INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL Spring 2004

Paul Heinbecker

JANE BOULDEN

IN MARCH 2003, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS on a second Security Council resolution on Iraq, Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, found himself briefly, but determinedly, at centre stage. For a couple of days in the midst of one of the most significant UN debates in recent memory, Ambassador Heinbecker drew the attention of the world. On 4 March 2003, the *Globe and Mail* carried a photo of the dapper ambassador, in overcoat and glasses, next to a headline that read "UN eyes Canadian proposal." The headline was echoed in various forms by major international news organizations. The reason for all the attention was a Canadian proposal for a compromise resolution on Iraq at a time when the two sides in the debate were drifting farther apart and war seemed inevitable. The idea drew the attention of Security Council members. Its substantive base—the idea that the Security Council should establish a set of deadlines for the achievement of specific disarmament tasks—was supported by many Council members, including Britain, which adopted the idea in a proposal a few weeks later.

The fact that Heinbecker should be the proponent and author of a Canadian compromise proposal on Iraq was not a surprise to his colleagues in the Canadian foreign service. This was probably the first exposure of most Canadians to someone who is a major figure in Canadian foreign policy. Although Heinbecker has played critical roles in policy development and in representing Canada abroad, few Canadians would know this or be able to name him.

It may be a function of the nature of the post–World War II world, but Paul Heinbecker's career in the Canadian foreign service began and ended with remarkable symmetry. Heinbecker entered the foreign service in 1965, aged 24, after writing the foreign service exam because it was too rainy to walk home from football practice. That year, the United States sent its first combat troops to Vietnam and began bombing in the north of the country. Canada's Prime Minister Pearson generated deep annoyance in US President Johnson by refusing to support US actions and by calling for an end to the bombing in order to give negotiations a chance. Rhodesia achieved independence as Zimbabwe, and India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir. Canada had just completed a difficult UN mission in the Congo, and was on the verge of its lengthy involvement in Cyprus. Its commitment to peacekeeping and the United Nations were unquestioned but declining military resources were raising questions about its ability to maintain a capability to fulfill that commitment. In 1965, Canada and the United States signed the Auto Pact, establishing free trade in automobiles and automobile parts between the two countries, and on 9 November, the northeast of the United States and Canada endured a blackout of 13-and-a-half hours. While such linkages provide an intriguing sense of *plus ça change, plus c'est le meme chose*, they mask some fundamental changes in the international environment during the course of Heinbecker's career. The most significant of these is the end of the Cold War. In the mid-1960s, when Ambassador Heinbecker first entered what was then the Department of External Affairs (DEA), Cold War politics had long since established a particular order and structure on international relations. It is hard to comprehend now how pervasive and forceful the threat of nuclear war was and, in 1965, the near-miss of the Cuban missile crisis was fresh on everyone's mind. Unwittingly or otherwise, this was the world Paul Heinbecker entered. Armed with a Bachelor's degree in English and history from Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Heinbecker was one of 193 people to enter the foreign service between 1963 and 1968.

This represented a significant boost in recruitment for External Affairs, creating a "bottom heavy" service.[1] Though many of that group would have paralleled Heinbecker's initial steps as third secretary, and then first secretary, and so on through the ranks, very few ended up, as he

did, spending the last 15 years of their career at the top echelons of Canadian foreign policy making. In 1966, a year after joining the service, Heinbecker was posted to Ankara, Turkey as the third secretary in the Canadian embassy where he stayed until 1970. In 1972, after a two-year stint in Ottawa, he went to Stockholm as the first secretary in the embassy there, and three years later, in 1975, he moved to Paris as counsellor at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where he stayed until 1979. These postings amounted to a remarkable 11 years spent away from Canada in the first 14 years of Heinbecker's career, all of them in Europe. Returning from Paris, Heinbecker spent the next 13 years in North America, eight of them dealing with US-related issues. From 1979-1983, he was the director of the US general relations division, and from 1985-1989, he served as minister in the Canadian embassy in Washington. In the interim two years he was the chairman of the policy development secretariat in the DEA, the first of a series of high-level policy-making positions he was to hold over the next 18 years. During this time he was one of the principal authors of the green paper published by External Affairs in 1985. Entitled "Competitiveness and Security," the paper is unusual for governmental papers in its articulacy and in providing the equivalent of a strategic assessment of the international arena in which Canada was operating, establishing resultant priorities for the direction of Canadian policy. "Competitiveness and Security" was prescient in its analysis of the inevitability of globalizing forces and their implications for Canada, as well as in its assumption of the continued dominance of US economic power.[2] Unlike many such reports, this established general priorities rather than policy-specific ones, and it was also notable for its emphasis on the direct linkage between economic strength (competitiveness) and Canada's ability to ensure its own security.[3]

