



**CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE**  
**INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES**

# Biden or More Trump: What Canadians Need to Know about the 2020 U.S. Election

by Colin Robertson  
October 2020

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by Colin Robertson

CGAI Vice-President & Fellow  
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That Nov. 3 is the “[most consequential](#)” U.S. election in our lifetime is likely correct and not just for Americans. If it’s four more years of Donald Trump, then the preppers and survivalists may be on to something. Whatever and whenever the results, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is right to say that Canada needs to be “[ready for all outcomes](#)”.

Canada’s relationship with the U.S. is the consequential one. NORAD safeguards our security, although whoever forms the next administration is going to press us to invest in a new [North Warning System](#) and to increase our defence spending to the NATO target of two per cent of GDP (we currently spend [1.3 per cent](#)). The new Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement (CUSMA) guarantees access to what is still the biggest market in the world and the [preferred entry point](#) for fledgling Canadian exporters. Our shared environment is managed through a web of agreements dating back to the Boundary Waters Treaty and the International Joint Commission (1909).

Despite the asymmetries of power, with care and constant attention we have mostly enjoyed a remarkable partnership that is the envy of other nations. It also leverages our diplomacy. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney described it best: “[Canada’s influence in the world](#) is measured to a significant degree by the extent to which we are perceived as having real influence in Washington.”

Geopolitics’ shifting tides suggest that the U.S. is in relative [decline](#) and certainly its handling of COVID has [shaken](#) global confidence. Although Trump has [damaged](#) the American brand, the U.S. still enjoys considerable hard and soft power. Canada cannot change its geography, nor would we want to. So, we need to keep investing in our most important relationship, no matter who is president.

## If Trump Wins

After the duelling town halls (Oct.15), the [Daily Beast](#) headline caught the zeitgeist of the campaign: “The Biden and Trump Shows: It’s Mr. Rogers vs. ‘Someone’s Crazy Uncle’.” For Trump, re-election will be a reaffirmation of “America First”, but unlike 2016 when he campaigned on themes like “Build the Wall”, “Repeal NAFTA” and “Drain the Swamp”, the platform this time is essentially “[More Trump](#)”

It means a continuation of his transactional approach to issues, and those transactions must serve his domestic priorities. As Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross put it at the outset of NAFTA renegotiations with Canada and Mexico: “We’re trying to do a difficult thing. We’re asking two



*The Trudeaus and Trumps in the Oval Office 2017* [Source PMO](#)



countries to [give up some privileges](#) that they have enjoyed for 22 years. And we're not in a position to offer anything in return."

Trump has revolutionized personal diplomacy through his constant tweets. They have obliged foreign ministries to set up 24/7 Trump watches. It has been a [revolving door](#) for those minding his national security, defence and foreign policies.

Despite its incoherence and unpredictability, Trump's view of the world remains that set out in his [inaugural address](#):

For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry; subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon ... From this day forward, it's going to be only America first.

And as he told [West Point graduates](#) in June:

We are restoring the fundamental principles that the job of the American soldier is not to rebuild foreign nations, but defend – and defend strongly – our nation from foreign enemies. We are ending the era of endless wars. In its place is a renewed, clear-eyed focus on defending America's vital interests. It is not the duty of U.S. troops to solve ancient conflicts in faraway lands that many people have never even heard of. We are not the policemen of the world.

Acting on his contempt for multilateralism, Trump pulled the USA out of the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#), the [Paris climate accord](#), the [Iran nuclear deal](#), the [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty](#), [UNESCO](#), the [UN Human Rights Council](#), the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), and the [Open Skies Treaty](#). He refused to join the global migration pact and the European-led efforts to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 or the Franco-German Alliance on Multilateralism.

We can expect withdrawals from more multilateral organizations, starting with the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO). He has also threatened to let lapse the [New START accord](#), which limited the number of strategic nuclear warheads deployed by the United States and Russia. He has tried to reduce U.S. contributions to the UN – U.S. funding accounts for close to [1/5 of the UN budget](#) – but Congress has sustained the U.S. support. Trump's speeches at the UN have been bombastic and defiantly unilateralist. His debut [speech](#) (2017) to UNGA was an ode to sovereignty, telling delegates that "our success depends on a coalition of strong, independent nations that embrace their sovereignty, to promote security, prosperity, and peace for themselves and for the world."

Alliances don't figure much in the Trump world view. As two of his principal advisors, H.R. McMaster and Gary D. Cohn, phrased it in the [Wall Street Journal](#) (May 2017): "The world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage."

In a recent discussion at the [Aspen Institute](#), current National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien described the Trump approach as dealing "with the world as it is and not as we wish it to be and we don't turn a blind eye to the conduct of our competitors or adversaries... the idea of leading from behind and strategic patience has been cast aside by this administration... America First but not America Alone."



