



## Appealing. The Biden Doctrine in the “Cold Democracy” Age

GASPARINI, Amedeo<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup>  0000-0002-5899-1359; Utrecht University. Utrecht, The Netherlands. a.t.gasparini@students.uu.nl.

The content expressed in this article is the sole responsibility of its authors.

### ABSTRACT

Western democracies have lost their compass. They are cold and with no appeal; not looked upon as an efficient and effective model of governance. The Biden Doctrine might be defined as Joe Biden’s worldview divided between democracy and authoritarianism, as well as his attempt to make democracy attractive by having it deliver effectively on people’s concerns and needs. The Doctrine is also characterized by a commitment to the respect of human rights: its concern is not spreading democracy but showing that liberal democracy can effectively deliver at home and abroad more efficiently than authoritarian systems. The Biden Doctrine must not only focus on the revival of democracy but also face the challenge posed by authoritarianism’s appeal. The Doctrine must stand up against authoritarian rule, to promote liberal democratic government and respect for human rights as a solution to the distrust of democracy, in the era of cold democracies.

### RESUME

The purpose of this paper is to formulate in a coherent and comprehensive manner an initial idea of Joe Biden’s Doctrine in the field of foreign policy at the time of the “cold democracy” era, that is, at a time when democracies are discredited and under attack. Above all, not appealing. The Biden Doctrine will have to revitalize the concept of democracy and put emphasis on human rights, using multilateralism.

In terms of methodology, the paper relies primarily on nonacademic sources-although there is no shortage of such sources due to the fact that no official Biden doctrine of foreign policy has been formulated.

At the level of results, Biden doctrine of democracy should expose the consequences and the dire results of autocracies and strengthen democracy worldwide in a multilateral manner in an era when democracy seems weak and is contested.

Future research should also address this issue considering the historicization of the Biden administration. It is not yet known what effect the policies of the Biden administration will have on the planet.

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

#### Article process:

Submitted: 20/07/2022

Approved: 15/09/2022

Published: 10/10/2022



#### Keywords:

Biden Doctrine, Cold Democracy, United States, Liberal Democracy, Authoritarianism

#### Keywords:

Doutrina Biden, Democracia Fria, Estados Unidos, Democracia Liberal, Autoritarismo

### Introduction: Revitalizing the Fire of Democracy

The appeal and trust democracies exercise seem to have been fading for quite a while. Seemingly unable to effectively deal with many challenges in Western societies, they appear increasingly unsuited to provide answers in the short term to emergencies tied to the economy, trade, and health. The “fire” of democracy – its attractiveness – is being increasingly extinguished by the discredit thrown on it. Today democracy is widely discarded in favor of authoritarian mechanisms and illiberal models. Many democracies are cooling down, and seem unable to keep pace with social evolutions, as well as with the increasingly interconnected world. Faced with multiple challenges, it would seem democracies fail to warm the hearts of many citizens, who prefer quick and demagogic solutions. Cold democracies are a danger to the social stability of Western States. The latter are fragile and exposed to the ill winds of authoritarianism. There is the risk many citizens might forget the value of democracy.

A capital challenge today is to revive the fire of democracy, making it attractive, hopefully, able to meet citizens’ concerns. Too many forgotten men and women are

disappointed and impoverished by globalization, for example. The Biden administration has made a focus on democracy, human rights, liberalism, and cooperation with international institutions a major point. Whether it will succeed in rekindling the fire of democracy is far from certain, but what is increasingly emerging as the Biden Doctrine – i.e., making democracy attractive by showing that democracy effectively delivers – might work as a compass that both the U.S. In a world where authoritarianism is increasingly appealing, strengthening the liberal democratic model is essential for democracies that no longer seem to be appealing to many in Western societies. Considering the ever-running globalization and the interplay between the planet's economies it is crucial for liberal democracies to continue to be Western civilizations' beacon.

Facing the challenges posed by rising inflation and the post-Global Finance Crisis, the pandemic and trade challenges (Ettinger 2020), but also unemployment, the political classes' lack of credibility, the environmental concerns, and the populist challenge, how will the Biden Doctrine be able to cope with the cooling of democracies? How will the U.S. administration stop the trend of “democratic cooling” vis-à-vis global challenges, concerning the rise of consensus around authoritarian, illiberal, and muscular models? The Biden Doctrine envisions strengthening the concept of democracy by making it more convincing. In the History of the U.S. Presidency, many presidents explicated their doctrine worldview. Some were more focused the U.S. domestic policies, and some were on foreign affairs. Some worked; others did not, and so far, it is not clear if Biden will formally adopt and codify his policies into a doctrine carrying his name (Ullman 2021). In terms of methodology, this paper has many non-academic articles: the reason is that the Biden presidency is not even halfway through its term and therefore it is natural that a sufficient body of scholarly analysis on the subject has not yet been formed.

