enemies," a view that Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke have argued equates in

practice to an aggressive moralism "derived from the religious conviction that the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil."[20] Kristol's fourth thesis flowed naturally from his third: "large nations [like the United States] inevitably have ideological interests in addition to more material concerns," which they *should* actively pursue.[21] In effect the neocons, John J. Mearsheimer argues, "divide the world into good and bad states … [in which] the democracies are the white hats."[22]

Unsurprisingly, this neoconservative blueprint for foreign policy was widely criticized. Sir Roger Scruton, an English philosopher and writer, claimed that it was not "true" conservatism at all: "For me, the true conservative approach in international relations is … to do whatever is required by the national interest, but to leave others to their fate."[23] Ilan Peleg goes further, claiming, "Neoconservatism, despite its name, was one of the most revolutionary, nonconservative movements in the history of American foreign policy."[24] Jennifer Welsh, however, ultimately concludes that because the neoconservatives were acting to preserve the existing global order (that is, by reinforcing US hegemony), they remained essentially conservative in *intent*, despite their radical methods.[25]

Harper's Conservative Ideology in Opposition

To what extent did the Conservatives under Harper reflect these ideological attributes? Prior to winning a minority government in the January 2006 federal election, Stephen Harper was widely portrayed by his political opponents as **[29]** a right-wing neoconservative, linked to George W. Bush, a US president who was deeply unpopular in Canada. The attack ads run by the Liberal Party of Canada during the 2005–6 election campaign were illustrative of this portrayal. One English-language social media ad reminded viewers of an article in the *Washington Times* that claimed that "Canada may elect the most pro-American leader in the Western world. Harper is pro-Iraq, anti-Kyoto and socially conservative. Bush's best new friend is the poster boy for his ideal foreign leader. A Harper victory will put a smile on George W. Bush's face." The ad concluded, "Well, at least somebody will be happy, eh?"[26] A French-language ad contained even more pointed reminders of Harper's conservative dispositions.[27]

Such a portrayal, of course, was not historically inaccurate. In the fifteen years prior to becoming prime minister, Harper had indeed accumulated many unambiguously conservative positions on a number of foreign policy issues, as Peter McKenna notes in the introduction. For example, writing in the *Wall Street Journal* in March 2003, he criticized Jean Chrétien, the Liberal prime minister, for keeping Canada out of the "coalition of the willing" that was being organized by the Bush administration to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. This, Harper claimed, was "a serious mistake," noting: "Disarming Iraq is necessary for the long-term security of the world, and for the collective interests of our historic allies and therefore manifestly in the national interest of Canada."[28] Harper waxed even more lyrical on this matter when he addressed a "Friends of America" rally held in Toronto in April 2003: "Thank you for saying to our friends in … America, you are our ally, our neighbour, and our best friend in the whole wide world. And when your brave men and women give their lives for freedom and democracy we are not neutral. We do not stand on the sidelines; we're for the disarmament of Saddam and the liberation of the people of Iraq."[29]

Likewise, after Paul Martin's Liberal government announced in February 2005 that Canada would not take part in the US ballistic missile defence system, Harper intimated that the Conservatives favoured doing so.[30] He also unambiguously opposed the Kyoto Protocol, claiming that the Liberal government could not implement the GHG emission targets that it had embraced.[31] In 2003, he expressed scepticism about the United Nations, deriding the Liberal attachment to UN-based multilateralism, and claiming that "the time has come to recognize that the US will continue to exercise unprecedented power in a world where international rules are still unreliable and where security and advancing of the free democratic order still depend significantly on the possession and use of military might."[32]

In short, we can see a number of the elements of a neoconservative approach to foreign policy in Harper's various positions prior to his coming to office in 2006. These include: a preference for a particular kind of order (and support for the hegemonic role of the United States especially); a deep scepticism about international **[30]** institutions, especially the United Nations; traditionalism, in that he emphasized that Canada shared values similar to those of Britain and the United States; and a

determination to pursue the national interest (especially when it came to scrapping Kyoto). In his years in opposition, Harper left little doubt that his *Weltanschauung* was essentially binary: in his world, the hats were, just as Mearsheimer suggested, either white or black. (It should be noted, however, that Harper himself did not use that white hat/black hat analogy, preferring to frame his discussion in terms of right and wrong.[33] It would be left to one of Harper's future foreign ministers, John Baird, to articulate the black hat/white hat argument.[34])

