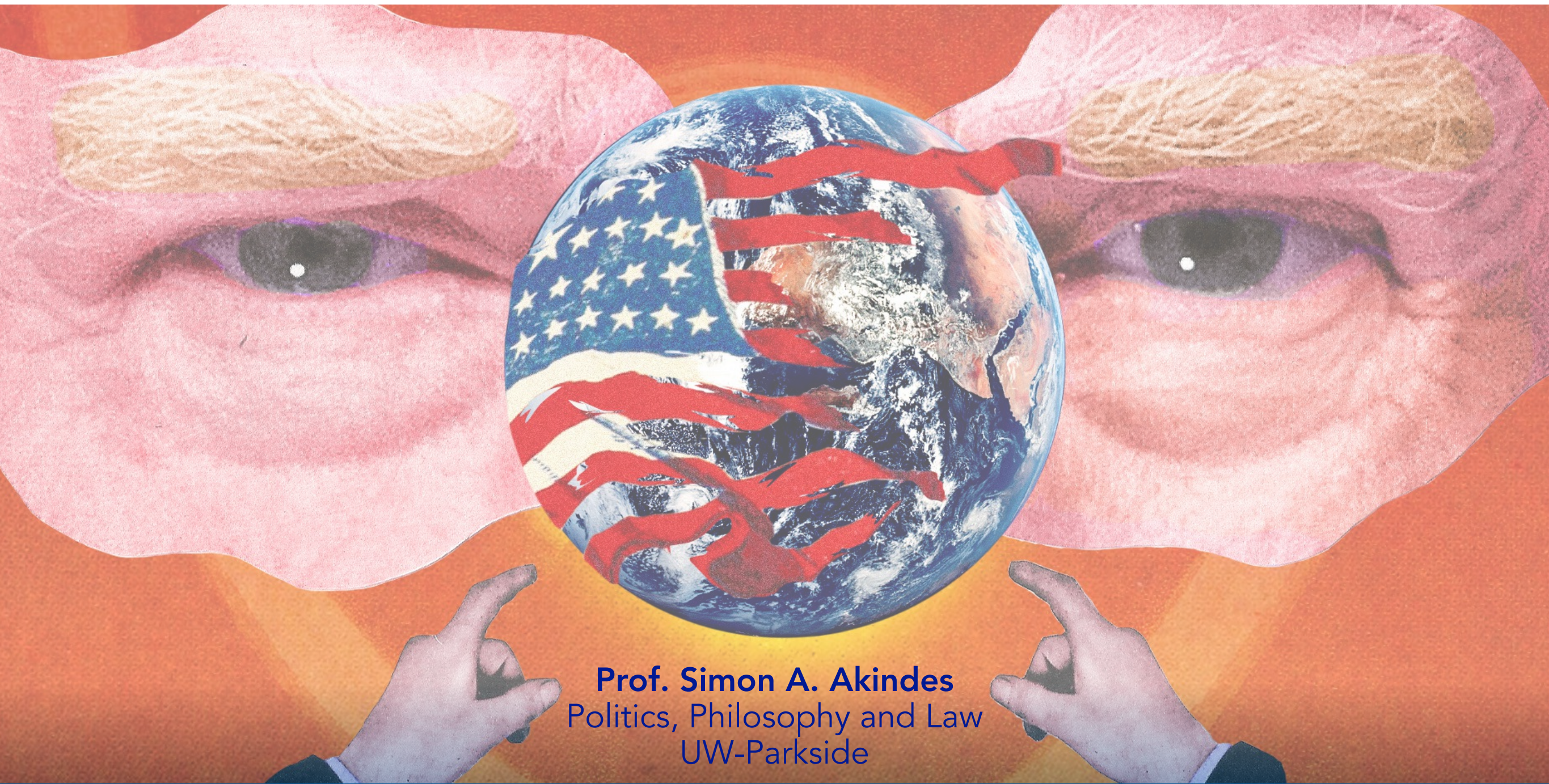


US Elections

Lessons and Implications
for the Developing World



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Still searching for a deeper “democracy”

On November 4th, Joe Biden makes the following statement in his post-election address:

“And if we had any doubts, we shouldn’t have any longer, **about a government of, by, and for the people.** It’s very much alive, very much alive in America. Here, the people rule. Power can’t be taken or asserted. It flows from the people.”

Elections without democracy?

