



CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES

What Canadians Need to Know About the Biden Inauguration

by Colin Robertson
January 2021

CGAI PRIMER

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Prepared for the Canadian Global Affairs Institute
1800, 150 – 9th Avenue S.W., Calgary, AB T2P 3H9
www.cgai.ca

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ISBN: 978-1-77397-164-3



At noon on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, pursuant to the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution, Joe Biden will place his left hand on a Bible, and raising his right hand before Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, he will “swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” George Washington added the phrase “so help me God” to the 35-word vow and few presidents have departed from this tradition. Thus will formally begin the Biden administration.



Joe Biden takes oath of office as vice-president January 2009

As with last summer’s Democratic National Convention, “[to ensure that the inauguration ceremony on January 20 honors](#) and resembles sacred American traditions while keeping Americans safe and preventing the spread of COVID-19,” it will be modest and, for most who would normally be there, a virtual experience. Missing will be the traditional balls, parties and the crowds at the Capitol and down the Mall. The traditional parade is to be “reimagined”. However, the main concern is not COVID but those in denial over the election results. The recent turmoil on Capitol Hill and threats from Donald Trump’s supporters mean there will be a highly visible security presence, including a 25,000-member contingent from the National Guard. D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) and Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) issued a joint statement saying “we are taking the [extraordinary step](#) of

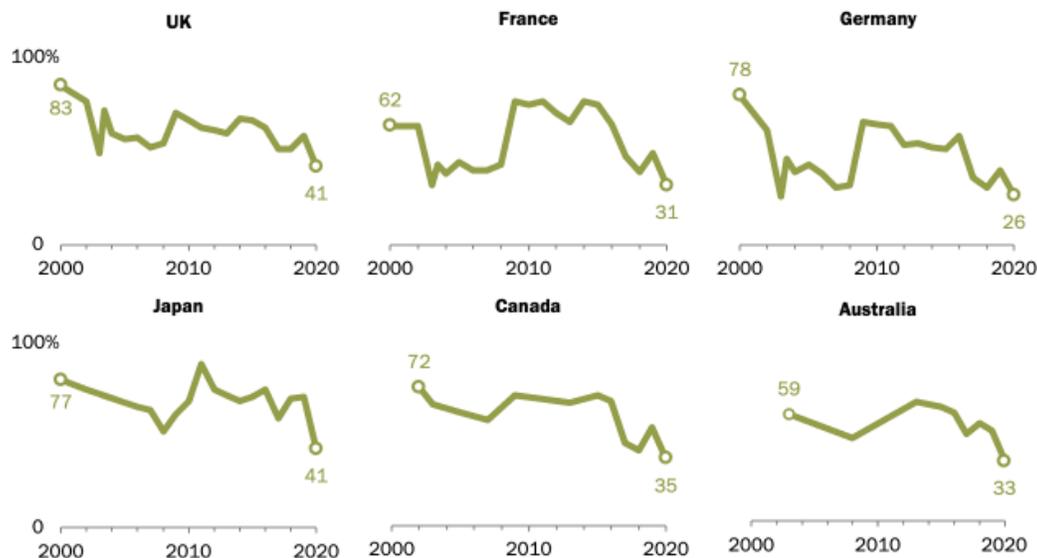


encouraging Americans not to come to Washington” and air, train and bridge access to the capital is curtailed.