But it is clear that the Conservative foreign policy agenda as it emerged from the years in opposition had little resemblance to the kind of positions that would have been articulated by a real neoconservative in the United States. The international policy mindset of the Conservatives is perhaps most clearly revealed in the party's platform released for the 2005–2006 election campaign. The 46-page platform had just three short sections on international affairs; its foreign policy section consisted of a mere 171 words, so short that it is possible to quote it in full:

> Canadians are rightly proud of our values of freedom, fairness, and compassion. But too often, Liberal foreign policy has compromised democratic principles to appease dictators, sometimes for the sake of narrow business interests. Foreign aid has been used for political purposes, not to ensure genuine development. We need to ensure that Canada's foreign policy reflects true Canadian values and advances Canada's national interests.
>
> A Conservative government will:
>
> • Articulate Canada's core values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, free markets, and free trade – and compassion for the less fortunate – on the international stage.
> • Advance Canada's interests through foreign aid, while at the same time holding those agencies involved in this area accountable for its distribution and results.
> • Increase spending on Overseas Development Assistance [sic] beyond the currently projected level and move towards the OECD average level.
> • Make Parliament responsible for exercising oversight over the conduct of Canadian foreign policy and the commitment of Canadian Forces to foreign operations.
> • Place international treaties before Parliament for ratification.[35]

Indeed, it would appear that those who crafted, and approved, this section of the 2006 platform had little knowledge or understanding of the nature of **[31]** international politics or foreign policy. Embarrassingly, none of the many eyes, one presumes, in the Conservative Party brain trust who looked at the platform before it went to press appeared to know (or care) that "foreign aid" is a term that was decades out of fashion, or that it is "official development assistance," not "overseas development assistance." In addition, the partisan frame of the platform that focused on the supposed single sin of Liberal foreign policy — having "compromised democratic principles to appease dictators, sometimes for the sake of narrow business interests" — reveals a highly limited understanding of what foreign policy is (or should be) all about.

An Ideological Conservative in Power?

If the Harper Conservatives were as ideologically conservative — or neoconservative — as is so often asserted, what should Canadian foreign policy have looked like once they had achieved power following the January 2006 federal election?

First, we should expect a foreign policy marked by a whole-hearted commitment to the support of the United States on a range of global issues. A good American ally would have abandoned the Liberal policy of refusing to participate in the ballistic missile defense program, particularly since Harper had promised while in opposition that a Conservative government would join the ballistic missile defense system. Likewise, a good American ally would have ramped up defence spending well beyond the increases in the defence budget initiated by the Liberal government of Paul Martin. We would also expect

strong and consistent support for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, since that mission went to the core of Harper's contention that a conservative government in Ottawa would be a faithful ally of the United States, and would define Canadian national interests as deeply aligned with upholding and sustaining American global hegemony. Indeed, at the very outset of the deployment of a Canadian Armed Forces battle group to Kandahar in early 2006 — a move that coincided with the new Conservative government taking office — Harper did offer fulsome support for the new combat mission, asserting in a speech to Canadian troops at Kandahar Air Field that his government was in it for the long haul. "Canadians," he said, "do not cut and run… We don't make a commitment and then run away at the first sign of trouble."[36] But we should have expected that Canada would have remained in Afghanistan in support of the United States for as long as the Americans and other Western allies were there.

Likewise, we should have expected that a Harper Conservative government, as a good American ally, would have offered the administration of George W. Bush support for continuing US military efforts to stabilize Iraq as a new government took office in Baghdad shortly after the new Conservative government came to power in Ottawa. More broadly, a neoconservative government would **[32]** have put a premium on maintaining a good relationship with the United States on a range of bilateral and global policy issues, and would have sought to work cooperatively and productively with whoever the US president was. Central to this cooperation would be what Justin Massie and Stéphane Roussel characterize as neocontinentalism, which seeks to intertwine purely continental relations between Canada and the United States, particularly trade policy, and especially support for American global hegemony.[37]

