

# Defense of Human Rights and the Humanitarian Crisis at the Border of Venezuela and Colombia from the United States Policy Perspective

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## Abstract

*The aim of the article is to present the U.S. policy towards the situation on the border between Venezuela and Colombia in recent years. The main reason for the U.S. involvement was the humanitarian crisis in that area. The causes of the migrant crisis include the Maduro regime's curtailment of democracy, the sharp drop in oil prices and demand on international markets, and the popular revolt. One of the consequences, besides the obvious, humanitarian ones, unfavorable from the perspective of international security and U.S. interests, is the attempt to destabilize the situation in Colombia and undermine its role in the inter-American world. Colombia is a traditional and loyal U.S. ally in the region. Apart from humanitarian considerations from the perspective of U.S. interests, its activity is dictated by economic, political and strategic reasons related to regional security.*

**Keywords:** United States, Latin America, immigration

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## Introduction

Despite the formal announcement by Secretary of State John Kerry of the end of the Monroe doctrine in international relations of the Western hemisphere in 2013, Latin American countries are still present in the policy of the United States. The goals of U.S. policy towards this region of the world have not changed, except its intensification and the tools selected for its implementation. From the perspective of the interests of the United States, its relations with Venezuela since 2000 have boiled down to economic issues (the importance of Venezuelan oil resources) and cooperation in counteracting drug terrorism in South America. The activities of Venezuela's anti-American authorities on the international arena remain important issues in bilateral relations (ALBA, bilateral cooperation with countries in the region critical to the United States). One of the most important problems in U.S. foreign policy is the humanitarian immigration crisis on the Venezuela-Colombia border, which started in 2016. The United States' active policy towards this crisis should be considered in many dimensions. In addition to the obvious humanitarian dimension, the United States' involvement is dictated by supporting its strategic and loyal partner in the region, which is Colombia, and by continuing to support the democratization processes in Venezuela against the rule of President Nicolas Maduro. The political and economic situation in Venezuela has been regularly monitored by the United States, even more closely since Hugo Chavez's death and Nicolas

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\* The article was based on the research presented in one of the subsections of Rafał Wordliczek's book *Regionalny wymiar interesu narodowego Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki. Studium polityki zagranicznej USA wobec państw Ameryki Łacińskiej na przełomie XX i XXI wieku* and supplemented with up-to-date information on the subject.

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Maduro's becoming the country's new president in 2013. The issue of human rights violations by the Venezuelan authorities is important from the perspective of the interests of the United States. However, it should be emphasized that the violation of fundamental human rights in Venezuela by President H. Chavez had only domestic consequences. Since Maduro took power, the violation of human rights, along with the deepening economic and humanitarian crisis (mass emigration to neighboring countries), has become one of the elements that may potentially destabilize the entire region. Since 2016 the violation of human rights by the Venezuelan authorities has been reinforced by the unequivocal political actions of President Maduro against democracy and the rule of law. The list of serious allegations made by the United States against the anti-democratic actions of President Maduro is very long and includes, among others, government interference in the operation of democratic institutions in Venezuela, preventing a referendum on the dismissal of Maduro, arrest of the oppositionists, restriction of freedom of speech, control of the media market, violation of the principle of the separation of powers, and, finally, suspicion of the government's cooperation with drug criminals and rejection of U.S. proposals for international humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the article is to analyze political relations in the context of the failure to respect human rights and the lack of democratization of political life in Venezuela, which were one of the main reasons for the radicalization of public sentiment after 2017 and the emergence of a huge humanitarian crisis caused by uncontrolled emigration of Venezuelans. Especially from the perspective of the U.S. policy, this problem is very important, because the phenomenon of uncontrolled emigration reduces the level of the international security system in the region. Dating back to 2015, the migrant crisis at the Venezuela-Colombia border is the largest mass displacement crisis globally.<sup>2</sup> The thesis put forward in the article is that the United States has a vested interest and commitment to resolving the migrant crisis in Venezuela for reasons of strategic international security interests and its own national interest. Answers to the following research questions will help in sustaining the above thesis:

- What was the policy of the Donald Trump administration toward the humanitarian migrant crisis?
- What policy tools is the Joe Biden administration using?
- What is the importance of Venezuela in the security architecture of the Western hemisphere?
- What is the political significance of the crisis for the international security architecture?