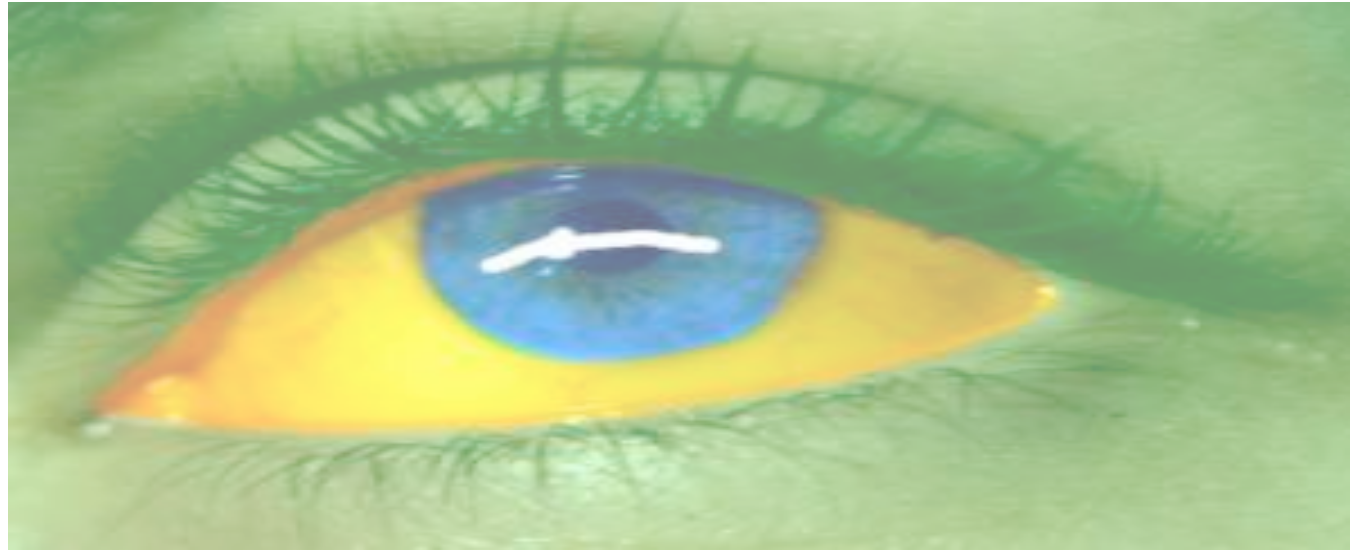
He also declares: "Every vote must be counted. No-one is going to take our democracy from us, not now, not ever" he clearly equates democracy with free and fair voting, one person, one vote, and accurate counting. **This concept of democracy has become the dominant one.**

Voting = democracy: A fallacy?



This raw, rather “simplistic” and procedural view of democracy does not take into account the complex and long history of disenfranchisement around the world and in the USA. European colonizers denied their subjects the right to vote.

USA: The biggest election in the world?



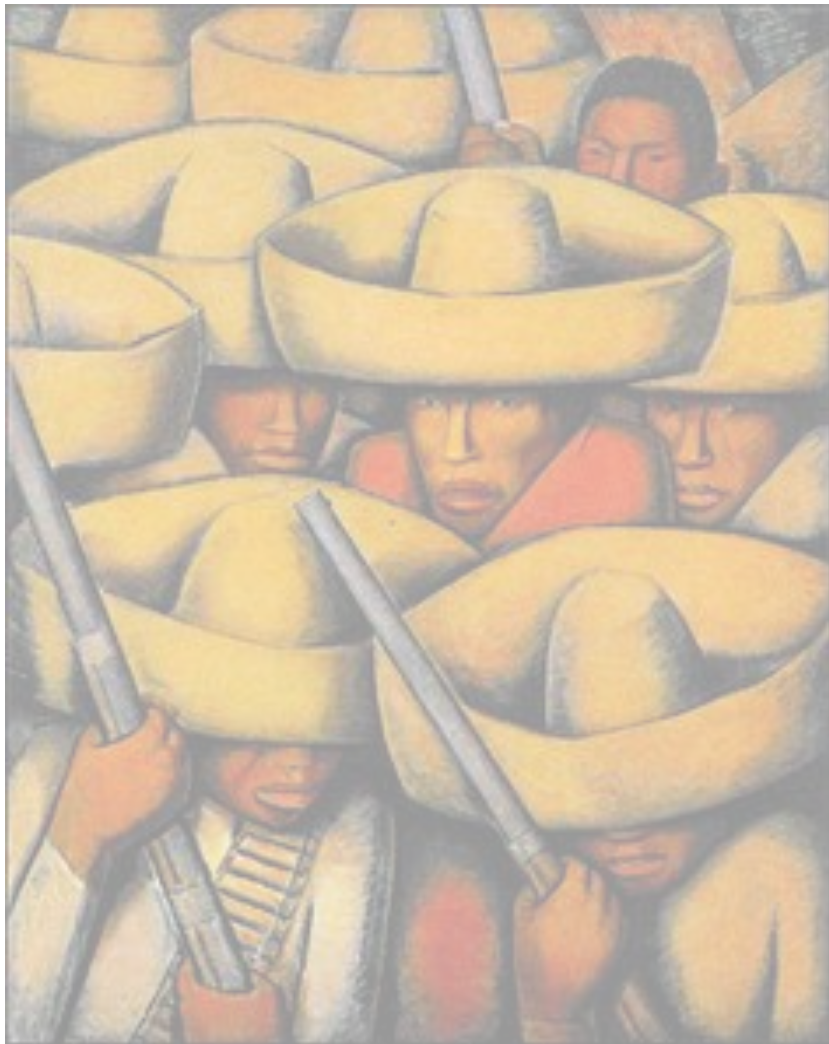
North Korea, Russia, Hungary, China, Apartheid South Africa all claimed to be democracies, **but no general election has more consequences for the world than that of the USA.**

