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# The New US National Security Strategy

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The National Security Strategy (NSS) is a fundamental document of the US grand strategy. It outlines the current US administration's strategic vision of national interests, challenges and threats, the goals of state policy in the world and methods and instruments for achieving them.

Joe Biden became US President in January 2021. The Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (hereinafter referred to as the ISG)<sup>1</sup> was published in March 2021. It took the administration a year and a half to draft a full-fledged NSS. The new NSS was released in October 2022.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, the author reviews and analyses the new US NSS in connection with the other fundamental documents of the Biden administration's grand strategy in view of ongoing geopolitical changes and the approaches of the previous administration of Donald Trump.

The new NSS comfortably fits into the framework of US military-political traditions and other US similar documents of the post-bipolar era. In many respects, the NSS 2022 is strikingly different from the NSS of the Trump administration,<sup>3</sup> which was published in December 2017 (in less than a year since Donald Trump

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<sup>1</sup> Interim National Security Strategic Guidance // The White House. 03.03.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> FACT SHEET: The Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy // The White House. 12.10.2022. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/10/12/fact-sheet-the-biden-harris-administrations-national-security-strategy/>.

<sup>3</sup> National Security Strategy 2017 // The White House. 18.12.2017. URL: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

assumed his presidential duties). However, it is not worth focusing too much on these differences for fear of missing the commonalities in the key documents of these otherwise antagonistic administrations. The US grand strategy is consistent and long-term.

In some places, the NSS 2022 looks not so much as a plan of action for the medium term as a report on work done, which is designed to present the Biden administration in the best light. The leitmotif of the new NSS is renunciation of Trump's isolationist tendencies and return of the primacy of allies and partners. At the same time, the NSS 2022 tries to co-opt Trump's agenda in certain areas and paint it in Democratic colours.

The NSS 2022 paints a gloomy picture of a world of spiralling global confrontation between the great powers but seeks to de-escalate tensions, emphasising the US commitment to peace and reluctance to allow open confrontation between great powers. It creates an image of the US as a magnanimous if not altruistic state. Yet, while using the terms of enlightened self-interest, the NSS deals with US aspirations for world domination and control over the global economic and political system. It abounds in ideology, as well as pragmatic and solipsistic points. This is probably the first NSS in recent history that calls to mind George Orwell quotes.

The author of this article is not in favour of demonising the US but it is necessary to have a realistic view of Washington's foreign policy and international conduct. Despite numerous domestic problems, the US remains a mighty, successful and durable great power that pragmatically, consistently and doggedly pursues its interests. The US will continue trying to build a world order centred around the US and counter any attempts by other countries to challenge it or pursue a policy threatening US interests and values.

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# Foundations of the US grand strategy

A detailed analysis of the US grand strategy exceeds the scope of this article, but a brief description is essential for understanding the general context of the NSS 2022.

National security covers national defence and foreign policy. It is underpinned by military superiority over any foreign state or group of states, a favourable international environment and a system of defence capable of successfully resisting hostile or destructive actions (overt or covert) both inside and outside the country. The goals of removing threats and achieving economic prosperity, promoting economic development and global expansion have been the backbone of the US approach to national security throughout its history. As American historian Brooks Adams aptly put it, Fear and Greed are the nation's driving forces.

Ideologically, the US grand strategy rests on three basic tenets laid down by US founders: enlightened self-interest, reliance on military power and Manifest Destiny. Enlightened self-interest means supremacy of US national interests over the norms of international law and commitments to other states, primacy of strategic goals over short-term ones and preservation of US freedom of manoeuvre under any circumstances. That said, Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding

Fathers, believed that US freedom of choice was only possible if the nation has strong military potential. He said that only strong nations can choose between war and peace. These two basic tenets underpinned Manifest Destiny, a sign of uniqueness, exceptionalism and divine election of the American nation, state and ideology. America's Manifest Destiny implies recognition of a sacred immutable truth – the virtue of the American people and the US system and the US mission to spread its values and institutions all over the world.

The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act mandates that the US administration submit to Congress a report on national security strategy issues every year, simultaneously with presenting the next year's budget. In reality, the NSS was published less often than every year. There have been 18 versions since 1987. All US presidents except Reagan and Trump published their first NSS only the following year after assuming office.

