



QUO VADIS, AMERICA? U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY UNDER PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

QUO VADIS, AMERYKO? STRATEGIA BEZPIECZEŃSTWA NARODOWEGO USA ZA RZĄDÓW PREZYDENTA JOE BIDENA

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ABSTRACT

The research purpose of the paper is to analyze the key assumptions outlined in the US National Security Strategy 2022. The paper will look for answers to the following questions: What is national security strategy? Is it an important document? What and for whom does it matter? What direction will US policy take under Joe Biden's administration? What tools and methods will be used? What are the goals and priorities set in the document? Which countries are among the closest allies and biggest adversaries? What impact had the Russian aggression against Ukraine on the shape of the US National Security Strategy 2022? The main research method will be source analysis and criticism, as well as a comparative method to contrast the current NSS with previous ones. The research thesis assumes that the priority of the current US security strategy remains the one initiated during previous White House administrations – the rivalry with China, which in tandem with Russia aims to change the modern international order, threatening the national interests of the United States of America. The

ABSTRAKT

Celem badawczym niniejszego opracowania jest przeanalizowanie najważniejszych założeń przedstawionych w Strategii Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego USA z 2022 roku. W artykule będą poszukiwane odpowiedzi na następujące pytania: Czym jest strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego? Czy jest to ważny dokument? Jakie i dla kogo ma znaczenie? W jakim kierunku polityka USA będzie podążać za rządów Joe Bidena? Jakie środki i metody będą wykorzystywane? Jakie cele i priorytety wyznaczono w dokumencie? Które państwa znalazły się w gronie najbliższych sojuszników i największych przeciwników? Jaki wpływ na kształt Strategii Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego USA z 2022 roku miała agresja Rosji na Ukrainę? Główną metodą badawczą będzie analiza i krytyka źródeł oraz metoda komparatywna, pozwalająca na zestawienie obecnych założeń SBN z poprzednimi. Teza badawcza zakłada, że priorytetem obecnej strategii bezpieczeństwa USA pozostaje – zapoczątkowana za poprzednich administracji Białego Domu – rywalizacja z Chinami, które w tandemie z Rosją dążą do zmiany współcze-

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conducted analysis, on the one hand, confirms the thesis, and, on the other hand, points to inconsistencies in US strategic thinking (which takes the form of a “wish list”), which can significantly affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the set goals and objectives.

Keywords: United States of America; Joe Biden; US national security strategy; China; Russia

snego porządku międzynarodowego, zagrażając interesom narodowym Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki. Przeprowadzona analiza z jednej strony potwierdza postawioną tezę, a z drugiej wskazuje na niespójność w amerykańskim myśleniu strategicznym (które przybiera formę „listy życzeń”), co znacząco może wpłynąć na efektywność realizacji wyznaczonych celów i założeń.

Słowa kluczowe: Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki; Joe Biden; strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego USA; Chiny; Rosja

INTRODUCTION

Almost two years after President Joe Biden’s inauguration, the long-awaited National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) was released in October 2022 and was expected to answer a number of questions, including: In what direction will U.S. policy move? What tools and methods will be used? What goals and priorities have been set? Which countries were among the closest allies and biggest enemies? What impact has Russia’s aggression against Ukraine had on the shape of the U.S. National Security Strategy 2022? In starting to explore this topic, it is worth answering the questions at the very beginning: What is national security strategy? Is it an important document? What is its significance and for whom? The research objective of this article is to analyze the assumptions outlined in the U.S. National Security Strategy 2022, and to answer the above-mentioned research questions. The main research method will be the analysis and critique of sources and a comparative method to compare the current NSS with previous ones. I will verify the following thesis: that the priority of the current U.S. national security strategy remains the one initiated under previous White House administrations – which basically comes down to a rivalry with China, which in tandem with Russia seeks to reshape the modern international order, putting the national interests of the United States of America at risk. At the same time, there is a noticeable inconsistency in U.S. strategic thinking (which takes the form of a “wish list”), and this could significantly affect the effectiveness of achieving the set goals and objectives from the NSS 2022.

WHAT IS NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?

After searching the literature for the origins and meaning of the term ‘national security strategy’, it is worth noting that initially the concept of strategy referred exclusively to military issues. At the beginning of the 20th century, the definition expanded, with the formation of war strategy, followed by the separation of defense strategy, and at the turn of the 21st century the concept of national and international security strategy was formed, which referred to the ways of using all the resources of international relations actors (including states, coalitions, alliances, the international community) to prevent and resolve conflicts and crises. As Stanislaw Koziej points out, security strategy is: “the theory and practice of directing the security affairs of an entity by the top decision-maker with particular reference to setting security goals and ways to achieve them” (Koziej, 2010, p. 4; Bartholomees, 2008, p. 14).

A successful strategy is based on clearly defined policy goals, on finding the fields where you have an advantage over your opponent, and on a precise cost-benefit calculus (Baylis et al., 2009, p. 72). Often the term ‘strategy’ is used interchangeably with the word ‘policy’. Alan G. Stolberg considers this to be a mistake, since these terms have different meanings. As he points out, policy is related to answering the question “what to do with a certain problem?”; strategy, on the other hand, seeks a solution to a problem by raising the question: “how to do it?” (Stolberg, 2010, p. 29).

The concept of strategy is very broad¹, because it refers to various fields, e.g., business strategy, development strategy, etc. In relation to the country, strategy means: the skillful ability to secure national interests, how to measure and combine all the tools at the disposal of the nation and the state to ensure the success of a clearly defined general policy (see: Kukułka, 1978, p. 122). Although the conceptual framework of strategy has expanded progressively, it is still defined in modern dictionaries as: “a branch of the art of war”, whose task is to define the rules for the preparation and conduct of war (*Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego*, 2004, p. 553). According to Carl von Clausewitz, “the nature of war is determined by politics, thus political circumstances shape strategy, understood as the science of using battles for the purposes of war” (Clausewitz, 1958, p.