Why? (1) Mystique and Fascination



Because of the narrative surrounding the election, its mystique and its mystifying power fascinate millions in developing and developed countries. That mystique brought millions to the USA and dispossessed Native Americans of their lands.

Why? (2) US Soft Power



The US has cultivated the narrative of the leader of the “Free World” since the end of the Second World War, with renewed intensity after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The media and American popular culture have exponentially amplified that powerful image.

Why (3) The Most Expensive

\$14 Billion

It is a powerful symbol for the largest economy to splash so much money on elections and display efficiency. In just three months, **Michael Bloomberg spent almost a billion dollars in the primary election to win no state.**

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of several old, leather-bound books. The spines of the books are visible, with some text like 'S. OPTATI AFR. EPISCOPI DE SCHISM. DONAT.' and 'TERTULLIANI OPERA' partially legible. The books are arranged in a row, creating a sense of depth and history.

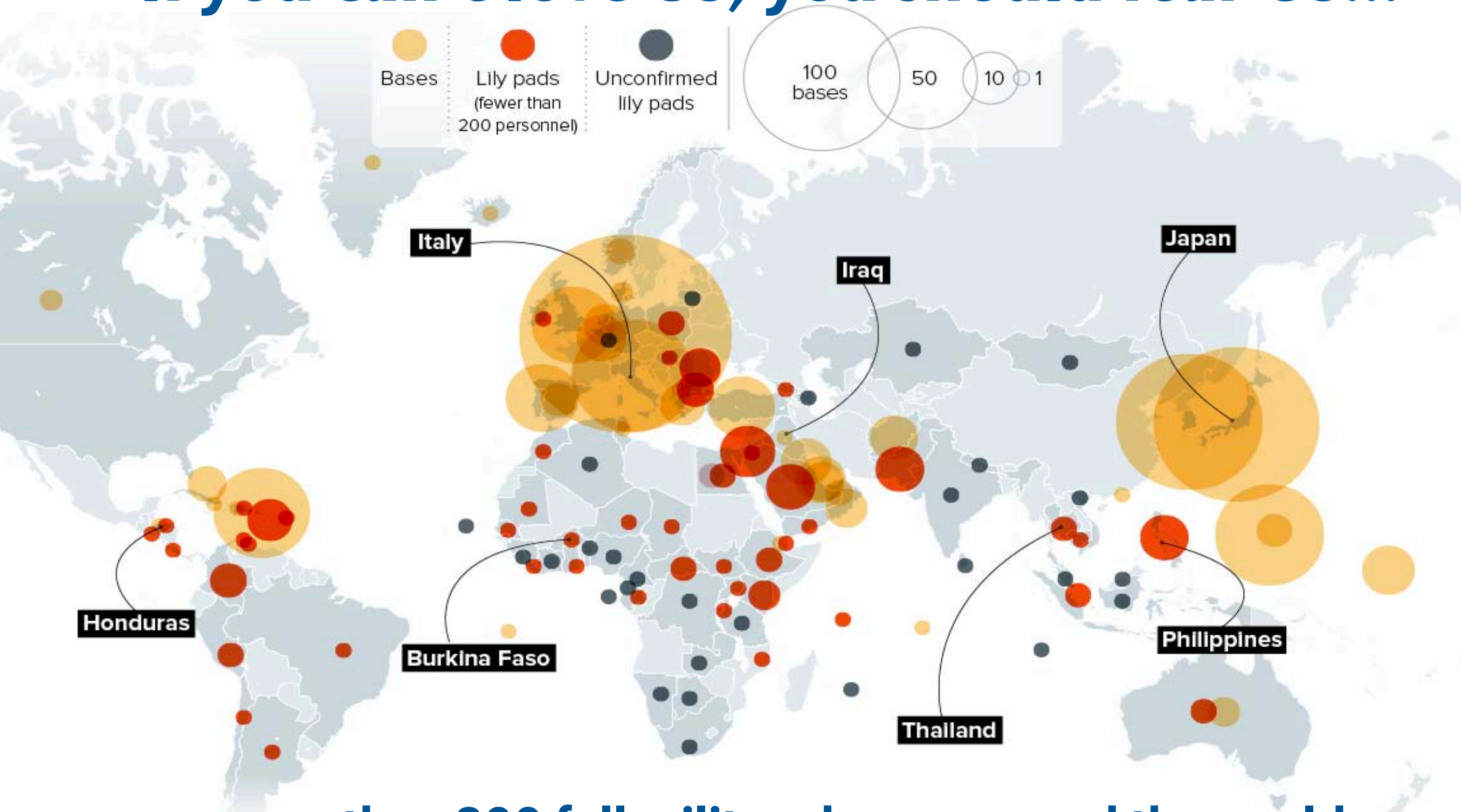
Why? (4)

