

Notes for Remarks by Paul Heinbecker*

**At the 22nd Annual Frank Church Conference on
Public Affairs**

Global Flash Points: Clash of Cultures

A Canadian Perspective on US Foreign Policy

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Check Against Delivery

***Paul Heinbecker is Distinguished Fellow, International Relations, at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, and Director of the Centre for Global Relations, Governance and Policy at Wilfrid Laurier University. He served as Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations (2000- 2003) and Germany (1992-1996). This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of the institutions above.**

Introduction

- **It is a joy to be invited to this famous centre by Bethine Church, a woman who personifies life and joy, itself.**

It is a particular honor to speak in a conference inspired by one of America's great citizens, and Canada's friends, the best President the US regrettably never had, Senator Frank Church.

Our troubled world needs leaders of Senator Church's outstanding competence, courage, vision and conviction.

The organizers' s charge to the conference is to discuss

“how the US should engage a world where many mistrust and even hate America, and

how the US should rebuild global institutions and contain extremism”

It is admirable that you have chosen such a subject and are prepared to speak candidly about it.

Seeing yourselves as others see you, to paraphrase Robbie Burns, can save you from many a serious blunder.

I am flattered that you have asked me to address these very timely issues of so much importance to your country and to the world.

But I confess to being a little reticent about doing so, too.

How to respond honestly to such a topic without giving offence?

- **For a foreigner, even a friendly one, to help you see yourselves as others see you,**
- **or offer suggestions of what you might do to engage the world,**
- **is an especially delicate assignment—**
- **Even a mug's game**
- **It is human nature that most people resent advice,**

however constructively it's offered and whatever the circumstance

- **Tolerance of criticism, especially from foreigners is, also, notoriously low.**

- **For Canadians (and I suspect for Americans, too) that goes double for the neighbours**
- **We, Canadians, also have some historical baggage on this score**

**Dean Acheson referred in the Fifties to Canada as “
the stern voice of the mother of God”**

**Anonymous US diplomat:--when Sweden joined the EU
thus vacating the position of world’s mother-in-law
would Canada campaign for the job?**

- **Nevertheless, it is possible to be frank without being brutally frank if the starting point is sympathy and not antipathy,**
- **And if the language is sufficiently diplomatic.**
- **I grew up in Southern Ontario very sympathetic to most things American.**
 - **We watched John Wayne Roy Rogers and the Marx brothers movies**
 - **Thanks to rooftop antennas, the Cleveland Indians and Cleveland Browns were our “hometown” teams.**

- **As a young Patrol Boy (school crossing guard), I won a visit to Washington, even before I had ever visited Ottawa.**
- **Nor was I somehow unusual.—Former Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson impressed President Kennedy with his intimate knowledge of baseball.**
- **The American Dream was similar to the Canadian Dream**
- **There were disagreements between Canada and the US in those days,**
- **but they were contained within a larger consensus and surer sense of neighbourhood and, even, friendship**
- **After the Revolutionary war, the war of 1812-14, Manifest Destiny, and the Irish American Fenian raids, we were never “kissing cousins”**
- **—by the way a Canadian political leader, D’Arcy McGee was assassinated by a Fenian terrorist in 1867—**
- **But we were close cousins, and over time became quite admiring cousins.**

- **A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then;**
- **Some of that sense of family that I grew up with has flowed away with it.**
- **In Canada-US terms, even as we have become much more integrated economically, we have become considerably more distant politically.**
- **Partly the cause has been shifting demographics (Hispanic immigration for you and Asian immigration for us)**
- **Some of it has been shifting political power (to the South and West for you and to Quebec for us)**
- **Some of it is a question of changing values—among other things, religion**
- **Religion has apparently become less prevalent in Canadian public life as it has become more prevalent in American life.**
 - **A Gallup Poll released in November 2003 found that six out of ten Americans said that religion was "very important" in their lives.**

- **In contrast, in Canada and the United Kingdom, two societies often perceived as quite similar to the United States, only 28% and 17% respectively described religion as similarly important in their lives.**
- **A 2002 Pew Research Center poll had found broadly the same proportions**

- **Our respective national dreams still intersect, and there is still a large overlap, but they seem no longer to be concentric.**

- **Maybe that is to be expected as our societies mature.**

- **In any event, while Canadians and Americans share a lot of DNA, we are not the same people.**

- **Among other things, you Americans know that you are citizens of the most powerful country on earth and we, Canadians, know that we are not.**

