

Year One of the Biden Administration: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Russia

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Abstract

The article provides an analysis of Russia's role and place in President Biden's U.S. foreign policy aims. Particularly, this paper explores clashing world order visions, issues pertaining to national sovereignty, post-Soviet space development, sanction policies, climate change issues, and global security. The following research reveals that the rivalry between the United States and Russia influences the system of international relations, because both parties promote substantially different concepts of the future world order. The Biden administration was unwilling to make the necessary concessions to accommodate Russia because 1) there is a huge gulf between the two country's world views that even makes negotiations between the two almost impossible, and 2) because it does not take Russia seriously and views it as a declining power. As a result, the two sides were unable to come to some kind of negotiated agreement that would have addressed Russia's concerns including the Ukraine issue. Instead, deterring Russia has become a priority for U.S. foreign policy in critical areas such as national sovereignty, the democratic development of post-Soviet countries, Russian-related human rights issues, and U.S. sanction policies against Russia. Comparing Trump's presidency to the Biden administration's first year in office, Biden has championed a more pragmatic narrative towards Russia. Most evidently, this is manifested in problems concerning universal global challenges such as strategic stability, cyber-security, and even aspects of climate change. Nevertheless, the possibility of concluding any serious negotiations between the parties on new world order parameters seems less realistic today than ever before.

Keywords

Russia, United States, foreign policy, Biden administration, U.S.–Russia relations

Introduction

Russia's role in U.S. foreign policy, as well as its general relations with the U.S., is experiencing a serious crisis. Arguably, U.S.–Russian relations are at the lowest point since the Cold War. Confrontation between the two only intensified when Russia launched its “special military operation” against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In terms of the risk of nuclear escalation, some experts even compare the clash over Ukraine between Russia and the U.S.–led West to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (Schmemmann, 2022). Despite the Biden administration recognizing the decline of America's position as a global leader, as well as the looming threat posed by China, all efforts to avoid confrontation with Russia have failed. Analyzing state narratives reveals how U.S. worldviews, its perception of Russia, and responses to world events may have contributed to such radically

changing relations, now labeled as sustained confrontation. On the one hand, the antagonistic U.S. perception of Russia damaged relations between the two countries, which eventually escalated into conflict. On the other hand, Russia's more assertive foreign policy supported the U.S.

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narrative about it being a “revisionist power,” yet again negatively impacting their bilateral relations.

U.S. foreign policy towards Russia is the subject of a large amount of research. John Mearsheimer (2014), Peter Rutland (2015), Richard Sakwa (2017), Robert Legvold (2016), Sergey Karaganov (2018) analyze the Russian question through the lens of political realism. Thomas Graham (2019) and Dmitry Trenin (Graham & Trenin, 2020) developed the concept of the United States and Russian rivalry being a new type of great power competition. Andrej Krickovic and Yuval Weber (2018) also assume that U.S.–Russia relations “begin to look like a new Cold War,” with increasing deterrence and confrontation between the sides and a growing potential to escalate into a full-out nuclear war.

Seva Gunitsky and Andrey Tsygankov (2018) note that the so-called “liberal bias” among U.S. intellectual and political elite has a significant impact on the country’s approach to Russia in its foreign policy. Developing this line of thought, Alexander Cooley, 2017 argues that the United States should further promote liberal norms and values.

Additionally, constructivism is becoming more influential within international relations theory. Michael Reynolds, 2018 notes that the common narrative among the U.S. establishment concerning a “weak” and “clumsy” Russia ultimately lead to the country being gravely underestimated. William Wohlforth and Vladislav Zubkov (2017) consider the clashing world order approaches pursued by the two countries as detrimental for fueling bilateral confrontation. Also, Andrey Sushentsov and William Wohlforth (2020) identify “NATO-centric” U.S. discourse as a significant factor in relation deterioration.