Since 1789 and going strong

The election is robust, has gone through the test of time and become arguably the oldest running electoral system in the world. It is now a fortress. It is admirable.

Why (5)

If you can't love US, you should fear US...



.... more than 800 full military bases around the world.

Why (6)



Being a friend of the USA can be an enviable and safe position, although that can change quickly.

But not being a docile friend can quickly make you an enemy for ideological, geopolitical or economic reasons.

However, the official narrative does not always correspond to history, to the reality.



The history of voting has not been an easy and beautiful one. It was the Civil Rights Movement that legally resolved issues of voting and citizenship in the the USA, 176 years after the 1789 constitution.

What have the rest of the world discovered in this 2020 election?

1



That the use of **race**, a political invention created to justify a the unequal distribution of wealth and for electoral purposes, has infected the country. **An old coronavirus with no vaccine in sight, is still a huge factor in US politics.**

What have the rest of the world discovered in this election?

2



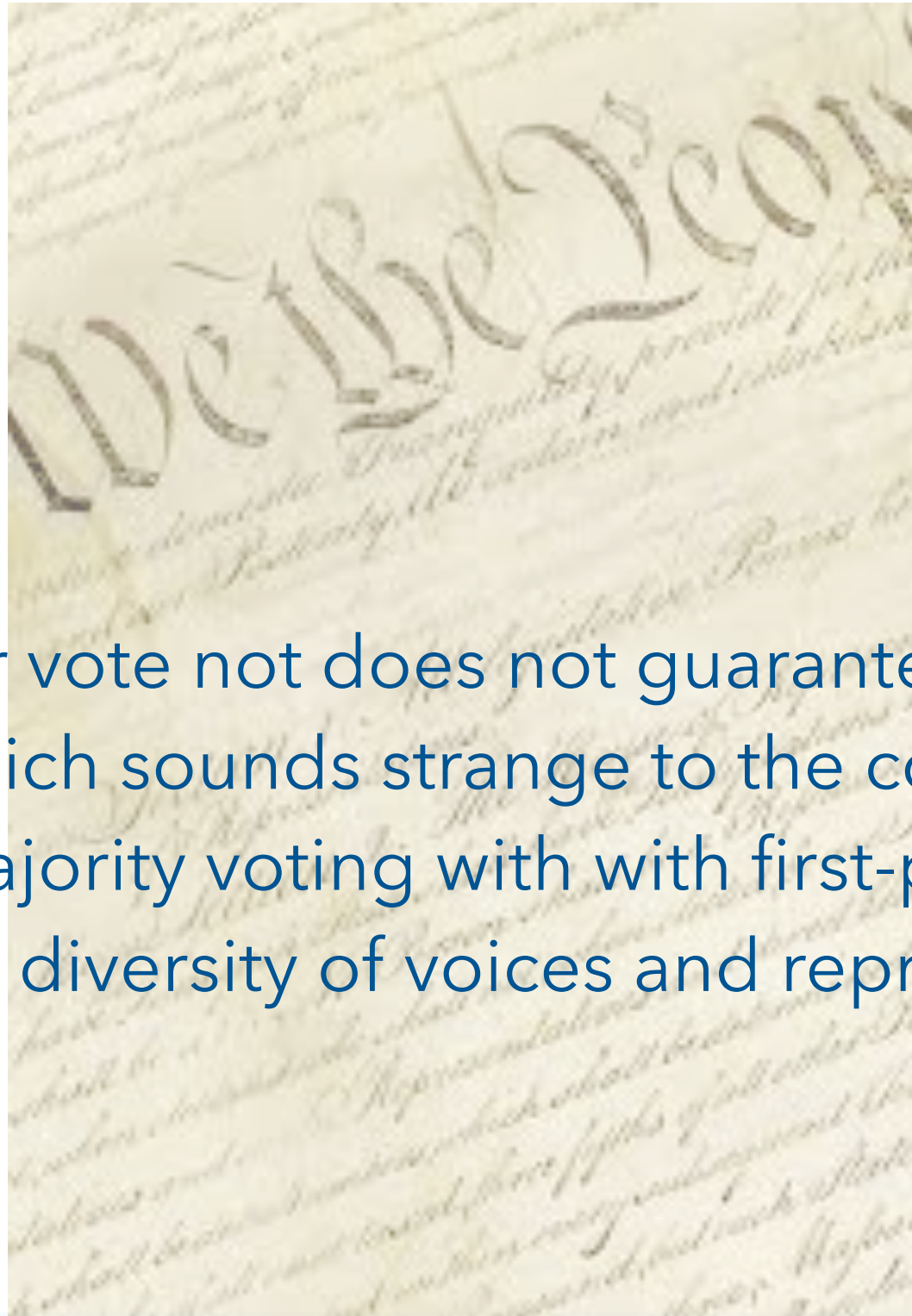
That race, **like ethnicity in African politics**, is instrumentalised to capture the state. It then becomes a ping pong ball around which elites mobilize.