If an integral part of a neoconservative foreign policy is taking moral (or moralizing) stands on other actors in global politics, we would expect to see a willingness to support "good" states in global politics (Mearsheimer's "white hats") — and call out the "black hats" that might be inimical to Western interests. We would thus expect that this would translate into strong and consistent support for "white hats" like Israel and strong opposition to "black hats." At the time that the Conservatives were in power, this would have included Iran, North Korea, and the Russian Federation. Iran not only threatened friends like Israel and disrupted Western interests in the Middle East but also refused to acknowledge any responsibility for the death of Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian journalist who had been raped, tortured and murdered while in an Iranian jail in 2003.[38] During this period, North Korea, which had been declared part of an "axis of evil" by President George W. Bush in 2002, continued to play a game of cat and mouse with the international community, producing plutonium, test-firing long-range missiles, and testing nuclear weapons while receiving assistance packages in return for supposedly suspending its nuclear weapons program. During the time that the Harper Conservatives were in power, relations between the West and the Russian Federation deteriorated, as Vladimir Putin, president from 2000 to 2008, premier from 2008 to 2012, and then elected president again in 2012, progressively abandoned the cooperation that had been forged with NATO and the West in the late 1990s. While the causality of the growing estrangement is complex — it was partially a function of the West's continued expansion eastward, partially a function of Putin's attempts to strengthen his political position within Russia[39] — there can be little doubt that during this period the Russian Federation was increasingly seen as a "black hat" by the West. The arc from the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 to the dismemberment of Ukraine in 2014 that led to the de facto expulsion of the Russian Federation from the G8 almost exactly matched the Conservative period in office. In the case of each of these "black hats," we would expect that a neoconservative government in Ottawa would take a strong, moralizing stance.

In the case of China, we might expect a comparably hard stand from a leader, and a party, that had a long record of expressed antipathy towards the government in Beijing for its human rights practices.[40] Indeed, Paul Evans, at the time the co-CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, noted how struck he was in 2006 when two members of the new Harper Conservative **[33]** cabinet described China as "a godless totalitarian country with nuclear weapons aimed at us," a view of China that Evans said was "far removed from the main lines of Canadian thinking for two generations."[41] But such views would suggest that the Conservative government would, just as the Conservative platform promised, no longer be willing to "[compromise] democratic principles to appease dictators, sometimes for the sake of narrow business interests."

In other areas of policy, we would also expect to see manifestations of a neoconservative agenda. For example, in the case of the Arctic, Adam Chapnick has argued that we should not be surprised that patriotism was a key driver of policy, given that two of Harper's predecessors, John Diefenbaker and Brian Mulroney, embraced "Canada's northern heritage as a source of national pride."[42] Indeed, as Chapnick notes, Harper would quickly move to combine patriotic invocations of the north with a "rhetoric of fear" about "increasingly aggressive Russian actions around the globe and Russian intrusions into our airspace."[43]

On climate change, we should have expected that a neoconservative government would have continued the opposition to the policies pursued by the Liberal governments of both Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin that had been expressed by Harper while he was in opposition. Harper had been keenly aware that the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 6 per cent below 1990 levels was a figure that had been pulled out of thin air by Chrétien.[44] Prior to 2006, Harper regularly claimed the Liberal position was at best fanciful and at worst disingenuous, and promised that he would renegotiate Canada's Kyoto commitments.[45] We should have expected that that opposition would have continued.

Finally, in keeping with the neoconservative skepticism of multilateral institutions, we would anticipate that a Conservative government would maintain the negative attitudes towards multilateralism in general and the United Nations in particular that had been expressed by Harper while in opposition.[46]

Primat der Wahlurne: An Alternative Lens

The case studies in this book demonstrate that the foreign policy pursued by the Harper Conservatives from 2006 to 2015 looked rather different from what we might expect of a conservative or neoconservative ideological foreign policy. First, "ideology" suggests consistency and coherence; that, after all, is one of its key attributes.[47] However, as the chapters ahead make clear, Harper's foreign policy lacked coherence. This was something that even conservatives (and Conservatives) themselves recognized: for example, a panel on foreign policy at the 2013 Manning Networking Conference concluded that the Harper government "and the broader conservative movement from which it springs, don't so much have a foreign policy as a vague foreign-policy vision, dressed up with a mish-mash of policy ideas."[48]