¹ According to Roman Kuźniar, the meaning of the word ‘strategy’ has become “banalized” over the decades (see: Kuźniar, 2005, p. 11 ff).

143 ff). American researchers reduce the term ‘national security strategy’ to the concept of using the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated manner to achieve set national and international goals. It is pointed out that national security strategies are largely implemented by military force structures. Decisions on what the national security strategy will focus on are made in response to perceived threats in the international environment and involve international commitments, troop numbers, the deployment of military forces around the world, and the development of military capabilities (Jordan et al., 2009, pp. 41–43). Boleslaw Balcerowicz defines strategy as: “the theory and practice of action aimed at achieving the set goals in a particular field, taken on an overall scale and having a long-term character” (Balcerowicz, 2002, p. 94). Although the security strategy is adjusted to current security threats and challenges, it should cover a longer time horizon. For example, comparing the National Security Strategies (NSSs) of two U.S. presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, indicates that they contain similar goals and challenges for U.S. security. Considering the circumstances of the creation of Clinton’s NSS² – it was formulated in 1995 and thus after the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR, while the security strategy under President Bush was formulated in 2002, after the terrorist attacks in the U.S. Despite the different circumstances, the two strategies regarded terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, drug trafficking, and the spread of international crime as the main threats³. As early as 1995, President Clinton stressed that the threats of the modern world transcend national borders, thus the U.S. must be prepared to conduct military interventions in various places around the world. Formed under different circumstances, U.S. national security strategies have many points in common, showing that the approach to national security has a long-term character. Forecasting the country’s security must take into account constant trends, which will enable the appropriate deployment and use of the resources one has. Each country should formulate a security strategy that will define how security is understood, include instruments for achieving it, ways to eliminate threats based on, among other things, the historical experience of the nation and external conditions, such as alliances (Lasoń, 2010, pp. 15–16). The basic instruments of national security strategy include: diplomacy, information capabilities,

² For more on the NSS under President Bill Clinton, see: Zieba, 2000, pp. 51–65; Johnson, 2001.

³ *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (1995); compare with: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2002).

economic capabilities, and armed forces (Koziej, 2010, p. 6). For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to bring up the definition created by the U.S. government, which defines national security strategy as: the art and science of creating, applying, and coordinating instruments of state power (diplomatic, economic, military, and information) together with the military forces to secure the nation's interests (Dannreuther & Peterson, 2006, p. 5 ff). Thus, the strategy is a plan of action, and its task is to solve specific problems. The NSS presents the position of the current U.S. president and his associates on foreign and security policy. The document includes not only the biggest threats and challenges to U.S. national security, but also countermeasures and methods (Kiwierska, 2010, p. 1 ff).

Although the U.S. national security strategy is largely implemented through military structures, its construction cannot proceed without consideration of the international environment. Because international relations and domestic politics are intertwined, national security policy operates on two levels. Decisions on strategy are mostly a response to threats in the international environment. Even though the formation of the U.S. NSS is primarily influenced by the domestic policies of policymakers (including issues of defense budget spending, military strength, armaments), the national security strategy also depends on international commitments, alliances, cooperation of the U.S. military forces, and intelligence services with other countries (Jordan et al., 2009, p. 43 ff).

The formulation of the U.S. national security strategy has several tasks. First, it presents the most important goals with an indication of which elements of the national power can be used in achieving them, and this can provide guidance, for example, to federal agencies during planning and implementing the budget, scheduling training for employees or purchasing appropriate equipment. Second, the national security strategy provides to the executive branch the necessary information needed to justify its decisions and actions to Congress. Third, the formulation of a detailed security strategy can be helpful to the incumbent White House administration when informing the public about the tasks, goals, tools and reasons for the U.S. security policy they are pursuing (Dale, 2013, p. 2 ff).

The frequent reference to both the country's military and economic strength and the emphasis on the superpower's leadership role (*American leadership*) can be considered a characteristic element of the U.S. national security strategy. At most, the context of the used vocabulary changes, and so in the NSS 2002 we can read about the role of the U.S. in leading the historic mission to bring freedom and peace to the world (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2002, p. 3 ff). On the other hand, the Barack Obama administration's

National Security Strategy focused on renewing America's leadership in the world (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2010, p. 2 ff). Also in the U.S. National Security Strategy under Donald Trump, we can find a reference to this issue in the document, where it is emphasized that the United States is to continue to play the role of "world leader", but with a different accent than its predecessor – through using a position of strength towards other actors in international relations as a tool of pressure (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017, p. 3).

Assuming that the general aim of the NSS is to communicate the vision of national security from the executive to the legislature branch, it seems logical that consistency in the executive's public communication with the content of the document is necessary. However, practice varies. An example is the presidency of Donald Trump, whose undisguised sympathy for Vladimir Putin put into question the transatlantic relations and the strength of traditional alliances (especially from the EU). However, the 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy has already set a more categorical tone towards Russia, which, alongside China, was listed as a rival power constantly seeking to expand its military power and influence, posing a threat to U.S. international position, influence and interests (Waśko-Owsiejczuk, 2018b, pp. 83–93). One of the questions that arises at this point is how it is possible that the President's public statements have diverged from the provisions of the NSS 2017, which in fact is, after all, a report submitted by the President to Congress. The answer will not be simple. Because, on the one hand, it is worth remembering that this document is prepared by the National Security Council, thus the closest advisory group to the U.S. president, and, on the other hand, the case of President Donald Trump's presidency shows an interesting case – the lack of a coherent position and vision for the implementation of U.S. foreign and security policy between the president and his cabinet. This was particularly visible at the beginning of the Trump administration, when the biggest disagreements were between the president and the Defense Secretary James Mattis, who repeatedly pointed out the threat from Russia and the inviolability of U.S. alliances, called Putin "delusional" for breaking all the rules of international diplomacy, and stated that among global threats, "Russia may be the most dangerous" (Scarborough, 2016)⁴. And just as Americans and other participants in international relations have more than once been surprised

