

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE USA AND CHALLENGES IN NAVIGATING A MULTICENTRIC WORLD

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Abstract: *The global geopolitical shift towards multicentricity, accompanied by major changes in the security landscape due to extensive military operations and international conflicts in several regions, creates serious challenges to preserving world order and the stability of international relations. There has also been a noticeable decline in the effectiveness of regional and global international organisations to address significant global concerns. Under such conditions, the USA remains one of the most powerful forces in the international multifaceted processes. The position of the USA in world affairs and global challenges is strongly influenced by the actions and effectiveness of its political institutions, primarily the Administration and Congress. This article aims to illustrate the impact of the main elements of the American political system, particularly the mechanisms of checks and balances among government branches, on recent developments within the US, particularly its pre-election races, and on a global scale. This investigation explores the impact of political processes in the United States on its foreign policy and its position within the geopolitical landscape. The analysis indicates a growing polarisation of society due to inter-party confrontations during an election year and institutional limitations in addressing essential internal and global issues. As a result, two main directions – hard conservative and left-centrist – have emerged in recent US political events, compelling the entire American society to reflect on the future of its democracy and the effectiveness of its political system.*

Keywords: *US political system, institutions, domestic, global, challenges, multicentric world, international conflicts, geopolitical positioning, international relations.*

Rezumat: Sistemul politic al SUA și provocările navigării într-o lume multicentrică. Tranziția geopolitică a lumii către multicentricitate, schimbările bruște survenite în mediul său de securitate, asociate acțiunilor militare de amploare și conflictelor internaționale din mai multe regiuni, creează provocări serioase pentru menținerea ordinii mondiale și stabilitatea relațiilor internaționale. Există, de asemenea, un declin vizibil al eficacității organizațiilor internaționale regionale și universale, a căror capacitate de a influența provocările critice ale lumii este limitată treptat. În aceste condiții, Statele Unite ale Americii rămân una dintre cele mai puternice forțe în procesele internaționale multilaterale. La fel de evident este faptul, că poziția Statelor Unite în afacerile mondiale și pe problemele globale este puternic influențată de poziția și implicarea efectivă a instituțiilor politice americane, în primul rând a Administrației și a Congresului, care ar putea acționa prin mecanismele de echilibru din cadrul sistemului politic american. Acest articol își propune să prezinte impactul principalelor elemente ale sistemului politic american, cu principiul său de control și echilibru între ramuri, asupra evoluțiilor recente nu numai în SUA și în special în cursele sale preelectorale, ci și la scară globală. În conformitate cu acest obiectiv, este examinată influența proceselor politice din SUA asupra politicii externe a țării și locul acesteia în sistemul geopolitic mondial. Analiza arată, de asemenea, că există o polarizare crescândă a societății din SUA din cauza confruntărilor dintre partide în acest an electoral și a limitărilor instituționale, abordându-se în același timp probleme fundamentale atât în mediul politic intern, cât și în cel extern. Drept urmare, două direcții principale – dură conservatoare și de centru-stânga – păreau să domine în procesele politice recente din SUA, cerând întregii societăți americane să ia decizii cu privire la viitorul democrației sale și eficacitatea sistemului său politic, pentru a face față noilor provocări globale.

INTRODUCTION

The most notable phenomenon in international relations at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century has been the overall deterioration of the security environment due to the sharp increase in regional conflicts and military actions compromising global affairs. These, in turn, create new, profoundly critical challenges for the existing world order. The previous bipolar world and its international legal system, established by the victorious states as a result of World War II, lost both the ideological foundations for further global positional confrontation and the practical capabilities for bipolar containment and the maintenance of international order and security with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its entire subordinate communist bloc.

For a brief historical period, the United States, as the primary victor of the Cold War, became the sole global leader of world relations and international order. However, this mission proved to be politically and strategically unjustified, and

overly expensive due to the necessity to serve as the main "global firefighter" in all the world's hotspots. This inevitably impacted the economic positions, international influence and competitiveness of the United States. Such a role did not align with the new realities of a world with its diverse challenges, the regrouping of old and the emergence of new significant actors and alliances on the international stage, which collectively underscored the growing importance of multicentricity, the evolving balance of power, and the resulting "frictions" between various regional and global entities.

