

EMBASSY

EMBASSY free trial ▶

archives

search

Like



NEWS OPINION POLICY BRIEFINGS IMMIGRATION TRADE DEFENCE DEVELOPMENT DIPLOMACY DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS

HOT TOPICS: [Iraq](#) | [Ebola Crisis](#) | [Scottish Independence](#) | [Charities Audits](#) | [ISIS](#) | [Ukraine](#) | [Back to Parliament](#) | [CETA](#)

NEWS

Harper as statesman key to Tory re-election strategy

Like

15

Tweet

Print Email

Insiders say Conservatives will use PM's international experience to diminish rivals.



The Hill Times Photo: Jake Wright

Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the Ottawa Convention Centre on Sept 15.

Chris Plecash

Published: Wednesday, 09/17/2014 1:44 am EDT

Last Updated: Wednesday, 09/17/2014 10:49 am EDT

Foreign policy may not determine the next federal election, but observers say the Conservative Party will step up their efforts to portray Prime Minister Stephen Harper as a statesman with international stature in an effort to diminish his political opponents in the emerging campaign.

More Related To This Story

[Tories target diasporas in foreign-aid talk tour](#)

"I think the Conservatives see foreign policy as a key way to rebuild the prime minister's brand, and use that to transition to momentum for the party and Stephen Harper as we get closer to an election," Nik Nanos, president of Nanos Research, told *Embassy*.

"The brand-repair strategy right now is fundamentally built around foreign policy."

The Harper government went out of its way to insert Canada into international affairs over the summer, talking tough and pushing for sanctions against Russia over its incursion into Ukraine, pledging "unequivocal" support for Israel in its war in Gaza, and joining the latest US-led coalition

Back To Parliament Fall 2014

IN-DEPTH, EXCLUSIVE FOREIGN AFFAIRS NEWS.

Daily updates. [Sign up here](#)

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

September 17, 2014



- Download latest PDF
- Issue Archives
- Subscribe

POLICY BRIEFINGS

July 23, 2014



FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

- Download latest PDF
- Policy Briefing Archives

ON THE RECORD

Full text speeches and statements



Our resources, new frontiers

Greg Rickford

09/05/2014

prejudging unequivocal support for Israel in its war in Gaza, and joining the latest US-led coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq.

The prime minister continued to focus on foreign policy and trade in a campaign-style speech to the Conservative caucus on Sept. 15 in Ottawa, where he reminded his audience that they live in “an uncertain world.”

“[T]he measure of good government—the true test of leadership—lies not in achieving success in times of stability and peace, but in doing so during times of risk and danger,” Mr. Harper told the audience of Conservative MPs and supporters.

A foreign affairs agenda

Foreign affairs and trade will top the prime minister’s agenda in the first weeks back to Parliament. On Sept. 17, he’ll meet with recently elected Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, who will address Parliament and thank Canada for its support over the past year.

The following week, South Korean President Park Geun-hye will be in Ottawa on a state visit that could move the two sides closer to ratifying the Canada-South Korea free trade agreement they concluded negotiations on in March.

On Sept. 23, Mr. Harper will travel to New York where he’ll address the UN General Assembly for the first time in four years, before returning to Ottawa on Sept. 25 to host a summit with European Union leaders that will likely include the announcement of further progress towards the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. In November, the Prime Minister will travel to China for the APEC summit in Beijing, followed by the G20 leaders’ summit in Australia.

“It’s all about being a statesman and how you portray yourself. You have stories about the prime minister picking up the phone to call Obama to talk about something; in other stories he’s on the phone with [British Prime Minister David Cameron] in the UK,” observed Keith Beardsley, a former advisor and deputy chief of staff for issues management to the prime minister.

“This is how you create the image of a man who’s not only in control, but knows what he’s doing and he’s an equal with all of these world leaders. It doesn’t hurt your image at all.”

Image is everything

When it comes to electoral strategy, the Conservatives have traditionally used international affairs to appeal to ethnic diasporas concentrated in the suburban communities of Canada’s largest cities. That strategy continued over the summer. *Embassy* reported on Conservative MPs meeting with Haitian, Ukrainian, Somali, and East Asian groups across the country to announce millions of dollars in international aid.

Recent opinion pieces have suggested that the next federal election will be about foreign policy. John Ibbitson, currently a senior fellow with the Centre for International Governance Innovation, has mused that the election will likely be about who Canadians “trust to mind the store...overseas as well as at home,” and Ottawa-based pollster Bruce Anderson has suggested more voters will consider Canada’s place on the world stage when they cast ballots in the next election.

But Mr. Nanos is skeptical that the next federal election will come down to foreign policy and Canada’s international standing. Rather, the Conservatives are pushing foreign policy because it’s to the prime minister’s advantage, he said.

“Foreign policy is a key lever to define the brands of leaders, but it’s very rare that it’s the determinant of an election outcome,” said Mr. Nanos.

“Foreign policy kind of pops on and off the radar. If there’s a foreign policy crisis of some sort, it becomes of concern to Canadians, and then once it’s out of the news it’s out of sight, out of mind.”

One former Conservative advisor, speaking on background, said the party wants to present voters with the choice between “experienced people who have a plan” and “inexperienced people who are naive about how the world works.”

“It’s a case of Conservatives wanting to make [foreign policy] matter. The prime minister’s going to go all over the world in the lead up to the next election—China in the fall, and various other places—to look like a world leader that’s respected on the world stage,” said the source, a former staffer to the Harper Cabinet who requested anonymity.

“A lot of it is the Conservatives wanting people to think ‘There’s a lot that could go wrong out there, let’s stick with the devil we know.’”