Trump, the perpetrator of the turmoil, [does not plan to attend](#) the ceremony on the western steps of the Capitol building. He leaves the White House with the [lowest job approval](#) rating of his presidency (29 per cent) and increasingly negative ratings for his post-election conduct. The U.S.’s ratings among its allies [plummeted after he took office in 2017](#) and then continued to sink, in part due to the widespread perception that the U.S. has [handled the coronavirus pandemic poorly](#). He also leaves, writes the *Washington Post*’s Dan Balz, “a [broken Republican Party](#).” During his four-year term, Trump “ideologically twisted a party that once had a coherent conservative governing philosophy, which he does not. He put a vice grip on the party’s grass roots and persuaded many of them to believe that truth does not matter. He opened up the party’s coalition to an emboldened white supremacist movement.” Impeached a second time by the House of Representatives, Trump will soon face a second trial with the Democrats in the majority, but whether they can convince 17 Republicans to join them in mustering the necessary 2/3 majority for conviction is to be determined. Unfortunately for Biden, part of the Trump legacy is to leave many of the more than 70 million who voted for him believing his lie that the [election was stolen](#) from him.

In some countries, ratings for U.S. reached a record low in 2020

% who have a [favorable](#) view of the U.S.



Note: 2000 trend is from 1999 or 2000 and provided by U.S. Department of State.

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



That Trump will not attend the inauguration is a “good thing,” said Biden, tartly observing in the wake of the ransacking of Capitol Hill, that Trump “exceeded even my worst notions about him ... He’s been an embarrassment to the country.” Vice-President Mike Pence [is expected to appear](#), together with all living former presidents and their spouses — [with the exception of](#) Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, now 96 and 93.

The theme of the inauguration, “America United”, kicked off January 16 with “America United: An Inauguration Welcome Event Celebrating America’s Changemakers” and will continue with events on Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 18), a national holiday, followed by a nationwide “COVID-19 Memorial to Lives Lost” on January 19. To compensate for the pomp and circumstance that usually go with an inauguration, the inaugural committee has produced a 90-minute television special, “Celebrating America”. Hosted by Tom Hanks, it features performances from Demi Lovato, Justin Timberlake, Bruce Springsteen, John Legend, Foo Fighters, Ant Clemons and Jon Bon Jovi.

On the mornings of past inaugurations, presidents since Franklin Roosevelt have gone to [St. John’s Church](#), across from the White House in Lafayette Square, for a prayer service. Lafayette Square is where Trump infamously raised the Bible last June during a protest over the killing of George Floyd. The prayer service is a tradition that dates back to George Washington. Since FDR’s day, it has been held at the National Cathedral in whose crypts are interred Woodrow Wilson, Cordell Hull and Helen Keller.



The curtailed ceremony is bad news for Canada as the roof of the Canadian embassy, overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue, is the best vantage point from which to watch the parade and a superb opportunity for outreach and public diplomacy. While working there, I watched the second Bush inaugural. We flew all our flags and posted a banner extolling the Canada-U.S. partnership as “friends, neighbours, allies”. Our guests included newly elected West Virginia governor (and now Senator) Joe

Manchin, former speaker Newt Gingrich and Senator John McCain. As a midshipman at Annapolis, McCain had marched in the second inaugural for Dwight Eisenhower. He knew marching bands like no one I have ever met and, for nearly an hour and a half, he provided colour commentary for me from the balcony. It was very cold and his daughter, who lived in Toronto, came out and encouraged him to come inside. He smiled and told her that he’d been in “worse situations”.



The Ceremony

Until 1936, the inauguration took place on March 4, originally to give the Electoral College time to meet after the election. After the long lame-duck period between Herbert Hoover's defeat in November 1932 and FDR's inauguration in March 1933, the Constitution was amended to set January 20 for the inauguration and January 3 for the start of the new Congress.

From the inauguration of the first Democratic president, Andrew Jackson, in 1829, the ceremony was performed on the east side of the Capitol Building, facing the Supreme Court and Library of Congress.

With his eye for the camera and for his audience, Ronald Reagan moved the ceremony to the west side. Its splendid vista looks straight down the Mall to the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Subsequent ceremonies have stayed on the west side of the Capitol ever since.