Investigating the effects of discourses and narratives is a growing field of study for the political sphere. This article fills a crucial literature gap by examining the position of the U.S. towards Russia by explaining U.S. official narratives. This research tries to develop explanations for why the U.S. was unwilling to seriously negotiate Russia’s security concerns, leading up to Russia’s actions in Ukraine. This paper examines the following research questions:

- RQ1.** How has Russia’s place in U.S. foreign policy changed under the Biden administration?
- RQ2.** What factors have contributed to increased confrontation between the United States and Russia under the Biden administration?
- RQ3.** What factors limited U.S. foreign policy ambitions towards Russia, as well as any negotiation opportunities?
- RQ4.** Where was cooperation possible between the United States and Russia, and where were disputes inevitable?

This study proceeds from the constructivist premise that the political reality of the situation, including related facts and events, does not speak for itself—their meaning is the product of their interpretation by political actors (Krebs, 2015, p. 810). Both individuals (political leaders) and institutions (states agencies, mass media, non-profit organizations etc.) can play as actors in the political sphere. Actors create and substantiate various types of identity inherent to American society; in the context of this study, foreign policy identity is imperative to understand foreign policy goals. This article focuses on individuals who act as political actors and form “narrative constructs” (Bially Mattern, 2005, pp. 12–13) with a significant political and discursive influence on U.S. foreign policy. The following research considers the broad official narrative of the United States on foreign policy. By analyzing official U.S. positions, this paper unlocks the narratives formed by President Biden and his administration. Specifically, it will analyze his speeches, interviews, statements, press conferences, and documents posted on the [White House website](#), (2021). These materials, supplemented by information from analytical centers and the media, constitute the main body of sources. The chronological framework of the study covers the period from January 20, 2021 (the inauguration of President J. Biden) to February 24, 2022 (the start of President Putin’s “special military operation” in Ukraine).

The methodological framework of this study follows a constructivist theoretical approach, which helps better interpret the actions of political actors during certain international situations. The research is based on methods of paradigmatic narrative interpretation and qualitative text analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 12–15). According to these approaches, the most relevant narratives, containing similar topics, ideas, concepts, and having potential importance for research, are identified in the inductive-method-based sources. Then, the selected texts are classified by problem areas and analyzed in the context of the research objectives. After examining the collected body of sources, the following areas in U.S. foreign policy objectives were identified as most problematic:

- 1) Changing conception of the world order.
- 2) Maintaining sovereignty and the Russian factor.
- 3) Development of the post-Soviet space.
- 4) U.S. sanctions policy.
- 5) Effects of climate change.
- 6) Issues pertaining to global security.

Changing Conception of the World Order

Biden’s victory in the 2020 presidential elections is an additional factor for the transformation taking place within U.S. foreign policy, separating it from Trump’s previous neo-isolationist policies. Nevertheless, the democrat-led

administration was forced to make certain policy changes, being initially faced with the (post)-pandemic world conditions. Thus, while implementing his new foreign policy, President Biden is forced to consider the growing rivalry between great powers, the strengthening role of regionalism, as well as the need to correlate the U.S. international agenda with its political and economic resources. In this case, the withdrawal of U.S. and ally troops from Afghanistan (Biden, 2021g), accompanied by the chaotic situation in the country and the subsequent rise of the Taliban, became a symptomatic example of Biden's limited U.S. foreign policy capabilities.

U.S. foreign policy adaptations to changing international and domestic realities is currently being traced and explained (Tsygankov, 2020). The previous post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy paradigm has largely exhausted itself. It once proceeded from the premise of an imminent onset of the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992) which aimed at spreading liberal democracy around the world, not excluding use of force. The relative weakening of the United States' position in world affairs and the strengthening of non-Western players such as Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey, and others have motivated Washington to correct the paradigm that has dominated over the past three decades. However, the formation of a "polycentric" or "multipolar" world order and possibly waning power of the United States stirs various debates among scholars (Lo, 2020). In fact, such trends may turn out to be far from the truth. As Bobo Lo (2020) mentions, the United States "can probably become the leading power in the world over the next two decades, perhaps much longer."