O'Brien summarized the Trump achievements: destruction of the ISIS Caliphate, American hostages brought home, replacement of NAFTA with USMCA and revised trade deals with Korea and Japan, curbing undocumented refugees from Central America, better burden sharing within NATO, stronger military including the creation of the [Space Force](#), improved relations with [India](#) and [Brazil](#), revitalized alliances in the Indo-Pacific, peace agreement with the [Taliban](#) and troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, pressure campaign on Iran and its allies in the region, the [Abraham Accords](#) bringing peace between the Gulf Arabs and now [Sudan](#) with Israel and the move of the US Embassy to [Jerusalem](#).

Looking ahead, O'Brien also said that a Trump administration is "not going to stay in international organizations that are corrupt or that are totally controlled by the Chinese if we can't reform them. We're going to try and reform them first. We're not going to stay involved in the Human Rights Council or the WHO where they're fully corrupt."

Trump's trade wars – [tariffs and quotas](#) - have been aimed at adversaries, like China, as well as allies like Canada; in Canada's case, often using the dubious claim of defending 'national security'. Trump's trade actions are [challenged](#) at the World Trade Organization. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Trump tariffs have cost the average US household [\\$1277](#) a year while the New York Fed points out their [cost to American manufacturers](#) that rely on imports.

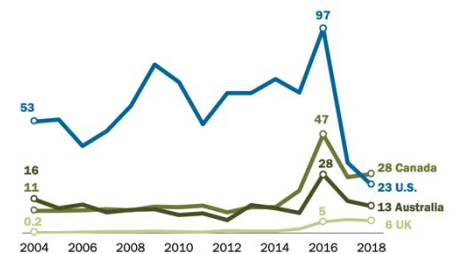
Mr. Trump claims, [falsely](#), that the WTO takes advantage of the U.S. For Canada, which is leading efforts to [reform WTO dispute settlement](#), a second Trump administration means the threat of more tariffs – [blueberries](#) may be next – and quota arrangements, whether formal as with [autos](#) or informal as with [aluminum](#).

A Trump administration devoted to further deregulation, fossil fuel exploitation, more tariffs and lower taxes also presents complications for Canada. It will be hard to square competitiveness with a green shift and social justice redistribution if the U.S. is headed in the opposite direction.

Immigration to the US has halved under Donald Trump, to about 600,000 people per year — a level not seen since the 1980s — according to an [analysis](#) by William H. Frey of the Brookings Institution. As Frey told the *New York Times*, the drop "is clearly a result of [Trump's restrictive immigration](#) measures, including immigrant bans from selected countries, greater limits on refugees, and generating fear among other potential immigrant groups over this administration's unwelcoming policies."

**U.S. refugee resettlement drops, falling below Canada in 2018**

Number of resettled refugees, in thousands



Note: Nations shown are top four resettlement countries. Complete data for UK prior to 2004 is not available through the UNHCR. Figures rounded to the nearest thousand. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data, accessed June 12, 2019.

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Trump has sliced US refugee admissions to such an extent that Canada is now the lead refugee resettlement country. Canada resettled [28,000 refugees](#) in 2018, while the U.S. resettled 23,000, down from 33,000 in 2017 and 97,000 in 2016.





## If Biden Wins

Life for Canada would be easier with a Joe Biden administration. An [internationalist](#), as vice president he told the World Economic Forum three days before leaving office in 2017 that “for the past [seven decades](#), the choices we have made – particularly the United States and our allies in Europe – have steered our world down a clear path. In recent years, it has become evident that the consensus upholding this system is facing increasing pressures, from within and from without. It’s imperative that we act urgently to defend the liberal international order.”



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

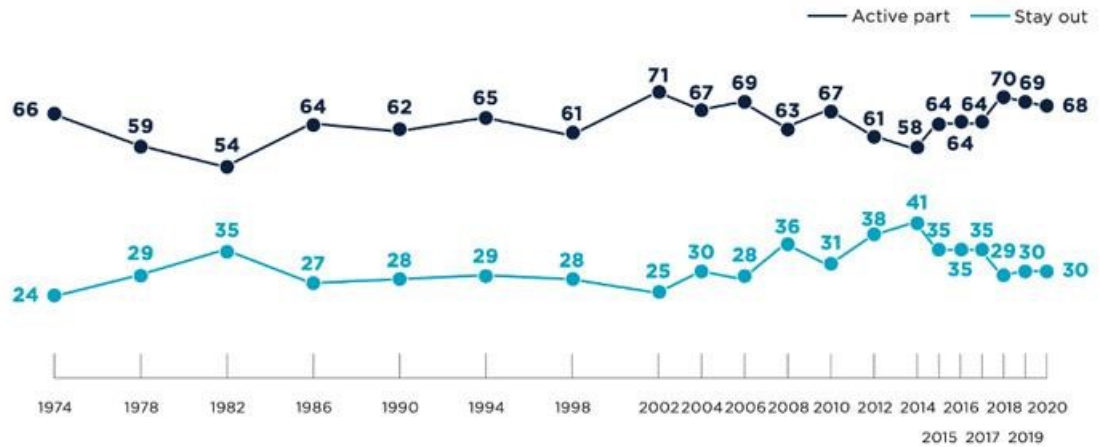
It’s a theme Biden returned to in his 2019 speeches at the Munich Security Conference (February) and at CUNY New York (July). At [Munich](#) he promised that the “America I see does not wish to turn our back to the world or our allies. The America I see – and I mean this from the bottom of my heart – cherishes the free press, democracy, the rule of law.” In [New York](#) he promised “to once more place America at the [head of the table](#), leading the world to address the most urgent global challenges” by using multilateralism and valuing democratic allies like Canada.