The formal ceremony will begin with the U.S. Marine Band (traditionally playing "Hail to the Chief") and will include an invocation from Father Leo J. O'Donovan, a Biden family friend, with firefighter Andrea Hall leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Jennifer Lopez will sing. Amanda Gorman, the first National Youth Poet Laureate, will recite a poem, a tradition that began with Robert Frost reading "The Gift Outright" to John F. Kennedy in 1961. After the oaths of office and inaugural address, Reverend Dr. Silvester Beaman, another Biden family friend, will give the benediction, and to conclude the ceremony, Lady Gaga will sing the Star-Spangled Banner.



Joe Biden takes the oath of office as vice-president, January 2013

The Inaugural Address

Listen carefully to Biden's speech. As the astute Democratic Whip, James E. Clyburn, engineer of the Biden turnaround in South Carolina, observes: "People are really anxious. This marks a



turning point. We can see it, we can feel it. It's a very significant break. And we will hear it in his speech ... People want to believe in their country, to feel this [democracy is worth saving](#)."

The inaugural address sets the vision for the administration. Every word is carefully chosen. It is the first formal pronouncement as president and the audience goes beyond the American people to include America's allies, adversaries and enemies. When successful — as with presidents Abraham Lincoln, FDR and Kennedy — it is a call to action, complete with ringing phrases that become part of our dialogue.

Taking office during calamitous economic turmoil, FDR was bluntly honest: "A host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. [Only a foolish optimist](#) can deny the dark realities of the moment." Kennedy gave perhaps the most evocative speech in living memory with phrases like: "[Ask not what your country can do for you](#); ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

George Washington gave the shortest inaugural speech, at 135 words. He said: "The preservation of the [sacred fire of liberty](#), and the destiny of the Republican model of Government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people." In delivering the [longest address](#): 8,445 words in 1841, William Henry Harrison caught a cold and died of pneumonia, or possibly typhoid, a month later.

There is usually a three-part pattern to the inaugural address. In times of continuity, presidents underline the American ability to come together after a hard-fought campaign. In times of a change in party, presidents usually praise America's democratic commitment to a peaceful and orderly transition. Barack Obama's first speech underlined change, the theme of his successful campaign, and called for a "[new era of responsibility](#)". Trump took a very different approach with his depiction of "[carnage](#)" in America and "America First". We can expect Biden to emphasize national unity and reconciliation and talk about getting Americans back to work with emphasis on the segments of the population and sectors of the economy that have been hit the hardest.

The second part of the address usually describes the problems facing the nation and the world. Biden has plenty to talk about here — the domestic priorities, starting with a health-care disaster and a deteriorating economy, racial injustice and economic inequality regarding race, justice and equity. He likely will talk about climate change and climate justice. He probably will speak about renewing and reinvigorating America's commitment to traditional American values and principles. We can expect him to pledge to have an ethically based administration.

Biden will likely talk about the [international challenges](#): the resumption of great-power rivalry with China and Russia, and the continuing global threats of climate change, displaced peoples and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. During my posting at our Washington embassy, I had several impromptu conversations with Biden, then chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If there was one theme, it was his commitment to multilateralism and American leadership of the rules-based system.

