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SECTION I: POLITICS, HISTORY

From Philadelphia to NATO: The Internationalization of U.S. Security Commitments at 250

TATO BEZHITASHVILI[1]

Abstract

The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. Throughout its quarter-millennial history, the United States has undergone significant transformations on both domestic and foreign stages. These changes have influenced the degree of democratization, levels of economic welfare, the nature of interstate relations, and decisions regarding participation in armed conflicts. Initially, geographic isolation contributed to U.S. security and facilitated the accumulation of power. Over time, however, the nation became increasingly vulnerable to external threats. Following substantial challenges during World War I and World War II, the United States ultimately opted to take on growing security commitments. This pursuit of global extension eventually culminated in the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The paper compares and contrasts the initial U.S. security perception with its modern global posture. It explores reasons behind the U.S. reluctant transition from isolationism to global expansionism. The piece provides a longitudinal assessment of how the U.S. has been constructing its geopolitical role and character throughout its semiquincentennial. Importantly, it displays the stark disagreement between President George Washington's warnings on permanent alliances and the current American participation in NATO.

Keywords: 250th anniversary, alliance, foreign policy, security, NATO, United States.

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Introduction

In 2026, the United States of America celebrates its 250 years of independence. Throughout its quarter-millennial history, the U.S. has undergone significant transformations on both domestic and foreign stages. These changes have influenced the degree of democratization, levels of economic welfare, the nature of interstate relations, and decisions regarding the entry into wars. Initially, geographic isolation contributed to American security and facilitated the accumulation of power. In particular, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans served as a natural protection for the newly independent country. Over time, however, the nation became increasingly vulnerable to external threats. The United States had to find other means to ensure its national security and stability. Following substantial challenges during World War I and World War II, the United States ultimately opted to take on growing security commitments. This pursuit of global extension eventually culminated in the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The initial U.S. foreign policy in the 18th century starkly differed from its current global posture. At the time of signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and issuing Washington's Farewell Address in 1796, the newly established nation could not exercise a sufficiently robust foreign policy. Defenseless against external encroachment, American policymakers preferred remaining an autonomous actor in regional and global politics.

It is worth mentioning that the U.S. did not abandon its original faith in unilateralism overnight, but rather it practiced a slow but steady extension worldwide. This change has been happening in response to the industrialization as well as mushrooming global challenges - wars and financial crises - throughout the last 250 years. Those risks have been narrowing the odds for the U.S. remaining isolated from global events. By gradually transcending its role from patrolling in the Western hemisphere to global power projection, the United States steadily internationalized its security commitments. By founding NATO with partners, the United States has ultimately become a central actor in the North Atlantic space and beyond.

The paper compares and contrasts the initial U.S. security perception with its modern global posture. It explores reasons behind the U.S. reluctant transition from isolationism to global expansionism. The piece provides a longitudinal assessment of how the U.S. has been constructing its geopolitical role and character throughout its semiquincentennial. Importantly, it displays the stark disagreement between President George Washington's warnings on permanent alliances and the current American participation in NATO.

Theoretical Framework

The early American struggle for security and survival can be well analyzed from the Structural Realism perspective. According to this International Relations theory, states as the central actors are in constant pursuit of survival (Waltz, 1979, p. 91). In the condition of self-help, states are prone towards growing militarization and an arms race, ultimately generating a security dilemma among regional or global powers. Importantly, as Kenneth Waltz - one of the founders of Structural Realism - proposes, the anarchic nature of the international system, rather than human nature, governs state behavior (Waltz, 1979, p. 65). Since the first years of independence, U.S. foreign policy engagement has largely depended on the type of system and global situation. Accordingly, as the existing international system could no longer ensure its security, the United States was forced to search for new solutions.

During its initial decades of statehood, the physical separation benefitted the U.S. security and inviolability from external powers. However, with the overdevelopment of technologies and the interconnection of global affairs, there was no place in the world left inaccessible. With a rapid industrial revolution transforming global dependence on boats into mechanical transportation systems, and eventually replacing cannons with intercontinental ballistic missiles (with the capacity to reach thousands of kilometers), the original arguments for isolationism and neutrality failed markedly. Hence, if the U.S. wanted to practical security at home, it should have withdrawn from a longstanding quarantine mode rather than remaining distant from global politics.

For the U.S. to secure its interests, the best option was to seek forward presence and collective defense policies through the NATO alliance. Closer cooperation with allies has become the source of urgent support for the U.S. to easily access any point using their territory, airspace, or water:

“Access granted by the United States’ network of alliances and security partnerships has underpinned the US-led global system since 1945. Access has allowed Washington to deploy personnel and infrastructure near potential combat theaters, move materiel, conduct logistics, and fight directly from within foreign territory” (Carson, Metz, & Poast, 2025, p. 107).

With the extended rights, the U.S. has successfully defeated the “tyranny of distance.” This concept represents another fundamental characteristic of the United States of America. It creates a remarkable paradox for the country: the United States’ physical separation from the rest of the world naturally defended it from foreign invasion, whereas that remoteness has limited the U.S. ability to influence world

politics. Considering this, the NATO alliance appeared an inevitable necessity for American global interests to benefit and extend.

Furthermore, this paper applies a geopolitical/geostrategic theory – Rimland Theory by Nicholas John Spykman. It is closely linked to the realist concepts of balance of power and sphere of influence. Constructed on the "Sea Power" (Mahan, 1890) and "Heartland" (Mackinder, 1904) theories by Alfred Thayer Mahan and Halford Mackinder, respectively, Rimland Theory has largely influenced the U.S. Containment Policy during the Cold War and NATO expansion in the subsequent decades. If Mahan highlighted the significance of maritime dominance, a strong navy, and controlling trade routes in water, whereas Mackinder underscored the centrality of controlling the Eurasian land, Spykman vehemently argued that "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Spykman, 1944, p. 43). Nicholas Spykman combined the tools provided by Mahan and the warnings outlined by Mackinder into the strategy for the U.S. to expand its influence into Eurasia and effectively besiege the Heartland power, the Soviet Union, during the second half of the 20th century. Similarly, the current U.S. focus on the Indo-Pacific, as the modern application of Spykman's theory, serves the same goal to keep in check any Heartland power from expanding in the region.

Initial Formula of the U.S. Security

While revisiting the roots of early American security perception, the role of Philadelphia is worth noting. The city served as the birthplace of the United States. As a symbol of independence, Philadelphia hosted the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, drafted the Constitution in 1787, and acted as the national capital during 1790-1800 (History.com Editors, 2025). Yet, the central event connecting Philadelphia to the research topic was Washington's Farewell Address – a document primarily distributed in Philadelphia in 1796.

While advocating for the rule of law, morality, and national unity, President Washington issued important warnings for his contemporaries and successors. Chief among those warnings was to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world" (Washington, 1796, p. 22). It is noteworthy that President George Washington's call for isolationism was not about a strict remoteness but rather a unilateralism to ensure freedom of action independent from great powers. Notably, he recommended

extending commercial rather than political relations with the rest of the world, ensuring a neutral course of action.

Hence, the initial perception of security for the United States was greatly rooted in geographic separation from the rest of the world. With the Pacific Ocean to the West and the Atlantic to the East, American security advanced markedly, with minimal external interference. However, later in 1823, the United States approved the Monroe Doctrine (National Archives, 1823). Also known as the U.S. strategy to dominate the Western Hemisphere, the Doctrine can also be assessed from the securitization perspective. Fears of potential recolonization of Latin American countries by European powers, as well as Russia's possible expansion in the Pacific, greatly inspired this Doctrine. However, it was first and foremost designed to ensure American national security during times of great transformations.

Reluctant Transition from Isolation to Global Engagement

Right at the beginning of WWI, the United States declared neutrality (Wilson W. , 1914), continuing the path advised by the first U.S. President to keep the country out of European conflicts. However, with the German attack on American ships and the deciphering of the Zimmermann Telegram (Lindsay, 2026), the United States was forced to partake in the conflict. "The world must be safe for democracy" – those words by President Woodrow Wilson before Congress have tremendously changed the destiny of the United States and the world since then (Hindley, 2017). Consequently, the First World War marked the American transition from isolation and non-interference to active global participation. However, that shift appeared very short-lived, as after a decisive contribution in the World War I, the country returned to its isolationist policy.

At that time, President Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" (Wilson W. , 1918) was the most explicit attempt so far to internationalize American security through multilateral cooperation. However, the Senate rejected his proposal to become a full-fledged member of the League of Nations. Accordingly, "Fourteen Points" remained just a delicate light of hope for the United States during the interwar period as the nation returned to its traditional stance of unilateralism. Despite the establishment of the League of Nations, the interwar period saw a deficient American security commitment.

As Edward Hallett Carr (1946, p. 27) discussed, the United States preferred the nineteenth-century "utopian" approaches of liberal democracy rather than complex power politics. This application has largely

neglected the unsuitability of theory with a specific time and location, as well as the role of force in managing crises during the interwar period. As a result, the limited U.S. engagement and post-WWI delusion of the victorious side generated power vacuums in Europe and Asia, permitting the resurgence of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and fascist Italy. The two-decade-long absence from global politics put a high price on the U.S. to pay in the World War II and the post-conflict reconstruction on the European continent.

The Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941 (U.S. Department of War, n.d.), can be considered the turning point for the U.S. global engagement. The event ruined the logic behind U.S. neutrality and the protective purpose of the two-Ocean shield as Imperial Japan heavily attacked American land in the Pacific. That was the moment that clearly demonstrated that if Americans wanted to secure their territories, they should have established dynamic international affairs, taken stronger initiatives, and ensured a balance of power in key regions.

The NATO Era

U.S. participation in the NATO alliance is the most excellent example of expanding American security commitments. Since 1945, U.S. policymakers have believed that waiting for another global war would be unreasonable, considering the experiences of the First and Second World Wars. In the nuclear age, seeking multilateral formats of partnership and, specifically, establishing NATO, ensured U.S. security and stability through NATO's collective defense pledge. Interestingly, this was the implementation of an exactly opposite policy to what George Washington warned against: permanent alliances. Since 1949, the United States has been committed to participating in any counterattack operations in the event of external aggression against Canada or its European partners. Hence, after a lengthy reluctance to international commitments, that was a revolutionary decision for the U.S. Since then, the U.S.'s survival as an economically and politically powerful actor has greatly depended on the level of engagement with its allies worldwide.

It was believed that a strong and democratic Europe as a partner could provide reciprocal benefits to the United States. Considering the devastating effect of the Second World War and the expanding communism around Europe, the U.S. had no other choice but to financially support European nations to rebuild cities and improve their resistance towards new ideology. The Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, as primary

economic-ideological mechanisms, demonstrated expanding American commitments. With $400 million provided for Greece and Turkey (Lindsay, Remembering the Truman Doctrine, 2026) and $13 billion for 16 Western European nations (Wilson T. A., 1977, p. 47), the United States explicitly proved itself capable and willing to end the isolationist policy and shift towards more engagement.

For over 77 years - almost a third of its statehood period - the U.S. has been allocating significant resources to maintaining and consolidating NATO. The United States proved itself to be a devoted partner for the rest of the NATO members. It remained loyal to the collective defense clause of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (NATO, 1949). Both during and after the Cold War, the U.S. actively participated in major geopolitical events, preserving global peace and stability.

Concluding Remarks: The Legacy of the 250-Year History

In its 250-year history, the United States has been maneuvering between two extremes - isolationism and global engagement. Its strategies shifted from isolationism and Offshore Balancing to Liberal Internationalism and Liberal Hegemony policies. After looking at those trends and patterns of U.S. engagement in retrospect, it is crucial to note that the year 2026 is probably the most serious test of American preparedness for global commitments since George Washington's warning. Nowadays, the world is full of complexities, with multidimensional threats both on conventional and non-conventional levels.

In 2026, the debate over isolationism and engagement is not completely resolved. The initial Philadelphia warning on "permanent alliances" still affects the current U.S. foreign policymaking. Revisionist Russia, the turbulent Middle East, Iran alongside its proxy terrorist groups, rising China and the possibility of "Thucydides Trap" - facing those excessive challenges, unnecessary wars, and massive global financial contribution, the U.S. once again faces the dilemma between its initial unilateralism and modern international security commitments. Considering this, it is no surprise that the world has experienced the Trump Administration's harsh skepticism towards permanent alliances, questioning the necessity of U.S. engagement in NATO.

At the same time, American policymakers acknowledge the massive benefits of global partnership, such as access to global trade, advancing prosperity, sharing democratic norms, exchanging technological achievements, mutually strengthening partners, guaranteeing global security and stability, and maintaining

great power recognition. It is still under question whether the 250-year-old United States will follow its active global engagement policy through alliances, or return to its foundational principle – George Washington's formula of avoiding permanent alliances. However, it is highly unlikely to see the United States isolating itself from the rest of the world. Yet, the gradual shift in U.S. foreign policy priorities from one region to another is foreseeable in the short term.

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Prospects and Challenges for the Development of Transatlantic Ties between NATO`s American and European Partners under the Donald Trump Administration

NIKA CHITADZE[2]

Abstract

The paper analyzes NATO's role in ensuring international security during both the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods. It also presents and discusses the main disagreements between NATO's American and European partners following Trump's second term.

Keywords: USA, NATO, Europe, Defense, Security, Donald Trump

Introduction

During Donald Trump's first presidency, political statements directed at NATO's European partners were marked by criticism, both financial and military. The United States is one of the main players in the international political system, and therefore, its rhetoric with the international organization NATO is important for cooperation. Tense and political relations are an obstacle for both sides.

For years, Donald Trump has been skeptical of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, often criticizing the defense spending of member states, which he believes is too low. As we have seen, he often stated in his statements that he would not protect those members who failed to meet their defense spending targets. Donald Trump's victory in the presidential elections had a significant impact on transatlantic relations. European leaders were aware that his policy on the financial issue would once again be in the spotlight in NATO and would attach special importance to it, since he constantly mentioned and talked about this issue in his statements. In addition, maintaining the conflict situation on the continent and political support for Ukraine, similar to Europe's support, remained on the agenda.

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The Trump administration's foreign policy was dominated by "Peace through strength", which was based on the idea that strong military capabilities and an increased budget are the main means of ensuring international security.

NATO's main policies and priorities from its creation to the present

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created on April 4, 1949 to prevent threats to the world, since the world had gone through two world wars and killed up to 62 million people, the countries had problems with refugees, food, and the restoration of territories, an increase in infant mortality, and millions of orphans were left homeless (half a million people were homeless in Hamburg). After the defeat of German Nazism, fascism, and Japanese militarism, a threat arose in the form of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was able to strengthen its geopolitical and ideological influence in Central and Eastern Europe, which created the need for democratic countries to take care of developing a new collective security system in order to prevent a third world war. It was for this purpose that NATO was created. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in Washington and had 12 member states: the United States, Portugal, France, Iceland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, Luxembourg, Italy, Norway, Denmark, and the United Kingdom (NATO Handbook, 2006). These countries were the first, and later NATO began to expand, and other countries joined.

NATO served three main goals: 1. To contain Soviet expansionism, 2. To prevent nationalist militarism in Europe through the strength of North Americans, and 3. To promote European political integration.

The United States financed and supported the creation of the Marshall Plan, known as the European Recovery Program, with the help of which the level of economic stabilization was achieved. The Marshall Plan was intended to help the needy populations of Europe, to stop the influence of the Soviet Union and communism, and to prevent economic decline. It was developed in May 1947 (Agnew, 2004). “It would be neither appropriate nor effective for the United States government to devise its own program for European economic reconstruction. That is a matter for the Europeans themselves; I believe that the initiative must come from Europe. Our role should be to facilitate the development of a European program and later to support that program as much as we can. The program should be collaborative, with many, if not all, European countries agreeing to it.” - George S. Marshall (Agnew, 2004)

With the support of the Soviet Union, communists were threatening the governments of European countries. In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia overthrew the democratically elected government with the covert support of the Soviet Union, after which Soviet troops surrounded Berlin.

Against this background, the countries of Western Europe united to strengthen military cooperation and collective defense. After discussions and debates, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4, 1949. The famous Article 5 was created, according to which an armed attack on one or more of them would be considered an attack on all of them, in which case each ally would receive the right to use armed force. In addition to this article, new articles were created and added over time (Chitadze, 2008). NATO created a unified command structure, and military headquarters were located in Rocancourt, near Versailles, in Paris. The Allies also established a permanent civilian secretariat, the first Secretary General of which was Lord Ismay, a representative of the United Kingdom. Over time, political stability was restored, and the rise and rise of states began. The alliance began to expand, and the states of Greece and Turkey joined in 1952, and West Germany in 1955 (NATO Handbook, 2006). Against the background of current events, NATO simultaneously adopted the doctrine of "Massive Retaliation" - if the Soviet Union attacked, NATO would respond with nuclear weapons. This was precisely the deterrent for both sides, since any attack could easily escalate into a nuclear war and have negative consequences for the states.

During the Cold War, NATO was able to overcome the threats that came from the Soviet Union. In 1955, the Soviet Empire initiated the Warsaw Pact, a collective defense treaty. The Soviet Union and seven Eastern Bloc socialist republics joined this treaty.

NATO took steps not only in the military but also in the political sphere, since NATO saw that there was a lack of political consultation, which was clearly demonstrated by the Suez Crisis in 1956, so the committee presented recommendations and strengthened cooperation in foreign policy, economics, culture, science, and technology. With the help of these recommendations, member states were encouraged to resolve disagreements that they had among themselves through dialogue, regardless of whether this conflict concerned NATO or not.

The events taking place in the NATO alliance, and at the same time the realities developing in the world, taught the North Atlantic organization what steps it needed to take for greater security, not only in terms of military, but also in terms of political dialogue. States tried to prevent a repeat of the world war and to establish ties as much as possible, strengthen negotiations and have military power. After the creation of NATO, the joints were gradually refined, and Europe was developing in order to create security on the continent.

As noted, NATO worked not only in the military, but also in the political arena, which is why in 1991 the NATO allies established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, and since 1997 it has been called the Euro-Atlantic Council. This council united the states, began a partnership with neighboring

countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia. It was these countries that held consultations, established new ties to deepen democracy and European integration, among which there were active negotiations and mutual cooperation. The idea and goals of NATO's creation encompassed not only member states but also neighboring states. In 1994, the North Atlantic Alliance created the Mediterranean Dialogue, where a dialogue was held with non-NATO countries: Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, and Mauritania. Their goal was to strengthen stability and improve mutual understanding in the Mediterranean region (Chitadze, 2008).

The North Atlantic organization has faced many obstacles since its creation, but its role in peacebuilding was so great that action was necessary. The collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the growth of ethnic violence and nationalism, which was especially noticeable in Yugoslavia. Initially, this process was carried out in the observation phase by NATO to see how far it would be able to withstand without NATO intervention and whether the state would be able to resolve the conflict on its own, but as aggression increased, which could have easily escalated into a full-scale conflict, the Alliance decided to act within its competence. NATO's first action was to express its full support for the UN's efforts to stop war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1993-1995, NATO conducted an air campaign that proved decisive in ending the conflict. It deployed 60,000 troops to Bosnia under a UN mandate to help bring peace, later handing over the mission to the European Union in 2004. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became clear what problems each state faced after gaining independence, whether it was increased aggression, ethnic problems, economic problems, or internal civil strife. States tried to cope with these problems with their own resources, but when they were unable to solve them, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in accordance with its rules and legislation, helped states within its mandate to prevent the conflict from deepening and the war from engulfing more states.

The Yugoslav conflict showed NATO that it was necessary to introduce a new mechanism that would include the Caucasus and other regions. It was supposed to prevent similar conflicts from developing in other states. It was for this purpose that the Partnership for Peace program was created, which allowed non-NATO countries to share information with NATO, to become closer to each other militarily, and to introduce democratic standards in their own states. At the same time, the partner countries themselves would decide how close they wanted to be to the North Atlantic organization and cooperate, and the door to enlargement was open to them if they decided to move towards NATO membership. This agreement turned out to be quite successful for European countries that needed deep and comprehensive cooperation

with NATO; the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were able to become full members of NATO by working on political and military reforms. The path to enlargement was opened, and NATO played an important role in strengthening democracy and stability in Europe. Against the backdrop of this success, a new crisis emerged on the continent, with the conflict between Albanian separatists and Serbian military and political forces in Kosovo. NATO conducted a 78-day air operation and flew more than 38,000 sorties to restore the peace process (Chitadze, 2008).

In 2001, the North Atlantic Alliance had to invoke Article 5 for the first time in its history, during a terrorist attack in New York. This event, and subsequent terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, and Istanbul, had such dire consequences for the innocent population of the country that a new plan had to be implemented. The coalition and NATO members decided to launch a military intervention in Afghanistan, the goal of which was to seize bases and arrest key leaders. This operation is known as “Operation Enduring Freedom”. This step was intended to maximally restrain al-Qaeda leaders so that they would not pose a threat to the population. The terrorist acts carried out by al-Qaeda were deadly and large-scale; these actions damaged both state territories and took the lives of innocent citizens. While this process was not over and covered various countries and cities, NATO began to think about how to curb the violence.

NATO continued to expand and cooperate with new partners. In 2004, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania joined.

The next enlargement was in 2009, when Croatia and Albania became members of NATO. Montenegro joined in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020, Finland in 2023, and Sweden in 2024 (NATO, 2026). It seems that both the developed states of the European Union and developing countries are joining NATO. This shows that the North Atlantic Organization is open to enlargement to any country that establishes and shares NATO's basic goals and requirements.

Since its creation, the Alliance has been trying to adapt to the reality of what is happening in the world; it is integrating and developing, cooperating with both international and non-international organizations. It also strengthens coordination with organizations that have strong capabilities and capabilities in the direction of civil society development. Today, in the 21st century, it is becoming even more visible that NATO's main task is collective defense. Events that have developed in various states, such as Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and against Ukraine in 2014. The Syrian conflict and the rising terrorism coming from the Middle East and North Africa, ethnic conflicts in the regions, economic difficulties, and the increase in migrants, cyber attacks that have become more relevant against the background of technological development, these difficulties have put NATO's flexibility to the test and

reminded us of how many difficulties it must endure. NATO fights terrorism through prevention, protection, and operational response, but there are several factors that exacerbate problems in the region, including political instability, economic difficulties, weak state institutions, and climate change. In addition, Russia and its positions are of great importance. Russia is the biggest and most direct threat to NATO. This country's goals include: increasing and expanding military power, violating airspace, and provocations, and changing the Euro-Atlantic security system. In addition, Russia is waging hybrid warfare, disinformation and propaganda, cyberattacks, economic pressure, and sabotage. NATO's goal is to deter Russia's aggressive actions.

It is worth noting that the North Atlantic Alliance has become flexible over time. In the 1950s, NATO was a purely defensive organization; in the 1960s, it turned into a political instrument, in the 1990s, it was a guarantor of stabilization in Central and Eastern Europe, and in the 21st century, it faces completely new threats and its activities are becoming even more comprehensive.

NATO has implemented a modern strategy:

• Madrid Summit 2022 - a defense strategy was defined, which includes air, sea, land, and space with a 360-degree approach. NATO's military base was strengthened, and battle groups were created in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary. In addition, the NATO force model was created - rapid response, improved coordination, and readiness (NATO, 2026).

• Vilnius Summit 2023 - regional defense plans were approved.

• Washington Summit 2024 - Strengthened military capabilities.

• Hague Summit 2025 - Agreed on defense. Countries should allocate 5% of GDP to defense (NATO, 2026).

In 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea, NATO implemented the most significant strengthening of collective defense since the end of the Cold War. The plan was called the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which ensured security and adopted adaptation measures. This package became the basis for the common system of NATO's deterrence principle in 2014-2016. According to this package, Central and Eastern Europe carried out land, sea, and air operations and exercises. The main goal was to deter aggression and strengthen defense.

NATO's main goal is to protect the security of its member states, taking care of this both militarily and politically. Collective defense is the core of the Alliance, its responsibility to protect populations from attacks and wars around the world.

Also important is the protection of its core principles and values:

1. Democracy
2. Human rights
3. Freedom
4. Rule of law

NATO annually develops new plans and packages, implements and develops new ones, such as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) formed in 2015 - a very high readiness joint force, consisting of 20,000 soldiers, 5,000 of whom could be deployed on land in 2-3 days. These operations were supported by both the air force and the navy. Military exercises, collective defense, and rapid response to crises were carried out. It was first tested in Poland and has been regularly tested in various exercises, and since 2024, this model has been replaced by the Allied Reaction Force (ARF), only the name has changed. It appears during crises, strengthens deterrence, and demonstrates NATO's readiness. In 2016, at the Warsaw Summit, RAP was fully implemented, and deterrence policy was strengthened. In 2018, at the Brussels summit, 30 battalions, air defense aircraft, and 30 warships were created, which were ready in 30 days. In 2020, a new strategy, Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area, was introduced, according to which a unified military framework was created, and crisis planning was improved (NATO, 2026). During the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, NATO's response was to activate the defense plan, deploy forces, create new battle groups in Eastern Europe, mobilize 40,000 troops, and strengthen air and naval forces (NATO, 2026). It was precisely Russia's aggression that caused NATO to further strengthen its military readiness in Eastern Europe; its attacks became powerful and threatening, so the goal of the North Atlantic organization was to be ready for any scenario, strike, and have its military strength at full readiness. These aggressive attacks by Russia have not only affected Ukraine, but also threatened other former Soviet Union countries, since it was quite possible that the same conflict could engulf these regions, so the Alliance has strengthened its armaments in this area and made them stronger than before. This means that events, conflicts, and changes in the state automatically make NATO flexible and push it to take quick, favorable steps (NATO, 2026).

The NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) is the main provider, ensuring the rapid delivery of services to both member and partner countries. The main activities of this agency are to support NATO operations and exercises, manage and coordinate the Central European pipeline system, and ensure the smooth operation of the weapons system. In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this agency provided logistical support for the procurement of medical supplies. This is precisely what indicates the fact that even during the pandemic, the Alliance helped various countries with its resources in terms of

medical assistance and did not leave countries in need of assistance unattended. In addition, it provides port services, air transportation, base maintenance, and fuel supply. Today, it manages 32 programs and more than 90 systems: radars, helicopters, missiles, and armored vehicles. The headquarters of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency is located in Luxembourg, with main centers in Hungary, France, and Italy. There are about 1,550 employees and more than 2,500 contractors in this area, which indicates that it has a rather large and important role for the Alliance and its members. Since it is with the help of this agency that the necessary services are provided in various situations (NATO, 2026).

At the Warsaw Summit, the leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formulated the Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge, the purpose of which was to strengthen the military potential and replenish military supplies, deter aggression from Russia, and at the same time support Ukraine in its defense. At that time, the states were obliged to share their experiences with each other, introduce innovative ideas, and cooperate with the European Union, Ukraine, and the Pacific Ocean partner countries. After the Russia-Ukraine war, NATO considered Ukraine as an indispensable target in its new plans and tried to help it so that it would not be alone in this war, and the conflict would not spread throughout the region. That is why, it seems, since 2014, the North Atlantic Organization has been putting deep cooperation with Ukraine on the agenda.

It is worth noting that the Alliance has a NATO Supreme Committee, which is responsible for strengthening international cooperation in the field of defense and armaments, and the Conference of National Armaments Directors. The committee provides modern equipment, compatible systems, conducts intelligence and monitoring, and provides ballistic missile defense. The committee meets twice a year, holds meetings and implements new strategies, and has constant communication with partners. Its activities are supported by ground, air, and naval units, which are in constant readiness and manage all activities in these areas. This means that communication and cooperation between partners help to create participation in joint projects, exchange information, and share resources, which in the future reduces costs and strengthens collective defense. NATO's internal bodies are similar in their activities, although they are distributed, which increases efficiency. For example, in addition to this committee, there is another very important body, the Defense Industrial Production Board, which was created to strengthen defense industrial capabilities. It connects countries, military plans, defense, works on supply problems, integration of military plans, and coordination of defense procurement. Member states plan production better, and transparency increases. This committee helps NATO identify real problems in the field of production and accelerates the delivery of military equipment. The committee makes decisions in stages: first, it prepares

recommendations, then it provides them to national representatives, and finally, they are discussed in the NATO Supreme Committee, and a final decision is formed.

In 2024, a meeting was held in NATO, where the events of the past years, their results, and future strategies were summarized. The alliance holds similar meetings every year and develops an action plan to improve its work. It was at this year's Washington summit that NATO committed to expanding its industrial capabilities, which means increasing defense and developing an industrial base in critical situations. The goal of this plan is to expand and refine NATO's defense lines and be at the forefront of security. The alliance was particularly attentive to the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war and, at the same time, monitored other developments. The goal of the North Atlantic organization in recent years has been not only to repel an armed attack, but also to transport troops, strengthen intelligence, and coordinate.

In the summer of 2025, NATO allies agreed to develop naval, air, land, cyberspace, and space capabilities. Be timely and conduct full-scale joint collective defense operations. NATO’s defense planning process itself represents 3 main tasks:

• Deterrence and Defense

• Crisis Management and Prevention

• Cooperation for Security

In the same year, NATO Defense Ministers approved new goals:

1. The need for more military power

2. Increased defense spending

3. Industrial expansion

4. Maximizing the use of modern technologies (US Mission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2026).

In parallel, training is being conducted between partners; they participate in rapid reaction forces, air and missile defense programs, which help to gain and improve experience. In addition, NATO brings together states, the military, academia, and the private sector. As I mentioned, NATO continues to conduct training in different countries regardless of the climate, in 2026, more than 32,000 soldiers from 14 allied countries joined forces and underwent intensive training in the northern part (Finland, Norway). The aim of this operation is for the allies to improve coordination in any climatic situation and strengthen experience in harsh conditions. The exercise took place in 2026 and covered cyberspace and space. The operation aimed to improve readiness, air missions, and fire training, so that the forces could operate effectively. In addition to this operation, a large-scale exercise called Steadfast Dart 2026 was also held. 10,000 military personnel

from 11 countries, including the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Lithuania, are participating in this exercise.

The main priority of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is collective defense, ensuring the security of member states, conflict prevention, maximum access to resources, and a timely response to conflict hotspots. The alliance is based on these goals and has developed over time, covering both the military and political spheres. It has implemented and refined strategic plans that are fully adapted to the situations. Since its creation, it has faced numerous conflicts and problems, but it has not stopped its activities; on the contrary, events have determined NATO's flexibility and comprehensiveness. Let us briefly summarize the events: in 1949-1991, NATO's main goal was to contain the Soviet Union and protect Europe; in 1991-2001, it was crisis management and partnership with the countries of the former Soviet Union, NATO expansion; in 2001-2014, the era of terrorism began; in 2014-2022, the main threat was the return of Russia and occupations; in 2022-2026, multilateral threats, competition between great powers. There have been many cases throughout history when NATO required full readiness and timely response; these events contributed to the formation of its activities (US Mission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2026).

Relations with American and European Partners after Trump's Second Term

The progress report published by NATO in 2025 outlined the relations between NATO and the European Union in various areas. Work continued in the areas of partnership for peace, NATO defense planning process. The meeting of high-ranking representatives strengthened communications with each other and improved the processes taking place in the organization. The organization's partners strengthened relations in terms of developing military capabilities and also avoided duplication of activities. Significant attention was paid to ammunition in the ground and air sectors in order to increase their stock. On the ground side, meetings were held between the European Defense Agency and NATO on ground strikes by soldiers, as well as on chemical and biological threats.

After the election of Donald Trump to his second term as president, he again put on the agenda the increase in the defense budget of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At the 2025 NATO summit, European leaders agreed to Donald Trump's request and increased the budget. The White House published statements by representatives of the EU countries regarding the budget increase and their positions: Polish President Andrzej Duda stated that the adoption of this initiative would have been impossible without Trump. Finnish President Elina Valtonen fully supported it and said that Europe should spend more. At the same time, Estonian Prime Minister Kristen Michal recognized this as a historic moment. These official statements

were made not only by European leaders, but even CNN journalists stated that it was a diplomatic masterpiece. Initially, this agreement was acceptable to NATO member states, as confirmed by positive official statements from representatives of European countries. However, Donald Trump and his administration began to make negative statements about NATO. In February 2025, at the Munich Security Conference, Vice President Jay Dee Vance criticized European leaders for curbing freedom of speech and excessively liberal immigration policies. At the same time, Donald Trump continued to demand an increase in defense budgets from European countries. Unlike Trump, previous administrations did not directly link transatlantic cooperation to Europe's financial obligations to NATO, but Trump raised the budget issue and stated that, in the event of an attack, American support would depend on the defense spending of a particular member state. Several events before the NATO summit caused concern among European leaders on Trump's part, such as the G7 meeting in Canada, which President Donald Trump left before its end, and wrote offensive comments on social media about the French President Emmanuel Macron. This meeting ended without diplomatic results and escalated the situation. At the same time, before the NATO summit, it was noticeable that the Trump administration's commitment to European security was weakening. Ultimately, the NATO summit showed how much power diplomatic meetings have and how it is possible to avoid problems and conflicts through dialogue and agreement between the parties. Although Europe had to make concessions due to Trump's policies, the main goal is to strengthen security, for which, sometimes, making concessions is inevitable. Not all European countries have met Trump's tough attitude and negative rhetoric in the same way. For example, the Prime Minister of Spain openly opposed Trump and stated that he would not meet the 5% target, but in the end, an agreement was reached. It was this negative rhetoric that caused a rift, and Belgium and Slovakia joined Spain. These events show how much power diplomacy has in politics. If the statements are correct and take into account the parties, then there is less risk of worsening relations. Negative rhetoric, on the other hand, provides a chance to incite conflict, which subsequently affects the decision-making process.

Let us consider the relations and agreements concluded between NATO and the European Union in 2025: On January 13, the NATO Secretary General participated in the meeting of the Security and Defense Committee of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, where priorities and defense spending were discussed (Carnegie, Europe, 2026). On January 31, the NATO Secretary General participated in the meeting of the European Commissioners, which aimed to increase military production and agree on strategic priorities. On February 3, the NATO Secretary General attended an informal meeting with EU leaders. On February 6, he participated in a panel discussion, where ambassadors exchanged

views. On February 13, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy participated in the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council. On April 3, he exchanged views with NATO foreign ministers on the “European Defense White Paper - Preparedness 2030” (Carnegie, Europe, 2026).

The positions of the President of the United States of America and his administration were attracting attention throughout Europe. Donald Trump’s goals and policies were unacceptable to European leaders, including the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, as well as Trump’s negative comments to European representatives, his tough attitudes, his policy of intimidation, that the US would leave the North Atlantic Organization and that this was an unnecessary burden for him, and his statements, where he clearly stated that US assistance would be determined by the amount of the defense budget of a NATO member state. It was this attitude that later became the focus of attention from European states, and they took into account Donald Trump’s negative rhetoric. Spain refused to allow the full use of American military bases and airspace to attack Iran, while France allowed the US to use aircraft based in southern France.

Donald Trump was disappointed that NATO member states had not shown more activity in military operations against Iran.

Official statements by Donald Trump and his administration concerned the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Trump administration described NATO's new policy as "the end of free rein", "a new era of shared responsibility" (white house statement of NATO breakthrough).

These statements were published after the Hague summit. Trump said that Europe should pay its fair share and put the demand for a 5% budget on the agenda for Europe. In addition, in official statements, the Trump administration no longer presented the same collective defense as NATO Article 5 as an automatic guarantee, and such statements have caused serious fear in Europe.

Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Defense, stated that Europe should be able to defend itself. The administration has openly spoken about the reduction of American forces in Europe. Marco Rubio's comment on this was that American military readiness in Europe will change, citing competition with China, the Indo-Pacific region, and the Middle East as reasons. In addition, Trump demanded that NATO member Denmark accept Greenland, which alarmed Europe.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, during a meeting with Marco Rubio, said that exaggerated statements in the media, both in the American and European media, are unfounded, and that America's contribution to NATO is as active as before. He also stated that all countries should contribute to improving NATO in order to remain viable; the alliance is not only a union of allies and partners, but also a unity of developed economies and countries. He noted that problems and internal needs also exist in Europe,

although priority has been given to defense, and he wants others to do the same. Mark Ruth stated that it is inevitable to increase defense spending, but this should happen gradually, because Eastern Europe is still at war and they need to face reality; these costs will also increase from the American side, and everyone should work together to create a complete, defense-capable alliance that will cope with the problems.

Finally, at the Hague Summit, the parties agreed to allocate 3.5% of the GNI for defense spending by 2035, with an additional 1.5% allocated by the Allies:

- To protect critical infrastructure
- To promote the development of innovation
- To ensure the security of networks
- To strengthen the defense industrial base (NATO, 2026).

The summit paid significant attention to the fifth article of collective defense, which means that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all members, thereby demonstrating their unwavering commitment to NATO's main article. In doing so, the member states showed Donald Trump that he cannot change the main principle of NATO and that all countries firmly recognize it.

This agreement was adopted against the backdrop of the tension between the President of the United States of America and NATO member states. Despite the differences of opinion, the parties were able to stabilize the situation. Although Donald Trump's request was not fully accepted, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization worked seriously on increasing defense spending, which will help manage future crises. With this step, the summit reviewed Donald Trump's demands; his positions were not ignored, but despite the fact that America has a major role in NATO, it will not fully implement Donald Trump's rigid policy.

NATO needs investments to successfully implement its operations, the Alliance helps member states in discovering and developing investments in a wide range of high-value projects. In 2026, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization helped countries advance in various areas:

1. Drones
2. Air-to-air refueling
3. Ammunition
4. Military training
5. Air and missile defense

NATO, in cooperation with the European Union, launched 32 projects aimed at improving operational effectiveness and strengthening ties between members and partners.

The military forces of each Allied country need constant training to cope with various challenges and effectively perform their duties. Training exercises allow the military forces of different countries to train together, increase readiness, and enhance cooperation. NATO allies Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia have created the Multinational Special Aviation Programme, which aims to train crews involved in force transfer and withdrawal operations. This center is located in Croatia.

This and similar projects require professional pilots and their constant retraining, which is why a network of training centers has been created in Europe. This project reduces the dependence of European countries on American training centers and focuses on training their own crews domestically, and the list of participating countries is quite extensive: Norway, Spain, Poland, Turkey, Italy, Hungary, Canada, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Romania, Denmark, Great Britain, Montenegro, Netherlands.

It is in the implementation of these projects that it is clear how carefully NATO and the European Union are monitoring Donald Trump's statements that they are trying to become less dependent on America, so that in the event of any conflict or problem, based on Trump's statements, there is a chance that the US will not help member states as effectively as usual.

NATO is trying to implement projects not only on land and in the air, but also in the sea, so it is necessary to have full control over the water and the ability to fight submarines. France and Germany began the development of the Maritime Airborne Warfare System project, and various countries joined it: Greece, Poland, Spain, Canada, Italy, and other European states.

Conclusion

The main activities of the North Atlantic Organization throughout history have been interesting and multifunctional. The alliance had to adapt to reality, regimes, presidents and prime ministers, pandemics and conflicts, wars in different parts of the world. However, it continues to operate and develop successfully to this day. Relations with the United States were characterized by constant cooperation, meetings, and dialogue. During Trump's presidency and the formation of his chosen political positions, several problems emerged that were not easy to overcome for both the United States and Europe. From his first presidency, Donald Trump noted that it was necessary to increase defense spending by European countries, since America is a superpower and pays much more for NATO's defense than other European countries. That is why he constantly wanted European member states to increase this financial share and distribute it fairly. Initially, the leaders of the alliance liked his position very much and even agreed to increase the budget. European leaders celebrated this achievement in NATO with success and joy.

They have always cooperated with America and wanted to have an even deeper relationship with the alliance. That is why the NATO Secretary General congratulated Trump on his second term and expected to continue his relationship with Trump after he was elected president for a second term. This is where the formation of the political positions of the United States in relation to NATO began. Events such as the war with Iran, the war in Ukraine, and the desire to open the Strait of Hormuz developed. The president had other plans and goals regarding these events. He wanted to attack Iran and open the Strait of Hormuz, which required the consent of NATO allies. After the refusal, he continued the tough dialogue, the spread of negative rhetoric, and unexpected actions. He openly opposed it and said that America would leave NATO, reduce assistance, and that NATO's role was not to his liking at all. This rhetoric began precisely when the leaders of European states rejected his proposals; he had other trade plans that differed from those of European leaders. His administration also began to make official statements that negatively affected the North Atlantic organization. These statements affected NATO and European states. They decided to be less dependent on the United States because they saw the danger that, in case of a problem, Trump would not help the alliance and would avoid responsibility. This danger was indeed real, and open confrontation in the media and social networks creates fear and uncertainty that hinders the decision-making process. The NATO Secretary General spoke to Trump after making this statement, and European leaders also made comments on this, and the entire media space was covered in this context. Such a confrontation had a negative effect on NATO, since representatives of European countries were in uncertainty and had difficulty concentrating on real threats, but they overcame it and continued official meetings, dialogues, and summits. Despite the difficult and negative rhetoric, they held a summit, and the NATO Secretary General officially made statements on NATO's main goals and overcoming common threats, development, and cooperation, which indicates that they thereby focused on the real problems and their improvement that exist in the world, and that these problems cannot be overcome without joint cooperation. Thus, an aspect of the theoretical framework of constructivism appeared; this approach draws special attention to the fact that the foreign policy of states is not determined only by international cooperation. According to constructivism, an important role is played by ideas and norms, identity, political narratives, and discourse, which influence the behavior of states. Donald Trump's rhetoric is an example of how his messages affect reality, American foreign policy priorities, as well as the political behavior and security perceptions of European partners. It was then that Europeans began to think about not being completely dependent on America when it spread negative rhetoric towards NATO.

From a constructivist perspective, the discourse of Donald Trump's administration has partially changed the existing ideas about NATO. If before the alliance was a unity based on shared values and collective security, Trump's rhetoric has increasingly reflected a system of transactional cooperation, where the emphasis is on financial responsibility. This has affected US allies, as well as the internal dynamics of NATO itself, as the discussion about increasing the defense budget and military strength has intensified in European states. In addition, constructivism allows us to analyze what is really behind Trump's words, what is his real reason, which is the financial part and trade, in fact, he thinks about the financial part and wants to equalize this share among NATO members. The opening of the Strait of Hormuz is also precisely because of the financial and trade part. The approach of the Trump administration, the official statements made by the president, political narratives, and messages affect the behavior of international partners, the unity of alliances, and global security. Accordingly, the study will examine, through a constructive framework, how the political rhetoric of the Trump administration has become an important factor that has influenced the transformation and cooperation of US-NATO relations.

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The Evolution of American Soft Power in the Digital Age

MARIAM GABUNIA[3]

Abstract

The paper explores the evolution of American soft power and its transformative nature through the digital age. It underlines the dynamic nature of the United States' soft power in the ever-changing world, examining the "American dream" and how it entered the landscape of digital complexity. The paper begins by analyzing the foundational role of Harvard and Hollywood in demonstrating American values to the world, and explores the digital age that followed. Delving into the themes of "TikTok phenomenon," "attention economy," and decentralized platforms of Silicon Valley allows the understanding of the double-edged sword nature of modern American soft power. Ultimately, the research argues that while the U.S. moved away from traditional public diplomacy into a more accessible digital world, complexities still persist and shape soft power strategies across the globe.

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The United States has leveraged a vast array of institutional capabilities to establish itself as a global leader. Land of the free, the message that's been historically projected of democratic cultural values and ideas is not merely a slogan, but a strategic story designed to align America with people across the world with similar values. Consequently, while many of the country's pillars were built through rapid policymaking, foreign affairs decisions, and domestic infrastructure, the concept of soft power has increasingly emerged as a central focus of modern research. Soft power, in the context of international relations, refers to the ability to achieve a certain desired outcome through means of attraction. This idea, proposed by one of the foremost thinkers in International Relations, Joseph Nye, has been used in various contexts by scholars today. Soft power connotes attraction rather than coercion, the latter of which Nye titled as "hard power." Through his theory, he believes in the balancing of the two powers, while underlining the significance of soft power as a critical asset that states cannot afford to ignore. The significance of soft power becomes exemplary while looking through the history of the United States. Soft power has long been a concept that has defined the United States as one of the key players in the world. To grasp the concept better, Joseph Nye provided the best example of American soft power usage: the fall of the Berlin Wall. "When the Berlin Wall went down, it didn't go down under an artillery barrage of hard power," he said, "it went down under people wielding hammers and bulldozers" (Jr., 2016).

The interest that America has long put into building relations with other nations and aiding them in development has played a massive role in the harboring of its' soft power. It's through initiatives of the sort that groups of people globally build trust and respect for other countries' cultures. If a country has an attractive culture, Joseph Nye noted, it drives other countries to sympathize with its views. There's a sector in the government of the United States, the public diplomacy department, in charge of getting different nations informed of American cultural values, but the true engine of American soft power is everything from Harvard to Hollywood.

To put it briefly, on one end of the spectrum, there's America's elite academic institutions harboring ideals of talent and intellectual diplomacy. The historical prestige of some of these universities attracts youth from across the world. This concrete soft power requires a lot of capital to sustain, and billions go into sustaining this image of American meritocracy and the collaboration of great minds in one space from across the globe. Once students from foreign countries return to their countries, they return with a Western or just further broadened model of thinking and values. The sphere of Education is a quiet but powerful force. It's an expansion of persuasion through learning. When countries allow for institutional partnerships,

they add to their soft power. It's a way to gain respect and shape relations between states. The Fulbright program, which was established in 1946, has become central to America's cultural diplomacy and educational exchange (Bu, 1999). The program has had a desirable outcome, producing large numbers of successful scholars. The institution of Education in America is so influential that even as tensions upsurge politically, the appeal of American higher education remains.

On the second end of the spectrum, we have Hollywood, a mirror to America's cultural principles. While Harvard shaped world leaders, Hollywood allowed for the distribution of American cultural values on a simpler level. Through the mass-market cinema, the American entertainment industry exports stories, lifestyles, and free-market consumer values to billions of viewers globally. With its emergence post-World War II, America nearly monopolized the industry. Hollywood was a perfect vehicle to distribute the "American Dream" across borders. It wasn't solely ideals being spread, but cars, appliances, architecture, and vice versa that were featured in films, which were also popularized globally. Hollywood serves as a subconscious advertisement of the American way of life. Cinema remains a key player in America's soft power today, though it has altered and become accessible for a global audience without needing to go to a movie theater through online platforms.

With the new digital era, the distribution of soft power has become paradoxically complex, yet simultaneously streamlined. The complexity of soft power distribution lies in the hyper-connected, platform-driven, social media system. Now the algorithm determines the scale and speed of soft power distribution. It's Silicon Valley that spreads its power and culture through tech developments and codes, rather than diplomatic intent.

The United States has gradually built a global influence system to project its ideals overseas, utilizing digital platforms and media that have reshaped how many consume information. Digital diplomacy has produced a vast array of "digital-first" diplomats. As an example, we can underline the former ambassador of Indonesia to the U.S, Dino Patti Djalal's experience conducting digital diplomacy. While there's an evident divide with only 20% of the population having regular access to the internet during his tenure, those with access to the internet who consumed social media made up 83%. This made Indonesia the second largest media market in Asia, and social platform tools like X came of tremendous help as Djalal notes in his experience (Curtis, 2012).

Faced with such implications of the evolving world, the United States adapted and took measures to transform traditional public diplomacy into a modern digital strategy. The States have shifted from

traditional broadcasting to messaging via social media platforms such as X, YouTube, and Instagram. This allows for a direct engagement with foreign publics. It revokes censorship of authoritarian regimes abroad and allows for a comfortable, non-state-controlled media. The digital world has come to serve a major role in digital campaigning, first introduced during President Barack Obama's first election in 2008. It has since redefined elections and campaign strategies, seeing the cultural and social impact it has had on societies. While social media gives people unprecedented access to social media, this also guarantees the existence of algorithmic bias, echo-chambers, and disinformation.

