

# **Diplomacy, Society and the COVID-19 Challenge**

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# 8 Government Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Comparative Health Policies in the US and Canada

*Çağrı Erhan and Efe Sivriş*

### Introduction

While the COVID-19 pandemic has claimed the lives of over 6.3 million people worldwide, it has had several far-reaching socio-economic and governmental implications worldwide. Many countries coped remarkably well in the face of the pandemic. According to Bloomberg's COVID Resilience Rankings, Norway and Ireland handled the pandemic very well since both countries made great efforts to impose lockdowns and vaccinate their public (Bloomberg, 2020). While the United States (US) now conducted effective vaccination drives in the direction of the present government of Biden, the previous Trump government's mismanagement of the pandemic turned it into a full-fledged catastrophic event during the early phases from its very inception. Donald Trump specifically referred to the virus as the "Chinese Virus" (Kurtzman, 2021). This not only fuelled anti-Asian racism but also depicted his insensitive reaction to a pandemic that might kill almost 385,000 Americans in only 2020 (Crist, 2021). Moreover, the Trump administration's earlier neglect of the virus outbreak resulted in a massive death toll and startled the social and geopolitical dynamic of the North American region and the global community. As the 2020 US elections had seen the maximum voter participation, experts attributed this to enhanced disunity, political interference, deliberate misinformation, and an overall absence of integrity and liability about the COVID-19 pandemic under Trump's presidency. In contrast, Trump's isolationist and right-wing approaches, in particular, forced Canada into an isolated situation in its fight against the virus. Canada still handled the virus more efficiently than the USA. Canada implemented strong lockdown policies and financial assistance programmes. The government of Canada heavily contributed to and endorsed health-care programmes, specifically investigations and studies related to COVID-19. All the initiatives helped Canada recover from this crisis effectively. Furthermore, a contrast between the 2020 US and the 2021 Canadian elections showed that, while most Americans were highly sceptical of Trump's COVID action plan, most Canadians opted to re-elect Trudeau due to his competent management of the pandemic. In this review, we aim to examine how the United States and Canada handled the COVID-19 crisis and the implications for both countries' internal political affairs and international geopolitics.

## Background

COVID-19 started first in Wuhan, China. The first case in the United States was confirmed on January 21, 2020, in Snohomish County, Washington State (History.com, 2021). Soon after that, Seattle was turned into the COVID-19 hub, with 39 inhabitants dying of COVID comorbidities in just four weeks. Though the pandemic gave international leaders a clear chance to demonstrate their management expertise, US President Trump failed to employ the crisis as a disguised option to quiet his opponents through efficient strategic leadership and management. After the virus spread, Trump asserted that it had risen from a lab in Wuhan and dubbed it the “Chinese Virus” (Rogers et al., 2020). His response to the virus conveyed his contemptuous behaviour towards a significant threat and fuelled concerns of ethnocentric intolerance throughout the United States. As Trump proceeded to trivialise the virus’s risk, declaring in the Oval Office that the danger for “the vast majority of Americans” is “very, very low,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, a representative of the White House coronavirus response team, stated “on the very day that ‘bottom line, it’s going to get worse’” (Summers, 2020). Accordingly, whereas most health authorities stressed the importance of facial masks to prevent virus transmission, Trump was reported as mentioning, *You can do it. You don’t have to do it. I’m choosing not to do it, but some people may want to do it, and that’s OK (Ibid)*. Considering President Trump’s constant downplaying of the virus, an eminent news portal claimed, *If U.S. President Donald Trump gets his way, North America may soon embark on a massive, life-and-death medical experiment with hundreds of millions of people as guinea pigs, including you and me and our American friends and relatives (Ibbitson, 2020)*.

