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POLITICAL RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH KENYA IN THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY - DEMOCRATIC VALUES ABOVE ALL?

Łukasz Jureńczyk*

ABSTRACT

Democratic values in the relations of the United States with the countries of the Global South, including African, constitute an important research problem. The interest in this issue grew during the presidency of Barack Obama who has Kenyan roots. The purpose of the paper is to discuss and evaluate the relations between the US and Kenya in the context of the promotion of democracy. The research problem is contained in the following questions: What is the nature of American-Kenyan political relations? Are they friendly and durable? Do they have strategic significance for both partners? What role do good governance and democracy play in these relations? The analysis shows that strategic cooperation between the US and Kenya has solid foundations. It results from both historical factors as well as the current proximity of strategic goals, primarily in the East African region. Although there are numerous problems and misunderstandings between state authorities, including the different perceptions of the importance of democratic values, they do not interfere with close cooperation between the US and Kenya. This means that the issue of promoting democratic values does not play a key role in US-Kenyan relations. The United States is ready to forge closer relations with Kenya even with concessions in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, which is a manifestation of a realistic approach.

Key words: United States, Kenya, political relations, democratic values

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to discuss and evaluate the specifics of US political relations with Kenya in the second decade of the 21st Century, with particular emphasis on the promotion of democracy by the US. The main research problem lies in the questions: What is the nature of American-Kenyan political relations?

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Are they friendly and durable? Do they have strategic significance for both partners? What role do good governance and democracy play in these relations? The main thesis assumes that despite numerous problems and misunderstandings between Washington and Nairobi, including the importance of democratic values, strategic cooperation between the US and Kenya has solid foundations. It results from both historical factors as well as the current proximity of strategic goals, primarily in the East African region. The issue of promoting democratic values does not play a key role in US-Kenyan relations, and therefore cannot permanently damage these relations.

1. Theoretical Assumptions

The aim of the international relations theory is to understand how relations between states and the international system as a whole function. For heads of state, theoretical knowledge can provide guidance on how to achieve political goals. Liberals see democracy as the appropriate political system that creates favourable conditions for peaceful cooperation between states, but also greater morality, freedom, prosperity and justice. Democratic peace theory advocates, including **Michael Doyle**, believe that liberal democracies do not wage war against each other (Doyle, 1983, p. 213). Besides, liberals argue that the emergence of a bloc of democratic, interdependent, nationally satisfied states is a precondition for stable form of interstate politics grounded in reliable expectations of peaceful change, domestic rule of law, stable international institutions and intensive societal interaction (Moravcsik, 2001, p. 30-31). At the same time, they perceive authoritarianism as an inappropriate system, increasing the risk of destabilization of relations, international crises, and the risk of war. Within the framework of liberal internationalism, **Anne-Marie Slaughter** assumes that liberal states, unlike illiberal states, abide by international law. The more liberal democracies there are in the world, the more international law will be respected (Czaputowicz, 2016, p. 17, 27-28). Liberals seek to expand democracy, trade relations profitable for all parties, and international institutions on the global system and among other countries. They see democracy and liberal values as mutually beneficial for the United States as well as the target countries. Some liberals, however, try to impose liberal values, institutions and relationships by force (Duryea, 2022).

Realist theories share a few basic concepts, including: the international system is anarchic; states are the primary actors within that system; and states

act in their own interest in pursuit of either power (classical and offensive realism) or security (defensive realism). The dominant concepts stemming from the theory of realism are anarchy, the balance of power, and the national interest (Cristol, 2017). The nature of realism implies that seeking a moral high ground is a goal that governments cannot always achieve. For this reason, they are looking for other solutions that will be more effective in achieving their political goals and advancing national interests. In a situation where national security is of paramount importance, issues of values and morals may be relegated to the background (NUO, 2017). Realist scholars, like **Edward H. Carr**, criticize idealistic perceptions of certain values, such as peace and justice, as being universal. He argues that there are neither universal values nor universal interests. According to him, those who consider certain values or interests to be universal, in fact promote their own values or interests (Carr, Cox, 2001, p. 71). This also applies to liberal values, including liberal democracy.

