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ROLE OF SUSTAINED DEMOCRACY IN US FOREIGN POLICY DURING PRESIDENCY OF JOSEPH R. BIDEN*

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Abstract. Value-based foreign policy has always been a point of controversy, and the situation is no different today. This question becomes all the more controversial in the event that its executor is to be a pre-eminent power - the United States of America. In this respect, the present is not so different from the recent past, and in the context of the great power rivalry of the USA, especially with the PRC and the Russian Federation, analogies with the Cold War are offered and often brought. It was precisely at that time that both (super)powers claimed to a certain extent that they carried out their foreign policy in accordance with their values, which they considered to be key and not in favor of the cold calculation of national interests. The choice was not binary then and it has not become so even today, and even if during the mentioned period both superpowers supported different groups in different sections and entered into conflicts under the different pretexts, neither side could actually claim the title of valuable foreign policy. Although comparisons with the Cold War are often exaggerated, indeed the newly renewed (or never ended) and growing great power rivalry shaping to a large extent the current international system, at least in the case of the US, complicates the never-ending formal commitment to supporting democracy and democratic regimes in its foreign relations. Also, on the basis of the mentioned facts, we decided to investigate this phenomenon and through the article we want to contribute to the debate about the role of democracy in international politics and foreign relations of the current J. Biden administration as a whole.

Keywords: United States; foreign policy; democracy; values

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1. Introduction

The idea of promoting democracy in American foreign policy is not a new characteristic, but a constant practically since the beginning of the 20th century (Adeniran et al., 2023). Some of the authors already tried to present the American occupation of the territories acquired after the war with Spain through the prism of instilling democracy and liberalism in the new territories (and in principle even before the time when the American westward expansion was passed off as a civilizing mission spreading, among other things, democracy and progress). Later, democracy, the right of nations to self-determination and liberalism in general was one of the main points of American participation in both world wars. However, the Cold War and great power rivalry with the USSR often required cooperation (or direct support) with non-democratic and illiberal regimes around the world. "Its commitment to liberal principles and rules were inconsistently applied because its fear of the USSR led it to double standards and hypocrisy in the service of national security or, as was said at the time, national survival." (Duffy Toft & Kushi, 2023, p. 261) Graduation of its preferred ideology took place in the context of the fact that neither of the competing powers was seriously afraid of a domestic coup, and was therefore rather a tool for expanding its sphere of influence (or stopping the spread of the other) (O'Rourke, 2018) Also because of this, the American side had no problem with the rhetoric of the fight for freedom and democracy (which, especially during the R. Reagan administration, became virtually synonymous with anti-communism) and at the same time providing support to illiberal anti-communist fighters all over the world. (Jackson, 2023) Although the US foreign policy of the past and present is an actively and significantly researched issue, our goal is to contribute to the beginning of the discussion about this aspect of American foreign policy in the era of President J. Biden.

2. Short historic review of democracy promotion in US foreign policy

In its modern form, after the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion was again prominently pushed forward under President G.W. Bush (the rhetoric of democracy and freedom, as well as real but selective actions during the G.H.W. Bush and W. Clinton administrations had an important place) through the so-called Agendas of freedom. Despite the fact that during his presidential campaign, G. W. Bush was fundamentally opposed to foreign interventions intended for nation-building, according to all accounts (and his own record), the events of 9/11 changed the president's position, and subsequently Bush Jr. adopted a policy of unilateral and preemptive regime change to democratize rogue states that became known as the Bush Doctrine. (O'Rourke, 2018 p. 231-232) During his second inaugural address (in January 2005), noted that "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." (NPR, 2005, para. 5) President Bush then formally pronounced democratization doctrine. "So, it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" (NPR, 2005, para. 7). In the State of the Union Address in February 2005, President Bush reiterated the role of democracy in US foreign policy:

In the long-term, the peace we seek will only be achieved by eliminating the conditions that feed radicalism and ideologies of murder. If whole regions of the world remain in despair and grow in hatred, they will be the recruiting grounds for terror, and that terror will stalk America and other free nations for decades. The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror, and replace hatred with hope, is the force of human freedom. Our enemies know this, and that is why the terrorist Zarqawi recently declared war on what he called the "evil principle" of democracy. And we've declared our own intention: America will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East and beyond, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world (The White House, 2005, para. 38).