Engaging in "Twiplomacy," or broadly "Digital Diplomacy," the American state has utilized the new possibilities digital diplomacy has to offer. Deploying specialized units like the Global Engagement Center (GEC) to oversee foreign misinformation and algorithmic propaganda, having access to real-time communication platforms free of censorship, and collecting data to tailor to certain demographics, these tools have made digital diplomacy manageable to an extent previously deemed impossible.

Recently, to keep up with the average human attention span, "attention economy." information gets distributed within short clips that last around a minute. The TikTok phenomenon has altered common people's perception of taboo and reality. This shift represents the sharpest point of the double-edged sword as American diplomacy adjusts to emerging trends and algorithmic changes. It adapts to creating emotional triggers over substantive democratic values, where likes and interaction count for credibility, and competes with foreign media for the scarce resource of the digital age, human attention. With TikTok came a radical insurgency of artificial intelligence-generated deepfake videos. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2026), confidence in digital diplomacy has dropped due to the speed of AI-generated content. The Alan Turing Institute has found that only 8% of the UK population feel confident in identifying real government messages over AI-generated ones (Sippy, Enock, Bright, & Margetts, 2024), while in America, the Veriff Deepfakes Report identified a confidence and competence gap regarding deepfakes (Veriff, 2026).

Notably, global perceptions of the United States have also been fluctuating due to the visibility that comes with the digital age. There's no clear line between domestic reality and foreign projection. As domestic issues are turned into short viral clips and spread through social media, public opinion gets polarized. As noted by Nicholas Cull, "modern digital diplomacy is no longer just about 'selling' a country; it is about managing the global fallout of that country's internal contradictions" (Cull, 2019). The concept of digital sovereignty is another stepping stone for American soft power. The power isn't solely spread through

content, but through servers (Microsoft, Google, etc.). Foreign leading powers challenge Silicon Valley by creating their own digital stacks to achieve sovereignty over the internet. The foreign powers have recognized the Internet as a decisive determinant of geopolitical power as the challenge grows. China has started investing in AI research to compete with its Western rivals and so on.

Another interesting viewpoint that comes into discussion about digital diplomacy is that this "city on a hill" is no longer represented by only presidents and ambassadors but by people in the tech industry. Figures like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg have more influence, therefore more soft power, over the state department. The platform that allowed technology to develop is the same platform that high-profile tech individuals have an upper hand on. It further deepens the argument of soft power transforming and conforming to the ever-changing world.

However, it isn't just digital diplomacy that's a central factor in today's American vision. Various factors go into the construction of the nation's soft power as a whole. With the discontinuation of the USAID program that has helped billions across the world, and new policy decisions, the new American government has seemingly taken a different perspective on its foreign policy goals. Historically, there have always been shifts between the usage of hard and soft power. The current administration under President Donald J. Trump has prioritized and pushed hard power forward while taking a step back on soft power. Clearing USAID, terminating around 86% of its foreign aid programs, and cutting around $60 billion in funding in about 130 countries has shown a drastic contrast from previous soft power usage. USAID has formerly contributed to positive reputation-building across Africa. In 2023, according to a Gallup poll, 59% of Africans approved of Washington's leadership (Gallup, 2023). The focus has shifted from leveraging long-term attraction to current national issues. While the U.S. utilizes spending and saves billions in domestic capital through aid termination, it loses its reputational security. This creates a gap between reality and America's image in public diplomacy. Furthermore, the new administration's approach can be a signal to a new role of the United States in this turbulent geopolitical period. The U.S. is taking a step back on being the world's "guarantor," instead offering to cement its role as a strategic ally to nations. The new American soft power can be interpreted as a targeted instrument with certain goals. The American brand is being transformed and redefined with its technological and economic dominance, and the usage of hard power on the front line. As written in the recent U.S. State Department Strategic Plans, America is seeking to "trade, not aid," pushing for reciprocity.

The slow American withdrawal from having dominance in global soft power doesn't guarantee any certain outcome but indicates a new era that the new administration sees the United States entering. By stepping back from the role of a benefactor, the United States gains the ability to focus resources domestically. It's a pivot towards "Jacksonian realism" that American history remembers as an epoch of freedom of action and reputational security. The leverage that the United States has on global soft power is structurally embedded and hard to see deteriorating, the durability of its power relies upon how it manages the trust of a world that, even during rough times, is still profoundly shaped by the trademark American vision.

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From 1776 to 2026: The Enduring Power of "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness"

MERI GOGOLADZE[4]

Abstract

The Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776, articulated a set of ideals that have shaped American identity and influenced global democratic thought. Among its most enduring phrases is Thomas Jefferson's assertion that all men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." This article examines the origins, historical evolution, global resonance, and contemporary relevance of Jefferson's words as the United States approaches its Semiquincentennial in 2026. It begins by situating the phrase within Enlightenment philosophy, particularly John Locke's natural rights tradition, and Jefferson's rhetorical adaptation of "happiness" as a broader concept of human flourishing. Globally, the article explores how Jefferson's ideals influenced the French Revolution, Latin American independence, post-colonial constitutions in Africa and Asia, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the contemporary context, the article analyzes challenges to democracy, economic inequality, technological disruption, and climate change, arguing that Jefferson's phrase remains a flexible framework for addressing modern issues. Ultimately, it is concluded that the enduring power of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" lies in its aspirational quality. It is not a finished reality but an ongoing project, requiring each generation to reinterpret and expand its meaning. At 250 years, Jefferson's words remain both unfinished work and a universal beacon for liberty and justice.

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Introduction

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, a document that not only announced the birth of a new nation but also articulated a set of ideals that would reverberate across centuries. Among its most memorable lines is Thomas Jefferson's assertion that all men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Few phrases in political history have achieved such enduring resonance.

As the United States approaches its Semiquincentennial in 2026, this phrase invites renewed reflection. Why has it endured? How has it been reinterpreted across 250 years? And what does it mean in an age of globalization, technological disruption, and democratic uncertainty? This article traces the origins, evolution, global resonance, and contemporary relevance of Jefferson's words, arguing that their power lies in their adaptability and aspirational nature.

I. Origins of the Phrase

The intellectual roots of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" lie deep within the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment. Jefferson's famous triad did not emerge in a vacuum; it was the product of centuries of philosophical debate about natural rights, the role of government, and the meaning of human flourishing.

Locke and the Natural Rights Tradition

John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) provided the most immediate inspiration. Locke argued that individuals possess natural rights to "life, liberty, and property," rights that predate the formation of political society and which governments exist to protect. Jefferson's substitution of "happiness" for "property" was a deliberate rhetorical and philosophical move. Scholars such as Garry Wills have argued that Jefferson sought to elevate the Declaration beyond a narrow defense of property rights into a broader moral vision of human dignity.

Locke's emphasis on property reflected the economic realities of 17th-century England, where land ownership was central to political participation. Jefferson, however, writing in the agrarian colonies of North America, sought a more expansive concept. "Happiness" encompassed not only material well-being but also civic virtue, moral fulfillment, and the capacity to pursue one's own vision of the good life. In this sense, Jefferson's phrase aligned with classical notions of *eudaimonia* found in Aristotle, who defined happiness as the highest human good achieved through virtuous living.

Jefferson's Drafts and Revisions

Jefferson's drafts of the Declaration, preserved in the Library of Congress, reveal his careful revisions. Early versions included formulations closer to Locke's "property," but Jefferson ultimately chose "happiness." This choice was not merely stylistic; it reflected his belief that government should secure conditions for human flourishing rather than simply protect possessions.

The rhetorical craft of Jefferson's phrase also contributed to its endurance. Its cadence reflects classical parallelism, a rhythm that makes it memorable and quotable. Its simplicity belies its depth, allowing it to be invoked in diverse contexts without losing its force. Pauline Maier has noted that Jefferson's language transformed Enlightenment philosophy into a poetic declaration that could inspire both revolutionaries and future generations.

Colonial Context and Political Necessity

The colonial context of 1776 made this phrase especially potent. Colonists sought to justify rebellion against Britain not only on pragmatic grounds but also on universal principles. By asserting that rights were "unalienable" and derived from a Creator, Jefferson framed independence as a moral necessity rather than a political convenience. The phrase thus served as a rhetorical weapon against tyranny, legitimizing rebellion by appealing to ideals that transcended local grievances.

Jefferson's words also reflected the influence of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson, who argued that the natural rights of individuals included "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Hutcheson's writings circulated widely in the colonies and likely shaped Jefferson's thinking. By drawing on both Locke and Hutcheson, Jefferson synthesized English and Scottish Enlightenment traditions into a uniquely American formulation.

Theological Dimensions

The invocation of a Creator as the source of rights added a theological dimension. Jefferson, though personally skeptical of orthodox Christianity, recognized the rhetorical power of grounding rights in divine authority. This move ensured that the Declaration's claims would resonate with a broad audience, including those who viewed liberty as part of a providential order. By linking "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" to divine endowment, Jefferson elevated the struggle for independence into a sacred cause.

Rhetorical Power and Literary Craft

The literary quality of Jefferson's phrase cannot be overstated. Its rhythm and balance reflect classical rhetorical training, which Jefferson absorbed during his education. The triadic structure — three parallel elements building to a climax — is a hallmark of persuasive oratory. The phrase's universality and simplicity made it adaptable across contexts, ensuring its longevity. As Danielle Allen has argued, Jefferson's words function as both a philosophical claim and a democratic invitation, inviting readers to see themselves as participants in a collective project of liberty.

II. Historical Evolution

The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" has never been static. From the moment Jefferson penned it, Americans have debated its meaning, contested its application, and sought to expand its promise. Across 250 years, the phrase has functioned as both a mirror of American contradictions and a beacon for reform.

A. The Revolutionary Era and Early Republic

In the late 18th century, Jefferson's words were celebrated as a revolutionary manifesto. Yet even in 1776, contradictions were evident. The institution of slavery persisted, women were excluded from political participation, and Indigenous peoples were denied recognition. Jefferson himself, a slaveholder, embodied the paradox of proclaiming liberty while denying it to others.

Nevertheless, the aspirational quality of the phrase allowed marginalized groups to claim it. Abolitionists in the early republic argued that slavery violated the Declaration's principles. Benjamin Banneker, in his 1791 letter to Jefferson, reminded him that "we are all of one flesh" and appealed to the ideals of equality.

B. The Antebellum Period

By the mid-19th century, the Declaration had become a central text in debates over slavery. Frederick Douglass's 1852 speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" remains the most powerful indictment. Douglass declared that the celebration of liberty was a "sham" so long as millions remained enslaved. He invoked Jefferson's words to highlight the hypocrisy of a nation that proclaimed liberty while practicing bondage.

Suffragists also seized upon the Declaration. At the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the "Declaration of Sentiments," which echoed Jefferson's language but asserted that "all

men and women are created equal." By reframing the pursuit of happiness as inclusive of women's rights, Stanton and her colleagues expanded the Declaration's promise.

C. Reconstruction and the Gilded Age

The Civil War and Reconstruction marked another turning point. Abraham Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, described the nation as "conceived in liberty" and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Lincoln's invocation of Jefferson's ideals framed the war as a struggle to fulfill the Declaration's promise.

During Reconstruction, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments sought to enshrine liberty and equality in law. Yet the Gilded Age revealed new contradictions. Industrialization created vast inequalities, and liberty was often interpreted narrowly as freedom of contract. The pursuit of happiness was constrained by economic exploitation, prompting reformers to argue for labor rights and social protections.

D. The Progressive Era and New Deal

In the early 20th century, progressives reinterpreted Jefferson's phrase to include social welfare. Theodore Roosevelt argued that liberty required protection against corporate monopolies. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal expanded the pursuit of happiness to encompass economic security, education, and healthcare. Scholars such as Jill Lepore note that this era marked a shift from negative liberty (freedom from interference) to positive liberty (capacity to flourish).

E. Civil Rights Movement

The mid-20th century saw the Declaration invoked in the struggle for racial equality. Martin Luther King Jr., in his "I Have a Dream" speech, described the Declaration as a "promissory note" that had yet to be fulfilled for African Americans. King's rhetoric reframed the pursuit of happiness as a collective demand for justice, equality, and dignity.

Civil rights activists argued that liberty was meaningless without equal protection under the law. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Civil Rights Act of 1964 sought to realize Jefferson's ideals in practice. Yet King's reminder that the promise remained unfulfilled underscored the ongoing nature of the struggle.

F. Late 20th Century: Expanding Horizons

By the late 20th century, Jefferson's phrase was invoked in debates over gender equality, LGBTQ rights, and disability rights. The pursuit of happiness came to include the right to live authentically, free from

discrimination. Supreme Court decisions such as *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) cited the Declaration's ideals in affirming marriage equality.

Liberty was reinterpreted in terms of privacy, autonomy, and bodily integrity. The phrase's adaptability allowed it to serve as a foundation for diverse movements, each claiming Jefferson's words as their own.

G. 21st Century Reinterpretations

In the 21st century, new challenges have reshaped the meaning of Jefferson's phrase. Liberty is now debated in terms of digital rights, privacy, and surveillance. The pursuit of happiness has been linked to well-being, mental health, and environmental sustainability.

Danielle Allen argues that Jefferson's words remain a living ideal, constantly reinterpreted to meet the demands of changing times. The phrase continues to serve as a flexible framework for addressing contemporary issues, demonstrating its adaptability across centuries.

III. Global Resonance

Jefferson's phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" has long transcended its American origins. From the late 18th century onward, it became a touchstone for revolutionary movements, constitutional drafting, and international human rights discourse. Its universality lies in its adaptability: different cultures and political contexts have reinterpreted the phrase to suit their own struggles for freedom and dignity.

A. The French Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 echoed Jeffersonian ideals in its slogan "liberté, égalité, fraternité." While not a direct borrowing, the resonance is clear. French revolutionaries were inspired by the American example, and Jefferson himself, serving as U.S. minister to France, witnessed the ferment firsthand. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) proclaimed that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights," a formulation strikingly similar to Jefferson's.

The French case illustrates how Jefferson's phrase could be adapted to emphasize equality alongside liberty. Whereas Jefferson highlighted happiness, the French revolutionaries stressed fraternity and collective solidarity. This divergence reflects cultural differences but underscores the shared Enlightenment commitment to universal rights.

B. Latin American Independence Movements

In the early 19th century, Latin American leaders drew inspiration from the American Declaration. Simón Bolívar, in his writings and speeches, invoked the principles of liberty and equality to justify independence from Spain. Constitutions in Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico incorporated language reminiscent of Jefferson's triad.

Bolívar's vision of liberty was shaped by the challenges of post-colonial governance. He emphasized not only individual rights but also the need for strong institutions to secure them. The pursuit of happiness, in this context, was linked to national prosperity and civic virtue. Jefferson's phrase thus became a flexible template, adaptable to diverse political realities.

C. Post-Colonial Africa and Asia

The mid-20th century wave of decolonization saw Jefferson's ideals invoked once again. Leaders in Africa and Asia cited the Declaration as a precedent for their own struggles. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana declared that "freedom is not a gift but a right," echoing Jefferson's insistence on unalienable rights.[2]

India's Constitution (1950) enshrined fundamental rights to life and liberty, reflecting both indigenous traditions and global influences. South Africa's post-apartheid Constitution (1996) emphasized dignity, equality, and freedom, ideals that resonate with Jefferson's triad. In these contexts, the pursuit of happiness was interpreted broadly as national self-determination and social justice.

D. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Perhaps the most significant global echo came with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Drafted in the aftermath of World War II, it proclaimed that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." While not a direct quotation, the spirit of Jefferson's phrase is unmistakable.

Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the drafting committee, explicitly linked the UDHR to the American Declaration. The UDHR's emphasis on life, liberty, and dignity reflects Jefferson's influence, though broadened to encompass economic, social, and cultural rights. David Armitage has argued that Jefferson's words became a "global script" for independence and human rights.

E. Contemporary Global Movements

In the 21st century, Jefferson's phrase continues to resonate globally. Pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong, Belarus, and Myanmar have invoked the language of liberty and human rights. Activists worldwide cite Jefferson's ideals to demand freedom from authoritarianism.

The universality of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” ensures its relevance far beyond American borders. It functions as a shared vocabulary of freedom, adaptable to diverse struggles. As Jill Lepore notes, Jefferson’s words have become “world property,” belonging not only to Americans but to all who seek liberty.

IV. Contemporary Relevance in 2026

As the United States prepares to celebrate its Semiquincentennial, Jefferson’s phrase remains strikingly relevant. The ideals of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” continue to serve as a moral compass, but they are challenged by new realities. Democracy itself is under strain, economic inequality threatens opportunity, technological change redefines liberty, climate change imperils life and happiness, and the America250 celebrations invite reflection on whether the nation has lived up to its founding ideals.

A. Democracy Under Strain

Polarization, misinformation, and declining trust in institutions have raised questions about the resilience of American democracy. Liberty, once understood as freedom from tyranny, now requires protection against digital manipulation and erosion of civic norms. Jill Lepore has argued that Jefferson’s ideals must be reexamined in light of modern inequality and technological disruption.

The rise of populism and authoritarian tendencies worldwide underscores the fragility of democratic institutions. Jefferson’s phrase reminds us that liberty is not self-sustaining; it requires vigilance, civic participation, and a commitment to truth. The pursuit of happiness, in this context, depends on the health of democratic processes.

B. Economic Inequality

The pursuit of happiness is hindered by disparities in wealth and opportunity. Economic inequality has reached levels not seen since the Gilded Age, undermining the promise of equal rights. Scholars argue that Jefferson’s phrase must be reinterpreted to include economic justice. Danielle Allen notes that happiness requires not only freedom but also the material conditions to flourish.

Debates over healthcare, education, and housing reflect this tension. Liberty is meaningless without the capacity to pursue happiness in practice. The Semiquincentennial provides an opportunity to reassess whether the nation has fulfilled its obligation to secure these conditions.

C. Technology and Privacy

Technology has introduced new dimensions to liberty. Digital autonomy, privacy, and protection from surveillance are now central to debates about freedom. The rise of social media, artificial intelligence, and big data has created unprecedented challenges. Liberty must now be defended not only against government tyranny but also against corporate exploitation of personal information.

The pursuit of happiness is also shaped by technology. Access to digital resources can enhance well-being, but it can also exacerbate inequality. Jefferson's phrase, though written in an agrarian age, speaks directly to these modern challenges.

D. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Climate change adds another layer, as the right to life and happiness depends on environmental sustainability. Rising temperatures, extreme weather, and ecological degradation threaten the conditions for human flourishing. Liberty, in this context, includes the right to live in a habitable environment.

The pursuit of happiness must be reinterpreted to include ecological well-being. Scholars argue that Jefferson's ideals require expansion to encompass environmental rights. The Semiquincentennial provides an opportunity to integrate sustainability into the nation's vision of liberty and happiness.

E. America250: Civic Renewal

The America250 celebrations in 2026 provide an opportunity for civic renewal. They invite reflection on whether the nation has lived up to its founding ideals and how those ideals can guide future progress. The anniversary is not merely a commemoration of past achievements but a call to action.

Public exhibitions, educational programs, and community events highlight the enduring relevance of Jefferson's phrase. By revisiting "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Americans can recommit to the unfinished work of democracy. The Semiquincentennial thus serves as both a celebration and a challenge: to expand liberty and happiness for all.

F. Global Resonance in 2026

The phrase also resonates globally in 2026. Movements for democracy in Hong Kong, Belarus, and elsewhere have invoked Jeffersonian language to demand freedom. The universality of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" ensures its relevance far beyond American borders.

In an interconnected world, Jefferson's ideals serve as a shared vocabulary of freedom. They remind us that the struggle for liberty and happiness is not confined to one nation but belongs to humanity.

V. Conclusion

The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" has endured for 250 years because it is both universal and flexible. From its Enlightenment origins in Locke and Hutcheson to Jefferson's poetic rendering in 1776, it has functioned as a moral compass for successive generations. Its adaptability has allowed abolitionists, suffragists, civil rights leaders, and human rights advocates worldwide to claim it as their own.

A. The Enduring Aspirational Quality

The endurance of Jefferson's phrase lies in its aspirational quality. It points not to a finished reality but to an ongoing project. Each generation has reinterpreted it to meet its own challenges, ensuring its relevance across centuries. As Garry Wills observed, Jefferson's words transformed Enlightenment philosophy into a democratic invitation, inviting readers to see themselves as participants in a collective project of liberty.

This aspirational quality explains why the phrase has been invoked in contexts far removed from its original moment. Douglass used it to indict slavery, Stanton to demand women's rights, King to call for racial justice, and Roosevelt to expand social welfare. Globally, it inspired revolutionaries in France and Latin America, decolonization leaders in Africa and Asia, and human rights advocates drafting the Universal Declaration.

B. The Unfinished Work of Democracy

Yet the phrase also reminds us of unfinished work. Jefferson's ideals were proclaimed in a society that excluded women, enslaved Africans, and Indigenous peoples. The contradictions of 1776 have never been fully resolved. The Semiquincentennial invites reflection on whether the nation has lived up to its founding ideals.

As Jill Lepore argues, the history of the United States is a struggle to reconcile its ideals with its practices. The pursuit of happiness remains elusive for many, constrained by inequality, discrimination, and systemic injustice. Liberty must be defended not only against tyranny but also against complacency.

C. Global Significance

The global resonance of Jefferson's phrase underscores its universality. It has become part of a shared vocabulary of freedom, adaptable to diverse struggles. David Armitage's notion of the Declaration as a "global script" highlights its role in shaping constitutional traditions worldwide.

In 2026, Jefferson's words continue to inspire movements for democracy and human rights. They remind us that liberty and happiness are not confined to one nation but belong to humanity. The Semiquincentennial thus has global significance, inviting reflection on the universal struggle for freedom.

D. Contemporary Challenges

The contemporary relevance of Jefferson's phrase is evident in debates over democracy, inequality, technology, and climate change. Liberty now includes digital autonomy and privacy. The pursuit of happiness encompasses well-being, mental health, and environmental sustainability. Life itself is threatened by ecological crisis.

Mary Christina Wood's concept of "nature's trust" suggests that environmental stewardship is essential to securing life and happiness. Jefferson's ideals must be expanded to include ecological rights, ensuring that future generations can flourish.

E. Forward-Looking Reflection

As the United States celebrates its Semiquincentennial, Jefferson's words remind us that independence was not merely a political act but a moral commitment. The challenge of the next 250 years will be to ensure that these ideals are not only preserved but expanded to meet the demands of a changing world.

The enduring power of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" lies in its ability to inspire both reflection and action. It reminds us that the work of freedom is never complete. Each generation must reinterpret and renew the promise, ensuring that liberty and happiness are extended to all.

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Reimagining 1776 in the Digital Age: Popular Sovereignty, Democratic Legitimacy, and Hybrid Digital Sovereignty in a Globalized World

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Abstract

This article reconsiders the normative legacy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence at the moment of the American semiquincentennial by asking how the principles of popular sovereignty and democratic legitimacy operate under conditions of globalization and digital transformation. The study argues that the political vision articulated in 1776 remains normatively powerful, but its institutional environment has changed profoundly. Authority is no longer exercised primarily through territorially bounded state institutions; it is increasingly shaped by digital platforms, transnational networks, and regulatory regimes that mediate participation, information, and public consent. Drawing on democratic theory, international relations, and digital governance, the paper develops the concept of "hybrid digital sovereignty" to describe a form of political authority co-produced by states, corporations, and technological infrastructures. It combines theoretical analysis of the United States, the European Union, and China in order to show that the digital age has generated competing models of sovereignty rather than a single democratic trajectory. The paper argues that preserving the normative core of 1776 requires theoretical and institutional adaptation capable of addressing the realities of a globalized, technologically mediated political order.

By revisiting the Declaration's foundational principles through the lens of contemporary digital governance, the article contributes to current debates on the future of democratic legitimacy in an increasingly interconnected and technologically mediated world.

Keywords: Popular Sovereignty; Democratic Legitimacy; Digital Governance; Hybrid Digital Sovereignty; Globalization; Declaration of Independence.

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Introduction

The U.S. Declaration of Independence occupies a foundational place in the history of political thought, because it transformed a colonial grievance into a universal claim about legitimate government. Its most enduring proposition - that governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed" (United States, 1776/2010, para. 2) - helped institutionalize the modern democratic idea that political authority must be grounded in the people rather than in dynastic right. Two hundred and fifty years later, however, the historical durability of that ideal does not eliminate the need for reinterpretation. The political world in which the Declaration was written was shaped by territorial communities, culture, and state-building; the contemporary world is shaped by global interdependence, digital communications, data extraction, and transnational forms of influence. These changes matter because they alter the conditions under which popular sovereignty can be meaningfully exercised. The concept presumes that a political community can identify itself as "the people," authorize representative institutions, and hold rulers accountable through recognizably political mechanisms. Yet, globalization has redistributed decision-making across multiple levels of governance, while digitalization has restructured how citizens receive information, form preferences, and engage in public discourse. The result is not the disappearance of sovereignty, but its transformation. What is at stake today is whether the normative language of democracy can retain force when the infrastructures that shape public consent are partially privatized, globally networked, and technologically mediated (Dahl, 1989; Fritz, 2008).

This article argues that the enduring relevance of the Declaration lies precisely in its openness to reinterpretation. The core principles of popular sovereignty and political legitimacy remain central to democratic theory, but they can no longer be treated as if they operate in an exclusively state-centered environment (Beetham, 2013; Dahl, 1989; Habermas, 1996). The article advances three claims. First, globalization has weakened the assumption that sovereignty is purely territorial and exclusively national. Second, digital platforms have reconfigured the public sphere in ways that simultaneously expand participation and intensify new forms of inequality, manipulation, and control. Third, these developments require a revised conceptual framework - described here as hybrid digital sovereignty - that captures how authority is now co-produced by states, regulatory institutions, corporations, and algorithmic systems (Held, 1995; Nye, 2011).

Literature Review

The literature relevant to this topic spans several interconnected fields: democratic theory, constitutional thought, globalization studies, media and communication research, and the political theory of technology. Classical democratic theory provides the normative baseline. Dahl (1989) defines democracy in terms of participation, contestation, and responsiveness, emphasizing the institutional conditions necessary for citizens to influence collective decisions. Habermas (1996) deepens the discussion by linking legitimacy to public reasoning and deliberative procedures through which laws can claim validity. Together, these perspectives remain essential because they clarify that legitimacy is not merely the fact of obedience, but the justified exercise of power under conditions of inclusion and communicative accountability.

Historical and constitutional scholarship helps situate the American case within a longer genealogy of popular sovereignty. Arendt (1963) reads the American founding as a political act of constitution-making rather than merely anti-colonial resistance, while Fritz (2008) demonstrates that the American constitutional tradition repeatedly struggled to define how "the people" should be represented institutionally. These studies are especially important for the present argument, because they show that popular sovereignty was never a simple or fully settled category, even within the United States. Its authority has always depended on institutional translation, political contestation, and the boundaries of inclusion.

The globalization literature complicates any straightforward state-centric view of sovereignty. Held (1995) argues that the rise of global governance has redistributed authority beyond national institutions, creating a multilayered political order in which domestic decisions are increasingly affected by international regimes and cross-border dependencies. Nye (2011) similarly emphasizes that power in the contemporary world diffuses across networks, institutions, and non-state actors rather than remaining concentrated in governments alone. These arguments are particularly important because they reveal that democratic accountability increasingly operates in an environment where many consequential decisions are made beyond the reach of a single electorate.

Digital governance scholarship extends this debate by showing that contemporary power is shaped not only by institutions and markets but also by code, platforms, and data infrastructures. Lessig (2006) famously argues that "code is law," meaning that software architectures regulate behavior in ways comparable to formal legal rules. Castells (2010) conceptualizes the 'network society' as a social structure organized around information flows, while Benkler (2006) highlights the participatory possibilities of networked communication. At the same time, more critical accounts warn against technological optimism.

Sunstein (2017) explains how fragmented media environments intensify selective exposure and ideological sorting, and Howard (2020) shows how computational propaganda can distort democratic processes through disinformation and manipulation.

Recent research on surveillance capitalism and artificial intelligence further strengthens the critical dimension of the debate. Zuboff (2019) argues that digital capitalism increasingly turns human experience into behavioral data for prediction and control, thereby creating asymmetries of knowledge and power that undermine autonomy. Floridi (2014) suggests that digital environments are transforming the very structure of social reality, making questions of information ethics central to political order. This body of scholarship demonstrates a clear gap: although many authors examine democracy, globalization, or digital governance separately, fewer studies place these themes in direct dialogue with the political language of 1776. This article addresses that gap by explicitly linking the Declaration's normative claims to contemporary debates about algorithmic power, transnational governance, and competing models of digital sovereignty.

Building on these debates, this article positions itself at the intersection of democratic theory, digital governance, and international political analysis. While previous scholarship has extensively examined democracy, globalization, and technology as separate fields of inquiry, fewer studies have explored how the normative language of the American founding can be applied to contemporary transformations of political authority. This article seeks to address that gap.

Theoretical Framework

This article uses a multi-layered theoretical framework that combines normative democratic theory, global governance analysis, and the political theory of digital infrastructures. The first layer is popular sovereignty, understood as the principle that political authority originates in the people. In the tradition opened by the Declaration and later constitutional practice, popular sovereignty functions less as a sociological fact than as a normative claim: authority is legitimate only when those subject to it can be regarded as its authors in some meaningful sense (Fritz, 2008). This principle remains foundational, but it requires institutional mediation through elections, representation, rights, and public accountability.

The second layer concerns democratic legitimacy and is approached through a deliberative lens. Habermas (1996) is especially useful here because deliberative legitimacy depends not simply on voting outcomes, but on the quality of the communicative conditions under which public will is formed. In digital

environments, this issue becomes acute. If political preferences are shaped through non-transparent recommendation systems, strategic amplification, or asymmetrical control over data and visibility, the relationship between citizen consent and legitimate authority becomes more fragile (Habermas, 1996; Lessig, 2006; Zuboff, 2019). The problem is therefore not only whether citizens participate, but under what informational conditions that participation occurs.

The third layer is global governance. Held (1995) and Nye (2011) help explain why authority today cannot be analyzed only within the borders of the nation-state. Global markets, international organizations, and transnational firms all influence domestic outcomes, often in ways that are politically consequential, but only weakly accountable to national publics. A theory of sovereignty adequate to the present must therefore capture both vertical diffusion - across local, national, and supranational levels - and horizontal dispersion - across public and private actors (Held, 1995; Nye, 2011).

The fourth layer is digital governance. Lessig (2006), Castells (2010), and subsequent scholarship on artificial intelligence, information ethics, and surveillance capitalism (Floridi, 2014; Zuboff, 2019) demonstrate that infrastructures of communication are themselves structures of power. Platforms are not neutral channels. They rank, filter, monetize, and shape visibility. In democratic societies, this gives private technological actors quasi-governing functions; in authoritarian settings, it gives the state unprecedented capacities of monitoring and behavioral control (Lessig, 2006; Zuboff, 2019; Creemers, 2018). On this basis, the article introduces the concept of hybrid digital sovereignty: a form of political authority co-produced by states, corporations, regulatory institutions, and technological architectures. This concept does not deny the continued centrality of the state, but it rejects the assumption that the state alone defines the locus of sovereignty in the digital era.

From 1776 to Global Interdependence

The Declaration's theory of government emerged in a world where sovereignty could be imagined as territorially centered and politically embodied in a self-governing people. In the twenty-first century, however, the political economy of globalization has significantly complicated that picture. Trade regimes, financial institutions, global supply chains, and cross-border security arrangements shape domestic policy choices in ways that are often only indirectly accountable to citizens. Even where formal sovereignty

remains intact, the practical autonomy of governments is constrained by dense forms of interdependence (Held, 1995; Nye, 2011).

This does not mean that globalization has abolished sovereignty; rather, it has pluralized and stratified it. States continue to legislate, tax, regulate, and represent, but they do so in a context where many policy decisions are affected by actors outside the national demos. Questions of data governance, cybersecurity, platform regulation, digital taxation, and AI standards all illustrate this shift. A single state may desire robust democratic accountability, yet the infrastructures through which its citizens communicate or transact can be owned by firms headquartered elsewhere and governed by transnational technical systems. In this sense, sovereignty becomes relational rather than self-contained (Floridi, 2014; Nye, 2011).

The relevance of 1776 in this context lies in its normative insistence that authority must still answer to the governed. If sovereignty has become distributed, then the challenge is not to nostalgically restore an impossible political closure but to rethink how consent, accountability, and representation operate in layered governance environments. A contemporary reading of the Declaration should therefore not treat globalization as an external threat to democracy alone; it should treat it as a structural condition that forces democratic theory to clarify what forms of authority remain legitimate when power escapes simple territorial boundaries.

Digital Democracy: Opportunities and Challenges

The democratic potential of digital technologies is real and should not be minimized. Networked communication lowers barriers to participation, increases the speed of mobilization, and allows groups historically marginalized by legacy media to enter public debate more effectively (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2010). Protest movements, issue-based campaigns, and new forms of civic journalism have all benefited from digital tools. In comparative perspective, digital communication can reduce some transaction costs of organization and broaden access to political information, especially among younger citizens.

Yet the same infrastructures also generate distortions that challenge democratic legitimacy. Empirical research by the Pew Research Center (2020) found that 72% of American adults used social media, and many respondents reported that these platforms had become an important source of political news. In the same study, experts expressed deep concern that digital environments weaken civic trust and intensify polarization. These findings matter not because social media replaces all politics, but because it

increasingly shapes the epistemic environment in which politics occurs. If citizens encounter public life through commercially optimized systems that privilege outrage, virality, and segmentation, then deliberation becomes harder to sustain (Sunstein, 2017).

The democratic problem is not solved merely by increasing participation metrics. A platform can host enormous volumes of participation while still undermining legitimacy if its internal design systematically rewards sensationalism, micro-targeted manipulation, or exclusionary discourse. Sunstein (2017) shows that fragmented media consumption can deepen ideological enclaves, while Howard (2020) documents how automated amplification and disinformation campaigns can corrupt public debate. For this reason, the article rejects any simple equivalence between digital participation and democratic legitimacy. Participation is normatively valuable, but only when citizens interact under conditions compatible with informed agency, plural exposure, and meaningful accountability.

Competing Perspectives on Digital Democracy

A strong counter-argument to the concerns raised above holds that digital media may in fact revitalize democracy. According to this view, the internet weakens gatekeeping by traditional elites, diversifies access to information, and empowers ordinary citizens to challenge entrenched institutions. From this perspective, anxieties about platforms are overstated because digital spaces simply make visible conflicts and grievances that were always present. Moreover, supporters of this position argue that regulatory intervention risks suppressing innovation and empowering states to police expression in ways incompatible with freedom (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2010).

This counter-argument captures an important truth: democracy has always required spaces for contestation, and elite-managed information systems have never been neutral. Nevertheless, the argument becomes insufficient when it ignores structural asymmetries embedded in digital ecosystems. First, visibility is not evenly distributed; it is actively governed by proprietary recommendation systems. Second, the concentration of platform ownership means that nominally open digital spaces are dependent on a small number of firms that set the rules of amplification, moderation, monetization, and access. Third, the data-intensive design of digital advertising enables forms of behavioral targeting that exceed traditional persuasion and can distort autonomous political judgment (Lessig, 2006; Zuboff, 2019).

The rebuttal, therefore, is not that digital participation is illusory, but that it is systematically conditioned. Democratic legitimacy cannot be inferred from activity alone. What matters is whether citizens participate as informed and relatively equal agents, or whether participation is organized within environments characterized by opaque ranking systems, asymmetrical informational power, and strategic manipulation (Habermas, 1996; Howard, 2020; Lessig, 2006; Zuboff, 2019). In this sense, the digital age does not abolish popular sovereignty; it renders its preconditions more fragile. Thus, the conclusion follows: digital participation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democratic legitimacy.

The United States and Platform-Centered Governance

The United States illustrates a model of digital governance in which private firms play an exceptionally central role in structuring public communication. This arrangement is historically consistent with American traditions of market liberalism and limited state intervention, but it has generated a paradox: core infrastructures of democratic discourse are privately owned and commercially optimized. Major platforms influence who sees what, under what conditions, and with which forms of monetized visibility, yet they do not derive authority from democratic authorization in the conventional sense (Zuboff, 2019; Lessig, 2006).

This model offers important advantages. It can promote innovation, rapid technological development, and a relatively decentralized media environment. However, it also produces a democratic deficit. Because platform governance is driven primarily by corporate incentives, questions of public reason, civic equality, and political accountability are often secondary to engagement metrics and advertising revenue. The result is a privatized infrastructure of political communication in which the norms of self-government are filtered through business models designed for scale and behavioral capture. The United States therefore demonstrates how a liberal democratic order can face sovereignty challenges not only from the state, but from concentrated private power (Zuboff, 2019).

The European Union and the AI Act

The European Union offers the strongest contemporary example of an attempt to democratize digital sovereignty through regulation. Rather than relying mainly on corporate self-governance, the EU has developed an institutional framework grounded in rights protection, accountability, and public oversight.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) established a major precedent by elevating data protection to a legally enforceable principle. The AI Act extends this logic by adopting a risk-based approach to artificial intelligence, subjecting high-risk systems to stricter obligations and prohibiting certain uses regarded as incompatible with fundamental rights (European Commission, 2024).

The normative significance of the EU model is considerable. It treats digital governance as a constitutional question rather than merely a technical one. In doing so, it aligns closely with a Habermasian understanding of legitimacy: political authority over digital systems must be publicly justified, procedurally structured, and compatible with rights. The EU thus represents regulated sovereignty - a model in which institutions attempt to bring technological power back within a democratically defensible framework (Habermas, 1996).

At the same time, the EU model is not free from criticism. Regulation can lag behind innovation, implementation can vary across member states, and extensive compliance burdens can reinforce the market power of already dominant firms by making entry more difficult for smaller actors (Bradford, 2020; European Commission, 2024). Even so, the EU remains crucial to this argument because it shows that digital sovereignty need not be reduced either to laissez-faire platform rule or to authoritarian state control. It demonstrates a serious attempt to align technological governance with democratic legitimacy (European Commission, 2024; Habermas, 1996).

China and Digital Authoritarianism

China represents a sharply contrasting model in which digital systems are integrated into centralized state authority. Surveillance infrastructures, facial recognition technologies, censorship regimes, and large-scale data collection all serve the political objective of maintaining order, monitoring behavior, and preserving regime stability. In this context, sovereignty is not dispersed across state and society in democratic fashion; it is consolidated through technologically enhanced state capacity (Creemers, 2018; Floridi, 2014).

Supporters of this model sometimes argue that it delivers efficiency, social coordination, and protection against disorder or misinformation. Yet from a democratic perspective, these arguments remain insufficient because they detach legitimacy from public consent and political pluralism. Efficiency without accountability cannot satisfy the democratic standard articulated in the Declaration’s language of consent. The Chinese case is thus analytically important not simply as an authoritarian contrast, but as evidence that

digital technologies are politically indeterminate: they can be used to broaden participation, to regulate markets, or to entrench centralized control (Creemers, 2018; Habermas, 1996).

For the purposes of this article, China demonstrates the limits of any technologically deterministic account of modernity. Digital transformation does not naturally produce liberal outcomes. It can reinforce hierarchy as effectively as it can facilitate openness. This is precisely why the normative language of sovereignty and legitimacy remains indispensable. Without it, digital governance risks being evaluated only in terms of performance or efficiency, rather than in terms of whether those subject to power can recognize themselves as its legitimate authors (Fritz, 2008; Habermas, 1996).

Competing Models of Digital Sovereignty

The comparison among the United States, the European Union, and China reveals that the digital age has not produced a single model of modern governance. Instead, it has generated competing paradigms of sovereignty. The U.S. model may be described as privatized sovereignty, because public discourse is heavily mediated through corporate platforms. The EU model may be described as regulated sovereignty, because digital power is brought under legal and institutional constraints in the name of rights and accountability. The Chinese model is centralized sovereignty, because digital infrastructures are subordinated to state-directed monitoring and control.

These differences are not superficial policy variations; they represent distinct answers to the question of who governs the digital environment and on what grounds. In the American case, market logics dominate; in the European case, constitutional-regulatory logics dominate; in the Chinese case, state-security logics dominate. The wider theoretical implication is that sovereignty in the digital age is fragmented rather than convergent. This fragmentation challenges any assumption that liberal democracy automatically remains the universal destination of technological modernization (Held, 1995; Lessig, 2006).

The article’s concept of hybrid digital sovereignty helps explain this landscape. Political authority today is rarely located in one institutional site alone. It emerges through interaction among public law, corporate infrastructure, algorithmic architecture, and transnational standards. A theory of democracy adequate to the digital age must therefore evaluate not only governments, but also the technological and regulatory ecologies through which collective will is formed and enacted.

Conclusion

The 250th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence should be understood as an invitation to theoretical renewal. The principles of popular sovereignty and democratic legitimacy retain deep normative force, yet they now operate in a world fundamentally different from the one in which they were first articulated. Globalization has multiplied sites of authority beyond the nation-state, while digitalization has transformed the public sphere through infrastructures that can simultaneously enable participation and intensify domination.

This article has argued that the most productive way to preserve the legacy of 1776 is not to repeat its language as historical ritual, but to reinterpret its core commitments under contemporary conditions. The concept of hybrid digital sovereignty captures the fact that authority is now co-produced by states, regulatory institutions, corporate actors, and technological systems. In such a setting, democratic legitimacy cannot be measured only by formal elections or visible participation. It must also be assessed in terms of informational fairness, algorithmic accountability, rights protection, and the capacity of citizens to act as informed political agents.

The future of democracy will depend on whether political systems can re-embed technological power within publicly accountable frameworks. For this reason, the Declaration remains relevant not as a static script, but as a living normative resource. Its insistence that legitimate power derives from the governed still matters. The challenge of the digital age is to determine what that principle requires when the conditions of governance are global, networked, and increasingly shaped by code.

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Voice in Action: How Americans Participate in Democracy Today

NIA KOKHREIDZE[6]

Marking 250 years since the United States declaration of independence reflects not only on the origin of the U.S. but also on how founding principles continue to shape civil life today. American democracy is built on the idea that authority derives from the people and is sustained through their active involvement in public life (Levitsky, 2018). Over the time this principle has developed into a complex and evolving system of participation that extended far beyond its original forms.

Participation extends beyond formal political structures. Electoral engagement remains the most visible and trusted form of voting in local state and national elections, as well as involvement of political campaigns and party activities. (Dalton, 2019) Through these processes, citizens directly influence governance and policy outcomes.

Equally significant is civic and community engagement, where individuals participate in local organizations, volunteer initiatives, public discussions, and grassroots movements. These forms of involvement emphasis the everyday practice of democracy, demonstrating that civic responsibility is exercised not only during elections but through ongoing contributions to community life. (Putnam, 2000)

In the contemporary era, digital participation has emerged as a powerful force reshaping democratic engagement. Social media platforms, online forums and digital communication tools enable individuals to express opinions, access information and mobilize collective action with unprecedented speed and reach. This shift has broadened participation and lowered traditional barriers particularly for the younger generation. (Bennett, 2013)

When we look at the past 250 years, we can see that democracy in the U.S. has changed as society. Digital activism often translates into real world mobilization, while local initiatives gain visibility and influence

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through digital networks, illustrating the changing nature of civic engagement in the 21st century. (Tufekci, 2017)

At the same time patterns of participation vary across social and demographic groups. Influenced by factors such as education, technological issues and community context. Despite these differences, engagement remains a crucial link between citizens and institutions.

To conclude, democratic life in the United States is sustained not only through formal institutions but through the participation of the people. “Voice in action” is expressed through voting, community and engagement in social activities. (Verba, 1995)

As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of its independence many people are thinking not only on the country's history but also on what democracy means in modern American society. Since 1776 the United States has been built on the idea that power belongs to people and that citizens should have a say in their government’s activities. Over time however democracy in America has grown into something rather than simply voting in elections. Today America participates in democracy through community activism, volunteering and digital communications. These participation forms show that democracy is not just a political system but a practice that citizens depend on. (Pew Research Center, 2021)

One of the examples of participation in democracy for American people is elections. Voting is the reason why people still can have influence on important decisions and rights to choose the leader that is suitable for the country and the society. The most attention is usually towards presidential elections but people also participate in local and state elections to vote for the governors, mayor, judges and school board members. These elections have an impact on their daily lives because these decisions shape policies that have influence on education, healthcare, public safety and the economy. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.)

But taking part in elections is not all about casting a ballot. Many Americans are contributing to political campaigns by becoming volunteers, attending rallies and donating money. Political discussions are the main topic to talk about during elections whether it's online or offline. (Han, 2016) Although political disagreements are common in the United States, elections are still the main way that people express their ideas and viewpoints.

Democracy in the United States is not only limited to political activities alone. Civic and community engagement also pay an important role in democratic life. Across the country millions of people participate

in local organizations, volunteer projects and charity work. Some help organize food drives, support homeless shelters, tutor students or participate in environmental cleanup. While these activities may not appear direct political propaganda, they still strengthen communities and encourage people to take responsibilities for society. (Collins, 2019) This community participation also creates opportunities for discussions and cooperation. Town hall meetings, local forums and neighborhood groups allow people to share concerns and work together to solve problems. In many cases local activism becomes the starting point for larger national movements. Throughout American history, important social changes have often begun with ordinary citizens organizing within their communities. The civil rights movement for example started through local protests and grassroots activism before becoming a nationwide movement for equality and justice. In more of the modern day, George Floyd's murder can be used as an example, in 2020 after his death local community groups and activists across many American cities organized peaceful protests, police reform. What began as local demonstrations quickly developed into a nationwide movement that influenced public, local government policies and discussions about social justice in the United States.

In recent years, technology and social media have changed the way American people participate in democracy. Internet platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube have become major spaces for political discussions and activism. For example, in the 2024 U.S. presidential election campaign both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris used social media as a central tool for political communication and voter mobilization. Donald Trump relied heavily on direct online messaging through platforms such as “Truth Social” to reach supporters and share campaign messages. Kamala Harris and her campaign team used platforms such as Instagram, Tik Tok and Facebook to engage with voters, share messages and to turnout voters. (Atay, 2026)

People can now share their opinions, spread information and organize events. Digital communications have made participation more accessible especially for younger generations who spend much of their time online. Social media has also allowed important social issues to gain national and global attention very quickly. Online campaigns and hashtags related to racial injustice, climate change, women's rights and mental health have encouraged millions of people to take part in public activities. Women across the U.S. used social media to share experience of sexual harassment and abuse. The movement created national discussion about gender equality and legal protections. (Grandin, 2025) During Covid-19 many Americans used social media to organize volunteer groups, raise money for families in need, share health information and support local communities.

At the same time, digital democracy has created new challenges. False information spreads quickly online and political debates on social media are often highly emotional and divided. Many people receive news only from sources that match their personal beliefs which can increase polarization and make discussions more difficult. (Bonal, 2026) In addition, not everyone has an equal access to technology or reliable information meaning that some groups participate more easily in elections than others. But still digital participation remains one of the most important features of modern American democracy.

Another significant part of democratic participation in the United States is protest and activism. Americans have a long history of using protests to demand change and challenge injustice. Through history demonstrations and social movements have influenced laws, public attitude and government policies. (Tilly, 2008) For example, during the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted more than a year and African Americans refused to use segregated public buses in Montgomery, Alabama after Rosa Parks arrest. This protest led the U.S. Court to rule that bus segregation was unconstitutional. Later in 1963 Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I have a Dream" speech. These events increased political pressure on the federal government and contributed to the Civil Rights Act, which outlawed segregation in public places and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which protected African Americans rights to vote.