There has been no U.S. narrative supporting multipolar world order formation. Currently, the U.S. perceives the world system to be in a state of international crisis, fueled by a bipolar struggle between democracy and authoritarianism (Biden, 2021e). By painting such an existential challenge, Biden confronts both challenges within the country itself (right-wing populism and Trumpism) and at the international level. In this regard, Russia and China play the role of "revisionist" forces, seeking to challenge the liberal order and American leadership (Biden, 2021e). Hence, the participation of 110 countries (excluding Russia and China) in the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy (December 9–10, 2021) can be considered as one of the many steps the U.S. has taken to conceptualize the international order under the "democracy – autocracy" framework (Summit for Democracy, 2021).

China is steadily increasing its economic and military potential (Bateman, 2022; Leksyutina, 2019). Thus, in regards to the global struggle, it is perceived by the Biden administration as "the most serious competitor" challenging American "prosperity, security, and democratic values" (Biden, 2021a). A strategic task for the U.S. is to deter China, and do so by readily using a wide range of

foreign policy tools to accomplish the task, including: sanctions, trade wars, political pressure (both direct or through institutions), military alliances (such as the strategic military alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—AUKUS), and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between Australia, India, and Japan—QUAD), and political ideology. Simultaneously, a significant part of the American establishment considers Russia as a secondary opponent, who could multiply China's power (Summit for Democracy, 2021). The idea that Russia is a fundamentally "weak" state, because of alleged state corruption and inefficient democratic institutions, is widely spread in U.S. expert and political circles (Gunitsky & Tsygankov, 2018, p. 3). According to this point of view, due to internal reasons (instability) or external circumstances (increasing power asymmetry in favor of China), Russia will be eventually forced to change its foreign policy strategy in a more Western-appeasing direction (Sokolshchik & Suslov, 2022, p. 153). Moreover, this interpretation assumes that Russia will play an even less significant role in the international system in the future (Krickovic & Weber, 2018). The dominance of such views among the U.S. political establishment, including those of President Biden, has led to the establishment of a policy of systemic deterrence, aimed to weaken Russia. This policy excludes the possibility of taking Russian concerns more seriously in the international sphere. Hence, this perception makes any productive negotiations with Russia on the key parameters of the world order senseless to U.S. interests (Krickovic & Weber, 2018).

It seems strategically advantageous for the United States to solve its issues with Russia in such a way as to conserve its resources on its rivalry with rising Beijing. Statements following the U.S.–Russian summit in Geneva in June 2021, which was the most important event for their relations at that time, demonstrated that only tactical issues, which can increase confrontation predictability with Russia or invigorate American world leadership (Suslov, 2021), can be put forward on the negotiation table. However, the principled defense of clashing world order views of the two countries failed to make room for any bilateral discussions, even those on tactical issues (Sakwa, 2017). As Andrej Krickovic and Richard Sakwa (2022) argue, this ideological clash runs deep as it is based on the conflicting understandings of both parties on the fundamental nature of international politics. Meanwhile, as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (2021) stated shortly after the summit, relations between Russia and China "have reached an all-time high, setting an example of interstate cooperation in the 21st century." Considering international changes, deepening Sino–Russian cooperation in the economic, political, military, and technological spheres is likely to remain as a chief trend in the medium term.

Maintaining Sovereignty and the Russian Factor

Being great powers, fully capable of conducting independent foreign policies, maintaining sovereignty is crucial for both the U.S. and Russia. The United States positions itself as the leader of the democratic world. Russia envisages itself as a world defender of justice. Each country identifies its own specific mission in the international arena. For the United States, it is to protect democracy and liberal values. For Russia, the aim is to protect political and cultural diversity and support its national development in different regions and countries.

Each side has its own perception of what the world order should be, a perception which they defend or promote. For the U.S., world order should be based on rules reflecting universal values and American supreme leadership. For Russia, world order should be “polycentric” or “multipolar” and based on international law, freely discussed by sovereign states. The U.S. believes that international politics should be shaped by liberal ideas like democratic peace theory, while Russia’s take on the matter is based on its adherence to *realpolitik*. These contesting parties talk over each other as if they are living in different realities, which in a sense they are (Krickovic & Sakwa, 2022). As Thomas Graham and Dmitry Trenin (2020) emphasize, in this equation, “no country is prepared to accept any infringement on its own sovereignty.”

