
BIDEN'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: A DIFFERENT TYPE OF AMERICAN PRIMACY

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Abstract. President Biden's National Security Strategy (NSS), released in October 2022, provides a somewhat clear understanding of the administration's primary focus areas, despite the complexity of a document that should summarize the points of view of all the pieces of the complex American administration machine. This specific NSS combines traditional Democratic features, such as an emphasis on alliances and democracy, with novel elements like the assertive identification of China as the primary strategic challenge. It highlights China's rise as a global competitor, capable of shaping the international order, and acknowledges Russia as a threat. In this document, it is evident that the Indo-Pacific region is now the focal point of American geopolitical strategy, with the Western Hemisphere (Mexico and Canada) and Europe remaining crucial. Significant departures from the prior administration's approach include a strategic reorientation towards competition between governance systems, encapsulated in the 'democracy vs. autocracy' dichotomy, and a heightened focus on climate change as an existential threat, advocating for international cooperation to mitigate it, even with strategic rivals such as China.

Keywords: National Security Strategy (NSS); China; Biden; Climate Change; Terrorism

Introduction

On October 12, 2022, President Joseph Biden's administration released the National Security Strategy of the United States (NSS), a pivotal document outlining the presidency's foreign and security policy directives. The development and release of the NSS are mandated by the Goldwater - Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1985-86 Public Law 99-433 ([H.R.3622 - 99th Congress \(1985-1986\): Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, 1986](#)).

This act requires each administration to provide which requires the Administration in charge to prepare an "exhaustive description and discussion" of "US global interests, goals, and objectives ... [and] US foreign policy, global commitments, and national defence capability." ([H.R.3622 - 99th Congress \(1985-1986\): Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, 1986](#)).

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The NSS aims to coordinate all foreign and security policy-making agencies, facilitating a united front. Although it represents the collective consensus of the national security establishment, the NSS inevitably reflects the imprint of the President and his closest allies. From a procedural perspective, the President must submit the NSS to Congress. However, the audience extends beyond Congress, reaching internal and external stakeholders, allies, adversaries, and the general public. Although not the primary target, the latter has a vested interest in the Strategy, as it reveals how their tax dollars are deployed in foreign affairs and defence.

Interestingly, each NSS publication attracts criticism, not necessarily for its content, which naturally varies and is thus subject to differing assessments, but for its perceived lack of utility. National security experts, such as Justin Logan and Benjamin Friedman, have gone as far as to label the NSS a "predictable farce" (Logan and Friedman, 2022).

The two experts argue that the NSS should be abolished due to three primary concerns. First, they argue that the NSS essentially enumerates goals or priorities that are not actual priorities but attempts by various government agencies and offices to secure their specific interests within the Administration's agenda. This approach fails to meet the strategic requirement of prioritization, providing no clear directive on the hierarchy of importance among the listed priorities.

Second, they contend that the term 'national security' has been excessively and poorly used over the years. It is virtually indistinguishable from anything the authors deem significant, further complicating prioritization. Finally, NSS tends to generalize, creating confusion between specific incidents and broader issues, often interpreting these incidents as products of larger trends rather than distinct, localized situations. This confusion can precipitate disproportionate and excessive responses (Logan and Friedman, 2022).

Despite these criticisms, the NSS holds a pivotal role: it serves as a guide, indicating the hierarchy of interests and action imperatives each Administration deems characterizing its foreign policy. Indeed, within the lists of objectives presented in the NSS, certain issues are prioritized over others, even when it is unclear how they will be pursued, what costs will be incurred, and what red lines demarcate action from inaction.

Legally, the NSS must include a discussion of international interests, commitments, goals, and policies and the defence capabilities the United States needs to enact the Strategy. As alluded to earlier, this mandate often goes unfulfilled, as National Security Strategies generally outline means and methods of achieving strategic objectives only in broad strokes. Yet, each NSS serves as an interesting 'narrative' of a specific epoch of world history and America's role within it. More than a true strategy, the NSS offers the international political philosophy of the current administration, outlining not only national security interests but also broader geopolitical

considerations. Hence, examining various NSSs allows us to appreciate the evolution of different administrations' approaches to recurring issues and analyse continuity and change elements. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of President Biden's recently published NSS cannot occur without comparing it to that of his predecessor and potential electoral rival, Donald Trump.

