

Gen Z and Changing Transatlantic Foreign Policy Perceptions

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The European and North American Generation Z—people born after 1996 and thus formed their worldview after 9/11, China became a global power, and the 2008 financial crisis—have significantly different ideas about world order, international security, and the reliability of partner countries than their older compatriots. They are less likely to perceive the United States as the most influential power and to see partner countries in Europe or on the other side of the Atlantic as reliable, and they tend to have a more positive view of China.

The Gen Z views expressed in GMF's Transatlantic Trends 2021 survey reflect important long-term changes in the world order, and have the potential to directly impact the evolution of European integration and transatlantic cooperation.

The perceptions of Gen Z serve as a window into the world of tomorrow and policy-makers should take them seriously. Gen Z views are important food for thought for those in charge of imagining and shaping the place of the EU and the transatlantic alliance in the future international order.

Skipping school on Fridays for demonstrations against climate change or reigniting debates on gun control and racial justice, young people born after 1996—Gen Z—are often seen as more politicized than the previous generation, the Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996. This observation is also reflected in the *Transatlantic Trends 2021* foreign policy survey, which reveals the 18-24 years old cohort to be an outlier on many questions central to the transatlantic relationship. The contrast is especially stark when comparing Gen Z to the oldest cohort in the survey.¹ Europeans and North Americans under 25 are more likely than their older compatriots to perceive the world as bipolar or multipolar instead of seeing the United States as the uncontested leader in global affairs, and to hold more positive views on China. Gen Z also seems to be a global and European generation, perceiving the EU as an important player in the world and more likely to support the military engagement of European countries in the Middle East.

Most importantly, Gen Z diverges from established patterns of transatlantic relations and does not sign up to the idea of a unipolar world order under U.S. leadership. While this might, at first sight, appear somewhat unsettling to older policymakers, or one might be tempted to ignore the (still minority) Gen Z opinion as youthful fancy, this would be short-sighted. The Gen Z view offers an opportunity for transatlantic policymakers to imagine the world of tomorrow and seize its opportunities. There is something like a transatlantic Generation Z, which in itself is an opportunity. While a generational gap can be observed in almost all countries surveyed, the degree of alignment of the perceptions and opinions of young people on both sides of the Atlantic is striking. There is a European and transatlantic consensus among the cohort, but with a shifting focus compared to older generations. However, this generation also shows much lower levels of mutual trust compared to the overall average found in the survey: it seems that the Trump years, Brexit,

respondents (45%) see the United States as the most influential actor, compared to four out of five (81%) of the respondents aged 65 or above—a 36 points generation gap. Similar generation gaps can be found in Sweden (43% vs. 70% of the 55+ respondents), the United Kingdom (47% vs. 74% of the 65+ respon-

Methodology

Transatlantic Trends is a comprehensive public opinion survey conducted in 11 countries on both sides of the Atlantic—Canada, the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The fieldwork was conducted from late March to mid-April 2021 via online surveys with a sample of 1,000 persons per country. The data were weighted to match population factors for age, gender, region (in all countries), income (in Canada, the United States, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain), and occupation (in the United Kingdom and France).

The sample sizes for respondents aged 18-24 years were the following: 97 in Canada, 103 in France, 88 in Germany, 84 in Italy, 109 in the Netherlands, 116 in Poland, 78 in Spain, 126 in Sweden, 175 in Turkey, 125 in the United Kingdom, and 175 in the United States. These data were then weighted to ensure a representation according to the actual population quota in the respective states. Despite the comparatively small sample size, the study provides a comprehensive overview of youth public opinion on a range of foreign policy issues on both sides of the Atlantic and is unprecedented in its scope.

The results for the youngest generation are contrasted both to the national average and the oldest generation. In the second case, the “oldest generation” refers to respondents aged 55+ in Turkey, Sweden, Spain, Canada, and the United States, and respondents aged 65+ in the United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, and France.

¹ German Marshall Fund of the United States, [Transatlantic Trends 2021](#), June 2021.

and years of complicated cooperation among European countries have colored the opinion of the young generation. This demonstrates the need for in-person exchange and positive experiences of European integration and transatlantic cooperation, as public support will determine the capacity of these projects tomorrow. Civic education to build meaningful links among citizens is not an add-on but vital for future cooperation. Yet, even the most sophisticated civic education programs cannot replace positive examples and concrete results. This is why partners on both sides of the Atlantic should seek cooperative solutions to shared challenges—something those under 25 suggest they have not seen enough of. Besides generating policies with an added value, this can demonstrate to Gen Z that Europe and the transatlantic relationship can still deliver, particularly on challenges, such as climate change, that will significantly shape their future.