By law, the NSS should concern national interests, US national security goals, foreign policy, international commitments and military capabilities required for implementing the strategy. It should also outline long- and short-term ways of using elements of military power in furtherance of national interests and NSS goals and ensure that US capabilities are properly aligned with US national interests and NSS goals. The NSS lies at the foundation of the US budget process. It outlines ways of using limited resources and promotes coordination between different government bodies, the shaping of public opinion and discussion. It is also supposed to inform other international actors about US interests and views. The NSS is the foundation for drafting two other core military-political documents – the National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the National Military Strategy (NMS).

The NDS is released by the US Defence Secretary. This document was introduced in 2005 to replace annual reports to Congress by the US

Defence Secretary. It explains how the Pentagon is going to achieve the NSS goals. The NMS is drafted by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) with the participation of its other members and unified combatant commands. The NMS deals with how the armed forces are going to be used to achieve NSS and NDS goals. The NDS and the NMS have become much less open in the past few years. Full-fledged open versions are replaced with brief references and descriptions.

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## Interim Strategic Guidance

Its main goal is to confirm the total renunciation of Trump's legacy that the Biden administration considers odious: "And under the Biden-Harris Administration, America is back. Diplomacy is back. Alliances are back."

President Biden immediately announced the coming of what he called "an inflection point," a moment of "accelerating global challenges." His views on national security are noteworthy. He emphasised:

- 1) Unconditional reliance on allies and partners;
- 2) Open promotion of the ideology of enlightened self-interest;
- 3) Open recognition of the ongoing global confrontation between the advocates of democracy and autocracy over the choice of the best system for addressing global challenges.

The second and third points fully correspond with the views of the Trump administration. As for the first one, its role in the NSS 2017

was much less important. Strictly speaking, there was no discussion of it at all, although Trump never denied the benefits of alliances and partnerships for the US.

The ISG consistently integrated the ideological tenets of the new administration. President Biden said, “Many of the biggest threats respect no borders or walls, and must be met with collective action. None can be effectively addressed by one nation acting alone. And none can be effectively addressed with the United States on the sidelines.”

At the same time, according to the Biden administration, democracy is endangered all over the world. It is threatened by populism, corruption, inequality, nativism, nationalism and authoritarian states. The Biden administration is openly blaming “anti-democratic forces” for sowing “division within and among free nations.” By “anti-democratic forces” they mean China, Russia, Iran, the DPRK, unstable states and non-government actors.

The ISG recognises the change in the balance of power in the world arena but sees it not so much as a natural historical process explained by economic, socio-political and demographic factors, and not even so much as a threat to its interests. It considers it a challenge to the entire community of “free nations” posed by “anti-democratic forces” with “wrong views.”

The Biden administration tried to seize on Trump’s agenda with his slogan “Make America Great Again” by emphasising the need to build back the US economy and healthcare system after the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## National interests

The ISG addressed three traditional US national interests (security, economic prosperity and protecting democratic values), and added some nuances reflecting the views of the Biden administration:

- Threats to security are posed both by great powers and regional rivals and cross-border challenges;
- Economic development must be aimed at helping working people get ahead rather than increasing corporate profits or GDP;
- The United States must renew its own democracy and begin defending its values beyond its borders by uniting “the free nations” in the struggle against “anti-democratic forces.”

The NSS 2022 confirmed these US national interests. It is interesting to compare them to the Trump administration’s interpretation in the NSS 2017 that emphasised four national interests: security, economic prosperity, ensuring peace by increasing defence spending and enhancing US influence in the world. Increased defence spending was the only unusual item. **First**, military might is an instrument of grand strategy rather than an end in itself and, **second**, it duplicates the traditional national interest of ensuring security.

The national interests of the NSS 2017 and NSS 2022 coincide overall but differ considerably in the details:

- On the security issue, the former administration focused on threats to US territory, illegal immigration, cyber threats and international terrorism;
- On economic prosperity, it emphasised not the welfare of working people but resilience to “unfair” trade practices, protecting intellectual property and providing energy resources needed to fuel the economy;
- As regards national influence, it paid much less attention to missionary ideology and concern about the fate of the world, and instead prioritised the pragmatic interests of the US.