The first NSS was released in 1987 and the original intention was for annual releases. Yet, the complex, time-consuming inter-agency coordination process, which is central to the document's creation, often resulted in late or entirely absent reports. Since the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009), the practice of releasing one NSS per presidential term, typically in the first year, has been established. The Biden administration deviated from this pattern. In March 2021, the administration published a relatively brief document entitled *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, which broadly outlined the anticipated priorities and actions for foreign and defence policy, with the full NSS expected in early 2022* (Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, 2021).

However, the realization that Russia was planning an invasion of Ukraine not only delayed the NSS's release but also its development. In February 2022, Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine demonstrated that Russia should be conceptualized as a colonial power and not as merely a power searching for security or status (Oksamytna, 2023: 502).

This military invasion aiming at territorial conquest and the potential use of hybrid warfare against Ukraine and its partners necessitated a broader reimagining of American involvement in global security affairs. The administration responded through several actions aimed at supporting Kyiv, from military support to financial sanctions (Welt, 2023). This response to the war helped define two significant themes in the NSS: the emphasis on American leadership and the role of alliances and the focus on rivalries. This included an intensified focus on Russia and the anticipated and even more relevant focus on China, which, despite everything, remains the crucial, systemic rival of the US (Tierney, 2024). Even if Biden keeps stressing that there is no need to talk of a new Cold War with China (Viser et al., 2022), one of the key elements of his White House term has been his strict approach toward Beijing (Zengerle, 2021). In particular, by bringing decoupling to full speed (Black and Morrison, 2021) and launching a number of initiatives, for instance, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), to challenge China's growing economic power. Currently, this is one of the few issues that keep Washington's politics united (Goldberg and Schneider, 2020).

In the document, Biden seeks to rejuvenate American leadership, underpinned by the belief that the US alliance system and the multilateral (though US-led) management of collective security is a crucial foreign policy asset. This perspective, which Biden expressed explicitly during his election campaign, is reinforced in the

NSS using the war in Ukraine. The document serves to underscore the strategic choice of basing American foreign and security policy on asserting international leadership to garner the consensus of allies and partners on shared interests. The NSS emphasizes, in this regard: "The need for a strong and purposeful American role in the world *has never been greater* [emphasis added]" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 7*). The United States, the Strategy underlines, "will ...build the strongest possible coalition of nations to enhance our collective influence to shape the global strategic environment and to solve shared challenges" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 11*).

The discrepancy with the Trump administration's general and philosophical approach (2017-21) is striking. In his National Security Strategy released in December 2017, Trump aimed to ensure US world primacy rather than international leadership, so much so that he renamed his 2017 NSS the *America First National Security Strategy* (*National Security Strategy 2017, 2017: 3-4*). Trump also mainly addressed his constituents in documents that have as primary users the political-cultural machine of Washington's foreign policy, as well as allies and rivals. Whereas, for Trump, the national interest is served by an instrumental and selective vision of partnerships (*National Security Strategy 2017, 2017: 17-24*), for Biden, it is preserved by seeking collaboration and coordination with allied countries and, in some cases - such as the fight against climate change - even with rivals such as China. As noted by scholar Emma Ashford, while the document does not outright say "America is back" (*The White House - BRIEFING ROOM SPEECHES AND REMARKS, 2021*) – a sort of mantra for the Biden administration's first year – the message is precisely the same (Ashford, 2022).