Till March 29, 2020, just a few months after the cases began to rise, New York City had emerged as among the worst affected regions of the USA, with 30,000 cases reported and over 2000 lives lost. This prompted the demand for comprehensive national lockdowns and the closure of markets and educational institutions. The steep rise in the overall cases forced Trump to set aside \$8.3 billion to combat the emergence and spread and announce the situation as a national emergency. His administration bought a significant quantity of healthcare equipment under the Defence Production Act of 1950.

Due to the Trump Administration’s deferred and mixed handling of the situation, local and state governments failed to contain the virus’s dispersion amidst mask restrictions and certain other standard operating procedures (SOPs). There was an unusually high percentage of cases among the Black and Latino populations, decreased vaccination rates, and the prevalence of xenophobia against Blacks and Asian Americans. The assassination of George Floyd was a notable tragedy that depicted not only systemic racism but also the evolving racial intolerance in the immediate wake of the Trump administration’s biased perspective on COVID-19 (Toure et al., 2021).

## Comparison of Trump’s and Trudeau’s Viewpoints on the Pandemic

Since the discovery of the COVID-19 virus in January 2020, the Trump presidency’s intervention has been signified by carelessness, insufficiency of resource management, and the deliberate disperse of rumours and fabrications. Trump insisted on

January 22nd at the World Economic Forum in Davos, “*We have it totally under control. It’s one person coming in from China. It’s going to be just fine.*” While Trump initially voiced contentment with China’s “efficiency and transparency” in containing the virus, he appeared perplexed by its deadliness (Lambert, 2020). The preceding remarks left Americans confused in determining whether the virus posed a serious threat to them or not. Trump also asserted that “*I think the virus is going to be—it’s going to be fine,*” “*it’s also more deadly than even your strenuous flu ... This is deadly stuff,*” he went on (Ibid). The preceding remarks definitely left Americans perplexed in determining whether COVID-19 posed a serious threat to them or not.

Furthermore, in addition to expressing his ambiguity, President Trump’s dismissive comments about the roots of the virus revealed his discriminatory attitude towards the virus. A few months after the spread, Trump referred to coronavirus as “China-Virus” during official events and press conferences. Likewise, at a campaign in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Trump addressed the virus as “Kung-Flu,” adding, “*I can name 19 different versions of names*” (Zhou, 2020). Harvey Dong, a professor of American and Asian diaspora research at the University of California, Berkeley, criticised the racially biased viewpoint, claiming that “*it’s racist and it creates xenophobia*” (Chiu, 2020). Due to discriminatory declarations by Trump government representatives, many Asian American citizens across the state have indicated ethnic physical and verbal threats linked to coronavirus concerns.

While Mr. Trump repeatedly used racist words about the virus, Canadian president Trudeau’s stance was distinct and communitarian. Trudeau said at a Lunar New Year meeting at a Chinese banquet hall in Toronto on February 1, 2020, “*There is no place in our country for discrimination driven by fear or misinformation*” (Jones, 2020). He persuaded Canadians to join hands and alerted against the propagation of any racist misconceptions about the pandemic roots.

As a result, one could notice a huge distinction between the general approach evident in Trump’s and Trudeau’s remarks. While President Trump’s statements and discussions revealed his discriminatory attitude and unpreparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Trudeau’s disposition was notably different. In contrast to Trump’s “China-virus” racist remarks, Trudeau not only publicly denounced “*hateful rhetoric*” but also stressed the importance of a coordinated attempt to fight the virus’s dispersion (Tasker, 2022). His remark well demonstrated this, “*My focus is standing with Canadians and getting through this pandemic*” (BBC News, 2022).

### **Assessment of the COVID Initiatives of the United States and Canada**

On February 2, 2020, US President Trump and Canadian President Trudeau spoke by a call about the virus’s increasing prevalence and measures taken to contain and lessen its dispersion (Holland & Harte, 2020). This came just two days after the Trump government decided to enact emergency travel bans and mandatory quarantine for Chinese citizens (Leslie, 2020). Taking cognisance of the conversation, one might expect the two presidents to put aside their disagreements to devise mutual tactics to contain the virus from spreading further.