Today protests continue to play a major role in American society. People organize marches and campaigns related to issues such as racial equality, climate change, gun violence, immigration and women's rights. These movements demonstrate that democracy is not only about supporting the system but also demanding improvement. Activism allows citizens to express frustration, raise awareness and encourage political leaders to respond to social concerns. (Fisher, 2024)

Participation in democracy does not look the same for everyone. Factors such as age, education income and access to technology all influence how people engage in public life. Younger generations are often more active online, while older generations may participate more through voting and traditional civic organizations. People with higher levels of education and economic stability are also generally more likely to participate in politics and community activities. These differences show that while democracy is open to everyone in theory, participation is often shaped by social and economic realities.

Despite these differences democratic participation remains essential to American society. Through voting, volunteering, activism and public discussion citizens help the society with shaping their future. Democracy can be saved not only by law and legislation but with people who engage with public life and believe that their voice matters. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2025)

As the United States reaches 250 years of independence, it becomes clear that democracy has changed with society itself. New technologies, social movements and change of culture have transformed the ways people participate in civic life. Voting remains an important practice in democracy but democracy exists in community social movements and in online spaces. Over the past 250 years, America has continued to rewrite how citizens should engage with government and society. Challenges such as political inequality and misinformation remain serious issues, participation continues to be one of the strongest foundations of American democracy.

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Crisis of Power Projection in the 21st Century: Technological Transformation, Hegemonic Pressure, and Security in the South Caucasus

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Abstract

This article examines the crisis of power projection in the twenty-first century as a structural consequence of technological transformation, hegemonic pressure, and the diffusion of military capabilities. Its central argument is that traditional power projection, based on large platforms, forward deployment, and technological superiority, no longer guarantees strategic effectiveness. Neorealism provides the theoretical basis for explaining this shift: under conditions of relative decline and systemic competition, hegemonic actors intensify military activity, but the operational environment increasingly limits their capacity to convert military force into stable political outcomes. The article analyzes anti-access/area-denial systems, precision-strike capabilities, unmanned systems, and delegated force as indicators of this transformation. The South Caucasus is used as an empirical case, with particular attention to the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and Turkey-Azerbaijan military cooperation. The article concludes that the crisis of power projection does not imply the decline of military force; it indicates the transformation of its logic, limits, and political utility.

Keywords: Power Projection; Neorealism; South Caucasus; Delegated Force; Technological Warfare; A2/AD; Balance of Power

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Introduction

The crisis of power projection in the twenty-first century is defined by a contradiction: states continue to increase military activity while the strategic effectiveness of military force becomes less predictable. This contradiction is most visible in hegemonic behavior. A hegemon whose economic instruments lose part of their structural effectiveness does not withdraw from international competition. It seeks alternative instruments of influence, and military force becomes more attractive as a compensatory mechanism. Yet the contemporary technological environment makes the use of force more expensive, more vulnerable, and less politically decisive. During the post-Cold War period, the dominant model of power projection rested on the ability to deploy forces globally, maintain forward bases, control maritime and air domains, and use advanced military platforms with limited operational risk. Carrier strike groups, strategic aviation, expeditionary forces, special operations units, and intelligence networks created a military architecture that allowed the United States to project power across distant theaters. This model did not merely express military capacity; it translated material superiority into political leverage. The twenty-first century has weakened that relationship. Anti-access/area-denial systems, long-range precision missiles, unmanned aerial systems, electronic warfare, cyber capabilities, and real-time intelligence networks have changed the operational environment. Large platforms remain relevant, but they are no longer protected by the same degree of technological asymmetry. Smaller and medium-sized states, and in some cases non-state actors, can now impose costs on stronger adversaries through relatively cheaper systems. The diffusion of precision and surveillance capabilities reduces the concentration of military advantage.

This article argues that the crisis of power projection is not a temporary decline in the military capability of one state. It is a systemic transformation in the relationship between force, technology, and political control. Military superiority still matters, but it no longer automatically produces strategic outcomes. The South Caucasus illustrates this transformation with particular clarity. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War demonstrated the operational impact of drones, real-time intelligence, and precision targeting, while also showing that battlefield success remains limited by external political structures. Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation further shows how delegated force can operate within an asymmetric strategic partnership without becoming a classical proxy relationship.

Theoretical Framework: Neorealism, Hegemonic Pressure, and the Crisis of Force

Neorealism explains the crisis of power projection through the structure of the international system. Kenneth Waltz's theory begins from the assumption that states operate in an anarchic environment where no central authority guarantees their survival (Waltz, 1979). Under these conditions, states seek security by preserving or increasing their relative power. The distribution of capabilities determines the strategic behavior of states more than their internal preferences or ideological self-descriptions.

Hegemonic power depends on the combination of economic resources, financial influence, technological superiority, military reach, and institutional control. In the post-Cold War period, the United States possessed a level of economic and military concentration that sustained a unipolar order. Dollar dominance, global financial institutions, military alliances, and forward deployment created a system in which economic and military power reinforced each other. The petrodollar mechanism and the global role of the dollar gave the United States a structural advantage by sustaining demand for its currency and facilitating the financing of both domestic programs and military commitments (Spiro, 1999).

This structure has not collapsed, but it has become less stable. The dollar remains the central reserve currency, yet its share in global reserves has declined compared with the early post-Cold War period. The use of sanctions, financial restrictions, and control over payment systems has increased the geopolitical function of finance, but it has also encouraged other actors to diversify reserves, expand trade in national currencies, and develop alternative financial mechanisms (International Monetary Fund, n.d.; Eichengreen, 2011). Financial power therefore retains coercive value, but its political use also generates systemic distrust. From a neorealist perspective, this produces hegemonic pressure. A dominant power facing relative economic erosion seeks to preserve its position by using available instruments more intensively. Economic decline in relative terms does not necessarily produce restraint. It can produce more active and more aggressive behavior because the state seeks to compensate for declining structural advantages (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). Military force becomes a more important instrument when financial and economic tools no longer provide universal influence.

The problem is that military force itself is being transformed. Traditional power projection relied on the assumption that advanced platforms could enter, dominate, and sustain operations in distant theaters. Contemporary A2/AD capabilities challenge that assumption. Long-range missiles, integrated air defenses, maritime denial systems, drones, and precision-strike networks make access more difficult and increase

the risk to expensive platforms (Krepinevich, 2010). The crisis is therefore not the disappearance of power projection, but the weakening of its strategic reliability.

This creates a paradox at the center of contemporary international politics. States are pushed by systemic competition to use force, but technological diffusion reduces the strategic return of that force. Operational success becomes easier to achieve in specific tactical contexts but harder to convert into stable political control. Afghanistan and Iraq showed that technological superiority could destroy organized military resistance without producing durable political order (Jones, 2009; Kilcullen, 2009). Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh show that lower-cost technologies can disrupt stronger or more traditional military structures.

The Transformation of Power Projection: SIPRI, A2/AD, and Technological Diffusion

The persistence of military spending confirms that military power remains central to international politics. SIPRI reported that global military expenditure reached approximately 2.44 trillion dollars in 2023, a historic high (SIPRI, 2024, p. 1). The United States remained the largest military spender, with approximately 916 billion dollars, accounting for roughly 37 percent of global military expenditure (SIPRI, 2024). These figures show that hegemonic military capacity remains substantial. They also show that military competition is expanding across the system rather than remaining concentrated in one center. Military expenditure, however, is not identical to strategic effectiveness. The United States and its allies continue to possess advanced weapons, global basing networks, and high-end command structures. Yet the cost of using this infrastructure has increased. The operational environment has become more contested. Forward bases, aircraft carriers, logistics hubs, and large formations are exposed to precision strikes, cyber disruption, missile attacks, and persistent surveillance.

A2/AD systems are central to this transformation. Anti-access capabilities seek to prevent an adversary from entering an operational theater, while area-denial capabilities seek to restrict freedom of action inside that theater. These systems combine long-range missiles, integrated air defense, electronic warfare, maritime denial, cyber operations, and surveillance networks. Their purpose is not always to defeat a stronger military directly. Their purpose is to raise the cost of intervention and complicate the political decision to project force (Krepinevich, 2010).

China’s development of anti-ship ballistic missiles, especially the DF-21D and DF-26, illustrates the problem. The DF-21D, often described as a medium-range anti-ship ballistic missile, and the DF-26, with

a longer intermediate-range profile, challenge the traditional assumption that carrier strike groups can operate with relative freedom near contested theaters (Erickson, 2013). This does not make aircraft carriers obsolete. It makes their use more politically and operationally costly. A platform that once symbolized uncontested reach becomes a high-value target inside a dense missile and surveillance environment. Technological diffusion widens the problem beyond great-power competition. Drones, loitering munitions, commercial satellite imagery, encrypted communication, electronic warfare systems, and precision-guided munitions are increasingly available to medium states and non-state actors. The result is a battlefield where cheap systems can threaten expensive platforms. The cost-exchange ratio becomes unfavorable for technologically advanced militaries when low-cost systems impose high-value losses.

The war in Ukraine after 2022 reinforced this tendency. Bayraktar TB2 drones, FPV drones, HIMARS, electronic warfare, and open-source intelligence altered battlefield dynamics by connecting sensors, shooters, and command decisions in compressed time. The key lesson is not that any single platform decides war. The more important lesson is that integrated networks can reduce traditional asymmetries and increase the vulnerability of conventional formations (Watling & Reynolds, 2022).

Empirical Analysis: The South Caucasus and the Delegated Force Model

The South Caucasus is a concentrated case of the wider crisis of power projection. The region links the Black Sea, the Caspian basin, the Middle East, and Eurasian transport corridors. It contains unresolved conflicts, energy infrastructure, transit routes, Russian security legacies, Turkish strategic activism, Iranian balancing behavior, and European diplomatic engagement. This density of interests creates a fragmented security environment where no actor possesses uncontested regional control.

The 2008 Russia-Georgia War showed that Russia retained the ability to use direct military intervention to shape the regional order. At that stage, Moscow still performed the role of a hard-power arbiter in the South Caucasus. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and the geopolitical effects of the war in Ukraine weakened that position. Russia remained relevant, but its capacity to structure the regional security environment declined (de Waal, 2024; Melvin, 2024). Turkey expanded its influence through Azerbaijan, Iran sought to protect its geopolitical interests, and the European Union increased its diplomatic and monitoring presence without becoming a military actor.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War was a decisive empirical indicator of technological transformation. Azerbaijan used Bayraktar TB2 drones, Israeli Harop loitering munitions, real-time intelligence, and precision targeting to weaken Armenian armor, air defense systems, logistics, and fixed positions. Traditional platforms and linear defensive structures proved vulnerable when exposed to persistent surveillance and precision strike (Bendett et al., 2021, pp. 4-9). RAND's analysis treats the conflict as one of the first interstate wars in which drones played a decisive operational role (Bendett et al., 2021, p. 12).

The war also demonstrated the limits of technological effectiveness. Azerbaijan achieved rapid operational success, but the final political outcome was shaped by the November 10, 2020 ceasefire and the involvement of external actors, especially Russia. The battlefield did not produce an autonomous political settlement. Operational success entered a diplomatic structure in which great-power interests and regional bargaining defined the final result (Kofman & Nersisyan, 2020). This confirms the central argument of the article: contemporary force can be effective at the operational level while remaining politically constrained.

Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation shows a second dimension of the crisis: the emergence of delegated force. This relationship cannot be reduced to a classical proxy model. In a proxy relationship, the stronger actor normally exercises strategic control while the weaker actor functions as an instrument with limited autonomy. The South Caucasus case is different. Azerbaijan preserved sovereign political agency and pursued its own national objectives, but its operational effectiveness was significantly strengthened by Turkish technology, training, doctrine, and intelligence cooperation.

The concept of delegated force within an asymmetric strategic partnership captures this configuration more precisely. Turkey provided military technology, doctrinal influence, operational experience, and political support without assuming direct formal control over Azerbaijani decision-making. Azerbaijan used these capabilities to increase battlefield effectiveness while retaining political autonomy. This model allowed Turkey to expand regional influence without the costs and risks of direct military intervention.

The model has three main components. First, technological integration: Turkish unmanned systems, especially Bayraktar TB2, became part of Azerbaijan's operational architecture. Second, intelligence and operational coordination: real-time information supported faster targeting and decision-making. Third, doctrinal and educational convergence: Azerbaijani officers had long been trained in Turkish military institutions, facilitating interoperability and shared operational concepts (Azizi & Cevik, 2023, pp. 6-7; Posen, 1984, pp. 23-27).

From a neorealist perspective, this is a rational adaptation to an anarchic and competitive environment. States seek to increase security and influence while limiting costs. Delegated force allows a state to project influence indirectly, avoid full political responsibility, and exploit technological asymmetry. It also allows the partner state to strengthen its military position without surrendering full strategic autonomy.

This model has limits. Delegation creates control problems because the partner state retains its own interests. Operational integration depends on political alignment; if strategic goals diverge, the model weakens. Delegated force therefore does not restore classical hegemony. It creates flexible influence under conditions of fragmented control. The South Caucasus shows that the new logic of power projection is neither full hegemony nor simple proxy control. It is a networked and partially delegated form of influence in which military effectiveness depends on technology, intelligence, interoperability, and political synchronization. The result is not stable dominance, but limited and conditional influence.

Conclusion

The crisis of power projection is a structural transformation in the relationship between military capability and political effect. It does not mean that military power is declining as an instrument of international politics. It means that military superiority is less able to guarantee strategic control. Hegemonic actors continue to intensify military activity because relative economic pressure and systemic competition push them toward more active use of force. At the same time, technological diffusion, A2/AD systems, unmanned platforms, precision weapons, and fragmented regional orders reduce the strategic reliability of traditional force projection. Neorealism explains why this process produces more military activity rather than less. Under anarchy, states respond to insecurity and relative decline by seeking to preserve their position. The contemporary system, however, limits the effectiveness of that response. The result is a paradox: states use force more frequently, but the conversion of force into durable political order becomes more difficult. The South Caucasus confirms this logic. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War showed the operational value of drones, real-time intelligence, and precision targeting. It also showed that operational success remains politically limited by external actors and regional bargaining. Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation demonstrates the rise of delegated force within an asymmetric strategic partnership, where influence is projected indirectly through technology, doctrine, intelligence, and military integration. The central finding is that the classical model of power projection, based on large platforms, technological monopoly, and direct intervention, is losing strategic reliability. Future research should compare delegated

force models across regions, examine how small and medium states exploit technological diffusion, and develop clearer criteria for distinguishing operational victory from strategic success.

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250 Years of Declaration of Independence

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250 Years ago, in 1776 group of delegates signed a document, Declaration of Independence (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The Declaration was a product of the Enlightenment, deeply rooted in the theories of thinkers like John Locke (Locke, 1689). By asserting that "all men are created equal" and endowed with "unalienable Rights,". It is huge merit of founding fathers who were so wise and forward looking that they created declaration, which we can say still works and is still in use even today after two and a half centuries later.

Influence of John Locke is mostly visible in the conception of "Natural Rights". In his papers, Locke asserts, that each human has right of live, liberty, and property (Locke, 1689). This idea was reflected in declaration by the Thomas Jefferson, as life, liberty and pursuit of happiness (Declaration of Independence, 1776). This emphasizes that, these rights are untouchable and given by the day of birth to every individual.

Even more, "social contract" and "consent of the governed" must be mentioned as it is one of the pillars. According to Locke, the only legitimate source of government is the consent of the people (Locke, 1689). Proof of how the British monarch violated this contract is presented grievances in the Declaration (Declaration of Independence, 1776). When the will of the people is ignored by system, above mentioned social contract is violated and the government loses its right to govern.

I will borrow it from Locke again, as he argued that the people have an obligation to change or abolish government, if they fail to protect natural rights of their people (Locke, 1689). This is exactly one of the points for fighting against tyranny in 1776.

While this was a radical departure from European tradition, the document was initially exclusive in its application. In 1776, these rights did not include enslaved people, women, Indigenous populations and etc.

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However, the brilliance of the Declaration has its own aspirational language. It planted a seed of universal liberty that would eventually be used by different kind of groups to demand their place within the American social contract.

The "unalienable rights" stated in the declaration, at first were more like moral and philosophical. They were later developed and implemented in a better way with amendments as Bill of Rights (U.S. Const. amends. I-X). This step was necessary, in order to prevent the tyranny, which Founding Fathers fought against. The Bill of Rights became guarantor that individual freedoms would be protected in the states.

However, seed of universal liberty, has become problematic after 10th amendment of US constitution, which was ratified in 1791, after 10 years of Declaration of Independence (U.S. Const. amend. X). This amendment allowed to regulate and have rules taken by the states themselves which were tailored to them. In most cases, this affected groups such as, slaves, indigenous populations, women and etc.

Historically, this power has been used as a weapon against ideas of the first declaration. For example, till mid-19th Century, some states used this power as their constitutional right to keep the institution of slavery, or to limit civil rights of women. This tension showed that universal seed of liberty from declaration could only be achieved through a long legal and political struggle and fight. Even nowadays, some states think that people in Washington does not know what their real needs are, this causes states to challenge federal preemption, by testing the Supremacy Clause (U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 2). We can say that this is now taking a new form and is manifested in the crisis of modern federalism, particularly in the cases of Texas and California

One of the examples of fighting in order to achieve freedom and liberty, was civil war of USA. 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments were first right steps forward to the balance and idea of the first Declaration of Independence. (U.S. Const. amends. XIII, XIV, XV).

"All people are created equal"

Abolitionist movement of 19th century was exactly based on principles of declaration itself, against fighting the institution of slavery.

Similar kind of processes went with women right movement. In 1848 at the convention of Seneca Falls, the "Declaration of Sentiments" were adopted (Seneca Falls Convention, 1848). This adoption was interesting and crucial for this movement itself, since it directly repeated the structure of 1776 document.

It emphasized that, women civil and political rights are undivided part of the democracy. However, this long-term fight culminated in 1920, with the 19th amendment (U.S. Const. amend. XIX).

Above mentioned examples, are proof that the Declaration is not just a static text. We can call it "living document" which is constantly evolving, expanding with each generation.

Since the day of 1776 independence, main foreign policy was neutrality. Starting from George Washington, including later James Monroe's ideas, which was called Monroe Doctrine (Monroe, 1823). However, decades later, in the 20th century, mainly after 1st and 2nd World Wars, was the first time, that the principles of the Declaration transcended American borders and became the foundation of world order.

After 1st and 2nd World Wars, the role "Arsenal of Democracy" has been assumed by the United States. This meant providing military support, so as spreading the ideas of freedom and self-determination. Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and later Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" directly echoed the ideas of 1776 around the world (Roosevelt, 1941; Wilson, 1918).

Ensuring stability after 2nd World War, America's role is noteworthy. Starting from The Marshall Plan, the economic recovery of Europe, founding of the United Nations, creation of NATO and etc. All this were attempts to establish an international system, where conflicts would be resolved using legal and democratic principles, instead of wars.

All this, once again, emphasizes the universal and eternal value of the Declaration of Independence. USA with using its "soft power" with ideas of individualism and liberty, has been a guarantor of peace and progress on global scale thru 20th century.

Moving onto, USA-Georgian relations, we must start from history. One of the key ideas from the Declaration of Independence, such as "seed of universal freedom" has been particularly fruitful for Georgia. For which Independence and democratic values are always main subjects of constant struggle. American-Georgian relations mostly became active from the early 20th century, during the First Republic of Georgia. This was first time in this relation when humanitarian organizations assisted the young, newly born democracy in eastern Europe. Even after the occupation of Soviet Union, "policy of non-recognition" was seed from US side, that kept Georgian's hope for independence alive.

Even after events of 1991, by the time of collapse of Soviet Union and restoration of independence in Georgia, the United States became one of the main supporters of Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Euro-Atlantic integration. USA took a biggest part in development of every field Georgia, including

democratically and economically. It also needs to be mentioned that the" Strategic Partnership Charter" which was signed in 2009, main principles in this charter are based on 1776's declaration (U.S.-Georgia Charter, 2009). Which tells following: Democracy, Free market, and the rule of law.

On the other hand, merit of Georgia and Georgians must be mentioned. The best reflection about "pursuit of happiness" are lives of Georgian immigrants who made a great contribution to the development of United States. This example demonstrates that the American dream and the principles of the Declaration of 1776 are open to all who share the ideas of freedom and hard work.

Georgians' contribution mainly starts from 1890, when Buffalo Bill Cody hired 12 Georgians Cossack horsemen for his show (Program on Georgian Studies, n.d.). It is interesting that those Georgians were mostly called Russian Cossacks, however in reality they were Georgians, from Guria. They brought a completely different style of horsemanship. Their tricks, fast-paced maneuvers were a show which was never seen before by American audiences. Some researchers believe that this Georgian riding had a great influence on American rodeo. Tricks performed by Georgians later were adopted by American cowboys

Contribution of Alexander Kartvelishvili to American aviation is invaluable. He was leading engineer, in whose hand's legendary aircraft such as P-47 Thunderbolt has been created. This aircraft played a decisive role in the victory of Democracy in World War 2.

George Balanchine, as Georgian's call - Giorgi Balanchivadze. Americans called him "Father of American Ballet". He created artistic language, which was completely new to the world. His work was an expression of the individual freedom and creative pursuit, which are precious to the American identity.

General John Shalikashvili must be mentioned too, as he was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Armed Forces. Leadership from General Shalikashvili, in the post-Cold War era ensured that America remained a pillar of global peace and stability. He is one of the best examples, how an immigrant can achieve rise to the highest office in the world.

It is sad to mention, that there is no works of studying Georgian immigration in the USA. We can look up plenty of works, which are dedicated to other nations such as Jewish, Korean, Chinese and etc. Considering how big Georgian's contribution in reality is in the America, researching and working on Georgians would be helpful for Georgians and for USA as well.

Now, we must move on to previously mentioned examples, which we can call the crisis of modern federalism. More than two centuries later, after ratifying Declaration of Independence, we can say that

American statehood is facing a new challenge. This is mainly reflected in the tension between the federal government and states, especially Texas and California. Just like previously mentioned example, same question is raising: Where is the line drawn between local self-government and national security?

One of the examples, is border security, especially for Texas. We know and agree, how problematic illegal immigration has been and still is for USA, since day of declaring independence. Nowadays, Texas has decided to fight this problem on their own, using their resources and using ideology of "Lone Star". Because of this behavior, there is ongoing tension and between state and government. For arguments, both side use constitution itself.

10th Amendment of the US constitution

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, not prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people (U.S. Const. amend. X).

We already discussed, what problems this amendment caused in the history of United States. Even now, Texas uses this amendment as having Police Power in their own territory. Which means power to regulate Health, Safety, and Morals. States argue that they know what's best for their people better than a federal government.

Article I, Section 10

limits powers of state governments, prohibiting them from making treaties, coining money, emitting bills of credit, or impairing contracts; it also restricts their ability to tax imports/exports, keep standing armies in peacetime, or engage in war without Congressional consent, ensuring a unified national system and preventing interstate conflicts and economic chaos (U.S. Const. art. I, § 10).

The federal argument is the "One Voice" doctrine, which is principle of foreign relations law, that maintains the United States must speak with a single, unified voice in its relations and this is mainly job of executive branch and the President of the Unites States (Texas v. U.S., n.d.).

This case of tension, once again confirms that, declared principles from 1776 are in a constant process of interpretation. It is clear, that founding fathers were trying to create complete balance, however modern

political reality shows, that “consent of the governed” is not only a historical event, rather it is legal daily battle.

That is why, the stability of American democracy is determined by a system, which is called as “checks and balances”. It limits the concentration of power, which is related to Madison’s idea of controlling the outcome of factions. For example, when Texas or California opposes the federal government, it is this system that provides a balance and decision between the state’s “police power” and the federal “one voice” doctrine. All this serves to preserve the rule of law.

As of final word we must borrow it from James Madison, “we cannot control the causes, so we must control the effects” (Madison, 1787).

To sum up, nothing is perfect. Version of 250-year-old document is not directly in use the way it was at first. And US citizen and not only, humans generally all over the world must be thankful, at first, of founding fathers and also for social generations of 250 years, who pushed, fought and sacrificed themselves for rights and liberty of themselves and their future generations.

Appearance of Georgians in 1890 is symbolic event, as it shows that the right to “pursuit of happiness” and the American horizon of possibilities provided for by the Declaration, became available to Georgians as early as the 19th century. This success on American land is foundation for cultural dialogue, that later developed into a strategic partnership too.

Act of Independence of Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918 had a direct influence of the universal principles from the Declaration of Independence. The ideas from Thomas Jefferson, such as equality, political freedom, and self-determination, also became the foundation of Georgian democracy. Not only Georgian but, this Declaration from 1776 affected literally whole globe and its democratic countries. Even if we name any of democratic country, each has a seed from the Declaration of Independence. Even in 1991, when Georgia regained its independence, it once again chose Western democratic values. All this confirms that the 1776 document is the genetic code of global freedom.

The Declaration of Independence from 1776 is not just a static text, it is expanding with each generation. Americans of Georgian descent are proof, that Declaration of Independence from 1776 is like a “living document”, which unites everyone who believe that “all men are created equal”, regardless of borders and nationality.

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The Declaration of Independence at 250: Climate Resilience, Disaster Diplomacy, and the Enduring American Ethos of National Security (1776–2026)

FOSTER NYASHA[9]

Abstract

As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, the meaning of national independence requires renewed interpretation in light of climate disruption, disaster vulnerability, and environmental insecurity. This paper argues that the Declaration's core principles such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness must now be understood through the contemporary climate–disasters–security nexus. In the twenty-first century, a nation cannot meaningfully secure life and liberty if it fails to protect people, infrastructure, and institutions from extreme weather, cascading hazards, and long-term ecological instability. Using Hurricane Katrina as a turning point, the paper examines how U.S. disaster policy evolved from a reactive emergency model toward resilience, intergovernmental coordination, and broader security integration. It also evaluates the limits of this transformation, particularly where equity, preparedness, and climate adaptation remain uneven. Finally, the paper considers the international dimension of American disaster diplomacy, including U.S.–Georgia cooperation in emergency preparedness, as evidence that national resilience increasingly depends on transnational partnership. The paper concludes that the ideals of 1776 remain politically vital only if they are reimagined to include climate resilience, environmental security, and sustainable governance.

***Keywords*:** Declaration of Independence, climate resilience, disaster diplomacy, national security, Hurricane Katrina, environmental security

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Introduction

The approaching 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence invites more than ceremonial commemoration; it demands renewed reflection on the political meaning of the United States in an era of deep environmental uncertainty. The Declaration's assertion that all people are endowed with the unalienable rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" has long functioned as a moral and symbolic foundation of American political identity, even though the document is not itself legally binding (National Archives, n.d.). The National Archives further describes it as expressing "the principles on which our government, and our identity as Americans, are based" (National Archives, n.d.). In the twenty-first century, however, these principles can no longer be interpreted solely through the language of constitutional order, military sovereignty, or territorial defense. They must also be understood through a world shaped by hurricanes, droughts, heatwaves, sea-level rise, food insecurity, damaged infrastructure, and the destabilizing social effects of climate shocks.

This paper argues that the Declaration's promise of life and liberty must now be read through the climate–disasters–security nexus. If governments are instituted to secure rights, then they must also secure the environmental and institutional conditions that make those rights meaningful. A state that cannot anticipate, absorb, and recover from major disasters cannot fully protect life. A society whose most vulnerable communities face repeated exposure to floods, fires, and infrastructure collapse cannot meaningfully guarantee liberty in substantive terms. In this sense, climate resilience is not peripheral to American political identity, it is increasingly central to it.

The analysis proceeds from Hurricane Katrina as the defining modern case through which these tensions became unmistakable. Katrina was not merely an extreme weather event. It exposed the fragility of federal disaster governance, revealed profound inequalities in vulnerability and recovery, and accelerated the fusion of environmental risk with national security thinking. The years after Katrina saw important reforms in emergency management and preparedness, yet they also revealed the limits of institutional learning. The paper therefore connects the founding language of 1776 to the resilience challenges of 2026, arguing that the enduring American ethos of national security must now include disaster preparedness, climate adaptation, and international resilience cooperation (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2009).

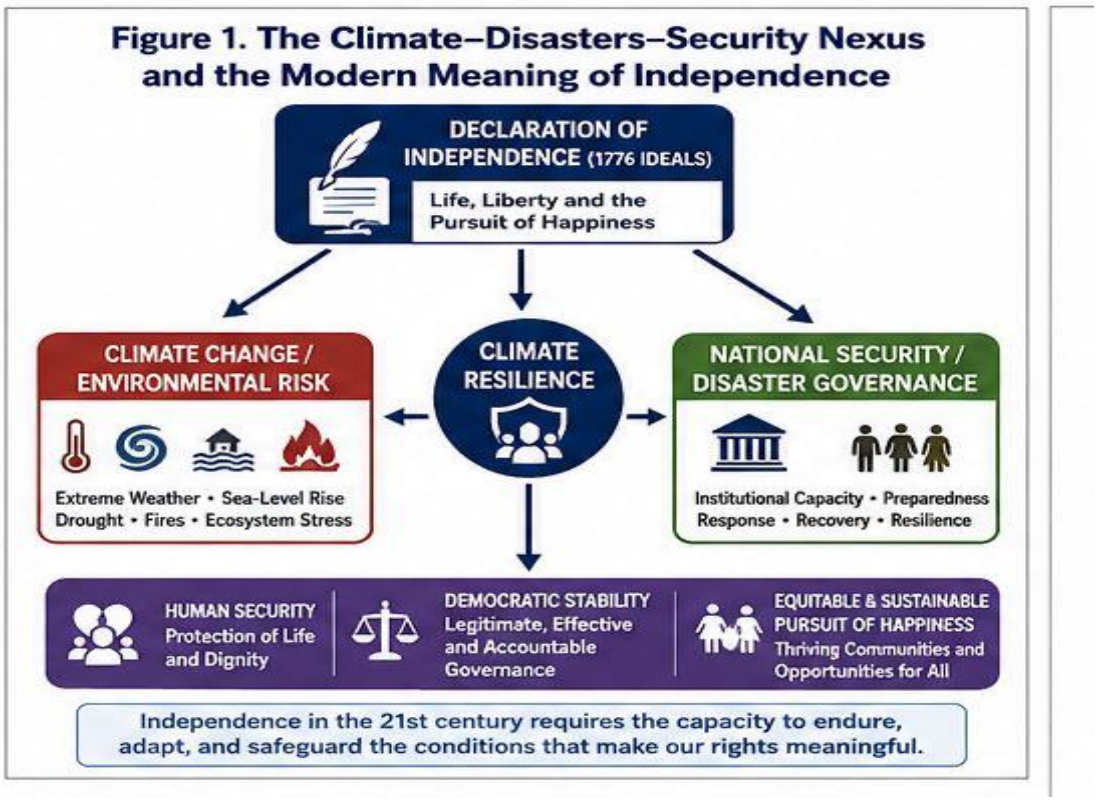


Figure 1. The Climate–Disasters–Security Nexus and the Modern Meaning of Independence

Re-reading 1776 in the Climate Century

The political force of the Declaration lies in its insistence that government exists to secure human dignity against forms of domination and insecurity. Historically, this language has been associated with tyranny, colonial rule, and political exclusion. Yet the underlying logic of the document is broader: it places protection, legitimacy, and the common good at the center of public authority. That logic remains relevant in the climate century. When intensifying disasters destroy homes, sever access to food and water, damage public health systems, and displace whole communities, the state's obligation to secure life and liberty becomes inseparable from its ability to govern environmental risk (National Archives, n.d.).

This reinterpretation does not require abandoning the traditional meaning of the American founding. Rather, it extends it. National independence in 1776 was defined against imperial control; national resilience in 2026 must also be defined against climate fragility and institutional failure. The environmental question is therefore a constitutional and civic question in the broadest sense. A republic that celebrates liberty while neglecting disaster risk, crumbling infrastructure, or unequal exposure to extreme weather

risks hollowing out the very promises it commemorates. The pursuit of happiness, in this framework, is not reducible to individual aspiration; it also depends on stable communities, functioning institutions, and the capacity to withstand collective shocks.

This is especially significant because climate-related threats have become increasingly embedded in national strategic thinking. A major White House assessment on the national security implications of climate change argued that climate change is an "urgent and growing threat" that contributes to increased natural disasters, refugee flows, and conflicts over food and water (The White House, 2015). The same report described climate change as a "threat multiplier," intensifying poverty, environmental degradation, instability, and the conditions that can enable violence (The White House, 2015). Such language signals that environmental threats are no longer treated as background conditions; they are increasingly recognized as core security concerns.

Hurricane Katrina and the Transformation of American Disaster Policy

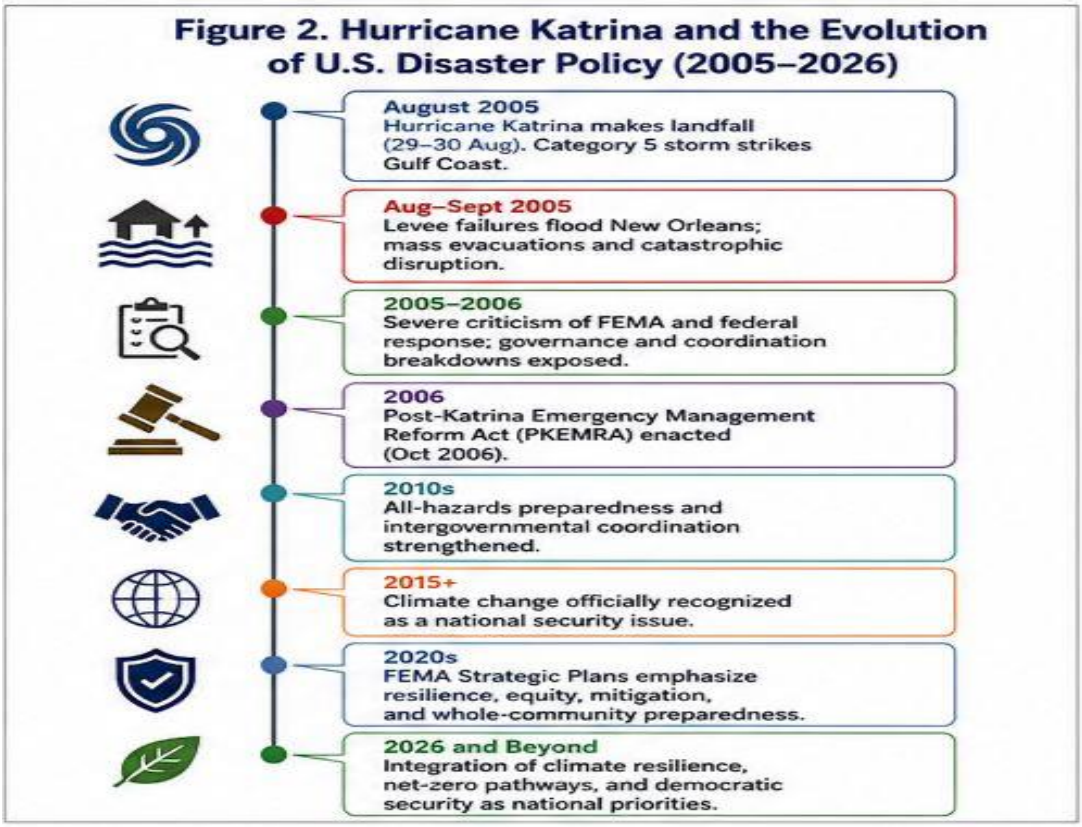


Figure 2. Hurricane Katrina and the Evolution of U.S. Disaster Policy (2005–2026)

Hurricane Katrina remains the most powerful domestic example of how disaster can expose the gap between American ideals and institutional reality. The National Weather Service describes Katrina as one of the most devastating natural disasters in United States history (National Weather Service, n.d.). It reached Category 5 intensity, broke pressure records, and generated catastrophic storm surge across the Gulf Coast. Levee failures left at least 80 percent of New Orleans under water by August 31, 2005 (National Weather Service, n.d.). The scale of physical destruction alone would have made Katrina historically significant, but the storm's political significance arose from its exposure of systemic weaknesses in emergency management, federal coordination, and social protection.

The post-Katrina accountability literature quickly showed that the disaster was not simply a meteorological event. It was a governance crisis. According to the Government Accountability Office (2009), Hurricane Katrina affected more than half a million people across approximately 90,000 square miles in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and resulted in over 1,600 deaths, while also becoming one of the largest disaster relief and recovery operations in U.S. history.

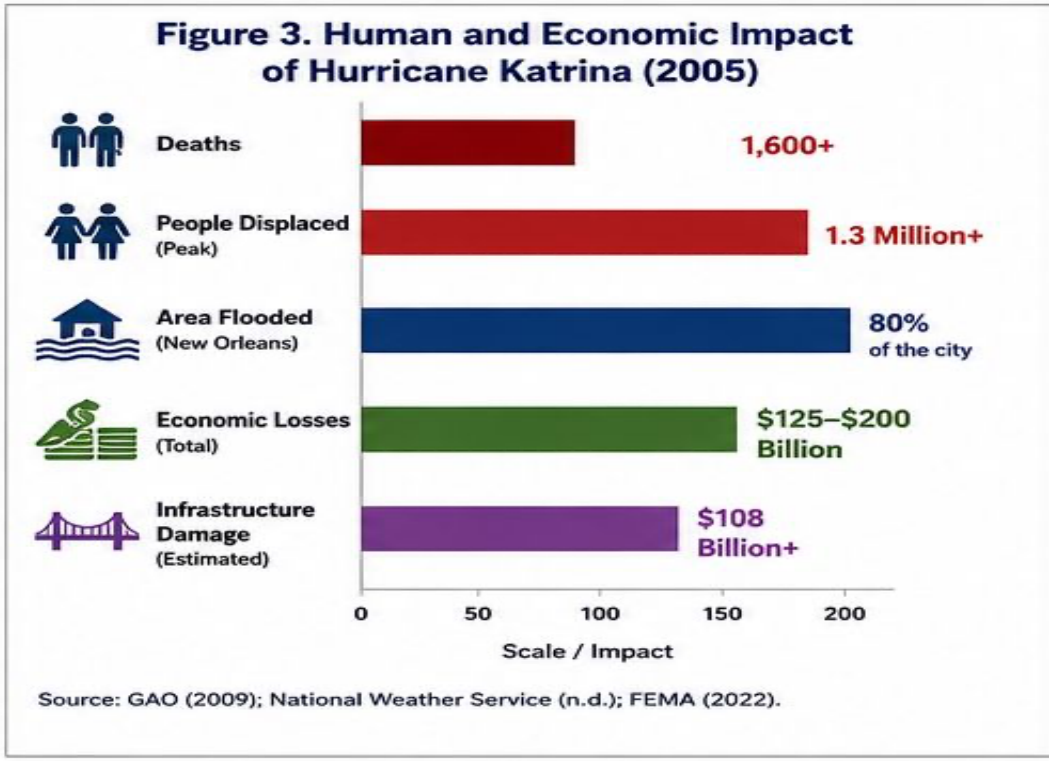


Figure 3. Human and Economic Impact of Hurricane Katrina

The same review emphasized that Katrina "revealed weaknesses in the basic elements of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any catastrophic disaster" (GAO, 2009, p. 2). This finding is crucial because it moved the policy debate from the language of isolated failure to the language of structural weakness.

Katrina also transformed the way federal disaster management was understood in relation to national security. In the years immediately preceding the storm, FEMA had been absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security as part of the post-9/11 reorganization of the federal state. While this shift was designed to strengthen homeland protection, Katrina revealed the costs of privileging terrorism-centered security over all-hazards preparedness. What emerged was a paradox: the United States had expanded its security institutions after 2001, yet it remained dangerously vulnerable to a foreseeable natural catastrophe. Katrina thus forced policymakers to confront a broader definition of security, one that included critical infrastructure, intergovernmental coordination, public health, evacuation systems, and continuity of essential services.

The principal legislative response was the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA). This law sought to enhance FEMA's authority and autonomy within DHS and to establish a more comprehensive system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation. GAO's review of implementation noted that the Act expanded FEMA's responsibilities well beyond organizational changes, addressing multiple shortcomings revealed by Katrina (GAO, 2009). In institutional terms, PKEMRA represented an attempt to restore federal disaster management capacity and re-center catastrophic preparedness within national governance.

Yet the significance of Katrina lies not only in the reforms it triggered, but also in the standard it set for evaluating whether the United States truly protects life and liberty in disaster. Katrina demonstrated that security cannot be understood only as defense against hostile states or non-state violence. It also depends on levees that hold, emergency plans that function, agencies that coordinate, and institutions that do not abandon vulnerable populations in moments of crisis. In that sense, Katrina remains a test case for the lived meaning of American independence.

Climate Resilience as National Security

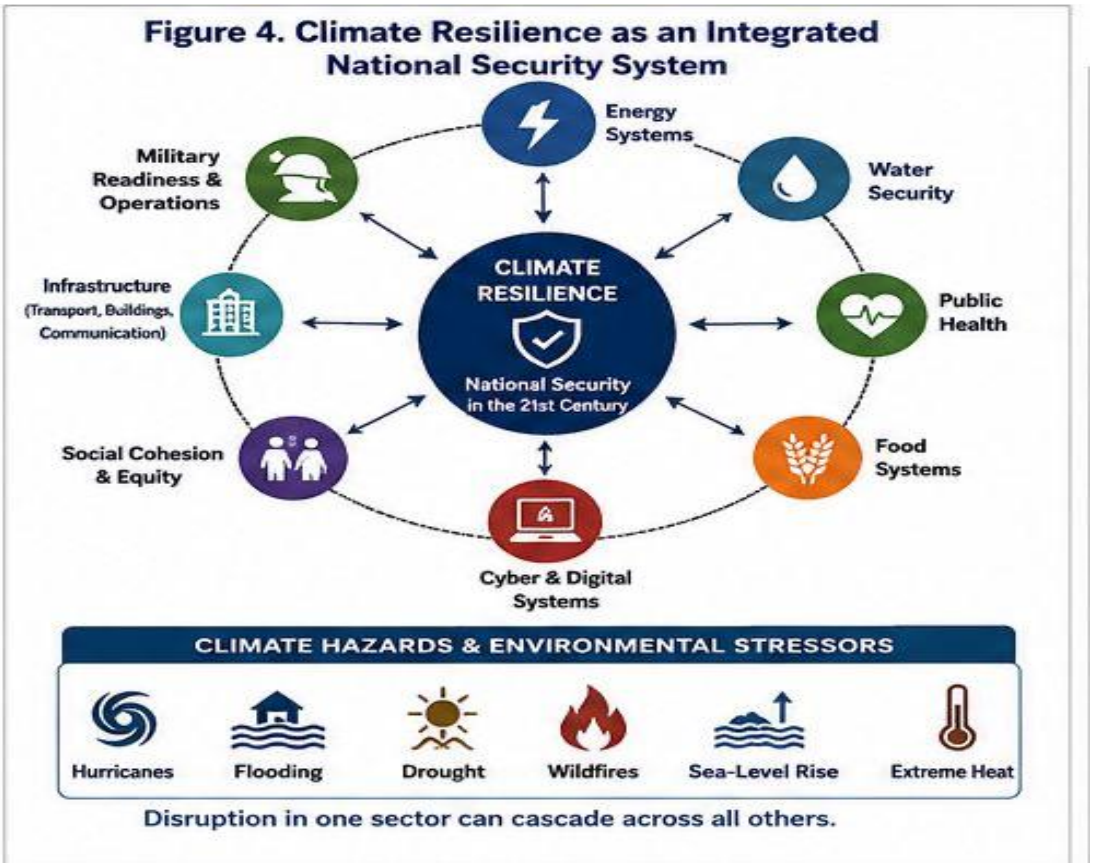


Figure 4. Climate Resilience as an Integrated National Security System

The post-Katrina policy conversation gradually converged with the broader climate-security debate. The White House climate security assessment made clear that climate change affects U.S. national security not only through international instability, but also through direct pressure on military readiness, installations, supply chains, electricity systems, water resources, and disaster-response missions (The White House, 2015). Coastal erosion, sea-level rise, flooding, and fire hazards threaten bases and operations, while extreme events increase the frequency and complexity of humanitarian response. This matters because it reframes resilience as a strategic requirement rather than a purely humanitarian aspiration.

Within this framework, climate resilience can be understood as the capacity of institutions and communities to absorb shocks without losing core functionality. It includes hard infrastructure, but it also includes governance quality, planning, communication systems, social trust, redundancy, and recovery speed (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], n.d.). A climate-resilient republic is not one that eliminates all risk; it is one that reduces preventable vulnerability and responds without cascading institutional breakdown. This is especially important for the United States because environmental shocks

increasingly overlap with economic inequality, public health stress, energy insecurity, and digital dependence. Security in such a context is not divisible. Disruption in one sector rapidly transmits to others.

This evolution has significant normative implications for the American founding tradition. If climate change threatens food systems, water access, homes, mobility, and public order, then environmental resilience becomes a condition for democratic endurance. The right to life is endangered when evacuation systems fail or when communities lack protection from recurrent flooding. Liberty is hollowed out when disaster recovery depends heavily on wealth, race, geography, or institutional access. The pursuit of happiness becomes increasingly precarious when extreme weather repeatedly destroys the material conditions of ordinary life. By this logic, climate resilience is not an optional policy add-on; it is part of the modern infrastructure of republican legitimacy.

At the same time, resilience should not be romanticized. The language of resilience can become superficial if it is detached from redistribution, adaptation finance, and measurable preparedness. The lesson of Katrina is that resilience rhetoric without operational capacity is politically dangerous. It can create the appearance of readiness while masking uneven protection. Consequently, a serious American resilience agenda must connect mitigation, adaptation, emergency management, and social equity. It must also recognize that climate security is not merely about surviving single disasters, but about governing cumulative risk across decades.

Disaster Diplomacy and the International Dimension

Disaster diplomacy refers to the use of disaster preparedness, humanitarian cooperation, and resilience-building as instruments of partnership, trust-building, and strategic engagement. In this respect, American national security in the climate era is increasingly international. Alliances and partnerships are shaped not only by military commitments, but also by shared capacities for emergency response, training, and institutional learning.

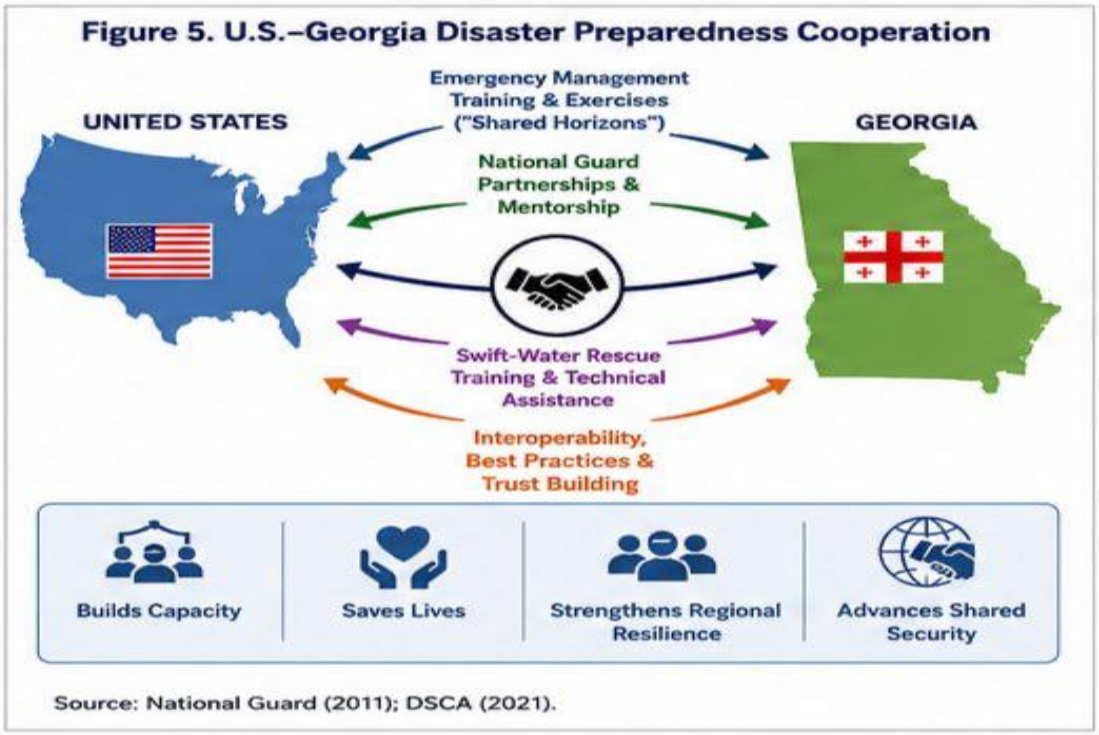


Figure 5. U.S.–Georgia Disaster Preparedness Cooperation

Georgia–U.S. cooperation offers a useful example. A 2011 National Guard report described the "Shared Horizons 11" tabletop exercise in Tbilisi, where Georgia National Guard personnel worked with Georgian institutions to prepare for civil response in the event of natural disaster (National Guard, 2011). The exercise was designed to strengthen cooperation between key Georgian ministries within a national response framework and to build partner capacity in emergency management. The report explicitly framed this work as part of a long-standing partnership emphasizing disaster response, trust, and regional robustness.