Opposition parties ‘boxed in’

The Conservatives continue to trail the Liberal Party in the polls. The most recent survey of national polling by aggregator ThreeHundredEight puts the Liberals seven points ahead of the Conservatives, with the two parties polling at 39 per cent and 32 per cent respectively, while the NDP trails with 21 per cent.

Foreign policy is the one file on which the Conservatives maintain a clear advantage in terms of driving the news agenda. The party has been in power for nearly a decade and has had more than three years of majority government to shift their focus from domestic to international affairs. The two main opposition parties, meanwhile, have in some cases had to avoid directly challenging the



Canada-EU trade talks: The story so far
Embassy Staff
08/14/2014

[READ MORE »](#)

CANADA VIETNAM NOTEBOOK

A record of Canada Vietnam relations



The problem with bloggers
Carl Meyer
08/28/2014



Vietnamese government fears 'Black April Day' bill would open up old wounds
Peter Mazereeuw
07/30/2014

[READ MORE »](#)

WHAT'S POPULAR ON EMBASSY

MOST READ

MOST EMAILED

'Stick to the knitting': Charities face similar scrutiny in UK, Canada

A moral choice looms for the Harper government

EU members at odds over trade deal with Canada

EU trade deal ratification process yet to be settled

Harper as statesman key to Tory re-election strategy

THE HILL TIMES

HEADLINES

Harper suspended Commons committee reviews of Gascon's Supreme Court appointment in June: House documents

Prime Minister Harper launches campaign-style speech, rallies Conservatives as House resumes sitting

#Can2020 Conference is fuel for 2015 and beyond

A not-for-profit, Canadians for a New Partnership, was recently launched to address First Nations issues, and involves former PMs Joe Clark and Paul Martin, among others. What do you think of this initiative?

A successful society values its public goods, Oliver should understand that

[READ MORE](#)

Wire Report

HEADLINES

Quebecor 'still interested' in Wind

Shomi not meant to 'kill Netflix': Rogers CEO

TekSavvy asks CRTC for help to launch TV service

Buyout puts Wind on solid ground, says Lacavera

Incumbents say AWS 2 not a side

two main opposition parties, meanwhile, have in some cases had to avoid directly challenging the government's foreign policy positions.

Mr. Nanos described the Liberals and NDP as "boxed in" when it comes to foreign policy. "Once the opposition parties agree with the government, they've basically ceded any advantage they could have on the foreign policy front and Stephen Harper gets all the credit for a particular foreign policy stance," he said.

cplecash@embassynews.ca
[@chriscplecash](#)

More from Embassy - Canada's Foreign Policy Newspaper

- [A moral choice looms for the Harper government \(09/03/2014 12:00 am EDT \)](#)
- [Go-to venues for your big day \(09/10/2014 12:00 am EDT \)](#)
- [Solution to Canada-EU seal ban feud closer, officials say \(09/11/2014 5:14 pm EDT \)](#)
- [Canada should champion water, sanitation and hygiene \(09/17/2014 1:30 am EDT \)](#)

Recommended by

Like < 48

15

Tweet < 40

Print Email

Comments that appear on the site are not the opinion of *Embassy*. Personal attacks, name-calling, offensive language, and unsubstantiated allegations are not allowed. For more information on our commenting policies, please see our [Community Discussion Rules page](#).

7 comments

[Add a comment](#)



Thomas Mungo · Top Commenter · Capilano College

Harper as statesman? If this is what the Harper party is basing their election strategy on then I recommend a new leader. This man is an epic fail on that file as well as all others. His idea of being a statesman involves being foot dog to Israel.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 5 · 22 hours ago



Drakula Romania · Top Commenter · Iasi, Brasov, Romania

the way harper dresses, all pudgy things bulging from his suits, his poorly designed toupee make him look more like a fat clown than statesman. Plus a statesman wouldn't cut \$5 million from veterans, then turn around and give \$4 million to SCAM charity "Tribute to Liberty" who, before Jason Kenney got involved, spent 95% of ALL donations on salaries! Talk about a charity who needs to be investigated by the CRA!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 4 · 21 hours ago

[View 5 more](#)

Facebook social plugin

HOT TOPICS: [Iraq](#) | [Ebola Crisis](#) | [Scottish Independence](#) | [Charities Audits](#) | [ISIS](#) | [Ukraine](#) | [Back to Parliament](#) | [CETA](#)

INSIDE EMBASSY

- [Front Page](#)
- [Immigration](#)
- [Trade](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Defence](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Diplomacy](#)
- [Party Time](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Diplomatic Contacts](#)

SUBSCRIBERS

- [Subscribe](#)
- [Login](#)
- [Update Password](#)
- [Download Electronic Edition](#)
- [Sign Up For The Electronic Edition](#)
- [Email Newsletters And Alerts](#)
- [Group And IP Subscribers](#)

MORE INFO

- [Advertising](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Submit An Article](#)
- [Internships](#)

HILL TIMES PUBLISHING

- [Hill Times](#)
- [The Wire Report](#)
- [Parliament Now](#)
- [HTWork.Ca](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Reuse & Permissions](#)

STAY CONNECTED>>

[RSS](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

© 2014 Hill Times Publishing All rights reserved. 69 Sparks St. Ottawa ON K1P 5A5

incumbents say AWS-3 set-aside unnecessary, bad for taxpayers

[READ MORE](#)



Natural Resource Department briefing notes: The 'key messages'

[Day at the Registry: Tim Hortons registers in-house](#)

[Harper energy strategy pushes expansion of oilsands, pipelines, shale gas](#)

[CFIB has busy August on EI premiums](#)

[Q&A: Marc Wayne says new medical marijuana industry never been done before, federally](#)

[READ MORE](#)