There is a tendency to assume Americans have slipped into a Trumpian isolationism but a recent survey by the [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#), tracking 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, he 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

Biden would come to office with the most foreign policy experience of any president since John Quincy Adams, although former Defense secretary and CIA director Robert Gates caustically writes in his memoir that Biden has "been [wrong](#) on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades." Biden will also be able to draw on formidable [talent](#) well versed in national security— veterans of the Obama and Clinton administrations – as well as [Republicans](#) who declared Mr. Trump "unfit" and support Mr. Biden (and we can be sure smart embassies are reaching out to those on these lists). There is also a [major rebuilding](#) job within the professional ranks of the [demoralized](#) US Foreign Service.

When asked about foreign interference in the election during the last presidential debate Biden said: "We know that [Russia](#) has been involved, China has been involved to some degree, and now we learn that Iran has been involved. They will pay a price if I'm elected."

On Russia, Biden would align more with the rest of the G7 in seeing Russian revanchism with its immediate neighbours and mischief-making in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and through [cyber-subversion](#) and [disinformation](#). Biden will also have to address the problem identified by then Defense Secretary James Mattis in the [US Nuclear Posture Review](#) (2018): "Russia is modernizing these [nuclear] weapons as well as its other strategic systems. Even more troubling has been Russia's adoption of military strategies and capabilities that rely on nuclear escalation for their success." Biden promises in 'Why America Must Lead Again,' [Foreign Affairs](#) (2020) to "...pursue an extension of the New START treaty,



an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia, and use that as a foundation for new arms control arrangements.”

Biden also promises to “[reassess](#)” the Saudi Arabia “and US support for Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen, and make sure America does not check its values at the door to sell arms or buy oil.” Even before the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi-Canada relations have been strained on human rights issues.

Biden’s first priority must be a daunting domestic agenda, starting with COVID recovery, along with his commitments to such issues as clean energy, immigration reform and action on social and racial justice. His [social justice](#) and [green and clean energy](#) policies align with those of the Trudeau government.

Canada needs to leverage off this domestic agenda and identify the natural fits. “Building back better” and the trillion-dollar infrastructure plan come with the protectionist promise of “[Buy American](#).” We need to persuade Biden of the benefits of continental collaboration on resilient, clean infrastructure, including our shared network of pipelines and electrical grids. As reports from Harvard’s [Belfer Center](#) and the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) underline, this will guarantee both dependable supply chains and mutual prosperity.

The new North American trade accord includes a [competitiveness](#) committee that we need to activate and harness for continuous improvements. Voters tell [pollsters](#) that they expect a fairer distribution of the gains of globalization, including accountability for the environment and human rights. Why not start in North America?

Biden has set himself a big agenda. It is hard to run too many things through the U.S. system at once. However, Biden’s Senate experience (1973-2009) and then as vice-president (2009-16) chairing both the Judiciary and Foreign Relations committees means he knows how to legislate and get it done.

The separation of powers means that even if the Democrats control both chambers in Congress as Bill Clinton did in 1992 and Barack Obama did in 2008, they need to focus on a few priorities, starting with recovery and reform at home. As Biden wrote in a 2017 [New York Times](#) op-ed: “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.”

Getting time with a new administration is always difficult, so we need to go in with solutions rather than complaints. While Biden [threatens](#) to scuttle the Keystone pipeline, we must avoid making it a [litmus test](#) of the relationship and instead [work it out](#). But we should be under no illusion: Biden is as green as Obama. As he said in the final presidential debate, he is committed to “[transition away](#) from the oil industry.”

It helps that Biden likes Trudeau. After the 2016 election, Biden publicly called on him to be a defender of the “[liberal international order](#)”. While we can count on Trudeau to rekindle the relationship, our premiers and legislators need to continue their own outreach to their American counterparts. The premiers played a critical role in persuading their gubernatorial counterparts to sign on to a [reciprocity agreement on procurement](#) in the Obama administration infrastructure program as part of the recovery from the 2008-9 recession.