But this ray of hope was short-lived because both figureheads had drastically distinct approaches to leadership. For example, while President Trump commemorated the Fourth of July at Mount Rushmore by making racist statements about the coronavirus, Trudeau observed Canada's national day by planting at an Ottawa land (Leyland, 2020). Likely, while Trump and his followers decided against wearing masks in public, it became SOP in Canada from the start (Ibid).

The differing opinions of both presidents caused a marked contradiction in the percentage of cases in both countries during the year 2020. Since July, the United States had recorded over 3 million cases, whereas Canada's total cases remained markedly over time and were 60 times lower than the USA. Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious disease specialist, referred to the distinction as "*it's like night and day: From coast to coast, we have the epidemic in Canada under excellent control. We've been able to suppress cases at the community level. Of course, we're still seeing some small outbreaks, but we've been able to suppress the vast majority of the infection and rapidly identify small outbreaks*" (Leyland, 2020).

The drastic contrasts in cumulative COVID occurrence rates between the United States and Canada were due to variations in both countries' general policy initiatives. When the first coronavirus incidents were revealed in March 2020, all Canadian regions and provinces announced a state of emergency. They imposed lockdowns on educational institutes, restricted gatherings, closed non-essential organisations, and severely controlled and monitored border entry. Since the outbreak of 2004 SARS, the Ministry of Health exercised the Quarantine Act, mandating all tourists visiting the state to undertake a requisite 14-day self-quarantine (McQuigge, 2022). Resultantly, Canada saw a significant decrease in the overall incidence rate until the second wave that occurred in September 2020.

In the United States, on the contrary, the Trump government proceeded to understate the possible risks posed by the virus, even though it had recently terminated and dissolved the group in charge of dealing with a pandemic in 2018 (Lopez, 2020). The successive major cuts in general public finance exacerbated the Trump government's failure to manage an emergency of the magnitude of COVID-19 efficiently. Major postponements characterised the Trump government's mishandled reaction in successfully closing the influx of tourists into the US. Furthermore, the government could not promptly deliver testing kits and preventative medical equipment to public health personnel. These factors were critical in mobilising a coordinated reaction to the emergency. Trump's repeated claims that wearing a mask was unnecessary to contain the virus only fuelled the emergency.

It should be recognised that President Trump quickly understood the pandemic's significant risk, especially in the months following the crisis in New York City. He started wearing a mask in the community and appearing on television from the Oval Office more frequently, requesting people to adhere to socially isolating SOPs and highlighting his government's COVID-19 regulations. However, this belated realisation came at the expense of several lives lost throughout the United States due to the administration's public health failures, lack of adequate testing kits, effective lockdowns, and SOPs.

Canada, in contrast, managed to stay more assertive and productive in its response to the pandemic, as said before. Observers such as David Frum claimed that the country levied urgent 14-day self-isolation initiatives for tourists and visitors (Frum, 2020). Upon entrance, visitors were asked, “What will they do with the grocery shopping?” Whether or not they were aware of their country’s masking prerequisites? What contact information might be employed to contact them while they are isolated? Upon entrance, Canadian healthcare institutions maintained direct contact with all visitors subjected to the requisite self-quarantine. They would indeed take calls, voice messages, and texts from the health systems regularly, commending them for being law-abiding citizens, notifying them of the rest of the days, and focusing on their physical and psychological health.

### **Geopolitical Implications of Trump’s COVID Reaction for the US and Canada**

The pandemic appeared to be a significant health threat worldwide, killing many people and transforming into a significant global problem across country boundaries. Due to continuous border shutdowns, limitations on mobility, and other lockdown provisions, global movements of individuals and world trade reached all-time declines. Admittedly, it was internationalisation that allowed the virus to transmit from Wuhan to the world at large quickly. As a result, its dispersion posed various risks to the geopolitics of nations all over the globe.