The geopolitical approach

This NSS underscores a geopolitical reality that has become increasingly evident in recent years: the Middle East is a region of diminishing interest to American diplomacy. After the surge of presence in the early years of this century following the invasion of Iraq, the Obama administration began a shift in approach—a trend that has continued under both Trump and Biden, despite their differing styles. In this region, the goal is to promote regional stability through economic integration and military cooperation. In this context, the "Abraham Accords"—the agreements to normalize relations between some Arab countries, particularly in the Gulf, and Israel, brokered by the Trump Administration—are regarded as a critical step (*Guzansky and Marshall, 2020*). Furthermore, the Biden Administration reasserts its support for a two-state solution along 1967 lines "with mutually agreed upon exchanges, remain the best way to achieve an equal measure of security, prosperity, freedom, and democracy for both Palestinians

and Israelis." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 41*). Although the terrorist massacre carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the ensuing war launched by Israel forced the US administration to return to being more active in the region, its approach has not been as strong as it was in the past.

As always, a commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon is featured. The war in Ukraine and protests in Iran have complicated the efforts of the United States and Europe to reinstate the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)*—the 2015 nuclear deal now existing only in theory after the Trump Administration unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018, which led Iran to lessen its compliance from 2019.

The one defined as the region that most directly impacts the United States is that of *the western hemisphere* (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 40*), where Mexico and Canada are inevitably seen as pillars of US foreign policy. Within this context, immigration is a central issue requiring a regional response. After Trump's fraught relationship with Europe, the Biden administration has reaffirmed the importance of ties with the continent.

In this sense, the NSS reiterates the foundation of transatlantic relations: "shared democratic values, common interests, and historical ties". The alliance with the Europeans, barely mentioned in Trump's NSS in 2017, is again presented as a central axis of American foreign policy and influence in the world. "[T]he transatlantic relationship", it reads, "is a vital platform on which many other elements of our foreign policy are built", and Europe has been, and will continue to be, "a key partner in addressing the full range of global challenges". (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 38*). Biden's transatlantic agenda extends beyond European security, which is primarily entrusted to NATO, to include cooperation in defending a rules-based international order (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 39*). Europe is framed as the front line in defence of freedom, territorial sovereignty, and non-aggression. Biden unambiguously commits to the collective defence bond of NATO's Article 5 and pledges continued collaboration with NATO allies to deter, defend against, and build resilience to aggression and coercion (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 39*).

The NSS then highlights the need for allies to assume greater responsibilities by increasing defence spending, capabilities, contributions, and investments (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 39*)¹, although this approach is still not

¹ As we step up our own sizable contributions to NATO capabilities and readiness—including by strengthening defensive forces and capabilities and upholding our long-standing commitment to extended deterrence—we will count on our Allies to continue assuming greater responsibility by increasing their spending, capabilities, and contributions. European defense investments, through or complementary to NATO, will be critical to ensuring our shared security at this time of intensifying competition. (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022, p.39*).

particularly popular in the US defence industry as they fear that, a Europe more active on defence, could bring more competition (Bergmann and Besch, 2023). Of note is the call to adapt to new challenges like cybersecurity, climate security, and most notably, the "growing security risks presented by the policies and actions of the PRC (People's Republic of China)," explicitly named as a challenge to transatlantic security for the first time (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 39*) in line with the message that since 2019 has become an integral part of the transatlantic rhetoric on the importance of containing China (Morcos, 2021).

Inevitable, then, is the reference to the freedom of Ukraine as a precondition "for the pursuit of a whole Europe, free and at peace." Russia's invasion of Ukraine represents a radical challenge to the realization of this vision, which is why the Americans confirm their determination to "support Ukraine in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, imposing heavy costs on Moscow for its attack" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 39*).

The American response, and more generally the Euro-Atlantic one, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine took place on various levels: diplomacy; military-economic support to Ukraine; sanctions; reduction of energy imports from Russia; strengthening NATO defence and deterrence capabilities; enlargement of NATO itself, with Finland and Sweden ready to join the Alliance, and of the EU; and EU-wide management of refugees. Support has remained constant, and in the military field, it has indeed grown, although always avoiding however always avoiding direct intervention by NATO and/or the countries of the Alliance on the ground. The American role has been crucial in keeping the transatlantic front united. Despite these unified fronts, some of Biden's decisions have caused friction among Europeans. Energy relations between the United States and Europe have become particularly problematic, especially with the ongoing war in Ukraine (Brew and Gordon, 2022). The potential for a new trade war due to the impact of inflation on transatlantic relations and the US's proposed *Import Reduction Act (IRA)*² also concerns Europeans.³