[34] A lack of consistency was one manifestation of this lack of coherence. Roland Paris has argued that part of the inconsistency in Conservative foreign policy stemmed from a distinct discomfort with diplomacy. As Harper himself admitted, he tends to see the world in Manichæan terms (Paris's characterization, not Harper's[49]). As Paris correctly observed, because the "default orientation is to divide the world into friends and enemies — white hats and black hats," the Conservatives ran into difficulty when they were faced with the realities of world politics. The result, according to Paris, was that during the Harper era

> Canada lurches around the world like a drunk, sometimes shouting and haranguing, and sometimes whispering conspiratorially. One day we praise the UN desertification convention; the next day we reject it as worthless and stomp away. No one knows what to expect from Canada anymore — except unpredictability and tactlessness.[50]

In Paris's view, to claim that the Conservatives were driven by ideology "almost gives too much credit for what is essentially a fairly incoherent foreign policy."[51]

But if ideology is an imperfect guide for understanding foreign policy under the Harper Conservatives, what might provide a more compelling frame for explaining international policy during this era? I suggest another possibility. Students of international relations and foreign policy analysis are well acquainted with the idea of *Primat der Außenpolitik* (primacy of foreign policy), Leopold von Ranke's assertion that the structures of international politics shape a country's foreign policy. Some may be familiar with its antithesis, *Primat der Innenpolitik* (primacy of domestic politics), associated most commonly with Hans-Ulrich Wehler, a German scholar who studied the *Kaiserreich* and argued that domestic structures, not global ones, explain foreign policy-making. However, a third variant could be

identified as well: *Primat der Wahlurne* — and Peter McKenna's underlying argument — the primacy of the ballot box.

In this view, foreign policy is shaped not so much by "domestic politics" writ large, but by much narrower electoral considerations, with policies shaped by a desire to maximize votes at the next election. In the case of the Conservatives, we know that Harper came to office in 2006 with the broader strategic goal of ensuring that the Conservative Party of Canada would replace the Liberals as Canada's "natural governing party."[52] Harper himself made no secret of this objective. In 2008, he put it this way: "My long-term goal is to make the Conservatives the natural governing party of the country. And I'm a realist. You can do that in two ways… One thing you do is pull the conservatives, to pull the party, to the centre of politics. 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 conservativism."[53] As Paul Wells has noted, Harper's policies were always directed at "playing a longer game."[54]

Foreign policy undoubtedly played an important role in this longer-term strategy. The case studies in this book demonstrate that rather than embrace a narrow **[35]** ideologically-focused conservative foreign policy agenda, the Harper Conservatives tended to frame their foreign policy positions with an eye on electoral outcomes. In the process, Harper pulled his government to the centre more than he pulled the centre to conservatism. It is true that he claimed that the majority won by the Conservatives in 2011 was because "Conservative values are Canadian values and that the Conservative party is Canada's party."[55] But in Jeffrey Simpson's view, Harper's claim "stands reality on its head." Rather, Simpson argued that another dynamic was at work here: "The Conservatives became more traditionally Canadian or, to put matters another way, have learned that Conservatives had to evolve from something much more ideological into something more malleable." In his view, the Conservatives won the 2011 election "not so much because the country changed … but because the party changed to fit the country."[56]

Conclusion

The case studies in this book highlight the overweening importance of the prime minister's own political views in the shaping of Canada's international policy. In all these cases, we can see the impact of Harper's personal perspectives, beliefs, policy preferences, and political ambitions. In some instances, these were long-standing views, as in the case of Israel. In other cases, they reflected personal enthusiasms, as in the case of the Arctic. In others, they reflected an evolving perspective, as in the case of the mission in Afghanistan or the case of Canadian relations with China. But not in all instances can we claim that the prime minister's views on international affairs were always ideological, much less conservative. Rather, Harper's personal impact on foreign policy reflected a broader historical tendency for prime ministers to be able to have an extraordinary impact on moulding Canadian foreign policy.[57] His impact and motives, moreover, were also intensely political.