⁴ The Vice President – Mike Pence, Secretary of State – Rex Tillerson, and the President's newly appointed National Security Advisor – Herbert McMaster – share a similar point of view.

by President Trump's statements and tweets, declarations, sudden changes of position, views or incoherence, the inconsistency and lack of a common position between the president and his closest associates has caused confusion and anxiety. On issues as important to the country as foreign and security policy, it seems crucial that the presidential administration should speak with one voice. Ultimately, the shape of the NSS 2017 diverged from President Trump's publicly declared vision, particularly in terms of his desire to deepen cooperation with Russia, which was criticized in the document for, among other things, interfering in the internal political affairs of other countries, or offensive cyber activities to influence public opinion around the world. However, as highlighted in the media, referring to the opinions of officials involved in the preparation of the document: "The new Trump strategy is influenced strongly by the thinking of top national security officials rather than that of the president himself" (Holland & Oliphant, 2017). And although Trump's presidency was in many ways a novelty, at the same time, instances of a lack of coherent vision regarding the direction of U.S. foreign and security policy have already happened in the past. The administration of George W. Bush can be taken as an example⁵. However, the main difference was that divergent approaches and visions were visible under President Bush on the line among his staff, and under President Trump between him and some of his cabinet. At the same time, differences in approach to security can be apparent at different levels, not only between government agencies or individual members of the president's cabinet, but also between the executive and the legislature. Historically, we have had examples where Congress and the President have not spoken with one voice. As an example, we can take the refusal of Congress to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, despite the fact that the then U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was a strong advocate of this initiative. Also during the period when the cyclical NSSs were already being prepared, such situations occurred. Bill Clinton's administration, whose relationship with Congress deteriorated

⁵ Already in George W. Bush's first year in office, the media reported tensions between his associates. There was even a division between the "hawks" and "doves" camp. The first was formed by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, among others. The second – Condoleezza Rice and State Department head Colin Powell. Among other things, it was pointed out that the camps had different approaches to governance and policy-making. "Hawks" advocated a military approach to US foreign policy, where military force should be the main tool for its implementation. It is worth noting that the "hawks" were strong supporters of the 2003 war against Iraq. "Doves" in the Bush administration, on the other hand, advocated the use of diplomacy as the main means in US policy, multilateral international cooperation, democratization and collective security (for a broader discussion see: Watson, 2001; Barber, 2005, p. 37 ff).

considerably after his first year in office, especially on foreign policy matters, can serve as an example.

At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that the NSS can only be, as Don Snider rightly points out, a starting point for the dialogue necessary to achieve a “common” understanding of the strategic environment and to resolve internal differences on foreign policy agendas. The idea behind the creation of these cyclical strategic reports was not and is not to prepare a neutral planning document. The document fulfils five key objectives boiling down to communicating the executive’s strategic vision to: 1) Congress, which at the same time is intended to legitimize requests from the President’s office for funds for specific purposes; 2) Foreign entities (including foreign governments, international organizations and institutions); 3) Selected national recipients (especially political supporters expecting the President to recognize their cause, but also more broadly to those who will want to support the strategy on the grounds that it will be in line with theirs); 4) Government agencies (through the creation of foreign and security policy consensus within the executive, inter-agency guidelines for further action); 5) The public – by showing the overall agenda of the President, both in terms of substance and messaging (Snider, 1995). According to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the U.S. National Security Strategy is to focus broadly on two main issues: 1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States, particularly relevant to U.S. national security – taking into account proposed short-term and long-term uses of political, economic, military and other elements of superpower’s power. In doing so, the Act identifies the need to present in the document the adequacy of U.S. capabilities to implement the NSS, including an assessment of the balance between the capabilities of all elements of U.S. power to achieve the strategy’s goals; 2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and implement the NSS (*Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986*).

After the 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., the phrase ‘National Strategies’ began to be used to refer to government plans to combat terrorism. The National Strategies differed from other government documents in that they crossed the various levels of cooperation between administrations, public and private sectors, federal, state, regional. During this period, seven strategies were formulated that addressed: national security, homeland security, counterterrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, and money laundering (O’Leary, 2006, p. 324). It should be emphasized that the

U.S. National Security Strategy has primacy over the National Defense Strategy, whose preparation and development is carried out by the U.S. Department of Defense. The same applies to the National Military Strategy, whose preparation is handled by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and which must also be compatible with the NSS.

There are characteristic issues we can distinguish in almost every national security strategy. As the first element, we can point to the fundamental values and moral norms professed by a nation (e.g., human rights, freedom). As the second are included national interests (e.g., survival, territorial integrity, sovereignty, security of citizens, economic development)⁶. During the formulation of a national security strategy, it is necessary to guide the state's *raison d'être*, which should not be confused with national selfishness. If we assume that the purpose of such a document is the effective implementation of the established goals, it should be necessary to take into account the interests of other participants in international relations. An example of this would be the emphasis in a given strategy on increasing a country's military strength. This type of action can not only diminish trust in relations with other countries, but can also provoke them to expand their arsenals. Thus, it seems reasonable to take into account – during the development of security strategies – international agreements and commitments, and the interests of other countries. In determining the strategic goals of the state, significant importance is given to history, tradition, world processes, potentials of other countries. Another important element is the articulation of national security determinants, challenges and security threats, which makes it possible to outline a country's national security concept, goals, and objectives. The document also includes a description of the country's security system, strategic policy directions and clearly defined methods and tools for action. Roman Kuźniar points out that resources are a prerequisite for the effective formulation and implementation of a security strategy. "Potential without strategy is almost as meaningless as strategy without potential" (Kuźniar, 1994, p. 187).