In this diversity of modern states, international and non-governmental actors, regional associations and such heightened group confrontations as the Collective West and the Global South, the United States aims to remain one of the most powerful factors in international events and in addressing urgent issues on the global agenda, albeit not globally but more selectively. According to the official definition by the U.S. Congress, the role of the United States in this context consists of four key positions: maintaining global leadership, protecting and promoting the liberal international order, freedom, democracy, and human rights, and preventing the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia¹.

The whole institutional power of the US political system, the "deep state," is focused on reinforcing these positions, despite escalating inter-party confrontations and political rivalries. Consequently, the United States may attain a markedly higher standing in several domains: global security policy (primarily as the leader of NATO), economic (the largest importer and the second-largest exporter), and social (despite growing socio-economic inequality, unprecedented among developed democracies, it maintains a stable image of attractive "soft power" and "great opportunities", consistently leading to massive waves of immigrants). These latter characteristics are rightly associated with the role and impact of the US political system in the larger context of state formation.

This study examines the influence of elements that comprise the American political system, particularly its mechanisms of checks and balances among government branches, on processes occurring both domestically and internationally. This study investigates how American political processes impact the nation's foreign policy and its position in the geopolitical system.

The current study is not the first examination of the features of the U.S. political system, the role and significance of all branches of government, and its

¹ *U.S. Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service. Updated 06.04.2020, in <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44891/47> (Accessed on 15.04.2024).

interconnection with the broader American institutional structure. Most scholars, when examining various aspects of the issue, focus on its specific components, which classify publications into several scientific fields and disciplines, such as history, political science, sociology, etc. In light of the primary inquiries of this study, numerous recent publications are notably significant.

The work of the specialists from the APSA presidential task force on political parties provides significant insights for this research. In their review, "Political Parties and American Democracy"², they examine issues such as trust in political parties, their democratic resources, the organisation of the American party system, the characteristics of groups within political parties, and the role of these groups in the electoral process, among other topics. J. A. Piazza³ and R. Kleinfeld⁴ studied aspects related to the polarisation of American society, including elections, the potential for political violence, and the influence of these processes on the spread of "conspiracy theories" in society. Additionally, the conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation has developed "Project 2025" as a roadmap for a future conservative U.S. president⁵. "The Structure of Policymaking in American Government" by Guy B. Peters⁶ provides an understanding of the structure and workflow of the American government. Research by J.M. Grumbach and J. Michener⁷ on the features of American federalism, where individual states

² *More than red and blue: Political Parties and American Democracy*, APSA Presidential Task Force on Political Parties, July 2023, in <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/more-than-red-and-blue/> (Accessed on 17.04.2024).

³ James A. Piazza, *Political Polarization and Political Violence*, in "Security Studies", Vol. 32, 2023, No 3, in <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2023.2225780> (Accessed on 07.03.2024).

⁴ Rachel Kleinfeld, *Polarization, Democracy, and Political Violence in the United States: What the Research Says*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Kleinfeld_Polarization_final_3.pdf (Accessed on 07.03.2024).

⁵ Emily Brooks, *Heritage faces blowback after 'bloodless' revolution comment*, in "The Hill", 06.07.2024, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/4757210-heritage-blowback-bloodless-revolution/> (Accessed on 08.07.2024).

⁶ Guy B. Peters, *The Structure of Policymaking in American Government*, in "American Public Policy", 1986, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-18388-3_2 (Accessed on 07.05.2024).

⁷ Jacob M. Grumbach, Jamila Michener, *American Federalism, Political Inequality, and Democratic Erosion*, in "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science", Vol. 699, 2022, No 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162211070885> (Accessed on 07.05.2024).

gain influence over critically important democratic institutions, including election administration, reveals processes related to the relationship between federalism and the institutional structure of the U.S. The works of several Ukrainian scholars (I. Herhizova, V. Dubovyk, R. Martyniuk, N. Melnychuk, I. Pidbereznykh, H. Perepelytsia, and others) examine the U.S. electoral system, as well as foreign and security policy in various regions of the world. However, the relationship between the U.S. political system and its ability to respond to the challenges of the contemporary multipolar world is addressed for the first time.

PECULIARITIES OF THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM

History has established that the United States, having voted for independence from the British Empire during the Revolution and enacted the principles of the prominent French philosopher Montesquieu on the organisation of power without its concentration in a single entity, became the first democracy to constitutionally introduce the principle of a tripartite division of state structures, which later spread to other democracies around the world.