The purpose of this paper and the contribution this one intends to make is an interpretation that views the Biden Doctrine considering the phenomenon of so-called cold democracies, considering respect for human rights and the firm condemnation of autocracies across the planet. There is not yet a precise definition of the Biden Doctrine, not least because it is quite premature to fully identify a comprehensive strategy that would take years to be assessed. The administration's focus vis-à-vis international affairs are oriented towards multilateralism, international cooperation, human rights, strengthening of democracy, and the commitment against authoritarian regimes. The Biden Doctrine might be an answer to the phenomenon of the cooling of democracy. That is the vast and widespread lack of appeal of the liberal-democratic model. The Doctrine is valid both on the external and internal fronts of the U.S.: if the Biden administration wants to strengthen the concept of democracy abroad and to show that democracy can deliver on people's concerns, the same thing will have to be done at the domestic level, where political polarization is sky-high.

### **“Cold Democracy” and Its Risks**

Western democracies are getting cold. The great democratic architectures of the Old Continent and the U.S. seem no longer able to warm their citizens' hearts and enthusiasm on this model. Western democracies seem to lack credibility vis-à-vis the illusory efficiency of today's authoritarian models, such as China and Russia. Moreover, today's rulers of illiberal democracies and autocracies "figured out how to create a one-party state without the hassle of staging a coup" (Applebaum 2021). So, they might appear legitimate and appealing to many. To complicate things even further, it seems that the crises of democracies – from the aftermath of the global financial crisis (GFC) and that of immigration – have stabilized. The rise of demagogic movements is the effect of unease that has risen from the bottom of the Western states' social fabric. Western democracies are indecisive; they do not keep pace with society. From the lack of political leadership to Covid-19, from industrial innovation to migrations, from companies' relocations to the decade-long concerns of internal politics. The sum of these urgencies has led to the perception of cooling of the concept of democracy.

Cold democracies are democracies that have lost appeal as a system able to guarantee well-being and prosperity and democratic participation. The greatest risk associated with cold democracies is the potential appeal that the alternative – authoritarian models – might appear as a satisfactory solution. In the past, democracies were animated by the fire of popular participation: the pursuit of freedom and counting in the life of a country. Today, however, democracies are no longer perceived as the best model capable of providing opportunities to their citizens – this is especially true for the liberal democratic model that couples democracy with liberalism in North America and Europe. Faced with the challenges of the future – including digital surveillance, climate change, and trade tensions – Western democracies seem to have lost their compass. They are cold, lifeless, and worse, without appeal; that is, without the ability to be looked upon by a multitude of observers as an efficient model. Many Western democracies are stranded in the icy immobility of indecision.

Western democracies are beset by the absence of meaningful reforms, as well as being submerged by many crises intertwined with one another. While in the past the liberal democratic model contributed to stabilizing growth rates and broad-based prosperity, today it seems to have become a victim of itself. The successes of liberal democracy in Western societies from the post-war period to the present day have driven away the memory linked to undemocratic and illiberal systems. Liberal democracy would have worked so well in this sense that at the first difficulty it would have triggered in many the desire for an alternative model. The slowness of democracy and the system of checks and balances have certainly contributed to cooling the appeal of democracy itself in many Western societies. Thus, many welcome other alternative solutions to rule society. The economic crisis undermined the perception of the liberal-democratic model: it is not by chance that the so-called forgotten men voted *en masse* for political movements closer to illiberalism and the concept of the strong man than to democratic sharing.

This weakened democracies. In many places, globalization helped to create a level of well-being such that not only do the direct beneficiaries desire more, but also the “losers” of globalization itself, have a distaste for democracy. Increasingly, many in the West have become almost as used to democracy. The concept of democracy would then be weakened and embrittled just because of this habit of such a system. The younger generations are at risk: many take democracy for granted and thus cool it down – and this prevents the positive fruits of democracy from being grasped, as well as making the risks or recognition of the risks of seductive authoritarianism intangible. Particularly, young generations in the West do not know the alternative to the democracy where they were born and raised. Biden has faith in building a foreign policy doctrine around the concept of democracy. “There will be no doubt about the resolve of the US to defend our democratic values, which we cannot separate from our interests,” President Biden (2021b) said. He intends to strengthen the role of the U.S. as a beacon of democracy and democracy promoter around the world.

More and more, it seems that democracy is perceived as annoying: it is incoherent, it is fallacious, and it has internal contradictions that have acted as fuel for populist movements in the past years. Populist politicians speculate on the cooling of democracy and exploit the popular discomfort about the fragility and cooling of democracy to gain political consensus. It is no coincidence that almost all the political leaders today categorized as populists have open contempt for democracy and individual civil liberties. They want to undermine liberal democracy and propose new authoritarian-like alternatives. This is the risk of the cooling of democracy: individuals no longer have faith in the democratic model and thus willingly accept alternative models to the cooled democracy, and close to the rampant, seductive, and fascinating authoritarianism.