The construction of a national security strategy should take into account all the factors that affect the potential. Among the most important is the geographical factor – using the example of a superpower, it can be said that being separated by two oceans from most international actors determines the U.S. position in the world. It is worth noting that in the 21st century, the role of the geographical

⁶ For an interesting classification of national interests see: Smith, Corbin, & Hellman, 2001, pp. 33–34.

factor has diminished – due to the development of technology the world has become “smaller”. Thus, the policy of isolationism, once applied by the U.S., is now no effective barrier. Another factor – demographic – is expressed in the strength of the population, which works for the economic strength of the country. Also important are energy resources, which have an important impact on the functioning of the economy. Possession of a strategic energy resource – such as oil – known as “black gold”, can determine the policies of countries suffering from deficiencies in this resource. One of the most important factors is the country’s economic potential, which has an impact on policy expressed in finding new markets, signing trade agreements. A strong economy has a huge influence on a country’s military potential, without this it would be impossible to fund the armed forces. The political factor – a determinant of soft power – is composed of the political and legal system of the country. This factor is expressed not only in the choice of appropriate tools for solving international problems, but also in the way it influences other participants. Unlike totalitarian states, which use force and violence, democracies are mainly based on peaceful influence on partners through, for example, negotiation, persuasion, and the power of good example, i.e., showing mainly the benefits of participating in the democratic system and adhering to these principles. The last factor – psychosocial – includes “not only the character of a particular nation, but also morale, understood as the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policy of its government in times of peace and war”⁷. The power in the psychosocial factor was seen and used by great strategists and commanders, such as one of the greatest conquerors in history, Alexander the Great, who was able to encourage troops to fight for more territory. A contemporary example of the power of this factor, for example, was the 2003 U.S. war against Iraq, when the administration of G.W. Bush explained to U.S. soldiers that by fighting there they were keeping terrorists away from the United States, framing the rhetoric even as a struggle between “good and evil”.

Is the national security strategy an important document? The answer to this question will not be a clear-cut one, as much depends on the regulations adopted internally in a particular country. In the case of the United States, each president is obliged once a year to present the NSS before Congress⁸. However, given the statistics, each successive U.S. president increasingly feels less and less obliged

⁷ For more on the determinants of security strategy, see: Czulda, 2010, pp. 45–56.

⁸ According to the law: *Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986*.

to fulfill this duty⁹. As emphasized earlier, the general aim of the document is to communicate the vision of national security from the executive to the legislature branch. It is intended to provide consistency to the budgeting process – a transparent statement of interests, objectives and resources is intended to give Congress a clear picture of the resources needed to support the President's strategy (Snider, 1995). It is also worth mentioning that the document is submitted in two versions – classified version for officials with high security clearances and an unclassified version available to the public. There are times when the national security strategy affects not only the state budget, but even legislation, as was the case with the 2002 NSS¹⁰. Because the U.S. National Security Strategy presents the most important assumptions, foreign and security policy goals, as well as the superpower's tasks and interests in the world, the document is also reviewed in detail abroad. On the one hand, it provides guidance to U.S. government agencies, presenting the White House's approach, and on the other, it signals intentions to both America's allies and adversaries. The purpose of the NSS is to articulate the main security threats and challenges and to identify the tools through which national security policy will be implemented¹¹. Crucial to this is the approach of the current president in office and his cabinet to security issues, as this affects, among other things, the tools and methods by which threats will be eliminated, such as whether the main focus will be on joint actions within the framework of international organizations or stand-alone prevention initiatives.

DECISIVE DECADE – MAIN ASSUMPTIONS OF THE NSS 2022

President Joe Biden took over the government of the United States at a time of extremely turbulent social times. On the one hand, the U.S. has been struggling with a series of domestic crises, and not only health crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also economic, political, security and social crises, which reached its culmination on January 6, 2021, when an infuriated mob of Donald Trump supporters stormed the Capitol to protest the allegedly rigged results of the presidential election (Sheerin, 2022). But a divided and internally

⁹ E.g., during his two terms in office, Bill Clinton presented seven US National Security Strategies, George W. Bush only two. See: *National Security Strategy Archive*.

¹⁰ E.g., USA Patriot Act.

¹¹ For more on US national security strategy, see: Szlajfer, 2008, pp. 307–348.

conflicted America is not President Biden's only problem. On the other hand, the four years of Donald Trump's presidency have negatively affected the balance of U.S. foreign policy, confusing longtime allies and challenging the international order built as a counterweight to authoritarian governments around the world. The 2017 NSS represented a break with previous U.S. foreign policy doctrine. Over 50 years of political experience of Joe Biden, who previously held, among other things, the position of vice president during Barack Obama's time in office, could indicate, on the one hand, that President Biden would know how to manage the crisis and reconciliation, and, on the other hand, that he would govern in the style of the Obama administration, following the path laid out earlier. For this reason, Biden's win was not welcomed with as much enthusiasm in some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, as it was for countries in Western Europe which were hoping for a renewal of close transatlantic relations. Joe Biden's statements during the election campaign period alone raised concerns among some European leaders, due to the fact that he pointed to a democratic crisis in the region: "You see what's happening from Belarus through Poland and Hungary and the rise of totalitarian regimes in the world", which was strongly criticized by the addressees of this speech (TVP World, 2020). In addition, concern among Central and Eastern European countries was dictated by the policies pursued under the last Democratic Party president, who initially sacrificed the region's interests to improve relations with Russia¹².

The first actions of the Biden administration sent mixed signals. On the one hand, the new U.S. president chose the United Kingdom for his first official foreign visit, which could signal a return to traditional allies and continued close relations with the Old Continent. On the other hand, on the very first visit to Europe, President Biden met with the Russian president in Geneva, which critics interpreted as a reaching out to the Kremlin authorities, while indicating that a meeting with the Russian leader so early in Biden's term could raise Vladimir Putin's rank on the world stage (Liptak, 2021). In addition, the announcement of a global promotion of democracy and opposition to authoritarian states, especially China and Russia, with the first signs of U.S. action in this field which was (in December 2021) hosting Summit for Democracy, raised further questions about the future direction of U.S. foreign and security policy. However, the

¹² At the beginning of President Barack Obama's first term, there was an effort to bring relations closer on the Washington–Moscow line, even by pushing a symbolic reset button (see: Harding & Weaver, 2009).

most urgent problem began in February 2022 with Russia's aggression against Ukraine. For these reasons, the publication of the U.S. National Security Strategy was eagerly awaited, which was expected to provide answers to a number of questions, including what direction will U.S. foreign policy take? What instruments and methods will be used? What goals and priorities have been set? Which countries were among the closest allies and biggest adversaries?