Foreign Intervention, really.. 3

Russian interference in the USA, but USA and European governments have intervened overtly or covertly in the world, especially in developing countries for decades, **non stop**.



What have the rest of the world learned? 4



The popular vote not does not guarantee you will be elected to office, which sounds strange to the common observer. In addition, majority voting with with first-past the post does not guarantee a diversity of voices and representativity.

When it comes to power and interests...

5

..... the same behavioral patterns prevail like in most countries: misinformation, authoritarian tendencies, manipulation of laws, irrationality, arrogance, intimidation, violence and vigilante threats, etc..

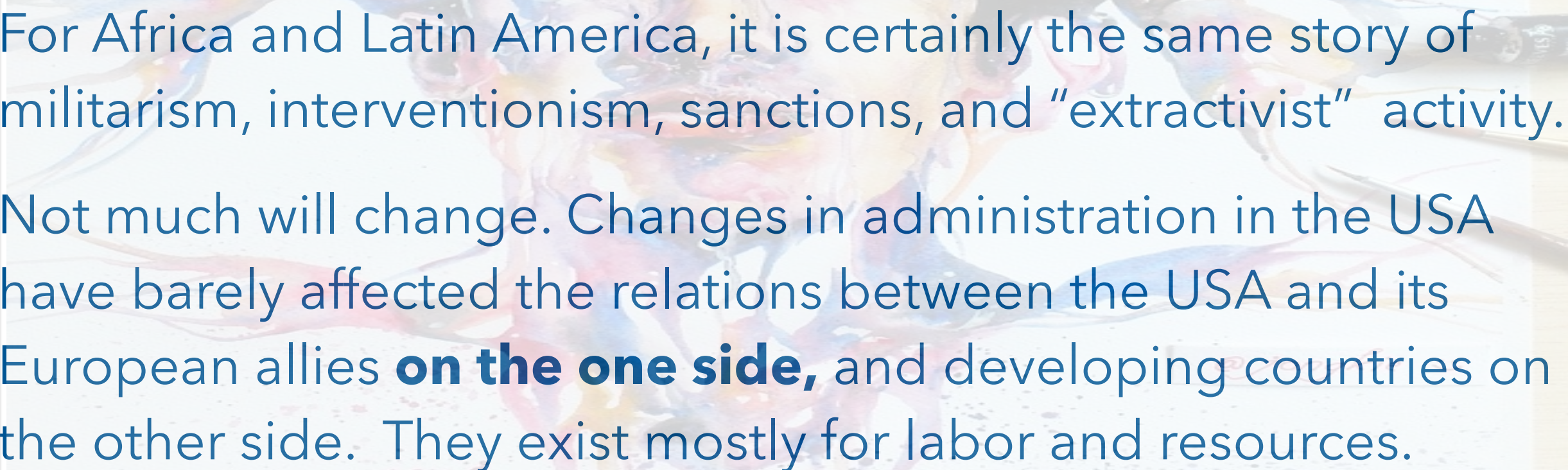
Is Trump a Strong Man, a Caudillo? 6

With his demagoguery, lies and tweets, Trump does resemble some leaders in the developing world. This type of behavior is well-calculated. It is neither irrational, nor schizophrenic.