Although the foreign policy of the Harper Conservatives is often explained by invoking ideology, particularly neoconservative, "right-wing" ideology, the cases explored here suggest that Canadian foreign policy during the Harper Conservative era was neither as ideological as is sometimes remembered, and certainly not as conservative as is often claimed. Instead, I have argued, like McKenna, that we need to look elsewhere for a more compelling explanation for policy outcomes. In his study of Harper in power, Wells quotes a Conservative MP who told him that "If you think of Harper as a conservative ideologue, you run into no end of confusion and contradiction. But if you think of him as a Conservative partisan, most of what he does makes sense."[58] Clearly, looking at Canadian foreign policy under the Harper Conservatives as driven by the primacy of the ballot box — and the longer-term strategic goal of replacing Liberal hegemony with Conservative hegemony — provides a more compelling explanation for foreign policy in the Conservative era.

[36] NOTES

[1] Shaun Narine, "Stephen Harper and the Radicalization of Canadian Foreign Policy," in J.P. Lewis and Joanna Everitt, eds., *The Blueprint: Conservative Parties and Their Impact on Canadian Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 314–42, quotation at 314.

[2] For a classic field analysis, see John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1997): 957–94, quotation at 957.

[3] For example, Martin Goldfarb, "Stephen Harper Has Injected Moral Principle into Canadian Diplomacy," *National Post*, 17 January 2014; Derek Burney and Fen Hampson, "For Canada Abroad, A Very Good Year," *iPolitics*, 22 December 2013, http://www.ipolitics.ca/2013/12/22/for-canada-abroad-a-very-good-year/; John Kirton, "Harper's "Made in Canada" Global Leadership," in Andrew F. Cooper and Dane Rowlands, eds., *Canada Among Nations 2006: Minorities and Priorities* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 34–57.

[4] Frances Russell, "Harper Driven by Libertarian Ideology, Not Reality," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 February 2012, A7.

[5] Jordan Michael Smith, "Reinventing Canada: Stephen Harper's Conservative Revolution," *World Affairs* (March/April 2012), 27, http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/reinventing-canada-stephen-harper's-conservative-revolution.

[6] Paul Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Playbook for Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 196–7.

[7] David Rayside and James Farney, "Conclusion: The Distinctive Evolution of Canadian Conservatism," in James Farney and David Rayside, eds., *Conservatism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 343.

[8] Cited in Jennifer Campbell, "Whither Harper's Foreign Policy?" *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 December 2013, C4; video: Canadian International Council, "Making Sense of Harper's Foreign Policy," Ottawa, 9 December 2013, http://www.cpac.ca/en/programs/public-record/episodes/28991413/, 0:04:05.

[9] Haroon Siddiqui, "Prime Minister Harper's Foreign Policy Hobbled by Ideology," *The Star,* 13 October 2012, A11.

[10] See Frédéric Boily, "Le néoconservatisme au Canada: Faut-il craindre l'École de Calgary?" in Boily, ed., *Stephen Harper: de l'École de Calgary au Parti conservateur* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 27–53.

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[12] Joe Clark, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013), 103–4.

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[13] Tom McMillan, *Not My Party: The Rise and Fall of Canadian Tories, From Robert Stanfield to Stephen Harper* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2016), 549.

[14] Jennifer M. Welsh, "'I' Is for Ideology: Conservatism in International Affairs," *Global Society* 17, no. 2 (2003): 181–3. See also Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1962).

[15] Welsh, "'I' Is for Ideology," 169–74.

[16] Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, "A Conservative Foreign Policy? Canada and Australia Compared," in James Farney and David Rayside, eds., *Conservatism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 139–64. Also, see the discussion of realism and neorealism in Welsh, "'I' Is for Ideology," 175–78. For a counter-argument that suggests that the kind of internationalist policy pursued by Canada is in fact quite conservative, see Adam Chapnick, "Peace, Order, and Good Government: The 'Conservative' Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 60, no. 3 (Summer, 2005): 635–50.

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[21]Kristol, "Neoconservative Persuasion."

[22] John J. Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neoconservatism," Open Democracy, 18 May 2005, http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/morgenthau_2522.jsp.

[23] Roger Scruton, "An Englishman Looks at American Conservatism in the New Century," Address to the Howard Center, Chicago, 1 May 2004, https://phillysoc.org/tps_meetings/the-conservative-movement-for-forty-years-achievements-and-prospects/, mirrored at http://libertycorner.blogspot.ca/2006/08/wisdom-from-roger-scruton.html.

[24] Ilan Peleg, *The Legacy of George W. Bush's Foreign Policy: Moving beyond Neoconservatism* (Boulder: Westview, 2009), xi.

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[25] Welsh, "'I' Is for Ideology," 181–3.