According to the Constitution, the United States is a republic with a federal government of three branches, each constrained from exceeding its authority. The system stipulates that all top government officials are elected by American citizens, and the 27 constitutional amendments adopted ensure and guarantee their basic rights and freedoms.

The federal government is divided into legislative, executive, and judicial branches, with the legislative functions vested in the bicameral Congress consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives. Executive power is held by the President, along with the Vice President and the Cabinet. The federal courts and the Supreme Court exercise judicial functions. Members of the House of Representatives are fully re-elected every two years in proportion to the population of each of the 50 states. Senators, on the other hand, are elected in pairs to the upper chamber for a six-year term. Notably, this term for senators is divided into three classes or stages, with one-third undergoing a unique rotation every two years from election to the first class, promotion to the second, and completion of their term after the third. This system ensures a certain continuity of change and stability for both newly elected and experienced members in the chamber, thereby ensuring the natural and uninterrupted progression of the legislative process in each session of Congress. This practice contrasts favourably with others, such as Ukraine or Poland, where simultaneous re-election of the entire parliament in successive terms may cause disruptions in its functional activity.

By constitutional authority, the President of the United States signs federal laws and serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President can veto a bill, but two-thirds of both houses of Congress can override a presidential veto. The Vice President, elected from the same political party as the President, is the President of the Senate, with the authority to cast tie-breaking votes in the Senate and, under specific circumstances, assume the presidency.

As shown above, the American political system relies on "checks and balances," a constitutional principle that provides mutual control across the three different branches of government. Compliance with this principle prevents situations when one of the three branches of government exerts dominance. Consequently, each branch contains distinct powers and is reliant on the powers and actions of the other branches⁸.

An illustrative and notably impactful instance (both domestically and internationally) of contemporary U.S. practice concerning the pressing application of checks and balances among branches of government is the matter of the potential suspension of federal government funding due to increased expenditures toward the end of the fiscal year. This scenario underscores Congress's failure to ratify a budget bill that surpassed the established deficit limit, consequently threatening the functional integrity of the executive branch. The mere theoretical possibility of a government shutdown stemming from insufficient budgetary funding in a country as important as the United States inevitably raises profound internal and external concerns, particularly concerning the timely execution of obligations and the imperative of their fulfilment.

A recent instance in this series, which has attracted increased attention regarding its implementation, pertains to the delay by Congress in approving external financial aid requested by the executive branch. The direct cause of the delay in resolving this issue, which notably affected Ukraine and Israel, was the Speaker of the House's procrastination in introducing the necessary bill for consideration, primarily due to political motivations. It is important to note that according to procedural rules, the Speaker holds the exclusive authority to decide when and which bill is presented for deliberation among the members⁹.

Undoubtedly, the president's role as head of the administration and the

⁸ *The United States Constitution. Article I, Section 1*, in https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artI-S1-2-4/ALDE_00001314/ (Accessed on 03.03.2024).

⁹ *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents and Procedures of the House, Chapter 34*, 1965, p. 637, in <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-HPRACTICE-108/html/GPO-HPRACTICE-108-35.htm> (Accessed on 03.03.2024).

entire executive branch of government within the political system of the United States has considerable importance when addressing domestic and international challenges. As the primary advocate for domestic policy, the president forwards bills to Congress, issues executive orders, and outlines directive guidelines for the government.

The term "Bidenomics" is associated with President Joe Biden of the Democratic Party. It refers to his economic policies aimed at strong government support and the expansion of the middle class, seen as the fundamental condition for economic success and growth from the society's lower and middle strata. In contrast, the previous doctrine known as "Reaganomics," under Republican President Ronald Reagan, was based on an antithetical premise: it was conceptually accepted that jobs are generated extensively by strengthening the position of private capital, steering the country's economic development from the top down.

Similarly, in the foreign policy realm, Article II of the U.S. Constitution outlines several presidential powers, including the authority to negotiate international treaties and appoint ambassadors. Importantly, these actions require Senate permission; international treaties need two-thirds of the senators present, while ambassadorial appointments require a simple majority. Consequently, the president indirectly gains additional associated powers, such as recognizing foreign governments and conducting diplomatic activities with other states. Experts rightly note the direct connection between the evaluation of the president's activities as the state's representative in foreign policy by both the foreign public¹⁰ and politicians. In today's conditions, due to the exacerbation of nearly all global problems and conflict challenges, the unequivocal position of the U.S. president on these matters is critically important for maintaining the overall international order.