The long-awaited U.S. National Security Strategy was released in October 2022. In the very introduction, President Joe Biden assured that the need for American leadership around the world is stronger today than at any time in the past because: "We are in the midst of a strategic competition to shape the future of the international order". At the same time, he announced that: "the United States will lead with our values, and we will work in lockstep with our allies and partners and with all those who share our interests" (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2022*, pp. 2–3). Similarly to President Obama, Joe Biden announced cooperation under alliances and partnerships, while highlighting the importance of traditional relationships in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. On the contrary to his predecessor Donald Trump, the new U.S. president emphasized the role and importance of NATO in ensuring international security, while counting on more members to join the organization (he mentioned Finland and Sweden). First among the countries competing with the U.S. was listed China, which seeks to change the international order in its favor. He also referred to Russia, regarding this country's aggression against Ukraine, which has shattered peace in Europe and stability in the world. President Biden also addressed the Kremlin's threats in the context of nuclear weapons, indicating that they are reckless. In a broader aspect, he referred to the threat to democracy posed by autocrats, which, in the view of the U.S. president, seek to export a repressive model of government to other countries. At the same time, he announced that Americans will defend democracy around the world and try to instill democratic values in more countries. President Biden called it a "360-degree strategy" that will allow them to win the competition in the 21st century. The document points out two main (strategic) challenges. The first is the rivalry with other powers over the international order shaped by the U.S. after the Cold War. It was considered a challenge to international peace and stability, especially in the context of ongoing activities in the form of: launching aggression wars, actively undermining the democratic political processes of other countries, using technology and supply chains for coercion and repression, and exporting an illiberal model of international order. In this

regard, they announced not only cooperation with countries that share their vision of a free and democratic world, but also mobilization to uphold basic principles such as the right to self-determination, territorial integrity, political independence, free transfer of information, respect for universal human rights, while also announcing the strengthening of international institutions. It also raised the issue of the global economy, pointing out that it must operate on a more equal level and provide development opportunities for all. The NSS under the Trump administration also referred to this topic, emphasizing the need to ensure fair and mutually beneficial economic relations (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017, p. 38). A second strategic challenge, or rather a package of common challenges that cross borders and require the involvement of the international community, was listed: climate change, food insecurity, communicable diseases, terrorism, energy shortages, inflation. It was emphasized that these challenges are not marginal, but are the core of national and international security (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 2–3, 6–8).

The document focuses particular attention on the competition between democracies and autocracies in shaping the international order, pointing out that there is a growing risk of conflict between great powers. With that said, this competition takes on an existential character. Under attack are the fundamental laws and principles on which international relations are based, including the UN Charter, especially in the context of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the prohibition on the acquisition of territory through war. The U.S. government's efforts will focus on both strengthening the American political system internally, taking care, among other things, to ensure fairness and equal treatment under the law. In doing so, it is important to take action against manipulation of information, attacks on the rule of law, or interference in the electoral process. As well as on strengthening democracy around the world, which, according to the document, will be based mainly on persuasion, showing how much benefit the democratic community provides. On the one hand, democratic countries look out for each other, striving to solve the most difficult challenges of the modern world through cooperation with other democratic governments and the private sector. On the other hand, this cooperation has measurable benefits for society, not only in the context of protecting human rights, but also their prosperity. This does not mean that Americans will endeavor to rebuild the world in America's self-image. The document emphasizes that the vision of a democratic, free, prosperous and secure world is supported by a broad coalition of nations, and not

just traditional U.S. allies in Europe and the Pacific, but more broadly around the world, even among governments that disagree with the Americans on all issues and in countries that do not recognize democratic institutions but support/accept this rules-based international system because of their dependence on it. In addition to persuasion, U.S. authorities have announced the use of pressure (unspecified) on partners to respect and advance democracy and human rights (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 7–8, 16).

Traditionally¹³, as in documents of previous White House administrations, this one also indicated that America will not hesitate to use force to defend national interests, but only as a last resort and with the consent of the American people (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, p. 20). Among the powers competing with the U.S., China and Russia were listed first and foremost, but also to a lesser (regional extent), Iran and North Korea, mainly due to their development of illegal nuclear and missile weapons programs, as well as interference in the internal affairs of their neighbors. In the same context, North Korea and Iran were included as a threat in the previous 2017 NSS under Donald Trump (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017, pp. 1–3). The U.S. rivalry with China and Russia was to take different forms due to the fact that these countries, despite sharing a common goal of overthrowing the existing international order, also pose different challenges. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is proof, in the view of the document's authors, that the Kremlin authorities pose a direct threat to a free and open international system, whose principles they disregard and violate. Although Russia has been recognized as a source of disruption and instability, at the same time it has been pointed out that it does not have capabilities across the spectrum like China, which in turn wants to achieve the same goal using all its potential – economic, diplomatic, military, and technological, with Beijing authorities showing ambitions to create an expanded sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific region and become a leading world power. They have wider opportunities in doing so to act and exert real influence/pressure on other participants in international relations, including institutions, to create more liberal conditions for their own authoritarian model

¹³ Previous U.S. NSSs also referred to U.S. military strength, except that different White House administrations gave varying intonations to military means, and so, for example, while the G.W. Bush administration gave primary accent to the use of military tools for preventive purposes as well, the Obama administration made diplomatic instruments central, while indicating, as in the case of the NSS under the current president, that recourse to military force would be a last resort.