## Looking Forward: Debt, Division, COVID & China

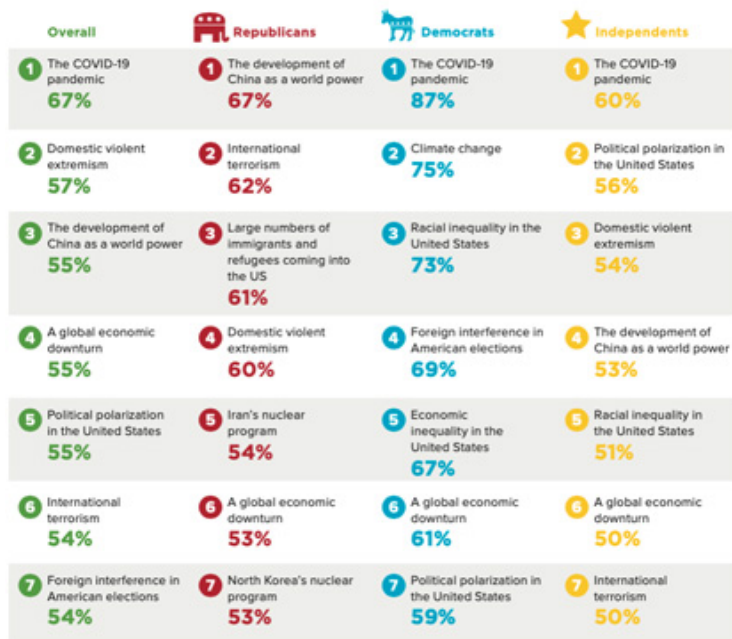
Donald Trump has been a daily part of Canadian life these past four years with his tweets and pronouncements. While he 'entertained' as host of the Apprentice, as President of the Free World he has shocked, frightened and angered Canadians. This we will not miss. A recent survey conducted by ABACUS, says [75 percent](#) of Canadians would vote for Joe Biden and 25 percent for Donald Trump.

In an essay for the [Lowy Institute](#), Brookings scholar Thomas Wright worries that a re-elected Donald Trump would feel “vindicated and emboldened. He will surround himself with loyalists and will act without constraint. The world may be irrevocably altered — alliances may come to an end, the global economy could close, and democracy could go into rapid retreat.”

A Joe Biden administration, on the other hand, writes Wright, would be a “reprieve” for the rules-based international order. The question will be how closely he hews to the Obama approach on which he has campaigned. Wright says the debate will be between the “restorationists” - those who would continue Obama’s approach, and “reformers”- those who would challenge parts of it on issues like China, foreign economic policy, the Middle East, and democracy. Regardless of the outcome, we also need to keep in mind that as a recent Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey illustrates, Republicans and Democrats see the world and its threats [differently](#) and these divisions will affect US policy-making.

Figure D: Top 7 Critical Threats

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all (% critical threat):  
n varies



2020 Chicago Council Survey

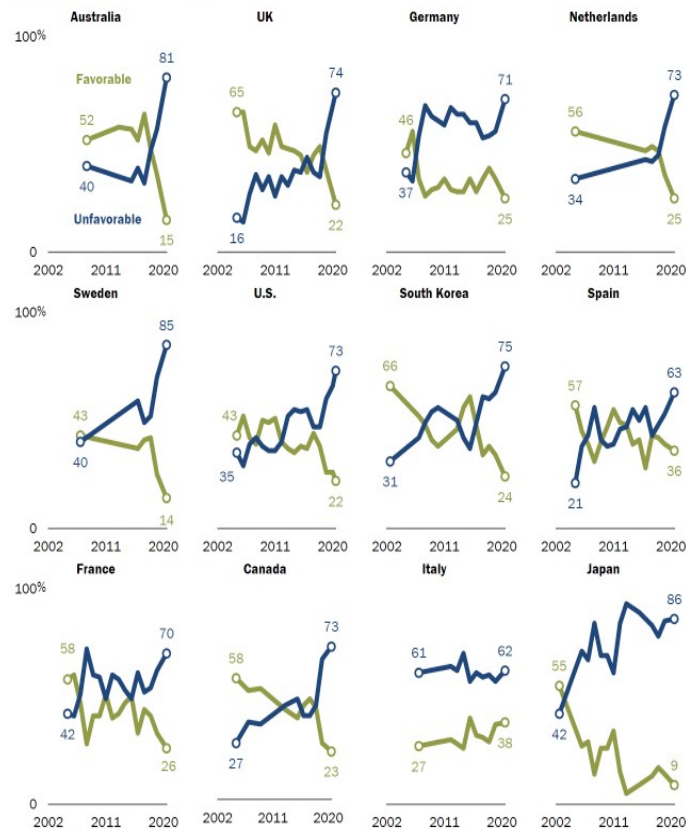
Whoever forms the next administration faces a world ravaged by COVID. The World Bank warns that the pandemic is relegating [150 million](#) people to extreme poverty. Trudeau has championed COVID support for the developing world. So why not offer to work with the next administration around the delivery of vaccines that only the U.S. military can achieve, and then on community health drawing on Canadian experience?

The next administration also faces formidable financial challenges. At [17.9 per cent of GDP](#) in FY 2020 the U.S. federal deficit is almost twice as large than at the worst of the 2009 Great Recession. The federal debt, measured against the size of the economy, is larger than at any time since the Second World War. Interest on the debt is greater than the budgets of Homeland Security, State, Commerce, Education, Energy, HUD, Interior and Justice.



