

Perceptions of Joe Biden in Europe since the 2020 US Presidential Election

Miss Pimchanok Kutchon

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By Miss Pimchanok Kutchon
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Thesis Advisor Associate Professor NATTHANAN KUNNAMAS, Ph.D.
Thesis Co-Advisor Professor MARTIN HOLLAND, Ph.D.

Accepted by the GRADUATE SCHOOL, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement of the Master of Arts


----- Dean of GRADUATE SCHOOL
(Associate Professor Dr. THUMNOON NHUJAK)

INDEPENDENT STUDY COMMITTEE


----- Chairman
(Assistant Professor KASIRA CHEEPPENSOOK, Ph.D.)


----- Thesis Advisor
(Associate Professor NATTHANAN KUNNAMAS, Ph.D.)


----- Thesis Co-Advisor
(Professor MARTIN HOLLAND, Ph.D.)


----- Examiner
(BHANUBHATRA JITTIANG, Ph.D.)

พิมพ์ชนก คุตชนม์ : มุมมองของยุโรปเกี่ยวกับโจ ไบเดน ตั้งแต่การเลือกตั้งประธานาธิบดี
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สหภาพยุโรปเป็นพันธมิตรที่สำคัญของสหรัฐอเมริกา มาเป็นเวลานาน แต่นโยบายต่างประเทศของ
โดนัลด์ ทรัมป์ในยุโรปส่งผลกระทบต่อยุโรปและเปลี่ยนมุมมองในกลุ่มประเทศยุโรปที่มีต่อประเทศ
อเมริกาเป็นอย่างมาก ประธานาธิบดีคนใหม่ของสหรัฐฯ จึงต้องฟื้นฟูภาพลักษณ์ของวอชิงตัน และหลังจากที่
โจ ไบเดน เข้ารับตำแหน่งประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐฯ หลายประเทศในยุโรปยินดีกับชัยชนะของไบเดน อย่างไรก็ตาม
แต่ละประเทศ (ฝรั่งเศส เบลเยียม และเยอรมนี) ก็ได้แสดงความเห็นเกี่ยวกับไบเดนแตกต่างกันออกไป ในช่วง
แรก ฝรั่งเศสดูเหมือนจะหมดความเชื่อมั่นในศักยภาพของประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐฯ แต่ก็เปลี่ยนทัศนคติเมื่อไบเดน
กลับมาลงนามในสนธิสัญญาปารีสอีกครั้ง ในเบลเยียม ไบเดนได้ถูกรายงานไปในแง่ดี และหวังว่าเค้าจะ
สนับสนุนค่านิยมและบรรทัดฐานของสหภาพยุโรปต่อไป แต่ไม่มีการวิพากษ์วิจารณ์มากมายนักในหนังสือพิมพ์
ของเบลเยียม ในส่วนของเยอรมนี รู้สึกซาบซึ้งที่ไบเดนตัดสินใจที่จะประจำการกองทหารสหรัฐฯเยอรมนีต่อไป
หลังจากก่อนหน้านี้ทรัมป์ประกาศถอนทหารสหรัฐฯออกจากเยอรมนี อย่างไรก็ตาม โจ ไบเดน ยังคงมีหน้าที่อีก
มากมายที่ต้องการบรรลุเพื่อพิสูจน์ศักยภาพของเค้าต่อยุโรป เพราะนี่คือจุดเริ่มต้นของชีวิตของเขาในฐานะผู้นำ
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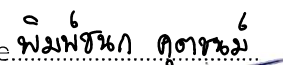


KEYWORD: European Union, Joe Biden, Perception of Joe Biden, Perception of Joe Biden in France, Perception of Joe Biden in Belgium, Perception of Joe Biden in Germany, the EU and US relations, the EU and US tensions

Pimchanok Kutchon : Perceptions of Joe Biden in Europe since the 2020 US Presidential Election. Advisor: Associate Professor NATTHANAN KUNNAMAS, Ph.D., Co-Advisor: Professor MARTIN HOLLAND, Ph.D.

The European Union has been a significant partnership of the US for long time but Donald Trump's foreign policy in Europe has crucially impacted the territory and greatly changed perception of America in Europe countries. Therefore, it is a duty for the new US president to revitalize Washington's image. After Biden took then office, many European countries tend to be grateful for Biden's victory; however, each country (France, Belgium, and Germany) expresses delight on different stories about Biden. At first, France appeared to lose faith in the competence of US president but it changed its mind when Biden returned the US to the Paris Agreement. In Belgium, Biden was reported in relatively positive ways and hopes he would continue supporting the EU values and norms but there were no such substantial criticism appeared in the newspaper. Germany was appreciative that Biden decided to continue stationing the US troops in Germany after Trump's declaration of the US military removal from the country. Remarkably, Joe Biden still has a number of tasks to clarify his quality to Europe since this is the beginning chapter of his life as the world leadership.

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Advisor's Signature: 
Co-Advisor's Signature: 

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Introduction

The American election for the 46th president was significantly intense, critical and nail-biting during the few months before the election result was confirmed. On 8 November, Joe Biden, 77-year-old American politician and president-elect of the United States, won against Donald Trump in the 2020 United States presidential election and became the 46th president in January 2021. Biden, as a member of the Democratic Party, stands against Donald Trump, from the Republican Party, who has different attitudes and concepts of governance and their campaigns were almost completely opposite from one another.

So why is it so important to pay attention to the US 2020 presidential transition? It is apparent that in 2020, the COVID-19 brought about Americans' divergence and the public became more skeptical about how the government would take actions for measures and what solutions would be provided for citizens. A part from this new global pandemic challenge, there are plenty of tasks for the country to handle, particularly political issues relevant to the US's partnership with Europe. European countries are key partners who have always had an impact on American foreign policy in the past. Former President Donald Trump has crucially filtered European perceptions in such unpleasing ways by his extreme policies in Europe. Inconsistencies in several dimensions between the two continents became even more radical and resulted in transatlantic crises. The 'America First' aggressively

strikes European foreign policy and has changed perceptions of America. Plus, trade war between them remains unsettled, tariff issues in particular. Therefore, the new president is the significant variant of such a critical circumstance to become the hope for American citizens and Europeans to make comprehensive solutions to these issues.

The 2020 election results turned out that the share of voting for Trump and Biden were distinctly different; however, after the intense election, tensions and opposition to the new president do not seem to have absolutely disappeared. Some do not trust Biden's competence to tackle the American economic issues under multiple crises. Such uncertainty and conflicts among Americans, have been challenges for Biden since the first day of his administration. Definitely, the situation in the US is also a reason for the world to keep track of the America and its president, specifically for the EU whose transatlantic relationship with the US has been a key influence with its important strategic partner. Perception plays a key role for both sides since it does not only indicate how the people think about the opposite regions but also crucially influences the governments' propaganda based on public concepts and reactions toward the other side.

During the Donald Trump administration, over the last 4 years, the relationship between America and the European Union was not without complications. Trump had introduced many extreme policies such as 'America First' (with the intention to

make the US great again) and this sort of approach importantly influences US foreign policy on the European continent and the rest of the world. This is one of the appreciable tensions and conflicts in the transatlantic area. However, things are expected to be different since Joe Biden is going to take Trump's place and is expected to be able to execute a more diplomatic foreign policy.

The EU, definitely, has been one of the strongest ties to the US since the end of WWII and the relationship seems to be strong bilaterally; however, there is a lot of inconsistency between these powerful pillars since the direction of governance essentially relies on the 'leader' at a particular period of time. Therefore, the US presidential transition is highly significant because it will have consequences for Europe in many aspects. This research, hence, focuses on perceptions in Europe towards Joe Biden and his actions presented in online European local newspapers which are regarded as the mainstream of national information pool individual European countries generally consume.

Objectives

1. To assess how European citizens perceive Joe Biden, and vice versa
2. To observe how Joe Biden taking the White House will impact transatlantic relations between the US and the EU.

Hypothesis

European citizens' perception on Biden reflects his foreign policy and attitude toward the European Union. If Biden demonstrates a friendly foreign policy towards the EU and treats it in a positive manner, people would have positive attitudes toward him in return. In contrast, if he perceives the EU as a rival and attempts to aggressively compete with the EU, European citizens would display negative feedback on him.

Scope of Study

The study covers the perceptions of Joe Biden held in European countries since his 2020 presidential campaign and the US election onwards.

Literature Review

Since the 19th century, the world has been experiencing globalization where technological, business, economic and trade competition have become the major factors in this competitive world. An individual country is not able to stand by its own without external contributions in the face of hard and soft powers and these external powers could impact the country and become influential factors in how people from the outside perceive the state. From this aspect, it can be said the capability of one country is not all about military and political potentials but also about perception from outsiders. Even though, foreign policy is perceived as a face of a nation's intention and reflects how one country treats and/or expects from other nations, it does not consider how those perceivers actually view the country.

The relevant theoretical sources contributing to this research can be found in *Shaping the EU Global Strategy: Partners and Perceptions* (Chaban, & Holland, 2019)¹. They focused on how human beings as viewers respond and acknowledge the EU's actions on contemporary internal and global contexts and suggested that perception could not only be dependent on existing policies and values of the Union that aim at representing its identity. According to this research, in the 21st century, the Union developed foreign policies towards 10 strategic international counterparts of which five comprise Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (known as BRICS), and five other nations; Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Canada and US. In 2015, particularly, the EU had to handle crises from several directions involving chronic migration issues, Eurozone destabilization and Brexit that showed the Union's failure to strengthen solidarity among member states. These facts could affect viewers' responses to the EU and that would also mean how they perceive it. In the same year, Chaban and Holland together with contributors conducted this research on perceptions of the EU in these tactical partners for the European External Action Service. This volume covers the US's perception and this could contribute to my research in how the US and the EU have previously responded to each other's movements since the two view themselves as significant trade partners and political influencers. Examples could be the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Transatlantic Trade and

¹ Chaban, N., & Holland, M. (2019). *Shaping the EU Global Strategy: Partners and Perceptions*. In. N. Chaban & M. Holland (Eds.). (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham)

Investment Partnership (TTIP) where the two regions commit to sharing common values and pursue rules-based trade agreements among each other. On the side of security and defence, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) plays the key role in this field where they agree to tackle crises, counter-terrorism, cybercrimes, migration issues, and energy and climate change.