In the context of U.S. domestic policy, the problem of sovereignty turned out to be closely connected with Russia. The transformation of U.S.–Russia relations into a question of U.S. internal political struggle is often associated with the alleged Russian “interference” in the 2016 presidential elections and its further investigations (Lynch et al., 2016). The origins of this trend, however, can be traced back to the presidency of Barak Obama (Deyermond, 2012, p. 76). During the 2020 elections, the Russian factor was, yet again, clearly manifested within the domestic political narrative of the U.S. (Biden, 2021i). Under the current administration, Russia plays a role in U.S. domestic policy, further limiting the possibility of dialogue even on key international security issues. For instance, President Biden, when speaking at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, clearly labeled Russia as a threat to U.S. sovereignty and the 2022 Congressional Elections (Biden, 2021i).

On the other hand, Biden’s opponents from Republican Party also use the Russian factor against Biden’s administration. Their rhetoric concerning the Geneva Summit accused Biden of surrendering U.S. interests and being too soft on Russia. Reacting on pressure from the opposition, and despite some positive results of the summit, a few days after its completion, Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that the United States, if approved by congress, was preparing new sanctions against Russia due to the alleged

poisoning and imprisonment of Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny (Karni, 2021).

Development of the Post-Soviet Space

One of the most concerning areas in the U.S. foreign policy narrative regarding Russia remains the issue of the development of the post-Soviet space. Ukraine is a decisive country around which the confrontation with Russia has unfolded. Although the political and narrative foundations of the Ukrainian crisis can be traced back three decades, following the end of the Cold War or even back to the last century, with the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (Roberts, 2022, pp. 6–7), the immediate origins of the clash between Russia and the West on Ukraine and its “special military operation” can be traced back to 2014.

Magdalena Leichtova (2016) mentions that the refusal of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to sign the Association Agreement with the EU at the end of 2013 is “usually presented as the original cause of all the events.” This decision was the impetus for the escalation of the crisis, which involved such international players as the EU, the United States, and Russia. This provoked the Maidan Uprising, which, despite the agreement between President Yanukovych and the opposition on the early presidential elections and constitutional reform (which were attested by French, German, and Polish representatives), ended in a coup in Kiev (Baunov et al., 2015). This regime change in Ukraine, approved and supported by the U.S. and its allies (Carpenter, 2017) at the end of February 2014 triggered the accession of Crimea to Russia the following month, and a civil war led by pro-Russian rebels in the Donbass region in 2014–2015 (Roberts, 2022, pp. 6–7), which was concluded by the Minsk Agreement (Protocol... 2014). As Ted Carpenter (2017) points out, “it is no wonder that Russia reacted badly to the unconstitutional ouster of an elected, pro-Russian government – an ouster that occurred not only with Washington’s blessing, but apparently with its assistance.” Thus, the contours of an irreconcilable confrontation between Russia and the West around Ukraine and its possible directions of domestic and foreign political development were formed.

Further political and narrative events only aggravated the contradictions between Russia and the U.S.-led West on Ukraine. On the one hand, Russia’s national security concerns and the unwillingness of the United States and its allies to discuss them seriously widened the gulf between them (Krickovic & Weber, 2018). On the other hand, Ukraine’s systematic integration into Transatlantic structures, specifically NATO, as a government goal was amended in Ukraine’s constitution in 2019 (Roberts, 2022, p. 8); the official stating of the country’s intention to return Crimea, including militaristically, under the Crimean

Platform adopted in 2021 (Roberts, 2022, p. 8) brought Russia and Ukraine closer to a direct military clash.