The more it changes, the more it stays the same

7



For Africa and Latin America, it is certainly the same story of militarism, interventionism, sanctions, and “extractivist” activity. Not much will change. Changes in administration in the USA have barely affected the relations between the USA and its European allies **on the one side**, and developing countries on the other side. They exist mostly for labor and resources.

Strong men can exist in the USA too? 8

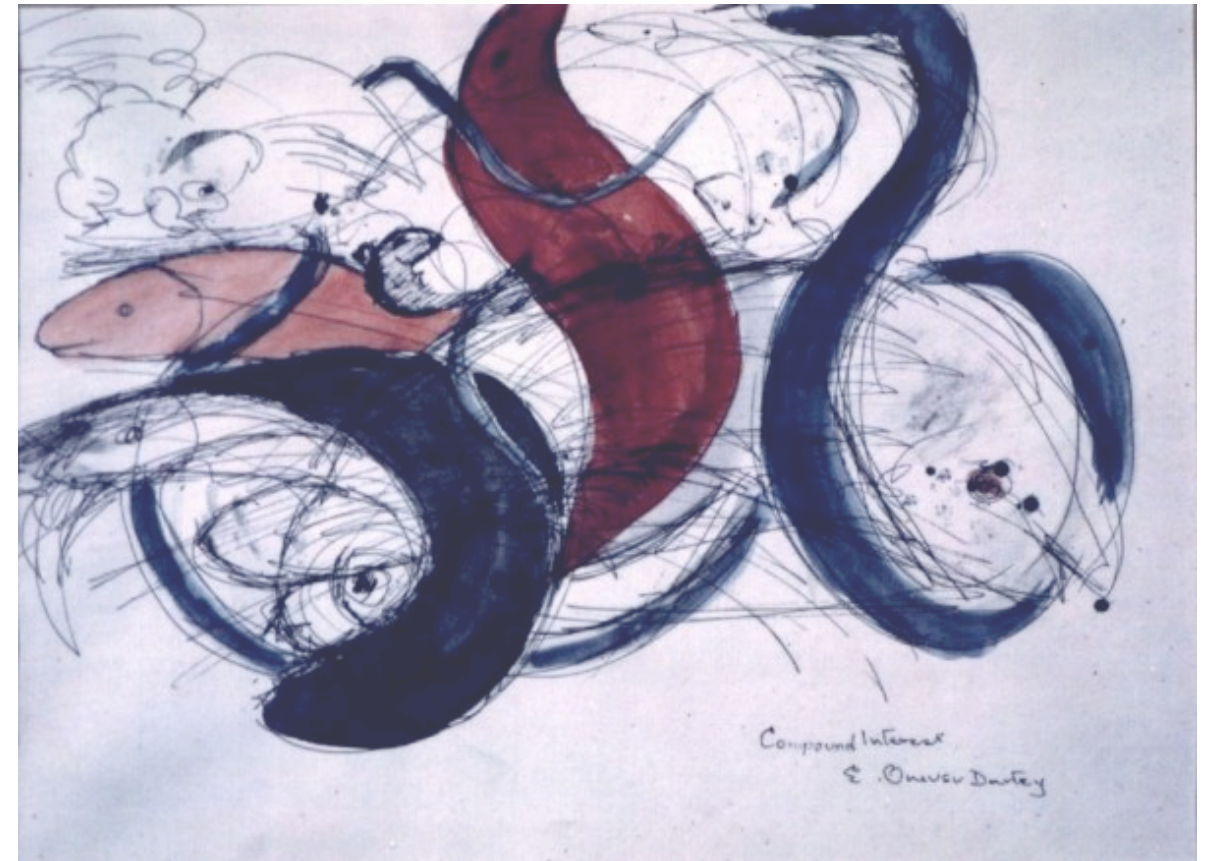


"Just as people spoke about the triumph of democracy in the 90s [in Africa], **now you are hearing people talk about end of democracy and the triumph of tribalism and the strong man.** We have to resist that cynicism."

Obama in Africa in South Africa (2018)

“Shithole” countries ...

... is the name Trump called African countries, El Salvador, and Haiti, in an attempt to justify his deportation policy in a closed-door working session with members of the cabinet and the Congress in January 2018....