The most striking difference between the two administrations concerns their approach to national interests. The Trump administration emphasised the need to focus on the US itself, eliminate damaging distortions in trade, and redistribute the financial burden of security on an equitable basis. The Biden administration did an about face in favour of multilateral cooperation. The Trump administration said that the US should not impose its model of state and society on other countries and that it was not the inevitable culmination of progress. The Biden administration clearly expressed the need to rally democratic states to challenge the powers with “more obscure” views.

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## NSS 2022 strategic challenges

The publication of the ISG was followed by events that heralded a dramatic change in the international arena, largely borne of processes dating back some time. In the year and a half after Trump’s departure from the White House, the Biden administration was feeling somewhat more confident, while still concerned over economic and socio-political differences inside the US.

The NSS 2022 outlined two strategic challenges:

- Increased competition between world powers for the right to determine what the world will look like after the end of the post-bipolar system;
- Cross-border challenges, common for all states, are no less important than geopolitical confrontation.

Building on the ideas contained in the ISG, the NSS 2022 declared the need for the United States to confront the authoritarian great powers for the right to shape the new international order, to unite and lead “the free nations” in countering cross-border threats (or, according to NSS 2022, shared challenges) and “anti-democratic forces.” A revealing passage states that the problems of US opponents in international and domestic affairs “are associated with the pathologies inherent in highly personalised autocracies.” To believe the NSS 2022, the democratic system consistently outcompetes authoritarianism and facilitates prosperity, stability and peace. Nevertheless, it reads: “We do not, however, believe that governments and societies everywhere must be remade in America’s image for us to be secure.”

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## Great power confrontation

According to the NSS 2022, the most pressing challenge is from powers that layer authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy. Russia and China are listed in this category. It goes on to assert that “Russia poses an immediate threat to the free and open international system,” whereas China “is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective.” It is stressed that although Russia, Iran and the DPRK are still posing a threat

to the United States, the main challenge is posed by China and is not limited to the Indo-Pacific, it is becoming increasingly global. Compared with the NSS 2017, the new strategy admits that the threats from Iran and the DPRK have diminished against the backdrop of challenges from China and Russia.

According to the NSS 2022, “Beijing has ambitions to create an enhanced sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific and to become the world’s leading power.” The new strategy is accusing China of what is so typical for the US itself. It notes that China wants “to create more permissive conditions for its own model, mold global technology use and norms to privilege its interests and values, use its economic power to coerce countries, limit access to its domestic market, and make the world more dependent on itself while reducing its own dependence on the world.” It also notes that China is investing in its armed forces and wants to have greater global reach.

Interestingly, the NSS 2022 admits that “the PRC is also central to the global economy and has a significant impact on shared challenges.” It offers the following conclusion: “It is possible for the United States and the PRC to coexist peacefully, and share in and contribute to human progress.”

The US strategy towards China involves a combination of efforts to enhance the economy, build alliances and “compete responsibly” with the PRC. A special place is reserved for supporting the Indo-Pacific countries to resist Chinese “pressure.”

China and Russia are accused of “genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, human rights violations in Tibet, and

the dismantling of Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms," aggression against Ukraine, "weaponising energy for coercion," and the world's food problems, to name a few.

The NSS 2022 notes the critical role of the Taiwan issue for regional and global security and affirms the US desire to preserve the status quo: "We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side, and do not support Taiwan independence." It reaffirms the US government's "one China policy" which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act (1979), the Three Joint Communiques (1972-1982), and the Six Assurances (1982).

The NSS 2022 paints a gloomier picture on Russia: "Over the past decade, the Russian government has chosen to pursue an imperialist foreign policy..." It goes on to say that the United States "made considerable efforts at multiple points to reach out to Russia to limit our rivalry and identify pragmatic areas of cooperation." Russia "spurned these efforts..." The US does not share Russia's idea about the ongoing conflict between Russia and the West. Together with its allies, it supports Ukraine in its confrontation with Russia, ensures the protection of NATO members and responds "to Russian actions that threaten core US interests." The US is concerned that reliance on nuclear weapons in Russian policy may grow due to the weakening of conventional forces in the current conflict. The United States "will not allow Russia to achieve its objectives through using, or threatening to use, nuclear weapons." In its relations with Russia, "America retains an interest in preserving strategic stability," arms control, "and in rebuilding European security arrangements which, due to Russia's actions, have fallen in to disrepair." The US refuses to admit to any responsibility for destroying security regimes and destabilising the situation in Europe as a matter of principle.