If to focus on this article's considered period, the attention of the Biden administration to both Ukraine and the region notably increased since Trump's time in office (Sokolshchik, 2020b, p. 283). Beginning prior to the start of the Ukrainian crisis, the U.S. political narrative of 2021 was marked by a new round of tensions. On the one hand, it was aimed at increasing concerns of a "possible military invasion by Russia," thereby eroding the confidence in a peaceful settlement in Eastern Ukraine in the framework of the Minsk Agreement (Protocol... 2014). On the other hand, the concentration of Russian armed forces bordering the Donbass region (Jones et al., 2021), as well as the series of military exercises in the region conducted by Russia and the United States and its NATO allies in 2021 all clearly illustrated the high possibility of a future military escalation (Jones et al., 2021). What pulled the trigger for Russia's "special military operation," in Roberts' opinion, "might have been President Zelensky's defiant speech to the Munich Security Conference on 19 February (2022), in which he threatened Ukrainian re-acquisition of nuclear weapons" (Roberts, 2022, p. 19).

Biden's approach to the problem correlates with his consistent support for Ukraine's pro-Western development, despite the fact that Russia considers post-Soviet countries within the sphere of its national interests. For instance, President Biden emphasizes: "We will never recognize Russia's purported annexation of the peninsula [Crimea], and we will stand with Ukraine against Russia's aggressive acts" (Biden, 2021h). Russia's role in the Ukrainian crisis was assessed by the United States as an "extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" (Biden, 2021e). The Biden administration clearly stated that "Russia's aggression, including the war in Eastern Ukraine and its seizure of Crimea, <...> destabilized Europe and the Black Sea region, and threatened the global rules-based order" (Joint Statement... 2021).

Moreover, Ukraine's progress along its path towards democracy and a Euro-Atlantic partnership was characterized as one of the central objectives for U.S. foreign policy in the context of "the global struggle between democracy and autocracy" (Joint Statement... 2021). One of the major steps taken by the U.S. to achieve this goal was the reinvigoration of the Strategic Partnership Commission (SPC) with Ukraine, a meeting which was held in 2021—the first time since 2018. The Commission's agenda currently includes a wide range of "support-Ukraine" and "counter-Russia" measures in the following fields: 1) security and defense; 2) promotion of democracy and protection of human rights; 3) energy security and a climate change problem; 4) sustainable economic development; and 5) combating the pandemic and its consequences (Joint Statement... 2021).

However, the desire of the United States to spread democracy in the post-Soviet space has its limits. Despite the fact that the United States and its European allies are not officially responsible for the security of non-NATO members, dilemmas arise surrounding the possibility of required U.S. direct support in the event of a military escalation on Russia's western borders. This question became even more relevant in the context of Russia's ongoing actions in Ukraine. At the same time, a direct military clash between the United States and its allies with Russia entails the threat of a rapidly escalating conflict that has the capability of going nuclear (Karaganov & Suslov, 2019).

More clearly, the limited capabilities of the United States can be traced to back to Belarus. Despite its will to affect "the Belarusian regime" which is "aimed at suppressing democracy and the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Executive Order 13405... 2021) the United States has a limited set of instruments in Belarus, particularly sanctions and other restrictive measures. According to Thomas Graham, supporting democracy is important for the United States, but Belarus is not among countries that is given absolute priority both in America's foreign policy goals and the U.S. court of public opinion (Sokolshchik, 2020a). As the researcher notes, the broad intervention of the West in the domestic affairs of Belarus can provoke a serious international crisis, because Russia strategically sees the country as important in terms of its existential interests (Sokolshchik, 2020a).

U.S. Sanctions Policy against Russia

Extraterritorial economic measures (sanctions) are one of the key instruments the U.S. uses in its foreign policy strategy with Russia. Generally, U.S. sanctions against Russia have a serious impact on the investment environment in the country, the ability to take loans in foreign markets, and the dynamics of the country's economic growth. According to estimates of both Russian and international expert centers, due to the various sanction regimes in place, including that of the U.S., Russia loses from 1% to 1.5% GDP per year (Portanskiy, 2020).

Today's U.S. sanctions regime against Russia began to unfold in 2012 and intensified following the 2014 Crimean crisis. The U.S. sanctions policy against Russia is based on a broad regulatory framework. It is made up of congressional laws and presidential executive orders. Federal legislation prescribes the executive branch to introduce restrictive measures against Russian citizens, companies, and projects. The legislative form of U.S. sanctions against Russia makes them practically irreversible and shapes the boundaries of the political course in this area.