Constructivism sees the world, and what we can know about the world, as socially constructed (Theys, 2018). According to the representatives of the constructivist theory, a greater level of security is ensured not by the maximization of power, but by the association of states into international communities sharing democratic values. Members of such communities renounce violence in mutual relations and undertake the peaceful settlement of disputes, which is similar to the liberal approach. States decide to cooperate, *inter alia*, because of the interdependence, according to which the state expects other participants to behave in the same way. States recognize that their prosperity depends on the group as a whole, not on its individual members. Homogenization, in turn, causes the members of the community to strive for a common system of values and a similar political system (Czaputowicz, 2012, p. 176). Constructivists also believe that non-state actors, including international institutions, play a large role in the international arena and can significantly influence the behaviour of states through lobbying (NUO, 2017).

2. Background - Shaping the US-Kenya Political Relations

After the Second World War, despite the global rivalry against the Soviet Union for spheres of influence, the United States intervened to a small extent in African countries (Kerton-Johnson, 2011, pp. 13). Initially, Kenya remained a British colony, and the US watched with concern the British actions in this country. The vast majority of African-Americans condemned the ruthless British response

to the Mau Mau rebellion in 1952-1955 and the arrest of its leader - **Jomo Kenyatta**. The US Government was, however, committed to the maintenance of white rule, and therefore did not officially condemn the British policy towards Kenya (Ledwidge, 2012, pp. 124-125). It is worth mentioning that one of the brutally tortured by the British was **Hussein Onjango Obama**, the grandfather of the later American president - **Barack Obama** (Cobain, 2013). In December 1963, Kenya gained independence, and in 1964 it established diplomatic relations with the United States, which in the same year founded the embassy in Nairobi. Since then, the states have enjoyed cordial relations and an enduring partnership (U.S. Relations..., 2018). In the first decades of statehood, a relatively large degree of political competition was allowed in Kenya. Nevertheless, it took place under the long-term reign of the same party - Kenya African National Union (KANU), which was the former single party (Cassani, Carbone, 2016, pp. 192). Its rule lasted in Kenya from 1963 to 2002 and ended with the defeat of the representative of KANU - **Uhuru Kenyatta**, a son of **Jomo Kenyatta**, in the presidential election (Hartmann, 2016, pp. 95). Relations between the United States and Kenya became even closer after Kenya's democratic transition of 2002 and subsequent improvements in civil liberties. Relations between the countries have been strengthening in the political, security and economic areas (U.S. Relations..., 2018).

After the end of the Cold War, the promotion of democracy in the global dimension was to be one of the key actions of the United States on the international stage. In the case of Africa, however, rhetoric contrasted with practice, because the promotion of democracy had only the form of small incentives and symbolic support. In Kenya, this policy had a negligible effect, and democracy was regressing in the state itself. In general, the promotion of democracy in East Africa was dominated by security issues because the United States was involved in resolving conflicts in the region. American administrations tried to maintain good relationships with the so-called 'soft authoritarian' rulers in East African countries, whom they needed to enforce stability in the region (Bouchet, 2015, pp. 116, 120, 133). This approach was - among others - towards **Siad Barre** in Somalia, **Meles Zenawi** in Ethiopia, **Paul Kagame** in Rwanda, and **Daniel Moi** in Kenya. The United States provided the economic, political, and military support that helped survive authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes in the region (Kieh, 2014, pp. 168).

In the 21st Century, the United States faced a number of problems in Africa, including the rise of Islamist terrorist movements, local and regional conflicts and

energy-related issues (Walton, 2012, pp. 66). The continent, however, was not Washington's main focus. In cold strategic terms, no matter how big the mayhem, death and poverty in Africa are, they do not necessarily threaten the national security of the US (McMahon, Wedeman, 2006, pp. 24). In addition, the American society expresses greater approval for troop deployments in the areas of traditional American interests, such as Europe and the Middle East, rather than in Africa (Holsti, 2006, pp. 297). On the other hand, the United States has established close relations with some African countries. An example is the so-called "special relationship" with Kenya. US-Kenyan relations were shaped by factors such as language and colonial heritage, religion similarity, traditions of the capitalist economy, common security interests, including mainly a sense of terrorist threat, and a relatively high number of Kenyans receiving visas to study in the United States. They were strengthened by the pride of Kenyans in the election of **Barack Obama** first as a senator and later as the president of the USA (Kaba, 2006, pp. 80-81).