[26] Several Liberal attack ads have been posted to YouTube. For example, "Liberal Ads on Stephen Harper in 2005," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE-JGcQ76yg. The English ads follow the French.

[27] "Réussir le Canada," YouTube, December 2005, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE-JGcQ76yg. After noting that there would be pros and cons ("des pours and des contres") if Harper won, the French-language ad claimed that Harper was "*contre* l'accord de Kyoto; *pour* le guerre en Irak; *contre* les droit des femmes au libre-choix; *pour* la présence de l'armée dans toute nos villes; *contre* les mariages entre conjoints de même sexe; *pour* le programme américain de bouclier antimissile; *contre* le bannissement des armes de poing" (*against* the Kyoto Accord; *for* the Iraq war; *against* choice for women; *for* deploying the army in all our cities; *against* same-sex marriage; *for* ballistic missile defense; *against* banning handguns).

[28] Stephen Harper and Stockwell Day, "Canadians Stand With You," *Wall Street Journal*, 28 March 2003.

[29] "'Friends of America' Rally in Toronto," *CBC News,* 4 April 2003, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2003/04/04/usrally_030404.html.

[30] Ann Denholm Crosby, "The New Conservative Government and Missile Defence," in Cooper and Rowlands, eds., *Canada Among Nations 2006*, 164.

[31] "Conservative Government Would Scrap Kyoto: Harper," *CBC News*, 9 June 2004, http://www.cbc.ca/news/story/2004/06/09/elxnharpkyoto040609.html.

[32] Stephen Harper, "A Departure from Neutrality," *National Post,* 23 May 2003, A8. See also the discussion in Mike Blanchfield, *Swingback: Getting Along in the World with Harper and Trudeau* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 39–40.

[33] See, for example, "Rediscovering the Right Agenda," *Citizens Centre Report Magazine,* 10 June 2003, 73–7, mirrored at https://nossalk.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/harper_2003_rediscovering.pdf.

[34] See Brooke Jeffrey, *Dismantling Canada: Stephen Harper's New Conservative Agenda* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 243.

[35] Conservative Party of Canada, *Stand Up For Canada: Federal Election Platform* (Ottawa: Conservative Party of Canada, 2006), 44–5.

[36] Stephen Harper, "Address by the Prime Minister to the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan," Kandahar, Afghanistan,13 March 2006), https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/03/address-prime-minister-canadian-armed-forces-afghanistan.html.

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[38] On the Kazemi case, see the report compiled by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, *Impunity in Iran: The Death of Photojournalist Zahra Kazemi* (New Haven, CT: Iran Human Documentation Center, 2006), https://iranhrdc.org/impunity-in-iran-the-death-of-photojournalist-zahra-kazemi/.

[39] For an objective assessment of this complex causality, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

[40] See also Sonny Shui-Ling Lo, "The Politics of Soft Power in Sino-Canadian Relations: Stephen Harper's Visit to China and the Neglected Hong Kong Factor," in Huhua Cao and Vivienne Poy, eds., *The China Challenge: Sino-Canadian Relations in the 21st Century* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2011), 66–80; and Kim Richard Nossal and Leah Sarson, "About Face: Explaining Changes in Canada's China Policy, 2006-2012," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20, no. 2 (2014): 146–62.

[41] Paul Evans, *Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration, and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), xiv.

[42] Adam Chapnick, "A Diplomatic Counter-Revolution, 2006–11," *International Journal* 67, no. 1 (Winter 2011–12): 137–54, esp. 143.

[43] Ibid., 143. Chapnick reminds us that Harper's "rhetoric of fear" was sufficiently unfounded that the commander of NORAD, Gen. Victor "Gene" Renuart, Jr, went out of his way to stress that "the Russians have conducted themselves professionally; they have maintained compliance with the international rules of airspace and sovereignty." Quoted in ibid.

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[45] "Conservative Government Would Scrap Kyoto: Harper," *CBC News*, 9 June 2004, http://www.cbc.ca/news/story/2004/06/09/elxnharpkyoto040609.html.

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[48] Carlo Dade, "Moving toward a Conservative Foreign Policy," *National Post,* 15 March 2013, https://nationalpost.com/opinion/carlo-dade-moving-toward-a-conservative-foreign-policy.

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