... and he denied it

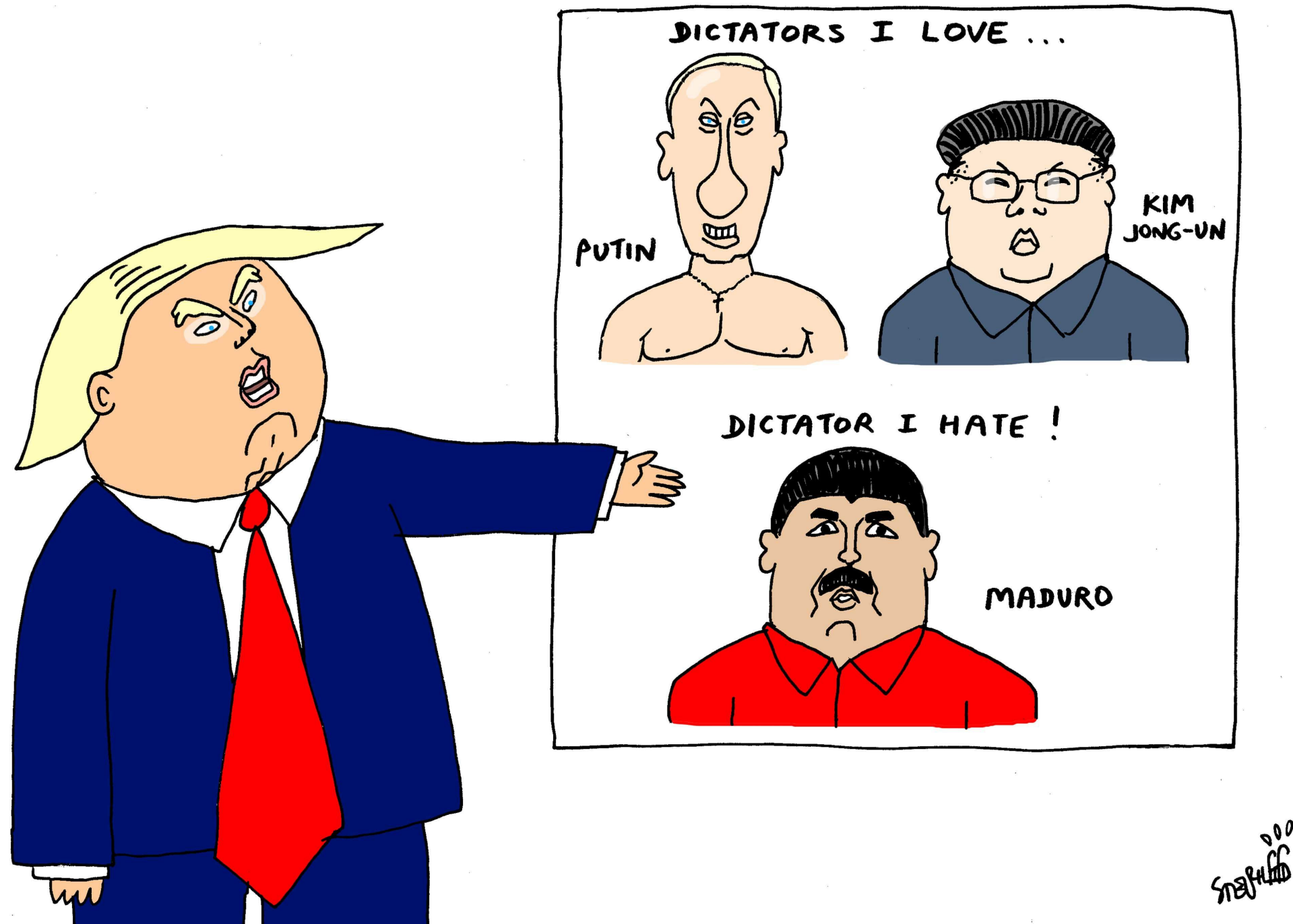
**This is how wise Shona people of Zimbabwe
will answer him.**

**The monkey
does not see
his own hind parts.
He sees
his neighbours'.**

Shona (Zimbabwe)



How different will it be with Biden? Who will be Biden's dictators?