3. Kenyan Roots of Barack Obama and Expectations of Democratization and Support for Africa

Barack Obama's paternal side had an African Islamic family background. His father, **Barack Obama Sr.** was an economist working for the Kenyan government who came to the University of Hawaii on a government scholarship (Apeldoorn, Graaff, 2016, pp. 191). The American president never met his father personally, but he was still supposed to inherit the idea of anti-imperialism. Barack absorbed his father's thoughts, which was reflected, among others, in his book „Dreams from My Father”, published in 2004. Commentators from republican circles claimed that due to the adopted ideas **Barack Obama** was intellectually hostile to the notion of American exceptionalism (Brooks, 2013, pp. 14). This criticism does not seem to be justified, however, because the greatness of America is primarily due to the peaceful promotion of freedom, democracy, and international cooperation.

Barack Obama's African roots and his perception of him as a "moral leader" raised the question about the role the United States was to play in Africa and the world during his presidency (Renshon, 2010, pp. 209). **Barack Obama's** victory in the presidential election was received with great enthusiasm in African countries. On the streets of many African cities people cheered and even danced, and Kenya declared a day of his inauguration in the office a public holiday. Many

experts and commentators, including those from Africa, believed that **Obama's** approach to Africa would be transformative (Kieh, 2014, pp. 165). The election of African-American for the President of the United States was a historical event. Given the international role of the United States, there was widespread hope that this would have major implications for global democracy, peace and prosperity (Wang, 2016, pp. 9). Africa, including Kenya, was to be one of the main beneficiaries of this change.

Barack Obama made his first presidential visit to Africa in July 2009, which further fuelled African hopes and expectations. During the trip, the American president presented a vision of his administration's policy towards the continent. On July 22, 2009, in his speech to Ghana's parliament, he outlined four main pillars of this policy, including democracy and good governance, economic cooperation and development, public health and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Pagel, 2009). Although there was nothing innovative about this approach, the origin and charisma of President **Obama** gave hope that this time support for Africa would be decisive and comprehensive.

In practice, already at the end of the first term, even **Barack Obama's** proponents felt disappointed at his approach to Africa. They began to admit that his administration did not even partially meet the expectations of African countries. Political opponents have even claimed that he did much less for Africa than previous US presidents (Moss, 2012). **Barack Obama** maintained the cosy ties with various authoritarian and semi-authoritarian African governments, which were beneficial, inter alia, in terms of purchasing oil and counteracting terrorism (Carothers, 2013, pp. 201-202). Despite this pragmatic approach, for the United States democratization has always been an important factor, which has not changed during the **Barack Obama** administration. However, activities in this area were too limited in relation to the expectations of African societies.

4. American-Kenyan Political Relations during the Presidency of Barack Obama

After **Barack Obama** took the office, the US ambassador in Nairobi **Michael Ranneberger** pointed out to the Kenyan authorities the need to increase the pace of democratic reforms, and to fight against corruption and culture impunity (Chau, 2010, pp. 143). In the political area, the support of the **Obama** administration for Kenya focused around key goals, such as promoting democratic values, spreading human rights, initiating good governance, and fighting political and

clerical corruption (Kenya – US...). The United States mainly supported programs in the field of devolution and support to county governments, supporting free and fair elections, empowering civil society, and countering violent extremism (Democracy, Governance...).