This research points out the significances of social-psychological aspects and essential influence of individual culture and ideology have that impact on conventional international conducts (Movahedi, 1985, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019, p.2). Moreover, it found that images and perceptions of the EU in citizens of these ten strategic nations have dominant influences behind foreign policy. Therefore, reputation is the real power of any individual and what one could be reflected by how other people think and perceive him or her (Morgenthau, 1965, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019, p.2).

In this research three theoretical contributions are adopted which demonstrate key concepts for analyzing perceptions - Othering theory (Pickering 2001; Chaban and Holland 2014a; Chaban, & Holland 2019), image theory (Herrmann, 2013, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019) and cascading activation framing (Entman, 2003, 2004, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019)².

² Ibid.

Othering Theory

This theory was adopted by a macro-level theory of Othering in Chaban and Holland (2014a) to discuss the external perceptions of the EU: its core concept determining the Union as the Other. This theory argues that the ideas and concepts of outsiders have crucial implications for the EU's perceptions and responses. Also, what kind of Other is the EU in the eye of external viewers: different things will be seen from different points of view (Chaban, & Holland, 2019). Moreover, this theory intends to avoid the constraint of ideas and perspectives which only reflect the European perspective. This theory is divided into two different dimensions.

1.) This stage explains that the way the external observers perceive the EU is subject to what levels and dimensions of their standing. In other words, the Union is considered as the Other from different perspectives on various positions, so it depends on how and on the EU is engaging. Therefore, the EU's identity could be different when subjected to the process of Othering to become the Otherness (Pickering, 2001, p.49, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019) For example, the EU is a predominant market and strategic commerce partner of the ten key counterparts. Free Trade agreements (FTA) in particular, give the EU bargaining and negotiation power. This means a lot to South Korea, India, Canada and the US (Chaban, & Holland, 2019). In this way, the four countries would view the EU as a strategic trading partner

(positive) and/or a competitive market (negative) depending on contemporary trading contexts. On the other hand, Brazil, India and South Africa were European colonies in the past and their colonial experience still filter their mind and they tend to picture Europe differently from other countries that were not colonized. Additionally, norms and values also shape images of the Union in different areas. In the same manner to Joe Biden once he became the US president, he has taken over the role of the country's leadership, representing the American as a whole. Whatever political, security, and trade policies are launched by his administration, the EU, as the Other to the US, would keep them under observation; Will his policies affect specific EU members? How are they impacted by those policies of the US? These options would be critically transformed into expectations towards Biden's actions; once the EU is affected by his policies, its view on Biden is, then, filtered.

2.) Interactions between one and the Other; however, could lead to three consequences. One is positive reformations (which mean one self and the other are adaptive and liable to converge toward each other). Or it could be that oneself and the other would create a stronger position and resistance toward each other (meaning that they neither accept nor adopt one another's aspect). Alternatively, it may lead to indifference which the EU considers as situation where it is difficult to predict potential reactions from one another (Peeren and Horskotte, 2007, p. 11, cited in Chaban, & Holland,

2019, p.8). The result of these consequential interactions could vary in different contemporary conditions; likewise, the EU could treat external perceivers as alliances or rivals. Collaborative interaction could result in both oneself and the other cooperating, learning from and sharing sources with each other. However, the reactions and responses of viewers could clearly project and reflect the true self.

Image Theory

This theory is considered to be a corresponding concept with Othering theory since it suggests image of oneself is difficult to define what one actually is, because it could have several facets depending on who is looking at and from where. Moreover, image has no definite form, making the reality of one's image hard to be clearly determined (Chaban, & Holland, 2019). Since human beings have lived in contemporary circumstances since WWII and they are likely to change anytime; this is one of the consequences of globalization. Thus, image is an important strategy of an individual country. There are four categories of image to compare.

- 1.) First, all internal and external crises and issues relevant to the EU's responsibility do affect its image of competence. Crises in the past that the EU is not able to handle affectively would cause people to portray the Union in negative way; for example, the Eurozone crisis since 2009 displays how the

EU controls its economic power (Chaban, & Holland, 2019). Likewise, the European migrant crisis in 2015 reflects what measures the EU imposes to handle the issue and more importantly indicates whether or not the union empowers and maintains human rights (that has always been the EU's primary principle and is promoted globally), as well as Brexit that has impacted on the EU's image of solidarity. Consequently, these EU challenges create negative points of view for external observers.

2.) Second, a positive image of the EU could be seen by emerging power in terms of economic and political stability especially in BRICS together with Mexico as well as creating a superpower image with the US (Chaban, & Holland, 2019).

3.) Third, the normative power of the EU could also expose what the Union truly is as the norms represent what it wants strategic partners to accept and follow. In some contexts of norms tend to be authorization (talking at) rather than common obligations (talking with). However, norms sometimes reveal the vulnerability of the EU if it could not fulfill existing norms. Consequently, the EU would lose its credibility and trust since the EU is considered as symbol of normative power (Chaban, & Holland, 2019). In contrast, America may not be regarded as a country where seizes normative orientation but the rule-based. But it may be another story when Biden took the office because

this man is initially expected by his people and global counterparts to be more unified and polite than the previous US president who has ruined global norms. With these expectations, plus his personal attitudes towards the world possibly bring back normative means to America so that it speaks the same language as its potential trade partner, like the European Union.

4.) Last, image changes through time, meaning that one's perception would change in accordance with contemporary conditions and contexts. But, once an image is created in the human mind, it is hard to change the way they perceive things because image evolves with the influence of time. For example, crises typically alter historical and cultural contexts in the long term and this would become an enduring image (Braudel, 1980, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019, p. 10).

Cascading Activation Framing

This theory suggested that the elite can have an influence on people's perception and elites in this context refer to those with access to information on foreign policy that spread in society and those who control information such as government officials and journalists (Entman, 2003, 2004, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019, p. 11). These people could be considered as influencers who are able to create impact on society's perception as well. The mechanism of this framing is to select some pieces of information, that are believed to be truthful, and then make them more

noticeable and dominant through exposure in the print media in order to catch people's attention. In this way it may be easier to shape people's interpretation and thoughts on the media (Entman 1993, p. 52, cited in Chaban, & Holland, 2019).

According to Entman, when it comes to promoting foreign policy, the information selected by a nation's decision-makers and elites, who have power through the media, would flow down to ordinary people, just like a cascade, and we can see how they respond to the spread of policy information. Once they receive and interpret it, citizens' reaction would then flow back to the superiors which is the upper levels. This kind of approach can be entitled as public diplomacy which is a method enabling two-way communication between the government and the citizens to reflect public's thoughts. It can be strategic planning, campaign, or public engagement created to obtain public opinion and advocacy that impact a state's foreign policy. On the side of Biden, he acknowledges public responses and take them as part of foreign policy so that the people will be convinced of his actions and accept him as he's considerate about their opinion.

Methods

To identify sources used in this paper, multiple databases were utilized as secondary data. In order to define how the president is viewed in Europe,

acknowledgement of the EU-US relation and crises background initially enhance comprehension and crystallization. To begin with a key term of the EU-US transatlantic relation, Taylor & Francis Online provided several available papers. Through this searching method, it enables to figure out other more relevant paper works. Beginning with contexts and disputes among the two territories and the Biden's planned foreign policy. The following session would demonstrate public opinion surveys conducted by YouGov; in this survey embraces 7 European countries, aiming at describing what European think about the president before he took the office. Then drawing to the main focus which is traditional newspaper in online media platform; particularly explore through 3 countries – Germany, France, and Belgium.

The selected materials in this paper primarily consists of 3 sorts; transatlantic articles and the US foreign policy articles, 2 surveys, and local online newspaper published in English version. First session would discuss about the EU and US transatlantic relation and current tensions as the basis of situational comprehension. Followed by the United States foreign policy Biden launched after his 100 days taking the White House. The second session would explore through the surveys. The first one implemented YouGov. This survey collected opinion about Joe Biden before the US election date in 7 European countries, revealing their thoughts about Biden during electoral campaign. The second one conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations cooperating with Datapraxis and YouGov, describing general views of European citizens towards Biden after taking the office. The last session would be

local news talking about the president's administration and actions in 3 different countries.

Analytical methods are embraced by 3 key themes which have been explained in the literature review. Each theme is utilized to examine the how Joe Biden is interpreted through reach national newspaper, how he's represented, and what issues he is paid attention on by the medias. With this means it helps to be able to read between the lines of what the United States is intending to present to its counterpart. On the other hand, it reveals what kind of Biden the local newspaper in Europe actually want to present to the eye of their people in which both sides can collect feedback and responses after certain actions are conducted.

These 3 elemental approaches were applied to European Union perception to observe how partnerships perceive the Union and one of them is the United States. Therefore, the US under Joe Biden administration can, vis-a-vis, precisely use to determine perceptions of Biden in European contexts. Notably, these approaches applied in this paper contribute psychological and cognitive aspects through published conducts and political contexts appear in the media rather than accurately predict the future implementation of the Transatlantic.

How can these approaches be applied to Joe Biden?