The geopolitical implications of COVID-19 were far-reaching for the USA. Previously in March 2020, US Vice President Mike Pence directed the nation’s disease control authority to efficiently lock all borders of the state, amidst authorities’ suggestions that there was no indication that such an action would be successful in preventing the distribution of the virus (Dearen, 2020). Due to these initiatives, nearly 150,000 children and adults were deported from the state. The United States’ borders with Canada and Mexico were closed, impacting thousands of refugees attempting to enter the United States. As a result, many people and children, who were normally afforded special constitutional protections through federal law, were deported back to the country. Numerous people returned to nations with highly unstable situations, including Afghanistan, Honduras, and El Salvador. Critics denounced the Trump government for simply waiting for an opportunity to penalise immigrants, as it did before taking office in 2016. Lee Gelernt, an official with the American Civil Liberties Union’s Immigrants’ Rights Project, claimed: “*That is what the Trump administration has been trying to do for four years and they finally saw a window*” (Ibid). Only a few months after the borders were closed, Trump used the actions as propaganda in his campaign for the upcoming presidential election. He stated this at a gathering in Arizona: “*It’s a great — it’s a great feeling to have closed up the border.*”

The Trump government’s decision to haphazardly close all of the national borders had many consequences for the state, its neighbourhood, and worldwide geopolitics. The pandemic raised the competitiveness between the United States and China, having detrimental consequences on providing worldwide health-related

products while enhancing the total destabilisation of the world order (Bahi, 2021). Instead of focusing on the virus's risks, the two countries' attitudes showed a zero-sum mentality predicated on the demand to enhance their worldwide financial interests at the expense of others. As a result, the overall confidence in worldwide state collaboration dropped drastically. This scenario was aggravated by the absence of international or regional governance during a worldwide emergency, which jeopardised world peace. Because of the obvious US-China fierce competition during the pandemic, Europe and Canada identified themselves as secluded in their efforts to address the disaster adequately. In the post-Cold War situation, Europeans thought they were creating a global order governed by rules, with their landmass at the centre. But, in the after-effects of the pandemic, influential international organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) had seen themselves being utilised by the potential global superpowers – the United States and China – in their rivalry. Instead of efficiently addressing the issues that humans experience globally, the institutions become a focal point for global competition. As a result, Europe found itself isolated in terms of developing workarounds for the pandemic (IWM, 2022). This abandonment was compounded by Europe's allied powers acting unilaterally: Trump proceeded to irritate the European Union by enforcing travel restrictions on people of 26 Schengen countries, a move denounced by most European Union leaders as pre-emptive and unjustifiable (The Parliament Magazine, 2020). While Trump initially underestimated the virus's perceived risk, he struck the European Union in a video statement for failing to handle the "foreign virus" successfully while accusing European visitors of "seeding" the virus's transmission in the United States (KFF, 2020).

Similarly, Canada became detached due to President Trump's inconsistent strategies, geopolitical confrontation with China, border limitations, and inability to properly deal with the virus in the United States. Trudeau's administration attempted to tread a fine line between China, its second largest bilateral trade and investment associate, and the United States, its biggest trading partner, natural associate, and neighbour.

Trump decided to close the borders while arming it shortly after the pandemic started. This had already been putting a strain on both countries' economic cooperation, Trump's plan to suspend N-95 mask exports to Canada while afterwards restoring the border only heightened conflicts between the neighbours, abandoning Canada isolated (Blatchford, 2022). But this can be interpreted as a follow-up to Trump's preliminary provocations to rip up the NAFTA trade agreement. Therefore, Trudeau must have been prepared for violent calls by the Trump presidency during the pandemic.