- **That affects a lot of things, not least foreign policy.**

- **Perhaps because the Cold War is over and there is so little consensus on the war on terror, countries that were once close allies seem to have lost the sense of shared fate.**
- **I think we all need to recapture that sense, not by making an enemy of the Russians again, much less of the Chinese.**
- **Or of Islam.**
- **But by recognizing that in a globalizing world, where security is under threat from terrorism, organized crime, disease, climate change, etc., we need each other, in some ways more than ever.**
- **For example, no single country or even coalition of the willing is going to save us all if an Avian Flu pandemic breaks out.**
- **We will either hang together or, as ??? said we will hang separately.**
- **There was a time not very long ago when we all saw the world as a place where diversity was a wonder not a threat, and saw multilateral cooperation as manifest good sense.**
- **I think we need to recapture some of that sense of solidarity and cooperation in managing our shared fate.**

- **My most fundamental advice to Americans in these circumstances is that to engage a distrustful world and to re-build global institutions**
- **just be the same Americans and democrats abroad that you are at home—welcoming of diversity, generous to others, law-abiding and open to ideas.**
- **Emulating the humanity and recapturing the vision Frank Church would help a lot.**

What the world thinks of the US

- **The organizers of today’s conference are regrettably right that there has been a precipitate deterioration of attitudes around the world towards the US since the outpouring of sympathy after 9/11.**
- **On September 10, 2001, the French paper Le Monde was proclaiming that we were all Americans.**
- **By March 17, 2003, the US Congress was re-naming French Fries “Freedom Fries”.**
- **(Although they retained the word “menu”!)**

- **By December, 2003, the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, headed by former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and to Syria Edward Djerejian, was reporting that "the bottom ha[d] indeed fallen out of support for the United States".**
- **In 2004, the Pew “Global Attitudes Project” confirmed that those attitudes were widely shared.**
- **By June, 2005, nevertheless, Pew found that Anti-Americanism in Europe, the Middle East and Asia was showing modest signs of abating.**
- **Incidentally, in the 16 countries surveyed by Pew earlier this year, Canadians gave the US the second highest rating (59%), behind only Poland and the US itself.**
- **Only in Indonesia, India and Russia has there been significant improvement in overall opinions of the U.S.**
- **By the way, the two countries most satisfied with themselves seemed to be Canada and the US, in that order.**

What Americans think of Canada

- **If these references to disaffection with America abroad are starting to try your patience, you should know that polls show that the feelings are mutual.**
- **According to Harris polls, there has been a steep decline of American regard for Canada since 2001,**
 - **In 2001—73% of Americans saw Canada as a close ally of the US**
 - **In 2005—48% of Americans see Canada as a close ally.**
- **Our differences on the Iraq war are probably a central factor.**
- **As is perhaps a continuing misunderstanding on terrorism—**
 - **the 9/11 terrorists did not come from Canada, the CNN's Lou Dobbs notwithstanding.**
- **By the way, while we disagreed on Iraq, we sent combat forces to Afghanistan to fight alongside Americans**

- They are still there—by February we will have about 2,000 troops in the Kandahar region
 - We have also made Afghanistan our largest aid partner.
 - Further, we are disbursing about \$300 million towards the Iraqi reconstruction
- Nevertheless, the cooling is apparent on both sides, perhaps on all sides

To my mind, this “estrangement” need neither be permanent nor long.

- There are many correctives that can be taken on both sides of the 49th parallel, and in longitudes across the earth.
- In print and in the media, I am a frequent critic of my own government’s foreign policy
- But, as this conference is about how the US should engage the world and rebuild international institutions, I offer the following advice with great trepidation but in the spirit of this conference

On Engaging the World and Rebuilding Institutions

1. Beware of Big Ideas

- **Grand Strategy**
 - **The New American Empire**
 - **The New American Century**
 - **Hegemony**
 - **Principled Unilateralism**
-
- **There is a lot of seductive power in these terms, which appeal so much to my academic colleagues**

 - **But for policy makers, there entail a lot of risk as well.**

 - **It is not obvious to me how acting on these theses will end in anything but tears for ordinary Americans.**

 - **My conception of Americans, derived from my childhood and from 25 years of professional engagement with you, is that you simply find little attraction in dominating the world.**

 - **The United States has always been the anti-Empire.**

By the way, you need not choose between isolationist-realism and idealistic-interventionism, the debate that has been rekindled by the Iraq war aftermath.

For the rest of us, it would be fine if the pendulum stopped somewhere in the middle of the two, avoiding adventures on the one hand, but being willing and available to help sort out places like Darfur, on the other.

2. Take your own advice

- **American history is replete with the wisdom of your exceptional leaders.**
 - **President John Quincy Adams –speaking in the early years of the republic:**

“Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.... She might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit..”

- **Or Harry Truman, speaking at the founding of the UN in San Francisco**

“We all have to recognize that no matter how great our strength, we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. No one nation ...can or should expect any special privilege which harms any other nation.”