Research methodology in political science is interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, research methods characteristic of, for example, historical (analysis and criticism of sources) or legal sciences will be used. An analysis of U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century and the changes that are taking place in the international environment and affect the evolution of the U.S. position on the political map of the world will be carried out by means of the case study method, the statistical method and the comparative method. In order to thoroughly investigate the above-mentioned research problem, the paradigm of political realism characteristic of the sciences of international relations will be adopted.

## 1 Donald Trump administration's policy toward Venezuela's humanitarian migrant crisis

From the perspective of the national interest of the United States, it is the economic crisis, caused by a sharp fall in oil prices on the world markets, that is the most important. In addition, the Venezuelan authorities have drastically reduced the extraction of the raw materials since 2016. The economic crisis in Venezuela in 2018 was very serious. Hyperinflation reached 14,000%, public debt doubled in 2018 to USD 25 billion<sup>3</sup> at the end of 2018, Venezuela's foreign loans exceeded USD 89 billion, and corruption became rife (*World Economic Outlook...* 2018). Between 2014 and 2021, under the authoritarian rule of Nicolas Maduro Venezuela's economy contracted by 80%.

1. See: U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017: Venezuela, March, 2018. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2017&dliid=277367#wrapper> (accessed 2018-09-20).

2. See: U.S. Department of State, Diplomacy in Action, United States Assisting Venezuelans in Need. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/06/283534.html> (accessed 2018-11-26).

3. As in American usage, a thousand million [Ed.].

The economic crisis combined with the restriction of democracy and human rights by President Maduro caused violent social protests. Numerous examples of violations of human rights by President Maduro during social protests in 2017 are provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Context of Protests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from April 1 to July 31, 2017.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Venezuela's fragmented political scene has favored President Maduro. By 2019, the Venezuelan opposition had become weak and sharply divided. Juan Guaidó, a new opposition leader and a former member of Venezuela's National Assembly, unrecognized by Madero, emerged and called on both Venezuelans and the international community to make a concerted effort to topple the Maduro regime and restore democracy. Practically at the very beginning of his activities, Guaidó received support from President Trump's administration (Singer, Wilson, and Seelke 2022).

Social discontent very quickly resulted in the mass emigration process, which started in 2017, both to neighboring countries, including Colombia, and to the United States. The deepening economic crisis resulted in a dramatic humanitarian situation. The humanitarian crisis manifested itself, inter alia, in emigration of medical personnel (by mid-2018, 22,000 doctors and 3,000 nurses had left Venezuela), an increase in the incidence of infectious diseases (e.g., AIDS), an increase in mortality, especially of infants and children, and food shortages.<sup>5</sup> By October 2022, more than 7.1 million Venezuelans had fled the country for economic and political reasons, such as food insecurity and the collapse of health and other social services. 75% Venezuelans settled down in Latin American and the Caribbean countries (Seelke 2022). Various countries have received Venezuelan refugees, but five Latin American countries have adopted more than 70% of them: Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, and Chile. However, the largest group of refugees from Venezuela has found refuge in the territory of neighboring Colombia. More than 1.7 million immigrants have found themselves in Colombia (Klein 2022). From the perspective of U.S. interests, Colombia plays a key role in the international security system in the Latin American region. The potential destabilization of the country and the downgrading of its role on the inter-American arena have led to an intensification of U.S. aid efforts. Between 2017 and 2020, Trump's administration allocated more than USD 1 billion in humanitarian aid. In 2020 alone, the aid amounted to USD 528.5 million, more than 75% of which went to support Venezuelans residing in neighboring countries. President Trump has been credited with internationalizing the aid earmarked for immigrants. In 2019, the Humanitarian Response Plan under supervision of the UN Officer for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was launched. The initiative had a budget of USD 762.5 million and involved the implementation of more than 234 projects. As a consequence of previous actions, with the support of the U.S. already under President Biden, the UN decided to include Venezuela in the UN World Food Program with a budget of USD 190 million. The program covered 9.3 Venezuelans—i.e., 32% of the country's total population (Margesson and Seelke 2021).