In 1989, Ambassador Heinbecker became Prime Minister Mulroney's chief foreign policy advisor and speech writer, and, in addition, from 1991–1992 he was the assistant secretary to the cabinet for foreign and defence policy. Speech writing was not new to Heinbecker: in 1983, he wrote Prime Minister Trudeau's peace initiative speech. By all accounts, Heinbecker and Mulroney developed a close working relationship, working together on multiple drafts of speeches at a time when Canada was particularly active internationally. These were the days of the anti-apartheid campaign (in which Canada was a leader), the debate over Canadian participation in the US Strategic Defense Initiative, the Free Trade Agreement, the end of the Cold War, and the start of the war in the former Yugoslavia. From speech writing and policy making in Ottawa, Heinbecker returned to Europe as ambassador to Germany, not long after the end of the Cold War and just after German reunification. Canada had just announced plans to withdraw its military presence from Germany when Heinbecker arrived, adding to the need for him to work on strengthening Canada's profile in both Germany and Europe. While in Germany, Ambassador Heinbecker established the Canada-Germany Business Forum, in pursuit of his "number one priority … investment advocacy." He worked hard to keep Canada on Germany's radar screen in the midst of the massive changes occurring there in the aftermath of unification, and in the face of a series of negative images of Canada prompted by the "turbot war," the European anti-fur campaign and German misconceptions about Canadian forestry practices. It was this posting that prompted Heinbecker to provide his now oft-quoted definition of an ambassador as "one part pundit, one part saloon-keeper, one part bean-counter, one part advocate, one part impresario, one part psychiatrist, and one part flag pole."[4]

Back in Ottawa in 1996, he took on the job of assistant deputy minister for global and security policy, where he stayed for four years before becoming ambassador to the UN. Soon after taking the post, Heinbecker became one of the department's chief representatives in the Canadian government's efforts to establish and then lead a multinational force to assist refugees in eastern Zaire. This involved difficult negotiations with the US government, which was hesitant about the idea, as well as time-sensitive efforts to get a number of other states to agree to contribute to the effort. The Canadian team succeeded in obtaining a commitment from 20 other states to support the force, and the idea received approval from the UN Security Council on 15 November 1996.[5] In the event, however, the mission suffered from almost innumerable problems, most significantly an abrupt change in the nature of the situation on the ground. Heinbecker's difficulties were compounded by shifts in the positions of decision-makers at home. As chair of the Canadian effort, Heinbecker was, therefore, left to juggle

competing agendas and desires from both domestic and international sources.[6] The experience was a bruising one for the Canadians, who learned some hard lessons about trying to take the lead in a situation in which permanent members of the UN have an interest, and about what is involved in playing a leadership role in establishing a multinational force. One of the most notable developments in Canadian foreign policy during this time, and one with which Heinbecker is very closely associated, was the development of the concept of human security as a key component of Canadian foreign policy. Canada became a leader in promoting this idea internationally, and many Canadian foreign policy initiatives have stemmed from it. In 1999, the international community faced difficult decisions about whether and how to intervene in Kosovo. As with the decision to intervene in eastern Zaire, Ambassador Heinbecker was a key player in the Kosovo decisions and, in particular, in articulating those decisions publicly.[7] Canada played an important role in NATO's response to the Kosovo crisis at a variety of levels. Heinbecker used the human security concept to argue that the Kosovo war was necessary as "a war of values, a war of human security" as well as a necessary effort in pursuit of Canadian objectives, pointing out that the current geostrategic realities for Canada made human security "very much 'forward defence'."[8]

In many ways, Ambassador Heinbecker's posting to the United Nations was a natural outgrowth of what had come before: time spent in Washington and on US issues, his experience with the Zaire mission and the Kosovo intervention, and his work on human security, in addition to his background in developing the policies that he would now be pursuing on Canada's behalf at the UN. Although it is a generalization, it is fair to say that in foreign postings a foreign service officer is primarily engaging in policy implementation, while at home he or she is more involved in policy making. In becoming Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations in 2000, Paul Heinbecker found himself in a relatively rare situation where both sides of the equation are possible and required. Thus, for example, the March 2003 compromise proposal on Iraq, though approved in Ottawa, was his own idea.