That partnership deepened in later years through more specialized training. In 2021, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency reported that the Marietta Fire Department traveled to Georgia to train Georgian Emergency Management Services in swift-water rescue techniques relevant to floods and other natural disasters (Department of Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2021). The article emphasized interoperability, mentorship, and the value of sustained relations under the State Partnership Program. Such cooperation illustrates how disaster preparedness can serve both humanitarian and strategic ends: it improves life-saving capacity while reinforcing broader bilateral security ties.

For the United States, this international dimension is significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that resilience can function as a form of soft power, strengthening relationships through practical assistance and shared expertise. Second, it reinforces the idea that national security is increasingly transnational in an age of climate-linked disruptions. Floods, fires, migration, infrastructure shocks, and humanitarian emergencies do not remain neatly contained within territorial borders. Cooperative resilience-building therefore aligns with both the moral language of the Declaration and the strategic imperatives of the present.

Toward 2026: Resilience, Net-Zero Pathways, and Democratic Security

As the 250th anniversary of American independence approaches, the central policy question is not whether the founding ideals remain relevant, but how they must be operationalized under conditions of climate instability. The answer cannot lie in symbolism alone. It must include durable investment in resilient infrastructure, stronger federal-state-local coordination, climate-informed planning, protection of critical systems, and more equitable recovery mechanisms. It must also include credible movement toward lower-carbon development pathways, because resilience without mitigation simply manages an escalating crisis (The White House, 2015).

This also requires a broader conception of American security culture. The traditional national security canon has often privileged military strength, deterrence, and geopolitical rivalry. Those remain important, but they are insufficient. A nation may possess extraordinary military capabilities and still be strategically fragile if its cities flood, its energy systems fail, its water supplies are stressed, and its most vulnerable citizens remain exposed to preventable disaster. Katrina made this contradiction visible. Climate change now magnifies it. A republic worthy of the Declaration’s language must therefore defend not only borders and institutions, but also the ecological and social foundations of collective life.

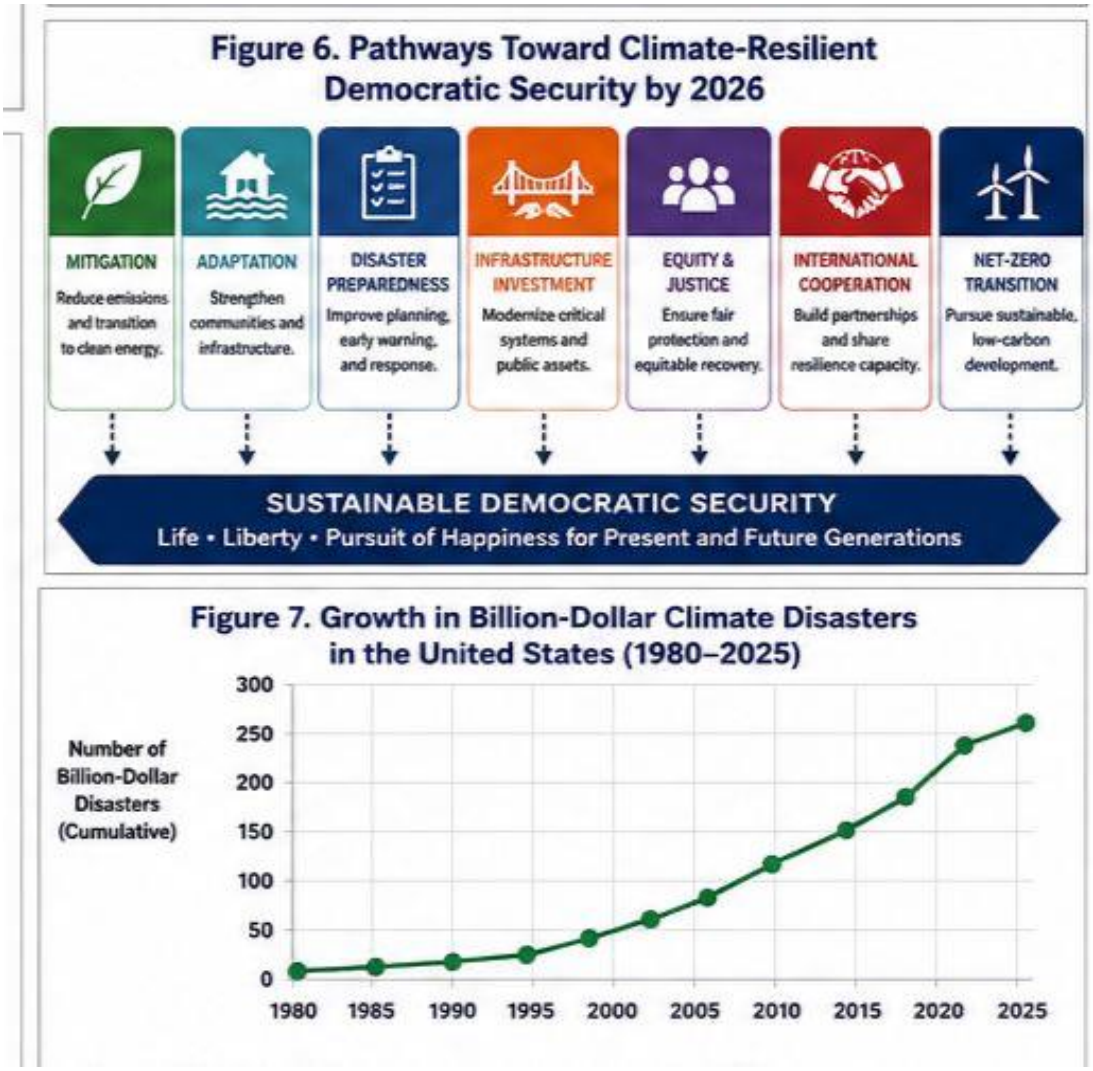


Figure 6 and 7(Growth in B$). Pathways Toward Climate-Resilient Democratic Security by 2026

The enduring relevance of the Declaration lies in its flexibility as a moral framework. Its language has repeatedly been reinterpreted by later generations in struggles over slavery, civil rights, gender equality, and democratic inclusion. The climate age presents another such moment of reinterpretation. To honor the Declaration at 250 is not merely to celebrate the past; it is to ask whether the United States is building the conditions under which life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness remain possible in an era of cascading environmental risk. On that question, climate resilience is not external to American identity. It is becoming one of its defining tests.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence should be read as an opportunity to reinterpret American national security through the lens of climate resilience and disaster diplomacy. The Declaration's core values remain foundational, but their contemporary meaning depends on whether the United States can protect people and institutions from environmental disruption. Hurricane Katrina exposed the inadequacy of narrow security frameworks and forced disaster preparedness, resilience, and institutional coordination into the center of national policy. Post-Katrina reforms marked an important shift, yet climate change has made clear that these reforms were only the beginning.

The paper has also shown that resilience has both domestic and international dimensions. Domestically, it requires stronger preparedness, equitable adaptation, and climate-conscious governance. Internationally, it is advanced through practical cooperation such as U.S.–Georgia emergency preparedness partnerships that build interoperability and trust. In both cases, the central insight is the same: independence in the twenty-first century requires more than sovereignty. It requires the ability to endure, adapt, and cooperate under conditions of climate uncertainty.

If the Declaration remains a living text, then its promise must be extended into the environmental present. Life requires safety from catastrophic risk. Liberty requires institutions capable of protecting all communities, not only the privileged. The pursuit of happiness requires a habitable, resilient, and just social order. By 2026, these are no longer secondary policy concerns. They are central to the enduring American ethos of national security.

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America and Its Oldest Ally: The Enduring Partnership with France

SABA PRUIDZE[10]

Abstract

The partnership between the United States and France is one of the oldest and most influential alliances in modern history, dating back to the era of the American Revolutionary War. France's early military and financial support-symbolized by figures such as Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette -played a decisive role in securing American independence. Over time, this relationship evolved from a strategic wartime alliance into a multifaceted partnership grounded in shared values, including democracy, liberty, and international cooperation. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the alliance adapted to global challenges, with both nations fighting side in major conflicts such as World War I and World War II, and later cooperating through institutions like NATO. Despite occasional political disagreements- particularly over foreign policy in the Middle East or defense strategy-the relationship has remained resilient, reinforced by deep cultural ties, economic interdependence, and diplomatic dialogue. In the contemporary era, the Franco-American partnership continues to play a vital role in addressing global issues such as climate change, security, and multilateral governance. As both countries navigate an increasingly complex international landscape, their historic alliance demonstrates both continuity and adaptation, reflecting a shared commitment to global stability and democratic. principles.

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France and the Birth of America: Revolutionary Support and Early American Debates

France remains America's oldest ally, its support brought success of the American Revolutionary War. It is important to mention that the official beginning date of the revolution is 1775, however the military, naval, and financial assistance in 1776 from the European superpower was a turning point which transformed a colonial rebellion into a successful war for independence.

The devastating defeat in the Seven Years' War and the long-standing rivalry against Britain motivated France to begin secretly providing aid to the American colonies as early as 1776. Through the fictitious trading company Roderigue Hortalez et Compagnie, led by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, France shipped thousands of muskets, tons of gunpowder, artillery, and clothing. As Benjamin Franklin reported from Paris, French assistance gave the Americans "the means of sustaining the war" (Franklin, 1777, as cited in Schiff, 2005). The American victory at Saratoga in 1777 turned a secret co-operation into an open commitment. On February 6, 1778 the two nations signed the Treaty of Alliance- " If War should break out between France and Great Britain... his Majesty and the said United States, shall make it a common cause, and aid each other mutually with their good Offices, their Counsels, and their forces" (Treaty of Alliance, 1778). In the same the Treaty of Amity and Commerce were signed which formally established peaceful trade relations and formally recognized American independence.

Soon after establishing formal connections between the governments and states France declared war on Britain and moved its troops under the Comte de Rochambeau, naval forces were led by Admiral de Grassem and the Marquis de Lafayeette. This kind of direct interference in the war brought a Franco-American victory at the Battle of the Chesapeake (1781) at Yorktown. Alongside with the military assistance new partner also supplied critical Financial aid totaling more than 1.3 billion livres (French currency) which itself included loans, subsides, and gifts (Dull, 1985)

Thomas Jefferson, who served as U.S Minister to France (1785-1789), deeply admired French culture and Enlightenment ideals. In his Autobiography, he expressed his strong affection, stating that after his own country, "France would be my second choice" (Jefferson, 1821/1984). He was strongly influenced by classical philosophers that shaped his intellectual curiosity and showcased France as a center of learning and liberty.

In contrast, Alexander Hamilton had a critical viewpoint of revolutionary France. In 1794, he warned against the radicalism of the French Revolution, writing that it had hurried her headlong through a rapid

succession of dreadful revolutions, which have laid waste property... and deluged it in crime, poverty and wretchedness" (Hamilton, 1794).

These differing perspectives between Jefferson and Hamilton helped shape America's earliest foreign policy debates and the rise of the first political parties.

Franco-American Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries

The strong partnership between France and the United States continued to develop throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. This collaboration was shaped by important diplomatic relations, territorial agreements, and symbolic events that further strengthened the ties between the two nations.
In 1803, France played one of the most important roles in American expansion through the Louisiana Purchase which was agreed because of the financial difficulties and the risk of losing the territory of Britain, Napoleon Bonaparte sold approximately 828,000 square miles of land to the United States for 15 million dollars (about 80 million Frances). This historic agreement, negotiated by American envoys Robert Livigston and Hames Monroe, doubled the size of the young nation. President Thomas Jefferson described it as ' a great achievement" that secured the Mississippi River and opened the American West (Jefferson, 1803, as cited in Peterson, 1984).

Throughout the 19th century, cultural and symbolic connections deepened. The most iconic gesture came in 1886 with the gift of the Statue of Liberty. Designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and engineered by Gustave Eiffel, "Liberty Enlightening the World" was a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States to commemorate the centennial of American independence and symbolize shared ideals of liberty and democracy. At the dedication ceremony, President Grover Cleveland accepted the statue, noting the "ties of friendship" between the two republics (as cited in Moreno, 2000).

The global conflicts in the 20th century tested and once again reaffirmed the alliance. During World War I, France and the United States fought side by side against Germany. On July 4, 1917, at the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette in Paris, Colonel Charles E. Stanton (speaking for General John J. Pershing) delivered the famous words: "Lafayette, we are here!" (Stanton, 1917, as cited in Pershing, 1931). This powerful declaration symbolized America's repayment of France's Revolutionary War support.

President Woodrow Wilson, who led the United States into the war, emphasized the deep historical bond between the two nations. In his address to Congress, Wilson highlighted the shared commitment to liberty, stating that America fought "for the rights and liberties of small nations" and stood with France as a fellow

republic defending democracy (Wilson, 1917). On the French side, Prime Minister Alexandre Ribot welcomed America's entry into the war with gratitude. In a speech to the French Senate shortly after the U.S. declaration of war, Ribot expressed hope and relief, declaring that the arrival of American support would bring new strength to the Allied cause and help secure victory for the forces of liberty (Ribot, 1917, as cited in "Alexandre Ribot on America's Entry into the War"). With this kind of strong commitment towards each other and the American direct involvement turned the tide of the war to the victory. In World War II, the partnership reached new heights. On D-Day (June 6, 1944), American forces led the massive Allied invasion of Normandy. U.S. troops played a central role in the liberation of Paris in August 1944. General Charles de Gaulle, leader of Free France, expressed deep gratitude to the American people upon the liberation, acknowledging the immense sacrifice made to restore French freedom. After the war, the United States provided massive financial assistance to help rebuild war-torn France through the Marshall Plan (European Recovery Program). Between 1948 and 1952, France received over $2.3 billion in aid one of the largest shares among European nations - to reconstruct its economy, infrastructure, and industry (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). President Harry S. Truman, who signed the Marshall Plan into law, described it as essential "to restore the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their continent" (Truman, 1948). On the French side, Foreign Minister Georges Bidault and other leaders expressed profound thanks, viewing the aid as a continuation of the historic friendship between the two republics. These joint efforts in war and peace reinforced the "oldest alliance." France became a founding member of NATO in 1949, solidifying the transatlantic security partnership. rench President Vincent Auriol strongly supported the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty, viewing it as vital for the security of Europe and the preservation of democratic values. He described the alliance as a necessary shield "to guarantee peace and collective security" against future threats (Auriol, 1949, as cited in historical records of the Fourth Republic). Despite occasional tensions disagreements over the Vietnam Warsuch as during the Suez Crisis (1956) andthe Franco-American relationship remained resilient, built on shared democratic values and historical gratitude.

Contemporary Challenges and Enduring Alliance: France and the United States under Macron and Trump

Despite their deep historical ties, Franco-American relations have faced notable tensions in recent years, particularly during President Donald Trump's second term and President Emmanuel Macron's leadership.

Disagreements have centered on trade, NATO defense spending, tariffs, and especially the issue of Greenland.

President Trump has strongly pushed for the United States to acquire Greenland for national security reasons and has threatened to impose tariffs of up to 25% on goods from France and other European countries if Denmark does not agree to sell the territory. Trump has also criticized French and European contributions to NATO and imposed or threatened tariffs on French luxury goods, wine, and champagne.

In response, President Macron has firmly opposed these moves. He visited Greenland in 2025 to support European sovereignty and publicly criticized Trump's approach. Macron stated: "No intimidation nor threat will influence us, neither in Ukraine, nor in Greenland" (Macron, 2026). He further condemned the use of tariffs as leverage, declaring that "the endless accumulation of new tariffs... is fundamentally unacceptable, even more so when they are used as leverage against territorial sovereignty" (Macron, 2026).

Tensions also arose over perceived unpredictability in U.S. foreign policy. Macron criticized excessive inconsistency, saying, "When we want to be serious, we don't say each day the opposite of what we said the day before" (Macron, 2026).

However, despite these disagreements, the United States and France remain strong allies. Both countries continue to cooperate closely on counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and major global security issues. The fundamental partnership rooted in over 240 years of shared history - has once again demonstrated its resilience even amid current challenges.

Conclusion An Unbreakable Bond: The Past, Present, and Future of Franco-American Relations

The Franco-American relationship stands as one of the oldest and most resilient alliances in modern history. From France's decisive support during the American Revolution including military aid, the 1778 Treaty of Alliance, and substantial financial assistance to the Louisiana Purchase, the Statue of Liberty, and joint efforts in both World Wars, the partnership has played a vital role in shaping the United States.

Though Thomas Jefferson deeply admired France while Alexander Hamilton remained more cautious, the alliance endured. It was further strengthened in the 20th century through the Marshall Plan and the founding of NATO in 1949.

Even today, under Presidents Macron and Trump, disagreements over NATO spending, tariffs, and Greenland have created tensions. Yet, both nations continue to cooperate closely on security and global issues.

Ultimately, the bond between the United States and France proves that shared values and historical gratitude can overcome differences. As General de Gaulle famously declared in 1960: "France and the United States have been friends for a long time, and they will remain friends forever."

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An Analytical Examination of President Donald Trump's 2026 State of the Union Address

TAMTA UTIASHVILI[11]

The 47th President of the U.S. Donald Trump appeared before the Congress to deliver his second and the longest in the history of the U.S. State of the Union address on February 24, 2026. The President spoke for an hour and 47 minutes and enjoyed this opportunity to talk more than 10, 000 words directly to the American public. After more than a year of his second term, when scholars are still examining whether his second term represent continuity or change, President Trump offered victorious remarks, praised the work of Republicans, mainly accentuated domestic affairs, in particular economy and migration, and outlined his future agenda. This article offers the analysis of the content of the president's speech before the Congress, making it a resource for understanding the complexities of Trump's communication style for scholars studying presidential communication.

President Donald Trump has never had a short speech to Congress talking for more than an hour every time. During his first term (2017-2021) he has come close to breaking the time record of State of the Union Address. Previously, President Bill Clinton held the title for the longest spoken State of the Union address as he spoke for approximately an hour and a half. The record was broken this year by nearly 20 minutes.

Considered as one of the most important speeches in the United States, the Presidents usually reflect on major issues of the U.S. both home and abroad. It is a communication from the President to Congress in which the President offers remarks on the current condition of the country and provides proposals for the future year. This tradition is rooted in the U.S. Constitution and Greene and Kreiser (2026, p.2) underlined that "the address originates in the Constitution (Article II, Section 3, clause 1), which requires that the President "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.""

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State of the Union addresses are prepared and designed for maximum effect on specific audiences. Starting from the president George Washington and through Herbert Hoover this address was called the "Annual Message" and "Franklin Roosevelt was the first president to refer to his annual message as "the State of the Union," which are the words that the Constitution uses, and his 1941 speech is the first to have that title" (Lindsay, 2026, para 3).

Presidents use this opportunity to trumpet their achievements on both domestic and international stage and emphasize the greatness of America. Donald Trump continued the tradition and his speech was no exception. Though foreign policy was not broad area of concern, the "critics described it as lacking in substance" (Galston and Kamarck, 2026, para 18). As for the domestic affairs, it was the main focus of the speech, reflecting on his return to the White House. He mentioned reduced facts of undocumented migrants crossing a southern border, positive market trends and a growing stock market, rising incomes, affordable living and decreased prices, including on petrol. Trump (2026, para 30) concluded by adding "Our country is winning again".

Frum (2026) analyzed the president's speech and stated that it was "divisive, abusive and childish" (para1) and that "States of the Union are rituals intended to demonstrate the unity of the nation: the president addressing two houses of Congress, backed by his Cabinet, speaking to the largest audience in the regularly scheduled year. Even the nonpartisan institutions of government—the Supreme Court and Joint Chiefs of Staff—attend in robes and uniforms, adding the symbolism of their respectful neutrality" (para 4).

The speech comes at a challenging moment when his public approval ratings have slipped and are around 40 percent, according to a wide range of polls (Galston and Kamarck, 2026). His voters start to lose trust in him ahead of the November midterm elections. Galston and Kamarck (2026, para 2) claimed that in the speech the president did not reach out to the independent and swing voters and "he largely bypassed the affordability concerns that polls show remain the top priority for most voters". Though, experts emphasized the high need to focus more on how to address what the American public wants and what concerns they have, Trump still didn't suggest that he would adjust his policies in response. Instead, he took pride in his first year back in office, while typically blaming the country's problems on his predecessor and on Democrats who responded to his words with a mix of silence or angry shouts.

During the second year of presidency, American voters are more concerned about the economy and the cost of living. They expected the president to focus on rising costs of food, housing, energy, healthcare and other concerns of the middle-class households. However, they were disappointed as he did not

acknowledge the concerns of ordinary families and did not refocus his agenda on affordability (Galston and Kamarck, 2026). The president spent first twenty minutes highlighting positive economic statistics and received a loud and long bout of applause from Republicans during a line about the priority being to protect American citizens. He did not mention that many Americans remain displeased and financially frustrated with increasing prices. However, Democrats again were blamed for the high costs and the president offered zero solutions to the problems American families are facing (Pager and Broadwater, 2026). The president also defended his tariffs claiming to be a necessary mechanism for the country to prosper.

It is notable that the speech fell on the fourth anniversary of the war in Ukraine. The president only briefly mentioned Ukraine, highlighting his hope for peace. He did not mention the significance of the date and while noting that his administration was working to end the war, little attention was devoted to the topic.

Donald Trump utilized his State of the Union address to praise American patriots and announced a number of Medals and Honors. In particular, he featured the men's U.S. hockey team that won the gold medal at the Olympics, military heroes and a 100-year-old Korean War veteran (Galston and Kamarck, 2026).

State of the Union's address is not an illustration of strategic agenda, it is a report of accomplishments and a vision for the upcoming year. The President declared that a "golden age of America" had begun and focused heavily on domestic transformation, a decrease of illegal immigration, and his administration's success in reducing border crossings, and record highs in the stock market. Setting an ambitious tone for the coming year, he also mentioned the 250th anniversary of American independence, renewed sense of patriotism and stated that "This July 4, we will mark two and a half centuries of liberty and triumph, progress and freedom in the most incredible and exceptional nation ever to exist on the face of the Earth. And you've seen nothing yet. We're going to do better and better and better. This is the golden age of America" (Trump, 2026, para 4).

Though there is no clear evidence and it is ambiguous whether he was referring to illegal immigration voting or not, "Trump returned to this familiar claim as he appealed to lawmakers to pass stricter voter ID requirements to "stop illegal aliens from voting"" (Horton, Gilder & Edgington, 2026, para 28). Border security has become a major focal point of the speech. Interesting to note that Donald Trump mentioned the word "border" 15 times in comparison to five times during his 2018 address to the Congress. Kim (2026, para 27) along with Stimson experts analyzed Trump's priorities in 2026 address, compared it to 2018 address and located main patterns by emphasizing that "critical foreign policy problems in Asia, such as China and North Korea, were not mentioned once this year. But in 2018, China was mentioned three

times and North Korea was mentioned seven times. This is just another example of the difference in policy priorities of the early part of the Trump administration's second term compared to the first one".

The characterization of Democratic immigration policy as "border invasion" signaled the vocabulary of not only policy disagreement, but also violent language. Many scholars extensively examining Donald Trump's communication style and its influence on presidential communication, claimed his rhetoric being violent. Graham (2025, para 2) highlighted that "for a man openly campaigning for the Nobel Peace Prize, Donald Trump sure does love the rhetoric of violence". Savin and Treisman (2025) analyzed Donald Trump's speeches from 2015 to 2024 and compared them to not only other U.S. presidential candidates but also to various global leaders. While acknowledging Trump's unique communication style, the authors (2025, p.1) claimed that "Trump's use of violent vocabulary-linked to both war and crime-intensified over time, becoming by late 2024 among the most extreme of any democratic politicians studied."

It is noteworthy to mention what Donald Trump didn't do in this speech and that is offering much in the way of new policies. The speech was compiled of frequent use of superlatives, mentioning immigration as a defining issue, but new pitches were only made for old ideas. He provided little hint of any change or possible modification in the course of his administration. Though he commented on crimes committed by undocumented migrants, no new direction to tackle the issue was offered, no mention of what might be needed in the aftermath. In particular, the president indicated "healthcare plan that provides direct payments to Americans to help cover insurance premiums, a law to require all voters to prove their citizenship and a ban on providing commercial driver's licences to undocumented migrants" (Zurcher, 2026, para 15).

In State of the Union Address President Trump continued the style of emphasizing grandiosity and superlative perseveration. Instead of providing a greater emphasis on the country's situational aspect, Weeks (2026, para 2) claimed that "virtually every achievement claim is framed as the largest, fastest, or first in recorded history: "a turnaround for the ages," "the strongest and most secure border in American history by far," "the single largest decline in recorded history," "the biggest in history," "the most powerful military on earth," and "the lowest number in over 125 years."" Wolf and Merrill (2026, para 19) highlighted that superiority expressions frequently used by Trump are troublesome to prove and noted that "it's not possible to fact check these kinds of statements. Trump says them all the time". Being characterized as "the disruptor" by Eissler, Russell and Theriault (2025, para 1), his speech to the Congress

was “filled with theatrical flourishes – the kind of made-for-the-cameras moments the man who once hosted a reality television show seems to enjoy” (Zurcher, 2026, para 4).

Though most of his foreign policy comments were devoted to immigration, he made only a passive reference to Iran. The topic of Iran was what the world was most eager to hear about and it took the president 90 minutes to get to it. Iran was mentioned four times in his speech, expecting the country to abandon its ambitions of obtaining nuclear weapon. He did not articulate the urgency of military operation in the country and gave little hint about future actions. The president stated that he prefers to solve tensions through diplomacy and noticed “My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy. But one thing is certain: I will never allow the world's number-one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon. Can't let that happen” (Trump, 2026, para 271). Furthermore, the president stated that the government of Iran was working to build missiles that will be able to reach the U.S.

The 47th president presented himself as a peacemaker and made a claim about ending “eight wars”. In particular, Trump (2026, para 250) mentioned that “Cambodia and Thailand; Pakistan and India—would have been a nuclear war—35 million people, said the Prime Minister of Pakistan, would have died if it were not for my involvement; Kosovo and Serbia, Israel and Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Congo and Rwanda. And, of course, the war in Gaza, which proceeds at a very low level. It's just about there”. Horton, Gilder & Edgington (2026, para 39) emphasize that “although, Trump can claim credit for brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, it is not correct to say he has ended eight wars. A number of these "wars" had lasted just days, although were the result of long-standing tensions”.

In 2025 President Trump began his second term at rapid speed but the world was still adjusting to the reality of new “America First” agenda. He started a cascade of comprehensive executive actions signed in his first 100 days, set priorities such as trade, immigration and national security and vowed to reshape federal government. Thus, he kept the world guessing of his, perhaps, a more uncertain agenda, and assured that the global impact of his second term would go beyond the calculations of world leaders. Donald Trump’s policies and his agenda raise questions about the role that his presidency will have in historical perspective (Lewis, 2026).

It is not an exaggeration to say that Trump’s communication style is unconventional, which earned him both praise and criticism. He has always had a unique ability to communicate with his voters and his massive use of social media allowed him to deliver messages directly to American citizens without media filters. One the one hand, Donald Trump’s communication style has been declared as fascinating and

appealing, and on the other hand, it is claimed to be unconventional and outrageous. His unique mix of language and body language has become of particular interest of many researchers and made him an unconventional and often controversial president. Scholars of leadership describe it in such a manner because the president's style is so different from anything else, leaving behind all previously held norms and standards. As Sonnenfeld and Tian (2026, para 14) stated "in his tenure as president, Donald Trump has violated all the rules and norms of the presidency as laid out by pretty much anyone and everyone imaginable: historians, psychologists, policy experts, journalists, media commentators, political scientists".

No president in the history of the U.S. has conducted public communication like Donald Trump. Though Trump has moved from traditional oratorical style and has expanded his rhetorical field, his communication style is uniquely his, and it has worked for him. The 47th president of the U.S. will continue to dominate the news cycle and will mark the next phase in the evolution of presidential communication in the U.S. The international society will continue to observe how the president challenges presidency and breaks norms and how his moves will be reflected globally.

During the State of the Union address the mentioning of the third term raised several questions among experts, when the president noted that this should be his third term in office instead of his second one (Trump, 2026). Despite the fact that the speech was frequently interrupted by cheering Republicans in the crowd, how will the world look back at his actions and what impact it will have globally are yet to be examined. The international society continues to search the ways on how to navigate a changing world.

In conclusion, every president treats the State of the Union as an opportunity to emphasize their accomplishments rather than to speak about challenges. It is a tradition that gives a president a chance to project strength that Trump used in his nearly two-hour speech. Scholars across several disciplines have paid increasing attention to his communication and how the 47th president of the U.S. provided an assessment of key issues impacting conditions in the country and presented a vision for the future in his address. The address was designed for maximum effect on specific audiences and careful attention will still need to be focused on the implications of his speech.

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SECTION II: POLITICS, HISTORY

Ideational Differences between Democrats and Republicans

GIVI AMAGLOBELI[12]

Abstract

In the given paper the main ideological differences between the US's two main political parties are being discussed. The difference has been relevant from the moment of establishment of those parties, although, with significant shifts in ideological terms. We will try to elaborate on subjects like equality, liberty, rights and limits of governance. In addition, we will also compare the parties' current attitudes on the aforementioned issues with their traditional ideological orientations and practices, along with the actual policy ramifications.

Keywords: USA, Democratic, Republican, ideology, shift.

Introduction

The Democratic and Republican parties have been the two leading forces in American politics for over 150 years. While both operate within the constitutional system of the United States, they hold distinct views regarding government intervention, economic management, social equity, and civil liberties. Over time, these perspectives have undergone substantial changes, leading to significant ideological shifts that continue to influence modern political discussions and policymaking in the United States (Shirateitel,

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2021). Examining these ideological differences is crucial for understanding contemporary political debates and voting patterns.

This paper analyzes the key ideological distinctions between the Democratic and Republican parties, with particular emphasis on their differing views regarding equality, individual liberty, rights, and the role of government. It further traces the historical evolution of both parties' ideological positions and evaluates how these shifts have influenced contemporary public policy.

Historical Origins and Party Realignment

The Democratic Party was founded in 1828 and traditionally advocated states' rights, limited federal government, and agrarian interests. The Republican Party emerged in 1854 largely in opposition to the expansion of slavery and favored a stronger federal government capable of supporting industrialization and national development.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Republicans were perceived as advocates of reform and progress, whereas Democrats tended to represent more conservative interests, especially in Southern states (Shirateitel, 2021). Nevertheless, the twentieth century witnessed a gradual realignment of the ideological foundations of both parties.

The Great Depression marked a crucial turning point in the early twentieth century. In response to the economic crisis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the New Deal, which significantly increased the federal government's role in economic management and social welfare programs. As a result, the Democratic Party became more closely associated with government intervention and social support policies (Abramowitz, 2018). In contrast, the Republican Party increasingly advocated for free-market principles, reduced government involvement, and fiscal conservatism.

The Civil Rights Movement accelerated this realignment. Democratic administrations supported civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As a result, many conservative Southern voters shifted toward the Republican Party, while African American voters became one of the Democratic Party's most loyal constituencies (Brewer & Stonecash, 2001).

Equality and Social Justice

One of the most fundamental differences between Democrats and Republicans concerns the concept of equality. Democrats generally support government intervention to reduce social and economic inequalities. They advocate progressive taxation, public education, social welfare programs, and broader access to healthcare as mechanisms for promoting equal opportunity (Abramowitz, 2018).

Republicans, on the other hand, emphasize individual responsibility and equality before the law rather than equality of outcomes. They argue that excessive government intervention may undermine personal initiative and economic freedom. Consequently, Republicans often favor lower taxes, reduced government spending, and market-based solutions to social and economic challenges (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006).

These opposing perspectives stem from fundamental philosophical disagreements about the extent to which government should intervene in the economy versus protecting personal freedoms.

Liberty and Individual Rights

Liberty occupies a central position in the ideological frameworks of both parties; however, Democrats and Republicans interpret this concept differently. Democrats often argue that liberty requires access to essential social resources such as healthcare, education, and economic opportunity. Without these resources, individuals may be unable to exercise their freedoms effectively (Abramowitz, 2018).

Republicans typically emphasize freedom from government interference. According to this perspective, lower taxation, fewer regulations, and stronger protections for private property enhance individual liberty and encourage economic growth (McCarty et al., 2006). This understanding of liberty influences Republican support for deregulation and limited federal authority.

These differing interpretations contribute to ongoing debates regarding healthcare reform, labor rights, educational policy, and economic regulation.

The Role and Limits of Government

Disagreement over the proper role of government remains one of the most significant ideological divisions between Democrats and Republicans. Democrats generally view government as a necessary instrument for addressing societal challenges, correcting market failures, and protecting vulnerable populations. They

often support federal programs designed to reduce poverty, expand healthcare access, and regulate environmental practices (Abramowitz, 2018).

Republicans favor a more limited governmental role and emphasize private enterprise as the primary engine of economic prosperity. They argue that government intervention frequently creates inefficiencies and limits personal freedom. Consequently, Republican policymakers often advocate deregulation, tax reductions, and greater reliance on market mechanisms (McCarty et al., 2006).

This ideological divide influences policy debates in nearly every area of public life, from healthcare and education to environmental regulation and economic development.

Attitudes and policies regarding sexual minorities and immigration

The Democratic and Republican parties differ significantly in their approaches to sexual minority rights and immigration policy. Democrats generally advocate for greater legal protections and equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals, supporting initiatives such as marriage equality and anti-discrimination legislation. Republicans, on the other hand, tend to prioritize traditional social norms and have frequently resisted the expansion of LGBTQ+ rights, particularly in relation to transgender issues (Jelen, 2017; Proctor, 2025). Differences are also evident in immigration policy. Democrats typically support more accommodating measures, including pathways to legal status for undocumented immigrants and stronger protections for refugees and asylum seekers. Republicans generally favor tighter border security and more restrictive immigration regulations. Studies indicate that partisan divisions over immigration have grown considerably since the 1980s, with Republicans adopting increasingly restrictive positions while Democrats have become more supportive of immigrant rights and inclusion (Walters & Skocpol, 2023; Ollerenshaw, 2023). These policy differences illustrate broader ideological disagreements about diversity, equality, and the government's responsibility in safeguarding minority rights and managing immigration.

Religious views regarding social (in)equality

This subject represents one of the fundamental paradoxes of American politics, stemming from the divergent interpretations of Christian values and political ideology embraced by Republicans and Democrats.

The Republican Perspective

In general, many Republicans oppose social welfare initiatives. However, they often disagree with how assistance should be provided.

Their reasoning typically includes:

- **Personal responsibility:** Many conservatives believe individuals, families, churches, and local communities should be the primary sources of support rather than the federal government.
- **Limited government:** They argue that large welfare programs create dependency and reduce individual initiative.
- **Religious charity:** Conservative Christians often emphasize voluntary charity as a moral duty. From this perspective, helping the poor is virtuous when it is freely given rather than mandated through taxation.
- **Fiscal concerns:** Republicans frequently argue that extensive welfare programs increase government spending, debt, and inefficiency.

The Democratic Perspective

Democrats generally support a broader governmental role in addressing poverty and inequality.

Their reasoning includes:

- **Social justice:** Many Democrats argue that structural barriers—such as unequal access to education, healthcare, and employment—limit opportunities for some groups.
- **Collective responsibility:** They believe government can serve as a tool through which society helps vulnerable populations.
- **Reducing inequality:** Social welfare programs are viewed as investments that improve social mobility and economic security.
- **Religious and secular motivations:** While Democrats tend to be more religiously diverse and less likely to emphasize Christianity publicly, many religious Democrats cite Christian teachings about caring for the poor, the sick, and the marginalized as support for welfare policies.

The disagreement is often not about whether the poor deserve help, but about which institutions should provide that help. Conservatives tend to trust families, religious organizations, and local communities

more, while liberals tend to place greater trust in government programs as mechanisms for reducing poverty and inequality (Alesina, Glaeser, & Sacerdote, 2001).

Therefore, the apparent contradiction arises because Republicans and Democrats define both Christian duty and the role of government differently. Republicans often see government welfare as potentially undermining personal responsibility and voluntary charity, whereas Democrats often view government welfare as a practical expression of society's moral obligation to care for those in need.

Contemporary Policy Implications

The ideological divide between the Democratic and Republican parties is evident in present-day policy debates. Democrats tend to advocate for publicly supported healthcare programs, stronger environmental protections, and increased investment in renewable energy sources. They argue that government intervention is essential for addressing societal challenges and enhancing public well-being (Abramowitz, 2018).

In contrast, Republicans generally emphasize economic expansion, private-sector growth, and national energy security. They often maintain that extensive environmental regulations and large-scale social welfare programs create unnecessary financial burdens for businesses and taxpayers (McCarty et al., 2006).

Over the past several decades, these policy differences have become increasingly pronounced due to growing political polarization. Studies indicate that ideological alignment between voters and political parties has strengthened, as individuals increasingly support parties that correspond with their economic and social beliefs (Gelman et al., 2008). As a result, partisan divisions have deepened, making bipartisan cooperation and political compromise more difficult to achieve.

Factors Behind Ideological Change

Political ideologies are not static; they develop in response to shifts in social, economic, and demographic conditions. Factors such as industrial growth, urban expansion, globalization, and technological advancements have significantly shaped the preferences and concerns of the American

electorate. In turn, political parties adjust their policy agendas and strategies to address these evolving societal demands and attract new groups of voters.

Electoral realignments further contribute to ideological change within political parties. As parties attempt to broaden their support among diverse demographic and regional constituencies, they often revise their political positions and priorities. The historical evolution of the Democratic and Republican parties demonstrates how political organizations adapt their ideologies to changing social and political environments (Shirateitel, 2021).

Conclusion

The Democratic and Republican parties embody different ideological perspectives that continue to influence the political landscape of the United States. The Democratic Party typically supports a stronger role for government in addressing social and economic inequalities, expanding welfare programs, and regulating the economy. In contrast, the Republican Party generally favors limited government intervention, market-oriented economic policies, and personal accountability.

These ideological distinctions emerged through a lengthy process of political transformation that reshaped the parties' historical identities. Major developments, including the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Movement, played a crucial role in redefining party alliances and policy agendas. In the present day, issues related to equality, freedom, individual rights, and the scope of government authority remain key points of disagreement between the two parties.

Examining these ideological differences helps to better understand current political debates and the ongoing development of American democracy.

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The Declaration's 250th Anniversary: The Signers' Legacy Meets Today's World

MAIA ANTIDZE[13]

Introduction

In 2026, the United States will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, a seminal political document in contemporary history. Their pronouncements altered history by declaring the American colonies independent of British rule. Ratified on July 4, 1776, the Declaration proclaimed the thirteen American colonies' independence from Great Britain and presented transformative concepts regarding human rights, self-governance, and political liberty. Primarily authored by Thomas Jefferson and ratified by fifty-six delegates of the Second Continental Congress, the document emerged as a symbol of democratic aspirations both in America and globally.

The Declaration of Independence was written during a period of severe conflict between the American colonies and Great Britain. Colonists increasingly resisted British taxation policies and restrictions on self-governance, contending that their rights as English subjects were being infringed. Following years of political strife and armed conflict, colonial leaders determined that independence was imperative.

The Declaration fulfilled multiple objectives. Initially, it officially proclaimed the colonies' independence to the global community. Secondly, it substantiated that decision by enumerating grievances against King George III. It primarily articulated a philosophical foundation for governance rooted in natural rights. Jefferson is renowned for asserting that "all men are created equal" and that they possess inalienable rights, including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".

These concepts were significantly influenced by Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke, who argued that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed. When a government infringes upon the rights of its citizens, the populace possesses the authority to modify or dismantle it. This

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concept posed a profound challenge to conventional monarchies and impacted democratic movements worldwide.

The significance of the Declaration transcends the American Revolution. It emerged as a fundamental declaration of democratic principles, motivating political reformers, revolutionaries, and civil rights advocates in later centuries. Numerous contemporary constitutions and human rights instruments embody principles initially enunciated in 1776.

During the summer of 1776, fifty-six men convened in an unassuming brick structure in Philadelphia to execute what the British Crown would have deemed an act of high treason. The document they signed lacked legal authority and did not establish a government, currency, or military force. The document did not establish a government, raise an army, or issue laws. It articulated a transformative vision of liberty, equality, and self-governance that would alter the trajectory of American and global history. Two and a half centuries later, individuals continue to read the Declaration and discuss its significance. The 250th anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of the signers: their accomplishments, their omissions, and the relevance of their ideas today.

The fifty-six signatories came from various colonies, yet they shared several significant commonalities. The majority were educated, often studied law, and worked as lawyers, merchants, landowners, scientists, or farmers. Despite differences in age, wealth, faith, and regional concerns, they united in their dedication to the cause of independence. A considerable number had served in colonial assemblies or local governments. They were not ordinary individuals; they belonged to the political and economic elite of their era.

Several signatories were well-known before 1776. John Adams of Massachusetts was a prominent advocate for independence. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia composed the initial draft of the Declaration. Benjamin Franklin, renowned as a scientist and diplomat, endorsed the separation from Britain. Others were less famous yet remained significant within their colonies.

The signatories also faced real dangers. The outcome of the war with Britain was uncertain. Families might lose their property, and in the event of a failed revolution, signatories could face execution as traitors. Some assets were lost during the conflict. Despite this, they continued to support independence.

Nevertheless, the signatories were not a homogeneous collective. They possessed distinct motivations. Some sought political autonomy from British taxation and governance. Others sought to safeguard their economic interests. Some advocated for expansive democratic principles, whereas others sought to

maintain the prevailing social hierarchy. These disparities manifest in their subsequent actions following the Declaration.

A fundamental contradiction in their narrative is slavery. Numerous signers owned enslaved people, including Jefferson and several others from the South. Some condemned slavery in principle yet did not emancipate their own slaves. The Declaration's assurance of equality did not extend to enslaved Africans, Native Americans, or women. This paradox is pivotal to understanding the signers' legacy.

Notable signatories, including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Roger Sherman, played a major role in the formation of the new nation. By endorsing the Declaration, they risked their property, reputations, and lives. Had the Revolution failed, many might have faced charges of treason and severe punishment.

The bravery of the signatories has become an integral aspect of American national identity. Their readiness to confront one of the globe's most formidable empires illustrated a conviction that principles warranted defense despite personal peril. Their actions continue to embody civic duty and political engagement.

Contemporary evaluations of the signers are more nuanced than those of earlier generations. Many signatories owned enslaved people despite proclaiming that “all men are created equal.” Women, Native Americans, and many other groups were denied the political rights anticipated by the founding generation. These contradictions do not diminish the Declaration’s importance but promote a more comprehensive understanding of the historical context.

Historians today assert that the signers were both products of their era and contributors to concepts that would subsequently be employed to contest the very inequalities they endorsed. The language of the Declaration emerged as a potent instrument for subsequent reform movements aimed at broadening freedom and equality.

The Declaration’s Influence on Modern Democracy

The Declaration's influence on democratic governance is among its most enduring legacies. The principle that governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed is essential to democratic systems worldwide. The Declaration is not a legal instrument like the Constitution. It does not establish laws or institutions. Nonetheless, it shaped the concepts underlying the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The focus on rights, limited government, and the consent of the government is partially derived from the

Declaration. Judicial bodies occasionally refer to the Declaration when construing the Constitution. Judges use its language to substantiate arguments about liberty and equality.

Modern elections, constitutional safeguards, and representative institutions embody the conviction that political authority ultimately resides with the people. Citizens continue to cite the Declaration's principles while championing transparency, accountability, and political reform. Public discussions of voting rights, governmental power, and civil liberties frequently invoke the principles articulated in 1776.

The Declaration also helped establish the idea that governments exist to safeguard individual rights rather than solely to wield power. This concept shaped the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and, subsequently, international accords such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Independence movements and democratic activists beyond the United States have been inspired by the Declaration. Leaders advocating for self-determination often cite its principles to support claims for political freedom and national sovereignty.

Consequently, the document's impact transcends American borders. The document asserts that individuals possess rights that governments cannot revoke. Jefferson stated that these encompass life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This concept was not wholly original. Previous philosophers, notably John Locke, articulated ideas of life, liberty, and property. However, Jefferson's rendition gained greater notoriety and prevalence. The concept of natural rights served as a cornerstone for subsequent human rights movements. It posited that rights are inherent to individuals by virtue of their humanity, rather than conferred by a monarch or state. This concept was revolutionary in the eighteenth century and remains significant today. The principal concept of the Declaration is popular sovereignty.

The document states that governments "derive their legitimate powers from the consent of the governed." A government is deemed legitimate solely when it receives the consent of the populace. This concept manifests in contemporary democracies through elections, representative institutions, and leaders' obligation to be accountable to citizens.

The phrase "all men are created equal" has become a criterion for evaluating democracies. This does not imply uniformity among individuals, but rather that all individuals merit equal respect, equal legal protection, and equal opportunities to participate in political affairs.

The Declaration and the Constitution together form the ideological foundation of democracy in the United States. The Declaration sets the objectives: liberty, equality, and governance by consent. The Constitution outlines the framework: the organization of government, the distribution of power, and the safeguarding of rights.

To critically assess the legacy of the Signers, we must confront the significant contradictions inherent in the founding moment. The fifty-six signatories of the Declaration were affluent, Caucasian, male elites. Numerous individuals, including Jefferson himself, enslaved people in harsh, perpetual servitude while articulating the phrase "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." They systematically excluded women, Indigenous nations, and non-landowners from the political community they were establishing. For decades, the conventional response to this paradox has oscillated between two ideological extremes: either excusing the Founders' shortcomings to preserve their legendary status or wholly rejecting their philosophical ideals because of their ethical transgressions.

The civic programming for the 250th anniversary presents a significantly more nuanced trajectory. Rather than viewing the founding as a perfect, immaculate conception or an irreparable transgression, contemporary historical institutions characterize the American narrative as an "unfinished ledger." The National Archives' recent exhibitions, including Opening the Vault, deliberately highlight the stories of individuals initially marginalized by the Declaration's assurances. They show how enslaved individuals, marginalized women, and tribal nations used the Declaration's rhetoric to assert their quest for freedom.

The true brilliance of the Declaration of Independence lies in the radical flexibility of its principles, not in the perfection of its authors.

When abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass presented his scathing address, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?", he did not incinerate the Declaration; instead, he elevated it as a reflection of the nation, insisting that it adhere to its explicit textual obligations. In 1848, the suffragists convened at Seneca Falls and promulgated the Declaration of Sentiments, deliberately emulating Jefferson's syntax to assert that "all men and women are created equal.

The legacy of the Signers is not a static artifact from 1776; it is a dynamic, generational endeavor aimed at broadening inclusion. The narrative of America involves marginalized groups appropriating the foundational text and using it as a tool against the elites who originally composed it. This evolution faces unprecedented systemic challenges in the contemporary world. The framework of our political system—the Constitution, the Electoral College, and the organization of Congress—was established during a period marked by sluggish communication, localized economies, and significant skepticism toward direct democracy. Currently, our institutional frameworks are under significant strain as they grapple with twenty-first-century challenges such as artificial intelligence, global climate change, and rapidly evolving digital media.