## Increasingly negative evaluations of China across advanced economies

% who have a(n) \_\_\_ view of China



Note: Belgium and Denmark not surveyed prior to 2020. In Italy, 2020 data from telephone surveys; prior data from face-to-face surveys. Those who did not answer are not shown. Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes survey, Q8b. "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries"

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Managing China will stay at the top of the president's inbox. After imposing tariffs on China, Trump tried the carrot of a trade deal and a personal relationship with President Xi Jinping. He now blames China for the "[China virus](#)" pandemic and is confronting Chinese aggressiveness around Taiwan and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.

The rising Chinese threat is reflected in current U.S. strategic doctrine, the [National Security Strategy](#) (2017), which describes China as a revisionist power wanting "to erode American security and prosperity" and "shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests." The Pentagon's [National Defense Strategy](#) (2018) describes China as a "strategic competitor" that seeks "Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global pre-eminence in the future." In his [speech](#), "Communist China and the Free World's Future" (July, 2020), Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said engagement was a failure and China is pursuing its "decades-long desire for global hegemony of Chinese communism."

While the tone will be different, Biden and Congress will be tough with China on trade issues like intellectual property and forced technology transfers, on Chinese infringements

of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong, and on human rights issues like repression of the Uighurs. But again, Biden looks to collective action, writing in [Foreign Affairs](#) 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."

In the final presidential debate Biden picked up on this theme accusing Trump of embracing "thugs like [Kim Jong-un] in North Korea and the Chinese president [Xi Jinping] and [Russia's Vladimir] Putin and others, and he pokes his finger in the eye of all of our friends, all of our allies... We need to be having the rest of our friends with us saying to China: these are the rules. You play by them or you're going to pay the price for not playing by them, economically."

With Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig held hostage since Canada proceeded with the extradition request for Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou in December 2019, we have real stakes in this file. [Surveys](#) across the democracies indicate increasingly negative attitudes toward China, and in foreign ministries the policy debate on China is resetting from engagement to containment. [Canadian attitudes](#) have shown a similar shift toward distrust of China. Where once Canada aimed at comprehensive



engagement, Trudeau now speaks of Chinese "[coercive diplomacy](#)" and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan talks of "hostage diplomacy".



## Appendix

### Basics of the Canada-U.S. Relationship

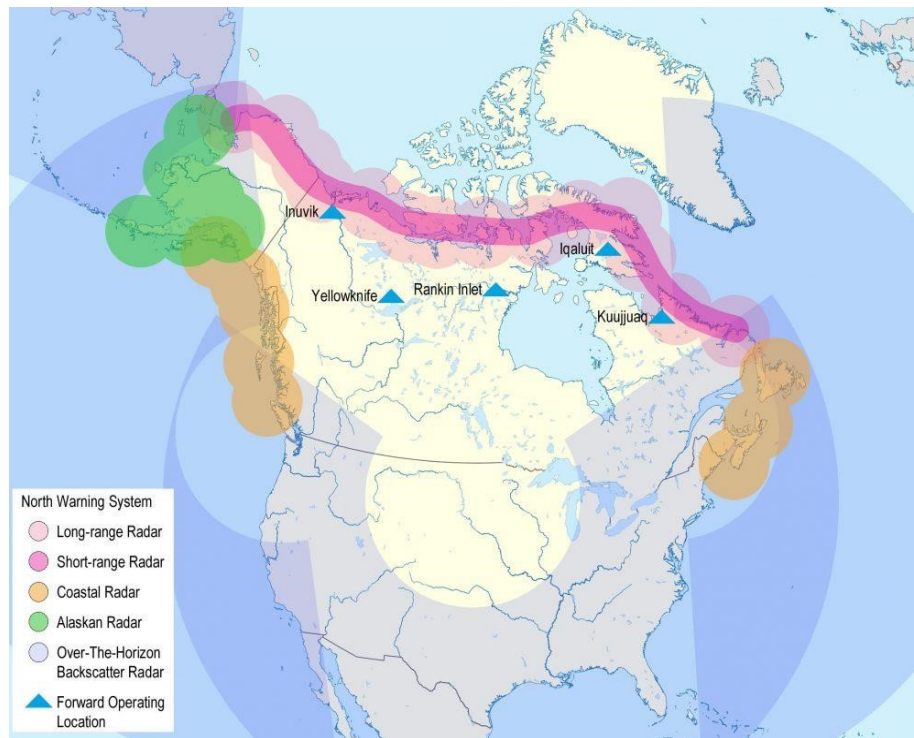
The “golden rule” of Canada-U.S. relations is very simple Brian Mulroney astutely observed: “We can [disagree](#) without being disagreeable. The Americans are very important to us. We know they are, notwithstanding the differences, our best ally, our closest neighbour, our biggest customer.” Relationships matter and it starts at the top with the prime minister and president.

If the Trudeau-Obama relationship was characterized as a [‘bromance,’](#) it has been much more difficult with Mr. Trump who seems to prefer dealing with despots rather than democrats. Probably the low point of the Trudeau-Trump personal relationship came at the end of the G7 summit in Charlevoix (June, 2018) when Trump repudiated U.S. signature to the summit [communiqué](#) and tweeted that Trudeau was “[so meek and mild...very dishonest & weak](#)”. That Trudeau has restored the personal relationship is a tribute to his perseverance and reflective of another [Mulroney](#) observation that the most important relationship for any Canadian prime minister is that with the U.S. president.