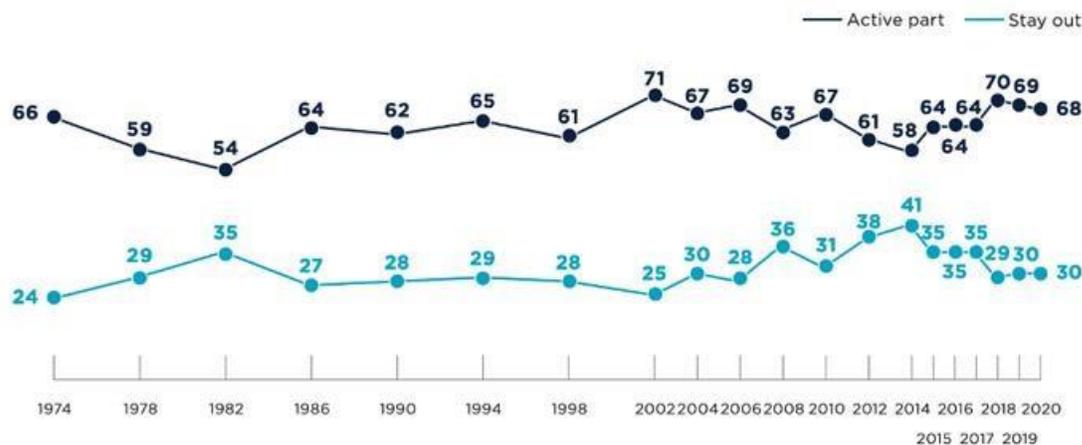


For Biden, the message to allies, friends and partners is likely to be a commitment to close partnership based on shared values inherent to liberal democracies: human rights, the rights of women and minorities, the commitment to the rule of law and the commitment to climate mitigation. Expect him to put on notice illiberal democracies and authoritarians. He will vocally support multilateralism and international organizations. He will likely recommit to NATO, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, announce a return to the Paris Climate Accord, a halt to the withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) and, we hope, support reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO). There may even be an indication about a successor to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding Iran's nuclear program.

There is a tendency to assume Americans have slipped into a Trumpian isolationism but a recent survey by the [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#), which has tracked American attitudes for decades, says Americans remain supportive of an active U.S. role in the world. Solid majorities support U.S. security alliances and free trade as the best ways to maintain peace and prosperity. In his July 2019 foreign policy speech, Biden committed to a [summit of democracies](#) modelled on Obama's [nuclear security summits](#), where leaders would commit to strengthening democracy at home and overseas and "make concrete commitments to take on corruption and advance human rights in their own nations."

Figure B: **US Role in World Affairs**

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)
n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

The third part of the speech will accentuate the American capacity for innovation and the strength of American institutions. The ability to solve problems is fundamental to the American spirit. Biden will likely say that his reinvigorated domestic and foreign policies will be the platform for the demonstration of American values and American leadership. Lyndon Johnson



put it best in 1965 when he said: “If we succeed it will not be because of what we have, but it will be because of what we are; not because of what we own, but rather [because of what we believe.](#)”

If the inaugural address sets the vision for the new administration, the blueprint for action, usually previewing the president’s budget and economic forecast, comes next month in the president’s annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. Last week, Biden set out his initial priorities for Congress: a nearly \$2 trillion short-term relief plan that includes a nationwide vaccination effort, including boosting vaccine production and delivery, creating public awareness campaigns and providing for emergency hiring in the public health sector. It also includes an expansion of the [child tax credit](#), \$2,000 stimulus payments for individuals and an extension of enhanced unemployment insurance through September.

The First Days

Biden takes office in the midst of a public health crisis which has created an economic crisis. They collide with a social crisis over race, gender and class and the ongoing climate crisis.

Biden will begin with a 10-day [series of executive orders](#), directives and a [legislative package](#) designed to address the four overlapping and compounding crises. Of interest to Canada, this reportedly includes rescinding the [Keystone Pipeline permit](#).

In a memorandum to the incoming White House senior staff, chief of staff Ron Klain said Biden “will sign roughly a [dozen actions](#) to combat the four crises, restore humanity to our immigration system, and make government function for the people.”

These will include rejoining the Paris Agreement, reversing the Muslim travel ban and extending the existing pause on loan payments and interest for millions of Americans with federal student loans. It will also include implementing “Buy American” “so the future of America is made in America ... and, we will take action to extend nationwide restrictions on evictions and foreclosures and provide more than 25 million Americans greater stability, instead of living on the edge every month.” Biden will launch his “100 Day Masking Challenge” by issuing a mask mandate for federal property and interstate travel.

The Klain [memo](#) also says: “He will fulfill his promises to restore dignity to our immigration system and our border policies, and start the difficult but critical work of reuniting families separated at the border. And, President-elect Biden will demonstrate that America is back and take action to restore America’s place in the world.”