However, there have been differences of opinion among the ruling elite in the United States over how much financial aid to provide to the Venezuelan people and how it should be done. By the end of 2018, the administration of President Trump limited its activities to financial aid programs and considered a military operation of international forces under the command of the United States. In 2017, there was a certain visible difference of opinion in the context of the potential U.S. response to the Venezuelan crisis between President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. In an interview with *The Street Journal* in mid-2017, President Trump ruled out a military operation, but during his visit to Latin America Pence stressed that “the United States will not rest until democracy is restored in Venezuela” (Rendon 2017). Vice President Pence was supported by U.S. Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis, who announced a USD 56-million humanitarian mission to assist

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4. See: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human rights violations and abuses in the context of protests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 1 April to 31 July 2017. Geneva, August 2017. [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/VE/HCREportVenezuela\\_1April-31July2017\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/VE/HCREportVenezuela_1April-31July2017_EN.pdf) (accessed 2022-12-01).

5. See: PAHO's Response to Maintaining an Effective Technical Cooperation Agenda in Venezuela and Neighboring Member States. Provisional Agenda Item 7.22, CE162/INF/22, Rev. 1 20 June 2018. <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/49487>.

Venezuelan refugees who had fled to Colombia. Mattis stated, “We’re not sending soldiers, we’re sending doctors. And it’s an effort to deal with the human cost of Maduro, and his increasingly isolated regime.” U.S. Southern Command, Mattis Impressed with Colombian Progress, Concerned about Venezuela (Garamone 2018). One of the ardent supporters of a U.S.-led military mission was Senator Marco Rubio, supported by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Critics of the military solution pointed to the high costs of this endeavor, the reluctance of the neighboring countries of Venezuela, except Colombia and Brazil, to support it, and the lack of acceptance by Venezuelans themselves, including representatives of the opposition (O’Neil 2018).

However, the option of initiating large-scale aid programs for Venezuelans directed by President Trump’s administration won out. President Trump chose diplomatic and multilateral forms of cooperation to resolve the crisis and help its victims. The U.S. diplomatic offensive was launched on April 13–14, 2018, during the eighth summit of U.S. countries convened in Lima on the problem of corruption in Latin American economies. Among the many topics discussed by the participating countries, one concerned inter-American cooperation to address poverty and the migrant crisis in Venezuela. The representatives of 16 countries (e.g., Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, the United States, Colombia, and Canada) agreed that President Maduro, through his undemocratic form of government, bears full responsibility for the difficult social situation in Venezuela and the associated threats to international security. The diplomatic efforts and pledges made by the U.S. at the summit were backed up by another tranche of USD 16 million in humanitarian aid. In addition, the U.S. government allocated USD 2.5 million in food aid for Venezuelan citizens residing in Colombian territory (Meyer 2018). Another feature of President Trump’s policy toward the migrant crisis was the internationalization of the aid process targeting both immigrants and the impoverished and frustrated residents remaining in the country by supporting the democratization process. An example is the U.S. recognition of Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela in January 2019, along with others from more than 35 countries. Guaidó was also recognized as president of Venezuela by other 14 countries in the western hemisphere, including Canada, Colombia and Brazil. The 24 members of the European Union, including France, Germany and Spain, also reacted to political developments in Venezuela in a similar manner. The group of the countries that recognized Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela’s legitimate president included Russia, Syria, Iran and Turkey, and, among the countries of the western hemisphere, Nicaragua and Bolivia. The tangible effect of this action initiated by President Trump was the international isolation of the Venezuelan authorities in the person of Maduro. As many as 18 members of the Organization of American States recognized Guaidó as the legitimate and sole representative of the Venezuelan people. In addition, a few days after recognizing the Guaidó government, President Trump decided to take further steps to strengthen the democratic transition in Venezuela. On January 28, 2019, the U.S. government took a radical decision. President Trump announced the imposition of sanctions on the state-owned energy company Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PdVSA). The consequence of this step was to deprive the Maduro regime of financial resources. At the same time, the State Department granted humanitarian aid to President Guaidó in the amount of USD 20 million (Seelke 2019). The U.S. and 11 other Western Hemisphere countries, invoking the Rio Pact signed in 1947, took action against the Maduro regime as the person responsible for triggering the migrant crisis in Venezuela. On September 23, sanctions were imposed and the assets of Maduro, his family and the members of his cabinet were frozen. In total, 23 different types of sanctions and transit restrictions were introduced (Meyer 2019).