In this domain, both branches of government exhibit a continual overlap of functions when addressing crucial issues related to foreign policy priorities and national security. This is especially evident in areas such as military deployment, providing international aid, and immigration management.¹¹

¹⁰ Alexander Agadjanian, Yusaki Horiuchi, *Has Trump Damaged the US Image Abroad? Decomposing the Effects of Policy Messages on Foreign Public Opinion*, in "Political Behavior", Vol. 42, 2020, No. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9511-3> (Accessed on 17.04.2024).

¹¹ *The United States Constitution. Article II, Section 1, Clause 1*, in https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artII-S1-C1-1/ALDE_00013790/ (Accessed on 03.03.2024).

Indeed, Congress holds the authority to declare war, although the President has the power to issue orders to the armed forces that authorise military actions without approval from Congress. These apparent contradictions between the powers of the two branches of government, which have become prominent during U.S. military operations – from Vietnam to Iraq, Libya, or Syria – have ultimately led to a mutual but still ambiguously supported agreement requiring the President to obtain additional authorisation¹² to use military forces abroad.

Another aspect, both domestically and internationally throughout American history, is that political parties in the U.S. have shaped the overall "climate" surrounding presidential elections and the implementation of the corresponding government policies. Currently, the electoral system in this country is bipartisan, although so-called "third" parties also actively participate in each election. Examples include the Reform Party, the Green Party, and the Libertarian Party, among others, which, notably in the 2024 elections, have found new opportunities due to the criticism of both primary party candidates. Nevertheless, within the domestic political system, the two main parties – the Grand / Old Party (GOP)/Republican Party and the Democratic Party – hold overwhelmingly dominant political positions, evidenced by significant representation throughout all three branches of government.

Unlike European elections, candidates in American electoral races do not seek to secure a 50% majority of votes. Instead, they aim to obtain more votes than their competitors to secure the position. Because the two parties are the biggest and most popular, their representatives typically receive the most votes. While there are instances where candidates from a "third" party win amidst sharp disputes between the two main parties, such occurrences are generally less significant and occur on a smaller scale. This dynamic sustains the election system's two-party structure.

The overpowering representation between the two parties allows them to form broad political platforms and factions among their members, thereby representing various social and political interests. It provides opportunities for varied representation from the left, centre, and right, along with influential advocates of isolationism or globalists. Therefore, despite the general characterization of a bipartisan system, the American party system encompasses groups of all political shades (liberals, realists, conservatives) among Democrats

¹² Jonathan Masters, *U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President*, 02.03.2017, in <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president#chapter-title-0-4> (Accessed on 17.04.2024).

and Republicans, which provides incentives and competition in all intra- and inter-party discussions on pressing political issues, both domestically and globally.

Undoubtedly, the main event in the inter-party struggle in the USA is the presidential election, held on a statutorily set date: "the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even-numbered years" i.e., every four years¹³. The election process itself is quite lengthy and consists of two stages. In the first stage, which takes place 1.5-2 years in advance, candidates are nominated, and debates occur, followed by the so-called "primaries," which have been held in all states since the 20th century. These primaries collectively determine the single winning candidate from each party, who is then confirmed at the national party conventions. Furthermore, according to procedural rules, during the primaries, candidates receive a few voting delegates to the convention, depending on the number of votes they have received across the states. The Democratic Party distributes 3,979 delegates to its candidates, while the Republicans distribute 2,472. In each state, the number of party delegates is proportional to the number of party members according to party lists. The 2024 primaries and caucuses are notably different from previous election years, as during the year, significant adjustments were made to the electoral contests twice, creating challenges not only for the entire political system but also for the inter-party battles and corresponding procedural processes. For instance, the seemingly permanent leading party candidates - the incumbent and the former president of the country - who still needed to be officially endorsed by their party conventions were chosen after Super Tuesday and eight months before the actual elections. The initial rise of these two leading candidates for the highest executive office in the U.S. was directly related to the internal radicalisation of the country's political environment, as well as the selection of the most significant individuals who, at that moment, met the electorate's expectations in addressing national and global challenges.