Klain also lays out the congressional agenda: “The president-elect made the case for his first major legislative proposal earlier this week, and will continue to advance legislative solutions to critical problems, such as in the immigration bill he will send to Congress on his first day in office; the build back better recovery proposal to create millions of good-paying union jobs that



he will unveil in the coming weeks; and his ongoing support for legislation related to voting rights, the minimum wage, combatting violence against women, and more.”

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin compares it to the challenges FDR faced over the Great Depression and Lincoln with the Civil War. “It’s huge what he’s facing,” observes Goodwin, adding: “[History has shown](#) when you have crises like this, it’s an opportunity for leaders to mobilize resources of the federal government ... All the presidents we remember, they dealt with a crisis. When you’re given that chance, the question is: Are you fitted for that moment?” As Goodwin writes in her book, *Team of Rivals* on the Lincoln presidency, a lot depends on the team charged with implementing the Biden vision.

The Biden Team

“The president shall nominate and, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States.”

– U.S. Constitution, Article II, section 2, clause 2

In setting the agenda, Biden needs to put his team together, starting with his cabinet officers. Having served six terms as a senator and two terms as vice-president, the 78-year-old Biden is arguably the most experienced to take office since John Quincy Adams. Campaigning on a pledge to build a cabinet “that looks like America”, Biden’s nominations include women and minorities. Robert Gates, who served eight presidents, including as defence secretary to both George W. Bush and Obama, observes that the one thing they shared was that: “each one ... understood he did not have all the answers, and surrounded himself with experienced, thoughtful people who would give good advice, and they were willing to listen.”

Many of those named are alumni of Obama’s two terms in office or worked with Biden while he was a senator. Anthony Blinken, the new secretary of state, served as deputy secretary of state in the Obama administration (and when I met him, he was staff director to then-Senate Foreign Relations chair Biden) and one of his first tasks is a [major rebuilding](#) job in the professional ranks of the [demoralized](#) U.S. Foreign Service. Tom Vilsack returns as agriculture secretary. Former secretary of state and long-time Massachusetts Senator John Kerry will be special envoy on climate. Denis McDonough, Obama’s former chief of staff, will lead the Department of Veterans Affairs. Former national security adviser and UN ambassador Susan Rice will head the White House Domestic Policy Council and former UN Ambassador Samantha Power becomes administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Kurt Campbell, the architect of the “[pivot to Asia](#)”, becomes [Indo-Pacific co-ordinator](#) in the National Security Council. Incoming CIA director and career ambassador [Bill Burns](#) was formerly deputy secretary of state.

There is also a handful from Congress including Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-Ohio), incoming Housing and Urban Development secretary and Native American Rep. Deb Haaland (D-N.M.),



incoming Department of the Interior secretary. Biden chose Rep. Cedric Richmond (D-La.) as director of the White House Office of Public Engagement.

Unlike in Canada, with its permanent and non-partisan public service, the president picks the most senior 5,000 or so jobs in the executive branch. Their selection is not subject to competition but rather to the president's prerogative. When Kennedy was president, only about 280 executive branch positions required Senate approval but that number has since escalated into four digits. These positions, as well as the several thousand that are the prerogative of the legislative branch, can be found in the [Plum Book](#).

The most important positions, all of which require Senate consent, are the [cabinet secretaries and agency heads](#). Confirmation hearings have already begun. Canadian cabinet ministers and senior civil servants should get to know their counterparts because it's all about relationships. Their backgrounds are a reminder of the importance of involving all Canadian elected officials, especially those at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, in reaching out to their American counterparts to advance Canadian interests. You never know where those people will wind up. Early connections can pay rich dividends, but it's up to us to take the initiative.

Nomination hearings can be the stuff of Hollywood screenplays — a packed room with a full complement of senators both defending and “prosecuting” the nominee. This is often the case with judicial appointments, as I witnessed during the confirmation hearing for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito in January 2006.