When prime ministers and presidents meet, they usually begin their discussions with the big picture: the geostrategic issues of international peace and security, finance and economics, climate and migration. Then they turn to the bilateral, usually conveniently sorted into three big baskets: defence and security; trade and the border; energy, environment and climate.

In her [confirmation testimony](#) in July before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Ambassador-designate Aldona Wos identified the priority areas for Canada-U.S. international focus as cyber-China, Russia/Ukraine, Iran, Venezuela, counterterrorism, cyber-security, and 5G network standards, peacekeeping and the Arctic. These issues are not likely to change no matter who is president.

Defence and Security: Our military, law enforcement and security agencies all work closely together. The U.S. is our principal ally through a series of agreements dating back to before the Second World War, of which the most important is the 1958 bi-national [North American Aerospace Defence Agreement](#) (NORAD). The only bi-national military command in the world covers air and maritime defence. We are also jointly committed to collective security through [NATO](#) (1949) with a Canadian battle group in [Latvia](#) (since 2017) and fighter jets, frigates and submarines patrolling the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe. Canada and the U.S. share intelligence through the [Five Eyes](#) nations group.



Source: DND

Trade and the Border: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost [400,000 people and \\$US2 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 USA sought to create a North American security perimeter), public health will now be part of the screening process. Alberta is experimenting with [testing](#) at the point of entry and then a second test days later to mitigate quarantine restrictions.

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 [9 million](#), while 1.9 million Canadian jobs are related to Canada's exports to the U.S.





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The **U.S. EXPORTS MORE TO Canada** than to Japan, China and United Kingdom combined!

Nearly **9 million jobs** in the U.S. rely on **TRADE AND INVESTMENT** with Canada.

For every **\$1 billion** in **U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS**, approximately **8,100 American jobs** are supported and **\$1.3 billion** in **ECONOMIC ACTIVITY** is generated.

Over **\$15 billion** of **PROCESSED FOOD AND BEVERAGE PRODUCTS MADE IN THE U.S.** were exported to **Canada** in 2018.

**U.S. agricultural exports to Canada HAVE INCREASED 27%** in the last 10 years.

Canada is the **#1 AGRICULTURAL EXPORT MARKET** for **30 U.S. states**.

**TOTAL U.S.-CANADA AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD TRADE = \$49.7B**

U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO CANADA = \$25.7 BILLION INCLUDING:		U.S. AGRICULTURAL IMPORTS FROM CANADA = \$24.0 BILLION INCLUDING:	
• Fruits and Nuts .....	\$4.7B	• Vegetables .....	\$2.8B
• Food Preparations .....	\$4.2B	• Baked Goods .....	\$2.7B
• Vegetables .....	\$2.9B	• Beef and Pork .....	\$2.3B
• Beverages .....	\$2.7B	• Canola Oil .....	\$1.6B
• Baked Goods .....	\$1.2B	• Chocolate Products .....	\$1.4B

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Follow the conversation on Twitter: [#agpartners](https://twitter.com/agpartners)

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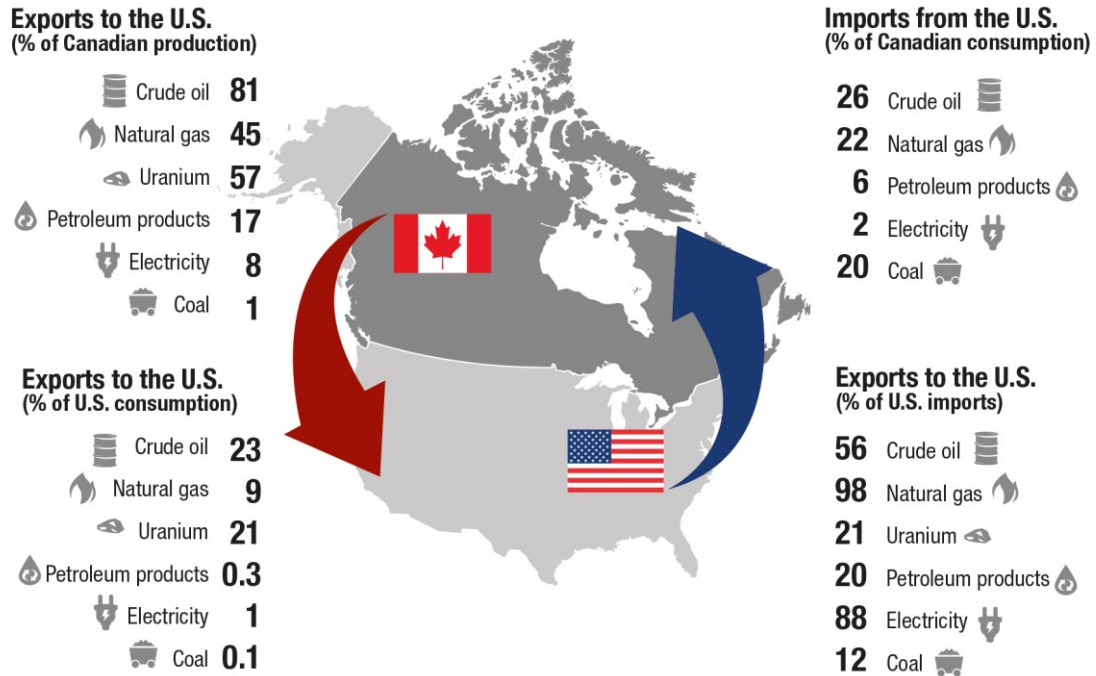
Source: [Agriculture Canada](http://Agriculture Canada)