The other adjustments involved changes to the Democratic Party candidate, prompted by the incumbent president's decision to withdraw from the race and step aside in favour of the current Vice President of the United States. The challenges to the country's political system, notably party procedural rules, stemmed from the fact that the existing regulations did not allow for the results of the already conducted primaries to be revised or for the reallocation of previously

¹³ Caitlin Curran, *Election Day: Frequently Asked Questions*, Congressional Research Service. 02.05.2024, in <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R46413.pdf> (Accessed on 05.03.2024).

received financial contributions to the party coffers. However, the flexibility of political rules and the mobilization of the Democratic Party machine enabled them to quickly secure the support of the majority of delegates for the nomination of a single candidate at the party convention.

Meanwhile, the geopolitical context surrounding the US internal elections is becoming increasingly acute due to the current global situation, where the liberal democratic traditions of electoral processes are facing growing dual pressures and challenges from overtly authoritarian regimes and the rising influence of right-wing and ultra-conservative rhetoric. The outcomes of this international confrontation between these political directions in a record number of national elections around the world, in recent years, have shaped and will continue to shape the nature of international relations and the capabilities of the modern global multicentric world order. Clearly, the situation and outcome of the US electoral race in 2024 appeared to be one of the most decisive factors in this context.

IS THE US STILL THE GLOBAL LEADER OF THE MODERN WORLD?

The geopolitical realities resulting from the American elections could undergo significant changes, potentially jeopardising the United States' foundational positions in achieving the goals of its so-called "long-term" policy, as well as its historically established image as the principal promoter of democracy in international relations. For instance, if the US significantly alters its foreign policy by relinquishing its traditional role as the primary security guarantor for allies in Europe and loses strategic trust among partners in other regions due to a wave of neo-isolationism, these allies will be compelled to face new realities. They will need to seek collective security and a "nuclear umbrella" with limited or selective involvement of the U.S. and to establish a new format of deterrent relationships with other nuclear powers such as Russia and China¹⁴.

The United States cannot be said to be unaware of recent and threatening geopolitical changes and challenges. Delayed reactions or inconsistent countermeasures may result, if not in a collapse, then surely in a latent reduction of influence of its leading position on the international stage. In historical retrospect, the United States has often faced criticism for conducting a

¹⁴ Alyxandra Marine, *As the US faces down new nuclear threats, will Cold War solutions work once again?*, Atlantic Council, 28.11.2023, in <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/as-the-us-faces-down-new-nuclear-threats-will-cold-war-solutions-work-once-again/> (Accessed on 05.04.2024).

predominantly reactive rather than premeditated and regularly followed policy regarding international crises and conflicts.

More specifically, in an attempt to find a way out of such a situation at the "deep state" level within a two-party format during the previous administration of D. Trump, the Global Fragility Act (GFA), 2019 was adopted. The main goal of the law was to promote long-term stabilization in vulnerable regions of the world and prevent conflicts. The law required the development of a relevant strategy and a 10-year action plan for its implementation; however, it failed to achieve operational progress despite the fact that the *US Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability* was issued on December 18, 2020.

During President Joe Biden's administration, the action plan was indeed updated and, in 2023, it was approved by Congress to achieve stabilization goals and enhance cooperation and partnerships in sensitive countries and regions critical to national interests¹⁵. It was acknowledged that the plan would not be immediately implemented; rather, it was viewed as a long-term prospective guidepost for fostering partnerships with a dozen countries in critical regions of Africa, Latin America and the Middle East¹⁶. This approach adopted by the United States to address current conflict issues and the major regions where they have spread appears timely overall. However, it cannot be ignored that amidst heightened radical inter-party competition and intense rivalry among presidential candidates, the adherence to the long-term perspectives of this initiative appears at least uncertain.

A victory and a second administration under the Democrats would signify the ongoing commitment to expanding regional partnerships globally in the spirit of liberalisation. Conversely, a second administration of Donald Trump, based on radical conservatism, would make such prospects unpredictable. Together, these fundamental divergences in approaches to advancing current and prospective foreign policy plans on the international stage precisely demonstrate the issues limiting the USA's ability to implement a "long-term" policy, which is crucial for analysing and forecasting contemporary international relations and the role of the United States.