But as often as not, they are routine — almost cavalierly so — as I saw with the Senate Foreign Relations Western Hemisphere subcommittee nomination hearing in May 2005 for South Carolina speaker David Wilkins. He became the second Bush ambassador to Canada. Chair Norm Coleman, a Minnesota Republican senator, was the sole member on the dais. Wilkins's advocates, essentially character witnesses, were led by the senior senator from South Carolina, Lindsey Graham, with two senators — Democrat Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Jim DeMint of South Carolina — speaking their support. Wilkins gave a brief statement about Canada-U.S. relations and his objectives, and there were a few questions from Coleman on security, ballistic missile defence, border transit and the problems encountered by Minnesota fishermen on Lake of the Woods (a reminder that all politics is local). It was over within 36 minutes. Then-Senator Biden chaired the full committee confirmation and Senate confirmation followed quickly. There was a celebratory send-off for Wilkins in the Benjamin Franklin room on the eighth floor of the State Department. Franklin is considered to be the father of the American foreign service.



Biden's incoming Cabinet so far

● No Senate confirmation required ● Requires confirmation

👉 Click to learn more

 Vice President ✓ Kamala Harris	 Chief of staff ✓ Ronald A. Klain	 Agriculture Tom Vilsack	 Commerce Gov. Gina Raimondo	 Defense Lloyd J. Austin III	 Education Miguel Cardona	 Energy Jennifer Granholm
 Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra	 Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas	 Housing and Urban Development Rep. Marcia L. Fudge	 Interior Rep. Deb Haaland	 Justice Merrick B. Garland	 Labor Marty Walsh	 State Antony Blinken
 Transportation Pete Buttigieg	 Treasury Janet Yellen	 Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough	 Economic advisers chair Cecilia Rouse	 Environmental Protection Agency Michael S. Regan	 Management and Budget Neera Tanden	 National Intelligence Avril Haines
	 Science adviser Eric Lander	 Small Business Administration Isabel Guzman	 Trade Rep. Katherine Tai	 United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield		

Source: [Washington Post](#)

U.S. Ambassador to Canada

The job that most directly affects Canadians and the one person who thinks about Canada 24/7 is the U.S. ambassador, a position that the Senate must also confirm.

From a Canadian perspective, we want an ambassador who has the president's confidence and the ability to pick up the phone and get through to the White House. We also want them to have a good working relationship with their counterpart at the Canadian embassy in Washington. These two individuals are effectively the quarterbacks of the relationship. By working together, they can resolve or keep in play the many vexing transactional problems that should be solved at their level rather than adding to their leaders' already crowded agendas.

U.S. ambassadors are usually political in background. Jim Blanchard of Michigan (Bill Clinton) and Paul Cellucci of Massachusetts (Bush 43) were former governors. Wilkins (Bush 43) had served as speaker of the South Carolina legislature. Gordon Giffin (Clinton) was a businessman-lawyer and elector from Georgia who had served as a senior advisor to Senator Sam Nunn. Both Obama ambassadors, David Jacobson and Bruce Heyman, came from the private sector but their efforts, especially in fundraising, helped earned them their place. Kelly Knight Craft (Trump), also came from the private sector but with extensive political experience. She would go



on to become U.S. ambassador to the UN. Craft had an impeccable contact list in the White House and among congressional and state Republicans. Having an extensive contact list with state officials, members of Congress and within the administration makes a big difference.

Given the rigours of financial and security scrutiny, Biden's ambassador is not likely to be confirmed until summer. To get a sense of their priorities, it is worth looking at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's [confirmation testimony](#) in July 2020 by Trump's ambassador-designate Aldona Wos, who was never confirmed. The priority areas for Canada-U.S. international focus were identified as China, Russia/Ukraine, Iran, Venezuela, counterterrorism, cyber-security and the 5G network standards, peacekeeping and the Arctic.