Despite the tough tone on China and Russia, the NSS 2022 is intended to de-escalate the great power confrontation. It notes that China and Russia are still interested in cooperation with states “that do not share their vision.” This leads to the following conclusion: “As a result, the United States and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC and Russia’s external environment in a way that influences their behaviour even as we compete with them.” The NSS 2022 also notes that the fundamental differences the US has with China and Russia are with their governments, not their people.

The NSS 2022 emphasises the US desire to avoid a conflict, a new Cold War or bloc-based confrontation. The last of these looks particularly devious against the background of the efforts to strengthen NATO and other military-political and economic alliances as much as possible, which reflect a desire to preserve Western unity and prevent the formation of alliances or coalitions of states that do not share US views on the world order. The Trump administration considered it enough to prevent the emergence of dominant states in the world’s key areas, whereas the goal of the Biden administration is to ensure the absolute dominance of the US and its allies and their views on the best way to structure the international order.

The NSS 2022 notes the US striving to avoid accidental military escalation, improve communication channels for contacts during emergencies, enhance transparency and start a dialogue on arms control. The US will also cooperate with China on the broadest range of issues but without deviating from its national interests.

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## Cross-border and other threats

Great power confrontation and cross-border threats do not exist independently but rather are interrelated. The goal of the NSS 2022 is to find the right balance between cooperation and confrontation in the efforts to address two main strategic challenges. Climate change is considered the greatest cross-border threat. In this context, the strategy mentions “the geopolitical imperative to reduce our collective dependence on states that seek to weaponize energy for coercion.” Other cross-border threats include infectious pandemics, uncontrolled migration, food supplies and corruption.

Discussing cross-border threats, the NSS 2022 demonises “autocratic governments” that “often abuse the global economic order” and “raise costs by withholding the movement of key goods.” They also “leverage access to their markets.” Russia and OPEC are criticised for their actions in the oil-and-gas market. It is mentioned separately that Russia’s operation in Ukraine “contributed to a surge in food prices, eroding food security worldwide.” China is denounced for “massive coal power use” and for choosing “not to cooperate adequately with the World Health Organisation and the international community on the global response to COVID-19.” The US is indignant at China’s expectations of “concessions on unrelated issues as a prerequisite to cooperation on shared challenges.” Against this background, the NSS 2022 gives a detailed account of the US efforts to counter all types of cross-border threats.

It emphasises the need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and harden control over the digital economy, information networks and the financial system against “malicious” and “illegal” actions by “anti-democratic forces.”

One of the most important novelties of the NSS 2022 was the addition of “domestic terrorism” to the list of threats. Before that, the US published its first National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism.<sup>4</sup> It was a response to the riots inside the US Capitol building in January 2021. The NSS 2022 notes that the threat of domestic terrorism has grown substantially whereas the threat of international terrorism has been greatly diminished. The NSS 2022 points to the threat of “racial or ethnic prejudice, as well as anti-government or anti-authority sentiment.” Another revealing section of the NSS 2022 concerns disinformation and “preventing credible information from being crowded out.”

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## Instruments for implementing the NSS 2022

The NSS 2022 outlines the following ways to respond to strategic challenges and protect US national interests:

- Invest in the main sources of American power;
- Build the strongest possible coalition of friendly states;
- Modernise and strengthen the armed forces.

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<sup>4</sup> FACT SHEET: National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism // The White House. 15.06.2021. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Strategy-for-Countering-Domestic-Terrorism.pdf>.



In another important passage, the NSS 2022 addresses the need to remove the border between the foreign and domestic policy. By tradition, grand strategy and the NSS as its main document are outward-facing. While dismissing Trump's isolationist tendencies and his America First slogan, the Biden administration is still trying to benefit from the increased attention of voters to domestic socio-economic problems. At the same time, the document clearly states that a world order meeting US interests and values is essential for protecting the rights of the Americans and ensure their prosperity.