In the context of this, he also reminded that democracy (also in Iraq) should also guarantee the security of the United States of America itself: "We are standing for the freedom of our Iraqi friends, and freedom in Iraq will make America safer for generations to come." (The White House, 2005, para. 51) "Confirmation" of democratization as a goal of the Bush administration then came with the publication of the National Security Strategy in 2006. (Braumoeller, 2012) However, the change occurred, primarily under the influence of the absence of evidence of an active Iraqi program and arsenal of weapons of mass destruction as the main reason

for the intervention in Iraq as also under the influence of the ideological orientation of the closest presidential advisers and cabinet members.

As a result of not finding WMD, the Bush administration began to justify the continued occupation of Iraq by spreading democracy to end terrorism. D. Feith, Undersecretary of the US Department of Defense and a prominent supporter of the intervention in Iraq, was also surprised by the change in rhetoric:

The president and his key communications advisers apparently decided that the failure to find WMD stockpiles was such an embarrassment that the President should not even try to explain it or put it in context. Rather, the Administration tried to change the subject. (Hanania, 2022, p.156)

Bahador, Moses and Youmans (2018), after analyzing key texts and speeches, found that if until March 2003, when the US intervened in Iraq, 6.7% of the justifications contained democracy and human rights, and in the period after that, and only until March 2004, up to 44.7% of justifications were focused on the role of democracy. “As far as presidential rhetoric is concerned, freedom is America's comfort blanket.” (Nichols & Milne, 2022 p. 472) As American historian Eric Foner wrote, “freedom” is the key word of American history, and American foreign relations are no exception. “Ideas of freedom encourage larger promises from leaders when they explain their actions. Realpolitik is never sufficient for the American polity.” (Suri, 2022, p. 282) The democratization rhetoric also arose on the basis and background of the ideological orientation of cabinet members and key presidential advisers. Neoconservatives, whose representatives primarily included R. Perle (advisor to the Minister of Defense D. Rumsfeld) and P. Wolfowitz (deputy minister of defense), as well as the so-called The Vulcans (a group of conservative "hawks" who were foreign policy advisers to G.W. Bush's candidacy before the 2000 election) including future National Security Advisor and Secretary of State C. Rice were all vocal advocates of American "engagement" even before the events September 11. And precisely under the influence of the ideology of neoconservatism, the administration did not hesitate to use military force for "value purposes". “Passive measures are not sufficient and neoconservatives advocate active measures alone or with others to realise this fundamental goal of spreading democracy. The export and defense of democracy is the way to long-term security” (Ritchie & Rogers, 2007, p.145). The contradiction between values and security interests was prominently shown in the case of Uzbekistan, which at the time hosted one of the largest American bases – Karsi-Khanabad. Anti-government protests took place in the state in May 2005 in the city of Andijan, which were violently suppressed. In the end, Uzbekistan itself decided on the hesitant attitude of the US on how to react to the unfavorable situation and decided to close the base, while American troops definitively left the country at the end of 2005. Not only in Uzbekistan, but also under the influence of regime changes and armed conflicts, the United States failed in democracy promotion. Although revolutions took place in Ukraine and Georgia during the first and second Bush administrations, which brought pro-Western political forces into the government, the subsequent internal and foreign policy direction of both countries only further complicated the situation. (Dundich, 2013) (Herring, 2017) “The president and his "neoconservative" advisers had grossly exaggerated the power and appeal of hegemonic claims about American freedom, and their actions motivated mass resentment at home and abroad” (Suri, 2022 p. 294-295).

With the election of President Obama (and under the influence of continuing and increasingly negatively perceived military operations abroad), the new administration expressed and proceeded more cautiously about the role of democracy in foreign relations. Even during the largest pro-democracy-oriented civil protests in the Middle East and North Africa in modern history, the US behaved with restraint and selectively supported democratic movements and the status quo elsewhere. “The President praised the 'victory of the will of the people' in Tunisia, where US interests were negligible. In other countries, the United States took varied approaches depending on the severity of the oppression and the importance of its interests.” (Herring, 2017, p. 681) This was especially evident in the approach to Bahrain, where, despite the protests and the subsequent intervention led by Saudi Arabia, the US behaved restrained no doubt primarily due to the importance of Bahrain as important regional security partner and critically important location where the USN Fifth Fleet is based. In the case of Egypt, US non-military intervention happened after long discussions within the administration, when mainly younger advisers and its members (B. Rhodes, S. Power) with the support of H. Clinton advised President Obama for American intervention and pushing Mubarak to resign. This pressure and the stubbornness of the Egyptian leader unwilling to make concessions led to the intervention of the American president and on February 1, 2011, he called on his Egyptian counterpart to leave this post, Mubarak then actually relinquished