Declining U.S. Influence

The Donald Trump years are likely to be particularly significant in the political memory and perceptions of the youngest Transatlantic Trends respondents since they were aged between 14 and 20 when he was elected. This may be why Gen Z respondents are less likely to see the United States as the most influential actor in global affairs. It is mostly the EU that benefits from this perceived shift (on average, a +10 points difference from the oldest respondents), which is a hopeful sign for a more balanced transatlantic relationship with better responsibility sharing.

When asked to rank actors according to their influence in global affairs, Transatlantic Trends 2021 respondents across age group and countries indicated that the United States remains the most influential (62%), followed distantly by China (20%) and the EU (14%). However, the perceptions of young respondents indicate a shift toward a new world order: in general, they are more likely than their older compatriots to see the power of the United States as less important than that of the EU. The greatest gap between Gen Z and the oldest respondents can be found in Poland, where less than half of the youngest

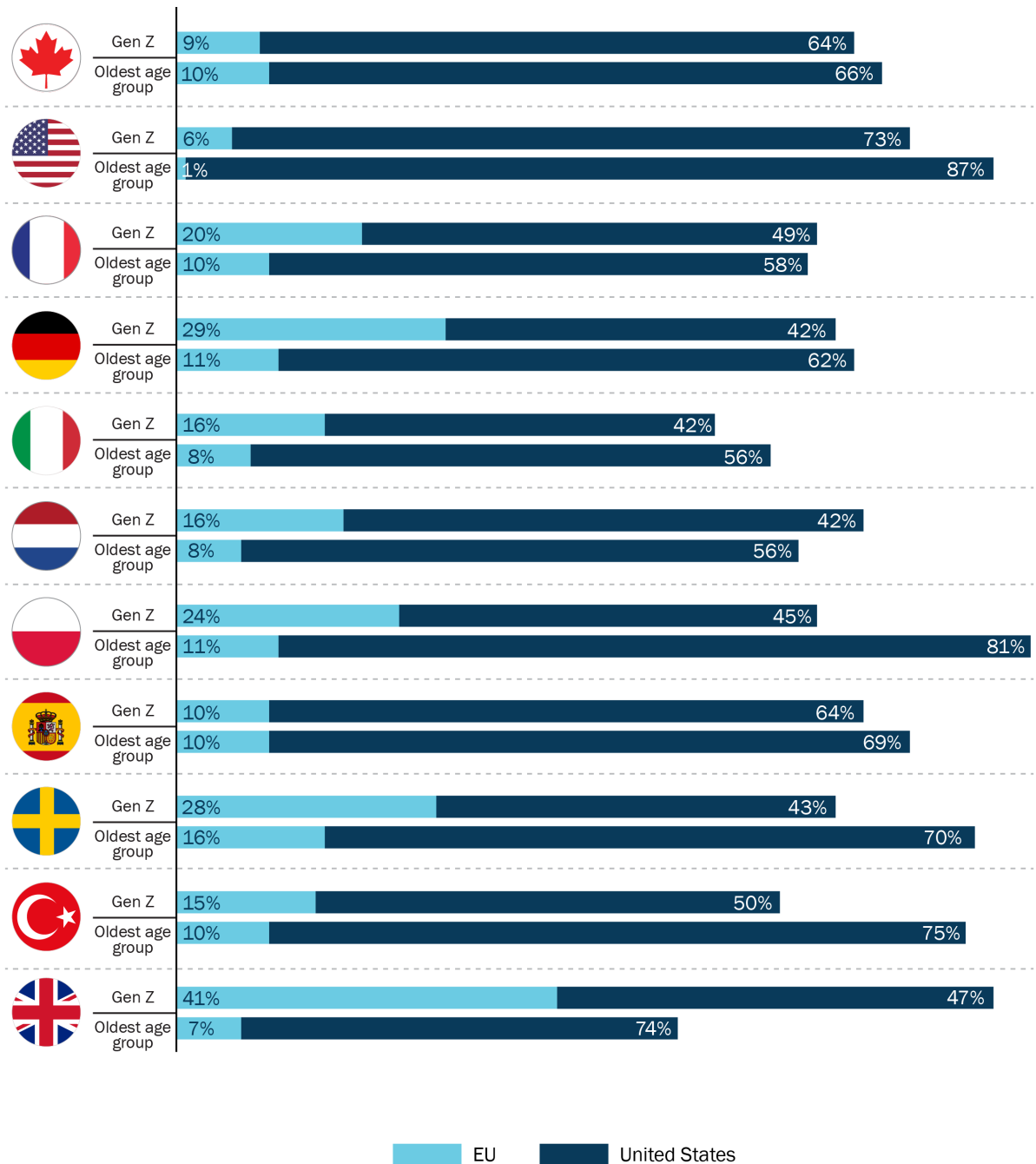
dents), Turkey (50% vs. 75% of the 55+ respondents), and Germany (42% vs. 62% of the 65+ respondents). Even in the United States, where respondents were overall and across age groups most likely to see their own country as the most influential (81%), younger respondents were less likely to do so, with only 73% of them viewing the United States as the most influential (compared to 87% of the 55+ respondents).