The NSS 2022 notes the need to adjust globalisation and lists initiatives that are of key importance for the US: the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the global minimum tax on corporate profits and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII). It also talks about the need to draft new rules in trade, the economy, technology, information space and power engineering. The NSS 2022 states: "The private sector and open markets have been, and continue to be, a vital source of our national strength and a key driver of innovation." However, it notes the need for government investment in areas where the private sector cannot do enough, primarily in the critical infrastructure, semiconductors and energy. The focus is on "countering intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, and other attempts to degrade our technological advantages." The US is willing to develop technology together with its allies and partners but is determined to toughen export and government control in this area. Global economic growth is seen as an obvious benefit for the US because it facilitates exports of American goods and services.

The US plans to develop its own system of alliances and partnerships but declares its intention to cooperate with all states on countering cross-border threats. It also expresses willingness to work with international agencies, including the UN, and seek ways to make them stronger.

While claiming to want a world without bloc confrontation, the US is trying not only to strengthen the Western camp that it

leads, but to draw into its orbit all meaningful international agencies. This will allow it to marginalise to the utmost any state that is not prepared to live by the laws of “the democratic world.” Organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund promote US values and interests. Indicatively, the NSS 2022 leaves the door open to “undemocratic states” that are willing to adopt the rules of the American world order.

Discussing the formation of alliances and partnerships, the NSS 2022 notes the need to involve its European allies in the affairs of the Indo-Pacific and its Asian partners in European affairs. This also applies to joint confrontation versus Russia and China. The NSS 2022 notes the expanded activities of the G7 and the importance of involving other countries in cooperation with it. It highly values the role of NATO in confronting Russia and its expansion following the Madrid summit in June 2022.

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## Defence

The classified National Defence Strategy (NDS) was endorsed in late March 2022. It included the Nuclear Posture Review and the Missile Defence Review. The NDS 2022 was supplemented by a Fact Sheet<sup>5</sup> one and a half page long and a promise to publish a complete unclassified NDS version in the next few weeks. The lengthy drafting and delayed publication of the NSS and the unclassified NDS

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<sup>5</sup> Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy // U.S. Department of Defense. 28.03.2022. URL: <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF>

version by the Biden administration met with criticism in Congress because this delayed the budget process. Republican Representative Mike Rogers and Senator Jim Inhofe, ranking members of the House and Senate Armed Services committees, criticised the administration. Although the NDS 2022 formally relies on a rather detailed ISG, these strategic documents were not adopted in the right order – a document of a lower level (the first, classified NDS) was adopted before the main one (NSS).

The Trump administration released its NDS in January 2018, soon after the publication of the NSS 2017. The NDS 2018 was accompanied by a short 11-page unclassified version<sup>6</sup> that sufficiently laid out the main provisions of the document. Indicatively, the unclassified NDS 2018 version was largely consonant with the NSS 2022. Part of the explanation is that this document was supervised by Defence Secretary James Mattis who adhered to more traditional views than Donald Trump. Eventually, this led to his scandalous break with Trump and resignation.

The unclassified version of NDS 2022 was released on October 27, two weeks after the publication of the NSS 2022.<sup>7</sup> It is a lengthy document incorporating the unclassified versions of the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and Missile Defense Review (MDR). It requires special attention. Below we will review defence issues in broad outline, proceeding from the Fact Sheet on the NDS 2022 and the NSS 2022.

The Fact Sheet formulated the priorities of US government defence policy:

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<sup>6</sup> Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy - DoD // U.S. Department of Defense. 8.10.2018. URL: <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> National Defense Strategy // U.S. Department of Defense. 27.10.2022. URL: <https://www.defense.gov/National-Defense-Strategy/>

1. Defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC;
2. Deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners;
3. Deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary, prioritising the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe;
4. Building a resilient Joint Force and defence ecosystem.

The Fact Sheet defines the PRC as the “most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge” for the Pentagon. Russia is described as a source of “acute threats.” In this case, the priority in deterring Russia is given to cooperation within NATO. Other threats include “those from North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations.”

The term “resilience” is becoming popular in the US grand strategy. In the national defence context, it denotes an ability to sustain damage, overcome the consequences of a crisis and recover quickly from disruption.

As for the plan for implementing the defence strategy, it rests on three tenets:

- Integrated deterrence – organic linkage of all elements of national power across the board.