Another significant and current peculiarity of contemporary international and national realities is sharply manifested today in the United States. Experts and thematic surveys indicate an increasing internal polarization and variability,

¹⁵ *Global Fragility Act*, in <https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/globalfragilityact> (Accessed on 07.03.2024).

¹⁶ *The U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*, in <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/USPCPS%202-Page%207.pdf> (Accessed on 12.05.2024).

resulting in a notable trend of increased citizen suspicion and absenteeism in political processes and attitudes towards elections, alongside a strengthening general mistrust of government.

The increasing share of those disenchanted with the political plans and, particularly, the leadership of presidential candidates from both parties is not unexpected and is partly indicative.¹⁷ Discourse regarding the necessity for "technical" changes in electoral processes to reduce the influence of the two leading parties or to strengthen the participation of a "third" party is prevalent and, at the very least, gaining popularity. It is claimed that without these changes, there will be no effectiveness in the electoral system and no progress in solving society's fundamental problems. Despite the seeming difficulty of implementing the "third force" concept in the current political system of the United States, its more or less serious promotion could potentially result in a significant shift of voters away from the traditional major parties¹⁸.

As a result, amidst these genuinely troubling signals for domestic order, the issues of defining long-term goals and prioritizing key directions of the country's foreign policy inevitably get "lost" or pushed to the background. These matters are influenced by the divergent positions of political parties and their leaders in the current political climate of the United States. A typical example of such a political divide and a litmus test was Congress's delay in approving and even considering aiding Ukraine during the third anniversary of its full-scale war with Russia. The unexpected delay in the lower house of Congress over the approval and discussion of financial aid to Ukraine underscored certain dysfunctionality, if not outright failure, of political forces and the available options within the political system to address this issue. Despite significant support from a substantial portion of the political establishment and the executive branches, the issue remained unresolved due to the intensification of partisan confrontation during the electoral race. Swiftly resolving the problem would have demonstrated the political success of the ruling administration, whereas the delay indicated the potential for opposition and the political influence of competing forces. Objectively, such a situation highlights certain deficiencies within the political system of the United States, where internal partisan confrontation in addressing urgent international security

¹⁷ *Americans' Dismal of the Nation's Politics. 65% say they always or often feel exhausted when thinking about politics*, Pew Research Center, 19.09.2023, in <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/09/19/americans-dismal-views-of-the-nations-politics/> (Accessed on 01.03.2024).

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

issues eventually gets caught in a state of indecision concerning potential solutions. This situation contributes to political division within the country and undermines trust in its stable image on the global stage¹⁹.

It is evident that the mentioned problems and manifestations of indecision – the ideological confrontation between left/centre-liberals and right-conservatives – in approaches to solving political issues extend beyond and are not exclusively focused on presidential elections. Across the entire spectrum of internal and external issues in the United States general pre-election rhetoric, discernible patterns emerge supporting a modernized isolationism against globalists, based on calls to rebuild MAGA society in the country, focusing on its societal cohesion and a degree of separation. At the same time, the American economy, which is undeniably interconnected with and fundamentally reliant on the operation of all aspects of global economic ties, including those with competitor countries, has recently shown positive trends in inflation control, increased employment in the national labour market, and overall optimism about the prospects of economic growth based on the multifaceted development of external relations and cooperation.

Therefore, in a broader context, compared to previous times, political processes in the United States increasingly manifest tendencies of disunity and polarization among political forces, especially concerning the most significant domestic societal issues and their competitive reflection in the activities of state institutions and the political system. Similarly, leadership positions and the prevailing influence of the United States on the global stage inevitably transfer domestic political crises onto all significant international concerns.

THE US APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE THREE CRISES ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

Three critical and highly significant issues of the current international agenda require analysis, as they have substantial implications for the United States and the international community. The first issue relates to the divergences in choosing a strategic position and the attitudes of U.S. political forces towards Russia's war against Ukraine and the necessity of supporting Ukraine. Initially, two approaches emerged in this internal political discourse within the U.S. On the one hand, the massive violation of international law resulting from Russia's invasion

¹⁹ Ian Bremmer. *The Top 10 Global Risks for 2024*, in "Time", 08.01.2024, in <https://time.com/6552898/top-10-global-risks-for-2024/> (Accessed on 17.03.2024).

demanded and received strong condemnation from the American side, leading to substantial financial assistance to Ukraine, surpassing that of other nations. On the other hand, there were concerns about the potential escalation of the conflict beyond the bilateral Russian-Ukrainian format, posing increased risks for the U.S. of getting involved in a wider conflict with unknown consequences. Considering these concerns, the Biden administration pursued a policy aimed at supporting Ukraine on the international stage and maintaining consistent sanctions against the aggressor. However, it also adhered to certain limits and restrictions on military aid, primarily in terms of further actions, which raised questions and reinforced the perception of "Western indecisiveness" during current crises.

