



CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES

Biden's 100 Days

by Stella-Luna Ha
July 2021

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Laurie Trautman – CGAI Fellow and Director of Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University.

Luiza Ch. Savage – CGAI Fellow and Executive director for editorial initiatives at POLITICO.

QUESTION: How do you assess the first 100 days and what stands out to you in particular?

Sarah Goldfeder

- Strong first 100 days with a situation that is dictated by the COVID pandemic.
- Vaccine rollout is the immediate priority while looking forward, this administration will need to figure out how to govern without a crisis and address other important matters such as Afghanistan, the border issues, and climate change.

Laurie Trautman

- Some important things have been accomplished to set up for real works to begin.
 - U.S. and Canada borders' roadmap for renewed Canada and US partnership was done in the first 100 days.
 - Repairing the severed connection among all levels of bureaucracy and agency between two countries under the Trump administration.

Luiza Ch. Savage

- No military presence in Washington, D.C., and readily available vaccine doses for everyone are a great relief to people.
 - A return to a sense of calm, process, and predictability.
 - A genuine feeling that the U.S. is turning the corner on the pandemic and back to normalcy, i.e., opening schools and travelling.
- What remains the same between the Trump and Biden administrations is the winding down of the America's role in the Middle East, moving towards industrial policy and away from free trade.
- Perception of Biden's original centrist agenda has shifted since Biden has expanded the government's role in public life with a slim margin of majority.



- While there are constraints on passing legislations in the Senate due to the filibuster, Biden is still able to put forth his big spending proposals.

QUESTION: One thing that hasn't returned to normalcy is the border which is still closed. Where are we at with the border? What are the impacts of these border restrictions in over the last 15 months?

Laurie Trautman

- The situation stays the same as almost a year ago: there is no plan for reopening despite the mounting pressure from private sectors and multiple-interest groups.
 - A huge diplomatic failure is partly to blame. It is essential to first move away from a level of overwhelmingness for public agencies to an actual real period of engagement in order to develop a reopening plan.
 - Impacts are increasing and hard hits for small-to-medium sized industries located in rural areas, particularly in Alaska.
 - Immediate impact: lifting the border restrictions will still result in great deal of damage despite government subsidies.
 - Long-term impacts: in the business sector, the lack of negotiations and site visits in the manufacturing industry will produce a delayed reaction to how that's going to be translated in to cross-border contracts.

QUESTION: Looking at how we may reopen with vaccine certificates or preclearance at the airports and perhaps the land borders, how would you envision this process and what will you recommend?

Laurie Trautman

- Current status requires passengers who enter Canada by air or land presented a negative PCR test in paper or other digital forms such as an email containing the result notice.
- Unsustainable, short-term, temporary measure that is expected to be replaced soon by a much more seamless and efficient technology that no longer passengers to pull out the result from their end.
- Canada is moving in this direction e.g., ArriveCAN app – vaccine data and test results are expected to be shared through various privacy channels.
- Whereas it is still unclear where the US is heading towards and regardless, there will be two systems. And yet, it all depends on how aligned, interoperable they are, there will be major consequences on how well the border can function once it is reopened.



QUESTION: Wouldn't that be one way to go if we can add some of that information into the NEXUS card?

Laurie Trautman

- NEXUS is a bilateral program which needs both governments to approve any changes which is precisely the current issue of getting it modified and approved by the authority.

QUESTION: The last time that we had a sticky situation at the border was after 9/11 where we were trying to figure out how we would allow both people and goods to travel smoothly, and it was really the governors who took, allowed and pushed to find solutions such as experimenting with special driver's licences. What are you hearing and seeing from the border-state governors on this issue? What kind of an impact are they having?

Laurie Trautman

- Some measure such as creating an Enhanced Driver's licence program could help expanding the border crossing requirements and cooperation which may be soon incorporated into NEXUS.