## **2 Joe Biden administration’s policy toward Venezuela’s humanitarian migrant crisis**

After President Biden took over in January 2021, his administration continued the relief efforts initiated by his predecessor. This applies to both the choice of the tools needed to achieve the adopted goals and the results themselves. An essential element of the continuation was the resort to diplomatic methods and the expansion of sanctions imposed on politicians from among the Venezuelan establishment. The primary objectives of U.S. policy toward Venezuela also remained unchanged:

humanitarian assistance to Venezuelan refugees and pressure and leverage on the Venezuelan authorities to restore the democratic rule of law. The key difference between the policies of President Donald Trump's administration and that of President Biden was to increase aid and take action on a larger scale. The best example is the amount of funding that went to humanitarian aid to Venezuelans and to civic programs supporting the Venezuelan opposition. Due to the dynamics of the migration process and political developments in Venezuela, there were also new problems facing the Biden administration. Venezuela's migration problems have made U.S. policymakers realize how much this crisis has affected the instability of the Western hemisphere's security system, and postponing its resolution has posed a real threat to the form of that system in the past. As a direct consequence of the mass migration flows from Venezuela, many refugees have arrived in Mexico, aiming to enter the U.S. The Biden administration, in light of the new situation taking place right on the U.S. border, has taken a number of steps to increase U.S. security. Among these measures are initiating a number of new immigration programs for Venezuelan refugees arriving in the U.S. and strengthening cooperation with Mexico on migration policy. One other noteworthy element of Biden's policy toward Venezuela is the internationalization of the ways to address the problem to a greater extent than under President Trump.

The analysis of President Biden's policy can begin with internationalizing the problem of the migrant crisis to a greater extent. On June 25, 2021, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken met with Canadian Foreign Minister and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell in Washington. The meeting resulted in the adoption of a joint resolution, which reads, among other things, 'We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and its regional and global impact. The peaceful solution to that deep political, social, and economic crisis has to come from the Venezuelan people themselves through Venezuelan-led, comprehensive negotiations with participation from all stakeholders. A time-bound and comprehensive negotiations process should restore the country's institutions and allow for all Venezuelans to express themselves politically through credible, inclusive and transparent local, parliamentary, and presidential elections. We call for the unconditional release of all those unjustly detained for political reasons, the independence of political parties, freedom of expression including for members of the press, and an end to human rights abuses. We welcome substantive, credible advancements to restore core democratic processes and institutions in Venezuela and are willing to review sanctions policies based on meaningful progress in a comprehensive negotiation. We call for electoral conditions that abide by international standards for democracy, beginning with the local and regional elections scheduled for November 2021. We remain committed to addressing the dire humanitarian crisis inside Venezuela and welcome further agreement among all political actors in Venezuela to allow for unfettered access to humanitarian assistance, to include food, medicine, and critical COVID-19 relief supplies'.<sup>6</sup> The problem with the implementation of aid programs is the division among the international community. As mentioned earlier, some countries neither supported the aid nor recognized Juan Guaidó as the legal president of Venezuela. China, Iran, Russia, Cuba and Turkey, for various reasons, continued to recognize Maduro as the officially and legally incumbent president of the state. Both the U.S. and EU countries, Great Britain, Canada and 11 countries of the Western Hemisphere recognized the government of Juan Guaidó and successively extended the scope of sanctions against the members of the Maduro regime. A disturbing signal from the perspective of U.S. interests came from Colombia. In August 2022, after the parliamentary elections, a new left-wing government was formed under the leadership of President Gustavo Petro. One of the first defensive foreign policy decisions was to recognize Maduro as president of Venezuela. There was a radical change in the position of Colombia, which until then supported Juan Guaidó and actively provided assistance to Venezuelan refugees residing on Colombian territory (Seelke 2022).

Funding for aid programs targeting Venezuelans has also increased under President Biden. The Biden administration has taken a very offensive approach to the problem of financing humanitarian aid programs not only in the context of the refugee crisis in Venezuela but also in the global dimen-

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6. See: U.S. Department of State, U.S.-EU-Canada: Joint Statement on Venezuela, Media note, Office of the Spokesperson, June 25, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-eu-canada-joint-statement-on-venezuela/>.



sion. The ambition of the U.S. in 2022 was to restore the status of a global leader among countries that provided financial support under humanitarian aid programs. In 2022, the U.S. government allocated USD 10.1 billion to finance humanitarian aid worldwide (Margesson 2022). In the years 2017–2022, the U.S. allocated funds to humanitarian programs for Venezuela in the amount of USD 1.94 billion. In 2021 alone, the U.S. allocated USD 323 million for the development of democracy and humanitarian programs in Venezuela. In 2022, the U.S. Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, under which another USD 40 million was allocated solely to democracy programs and obliged various U.S. agencies to continue helping Venezuelan refugees in other countries. The expenditures proposed by the U.S. Congress for helping Venezuela in 2023 oscillate in the amount of USD 55 million (Seelke 2022).