French President Emmanuel Macron, during his state visit to the White House in December 2022, spoke of the risk of "fragmentation" of the West and described the IRA as a "super aggressive" law (*Euractiv.com, 2022*). These sentiments echo those of European trade ministers, who had previously expressed "very concern" about new US incentives for consumers to buy electric vehicles.

² Approved by Congress in August 2022, the IRA contains a series of measures to reduce health costs but above all to support the fight against global warming. The IRA has committed over \$369 billion in investment and subsidies to promote renewable and more sustainable energy solutions. However, the aid favours US companies, indirectly discriminating against European companies in the sector.

³ Inflation Reduction Act, August 2022 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/19/fact-sheet-the-inflation-reduction-act-supports-workers-and-families/>

They fear that European companies might shift their operations to the US to take advantage of federal subsidies and compete with American rivals (Propp, 2022).

However, looking at the entire globe, it is clear from this document that the *Indo-Pacific*, a macro-area extending from South Asia to the Western Pacific, is becoming more and more central in global politics (He and Feng, 2020; Kuo, 2018; Li, 2022; Pardesi, 2020). The American Asian pivot started, on paper, with the Obama administration (Clinton, 2011). Now, it is the centre of gravity of current American strategic interests and the primary arena for its competition with China (Gaens and Sinkkonen, 2023; Harding, 2019; Scobell, 2021; Yoshihara, 2013). The NSS labels it as crucial to the global economy and "the geopolitical epicentre of the 21st century". In this sense, the United States has a "vital interest ... in a [Indo-Pacific] region that is open, interconnected, prosperous, secure, and resilient" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 37*). This strategic importance naturally arises from the fact that the region is where China's expanding influence is most pronounced. China is the only country with the economic, technological, and military resources to rival the United States.

The document refers to the need for the USA to bolster "open societies through investments in democracy, institutions, the free press and civil society". There is also a more geopolitical passage that demonstrates how Americans, despite everything, continue to consider free access to waterways a cornerstone of their foreign policy (*Council on Foreign Relations, 2019*). In particular, the document states: "We will work on a shared regional system in support of open access to the South China Sea, a passageway for nearly two-thirds of global maritime trade and a quarter of all global trade" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 37*).⁴

The control of the South China Sea has long been a sensitive issue in relations with China, which has built artificial islands equipped with military installations. The NSS reasserts the United States' firm commitment to supporting allied countries in the region, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia. The alliance treaty with Japan also covers the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which China claims as its own (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 38*).

The focus on China necessitates significant attention to India, defined as the "largest democracy in the world" (despite the notable decline of the rule of law under Narendra Modi's government) and a crucial "defence partner". The NSS

⁴ Open and accessible and ensure that nations are free to make their own choices, consistent with obligations under international law. We support open societies through investments in democratic institutions, free press, and civil society and are cooperating with partners to counter information manipulation and corruption. And we will affirm freedom of the seas and build shared regional support for open access to the South China Sea—a throughway for nearly two-thirds of global maritime trade and a quarter of all global trade.

promises that the United States and India "will work together, bilaterally and multilaterally, to support our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 38*). This is interesting. India is a member of the Quad, a collaborative forum also comprising the US, Australia, Japan (*Deshpande, 2021*). Yet, it also maintains a substantial relationship with Russia, something that the war in Ukraine did not change, in which New Delhi has remained mostly neutral (*Jagtiani and Wellek, 2022; Konwer, 2023; Verma, 2023*).

