

Almost High Noon: A New Chance for Transatlantic Relations?



The past four years in transatlantic relations were a litmus test for committed transatlanticists. As the historian Michael Kimmage outlines, there have been many ups and downs since 1945. But the trend in public opinion demonstrated a worrisome transatlantic alienation during the Trump presidency. Now, all hopes rest on Joe Biden. But US contributors in this chapter warn: things will not go back to pre-2016. Former Congresswoman Jane Harman reminds us that nostalgia is not a strategy for transatlantic relations.

Before the election, relations with the United States were at an all-time low from a German perspective, with 79 percent (compared to 64 percent in 2019) saying they were very bad or somewhat bad. The United States was not perceived as a partner on most foreign policy issues, except when it comes to European security. After the election, 23 percent of Germans say the United States is Germany's most important partner in foreign policy, up from 10 percent in September. Nevertheless, 53 percent say the presidential election has weakened their trust in US democracy. Most strikingly, on a scale from 1 to 10, the United States receives an average rating of 5 from Germans when they are asked how democratic they perceive the country to be.

Americans for their part still say relations with Germany are very good or somewhat good (74 percent) and that they regard the country as a partner on most foreign policy issues. The incoming Biden administration can build upon this solid basis. Furthermore, 78 percent of Germans are convinced that transatlantic relations will normalize during Biden's presidency.

The transatlantic to-do list is long; for instance, when it comes to European security. Russia is seen by 27 percent of Germans as a challenge, up from 6 percent last year. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius warns that Europeans finally have to do their part and fulfill NATO's 2 percent goal. For the way ahead, H.R. McMaster urges the United States and Europe to rebuild confidence. They also need to have patience, says Michael Kimmage. But the United States will return to the fold.



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With which statement do you agree most?



US ELECTION

45%

Germany and Europe should continue to rely on the relationship with the United States.

51%

Germany and Europe should become more independent from the United States.

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don't know 2%, no answer 2%