Gen Z respondents tending to regard the United States as less powerful can be observed across all countries surveyed.

While sometimes not statistically significant, Gen Z respondents tending to regard the United States as less powerful can be observed across all countries surveyed.² The EU or China filled the U.S. absence in international affairs during the Trump presidency on topics including the Paris climate agreement, the Iran nuclear agreement, or multilateral trade agreements. Transatlantic Trends 2021 did not show a clear “Biden effect” in that most results were generally consistent with the previous year (when the survey was conducted only in France, Germany, and the United States), but it may also be difficult to measure a potential Biden effect only a few months after the new administration took over. In contrast, the Trump years seem to have marked the political memory of Gen Z. But, although the four years of the Trump administration were undoubtedly formative for those younger than 25, what we are seeing is likely more than that and shows the effects of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and, finally, Trump’s foreign policy as the prominent examples of U.S. global action. Seen

² A result is statistically significant if it is most likely not produced by chance, but by the variable of interest. A major reason why results are not statistically significant is sample size. For example the results of the perceptions of young French (49%) or Italian respondents (42%) are not statistically significant, although they lie below the national averages (56% in France, 51% in Italy)

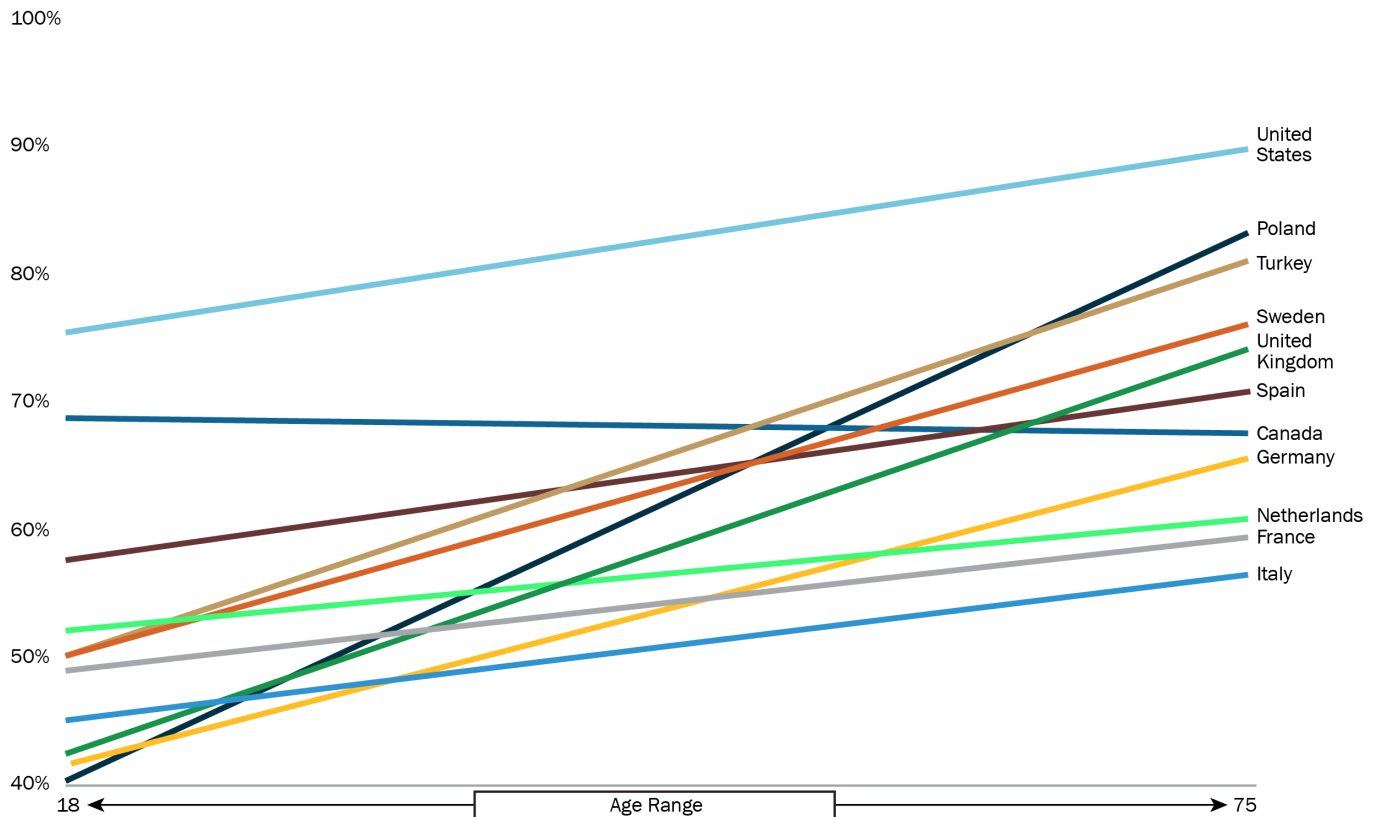
Figure 1. Perceptions of the EU and United States as the Most Influential Actor, Gen Z vs. Oldest Age Group.