Heinbecker's tenure at the UN was heavily influenced first by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the corresponding international response, and then by the debate about Iraq and the eventual USUK-led war. In spite of the different focus this gave UN deliberations, and although Canada's term on the Security Council ended shortly after Heinbecker took up the ambassadorship, he continued to take the initiative on issues of concern to Canada relating in particular to the human security agenda. During his tenure, Canada was a leader in calling for greater measures to ensure the protection of civilians and for UN reform. Ambassador Heinbecker also took the lead in arguing against granting the United States special exemption from the newly established International Criminal Court, successfully calling for an open Security Council meeting to debate the issue.[9] Speaking about six months after he began his tenure at the UN and just after Canada's term on the Security Council had drawn to a close, Ambassador Heinbecker outlined the lessons he had already learned.[7]

> I have learned that peace-keeping is indeed broken but also that it can be fixed if the states members can summon the wit and will to do so. I learned that Security Council reform is long overdue; that the P5 too often function as a self-appointed, self-interested, *directoire*; that the threat of a veto is omnipresent and quite distorting; that more permanent members and more vetoes would paralyse the organization; and that, instead of more autocracy, the UN needs more democracy. I learned that myopic realpolitik, atavistic self-interest and cut-off-your-nose-to-spiteyour-face ignorance are all too prevalent in the United Nations. But I also learned that idealism is alive and well in the UN: that our democratic and liberal values, universal values, have more appeal than ever; and that the propagation of these values is a fundamental interest of foreign policy. … Most gratifying, I learned that Canada's views are respected in the UN, that our voice carries weight there, and that our participation is both creative and valued.[10]

When Ambassador Heinbecker announced his retirement from the foreign service, to take effect 31 December 2003, there was a brief flurry of speculation that the timing of his departure and the arrival of the new Martin government in Ottawa might be significant. Anyone familiar with Heinbecker's background and his long history of working well with a number of different leaders from both parties knows that this was unlikely. Rather, the reason for his departure was to take up a position at a newly-established research centre in Waterloo. Ambassador Heinbecker will be senior research fellow at the

Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and will also be Director of the Centre for Global Relations, Governance and Policy at Wilfrid Laurier Univeristy, the university where he obtained his Bachelor's degree. The new roles will not only allow him to continue to work on the issues he finds most important, though now in quite a different guise, but also provide him with an opportunity to come full circle and return to his home town. It is inevitably difficult to separate official government positions from personal beliefs when examining the career of a public servant. Good public servants, after all, are the ones who are able to be completely convincing about the government's official position regardless of how far it may be from their own. Nonetheless, patterns are discernable.

During Heinbecker's tenure in various positions during the last 20 years or so, certain themes have taken root in Canadian foreign policy. One has been a greater awareness of the need for Canada to engage in what might be called niche diplomacy. In recognition of the declining Canadian resources available for foreign policy, Canada has increasingly focused on issues in which it has an ability to add value. The second, related, trend is the development of the concept of human security. While neither can be attributed exclusively to Heinbecker, he has certainly had an important role in advocating and developing both, and both have been central to Canadian foreign policy.

Indeed, if you look closely, you will find Heinbecker's fingerprints on many of Canada's major foreign policy initiatives and decisions in the last 20 years. With his presence and through the written word, Paul Heinbecker has articulated, created, and promoted Canada and Canadian foreign policy wherever he has been. This is as true of the days of Trudeau's peace initiative and the richness of the Mulroney foreign policy years as it is of the promotion of human security and its associated initiatives, and, most recently, his work at the United Nations. As much as he has given in each position—and it has been considerable—he has also used each step to maximize his abilities, thereby increasing his capacity to contribute and to achieve. He was lucky enough in his first posting to work with a foreign service officer who encouraged him to develop basic skills—meet as many people as possible, ask questions all the time—and provided the equivalent of a postgraduate course in terms of knowledge acquisition. The posting at the OECD in Paris, in its wide-ranging coverage of issues, including those relating to the developing world, provided an excellent grounding for speech writing as well as later positions in policy development. Speech writing and experience in Europe and the United States, in turn, provided excellent background for his roles as ADM for global and security policy and then UN ambassador. But a series of fortuitous postings only provides a partial explanationfor Heinbecker's impact and success. Any number of other people might have followed the same initial path and not ended up in the same place. Some of the answer lies in Heinbecker's ability to soak up knowledge and experience at each and every opportunity, coupled with a knack for analysis and strategy. Further value added can be found in his willingness to speak his mind, both to his bosses and, as Canada's representative, to other powers. An examination of Heinbecker's career suggests the pleasing notion that creative, active, bright individuals who take the initiative and have the courage of their convictions can make important contributions to Canadian policy and will be rewarded for their efforts. Such an outcome is not always a given in the foreign service (or in civil service generally). In that context, it is interesting that Ambassador Heinbecker himself characterizes the foreign service as a place where the fear of error competes with creativity.