U.S. sanctions policy is based on an extensive institutional structure. The U.S. Department of Treasury, the

State Department, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Justice are involved in its implementation. The most important role is allocated to the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury which controls major sanctions lists. By the end of 2021, reasons for sanctions against Russia can be categorized into the following: 1) human rights violations; 2) cyber security and alleged interference in U.S. domestic politics; 3) issues pertaining to the Ukrainian crisis; 4) restraining Russian military and economic potential; and 5) countering Russian energy projects.

The Biden administration's focus on promoting liberal democracy at the international level entails a more attentive attitude of the United States to high-profile events in the field of human rights. The law base of U.S. sanctions against Russia on human rights consists of the Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 ([Public Law 112–208... 2012](#)) and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act of 2016 ([Public Law 114–328... 2016](#)). Thus, on March 2, 2021, reacting to Russia's treatment of oppositionist Alexei Navalny, the United States imposed new sanctions on Russia, namely designated against seven high-ranking officials, and a number of legal entities, including several research organizations ([U.S. Sanctions... 2021](#)). On April 15, 2021, a new package of anti-Russian sanctions was introduced by the Executive Order ([Executive Order 14024... 2021](#)). As response to the Ukrainian crisis, the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act was adopted in 2014 ([Public Law 113–95... 2014](#)). U.S. sanctions against the Russian energy sector are regulated by a number of executive orders, particularly Executive Order 13,662 ([Executive Order 13662... 2014](#)), and the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA) of 2019, the amended versions of which were adopted in 2020 and 2021 as a part of National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) ([Public Law 116–92... 2019](#); [Public Law 116–283... 2021](#)). In general, the policy of U.S. sanctions to deter Russia (as well as Iran and North Korea) is regulated by a number of executive orders and acts of Congress, and the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) of 2017 is debatably most vital ([Public Law 115–44... 2017](#)).

Nevertheless, sanctions also have an impact on U.S. domestic politics. Against the backdrop of attempts made by the Biden administration to build a dialogue with Moscow in the field of global security, Republicans criticize the President for showing weakness to Russia ([Crowley, 2021](#)). Biden's opponents continue to lobby for the imposition of sanctions against Russian energy project Nord Stream 2. Criticism is focused both on the easing of pressure on the Russian–German energy project, and generally on Biden's Green Agenda, particularly his

decision to shut down the Keystone Pipeline in the United States ([Cruz, 2021](#)).

As a part of the political process, the Biden administration cannot ignore accusations of showing weakness to Russia. This largely explains democrat assurances to continue sanctions pressure, especially on human rights grounds and against Russia's energy sector. As the Biden's national security adviser John Sullivan mentioned almost immediately after the Geneva Summit in June 2021, the U.S. was preparing sanctions against Russia due to the Navalny case and the Nord Stream 2 project ([Campisi, 2021](#)).

U.S. sanctions policy has significant effects on the Russian economy. However, Russia has managed to advance while adapting to the tight sanction regimes. Thus, Moscow was able to complete the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline ([Brown, 2021](#)). As some the experts noted at the end of 2021, U.S. sanctions have largely reached their implementation limit. Further sanction escalation, such as the introduction of “draconian” sanctions, may be fraught with severe losses for U.S. businesses, hit U.S. partners in Europe, and may affect the stability of the global economy ([Sokolshchik & Suslov, 2022](#), p. 158). The new wave of anti-Russian restrictive measures from the U.S., EU, and their partners after February 24, 2022 demonstrated this. It largely led to an increase of global energy and food crises ([Blas, 2022](#); [Zaytsev et al., 2022](#)).

As practice shows, the goal of U.S. sanctions to deter Russia has yet to be realized. After 2014, the U.S. and EU imposed sanctions against Moscow on grounds of Russia's alleged “political, economic, or military aggression” ([Public Law 113–95... 2014](#)). However, Russia continued its foreign policy strategy by actively supporting the DPR and the LPR in Eastern Ukraine. Moreover, it conducted a military operation in Syria. Despite the deteriorating socio-economic situation in Russia ([Kotyrla & Zaytsev, 2021](#)) and the protest movements, the Russian political system provides relative stability in the country. As Ivan Timofeev (2019p. 89) emphasizes, “the link between sanctions and democratization is not clear. Sanctions may even stimulate consolidation of the targeted regime instead of its collapse.”