On June 24, 2022, the Ninth Summit of the Americas was held in Los Angeles, whose keynote was ‘Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future.’ However, it was not the overarching goal of the meeting that focused the attention of observers, but the fact that, once again, representatives from Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela were not allowed to attend the summit. The reason was the dictatorial form of these countries’ governments and violations of basic human rights and democratic principles. In total, representatives of 23 of the 35 U.S. countries attended the meeting at the rank of heads of state for various reasons. One of the key issues discussed at the U.S.-initiated Pan-American Summit was the problem of mass immigration in the western hemisphere. As a result of the discussions, 20 participants at the event negotiated and signed the Los Angeles Declaration for Migration and Protection. The signatories of the document recognized mass migration movements in the western hemisphere as one of the main threats to the international security system regionally. They also shared the view that all countries should feel responsibility for migrants and pledged to create regional forms of cooperation to develop solutions to the problem. The proposals included strengthening border controls, creating legal migration, protecting legal migration routes, and assisting countries on whose territory migrants were found (Meyer 2022). The host of the meeting, President Biden, pledged another USD 314 million in humanitarian, health, economic, and development assistance for Venezuelan refugees. The structure of financial assistance was as follows: USD 103 million came from the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and USD 107 million came from the budget of the United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. These funds were used to support both Venezuelan refugees and the countries that received them, as well as Venezuelans remaining inside the country. Of the countries where Venezuelan newcomers had found refuge, the biggest beneficiaries of U.S. financial aid were Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Americans’ most important partner, Colombia. An additional USD 40 million was transferred by USAID for development purposes in Venezuela. The United States pledged to correlate its efforts with the UN Refugee Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Children’s Fund, and other international and nongovernmental organizations involved in helping Venezuelan refugees. In order to streamline the project and increase the effectiveness of financial assistance, the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration decided to locate Regional Refugee Coordinators’ offices in Colombia, Ecuador and Panama.<sup>7</sup> On September 22, 2022, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken stated that as part of solidarity with the Venezuelans, based on the Los Angeles Declaration for Migration and Protection signed at the Ninth Summit of the Americas, the U.S. decided to transfer another USD 376 million for humanitarian aid. USD 181 million came from the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration whereas the remaining amount of over USD 194 million came from the United States Agency for International Development. During the 2016–2022 period, according to data from the State Department, the United States provided a total of more than USD 2.7 million in funding for humanitarian, development, and health and food assistance.<sup>8</sup>

7. See: U.S. Department of State, Additional \$314 Million for U.S. Humanitarian Response to the Venezuela Regional Crisis. Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, June 10, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/additional-314-million-for-u-s-humanitarian-response-to-the-venezuela-regional-crisis/>.

8. See: U.S. Department of State, Humanitarian Assistance to Respond to the Venezuela Regional Crisis. Press Statement, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, September 22, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/humanitarian-assistance-to-respond-to-the-venezuela-regional-crisis/>.

A final issue related to the Venezuelan migration problem was the growing number of Venezuelan refugees in Mexico and the pressure to cross the border and enter the United States. Between 2019 and 2021, there was a 40% increase in refusals to admit the immigrants who tried to cross the border legally. For the first eight months of 2022 alone, there was an increase of as much as 65% in the rate of apprehensions at the border of illegal immigrants making another attempt. While the majority of Venezuelan refugees have emigrated for political or economic reasons and headed to neighboring countries, the number of Venezuelans heading to the United States has steadily increased. In most cases, the migration route went through Mexico. More than 21,000 Venezuelans have applied for political asylum in the 2019–2022 period, ranking fourth among all nations making such an application. The number of U.S. authorities' encounters with Venezuelans at the border with Mexico increased rapidly from more than 2,790 in 2020 to 48,680 in the next year and totaled over 97,600 in September 2022. Since January 2022, there has been a significant but temporary decline in encounters with Venezuelans at the border because Mexican authorities have made visas mandatory for Venezuelan citizens. However, as of March, the upward trend has been restored (Klein 2022).