power on February 11 (Dyer & Saleh, 2016). Later, in the case of Libya, the pressure of S. Power, who worked in the National Security Council as a special assistant to the president and senior director for multilateral affairs and human rights, and the US permanent representative to the UN, S. Rice, was important. With the support of H. Clinton (the then Secretary of State, who herself claimed that she decided to intervene in Libya after meeting with representatives of the rebels, who were supposed to convince her that Libya would become a democratic state that cares about human rights), they were able to convince President Obama to intervene primarily by arguing about the humanitarian disaster (in the context of the absence of an American response to the Rwandan genocide in 1994), which may arise in the absence of such action, even despite the protest of the then Secretary of Defense Gates and little public support. (Boucher, David & Prémont, 2020; Hanania, 2022)

3. J. Biden a democracy in US foreign policy

In the context of events in the United States itself, it is understandable that the current administration is primarily trying to pass off the political rivalry with D. Trump and the Republican Party more broadly as a struggle for democracy with its opponents led by D. Trump. During his inaugural speech, just two weeks after the violent protest by D. Trump's supporters, President Biden called the election victory and the transfer of power a "triumph of democracy" and warned that "democracy and truth are under attack." (The White House, 2021a) Atypical domestic political attention to the defense of democracy, which Americans take for granted, does not mean that democracy in foreign relations (or at least its rhetorical support) is given less attention. In addition to the already typical at least rhetorical support for democracy for the American political system and foreign relations, the administration of President J. Biden is primarily trying to pass off the current rivalry not only with the PRC as a rivalry between democracies and autocracies. During the first press conference of the new American president, J. Biden, he said:

So, I see stiff competition with China. China has an overall goal, and I don't criticize them for the goal, but they have an overall goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world, and the most powerful country in the world. That's not going to happen on my watch because the United States are going to continue to grow and expand. (The White House, 2021b, para. 183)

Later, in addition to the need to invest more in research and science and China's achievements in it, Biden also named the rivalry from the ideological side, saying that the 21st century will be "a battle between the utility of democracies in the 21st century and autocracies." (The White House, 2021b, para. 187) During his address on the occasion of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Biden mentioned:

Now, it's no secret that in the contest between democracy and autocracy, the United States — and I, as President — champion a vision for our world that is grounded in the values of democracy. The United States is determined to defend and strengthen democracy at home and around the world. Because I believe democracy remains humanity's greatest instrument to address the challenges of our time (The White House, 2022a, para. 22-23).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the support of Ukraine, especially by the democratic states of the West, should be proof of the determination to support democracy, which faces the invasion of an authoritarian state. However, during the speech delivered during the State of the Union in 2023, Biden also highlighted the support of Ukraine and the world position of democratic states in the context of the Ukrainian war. "We face serious challenges across the world. But in the past two years, democracies have become stronger, not weaker. Autocracies have grown weaker, not stronger" (The White House, 2023a, para. 270). In March 2024, on the same occasion, however, he again mentioned the phenomenon of the weakening of democracy "What makes our moment rare is that freedom and democracy are under attack at — both at home and overseas at the very same time." (The White House, 2024, para. 8) Indeed, the trend of democratization has not been favorable recently and according to the World State of Democracy index from the Swedish organization IDEA "Across every region of the world, democracy has continued to contract, with declines in at least one indicator of democratic performance in half of the countries covered in the Report" (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2023, p.8). The findings of the Economist Intelligence Unit were similar and in its report on the state of democracy in the world for 2022, the report claims that democracy is stagnating (Crowley, 2023).