Research on the 250th anniversary highlights that our public institutions are inadequately adapting to evolving demographics and rapidly changing social needs. The fundamental lesson of 1776 is that when a political system fails to address the needs of the populace, it is their prerogative to modify or dismantle it. The Signers were institutional innovators rather than preservationists. Honoring their legacy today entails not venerating the specific edifices they constructed but embodying the same audacity to reform and reimagine those institutions to address a significantly more complex world.

Conclusion

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence offers an occasion for both commemoration and contemplation. The signatories issued a compelling declaration on rights, liberty, and the people's governance. Their rhetoric contributed to nation-building and motivated global movements.

The Declaration did not eliminate injustice. The signatories excluded enslaved people, women, Native Americans, and the impoverished.

The legacy of the Signers encompasses both their accomplishments and their shortcomings. The authentic legacy of the Signers is not the establishment of an impeccable, enduring system of government. Their legacy consists of imparting a collection of ideals that are profoundly impactful and intrinsically radical, continually prompting each generation to aspire to them. Their statements persist as a continual indictment of our deficiencies and a steadfast exhortation to improve.

On July 4th, the true measure will not be the elegance of our commemoration of the past, but the audacity of our dedication to the future. In an era of artificial intelligence, shifting global power structures, and profound social divisions, the Declaration's core message is imperative: we are the architects of our political fate. The American experiment is not a distant relic; it is a dynamic covenant that demands our daily commitment, sacrifice, and collective allegiance. The Declaration endures as a living document, with its principles continually urging citizens to build a more equitable and inclusive society. The legacy of its signers extends not only to the past but also to the present and future. The signatories initiated this endeavor, but they did not complete it. The responsibility for that task lies with us.

Commemorating the signers' legacy entails more than merely recalling their names. It signifies applying their ideas to build a more equitable and inclusive society. It also signifies acknowledging that the narrative remains incomplete and that further effort is required.

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The Psychology of the American Dream: Ambition, Failure, and the Science of Human Potential Beyond Borders

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Abstract

The American Dream has shaped ideas about success for generations. Although it began in the United States and grew out of the frontier experience, its influence extends far beyond America. For millions of people, it affects how they define success, explain failure, and imagine their future. This interdisciplinary paper in Psychology and American Studies examines the American Dream from a psychological perspective. It argues that the same beliefs that encourage people to work hard and pursue ambitious goals can also create stress, disappointment, and feelings of failure when those goals are not achieved.

The paper first asks why people aspire at all. It argues that the American Dream is not only an American idea but also a broader expression of the human desire to seek success and pursue goals. It then examines the benefits of the Dream, including the hope it gives (Snyder, 2002), the sense of self efficacy it strengthens (Bandura, 1997), and the meaning it can bring to people's lives. The paper then turns to its psychological costs. These include seeing failure as a personal flaw and the shame that can follow (Brown, 2012), chronic anxiety caused by rising expectations, a focus on external rewards over internal satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and the loneliness that can result from strong individualism (Putnam, 2000).

The paper then moves beyond the United States and argues that human potential exists everywhere, but opportunities do not. It examines how the accident of birth shapes a person's chances in life. Factors such as family background (Bourdieu, 1986; Chetty et al., 2014), citizenship (Shachar, 2009), identity (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), and language (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010) can create barriers that hard work alone

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cannot fully overcome. These factors affect both access to the Dream and the difficulty of pursuing it. The paper also considers the European Dream (Rifkin, 2004) as an alternative model of success.

Finally, the paper offers practical recommendations. These include pursuing meaningful goals, developing a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), combining perseverance with self-compassion, and defining success through well-being and relationships rather than material achievement alone. The paper concludes that the effects of the American Dream depend not only on whether people pursue it, but also on how they pursue it.

1. Introduction

I have spent my life between two dreams. The first was American. At sixteen, I discovered the idea that hard work and believing in yourself could take me beyond the limits. That belief pushed me to learn English harder, study American and British music professionally, and earn a degree in American Studies. The second dream was European. I had wanted to see Europe since I was ten years old. I first visited at eighteen. That dream grew stronger when I attended the seventieth Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna, Austria, and it will become a reality when I move to Europe next month. This paper analyzes it as a psychological one; it is a story about human potential: the belief that hard work, talent, and persistence can transform a life of any person regardless of where it began. From this perspective, the American Dream is not only an American idea. It reflects a human desire to pursue goals, improve, and build a better life. My central argument is that the American Dream is both a gift and a trap. If people fully accept this idea, it can lead to shame, anxiety, and isolation. It also assumes that everyone starts from the same place and has the same opportunities, even though factors such as family background, citizenship, language, and place of birth can make a significant difference.

2. Why Humans Dream: The Psychology of Aspiration

Before evaluating the American Dream, it is important to ask why people dream about a better future at all. The ability to imagine a different life and work towards it is a basic part of human nature. David McClelland's research on achievement motivation found that people have different levels of desire to achieve success and reach high standards. This varies across individuals and cultures and is clearly linked to economic dynamism (McClelland, 1961). Achieving goals is also connected to the search and need for

meaning. Dan McAdams argued that people make sense of their lives through personal stories that develop over time (McAdams, 1993). The American Dream provides one of these stories, with a path from years of failure and struggle to dream success. From this perspective, the American Dream is not the source of human ambition. It is one way of expressing it. It takes basic human needs such as achievement, meaning, and hope for a better future and turns them into a powerful real-life story. This helps explain why the Dream has such a strong psychological impact. It can help people, but it can also harm them.

3. The Gift: How the Dream Empowers the Mind

The American Dream is indeed powerful because its psychological benefits are real. In psychology, hope is more than simple wishful thinking. For instance, Charles Snyder defined it as believing that important goals can be achieved and being able to see that path towards them. Higher levels of hope are linked to better performance, greater resilience, and better health (Snyder, 2002). For people facing poverty or limited opportunities, the belief that effort can improve their life can give them a strong reason, motivation to keep going. The Dream also strengthens self-efficacy. Albert Bandura used this term to describe a person's belief in their ability to achieve desired outcomes. It is one of the strongest predictors of achievement in psychology (Bandura, 1997). By promoting the idea that success is possible through hard work, the Dream encourages this belief. The Dream also makes one’s life and purpose meaningful. It helps people see effort and sacrifice as part of a larger purpose rather than as meaningless hardship, never-ending struggle. For example, research on resilience suggests that this way of thinking can help people cope more effectively with difficulties in their lives. These benefits matter most for people trying to improve their lives. In societies where class, status, or identity can limit opportunities, the idea that your future is not fixed can be freeing. In my life, that belief motivated years of effort and helped me create new opportunities from unknown Georgian and Russian villages to megalopolises in Europe. But the Dream cannot guarantee success. Hope can become unrealistic when opportunities are blocked. Self-efficacy can become self-blame when hard work is not rewarded.

4. The Trap: How the Dream Harms the Mind

The psychological costs of the Dream appear when its promises are not fulfilled, which happens to most people at some point. One of its most damaging effects is the internalization of failure (blaming yourself

for failure). Because the Dream suggests that success comes through hard work, and the person often sees it as a personal weakness rather than the result of structural barriers. For example, Brené Brown distinguishes guilt ("I did something bad") from shame ("I am bad") and shows that shame is closely linked to depression, anxiety, and social isolation (Brown, 2012). In this way, social and economic barriers can become personal feelings of worthlessness. A second cost is chronic anxiety because of rising expectations. The Dream defines success as more wealth, higher status, and greater achievement, so there is no clear end point. There will always be someone ahead. As a result, even truly successful people can feel they are not successful enough. Third, the Dream encourages people to measure success through external rewards. Self-determination theory describes the difference between intrinsic motivation, doing something because it is satisfying, and extrinsic motivation, doing it for money, status, or recognition. Research shows that focusing too much on external rewards can harm health (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This may explain why some people get what they wanted but still feel unfulfilled. Finally, the Dream's strong focus on individual success can have social costs. Its central idea is that people succeed through their efforts. Robert Putnam documented a long decline in community and social connection in the United States during the twentieth century (Putnam, 2000), and loneliness is now recognized as a serious public health issue. A culture that places the desire for success above human connection can damage the relationships humans need. This means the Dream should not be pursued blindly, and it has a trap inside.

5. Beyond Borders: Human Potential and the Accident of Birth

If the Dream has a psychological trap, it also has a structural limit. The Dream promises that potential is universal—that anyone, anywhere, can rise through hard work. The first half of this is true: the ability to dream and pursue goals belongs to no single nation. The second half is not. Human potential is universal, but the freedom to realize it is not. That potential often depends on the circumstances a person is born into, circumstances they never chose. One of the most important factors is family background. Pierre Bourdieu argued that financial and educational resources act as *cultural capital* with advantages across generations (Bourdieu, 1986). Research also shows that a child's chances of moving up the income ladder depend heavily on parental income and place of birth (Chetty et al., 2014). Family background affects not only who reaches the Dream but also what it costs to get there. Someone from a less advantaged family may reach the same goal as a wealthier peer, but mostly only after investing more time, effort, and resources. In my case, it took me two additional years to reach higher education in 2024, while some of my peers

moved ahead in 2022. Effort matters, but some people need much more of it to reach the same place. A second barrier is citizenship. Ayelet Shachar argues that citizenship works much like inherited property. Like feudal titles in the past, citizenship is assigned at birth and can shape a person's opportunities throughout life (Shachar, 2009). A talented, highly educated, and hardworking person may find the Dream unreachable not because of a lack of ability, but because of the passport they hold or the resources they lack. For example, a person with Georgian or Russian citizenship may face more serious obstacles when trying to study, work, or travel abroad than someone born in a wealthier EU country or Canada. This matters psychologically because the Dream promotes the idea that outcomes depend on one's own actions, the belief that people can change their lives through their choices and effort (Rotter, 1966). For billions of people, however, some of the most important factors are completely outside their control. Identity forms a third barrier. In an experiment, Bertrand and Mullainathan found that identical résumés with "white sounding" names received significantly more callbacks than those with "Black sounding" names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). The skills and qualifications were the same, but the results were different. According to the Los Angeles Times, in 2023 regulators found that Citigroup had discriminated against Armenian Americans, including people with surnames ending in "-ian" and "-yan." A person's name, ethnicity, or religion can affect opportunities in employment, education, and even access to financial services. Being aware of this kind of judgment can impact a person's performance (Steele, 2010). Language is the fourth barrier. Unlike citizenship or ethnicity, it can be improved through hard work, as my own English shows. However, native fluency and the "right" accent are often difficult to achieve fully. Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) found that listeners typically see accented speakers as less credible simply because their speech is harder to understand. In The European Dream, Jeremy Rifkin describes a different model with greater value on quality of life, community, and balance than on individual wealth and achievement (Rifkin, 2004). For example, the Eurovision Song Contest is an annual celebration of belonging across a very diverse European continent. Dreaming beyond borders is therefore not something everyone can do equally. Recognizing this helps people see that some barriers come from circumstances they never chose, not from personal failure.

6. How to Dream Well: A Psychological Guide

If the Dream is both a gift and a trap, the question is how to pursue ambition without its harmful effects. Psychological research offers several ideas for doing this well. First, prioritize intrinsic goals that are

personally meaningful. Research shows that people are happier and more satisfied when they pursue goals they truly care about rather than external rewards such as money or status (Deci & Ryan, 2000). My study of music was driven by a love of the performance rather than reward, which is why it is still a source of energy rather than exhaustion. But fame, money, and status can still be important sources of motivation. Second, adopt a growth mindset. Carol Dweck describes two ways of thinking. A fixed mindset assumes that abilities cannot change, while a growth mindset sees them as something that can improve through effort and learning (Dweck, 2006). This helps people treat failure as part of learning rather than as proof that they are not good enough.Third, combine perseverance with self-compassion. Persistence is strongly linked to achievement (Duckworth, 2016), but being too hard on yourself can do more harm than good. Research shows that treating yourself with understanding after failure can improve resilience and motivation more than harsh self-criticism (Neff, 2011). Fourth, define success through happiness, relationships, and quality of life, not only money or achievements. Strong social connections are critical for psychological health (Putnam, 2000). Finally, do not tie your self-worth to success. The biggest trap of the Dream is believing that your value depends on what you achieve. The goal is not to give up ambition. Human connections simply make it healthier.

7. Conclusion

The American Dream is neither as perfect as its supporters claim nor as false as its critics suggest. It is a psychological tool that turns universal human needs for achievement and hope into a particular story. Like any tool, it can help or harm. Used wisely, it can motivate and inspire. Used blindly, it can lead to stress, disappointment, and shame. Often, it does both at the same time. This paper has argued that the American Dream's benefits and costs come from the same place. It has also shown that family background, citizenship, identity, and language can shape a person's opportunities long before they make any choices of their own. Human potential exists everywhere, but opportunities do not. The American and European Dreams remind us that there is more than one way to think about success and that how we pursue it is ultimately a choice. My path has taught me this lesson. As a teenager in Georgia and Russia, I was inspired by the American Dream. Later, I studied American Studies at a Georgian university. Next month, I will move to Europe and realize a dream I have had since childhood. Along the way, I learned that dreams can inspire people, but they should not be followed blindly. The goal is not to stop dreaming, but to dream in a way that creates more opportunities and possibilities. My goal is to become a global citizen, building a

life in different countries and cultures. From Georgia to Europe, from the UK to the US, and from the Americas to New Zealand, I want to study, work, build businesses, and contribute wherever opportunities take me. The world is big, life is short, and I hope to live, learn, and achieve across many countries and continents. In many ways, the American Dream and the European Dream are part of a larger global dream without borders.

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The US and Anglosphere

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In the Anglo-American conservative political consciousness, the English-speaking world called "Anglosphere" is considered to be the combination of the English-speaking democracies of the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans namely - Great Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. In the canonical history created by the right-wing intellectuals of the above-mentioned countries, the Anglosphere has turned into a sort of supranational state which has its common clear political, security and economic interests.

Originally, the Anglosphere was created by the Great Britain, and it still maintains close and special ties with its member states. A good example and confirmation of this is the words of the British Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, who spoke in the Australian Parliament in November 2014, describing the relationship between Britain and Australia. He said that it is an alliance that has stood the test of time, and it is hard to find another country to which the British people feel so instinctively close. Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott responded to the British guest with no less Anglospheric pathos: "It is hard to imagine now that in 1788 there was nothing more than bushes on the site of Sydney, and, perhaps, English officers, sailors and convicts thought they had landed on the moon..." With those words, Abbott emphasized the historical role and special merit of England in the creation of the modern state of Australia. Based on the above comments, it is an undeniable truth that Australia and New Zealand are much closer to the heart of British or American conservative politicians than even France or Germany. Ergo, if Donald Trump and his associates are now considering whether it is worth confronting the Kremlin by invoking NATO's Article 5 in the event of a Russian attack on any NATO member state, in the case of Australia or New Zealand, there is big probability that they will unilaterally and immediately launch military action to defend their Anglosphere partners.

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Recent history has shown that in the Anglosphere, periodically, a head of certain member state takes the role of its leader. For example, during World War II, this role was effectively played by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who remains a recognized and irreplaceable authority in this space to this day. A good example of this is the fact that George W. Bush installed Winston Churchill's bust in the Oval Office of the White House, thereby, emphasizing that he was Churchill's Anglosphere successor. It is noteworthy that Barack Obama, who, for some personal reasons, is not distinguished by his great love for conservative Britain and England in particular ordered to remove the bust of Churchill from the office. In his turn Donald Trump, who is accused by his opponents of being a staunch Anglophile, told former UK Independence Party (Ukip) leader and one of the main initiators of Brexit, Nicholas Farage, in a private conversation, that he intended to return the Churchill bust to the White House, thus, emphasizing, like Bush, that he may also intend to take up the vacated mantle of leader of the Anglosphere.

To what extent will Trump assume the role of a new leader of the Anglosphere - this question, according to John Lloyd, publisher of The Financial Times, is one of the many that now revolve around Trump's presidency. "Will he try, with the power of his office, to revive the phenomenon of the Anglosphere and give it some solid form?" Can he make the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom more special than it has ever been since the two countries united to defeat Nazism?" The researcher asked.

To answer these questions, Lloyd cites a metaphor from the book "God and Gold" of the prominent American political scientist Walter Russell Mead, who describes the relationship between the US and Britain as cousins with a common business: "They quarrel, they don't talk to each other when they are angry, they have different views on how to live, but they are still united under one yoke in achieving a common goal - which is the management of a common business and its successful development."

This business, according to Walter Mead, is nothing more than the creation, maintenance, and development of the world capitalist order. "Britain," writes Walter Meade, "has not only a special relationship with the United States; It has a special relationship with the international capitalist order, an order that was created mainly by Britain and is now mainly run by the United States. And within this order," Lloyd continues, "the other Anglophone states - Canada, Australia, New Zealand - all contribute their efforts".

According to Lloyd, one thing is certain - Trump likes the capitalist order, in which he himself has had periods of decline and rise, but which has been mostly good for him because it has provided him with the finances that paved his way to the White House.

Trump also has an emotional connection to the United Kingdom, particularly to its Scottish part (which remains a member of the union). Trump's mother belonged to the family of McLeod from the village of Tong on the Isle of Lewis, where the US President spent three hours in 2008.

And last but not least, he appreciates the fact that Anglosphere nations are united by the Five Eyes Agreement which is the most effective platform for their cooperation in the security and intelligence areas. The victory of the Brexiteers in the UK, who are mainly English Conservatives, and the success of Trump in the presidential races in America, whose supporters are overwhelmingly Republicans of Anglo-Saxon origin, have raised many questions. Among them is what will happen to the Anglosphere as a political union after Trump's entrance to the White House for the second time?

It could be said that Trump has already answered this question in April of this year, when he invited King Charles in Washington. It was also noteworthy that he publicly told King Charles that their ancestors were genetic cousins, thus once again emphasizing the above-mentioned political metaphor about the historical, genetic and cultural kinship of America and Britain.

Of course, it is very difficult to say which of these two cousins is the leader of the Anglosphere at this stage – Trump or King Charles. To find out that, one of them would have to publicly recognize the leadership of the other, which is not easy to do for any of them. Confrontation between the UK and US leaders in this area has been vital since the end of the Second World War. A good example of this is the rivalry between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. It can be said that both were brilliant politicians and leaders and played a major role in the neutralization and collapse of the USSR. However, it must be said that they did not tolerate each other much and the competition between them for leadership in the Anglosphere was particularly intense. Reagan believed that Thatcher was an extremely ambitious person and in his characteristic ironic style he told the following anecdote to Eduard Shevardnadze:

"Reagan, Gorbachev and Thatcher have died. They are in the purgatory. God called Reagan first. He enters his residence. God is sitting in his throne with a scepter in his hand and is asking him:

- My son, tell me, what have you done for your people and for the world?
- I revived the economy, brought the USSR to the brink of collapse, unified Germany...
- Okay, okay. That's enough. You're going to heaven.

Then he calls for Gorbachev:

- My son, what have you done for your people and for the world?
- I brought freedom to my people, I united Germany...

- Okay, okay. You're going to heaven too.

And finally he calls for Thatcher:

- My daughter, tell me...

And Thatcher interrupts him right there and says angrily: "First of all, I'm not your daughter, and secondly, this throne is mine, it belongs to me. Get down right now."

When Eduard Shevardnadze, with whom I worked as a foreign affairs advisor, told me this anecdote, I was not particularly surprised, since I was well aware of his close relationship with Ronald Reagan. These two brilliant political figures shared a remarkable sense of humor and self irony, which contributed significantly to the peaceful end of the Cold War.

Donald Trump and King Charles don't lack a sense of humor either as was evident during their recent meeting in Washington. However, there still may be a problem between them. From a strategic perspective, Trump still views the UK as a second-rate country after China and Russia, while British Conservative politicians believe in re-establishing Britain as a global leader, which Trump seems to consider a rather utopian endeavor. Accordingly, we should expect a serious test for the transatlantic “family business.”

The Role of the United States in Building the Strategic Resistance of Small States through External Support

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Abstract

To continue resistance, ensure national survival, and promote long-term strategic resilience, this article methodically examines the crucial role that external support plays for small states engaged in contemporary warfare. It makes the claim that such support is not only supplemental but also necessary. Small countries, like Georgia, frequently face structural disadvantages that are characterized by inadequate technological advancement, restricted military capabilities, and limited economic potential. They are especially vulnerable to a variety of complex threats, such as large-scale conventional attack and hybrid warfare, because of these weaknesses. According to this concept, the report emphasizes how important it is for the US government to play a major role as an external player in strengthening Georgia's defense posture, improving institutional resilience, and facilitating integration with Western security frameworks. The United States has made substantial contributions to joint exercises, military training programs, capacity-building efforts, and defense reforms targeted at enhancing Georgia's preparedness within a comprehensive defense model through consistent collaboration with NATO.

This study demonstrates that although internal readiness programs and comprehensive defense plans are vital for strengthening national security, they remain insufficient without concerted foreign assistance. The application of diplomatic pressure and sanctions, hosting governments-in-exile that permit ongoing governance and planning, providing safe harbors and secure airspace for military and humanitarian

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operations, delivering expert training and knowledge transfer to local forces, establishing strong logistics and supply chains to sustain operations, facilitating intelligence sharing to improve situational awareness, providing financial assistance to support governmental functions and military preparedness, demonstrating military force as a deterrent against aggression, and providing direct assistance, including troops and supplies, together create a multidimensional support system essential for small states' survival. In Georgia's case, U.S. support from the Georgia Defense Readiness Program (GDRP), bilateral cooperations to continued security cooperation shows how sustained external involvement can greatly strengthen the country's capacity for resistance and resilience.

By examining both historical and contemporary case studies, including insights from the Russian Georgian War and broader regional security dynamics, the study concludes that effective external assistance reinforces political legitimacy, strengthens deterrence, and ensures operational continuity during crises. Ultimately, in the evolving landscape of modern warfare, the preservation of sovereignty for small states relies on a synergistic relationship between robust internal resistance structures and comprehensive, well-coordinated external support, with the United States assuming an essential strategic role in facilitating such outcomes.

Keywords: Small States, External Support, Total Defense, Resistance, Sanctions, Government-in-Exile, Safe Harbor, Expertise, Logistics, Intelligence, Financial Support, Demonstration, Direct Assistance

Introduction

Historically, small governments have navigated risky waters by relying on their ability to forge strategic alliances, effectively respond to external threats, and secure the backing of more powerful allies for survival. With a limited pool of military personnel, constrained economic resources, and oftentimes insufficient technological expertise, these nations find themselves particularly vulnerable to aggression from larger, more militarily advanced powers. This vulnerability has become glaringly evident in today's complex security landscape, marked by large-scale military invasions, pervasive cyber threats, and hybrid warfare (Balakrishnan, 2018). This vulnerability has become glaringly evident in today's complex security landscape, marked by large-scale military invasions, pervasive cyber threats, and the multifaceted nature

of hybrid warfare. For these smaller states, securing foreign assistance isn't merely a strategic advantage; it is an absolute necessity for sustaining resistance efforts and ultimately ensuring survival in the face of external attack. Domestic capabilities—no matter how robust frequently prove inadequate when confronted with a well-organized and formidable adversary. Numerous historical episodes underscore the critical reliance of smaller states on external support during times of conflict. For instance, the liberation of Norway, Poland, and the Netherlands during World War II relied significantly on the coordinated efforts of Allied powers, as these nations grappled with the overwhelming might of invading forces (Shvangiradze, 2025).

In contemporary scenarios, the ongoing struggle of Ukraine against Russian aggression compellingly illustrates how crucial international military aid, financial support, and political endorsement are to a nation's ability to withstand invasion and preserve its sovereignty (U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, 2024). Additionally, the defense strategies employed by Georgia and the Baltic States highlight their proactive approaches; these strategies center on fostering resilience, enhancing deterrence, and promoting international cooperation, thereby emphasizing their strategic importance in regions frequently perceived as vulnerable (Defence 24 com, 2025).

The main goal of the article is to demonstrate that successful external assistance not only maintains political legitimacy and improves deterrence of the small states which becomes a target for a more powerful state, but also guarantees operational continuity and fortifies the durability of domestic resistance organizations.

This article delves into the profound role the external assistance plays for small nations concerning national defense, resilience, and overarching defense strategies. It identifies and elaborates on nine essential areas where foreign aid proves critical:

- Diplomatic Pressure and Sanctions
- Hosting a Government-in-Exile
- Friendly Skies and safe Harbors
- Expertise and Training
- Logistics and Supply Chains
- Intelligence and Information Sharing

- Financial Support
- Force Demonstration
- Direct Assistance

These interconnected elements work in harmony to construct a comprehensive support framework, empowering small nations to resist occupation, uphold their legitimacy in the international community, and persist in their struggles over extended periods, despite the formidable challenges they face. **Each of the nine essential areas is critically evaluated in the article to clearly define its role, function and significance.**

Diplomatic Pressure and Sanctions

Isolating aggressors through coordinated political, diplomatic, and economic means is the primary line of defense for small nations facing military threats. Economic sanctions serve as both practical and symbolic expressions of disapproval from the international community. By hindering trade, barring access to global financial systems, and imposing diplomatic isolation, sanctions can significantly weaken an aggressor's ability to sustain military operations (Mathias Rauck, 2025).

Economic sanctions can be strategically applied across sectors such as finance, technology exports, and targeting specific political figures responsible for aggressive actions. The effectiveness of these sanctions depends on enforcement levels and coordination among influential nations. For example, following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and allied nations implemented unprecedented sanctions on Russian banks, restricted technology transfers, and limited energy sector revenues. These measures crippled Russia's industrial capacity and severely restricted its access to international markets. (Caf Dowlah, 2025).

Even the threat of sanctions can deter aggressors from smaller nations. When aggressors anticipate severe economic and diplomatic consequences, they may reassess the costs of violent policies. Coordinated international opposition, reinforced via global media coverage, further strengthens small states' legitimacy. Strategic informational pressure and diplomatic isolation thus play critical roles in shaping perceptions and reinforcing moral and operational support. (Dickinson, 2025). In reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the report looks at the effects of diplomatic pressure and international sanctions. The overall effect of these sanctions on the development of the conflict has been less significant than first thought, despite

the fact that they were intended to target Russia's banking system, technology imports, and energy earnings. Despite experiencing major economic issues, Russia has shown remarkable resilience by changing its domestic economy and shifting trading links toward allies like China and India (Ivana Saric, Noah Berman, Anshu Siripurapu, 2025).

Additionally, smaller, more vulnerable countries are disproportionately affected by the unintended repercussions of these penalties. Rising inflation, supply shortages, and economic instability are plaguing many developing nations that depend significantly on imports from both Russia and Ukraine (World History Encyclopedia. 2022). Conflict in Ukraine's Effect on Developing Countries. Wuab.org. For example, countries like Georgia are experiencing trade imbalances and higher energy costs as a result. As a result, even if sanctions are still an essential tool for applying diplomatic pressure, their limited ability to end long-running disputes highlights the need for different strategic approaches (Integra LLC, 2022). Establishing a variety of diplomatic ties, encouraging economic resiliency, and offering military support are some examples of such strategies.

Hosting a Government-in-Exile

A government-in-exile safeguards legitimacy and ensures political continuity during occupation. When democratically elected administrations relocate abroad—often under a powerful ally's protection—they maintain the state's legal and institutional foundations. This arrangement allows continued coordination of resistance efforts, ensuring they remain organized and internationally recognized (Herbert, L. (2025b, October 7).

During World War II, the Polish, Norwegian, and Dutch governments established themselves in London, collaborating militarily and diplomatically with the Allies. These administrations galvanized domestic opposition, retained international recognition, mobilized resistance networks, disseminated information, and formulated strategies supporting liberation efforts (DDay. Center, 2025).

Modern small nations facing military occupation can similarly rely on governments-in-exile to secure international support, coordinate military assistance, orchestrate sanctions, and facilitate humanitarian aid. This mechanism upholds sovereignty and fosters collective responses aimed at restoring peace and democratic governance (Shain, 2026). To preserve legitimacy and foster resistance, the United States government has a historical precedent for welcoming and supporting opposition or ousted political

leadership. For instance, during the Cold War, the United States provided various Eastern European exile organizations with political backing and operational support, thereby bolstering their claims against Soviet-backed regimes (NYCFPA Editorial, 2024, December 28). More recently, in 2019, the United States formally recognized Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela, endorsing an externalized political authority that challenged the existing government (Michael R. Pompeo, 2019). This scenario exemplifies how external recognition and support from influential governments can aid in sustaining political legitimacy and orchestrating international pressure, despite not conforming to the conventional model of a government-in-exile. Such agreements afford contemporary small states, particularly those facing occupation or regime displacement, a platform to maintain diplomatic relations, coordinate resistance efforts, secure assistance, and uphold their sovereignty within the international arena.

Friendly Skies and Safe Harbors

Safe havens provide a foundation for small states' resurgence, enabling reorganization, strategic coordination, and training. A safe harbor denotes secured territory beyond occupying forces, where troops regroup, enhance readiness, and plan counteroffensive operations (MADHANI, A, 2026, May 6).

During World War II, Charles de Gaulle's Free French Forces relied on the Allies' logistical support, operating from London and North Africa to orchestrate campaigns against German occupiers. Similarly, Ukraine has leveraged friendly airspace and NATO proximity for troop training, hardware transport, and humanitarian aid delivery (Robert-Cristian TrifDănuț-Dumitru DUMITRAȘCU, 2025).

Safe harbors also carry symbolic weight, epitomizing national sovereignty. Secure regions ensure leadership continuity, foster training for new personnel, and instill hope and solidarity. Collaboration between governments-in-exile and safe havens integrates logistics, diplomacy, and training, advancing autonomy and self-determination in adversity. (Richard N. Haass, 2003).

Despite the ongoing fighting following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the country has found "safe harbors" in protected external sanctuaries that enable the functioning of its government, logistics, and international assistance. Countries like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia have served as secure gateways, facilitating the transit of military aid, humanitarian assistance, training, and refugee protection, while also hosting coordination nodes with partners such as NATO and the European Union (EUToday Correspondents. 2026, April 24). Typically, a structured agreement between the host state, Ukraine as the supported state,

and key allied guarantors would be necessary to validate a safe harbor formally. Ideally, this agreement would be developed within a multilateral framework outlining legal protections, security commitments (including air and missile defense), logistical access, and rules of engagement to mitigate escalation risks. The United States has been instrumental in ensuring these hubs remain viable parts of Ukraine's broader war effort by coordinating military assistance, training programs, intelligence sharing, and providing diplomatic support, rather than designating formal "safe zones" within Ukraine itself (U.S. Department of State, 2025, January 19).

Expertise and Training

Transferring military knowledge from developed nations to smaller allies is vital. This includes operational planning, tactical training, and specialized fields like medical evacuation, demolitions, communications, intelligence, and cybersecurity (Vazquez, D, 2025, February 6).

Small nations' defense capabilities improve significantly through training programs by NATO, the UN, the US, and European allies. Georgia has advanced in coordinating with Western forces via NATO's Partnership for Peace program and multinational exercises, enhancing operational effectiveness and skills. The Baltic States have fortified territorial defense with guidance from foreign consultants and instructors. (Christopher P. Mulder, June 3, 2021). Beyond combat proficiency, training supports strategic planning, crisis management, and civilian defense organizations. External mentorship enables comprehensive total defense doctrines, activating society-wide resistance and ensuring readiness and unity (Christopher P. Mulder, June 3, 2021). This strategic development has been greatly bolstered by the invaluable expertise offered by foreign military consultants and instructors, who have guided these nations in crafting comprehensive, resilient defense strategies tailored to their unique geopolitical landscapes.

Beyond mere combat proficiency, military expertise encompasses a broader spectrum of capabilities, including sophisticated strategic planning, effective crisis management, and the establishment of civilian defense organizations. These partnerships also foster strategic trust and political alignment, laying the foundations for long-term security collaboration, mutual understanding, and shared objectives (Christopher P. Mulder, June 3, 2021). This inclusive approach to national defense underscores the paramount importance of readiness and unity across all sectors of society.

In the last decade, Georgia has significantly enhanced its defense capabilities and improved interoperability with Western troops due to extensive knowledge and training support from the US and NATO. Key initiatives include the Georgia Defense Readiness Program, which focuses on training Georgian Defense Forces in combined arms operations and leadership development, and the NATO–Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center, established in 2015 to facilitate multinational exercises and NATO-standard certification (The Messenger Georgia-US Launch, 2021).

Regular international exercises such as Agile Spirit, Noble Partner, Trojan Footprint, and Caucasus Eagle have further bolstered joint capabilities and operational readiness. Additionally, NATO provides strategic-level advisory support through the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package, aiding Georgia in transitioning to a modern, resilient, NATO-compatible military force (Agile Spirit. 2023). This support encompasses defense planning, cybersecurity, and institutional reform.

Logistics and Supply Chains

Long-term conflict presents immense challenges for small states, particularly when survival depends on continuous logistical support. This support encompasses fuel, food, medical supplies, advanced weaponry, ammunition, and communication equipment. The endurance of any resistance or defense campaign relies heavily on the strength and reliability of its logistics (Finabel, 2026). The ongoing war in Ukraine highlights the need for dependable supply lines from neighboring nations like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, as well as safe and coordinated support from the United States. By facilitating the constant flow of vital materials, these pathways maintain operational efficacy, raise morale, and strengthen defensive tactics under extreme strain.

The United States' assistance to Ukraine has grown in importance and visibility, demonstrating a strong commitment to the country's security and sovereignty. The deployment of cutting-edge weapons like precision-guided rockets, which are essential for Ukraine's defense capabilities against continued aggression, is only one of the many crucial areas in which this aid is provided. Additionally, the United States provides vital intelligence that improves Ukraine's strategic planning and situational awareness, allowing its forces to anticipate attacks and react efficiently in real time (Defence Industry, 2026, May 6).

Additionally, U.S. logistical support makes it easier for these essential materials to be distributed and transported effectively, ensuring they reach the front lines promptly. This demonstrates the complexity of the support network by requiring careful planning and coordination that spans several operational levels.

Another essential component of U.S. assistance is information exchange, which aids Ukraine in developing narrative strategies that effectively combat false information and strengthen national cohesion, so strengthening its people during these trying times (Masquelier-Page, A, 2024, December 5).

The importance of safe and efficient supply routes from nearby nations like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia has grown more apparent as the conflict in Ukraine rages on. These routes are vital for maintaining both military operations and civilian life since they consistently supply everything from military hardware to humanitarian relief. Maintaining operational tempo and guaranteeing that troops have adequate equipment and support depend heavily on how well these logistics work (Wissler, J., 2019).

These supply lines also significantly contribute to raising the morale of both military personnel and civilians in such a high-pressure setting. The knowledge that resources and assistance are continuously available can boost self-assurance and fortitude. In the end, coordinating these supply routes not only highlights the value of regional collaboration but also plays a crucial role in bolstering Ukraine's defensive tactics as it negotiates the difficulties caused by the current conflict. Ukraine's efforts to safeguard its independence and territorial integrity are mostly supported by the United States and secure transportation networks from surrounding countries (U.S. Embassy Tbilisi, 2022, January 10).

For small states like Georgia, prearranged agreements with international partners for swift logistical support are critical. National defense planning must incorporate robust transportation infrastructure, coordination systems, and stockpiles of essential supplies. Such elements construct a resilient defense framework. Reliable logistical readiness allows domestic resistance to endure, contributing to long-term state security and maintaining resilience amid adversity (Liz Fuller, 2017).

In the event of a crisis, Georgia lacks formal agreements that ensure reliable logistical help from allies such as the United States. Rather, Georgia improves its military logistics readiness through strategic alliances and collaboration techniques. Important projects include the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package and other programs that improve defensive capabilities as part of NATO-Georgia collaboration. This package aids with Georgia's military modernization and expands NATO forces' presence in the area (The White House, 2016). Additionally, the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership encourages bilateral defense collaboration. Georgia has improved its ability to collaborate with allied logistical systems through joint military exercises and training initiatives. This makes it possible for ally forces operating in Georgia to get efficient support in times of crisis. These alliances aren't legally enforceable, though (Eugene Kogan Kogan, 2020). This implies that while they help, any significant support from allies during a crisis is

contingent upon choices taken at the time rather than on agreements that have already been reached. Georgia's defense policy is still significantly impacted by the uncertainties surrounding partner support in times of emergency, despite improvements in its logistics capabilities.

Intelligence and Information Sharing

Access to comprehensive intelligence capabilities is indispensable for small nations. These capabilities include early warning systems, satellite imagery, and electronic surveillance, enabling timely and informed decision-making in complex conflicts (T. X. Hammes, 2021).

Allied intelligence cooperation significantly impacts outcomes. In Ukraine, real-time intelligence from NATO and the United States has enhanced battlefield awareness, allowing forces to anticipate enemy movements and counter hostile strategies (T. X. Hammes, 2021). During the Cold War, smaller NATO nations relied on shared intelligence to neutralize threats from the Soviet bloc, bolstering national security and collective defense (T. X. Hammes, 2021).

Alliances dedicated to intelligence sharing strengthen deterrence and enhance resilience against hybrid threats, including cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns. Covert subversion aimed at destabilizing political landscapes also requires sophisticated counterintelligence measures. Cooperation between domestic and international agencies allows small states to navigate the information battlefield, enhancing their proactive security posture and preserving sovereignty (Seth G. Jones, 2025).

Through well-orchestrated cooperation between domestic intelligence agencies and their international counterparts, small nations can effectively navigate the turbulent waters of the information arena battlefield that has become increasingly vital in contemporary warfare. This strategic collaboration not only prevents isolation but also empowers smaller countries to play a proactive role in shaping their security landscapes, ensuring they remain vigilant and adequately prepared against a kaleidoscope of evolving multifaceted threats. By cultivating these relationships, small nations can enhance their capacity to respond to challenges, ultimately reinforcing their sovereignty in a precarious world.

Regarding intelligence and information sharing, Georgia has received significant assistance from the US, NATO, and the EU to strengthen its capacity to recognize and address hybrid threats. This includes initiatives like the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package, which have assisted Georgia in connecting with NATO information-sharing systems, gaining access to secure communications, and receiving intelligence

analytic training Relations with Georgia, 2025). These enhancements make it easier for Georgia to collaborate with its partners in times of crisis.

By concentrating on strengthening Georgia's intelligence capabilities, the US has offered extra assistance. This involves assistance in restructuring Georgian security services as well as training in analysis, cyber defense, and counterintelligence. The European Union has mostly made contributions through initiatives that improve communication tactics, cyber resilience, civilian security, and counter-disinformation campaigns, U.S. Security Cooperation with Georgia.

These combined efforts have greatly improved Georgia's ability to recognize threats, comprehend complex circumstances, and collaborate with Western partners, even if it does not receive the same level of immediate, high-quality intelligence as full NATO members. Georgia's security and deterrence in a difficult environment are strengthened by our collaboration.

Financial Support

Adequate funding is essential to sustain resistance or military operations. Economic collapse can undermine even the most committed forces. External financial support—via loans or direct aid from governments and international organizations—is critical for defense spending, humanitarian assistance, and essential public services (VoxDev, 2024).

During World War II, the Lend-Lease program provided indispensable financial and material resources to the Allies, including the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, supporting both military capabilities and civilian populations (Mark Cartwright, 2025). In the current landscape, financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Western nations has been pivotal in stabilizing Ukraine's economy, which has been grappling with ongoing conflict and rising geopolitical tensions. This much-needed support allows Ukraine to fulfill its financial commitments and begin the arduous process of reconstruction.

Today, financial aid from the IMF and Western nations has been crucial in stabilizing Ukraine’s economy amid ongoing conflict, enabling continued government functions and reconstruction efforts (International Monetary Fund, El. resecures). These financial structures can provide timely and flexible support during crises, helping alleviate pressure and ensure that essential services continue. By fostering an environment of stability and resilience, such mechanisms ultimately empower nations to weather turbulent periods and

create a secure and prosperous future for their citizens, laying the foundation for lasting peace and development (International Monetary Fund, El. resecures).

While financial support is still necessary to sustain state operations and resistance during hostilities, its effectiveness is inherently limited in long-term conflicts with high death tolls and massive population displacement. External support, whether in the form of direct aid or loans from institutions like the International Monetary Fund, is essential to maintaining public services, funding defense projects, and preventing economic collapse (Donaubauer, J., Herzer, D., & Nunnenkamp, P. 2017). While past examples like the Lend-Lease program show how material and financial help may greatly increase both military and civilian resilience, current support for Ukraine highlights the significance of such aid in stabilizing economies during war. However, the cumulative effects of mass emigration, labor depletion, and human casualties threaten the fundamental foundations that financial aid aims to maintain as long as hostilities persist (U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, 2024b). Financial assistance is therefore essential, but it cannot promote long-term resilience on its own; in order to be effective over time, it must be combined with measures that help displaced populations, protect human capital, and guarantee societal continuity.

Force Demonstration

The display of military strength by international partners serves as both a deterrent and a reassurance. Large-scale multinational exercises, strategic deployments, and visible allied presence signal that aggression will meet a swift, coordinated response. (NATO-OTAN. El. Resecures, 2025).

NATO's enhanced forward presence in Poland and the Baltic States exemplifies this approach. Such deployments reinforce deterrence and regional stability, improving interoperability among allied forces and symbolizing collective resolve (Donatas Palavenis, 2024). Exercises like Defender Europe demonstrate unity and readiness, conveying to both allies and adversaries that the costs of aggression are high (Donatas Palavenis, 2024).

Visible force projection—including naval operations, maritime surveillance, and air policing—enhances security frameworks, shaping the psychological landscape of defense. Smaller states leverage collective strength to amplify deterrence, fortify national security, and maintain regional stability in the face of potential threats (NATO-OTAN, El. Resecures, 2025,).

A significant example of the United States using "indirect" force in a particularly difficult geopolitical situation is the Georgian situation. In this case, American military ships were positioned strategically in the charming Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti, Georgia, as part of a humanitarian supply operation called "Operation Assured Delivery." (U.S. Military Delivers 2 Million Pounds of Aid to Georgia, 2008) On August 24, 2008, the guided missile destroyer USS McFaul arrived in the busy port of Batumi. Targeting locations that were purposefully selected to be beyond the direct reach of Russian military operations, this ship transported vital supplies. In addition to providing much-needed help, the USS McFaul's arrival represented a concrete demonstration of support for Georgia at a crucial juncture. Furthermore, in late August 2008, the USCGC Dallas, a high-endurance cutter, also docked in Batumi. (Coast, D. August 27, 2008,). In addition to highlighting the substantial humanitarian operations taking place in the area to meet both practical needs and strengthen political ties, this further showed the United States' dedication to the mission.

Direct Assistance

Direct military assistance, including allied troop deployment and decisive intervention, represents the most critical form of external support. This support transforms modest resistance into effective liberation operations, restoring sovereignty and territorial integrity (The Gulf War 1990-1991).

Historical examples include the liberation of occupied Europe during World War II, U.S.-led coalition operations in Kuwait (1991), and NATO’s intervention in Kosovo (1999). Smaller nations often rely heavily on larger coalitions to secure independence and protect territory (The Gulf War 1990-1991).

Direct military aid requires formal requests and approval by the legitimate government of the occupied state, respecting sovereignty. A credible narrative of internal resistance reinforces moral and political justification for intervention, engaging both domestic and international audiences (Gerhards, J., Antoine, L., & Rasmus Ollroge, 2024).

While awaiting intervention, vulnerable nations must establish robust internal defense systems. Resilience and commitment to self-defense strengthen prospects for survival and provide a compelling case for external assistance, ensuring continued hope and determination among the populace (Benjamin Nussberger, Paula Fischer, 2019).

Conclusion

For small states, external assistance is not a luxury but a vital lifeline. Historical and ongoing conflicts demonstrate their reliance on foreign allies to confront powerful adversaries. Each component—intelligence sharing, military aid, economic sanctions, and diplomatic maneuvering—constitutes a pillar in the framework of national resilience (Horng, Pengly. April 29, 2024.)

To maximize external support, small states must develop robust internal defenses, including organized resistance networks and comprehensive strategies activating collective societal will. These initiatives mobilize public support, leverage local expertise, and ensure cohesive, credible responses to threats (Shvangiradze, 2025).

Legitimacy in internal resistance profoundly influences external support effectiveness. Securing international aid through military, humanitarian, or diplomatic channels requires strategic planning and sustained domestic cohesion (Yossi, Shain, 2024).

By fostering a mutually reinforcing relationship between internal resilience and external support, small states enhance their capacity to safeguard sovereignty and survival. This interplay strengthens defense posture and establishes the foundation for enduring stability, allowing hope and recovery to flourish even under the shadow of aggression (C. Todd Lopez, 2026).

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From Wealth to World Power: The United States in the Last Two Decades of the Nineteenth Century

GEORGE MCHEDLISHVILI[18]

Abstract

The last two decades of the nineteenth century marked one of the most transformative periods in the history of the United States. Between roughly 1880 and 1900, the nation underwent a profound transition from a rapidly industrializing continental republic into an emerging global power. Although the United States had long possessed vast natural resources, a growing population, and an expanding economy, it had traditionally concentrated on internal development and westward expansion. By the closing years of the century, however, American leaders increasingly sought to translate the country's extraordinary economic strength into diplomatic influence, military capability, and international prestige. The period witnessed the birth of modern American geopolitics and laid the foundations for the country's dominant role in twentieth-century world affairs.

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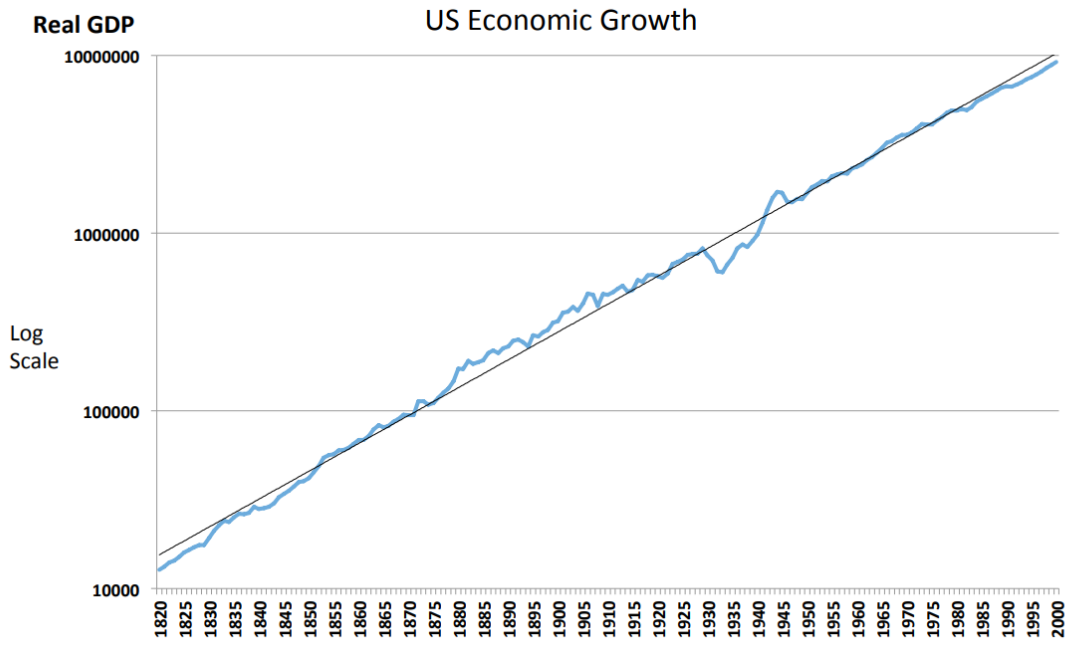
An Economic Giant Emerges

By the 1880s, the United States had become one of the world's fastest-growing industrial economies. The decades following the Civil War saw an explosion of railroad construction, steel production, oil refining, mining, banking, and manufacturing. Entrepreneurs such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, and Cornelius Vanderbilt built business empires that transformed American industry and accumulated unprecedented concentrations of wealth (See Figure 1, US Economic Growth, 2026).