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 was the recipient of more than [one-third](#) of our foreign investment and accounted for about half of our foreign direct investment. The United States remains Canada's main investment partner. Successive Canadian governments, dating back before Confederation, have consistently sought rules-based commercial agreements of which the 2020 CUSMA is but the latest iteration. Our deep economic integration gives us privileged, but not always secure, access to the biggest market in the world. It requires a permanent campaign by all levels of government in tandem with business, labour and civil society to fend off the forces of protectionism at the local, county, state and national levels.

Energy, Environment and Climate: The energy relationship is vital to both countries – electricity generated in Quebec literally lights up Broadway. Canada is the largest source of U.S. energy imports and the second-largest destination for U.S. energy exports. According to the [U.S. Energy Information Agency](#), in 2019 energy accounted for US\$85 billion, or 27 per cent, of the value of all U.S. imports from Canada. Crude oil and petroleum products accounted for 91 per cent of the value of U.S. energy imports from Canada and 89 per cent of the value of U.S. energy exports to Canada. The United States exported US\$23 billion worth of crude oil, petroleum products, natural gas and electricity to Canada in 2019,



about eight per cent of the value of all U.S. exports to Canada. The Canadian and U.S. electricity grid is deeply integrated with more than 30 major transmission arteries connecting all contiguous Canadian provinces to neighbouring U.S. states.



Source: [Natural Resources Canada](#)

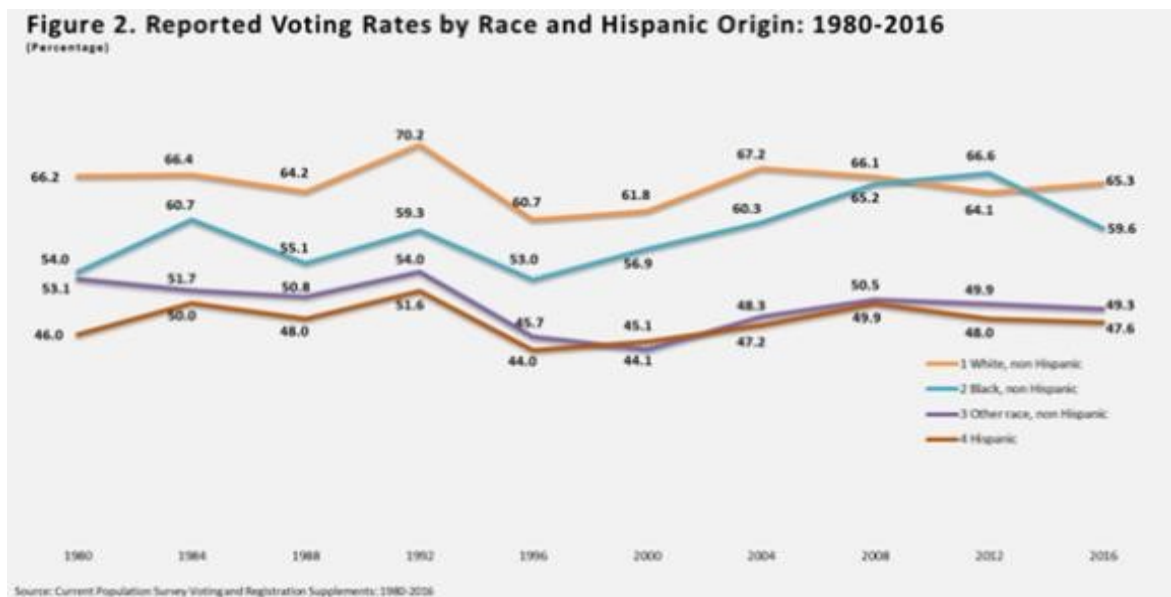
We share joint stewardship for our environment and lead the world in innovative cross-border practices. The [Boundary Waters Treaty](#) (1909) established the [International Joint Commission](#) that tends to the shared waters along our 5,525-mile-long border. The Great Lakes, with almost 20 per cent of global fresh water, receive special attention. Commitments to protect aquatic habitats, curb invasive species and help coastal communities adapt to climate change were added in 2012 to the 1972 [Water Quality Agreement](#). The rigorous negotiations around the [Canada-U.S. Acid Rain Treaty](#) (1991) and the multilateral [Montreal Protocol](#) on the ozone layer (1987) serve as a model for how we deal with climate change. Canada and the U.S. are also members of the [Arctic Council](#), established in Canada in 1996 with the signing of the Ottawa Declaration.