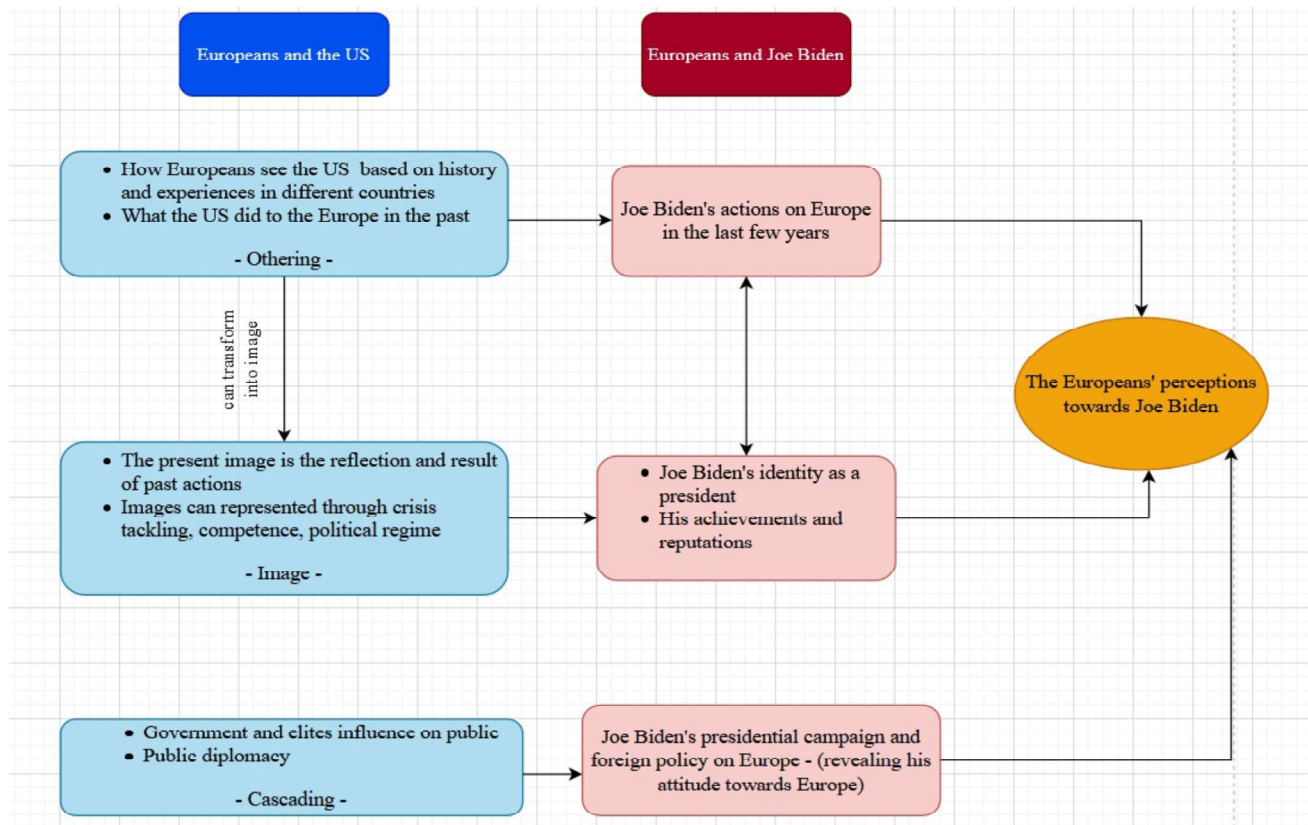
This diagram illustrates mechanism of the three key approaches using to assess Europe's perception of Joe Biden, starting from the first line at the left hand side

(blues boxes) conveying key concepts of each approach through relationship between the EU and US. The first one is othering means, in this state, it embraces historical background and experiences that European countries and America shared in times past, such as world wars and cold war. However, individual countries in Europe might acknowledge the US differently because they encountered the US in different contexts. The next state is image approach, it can be transformed by the othering since images of the US can lie with its previous actions in Europe and Europeans tend to recognize the US's identity through those actions and it becomes accumulated memories or the image in other words. Images can vary in various situations depends on how the US manage its domestic issues as well as international tensions that the US gets involved. Supremacy and political regime in which America attempts to dominate the world can portrait significant American identity to Europe.

Move to the middle line (pink boxes), this state shows the connections between the first two methods and Joe Biden as the US president. As othering approach describes different views of individual European countries depending on different experience with the US, likewise, how Biden appeared in European world in the old days will obviously impact European's perceptions of him today's, which link to the image approach that result in President Joe Biden's identity in the eye of Europeans. Moreover, his achievement and reputation also play in the important role to determine his qualification that relate to his image. Remarkably, othering and image

means in this state have a connection because people tend to consider his past actions in Europe and also assess him through the identity and reputations of the president in order to accurately determine what kind of person Biden is. In other words, his past and image are examined simultaneously by people.

At the bottom of the picture, it accounts cascading process through Biden's America. High administrations and elites would usually have power to control national media channels at the same time, public opinion appears to be important factors of how



US foreign policy on Europe would look like and Biden has cannot overlook this fact.

Even he structures campaigns and foreign policy for the country himself, again, Americans' voice would intensify (or oppose) the policy. Once elites' decision and public advocacy match, practical foreign policy can be launched and imposed on Europe. Finally, Europeans can define how Biden is through foreign policy.

The EU-US transatlantic relation and contexts behind crises

Understand the contexts of crises

Before discussing about perception concerning the European Union and the US, it is a good opportunity to refer to the most popular topic that cannot be disregarded, that is transatlantic relations, the important bilateral relation of the two continents. Apart from being a strategic partnership, the two can act as international rivals in terms of economics and defence which are the key factors leading to a divergence of perspectives, positions on international issues, institutions, norms and most importantly on the value of the transatlantic tie (Riddervold, & Newsome 2018)³. Many people question Trump has degraded the liberal international order, or so-called rules-based international order, that makes never-ending conflicts of transatlantic territory. The EU-US relation has always been influenced by the EU security and foreign policy that shapes how the Union should response to unpredictable America actions. Looking at the context of the EU-US crises, national and institutional conditions are likely to lead to comprehension of current crises.

For the EU, it seems that the Union has to manage fragmentations among member states in the face of multilateral crises. One of distinct divisions is Brexit in 2016 which is one of the EU members decided to be independent of the Union. Also,

³ Newsome, A., & Riddervold, M. (2018). *Transatlantic relations in times of uncertainty: crises and EU-US relations*
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018.1488839>

there is a rise in number of Eurosceptics. As well as many businesses experienced serious financial damages; particularly subprime crisis in 2008 and public debt crisis in Greece in 2009. Today's, Covid-19 pandemic has put a lot of burden on enterprise and startup companies. Moreover, the EU had a great crisis of migration in 2015 which challenged the EU to demonstrate its commitment to human rights as well as climate change and global warming.

On the other hand, the EU and US has to deal and fix the clash that once occurred in the past few years; specifically in the sense of environmental recognition and protection that Trump has made resignation of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change alleviation. Over the past decades, Europeans and Americans became more terrified of Islamic terrorism and not the refugee crisis which the US has been pursuing, no less than the EU, to create sufficient measures for those people. One subject that the Washington and Brussels have to address in their foreign policy making is the rising power of China; that may particularly be hard for the US to acknowledge the new competitiveness.

Key factors making transatlantic tensions to surge

These are the four major conflicts the EU and US have had during the 2020s and some of these tensions were being solved before Biden took the office.

The first problem in this area that should be brought to the table is that the US blames the EU for spending less on the military. The US holds less confidence in the

EU military forces as Europe provides insufficient resources for security and defence - specifically on contributions to NATO - while the US provides substantial funds for the Ukraine and Syria crisis and ending terrorism (Riddervold, & Newsome 2018). It is also predicted that the US will pressure the EU by pushing all burdens of military expenses to the Union⁴. In addition, when Trump took office in 2017, transatlantic security cooperation with the US became even tougher to settle, as he tended not to honour traditional transatlantic commitment and perceived the EU as a threat.

The second concern which is no less notable than the first one are political and economic issues. The EU is equipping less armed forces indicating that it may spend much more money on economic growth and the potential area where the EU perceives it is worth investing in China. Now, the EU has diverging routes to choose: whether it will maintain security relations with the US who provides important military supplies for the Union, or will it turn to advance economic ties with China⁵. Once the EU selects one option, it will lose opportunity in the other area. On the other hand, even if the EU decides to have defence reliance on the US, the attention of Washington's foreign policy will be drawn to the Pacific instead of the Atlantic⁶; just like Obama administration, where foreign policy towards Asia constituted one of

⁴ Whineray, D. (2020, January 16). 5 Reasons Why U.S.-Europe Tensions Will Grow in the 2020s—and How to Stop It. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/01/16/5-reasons-why-u.s.-europe-tensions-will-grow-in-2020s-and-how-to-stop-it-pub-80831>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

top concerns of the US agenda and consequently implied a reduced focus on Europe.

An important critical trade agreement between the EU and US is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), there is still uncertainty that Biden will return to TTIP after the agreement was ceased in 2016 (when he was the Vice President of Obama) without any substantial conclusion and settlement⁷. Nevertheless, it is not an easy task for the EU and US to simply renew the TTIP because there are numerous stumbling blocks for negotiations such as inconsistent legitimate terms (regulatory protection)⁸. In spite of this critical dispute, the European authorities have more modest desires towards his administration but remain hopeful that Biden will at least reduce Trump's unilateral steel and aluminum trade tariffs.

The third critical issue would be that European citizens continue to lose faith and trust in US competence and become more confident in their institution. As another power is rising, the US seems to have lost some of its power to lead the world as it claimed to make the America great again in accordance with Trump's principle. Consequently, the rest of the world are losing confidence in American politics and are reaching out other reliable powers as the EU may help improve the quality of

⁷ Chase, P. (2021, February 3). Enhancing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Relationship. *Wilson Center*. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/enhancing-transatlantic-trade-and-investment-relationship>

⁸ Ibid.

cooperation with Russia and China. Due to this, transatlantic power is being torn by this divergence.

In reverse, despite weakened transatlantic ties, the EU is able to consolidate harmony among the member states and extend integration. Previously, some might argue the Union was facing fragmentation due to multiple crises; however, a number of studies have suggested that crises helped to encourage member countries' citizens to harmonize more and cooperate well with other countries to tackle internal and external threats. Moreover, crises can lead to new policies that require cohesive delegation power. This statement can refer to an autonomous EU super-power⁹; when the member state become more unified and collectively respond to crises. In such the way, the EU is capable of intensifying integration and transforming autonomously from the US.