Faced with this newly emerging phenomenon on the border with Mexico, the United States authorities had to respond appropriately on the legal level. The migration law reform proposed by the U.S. was aimed at curbing border crossings by Venezuelans with Mexico. In March 2019, a new agreement was signed between Mexico and the U.S. tightening migration regulations, which were supplemented by Article 42 on easier removal of newcomers from U.S. territory to Mexican territory. Under the new legislation, the Mexican government has pledged to accept an unspecified number of Venezuelans from U.S. territory. In return, the U.S. government has pledged to increase the pool of H-2B visas earmarked for nonagricultural workers. This type of visa was used primarily by Mexicans. Venezuelan refugees in Mexico had the right to apply for asylum. Mexico accepted the U.S. proposal on October 12, 2022. On the other hand, in April 2022, the Biden administration enacted a new law covering 24,000 Venezuelans who were allowed to come to the U.S. by air. However, those willing to come to the U.S. had to meet clearly defined conditions. The basic condition that had to be met concerned the financing of a Venezuelan refugee's stay through the application of a U.S. citizen declaring to cover the guest's living expenses. Secondly, the Venezuelans had to meet sanitary requirements—i.e., have the entire COVID-19 vaccination cycle. The program did not cover individuals who had been deported from the U.S. in the past five years, had crossed the border illegally from the U.S., resided illegally in Mexico or Panama, held citizenship other than Venezuelan, had a refugee status in another country, and unaccompanied children. Critics of the new program authored by the Biden administration have primarily criticized it for being too small in scale, relative to the enormous scale and massive nature of the Venezuelan refugee crisis. Republican Party congressmen accused the initiated program of insufficient transparency (Singer, Wilson, and Seelke 2022).

## Concluding remarks

The U.S. involvement in resolving the humanitarian immigration crisis on the Venezuelan-Colombian border has many reasons. The obvious and, in a way, the fundamental reason is the humanitarian aspect and the willingness to help people in need by successive U.S. administrations, resulting from one principle constituting the U.S. system: protection of freedoms and fundamental rights of the individual. In the U.S. aid operations, there are also visible reasons of a pragmatic nature, related to the narrowly understood U.S. national interest. The first is the economic and strategic reason, resulting from the raw material potential, which is located on the territory of Venezuela, which has the richest oil deposits in the world. The important role played by Venezuelan deposits of natural resources in the U.S. economy was confirmed by Venezuela's high, third place, after Canada and Saudi Arabia, among the countries exporting crude oil to the U.S. market. The United States was concerned about the dynamically developing cooperation between Venezuela, India and the PRC in the field of energy. It should be noted, however, that in the time of the crisis on the crude

oil market and the fall in oil prices, Venezuela became convinced of the importance of its reliable customer, which is the United States.

Another reason for the active U.S. policy is related to the economic crisis, which was intended to initiate democratization processes and cause changes on the political scene in Venezuela. The economic crisis and the inept rule of President Maduro have caused a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, manifesting itself in the massive and uncontrolled emigration of Venezuelans, primarily to Colombia. The economic crisis in Venezuela has highlighted the importance of Colombia in the U.S. policy towards the countries of the region. U.S. policies toward the migrant crisis taken by both the administrations of President Donald Trump and Joe Biden have been very similar. Diplomatic efforts have been used and the focus has been on real financial assistance given both to Venezuelans in the country and those who chose to leave their homeland.

The situation on the border between Venezuela and Colombia in recent years is the main reason for the U.S. involvement. The causes of the migrant crisis include the Maduro regime's curtailment of democracy, the sharp drop in oil prices and demand on international markets, and the popular revolt. One of the consequences, besides the obvious, humanitarian ones, unfavorable from the perspective of international security and U.S. interests, is the attempt to destabilize the situation in Colombia and undermine its role in the inter-American world. Colombia is a traditional and loyal U.S. ally in the region. From the perspective of regional security (joint fight against drug trafficking) and close ties with the U.S., the support given to Colombia is understandable. The crisis in Venezuela is a factor in the potential destabilization of the region and a radical reduction in the level of regional security that is undesirable for the United States. Another reason for the increased interest of the United States is its support of the opposition and political changes in Venezuela since these changes are expected to bring real benefits to the geostrategic interests of the United States. The United States expects the Venezuelan authorities to return to the policy favorable to foreign investors, which was carried out before 1999. Unfortunately, it quickly turned out that U.S. hopes for a political change in Venezuela were in vain. The anti-American dimension of Maduro's activity on the international arena manifests itself in dangerous tendencies, threatening the interests of the United States.

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