

Paper Presentation: David Haglund:

“Canada and the United States: what does it mean to be good neighbours”

There are certain obligations if countries are going to be good neighbours. People who follow the maximalist vein of thinking say that you must develop a regional identity to become good neighbours. The minimalist look at the relationship between Canada and the United States says that for states to be considered good neighbours you have to accept that there is a mutual relationship and that these states must work together out of mutual respect and cooperation and not out of fear, such as how American Soviet Relations functioned during the Cold War.

In order to map the pattern of Canada US relations and whether or not we have been good neighbours you must look to history. The first instance of policy regarding how Canada and the US could function as good neighbours was the Good Neighbour Policy developed by the US. This policy was a failure both in the minimalist and maximist sense as there was no regional identity under the banner of pan Americanism. Despite this failure it is worth looking at as it may provide the blueprint for being good neighbours.

Before this policy emerged in the 1930's Canada and the US had a pattern of good neighbourliness. This was demonstrated in three points. The first the Security Community created between Canada and the US. The second is that the United States have their longest unbroken alliance with Canada, and third, just prior to World War Two there was the Kingston Dispensation where, at the brink of war, Canada promised to never intentionally allow a threat against the United States and the United States promised to come to Canada's defence should the need arise.

When trying to examine the Canada US relationship through a maximalist perspective there is the challenge of Regional Identity. The first issue is that people don't know what identity means, the second issue is that if we knew what should be implied by the concept of identity we would have to figure out who was in the region and how we could come to terms with the regional identity and the national identity.

With the coming of the American federal election we will see George W Bush replaced with someone who will hopefully establish a dialogue between Canada and Mexico. This will mean that the question of bringing Mexico into the North American community and trilateralizing will actually jeopardize the attempts being made at community building. Now there is obvious enthusiasm to create a North American Regional Identity. This will take time as right now North America is a market but it is not a vision and many Canadians want to find the Canadian identity outside of Canada.

In conclusion if you only use the maximalist theory to determine whether Canada and the United States are good neighbours then you find that they are not. Europe on the other hand would be considered good neighbours following this theory. This is because they have a tumultuous history that has forced them to create a regional identity in order to foster community and promote peace.