The last EU-US division to remark on is the European' fear of Trump's approach embedded in US extreme foreign policy. Over the past few years, the mirror image can demonstrate that Europeans and Americans feel reluctance towards each other and most of the time they have inconsistent values and perceptions on things such as normative power and climate change. Even though, Biden's victory over Donald Trump brought a lot of pleasure and joy to Europeans (as they basically supported Biden rather than Trump), European perceptions of America may not change since

⁹ Newsome, A., & Riddervold, M. (2018). *Transatlantic relations in times of uncertainty: crises and EU-US relations*
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018.1488839>

the previous president Trump has created the image of the US as the central power, and his America First approach is still haunting Europeans' minds. This approach has been threatening and hostile. But since Biden won, people have begun to expect him to be more familiar towards Europeans, though this might be a big challenge for the president because of perception obstacles in Europe.

Joe Biden's Foreign Policy on the EU is on Track

Biden's policy towards transatlantic issues has been revealed to be more positive than the last for years under Trump's administration. Notwithstanding, there's no substantial policy that has been settled. Apart from a bilateral summit, it requires more negotiations and comprehension from both sides in order to achieve desirable results and also to prevent any other potential tensions. The key aspirations that fall in this area consist of 4 concerns – trade, technology, climate change, and rising power¹⁰.

The issue that should be discussed first is the trade war between the Union and America that has yet to be concluded and became radical during Trump's tenure and this problem might not be solved easily. Biden has a lot to ensure that existing disagreements will not worsen the situation or the EU-US tie will come to an end.

¹⁰ Brattberg, E. (2021, May 6). Transatlantic Relations After Biden's First 100 Days. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/06/transatlantic-relations-after-biden-s-first-100-days-pub-84472>

The dominant subject in transatlantic trade is the imposition of Section 232 national security tariff clause on European steel and aluminum (which raises concerns by many steel workers' unions who take side with Biden)¹¹ and, additionally, excessive sanctions against some European countries, which Biden is required to deal with. Currently, the US administrators want to determinate this artificial trade war within transatlantic territory; however, the negotiation hasn't shown any clear progress. If there's no sign from the US to improve the situation, the EU may have plan to counter. The only dispute settlement achieved in this area is that the EU and US will have a temporary suspension of tariffs in the Airbus-Boeing dispute. Another positive sign of Biden's involvement is his proposal of global corporate minimum tax of 15 percent; this scheme has also gained positive responses from Europeans.

Even though, transatlantic trade negotiation is less hostile, the EU still has less expectation that Biden will be able to reform trade patterns. This is because Biden does not overlook the 'foreign policy for the middle class' and his 'Buy America' propaganda¹² (which is Trump's legacy, focusing on reshoring American jobs and improving job opportunity for American citizens), and mentions less about trade counterparts. Consequently, it is more burdensome for European firms to have inequivalent competitiveness in United States, and this remains one of the unsettled

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

conflicts in TTIP. With all of this, the EU seems likely to cultivate its trade some other regions.

The second area of potential conflict is EU-US cooperation on technology. It appears that Biden is willing to develop and clarify the relationship but it also exhibits some ambiguity that requires robust dialogue. Various questions need to be answered here. First, Biden has to make regulations governing online platforms for ‘Big Tech’¹³ (the big 5 dominant companies in technology of the United States – Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft – whose products and services are used globally) so that the Union and US will be brought closer than ever. In the similar way, the EU’s desire to create ‘tech alliance’ and other relevant technological protection’s implementation with the US in order to defend both sides from conspiracy and disinformation which can lead to misperception towards one another¹⁴.

However, some hindrances exist, the two regions have different digital taxation. France seems to be the only country among the EU member states who has compatible digital taxation with Washington. Contrastingly, Spain, Italy, Austria, and United Kingdom are having hostile conversation about the same subject with Biden’s

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

America¹⁵- it is even reported that the US is likely to impose digital tariffs on these countries as counteraction. Overall, transatlantic cooperation still has a lot to disclose about this vague topic and the process is ongoing.

The third ambition for Washington and Brussel is to create conformity towards climate action. Since the first day of Biden in the White House, he has vowed to rejoin the Paris Agreement to prioritize climate resolution after Trump's abandonment of this duty. In April 2021, Biden has been successful in ensuring America can fulfill the Leaders' Summit on Climate, in the same manner as the Union, and it seems certain the US will be back to honor its climate duty. But the President needs to be aware that the European leaders may not fully trust Biden's promise as Trump's heritage on climate still remains in Europeans' memories.

Moreover, in order to achieve efficient climate cooperation, both sides require more keenness on collective climate actions. Remarkably, there are several issues on climate where the two continents are trying to create convergence. For instance, the EU purposely brings emissions trading and carbon taxation to the table in the face of Washington's opposition. The only pact that both sides seem to mutually commit is net-zero carbon emission by 2050¹⁶. The EU is confident in its Emissions Trading

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

System (EU ETS) which is the key method to drive climate defence, on the other hand, Biden's administration argues this mechanism is not appropriate because it will ruin economic growth. Even though the US has aspiration to reduce CO2 emissions by 50 percent by 2030, the EU doesn't believe in what the US claims. Meanwhile, Brussel wants to accomplish 55 percent of reduced emissions by the same year.

The last challenge for transatlantic cooperation is how Washington and Brussel will respond to the rising power China. China is the third party in this context but it can be a significant variable to determine what the EU-US relation will look like in the future since the two pillars view the opportunity of the rising power differently. Biden purposed to approach China by joining with the EU (regarded as a key partner to help Washington get closer to China) and create a robust competitiveness. The EU seems happy with this Biden approach, but what Brussel needs to be concerned about is not to take side with either US or China in order to preserve balanced relations. The EU, on the other hand, has planned a strategy to create a favourable negotiation with China through a Comprehensive Agreement on Investments (CAI), but this implementation may make the Union feel uncomfortable because this carrying out means the EU to choose between Washington and Beijing.

However, the Biden administration will make sure the EU won't feel threatened or compelled to take sides with the US, instead, demonstrating in the way that America has the same values and holds similar approaches as the EU to develop relations

with China. With this, the US believes Brussel would appreciate this. One collaboration that illustrates meaningful Transatlantic relations is that both continents have adopted sanctions against China on human rights violations; punishing Beijing recognizes and accounts for human rights issues – something the EU demands. Beyond this topic, they need to discuss more about collective implementations to moderate Chinese influences on global businesses.

What Europeans think about Biden during the US presidential campaign 2020

European Views of US Election

On 8 October 2020, a survey of the US election created by YouGov, an international research data and analytics group, reflected how European countries evaluated the US presidential candidacies and which one they would like to win the election. Seven European countries were surveyed (comprising 1018 adults in Denmark, 2245 in Germany, 1071 in Spain, 1013 in Sweden, 1027 in France, 1745 in Britain and 1017 adults in Italy)¹⁷. The respondents were asked whether they would prefer Trump or Biden to win the 2020 election and become the next United States president (the results are in percentage). According to the survey, Denmark was the country with

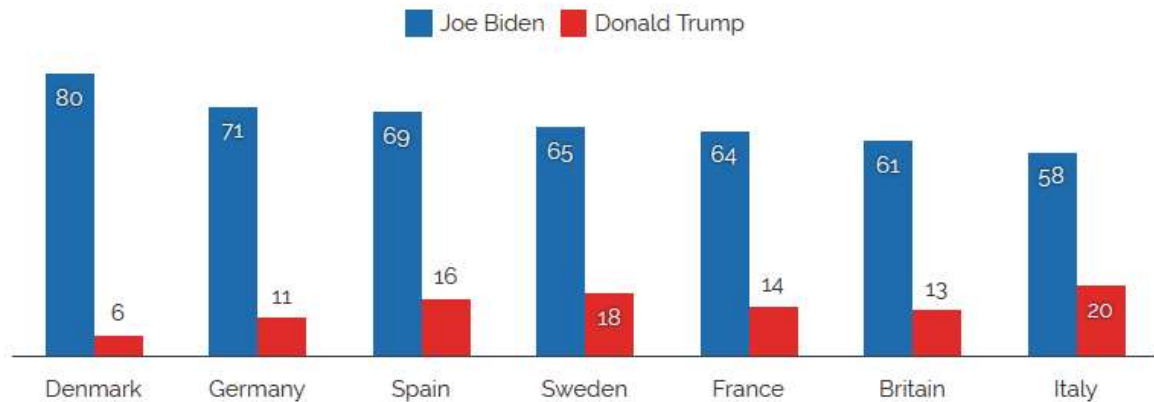
¹⁷ Smith, M. (2020, October 8). Europe wants Joe Biden to beat Donald Trump. *YouGov*. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/10/08/europe-wants-joe-biden-beat-donald-trump>

the highest rate of support for Biden to be the president, with 80%, followed by Germany with 71%, Spain 69%, Sweden 65%, France 64%, Britain 61%, and Italy with 58% (“do not know” responses are not shown). On the other hand, Trump seemed to perform well in Italian perception where he gained 20%, 18% in Sweden, followed by Spain, France, Britain, Germany and Denmark.

During the campaign, the two parties gained trust differently and this did affect the proportions of popularity in Europe. People believe that Donald Trump’s presidential campaign is untrustworthy since they experienced disappointment and annoyance during his presidency. In contrast, Joe Biden’s campaign was expected to be more sincere and faithful than Trump.

Europeans overwhelmingly want Joe Biden to beat Donald Trump

And who do you want to win the US presidential election in 2020 and become the next president of the United States? % (don't know responses not shown)



YouGov

15 September - 4 October 2020

Will Joe Biden become a good president if he wins the election?