and shape the global use of technology and norms to privilege their interests and values. Their galloping pace of development is supposed to prove that you do not have to be a democratic country to be able to develop your country economically and reach prosperity through a different path than the Americans propose. At the same time, they seek to make the world dependent on their economic potential and reduce their own dependence on the world. Thus, it can be concluded that U.S. efforts to draw post-Cold War Russia and China into the orbit of cooperation and influence of the Western world have failed. These countries have taken advantage of the conditions created for them (especially the openness of the international economy) to consolidate power and international standing – China, through quick economic development and geopolitical influence, and Russia, by “entering the political salons”, as it has joined the G8 and G20, revitalizing its economy in the 21st century. And while an international order based on Western principles has created opportunities for the governments of Russia and China to develop, at the same time it has been recognized as a threat to their power. Hence, these regimes work in tandem, seeking to reformulate the international order to create a system that favors their “personalized and repressive type of autocracy”. With this problem, the Americans see an opportunity to solve it in two factors. As a first, they point to the close cooperation and unification of nations that share with the U.S. a vision of a democratic world. In a counter to the efforts of rival powers trying to weaken U.S. alliances in the region and in the world, the Americans would focus their efforts on strengthening traditional alliances and building new ones, as an alternative to the order promoted by China and Russia. As a second, they point to interdependencies, especially in the economy, public health, and climate. With that said, China with other countries, including the U.S., share common interests and interdependencies that alone cannot be realized. On a smaller level, the interdependence also applies to Russia – especially in the global south, the Kremlin authorities have a vested interest in working with some countries that do not share their vision of the world. Thus, the U.S. sees these interdependencies as an opportunity to influence these countries and shape the external environment of China and Russia in such a way as to impact their behavior, even while competing with them. The document emphasizes, at the same time, that the U.S. does not seek conflict or a new Cold War, but wants to protect the vision of a democratic world in order to maintain the autonomy and rights of less powerful states, as an alternative to the international order pushed for by its rivals (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 8–9).

The US-adopted approach – the “Out-Competing China and Constraining Russia strategy” – will be based on maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage over China, while constraining a dangerous Russia. With this, they have separated out two different plans against China and Russia. For the Beijing authorities, plans will include: 1) investing in the foundations of American strength – competitiveness, innovation, resilience, democracy; 2) adjusting efforts to a network of U.S. allies and partners working toward a common goal and cause; 3) competing responsibly with China (without risking unintended military escalation) to defend American interests and build its vision for the future. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, the intense competition did not exclude simultaneous U.S.-Chinese cooperation especially on issues of converging interests regarding: climate, pandemic threats, nonproliferation, countering illicit and illegal narcotics, the global food crisis, and macroeconomic issues. In turn, plans for Russia include: 1) supporting Ukraine in its struggle for freedom, while providing assistance for economic reconstruction and supporting efforts to integrate this country with the European Union; 2) defending NATO territory, strengthening coalitions with allies and partners; 3) deterring and eventually responding to aggressive Russian actions that threaten U.S. interests, including Russian attacks on American infrastructure and democracy; 4) a strong U.S. response to the possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 23–27).

A lot of attention in the document is given to transnational challenges, especially climate change, while listing it as the biggest common existential problem. This problem will intensify year after year, resulting in humanitarian crises in various parts of the world, starting with huge fires, hurricanes, through increasing water levels, to water deficiency, melting ice, droughts and extremely high air temperatures. All of this may lead to tensions between countries competing for resources and energy advantages. It could result in conflicts due to food insecurity, health risks (as in the COVID-19 pandemic), instability, and mass migration. It is worth noting that the issue of climate change has already been highlighted in the NSS under the Trump administration, indicating that it is a national threat (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017, p. 22). To avoid these catastrophic changes, governments around the world must unite in efforts to, among other things, protect forests, electrify the transportation sector, redirect financial flows and create an energy revolution to prevent a climate crisis. Among other challenges and problems requiring extensive international cooperation, they mentioned pandemics. In this regard,

U.S. authorities have identified fields for improvement that will enable a faster and more effective response to a possible emerging new pandemic in the future. Improvements to be made include early warning and disease monitoring, data sharing and forecasting, accelerating the development of production and delivery of medical countermeasures, supporting the development and production of safe biotechnologies, and overcoming inequalities in access to health care. It also lists nuclear, chemical and biological weapons proliferation and terrorism among the transnational challenges. These threats were also mentioned under predecessors, only in different accents. As, for example, under G.W. Bush counter-terrorism was at the core of the 2002 NSS, under Barack Obama and Donald Trump they were already part of the list of threats. In 2022 NSS, the U.S. was supposed to lead multilateral arms control efforts and strengthen existing systems, frameworks, and institutions. In the context of the terrorist threat, it was highlighted that the current situation is fundamentally different from that of two decades ago, both in terms of ideology and the geographic spread of terrorist groups in different regions around the world. Despite the limitation of the terrorists' ability to operate, the strengthening of security measures and information sharing, this does not change the fact that terrorism continues to be a serious problem and threat to the U.S., its interests abroad, as well as locally through the rapidly growing threat from domestic violent extremists. The counter-terrorism strategy adopted by the administration shifted the focus of U.S. involvement away from strategy that is "U.S.-led, partner-enabled" to one that is "partner-led, U.S.-enabled". In this sense, the U.S. would continue to strengthen its internal and external security while supporting partners in strengthening their systems, including sharing threat information, enhancing border security, countering terrorist financing and radicalizing the public, combating disinformation, preventing terrorist recruitment and mobilization for violence (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 9–10, 27–31).