Source: Transatlantic Trends 2021.

Note: Oldest age groups among respondents: 55 years and over in Canada, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States; 65 years and over in the United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, and France.

Figure 2. Trendlines in Variations in Perceptions of the United States as the Most Influential Actor Across Age Range.



Source: *Transatlantic Trends 2021*.

in the larger context of public opinion polling, the Trump years thus appear to have accelerated a trend noted over the last decade, namely the relative decline of U.S. power in international affairs. Or rather, the views of Gen Z (in contrast to those of older respondents) confirm that the trend may last. This is consistent with the *Transatlantic Trends* results across age groups, showing that higher perceptions of U.S. influence in the global order in the correlate with age in a majority of the countries surveyed.

Toward a Stronger and More Engaged Europe

As 18–24-year-olds perceive less U.S. dominance, they also see a more bipolar or multipolar world order than the average respondent. The most striking result in

this regard can be found in the United Kingdom—but compared to what one might expect, the British Gen Z do not perceive the world as bipolar with the United States and China as the most influential powers but rather the United States (47%) and the EU (41%). Overall, it seems that the loss of influence of the United States in the eyes of the youngest generation in Europe mostly correlates with higher status for the EU, whereas China and Russia barely benefit. While the United Kingdom is a significant outlier, the EU is generally perceived as more influential by younger respondents than by ones aged 65 or older; for example, in Germany (29% vs. 11%), Poland (21% vs. 11%), the Netherlands (18% vs. 7%). The only country where the significantly lower perception of U.S. power among Gen Z respondents correlates with

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a significantly higher assessment of Chinese influence in global affairs is Poland where 25% of the youngest respondents, compared to 6% of the older respondents, say China is the most influential power.

From a European perspective, these findings are a hopeful sign that the “geopolitical” European Commission and the EU’s quest for becoming a truly global actor might benefit from public support in the long term. Although the perceptions of comparatively low U.S. influence in the world may ring some alarm bells in Washington, this finding should cause more hope than panic. As the lower influence of the United States in the eyes of the youngest respondents correlates with a higher perception of the EU’s influence, European policymakers could see this as a window of opportunity for true responsibility sharing in the transatlantic relationship. While the United States will be keen to take the lead on many issues of global governance and with regard to dealing with China, it is apparent that it has little interest in continuing to play as much of a role as a security provider in the European neighborhood. Furthermore, the EU has proven to be an important player for preserving, at least to some extent, the Iran nuclear agreement. If the United States wants to encourage more responsibility and co-leadership by its European partners, it seems it can count on the Europeans just entering the work force and the voting booth to be allies. This can be a win-win.

Indeed, a shift toward greater burden sharing and maintaining or increasing military engagement in the Middle East is reflected in the preferences of the youngest generation according to Transatlantic Trends; this might point to a long-term shift of policy preferences of the EU member states and changes in European strategic cultures. Across countries and age groups, the survey showed an overall preference for decreasing military engagement in the Middle East (37%), followed by maintaining it (33%) and just a small share of respondents in favor of increasing their country’s military engagement (9%) in the region. In all EU member states covered by the survey at least one-third of respondents aged between 18 and 24 years prefer maintaining engagement, and Gen Z respon-

dents are much more likely than their older compatriots to support more military engagement of their country in the Middle East. The most striking difference can be observed in Sweden and the Netherlands, where around one-fifth of Gen Z respondents advocates for more military engagement of their country in the Middle East, compared to only 2% of respondents aged 55 and older. Similarly striking generation gaps can be observed in France (13% vs. 3% of the 65+ respondents) and Spain (15% vs. 4% of the 55+ respondents). Undoubtedly, more engagement is still an extremely small minority view—but a generation gap is notable. Even in Germany, often characterized as a country with a strategic culture of military restraint and depicted as a civilian rather than military power, young respondents are more than twice as likely than older ones to support more military engagement in the Middle East (18% vs. 7% of the 65+ respondents). Polish Gen Z members are not interested in more engagement, yet the generational pattern remains consistent even here. The youngest cohort does not support stronger military engagement in the Middle East than their older compatriots, but they do less explicitly ask for decreasing military engagement (25% compared to 47% of the 65+ respondents).