### **Biden Doctrine and Multilateralism**

“It is clear, absolutely clear [...] that this is a battle between the utility of democracies in the 21st century and autocracies” (Biden 2021a). The Biden Doctrine might be defined as the President’s worldview divided between democracy and authoritarianism (Brands 2021). His goal is to make democracy attractive by having democracy effectively deliver people’s concerns in an era when the liberal-democratic model has lost its meaning and value for many citizens and when authoritarianism seems to be a powerful challenger to the Western political model. Thus, the Biden Doctrine is based on the necessary efficiency that liberal democratic states must show vis-à-vis present and future challenges. Secondly, the Doctrine might be characterized by a commitment to the respect of human rights worldwide. The Doctrine is geared toward making liberal democracy more appealing and having human rights respected worldwide.

Every time an American president is elected, there is always a race to get the credit for having defined the president’s doctrine. “Every election season, commentators search for the Holy Grail of American foreign policy, the presidential doctrine, or a leader’s defining set of

diplomatic beliefs” (Tierney 2020). “Trying to find it is not easy because his thoughts on foreign policy have changed over the decades he has been in public life” (Drezner 2021). Naming things – finding the most coherent arrangement to define an American foreign policy – is not just a rhetorical exercise but it is also a chance to offer guidance to fragile democracies about what foreign policy to pursue a vis-à-vis authoritarian appeal. Cold democracies are fragile: to be strengthened, they would need a formulation of a model. Because of the importance of the U.S. in the world and its pivotal place as a leader of free and democratic countries, the Biden Doctrine might be an efficient template.

Throughout history, there have been several doctrines named after the president who enacted them through speeches, proclamations, programs, and significant acts. Toosi (2021) reminds us that only the most significant ones played a capital role in History: the Monroe Doctrine (based on the U.S. supremacy on the American continent), the Truman Doctrine (based on the contrast of the USSR), the Eisenhower Doctrine (based on the commitment to guarantee territorial integrity in the Middle East), the Nixon Doctrine (based on the resolution of tensions in Indochina and disengagement in Vietnam), Reagan Doctrine (based on the contrast to Communism), Bush Doctrine (based on preventive war and military action abroad). “Some presidents never find a doctrine. Biden has one. In his view, the United States is in a competition of governance systems with China. His response is not about spreading democracy [...], but about showing that democracy can deliver at home and abroad” (Wright 2021).

Biden wishes to promote U.S. centrality through a multilateral posture; national defense, and the preservation of “America First” is thus the President’s objective. Biden, who has a long experience in foreign policy (AlAlkim 2021) believes that through the integration of the various pieces of the Western geopolitical puzzle that the Atlantic axis is stronger and more cohesive vis-à-vis the current challenges – Europe and Biden might restore a new transatlantic pact (Howorth 2021), Trump’s presidency “represented an unprecedented low point in transatlantic relations” (Olsen 2022). The defense of national interest for Biden comes through multilateralism, not unilateralism. Biden has used and will use at times a “gentle unilateralism”, but the President’s posture is oriented towards an integration of the disconnected pieces of the West in crisis. For about a decade, coinciding with the effects of the GFC, multilateralism has been on the defensive on a global scale. The U.S. is aware of this: from the comfortable unilateralism to a new bipolar, exemplified by China and its allies.

The expansionism of the U.S. model – liberal democracy based on freedom, capitalism, and human rights – has been an element that has united left and right in the country. Joe Biden is a strong believer in cooperation with multilateral institutions: the goal is always the same. That is, to make the American presence dominant or at least perceived and felt in the world, but at the same time to use rhetoric indexed to the internal audience of the country. If, on the one hand, Washington always has the ambition of counting in almost every corner of the planet, it is also true that a partially insular attitude runs through the country’s

veins. “Biden’s foreign policy will ultimately need to lead to international agreements with like-minded countries that have broad support across the American political spectrum” (Wright 2021). Biden Doctrine’s challenges encompass two areas of action: the domestic and the foreign. From the domestic front, the distrust that many sectors of the population have towards democracy itself is worrying.

The resentment of the middle class is mixed with a deep distrust of democracy and the liberal system. Distrust of democracy is the real disease that origins populism and the attraction to authoritarianism. “Biden also understands that while America’s domestic democracy crisis is homegrown in many ways, it is also part of a larger international crisis. It can be addressed only by tackling the risks of unfettered globalization, foreign interference in elections, and networks of corruption” (*ibid.*). The wind of Sino-Russian authoritarianism is reflected in the macho attitude of small regional chieftains who want to influence borders, purposely causing diplomatic incidents to initiate expansionist policies – see Russia, China, and Turkey, and Belarus. The (Western) collective distrust of democracy on the one hand weakens democracy itself and on the other hand, it makes the alternatives to the liberal-democratic increasingly attractive.

