

Canada-U.S. Relations

The good, the bad and the ugly

Sukumar Perival
Canada-US Fulbright Visiting Chair, Canadian Studies
Center, University of Washington
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The ugly first

PATRICK BUCHANAN (former U.S. presidential candidate)

➤ “For most Americans, Canada is sort of like a case of latent arthritis. We really don’t think about it unless it acts up.”

(1992)

➤ “Soviet Canuckistan.”

(2002)



The repeated canard (not true, by the way)

- “Canada is a favoured destination for terrorists and international criminals.” (Library of Congress research report 2004)
- “Far more of the 9/11 terrorists came across from Canada than from Mexico.” (former U.S. Speaker Newt Gingrich, April 2005 – later retracted and apologized).
- “We’ve got to remember that the people who first hit us on 9/11 entered this country through Canada.” (then U.S. Senator Conrad Burns, December 2005 – later said he ‘misspoke’).

The ugly continued...

FRANÇOISE DUCROS (former communications director to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien)

- “What a moron.” (about President Bush, 2002)
- PM Chrétien: The President “is a friend of mine. He’s not a moron at all.”

Ducros resigned shortly after.

More ugliness...

CAROLYN PARRISH (Liberal Member of Parliament 1993-2006)

- “Damn Americans. I hate the bastards.”
(overheard after invasion of Iraq, 2003)
- “We are not going to join a coalition of the idiots.” (2004)



Ugliest...

Carolyn Parrish MP performing 'voodoo' on the head of a doll of President Bush "where it would do least damage". (2004)



Will it ever stop?

- Canada can take care of North Korea. They're not busy." (TV ad run by Republican U.S. Senate campaign in Tennessee, October 2006)
- FACT: 45 Canadian casualties in Afghanistan since more than 2000 troops deployed in 2002; 37 deaths in 2006 alone)

Why so much misunderstanding?

- Global context
- Policy differences
- Trade disputes
- Divergent values



Global context

- Concerns about U.S. approach to global security
 - Invasion of Iraq as distraction from war on terror's main fronts (Afghanistan, rolling back terrorist networks, securing homeland)
 - Dismissive of concerns expressed by other countries about consequences of Iraq invasion
 - New national security doctrine permitting unilateral preemptive action

Policy differences

- Canadian commitment to multilateralism in foreign policy vs. recent US unilateralism
 - Kyoto Protocol and international cooperation on climate change
 - Landmines treaty
 - International Criminal Court
 - UN reform
 - Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative
 - Focus on WTO vs bilateral free trade agreements

Trade disputes

- Softwood lumber (2001-2006)
 - Largest trade dispute in the world
 - Huge issue in Canada but barely noticed in U.S.
 - Canadian resentment at U.S. not abiding by NAFTA dispute resolution panels
- Restrictions on Canadian cattle exports after discovery of BSE
- Challenges to Canadian wheat board and supply management bodies while increasing US agricultural subsidies

Divergent values

- Same sex marriage
- Abortion and contraception
- Guns
- Capital punishment
- Public provision of health care
- Decriminalization of marijuana
- Levels of military spending

And yet... best friends

- “The United States is our best friend and largest trading partner” – 2006 Throne Speech of Canada’s new Conservative government



What we have in common

- Shared history and values
- Shared geography
- Economic and infrastructure interdependence
- Shared institutions

Shared history and values

- Historical friendship and commitment to mutual security (e.g. fighting together in World Wars I and II, Korea, Cold War deployments, Afghanistan)
- Close allies on international stage (UN, NATO, WTO)
- Shared values: democracy, free markets, rule of law, civil liberties

Shared geography

- 9,000 km long border – and shared commitment to cross-border law enforcement and intelligence cooperation
- Shared environment
 - Airsheds (and air pollution)
 - Watersheds (Great Lakes, rivers, ocean)
 - Migratory species

Economic interdependence

- Critical infrastructure interdependence (pipelines, electricity grid, roads, rail)
- \$680 billion in annual two way trade, growing at 6% per year; both countries are each other's biggest trading partners
- Canada is #1 market for 38 U.S. states
- Integrated markets in energy and agriculture
- Intra-firm trade and regional business clusters

Shared institutions

- 300+ treaties and many other arrangements at all levels of government and private sector
 - International Joint Commission
 - NORAD and other long-standing defense ties
- Regional cooperation
 - Western Premiers – Western Governors Association
 - Atlantic Premiers – New England Governors
 - Bilateral cooperation: BC-Washington, Ontario-Michigan, Québec-New York
 - Multilateral organizations: Pacific North West Economic Region

Conclusion

- Canada and the U.S. are lucky to have each other for neighbors
- We have much more in common than we realize – disputes always get more attention
- Huge amount of cooperation at all levels of government and private sector
 - Global: war on terror
 - North America: Security and Prosperity Partnership
 - Regional: bilateral and multilateral connections (e.g. PNWER)
 - Business: North American economic ties, alliances, mergers, cross-border intra-firm trade
 - Civil society: university research, non-governmental organizations and foundations
- Much room for future synergy – Canadian energy, U.S. investment, need to work together in new global context to strengthen security and increase North American competitiveness