Threats to Kenyan democracy, including ethnic-based political divisions, interference in key institutions, corruption, and impunity, were particularly evident during the election period, which caused serious perturbations (U.S. Relations..., 2018). The December 2007 presidential election in Kenya resulted in the serious outbreak of violence. It was announced that the winner was incumbent President **Mwai Kibaki**, despite evidence of counterfeiting presented by opponent candidate **Raila Odinga**. During the crisis lasting over two months, there were mass manifestations dispersed by force and targeted ethnic violence. Eventually, the country pulled itself together owing to the introduction of the new Constitution adopted in a national referendum in August 2010, embarking on national rejuvenation (Khadiagala, 2016, pp. 180). The Constitution introduced many democratic system solutions, established new checks and balances and a more deliberate separation of powers (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 5). The beginning of **Barack Obama's** presidency coincided with the introduction of constitutional reforms and an attempt to return to the path of democracy. The American administration lent substantial diplomatic support and technical assistance to the process. At that time, Kenya was visited by Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** in 2009 and Vice-president **Joe Biden** in 2010, who focused on talks in the area of democratization of the state and economic cooperation (Carothers, 2013, pp. 203). In August 2012, Secretary **Clinton** visited Kenya again to meet with President **Mwai Kibaki**, Prime Minister **Raila Odinga**, and Chief Justice **Willy Mutunga**. It is worth mentioning that during her office she visited nearly two dozen African states (Hillary Rodham...).

The 2013 presidential election was another challenge for Kenyan democracy. The United States was concerned both about their peaceful conduct and about the possibility of holding them in accordance with the law. Another problem was that Presidential candidate **Uhuru Kenyatta** and Vice-Presidential candidate **William Ruto** were facing criminal charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC), related to their participation in the post-election violence of 2007. President **Obama** appealed to the Kenyans that the election of the leader was in their hands and did not endorse any of the candidates. Some members of the American administration, including Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs **Johnni Carson**, however, suggested that candidates with ICC allegations were not the

right choice. Ultimately, there was no political or ethnic violence during the elections. However, there were post-election disputes between the main candidates - **Uhuru Kenyatta** and **Raila Odinga**. Fortunately, they were dissolved by the Supreme Court, whose ruling was adopted by supporters of the defeated **Odinga**. A peaceful solution to the post-electoral dispute was enthusiastically received by President **Obama**, who expressed his hope that democratic reforms would continue in Kenya (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 6, 13).

In April 2013, **Uhuru Kenyatta** and **William Ruto** took over the offices of the President and the Vice President. At the beginning of the term, there was a discrepancy with the **Barack Obama** administration in areas such as justice, accountability, and reconciliation in promoting peace and stability, both in Kenya and in East Africa. American-Kenyan relations were also burdened with a lawsuit pending before the ICC. Although ICC's allegations against the two most important people in Kenya caused diplomatic problems, the **Barack Obama** administration tried to maintain its public commitment to the US-Kenya relationship (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 1-2, 13).

In the first year of **Kenyatta's** office, maintaining proper relations with the United States was a big challenge. The Kenyan authorities suggested a significant shift in Kenya's foreign policy as part of the so-called "Looking East" policy. Its goal was to strengthen relations with developing countries, including China globally competing with the United States. In July 2013, President **Obama** travelled to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania. Kenyans, one of the most pro-American societies in the world, were disappointed that **Barack Obama** again failed to visit his motherland. Representatives of the US administration argued that the President could only visit three out of all 53 African countries and that a difficult choice had to be made. However, President **Obama's** roots as well as the historically close relationship between the US and Kenya meant that Kenya would be the natural choice. The ICC's allegations against President **Kenyatta** and Vice President **Ruto**, and the temporarily cool relationship between Washington and Nairobi meant that Kenya was not included in the trip (Mboya, 2013).

In February 2014, tensions between **Obama** and **Kenyatta** governments deepened, when Kenya's Cabinet Secretary accused the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) of financing anti-government protests in Nairobi. In addition, the US administration criticized Kenya for pressure on the media and attempts to silence criticism of the government, limits on the funding of non-governmental organizations by foreign donors, and increased penalisation

of homosexuality (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 13). Although there was no radical breakdown in relations between states, for some time they were "suspicious, tentative and tepid". Later in 2014, these relations began to improve because the leaders of the states put aside the political questions and focused on economic and security cooperation (Řehák, 2018, pp. 80). In December 2014, the ICC Prosecutor withdrew the charges against **Kenyatta** due to the lack of evidence and obstruction by the Kenyan Government (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 1-2). Although the Americans were not satisfied with the attitude of the Kenyan authorities during the trial, the end of this case deepened the thaw in bilateral relations.