Or Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, as recorded in the recent documentary, The Fog of War,

- **“Have we a record of omniscience? I do not believe we should ever apply [our] economic, political or military power unilaterally...If we cannot persuade nations with comparable values of the merit of our cause, we’d better re-examine our reasoning.”**

You could do a lot worse than reflect on the words of Frank Church reprinted in the flyer of this conference.

“Like other nations before us that drank deeply from the cup of foreign adventure, we are too enamoured with the nobility of our mission to disenthral ourselves. Nothing in the constitution suggests that the Federal Government was established for the purpose of restructuring the world.

3. Help Reform the UN

- **No one did more to create the UN and then to sustain it than the US did.**

- **There would not have been a UN without the visionary leadership of President's Roosevelt and Truman.**
- **Many fine Americans have enhanced the UN from Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to Adlai Stevenson to Thomas Pickering to Frank Church, himself.**

*****Anne Marie—see me on this passage**

- **For all its flaws, the UN still matters to you.**
- **It also matters to the rest of us.**
- **154 heads of government came to New York this fall and made the least of their opportunity to reform the place**
- **But they did re-affirm the centrality of the organization**
- **The UN merits criticism and needs reform.**
- **It has all the problems you would expect a 60 year old organization to have, and more.**
- **but it serves us far better than the “UN bashers” admit, or even probably know.**

- **It is increasingly clear that the diminution of inter-state and intra-state wars that we have experienced in recent years...**
- **has had much to do with the UN's activism, its authorization of military interventions, its preventive measures, and its peace-building when conflicts have ended**
- **The UN is neither the basket case or the nefarious rival to the US it is sometimes painted.**
- **Richard Perle, former chairman of the US Defense Policy Board, writing in The Guardian, in March 2003, said. "Thank God for the death of the UN."**
- **This view was apparently popular among the neo-cons**
- **It was also quite wrong, just one of many things the neo-cons have been wrong about**
- **More important, it is not what the American people think-- according to the Fall, 2004, polling of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations:**

81% of Americans thought it somewhat or very important to strengthen the UN

Two-thirds of the public and three-quarters of the elite agreed that, in dealing with international problems, Washington should be more willing to make decisions within the UN, even if this means that its views will not prevail.

4. Re-Take the Lead Again in writing International Law

The US led in the creation of the international legal system post 1945

- **The UN Charter**
- **The International Court of Justice**
- **The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade**

For the rest of us, and for the US too, this system matters and needs reinforcement and advancement

The US has a unique opportunity as the sole super power to lead in the development of norms and laws for a time, already dawning, when there will be powerful competitors.

Now is no time to throw out the rulebook.

Roosevelt and Truman laid the foundations of the modern international legal system.

- **I doubt that they did so as an interim measure pending the time when the US was powerful enough to ignore it.**

The current record is, frankly, worrying for your friends and allies.

- **The UN Charter and the Iraq war**
- **Geneva Conventions, (Guantanamo)**
- **Torture Convention (US Senator McCain)**
 - **Would that Frank Church were still here**
- **Genocide Convention (Rwanda)**
 - **Not just the US by any means but also the US**

5. Remember that Everyone is Exceptional

US leadership has produced truly exceptional achievements

- **The United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank**
- **The Marshall Plan**
- **The Berlin airlift**
- **The containment, then the disintegration of the USSR**
- **Japan-China-Taiwan-North Korea-South Korea-Russia**
- **The Balkans**

But there have been some exceptional setbacks, too

- **Iran,**
- **the Congo,**
- **Chile**
- **Vietnams**
 - **Beware those in Washington who think that the exceptional leadership burden the US has born merits exceptional treatment before the law.**

6. Re-Consider the roles of Aid and Military Spending in Making the US Secure

- **The US spends very nearly as much on the military as the rest of the world combined**

According to the Centre for Defense Information—

- **US/DOD, \$460-490 billion projected for 2006, or 3.5% of GDP**
- **It is your money, your economy can probably afford it, and how you spend it is obviously your business but you should know that none of the rest of us is asking you to spend so much.**

- **It is for you to decide how much is enough.**

- **But when you do so, consider the words of two great philosophers, first, the Canadian country music singer Stompin' Tom Connors**
 - **“When your favourite tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail”**
 - **And second, President James Madison, as quoted in the New American Militarism by former US Army officer, Andrew Bacevich**
 - **“Of all the enemies of public liberty, war is perhaps the most to be dreaded....No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” (1795)**

- **Or just remember Eisenhower’s warning:**
 - ... **guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.**

- **On the other hand, there are many American critics, not least Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, who argue that you would do more to preserve your own security if you spent relatively less on the military and relatively more on foreign aid**

- **The US remains the largest single donor in absolute terms, but not in per capita terms.**
- **The average American trails the average Scandinavian, even the average European, in aid generosity.**
- **You under-fund development assistance, at least insofar as the accepted international standard of 0.7% of GDP is concerned.**