Dictatorships’ worldwide expansion in early twentieth-century Europe was also possible because of the limited appeal generated by fragile democracies in crisis. Among the many foreign policy issues, Biden “will prioritize allies by ‘revitalizing America’s network of alliances and partnerships and renewing the commitment to defend friends” (Shapiro 2021). Biden Doctrine’s effectiveness will go hand in hand with the ability of the president to attract allies and potential new entrants around the doctrine’s core elements. Many in Europe rejoiced at the “return of the U.S.”, as Biden’s foreign policy is oriented towards a global network of alliances (Kupchan 2021). Furthermore, “Biden hopes that this democracy versus autocracy theme has intellectual legs [...], as it suits America’s geostrategic position. With the Anglosphere, India, Japan, and the EU all firmly on the US side [...], America is likely to retain its pre-eminent global role into the new era” (Hulsman 2021).

The Biden Doctrine is far-reaching: to assess whether democracy can deliver, it takes years – it might be measured in a generation. The reforms rolled out by Roosevelt had immediate effects on the American economy, but the real impact of the New Deal and the hopes contained within it lasted for thirty years. With ups and downs, the social reforms, the strengthening of democracy at home, and the cultivation of the country’s social fabric had a profound impact even through the degenerations that came after the Great Depression, after Roosevelt, and after World War II. Whether one likes it or not, whether one is a Democrat or a Republican, the New Deal model appealed immensely and had important domestic and international spin-offs. In some ways, it was connected to democracy’s ability to “deliver.” Reformism and faith in institutions, in one’s means to create a prosperous future simultaneously strengthen the individual and the country.

## Trumpist Past, Chinese Future

There are three moments of Biden in terms of foreign policy posture “Biden the Moderate” (middle 1970s-early 1990s), “Biden the Hawk” (1991-2003), and, since the Iraq War, today’s “Biden the Dove” (Tierney 2020). He raised many doubts and often opposed the military intervention of the US: in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria to mention just a few. This would seem at odds with the Biden Doctrine that democracy should be promoted, as well as human rights: Why wasn’t Biden in favor of bombing Libya? He was talking about restoring democracy after so many years under tyranny. Why, secondly, was Biden not in favor of ending Assad’s reign in Syria? Indeed, there was talk of enforcing human rights. When he arrived at the White House, Biden vowed to right the wrongs perpetrated by the past administration (Aschoff 2021). The foreign policy approach of Biden and his doctrine is in obvious clash with the doctrine of the previous president. “Trump’s ‘doctrine’ was less a strategy than a slogan. ‘America First was a malleable, tub-thumping creed, invoked to justify everything from sanctions on foreign nations and tariffs on foreign goods to expelling asylum seekers from U.S. borders and turning Washington’s back on major international agreements” (Tharoor 2021).

The U.S. presidents’ foreign policy doctrines serve to scan and at the same time summarize the administration’s geopolitical worldview. The issue of the cooling of the concept of democracy, plausibly would not be of interest to Trump – much of Biden’s policies are likely to restore the status quo ante about Trump’s policies, such as for Canada (Ettinger 2021). Biden now certainly wants to present himself as the champion of human rights. The Biden Doctrine is also the result of a model constituted in antithesis to Trump’s unilateral decision-making, and protectionist doctrine. Some argue that Biden’s foreign policy should be oriented toward realist pragmatism rather than liberal idealism (Campbell-Doshi 2021). The latter has historically led to several failures and corrections: Wilsonian idealism after World War I was swept away by the economic crisis of 1929 and the rise of totalitarianism in Europe. Thus, it would be a mistake to set up a Biden Doctrine solely based on idealism; it must be remembered that all foreign policies must surrender to the hard logic of realism.

Biden’s foreign policy “it’s a strategy rooted in confidence that a rules-based international system that favors freedom will be good for both the United States and the world; that U.S. interests will advance with its values; that U.S. prosperity depends on the prosperity of others; and, therefore, that U.S. support for and leadership of such a world-the ‘free world,’ as we used to say-is not charity but wise self-interest” (Fried 2021). Strengthening the concept of democracy vis-à-vis the growing authoritarian world trend and activating a foreign policy based on human rights and support of democracy (see Ukraine in 2022) is something that brings the Biden administration closer to its liberal-idealist predecessors. If it wants the Doctrine to be effective, the administration must be pragmatic. That is, give concrete answers to those who are undecided about the benefits of the democratic model.