The proportions are quite different for Biden even though he was still in the election process (at that time) people tended to have a pretty positive perspective toward his pre-performance as the US president. There was a fair number of Europeans expecting Biden perform quite well. Nevertheless, it seems that the proportion of people thinking that Biden would rather have a fair and average performance is slightly bigger (Denmark at 55%), while, France has the biggest number of people who have no idea what kind of president he would be.

Biden finally won the election; how does this mean to the Europeans?

After he won the election, most Europeans may have celebrated his victory because of the facts discussed earlier. Notwithstanding, the initial public opinion in Europe is not enough to define the European has good attitude towards the elect-president; there are some ambiguous areas whether they are still faithful to and on the side of Biden as before. With this consideration, more evidence is required. Another survey, which examined Europeans' views of Biden after the election, is derived from a pan-European survey, *The Crisis of American Power: How Europeans See Biden's America*, conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations cooperating with Datapraxis and YouGov¹⁸.

This survey compiled public opinion from more than 15,000 people in 11 EU countries in late November and early December 2020 and was published in January the following year, revealing how people the EU feel about and perceive Biden's victory as they started thinking forwards about the relationship between the EU and US under the new leadership. The EU experienced considerable changes throughout the four years of Trump's governance and more importantly European citizens are

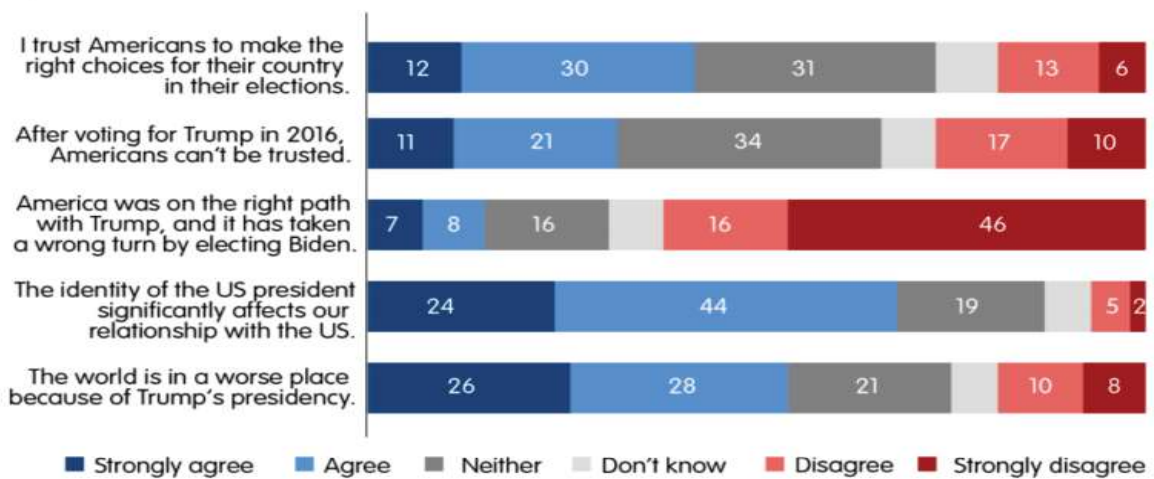
¹⁸ Krastev, I., & Leonard, M. (2021). *The Crisis of American Power: How Europeans See Biden's America*. *European Council on Foreign Relation* *ecfr.eu*. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-crisis-of-american-power-how-europeans-see-bidens-america/>

considering whether the US is losing global power and a rising China is an irresistible issue nowadays. On the positive side the EU member countries are happy about Biden winning and it seems they trust him to re-engage with other regions, hoping that he would be able to bring transatlantic cooperation to the table once again. Nevertheless, things might not go the ways they are expected because covid-19 might cause the change of political contexts in America since people may react to the pandemic aggressively and there's also polarization among themselves; these facts can make even more difficulties for Biden to handle.

In general, the poll implemented by ECFR shows that 53 percent of the respondents have faith in Biden and believe this would benefit their countries, and 57 percent believe it is an opportunity for the EU as well. However, when the citizens in the surveyed countries were asked to identify which statement (shown in the picture below) concerned them the most, the majority (68%) concluded that the identity of the US president significantly affects the EU relationship with the US (strongly agree and agree included). These findings indicate that the president's personality image importantly influences or even dominates the respondents' perceptions. In contrast, the statement that was objected to the most by the participants (62%), was that America was on the right path with Trump and has taken a wrong turn by electing Biden. It could be interpreted that the European surveyed citizens have negative attitudes towards Trump, one reason could be his aggressive trade policy, imposing tariffs on EU aircraft and agricultural products, and an aggressive foreign policy

towards the EU during his government. These reasons, therefore, impact the EU perceptions on Trump as what he did in the past were regarded as threats to the EU – in this area, Othering theory could be insightful because it concerns experiences that the EU gained from Trump. As a consequence, it impacts his current image in Europe.

Thinking about the US presidential election, for each of the following statements, please indicate whether you agree or disagree and how strongly in per cent



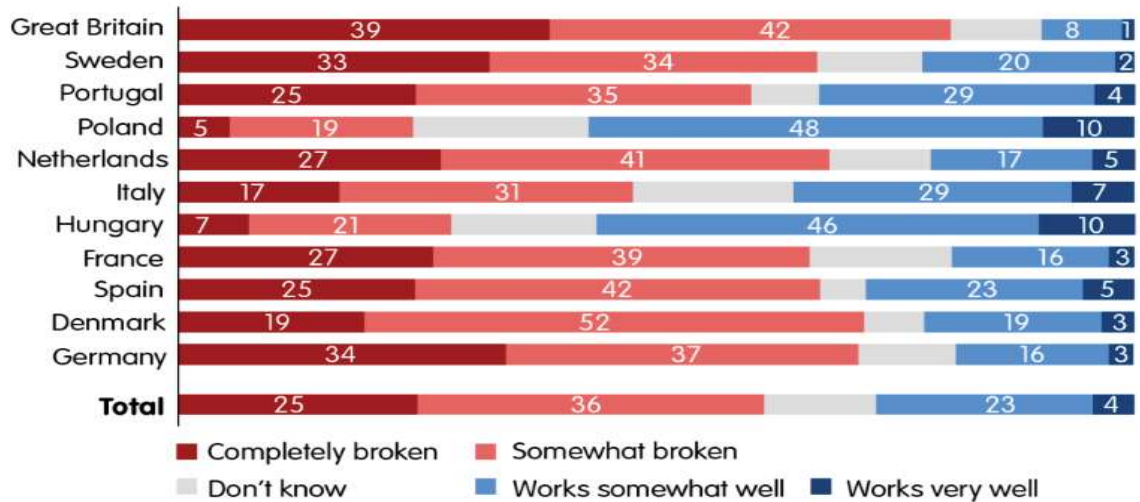
Considering all 11 surveyed countries as one sample.
Source: ECFR-commissioned data from Dataprix and YouGov
ECFR · ecfre.eu

Even though, Biden seems to have been given the green light from the major proportion of European citizens, when discussing about political system, there are still different visions of how they perceive the US and what they are concerned most about is relative power. In bygone days, Europeans might have thought their political

system was inferior of the US but in this moment, they have become more confident in their political power and believe it would be even more solid than America, while perceiving that the US is weakening and could even be broken in the future (as shown in the figure below). Reflecting on this, it seems a contradiction that Europeans have quite positive attitudes towards Biden, yet they have become more skeptical about the US political competence.

Perceiving that America is facing a breaking political system has shaken the trust of Europeans towards the US current president despite his affirmation to reunite America and bring it back to being the global power leader. They are also afraid that there are going to be tough challenges for Biden to fix separation among Americans, handle climate change, reduce tensions in the Middle East, and manage a rising power like China. These difficulties force European people to think of EU security given that Biden still has numerous jobs to deal with, therefore, he will might face problems with making better transatlantic relations. In addition, more than half of the surveyed countries recognize that China would become more competent than the US and a global leader.

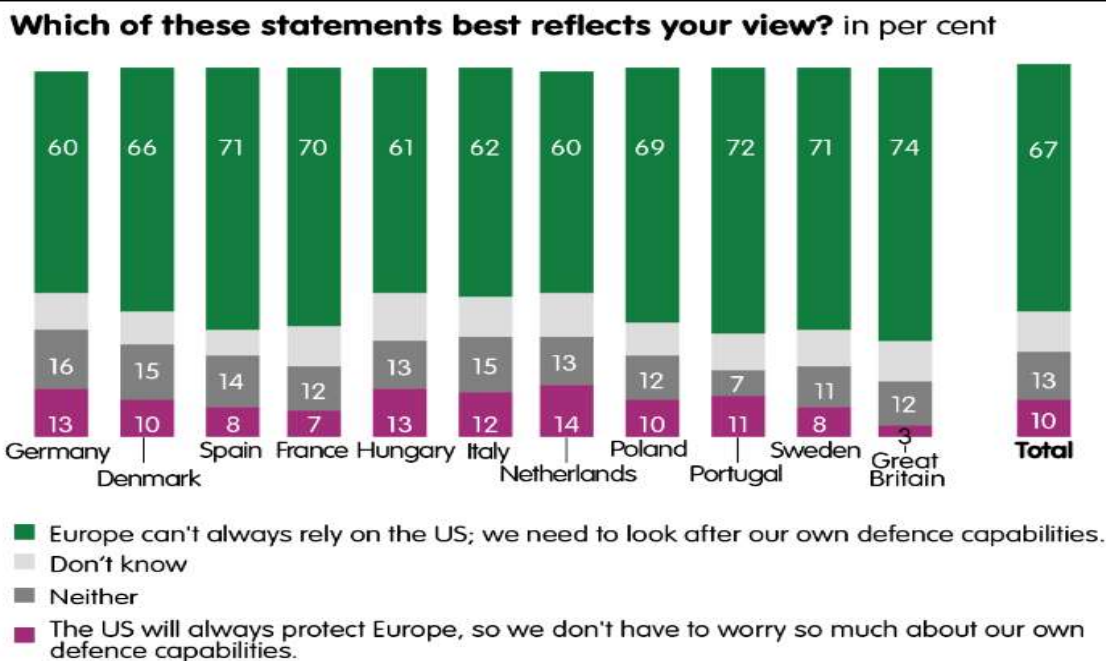
Do you think the political system of the United States works well or is broken? in per cent