This relationship between New Delhi and Moscow is a legacy of the Cold War when India, firmly non-aligned, considered the Soviet Union a reliable supplier of arms and energy and a champion of anti-colonialism central to India's post-British ideology (*Budhwar, 2007*). This bond has persisted post-Cold War and through the gradual rapprochement between Washington and New Delhi (*Pande, 2022*). Economically, India continues to profit from its ties to Moscow. The significance of this relationship has been on display in relation to the war in Ukraine. India has resisted conforming to Western sanctions and has only tepidly condemned the war, viewing it less as a conflict between Russia and Ukraine and more as an expression of a broader clash between Russia and the West - a narrative not dissimilar from that espoused by Moscow's propaganda (*Tellis, 2022*). From this perspective, the importance of India in countering China causes the United States to tolerate a degree of flexibility in India's relationship with Russia that it likely would not accept from other partners as, against this backdrop, Washington has realized that, by working with India and establishing this "Great Power Partnership", the two countries will be "stronger together in deterring Beijing's hegemonic designs" (*Arha and Saran, 2024*).

The NSS describes North Korea and Burma as problematic situations. In the case of North Korea, Washington pledges to seek "sustained diplomacy with North Korea to make tangible progress toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula while strengthening extended deterrence in the face of North Korean weapons of mass destruction and missile threats." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 38*). As for Burma, the NSS notes that "The brutal military coup in Burma has undermined regional stability, and we will continue working closely with allies and partners, including ASEAN, to help restore Burma's democratic transition "will continue to work closely with allies and partners, including ASEAN, to help restore democratic transition in Burma." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 38*).

Systemic rivals

The NSS identifies China and Russia as the main competitors of the United States (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 23–26*). This outlook shares some similarities with

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Trump's approach, although significant differences exist. In Trump's view, China and Russia were parts of the same problem. They "challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity" (*National Security Strategy 2017, 2017: 2*) and wanted "to shape a world want to shape a world antithetical to US values and interests." (*National Security Strategy 2017, 2017: 25*). For Trump, these nations were aiming to erode American security and prosperity by undermining the market economy, enhancing their military power, and manipulating data and information to expand their foreign influence.

For Biden, however, China and Russia represent separate issues. China "is *the* only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 23*). The rivalry with Beijing is primarily centered in the Indo-Pacific but is seen to be expanding globally. This position differs significantly from the previous Democratic administration of Barack Obama (2009-17), in which Biden served as Vice President. Obama viewed the rise of a "stable, peaceful, and prosperous China" as a positive development. This cooperative stance has been abandoned, although China is still considered an essential partner in some issues, such as climate change.

Biden met with the President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Xi Jinping, at the G-20 summit in Bali on November 14, 2022. Both leaders emphasized the importance of diplomacy, dismissed the notion of a *New Cold War*, and expressed the desire to reorient US-China relations. However, the meeting did not result in any agreements or help bridge the extensive range of differences between the two superpowers (*Viser et al., 2022*). However, the meeting did not lead to any understanding or bridge the gap on the wide range of differences between the two major powers (*Rogers and Buckley, 2022*).

In the past years, the US-China relationship has further soured. The visit of former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan - the *de facto* independent island claimed by the PRC as part of its territory - provoked a strong reaction from Beijing. In response, China conducted large-scale military exercises in the waters and skies near Taiwan. Formally, the Biden Administration adheres to the "one China policy", according to which the United States does not recognize the independence of Taiwan (which, moreover, has never proceeded with formal secession) (*Green and Glaser, 2017*). However, the US guarantees political and military support to Taiwan, and Biden has implied that any forceful attempt to unite Taiwan with the mainland would trigger an American military response (*Wang, 2022*).