The exposition of Biden's foreign policy ideas was made known on the American president's European trip in June 2021, where Biden expressly said he wants the U.S. to rally the world's democracies (2021b). In Europe, Biden was welcomed with open arms, but he did not forget to remind allies of the challenges ahead – for example, “Eastern Europeans can trust Biden to stand up to Russian aggression as this has been a hallmark of his political career” (Åslund 2021). “Biden has repeatedly argued the world has reached an ‘inflection point’ that will determine whether this century marks another era of democratic dominance or an age of autocratic ascendancy” (Brands 2021). Biden sees the world as divided into democracies and autocracies – Good and Bad (Miller-Sokolsky 2021). On one side, the free countries, ideally re-confederated under the stars and stripes flag. On the other, the countries close to China, and magnetized by Sino-authoritarianism, are based on muscular diplomacy or “wolf warrior diplomacy” (Westcott-Jiang 2021). The most significant test of the Biden Doctrine will be China. China is not only the West's systemic, but it is also a rival on the human rights front.

The Biden Doctrine is based on tolerance, democracy, and respect for human rights; all three elements that the Chinese approach lacks. The Biden Doctrine was born as an antithesis to the authoritarian model that most of all is on the rise and increasingly appealing: Chinese State capitalism, mixed with totalitarian repression. Both Trump and Biden “have engineered the most dramatic break in American foreign policy in the five decades since Richard Nixon went to China” (The Economist 2021), but what is evident, is China's intention not to coexist in the world system, but to dominate. Washington knows this well. Biden himself has not dismantled several Trumpian tariffs and policy elements – neither with Europe nor with China. The Biden Doctrine differs from that of his predecessor in its ability to include in its policy calculations also the option of collaborating multilaterally with allies. It is only in this way, proponents of democratic foreign policy would say, that one can result stronger in the face of China's aggressive and assertive posture – the same applies in the case of Russia, particularly the full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

According to Biden, the U.S. and fellow democracies compete with China and fellow autocracies (Wright 2021). The systemic rivalry between the US and China does not mean that there is no room for strategic collaboration between the two on challenges that are not geopolitical. A typical example is the climate issue – whose crisis disturbs national development progress (Manurung-Rezasyah 2021). Climate change is a chapter where both the U.S. and China have promised to work together. “Progress cannot be made in tackling the most serious global problems, including climate change, pandemics, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, without the cooperation of authoritarian states” (Miller-Sokolsky 2021). The Biden Doctrine includes restoring the appeal of democracy and a focus on human rights. For respecting human rights China does not want to hear about it. The Biden Doctrine might thus be challenging for China on this issue.

### **A Doctrine Between Cold Democracies and Authoritarianism**



“Gone was the clarity of the ideological struggle between capitalist democracy and communist autocracy, the free world and closed societies” (Rhodes 2021). In the last century, “competition was Communism, Nazism, militarism, and European empires. In the twenty-first century, it’s Putin’s Russia or Xi Jinping’s China” (Fried 2021). The Biden Doctrine will bear fruit in the coming years: it is too early to guess whether it will be effective and whether it will be able to alter the perception of many about the democratic model mired in the doldrums of inefficiency. The results of the doctrine must not only strengthen in people the conception of the democratic capacity to be efficient but must lead to important changes at the individual, social, national, and international levels. Domestic or foreign policy doctrines are only as efficient as they succeed in bringing about results that are tangible and accessible to as many people as possible.

Covid-19 and inflation domestically, and China and Russia abroad, are the top priorities for the Biden administration and Doctrine. China’s increasing assertiveness and the coronavirus particularly slightly helped undermine confidence in democracy and its perceived ability to be effective in the face of global challenges. “Often, world leaders are simply reacting to the demands of the moment and making it up as they go along” (Toosi 2021). The Biden Doctrine must be equipped with a series of dispositifs to strengthen the concept of global democracy and to raise the capacity of the democratic system to be efficient vis-à-vis political and commercial foes, as well as the pandemic. However, the risk that the concept of Biden Doctrine becomes yet another term that satisfies academics and commentators and does not turn into a set of general guidelines for the Biden administration’s posture concerning global challenges, is concrete. The Doctrine does not and should not entail spending more money, enlarging the State, or relying on patronage measures to generate consensus. It is a matter of producing tangible results.

The American soft power at the cultural level is something that has helped Washington in the decades to assert itself well beyond national borders. The Biden Doctrine’s soft power must be focused on the core mission of the Doctrine itself, that is, to strengthen the perception of the efficiency of democracy and the capacity of the liberal democratic model to provide answers. Restoring self-confidence is also an element the Biden Doctrine should look to. The appeal to liberal democracy by citizens will be stronger if the citizens trust democracy itself as a model delivering on their priorities. Strengthening the conception of democracy means strengthening democracy itself. Time is needed, but above all confidence in the liberal-democratic model, a model which now is the only one to offer prosperity coupled with individual and political freedom.