To better cope with Trump's risks of undefined practices, Trudeau's administration utilised comprehensive conciliatory and regulatory measures to mitigate the virus's risks. In the case of N-95 masks, for example, the Canadian administration and its lower levels teamed up with the lower wings of the USA government to maintain consistent supply. When it became clear that his province might not have enough N-95 mask stockpiles, Ontario Premier Doug Ford negotiated with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. Likewise, in response to Trump's

declaration that military units would be sent to the borders, Canada vigorously opposed it while maintaining direct relationships with US Homeland Security to prevent such a step. Shortly after knowing of such strategies, Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland quickly called US Vice President Mike Pence and Homeland Security officials, voicing her apprehensions about any more prospective movements of soldiers at the borders. She informed them emphatically that additional militarisation at the borders would be "damaging" to both nations' relationships. Furthermore, Canadian authorities proceeded to warn their American counterparts of how interconnected their distribution channels were and how devastating it would be to both nations if commerce were to have been halted in this way – particularly when it came to the transfer of basic healthcare infrastructure and supplies. As a result of this approach at multiple levels of the Canadian authorities, the country successfully overcame President Trump's potential danger to its attempts to curb the transmission of the infection successfully.

### **Economic Risks of the COVID-19 Pandemic for the United States and China**

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) annual World Economic Outlook disclosed that the total economic outcome in the United States reduced by 4.7% in 2020, the initial phase of the pandemic. Canada, on the other hand, performed far worse, with a 5.4% decline in volume. This might be interpreted as a consequence of Canada's strict lockdowns and closures of unnecessary educational institutes and markets. These measures aided in uplifting its economic growth and limiting the transmission of the virus more effectively than in the United States. In a broad sense, the COVID-19 pandemic had hindered markets around the globe in a variety of forms: it caused demand distress, and it also caused supply chain disruptions and a budgetary startle (Bauer et al., 2022).

The pandemic had a geographically distinct pattern, as it typically started in heavily populated regions and then distributed to semi-urban and rural areas of states (Triggs and Kharas, 2020). Most COVID-19 cases detected in the USA were reported from densely inhabited urban metropolitan areas, especially on the East Coast, like New York City, New Jersey, and Boston. Furthermore, distinct social and ethnic communities were impacted by the pandemic in a divergent manner. Because of historic and pervasive disparities and exclusion in academics, health services, management, and work opportunities, definite racial minorities, especially Blacks, were at a higher risk of contracting the virus. The deferring, taken together, only contributed to the nation's significant financial crisis.

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) revealed that February 2020 signified the end of the USA's apex in monthly business growth that also began in 2009 in the wake of the global economic recession (NBER, 2020). The pandemic's crucial devastating economic impacts on the US economic system included a steep drop in GDP and a swift spike in inflation accompanied by joblessness. In April 2020, employment in the United States tumbled by more than 20.5 million. The drop in GDP and joblessness resulted from the huge instability

in worldwide supply chain operations. The current trade wars between the United States and China weakened the risks by depriving the United States of huge volumes of import stuff required to maintain its market and combat the virus by itself during the pandemic.

Since some sectors of the economy, including grocery shops, dispensaries, and e-commerce firms, benefited from the pandemic, the vast largest portion of retail revenues fell due to huge fluctuations in household consumption. The rise in joblessness, combined with rising inflationary pressures, only exacerbated the problem for retail companies all over the state. Smaller companies were particularly hard hit. A survey showed that small company profitability dropped by more than 20% with the virus's emergence in January 2020 (Engidaw, 2022). Smaller companies in travel and hospitality were adversely affected due to the restrictions imposed by authorities during the pandemic.

The unemployment rate in the United States had exceeded 14.7% in April 2020, the biggest increase after the Great Depression (Center for American Progress, 2021). Nearly 37.6 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits, reflecting the country's tragic economic situation (FRED, 2022). The Trump government's broad, failed policies, which began long before the actual COVID-19 pandemic, amplified the financial collapse. His decisions hampered the nation's capacity to deal with an actual public health emergency like the pandemic.