- Campaigning in addition to deterrence. This rather vague term refers to the need “to counter forms of competitor coercion” with coordinated actions meeting the common goal by using all available tools of national power together with allies and partners.
- Maintaining the superiority of the US armed forces in the future by accelerating their development, introducing the most important technologies and investing in human capital.

In line with the traditions of US policy, the NSS 2022 underscores that “America will not hesitate to use force when necessary to defend our national interests,” followed by the peace-loving caveat that “we will do so as the last resort and only when the objectives and mission are clear and achievable, consistent with our values and laws, alongside operations other than war.”

Military planning will be based on the priorities of the armed forces – defence of the US, deterrence and victory in case of war. This means a further reduction in the role of the operations other than war that were so popular in the 2000s and early 2010s – soft power, humanitarian missions, disaster relief and military diplomacy.

The NSS 2022 makes an important point: “We ended America’s longest war in Afghanistan, and with it an era of major military operations to remake other societies...”

The trajectory of the defence industry will have to be based, in part, on an analysis of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The strategy notes

the importance of producing key arms systems and combat equipment quickly and in sufficient amounts and the need to innovate and creatively design solutions as battlefield conditions evolve. It also contains a suggestion to remove barriers to deeper collaboration with allies and partners, “to include issues related to joint capability development and production to safeguard our shared military-technological edge.”

Nuclear deterrence and modernisation of the strategic nuclear forces remain a priority, though the NSS 2022 also supports reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US strategy. The US plans to strengthen arms control and non-proliferation regimes, “pursuing realistic goals for mutual, verifiable arms control and the non-proliferation regime.” The emphasis is on measures that contribute to the deterrence strategy of the US and its allies and “pragmatic areas of cooperation” with adversaries. It also mentions the need to “ensure multilateral export control” towards “countries of concern.”

On counterterrorism, the US strategy has changed. It has offloaded the main role to its partners and promised to provide support: “Around the world, we will increase cooperation and support to trusted partners, shifting from a strategy that is ‘US-led, partner-enabled’ to one that is ‘partner-led, US-enabled’.”

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## Regional priorities

The hierarchy of regional priorities in the NSS 2022 is as follows: the Indo-Pacific, Europe, the Western Hemisphere, the Middle East, Africa and the Arctic. International domains – Sea, Air and Space – are dealt with separately. Unlike under the Trump administration, the NSS 2022

does not analyse South and Central Asia separately but has sections on the Arctic and international domains. By and large, the regional sections of the NSS 2022 and NSS 2017 have more commonalities than differences.

The NSS 2022 expresses an idea that is vital for understanding US globalism: “We are stronger in each region because of our affirmative engagement in the others.” The loss of influence in one region due to internal instability or actions by “hostile powers” negatively affects US interests in other regions.

According to the NSS 2022, the US seeks to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. US influence in the region is rooted in expanding the network of alliances and partnerships (ASEAN, the QUAD security dialogue, AUKUS, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and APEC) and in bilateral agreements with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines and Thailand. US-Indian relations are a separate story. The DPRK and Myanmar are mentioned as regional challenges in addition to China and cross-border threats. US priorities are complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula amid measures to deter North Korea and restore democracy in Myanmar.

In Europe, the key issue is confronting Russia in Ukraine and strengthening NATO. At this point, it is important not to underrate the fact that the EU is a common market embracing 450 million people, and hence, is an indispensable partner for the US (that is, a huge market of paying customers for American goods).

Not surprisingly, the NSS 2022 announced support for developing cooperation between the UK and the EU. Less expected was a separate mention of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that settled the conflict in Northern Ireland. Some of its provisions are newly relevant because of Brexit.

In the document, the US grand strategy in Europe is revealed to be primarily focused on the long-term encirclement of Russia. It is enough to mention Washington's intention to support Moldova and Georgia, strengthen democratic institutions in the Western Balkans, back diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, continue to engage with Turkey to reinforce its ties with the West and develop cooperation with Central Asian countries.

The NSS 2022 repeats another important idea that the main European actors – NATO, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – are indispensable US partners not only in Europe but also on global issues.