Here too, policymakers—particularly in the EU—might want to see this as an important sign that the perception of Europe’s role in the world is changing, and that European engagement, including military, has its place in an increasingly multipolar world order. The strong alignment of young public opinion between Canada and the EU countries also underlines that transatlantic burden sharing in the European neighborhood should not only be conceptualized based on geographic factors or EU membership, but also on like-mindedness of the partners and shared interests. The opening of Permanent Structured Cooperation in security and defense to non-EU member states and the focus on partnerships in the ongoing process of the Strategic Compass are hopeful signs that the EU might find a way to implement policies responding to slightly changing strategic cultures and preferences in the member states.

China: Not More Powerful but More Positive

While they do not generally perceive China as more powerful than their older compatriots, the image of the country held by younger respondents is significantly more positive. And, while there is normally a striking generation gap between Gen Z and all other respondents, on China the Gen Z and Millennials (born between 1985 and 1995) are generally aligned and differ from their older compatriots.

Across all countries, slightly more than half of the respondents (56%, cross-country average of all age groups) perceive China's influence in global affairs as negative. The number is particularly high in Germany (67%), France (59%), Canada (63%), and Sweden (62%). With around one-third of respondents seeing China's influence as positive, it enjoys most favorable views in Turkey (34%), Poland (35%), Italy (36%), and Spain (37%). However, even in countries with a highly negative perception of China's influence, the young generation sees it much less negatively, and partly even more positively than negatively. In France, opinion among Gen Z ones is almost perfectly divided between those seeing China's influence as positive (41%) and those considering it negative (42%). The pattern is almost the same for French millennials: 39% see China's influence as positive and 40% as negative. Among those aged under 25, Germans are the most China-critical, with 62% negative perceptions just slightly lower than the national average of 67%. German respondents between 25 and 39 years, however, are more aligned with other younger respondents, as less than half of them describe China's influence as negative (48%). Similarly, Gen Z respondents in the United States were much less likely to describe China's influence as negative (39%) than those aged 55 and older (83%).

The biggest China enthusiasts are the youngest respondents (18 to 24 years old) in Canada and Spain. It is striking that more than half of young Canadians (53%) see China's influence as positive, given that Canada also ranks among the top three countries with the most negative overall assessment of China's influence. Almost six out of ten Gen Z respondents in

Spain, where respondents were generally most likely to perceive China's influence as positive, hold a positive view of the country (58%). Across almost all countries, respondents have a more benevolent vision of China's influence in global affairs. Even if this does not always come with a more positive assessment of the country, younger people tend to it Beijing less negatively than their older compatriots.

The "TikTok Effect"?

