

Harper's Coup; Power grab in Ottawa

By [Mike Whitney](#)

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"We are in the worst crisis since 1929 and we have no government. How can this be good?"
Stephen Jarislowsky, chairman of Montreal money manager Jarislowsky Fraser Ltd.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper suspended Canada's parliament to avoid a challenge from opposition parties that were planning to oust him from power. The 3-party coalition—the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois—decided to remove Harper because of his strong opposition to a stimulus package that was designed to minimize the effects of the financial crisis. They also opposed his "proposed elimination of subsidies for political parties, a three-year ban on the right of civil servants to strike, and limits on the ability of women to sue for pay equity." Governor General Michaëlle Jean helped Harper to hang on by using her constitutional authority to close the legislature for seven weeks. Now the country is in a furor.

Harper is a far right conservative ideologue who served as president of the National Citizens Coalition (NCC), a conservative think-tank and advocacy group. The organization opposes national healthcare but supports privatization and tax cuts. It has 40,000 members but the names are kept confidential. Its motto is "more freedom with less government."

The Prime Minister has been a staunch supporter of George Bush and the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of his critics accuse him of being a neoconservative allied to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the Bilderburger Group. He is alleged to be a proponent of plans for a North American Union, which is an elitist scheme to end US sovereignty by merging the three countries—Canada, the US, and Mexico—into one superstate. The plan coincides with Harper's unwavering support for free trade.

Harper's connection to extremist organizations may sound far fetched, until one sees a video of him giving a speech that was also given by Australian PM John Howard prior to the war in Iraq. The speeches are identical—word for word—indicating that they must have been written by a third party somewhere in the bowels of the Pentagon or a nearby think tank. The video dispels any illusion that Karzai, Abbas, and Siniora are the only sock-puppets working for Washington.

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Harper is also a trusted ally of Israel and has defended Israel's 31 day invasion of Lebanon in 2006 that killed over 1,300 Lebanese civilians who were fleeing the south to escape Israeli bombing. According to Wikipedia: "the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations presented Stephen Harper with its inaugural International Leadership

Award for his support for Israel...the award was given to express the group's appreciation for Canada's "courageous stands" to boycott the Durban 2 Anti-Racism Conference.

On June, Harper was also awarded the Presidential Gold Medallion for Humanitarianism by B'nai B'rith International. He is the first Canadian to be awarded this medal."

Harper is also a committed militarist who has circumvented Parliament and announced a plan that will greatly expand Canada's armed forces. According to Linda McQuaig of the Toronto Star:

"Harper has already laid out an agenda that would fundamentally change this country - in ways most Canadians would oppose. While this agenda is not "secret," my guess is few Canadians know about it... Sometime in the dark of night last June 20, the Harper government posted a plan on the Department of National Defence's website - called Canada First Defence Strategy - to spend an eye-popping \$490 billion over the next 20 years on the military.

It's hard to imagine an agenda with more profound consequences for Canadians, beginning with a dramatic reordering of national priorities. Public health care? Child poverty? Fighting global warming?

While the election campaign has focused on economic issues, the military and its combat role in Afghanistan have actually been the centrepieces of the Harper administration. Harper has tried to reshape the way Canadians think about Canada, weaning us off our fondness for peacekeeping (and medicare, for that matter), and getting us excited about being a war-making nation, able to swagger on the world stage in the footsteps of the Americans." (Linda McQuaig, "Stephen Harper: Bulking up Pentagon North", the Toronto Star)

The Putsch Will Be Televised

Harper's nationally televised speech on Monday night was pure political theater; a near-perfect duplication of George Bush's many solemn addresses from the Oval office. Wrapping himself in the Maple Leaf, the smooth-talking Harper rattled off the familiar patriotic buzzwords and catchphrases while trying to affect the appearance of a man genuinely devoted to principle:

"We will use all legal means to resist this undemocratic seizure of power," Harper thundered peering straight into the camera.

Fortunately, Harper doesn't have a leg to stand on. Constitutional scholars unanimously agree that the parties have the right to deliver a "no confidence" vote and strip him of his power. Harper is just trying to brazen it out to buy some time.

"The Canadian government has always been chosen by the people," said the Prime Minister.

Not true, and Harper knows it.

"He's appealing to people who learned their civics from American television," said Henry Jacek, a political scientist at McMaster University. Other scholars... say Harper's populist

theory of democracy is more suited to a U.S.-style presidential system, in which voters cast ballots directly for a national leader, than it is to Canadian parliamentary democracy. In Canada, there's no national vote for prime minister. People elect MPs in 308 ridings, and a government holds power only as long as it has the support of a majority of those MPs.

"We have a rule that the licence to govern is having the confidence of the House of Commons," said Peter Russell, a former University of Toronto professor and adviser to past governors general.

"I'm sorry, that's the rule. If they want to change it to having a public opinion poll, we'd have to reform and rewrite our Constitution." ("Harper Wrong on Democracy Experts Claim" CTV)

Harper is just blowing smoke, but his challenge should be taken seriously just the same. Neocons do not go gently into that good night. Americans know that better than anyone.

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