Additionally, Russia's retaliatory measures have made it possible to develop some sectors of the national economy (i.e., agriculture) and accelerate the process of import substitution ([Kotyrla & Zaytsev, 2021](#)). A sufficient safety margin of Russia's political and socio-economic systems in the medium term, even against the background of negative domestic dynamics, allows the country to cope with U.S. sanction pressure.

Effects of Climate Change

One of the first decisions Biden made as president was to return the United States to the Paris Climate Agreement

(following President Trump withdrawal the U.S. from it in June 2017) (Biden, 2021b). Biden's Green Agenda declares the achievement of a clean energy economy and net-zero emissions no later than 2050 (The Biden Plan... 2021). It includes the transition of transport infrastructure to zero-carbon emissions by 2030, noting the wide spread rise of electric vehicles and its network of charging stations. Overall, Biden pushes the shift to clean tech in the energy industry by 2035. By the same time, it is planned to halve its carbon footprint in the construction industry and radically improve building-efficiency standards (The Biden Plan... 2021).

The Biden administration believes that climate change is a global crisis that is imperative to address (Biden, 2021c). This position is strikingly different from the narrative of the former president, who repeatedly expressed doubts about the seriousness of the problem for the United States and the planet (Trump, 2017). In the executive order on tackling the climate crisis, President Biden notes: "It is the policy of my Administration that climate considerations shall be an essential element of United States foreign policy and national security" (Biden, 2021c). Moreover, it is further stated that "the United States will work with other countries and partners, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to put the world on a sustainable climate pathway" (Biden, 2021c).

U.S. interest in more pragmatic international cooperation on climate change, including with Russia, creates certain prerequisites for bilateral relations. The historical case of U.S.–Russia relations on the climate change problem shows that collaboration to protect one's own interests can be useful even nowadays (Makarov et al., 2021). This may provide an opportunity to address its issues with Russia, for example, in the Arctic, because the countries are neighbors in the region and members of The Arctic Council (2021). The positive statements of the U.S. president speak in favor of the prospects for dialogue in the field. In particular, at the Climate Summit held in April 2021, he mentioned: "I am very heartened by President Putin's call yesterday for the world to collaborate and advanced carbon dioxide removal. And the United States looks forward to working with Russia and other countries in that endeavor" (Biden, 2021f).

Limitations on fighting climate change are determined by the general confrontational nature of U.S. relations with Russia. The dialogue and possible cooperation on countering climate change in the Arctic can be offset by the narrative that the region is becoming a new arena for military rivalry between the sides. Climate change, which is accelerating the Arctic ice cap melting, may also result in U.S.–Russia confrontation flowing into this region. In the 2019 Arctic Strategy, the U.S. Department of Defense considers the region "as a potential corridor for strategic competition" (Department of Defense... 2019). This, in its turn, creates significant challenges for the security of both

parties. For instance, U.S. officials have expressed concerns over the militarization of the Arctic after the bilateral summit in Geneva in June 2021 (Briefing... 2021).

However, President Biden, at a press conference after the Geneva Summit, noted that the leaders discussed how to ensure that "the Arctic remains a region of cooperation rather than conflict" (Biden, 2021d). Some experts note that there is room for cooperation in the field of research, the adaptation of infrastructure to the melting of permafrost, reducing methane emissions into the atmosphere, and combating erosion of coastal areas (Schreiber & DeGeorge, 2021).

Issues Pertaining to Global Security

In contrast to Trump's presidency, the Biden administration's narrative identifies the problem of strategic stability and non-proliferation as priorities (Readout of President... 2021). Coupled with the constructive position of Russia, who in October 2020 proposed to extend the START Treaty for another 5 years, the pragmatic narrative of the United States on the issue provides possible room for dialogue on arms control (Sokolshchik & Suslov, 2022, pp. 160–162).