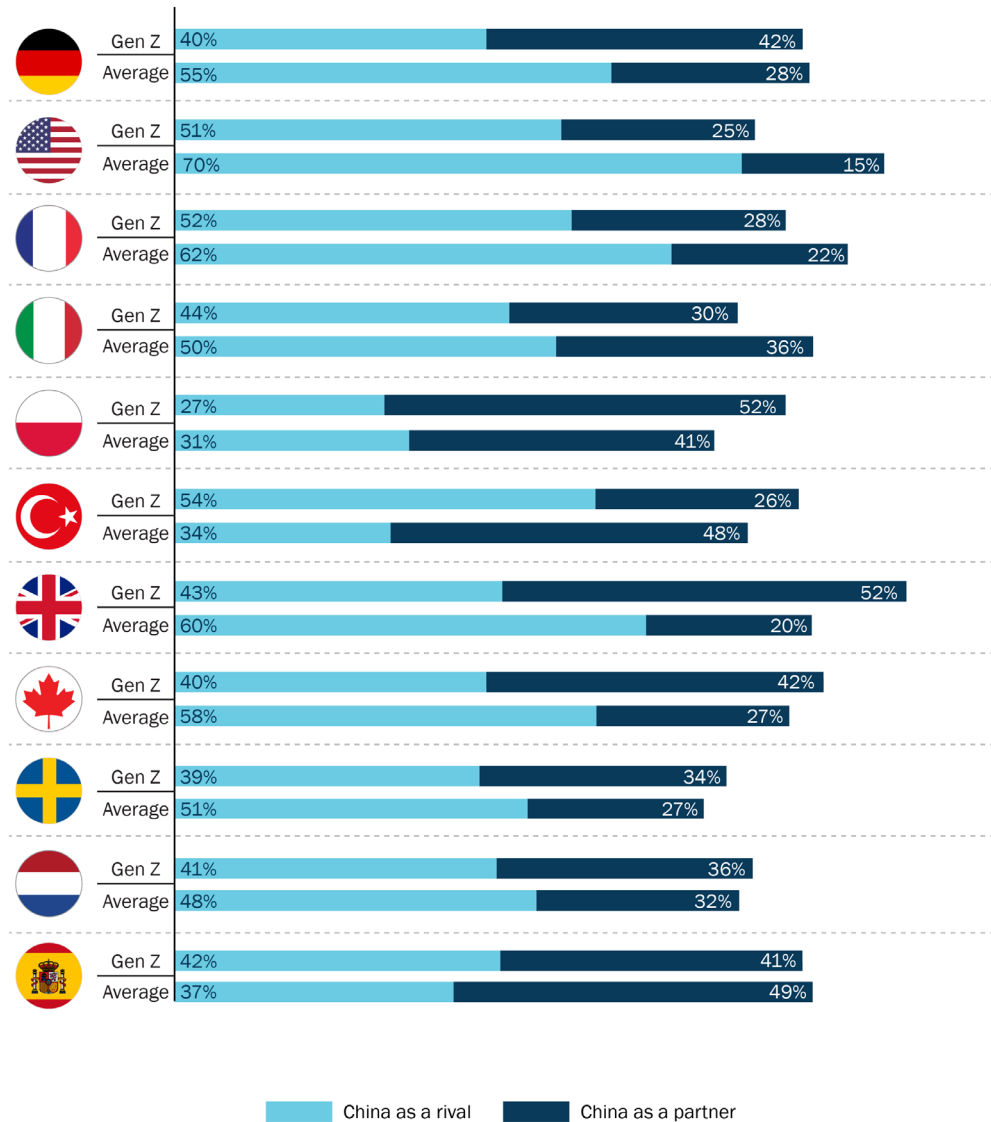
More than three-thirds of TikTok users in the United States are under 40,³ and more than half of 18-24 years old Americans use the Chinese social media app.⁴ Are we seeing a "TikTok effect" influencing views of China? This is probably too simplistic of a cause and effect. The positive view of China might also stem from a variety of Chinese other soft-power instruments, with which young people might generally be more in contact than their older compatriots. Probably the most popular example of this is the opening of Confucius Institutes to promote Chinese language and culture, an initiative of Beijing dating back to 2004.⁵ Those who already studied or started studying in 2004 or later were born in the early 1980s or later, and this is exactly where the generational gap can be found in Transatlantic Trends. Consequently, it seems that the Chinese "charm offensive" beginning in these years is bearing fruit now. One may argue that the presence of Chinese students on university campuses and the growing number of European and American students studying Chinese on both sides of the Atlantic has had a socializing influence on Millennials and Gen Z, making them more familiar with the country and fostering a positive perception of it. With apps, technology, the Confucius Institutes, and an increasing cultural footprint due to its growing movie industry

3 Statista, [Distribution of TikTok users in the United States as of March 2021, by age group](#), 2021.

4 Pew Research, [Social Media Use in 2021](#), April 2021.

5 Jamie B. Horsley, [It's time for a new policy on Confucius institutes](#), Brookings, April 2021.

Figure 3. Perceptions of China as a Rival or as a Partner.



Source: *Transatlantic Trends 2021*.

and Chinese movies “made for the world,”⁶ China is increasingly present in the life of younger Europeans and North Americans. It seems that Millennials and Gen Z have moved beyond the strikingly clear opinions of their older compatriots and have a more differentiated vision of China.

The views of those who tend to see China’s influence as particularly negative, namely U.S. respondents aged 55 and older (83%), were formed in a different era. But they are the past. Policymakers should see the perceptions of young people as a window into the future. Judging by the trends of the past ten years it seems likely that Chinese technology and culture will make their way into many domains of everyday life. In an interconnected world, where joint challenges like

6 Deloitte China, [China’s Film Industry – A New Era](#), 2017,

climate change will not be solved without cooperation with China, a certain degree of familiarity with language, culture, and politics of China will be crucial for understanding international affairs and articulating European and transatlantic priorities. In this context, “China hawks” arguing for a purely confrontational approach are prisoners of their generational world view. The same is true for “China cheerleaders,” who formed their view of China during the brief period when it seemed to be reforming as it began to play a bigger role on the world stage. But his view ignores the reality of strategic competition—and in this context, it is important to underline that Millennials and Gen Z are not a generation of pure “China cheerleaders.” Gen Z respondents are still more likely to describe China as a rival in France (52% vs. 28% as a partner), the United States (51% vs. 25%), Turkey (54% vs. 26%), the Netherlands (41% vs. 36%), Italy (44% vs. 30%), and Sweden (39% vs. 34%).