Industrial output expanded at remarkable rates. By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had surpassed Britain as the world's largest industrial producer. American factories produced enormous quantities of steel, machinery, agricultural equipment, textiles, and consumer goods. The country's vast domestic market, abundant natural resources, technological innovation, and continual immigration created conditions unmatched by any European economy.

Economic success generated confidence. Increasingly, many Americans believed that their nation's industrial achievements should be reflected in its international standing. Wealth alone was no longer considered sufficient; economic power should be accompanied by political influence and military capability.

Figure 1. America's economic growth, 1800-2000, on a logarithmic scale.



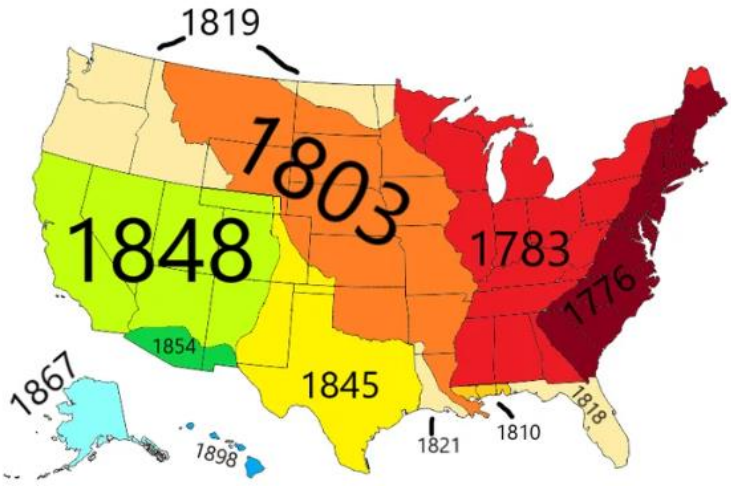
Closing of the Frontier

An important psychological turning point occurred in 1890, when the U.S. Census Bureau declared that the American frontier no longer existed in the traditional sense (See Figure 2). For generations, territorial expansion across North America had been a defining feature of American history. Once the frontier was considered "closed," political leaders, businessmen, and intellectuals began looking outward.

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued in his famous Frontier Thesis that westward expansion had shaped American democracy and character. Whether or not one accepts his interpretation, many contemporaries concluded that if opportunities for expansion within North America had largely disappeared, new opportunities would need to be sought overseas.

This shift in outlook did not necessarily imply a desire for territorial empire on the European model. Rather, many Americans believed that access to foreign markets, overseas naval stations, and strategic influence would become increasingly essential for continued prosperity.

Figure 2. America's territorial expansion



Industrial Strength and Foreign Markets

Rapid industrialization created another challenge: production often outpaced domestic consumption. Business leaders feared overproduction, falling prices, and economic crises such as the severe Panic of 1893.

Many concluded that expanding exports offered a solution. American manufacturers increasingly sought customers in Latin America, East Asia, and eventually China. Economic interests therefore became closely connected with foreign policy.

Government officials began promoting trade agreements, commercial diplomacy, and improved transportation links. American merchants invested abroad, while diplomats worked to secure favorable trading conditions. Economic expansion thus encouraged a more active international role without immediately requiring extensive territorial conquest.

Naval Power and Strategic Thinking

One of the most influential voices of the period was naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan. His book The Influence of Sea Power upon History, published in 1890, argued that great nations achieved global influence through strong navies, overseas bases, and control of maritime trade routes.

Mahan's ideas had a profound impact on policymakers not only in the United States but also in Britain, Germany, Japan, and elsewhere. American political leaders increasingly accepted that economic power required military protection. Commerce depended upon secure sea lanes, while international influence depended upon the ability to project force.

As a result, Congress approved major naval expansion programs during the 1880s and 1890s. The "New Navy" represented far more than military modernization; it symbolized America's determination to become an important international actor.

The Search for Strategic Bases

Modern naval strategy required coaling stations, repair facilities, and overseas bases. Consequently, American policymakers began paying closer attention to islands and ports across the Pacific and the Caribbean.

In 1889, the United States participated alongside Germany and Britain in resolving tensions over Samoa. The following decade witnessed growing American influence in Hawaii, where American economic interests had already become significant through sugar production.

The overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 by American settlers created controversy, but annexation eventually occurred in 1898. Hawaii became a crucial naval and commercial outpost linking the American mainland with Asia.

American interest also grew in the possibility of constructing an interoceanic canal across Central America. Such a canal would dramatically shorten travel between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, increasing both commercial efficiency and naval mobility. Although the Panama Canal would not be completed until the twentieth century, strategic planning began during the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Latin America and the Monroe Doctrine

The Monroe Doctrine, first proclaimed in 1823, had originally sought to discourage European colonial expansion in the Western Hemisphere. During the late nineteenth century, however, American policymakers increasingly interpreted the doctrine in more expansive ways.

Secretary of State James G. Blaine advocated Pan-American cooperation and organized the First International Conference of American States in 1889–1890. The conference promoted commercial ties, arbitration, and greater political cooperation among the nations of the Americas.

The United States also played an increasingly assertive diplomatic role in regional disputes. During the Venezuelan boundary dispute with Britain in 1895, the administration of President Grover Cleveland insisted that the United States had the right to intervene diplomatically under the Monroe Doctrine. Britain's eventual willingness to accept arbitration was widely interpreted within the United States as evidence of growing American influence.

Although Britain had broader strategic reasons for avoiding confrontation, many Americans viewed the episode as proof that their country could successfully challenge even the world's greatest imperial power.

The Spanish-American War

No event better symbolized America's emergence as a world power than the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Long-standing Cuban efforts to gain independence from Spain attracted considerable sympathy within the United States. Newspaper publishers such as William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer sensationalized Spanish actions in Cuba, helping generate public support for intervention.

The explosion of the battleship USS Maine in Havana Harbor in February 1898 dramatically increased tensions. Although the exact cause remains disputed, the incident became a rallying cry for war.

The conflict itself lasted only a few months. American victories occurred not only in Cuba but also in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Spain's defeat marked the collapse of one of Europe's oldest colonial empires.

The Treaty of Paris transformed America's international position. The United States acquired Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, while Cuba became formally independent but remained under strong American influence.

For the first time, the United States possessed significant overseas territories extending far beyond North America.

The Debate over Empire

The acquisition of overseas territories sparked intense domestic debate.

Supporters argued that America had both economic and strategic reasons to expand. Overseas possessions would provide naval bases, commercial opportunities, and international prestige. Some also believed that the United States had a moral duty to spread democratic institutions and modern civilization.

Opponents strongly disagreed. Prominent figures such as Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, and William Jennings Bryan questioned whether colonial rule was compatible with the principles of the American Revolution. The Anti-Imperialist League argued that governing foreign peoples without their consent contradicted the nation's commitment to liberty and self-government.

This debate revealed a tension that would continue throughout American history: how could a republic founded upon anti-colonial ideals exercise global power without abandoning its own principles?

The Open Door in China

American commercial ambitions increasingly extended to Asia. European powers and Japan were carving out spheres of influence in China, raising fears that American businesses might be excluded.

In 1899, Secretary of State John Hay proposed the Open Door Policy, urging all powers to maintain equal commercial access to Chinese markets while preserving China's territorial integrity.

Although enforcement depended largely upon diplomacy rather than military strength, the policy demonstrated growing American confidence in shaping international affairs. It also reflected an important characteristic of American expansion: policymakers often preferred open markets and commercial influence to formal colonial control whenever possible.

Economic Diplomacy and National Confidence

The final decades of the nineteenth century also witnessed the professionalization of American diplomacy. Foreign policy became increasingly connected to banking, investment, trade, and industrial development.

American financiers invested abroad, while exporters sought access to international markets. Government institutions expanded their ability to support commercial interests overseas. The distinction between economic and geopolitical power became increasingly blurred.

Meanwhile, improvements in communications, including the telegraph and expanding steamship networks, made global engagement more practical than ever before.

Public opinion likewise evolved. World's fairs, expanding newspapers, popular magazines, and improved education encouraged Americans to think of their country as a participant in world affairs rather than merely a continental nation.

Limitations of American Power

Despite these advances, the United States was not yet the dominant global power it would become after the Second World War.

Britain remained the world's leading naval power and possessed a vast empire. France, Germany, and Russia maintained larger standing armies and exercised considerable influence across Europe, Africa, and Asia.

American military institutions were still relatively modest, and many policymakers remained cautious about foreign entanglements. Isolationist traditions retained considerable political support, while domestic issues—including labor unrest, racial segregation, immigration, and political corruption—continued to demand attention.

Thus, the United States at the turn of the century should be viewed not as an established superpower but as an emerging great power whose capabilities were rapidly expanding.

Conclusion

The last two decades of the nineteenth century represented a decisive turning point in American history. During these years, the United States began converting extraordinary economic success into geopolitical influence. Industrial growth financed naval modernization, expanding trade encouraged overseas engagement, and strategic thinking increasingly linked prosperity with international presence.

Events such as the closing of the frontier, the publication of Mahan's naval theories, the Pan-American movement, the Venezuelan crisis, the annexation of Hawaii, the Spanish-American War, and the Open Door Policy collectively marked America's transformation from a largely continental republic into an increasingly global actor.

The process was neither inevitable nor uncontested. Americans themselves debated the meaning of expansion, the morality of empire, and the proper role of the republic in world affairs. Yet by 1900 the direction of change was unmistakable. The nation had acquired overseas territories, built a modern navy, expanded its diplomatic reach, and demonstrated a willingness to shape international events.

In retrospect, these decades formed the bridge between two eras. They concluded the period in which the United States focused primarily on continental development and inaugurated the age in which it would become one of the principal architects of the international system. The wealth created by industrialization did not merely enrich the nation; it provided the resources, confidence, and strategic vision that enabled the United States to emerge as a major geopolitical power—a transformation whose consequences continue to shape world politics today.

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The Invisible Ethnics: Rethinking German Assimilation in the Shadow of Anglo-American Historiography

German Contributions to the Declaration of Independence and the Problem of Colonial Visibility

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Abstract

For all the founding mythology that orbits the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock, the largest non-English immigrant group in colonial British America has remained curiously peripheral to the standard narrative of the early Republic. This article reconsiders the German-speaking population of colonial America — close to a tenth of the 1790 Republic and as much as a third of Pennsylvania — and argues that its near-invisibility in mainstream American Studies is not an accident of evidence but an artefact of an Anglo-centric historiography that long measured immigrant worth by the yardstick of assimilation. Drawing on three decades of revisionist scholarship and on the documentary history of the Declaration of Independence, it advances three claims: that German colonial invisibility was structurally produced; that German migration arose from a convergence of devastation, religious persecution, and skillful recruitment rather than any single cause; and that German Americans were not bystanders to independence but among its first reporters, translators, and soldiers. The Declaration — first announced and first separately printed in German — serves as the central evidence for a founding that was, in the fullest sense, plural.

Keywords: German-American history; colonial Pennsylvania; Declaration of Independence; historiography of immigration; assimilation; Pennsylvania Germans; American Studies; Palatine migration

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1. Introduction

In 1751 Benjamin Franklin sat down to write a sober demographic essay and, being Franklin, could not resist a provocation. Why, he wondered in print, should the "Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements" — newcomers who were, in his estimation, neither sufficiently English nor sufficiently white, and who threatened to "Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them" (Franklin 1751). On this point Franklin was spectacularly wrong, and the manner of his wrongness is instructive. This article asks how the most populous non-English community in colonial America came to be treated as a footnote to a story it helped to write, and what its recovery tells us — on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence — about who "We the People" actually were.

The dominant account of colonial identity formation has long been Anglo-centric, as David Hackett Fischer's influential *Albion's Seed* (1989) made explicit in both its title and its architecture. The founding myths orbit the Mayflower, Jamestown, and Plymouth Rock; the *Concord* — the 1683 vessel that carried the first German-speaking families to Philadelphia — commands no comparable place in cultural memory. Yet by 1776 the German-speaking population may have been the largest non-English immigrant group in all the colonies (Fogleman 1996), and by the first federal census of 1790 close to a tenth of the new Republic was of German descent (Faust 1909).

The paper advances three arguments. First, the structural invisibility of German colonists in American Studies is not accidental but the artefact of a particular historiographical bias. Second, the causes of German migration were plural — a convergence of devastation, theology, and effective recruitment — rather than singular. Third, German immigrants were not bystanders to American independence but, in several measurable senses, its first audience, its translators, and its soldiers.

2. The Push and the Pull: Why They Came

The causes of German emigration are richer than most survey accounts allow. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) had reduced parts of Central Europe to catastrophe, with some estimates placing mortality in the German lands at up to a third of the population. The peace that followed left a patchwork of roughly three hundred micro-sovereignties — too weak to defend their subjects, quite strong enough to tax them. As Durnbaugh (1980) showed in his study of Radical Pietist emigration, religious persecution of Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Pietists drove the earliest waves, particularly along the Rhineland–Palatinate corridor. But Durnbaugh is rigorous on a crucial point: economic hardship frequently played an equal role.

Crop failures, oppressive guild structures, and the catastrophic winter of 1709–1710 meant that emigrants were fleeing hunger as much as heterodoxy.

The pull was, in significant measure, a marketing campaign. William Penn toured the Rhineland in 1677 advertising two genuinely radical commodities: religious tolerance and cheap land. Otterness (2004) traces how the first mass Palatine emigration of some thirteen to fifteen thousand people in 1709 was shaped by promotional literature — including pamphlets associated with Joshua Kocherthal — that was, if not exactly false advertising, then at minimum optimistic advertising. Wokeck (1999) demonstrates how this early movement matured into the first organized system of mass transatlantic migration, complete with recruiters, shippers, and the credit arrangements of the redemptioner trade.

And so they came. Fogleman (1996) estimates that across the eighteenth century at least 900,000 people emigrated from the southwestern German lands, of whom roughly 85,000 — fewer than fifteen percent — reached British North America. Those 85,000 were enough. By the eve of the Revolution, people of German descent made up approximately one-third of Pennsylvania's population — the very colony that would host the Continental Congress, and Franklin's own.

3. Invisible by Design: The Historiographical Problem

Here is the paradox in the paper's title: a community so large, productive, and culturally distinct ought not to be invisible — yet in the standard canon of early American Studies it very nearly is. The explanation lies less in the archive than in the assumptions historians brought to it.

Foundational German-American scholarship long existed in a parallel universe. Faust's two-volume *The German Element in the United States* (1909) and Wittke's *We Who Built America* (1939) were written defensively — to supplement the mainstream record rather than to correct it — and they tended to gauge German value by the standard of assimilation, as though the highest compliment payable to an immigrant was that he had become sufficiently English. Wokeck (2000) argues that this assimilationist framing was anything but neutral: it reflected the academy's habit of treating non-English cultures as raw material for Americanization rather than as constitutive of American experience itself. Nolt (2002) carries the analysis into the early Republic, showing how Pennsylvania German identity was systematically marginalized precisely as the new nation constructed its founding mythology along Anglo-Saxon lines.

The irony deserves emphasis. The very assimilation that erased German visibility from the record was then cited as evidence that Germans had possessed no distinct history worth recording. They blended in; therefore they were always invisible; therefore there is nothing to study. It is a circular argument, and it has cost the field a great deal.

4. July 1776, in German

Nowhere is that cost clearer than in the documentary history of the Declaration of Independence. On 4 July 1776 the Continental Congress approved the final text in a Philadelphia whose streets carried German signage, German coffeehouses, and one of the most vigorous German-language print cultures in North America (Library of Congress, n.d.).

The first newspaper anywhere to report the Declaration's existence was not an English one. On the morning of 5 July, Heinrich Miller's *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote* announced that Congress had declared the united colonies free and independent states — scooping every English-language competitor in a crowded Philadelphia market (Adams 1999). Within days came the first separately printed German translation: a broadside produced by the Philadelphia printers Melchior Steiner and Charles Cist, modelled closely on John Dunlap's English original, with Miller carrying a full translation in the *Staatsbote* on 9 July (Arndt 1985; Adams 1999). For the large share of Pennsylvanians who read German as a first language, the phrases "all men are created equal" and "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" arrived, first, in German. This was no peripheral curiosity; it was a principal channel through which revolutionary ideology reached the colony's largest non-English community.

The military contribution was equally concrete. Thousands of German Americans formed volunteer companies at the outbreak of war. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg — son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America — raised and commanded the largely German-speaking 8th Virginia Regiment and rose to brigadier general; his brother Frederick would become the first Speaker of the United States House of Representatives (Museum of the American Revolution, n.d.).

And then there is the Prussian who arguably made the Continental Army worth the name. Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben — an unemployed, heavily indebted former staff officer recommended to Franklin in Paris — reached Valley Forge in February 1778 speaking almost no English, his serviceable battlefield vocabulary reportedly reduced to a single, versatile oath. In barely two months, drilling his troops in

German and French and relaying his curses through interpreters, he transformed a half-starved, disorganized force into one that could stand against the British. Washington made him acting inspector general, and in May 1778 Congress confirmed the appointment with the rank of major general (Museum of the American Revolution, n.d.). The printing press, the pulpit, and the drilling ground: Germans were present at every register of the Revolution — cultural, civic, and military — and yet the standard narrative still tends to cast them as supporting players.

5. Conclusion: Rethinking the "We"

Franklin's anxiety about a Pennsylvania "Germanized" rather than "Anglified" was not merely a historical curiosity; it was a diagnostic. It articulated what Wokeck and others have identified as a structural premise of Anglo-American colonial culture: that the English experience was normative, and that all other national trajectories were deviations to be absorbed and, ultimately, rendered invisible. The evidence assembled over the past three decades by Fogleman, Otterness, Wokeck, Nolt, and their transatlantic interlocutors tells a different story. The German colonial experience was not a footnote to the American founding but a form of co-authorship. The *Concord* deserves to stand beside the Mayflower; Miller's *Staatsbote* beside the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*; and the German printers, preachers, soldiers, and farmers who built the colony that housed the Revolution deserve to stand — fully and visibly — within the founding narrative. When we ask whose Declaration of Independence this was, the most accurate answer is plural — and, among other languages, it was written in German.

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Politics and Language of National Security Strategies: What of the 2025 NSS?

JONATHAN SCOTT[20]

Abstract

This year is the 250th anniversary of American independence, and much celebration and fanfare are scheduled. Similar events feature parades and displays that customarily include the military from all service components. Amid preparations for the celebrations, the United States is engaged in ongoing military operations in the Persian Gulf region. While there are many unanswered questions, much of the globe watches with concern, while those affiliated with international security and strategic studies look to identify how the President's decisions connect to a coherent strategy. Since the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, each administration has been responsible for crafting and publishing a National Security Strategy. One purpose of the National Security Strategy is to provide guidance needed for the Department of Defense and the services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) to plan, procure, prepare, and execute their responsibilities. The current President is recognized as a radically different communicator and executive. How different is the National Security Strategy of his second administration from other strategies in previous administrations? What messaging does his 2025 strategy send to the world? This research used an inductive content analysis of strategies and reviews to conclude that the Trump 2025 NSS departs from previous strategy paradigms and is met with uncertainty and concern by traditional allies still adjusting to Russia's aggressive revanchism and economic instability.

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In 1986, the most recent consequential of change to the defense architecture and processes of the United States, the Goldwater-Nichols National Defense Reorganization Act, went into effect and mandated not only a more joint approach to the American way of war, but also changed command and control and stipulated a reporting requirement to Congress and the nation which lays out strategic priorities and a worldview from the Oval Office. This research examined one of the reporting requirements of Goldwater-Nichols, the National Security Strategy, hereafter referred to as NSS, which provides the highest guidance and direction related to defense in the hierarchy of such documents. More specifically, this research examined the content and themes of the twenty NSSs issued since 1986 in comparison to the recent Trump administration NSS released in the Fall of 2025. In keeping with what is widely acknowledged by many scholars as a very unconventional governance style and communication pattern, the Trump 2 (as opposed to the first Trump administration of 2016 to 2020) NSS of 2025 conveys more political message and partisan polemics than the previous nineteen NSS since 1986, as revealed in this content analysis examination.

Formally identified as the National Security Report in Public Law 99-433 (1986) Congress prescribed a yearly explanation of national strategy with "a comprehensive description and discussion of "…interest, goals, and objectives of the United States; the ways and capabilities to achieve the objectives; the use of the elements of national power (most often identified as diplomatic, information, military, and economic – or DIME for short) to achieve objectives; the adequacy of the capabilities to carry out the strategy; and other necessary information to help inform Congress related to national security (Public Law 99-433, 1986, Section 104, Paragraphs a. and b.) In a cascading fashion, the National Defense Strategy describes how the Department of Defense will contribute to achieving the objectives identified in the NSS, and the National Military Strategy. But the National Security Strategy is also the closest we come to an identifiable Grand Strategy. The nineteen reports, from the Presidency of Ronald Reagan to Trump's second term have, until the most recently released strategy, followed a largely consistent path of components, but expressed in varying degrees of depth and with some diverging manners of expressing them.

Each unclassified release of the National Security Strategy is normally followed by commentary from strategy and national security experts and scholars from academia but also from centers and think tanks associated with matters of international relations and national security. The second Trump administration's NSS is no exception in receiving attention, but as expected with the "lightning rod" nature of releases from the Trump administration, received commentary and reviews different than previous feedback to earlier administrations. Several reviews pointed out the deemphasizing of the liberal approach and heightened

language of realism found in the document (Lin, 2025; Malik 2026). Trump's "America First" transactional approach is recognized by others (Alexandra de,2025; Hopper, 2025; Karlan et al., 2025; Ray, 2025). Other reviews of the document (Stelzenmuller et al., 2025; Simon & Stevenson, 2025; Bexheti, 2026) highlight the wording of concern or critique of the European need for reform and "political crisis" (President of the United States, 2025), as well as the language that seems to ease attention toward Russia and China (Pifer et al., 2025; Anderson et al, 2025).

Content and clear policy patterns receive greater attention in scholarship about National Security Strategies. Ettinger (2017) points out the continuance of attention to national interest objectives (ends) and the instruments or assets (means) necessary. These are among the primary reasons for creating the required document (Snider, 1995; Doyle, 2007; Boucher, 2009; Cancian, 2017). Additionally, the NSS presents a snapshot of the worldview from the occupant of the Whitehouse at the time of its publication (Dhojnacki, 2025). Two key examples of this are the first and second Reagan NSS reports which conveyed the view of a malevolent Soviet Union in mid 1980s, as well as the 2002 Bush NSS which highlighted the terror recently experienced by the United States in the Fall of 2001 and the rogue states the President was led to believe were most connected to that danger. The latter NSS of course contained the shift or azimuth adjustment to preemptive action. This Presidential worldview can also be seen in the G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and Trump NSS (1992, 1994 and 2018) respectively, which identified the resurfacing Israeli/Palestinian issues (Cordesman,2018).

A very thorough study of National Security Studies by Chin, Skinner, and Yoo (2023) examined and compared topics and emphasis of NSS from Reagan until Biden's 2022 strategy. The work by the above scholars takes the research into the depth of topics and countries mentioned by President and frequency. They found that there is much consistency in topics and countries mentioned with understandable variation at logical timeline points where a crisis or circumstances called for it (Chin, Skinner, & Yoo, 2023).

Thoughts and feedback about Trump's 2025 NSS are nascent, and this researcher believes more research will follow. One gap that is apparent now and worthy of exploring is the communicative technique or style of Trump's 2025 NSS. President Trump is recognized in some academic research for communicative techniques that are self-focused, populistic, informal and charged, often critical (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, & Paulhus, 2017; Hunston, n.d.; Meader & Hayes, 2025). Given President Trump's differences in communication style and practices which are readily apparent in routine social media messaging as well as "drive-by" engagements with the press and scheduled press conferences, how does the style and manner found in the 2025 NSS compare to the previous nineteen NSSs? Is there a manner or style difference that

speaks to Trump's departure from the paradigm, or is there similarity to previous Presidential communication in earlier NSS? A recognized factor here is that the development of a National Security Strategy is a collective effort, and according to Snider (96), includes input and revisions from multiple contributors. These contributors, primary cabinet secretaries and the National Security Advisor, would logically carry the President's way of thinking. But finally, there is the assumption, until research tells us differently, that a required report bearing the signature of the President is reviewed by him/her.

This research was a qualitative, inductive approach conducted using content analysis. All twenty NSS were analyzed for writing/language that was either politically suggestive of predecessors, opponents or a campaign. Additionally, the strategies were analyzed for a collegial, cooperative and collective tone or a self-focused, egotistical, or blaming way. Initial key words were identified and aligned with a particular coding endpoint for summarizing the result of the analysis. The key words alignment and resulting coding alignment are indicated in Figure 1 on page 5.

As key words must be considered in context, the analysis did not use mere appearance of the word to indicate a tone or pattern. Surrounding text and context were considered. For example, the pronoun "they" is used frequently and was applied to opponents or potential threats outside the United States as well as referring to political or ideological opponents within the United States.

A depiction of the overall findings for each President and National Security Strategy is depicted in Figure 2. Each NSS was assessed in the three language or tone categories depicted in Figure 1 using a rating of None – Little; Little – Medium; and Medium-High referring to frequency this was observed in the report.

Figure 1

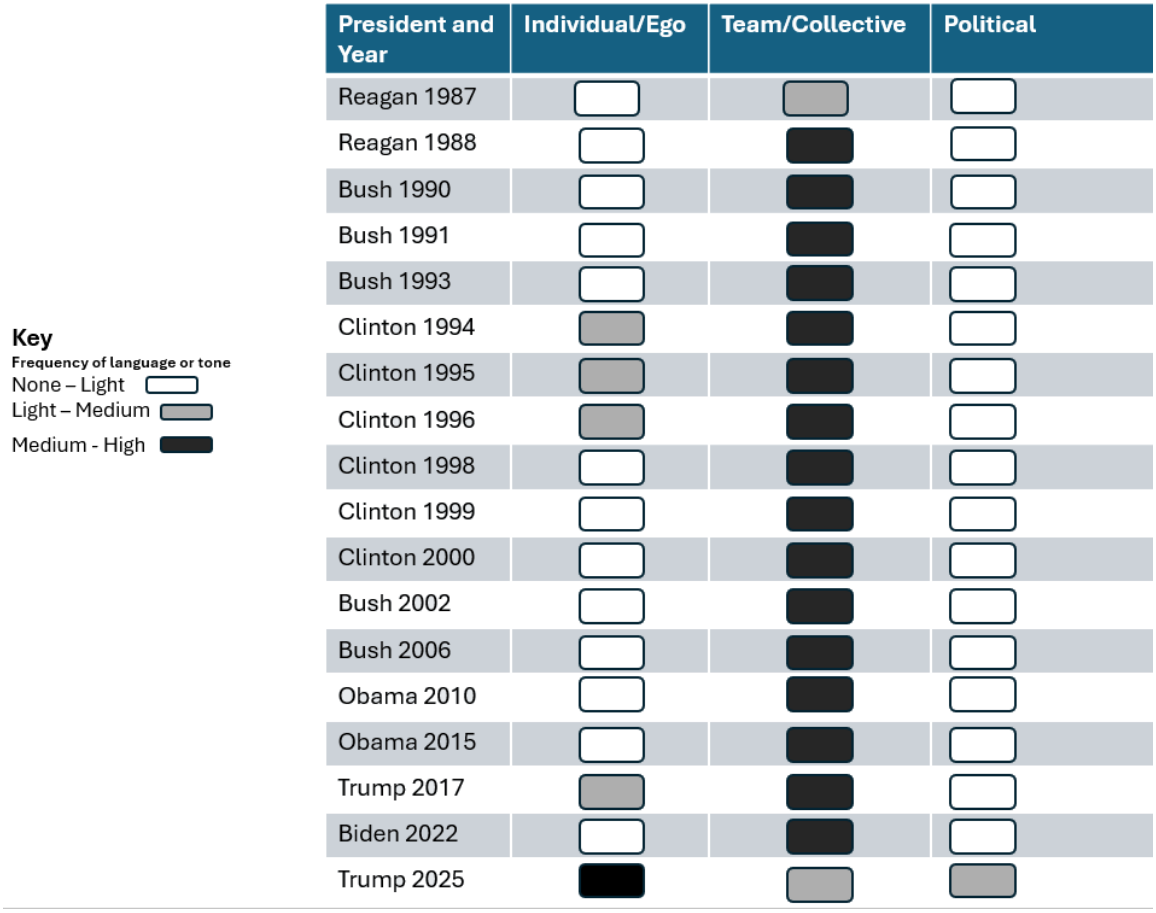
Key Words and Coding Summary



The findings of this research indicate that Trump's 2025 NSS is predictively true to the mannerisms and tone the President has displayed in his first term and the current administration. As we see depicted in Figure 2 on page 6, the analysis showed Trump's language and tone in the 2025 strategy is largely different than that of other Presidents, and even from his 2017 NSS. While there is little of the language or expression of alliance and team, the 2025 NSS is low to medium in language expressing teamwork and partnerships, and much of the language is qualified with term such as "like minded." Trump 2025 is medium to heavy in language of the individual or ego and is light to medium in language of politics and campaigns. Trump 2025 is light to medium in tone to alliance and institutions. He speaks openly of American policy previously lashed to foreign policy institutions, as well as allies and partners trying to offload cost on the U.S.

Figure 2

NSS Comparison of Language and Tone



A clear component and pattern emerged in the document – a pattern of political stage and self-identity which rarely appeared, and if only in a milder form, from other Presidential NSS.

This research looked at Trump's 2025 NSS compared to previous U.S. Presidents for its language and tone in focus on self-identification, politically charged language and the wording of teamwork and partnership. What may deserve greater attention is an examination of first to second term administrations NSS for shifts in message. Further study may also consider the release of foreign strategies in reaction to Trump's 2025 NSS.

Some might be tempted to ask the question, what does it matter? The NSS conveys or communicates to both our government and people a message, but it also, like every other formally released document from The White House, communicates to the world our path for at least four years. The results of this research show Trump's tone and language from the first to second administrations have accentuated the focus on the President himself and further the language of his political mantra of America First. Whether that Trump message is to the benefit of the world as a whole and even to the people of the United States is up to the reader and further work by historians.

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American Freedom – Premise for the Innovative Trends

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The concept of American character embraces so many elements. "The imposition of culture on the natural landscape of the country and the process of adaptation from which characteristically American phenomena in citizenship, frontier and urban life, and regional cultures have emerged; individual as a member of society and the impact of social forces on behavior and values; evaluation of the American character moves generally from historical to cultural, to sociological, to critical-philosophical modes of discussion: experimentation, the sense of uniqueness and historical purpose, the federalism of peoples and styles, national pride and self-criticism, the dilemmas of racial and social inequality" (Luedtke, 2005, p.2). It is worth mentioning that what William Chafe called "the Unfinished Journey" – describes the American character (Chafe, 1985, p.2).

Michael McGiffert has commemorated Henry Adams (1838-1918) "Harvard's man of letters as the first professional historian to take cognizance of the American national character as a legitimate subject for investigation. Adams called for a comprehensive cultural approach and declared that of all historical problems, the nature of a national character is the most difficult and the most important" (Luedtke, 2005, p.12).

No historical analysis has given more continuous and unending outline to modern academic and accepted understanding of the American character than Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis "The significance of the frontier in American History", which first appeared in 1893. The author argued that "the westward expansion and the "free land" of the fronter fundamentally shaped American democracy, character and culture, rather than European influence. Delivered at the Chicago World's fair, this "Frontier Thesis" suggested that the process of settling wilderness fostered individualism, self-reliance, and innovation" (Turner, 1893, p.12).

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Where Americans live and how often they are moving from one place to another also reflects the American character. From the very beginnings as a nation, the “population center of flotation” has been moving westwards. Early settlers left the original British colonies along the East Coast and moved westwards in the thin lines along the rivers and then through the mountain passes”. The American frontier - that imaginary line dividing areas with more than two people per square mile from those with fewer - was at one time just on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains. Then, it shifted to the areas that are today known as the Midwest. Soon it was across the Mississippi. By 1853, the U.S. had acquired the entire western part of the country, by purchase, conquest, and treaty. As more and more people entered these territories, new states were created. In 1890, the frontier was finally and officially declared “closed”. America's “manifest destiny”, her mission to expand her territory all the way across the continent in order to provide room for future generations had been completed” (Stevenson, 1996, p.28).

This frontier experience, the incremental but persistent opening and settlement of new lands to the west, had lasted for about three hundred years. According to the America historian Frederick Jackson Turner (1893), “this experience of first surviving in and then cultivating the vast, wild land had a deep and lasting influence on the American character. It strengthened the spirit of independence: the frontiersmen went ahead of governments, not behind them. It demanded self-reliance and self-confidence. It encouraged a sense of equality: what individuals could do was more important than who they or their parents were. It brought forth a restlessness, that “wanting to move on”, which many observers still see in Americans today. It made Americans more willing to “get up and go somewhere else in search of something better”. It created a certain toughness: those who were weak, or lacking in willpower, did not do well on the frontier. And finally, it probably helped to develop a characteristic that has also been frequently noted among Americans. In bad times and good, they tend to move easily from one part of the country to another. They seem to settle in and feel quickly at home wherever they go” (Stevenson, 1996, p.26).

There is a great diversity in the ethnic makeup of America. Nevertheless, many writers generalized about typical American values, attitudes, and beliefs. For example, Mortimer B. Zuckerman, editor-in-chief of US News and World Report, considers his country as “unique culture of self-reliance, independence, resourcefulness, pragmatism, and novelty”. He gives more details about his fellow Americans: “We are comfortable with change and with people who make things happen in America, the new is better than the old; taking charge is valued over playing it safe; making money is superior to inheriting it; education and merit are favored over family ties” (Tiersky E. and Tiersky M., 2001, p.2).

The first multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary American Studies first program created in 1930s and strongly developed in 1960s and 1970s was created by the free, democratic spirited scholars, like anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2019), who found it enlightening and inspiring to "blur genres", trespass the boundaries between disciplines, borrow the methods, sources, questions, and subjects of other fields, open up minds of students and broaden their horizons.

American Studies Programs at International Black Sea University (IBSU)

The only English American Studies program in Georgia - was established at IBSU after my exposure to diverse multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary American Studies programs at The George Washington, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, Memphis and Penn State universities. The program encompasses about 35 courses, among them American Culture and Society, American History, American Multicultural Studies, Women's History, Women's Studies, Politics, Geography, Media, Pop Culture, etc. The program was developed into the MA and PhD programs in 2007 and 2008.

I would like to mention, that the PhD program students have wide choice for selecting the dissertation topics from the above mentioned areas. I have observed innovative trends that are the most noteworthy at the PhD-level. Besides the diverse American Studies areas two absolutely different new trends have been outlined in the research.

1). Interdisciplinary trend-blending medicine with the American studies course: Women's Studies in the US. During the last three years six doctors have chosen topics from the American Women's Studies course, that mainly deals with socio-economic topics in connection with Women's lives. The two recently defended dissertations have been:

a) "Changes in the 21st Century American Family Formation, Implications of Divorce on Women's Emotional Condition, Behavioral and Academic Outcomes of Children (Comparative Analysis with the Georgian Case) by Tamar Mgeladze.

b) Demographic Changes in the Multicultural American Fabric as a Result of Family Limitation in the White Population since 1980s (Case: Comparative analysis with Georgian Demographics) by Medea Kuzanashvili.

2). Interdisciplinary trend-blending politics, history with the area of defence, specifically in the frame of Georgia-American relationship, with the participation of the PhD researchers of American Studies PhD from the Ministry of Defense of Georgia.

As an example, the following defended dissertations can be brought, just to mention few:

a) The Geostrategic Importance of the United States “Smart Power” Adaptation after September 11, 2001 and its Vital Role for the Caucasus Caspian Regional Security by Roman Kavtaradze, 2022.

b). Reasons and Effects of US Global Strategic Defense Cooperation and Its Integration with Transovrabia’s Political and Institutional Transformation 2000-Till Present (Case Study on Georgia) by John Edward Bushyhead, US, 2023.

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Between Deterrence and War: The Strategic Triangle of Iran, Israel, and the U.S.

SAMIN USTIASHVILI[22]

Abstract

The recent increase in hostilities among Iran, Israel, and the United States has changed the political situation in the Middle East and made the issue of regional security, nuclear weapons, and world economic balance more concerning. This paper explores the tactical moves behind the emergence of a confrontation scenario, i.e. military operations, proxy fights, diplomatic fractures, and the importance of the Strait of Hormuz for global energy supply security. Besides, it outlines the main narratives pushed by Tehran, Washington, and Tel Aviv, and assesses the changes in international law, potential new regional cooperation, and the consequences for the Middle Eastern order. Historical background is used to explain the crisis, which stems from the longstanding Iran-U.S. hostility and Israel's security policy. The paper concludes that what is happening now is not simply a temporary flare-up of tensions, but a major turning point in world politics.

Keywords: Iran, the U.S., Israel, Geopolitics, the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz, power shifts, war, world politics.

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Introduction

For decades these three have been the key players whose interactions have defined the strategic scene of the Middle East: The Islamic Republic of Iran, the State of Israel, and the United States. Instead of the traditional idea of deterrence based on two opposing sides, the triangular relationship they form has characteristics that make it hard for theories to define (Dittmer, 1981). Each of the three pursues its own goals, while at the same time constraining the strategic liberty of its opponents and therefore, some experts in international politics refer to it as a "three-body problem," a system that is by its nature unstable and uncertain (Min, 2025).

Traditionally, the alliance between the U.S. and Israel has been the foundation of the regional security framework, where the U.S. offers military, economic, and diplomatic support to guarantee Israel's strategic superiority. On the other hand, Iran has acquired asymmetric capabilities, developing nuclear technology, ballistic missiles, and proxy networks, to compensate for regular military weakness and to create a credible deterrent to military action by both Israel and the U.S. However, this state has remained highly unstable and easily disrupted by new technologies, changes in leadership, or regional conflicts.

This analysis studies three core dimensions of the Iran-Israel-U.S. strategic triangle: 1- the evolution of Iranian deterrence strategy and its organizational flaws. 2- Israeli security doctrine and its consequences for regional escalation. and 3-American strategic interests and the constraints on U.S. power projection. The Israelites security doctrine Cold War deterrence model, based on mutual assured destruction and clear red lines, cannot adequately explain or predict behavior within this triadic system. Instead, this triangle is characterized by using asymmetric vulnerabilities, ideological contestation, and proxy warfare, creating a constant risk of unintended escalation.

Iranian Deterrence Strategy: Ambitions and Vulnerabilities

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has been pursuing a deterrence strategy based on three pillars: its nuclear program, ballistic missile capabilities, and a network of regional proxy groups such as Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and Hamas that were intended to offset Iran's conventional military weaknesses and counter the influence of Israel and the United States (Tabatabai, 2020).

The nuclear program has become a key element of Iran's deterrence policy. Iranian officials claim the program is peaceful, but the increase in uranium enrichment after the United States withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018 suggests the program has strategic goals, such as strengthening Iran's bargaining position and discouraging possible military action. The breakdown of the JCPOA and Iran's return to enriching

uranium to 60 per cent heightened international concerns about nuclear proliferation and led to a cycle of escalation between Iran, Israel and the United States (Arms Control Association, 2025). These tensions were exacerbated by Israeli covert operations against Iran's nuclear infrastructure (United States Institute of Peace, 2021).

Iran's second pillar of deterrence is its missile capabilities. Tehran has invested heavily in ballistic and cruise missiles to compensate for its less capable conventional forces and to establish a credible retaliation threat (International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 2025). But recent wars have revealed serious weaknesses in Iran's defenses. Israel and the U.S. operations in 2024-2025 revealed the fragility of Iran's air defense systems, exposing the gap between Iran's ambition to deter attacks and its real military capabilities (Lair, 2025). Taken together, these developments suggest that Iran's deterrence strategy has extended its regional reach but also created vulnerabilities that raise the risk of escalation and strategic miscalculation.

Israeli Security Doctrine and Regional Escalation

The security doctrine of Israel has changed considerably in recent years, especially since the attacks of October 2023. Today Israel's doctrine relies on the concept of "extended deterrence" – showing military power credibly not just for defense but for regional dominance and preemptive destruction of threats to its existence. Israel's advantages in this regard stem from its advanced military technology, sophisticated intelligence capabilities, multilayered missile defense systems, and strong political and military support from the United States (Freilich, 2018). Israel's advanced air force and intelligence network, along with systems including Iron Dome, has allowed the country to conduct military operations with less risk of retaliation. This approach embodies a broader security philosophy that emphasizes the elimination of threats rather than mutual deterrence (Miller & Morganbesser, 2025).

Although Israel has a strong military, it still views Iran's nuclear program and its increasing influence in the Middle East as a significant security threat (Schiff, 2025). Years of war rhetoric and mounting threats by the Islamic leaders together with Iran's backing to Hezbollah and Hamas, which Israel considers as direct threats to its national security, have further cemented this sense of insecurity and mutual mistrust (IISS, 2019). That is why the Israeli policy is primarily about foresight, deterrence and having the upper hand in an escalation. In addition to preventing Iran from acquiring the most sophisticated military technologies, Israel has worked to reduce those capabilities whenever an opportunity presents itself, through secret and open channels (Freilich, 2018). Although Israeli policymakers view this approach as an

analytical response to security challenges, it has also contributed to a cycle of mutual distrust and escalation. Hence, opportunities for de-escalation and the development of long-term regional security arrangements have become increasingly limited or nonexistent.

American Strategic Interests and the Constraints on Global Power

The United States is the hub of the Iran–Israel–U.S. triangle, Israel's closest ally, Iran's main adversary, and the dominant outside power in the Middle East. However, American power is still constrained by other global priorities and lack of military resources. The original U.S. policy in the Middle East was based on three main goals: the containment of hostile powers in the region, the guarantee of freedom of navigation and a stable energy supply, and the support of Israel as a key regional ally (Haass & Indyk, 2008). They're still largely the same, but they've been attained in different ways by different administrations.

The U.S.-Israel relationship is a cornerstone of American regional strategy. Military assistance, intelligence cooperation and security coordination have bolstered Israel's military superiority and strategic confidence (Sharp, 2025). Meanwhile, American security assurances have increased Israel's Freedom of Action by diminishing the risks of regional military operations.

However, maintaining extended deterrence in the Middle East has become increasingly challenging. Effective deterrence depends on both capability and credibility, yet prolonged regional conflicts, uncertain escalation dynamics, and growing strategic competition with China have strained American commitments. The 2024-2025 flare-up among Iran, Israel and the United States illustrated these challenges. Washington intervened out of necessity to protect its forces and allies, but also to avoid escalation, indicating a crisis management strategy rather than a decisive victory (Miller & Price, 2024). The confrontation also raised larger questions about the viability of American involvement in the region. The United States' ability to maintain long-term strategic primacy in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East is increasingly challenged as the country attempts to juggle commitments across all three arenas (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022).

The Structural Instability of the Triangle

Beyond the individual strategies of Iran, Israel, and the United States lies a deeper structural problem: the triangular relationship itself resists long-term stability. Each actor has distinct threat perceptions, strategic priorities, and risk tolerances, increasing the likelihood of miscalculation and unintended escalation. A key source of instability is the asymmetry of escalation thresholds. Israeli leaders, facing perceived existential threats, may be willing to accept greater risks than American policymakers, who must balance Middle

Eastern commitments with broader global responsibilities. Similarly, Iranian leaders may view escalation as necessary for regime survival, even when such actions appear irrational to their adversaries. These differing calculations create persistent risks of conflict escalation.

The triangle is further complicated by what can be described as a credibility trap. Efforts by each actor to demonstrate deterrent resolve often produce the opposite effect. Israeli strikes intended to strengthen deterrence may reinforce Iranian perceptions of insecurity, while American security guarantees to Israel can increase Washington's involvement in regional crises, reducing its strategic flexibility. Rapid technological change also contributes to instability. Advances in missile technology, air defense systems, drones, and other military capabilities continuously alter the strategic balance, encouraging preventive actions before adversaries gain a decisive advantage.

Finally, the conflict extends beyond material interests and includes competing ideological visions of regional order and political legitimacy. Because the dispute involves questions of identity, regime security, and regional influence, it is far more difficult to resolve through traditional deterrence and diplomatic bargaining alone.

Conclusion and Future Implications

The Iran–Israel–U.S. strategic triangle is among the most unstable security relationships in the contemporary Middle East. Despite pursuing rational policies based on their respective security interests, all three actors have contributed to a cycle of deterrence, escalation, and mutual insecurity. Iran's reliance on nuclear development, missile capabilities, and proxy networks has failed to provide lasting security, while Israel's strategy of preemption and military superiority has often intensified regional tensions rather than resolved them. At the same time, American support for Israel and its broader regional commitments have limited Washington's diplomatic flexibility and increased the costs of maintaining regional stability.

The analysis highlights the limitations of traditional deterrence theory in addressing contemporary regional conflicts. Unlike the relatively stable bipolar deterrence models of the Cold War, the Iran–Israel–U.S. triangle is shaped by ideological rivalry, asymmetric military capabilities, and nuclear ambiguity. Recent developments have demonstrated that military superiority alone cannot prevent escalation when underlying political and security tensions remain unresolved. Consequently, the current deterrence framework appears increasingly unsustainable. Reducing the risk of future conflict will require renewed diplomatic engagement, greater regional cooperation, and security arrangements that address both Israel's security concerns and Iran's role as a significant regional actor. However, negotiations remain difficult because

security issues are closely tied to regime legitimacy and domestic political considerations, making compromise politically costly for all parties.

The persistent instability of the triangle also raises larger questions about the future of Middle East security architecture. Recent diplomatic efforts, including the normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia through Chinese mediation, indicate that alternative regional frameworks may arise alongside or outside of traditional U.S.-centered security structures (Nada, Hamasaeed, & Gallagher, 2023). Whether such arrangements can provide a more sustainable foundation for regional stability remains one of the central questions for the future of Middle Eastern politics. Without meaningful diplomatic progress, the strategic triangle is likely to remain a source of recurring crises with consequences extending well beyond the region.

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SECTION III: CULTURE, SOCIAL ISSUES

When Stress Reaches the Heart: Occupational and Psychosocial Stress, Gender Roles, and Women's Cardiovascular Health in the United States

ALEKO BAIRAMOVI[23]

Abstract

Women's cardiovascular health in the United States is shaped not only by conventional biological risk factors, but also by occupational stress, psychosocial adversity, caregiving burden, and gendered social expectations. This conceptual narrative review synthesizes selected public health data and cardiovascular literature to explain how chronic stress may contribute to cardiovascular vulnerability among women. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death globally, and the World Health Organization estimates that 19.8 million people died from cardiovascular diseases in 2022, representing approximately 32% of all global deaths (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025). In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 60 million women are living with some form of heart disease and that heart disease caused 304,970 deaths among women in 2023 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). The article discusses psychosocial stress, allostatic load, the Demand-Control model, the Effort-Reward Imbalance model, and work-family conflict as useful frameworks for understanding the social patterning of cardiovascular risk. It argues that women's heart health should be interpreted as both a medical and social issue, because the body responds biologically to long-term social and occupational pressure. The article concludes that cardiovascular prevention for women requires attention not only to blood pressure, lipids, diabetes, and smoking, but also to the working and social conditions that shape stress exposure and recovery.

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Introduction

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains one of the most important public health problems of the twenty-first century. Although major progress has been made in diagnosis, prevention, and treatment, CVD continues to cause substantial mortality and disability worldwide. The WHO identifies CVDs as the leading cause of death globally and estimates that 19.8 million people died from CVDs in 2022, approximately 32% of all global deaths. The same WHO fact sheet reports that 85% of these deaths were due to heart attack and stroke, and that more than three quarters of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2025). These figures show that cardiovascular prevention remains a global priority, but they do not fully explain how risk is distributed across sex, gender, occupation, and social context.