In the context of this position, the American side also decided to host the online Summit of Democracy, which took place on 9-10. December 2021, 110 states were invited, in addition to the states, representatives of civil society, journalists, human rights defenders and representatives of the private sector were also invited to the Summit (The White House, 2021c). Commentators noted that Bolivia or Sierra Leone, for example, were not among the invitees, but countries such as Serbia, Pakistan, Iraq, the Philippines, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya were invited despite their significantly worse record of democratic practices. In addition, among the uninvited states were the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Hungary, Turkey and all the countries of the Persian Gulf (Faiola, 2021). The Chinese and Russian ambassadors in the USA, criticizing the aforementioned move, jointly wrote an article for the National Interest in which, in addition to the fact that the USA is putting itself in the position of a decisive country that determines who is and who is not a democracy, they wrote that the action is the result of the Cold War mentality which "will stoke up ideological confrontation". Later in the article, the ambassadors described both their countries as democratic. Finally, both ambassadors urged that truly democratic states should also support democracy in international relations and not support hegemony (Antonov & Gang, 2021). In response to the non-invitation of the Hungarian side to the summit, the Hungarian Embassy in the USA described the decision as "disrespectful", and the Hungarian opposition to the speech of the President of the European Commission, U. von der Leyen, in turn limited her speech (Hudson & Parker, 2023). Taiwan's participation also became controversial. The Chinese side condemned Taiwan's invitation and called the move a mistake (Qingqing, 2021). The result of the summit was to be and was announced concrete commitments of the states in the areas of strengthening democracy and defense against authoritarianism, fighting corruption and promoting and respecting human rights. In addition, the commitments contained, for example, the fight against disinformation, the support of electoral integrity or the fight against financial corruption. The Presidential Initiative for Democratic Restoration, a set of measures and initiatives aimed at strengthening democracy, human rights and the fight against corruption worldwide, was also adopted. 424 mil. USD was allocated for the initiative (The White House, 2021c).

Second Summit for Democracy, which took place in March 2023, featured expanded list of participants (eight more states were invited, but invitation was not extended to Turkey and Hungary once again) - Honduras, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Lichtenstein (Detsch-Gramer, 2023). The very nature of the Summit gives rise to the feeling that through the invitations the United States divides the countries of the world into democracies - states that were invited to the summit and non-democracies - those that were not, and takes on the role of referee. Nevertheless, the list of countries invited to the Summit in 2023 shows that the majority (about two-thirds) actually meet the parameters (in this case, according to the Freedom House report) of a "free society", almost a third then belong to "partly free" societies (India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Kenya), three states were "not free" - Iraq, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Brown, 2023). Several initiatives emerged from the second Democracy Summit. At the second Summit, the Biden administration presented the initiative Advances in Technology for Democracy, within the framework of which the participating states should focus on supporting the use of technology for democratic governance and not actively fight against it. As part of this agenda, the participating states expressed their support for increasing the population's access to reliable information, expanding access to the Internet, increasing cyber security, and the fight against spyware (The White House, 2023b). Eight new initiatives ranging from supporting the fight against corruption to strengthening the protection of human rights and the free electoral process were also presented by USAID. (US Agency for International Development, 2023) American side (with help of its allies) plans to continue the initiative, and the third Summit for Democracy took place in March 2024 in South Korea (Summit for Democracy, 2024).

This new format is not only characterized by unclear commitments and muted media response, but new forum represents US with possibility of getting foreign state and non-state representatives and other stakeholders familiar with the concept of "struggle of democracies against autocracies".

4. Values and American strategic documents of the current administration

Critically, the administrations' policy statements through strategic documents also reflect traditional American statements of democracy support at home and around the world, with the present being labeled a "competition

between democracies and autocracies" in the National Security Strategy released in October 2022. Autocracies, on the other hand, according to the US side, "work overtime to undermine democracy and export a model of governance marked by repression at home and coercion abroad. "In addition, the United States speaks out in support of democracies worldwide: "So, the United States will continue to defend democracy around the world, even as we continue to do the work at home to better live up to the idea of America enshrined in our founding documents." (The White House, 2022b, p.3) In the subsection "our permanent role", the document re-formulates the nature of the current international situation as a competition between autocracies and democracies, placing the United States in the position of the leader of the "democratic camp":

The need for a strong and purposeful American role in the world has never been greater. The world is becoming more divided and unstable. The risk of conflict between major powers is increasing. Democracies and autocracies are engaged in a contest to show which system of governance can best deliver for their people and the world (The White House, 2022b, p.7).