However, the prolonged war and the intensification of partisan divides within the ongoing electoral races in the United States, as previously noted, have influenced the political positioning regarding assistance to Ukraine. For the Republican Party, especially its far-right wing, the decisive foreign policy recommendations came from the same fundamental think tank – The Heritage Foundation. According to the foundation's guidance, it is suggested that the United States ought not to be more concerned about the European war than the Europeans themselves, who are expected to assume greater responsibility and financial commitments, primarily in supporting Ukraine. The foundation emphasized that for the U.S., the main threat to national interests was defined in the Asia-Pacific region, where strategic efforts and a greater presence were recommended²⁰. At the same time, it should be noted that there is no certainty today about increasing non-economic U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region under a potential second term of Donald Trump, as it is anticipated that he would primarily focus on economic factors in international interactions, placing strategic security responsibility on regional actors. However, America is not expected to completely turn its "back to the world" during his new term²¹. Nevertheless, taking into account the individual traits of certain leaders, there is no guarantee of the mandatory implementation of this view.

In the theoretical evaluations conducted by experts and representatives of the political forces in the United States, it is evident that China poses the most

²⁰ Wilson C. Beaver, *Yes, America Is the Biggest Military Donor to Ukraine*, The Heritage Foundation, 28.02.2024, in <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/yes-america-the-biggest-military-donor-ukraine> (Accessed on 17.03.2024).

²¹ Andrew Byers, Randall L. Schweller, *Trump the Realist. The Former President Understand the Limits of American Power*, in "Foreign Affairs", Vol. 103, 2024, No 4, in <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/donald-trump-realist-former-president-american-power-byers-schweller> (Accessed on 03.07.2024).

substantial challenges and threats across the spectrum of the country's party-political landscape. This situation gives rise to a second challenge in a multicentric world, which is evident in the state's security strategies. Without invoking theoretical postulates such as the "Thucydides Trap" in the relations between these two countries, China, it is evident from various American assessments that China emerges as the only state that sets goals and can influence the modern international order. It positions itself primarily as a regional leader in Asia and beyond, aiming for a higher global status.²²

According to surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, this view is corroborated by a record-high number of Americans: 58% consider China a global power and consider it a critical threat to vital U.S. interests²³. Across the entire U.S. political spectrum, concerns about China's economic growth are expressed competitively by nearly all political factions, but the partisan differences stem from specific issues. Republicans, in this regard, demonstrate more concern about the strengthening of China's authoritarian political system (28%) and its increasing nuclear and overall military capabilities (26%). In contrast, Democrats are more focused on issues related to human rights violations in China's politics and infringements on democratic norms (28%)²⁴.

At the same time, it is evident from the analysis that the provided percentage breakdowns of political attitudes toward China do not seem excessively critical. Nevertheless, significant and politically sensitive attention to this issue in the United States has traditionally been evident since the time of Henry Kissinger, due to his widely disseminated conceptual view of the strategic danger to America from the combination of potentials and possibilities arising from an overly close relationship between China and Russia, which could pose global-level threats to the United States. Consequently, formulating a political stance towards China today has become a significant objective in the electoral platforms of both parties, evolving into a matter of strategy for the entire U.S. political system.

The third issue that unexpectedly emerged on the international agenda, and

²² Klaus Dodds, Zack Taylor, Azadeh Akbari et al., *The Russian invasion of Ukraine: implication for politics, territory and governance*, in "Territory, Politics, Governance", Vol. 11, 2023, No 8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2023.2256119> (Accessed on 05.03.2024).

²³ Craig Kafura, *Americans Feel More Threat from China Now Than in past Three Decades (Public Opinion Survey)*, 2023, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, in <https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023%20CCS%20China.pdf> (Accessed on 07.03.2024).