The Kenyan government initiated a number of democratic reforms that were to lead to liberalization and healing of political life. Kenyan authorities have tried to convince Americans that they have taken intensified efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, and have respected human rights and fought corruption (Muluvi, Odhiambo, Otieno, 2015). In the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit, between 2010 and 2019 Kenya advanced from the 101st to 94th place (Democracy Index 2019). In the Transparency International 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index, Kenya was ranked 154th out of 178 classified countries. In the following years some progress was observed in this respect and in 2019 Kenya was promoted to the 137th place out of 183 classified countries (Corruption Perceptions Index).

In March 2015, President **Kenyatta** made public apology for state abuses under past administrations. However, referring to 2007 post-election violence, he suggested that this matter should be resolved through reconciliation rather than judicial action (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 7). This gesture was received in the United States with both surprise and satisfaction. That same year, President **Kenyatta** announced a new anti-corruption drive, which was also very well received in the United States. Soon corruption charges were levelled against 175 government officials. The positive climate caused that **Barack Obama** finally visited Kenya between July 24-26, 2015 to participate in the Sixth Global Entrepreneurship Summit. The presidents of the United States and Kenya also discussed political matters, including democratic values, human rights, good leadership and governance, and their barriers like corruption and impunity (Muluvi, Odhiambo, Otieno, 2015). In the same year also Secretary of State **John Kerry** visited Kenya and continued talks concerning political, economic and security cooperation.

5. American-Kenyan Political Relations during the Presidency of Donald Trump

In January 2017, **Donald Trump** took office as President of the United States. He came from business circles, and in the West he was seen as a populist for whom democratic values were not a priority. In August 2017, another presidential election took place in Kenya, which again posed a challenge to Kenyan democracy. Initially, the **Donald Trump** administration did not pay much attention to this matter. **Uhuru Kenyatta** and **Raila Odinga** again stood in the presidential race. After the announcement of an unfavourable result for **Odinga**, the parliamentary opposition appealed to the Supreme Court, which ordered the election to be repeated. The fresh presidential elections took place in an atmosphere of fierce political struggle. Eventually **Raila Odinga** withdrew his candidacy, but the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) struggled with a major crisis. IEBC Commissioner **Roselyn Akombe** issued a statement that the repeated elections would not be law-abiding, and then resigned and fled to the United States fearing for her safety. Similar objections were expressed by other IEBC members, including Chairman **Wafula Chebukati**. Ultimately, the elections held on October 26, 2017 were won by **Uhuru Kenyatta** with the support of over 98% of those voting and low, nearly 39% turnout due to the boycott of the opposition. Unfortunately, several dozen people have been killed in election-related violence (Moore, 2017). A prolonged election cycle in 2017 hurt the economy, drained government resources, and slowed GDP growth (The World Factbook...). Ultimately, in November 2017 **Uhuru Kenyatta** began the second term.

The American administration wanted to stabilize the political situation in Kenya after the presidential election. On March 9, 2018, there was a symbolic handshake between President **Uhuru Kenyatta** and opposition leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and African Union envoy **Raila Odinga**, what became known as "the Handshake". This ended months of tension after divisive and deadly presidential election in Kenya. Leaders decided to set up a team to find a way to end such instability. This taskforce, known as the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), was to look at nine issues including ethnic antagonism, corruption and devolution (Letter from..., 2019). On 5-6 February 2020 they participated in the 68 US National Prayer Breakfast Meeting at the invitation of the US Congress. The meeting discussed political reforms under the BBI and the possibility of holding a referendum on the electoral changes before the 2022

presidential election. The United States, including through its Ambassador to Kenya **Kyle McCarter**, supports BBI and hopes this will lead to national reconciliation and peaceful next presidential elections (Agutu, 2020).