Nevertheless, especially under the influence of competition with the PRC, Russia and other antagonistic states, the United States does not intend to limit the freedom of action even in cooperation with non-democratic states, if they support the current international order:

The range of nations that supports our vision of a free, open, prosperous, and secure world is broad and powerful. It includes our democratic allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific as well as key democratic partners around the world that share much of our vision for regional and international order even if they do not agree with us on all issues, and countries that do not embrace democratic institutions but nevertheless depend upon and support a rules-based international system. (The White House, 2022b, p.8)

However, a line later, the NSS claims that:

We will work to strengthen democracy around the world because democratic governance consistently outperforms authoritarianism in protecting human dignity, leads to more prosperous and resilient societies, creates stronger and more reliable economic and security partners for the United States, and encourages a peaceful world order. (The White House, 2022b, p.8)

But that doesn't mean the U.S. won't work with non-democratic states, and in the interest of making US coalitions as "inclusive as possible we will also work with any country that supports a rules-based order while we continue to press all partners to respect and advance democracy and human rights" (The White House, 2022b, p.16).

And that's also because, according to the NSS, "the most pressing problem facing the United States is an authoritarian state with revisionist policies." This not-so-thinly veiled reference primarily to the Russian Federation and to PRC. It is China that is supposed to be "the only competitor that intends to reshape the international order and increasingly also the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to achieve this goal", and together these competitors are supposed to create a new international order "favorable to a highly personalized and repressive type of autocracy". Based on the NSS, the American side will also fight against anti-democratic measures such as weaponization of information, corruption, repression and measures against a free and fair election process.

In addition to the NSS, democracy promotion is prominently present in separate strategic documents for the regions (Indo-Pacific region and Africa). However, Latin America as a "key region for American security and prosperity" and the US relationship to democracy in it is mentioned in the NSS. In the aforementioned section, the United States recognizes that "democratic stability" in the region is advantageous to the US from security and economic areas. The US also pledges to support "partners working to build transparent, inclusive and accountable institutions" in the region. In addition to such and other support measures for democratic processes, law and justice, the fight against corruption and other measures, the US also speaks for "the democratic self-determination of the people of Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and any country where the popular will is suppressed" (The White House, 2022b, p.41).

The promotion and support of democracy also appears in regional and individual state strategies (integrated country strategy). In the regional strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, the Biden administration has set four goals, two of which are directly related to the promotion of democracy and the openness of the societies of African states: 1. To promote openness and open societies and the second goal: to provide democratic and security dividends. Under the second objective, the US will:

seek to stem the recent tide of authoritarianism and military takeovers by working with allies and partners in the region to respond to democratic backsliding and human rights abuses, including through a targeted mix of positive inducements and punitive measures such as sanctions. (The White House, 2022c, p.7-8)

The United States is also committed to supporting open societies in its Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the promotion of a "Free and Open" Indo-Pacific is the first goal of this strategy. As part of the said objective, the document says that "Through our diplomatic engagement, foreign assistance, and work with regional organizations, the United States will be a partner in strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, and accountable democratic governance" (The White House, 2022d, p.8).

Strategies for individual states (integrated country strategies) also emphasize the importance of democracy, its strengthening, or in the case of non-democratic states, the transition to it, as the most optimal system of government organization and preferred by the United States of America. Nevertheless, even in accordance with the more pragmatic aspects of the NSS and American foreign policy in general, the US does not renounce cooperation with non-democratic, illiberal states or directly even with the governments of states that came to power through a coup. After analyzing the ICS documents for African states, where there is the largest representation of non-democratic, illiberal states, the American approach is clear from the ICS as well. Indeed, the US considers (at least rhetorically) democracy, human rights, strong institutions and civil society to be critically important (with mentions of them appearing in every ICS for African states). However, this does not mean that the absence of an establishment respecting these principles is an obstacle to (including and above all security cooperation). Although in the ICS of coup states (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Guinea, except for Niger and Gabon, in which military coups have taken place since the publication of their ICS) the priority is the return to a legally elected and democratic government, so cooperation is not refused. In the case of Burkina Faso, it is explicitly written in the document:

Given this urgency, we will engage where we can under Section 7008 restrictions. However, we will need to be strategic, and identify areas where we are allowed to engage, where doing so fits within our national security interests, and where it is justifiable given the government's progress towards a democratic transition. At this moment, we intend to lean forward until and unless the transition government's actions force us to reassess (US Department of State, 2022a, p.4).