The United States' economic crisis may also be compared to its many global contemporaries, such as China, European Union nations, and Canada. According to multiple references, economically sound policies in the United States might have possibly assisted the nation in avoiding drastic joblessness and other financial implications. South Korea, for example, was successful in maintaining a low unemployment rate of 3.8%, just a little higher than the average 3.3% rate before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was due to the government's important interventions like lockdowns that also contributed in saving the country economically from crippling in the subsequent phases. Correspondingly, Germany's unemployment rate increased relatively from 5.0% to 5.8%, compared to 14.7% in the USA.

The scenario of Canada appeared differently in relation to the United States. The Canadian administration implemented several quick and efficient measures as an aspect of its "COVID-19 Economic Response Plan" to safeguard its people from the prospective financial consequences of COVID-19 (Government of Canada, 2020). In the initial pandemic phases, Canada had a sound financial position, a minimal GDP-to-debt ratio, and relatively low debt levels. All these factors aided the authorities in dealing with COVID-19 effectively. While the administration's first primary concern was to actively stop the virus's transmission by strengthening public health care facilities, its choice to place lockdowns on inessential markets and educational institutions caused substantial employment and revenue losses, as well as disproportionate effects on many sections of the population. Provided the preceding considerations, the Canadian state chose to stimulate its economic growth through mitigation actions. These constituted around \$212 billion in assistance to Canadian people and companies. Furthermore, it offered about \$14 billion

in finance to provinces to help them gradually expand their economic systems. Accordingly, the Canadian administration had set aside \$600 billion in funds for impacted companies across the state through Canadian banks and financial organisations. Resultantly, through these appropriate approaches as a component of the "Response Plan," Canada has been inclined to confront the likely negative economic consequences of the pandemic productively and dynamically, ensuring the balance of its economy in times of crisis. This strategy was implemented when Canada was pretty deserted due to the unexpected and unjustifiable decisions of US President Donald Trump, including the border restrictions that also negatively affected Canada's trade balance revenue.

It is also important to recognise that Canada's economic strategy arose due to the country's early efforts to halt the transmission of the pandemic. Shortly after the virus's emergence, the Canadian authorities made significant investments in health facilities and public health agencies throughout all Canadian provinces to provide them with the greatest available processes to deal with a prospective public health emergency. The financial assistance provided by the government was also in favour of the advancement and enhancement of successful virtual care and mental health instruments. Furthermore, the national healthcare's immediate reaction involved quick and easy COVID-19 testing services. As a result, during the early period of the pandemic, the nation's COVID testing per head of population was greater than in most other states (Samson, 2022). This resulted from the government's huge \$210 million financing in COVID-19 R&D programmes in March 2020. Given the United States' growing geo-political and geo-economic competition with Canada, as well as the closing of its borders with the United States, the Canadian authorities were capable of successfully obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE) through various channels (Ibid). This was accomplished, in phase, by engaging domestic industries and financing domestically made healthcare items and tools. Similarly, after the pandemic began, the administration invested approximately \$1.4 billion to fund vaccine innovation and education and approximately \$3.4 billion in humanitarian support against the COVID-19 virus (Ibid).

Canada's economy profited immensely from efficacious lockdowns and strong financial stimulus packages, rebounding twice as quickly as the United States, its principal trading partner, in the third period (Smith, 2020). In August 2020, the nation's economy expanded at an annual rate of 36%, compared to 20% in the United States. Likewise, Canada's rate of daily COVID cases fell dramatically in the third year, to below 400 from 1800 in May. In contrast, the huge increase in cases that occurred simultaneously in different states across the United States caused them to reconsider their intentions to restart their markets.