Joe Biden and Justin Trudeau 2016 [Source PMO](#)

Twitches and Grunts: Canada Prepares for the New Administration

“Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined together, let no man put asunder. What unites us is far greater than what divides us.”

- *John F. Kennedy to the [Canadian Parliament](#), May 17, 1961*

That the Kennedy quotation is still a staple for pundits and speechwriters trying to capture the essence of Canada-U.S. relations is a tribute not just to its eloquent brevity but to its accuracy. The relationship is a good one, with the last formal conflict over 200 years ago. Since then, we



have been a model of what FDR described as “good neighbourly relations”. If Kennedy captured the relationship’s zeitgeist, FDR described how it works:

We as good neighbours are [true friends](#) because we maintain our own rights with frankness, because we refuse to accept the twists of secret diplomacy, because we settle our disputes by consultation and because we discuss our common problems in the spirit of the common good. We seek to be scrupulously fair and helpful, not only in our relations with each other, but each of us at home with our own people.

FDR and Mackenzie King put in the trade and security foundations which subsequent administrations and governments have built on. Environmental co-operation dates back even earlier to the bi-national International Joint Commission (1909) that manages our waterways.

If the U.S. focuses on the global scene and is always interested in our perspective – which is why Canada needs a first-class diplomatic service – Canadians naturally concentrate on the bilateral issues. The issues tend to be divided into three groups: trade, economics and investment; climate, environment and energy; defence, security and intelligence.

Our embassy and Ambassador Kirsten Hillman have been [reaching out](#) for months to those who will be a part of the new administration, reminding them of, and sensitizing them to, the nuts and bolts of the relationship and identifying areas of [policy alignment](#), especially joint economic recovery and dealing with COVID-19.

Several provinces also have representatives in Washington. Quebec has long had a network of offices throughout the U.S. Working together, the different levels of government complement and reinforce the Canadian message, and this was most visibly illustrated in the recent renegotiation of the North American economic accord – the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement.

Of immediate concern is the future of the Keystone XL pipeline, the permit for which Biden will reportedly [rescind](#) as one of his first actions. More than 70 pipelines criss-cross the border, but KXL has taken on mythic symbolism for the environmentalists who constitute a key piece in the Democratic Party coalition. Another contentious pipeline is Line 5, crossing Michigan en route to Ontario and Quebec, which Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer [threatens to close](#). Then there is “[Buy America](#)”, a perennial irritant in the relationship that defies the logic of closer economic integration but has continuing appeal to local interests on both sides of the border.

Approximately [75 per cent](#) of our exports go to the U.S. and the U.S. accounts for about [51 per cent](#) of our imports. In 2019, the United States received more than 1/3 of our [foreign investment](#) and accounted for about half of our foreign direct investment. The United States remains Canada’s main investment partner. Canada is the largest market for export goods for over 30 states. The United States is Canada’s most important trading partner by a wide margin and it is characterized by heavily integrated supply chains, notably in auto manufacturing. According to the [U.S. Trade Representative](#), U.S. goods and services trade with Canada totalled an estimated \$718.5 billion in 2018. Exports were \$363.8 billion; imports were \$354.7 billion. The U.S. goods



and services trade surplus with Canada was \$9.1 billion in 2018. According to the Department of Commerce, U.S. exports of goods and services to Canada supported an estimated 1.6 million jobs in 2015. Canadian estimates of jobs generated in the U.S. through our bilateral trade tally almost [nine million](#), while 1.9 million Canadian jobs are related to Canada's exports to the U.S.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost [400,000 people and US\\$2 billion](#) worth of goods and services crossed our borders daily. The border has been closed since March; how and when it will reopen is yet to be determined but it seems likely that in addition to trade and security (especially since 9/11 when Canada and the U.S. sought to create a North American security perimeter), public health will now be part of the screening process.