Security relations are prioritized not only in the case of Burkina Faso. In the ICS for countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, "democratization efforts" or similar formulations are also not listed among the goals. On the contrary, among American opponents (about whom ICSs are published) such as For Venezuela (and Nicaragua), practically the entire document is dedicated to the transition to democracy, freedom and respect for human rights. (US Department of State, 2022b) (US Department of State, 2022c) (US Department of State, 2023a) (US Department of State, 2023b)

In the case of Africa (as well as in other parts of the world), the security cooperation formats are extensive and the American side actively supports, exercises with, or shares information with states with different institutions, but also with states where governments came to power through coups. Although understandable, thanks to the at times overblown rhetoric about the "struggle of democracies against autocracies" and the leading position of the US in the "free camp", then the mentioned aspects of American foreign policy and security cooperation cause "image" problems for the government. In the case of Africa, precisely in response to such concerns, after the findings that the US armed forces also cooperate with the states in which the coup took place (when in several cases US troops trained the masterminds of these actions), the US Department of Defense was also forced to limit its activities, but not completely cancel in all cases with states in which a coup has taken place, or their armed forces violate human rights. (Hauslohner & Horton, 2024)

5. Case studies

Primarily due to the topicality and absence of a number of primary sources necessary for a more complete analysis, even on the basis of the information already available today, it is possible to at least outline the approach of the Biden administration to democracy and its promotion in US foreign policy. In the context of a truly global weakening of democratic systems, the American side faces this challenge in virtually all regions of the world.

Brazil, as the largest Latin American country with deep ties to the United States of America, is one of the publicly known cases of American intervention aimed at maintaining the country's democratic system. The United States of America directly through the pressure of the administration of President Biden, members of the cabinet and even members of Congress and former high government officials on high officers of the Brazilian armed forces, who hesitantly approached the challenges of the then president J. Bolsonaro, who also planned, with the help of the armed forces, to stay in power and not accept the results of the elections in which he lost. In addition to direct pressure, announcements about the potential deterioration of Brazil's international reputation and position, the threat of stopping cooperation in the security field, US officials strengthened the Brazilian electoral system with support measures and recognized the new president practically immediately after the announcement of the election results in Brazil, with the aim of international legitimization and deterring elements, which could attempt a coup. International pressure, and above all the demonstrations of Brazilian citizens, finally helped to stop the hesitant representatives and the results of the elections were recognized and their winner, L. de Silva, took the post of president (Stuenkel, 2024).

Later, after the surprise victory of B. Arevalo in the Guatemalan presidential elections held in June 2023 and after subsequent government efforts to effectively nullify the results, US side through pressure on Guatemalan government officials and members of Congress (which led to revocation of their visas), as well as by repeated visits by US government officials and members of the US Congress, helped the democratic transition of power. Immediately on the day of the inauguration of the new President Arevalo, January 15, 2024, US side congratulated the new president helping solidify his position. The stability of Guatemala is also increasingly important for the US side due to the increased pressure on its southern border by emigrants coming from Guatemala (Bernal, 2023; US Department of State, 2024; Reinhard, Schaffer & Swaine, 2024)

Haiti, which is mired in civil unrest, that has practically turned into a war of gangs among themselves and at the same time against a weakened government, also provides us with a view of US approach to regional political crisis. After initially supporting A. Henry as an interim (unelected) prime minister (after the assassination of President Moïsse in 2021), he was denied access to the Dominican Republic while returning from his foreign visit to Kenya where he wanted to land after domestic gang leaders called on him to step down as president and prevented him from coming to Haiti. Also due to domestic unpopularity, according to the information available so far, the United States called on him to leave office during his return flight from Kenya and, according to one Caribbean diplomat, even gave him a resignation speech. Although the information about the direct call for resignation was rejected by the US officials, they restated their goal and interest in Henry "accelerating the transition for an empowered and inclusive governance structure that will rapidly help the country prepare for a multinational security support mission to address the security situation and prepare the ground for free and fair elections," the absence of support for Henry was also confirmed by American statements that the US does not provide him with logistical support for his return to Haiti. Despite the critical situation in Haiti, and despite some regional and domestic voices, the United States does not intend to intervene directly with the deployment of its own troops and therefore supports the idea of an international mission of police forces to help stabilize the situation (Osborn, 2024; Mérancourt & Schmidt, 2024). Henry finally announced his resignation from the post of prime minister on March 12, 2024, under considerable domestic and international pressure. (Grant, 2024)