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has had a considerable effect on Canada, leading to fundamental changes in social, economic, and political sphere. The Canadian response to COVID-19 had been many-sided, including measures to decrease the spread rate of the virus, preserve vulnerable groups, backing the healthcare system, and tackle the economic consequences of the pandemic. One of the first steps that had been taken against the pandemic was the foundation of the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF), which aimed at using serology, that

is, the scientific study of serum and other body fluids to struggle with the virus in Canada. CITF has been covered in various research articles so far, including the one that argued that the number of people who had been infected with COVID-19 was bigger than announced figures, indicating the need for continued readiness in struggling the virus (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Besides the establishment of CITF, the Canadian government applied various measures to decrease the rate of spread, including lockdowns and restrictions on travel and gatherings. These measures were useful in decreasing the number of cases in Canada, although there were some difficulties in enforcing the rules and managing compliance (Urrutia et al., 2021).

The Canadian government had given priority to its healthcare system in this period. The funding for scientific research and development of treatments and vaccines is sufficient enough. Canada has been one of the top countries in vaccine development, with several corporations located in Canada contributing to the global effort to produce effective vaccines (Government Canada, 2022). Another significant dimension of the Canadian measures to the pandemic was the support provided to citizens and commercial units affected by the economic impact of the pandemic.

Several programmes were implemented by the government for the purpose of providing financial assistance to those who lost incomes or were forced to close their businesses, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). Canadian response to the COVID-19 pandemic was comprehensive, with a particular focus on slowing the spread of the virus, hence supporting the healthcare system and addressing the economic impact of the pandemic as well. Whilst challenges appeared and there was still room for improvement, Canada is still honoured for its response to the pandemic.

The Canadian economy was affected severely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in closing of particular businesses, job losses, and a particular decrease in consumer choices. The Canadian economy shrank by 5.4% in 2020, which marked as the worst annual decline since the Great Depression (Government of Canada, 2020). The pandemic's impact on the Canadian labour market was severe as well. In April 2020, the Canadian unemployment rate rose to 13%, the highest record-keeping level since 1976 (Statistics Canada, 2020). Despite the decrease in the unemployment rate, it still remains above pre-pandemic leverage. Certain sectors, such as hospitality and tourism, were affected badly and still have long-term unemployment rates that are higher than the others (CBC, 2021).

The pandemic affected the Canadian government's finances as well. The federal government introduced several programmes for the purpose of supporting individuals and businesses during the pandemic, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). These programmes resulted in a significant increase in government spending, which led to a federal deficit amounting to USD 354.2 billion approximately in between the years 2020 and 2021, being the largest debt in Canadian history (Statistics Canada A and B, 2022). It can be concluded undoubtedly that the pandemic had a

significant negative impact on the Canadian economy, with long-term effects that are expected to continue in upcoming years. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic situation had a wide-ranging social impact on Canadian society. One of the most significant impacts, amongst others, was the increase in social isolation, loneliness experienced by many Canadians due to lockdowns and social distancing measures (Mo et al., 2020). Hence, this situation had a particular impact on elders and individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions. There was also a major increase in domestic violence and child abuse cases due to increase in the number of people who were forced to stay home and spend more time in close proximity with their abusers (Abramson, 2020).

The pandemic situation also highlighted the existing inequalities within the Canadian society, particularly the ones relating to the healthcare access and employment. People from marginalised communities, such as low-income individuals and racialised groups, were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to pre-existing systemic inequalities and, as a result, making them more vulnerable to the virus (Kemei et al., 2023). Moreover, the pandemic highlighted the precarity of many jobs in the gig economy and other low-wage sectors wherein workers often lacked paid sick leave and a variety of other employment protections. On the other hand, it also resulted in an increase in community solidarity and activism since Canadians cooperated for supporting each other and advocating for policy changes with the aim of addressing the challenges of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on both Canada and the United States. While both countries faced similar challenges, there were some notable differences in their approaches to managing the crisis. One key difference was the timing of the response. Canada began implementing public health measures, such as social distancing and mask mandates, earlier than the United States, which was slower to respond due to a lack of federal leadership and politicisation of the pandemic. The delay in the US response likely contributed to the higher number of cases and deaths in the country compared to Canada. Another difference was the level of coordination between the federal government and provinces/states. In Canada, the federal government worked closely with the provinces and territories to coordinate a unified response to the pandemic, while in the US, there was a lack of coordination between the federal government and states, with some states implementing their own measures while others did not.

