



CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES

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by Iris Liu
July 2021

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Bruce Stokes – Executive Director, Transatlantic Task Force: Together or Alone? Choices and Strategies for Transatlantic Relations for 2021 and Beyond, German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Opening Remarks:

- The best questions to ask the public are not factual questions, but it does not stop people from having opinions on global affairs.
- People have emotions and preferences, and they make decisions based on these preferences. People have contradictory emotions at the same time; one of the challenges about governance is to deal with these contradictions.
- Most Americans say it's important for other countries to respect the U.S. and that Biden will help improve the U.S. image
- The opinion of the U.S. president drives the opinion of the U.S., not the other way around. Most countries around the world hold positive views toward the U.S, 61% of Canadians are favourable of the U.S. The U.S. favourability among many countries is showing sharp recoveries in 2021, comparing to the data from 2020. Increased by 26% in Canada
 - Most of these countries have confidence in Biden to do the right thing regarding world affairs.
 - People think Biden is less dangerous and arrogant, more qualified and stronger as a leader than Trump.
 - Countries are in support of Biden's agenda of rejoining multilateral international organizations and affairs (WHO, refugees, climate change, summit of democratic nations)
- The insurrection has undermined the U.S. democracy as a role model; most people from other countries think that the U.S. used to be a good model, but not anymore. The Trump admin has damaged the U.S. image from all over the world
- Young people are most likely to say that U.S. democracy has never been a good role model for the rest of the world. 24% of young people in Canada think the U.S. has never been a good model.
- American partisanship complicates the challenges facing the U.S. on the global stage. Partisanship in the U.S. has never been worse, and it divides society; it has impacted almost every aspect of American life
- Parties are likely to be satisfied when their own party is in power rather than the opposite. There is little bipartisan agreement on foreign policy priorities and on almost



every policy issue. One rare point of convergence is that there is virtually no support for promoting democracy in other countries in either parties.

- Americans are committed to the multilateral organizations, but there is a very wide partisan gap in the U.S.'s membership in international organizations
- Americans' views towards Russia have never been worse compared to the time of the fall of the Soviet Union.
- Americans' sympathy towards Palestinians has doubled since 2013. Young people have a growing sympathy towards Israel which forms future challenges.
- Americans' view of China has been worse, but there has been a split on partisanship. Both parties agree that the U.S. should promote human rights in China (emotional issue, but policy base towards this issue would be a question mark)
- Americans' views on key foreign policy issues are a product of their information bubbles, and foreign policy priorities vary based on different partisan news resources (left vs right-leaning). People will get different opinions and comments based on which news resources they follow
- There are certain challenges facing North America, and European countries shared that cannot be dealt with alone. Some of the issues identified include future pandemics; technology; China; climate; economic recovery; security...
- In terms of emerging technologies, there is a need for North America and Europe to work together on building advanced mutual technologies, e.g., promoting advanced technology projects together being done by both

QUESTION: How should foreign governments like Canada seek to operate in this deeply polarized atmosphere?

- On topics such as global economic integrations and trade, U.S. partisan opinions are split. Concerning foreign countries, they need to be careful of both sides. Draw the line on cooperating with people on extreme (i.e., authoritarian regimes).

QUESTION: If the U.S. is no longer being seen as a democratic giant or role model, how can allies countries like Canada can help rebuild democracy?

- It starts from inside the U.S. The end product and deliverables of the democracy summit should be more than just commitment and promises to work together. There need to be specifics about how countries do to enhance democracy.
- It's better to deal with the problems that have public face; people should not be tempted by authoritarians.



QUESTION: How do Americans view Biden's six months? Are they supportive of Biden's agenda? And do people think Biden could accomplish them?

- Biden overall is doing better than Trump. He is seen as doing a good job on combatting COVID-19 and not being distracted by non-priority foreign policy issues.

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► About the Author

***Iris Liu** is a co-op student at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree at the University of Ottawa in Public and International Affairs. Previously, she graduated from Carleton University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Law in 2020. Iris had the experience of working as a legal assistant in both a private firm and The Landlord and Tenant Board Tribunal during her undergraduate years. Her research interests are international trade and Canada-China relations.*

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