

The Empire Strikes Back, Canadian Style

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The drama of Canadian politics has reached new levels. The fascinating story line and interplay of personalities makes a compelling political soap opera. But the real story is much less about personalities, and much more about power.

Since confederation in 1867, Canada has always been governed by the Liberal-Conservative duopoly, and thereupon ruled by the Canadian Establishment.

This result is assured by the archaic Anglo voting system known as 'First-Past-the-Post' (which systemically distorts the will of the people by over-representing the winning party while under-representing the losers, thereby tending to produce majority governments), along with the Establishment domination of their corporate media and campaign financing. In every nominally fair and free election, the public is propagandized into believing that the winning party can only come from the Liberal-Conservative duopoly. Hence, it is quite common for people to be driven to so-called 'strategic voting' (i.e. for the perceived 'lesser of evils' of the Liberal-Conservative duopoly), thereby ensuring that the seeming inevitability of this manufactured public perception becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy.

So any number of parties can run, but only the Liberal-Conservative duopoly can win, as it always has. Its two political factions (designated as the Liberal and Conservative parties) campaign vigorously and negatively toward one-another (and of course against any other contenders), and differentiate themselves on relatively minor issues. Their sole purpose is to win the privilege of holding the power of government, primarily to serve the Canadian Establishment, their patrons and masters. Every election should be viewed under this paradigm.

The Liberal-Conservative duopoly spans the political spectrum from centre to right. While it would be natural that the Canadian Establishment might have an ideological preference for the right-wing Conservatives, the centrist Liberals are historically the natural party of government since they appeal to a larger public constituency.

Since the Canadian Establishment owns, operates and controls the Liberal-Conservative duopoly, it isn't much concerned about which of its factions is in power. What matters most is that the power of government is well and securely held by either the Liberal or Conservative party, preferably with a stable majority, under a strong leader who well understands who really owns and controls the country.

It is also of utmost importance to the Canadian Establishment to maintain the facade of democracy, and the myth that the people choose 'their' government through the public theatre of the electoral process. This requires the occasional regime change from one to the other party within the Liberal-Conservative duopoly.

Canada's most recent regime changes occurred in 1993 (Conservative to Liberal) and 2006 (Liberal to Conservative). The legacy of the Mulroney regime was the virtual destruction of the Progressive Conservative party as a viable political brand; in 1993, this spawned the emergence of the Bloc in Quebec and the Reform party in the west. This disabled the Liberal-Conservative duopoly, and resulted in the Liberal pseudo-dictatorship from 1993-2006, during which elections were periodically held but no other party could possibly win.

The situation of a de facto uni-party state was quite acceptable to the Canadian Establishment, so long as the people would put up with it. But after a decade, it was recognized that an electable alternative was again required; hence, the remnants of the Progressive Conservatives were coerced into reunion with their brethren from the Reform/Alliance party, to form the new Conservative party (conspicuously dropping any pretension of being progressive).

By 2006, the Liberals had the baggage of scandals and arrogance of power. If a regime change could not be engineered under such circumstances, the Canadian Establishment risked having their charade of democracy exposed to all (people might conclude that there was no reason to vote, or perhaps even demand a representative voting system). To facilitate the urgently required regime change, a bogus corruption investigation by the RCMP (at the behest of the NDP) was publicly announced in the middle of the election campaign. The result was a regime change to a minority Conservative government, and the resignation of the Liberal leader.

But the Canadian Establishment always wants its country to be run by a majority government. To facilitate this, the Liberal leadership contest was conspicuously devoid of any of its strong and experienced potential candidates, a shocking surprise given that every previous Liberal leader within the past century had become Prime Minister. This produced the weakest leader imaginable; indeed, if the Conservative PM had the power to choose his opponent, he could not have found a candidate with poorer leadership and communications skills.