To address the problems outlined above, the U.S. will primarily use three groups of instruments:

- 1) Economic – investing in the primary sources and tools of American power and influence, especially innovation and industrial strength as part of the so-called modern industrial strategy, which intends to rely on strategic public investment in the American workforce, strategic sectors and supply chains, particularly in critical and emerging technologies, such as microelectronics, advanced computing, biotechnologies, clean energy technologies, and advanced telecommunications. A crucial force for inno-

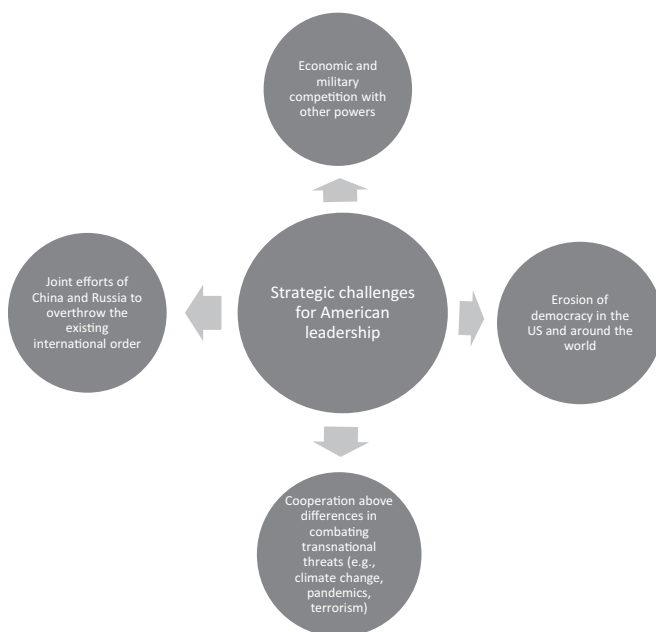


Figure 1. Strategic Challenges for American Leadership

Source: Author's own elaboration.

vation and at the same time a source of national strength for Americans has been identified as the private sector and open markets. At the same time, U.S. prosperity is dependent on the international order, which must be shaped actively by Americans in accordance with their interests and values.

- 2) Political – building as strong and broad coalition of nations as possible, in order to strengthen the collective influence in shaping the global strategic environment and facing common challenges, not only in terms of security, but providing a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation, emphasizing the triad – technology, trade, and security. In doing so, it is important to take care of the harmony of the international order, since the plunge of even one region into chaos or its domination by a hostile power will have a negative impact on the interests of the U.S. and its allies in the rest of the world.
- 3) Military – modernizing and strengthening the U.S. military to be ready for an era of strategic competition with world major powers, maintaining

and improving competitive advantage, confronting aggression, deterring conflict, power projection and protecting the American people and their economic interests while maintaining the ability to dismantle the terrorist threat at home. The strategy of achieving maximum effect in deterring acts of aggression has been called integrated deterrence. Its main objective is to modernize the combined forces to be: lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and responsive, prioritizing operational concepts and updated warfighting capabilities. For this purpose, extensive investment in advanced technologies was announced, including cyber and space applications, missile defeat capabilities, trusted artificial intelligence, and quantum systems, while deploying new capabilities to the battlefield in a timely manner. The highest priority of this strategy has been made nuclear deterrence, with a safe, secure and effective U.S. nuclear force, which to meet the challenges and threats to the U.S. has to be continually modernized (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 10–21).

In doing so, it should be emphasized that the U.S. approach to combating contemporary security challenges and threats was to take on an integrated character, thus the entire arsenal of assets at the superpower's¹⁴ disposal is to be used. At the same time, the document stresses that the U.S. cannot afford to rely solely on conventional forces and nuclear deterrence. Thus, a seamless combination of the U.S. ability to convince adversaries that the costs of their hostile actions would outweigh the benefits was adopted, so that a competitor seeking to gain an advantage in one area would understand that the U.S. could respond in many others. For this purpose, U.S. efforts are supposed to focus on: integration of military capabilities (land, air, sea, cyber and space, intelligence) with non-military capabilities (economic, technological and information; diplomatic); integration of operations in various regions around the world; integration with allies and partners through investment in interoperability and development of joint capabilities, joint position planning, and coordinated diplomatic and economic approaches (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, p. 22).

As the superpower has interests in virtually every region of the world, their strategy is taking on a global character. What is more, the document highlights

¹⁴ In the literature, the U.S. position in the international system is often referred to as supremacy or hegemony (see: Frankowski, 2006).

the importance of engagement in different regions of the world, not only the closest neighbors between Canada and Mexico, with whom they share common interests (security and prosperity) and challenges (including global pandemics and mass migrations) but further afield. With special attention given to the Indo-Pacific region, which is expected to be of most importance for the future of the U.S., it committed itself to: promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, reaffirming its ironclad commitments to the strong and consistent defense of U.S. allies like Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Philippines, and Thailand, as well as announcing the expansion of regional diplomatic, development and economic engagement with other countries in the region that share America's vision of a free and democratic world. Another region mentioned is Europe, in the context of strengthening transatlantic relations that are rooted in shared democratic values, common interests and historical bonds. European allies have been listed as essential partners of the U.S. in addressing the full range of global challenges. U.S. authorities have declared not only the deepening of transatlantic ties, but also the defense of European allies, who have been on the front lines of the struggle to defend the principles of freedom, sovereignty and non-aggression. The document stressed that the security and prosperity of Americans depends on peace in Europe. The main foundation of Europe's defense had to be based on a strong NATO, which is expected to continually adapt to modern security challenges, including its emphasis on cyber defense, climate security and the growing security threat posed by the policies and actions of China and Russia. At the same time, it was made clear that Russia's further invasion of Ukraine poses a serious threat to the vision of a free Europe, and therefore it announced strong U.S. support for Ukraine in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while imposing severe costs on Moscow for its aggression.