Old and New Militarism

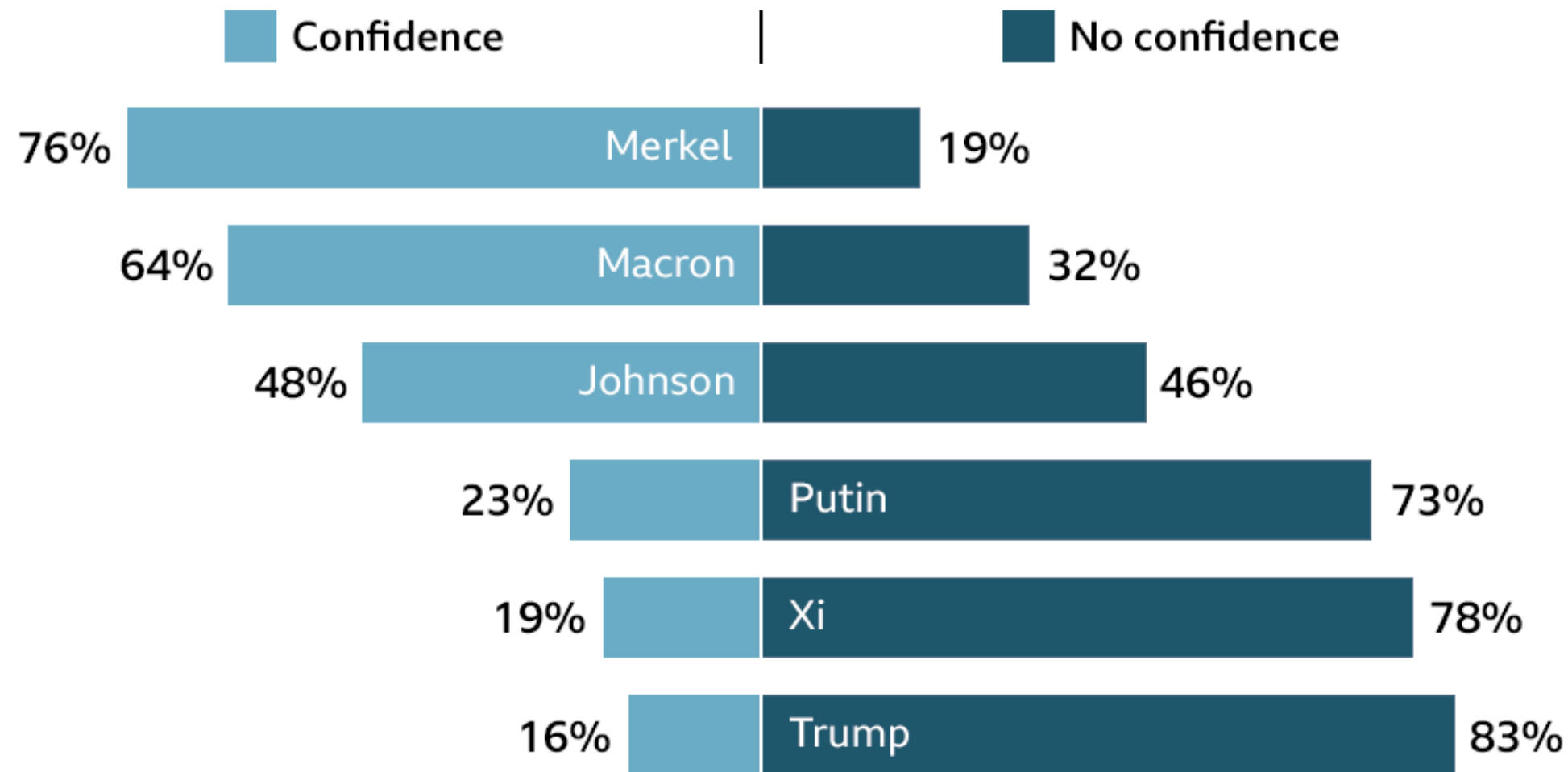


For Western Europeans, Trump was a little of a nuisance. They are thrilled Biden won: **a new future for multilateralism, for old post-war alliance to find a new life, to the detriment again of developing countries.**

Trump viewed from Europe

Trump less trusted than other leaders

Percentage of people saying they have 'confidence' or 'no confidence' in each leader 'to do the right thing regarding world affairs'



Survey asked questions of people in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and the UK

Source: Pew Research - Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey

BBC

Making The USA Great Again: the Biden Formula. What Biden says....

"There is no reason we should be falling behind China or anyone else when it comes to clean energy, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, 5G, high-speed rail, or the race to end cancer as we know it."



Biden says...



NATO is at the very heart of the United States' national security, and it is the bulwark of the liberal democratic ideal—an alliance of values, which makes it far more durable, reliable, and powerful than partnerships built by coercion or cash.

Biden promises...



"During my first year in office, the United States will organize and host a global Summit for Democracy to renew the spirit and shared purpose of the nations of the free world."

Selling democracy to the rest of the world again? Really?

Biden's "brave old world"

"We must once more harness that power and rally the free world to meet the challenges facing the world today. **It falls to the United States to lead the way.** No other nation has that capacity. No other nation is built on that idea."



Selling FREEDOM to the rest of the world again.. Really?

In conclusion ...

Elections will remain the bedrock of “democracy” in its most procedural meaning, but these questions remain:

Will it be deep enough and real for everyday people?

Will it work economically and politically for the commoner here in the USA and all over in the world?

In conclusion

Or will democracy continue to be a mask, a tool to maintain and increase inequality and political control? f countries ?

Will democracy it bring about a new world order where developing countries cn breathe?



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