Venezuela and the approach to it of the current administration of President J. Biden rather reflects "learning" from the course of the so-called. maximum pressure campaign, the ultimate goal of which was regime change. The campaign of maximum pressure began after the inauguration of US President D. Trump, who between 2017 and 2019 introduced one of the toughest sanctions regimes in history. However, the economic collapse caused by both sanction measures (not only American) and widespread Venezuelan corruption and inadequate

management of state-owned enterprises has strengthened the weakened state's cooperation with American competitors Russia and the People's Republic of China. (Not only) the United States, in addition to economic pressure (also by confiscating foreign reserves), stopped recognizing N. Maduro as the legitimate and legal president of Venezuela, thereby trying to strengthen international isolation, directly supporting the opposition candidate in his coup attempt (and indirectly threatening military intervention) (LaMothe & Rosenberg, 2019; Bahar, Bustos, Morales & Santos, 2019; Singh, 2022; Ramsay & McCarry, 2024). Due to lack of success that this large-scale campaign achieved (and efforts to stabilize oil markets), the current administration decided to change the approach from direct support (or interventions for) regime change to attempt an agreement in areas of possible cooperation (undoubtedly also under the influence of the humanitarian disaster and the high increase of Venezuelan emigrants trying to reach the USA). Therefore, in the fall of 2023, both parties (the Venezuelan government and the Venezuelan opposition) signed the Barbados Accords, which in exchange for the release of some political prisoners (and the exchange of other detainees) and democratization promises of Venezuelan government, the US provided a temporary softening of the sanctions pressure. However, the non-rigid democratization promises and the subsequent ban on the main opposition candidate from participating in the presidential elections will not mean a return to the old policy of trying to change the regime, but rather a modification of the sanctions measures (which would not violate the American interest in exporting Venezuelan oil to the USA). Interest in measures to make fuel less expensive for American voters, reducing the number of Venezuelan emigrants trying to get to the USA and limiting the unnecessarily high pressure that would push Venezuela even more into the hands of American adversaries are the main drivers of the current American policy towards the South American country (International Crisis Group, 2023; Mawad, 2024; DeYoung & Schmidt, 2024; Ramsay & McCarry, 2024).

Pragmatism, mainly under the influence of already global rivalry with the PRC, is also shown by the United States in cases of (new) partnerships with non-democratic, illiberal states. After the events of the last few years, partnerships threatened by coups have become a new challenge, which puts the American side in the difficult position of protecting its interests by cooperating even with such regimes.

Angola is one of the cases of new developing partnerships (in the past, Angola was also an important supplier of oil to the USA) between the USA and the so-called of the global South. Efforts to limit Chinese influence (the PRC provided Angola with tens of billions of USD for infrastructure and other projects primarily within the framework of the BRI program, and Angola was the largest recipient of Chinese economic assistance in Africa) combined with support for the diversification of suppliers of mineral raw materials (also important for the "green" transformation) is the main reason for renewed American interest. That is also why the American side announced the financing of a study and, together with the EU, of a railway project to connect Angola with its neighbors, which will facilitate and speed up the export of important minerals (together with the project of financing a container port in Sri Lanka, which is, however, independently American, these are the first similar foreign infrastructure projects). To highlight American support, the US Secretary of State A. Blinken even visited "unfree" Angola in January 2024 (and US President Biden also promised to visit Angola during the visit of the Angolan president to US in November 2023) (Freedom House, 2024; Birnbaum, 2024; Nyabiage, 2023; Nyabiage, 2024).