It is also worth noting the U.S. approach to the Middle East region, where the focus of American policy over the past two decades has been on combating threats emanating from the area. It announced an abandonment of large projects (like regime change) that have failed to produce permanent results and generated enormous expense for the U.S. in favor of more practical measures in the form of building partnerships, coalitions and alliances to strengthen deterrence power, while using diplomacy to deescalate tensions, reduce the risk of new conflicts and establish a long-term foundation for stability. As in other regions, the U.S. authorities announced deepened political, economic and security cooperation with the governments of countries that adhere to the rules-based international order. In this regard, support in reducing tensions and deescalating conflicts should be

based mainly on diplomatic means. In the context to the main U.S. opponent in the region – Iran – cooperation with allies was announced to enhance their ability to deter and counter Iran’s destabilizing activities, as well as diplomatic efforts to ensure that Iran never gains possession of nuclear weapons. In case of aggressive actions from Iranian side, a strong U.S. response was announced, including a military reply on a limited scale and in accordance with international law if it becomes necessary to protect U.S. interests in the region (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2022, pp. 37–47).

The publication of the U.S. NSS has encountered both positive and critical responses. Supportive voices have mostly emerged from the Democratic side, who praise the document for its comprehensive approach to solving the problems and challenges that the U.S. is facing, and its well-thought-out vision for advancing their interests. In contrast, critics of the document, who are largely cumulative in political opposition, point to its utopian character – “It is based in a fantasy world where all nations, even adversaries, work together to advance the common good. [...] Our adversaries are dangerous, they don’t care about the common good, and they don’t want to work with us to achieve altruistic goals – they want to destroy us” (Insinna, 2022; Rogers, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS: HARD, SOFT, OR MAYBE SMART POWER?

The long-awaited and delayed publication of the U.S. National Security Strategy was expected to answer a number of questions, the most important of which comes down to: *Quo vadis*, America? It would seem that Russia’s aggression against Ukraine will dominate U.S. strategy and define American foreign and security policy under the present White House administration. An analysis of the document allows the conclusion that, in general, this is not the case. And while the threat from Russia was even mentioned as being of an existential nature, its context is broader and comes down more to its cooperation with China to overthrow the current international order. And perhaps the categorical and harsh tone toward Russia may be somewhat of a novelty in the U.S. strategy, since in recent times it has been more like a “diplomatic dance” between Washington and Kremlin authorities, nevertheless, this trend has been noticeable before. The move away from a strategy that assumed integration between Russia and the West could already be progressively seen after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Which does not mean that the U.S. wants to engage in a new era of the Cold

War with Russia, by entering into a rivalry over nuclear weapons resources, or by pursuing any degree of military confrontation. The priority of the U.S. national security strategy in the long perspective is China, which cleverly uses all its potential to achieve this goal. While Russian actions are impacting the stability of the Americans' European allies, and an unstable Europe is not in their purposes, but in terms of U.S. strategic interests more broadly, China's actions in support of the Russian regime are far more harmful. The U.S. strategy's shift toward the Asia-Pacific is not new and was already noticeable during the Obama administration, while under Trump, China was at the center of the 2017 NSS as a rival power to the U.S. alongside Russia (these have been defined as "revisionist powers"). However, when one adds the other crucial element that the current NSS 2022 focuses on, which is the defense of democracy, it creates a certain inconsistency in U.S. strategic thinking, due to the fact that political systems in the Asian region are less democratic than for example those in Europe. In the document, the Americans, on the one hand, diplomatically announce cooperation with both democratic countries and those whose system and institutions deviate from these standards¹⁵. On the other hand, nonetheless, they announce an era of competition between democracies and autocracies. The open question remains: how will the U.S. government reconcile this? Of course, it can also be assumed that this inconsistency will not be a problem for the U.S. authorities, given that over the past two decades a significant portion of U.S. military aid, training, sales and support has specifically gone to non-democratic countries characterized by predatory actions and neglect of human rights (see: Stimson, 2022).

It is a fact that the erosion of the unipolar international order is proceeding intensively, which concerns the authorities in Washington, who, on the one hand, realize that the relative power and influence of the U.S. in the world has decreased, and, on the other hand, that without allies, partners, and multilateral institutions, the United States is unable to achieve most of its goals, especially long-term ones. It seems that Americans realize that in order to stop this process they need a comprehensive multi-pronged strategy (based on smart power¹⁶),

¹⁵ The Biden administration shows an openness to cooperation also with autocracies that reject using force to change borders (see: Chivvis, 2022).

¹⁶ The concept of foreign policy promulgated by the Obama administration involved a combination of soft power and hard power, with diplomatic means clearly dominating. The United States was to use diplomatic, economic, informational, legal, moral, and military power (as a last resort) in a balanced and integrated manner. According to Obama, a wise U.S. security strategy cannot be based

although mere declarations and fiery speeches filled with freedom-democratic slogans are no longer enough. If the U.S. wants to maintain its position as a superpower, on the one hand, the United States must compete with China and other powers by seeking to strengthen its economic and military capabilities through significant investments in new technology, among other things. At the same time, this rivalry cannot take a total form, not only because of the economic cooperation between these countries, but also because of a number of transnational challenges (including climate change, pandemics, inflation and others) that are hammering America's prosperity, and which they cannot solve without cooperation with global players. On the other hand, the U.S. should use its political potential based on soft power, the strength of international alliances, the vision of a free, prosperous and democratic world. Following the idea that America is stronger when it is loved and admired, not hated. Therefore, the future of the U.S. position on the international stage depends on how and whether it can convince the majority of international players to follow their vision of the world. However, the last two decades have revealed the consequences of the superpower's double-standard policies, leading both to a decline in the level of democracy in the U.S. and elsewhere, and to a weakening of the country's role as a leader and promoter of democratic values in the world, on which the superpower has built its power. Without deeper political reflection based on concrete actions, the erosion of this system will continue.

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solely on military power. No country, even with the strongest military potential, can face global challenges alone. More effective is long-term cooperation between countries to counter threats, such as terrorism – eliminating the causes and roots of extremist ideology, rather than killing terrorists (see: Waško-Owsiejczuk, 2018a, p. 102).

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