A major issue shaping relations between China and the Western bloc is the so-called *decoupling between* Western and Chinese economies. Decoupling does not pertain to the internal US-China trade, worth approximately 600 billion annually, but targets strategically sensitive sectors. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen expressed

concern over US companies importing critical products, including minerals needed for electric vehicle batteries, from China excessively. As a result, worries about dependence on China are growing in the United States. This underpins the sensational decision made by the Biden Administration in October to ban the export to China of US materials and technologies for developing next-generation semiconductors (chips). The barely concealed goal is to slow down China's technological progress significantly. However, for these export controls to have a long-term impact, they must be adopted by other countries, prompting the US government to pressure allies to follow its strict stance. (Bilotta, 2024)

The goal, not too disguised, is to slow down China's technological progress drastically. To have long-term effects, however, the export controls introduced by the Biden administration must also be shared by other countries. As a result, the US government has increased pressure on allies to adopt the strict American line. The Europeans are directly involved in the affair since they have four of the major companies (two Dutch, by far the largest, and two German) that manufacture the materials for the production of the latest generation chips. Several European countries have significant exposure to the Chinese market, particularly Germany. Given the systemic importance that Germany has for the European economic system, the marked decoupling sought by the United States is bound to have a continental impact and, therefore, fuel some transatlantic animosity, not least because the United States does not offer immediate forms of compensation. In early November, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said during his first visit to China that Germany does not believe in the decoupling idea *and* is seeking a deeper economic relationship with Beijing. (Scholz, 2022)

In the NSS, there is a particular focus on wanting to differentiate between China as a state apparatus, formed by the government and the Communist Party of China (it is always referred to as the People's Republic of China) - and the population, with a reference to the history of Chinese immigration to the United States. Indeed, the section on China concludes with a peremptory note which, while underlining the profound differences existing with the Communist Party of China, also reiterates that these differences exist "between governments and systems, not between our people", underlining the ties of family and friendship existing between the two peoples. (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 25*)

As for *Russia*, it is explicitly referred to as a threat to the international order since it is a nuclear power determined to subjugate (if not conquer, as in the case of Ukraine) its neighbouring countries and divide its enemies by half of intimidation, sabotage, disinformation and propaganda. The document also asserts, "Over the past decade, the Russian government has chosen to pursue an imperialist foreign policy with the goal of overturning key elements of the international order... Russia now poses an immediate and persistent threat to international peace and stability." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 25*). For the United States, the

goal is "to help make Russia's war against Ukraine a strategic failure" (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 26*), a goal to be achieved together with allies, especially European ones.

The Crucial Issues

Biden perceives competition with China and Russia as more of a clash of governance systems rather than a traditional geopolitical conflict. This struggle is often encapsulated in the 'democracy vs. autocracy' dichotomy. Although the NSS does not overtly use this language and sparingly uses the term 'autocracy', it emphasizes the intrinsic link between protecting democracy from internal and external threats and defending American security interests. The NSS differentiates between democratic countries and autocracies, emphasizing a "strategic competition to shape the future of the international order." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 1*). It also underscores the need to "sharpen our competitive edge for the future" against rivals who stake the finger at the alleged weaknesses of democracies to reaffirm the legitimacy, and indeed the superiority, of alternative (inevitably more or less autocratic) governance systems (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 1*).

Biden's NSS identifies climate change as the most important global issue: "The climate crisis", reads the document, "is the existential challenge of our time", which poses the "urgent need to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels." (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 27*). The Biden Administration recognizes that managing global warming is complicated not only by the natural difficulties of forging global agreements but also by the escalating geopolitical and ideological competition with US adversaries. Hence, climate change increasingly impacts American national security.

Biden's position is diametrically opposed to Trump's. In his NSS, climate change was never openly mentioned. For Trump, American primacy was crucial to counter an energy agenda deemed harmful to US economic and energy security interests. Acknowledging that "climate policies will continue to shape the global energy system", Trump stressed the need to preserve the US leadership, considered "indispensable to countering an anti-growth energy agenda" seen as "detrimental to US economic and energy security interests" (*National Security Strategy 2017, 2017: 22*).

In Trump's view, His objective was to ensure American energy independence without any restrictions on the use of domestic energy resources, even fossil fuels, openly saying that "reducing traditional pollution, as well as greenhouse gases" should be the result of "innovation, technology breakthroughs, and energy efficiency gains, not from onerous regulation" (*National Security*

Strategy 2017, 2017: 22). For Biden, energy independence is also vital, and increased gas production has been crucial in helping Europe replace imports from Russia during 2022. However, for Biden, the solution is not the unrestricted exploitation of fossil fuels but the development of renewable energy, which also carries geopolitical significance, as it would diminish fossil fuel-producing nations' capacity to pressure their importers (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 27–28*).