The two countries also differed in terms of financial support for citizens and businesses affected by the pandemic. Canada provided more comprehensive financial assistance programmes, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which provided income support to millions of Canadians who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. In contrast, the US response was more fragmented, with different states implementing their own financial assistance programmes and the federal government providing limited support. The differences between the Canadian and American responses to the pandemic can be attributed to a combination of factors, including differences in political leadership, federal-state/provincial relations, and financial support programmes.

**Examining Trump's Inability and Trudeau's Victory  
in the 2020/2021 Elections**

Many researchers regarded the 2020 US elections as a plebiscite on whether Trump had dealt successfully with the COVID-19 pandemic. The electoral outcomes show that most Americans voted for the opposite. Amidst Trump's electoral victory in 2016, even after his inconsistent statements about females and non-natives, Americans largely denounced his identical arguments regarding the COVID-19 emergency. Furthermore, Trump's negative rhetoric coincided with the state's large financial recession, reducing his possibility of re-election. A Cambridge study revealed that data about the economic recession reduced his endorsement across all sections of society, especially middle- and low-income families (Neundorf and Pardo-Prado, 2021). On either side, his government's ineffectual management of the public health emergency weakened his approval among older people aged 55–77. A further study found that if the COVID-19 cases were already 5–10% lesser, Trump could have been elected president (Brodeur and Baccini, 2021). It was especially the case in states like Arizona, Georgia, and Washington, where Joe Biden won by a sharp edge. Even so, it is a generalisation to recommend that the 2020 election results reflected the general trend of Americans regarding Trump's gross incompetence of the pandemic, as evidenced by his preliminary trivialising of the virus, the huge sharp rise in cases in urban metropolitan areas including New York City, and his persistent disinclination to highlight COVID SOPs like the wearing of masks in the crowd.

In Canada, on the contrary, Justin Trudeau successfully secured his third win in the 2021 Canadian election campaign (Leyland, 2021). Even though Trudeau's choice to convene an election soon during the pandemic was criticised by his opposition, Trudeau's party was capable of effectively justifying its policy initiatives, as evidenced by its electoral victory, though somewhat narrower than ever before. The election findings demonstrated that most Canadians were pleased with how Trudeau and his administration reacted to the pandemic and managed to save the nation from significant public health and financial crisis. Furthermore, this may be interpreted as the achievement of a political leader with pluralism and a liberal electoral mission statement versus the defeat of one who had a polarising one.

**Conclusion**

The initial findings show that Donald Trump's improper disposal of the COVID-19 pandemic had dire effects on the United States and international geopolitics. While his immediate dismissal of the virus contributed to many deaths and peaks in cases in major cities such as New York City, the shortage of swift COVID testing, combined with the inability to enforce efficient lockdowns, had a negative impact on the US economy, as evidenced by rising inflation and joblessness. Furthermore, Trump's discretionary decisions, including closing the US-Canada border and announcing the deployment of forces to the border, weakened its diplomatic cooperation with Canada, abandoning Canada detached. But, through policies including

fiscal stimulus packages for public health agencies, R&D, and acquisition and local production of PPE and other health supplements, Canada was capable of successfully controlling the pandemic. As an outcome of these immediate initiatives, Canada fared comparatively well during the pandemic, as evidenced by its fast-improving economy and a decreasing trend in total cases compared to the United States. Furthermore, Trump's mismanagement of the COVID pandemic effectively killed his re-election chances in the 2020 US elections. On the contrary, the majority of Canadians re-elected Trudeau for the third time in 2021, demonstrating their faith in his COVID policy initiatives.

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