Canada in the U.S.: In addition to our embassy in Washington, we have [12 consulates-general](#) throughout the U.S. A number of the provinces also have U.S.-based representatives. Given the depth and importance of our trade and investment, we should have a Canadian presence in every state to act as our eyes, ears and voice. With well over a million star-spangled Canadians [living](#) and working in the U.S., we need to rethink how we do business, including making greater use of honorary consuls.



## Basic Facts on the U.S. Election

- On Tuesday, Nov. 3, Americans will go to the polls to elect their president and [35 members](#) of the Senate (currently held by 23 Republicans and 12 Democrats). The GOP currently holds 53 seats and the Democrats and Independents hold 47 seats in the 100-member Senate. All [435](#) members of the House of Representatives are up for election. The Democrats hold 231 seats and the GOP 184. There are gubernatorial elections in [11](#) states with the GOP defending seven and the Democrats four. Nationally, the GOP holds 26 governorships and the Democrats 24. Voters will also elect 5,876 of the country's 7,383 state legislators as well as local sheriffs, judges, county and city councilors. They will also decide on state and civic initiatives, propositions and constitutional amendments. As set out in the Constitution, the next U.S. Congress will begin at noon on January 3, 2021 and the Chief Justice will administer the oath of office to the president at noon on January 20, 2021.
- The [U.S. Elections Project](#) predicts a high turnout of eligible voters (in 2016 it was 55.5 per cent). It estimates that, a week before November 3, over 70 million Americans (half of those who voted in 2016) have already cast their ballots either in person or through the mail. Over 50 million requested mail-in ballots.
- In 2016, [the Census calculated](#) that almost two-thirds of eligible white voters cast a ballot. African-American turnout fell to 59 per cent, a drop from both of Obama's elections. Latino turnout was at 48 per cent. Young people stayed home: [only about 46 per cent](#) of eligible voters under 30 turned out, far below the participation among those 45 and older.

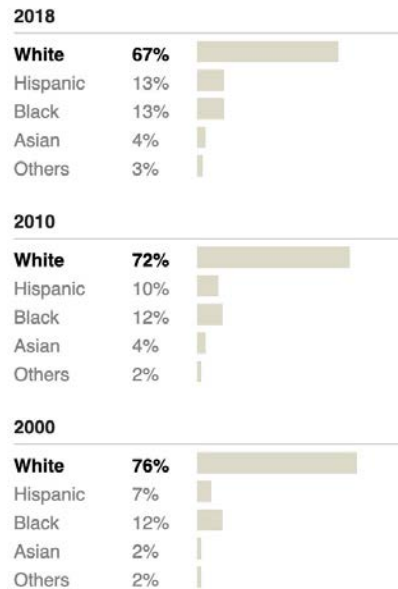


[Source US Census Bureau](#)

- The total cost of the 2020 election will approach \$11 billion, more than [50 per cent pricier](#) than 2016, according to estimates from the Center for Responsive Politics.



**United States**  
Eligible voters by race/ethnicity



[Source: Pew Research Center](#)

## Further Sources:

Both [Brookings](#) and the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) have analyzed Biden's and Trump's foreign policies. For public opinion surveys, look to the [Pew Foundation](#) 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 US Diplomacy and Foreign Policy](#).

The [U.S. embassy](#) and [Canadian embassy](#) provide basic facts and the embassies' [state trade fact sheets](#) are especially useful. The [Canada Institute](#) at the Wilson Center has excellent studies on Canada-US relations.

There are many books on the Trump presidency; my favourite are [Rage](#) (2020) and [Fear](#) (2018) by Bob Woodward and the Washington Post fact-check team's account [Donald Trump and his Assault on Truth](#) (2020). Trump's own autobiography [The Art of the Deal](#) (1987) is still the best insight into how he operates. 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).



For a contemporary view on managing Canada-U.S. relations, listen to former ambassador David McNaughton [in conversation](#) with Paul Wells. For an historical perspective, browse through the [Washington Diaries](#) of Allan Gottlieb, the Obi-Wan Kenobi of Canadian diplomacy in the United States, and look to his C.D. Howe lecture on [Romanticism and Realism in Canadian Foreign Policy](#).



## ▶ About the Author

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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 sits on the advisory councils of the [Alphen Group](#), the [Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy](#), [North American Research Partnership](#), [The Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa](#) and the [Conference of Defence Associations Institute](#) and the North American Forum. He is an [Honorary Captain \(Royal Canadian Navy\)](#) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate. During his foreign service career, he served as first Head of the Advocacy Secretariat and Minister at the Canadian Embassy in Washington and Consul General in Los Angeles, as Consul and Counsellor 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 the NAFTA, he is a member of the Deputy Minister of International Trade's Trade Advisory Council. 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 that influence Canadian foreign policy.

## Canadian Global Affairs

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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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