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

currently significantly strains all forces of institutional governance in the United States, is related to the Hamas terrorist attack and subsequent events in the Gaza Strip. For the U.S., this issue is comprehensively defined by the tumultuous global reaction and the necessity for regional security and humanitarian order amidst active military actions by Israel against Hamas, which carry significant potential for creating strategic consequences for the entire Middle East and beyond. In this conflict, Hamas launched a bold and unexpected attack on Israel, creating an operational trap situation where, despite the military disparity between the parties, the powerful Israeli armed forces were drawn into a military operation but could not fully exert force without risking hostage lives, causing catastrophic humanitarian consequences and numerous civilian casualties in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

Together with Israel, the United States has become entangled in the complex dynamics of the conflict. Since its founding, Israel has consistently relied on and received both political and substantial financial and military assistance from the U.S. This conflict exemplified a scenario in which both nations converged on a common objective: the liberation of all hostages and the punishment of Hamas. However, the prolonged military operation, coupled with the diminishing realistic prospects of completely destroying Hamas and the escalating catastrophic consequences for the civilian population resulting from military actions, sparked mass protest movements worldwide and inevitably influenced U.S. policy in an election year.

Thus, UN member states have repeatedly adopted resolutions for establishing humanitarian ceasefires in the conflict region, ultimately leading to adopting a UN Security Council resolution on the cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, which the USA did not veto²⁵. In June 2024, upon the proposal of J. Biden, the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution concerning the Gaza sector, which includes a ceasefire, phased hostage release, and withdrawal of the Israeli military from Gaza, while maintaining its position on the creation of a Palestinian state²⁶. The Biden administration took this step despite Israel's considerable support among official and public circles and the powerful Israeli

²⁵ *United Nations. Gaza: Security Council adopts US resolution calling for 'immediate, full and complete ceasefire'*, in <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/06/1150886>. (Accessed on 10.06.2024).

²⁶ *U.S. Abstention from UN Security Council on Gaza. Press Statement, 25.03.2024*, in <https://il.usembassy.gov/u-s-abstention-from-un-security-council-resolution-on-gaza/> (Accessed on 28.03.2024).

lobby in the USA, aiming to advance the prospects for long-term peace between Israel and Palestinians, including conditions for the establishment of a Palestinian state. This decision was made with an understanding of the risks associated with the radicalisation of international tensions, the global threat of regional conflict escalation, and the impracticality of resolving it through military means. However, this position is not fully shared by the current political leadership of Israel, not only due to adherence to a military conflict resolution concept but also in anticipation of potential alternative support from opposition forces in the USA during heightened partisan electoral battles and uncertainty about their outcomes. As a result, trends suggest diminished influence and persistent consistency in US foreign policy actions concerning "long-term policy." The corresponding negotiation processes of the USA concerning the Gaza issue as well as other significant global conflicts demonstrate what it means for a geopolitical player to be *pro et contra* on the world stage²⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

All three challenges allow for significant conclusions to be drawn. The primary one underscores the growing polarization within the country due to partisan rivalry in an election year and the institutional constraints it imposes on addressing critical issues both domestically and internationally. Importantly, a relatively new phenomenon for the USA has been the heightened influence of external events and challenges on the course and intensity of internal political processes.

Consequently, the United States' continued leadership in global geopolitics has facilitated the support of a strategy aimed at growth and security through the expansion of global economic ties and multilateral communications. Hence, competition rather than forceful confrontation with China, positional deterrence in relations with Russia rather than direct confrontation with it, and targeted external sanctions as a warning and limitation of the influence of authoritarian regimes were welcomed.

At the same time, supporters of a stringent conservative approach in the United States believe that the direction toward a certain autarky, restriction of

²⁷ Dina Smeltz, Lana El Baz, *Americans Continue to Say the US Should Stay Impartial in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Public Opinion Survey)*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 28.02.2024, in <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/americans-continue-say-us-should-stay-impartial-israeli-palestinian> (Accessed on 03.03.2024).

entry, and limited implementation of multilateral commitments under previous international political and economic agreements are fundamental. Hence, obstacles to foreign aid and deviations from the unconditional support of allies in international coalitions are currently being proposed for systematic integration into governmental operations.

Thus, recent times and, particularly the election year, have caused major issues for the entire political system of the United States, necessitating optimal decision-making by both the system and American society to further promote democracy and find answers to new global challenges.

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