



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on March 29, 2011

## Canadian Parliamentary Crisis to Send Voters Back to Polls

Canadians are headed for the polls again, showing how shaky politics has become in such countries. Stephen Harper's Conservative Party "won" a general election in early 2006 by garnering more seats than any other party. The other three major parties — Liberal (or "Grits"), New Democrat Party, and Bloc Québécois (the French separatist party) — each held significant numbers in the Parliament (pictured). Conservatives gained 24 seats for a total of 125; Liberals lost 32 seats for a total of 103; the New Democrats gained 10 seats for 29 total; and Bloc Québécois lost 3 seats down to 51; there was 1 independent.



Harper and his party — although holding only 40 percent of the seats in Parliament and receiving only 36 percent of the popular vote — formed the government.

In October 2008 Canada held another general election just before the U.S. presidential election, producing another "win" for Harper's Conservative Party. It gained 19 seats for a total of 143 in Parliament; the Liberal Party lost 26 seats down to 77; the New Democrat Party gained 8 seats to 37; and Bloc Québécois essentially stood still, losing just a couple of seats down to 49. Harper's party held 47 percent of the seats — a stronger hand, but not enough to govern as a conservative party in Canada. For more than five years, America's neighbor to the north has had a minority government whose opposition parties all leaned strongly toward socialism, but whose personal jealousies and lust for power prevented a coalition government from forming.

Canadians' experience in recent years is similar to that of Germans. In September 2005 Germany held a general election. During the previous years, the Social Democrats had lost so many state elections that the upper chamber of the German Parliament, the Bundestrat, was firmly in the hands of the Christian Democrats. The general election, held for the purpose of choosing members for the lower chamber, the Bundestag, produced a result which Canada would mirror in 2006: Christian Democrats actually lost 22 seats down to 226; the Social Democrats lost 29 seats to 222; the Free Democrats gained 14 to 61; the Party of Democrats Socialism, a Marxist group, surged from 2 seats to 54; and the Green Party lost 4 seats down to 51. Out of those five parties, only two — Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats and Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats — could combine to form a government, which they did.

Germany in September 2009 held another general election which produced gains for the Christian Democrats (+13 seats) and their traditional junior partner, the Free Democrats (+32 seats). These combined gains allowed Merkel to include the Free Democrats in the government without the Social Democrats, giving the country a "center-right" government. That government has already begun to unravel, however, as evidenced in the state elections on March 28 when the Green Party won its first-ever state election in Germany, capturing the historic stronghold of the Christian Democrats in Baden-



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Wuerttemberg. Before those crucial elections, Merkel's coalition government held 31 seats in the Bundestag to the opposition's 24. Today, Merkel's coalition holds only 25 seats in the Bundestag, while the opposition maintains 30 seats. It is extremely difficult, though not impossible, to govern with such political configurations.

In May of 2010, David Cameron's Conservative Party in Britain made major gains in the general election at the expense of the wildly unpopular Labour Party of Gordon Brown. Conservatives gained 97 seats to 306 in the House of Commons; Labour lost 91 seats down to 258; the Liberal Party, which professes to be the middle party, actually lost 5 seats, from 62 to 57, though it still holds the balance of power in the House of Commons. Absent a tricky coalition of small nationalist parties, Cameron was forced to form a coalition government with Nick Clegg's Liberal Party.

Australia held a general election three months later, in August 2010. The Australian Labour Party, the most socialistically inclined of parties in that nation, lost 11 seats in the national House of Representatives, leaving Labour with 72 out of the 150 seats. The four allied parties on the right gained 7 seats for a total of 72. The government was formed by Labour Party alliances with independent members, a member of the National Party of Western Australia (normally considered on the right) and a Green Party member. The margin of governing in Australia is extremely narrow.

Smaller nations are running into the same problems in attempting to form a solid government. For instance, though Belgium held an election in the middle of last year, politicians have not yet managed to form a government — the longest period of any modern parliamentary democracy without a government. In spite of this crisis, Belgium is sending four F-16 fighters to help the coalition operating in Libya. The machinations to form a government in Belgium, including inventions such as a "mirror government," demonstrate just how unworkable true democracy is in operation.

Last Friday — in a first for the Canadian government — the three major opposition parties in Canada found the Conservative Party government in contempt. The practical effect of such a finding is the long-awaited vote of no confidence, which triggers a new election. Prime Minister Stephen Harper will necessarily have to ask the Governor-General to dissolve the Parliament, though that is a mere formality. Virtually all the major polls show the Conservative Party again winning more seats than any other party. Indeed, three recent polls show Conservatives actually winning a majority. So it is possible, perhaps a coin toss probability, that Canada may actually have a majority conservative government soon.

Americans should learn from the struggles for power and prestige seen in Canada, Germany, Belgium, Australia, and Britain. The Founding Fathers did not trust democracy (pure majority rule), and instead formed a constitutional republic (rule by law). The American republic is composed of sovereign states — governments whose rights are in many ways superior to those of the federal government, which was formed by the states. The Founders also warned of one grave danger: factions (or parties). The lust for power leads to parties, and even parties such as seen in Canada, which cannot combine to form a government against the Conservative Party. The centralization of power — which continues even in nations such as Germany, Canada, and Australia, with strong traditions of state or provincial power — focuses control in only a few hands. And the insistence upon election after election (Canada is set to have three general elections in five years to find the "will of the people") is evidence of how poorly democracies function.

As President Obama and his ruling elite push ever harder to make the United States more "European" in its politics and governance, Americans ought to ponder just what a mess Belgium, Germany, Britain,



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Canada, and Australia are in today — and consider again the words of Benjamin Franklin, who, when asked by a woman at the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 what kind of government had been decided upon, replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.”



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