Asked to characterize his approach to foreign policy, he responds with hesitation that he considers himself a maverick. This does not just relate to the adage about speaking truth to power, but of being willing, in his words, "to absorb the consequences." What makes him this way? Perhaps it is the football player in him. He is a team player, but a competitive one with an awareness that risks can pay off in unexpected ways. Professional football was truly his alternative career choice, or more properly stated, his only career choice until he happened upon the foreign service exam in the rain. It may also be the small-town working-class background. Ambassador Heinbecker grew up and went to university in Waterloo, Ontario where his father worked in a local factory. Although it is now changing, Kitchener-Waterloo was then home to a strong Mennonite and German population. To this day, it is

possible for people to live primarily in German (his grandmother spoke only German), and old order Mennonites dress and operate following the old ways. It is a farming, working-class environment with a strong work ethic and sense of community.

As with anyone, it is difficult to nail down the intangible effects of upbringing. And it is even more difficult to determine which to attribute to growing up in small-town working-class Ontario, or just to growing up Canadian. Whatever their source, Ambassador Heinbecker carries with him a perceptible level of empathy for those in need or without a voice, combined with a sense at both the individual and the international level that anything is possible. It never occurred to him, that day after football practice, not to write the foreign service exam. Nor was there any reason to do anything but try when it came to developing a compromise resolution on Iraq, persevering in the antiapartheid campaign, putting forward the Trudeau peace initiative or creating a multinational force to assist refugees in eastern Zaire—all issues whose potential for success went well against the odds. All of this suggests a certain level of drive and determination. To what end? Heinbecker has consistently argued that values matter, that what they mean at the domestic level must be translated internationally through foreign policy. "I believe values are a Canadian interest. The more people share our values, the more cordial the world is for Canadian interests."[11] But there is more to it than that. It is not simply that it is in our interest to pursue these types of initiatives, or just that these things can be done, but it is that they *should* be done. When interviewed early last year for research on the future of peacekeeping, Heinbecker expressed dismay about Canada's level of wealth with respect to the rest of the world and how shocking it was that we weren't doing more as a country. "If you put me on the record for anything," he said, "you can put me on the record for that." Whatever its origins, Paul Heinbecker's approach seems to be based on a combination of personal empathy and a strong sense that those who have should work to help the have-nots. In fact, Heinbecker's approach is based on a remarkably un-football-like motto: "Look out for the little guys; the big guys will look after themselves."

1 As quoted in, "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade," http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/depthistory- en.asp (accessed 9 January 2004).

2 Shortly thereafter it became popular, at least in academic circles, to speak of the decline of US power, although this was a short-lived trend.

3 Department of External Affairs, "Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations," presented by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa: Dept. of Supply and Services, 1985.

4 Paul Heinbecker, "Fish, Forests, Fur and Canada's Fortunes in Bonn," in Robert Wolfe (eds.), *The Ambassador in Canadian Foreign Policy,* (Kingston: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 1998), 71.

5 Security Council Resolution 1080 (15 November 1996). The resolution was adopted unanimously.

6 A lack of agreement between the prime minister and the Department of Foreign Affairs developed, on the heels of disagreements between Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defence. A good overview is found in John B. Hay, "Conditions of Influence: A Canadian Case Study in the Diplomacy of Intervention, Centre for Security and Defence Studies," Carleton University, Occasional Paper no. 19 (1999).

7 See, for example, Paul Heinbecker and Rob McRae, "The Kosovo Air Campaign," in *Human Security and the New Diplomacy,"* Rob McRae, Don Hubert (eds.), (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 122-133.

8 Paul Heinbecker, "Human Security: The Hard Edge," *Canadian Military Journal*, (Spring 2000): 11-16.

9 This occurred in July 2002.

10 Statement by Ambassador Paul Heinbecker, Permanent Representative of

Canada to the United Nations on "Canada and the UN Security Council: Putting People First, An Overview," Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, (March 2001), http://www.un.int/canada/html/s-march2001heinbecker.htm. (Accessed 10 January 2004.)

11 As quoted in Paul Knox and Jeff Sallot, "Canada's Low Key Quarterback at the UN," *Globe and Mail* (7 March 2003).

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Jane Boulden holds a Canadian Research Chair in international relations and security studies at the Royal Military College of Canada. She is the author, most recently, of Terrorism and the UN: Before and After September 11.

Jane Boulden