Source: ECFR-commissioned data from Datapraxis and YouGov
 ECFR · ecfre.eu

This survey points out several findings of why Europeans are uncertain and skeptical about Biden's management. The first striking finding is that almost 70 percent of all respondent countries said the EU cannot solely rely on the US. In the meantime, the EU needs to intensify its military defence. Many countries in Europe experienced how terrible historical wars were, some countries were fearful because of bombs and

guns, particularly in Germany during the cold war, struggling with threats and wounds from the World War II. Therefore, it learnt from history that national security was essential for a country and this is why the Atlantic alliance is such an importance to it. However, Germany, today, tends to have as much ability as France (whose nation is regarded as the most forceful military in the EU) to boost its army and equip a lot more armaments. German people feel secure enough that they think military



Source: ECFR-commissioned data from Datapraxis and YouGov
 ECFR - ecf.eu

supports from the US is not as important as before and they do not believe it would create a greater security assurance for Germany, instead, they are liable to align with the potential rising power like China, aiming at making a stronger economic tie. Economic relations show the same trend as the military aspect mentioned above. The respondents recommended the EU should impose tougher trade policies on the

US to defend its economy, such as the taxation of foreign companies and rules for digital platforms.

The second finding is that Europeans no longer value the bilateral alliance between the EU and US, consequently, they reject Biden's call for a US and EU reunion to tackle China and to control its power together. The change in European citizens' perception about transatlantic bond began during the Trump's period in which he tried to dominate and threaten Europe by raising national interests, it's so-called 'America first' principle. This made the two territories more distant from one another. On the other hand, European respondents who support Biden believe he would be able to ease tensions between the US and China or the US and Russia and remain on friendly relations with the EU. However, Biden's gaining trust does not necessarily mean that Europeans would prefer to take side with Washington as they tend to separate the president's identity from political contexts. According to a pan-European poll in 2019, a large number of European respondents insisted on their countries and the EU remaining neutral when there were conflicts between other regions. The finding also indicates another interesting point in which the fact that Europeans prefer neutrality is because of having been offended by Trump's policy that somehow ruined the trust of Europeans on America. Another reason would be that the EU and US have different long-term values towards China; the US attempts to put China under control while Europe wants China to return to a rules-based system and play fairly with each other once again.

European Perceptions of Joe Biden

The previous sections have discussed how European citizens think about Joe Biden in general; however, this section will go deeper in focus on perceptions of three European Union founder members – France, Germany, and Belgium - as representative countries to demonstrate how Biden is reported and presented in their local newspapers.

Perceptions of Joe Biden in France

In French news, Biden has been mentioned in various aspects since he was in the presidential campaign but after his victory, the news tends to portray the new president in different ways. The information was retrieved from different French local newspaper online media - France24, The Local France, and the Connexion French news and views, between November 4, 2020 and May 21, 2021.

The perceptions of Biden during the US electoral campaign

During election campaign potential candidates, Trump and Biden, were both endeavouring to win Americans' hearts as well as to build trust internationally that they had the quality to be a good world leader. For Biden, he might have a challenging time to prove himself because the world hasn't seen him on the

presidential stage (besides vice president under Obama) and hasn't recognized him enough. Unlike the president Trump, who has apparently expressed his extreme attitudes towards the world and people has been demonstrated so clear about how he wants like to rule the world.

In the period of the presidential campaign, French minister Bruno Le Maire stated clearly that it wasn't important for French citizens at all. Whoever became the US president will have limited impact on France, and said "The United States has not been a friendly partner to European states for several years now", "...Washington is unlikely to drop its confrontational stance Whether Donald wins or not"¹⁹. According to his confident speeches to the public, the purpose is to convince French people not to expect much from the new president and stressed that whether Trump or Biden, America will turn hostile to them eventually. This implication can be subjected to cascading activation framing because the speaker held a high rank in the French administration with adequate credibility to persuade the public. He also gave the speech in a very formal event through official media so that his words were able to influence the people well. Moreover, Le Maire reminded the public that Trump has gained billions of dollars in tariffs from Europe simply because he claimed unfair trade against America companies. This dialogue can have a crucial impact on French

¹⁹ French minister: USA unlikely to be a friendly partner whoever wins election. (2020, November 4). *The Local France*. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20201104/french-minister-usa-unlikely-to-be-a-friendly-partner-whoever-wins-election/>

firms as well, guiding people to consider how the United States takes advantages of France, so that the administration can shape their citizens' notions. In addition, unfair trade can relate to the Othering concept as well. If we consider France as a trade partner of the US, it's threatened by the world leader and this is enough for the nation to have negative perspectives towards Washington and its president.

Biden is mentioned differently after his glory

Once the election result was out, France seemed to turn the table on to Biden's America too. It can be seen in the news that Emmanuel Macron, French President, tweeted congratulations to Biden on winning the presidential election. His action is possibly perceived as a diplomatic and political stance; conventional politeness for the new President Joe Biden. But if we look back few days before the new US presidential declaration, France had made an unfriendly speech to the United States (as mentioned above) and then quickly changed its attitude when it received the news of Biden. Although France confides with its military defence capacity, it attempts the EU to dismiss reliance on the US defence.

According to the news, Macron's and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo's messages to Biden were "...Let's work together!" and "Welcome back America"²⁰. This official welcome and friendly invitations of the French President and former Paris Mayor to Biden on social media are telling the French people that their leaders are open minded towards Biden and implying they welcome Biden; Macron is willing to work together as presidents. Also, it's believed America will be back after the toughness under the Trump administration. Due to all messages in the news, the French will be obviously convinced to recognize Biden as well because they can see that Marcon publicly accepts this election result and confirms that France and the US will maintain an intimate relationship; consequently, the cascading process can be applied to this event.

A month after Macron's congratulation, there was another acknowledgement of Biden in newspaper titled, 'Why Biden is good news for France'. Anne-Lorraine Bujon, associate researcher on America for an international affairs body, gave an interview to point out Biden can benefit France²¹. This interview, again, demonstrates how cascading activation framing works as she exposed frustration about Trump, saying that "the Trump administration hasn't shown much consideration for its alliance".

²⁰ 'We have a lot to do': Macron congratulates Joe Biden on winning US presidential election. (2020, November 7). *The Local France*. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20201107/we-have-a-lot-to-do-macron-congratulates-joe-biden-on-becoming-us-president/>

²¹ Rowland, L. (2020, December 2). Why Biden is good news for France. . *The Connexion French news and views*. <https://www.connexionfrance.com/index.php/Comment/Why-Biden-is-good-news-for-France-Anne-Lorraine-Bujon-associate-researcher-on-America-for-international-affairs-body-lfri>

She also mentioned that Europeans felt he insulted them and treated counterparts as if they were the US's enemies. These statements clearly show that this news causes French people to feel certain that Trump is a threat for their nation. Although some people may primarily have the same ideas as the interviewee, Anne-Lorraine Bujon, who is considered as an influencer in this context, enhance people's perceptions towards Trump. Simply looking, the interviewee merely talks about Trump's hostility but if it's looked at more closer, her statements can also make comparisons between Trump and Biden in the mind of French citizens by highlighting the former US president's antagonism against the country, and meanwhile persuading how France will benefit from Biden. The definite indicator for this is actually in the headline of the news itself. Another remark, Ms. Bujon strongly asserted that a number of analysts feel truly relieved and also believe Biden will build a better cooperation between United States, Europe, and France. "I think Biden supports more regulation of the digital sector, which is a priority for the EU, as well as rebuilding the club of democracies." said Ms.Bujon. The implications are not only about cascading effect, but also enhancing Biden's image by highlighting his enthusiasm for innovation; sharing the same interest with the EU is one of his approaches and will improve his image in Europe. Lastly, where image theory can possibly apply would be in regards to Biden's personality - Biden is portrayed as a

very funny, warm, sympathetic, and determined to fix transatlantic relation, as revealed by the researcher²².

Perceptions of Biden's Climate Actions

Biden returning the US to Paris Agreement is the good news for the European Union after it has been frustrated by Trump America for the last four years. Paris, thus, was happy to celebrate the new chapter with Biden's America and it seems that he has completely regained feelings of being trusted from French administration.

In late January, 2021, Emmanuel Macron admires the new US President himself because he made the right decision for America's Paris Climate obligation, mentioning "We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenge of our time. Stronger to protect our planet. Welcome back to the Paris Agreement", in a congratulatory message to Biden²³²⁴. This message contains several clues implying Macron welcomes Biden with open arms; as he mentioned 'We', 'Together', and 'Welcome back'. These words do express the feelings of harmony and conformity as the sign of declaration of Paris being ready to work closely with Washington²⁵. On the

²² Ibid.

²³ 'Stronger together': Macron welcomes Biden back to Paris climate accord. (2021, January 21). *The Local France*. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210121/macron-welcomes-biden-back-to-paris-climate-accord/>

²⁴ Paris agreement: France and US make joint commitment in battle against climate change. (2021, March 11). *The Locals France*. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210311/us-to-unveil-paris-climate-pact-commitments-in-april/>

²⁵ France's Macron and Kamala Harris discuss Covid and climate change over phone. (2021, February 16). *The Local France*. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210216/macron-and-kamala-harris-talk-covid-and-climate-change-in-rare-phonecal/>

other hand, the United States turning back to the Paris climate pact meaningfully tells the world that Biden is repairing America's image for planet protection after Trump had destroyed the US's reputation on this issue. During Obama's America, Biden (as Vice president) with Obama, had paid attention to climate responsibility. But whether or not this return is Biden's political strategy, he has improved the American image as the world leader who cares about sustainability. Additionally, this is excellent tactics for him as well to show the EU he has both generosity and quality to be the world leader who cares not only for his own country, but also the planet.