Discussing the Western Hemisphere, the NSS 2022 mentions the growth of uncontrolled migration and openly declares US intention to protect it against external interference or coercion, including from the PRC, Russia, or Iran. The US vows to consistently help the region's countries cope with their challenges, including economic development, security and "democratic self-determination" for the people of Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

The Middle East remains a region of vital US interests, though the US has had to somewhat revise its foreign policy paradigm in the region due to refocussing resources on the Indo-Pacific and Europe. Iran's "destabilising activities" are mentioned as the main regional threat along with international terrorism. The new framework for US policy in the region has five principles. The US will develop ties with its key partners and prevent the domination of any actor from inside or outside the region. It will protect the freedom of navigation, promote diplomatic efforts to settle conflicts, encourage integration between its partners, including military-political integration, and promote human rights. It is noteworthy that this concept mentions continued support for normalising Israel's relations with Arab states of the Middle East.



For the umpteenth time, the US has prioritised the development of ties with the leading African nations – Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, as well as supra-national and sub-national players. The NSS 2022 mentions Russia twice in the African context, denouncing “the destabilising impact of the Russia-backed Wagner Group” and “rising food and commodity prices, made worse by Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine.” The US will provide all-round support to African countries when it comes to the economy, security and democracy promotion but, as the NSS 2022 points out, will limit itself to support and investment. African states must settle conflicts and crises in Africa themselves.

The US notes the growing accessibility of the Arctic, new economic opportunities and intensifying competition in the region. It points out that Russia is “modernising its military infrastructure” and criticises its “aggressive behaviour” because all this is “creating new risks of unintended conflict and hindering cooperation.” The NSS 2022 also notes China’s increased interest in the Arctic but makes a point that the US wants to prevent unnecessary escalation and will grow its presence in the Arctic “as required,” not excessively. The US will cooperate with its partners and allies, as well as Russia, including in the Arctic Council.

These are the most notable provisions of the NSS 2022 regarding international domains – Sea, Air and Space:

- The US will protect the freedom of navigation and overflight, support environmental protection, and oppose destructive distant water fishing practices by upholding international laws and norms, including the customary international law rules in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The US has not signed or ratified this document up to this day but selectively fulfils its norms, where permitted by national interests.

The US is striving to “lead in updating outer space governance, establishing a space traffic coordination system and charting a path for future space norms and arms control.” The NSS 2022 states openly that the US “will develop policies and regulations that enable the burgeoning US commercial space sector to compete internationally.” Its other goal is to protect national security.

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The NSS 2022 does not differ too much from the national security strategies of the previous US administrations. Its leitmotif is to develop the broadest possible cooperation with allies and partners and unite into coalitions in the face of the growing rivalry of the superpowers and mounting cross-border challenges. The US will consistently strive to build a world of freedom and democracy but they should correspond to American views and, most important, US national interests. There will be room for undemocratic and even anti-democratic countries in the American world but they must not question US dominance in world politics and must keep away from “objectionable” countries like China, Russia and Iran.

The new US NSS speaks about the global confrontation between “free” and “anti-democratic” ideologies but it is not bellicose at all. It clearly attempts to smooth out rough edges, avoid excessively bellicose rhetoric and preserve at least some opportunities for dialogue. The US is now less inclined to squander resources and overtly impose its will on the world. Now it is focused on resolving its domestic problems, shoring up its power and saving strength for its global confrontation with China.

The United States is entering with caution the Brave New World of superpower confrontation. Washington knows only too well what an open clash may mean for humanity. But the US is not overly worried about peripheral conflicts, although they are increasingly affecting many countries, even those that are thousands of miles away from hot spots. The US is willing to fuel such conflicts, enhancing its own influence and brainwashing its allies ideologically, as long as these conflicts do not affect its interests directly and may bring advantages.




Give America an inch, and it will take a mile. That said, the US remains a reliable and most valuable ally for many countries. American power has given the world a lot and continues to forcefully shape it through military, economic, technological and cultural power. However, it is obvious that America's missionary work and its claim to the right to determine globally what is good and what is bad is much more reminiscent of imperialism than to justice and freedom. Alas, this is only too common in international relations.

For many decades, the US has demonstrated its ability to emerge as a winner and beneficiary from periods of global instability. Now the world stands weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, food and energy problems and mounting disagreements in many regions. The world's future is vague and may fluctuate for a long time between multipolar, bipolar and quasi-bipolar scenarios and a general storyline of shaky *Pax Americana*. Time will tell whether the US will be able to help the world through yet another period of turbulence or, conversely, shatter it beyond repair.



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