

Notes* for a Presentation by Paul Heinbecker

on Canada-US Relations:

Foreign policy

**CIIA Meeting with the Council of US
Ambassadors**

Ottawa, October 15, 2007

Cadieux Auditorium

LB Pearson Building

*Check Against Delivery

* Paul Heinbecker, Canada's former Ambassador to the UN, is the Director of the Centre for Global Relations at Wilfrid Laurier University and a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, in Waterloo. He is solely responsible for the content of these remarks

Introduction

- Thank you for the invitation
- PH Background
 - Canadian Ambassador to the UN, 2000-2004 (Richard Holbrooke and John Negroponte)
 - Political Director, 1996-2004 (Tom Pickering)
 - Ambassador to Germany, 1992-1996 (Bob Kimmit, Richard Holbrook and Chuck Redman)
 - Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Mulroney, 1989-1992 (Brent Scowcroft)
 - Minister (Political/Security Affairs), Washington, 1985-1989 (Jim Medas)

- Head, Policy Planning Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1983-1985
- Director, US General Relations Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1979-1983 (Robinson and Niles).

So, I have spent 11 years working on or in the United States, and three more in the office of probably the most pro-American Prime Minister in Canadian history.

In the interests of full disclosure, I should say that I am perhaps best known, or most notorious for, advising the Canadian Government to stay clear of the Iraq war.

And I am a critic of much of the foreign policy of the current administration

I am going to argue/assert three points, given the time constraints,

1. Globally, Canada would be best advised to keep its distance from the present administration, whose international unpopularity is unprecedented, and prepare for a new line-up in the White House,
2. Canada should get its own house in order on foreign policy and stop playing domestic political games with sensitive international issues.
3. Canada should use the next eighteen months to lay the groundwork for a new relationship with a new Administration and Congress, but bearing in mind that the next US administration will be subject to the same

strong undercurrents in the American Zeitgeist that have influenced the current one.

Keeping a Safe Distance

By the way, I also think Prime Minister Harper has concluded he should generally steer clear of US foreign policy at least until after the elections—especially the Canadian elections.

The first question I was asked to address was “What does the US expect of Canada in support of its international policies?”

With a Council of American Ambassadors present, it strikes me that that question would be better asked of them.

It would likely be more useful to our visitors if, speaking as a Canadian, I turned that question around.

- What should Canada expect of American foreign policy?
- Or, at least, what should Canada prefer?

And then I will try to answer the original question and the others posed, as well

Context/Polling

First I should establish some context, using polls, most of which are American.

The following are excerpts from the testimony of Dr. Steven Kull, before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs in March of this year,

Dr. Kull is the editor of WorldPublicOpinion.org and director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) and the Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) of the University of Maryland.

In his testimony, Dr. Kull discusses international polls that WPO.org conducted with the Chicago Council for Global Affairs and the BBC, within the last year.

According to Dr. Kull, during the 1990s, views of the US were predominantly positive.

But,

- “Comparing 1999 State Department data and recent Pew data, favorable views of the United States have dropped
 - in the UK from 83 percent to 56 percent,
 - in Germany from 78 percent to 37 percent,
 - in Morocco from 77 percent to 49 percent,
 - in Indonesia from 75 to 30 percent,
 - in France from 62 to 39 percent,
 - in Spain from 50 to 23 percent
 - and in Turkey from 62 to 12 percent.
 - Only Russia held steady.

- Dr. Kull states that views of US influence are consistently negative
 - in Canada,
 - Latin America
 - and the Middle East.
- They are mostly negative in Europe, mixed in Asia and most consistently positive in Africa.

“The numbers we are seeing today”, he said, “are the lowest numbers that have ever been recorded.”

According to Dr. Kull, “the aspect of US behavior that elicits the strongest negative feeling is how the US government deals with other countries.

“On average:

- 75% of those polled around the world disapprove of the way the US is handling the Iraq war,
- 69% disapprove of US treatment of detainees in Guantanamo and other prisons,
- 68% disapprove of how the US handled the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon,
- 61% disapprove of US handling of Iran’s nuclear program,
- 58% disapprove of US handling of global warming or climate change
- 55% disapprove of US handling of North Korea’s nuclear program.”