The NSS frames climate change as a common challenge requiring international cooperation rather than competition importers (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 27–28*). While advocating for collective action, Biden's NSS emphasizes that the effort begins domestically, referring to the support for green technology development in the IRA. The administration is committed to facilitating a domestic transition to clean energy, enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience, and altering the national security paradigm to incorporate climate change considerations into national security planning and policies.

The NSS dedicates significant attention to the terrorist threat (*National Security Strategy 2022, 2022: 30–31*), a particularly sensitive area where the Biden administration - despite the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan (Rohde, 2021) and a generally cautious approach in the Middle East (Traub, 2020) - does not intend to take steps backward. This is demonstrated by the killing of the al-Qaeda leader, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, in Kabul in early August 2022 (Baker et al., 2022), as well as that of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, self-styled 'caliph' at the head of the Islamic State, in northern Syria in February 2022 (Clarke, 2022). The NSS thus reaffirms Biden's intent, stated at the time of his withdrawal from Afghanistan, to adopt an over-the-horizon approach to terrorism - surveillance, control, and possibly targeted intervention without a direct presence on the ground (Hoffman and Ware, 2022).

Like Biden, Trump's NSS also identified jihadist terrorism as a priority threat (*National Security and Strategy 2017, 2017: 10–11*). However, Trump's NSS entirely overlooked issues related to domestic terrorism tied to white supremacy and radical right-wing groups, which since 2015 have been the main source of terrorist violence within the United States (Jones et al., 2020). Biden has tackled this issue head-on, committing the administration to counter "growing threats from a range of domestic violent extremists," groups that include individuals "motivated by racial or ethnic bias, as well as anti-government or anti-authority sentiments." To address this problem, the Biden administration launched the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism* in June 2021, which the NSS pledges to implement (*National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, 2021*).

Conclusions

Despite the inherent complexity, the NSS' general absence of specific policy directives, and some perceived vagueness regarding data and commitments, a thorough examination can provide policymakers, analysts, experts, observers, and those interested in American foreign policy a fairly clear understanding of the primary areas where President Biden intends to concentrate his efforts.

President Biden's National Security Strategy manifests traditional elements of the Democratic approach to foreign and security policy, such as the emphasis on alliances and democracy. However, there are some novel elements, such as the assertive and pervasive identification of China as the primary strategic challenge throughout the document. It highlights the rise of China as the main global competitor, increasingly capable of shaping the international order. While also acknowledging Russia as a threat, the NSS frames these two nations differently, emphasizing the different challenges they pose to the United States.

The Indo-Pacific region is currently at the core of the American geopolitical Strategy, while the Western Hemisphere—Mexico and Canada—and Europe also remain crucial. As for the Middle East, it is clear that this space is not that relevant to Americans anymore. In this area, the endorsement of the Abraham Accords as a critical step towards the long-term stabilization of the Middle East is particularly notable and represents an element of continuity with the previous administration.

That said, numerous sections reveal a significant departure from the previous administration's approach, ranging from America's global role to the distinct characterizations of the Chinese and Russian threats to the divergent overall views on democracy, climate change, and terrorism.

The Biden Administration's NSS underscores the existential threat of climate change, advocating for international cooperation to mitigate it and internal policy reforms to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels. The NSS reveals a strategic re-orientation towards competition between governance systems, encapsulated in the 'democracy vs. autocracy' dichotomy, heralding a new era in American national security policy under the Biden administration. Counter-terrorism efforts, both international and domestic, feature prominently in this Strategy, with a commitment to tackling jihadist terrorism and growing threats from domestic violent extremists. In regard to terrorism, the Biden administration is progressively emphasizing domestic challenges, differently from the previous administration, although recent operations in Afghanistan and Syria indicate that there remains a steadfast resolve to combat jihadist groups.

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