QUESTION: Canada is encouraged to be ambitious with the new administration while having a virtual week of meetings with various secretaries, how are we doing on that?

Luiza Ch. Savage

- The baseline fundamentals are still recognized by the two countries, and have been restored after the Trump era.
- Areas of focus, collaboration, and cooperation:
 - Climate and its huge, allocated spending where tangible progress is observed.
- Canada increases its ambition around reducing climate emissions.
- Since the roadmap came out, the Canadian and U.S. governments launched a greening government initiative by boosting their purchasing power around driving down carbon emissions from government operations.
- A new forum of energy producers among Canada, U.S., Saudi Arabia, Norway, and Qatar has also been announced.
 - Security – agreeing to invest on commitments; modernizing NORAD; expanding Arctic defence; going after domestic violence and extremist hate groups; and revising the Three Amigos Summits.



- Countries' statements read that we need to closely align our approaches to China, including addressing the challenge it presents to collective interests and international order from economic practices, national security to human rights abuses.
- Other significant issues such as women in the workforce, supply chains around energy transition, the 'building back better' sustainability and inclusivity models.

QUESTION: The detailed roadmap seems to provide an action plan or a blueprint for the two governments involving states and provincial governments as well. What is your sense on this issue?

Sarah Goldfeder

- Cooperation and division of work among agencies between the two countries.
- Connection between climate and supply chains and how we manage it in a face of a crisis.
- Second and third tiers of cabinet level positions are still vacant which result in a loss of touch points and streamlined workflow.
 - Rebuilding the State Department is in progress in the post-Trump era.
 - Diplomatic core and careerist nominations are expected.

QUESTION: There is certainly a smooth sailing appears on climate, but energy remains contentious. Do you have a sense of where we are at on pipelines?

Sarah Goldfeder

- Soft (false) deadline for Line 3 is next week.
- Political conversation within the public about the pipeline politics.
- Dispute is between the company and the State where the governors cannot stop the pipeline operation.
- Not a personality or relationship issue but a transaction issue between the company and the State.



QUESTION: During his address to congress, President Biden was emphatic about 'Made in America/Buy American', subsequently, it always gets Canadians a bit spooked upon hearing it. Should Canada be concerned about this despite the various agreements that we have with the US dating back half a century now?

Sarah Goldfeder

- Ensuring Canada's national interests is met within trade agreements and procurement mechanisms of the U.S.
- Numerous integrations within the supply chains are acknowledged.
- Both countries seek to engage and cooperate on security issues, NORAD and bilateral aspects of key defense companies.

Luiza Ch. Savage

- 600 billion dollars of federal procurements.
- Biden's executive orders did 4 things:
 1. Instructing the government to revamp for what it means for things to be 'Made in the U.S.'
 2. Increasing how much of a product must originate from the U.S. to be eligible.
 3. Eliminating some exemptions or 'waivers' allowing federal agencies to get around the rules.
 4. Requiring data to be published on a public website where US companies can be aware of it and hence competing for contracts.
- The E.U.'s response was to push back and introduce measures that would shut out producers and manufacturers from countries where the E.U. cannot compete.
- The International Procurement Initiative was brought on by some E.U. countries after Biden's announcement, aiming at not only the U.S., but also China.

QUESTION: There has been a particular focus on security and defense side in the roadmap, any observations on that in the face of Canada being pressed by the U.S. to contribute more to NATO and modernize NORAD?

Luiza Ch. Savage

- Biden's approach is much less threatening than Trump's 2% goal but persistent to press for collective contributions from other member countries.

Sarah Goldfeder

- It is an ongoing issue that has spread from Trumpian era.
- The U.S. recognizes Canada's limited bandwidth in its Department of National Defence but expects Canada to pull its weight.



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▶ **About the Author**

***Stella-Luna Ha** is the 2021 Canadian Excellence Scholar at CDSN.*

▶ **Canadian Global Affairs Institute**

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