Former secretary of state George Shultz described the depth and breadth of the Canada-U.S. relationship to me as a garden that needs constant attention. He is right and because the relationship is asymmetrical – the U.S., at least in trade terms, matters more to us than we do to them – Canada must wage a permanent campaign, using all levels of government and enlisting business, labour and civil society in making its case in the U.S. The late prime minister Pierre Trudeau remarked in 1969 when he travelled to Washington to meet with new president Richard Nixon: “Living next to you is in some ways like [sleeping with an elephant](#). No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.”

No matter the administration, the twitches and grunts never go away.

Further Reading

Joe Biden's autobiographies [Promises to Keep: On Life and Politics](#) (2007) and [Promise Me, Dad: A Year of Hope, Hardship and Purpose](#) (2017) should be read along with Evan Osnos' [Joe Biden: The Life, the Run and What Matters Now](#) (2020) and Jules Witcover's [Joe Biden: A Life of Trial and Redemption](#) (2019). Kamala Harris has also written a biography, [The Truths We Hold: An American Journey](#) (2019).

There is a wealth of ideas generated in recent years by the incoming foreign policy and national security team, including [speeches and articles](#) by [Anthony Blinken](#), [Jake Sullivan](#), [Kurt Campbell](#), [Bill Burns](#) and [Samantha Power](#).

For a sense of Biden, read his “Why America Must Lead Again” article in [Foreign Affairs](#) (2020) in which he wrote that “the most effective way to meet that challenge is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors and human rights violations, even as we seek to cooperate with Beijing on issues where our interests converge.” Writing in a 2017 [New York Times](#) op-ed, he said: “In over 45 years of working in global affairs, I've observed a simple truth: America's ability to lead the world depends not just on the example of our power, but on the power of our example.”



Both [Brookings](#) and the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) have analyzed Biden's foreign and national security policies. For public opinion surveys, look to the [Pew Research Center](#) and [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#). PBS Frontline's [The Choice 2020: Trump vs Biden](#) is riveting watching. For a comprehensive account and insights from a practitioner into American diplomacy, read Robert Zoellick's [*America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*](#).

► About the Author

A former Canadian diplomat, **Colin Robertson** is Vice-President and Fellow at the [Canadian Global Affairs Institute](#) and hosts its regular [Global Exchange podcast](#). He is an Executive Fellow at the University of Calgary's [School of Public Policy](#) and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the [Norman Paterson School of International Affairs](#) at Carleton University. A member of the Department of National Defence's Defence Advisory Board, Robertson is an [honorary captain \(Royal Canadian Navy\)](#) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate. Robertson sits on the advisory councils of the [Alphen Group](#), [Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy](#), [North American Research Partnership](#), the [Sir Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa](#) and [the Conference of Defence Associations Institute](#). During his foreign service career, he served as first head of the Advocacy Secretariat and minister at the Canadian embassy in Washington, consul general in Los Angeles, as consul in Hong Kong, and in New York at the UN and Consulate General. A member of the teams that negotiated the Canada-U.S. FTA and then NAFTA, he is a member of the Deputy Minister of International Trade's Trade Advisory Council and the North American Forum. He writes on foreign affairs for the [Globe and Mail](#) and he is a frequent contributor to other media. [The Hill Times](#) has named him as one of those who influence Canadian foreign policy.

► **Canadian Global Affairs Institute**

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The Institute was created to bridge the gap between what Canadians need to know about Canadian international activities and what they do know. Historically Canadians have tended to look abroad out of a search for markets because Canada depends heavily on foreign trade. In the modern post-Cold War world, however, global security and stability have become the bedrocks of global commerce and the free movement of people, goods and ideas across international boundaries. Canada has striven to open the world since the 1930s and was a driving factor behind the adoption of the main structures which underpin globalization such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and emerging free trade networks connecting dozens of international economies. The Canadian Global Affairs Institute recognizes Canada's contribution to a globalized world and aims to inform Canadians about Canada's role in that process and the connection between globalization and security.

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