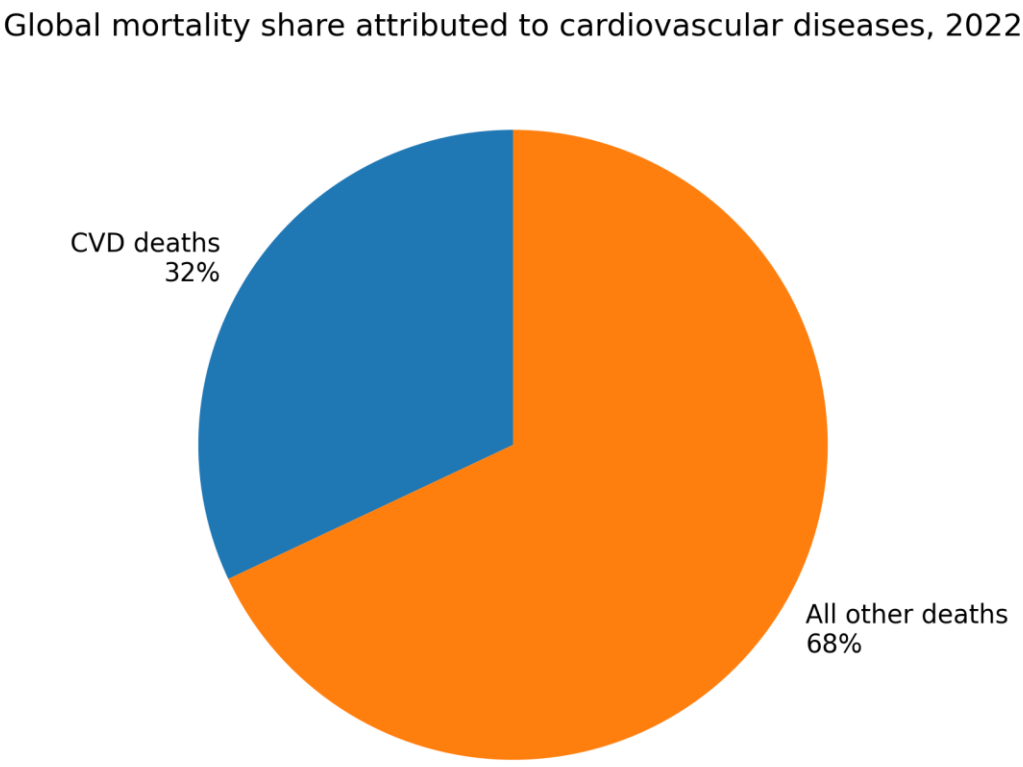


Figure 1. Global mortality share attributed to cardiovascular diseases in 2022. Note. The 68% category is the arithmetic complement of the 32% CVD share reported by WHO.

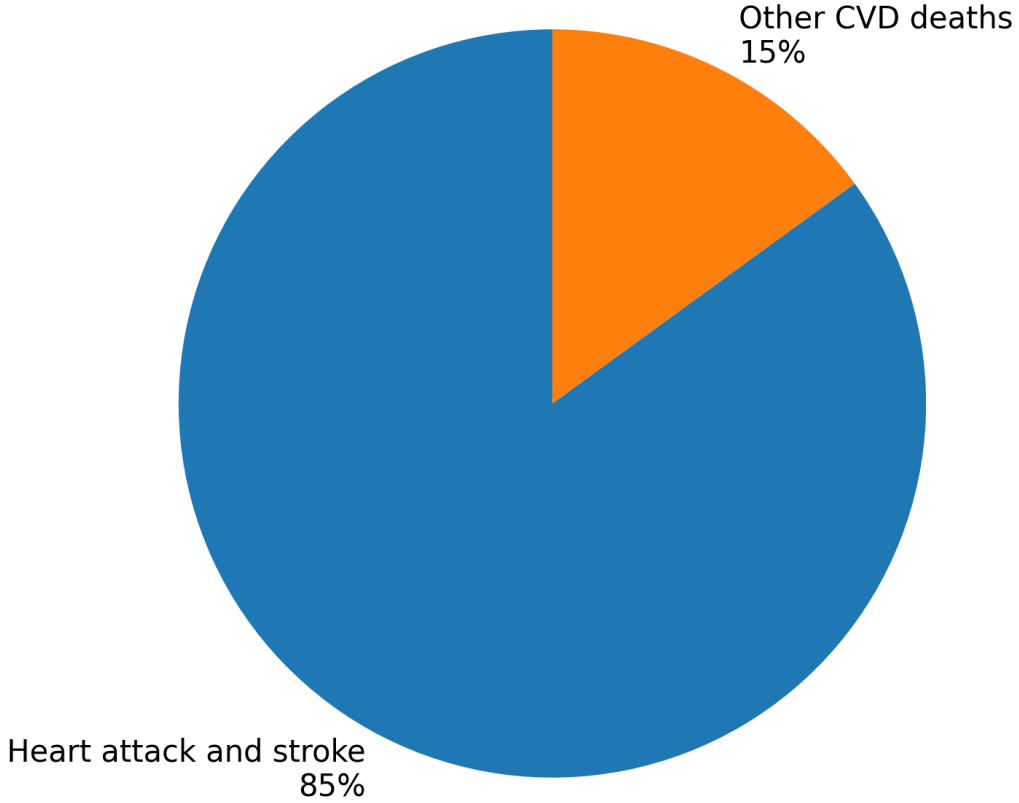


Figure 2. Reported composition of global cardiovascular deaths. Note. The 15% category is the arithmetic complement of the 85% heart attack and stroke share reported by WHO.

Women's cardiovascular health deserves particular attention because heart disease in women is still frequently under-recognized by the public and sometimes underestimated in clinical and social discussion. In the United States, the CDC reports that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women and can affect women at any age. The same source states that more than 60 million women, or 44% of women in the United States, live with some form of heart disease, and that heart disease was responsible for 304,970 deaths among women in 2023, or about one in every five female deaths (CDC, 2024). These data challenge any narrow view of women's health as limited to reproductive health and support a broader understanding of women's cardiovascular risk across the life course.

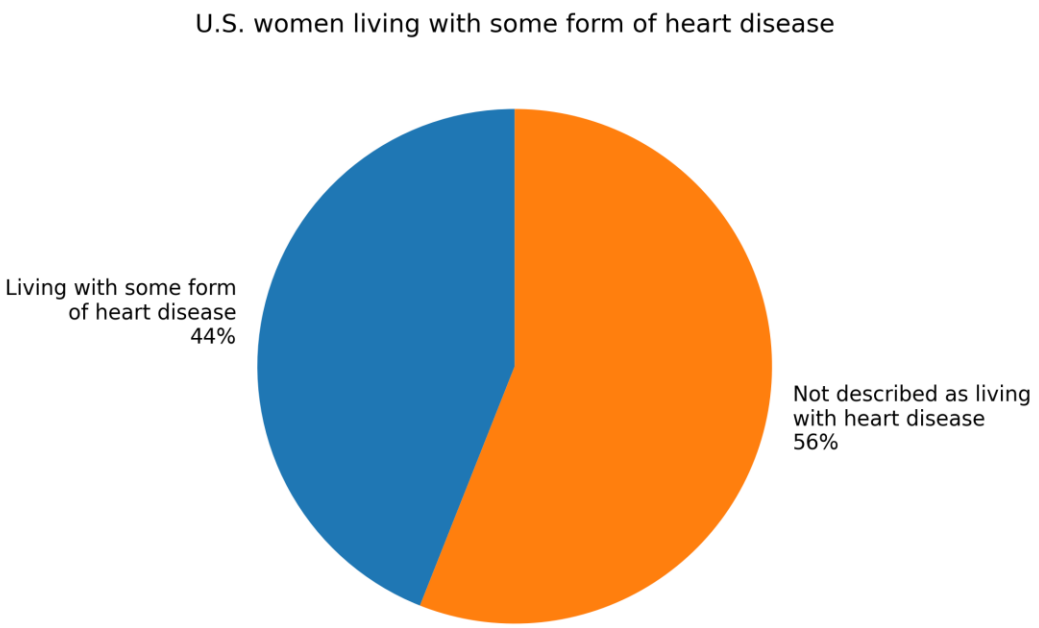


Figure 3. Proportion of women in the United States living with some form of heart disease.

Note. The 56% category is the arithmetic complement of the 44% figure reported by CDC.

This article focuses on occupational and psychosocial stress as contextual contributors to women's cardiovascular risk. It does not present original empirical data and should not be read as a systematic review. Instead, it is a conceptual narrative review that draws on selected public health reports, cardiovascular literature, and occupational stress models to develop a medical-social argument: women's cardiovascular health is shaped by the interaction between biological vulnerability, chronic stress exposure, work organization, caregiving demands, and gendered expectations. The central claim is simple but important: invisible social pressure can become visible biological burden.

Scope and Review Approach

This article is a conceptual narrative review rather than a systematic review or meta-analysis. The discussion is based on selected public health reports and peer-reviewed cardiovascular, occupational stress, work-family conflict, and allostatic-load literature cited in the reference list. Public health statistics were taken from WHO and CDC summary sources, while theoretical interpretation was based on established occupational stress models and recent cardiovascular literature on psychosocial stress in women.

No original participant-level data were collected or analyzed. The figures are descriptive or conceptual. Statistical figures use only numeric values explicitly reported in the cited public health or review sources; where a pie chart includes a residual category, the residual value is the simple arithmetic complement of the percentage reported in the text. The conceptual diagrams summarize relationships described in the article and should not be interpreted as original empirical findings.

Women's Cardiovascular Health as a Medical and Social Issue

Traditional cardiovascular prevention emphasizes risk factors such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, diabetes, smoking, diet, physical inactivity, and obesity. These remain essential. However, women's cardiovascular risk cannot be fully understood through conventional biomedical variables alone. Cardiovascular vulnerability also develops within social environments that influence sleep, recovery, diet, exercise, access to care, mental health, employment stability, and exposure to violence, discrimination, financial strain, or caregiving burden.

Recent cardiovascular literature increasingly recognizes psychosocial stress as relevant to CVD in women. A 2024 JACC state-of-the-art review concludes that psychosocial stress can influence cardiovascular health through multiple pathways and notes that stressors such as socioeconomic disadvantage, childhood adversity, intimate partner violence, and caregiving stress are especially common among women (Ebong et al., 2024). This does not mean that stress alone explains cardiovascular disease. Rather, psychosocial stress should be interpreted as one layer of risk that interacts with traditional risk factors and may worsen cardiovascular vulnerability over time.

The social dimension of women's cardiovascular health is especially important because many stress exposures are not randomly distributed. Work conditions, income, family responsibilities, social support, discrimination, and access to preventive care differ across populations. Therefore, a woman's cardiovascular profile may reflect not only personal choices or genetic predisposition, but also the conditions under which she works, rests, cares for others, and receives support.

From Chronic Stress to Cardiovascular Risk

Stress is often discussed as an emotion, but medically it is also a biological response. In an acute situation, stress responses can be adaptive: the body increases alertness, mobilizes energy, and prepares the cardiovascular system for action. The problem begins when stress is repeated, prolonged, or insufficiently

followed by recovery. Recurrent stress activation may affect blood pressure, heart rate, vascular tone, inflammatory signaling, glucose metabolism, sleep, and health behavior. Over time, these pathways can contribute to cardiovascular dysregulation.

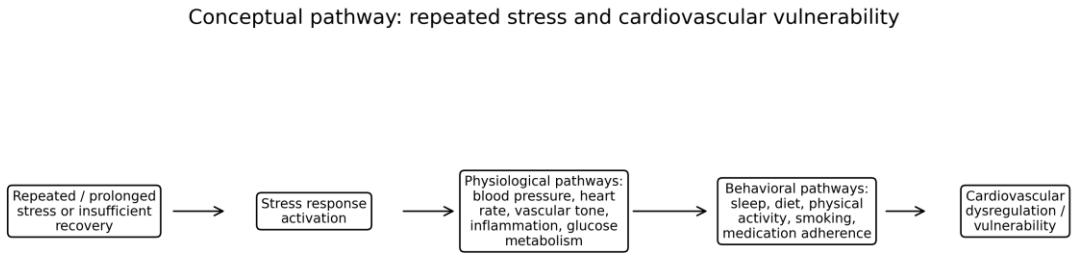


Figure 4. Conceptual pathway linking repeated stress activation with cardiovascular vulnerability. Note. This is an explanatory framework, not an original statistical result.

The concept of allostatic load is useful for explaining this process to both medical and non-medical audiences. Allostasis refers to the body's adaptive regulation in response to demands, while allostatic load describes the cumulative physiological strain produced when adaptive systems are activated repeatedly or chronically. Recent literature describes allostatic load as the strain or cumulative burden produced when stress-related systems are repeatedly activated and when adaptation becomes biologically costly (Juster & Misiak, 2023; Pfaltz & Schnyder, 2023). In practical terms, allostatic load helps explain how years of pressure may leave measurable traces in cardiovascular, metabolic, neuroendocrine, and immune systems.

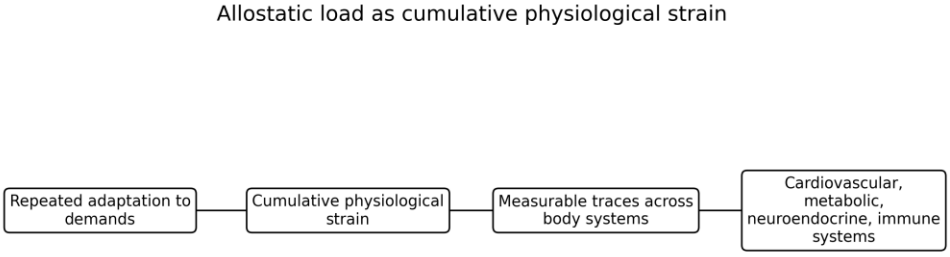


Figure 5. Allostatic load as cumulative physiological strain. Note. This diagram summarizes the concept discussed in the text and does not represent original empirical data.

For women, this framework is particularly relevant because many psychosocial stressors occur across the life course and may cluster together. Caregiving, financial strain, workplace pressure, interpersonal violence, discrimination, and family role overload can overlap rather than occur separately. A woman may not experience these pressures as isolated events; she may experience them as a continuous pattern of adaptation. The cardiovascular system responds to that pattern biologically.

Occupational Stress: Demand, Control, Effort, and Reward

Occupational stress provides a structured way to examine how work can affect health. The Demand-Control model, first developed by Karasek (1979), emphasizes the combination of high psychological job demands and low decision latitude. In simple terms, work is more stressful when employees face heavy demands but have little control over how tasks are performed. This model remains influential because it connects stress not only to workload, but also to autonomy and control.

The Effort-Reward Imbalance model, developed by Siegrist (1996), approaches work stress from a different but complementary angle. It proposes that stress arises when high effort is not matched by adequate reward, including salary, esteem, job security, promotion prospects, or social recognition. This model can be relevant when paid or unpaid labor is experienced as demanding but inadequately rewarded or recognized.

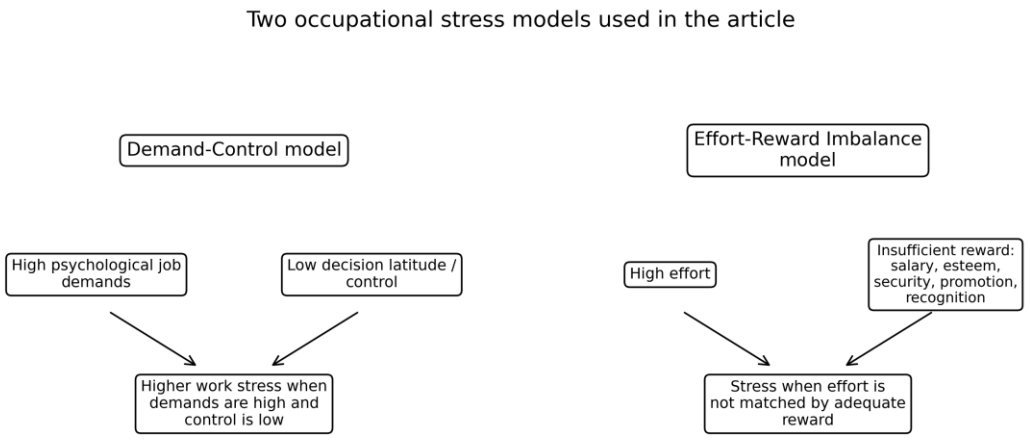


Figure 6. Occupational stress models used to interpret women's cardiovascular risk. Note. This diagram compares theoretical models rather than measured outcomes.

Epidemiological evidence supports a cautious but meaningful association between work stressors and cardiovascular outcomes. Kivimäki and Kawachi (2015) reviewed evidence from more than 600,000 men and women from 27 cohort studies in Europe, the United States, and Japan and concluded that work stressors such as job strain and long working hours are associated with a moderately elevated risk of incident coronary heart disease and stroke. They estimated excess risk for exposed individuals at approximately 10% to 40% compared with those free of such stressors, while also noting that definitive workplace intervention recommendations require stronger evidence. This careful interpretation is important: occupational stress should be taken seriously, but claims should remain proportional to the observational nature of much of the evidence.

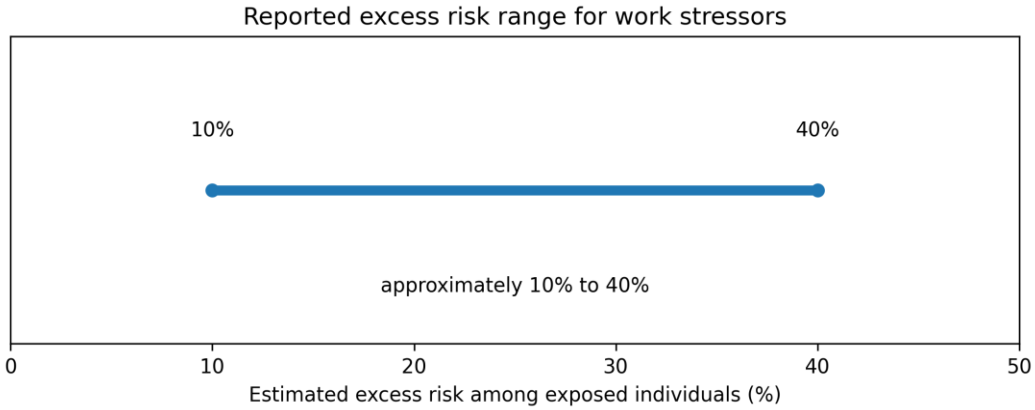


Figure 7. Reported excess risk range associated with work stressors. Note. This figure presents the approximate 10% to 40% range summarized by Kivimäki and Kawachi (2015); it should not be interpreted as a single causal estimate.

Work-Family Conflict and the Double Burden

Women's occupational stress cannot be understood only inside the workplace. Women may manage paid employment while also carrying substantial unpaid responsibilities at home. Work-family conflict occurs when the demands of work and family roles are mutually incompatible, so that participation in one role makes participation in the other more difficult. Research on work-family conflict commonly distinguishes work interference with family and family interference with work, and reviews describe associations with a wide range of work, family, and health-related outcomes (French et al., 2018; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The double burden is a useful social concept for explaining why women may experience stress even when their formal work hours do not fully capture their total workload. A woman may leave paid work and continue another form of work at home: caregiving, emotional support, household management, family organization, and invisible planning. These responsibilities may reduce opportunities for sleep, exercise, preventive medical visits, and psychological recovery. From a cardiovascular perspective, the issue is not only the number of tasks, but the reduction of recovery time.

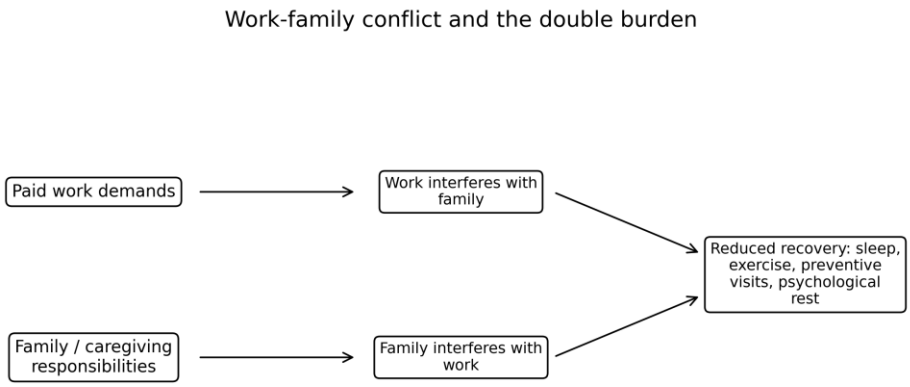


Figure 8. Work-family conflict and the double burden as reduced recovery time. Note. This is a conceptual diagram; no workload percentages are provided in the cited text.

Psychosocial Stressors Across the Life Course

Psychosocial stress is not limited to workplace pressure. The JACC review by Ebong et al. (2024) identifies several stressors relevant to women's cardiovascular health, including socioeconomic disadvantage, childhood adversity, intimate partner violence, and caregiving stress. These exposures matter because they may begin early, persist through adulthood, and accumulate over time. A life-course perspective is therefore necessary: cardiovascular risk in midlife or later life may partly reflect long-term exposure to stressors that began decades earlier.

The mechanisms are complex and should not be oversimplified. Chronic stress may influence cardiovascular risk directly through neuroendocrine, autonomic, inflammatory, and vascular pathways. It may also act indirectly by shaping health behaviors: poor sleep, emotional eating, lower physical activity, smoking, alcohol use, medication non-adherence, or delayed care-seeking. The American Heart Association notes that stress may contribute to health behaviors linked with higher risk of heart disease and stroke, including smoking, overeating, lower physical activity, unhealthy diet, excess weight, and not taking medications as prescribed (American Heart Association, 2024).

Because stress operates through both biological and behavioral pathways, it should not be dismissed as a vague or purely subjective complaint. For clinicians and public health professionals, stress can be treated

as a meaningful context for cardiovascular risk assessment. Asking only whether a woman has high blood pressure is not enough. It is also important to ask what social pressures may be contributing to sustained blood pressure elevation, sleep loss, poor recovery, or difficulty maintaining preventive behaviors.

Implications for Women's Cardiovascular Prevention

A stress-informed approach to women's cardiovascular health does not replace standard clinical prevention. Blood pressure measurement, lipid assessment, diabetes screening, smoking cessation, nutrition, physical activity, weight management, and pharmacologic treatment remain central. The contribution of a stress-informed approach is that it broadens the clinical and public health question. Instead of asking only, "What is her cardiovascular risk score?" professionals should also ask, "What chronic pressures shape her ability to protect her cardiovascular health?"

In practical terms, this means that cardiovascular prevention for women should include attention to occupational conditions, caregiving responsibilities, financial strain, violence exposure, discrimination, social isolation, sleep quality, and mental health. These factors may not always appear in standard biomedical charts, but they influence the daily conditions under which cardiovascular risk develops. Prevention becomes stronger when it recognizes both physiology and lived experience.

This article focuses on the United States because the cited CDC data and cardiovascular literature provide specific evidence on women's cardiovascular disease and psychosocial stress in the U.S. context. However, the same conceptual framework can support future comparative research between the United States and Georgia. Such comparison would require careful use of Georgia-specific evidence rather than assumption. The most responsible approach is to use the U.S. literature to build a well-supported framework and then test or adapt that framework using Georgian data where available.

Limitations

This article has important limitations. It is a conceptual narrative review and does not use a systematic search strategy, formal quality appraisal, meta-analysis, or original participant-level data. Therefore, it should not be interpreted as proving causal relationships between psychosocial stress and cardiovascular disease. Its purpose is to synthesize selected public health data and established conceptual models to clarify why women's cardiovascular prevention should consider occupational and psychosocial conditions alongside conventional biomedical risk factors.

The statistical figures in this article are descriptive and based on reported public health or review data. The conceptual diagrams are explanatory frameworks and do not represent newly measured associations, effect sizes, or causal estimates. Future empirical research should test these relationships using population-specific data, validated stress measures, cardiovascular outcomes, and appropriate adjustment for confounding factors.

Conclusion

Women's cardiovascular health is both a medical and social issue. The heart is affected by blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and physical activity, but it is also affected by the environments that shape stress, sleep, work, recovery, caregiving, and access to prevention. Occupational stress models such as Demand-Control and Effort-Reward Imbalance help explain how work organization may become biologically relevant. The concept of allostatic load helps explain how repeated adaptation to chronic pressure may accumulate as physiological strain. Work-family conflict and the double burden show why women's cardiovascular prevention must consider unpaid work and recovery time, not only formal employment.

The main message is that social stress is not outside the body. Over time, repeated stress can enter biological systems and contribute to cardiovascular vulnerability. For women, especially those facing overlapping work, family, financial, and psychosocial demands, cardiovascular prevention should be understood as more than risk-factor control. It should also involve creating conditions that allow women to rest, recover, seek care, and maintain health. In this sense, women's cardiovascular health offers a powerful example of how medicine, work, gender, and society are inseparable.

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International Partnership and National Resistance Effectiveness: The Case of U.S.–Georgia Strategic Cooperation

IRINA BAKHTADZE[24]

GEORGE ARABULI[25]

Abstract

The contemporary global security architecture has undergone fundamental transformations over the past several years, and its ultimate form remains highly uncertain. These transformations have been significantly accelerated by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, which has placed European states, especially those bordering the conflict zone, at risk of direct military aggression. Most importantly, several political statements and decisions have eroded the cohesion of the North Atlantic Alliance, which no longer appears as monolithic as it did in previous decades. It is precisely these environmental conditions and the growing threats of military aggression that make it necessary for small states, in particular those bordering the Russian Federation, to develop defense systems that ensure the involvement of all segments of society and, most importantly, to create the conditions required to activate an effective national resistance movement in the event of partial or full occupation of their territory. However, it must be emphasized that no small state can successfully establish and sustain a national resistance movement without strong international support and partnership. Therefore, the article aims to clearly outline that for a limited-resource state such as Georgia, maintaining its strategic partnership with the United States is vital. This cooperation should ensure the development of robust elements of a national resistance movement and secure international support should activation become necessary. It is precisely such result-oriented international political and military partnerships, combined with internal reforms, that can render the defense against a predatory state and ensure the legitimacy of a national resistance movement in the event of partial or full occupation. The study illustrates some of the positive results achieved through the cooperation between the two countries. The article employs qualitative methods, drawing on secondary

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data and primary sources, including legal documents, agreements, and other materials. Personal interviews with defense officials have also been conducted. The findings suggest that international strategic partnerships not only enhance military capabilities but also strengthen the institutional, operational, and political foundations necessary for effective national resistance in small states.

Key Words: military aggression, Russia, security, Georgia's defense systems, national resistance movement, Georgia’s strategic partnership with the United States.

Introduction

The character of contemporary warfare has fundamentally changed, increasingly blurring the line between the military and civilian domains and elevating the importance of a whole-of-society approach to modern defense strategies. As a result, small states have faced a steadily rising risk of military aggression. Predatory states, such as Russia, which possess not only regional but also global hegemonic ambitions, continually expose neighboring states to the threat of military aggression and contribute to strategic instability. Notably, before the outbreak of intense military violence, states typically face a range of hybrid threats, often employed to create favorable conditions for subsequent military action. Consequently, small states must develop and maintain defense systems capable of effectively resisting aggression despite their limited resources. Such systems must, above all, mobilize all segments of society and ensure the effective allocation of available resources. However, establishing such systems is an exceptionally challenging task in the absence of strong international support, particularly for small states. Therefore, alongside domestic reforms, it is critically important to strengthen relations with strategic partners and consolidate positions within international organizations to ensure that, in the event of partial or full occupation of the state, a national resistance movement retains both international support and legitimacy. Although existing scholarship has extensively examined national resistance, comprehensive defense, and societal resilience, comparatively little attention has been devoted to the role of international strategic partnerships in enabling and sustaining national resistance capabilities in small states. To a significant extent, the success of a national resistance movement depends on the availability and sustainability of international support. The novelty of this article lies in examining international strategic partnership as a critical enabling factor for national resistance movements, using U.S.–Georgia cooperation as an empirical case to derive broader lessons for small-state defense. The article proceeds in three parts. The first section examines the theoretical relationship between international partnership and national resistance in small states. The

second analyzes U.S.–Georgia strategic cooperation and its contribution to the development of Georgia's resistance capabilities. The third discusses the remaining challenges and offers policy recommendations to strengthen international cooperation as a pillar of national resistance.

International Partnership and the Success of National Resistance Movements in Small States

The contemporary security architecture has undergone a fundamental transformation. Although these changes initially emerged in Europe, they have had a global impact, affecting nearly every part of the world and compelling states, as individual actors, to take appropriate measures. The emerging characteristics of these transformations in the conduct and nature of contemporary conflicts became apparent as early as 2014, with Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (European External Action Service, 2016). This marked the moment when Russia's hybrid warfare evolved into intensive military operations while retaining nearly all of its hybrid characteristics. Most importantly, Russia sought to portray the aggression as an internal conflict, denying the involvement of its regular armed forces and instead relying on the so-called "little green men," who were presented as the actors confronting the Ukrainian government. Furthermore, Russia largely disregarded the fundamental norms and principles of international law and, as in its actions against Georgia in 2008, committed an unprovoked act of aggression against a neighboring sovereign state. Such an aggressive policy heightened the security threat to Russia's neighboring states. However, the 2022 war ultimately reinforced the perception of Russia as an existential threat, prompting discussions, even among NATO member states, about the likelihood of a future attack and the need to strengthen their defense posture (Polyakova, 2024).

Nevertheless, Russia's aggressive foreign policy poses a growing threat to the broader international security environment. It poses particularly significant risks to its smaller neighboring states, including Georgia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia (Brattberg, 2024). The emphasis on small states is driven by several key factors that distinguish them from countries such as Ukraine. Consequently, when these factors are taken into account, it becomes significantly more challenging for small states to conduct defensive operations of the kind Ukraine has sustained for more than 4 years. The first factor is the lack of strategic depth due to the state's limited territory. This significantly restricts maneuver space and allows a potential adversary to strike key strategic objectives in a relatively short period. The second factor is the scarcity of resources, encompassing human resources, warfighting capabilities, and the logistical support that collectively constitute combat power. However, Georgia's case differs significantly from this broader

picture, and the state consequently must operate under fundamentally different conditions when addressing and mitigating security risks.

While the Baltic states benefit from NATO's collective security guarantees, Georgia relies primarily on support through partnership arrangements. Such support is inherently more fragile and less reliable than the security assurances associated with Alliance membership. Accordingly, Georgia requires a fundamentally different approach to establish an effective defense system. This approach primarily encompasses two directions: domestic reforms and the deepening of relations with strategic partners. In response to existing and emerging security threats, active efforts to develop the Total Defense concept began as early as 2018 to reform and strengthen the national defense system (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2022). This was intended to serve as a prerequisite for reform of the state's defense system, ensuring the synchronization of all elements of national power and, most importantly, the integration of all segments of society into the defense framework.

The effective implementation of the Total Defense approach requires a resilient society, which, in turn, necessitates preparing all relevant segments of society. A society of this nature would be capable of generating one of the principal elements of Total Defense, namely a national resistance movement, under conditions of partial or full occupation of the state's territory. Given that approximately twenty percent of Georgia’s territory remains under Russian occupation, the prospect of territorial occupation is not a hypothetical scenario but a reality with which the country is already familiar. Accordingly, it is entirely plausible that, in the event of future aggression, a similar or even more severe scenario could recur. For this reason, the elements of a national resistance movement must be developed effectively and sustainably. To provide a clearer conceptual understanding, resistance may be defined as a nation’s organized, whole-of-society effort, encompassing the full range of activities from nonviolent to violent, led by a legally established government (potentially exiled/displaced or shadow) to reestablish independence and autonomy within its sovereign territory that has been wholly or partially occupied by a foreign power (Fiala, 2020). Nevertheless, the successful implementation and sustainability of such a resistance framework are exceedingly difficult without robust international support. Consequently, Georgia must deepen its defense cooperation with international partners and, in particular, further strengthen its strategic relationship with the United States. One of the fundamental pillars of a resistance movement is its legitimacy, which is preserved when a legitimate government leads it. Accordingly, maintaining such legitimacy when the government is exiled or displaced requires the support of international partners.

U.S.–Georgia Strategic Cooperation and the Development of National Resistance Capabilities

The military partnership between the United States and Georgia has evolved over more than three decades. During this period, substantial reforms have been undertaken with U.S. assistance, and numerous programs, supported by formal bilateral agreements, have been implemented and continue to contribute to the development of Georgia's defense sector. Most notably, this long-term cooperation has facilitated a profound qualitative transformation of the Georgian Defense Forces, enhancing their capabilities, professionalism, and interoperability with Western military structures. Furthermore, Georgian military personnel have served alongside U.S. forces in a variety of international military operations and missions in conflict zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan (Marines.mil, 2011). Participation in these deployments has played a crucial role in the development of the Georgian Defense Forces, providing valuable operational experience, improving combat readiness, and strengthening interoperability with allied military forces.

Among the implemented and ongoing programs, several have played a particularly significant role in developing and enhancing resistance movement capabilities. First and foremost, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program deserves attention. Effective resistance capabilities depend heavily on the availability of modern military leaders with critical-thinking skills, adaptability, and the capacity for innovative decision-making. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program directly contributes to this objective by fostering the professional development of Georgian military personnel. Through participation in the program, the Georgian Defense Forces have developed a cadre of highly educated and professionally competent officers and non-commissioned officers capable of planning, leading, and coordinating resistance-related activities and formations at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels (U.S. Embassy in Georgia, n.d.). The Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP) was one of the most significant turning points in the modernization of the Georgian Armed Forces. The program laid the foundations for developing military units based on Western organizational models, operational concepts, and professional standards. Most importantly, it initiated the transition toward a professional military force (MarForEurAf, 2004). Because resistance movements are generally led by military personnel and depend substantially on their expertise and leadership, the development of a corps of professionally trained soldiers and officers is critical. Consequently, GTEP should be regarded as a key milestone in strengthening the capabilities necessary for both national defense and potential resistance operations. The final program examined in this study is the Georgia Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiative (GDDEI), which is currently ongoing and has made a substantial contribution to the institutional

development of Georgia's defense establishment. A key focus of this program is the establishment and development of territorial defense capabilities, which are directly connected to the capacity to initiate and sustain a resistance movement in the event of aggression (U.S. Embassy in Georgia, 2022). Consequently, considerable work is underway under this initiative to strengthen this aspect of Georgia's defense system.

Collectively, the above-mentioned programs have made and continue to make a substantial contribution to the development, modernization, and transformation of the Georgian Defense Forces. Consequently, the key components required for the successful initiation and sustainment of a national resistance movement have been established, developed, and reinforced, thereby enhancing the country's overall preparedness for such a contingency. Largely as a result of U.S.-supported programs, the Defense Forces have developed a cadre of leaders with the professional competencies needed to plan and conduct the complex operations of a national resistance movement. Furthermore, the necessary institutional reforms have been undertaken to strengthen cooperation between the two principal components of the defense system: the regular military and the National Guard. Effective coordination between these entities is essential for the successful conduct of the aforementioned operations. In this regard, particular emphasis should be placed on the Special Operations Forces, which are expected to play a leading role within the regular military component during resistance-related operations.

Despite these impressive achievements in bilateral cooperation, there are still areas that require further development and sustained attention to build a more effective and comprehensive system. Addressing these challenges will be essential to enhancing institutional capacity, improving interoperability, and ensuring the long-term effectiveness and resilience of the overall defense framework. A resistance movement cannot exist without the active participation of the civilian component. As the regular armed forces and the National Guard continue to develop and strengthen their capabilities, the civilian component must evolve in parallel, becoming a principal pillar of the national resistance system. Only through the effective integration of organized civilian participation with formal military structures can a state establish a comprehensive and resilient defense architecture capable of sustaining resistance in times of crisis or occupation. Accordingly, concrete steps must be taken within this partnership to advance this dimension of national defense. Particular emphasis should be placed on the active development of the civilian component of the resistance movement, which constitutes the third indispensable pillar of an effective national resistance system. Strengthening this component alongside the regular armed forces and the

National Guard would significantly contribute to establishing a more comprehensive, resilient, and sustainable national defense architecture.

International Partnership as a Strategic Enabler of National Resistance: Challenges, Prospects, and Policy Recommendations

For a small state such as Georgia, maintaining a close strategic defense partnership with the United States is vital. This is especially true as the country develops new functional capabilities and adapts its defense architecture to emerging security challenges. In such circumstances, the exchange of experience, expert guidance and training recommendations, and sustained logistical support are indispensable to the successful development of these capabilities. Strengthening cooperation in these areas would significantly enhance Georgia's ability to build a more resilient and effective national defense system. At this stage, the previously discussed GDDEI framework largely encompasses the principal aspects needed to develop national resistance capabilities (Europetime, 2024). Nevertheless, several important challenges remain. In particular, the integration of organized civilian volunteers through volunteer defense organizations is still in its formative stage and has yet to reach its full potential. Consequently, greater institutional attention and sustained efforts in this direction are essential to ensure the effective incorporation of the civilian component into the broader national resistance system and to strengthen the overall resilience of the country's defense architecture. Accordingly, it would be desirable to amend the existing agreement to address the preparation and interoperability of the civilian segment. Such adjustments would potentially enhance U.S. support in this area by providing a more structured framework for cooperation. Alternatively, a dedicated cooperation agreement focused on this dimension could be concluded, further institutionalizing and legitimizing the development of civilian components within the broader defense cooperation architecture.

Conclusions

To sum up, effective national resistance in small states cannot be achieved solely through domestic efforts; it requires sustained international support and strategic cooperation. In Georgia, the strategic partnership with the United States has been critical to strengthening the institutional, operational, and human dimensions of national defense. Programs such as IMET, GTEP, and GDDEI have significantly

contributed to the professionalization of the Georgian Defense Forces, the development of territorial defense capabilities, and the establishment of key foundations for a functional national resistance framework. At the same time, the study highlights that military preparedness alone is insufficient. The long-term effectiveness of a national resistance movement depends on integrating civilian society, preserving political legitimacy, and securing reliable international support in times of crisis. Therefore, strengthening the civilian component of resistance and further institutionalizing U.S.–Georgia defense cooperation should remain strategic priorities.

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Importance of Development of Vocational Education in the US: Analysis of the Historical Role of Trade Colleges in the State of Georgia

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Abstract

This article explores the historical development of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in the United States, with a focus on the State of Georgia. It shows how vocational education has broadened economic and social transformations since the 19th century. From the late 18th to the early 19th centuries, the economy of the state of Georgia was primarily plantation-based, which limited the existence of formal education and vocational institutions. During this period, practice-based methods were prioritized over structured education. At the beginning of the 20th century, a crucial transformation occurred as industrialization necessitated the establishment of the first trade schools and technical colleges. The article demonstrates how the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) was developing. It highlights CTE's role in gaining education with labor market needs through special programs and institutional frameworks. The findings clearly show that Georgia's CTE system reflects a strong link between education and employment, supported by work-based learning opportunities and industry partnerships. The research is based on qualitative methods, referring both to secondary and primary sources, such as historical documents from the history of Georgia and vocational colleges. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of vocational education depends on its ability to change economic situation, technological progress, and social needs, which is a main factor in long-term workforce and economic development.

Keywords: Career and Technical Education (CTE), vocational education, workforce development, industrial development, labor market alignment, Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG); Georgia (USA), skills development, economic growth.

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving society, education serves a vital role for everyone. The 21st-century economy necessitates both higher education credentials and skills development. So, there is a growing interest among policymakers to create and expand effective Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. (Symonds et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Career and Technical Education (CTE), often referred to as **vocational education (VA**), provides occupational and non-occupational preparation at the secondary, postsecondary, and adult education levels. According to the *National Center for Education Statistics,* CTE programs are designed to develop skills and knowledge directly related to jobs in fields such as health sciences, business, and technology. CTE is a crucial element of the nation's workforce development system, so it is clear that CTE plays an important role in reducing unemployment.

In the US legislation, the 1990 Perkins Act defines **vocational education** as "organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses which are directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree". (The 1990 Perkins Act).

In the United States, all states develop Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs adjusted to their economic priorities. Each of the US states has CTE programs with the prioritized branches of agriculture or industry. One of the best examples of this approach is the state of Georgia. Georgia has established a comprehensive Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) system, which integrates academic knowledge with technical and occupational skills to prepare students for both higher education and the workforce. Georgia organizes its CTE programs into 17 career clusters and more than 130 career pathways to strengthen key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, and information technology. These programs are generally oriented toward hands-on learning and collaborate with technical colleges and industry partners, allowing students to gain practical experience and workforce-relevant competencies. (Georgia Cyber Academy. (n.d.).

The goal of the article is to study the case of Georgia, one of the original 13 states of the US, and the development of CTE colleges and their historical path. The purpose of the present paper is to analyze the historical importance of the establishment of such colleges in the development of each state, and the close links between agriculture, industry, and employment.

Literature review

Vocational preparation occurs at both secondary and postsecondary levels; Within this sector, two major institutional types can be analytically distinguished: community colleges and technical or trade colleges.

Community Colleges represent one of the most influential institutional forms within the American postsecondary education system. Within the CTE framework, community colleges offer associate degrees and certificate programs that combine technical specialization with general education coursework. A defining characteristic of community colleges is their dual mission: a.Workforce preparation, enabling students to enter skilled occupations directly after graduation; b.Transfer pathways, allowing students to continue toward a bachelor's degree at four-year institutions.

Technical and Trade Colleges differ from community colleges. These institutions are typically more narrowly focused on occupation-specific training and are designed to facilitate rapid entry into the labor market. Technical colleges primarily award certificates or diplomas rather than associate degrees. The pedagogical orientation of technical colleges is strongly practice-centered, such as laboratory work, simulations, and structured work-based learning experiences.

Career and technical education (also called vocational education, VET, or TVET) has several defining characteristics that make it usable for learners:

The first key characteristic is **a clear occupational focus**: Programs are designed so that they develop competencies required for specific jobs or groups of jobs, such as trades, technicians, service occupations, health, IT, etc. Curriculum is tailored to labor-market needs, industry standards, and job analyses. (OECD, 2010).

Another key characteristic of **VET** is Competency-based outcome, which **emphasizes demonstrable, measurable skills and workplace behavior** rather than abstract knowledge alone, unlike traditional academic education. UNESCO,2015)

A third key characteristic of CTE is **workplace relevance and integration,** which includes strong links with employers, industry bodies, and trade associations, including apprenticeships, internships, industry placements, on-the-job training, or simulated working environments that allow students to gain real-world experience. (ILO et al., 2020).

Hands-on, practical pedagogy is also another characteristic of CTE, as learning is in progress through practice in labs, workshops, studios, and simulated scenarios.(UNESCO.2015).

A modular and flexible delivery structure is often organized in modules and short courses that allow integration into larger qualifications. (OECD,2010).

Assessment anchored in performance includes Practical examinations, portfolio assessments, workplace observations, and competency demonstrations. (ILO et al., 2020).

Cost-effectiveness and scalability of CTE are often designed to train many learners to meet sector shortages quickly. It can be delivered in diverse settings: dedicated vocational schools, community colleges, employer sites, or blended/online formats. (OECD,2010)

Social inclusion and economic development roles provide accessible pathways to employment for youth, adults, disadvantaged groups, and second-career learners. (UNESCO,2015)

Quality assurance and regulation: Programs are subject to national qualification standards, accreditation, and quality assurance systems. Apprenticeships in construction or manufacturing; certificate programs in nursing assistance, automotive repair, culinary arts, information technology support; short courses in welding, plumbing, or cosmetology. (OECD, 2010; ILO et al., 2020).

These characteristics combine to make vocational education a practice-oriented, employer-linked, outcome-driven pathway primarily aimed at employability and economic relevance.

Case study: State of Georgia, US

The US state of Georgia is located in the southeastern region of the United States, bounded by Florida to the south, Alabama to the west, Tennessee and North Carolina to the north, and South Carolina and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Georgia was established as a British colony in 1732 under a Charter from King George II. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.; Georgia.gov, n.d; Georgia Historical Society, n.d.). Georgia's earliest economy was primarily agrarian, it was centered on plantation agriculture driven by slave labor, and **cotton became a dominant crop** after the invention of the cotton gin in the late 18th century. Nowadays, Georgia's economy is highly heterogeneous. Major sectors include **agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, logistics, information technology, and services**. The state capital, Atlanta, serves as a major economic and cultural center in the southeastern United States. (Georgia Department of Economic Development, n.d.; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, n.d.).

The development of vocational education in Georgia can be connected to the late 18^{th} and early 19^{th} century socio-economic structure, which was characterized by plantation agriculture and forced labor. Demographically, Georgia grew very fast, with the population from 82,548 in 1790 to 162,686 in 1800 and exceeding 250,000 by 1810 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This rapid expansion reflected both migration and natural increase, and the growing population strengthened an agrarian economy dependent on forced labor (Cashin, 1994, pp. 45–47).

Around 1800, enslaved African Americans established approximately 36–37% of Georgia's population (New Georgia Encyclopedia, n.d.). Enslaved laborers performed the majority of agricultural and many artisanal tasks, which required skills through practice rather than formal education (Wood, 2004, pp. 89–92).

Georgia's agricultural economy further reinforced the absence of vocational education. Cotton became the dominant crop in 1793, making the state a major exporter within the global textile economy (New Georgia Encyclopedia, n.d.). Rice cultivation in coastal regions and earlier **tobacco production** also contributed a lot to the agricultural base, but in fact, cotton monoculture became increasingly dominant across the state (Coclanis, 2002, pp. 300–302).

Moreover, the absence of significant industrialization in Georgia during this period reduced the need for a technically skilled workforce. **There was no demand to create schools that could provide standardized training in mechanics, engineering, or manufacturing.**

To summarize the above-mentioned, the historical case of Georgia demonstrates that the development of vocational education is closely tied to broader economic and social structures. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the dominance of plantation agriculture, the prevalence of slavery, and the lack of industrialization collectively limited the need for formal vocational training. Skills were transmitted informally, reducing the role of educational institutions in workforce development. Later, in the beginning of the 19th century, the decline of slavery and the gradual diversification of the economy laid the foundations for vocational education to begin to arise.

The First Vocational colleges opened in Georgia: A historical overview

The first state-supported vocational training college in Georgia was established during World War II. The North Georgia Trade and Vocational School opened in Clarkesville in February 1944 (Georgia Encyclopedia, 2025). This college offered programs such as automotive mechanics, radio and communications, and welding, which reflected the demand for skilled workers during and after wartime (Georgia Encyclopedia, 2025).

After several years, many vocational schools were established in Georgia, including the South Georgia Trade and Vocational School in 1948 (Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007). By the 20th century(late 1960s), more than nineteen vocational-technical colleges had been established across the state, showing the rapid expansion of vocational training according to local workforce needs (Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007). As the vocational schools were growing, both the population and technological complexity of Georgia's economy were increasing. The Technical College System was formally created in 2007 in Georgia to

supervise all state technical and vocational colleges, which integrate workforce development, adult education, and different economic programs. (Technical College System of Georgia, 2025; Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007).

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) represents the state agency that supervises Georgia's network of technical colleges, including **22** technical colleges and **88** campuses, which are supported by TCSG, offering more than 600 programs that directly address the state's workforce needs. (TCSG, 2025). These technical schools provide certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees in fields such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, automotive technology, and construction trades (Technical College System of Georgia, 2025). The main **mission** of TCSG is to prepare an educated, technically competent workforce that supports the state's economic development. (Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007). The system has strong collaborations with local industries to ensure program curricula align with job market demands.