Perceptions of Biden's Migration Implementation

Biden appears in the news that he gained positive feedback from France on his migration solutions in which he's keen on reuniting migrants who were separated from their families during the former US president's policy. Under Donald Trump's administration, he prevented migrants crossing the southern US border, causing a number of migrant families to be apart from each other (more than 5000 of them were children)²⁶. However, Biden's contribution is an ongoing process. His key statement that caught the attention of France's media is that "We are reuniting the first group of families, many more will follow, and we recognize the importance of improving these families with stability and resources they need to heal". His speech

²⁶ Biden to start reuniting migrant families separated under Trump. (2021, May 4). *France24*.

<https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20210503-biden-to-start-reuniting-migrant-families-separated-under-trump>

can genuinely improve his image of having an intense concern for the well-being migrants. Also, his speech reaches both France's heart and the EU's as well because he and the Union share the same priority which is human rights. Furthermore, Biden publicly condemned Trump's inhumane policy of migrant separation under his administration, mentioning, "moral failure and a national shame". He shows national guilt and responsibility here. In addition, the news described him in a very supporting way that the president and his administration officials are working tirelessly in order to complete a database of separated migrants and correct mistakes in the migration files, and put a great effort to gather all families²⁷. All of these discourses don't reflect only the president's good image but they can be part of cascading activation framing as French citizen can recognize his reputation through the news.

Perceptions of Joe Biden in Belgium

According to the news reported, most of the Biden stories contain neutral tones and diplomatic descriptions; even if Belgians are happy with Biden's victory, they don't obviously express their feelings and keep being composed. This is relatively because Belgium is regarded as the centre of the European Union; another potential reason is that it needs EU defence be autonomous from the US, thus, avoiding disputes and

²⁷Ibid.

extreme criticism: being unfrontational and neutral are considered necessary for the Belgian government.

Biden America can rely on Belgium but be independent in security policy

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo congratulated Biden that he finally became the US president and he stated firmly that Biden's America can count on Belgium,²⁸ so this is a pleasing sign for the US. The Prime Minister also stressed how important transatlantic relations are in his message, saying that Belgium is ready to consolidate the transatlantic alliance with the US under its new leader and together protect their shared values and retain the friendship that unites people of the two continents. And most importantly, Belgium hopes the United States will support European integration which brings peace and prosperity to the territory, said Mr. De Croo. Additionally, he has a passion for creating, as he called it, a common agenda with the US to mutually handle market competition, climate issues, and the Covid challenges. Based on his statement, it can be interpreted that the Belgian administration's expectation towards Biden, as the American president, is to advocate the EU's values. Consequently, the response of Biden to the EU's expectation will have an impact on European perceptions, which considered as part

²⁸ Clapson, C. (2020, November 8). "President-elect Biden, you can count on Belgium!". *VRT.NWS*.

https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2020/11/08/_president-elect-biden-you-can-count-on-belgium/

of Othering theory because Belgium (representative of the EU as a whole) is the other to the US who shares norms and values with the Union. In this context, Mr. De Croo strongly believes Biden is able to contribute to Europe to become united and is convinced that Biden will fulfill their common agreements; thus, these notions have positive impacts on European perceptions of Biden.

Despite European having light of hope with Biden, they are warned to be aware that Europe also has its role to play. As the Belgian Prime Minister said:

“We must also show we can be a partner e.g., in relations with China, where we should set higher demands, in foreign policy in our own backyard, where we cannot always shelter in the shadow of the US and expect the US to solve our problems” (Alexander De Croo, 2021)²⁹

Throughout the last four years, Europeans have witnessed NATO without the United States’ support which is problematic for the EU itself. From this point, the Union has become more self-conscious of its defence capacities as since it learnt to stand on its own.

Such a military issue is, therefore, another instance of Othering theory but the other way round. Belgium’s reaction to the US turns unfriendly in relation to security as it experienced Washington abandoning NATO, which put burdens on the EU, under the

²⁹ Clapson, C. (2021, January 21). “We can do incredible things together”. *VRT.NWS*.

https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2021/01/21/_we-can-do-incredible-things-together/

Trump administration. Thus, the Union decided to turn its back on US security cooperation and determine to be independent to create its own policies.

Moreover, his speeches do not only indicate othering theory, but they also contain suggestion of cascading mechanism. Belgium wants to set out a foreign policy in which Europe must have military autonomy from Washington because the EU had suffered for the last four years of NATO being ignored by its crucial counterpart. This issue was significantly reported in the news which allowed Europeans to recognize how terrible the US was. Now, people are likely to believe that American defence supplies are not necessary for Europe. This fact is consistent with the survey explained earlier that 70 percent of all respondent countries said the EU cannot rely on the US military and that means the EU has to strengthen its own armed force. Finally, the citizens' responses flow back to the European constitutes who can now confidently create foreign policy towards the US

Biden proves bright image of America to Belgian media

Joe Biden in The Brussels Times, Belgian national and international news in English language, appears to have a bright image in the eyes of the country's media as he is portrayed in many good ways. In this official site, Biden was headlined with a unity victory speech on the day he won the election. "You chose hope and unity,

decency, science, and yes, truth”, said Vice President-Kamala Harris³⁰. This means a lot to the EU as what she says is what the Union honors and values, for this reason, Brussel highlights this in the newspaper. For Biden, he pledged to be a president who conserves unity, and not to seek division among Americans. This can be related to the EU expectation on Biden that he’d encourage the Union’s integration in accordance with his claim of unity; meaning that the two continents share a common value of harmonization. He also affirms to change the United States’s vision of seeing counterparts as enemies and has given focused attention to the wellbeing of people, health, racial justice, removing racism, and rebuilding democracy³¹.

NATO and EU summits invited President Biden with open arms

Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, invited US president-elect Joe Biden to NATO summit in Brussel after he officially took the office. The aim of the summit is to gather the leaders of states and government in 30 member countries of NATO to decide the future of the Alliance and mutually defend its member states from threats and challenges, specifically on the subject of health security³². The Secretary

³⁰ Spinks, J. (2020, November 8). US elections: president-elect Joe Biden calls for unity in victory speech. *The Brussels Times*. <https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/politics/139729/us-elections-president-elect-joe-biden-addresses-the-nation-kamala-harris-pennsylvania-john-lewis-douglas-emhoff-covid-19-racial-justice-donald-trump/>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Amies, N. (2020, December 1). US president-elect Joe Biden invited to Brussels in early 2021. *The Bulletin*. <https://www.thebulletin.be/us-president-elect-joe-biden-invited-brussels-early-2021>

General particularly mentioned, "I invited president-elect Joe Biden to a Nato summit here in Brussels early next year," and also added that this coming meeting is "the best way for allies to meet, to sit (around a table)". Meanwhile, on the side of the EU, European Council President Charles Michel also offered Biden an official invitation to the EU summit with the 27 leaders. On top of this, Biden intended to join the G7 summit in UK around the same time as the EU's offered summit.

According to this information, it implies that NATO and the EU (as the others of Washington) have determination to continue security cooperation with the US under Joe Biden in spite of the EU considering itself having autonomous defence capacity. Besides, both are reassured by the White House's commitment that "This trip will highlight president Biden's commitment to restoring our alliances, revitalizing the Transatlantic relationship and working in close co-operation with our allies and multilateral partners to address global challenges and better secure America's interests".³³

The president appears to favor equality and non-discrimination and support vaccine development

³³ Bradshaw, L. (2021, April 26). US president Biden to visit Brussels in June for Nato and EU summits. Ibid. <https://www.thebulletin.be/us-president-biden-visit-brussels-june-nato-and-eu-summits>

In terms of diversity in the US administration, Biden has created a nondiscriminatory environment in his office by having [Kamala Harris](#) who is not only the first female vice president of the United States, but also the first African-American, and first Asian-American [vice president](#) of the country³⁴. Additionally, Biden's selection of Janet Yellen to serve as the first US female Treasury secretary is also evidence to show he carries out the ideas of equality and non-discrimination as Europe does and which are parts of European norms. Luis de Guindos, vice-president of the European Central Bank (ECB) gave a comment on this, "good news for the economy of the United States and the world economy."

Biden also looks forward to developing vaccines against Covid with the European Union as the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has agreed to develop corona vaccine under Johnson & Johnson in the Belgian division of Janssen Pharmaceutica, meaning that the vaccine will be available in Europe too³⁵.

Perceptions of Joe Biden in Germany

³⁴ Joe Biden to pick U.S. first female treasury secretary: 'good news' for the world economy. (2020, November 25). *The Brussels Times*. <https://www.brusselstimes.com/economics/142407/new-fed-appointment-good-news-for-the-global-economy/>

³⁵ Clapson, C. (2021, March 2). Is the Janssen vaccine approval in the US a gamechanger for Belgium too? *VRT.NWS*. <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2021/03/02/is-the-janssen-vaccine-approval-in-the-us-a-gamechanger-for-belg/>

In Germany, Biden is mentioned in quite positive aspects even before the election result had been revealed and the German administration are confident in Biden's intention of improving transatlantic ally. Here, there have been relatively a lot of good images not only of himself but also representing the America's strong standing which has benefited from a return to diplomacy with Germany after Trump degraded the relationship. (The pieces of information are based on *The Local Germany* published from 19 October 2020 to 11 June 2021.)

