



Centre for Research and Information on Canada

Canadians Differ From Americans on Iraq, United Nations

But Only 1 in 4 Seek More Distant Ties with the US

There does not appear to be a rise in anti-American feelings among Canadians, despite Canada's difference of opinion with the US over the war in Iraq.

In the period when the threat of war loomed and as it actually broke out, only 26% of Canadians said that Canada should have more distant ties with the US. This is higher than the 13% who felt this way immediately after September 11th, 2001, but lower than the 35% who held this view in the summer of 2002, when the idea of a US attack on Iraq first came to the fore.

Currently, a plurality of Canadians (48%) say that ties with the US should remain about the same as now, up 12 points since last summer. One in four Canadians (26%), however, would like to see the two countries have closer ties.

The data cited are the result of a new survey conducted on behalf of the **Center for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC)** in Canada and the United States. Information on the survey, including methodology, follows at the bottom of this background.

CRIC is an independent, non-partisan agency with a mandate to inform Canadians about the Canadian federation, its people and its values. CRIC is the research and communications program of the Canadian Unity Council (CUC). The CUC is funded in part by the Government of Canada.

Even in Quebec, where anti-war feeling is strongest, only 29% sought more distant ties from the US, compared with 44% who favoured the status quo, and 27% who would like closer ties.

The outbreak of war did not affect survey results. Those surveyed before March 16, when US President George W. Bush issued the final ultimatum to Iraq, did not have significantly different views on this question, compared with those surveyed after that date, including during the first week of fighting.

There is also little indication of strong polarization over the issue. Only 7% of Canadians said that ties should be much more distant (as opposed to somewhat more distant). Similarly, only 11% said that they we should have much closer ties (as opposed to somewhat closer).

War Against Iraq

While most Canadians do not want the country to distance itself from the US, Canadians do have distinct positions on the current international crisis.

On the disarmament of Iraq, Canadians were much less likely than Americans to say that the use of military force was necessary. Two-thirds of Canadians agreed it would have been possible to disarm Iraq peacefully. Thirty-two percent disagreed. They felt military force was necessary to compel Iraq to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction.

Americans were more evenly divided, with 46% agreeing that disarmament through peaceful means was possible, and 44% disagreeing.

Americans were surveyed between March 14 and 16, as the inevitability of war became apparent.

Canadians were surveyed over a longer period, with those surveyed prior to March 16 being even more likely (70%) to agree that disarmament through peaceful means was possible. Even after March 16, and as fighting erupted, 63% of Canadians said it was unnecessary to resort to military force to compel Iraq to disarm.

Regionally, within Canada, Quebecers were more convinced Iraq could be disarmed peacefully: 79% in that province held this view, compared with 63% in the rest of Canada.

The United Nations

Canadians are also much more supportive of the United Nations, even though both Canadians and Americans view the organization favorably. While 59% of Americans agree that "the United Nations contributes a great deal to world peace," 80% of Canadians hold the same view. Similarly, 74% of Americans, compared with 89% of Canadians, say that their country should provide troops for UN peacekeeping forces when the need arises.

Canadians are even more supportive of the UN now than in the past. The number agreeing that the UN contributes a great deal to world peace is 11% higher today than it was the last time the same question was asked, in 1980. Similarly, the number saying that Canada should provide some of its soldiers when the United Nations needs peace-keeping troops is 19% higher today than in 1980.

Immigration and Foreign Aid

The two countries differ on foreign aid and immigration. Seventy-six percent of Americans agree that "taking care of problems at home is more important than giving aid to foreign countries," compared with 63% of Canadians. Previous surveys have also shown that Canadians are more supportive of foreign aid than are Americans.

On immigration, the difference is even more striking: 50% of Canadians, compared with 30% of Americans, agree their country ought to be accepting more immigrants from those parts of the world experiencing major conflicts. The results are consistent with the findings of previous surveys, which showed that support for reducing immigration is higher in the US than in Canada.

In Canada, the number agreeing that the country ought to accept more immigrants from those parts of the world which are experiencing major conflicts is the highest since the question was first asked in 1993.

These findings suggest that Canada's reluctance to participate in military action in Iraq reflects the country's stronger support for the UN and its traditional positions on other aspects of foreign policy, rather than a desire to turn its back on the US. Dr. Andrew Parkin, Co-Director of CRIC, who managed the survey said "Canadians have their own values. They are not necessarily better or worse than the values that others may hold, but they do inform the positions we take on important issues such as the current situation in Iraq."

Citizens of the World?

While Canadians are more supportive of the UN, foreign aid, and immigration, they are no more likely than Americans to agree with the proposition: "I feel that I am more a citizen of the world than a citizen of my own country." Only 33% of Americans and 31% of Canadians agree with this statement. It appears that Canadians' stronger support for international institutions, such as the UN, is not accompanied by a weaker sense of national identity

Quebecers, however, have a distinct position on this issue: 46% agree that they are more citizens of the world than a citizen of their own country, compared with 25% in the rest of Canada.

Men and Women Differ

Men and women continue to view the current international crisis differently. While 75% of women said it was possible to disarm Iraq without resorting to military force, only 59% of men agreed. Similarly, 31% of women sought more distant ties between Canada and the US, compared with 20% of men.

In the US, women were also more likely to agree that Iraq could be disarmed peacefully, but the difference of viewpoint between the sexes was smaller (50% of women held this view, compared with 43% for men).

Two surveys were conducted on behalf of the Center for Research and Information on Canada. In Canada, 2,012 people were surveyed by Environics Research Group between March 7 and March 27, 2003. A survey of this size has a 95% probability of being accurate to within 2.2% (plus or minus). In the United States, Tele-Nation surveyed 1,004 people between March 14 and 16. A survey of this size has a 95% probability of being accurate to within 3.1% (plus or minus).

Complete results, graphics and question wording are available on CRIC website's: www.cric.ca.

Source: CRIC

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