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Threat to U.S. a threat to us, Canadians say in survey

Foreign Policy

James Cowan, National Post

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Larry Downing

U. S. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Feb. 19, 2009.

About 41% of Canadians reject Stephen Harper's claim that all security threats to the United States also pose a risk for Canada, according to a new poll.

When Barack Obama, the U. S. President, visited Canada in February, the Prime Minister told reporters that "there is no such thing as a threat to the national security of the United States that does not represent a direct threat to Canada."

While 54% of respondents to a survey conducted by Nanos Research agree with Mr. Harper's statement, 41% questioned his assertion that the national security of the two countries is inextricably linked.

"When Canadians hear a phrase like 'national security,' they see it as code for an alignment on foreign policy issues," said Nik Nanos, the president and CEO of Nanos Research. "They're a little more reticent, even under a very popular president."

Canadians are more comfortable with co-operation with the United States on such issues as the environment and reducing border restrictions, the poll suggests. Close to 94% said the countries should collaborate on environmental issues and 85.7% felt the flow of goods and people across the border should be enhanced. Roughly 65% said they supported reductions in trade protectionism.

"When you take foreign policy and national security out of the equation, Canadians feel a lot more comfortable with regards to closer co-operation with the United States," Mr. Nanos said.

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There was also widespread support for the development of continent-wide energy policy, with 76% of Canadians backing the idea. The poll suggests the level of support varies by region, with close to 81% of Ontario residents agreed with the notion, compared with 75% in the western provinces.

"I think a lot of Ontarians think about energy policy in terms of being consumers, and in the recent past have experienced brown-outs and there has been a public policy debate about the energy supply," Mr. Nanos said.

The poll, conducted for Policy Options magazine, tested reaction to claims made by the two leaders during Mr. Obama's visit without revealing their source. The telephone poll of 1,002 Canadians took place between March 13 and 18. It is considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. - For the full poll and tables, visit www.irpp.org

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Never ceases to amaze me, that the topic of Canada being at risk every time there is a threat towards the United States, is a ploy to elicit fear among Canadians. What should be written is the state of security on both the east and west coasts of our country. The Harper government is not too worry, when ocean going vessels are not search until they are inside the St. Lawrence Seaway, reaching Montreal in some cases.

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