In the meantime, American-African relations have suffered from the arrogant and reckless statements of President **Trump**. In January 2018, the American President criticized the legitimacy of receiving immigrants from African countries, calling them "shithole countries," and this comment was released to the media. This term embittered millions of Africans, caused criticism of many African leaders and, according to commentators, significantly influenced the possibility of pursuing US strategic interests on the continent (Greef, Chan, 2018). Experts intensified criticism of **Trump's** African policy, which was devoid of strategic thinking. They accused the American administration of weakening efforts to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights, limiting development support and focusing mainly on counteracting terrorism in Africa (Knigge, 2018). However, the Kenyan authorities have refrained from criticizing the American president's behavior, which has proved right in the long run, especially since President **Trump** is sensitive about that. To thaw the image of the American President, in October 2018 the First Lady of the United States - **Melania Trump** visited Kenya to promote health and education initiatives.

On August 27, 2018, on the 55th anniversary of US-Kenyan diplomatic relations, President **Kenyatta** visited the United States. During the meeting with President **Trump**, the leaders resolved to elevate the relationship to a Strategic Partnership. The presidents of the US and Kenya considered this a cornerstone of peace, stability and good governance in Africa and the Indian Ocean region. As part of the strategic partnership, the parties decided to initiate an annual dialogue to advance mutual prosperity (Joint Statement..., 2018). The strategic partnership is primarily concerned with counterterrorism collaboration, defence and security cooperation, support for greater accountability, transparency, institution building, and economic cooperation (The U.S.–Kenya..., 2018). During the meeting, President **Kenyatta** thanked President **Trump** for supporting the Kenyan government's efforts to greater accountability, transparency, and institution building, as well as for development assistance (Joint Statement..., 2018).

It is worth mentioning that Kenya has previously established a Strategic Partnership with China. For the United States, China's economic expansion in Africa is worrying, as it gives the countries of the continent an alternative to the West development partner. Cooperation with China undermines the efforts of the

United States and the West to initiate democratic reforms in African countries. In some cases, it contributes to the consolidation of authoritarian political regimes that do not respect basic human rights (Suzuki, 2010, pp. 204, 210). The **Donald Trump** administration, however, pays less attention to the rule of law in Africa than its predecessors.

In April 2019, just before stepping down as Kenyan Ambassador to the United States, **Robinson Njeru Githae** stated that relations between the U.S. and Kenya were "at their peak" (Bolton, 2019). This optimism was shared by the US Ambassador to Kenya **Robert F. Godec**. On May 7, 2019, the first meeting of the Bilateral Strategic Dialogue took place in Washington. During the meeting Kenyan Foreign Minister **Monica Juma** and US Deputy Secretary of State **John Sullivan** signed the documents - the Bilateral Strategic Dialogue (BSD) framework and the Security Governance Joint Country Action Plan, which outline plans to raise bilateral relations to what the US diplomat called "a new level". **Sullivan** explained that strategic dialogue between countries concerns many areas, including economic prosperity, trade and investment, defence cooperation, democracy, governance and civilian security, and multilateral and regional issues (Kelley, 2019). The second document was to enhance bilateral cooperation on anti-corruption efforts (Kiplagat, 2019). In early February 2020, President **Kenyatta** visited the United States again. Due to the business approach of President **Trump**, the meeting was dominated by economic issues.

6. Other Areas of US-Kenyan Cooperation in the Second Decade of the 21st Century

Kenya is very important for the United States in the context of implementing the East African policy. The state hosts the largest US diplomatic mission in Africa from which American agencies manage bilateral and regional programs and one of four major United Nations offices worldwide (Congressional Research Service, 2015, pp. 1). President **Barack Obama** and President **Donald Trump** have thanked Kenya many times for its diplomatic effort to establish peace in Somalia and South Sudan. In addition, Kenya plays an important role in combating international terrorism, including mainly the fight against the al-Shabab terrorist organization. Originating from Somalia, al-Shabab is trying to establish Islamic rule in north-eastern border region and coast of Kenya (The World Factbook...). Cooperation between the US and Kenya has included sharing intelligence information, training Kenyan security personnel in the U.S., receiving equipment

from the U.S., and other logistical support (Muluvi, Odhiambo, Otieno, 2015).

