

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: December 10, 2021

SL: Time to Look in the Mirror

The Takeaway:

- President Biden's "Summit for Democracy" is well intentioned. But calls for the defense of democracy risk backfiring if the United States fails to live up to it itself.
- Corporate power, white supremacy, electoral laws rigged for the few — the greatest threats to the United States' democratic aspirations start at home.
- U.S. foreign policy, meanwhile, often actively *undermines* democracy abroad. From coups to war to sanctions, any hopes of retaining legitimacy in the defense of global democracy must begin by transforming the United States' own broken foreign policy.

Democracy Is Under Attack. To Fight Back, Start By Fixing U.S. Policy

This week, the Biden administration convened political leaders, civil society, and private actors from around the world in a flagship foreign policy event called the "Summit for Democracy." He had good reason. The forces of authoritarianism present a grave threat to global aspirations for democracy, and our cherished democratic values must be actively defended.

But the Democracy Summit was missing one key fact: for the United States to truly support global democracy, it must begin by addressing *its own* democratic deficiencies at home and antidemocratic tendencies abroad. In other words, our work to defend democracy starts by looking in the mirror.

Democratic Failures at Home

The greatest threats to democratic aspirations in the United States come not from abroad, but from within. From the recent surge in militant white supremacist movements, to the insurrection at the Capitol, it's easy to think that these anti-democratic tendencies are recent phenomena. But the reality is, these threats have flourished in an environment of profound democratic failures that have *long* been embedded in the U.S. political system: the overwhelming corporate capture of the government; the systematic oppression of people of color and other groups; the rigging of the [electoral rules](#) in favor of minority rule; mass incarceration and [felon disenfranchisement](#); and so much more. In short: the call is coming from inside the house.

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A Force For Anti-Democracy Abroad

Meanwhile, the United States' role on the world stage often runs *directly counter* to the global struggle for democracy:

- The backing of [coups](#), [regime change](#), and even [genocide](#) in order to remove legitimately elected governments when inconvenient to U.S. corporate interests or geopolitical power;
- [Alliances with](#), military support for, and [arms sales](#) to authoritarian governments or those with authoritarian elements like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, the Philippines, Israel, and others (one recent study [found](#) that a disproportionate share of the world's overall democratic decline was driven *by* U.S. allies);
- The regular flouting and delegitimization of fundamental human rights, both [at home](#) and [abroad](#);
- Military action, from all-out [invasions](#) to deadly drone warfare, that not only cause immense harm in the moment, but [undermine](#) stability and democratization in the long term;
- Economic warfare in the form of [sanctions](#) against countries like Iran and North Korea, which, while often done in the name of democracy, only serve to instill mass suffering, empower authoritarian factions, and undermine those seeking democratic change;
- The creation and forceful promotion of a [global economic system](#) designed to put corporate profits before the wellbeing of everyday people, and keep power in the hands of the few at the expense of the many;
- And so much more.

Taken individually, it would be easy to write any one of these off as tragic mistakes or misguided but well-intentioned policy failures. But seen collectively, spanning the breadth of modern U.S. foreign policy, it's hard to come to any other conclusion than the fact that, despite the rhetoric, democracy is simply not a priority of U.S. foreign policy.

More Than “Hypocrisy”

Of course, you don't need to be perfect yourself to point out serious threats from others, and none of this is remotely an excuse for authoritarianism abroad. But the fact that the United States is claiming the mantle of global democratic leadership while utterly failing to live up to those values at home, and at times actively eroding them abroad, is cause for concern — and more than just because it's “wrong” to be hypocritical. If the United States doesn't live up to the same standards it demands of others, it undermines its own legitimacy, and gives authoritarians a simple, credible excuse for their own misdeeds.

Events like this summit can sadly serve to cover up the United States' own contributions to the problem, distract from the changes in U.S. policy that we so desperately need, and foment a dangerous and ahistorical “us vs. them” approach to the global fight for democracy that helps no one.

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President Biden should be applauded for attempting to marshal a defense of democracy against the very real threat of authoritarianism. But for the United States to be a credible force for good, it must begin by looking in the mirror.

The Perfect Holiday Gift For the Anti-War Activist In Your Life

Here is the link and the language we have been using. If you want to support our work and spread our message of peace, we have hoodies, t-shirts, stickers, and more — just in time for your holiday gift-giving! — at our new swag store! Every purchase directly helps support our work and amplify the message of our movement.

Shop now at <https://www.cafepress.com/winwithoutwar>

BURIED LEDES

Iran nuclear deal talks [resumed](#) this week after a weekend break. Broken record or not, we have to say: *There Is No Alternative*. Engaging in diplomacy is the *only* path forward.

The Senate [refused](#) to block President Biden's \$650 million dollar [weapons sale](#) to Saudi Arabia. Turns out, arming human rights abusers is good money. Who knew?

The House, with bipartisan support, voted to pass the NDAA — bloated Pentagon budget and all. The NDAA is [a mess](#), tacking yet another gold star on the war economy. If your representative [voted yes](#), you've gotta wonder who they're really representing.

This week, Rohingya refugees [sued Facebook](#), claiming that Facebook's algorithms boosted hate speech against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. If there's one thing Facebook is designed to do, it's knowing how to put profits above people.

According to a recent study, [global inequality](#) is at about the same level as it was during the early 20th century peak of Western Imperialism. If inequality is 'a political choice', why do we keep making it? Well, imperialism is ongoing, and of course, *practice makes perfect!*

In yet another roadblock to Afghans seeking refuge, USCIS has begun issuing [denials](#) to Afghans applying for the humanitarian parole program. Inhumane immigration policy is a wonderful testament to bipartisanship; bad across the board.

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The Feminist Peace Initiative is guiding a much-needed [movement](#) in foreign policy. Their [manifesto](#) envisions defunding the police and the military, ending militarism at home and abroad, divesting from weapons of war, and investing in human security.

And finally, a huge (or should we say, venti) congratulations to the first Starbucks team in the country to **fight for a [union](#) and win!**