Today to challenge the famous “End of History” – understood in a Fukuyaman-Hegelian way as the end of valid and credible alternatives to liberal democracy – came Chinese authoritarianism: a mix of coercive socialism and dirigiste capitalism. This model can generate economic growth, but it is neither liberal nor democratic. Yet, it is an alternative that has

gained momentum over the years. Biden and the European ruling classes know it well: the lack of appeal of cold democracies can be equivalent to the allure of Sino-Russian authoritarianism. The Biden Doctrine must not only focus on the revival of democracy as a value and as a political system capable of satisfying citizens – between 1) individual freedom and democratic participation and 2) economic growth and prosperity – but also face the challenge posed by authoritarian systems, populist solutions to complex problems, government, and opposition to radical-left and -right's demagoguery.

Reawakening the interest and appeal of democracy, and its ability to solve people's problems on a large scale is partly in the objective interest of limiting the appeal of the authoritarian model. Indeed, we live in an era where autocrats even do not pretend to be democratic anymore (Roth 2021). The unaccountability they have experienced throughout the years strengthened their conviction to be omnipotent and unaccountable for massive frauds and violations. Autocracies have been able to evolve over the years: the crisis of nation-States, the GFC, and the identity crisis that then contributed to the rise of populist movements and leaders worldwide. Unlike in the past, when often a coup d'état was needed to illegitimately gain power, modern autocracies have open contempt for democracy and liberal democracy as an inefficient system of government. This indeed has an impact on liberal democratic societies, wherein many citizens gripped by several overlapping crises – look with interest to an authoritarian model that appears 1) successful and 2) alternative to liberal democracy.

However, the climate of today's authoritarian state, where the autocratic and populist leader creates his party, integrates it into the state, “massaging the rules, shifting money around, putting pressure on courts and prosecutors, eliminating unpleasant media, and above all by creating the oligarchs.” (Applebaum 2021). The challenge of the Biden Doctrine – and restoring the dignity of democracy, the allure, and fame of a system that benefits the most and does not enslave the people – won't be just to address the problem of cold democracies and the rise of the authoritarian alternative, but also to find concrete solutions. Support the free press, strengthen human rights, promote the independent judicial system, and free and fair election, as well as expose the crimes and the corruption of leaders and oligarchs. Pointing this out will help the Biden administration to light up the essence of the democratic practice, the respect of human rights, and the proliferation of civil liberties.

The Biden administration indeed addressed many times the issue of democracy and human rights abroad, but no change occurred: nor in Belarus, Cuba, Venezuela, or North Korea – not to speak of Russia's Ukraine case and China's Hong Kong and Taiwan case. The use of rhetoric is a powerful device, but necessarily a limited one. Thus, concrete actions and policies are needed. This does not mean that Washington must export democracy and human rights – this technique showed to be quite critical and ineffective, from Iraq to Afghanistan more recently. The promotion through the soft power the US still has is the long-term solution. Engaging with the opposition of undemocratic and illiberal governments, supporting the idea

of democracy and its capacity to give voice to the individual people might be the best concrete option, in an age where some governments “cloaked their autocratic rule in the garb of democracy” (Roth 2021).

The Biden administration needs to lighten up the issue of democracy and human rights: the ability of the liberal democratic system to carry out effective output is a genuine feature of free states. Autocracies cannot ensure wellness and prosperity in the long term. Only freedom does. Individual conditions might improve at the economic level – as it is in the case of China – but eventually, the quench of liberty and freedom, and the will to have political and civil rights respected might be considered the long terms goal of human beings. History tells us so: history is nonetheless progressive; tomorrow will always be better than today, despite apparent relapses into a purgatory of today’s populist-authoritarian age. The hope for a freer world characterized by the triumph of liberal democratic ideals, human rights, and freedom as a crucial element for the world’s citizens is perhaps at the root of all the doctrines named after American presidents.

With due exceptions, the foreign policy doctrines of American presidents have always been oriented toward the promotion of individual freedom. With flaws, mistakes, and controversies, American foreign policy doctrines have attempted to promote democracy and human rights abroad. The adversaries of the U.S. – from the First to the Second World War, from the Cold War to today – never promoted freedom, human rights, and democracy abroad. The Biden Doctrine, in this sense, fits into the typical American tradition of formal, rhetorical, and sometimes theoretical, export of values anchored in the Enlightenment. The challenge of providing answers to citizens and their problems – both on the internal and external fronts – is, however, important, as various crises overlap one another, misinformation inflates problems, autocracies feel impunity, and the aftermath of economic, social, and health crises make themselves felt in people’s lives.

### **Conclusion: Making Liberal Democracy Appealing Again**

“Every newly elected American president enters office promising to implement new policies, to avoid the mistakes of the past, and to promote the county’s security, interests, and values” (Lieber 2021). During the 2020 presidential campaign, Biden proposed a global summit of democracies. We have already seen something with the G7 meeting in 2021, but that club is too small and restricted. The Global summit of democracy must leverage an essential principle typical of the liberal democracy of multilateralism: that inclusion. Being able to include the principles of freedom, democracy, and human rights is something that will warm up the “dull” concept of liberal democracy and at the same time can be a threat to authoritarian regimes. President Biden promised, “a restoration of American standing: hegemony maintained through the steady stewardship of international institutions that can overcome coordination problems and bring shared global prosperity” (Serpe 2021).