The results of the 2021 Geneva Summit indicate the readiness of the United States to cooperate with Russia in this area. The Joint Statement of the Presidents of Russia and the United States confirms the Cold War principle "that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" (U.S.–Russia Presidential Joint Statement... 2021). The document also recorded the decision to launch "an integrated bilateral strategic stability dialogue in the near future that will be deliberate and robust. Through this dialogue, we seek to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures" (U.S.–Russia Presidential Joint Statement... 2021).

There are a number of other topics in the field of arms control that are among the important areas for dialogue. In particular, there remains a problem of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles and the threat of a new arms race in Europe and Asia. There is possibility to negotiate military aspects of cyber security, given that it is an integral part of strategic stability (Karaganov & Suslov, 2019). The need to develop rules of conduct in this area is becoming an urgent task for key players in the nuclear field and for other countries. Noteworthy, is the decision to create a special working group between the two countries which came into fruition at the Geneva Summit (Biden, 2021d).

Additionally, according to the election program and the negotiation process in 2021, President Biden made efforts to resume U.S. participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to resolve the problem of the Iranian Nuclear Program developed in 2015 with the cooperation of

Russia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, China, and Germany (Turak, 2021). Multilateral dialogue on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is also among the priorities of the U.S. President (Reynolds, 2021). In these questions, the American political narrative was close to the Russian one (News Conference... 2021).

However, the progress of U.S. foreign policy in the designated areas of global security is still insignificant. Major limitations for the implementation of U.S. foreign policy in this field, as in several others where there is potential for cooperation with Russia, are the toxic bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as the perceived Russian factor in U.S. domestic politics. The critical rhetoric from the Republicans regarding the Geneva Summit results proves this (Crowley, 2021).

Conclusion

Biden's rise to power in the White House opened new opportunities for implementing a new foreign policy strategy towards Russia in numerous areas. On the other hand, it complicated an already complex foreign policy situation. There are some limitations in the key dimensions of U.S. foreign policy, which are primarily related to the transformation of the world order and the adaptation of the United States to new international and domestic political conditions.

A common limitation for all possible attempts at dialogue between the U.S. and Russia is the highly confrontational nature of their bilateral relations. In large part, this confrontation stems from their differing perceptions of their desired vision of the world order. Moreover, the perception of Russia as a fundamentally weak state, which is developing in a downward trend, limits any cooperation Washington may have with Moscow. Additionally, U.S. foreign policy limitations are also connected with Russia's perceived interconnectedness in U.S. domestic politics.

Yet, a fundamental question remains: will there be a world order transformation towards bipolarity, a struggle between democracy and autocracy, or will it become a "polycentric" or "multipolar" world system? Regardless of what the future may bring, the rivalry between the United States on the one hand, Russia and China on the other hand is of a long-term nature and influences the future structure of international relations. Russian deterrence as a U.S. competitor will continue, or perhaps even intensify, particularly in highly contested areas such as democratic post-Soviet space development, human rights issues, sanction regimes, facilitating political pressure, and supporting anti-Russian powers and coalitions. In this case, Ukraine has become a key battleground, both literally and figuratively, of the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the U.S.-led West. The unprecedented financial, diplomatic, political,

military, and informational support provided to Ukraine throughout the "special military operation" is all a part of the U.S. strategy to deter Russia, and its fight to retain global leadership.

Compared to Trump's presidency, when any steps to establish dialogue with Moscow were excluded due to the Russian factor in domestic inter-party struggles, Biden's administration expanded its the pragmatic narrative towards Russia. It most clearly manifested in problems concerning global challenges such as strategic stability, cyber-security, and in some ways climate change. However, in the field of global security, the United States aims to determine the rules of the game in the conditions of fierce rivalry between the great powers, rather than completely overcome U.S.–Russia confrontation. Contradictions within visions for the future world order and the U.S. perception of Russia as declining power are major obstacles to negotiations in all other spheres. Thus, the possibility of concluding any serious negotiations between the two countries on new world order parameters seems less realistic today than ever before, given that the United States has actively turned to defending its international positions on global matters.

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