Germany has expectation towards Biden even before taking the office

In early November 2020, American citizens were excited to know who was going to be their president, likewise in Germany, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her people were looking forward to seeing the new US leader who would change the awkward situation between Washing and Berlin after four years under Trump governance³⁶. In German newspapers, people expected Biden to win because they tended to be annoyed by Trump's unpredictability in politics as well as protectionism and nationalism (particularly 'America First' which is shocked Germans and the rest of the world, as a German official reported to the news, "Should Trump

³⁶ Merkel looks forward to 'new chapter' with Biden. (2021, January 20). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20210120/merkel-looks-forward-to-new-chapter-with-biden/>

be reelected, expect 'a great sucking in of breath' across European capitals for another four years of a very rocky ride."³⁷)

The 'America First' approach which Trump attempted to make it as a role model of American political regime has become the image of the United States. People were thinking that even if Biden won the election, Trump's footprint was not going to be removed³⁸. Thus, this was a big challenge for Biden to restore his country's reputation. Meanwhile, German administration was aware that if Biden won, he would need to essentially revitalize the quality of relation with Germany and also launch new dialogues in order to show his ability to bring everything back to normal.

Significantly, Trump served four years without visiting Germany who had waited for him to come. A politician in Merkel's Christian Democrat implied that Biden's visit would improve image of the US. With him, transatlantic territory would have an important prospect to intensify the relationship³⁹. From this point of view, Biden has very positive feedback in Germany.

Biden has regained German trust in United States democracy

³⁷ German-US alliance 'on life support' after four years of Trump. (2020, October 19). *The Local Germany*.
<https://www.thelocal.de/20201019/german-us-alliance-on-life-support-after-four-years-of-trump/>

³⁸ This is how Germany is reacting to Joe Biden's win. (2020, November 9). *The Local Germany*.
<https://www.thelocal.de/20201109/german-leaders-foresee-common-ideals-following-biden-win/>

³⁹ What could Joe Biden as US president mean for Germany? (2020, November 6). *The Local Germany*.
<https://www.thelocal.de/20201106/what-would-a-biden-presidency-look-like-for-germany/>

There was a relief among German's administration and people that Biden finally became the world leader. A German politician Frank-Walter Steinmeier revealed that "this is a 'good day for democracy.'" He truly feels grateful for Biden to run the White House and he knows German citizens share the same feeling as him⁴⁰. This report indicates that Biden's victory does restore America's image as the home of world democracy. Most importantly, the EU completely embraces democracy; consequently, the Union (as an 'other' of the US) now believes in Biden who brings the US back to evoke the common value with the European institute. With this way, Biden is successful in enriching his image; removing any questions about the US democracy and demonstrating his competence in rebuilding trust in Europe.

On the side of the Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel herself vowed that her country and the America would stick together to tackle global challenges. However, she remarked the lesson Germans learned from Trump was that Germans and European need to stand on their own feet and showed confidence in their armed force in spite of remaining in alliance with Washington; just the same way French and Belgian government warned their people, and never let their guard down on Biden's revoking tariff competition with Europe.

⁴⁰ German president Steinmeier 'greatly relieved' at US change of power. (2021, January 20). *The Local Germany*.
<https://www.thelocal.de/20210120/german-president-greatly-relieved-at-us-change-of-power/>

Biden revives the US military honour in Germany

During the US presidential campaign 2020, there was a fear among German people as Trump declared he would remove about one-third of the USA military troops in Germany if he succeeded in occupying the United States office again⁴¹. Trump gave the reason to this; Germany didn't sufficiently advocate defence to NATO and that the US detached from the institute⁴². His petulant decision frustrated Germans a lot and it risked the US's image being destroyed because it's well known that the US is one of the key security supplies for NATO. German government could only hope Biden would win the election so that he could revise this tough situation in Germany as Johann Wadepful, a German politician of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) said "I see a definitive chance that this decision will be revised if Biden is President." The speech notably defines the way of German citizens perceive Biden in which he would act in friendly manner to them and it means he had gained international trust even if there was, at that time, no guarantee he would win. Hence, these notions can enhance German perceptions of him.

⁴¹ Germany welcomes US troop withdrawal freeze under Biden. (2021, February 5). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20210205/germany-welcomes-us-troop-withdrawal-freeze/>

⁴² Will American troops in Germany still be relocated if Biden wins the election?. . (2020, November 3). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20201103/will-american-troops-in-germany-still-be-relocated-if-biden-wins-the-election/>

Fortunately, the German people's wish became true: Biden won the election and he plans to reverse Trump's order on removing the US military troops⁴³. A spokesperson of the German government insists that Germany greatly appreciates close and lasting cooperation with the United States put on duty in here⁴⁴. However, Berlin knows it shouldn't fully sell its trust on Biden's decision because he remains unsettling plans of how he will shape military concept in Europe⁴⁵. This is because as the 'other' of the US, Germany had learnt from the Trump administration not to expect much from its counterpart; especially from the US.

On the other hand, it has to be mentioned that there is a bright side of the US troops remaining stationing in Germany, as shown in the headline in the newspaper saying Washington has decided to deploy more military personnel in Germany in order to strengthen ties⁴⁶. The US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin expressed a conviction the two countries will stand by each other, saying he is happy to increase troops and military supplies in Germany. He also added Biden was willing to freeze the US troop withdrawal in response to the German government giving warm

⁴³ Merkel to meet US President Biden in Washington this July. (2021, June 11). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20210611/us-president-biden-to-meet-merkel-in-washington-in-july/>

⁴⁴ Germany welcomes US troop withdrawal freeze under Biden. (2021, February 5). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20210205/germany-welcomes-us-troop-withdrawal-freeze/>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ US to station 500 more military personnel in Germany in bid to strengthen ties. (2021, April 13). *The Local Germany*. <https://www.thelocal.de/20210413/us-to-station-500-more-military-personnel-in-germany-in-bid-to-strengthen-ties/>

welcome to the president. Thus, this can be clearly seen that his statement contains implication of reciprocity which refers to the Othering theory in which they potentially benefit from one another. As remarked in the news Austin vowed that "Germany will 'continue to be an important security and economic partner' for the United States 'for the years ahead.'" He also stressed this is the reason why improving the US and Germany relationship is regarded as one of very first priorities of Biden's America. His utterance has impacted on Biden's image in Germany showing the way that the president cares about the German people and honours tie with Germany since this topic is ranked as a top priority of Washington. So, this can be considered as a strategy of Biden's administrators to promote the United States under Biden to international audiences. A part from an image perspective, it can be related to cascading framing concept because the key messages given by the American administration represent the aim to convince the citizen to trust in Biden's willingness that they can confidently align with the country under his governance.

Final Thoughts

Throughout the research, Joe Biden has been shown to gain quite positive responses when Europeans recognize him as a US president candidate 2020. The surveys have illustrated most European citizens are pleased to see Biden overthrow Trump who had destroyed the transatlantic alliance and European confidence in United States' diplomacy since there was no substantial consultation or formal visit of the former

US president during his four years. Hence, it is accurately shown in the surveys that Trump lost his good perception in many partner countries and it's possibly difficult for the United States itself to retrieve its reputation of the world leadership.

Even though the White House is, now, occupied by Joe Biden, he still has plenty of work to bury the negative Trump legacies that he left the country with. Likewise, French perception towards Biden doesn't seem to be favourable, mentioning the US has become the enemy of Europe since Trump's administration. Contrastingly, it changed the tone when it recognized Biden as the new president. What it appreciates about him most seems to be Biden's decision to return to the Paris Agreement which the French government always promotes and were delighted by his concerns about human rights through Biden's migrant solutions. According to these, the French administration intently promote him to its people to affirm the US is back.

In Belgium by comparison, the newspapers did not report how Belgians feels about this victory, only conventional reports appeared in the medias and the tone of the stories remained neutral, which is considered as the most sensible way for Belgium to act (as the face of the European Union). Nevertheless, the Prime Minister Alexander De Croo promised that the US can place its reliance on his country but only if Biden supports European integration. Most importantly, he stressed Belgium and the EU must strengthen defence capacity on their own and not expect too

much Washington support after undergoing Trump's lessons, even though Biden has brought Washington back to NATO and can reclaim a positive image for America and for himself.

In Germany, the government states publicly that 'America First' has filtered the popular perception of the world leadership by the United States, therefore, they truly prefer Biden to take the honour of the presidency whom they have been supporting throughout the presidential campaign. Apparently, Biden in German news is reported more positively and warmly than in the other two European countries, which means the German administration seems to agree with him on almost all topics; especially on military and democracy issues. Biden's freezing the order of military retreat from Germany was a relief for German citizens, with Biden's victory is a sign of democracy in United States in their eyes. Noticeably, Germany seems to be one of the surveyed countries who prefer American defence supports most, so this might be its tactical approach to flatter its powerful counterpart.

On this point, it can be clearly seen that Biden has gained fair responses from Europe; primarily because the president has created environments where the two territories' interests and values can meet (specifically among the three nations that have been discussed). Biden rejoining the Paris Agreement and restoring to NATO provide significant big evidence the United States has been drawn back on track by this 46th US president who has shown his potential to be a great leader by

respecting common norms with the EU institutions. However, the Union knows this is only beginning of possible cold war there still are plenty of rooms for Biden and the European leaders to talk. Steel and aluminum tariffs are examples of transatlantic disputes which need attention and compromise on both sides. Not to mention rising powers like China and Russia who may be factors for the EU to consider about opportunity costs.

Since early 2020, the world has been facing a global new challenge, the Covid-19 pandemic, which it critically plunged all countries into uncertainty. Of course, under the pandemic circumstances transatlantic alliances can be undermined or strengthened; yet, there is no concrete transatlantic vaccine collaboration or mutually settled determination for the issue.

Lastly, even though Biden's America is portrayed to finally be on the right path and that the president is on his way to rebuild harmonization within his country and its partnerships, there's still a long way to go to judge if all his decisions are right and satisfy American people and Europeans. Another area for ambiguity is that what if Biden could not win another four years in the White House, does that mean something went wrong with his governance? It is visible that the US presidential transition in 2020 has made substantial differences and comparisons among Europeans who clearly opposed Donald Trump.

VITA

NAME	Pimchanok Kutchon
DATE OF BIRTH	20 December 1996
PLACE OF BIRTH	Nonthaburi
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED	Assumption University of Thailand, Faculty of Arts (Major: Business English)

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