“According to Dr. Kull, “the US military presence in the Middle East is exceedingly unpopular in virtually all countries.

On average 69 percent believe the US military presence there ‘provokes more conflict than it prevents’ while just 16 percent see it as a stabilizing force.”

But there is also good news among all the negatives

There is apparently an abundance of evidence that the unhappiness with US foreign policy is not a rejection of US values, except to the extent that US policy departs from those values, notably in the Middle East.

The problem is what the US does. And the solution is what the US is, or was.

At the end of the Second World War, the US bestrode the world even more colossally than it does today.

In 1945, the US share of the world economy was about 40%; today, it's about 32% (22% at purchasing power parity).

In 1945, US defence spending totaled, in constant 2005 dollars, approximately \$900 billion; today the equivalent figure is about \$600 billion.

President Truman, nevertheless, asserted before the assembled UN delegates in San Francisco in 1945 that

“[w]e all have to recognize that no matter how great our strength, we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please”.

In 1961, President Kennedy said that,

We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient—that we are only six percent of the world's population—that we cannot impose our will upon the other ninety-four percent of mankind—that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity—and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem.

So in answer to the question “**What should Canada expect of American foreign policy?**”, the answer is

- a return to American values,
- to a foreign policy that reflects those values, one that leads by example and not by exemption,
- to the promotion of the rule of law internationally,

- to making the UN and the rest of the international system functional
- To building up the international treaty system, notably the Non Proliferation Treaty regime, and climate change

Inculcating respect for international law is especially important at a time when rivals, notably China and others, whose values may be less cordial, are rising.

What the US should expect of Canada?

The US should expect an independent foreign policy that is derived from Canadian values, which have much in common with American values,

In a BBC poll conducted in by WPO.org Canada was ranked at the top of a list of 12 countries having the most positive influence in the world.

The US has a right to expect us to conduct an effective foreign policy, including “Soft power” in the Joe Nye definition and Hard Power, both.

When Canada has never been richer and our budget surpluses have never been higher, the US should be able to expect that Canadian governments will fund their foreign policy instruments properly.

Starting with diplomacy,

This worldliness, cumulative over time and aggregated among its officers, is fundamental to the value added that Foreign Affairs offers to the government.

It cannot be effectively carried out as a sideline by control freaks in the Centre

The US should expect us to carry a larger share of the foreign aid burden, especially in Africa, than we have.

It should expect us to give ourselves a military capacity that allows us to show up when the world needs us.

It should expect us to contribute to UN missions so that the US is not seen as indispensable, expected to bear every burden.

It should expect us to remember that Afghanistan is not Iraq and that we should acquit our undertakings to the international community and to Afghanis

But it should expect us to want a hand on NATO's policy steering wheel and to want the current mission in Kandahar carried out in a way that does not make more enemies than it eliminates.

Which means more NATO boots on the ground, less recourse to air power and a unified command and purpose, including on poppy cultivation.

It should be able to expect us to carry a large burden in the destruction of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union

And that's the answer to the second question I was posed, "how can Canada have an influence on US foreign policy."

By carrying out an effective, independent foreign policy of our own—and by making sure that American policy makers know that we are doing so.

The Next Administration

I presume that our embassy and consulates have long since been cultivating relationships with the like presidential contenders and their staffs.

From a Canadian perspective, most, not all, of the candidates look like conducting a foreign policy that Canadians and much of the world would prefer.

If I were making the decisions we would try to convey the following messages:

1. Gear back on the war on terror and make sure it does not become a war on Islam
2. Re-emphasize the rule of law in foreign policy and rejoin the multilateral community
3. Leave Iraq in the short term and reduce the double standards in Middle East policy
4. Re-engage in building the Arms Control and Disarmament regime and ease up on the BMD system in Eastern Europe.
5. Get serious about climate change.

But while contemplating the arrival of an Administration more to most Canadians' taste, remember that the underlying influences on US policy limit what we can achieve

1. exceptionalism
2. religiosity
3. militarism