The task of Biden and his allies – those who will join him in the world divided between democracies and authoritarianism, between liberal democratic and authoritarian governments, between those who respect human rights and those who do not – is to strengthen democracy and make it strong and appealing. “Doctrine-hunting amounts to a full-time employment program for the community of foreign policy watchers in and around Washington” (Toosi 2021). The Biden Doctrine might not be just a rhetorical exercise, but a program that addresses its goals, strengthening liberal democracy above all. The Biden Doctrine has as an adversary certainly all the authoritarianism of the world and at the same time, it finds itself having to firm up the concept of democracy by making it more appealing to the delusions of the post-GFC. The results of the crisis have helped to increase the consensus around populist movements and have helped to weaken the concept of democracy by cooling it down.

One of the tasks of the world’s leading democracy and economy, therefore, is to demonstrate that by warming up democracy, we must make them more efficient. Perceived as sluggish, inconclusive, weak, fragile, and inefficient, Western liberal democracies must show their effervescence and demonstrate to the people the ability to listen to them and deliver important pieces of policies. “China and Russia are U.S. adversaries – repressive authoritarians, serial human rights abusers who are determined to advance their interests and block where they can any notion of a Pax Americana. The U.S. should cooperate with China when it serves U.S. interests; always compete by strengthening its economy, capacity, and resiliency at home, offering competitive and practical alternatives to China abroad.” (Miller-Sokolsky 2021). This has been the approach that Biden seems to have taken in greater collaboration with democratic allies. The Biden Doctrine seems to be designed to provide an answer to cold democracies.

It reinforces the concept of democratic unity against authoritarianism, demonstrating the corruption of the dictatorial form of government and, on the other hand, resolving issues and social ills that afflict populations increasingly disappointed by the ineffectiveness of democracies in recent years. This paper sought to structure the definition of a Biden doctrine considering the challenges facing the new U.S. administration, especially considering the phenomenon of cold democracies and the rise of authoritarianism worldwide. Multilateralism remains an important tool in the Biden administration’s toolkit, just as an emphasis on democracy is a principle the president is inspired by. Making democracy a more appealing form of government remains a topic of broad academic discussion, and future research should also address this issue considering the historicization of the Biden administration. In other words, one of the weaknesses of this paper is that it is not yet known what effect the policies of the Biden administration will have on the planet.

Exposing the consequences of autocracies on people their rights will not be able to leave indifferent millions of people who have doubts about liberal democracy and its ability to

address their problems and the challenges of the future. “Do we believe that the autocratic model is superior and benefits the individual?”. This is the question to be asked and it is what the Biden Doctrine seeks to answer. During the Covid-19 pandemic, liberal democracy in many countries has been tested and discredited by foes. Some even suspended elections, others postponed them, and others held them as if nothing had happened. This issue is important from the point of view of strengthening democracy and the fascination it can exercise. The Biden Doctrine will have to deal with the further distrust created by Covid-19 in the ability of democracy to be efficient and pragmatic. To be able to stand up against the easy authoritarian rule, to promote liberal democratic government and respect for human rights as a solution to the distrust of this model, in the era of cold democracies.

## REFERENCES

- AlAlkim, Hassan Hamdan (2021). “U.S. President Joe Biden’s Foreign Policy towards the Gulf”. *Open Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 11, Num. 3, pp. 378-401. DOI: [10.4236/ojps.2021.113026](https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2021.113026).
- Applebaum, Anne (2021). “The Disturbing New Hybrid of Democracy and Autocracy”. From: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/oligarchs-democracy-autocracy-daniel-obajtek-poland/619135/>, 09.06.2021.
- Aschoff, Nicole (2021). “The Biden Doctrine”. Available on: <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/02/the-biden-doctrine>, 08.02.2021.
- Åslund, Anders (2021). “The view from Washington: How the new Biden administration views the EU’s eastern neighbourhood”. *European View*, Vol. 20, Num. 1, pp. 47-53, DOI: [10.1177/17816858211000484](https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858211000484).
- Biden, Joe (2021a). “Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference”. From: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/25/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference/>, 25.03.2021.
- Biden, Joe (2021b). “My Trip to Europe is About America Rallying the World’s Democracies”. From: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/05/joe-biden-europe-trip-agenda/>, 05.06.2021.
- Brands, Hal (2021). “The Emerging Biden Doctrine. Democracy, Autocracy, and the Defining Clash of Our Time”. From: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-06-29/emerging-biden-doctrine>, 29.06.2021.
- Campbell, Kurt M.; Doshi, Rush (2021). “How America Can Shore Up Asian Order. A Strategy for Restoring Balance and Legitimacy”. From: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-12/how-america-can-shore-asian-order>, 12.01.2021.
- Drezner, Daniel W. (2021). “Who Will Write The Biden Doctrine?”. From: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/06/10/who-will-write-biden-doctrine/>, 10.06.2021.
- Ettinger, Aaron (2020). “Is there an emerging left-wing foreign policy in the United States?”. *International Journal*, Vol. 75, Num. 1, pp. 24-48, DOI: [10.1177/0020702020914008](https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702020914008).