According to the OECD, (the multilateral economic think-tank)

- **United States ODA spending is \$18.9 billion or .16% of GNI**
- **By the way this is an area of Canadian foreign policy that I also criticize. Canada ranks 15th in generosity among the rich countries, at about 0.3% of aid expenditures per Canadian. The US ranks 21st.**
- **Sachs and others might well be right.**
 - **The Pew Global survey, June 23, 2005 indicated that positive opinions of the U.S. in Indonesia, which had plummeted to as low as 15% in 2003, have rebounded to 38%.**
 - **The U.S. tsunami aid effort has been widely hailed there;**
 - **79% of Indonesians say they have a more favorable view of the U.S. as a result of the relief efforts.**

- **Your efforts in Pakistan are probably having the same effect, there.**

7. Beware Double Standards

on Israel (Palestinian-Israeli conflict)

and nuclear weapons and the NPT—Iran versus Israel and India

on the ICC

- **Resolution 1422 and a permanent exemption for Americans (and their employees, including mercenaries)**
- **Article 98, bilateral immunity agreements and military and economic assistance cut-offs**

8. Don't Forget Your Neighbours

In a globalizing world, North America needs to make itself more competitive.

We need to create a new vision for our continent, give ourselves smarter borders, dispense with unnecessary regulations, harmonize standards, etc.

(For example, we can push out our security periphery to the coastal waters rather than the land frontiers)

Meanwhile, we have some problems to solve.

The North American Free Trade Agreement is wobbling

- **The issue in Canada is softwood lumber, which has become iconic a bellwether for us.**
 - **Canadians understand viscerally that it is a serious matter when the US chooses to ignore a ruling of a bilateral NAFTA dispute resolution panel, which has found that US practice illegal.**
 - **NAFTA dispute settlement judgments are not worth much if they amount to “heads you win, tails we negotiate”**
- **(Shultz, the “Constant Gardener” of Canada-US relations).**
 - **You might want to look at the illegal migration situation with Mexico, where according to former Secretary Shultz you have a classic market of labour supply and demand, bifurcated by a border.**

- **A “smart border” there, too, and active immigration/temporary worker programs might bring you more security than longer and higher fences.**

**9. In Conclusion, Be As American Abroad As You Are At Home and
The World Will Respond to You**

- **I personally do not doubt that if American values were more manifest in contemporary American foreign policy, and theories of power were relatively less manifest, you would find the world once again very receptive to you.**
- **I have lived in and/or covered the US professionally for the better part of the past 25 years**
- **The times desperately need the generosity of spirit that inhabits ordinary Americans, the excellence of your universities, the creativity of your science, the vitality of your arts and the power of your economy.**
- **It is not who you are that produces the low polling numbers of attitudes towards the US**
- **It is not your freedoms and successes that are resented, at least not by most ordinary people everywhere.**
- **They want to emulate them, even to share in them.**
- **If you want to change those low polling numbers, you need to re-consider the impacts, often unintended, of what you do abroad.**

- **When it comes to foreign policy, the world knows that your enormous power and capacity notwithstanding,**
- **and despite often the best will in the world,**
- **you are human like everyone else and therefore fallible.**
- **The world also knows that none of us can assure our security or prosperity alone, anymore.**
- **We are all interdependent and share the same fate.**
- **Acknowledging that is a pretty good starting point for your engaging the world successfully and rebuilding global institutions.**

Thank You

10. In Summary, Be As American Abroad As You Are At Home and Engagement Will Succeed

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- **I have lived in and/or covered the US professionally for the better part of the past 25 years**
- **The times desperately need the generosity of spirit that inhabits ordinary Americans, the excellence of your universities, the creativity of your science, the vitality of your arts and the power of your economy.**
- **It is not who you are that produces the low polling numbers of attitudes towards the US**
- **It is not your freedoms and successes that are resented, at least not by most ordinary people everywhere.**
- **They want to emulate them; many want to share them.**
- **If you want to change those low polling numbers, you need to re-consider what you do abroad.**

- **When it comes to foreign policy, the world knows that your enormous power and capacity notwithstanding,**
- **and despite often the best will in the world,**
- **you are human like everyone else and therefore fallible.**
 - **Oliver Cromwell (well, OK, not really an American, but wise nonetheless), 1650, to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland:**
 - **"I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."**
 - **Harris Poll October 25, 2005.**
 - **For the first time, a majority (53%) of adults feels that military action in Iraq was the wrong thing to do.**
- **The world also knows that none of us can assure our security or prosperity alone.**
- **We are all interdependent and share the same fate.**

- **Acknowledging that is a pretty good starting point for your engaging the world successfully and rebuilding global institutions.**

Thank You