Although a plurality of respondents in all countries still advocates overall for a tougher approach toward China across a range of policy issues, young French, German, and British respondents aged between 18 and 24 are much more in favor of a softer approach than are their older compatriots. To a lesser extent, that pattern can be observed as well in the United States, Sweden, Canada, and the Netherlands, whereas the opinions on the approach toward China of young Spanish, Turkish, Italian, and Polish respondents align with the respective national averages. From a long-term policy perspective, it is questionable whether Biden’s strategy of placing technology at the heart of U.S.-EU cooperation in the strategic competition with China is promising, given that young respondents in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom are particularly likely to call for a softer approach on China in the domains of cybersecurity and technological innovation.

Cracks in Perceived Reliability

Gen Z respondents agree on the issues but might be more wary of cooperation. While they converge on their perception of China and decreasing U.S. influence, their perceptions of the other countries covered

by the survey are much less characterized by mutual trust and a perception of reliability compared to the overall results. The only exceptions are Spain and Poland, where the perception of Gen Z respondents aligns with the other age groups.

Overall, Transatlantic Trends shows that respondents consider the other countries covered by the survey to be highly reliable. The exceptions are Poland, where respondents see other European countries, the United States, and Canada as very reliable, whereas Poland is not seen as a reliable by respondents in these countries, and Turkey, which is perceived as least reliable in all other countries, and where respondents see other countries as less reliable. Yet, in many cases, Gen Z respondents are much less likely to perceive their country’s traditional partners as reliable—a difference of around 10 percentage points and in some cases even more.

While the United States reliability is not perceived as significantly lower by Gen Z respondents in the EU member states, Canada and Turkey, young Americans are much less likely to perceive European countries and Canada as reliable partners than their older compatriots. They are most likely to perceive the other Anglophone countries covered by the survey as reliable, namely Canada (73%) and the United Kingdom (67%), as the most trusted actors in Europe are the European Union and France (both 58%), followed by Italy (54%) and Germany (53%). With the exception of Canada, all these values are ten or more points lower than the national average, with the most striking generation gap to be found for the reliability of Germany (15 points difference to the Americans’ national average, and a 26-point difference to the U.S. respondents older than 55).

Europeans have to come to terms with lower trust in the United States and relatively more suspicion of each other by their youngest generation. The most alarming results in this regard can be found in France and Germany, long-standing partners and close European allies: the level of perceived reliability of the other country is quite high on average, with 84% of the French seeing Germany as a reliable partner and 76%

of the Germans considering France as reliable. Yet, this is not the case among Gen Z respondents, where only 65% of the young Germans describe France as reliable and 71% of Gen Z French see Germany in that light. Admittedly, this level is still very high compared to the perceptions of other countries, and among the highest levels of reliability to be found in this age group. However, it also shows that the long-standing assumption of an almost natural reflex of French-German cooperation are less present among Gen Z than in other generations—the difference to the oldest respondents aged 65 and older amount to 20 percentage points in France and 24 percentage points in Germany. Indeed, it seems like the French-German relationship is not as appealing for the young generation—while Germany ranks among the top five destinations for studying abroad in France,⁷ this is not the case the other way around.⁸ As the French-German relationship traditionally relies on strong ties in civil society, both countries should think about ways to enhance these ties, especially when French-German student exchange has to compete with opportunities to study in China and the United States. This should not only be in the interest of those who cherish the French-German cultural heritage, but also of all Europeans, given that mutual understanding of France and Germany as key member states of the EU—which are also perceived as such by the youngest generation—is probably the most effective way to advance European integration on the long term.

In contrast to this comparatively lower level of perceived reliability in the Franco-German and U.S.-European relations, mutual trust among British and French Gen Z respondents is much higher than among the older generations. Of young British respondents, 63% consider France to be a reliable partner (compared to 52% of the national average), and the trust of young French respondents is even slightly

higher (65%, compared to 47% on national average). Although Gen Z has lived through Brexit, the United Kingdom leaving the EU seems not to have significantly harmed the perception of its reliability, which is a hopeful sign for maintaining the ties across the channel in the upcoming years. Besides reinvesting in promoting French-German relations among the youngest generation, France should thus also seize the opportunity of the high trust of young French toward the United Kingdom to strengthen bilateral ties. The same applies to London, as strengthening especially the relations of British and French civil societies could serve as a promising starting point for reviving and redesigning British-European relations after Brexit.