After military coups took place in a number of African states during the summer of 2023, the actions also affected American interests. In Niger, a country where approximately 1,000 members of the US Armed Forces are permanently stationed primarily at a drone base near the city of Agadez – which is the second largest military facility in Africa, the armed forces of the Niger overthrew US ally and democratically elected president M. Bazouma (back in March 2023, A. Blinken became the first US Secretary of State in history to personally visit Niger). Nevertheless, thanks to American diplomacy, the US was able to maintain a presence in the country until March 2024, although French troops were forced to leave the African state (the last members of the French armed forces left Niger in December 2023). However, in the context of the development of contacts with Russia, the People's Republic of China and Iran, as well as the development of cooperation with other military regimes in its neighborhood (as well as due to the suspension of most of American aid), Nigeria decided in March 2024 to terminate military relations with the American side, and the American presence was described as "illegal" (Hudson, 2024; South China Morning Post, 2024; Stepansky, 2023; US Department of State, 2023c). The American side condemned the coup (although it called the actions of the armed forces in Niger a coup after

more than two months only in October 2023), suspended most of the financial resources provided to Niger in the framework of foreign security and other aid, but did not voluntarily give up the partnership and tried to maintain an important object in an unstable part of Africa (discussions about the possible transfer of the object and adjustment of security relations are being conducted by the USA with Ghana, Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast), in which, in addition to the fight against terrorism, it competes with Russia and especially the PRC for influence. (Birnbaum-Chason, 2024) The pragmatic American approach and cooperation even with the government established by the coup was directly confirmed in an interview for Africa Report by Molly Phee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and head of the delegation of the American side in Niger:

What we have tried to do in Niger was [...] to say, we would like to work with you, we would like to maintain this partnership, which is demonstrably beneficial to you and to our interests in the region, because of course we're very concerned about the stability of Nigeria and coastal West Africa. (Pecquet, 2024, para. 10)

The list of cases is not exhaustive, and mainly shows the new ones, in addition to the mentioned non-democratic states developing their relations with the USA during the Biden administration. List can also include Vietnam, which due to the growing rivalry with the People's Republic of China in September 2023 (as part of the visit of US President J. Biden) upgraded its relations with the US to a comprehensive strategic partnership, the highest level of Vietnamese foreign relations, thereby moving bilateral relations (surprisingly up to) two degrees to the level of those with the PRC, India, the Russian Federation and South Korea (Vietnam Pictorial, 2023; Wee, 2023; WTO Center VCCI, 2023). The importance of the 2-day visit to Vietnam is highlighted by the fact that it was one of only 16 foreign visits so far (until April 2024) made by the current US President J. Biden, most of which took place as participation in international summits and visits to America's traditional allies and partners. Although still a democracy, the "value partnership" with US also becomes more complicated in the case of India. Increasing cooperation not only within initiatives such as QUAD (elevated to the level of heads of state) but also through unprecedented technology transfer and intelligence sharing (as well as increasing frequency of mil-mil contacts) also primarily under the influence of growing rivalry with the PRC comes despite questionable steps by the Indian side at home and abroad, which to some extent raise questions to their commitment to the ideas of democracy and liberalism (The White House, 2023c; Razdan, 2023).

Conclusions

Based on the research, we have reached the conclusion that indeed the United States today (as well as in its recent past) (at least) rhetorically upholds the principles of democracy and liberalism in its foreign relations. In order to support the communication strategy, in addition to the already existing various partial programs, initiatives and forums that exist through the American government bodies and other institutions, US also organizes new ones - for example, the Summit for Democracy. Nevertheless, primarily under the influence of security cooperation and strategic global competition, a certain discrepancy arises between the frequent (but also not completely uniform) statements of the highest representatives and strategic documents on the support of democracy around the world. Although, despite the often exaggerated and flamboyant rhetoric not fully corresponding to the character of its important allies and partners, the United States is willing to intervene in the case of the defense of the democratic establishment of the state. However, as a result of the change in the international system and the weakening of the American role in it, as well as the reputational damage that the previous period and military interventions with often unclear reasons of the USA caused, the nature of the role of democracy and "value-based" interventions has changed.

According to the information available so far, the current administration of President J. Biden does not intend to change undemocratic and illiberal systems abroad if it can establish correct and mutually beneficial relations with them (however, these efforts do not always translate into American success). Undoubtedly, much of the rhetoric is a political cover for the rivalry with the PRC and the strengthening of the "unity" of the balancing coalition consisting primarily of democratic states led by the US.

Geographical character also plays a role, according to preliminary research - the Western Hemisphere, states in the neighborhood of the United States of America appear to be those where the US intervenes to protect the democratic establishment (but not openly and directly in order to change undemocratic regimes), unlike in

other parts of the world. In the future, with expanded literature and primary sources, it will be possible to examine more closely the real intentions, interests and actions of the American party and the role of democracy and liberal values in their foreign policy.

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