- Ettinger, Aaron (2021). "Rumors of restoration: Joe Biden's foreign policy and what it means for Canada". *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, Vol. 27, Num. 2, pp. 157-174, DOI: [10.1080/11926422.2021.1899005](https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2021.1899005).
- Fried, Daniel (2021). "Biden Is Building A Doctrine Around Democracy. Will It Work?". From: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/biden-is-building-a-doctrine-around-democracy-will-it-work/>, 08.06.2021.
- Howorth, Jolyon (2021). "Europe and Biden: Towards a New Transatlantic Pact?". *European View*, Vol. 20, Num. 1, pp. 108–109, DOI: [10.1177/17816858211010610](https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858211010610).
- Hulsman, John C. (2021). "The Failure of the Biden Doctrine Exposes the True Emerging Contours of the World". From: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-failure-of-the-biden-doctrine-exposes-the-true-emerging-contours-of-the-world/>, 21.06.2021.
- Kupchan, Charles A. (2021). "The Right Way to Split China and Russia. Washington Should Help Moscow Leave a Bad Marriage". From: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-04/right-way-split-china-and-russia>, 04.08.2021.
- Lieber, Robert J. (2021). "Biden Foreign Policy: Sobered by Reality or Condemned to Repetition". *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 15, Num. 2, pp. 217-231, DOI: [10.1080/23739770.2021.1938843](https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2021.1938843).
- Manurung, Hendra; Rezasyah, Teuku (2021). "Indonesia-United States Relations: Implementation of President Joe Biden's Environment Policy". *International Relations and Diplomacy*, Vol. 9, Num. 10, pp. 433-445, DOI: [10.17265/2328-2134/2021.10.003](https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2134/2021.10.003).
- Miller, Aaron David; Sokolsky, Richard (2021). "Opinion: We Don't Need a Biden Doctrine Dividing the World into Good and Bad". From: <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/22/1009103520/opinion-biden-doctrine-foreign-policy>, 22.06.2021.
- Olsen, Gorm Rye (2022). "'America is Back' or 'America First' and the Transatlantic Relationship". *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 10, Num. 2, pp. 154-164, DOI: [10.17645/pag.v10i2.5019](https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v10i2.5019).
- Rhodes, Ben (2021). "Them and Us. How America Lets Its Enemies Hijack Its Foreign Policy". From: [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/foreign-policy-them-and-us?utm\\_campaign](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/foreign-policy-them-and-us?utm_campaign), September/October 2021.
- Roth, Kenneth (2021). "The Age of Zombie Democracies. Why Autocrats Are Abandoning Even the Pretense of Democratic Rituals". From: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/americas/2021-07-28/age-zombie-democracies?>, 28.07.2021.
- Serpe, Nick (2021). "The Limits of Foreign Policy Restoration". *Dissent*, Vol. 68, Num. 1, pp. 59-63, DOI: [10.1353/dss.2021.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2021.0009).
- Shapiro, Jeremy (2021). "Biden's Everything Doctrine. The Mantle of Global Leadership Doesn't Fit a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class". From: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-04-22/bidens-everything-doctrine>, 22.04.2021.
- Tharoor, Ishaan (2021). "The Biden Doctrine Is Still Taking Shape". From: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/01/20/what-is-biden-foreign-policy-doctrine/>, 20.01.2021.

- The Economist (2021). "Biden's New China Doctrine". From: <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/07/17/bidens-new-china-doctrine>, 17.06.2021.
- Tierney, Dominic (2020). "In Search of the Biden Doctrine". From: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/11/in-search-of-the-biden-doctrine/>, 09.11.2020.
- Toosi, Nahal (2021). "The Never-Ending, Ever-Frustrating Hunt for the 'Biden Doctrine'". From: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/07/biden-doctrine-foreign-policy-492019>, 07.06.2021.
- Ullman, Harlan (2021). "The Biden Doctrine: Will It Work?". From: <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/561128-the-biden-doctrine-will-it-work>, 01.07.2021.
- Westcott, Ben; Jiang, Steven (2021). "China is embracing a new brand of foreign policy. Here's what wolf warrior diplomacy means". From: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/28/asia/china-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-intl-hnk/index.html>, 29.05.2021.
- Wright, Thomas (2021). "Joe Biden Worries That China Might Win". From: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/06/joe-biden-foreign-policy/619130/>, 09.06.2021.