Furthermore, Turkey is perceived as a much more reliable partner by the youngest respondents than by other respondents; this generation gap is particularly pronounced in countries where overall trust in Turkey is lowest in the survey. In France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, only 15% to 16% of all respondents describe Turkey as a reliable partner, but around one-third of young respondents share this opinion (37% in France and the Netherlands, 32% in Germany, 30% in Italy). Given Turkey's involvement in the Middle East and the importance to all EU members of the EU-Turkey immigration deal, as well as the challenges that have marked the Turkish-European relationship and the respective bilateral relationships for years, these results imply that the youngest respondents have a much more pragmatic understanding of Turkey's reliability than older ones.

A New European and Transatlantic Impetus Is Possible—But Needs More Efforts

What do these results teach us with regard to the future of transatlantic relations? When looking at the results, traditional transatlanticists especially might be tempted to see them as the end of transatlantic relations, with young respondents being more positive about China and less convinced of U.S. leadership on the global scene. It is now time to adapt to the challenges of a new world order, and the opinions of

7 Pauline Bluteau, [Mobilité étudiante : Les chiffres à retenir](#), L'Étudiant, January 28, 2020.

8 Statistisches Bundesamt, [Deutsche Studierende im Ausland, Ergebnisse des Berichtsjahrs 2018](#).

Gen Z, as depicted in the Transatlantic Trends, can serve as a valuable inspiration for this. Of course, it could be easy to downplay this generational gap, arguing that Gen Z respondents are still a minority in society and not yet in decision-making positions. Yet, doing so would undermine the potential for positive change. Rather, policymakers should understand the perceptions of Gen Z expressed in Transatlantic Trends as a mirror of the world of tomorrow, and as a starting point for reflections on a future world order with its challenges and opportunities, and the place of Europe and the transatlantic partnership within this order.

China is undoubtedly going to be a key topic the transatlantic partners will seek close cooperation on in the upcoming years. While some “China hawks” may worry about the less critical view of transatlantic respondents under 25, they should be aware that they are not facing a generation of uncritical “China cheerleaders.” As public opinion among young respondents on both sides of the Atlantic perfectly converges, albeit on another level than in other age groups, the results could rather be read as a hopeful signal for balanced relations with China, which is, given its influence, probably the most pragmatic and successful way to follow.

As for the perception of transatlantic relations and the reliability of European countries, the youngest generation of U.S. respondents may be more significantly subject to a belated Trump effect. In the long run, it will be important to observe in how far these perceptions change under Biden and his much more positive discourse on Europe. Should these perceptions not be a short-term, belated Trump effect but a sustainable pattern, they should be a wake-up call for policymakers and civil society that the long-standing transatlantic relations—not only in the political but also in the cultural, educational, and civil society sphere—cannot be taken for granted and require a continuous effort.

Extrapolating from the view of younger Europeans and North Americans, one might also conclude that the EU states might underestimate themselves—and

that they should not hesitate to be bolder in international affairs. Of course, the EU’s competences might just be more visible to younger persons than older respondents, given that they grew up in an environment of Single Euro Payments Area numbers, the General Data Protection Regulation of the EU, and an active EU in the Iran nuclear agreement or the Paris agreement. Yet, despite persisting institutional shortcomings and coordination problems due to diverging strategic interests, the perception of the EU seems to be shifting, and member states should take this as an impetus to follow the path toward European strategic autonomy.

Nevertheless, and despite consensus and converging opinions of young people on both sides of the Atlantic, the cracks in perceived reliability among Europeans themselves and among the transatlantic partners must be seen as a wake-up call that these bonds on all levels must not be taken for granted, and that they need a continuous effort. The potential of converging opinions and for policy coordination can be undermined when decreasing levels of reliability among traditional partners like France and Germany question the established reflex for exploring opportunities for intra-European cooperation or coordination with the transatlantic allies. Policymakers should lead by example and show that European and transatlantic cooperation can deliver on key issues like climate change, global health, or nuclear security and disarmament. At the same time, they should seek to enhance people-to-people exchanges to promote positive European and transatlantic experiences on the level of civil society to create constructive spillovers and public support for common action on the political level.

In a nutshell, the opinion of young respondents expressed in Transatlantic Trends 2021 does not signal the death knell of the transatlantic relationship as we know it. Rather, it is a window to the future—and taking these perceptions seriously is a solid point of departure for setting the sails for European integration and transatlantic relations in a changing world and jointly designing this future.

The views expressed in GMF publications and commentary are the views of the author alone.

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Gesine Weber is a program coordinator in GMF's Paris office, where she coordinates the organization's activities in France as well and the Transatlantic Trends survey, and contributes to the team's research portfolio on security and defense. Her research interests include European security and defense, French-German relations, EU-U.K. security cooperation, and the EU-U.S.-China triangle in geopolitics. She is currently doing a Ph.D. in Defense Studies at King's College London.

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