Despite the Conservatives' advantages of incumbency and such an embarrassingly weak opponent, and with a three-way split of the progressive vote (significantly with the Green party invited to the televised leaders' debate, and with all four opponents gang tackling the incumbent PM), the result of the recent 2008 election was only a strengthened minority government. After considerable prodding, the hopelessly inept Liberal leader reluctantly agreed to step down when his replacement would be selected at a convention next May.

Which brings us to the last two weeks. The PM began the new session of parliament with a continuation of his confrontational and bullying behaviour, by announcing his intention to eliminate public funding of political parties. The three opposition parties, under an initiative previously prepared by the NDP leader, seized upon the opportunity to declare that they were forming a coalition that would defeat the government (ostensibly due to the lack of an economic stimulus plan in the budget update); also asking the Governor General to reject another election and allow them to take power. The coalition plan was to install the lame-duck Liberal leader as interim PM until his successor would be chosen, and to have 18 Liberals and 6 NDP in cabinet positions, supported by the separatist Bloc Quebecois.

In desperation, the PM sought a reprieve from imminent defeat, by calling upon the

Governor General to prorogue parliament until late January. The GG complied, giving all parties a 'cooling off' period before taking precipitous action. In the meantime, the PM launched a strong PR offensive to disparage the coalition, especially for its dependence upon the separatists.

Under these circumstances, the powerbrokers within the Liberal party have privately resolved their leadership question over the past two days. Their lame-duck leader was induced to resign forthwith, and two of the three announced leadership candidates suddenly withdrew. The 'chosen one' is to be coronated as the new Liberal leader this week by a caucus vote and confirmed by the party executive, without members having any opportunity to vote. The exigencies of the unprecedented political and economic crises are taken to justify this gross deviation from due process. All of which is uncharacteristically and breathtakingly efficient, if not very democratic.

Regarding the coalition, the new Liberal leader has stated "the coalition if necessary, but not necessarily the coalition", cleverly paraphrasing the historical phrase used by a former Liberal leader concerning conscription. So it remains uncertain as to whether the government will be immediately defeated by the coalition with the new Liberal leader at the helm. We shall see.

This much is what is clear today. Also noteworthy are recent polling results indicating that the Conservatives might gain a majority government in another election, given that many Canadians agree with their characterization of the coalition as 'being in bed' with the separatists. However the Conservatives have again inflamed the Quebec sovereignty question and destroyed their prospects in that province, as shown in yesterday's election.

The Liberal-Conservative duopoly is the primary political asset of the Canadian Establishment. And one can assume that their control of these parties is exercised through the backrooms, through the party powerbrokers and the leaders. So one should conclude that the present abuse of democracy within the Liberal party is the direct result of that chain of command, and that the Canadian Establishment now has their desired Liberal leader.

While it's perfectly clear that the Canadian Establishment would always prefer its Liberal-Conservative duopoly to hold power with the stability and secrecy of a majority government, it's equally obvious that the power sharing and consensus requirements of a coalition would be antithetical to its interests; even worse, a coalition with socialists and separatists would be pure anathema. What possessed the deposed Liberal leader to entertain such a blasphemous notion? This above all else is proof of his unsuitability for the job. What this beknighted fool failed to realize was that he had already fulfilled the job he was needed for, i.e. to perform as designated loser in an attempt to deliver a majority government (intended in this case to be Conservative) for the Liberal-Conservative duopoly.

The unceremonious change of Liberal leaders was necessary to avoid the political consequences and precedent of a coalition government. And now that the Conservative party has demonstrated that it cannot gain a majority (at least with its present leader) under the most extremely favourable circumstances, the Liberal party is revamped under suitable leadership to resume its role as natural government in the next election, whenever that may be.

Until then, the prediction here is that the traditional Liberal brand will be preserved by avoiding any power sharing with unsavoury coalition partners, and instead working

cooperatively with the Conservative government in the interests of Canada.

Long live the Liberal-Conservative duopoly. Long live the Canadian Establishment. God save the Queen. The Empire has struck back, Canadian style.

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