The United States is providing development support to Kenya, mainly in the social field. First of all, they finance programs in the area of health protection, humanitarian support, governance, education and agriculture. This is worth mentioning that between 2011 and 2016 Kenya was the largest beneficiary of American assistance among the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, ahead of Ethiopia and Sudan. Every year, the level of support was at a level close to USD 1 billion, and sometimes exceeding that amount. Kenya was also one of the largest recipients of US security assistance in Africa (U.S. Foreign...).

The test for the US-Kenyan strategic partnership was the border dispute between Kenya and Somalia regarding the shape of the maritime border. The quarrel concerns an area of 100,000 square kilometres with prospects of vast oil and gas deposits. The dispute has attracted the attention of many states keen to share in the exploitation of the resource-rich maritime blocks, including the United States. The US, unlike, for example, Great Britain which is historically associated with Kenya, decided to support Kenya in the dispute. The main reason was cooperation between the US and Kenya in the war on terror. In addition, the US hopes that the dispute will be settled in favour of Kenya, which will allow them to start investing in the extraction of raw materials located there (Maluki, 2019). It is worth mentioning that until October 2019, American diplomats maintained relations with Somalia through the embassy in Nairobi (Felter, Masters, Sergie, 2020).

Kenya is also an important country in the American policy of rebuilding the economic and commercial position in Africa. In recent years, the United States has been trying to strengthen trade relations with Kenya by starting negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA). In the intention of the US administration, the FTA with Kenya is to be part of a larger geopolitical strategy and improve US relations with Africa, set a template for future trade deals on the continent and counteract China's significant influence. The conclusion of such an agreement is important, especially since the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which gives African states preferential trade benefits, expires in 2025.

Conclusion

It is in the interest of the USA to expand the area of democracy and human rights, but in relations with Africa, including Kenya, the promotion of these values is not a priority. In summary, the narrative of the American administrations

towards Africa and Kenya is that the United States wants to strengthen cooperation so that African countries can benefit more from global cooperation, but this requires their active involvement in the areas of security, democracy and human rights, infrastructure and human capital, with which the United States is ready to help Africa (Řehák, 2018, pp. 86). This is in Washington's interest to include African states in close cooperation with the United States and, more broadly, with the West. This is conducive to maintaining political stability in these countries, allows for joint counteracting the spread of transnational negative phenomena, including terrorism, and promotes enhanced economic cooperation. In addition, this is expected to limit the development of influence of undemocratic states in Africa, including primarily China.

Barack Obama's administration, like previous American administrations, has continued US rhetorical support for democratization of Africa. In practice, however, activities in this area were quite limited. If this was in the interest of the United States, Washington was ready to support semi-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes on the continent, including the Kenyan authorities, which sometimes misappropriated democratic values. US national interests continued to have priority over the issue of promoting democracy in Africa (Kieh, 2014, pp. 177). This is even more clearly seen during the presidency of **Donald Trump**. His approach is primarily business-oriented, and the issues of rule of law and human rights are going to the background. Kenyan-American cooperation boils down primarily to the issue of jointly counteracting the terrorist threat and strengthening economic cooperation. This means that the US policy towards Kenya is dominated by a realistic approach, in which the primacy of national interests, mainly security issues, causes values such as democracy to fall into the background. However, this does not mean that the US has completely abandoned the promotion of democracy and human rights in Kenya. More serious violations of these values have received some response from America, even though it has been adjusted to strategic circumstances. In addition, the US can benefit from the support of a number of non-state actors who promote democratic values on a global scale, which is characteristic of the constructivist theory.

Cooperation between the United States and Kenya has solid foundations, which are based on the historical-cultural and linguistic unity, Kenyan pro-American sympathies, as well as the proximity of important strategic interests, primarily in the area of security and development. Cooperation is in the interest of both the United States and Kenya, so that cyclical disputes and misunderstandings are not able to seriously disturb it. China's expansion in Africa

and continuing instability in East Africa are causing the United States to strengthen its relations with Kenya. The US is ready to do so even at the price of concessions in the area of promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights. In turn, Kenya's development needs and the escalation of Islamic extremism, mainly in the north-eastern part of the country, mean that Kenya is also very keen to strengthen cooperation with the United States. To receive US support periodically, the Kenyan authorities are ready to initiate democratic reforms, but their range is limited.

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