One of the crucial **functions** of vocational colleges in Georgia has been to train a qualified workforce to meet labor market needs. Programs focused on basic industrial skills and professions such as healthcare, technology, cybersecurity, networking, and precision manufacturing (Technical College System of Georgia, 2025). Vocational colleges shorten the gap between education and employment, especially in high-demand sectors where Georgia's economy is growing, so technical colleges play an important role in reducing unemployment and providing mobility for those students who seek skilled jobs without pursuing traditional four-year degrees.

The expansion of vocational colleges has a high **economic and social impact** in the state of Georgia, as these institutions train skilled workers to support industries such as manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, and construction (Technical College System of Georgia, 2025). Secondly, vocational education **provides economic opportunities for non-traditional students,** including adults returning to education, displaced workers, and individuals seeking career change. (Technical College System of Georgia, 2025).

The analysis of the function of the Vocational Training and its Present implications.

In the US state of Georgia, vocational education is administered through the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), which coordinates technical colleges and workforce training programs across the state(TCSG, 2026). This system offers more than 600 vocational career programs, which enable a wide range of occupational training opportunities (TCSG, 2026).

Faculty qualifications in Georgia's vocational training colleges reflect both academic and professional standards. Academic trainers are generally required to hold at least a master's degree, while technical

instructors are required to hold certificates and relevant work experience (TCSG, 2026). Approximately 150,000–160,000 students are enrolled annually in vocational colleges in Georgia (TCSG, 2025). These students participate in a wide range of technical and career-oriented programs across the campuses (TCSG, 2026). Annual graduation is approximately 47,000 graduates per year, demonstrating the effectiveness of the vocational system (Government of Georgia, 2020; TCSG, 2025).

It can be assumed that in the 21st century, vocational education in Georgia is characterized by a stable network of 22 technical colleges, high enrollment levels, and strong graduate outcomes (TCSG, 2025). The system has evolved through consolidation and modernization, focusing on efficiency and labor market alignment rather than institutional expansion (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2015). This model represents a distinctive and effective approach to vocational education in the United States.

The relationships between CTE and industrial development

The increase of modern economies has highlighted the need for education, which would respond to labor market demands. In the state of Georgia, this connection between CTE and industrial development is crucially important due to the state's expanding sectors in logistics, manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology (Georgia Department of Education, 2023). The relationship between industrial development and CTE should be perceived as a dynamic interaction between skill formation and economic growth (Fletcher & Zirkle, 2016). Policymakers and educators try to design career pathways that correspond to high-growth sectors (Georgia State University, 2020). This system ensures that students are trained for employment opportunities and economic mobility (Georgia State University, 2020). CTE plays an important role in supporting regional and rural economies in the state of Georgia. By aligning training programs with local industries such as agriculture, logistics, and small-scale manufacturing, CTE contributes to the workforce, which is the main factor influencing business location decisions. (Georgia State University, 2020). This contribution strengthens regional economic and industrial development. CTE contributes not only to workforce readiness but also to broader economic development by facilitating industrial expansion and innovation (Dougherty, 2018). Despite its many advantages, the relationship between CTE and industrial development also has some challenges. Overemphasis on current labor market needs may limit workers' adaptability to future economic changes (Fletcher & Zirkle, 2016).

There are some future Perspectives of Development

According to human capital theory, investment in education and workforce skills is the foundation of economic growth. A well-trained labor force attracts businesses and enables the emergence of new industries (Becker, 1993).

There are some future Perspectives of development of CTE, and first of all, this is a **Technological Transformation**. Advances in automation, artificial intelligence, and digitalization are crucially reshaping labor markets. CTE will surely play a vital role in preparing workers for developing industries such as robotics, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

The second future perspective of development may be strengthening **Industry–Education Partnerships**. Future development will surely involve deeper collaboration between educational institutions and employers, including expanded apprenticeship programs and work-based learning opportunities (Technical College System of Georgia, 2023).

The third is Regional Development and Equity. CTE has the potential to reduce economic imbalance between urban and rural regions by coordinating training programs with local industry needs and supporting workforce retention (Georgia State University, 2020).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the case of Georgia demonstrates that the historical development of vocational education in the U.S. state of Georgia is very closely linked with education systems, economic structures, and labor market needs. As the analysis shows, from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Georgia had a plantation economy based on enslaved labor. During this period, occupational skills were mainly transmitted through informal practice and apprenticeship rather than through structured educational systems; there was no need for any formal training or education. The transition toward formal vocational education began with the decline of slavery, industrial modernization, and increasing demand for technically skilled labor. The foundation of the first trade and vocational schools in the mid-twentieth century marked a turning point in Georgia's workforce development.

In the twenty-first century, Georgia has already developed one of the most effective vocational education systems in the United States. The state has successfully connected education policy with the labor market, creating accessible pathways for social mobility, regional economic development, and workforce entry.

In all, the study of Georgia confirms that the success of vocational education depends on its ability to adapt to changes in economic realities, technological progress, and social needs. Therefore, the historical and contemporary case of Georgia provides valuable lessons for policymakers and educators seeking to strengthen vocational education systems.

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The Impact of Social Media on Women's Psychology and the Increasing Demand for Cosmetic Procedures

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed the way women perceive beauty, body image, and self-worth. Through continuous exposure to idealized and digitally enhanced images, social media contributes to appearance comparison, body dissatisfaction, and psychological distress. This paper examines the relationship between social media use, women's psychological well-being, and the growing demand for cosmetic and aesthetic procedures. Existing literature suggests that frequent engagement with appearance-focused content is associated with increased body dissatisfaction and greater acceptance of cosmetic surgery. Recent global statistics indicate a substantial increase in both surgical and non-surgical aesthetic procedures, reflecting the influence of contemporary beauty standards promoted through social media. The findings highlight the importance of understanding digital media's role in shaping psychological outcomes and healthcare decisions among women (Mironica et al., 2024).

Keywords: Social Media, Body Image, Cosmetic Surgery, Women's Psychology, Beauty Standards, Self-Esteem

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1. Introduction

Social media has become one of the most influential communication environments in modern society. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook expose users to thousands of appearance-related images daily.

Unlike traditional media, social media encourages active participation through posting, commenting, filtering, and editing personal photographs. Consequently, users are not merely observers but also contributors to beauty culture.

Women represent one of the most active groups on image-centered social media platforms, making them particularly vulnerable to appearance-based comparison and body image concerns. Previous research has demonstrated that frequent exposure to idealized beauty images may negatively affect self-esteem and increase dissatisfaction with one's appearance. (Mironica et al., 2024)

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Comparison Theory

According to Leon Festinger, individuals evaluate themselves through comparisons with others (Festinger, 1954).

Social media amplifies this process because users are constantly exposed to carefully selected and edited representations of beauty. Women often compare their appearance to influencers, celebrities, and digitally enhanced images, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction.

2.2 Self-Objectification Theory

Self-objectification occurs when women internalize external beauty standards and begin evaluating themselves primarily through physical appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

This process may lead to:

Appearance anxiety

Lower self-esteem

Increased body surveillance

Dissatisfaction with physical features

Research indicates that appearance-focused social media environments intensify these psychological outcomes. (Mironica et al., 2024)

3. Social Media and Body Image

Body image refers to an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding their physical appearance.

Modern social media platforms promote highly curated beauty ideals through:

Beauty filters

Face-editing applications

Professional photography

Influencer marketing

Celebrity endorsements

The phenomenon known as "Snapchat Dysmorphia" describes individuals seeking cosmetic procedures to resemble filtered versions of themselves.

A study conducted by researchers from Boston University found a significant increase in cosmetic surgery consideration among social media users. Interest in aesthetic procedures increased from 64% to 86%, while consultations with cosmetic surgeons increased from 44% to 68% among participants exposed to filtered and edited imagery. (Khan et al., 2024)

4. Psychological Effects of Social Media on Women

Research consistently identifies several psychological consequences associated with excessive appearance-focused social media use.

Low Self-Esteem

Women who frequently compare themselves with influencers and celebrities often report lower levels of self-confidence.

Body Dissatisfaction

Repeated exposure to unrealistic beauty standards contributes to dissatisfaction with facial features, body shape, skin quality, and overall appearance.

Anxiety and Depression

Studies have demonstrated significant associations between appearance-based social media engagement and symptoms of anxiety and depression. (Mironica et al., 2024)

Appearance-Based Validation

Many women become increasingly dependent on external validation through:

Likes

Comments

Followers

Online engagement metrics

This dependence may reinforce appearance-related insecurities.

5. Social Media and the Growth of Cosmetic Procedures

One of the most significant consequences of appearance-focused social media culture is the growing demand for aesthetic interventions.

According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), aesthetic procedures worldwide increased by approximately 42.5% during the last four years. In 2024 alone:

20.5 million non-surgical procedures were performed.

17.4 million surgical procedures were performed globally.

Botulinum toxin (Botox) remained the most frequently performed non-surgical treatment, with approximately 7.8 million procedures worldwide.

Hyaluronic acid fillers accounted for approximately 6.3 million procedures globally. (ISAPS, 2025)

These figures illustrate the growing normalization of aesthetic enhancement within contemporary society.

6. Statistical Trends in Cosmetic Procedures

Data reported by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons indicate that aesthetic medicine is increasingly dominated by minimally invasive procedures.

In 2024:

Total aesthetic and reconstructive procedures exceeded 30.8 million.

91.5% were minimally invasive procedures.

Only 5.1% involved cosmetic surgery.

Botox and dermal fillers remained among the most frequently requested treatments. (Alhotan, 2026)

These findings suggest that social media-driven beauty standards increasingly encourage non-surgical aesthetic enhancement.

7. Discussion

The evidence reviewed in this study supports the existence of a substantial relationship between social media exposure and women's attitudes toward cosmetic procedures.

Several mechanisms contribute to this relationship:

Continuous exposure to idealized beauty standards.

Increased social comparison.

Development of appearance dissatisfaction.

Greater acceptance of cosmetic interventions.

Perception of cosmetic procedures as normal and accessible.

Influencer culture further reinforces these attitudes by presenting aesthetic procedures as routine lifestyle choices rather than medical interventions.

Research suggests that social media use may predict interest in cosmetic procedures even more strongly than body dissatisfaction itself. (Walker et al., 2019)

8. Conclusion

Social media has fundamentally altered contemporary beauty culture and significantly influenced women's psychological well-being.

The literature demonstrates that frequent exposure to appearance-focused content contributes to:

Lower self-esteem

Increased body dissatisfaction

Appearance anxiety

Greater acceptance of cosmetic procedures

Global aesthetic medicine statistics reveal a substantial increase in both surgical and non-surgical procedures, paralleling the rise of social media influence. As digital platforms continue shaping beauty ideals, healthcare professionals, psychologists, and policymakers must develop strategies that promote realistic beauty standards and support positive body image among women. (Mironica et al., 2024)

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Painting Freedom: 250 years of independence in Art

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Abstract

Freedom was always expressed through numerous forms, and Art has been one of the biggest areas where people could freely convey their thoughts and concerns and all in all themselves. Art has always portrayed emotions, untold stories, hidden messages, and truth in every piece created. Through paintings, artists have presented the struggles, past and present events and state of the country. It is evident that, art did not only portray the road after the independence, but it also showed the authentic side of path towards it, proposed questions, trialed authorities and overall shaped the meaning of Freedom in the United States. Hence, independence has always been a major topic debated and analyzed throughout the history of the country, portrayed through art pieces whether it was sculptured, painted, etc.

Introduction

On July 4, 1776, America adopted the "Declaration of Independence, connected 13 colonies and declared them as free, exonerated from all adherences to the British Crown. The influence of the document and the messages coded into it, had immense influence around the world. Not only politically, but at the same time culturally, in different aspects of life and its courses. The influence was also seen throughout the pieces of art, which were created even before the "Declaration of Independence" In the early times, Indigenous

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people were incorporating and embedding European materials and styles, into their creations, improving them daily, because their path after the European colonizers was never easy, the struggles and suffering they had to go through was left through the paintings as well. Leaving the evidence and story for future generations to observe and learn from. Art was one of the ways people could protest and could state their opinions. In earlier periods, most of the artistic creations were of vast landscapes, portraying the true nature of the country. Although this was only one side of the artistic expression because later, the shift occurred, focusing on depicting true and cruel sides of the different decades, struggles of people, numerous social movements, all thriving for one sole reason, "Freedom".

John Trumbull: "Declaration of Independence" painting

The struggle for independence touched upon every aspect of life, one of the major sides being Art. Many artists were finding paths to express themselves, sometimes only possible abroad, with many not going back. Artists who worked hard to portray the day-to-day events and problems that country faced most of the time were labeled as propagandists and European Neoclassicism. "John Trumbull" has some of the most famous paintings created in the history of America, surrounding freedom and independence. Trumbull is the creator of the famous portrait of Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, which is still engraved on a ten-dollar bill. Trumbull's ambitions were always to depict bigger and grand pieces in history. The painting of the "Declaration of independence" and its idea was first formed in Paris, July of 1786, when Thomas Jefferson suggested that Trumbull should have turned his artistic capabilities towards the "Declaration of independence". Thus, the first sketches of the composition began, becoming one of the most famous depictions in the history of American art. This piece highlights the importance of Art in the path to freedom, in the politics and the chronicles of the country. The painting "Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776" named by Trumbull himself points out the emphasizes of the collaboration between the politics and art. Some historians even criticize the painting, stating that the event presented in the painting should either have been the day or the scene of June 28th when the Declaration was reported, or the day of the adoption, which was on July 4th. The inaccuracy of the present members was another huge aspect of criticism, but the key part of this painting and the true meaning behind Trumbull's thought process was that, his work was not named the 'The Signing of the Declaration" or "The Submission", but "The Declaration of the Independence". Trumbull took into consideration every single person who was part of this decision and wanted to preserve their importance towards it.

Generally, when artists are creating paintings, they naturally shape how future generations see the past and interpret it, much like historians, they shape what the future of humanity knows about the past, creating interesting views and questions from the observers. Thus, the criticism about this painting was that the event happening on it was the clear depiction of June 28th, when the discussion began about the document and not the approval of the declaration. Some historians also point out the inaccuracy of the environment such as doors and windows, the reason being the sole recollection of the room from Thomas Jefferson's mind, discussions with Trumbull in Paris. Including 41 of 56 individuals who signed the Declaration of Independence, but he had written to Jefferson that he was responsible for some individuals, leaning onto his recollection of their faces, and some he guaranteed, some would be from the pictures, created by other artists, and some would be with the help of verbal description, aided by the memory. Yet again, this action highlights the importance of the "historical license". Numerous other painted pieces were created with same thought processes, further pushing towards the narrative that, throughout the history of the United States, politics and art have been deeply intertwined, leaving future generations with the pieces, packed with information, whether altered or real, with idealized portrayals about the past events, regarding the path towards freedom.

Emanuel Leutze- "Washington Crossing the Delaware"

Art kept evolving rapidly after John Trumbull painted his famous picture of the Declaration of Independence. It shaped what freedom meant to people over the years. Alongside this masterpiece, one of the most famous paintings was created by Emanuel Leutze. The piece is called: "Washington Crossing the Delaware" (1851). This huge painting shows George Washington standing in a boat with his troops. They are crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night in 1776. They are heading toward launching a surprise attack on troops at Trenton, New Jersey. This moment was very important in the Revolutionary War. It was important to win this war. This painting is not historically accurate, but it is still very powerful and meaningful. Leutze painted this in Germany, not America. He used the Rhine River as his model for the Delaware River, because he could not travel to America. Leutze painted it in daylight with the sun rising. The boat is too small for all those people and horses, and Washington is wearing the wrong uniform. He would have been in clothes for such a dangerous mission. He would not have been standing in the middle of the boat during a storm. Leutze did not care about being perfectly accurate. He cared about sending a message. He painted this in 1851, when Europe was going through uprisings. People were fighting against

monarchies and demanding democracy. Leutze wanted to tell reformers that if Americans could overcome impossible odds to win freedom so could others. He was saying that the American Revolution was a model for the world. Leutze followed the Düsseldorf Schools philosophy that art should inspire people and teach lessons. There is a frontiersman, an immigrant and an African American man. This was intentional and meaningful. The African American figure is probably there to show that both freed slaves and enslaved people fought in the Revolutionary War. By putting all these people together, Leutze turns a military maneuver into a symbol of national unity. Washington stands tall and proud in the center not as a military leader but as a democratic leader. It had to be transported on a cart through the streets of Düsseldorf. Crowds gathered just to see it. When it arrived in America thousands of Americans paid to see it in New York City. People were worried that the country might break apart. This painting reminded a fracturing nation what it took to win independence. While it honors a moment in the American Revolution it also shows violent events, including violence against Native peoples. The painting shows America's moments, but it does not show the full story of who was excluded from that freedom. Native Americans enslaved Black people and women were all left out of the Independence that Washington was fighting for.

Civil War and Art

The Civil War changed everything about how Americans understood and portrayed freedom in art. The war forced the country to confront the truth that the Revolutionary War had half-delivered on its promise. Leutze painting showed freedom as an ideal. The Civil War showed freedom as a brutal bloody reality. Before the war many paintings celebrated expansion, beautiful landscapes and heroic history scenes. The war exposed the deep contradiction at the heart of American liberty. A nation founded on freedom while practicing slavery. One of the important paintings from this time is Eastman Johnsons "A Ride for Liberty". The Fugitive Slaves. This painting shows a Black family of four riding a horse as they escape slavery and head toward Union army lines. Johnson actually saw this happen near Centerville, Virginia during the war. What makes this painting so powerful is that it shows enslaved people choosing freedom for themselves, not waiting to be saved. This was radical for 1862. As Union armies moved through the South, thousands of enslaved people risked their lives to escape Union lines. The Fugitive Slave Act did not matter anymore during the war. Union generals said that any enslaved person who made it to Union territory was considered a contraband of war. Freedom got a lot more possible after the Emancipation Proclamation, in 1863.Winslow Homer is another artist from this time. He was sent to Virginia to draw what was happening

at the start of the war in 1861. His own mom said that when he came home, he was so changed that his best friends did not recognize him. As the war went on, Winslow Homer's drawings became deeper and more serious. After the war was over, he painted a picture called Prisoners from the Front in 1866. This picture shows soldiers who have been captured. The picture is not heroic or dramatic it is just real. The Civil War was a major deal. It has been called the American Revolution, which changed the basic ideas of the country and threatened to destroy the democracy. The war influenced art: The pain, the bravery and the way the war changed everyone. This includes soldiers, enslaved people, and families who were left behind. After the war the land looked different in art. The big question was: who is really free? Winslow Homer's art showed the truth about the war. That is what makes it so important. The war changed the way artists painted the land and the people in it. It made them show the story of the war and its effects, on everyone.

Conclusion

To Conclude, looking back at these paintings, From Trumbull's Declaration of Independence to Leutze's Washington Crossing the Delaware to Johnsons "A Ride for Liberty" and Homers Prisoners from the Front. It becomes clear that art is not about capturing historical moments. Art is about shaping what freedom means to Americans across times. Each artist made choices about what to show, what to leave out, and how to make viewers feel. Sometimes those choices were accurate; sometimes they were not. The main goal of expressing feelings through art was to show people the worth of freedom and art is the best way to preserve history and artists wanted future generations to remember all the struggles on the way that then guaranteed freedom. These choices tell us what each artist thought freedom should be about and what they wanted people to know about their time. The thing we learn from these paintings is that freedom has always been an idea in America. At first, it was a promise for some people. It took a lot of fighting thousands of deaths and the active resistance of enslaved people to make freedom mean something to what it should mean. The artists who painted during and after the war could not go back to painting idealized pictures of the past. They had to show the cost of freedom; the pain it took to win it, and the contradiction of a nation that claimed to be free while practicing slavery. We see the Native Americans who were excluded the enslaved people who were not free, the women who were not allowed to vote and the immigrants who still had to fight for their rights. Art will continue to shape how we understand freedom in the future. New artists will ask questions to include voices that were left out before and challenge old ideas about what

America means. Like Trumbull, Leutze, Johnson and Homer did, in their time today's artists are still shaping what the next generation will know about freedom. And that is the power of art. It does not just record history. It helps create it by showing us who we were, who we are and who we hope to become.

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Maternal Mental Health as a Mediator Between Divorce and Children's Academic Outcomes: A Comparative Study of the United States and Georgia

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Abstract

This study investigates the mediating role of maternal mental health in the relationship between parental divorce and children's academic outcomes within a cross-cultural comparative framework of the United States and Georgia. Although previous research has consistently demonstrated that divorce is associated with adverse emotional and academic outcomes in children, the underlying psychological mechanisms remain insufficiently explored.

A mixed-methods research design was employed, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data from 704 divorced mothers and 409 teachers. Maternal psychological distress was operationalized through indicators such as anxiety, depression, and stress, while children's academic outcomes were assessed through teacher-reported measures of motivation, concentration, and classroom behavior.

The results indicate a statistically significant negative relationship between maternal psychological distress and children's academic outcomes ($r = –0.42$, $p < .05$). Regression analysis further revealed that maternal mental health accounts for 31% of the variance in children's academic performance ($R^2 = 0.31$), supporting its mediating role. Cross-cultural findings demonstrate that institutional support systems in the United States facilitate more effective maternal adaptation. In contrast, in Georgia, extended family networks provide compensatory support in the absence of accessible professional psychological services.

The study advances existing literature by conceptualizing divorce as a multilevel psychosocial process and identifies maternal mental health as a critical intervention point for improving children's educational outcomes.

Keywords: academic outcomes, cross-cultural comparison, divorce, maternal mental health, mediation, social support

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I. INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a significant social and psychological phenomenon that has profound implications for family systems and child development. Over the past decades, increasing divorce rates have raised serious concerns regarding their impact on children's academic performance, emotional stability, and behavioral development.

While a large body of research has focused on the direct consequences of divorce on children, emerging evidence suggests that the psychological condition of the primary caregiver—particularly the mother—plays a critical mediating role. Mothers often serve as the central figure in child upbringing, and their emotional and psychological well-being directly influences the child's educational environment, motivation, and adaptation.

This study aims to examine the mediating role of maternal mental health in the relationship between divorce and children's academic outcomes, with a comparative perspective between the United States and Georgia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that children from divorced families tend to show lower academic achievement, reduced motivation, and increased behavioral problems (Amato, 2010; Lansford, 2021). These outcomes are often explained by instability in family structure and emotional stress.

Simultaneously, divorce significantly affects maternal psychological well-being. Research indicates increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among divorced women, which can negatively impact parenting practices and emotional availability (Kalmijn, 2020).

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on ecological systems theory and family systems theory, which emphasize the importance of environmental and relational dynamics in shaping child development.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample consisted of 704 divorced mothers and 409 teachers.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires assessing maternal psychological distress and children's academic performance. Statistical methods included correlation analysis and regression modeling to determine relationships between variables and test the mediating effect.

IV. RESULTS

The findings indicate a statistically significant negative relationship between maternal psychological distress and children's academic outcomes ($r = –0.42$, $p < .05$). Children of mothers experiencing higher levels of stress and depression demonstrated lower academic performance, decreased motivation, and concentration difficulties.

Regression analysis revealed that maternal mental health explains 31% of the variance in academic outcomes ($R^2 = 0.31$), confirming its mediating role.

Cross-cultural comparison showed that mothers in the United States benefit from institutional psychological support, whereas in Georgia, reliance on extended family support is more common.

Table I. Sample Distribution of Participants

roup	**SA**	**eorgia**	**tal**
others	2	2	4
achers	3	6	9
tal	5	8	13

Table II. Maternal Psychological Distress

dicator	**SA (%)**	**eorgia (%)**
xiety		

pression		
ep disturbances		

Table III. Children's Academic Outcomes

dicator	**A (%)**	**orgia (%)**
w performance		
ncentration problems		
w motivation		

V. DISCUSSION

The results confirm that maternal mental health is a key mediating factor in the relationship between divorce and children's academic outcomes. This finding aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of the caregiving environment.

The cross-cultural differences observed in this study highlight the role of structural and institutional factors in shaping maternal adaptation and child outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION

Maternal mental health plays a crucial role in determining children's academic success following divorce. Interventions should focus on supporting mothers psychologically to improve both family well-being and educational outcomes.

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The Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model in Breast Cancer Care: Reframing Psychosocial Outcomes through Social Support and Psychotherapy

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Abstract

Breast cancer survival has improved markedly, but survival is not the same as recovery. For many women, the end of active treatment marks the beginning of a different kind of struggle: persistent anxiety, depression, fear of recurrence, loss of identity, and a social world that has quietly contracted around them. These are not side effects in any clinical sense; they are the lived reality of the illness, and biomedical frameworks were never designed to address them. Research has shown, separately, that social support and psychotherapy each make a meaningful difference to how women navigate this experience. What has never been adequately theorised is what happens when these two resources work in combination and why, for so many women, neither is reliably available at all.

This paper proposes the Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model (SISM) as a framework for answering both questions. Its core argument is that social support and psychotherapy are not simply two parallel goods; they are mutually reinforcing, and their interaction produces psychosocial outcomes that exceed what either achieves in isolation. But whether that synergy can be realised at all depends on something more fundamental: the structural conditions that determine whether both resources are accessible in the first place. Drawing on structural sociology's account of how institutional arrangements and socioeconomic circumstances shape the availability of care, and on symbolic interactionism's insight that illness is always something a person must interpret and make sense of, the SISM brings together two traditions rarely placed in dialogue within psycho-oncology. Social support is conceptualised across emotional, informational, instrumental, and relational dimensions; psychotherapy across cognitive-behavioural, narrative, and supportive-expressive

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approaches. The model is applied comparatively across two structural configurations resource-rich and resource-constrained healthcare settings to show how different institutional environments interrupt or enable the synergistic mechanism in predictable ways. Three empirically testable propositions follow from this analysis. The SISM makes an original contribution to psycho-oncology, the sociology of health and illness, and women's health and to the wider argument that serious cancer care cannot stop at the biological.

Keywords: Breast Cancer; Social Support; Psychotherapy; Psychosocial Outcomes; Symbolic Interactionism; Structural Sociology; Women's Health; Psycho-Oncology; Survivorship; Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women worldwide and remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related mortality among women globally (World Health Organization, 2024). Although advances in screening programs, targeted therapies, surgical techniques, and supportive care have significantly improved survival rates, these biomedical achievements have not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction in psychological and social suffering. This is partly because the experience of breast cancer extends far beyond the biological and medical aspects of the disease. Today, many women live for years, sometimes decades, following diagnosis. However, survival does not always mean a complete restoration of the life they had before, and many continue to experience significant psychosocial burdens throughout treatment and into long-term recovery.

This experience is often associated with a variety of emotional, social, and psychological challenges, including anxiety, depression, fear of relapse, social isolation, changes in body image, sexual dysfunction, chronic fatigue, and disruptions to personal identity. These difficulties frequently persist well after the completion of active treatment and negatively affect quality of life, psychosocial adjustment, and treatment adherence (Burgess et al., 2005; Stanton et al., 2015; Helgeson & Cohen, 1996; Ell et al., 2005).

Although the psychosocial needs of cancer patients are increasingly recognized, their systematic integration into routine oncology services remains limited and inconsistent across many healthcare

settings (Institute of Medicine, 2008). Historically oncology has been shaped by a biomedical orientation that prioritizes the diagnosis, treatment, and control of disease, often giving comparatively less attention to the psychological, social, and personal consequences of cancer for patients and their families. Where psychosocial care is available, it is frequently positioned as ancillary rather than integral to cancer treatment, introduced, if at all, only after immediate medical concerns have been managed; in some cases, such needs remain insufficiently recognized or treated altogether.

This pattern reflects the enduring historical influence of the biomedical model within healthcare. Engel (1977) argued that the dominant biomedical model leaves inadequate room for the social, psychological, and behavioural dimensions of illness, and advocated instead for a biopsychosocial model that recognizes the interdependence of biological, psychological, and social factors in shaping health and disease. Conrad's (2007) work on medicalization illustrates how biomedical perspectives have extended their influence across an increasing range of human experiences and social conditions, reinforcing a tendency to interpret health primarily through biological and clinical frameworks, with the consequence that the emotional impact of diagnosis, disruptions to social relationships, changes in identity, and the challenges of living with uncertainty receive comparatively less institutional attention than the biological management of disease.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that these psychosocial dimensions are not peripheral to the cancer experience but are closely and consequentially linked to patients' quality of life, psychological adjustment, treatment adherence, and overall wellbeing. Effective cancer care therefore requires a framework that recognizes patients not merely as recipients of biomedical intervention but as individuals whose experiences of illness are shaped by emotional, relational, social, and structural circumstances.

While a substantial body of research has examined social support and psychotherapy as independent determinants of psychosocial adjustment among women with breast cancer, considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding how these resources interact with one another and how their effects are shaped by broader structural conditions. As a result, existing literature provides only limited theoretical insight into the mechanisms through which social and therapeutic resources may combine to influence psychosocial outcomes.

Moreover, existing research has tended to privilege individual-level explanations of psychosocial adjustment, while giving comparatively less attention to the structural conditions that shape access to

supportive and therapeutic resources. This limitation is particularly important because the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of psychosocial resources are often influenced by broader institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts.

Although social support and psychotherapy have each attracted considerable empirical attention as important psychosocial resources in breast cancer care, they are almost always examined in isolation. To address this theoretical gap, the present paper proposes the Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model (SISM), a framework that conceptualizes psychosocial outcomes as emerging from the interaction between institutional arrangements, relational environments, and therapeutic processes. The paper proceeds as follows: the next section examines the theoretical roles of social support and psychotherapy; subsequent sections present the SISM and its comparative application; the paper concludes by identifying directions for future empirical research.

Social Support and Psychotherapy: Theoretical Foundations

Social support in the context of breast cancer is best understood as multidimensional, encompassing emotional support (reassurance and validation), informational support (guidance on treatment and healthcare navigation), instrumental support (practical assistance), and relational support (belonging and shared experience) (Berkman et al., 2000). Each dimension addresses distinct aspects of the illness experience. Drawing on Bury's (1982) concept of biographical disruption, social support can be understood as a primary mechanism through which women reconstruct narrative coherence and social belonging following diagnosis. However, support networks mobilised at diagnosis often contract as treatment extends, leaving women most socially exposed at the point of greatest psychological demand - a relational dynamic that is as much structural and temporal as it is interpersonal.

Psychotherapy contributes through complementary mechanisms. Cognitive-behavioural frameworks address maladaptive thought patterns associated with fear of recurrence and body image disturbance. The narrative and existential approaches are of particular value in enabling patients to rebuild their sense of self following diagnosis and to integrate the cancer experience into a meaningful and liveable life story. Supportive-expressive therapy facilitates emotional processing within a relational context, fostering a sense of shared experience that can repair social bonds disrupted by illness (Spiegel et al., 1989; Helgeson & Cohen, 1996). Psychotherapy in this context is not merely a technical intervention but a socially mediated encounter in which meanings are negotiated and psychological resilience is

built over time. The critical theoretical limitation of existing research is not the absence of evidence for either process independently, but the absence of a framework capable of conceptualising their interaction. The SISM addresses this directly.

The Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model

The SISM integrates two theoretical traditions that are rarely placed in direct dialogue within psycho-oncology. From structural sociology, it draws on the social determinants of health tradition (Berkman et al., 2000) and Meyer and Rowan's (1977) institutional theory, which holds that formal organisational structures carry normative and legitimating dimensions that shape behaviour beyond their technical function. Applied to oncology, the formal existence of psychosocial services does not guarantee effective use; cultural legitimacy, relational accessibility, and alignment with patients' frameworks of meaning are equally constitutive of whether services are sought and experienced as beneficial. From symbolic interactionism, the SISM draws on the foundational premise that social reality is constructed through processes of interpretation and meaning-making in which individuals are active, reflective agents rather than passive recipients of structural forces (Blumer, 1969). A breast cancer diagnosis does not arrive as a neutral medical fact. It is interpreted through pre-existing cultural schemas about femininity, mortality, and bodily integrity that shape whether and how women seek support, engage therapeutically, and reconstruct a viable sense of self. Research on chronic illness consistently demonstrates that these interpretive processes are central to how patients negotiate identity and social belonging in the aftermath of diagnosis (Charmaz, 1991). The synergistic hypothesis at the model's core holds that social support and psychotherapy are mutually potentiating rather than merely additive. Social support provides the relational scaffolding within which psychotherapeutic insights can be practised and integrated into daily life — a process substantially more difficult when the patient's social environment is characterised by isolation or normative pressure against emotional disclosure. Conversely, psychotherapy equips patients with cognitive and emotional resources that enable more productive engagement with available social support and resistance to its erosion over time. Together, both processes address what neither can accomplish alone: the reconstruction of coherent identity and social belonging following the biographical disruption of cancer (Bury, 1982). Structural conditions constitute more than a moderating influence within the model. They shape the availability, accessibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness of both social support

and psychotherapy before either resource can exert its influence on psychosocial outcomes. Institutional arrangements determine whether psychosocial services are available and integrated within routine cancer care; socioeconomic conditions influence patients' capacity to access and sustain engagement with such services; and cultural norms shape whether seeking support or psychotherapy is viewed as legitimate, acceptable, or desirable. Consequently, structural conditions do not merely modify the relationship between psychosocial resources and outcomes; they actively shape the contexts within which these resources emerge, are mobilised, and become effective. The realisation of synergistic outcomes therefore depends not only on the presence of social support and psychotherapy, but also on the broader structural environments that enable, constrain, or legitimize their use. This structural dimension is directly testable through future empirical research examining how institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts condition the interaction between psychosocial resources and patient outcomes.

Comparative Application across Structural Contexts

Rather than focusing on specific national cases, the SISM is applied across two analytically distinct structural configurations conceived as Weberian ideal types in the sense that they are analytical abstractions capturing dominant tendencies rather than exhaustive descriptions of any particular system (Weber, 1949) that recur across diverse healthcare settings worldwide. The first is characterised by well-resourced, institutionally developed oncology infrastructure in which psychosocial services are formally integrated into care frameworks. Drawing on Meyer and Rowan (1977), formal institutional legitimacy does not resolve inequitable access: structural inequalities along lines of socioeconomic position, geography, and social marginalisation mean that service availability does not translate into equitable use (Link & Phelan, 1995). The SISM predicts that synergistic outcomes will be concentrated among those with both material access and cultural frameworks conducive to simultaneous engagement with formal therapeutic and informal social support resources.

The second configuration is characterised by resource-constrained or transitional healthcare environments in which formal psychosocial infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Strong informal support networks, particularly family and community structures, constitute the primary source of psychosocial care and carry genuine protective value by shaping how individuals seek, interpret, and

utilise available care (Pescosolido, 1991). Yet cultural norms around stoicism, gender expectations, and stigma associated with mental health services frequently suppress professional help-seeking even where some formal resources exist - stigma operating not merely as individual attitude but as a structural barrier that systematically reduces engagement with therapeutic care (Corrigan, 2004). The SISM predicts that informal support, however abundant, will produce attenuated psychosocial outcomes in the absence of complementary therapeutic engagement - not because social support lacks value, but because the synergistic mechanism requires both components. In both configurations, through different structural mechanisms, the synergistic relationship is interrupted - confirming the model's core claim that psychosocial outcomes are structurally contingent.

Conclusion

The Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model offers a theoretically grounded framework for understanding how social support and psychotherapy interact within structural conditions to shape psychosocial outcomes among women with breast cancer. Its central proposition - that these processes are synergistic and that structural conditions modulate the degree to which their combined potential is realised -represents an original contribution to the field. As a conceptual framework, the SISM generates three empirically testable propositions: that interaction-term modelling will reveal combined effects exceeding independent contributions (Hayes, 2018); that this synergistic effect will be moderated by structural conditions; and that the nature of moderation will differ systematically across institutional configurations. Future research should test these propositions using longitudinal designs and qualitative methods capable of capturing the interpretive dimensions of psychosocial recovery that quantitative designs alone cannot adequately address (Charmaz, 1991).

Although developed in the context of breast cancer, the Structural–Interactionist Synergy Model may have broader applicability to other chronic illnesses in which psychosocial adaptation depends upon the interaction of social, therapeutic, and structural resources.

The SISM contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue in sociology, psycho-oncology, and women's health, and to the broader argument that comprehensive cancer care is, inescapably, social care.

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The Voice of America: A Perspective of a Listener behind the Iron Curtain

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Abstract

The **Voice of America (VOA)** is the official international broadcasting service of the United States government. Established in 1942 during the Second World War, its original purpose was to counter Nazi and Fascist propaganda by providing accurate and reliable information to foreign audiences. Its first broadcast, directed at Germany on 1 February 1942, opened with *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and promised listeners truthful reporting regardless of whether the news favored the United States.

By the end of World War II, VOA was broadcasting in 40 languages through 39 transmitters. Although its future appeared uncertain after the war, the beginning of the Cold War gave the organization a new mission. Under director Foy Kohler, VOA expanded its global influence, receiving thousands of letters from listeners and demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting American values and perspectives abroad.

Broadcasting to the Soviet Union became one of VOA's highest priorities. In 1946, former U.S. ambassador Averell Harriman argued that radio was the only effective means of reaching Soviet citizens directly. The Russian Service was established in 1947, followed by broadcasts in Ukrainian and several other languages of the Soviet republics, including Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and the Baltic languages. Many broadcasters were émigrés who possessed firsthand knowledge of Soviet society.

Throughout the Cold War, VOA served as an important alternative source of information for Soviet listeners. Although Soviet authorities jammed its broadcasts, many people continued to listen,

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especially during the periods of détente in the 1970s and *perestroika* after 1985. VOA gained a reputation for delivering information unavailable through official Soviet media.

The Georgian Service broadcast daily for thirty minutes and consisted of news, analysis, and editorials. Compared with Radio Liberty, VOA adopted a more restrained and objective style. Because it was widely regarded as a government-funded broadcaster, it sought to maintain credibility by presenting information in a balanced and professional manner.

VOA was also known for its cultural programming. Its Russian Service introduced Soviet audiences to Western popular music, including hard rock, while Willis Conover's famous *Jazz Hour* became influential throughout the Soviet bloc. Other programs focused on literature, health, and youth issues.

In March 2025, the Trump administration initiated major staff reductions within the U.S. Agency for Global Media, forcing VOA to suspend operations for the first time in its history. However, legal challenges followed, and in March 2026 a federal court ruled key actions associated with the restructuring unlawful. More than 1,000 employees were subsequently recalled, allowing VOA to resume its mission after the most serious crisis in its 83-year existence.

Introduction

The Voice of America (VOA) has been for decades an authoritative media source of information for people all over the world. For decades it influenced minds and opinions of people regardless of their origin or background. It was especially important for residents behind the Iron Curtain, as it provided an alternative view and perspective for adult and young listeners. It seemed that after the dismantle of the socialist system and revolution of information technologies, VOA entered the new paradigm and would successfully continue its functioning at the background of new political developments and challenges appearing in the world. However, the blow came unexpectedly from within – from the side which VOA was called to refer to and whose opinion it expressed in its editorial – the United States Government. What is the role, mission, and function of the Voice of America? What is its current situation and did it manage to overcome the unexpected challenge? The present report attempts to answer these questions.

The Voice of America's origins and mission

VOA, or the Voice of America is the official external radio and television broadcasting service of the United States federal government. Its main target audience is Americans who live outside America, in particular, those Americans who reside in the countries without free media (Farmer, 2025).

The Voice of America was established in 1942, during WW2. Being a short-wave broadcasting station, its primary objective in those times was to counter-balance the Nazi and fascist propaganda. Therefore, in 1942, the mission of VOA supposed "to broadcast accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news and information to an international audience" (VOA, 2026).

The first broadcast on Germany, called *Stimmen aus America* ("Voices from America") was undertaken on 1 February, 1942. First, there sounded "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (the official signature tune of VOA in all its short-wave broadcasts), which was followed by the statement: "Today, and every day from now on, we will be with you from America to talk about the war... The news may be good or bad for us – We will always tell you the truth." (Kern, 2010).

Initially, VOA's headquarters were located in New York. By the end of WWII, VOA broadcasted through 39 transmitters in 40 languages (Dizard, 2004). Its programming consisted of news, analytical programs and music. When the WWII was over, there were apprehensions that VOA would get closed because of the lack of necessity and there were significant cuts in its funding. However, the beginning of the Cold War proved that the mission of VOA was far from being over and that, in fact it was just starting. Foy Kohler, who was the VOA director from 1949 to 1952, witnessed that VOA got 30,000 letters per month from listeners from around the world and thousands of requests for VOA's broadcast schedules. Still being a director, Kohler conducted a study of letters which showed that the content of letters indicated on success of persuasive actions of the VOA. At the same time, the study showed that VOA had different influence in different countries. In many countries, it contributed to promotion of American values (Herzog, 1952).

The beginning of VOA's broadcasting on the USSR

VOA's broadcasts on Soviet Union were of special importance and its languages encompassed Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Georgian (later also Azerbaijani) and Uzbek. The main initiator of VOA's Russian service was one of the former owners of manganese concession in Georgian SSR in

1925-1928, and the US Ambassador in USSR in 1943-1946 Averrell Harriman. In the beginning of 1946, noting the limited efficiency of the US printing propaganda in the USSR (limited spread, cultural "inclination", Soviet censorship), he argued to his government that "radio is the only means of free and direct address towards the Soviet people for the USA" (Ivanian, 2001). While proclaiming this, the American side proceeded from the fact that the Soviet authorities would hardly be able to confront such broadcasting (the more so as they themselves had been practicing radio propaganda on the USA), and even if they resorted to jamming of radio broadcasts (or, alternatively, withdrawal/confiscation of radio receivers), that would discredit them in the eyes of their own people and the rest of the world and increase the interest of the Soviet people towards these programs. "As for the win in the radio war against the USA, USSR will not be able to do that, as the Soviet authorities know very well that their people are much more vulnerable to truth, than our ones for slander" (Ivanian, 2001).

VOA in Russian

The Russian section of the VOA appeared in 1947 with the beginning of the Cold War in the context that the broadcasting in Russian became one of the priorities of the USA. The workers of the Russian service were predominantly the "second wave" emigrants, among them the prominent Soviet secret service agent, defector Aleander Barmin.

In 1949, there started programs in the Ukrainian language, in 1951 – in the Lithuanian, Latvian Estonian, Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. In the mid-1970s the Voice of America formally was reorganized – the radio station ceased to be a governmental agency and radio journalists gained the opportunity of presenting their own personal point of view on the events happening in the world. At the same time, they maintained the daily "editorial" – a several-minutes review reflecting the view of the United States government.

In the Soviet times, the Voice of America, along with Radio Liberty, was one of the sources of information on the events in the USSR and in the world. The Soviet authorities subjected the programs in the Russian language as well as other languages of the nations of the USSR to jamming. In spite of that, people got the hang of listening to those programs, although that required a lot of strain and attention – it was quite difficult to catch the message through constant jamming and disturbances. The reception of the most quality (without jamming) was from the 1970 to the 1980 (the period of d'Etante

/ “the discharge of international strain” – as they were saying in the Soviet media) and from the 1985 to the 1991 – with the coming of “perestroika”.

The peak of the jamming came on 1983, but even then numerous people listened to the Voice of America. VOA was so popular in the Soviet Union that there was a well-known joke in Moscow: when somebody retold the recent news heard on the radio, they would often add, not to name the radio station: “The voice bestowed upon me, which told me…” – the hearer understood perfectly well which voice that was (The Voice of America Turns 70, 2012).

VOA in Georgian

During the Cold War, in the Georgian language the VOA broadcasted daily for half an hour. The program would start at 12.00 o’clock at midnight and continued till 12.30. The program included the recent news (10 minutes), the analytical program 15 minutes and the editorial reflecting the view of the United States government (5 minutes). The program was led by experienced and prominent announcers – Valiko Megreli, Leo Lechkhumeli, Ramaz Jabadari, and others. For comparison: the programs of Radio Liberty broadcasted from Munich in Georgian also were run daily, but lasted longer – 1 full hour. At the same time, VOA’s Georgian programs were featured by a more reserved style compared to Radio Liberty, although the content of the programs was, of course, based on interpretation of the events taking an alternative view to the Soviet mainstream media. This has the following explanation: Although formally independent, VOA was still considered world-wide as a governmental media, especially as it was funded through the United States government through the Congress. This imposed on VOA particular responsibility of maintaining special boundaries, particular borders while addressing Soviet citizens. Although Radio Liberty was also funded by the United States, it was authorized by more freedom in composing its content with its style, manner and methods featured by more freedom and directness. VOA could not afford to cross the boundaries which Radio Liberty allowed itself to. That is why idea of the VOA was to be perceived by a Soviet listener as a government-based, reliable and unbiased source of information, maintaining the objective style and tone of delivering the information, which should be appealing for the listener and augment the mission of VOA as a broadcasting station which delivered only the truth, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

Music on VOA

Along with the BBC, the Voice of America was one of the few radio stations, which broadcasted in its Russian service hard rock and other music for youth from 1976 in the program called "Dance Music" ("muzyka dlia tancev"), led by Marina Levitskaya, Masha Sukhanova, Yuri Osmolovsky, Bill Skandrich and other announcers. Often after weekends, students and schoolboys in the USSR discussed the new pieces of hard rock, having listened on Friday and Saturday rock-music programs on the waves of the Russian service of VOA.

Jazz program of the Voice of America, led by Willis Conover ("Jazz Hour") was popular in the USSR and the whole world. Popular were the program on health care, led by Irina Kellner, books review by Liudmila Foster, youth programs of Yevgeni Aronov and William "Bill" Scanrdich, as well as literary sessions involving the reading of novels of Vasily Grossman, Vasily Aksyonov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, stories of Edgar A. Poe, and much more.

VOA during Trump's administration

In March, 2025, US president Donald Trump signed the decree on redundancy in the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM), leading to interruption of the working of the Voice of America. Around 1.3 thousand workers were informed about the paid vacation until receiving the further instructions. Director of VOA Michael Abramovitz announced that this is the first case for 83 years that the broadcasting is stopped. He noted the necessity for reforms, but expressed apprehension that current measures undermine the mission of the organization. Almost the same was said by journalist Toluse Olorunippa, who wrote in *The Atlantic*:

For the first time since VOA was founded in 1942, to counter Nazi propaganda during World War II, the network went dark in March. In some parts of the world, viewers wondered if the blank screens meant a coup had taken place in the U.S., Steve Herman, who recently retired from VOA after a 20-year career, told me (Olorunippa, 2025).

As a result, Trump administration faced lawsuits filed at them since March, 2025. In the beginning of March, 2026, Royce Lamberth, U.S. District Court Judge, ruled that President Trump's appointment of the new chief of VOA's parent agency was illegal, which abolished cutbacks and other actions

taken since 2025 (Salam, 2026). Finally, on March 17, 2026, more than 1,000 VOA employees were called to return to their work by the end of the month (Calhoun, 2026).

Conclusions

1. The Voice of America is a broadcasting agency, whose power was forged during the WWII and which designated its mission as presenting the truth however unpleasant it may be;
2. VOA worked in 49 languages and its role was irreplaceable, especially as, broadcasting in major languages of the Soviet Union, it served as a source of information having no match in terms of delivering an alternative information;
3. VOA had a Georgian service, whose programs, although short-time (just half-an-hour) managed to influence the consciousness of Georgian citizens behind the iron curtain;
4. VOA's programs had huge impact upon young listeners, as its musical shows ranged from rock and pop to jazz music;
5. In 2025, Trump's administration undertook an unprecedented step, attempting to curtail VOA's working, but, using legal leverage, VOA managed to defend its rights and its workers returned to its offices in March, 2026.

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The Second Shift and Gender Inequality: A Comparative Analysis of American and Georgian Women (XX-XXI)

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Abstract

The persistence of gender inequality in contemporary societies is closely linked to the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care labour. The concept of the "second shift," first introduced by Arlie Hochschild, remains a foundational framework for understanding how women navigate the dual burden of paid employment and unpaid household responsibilities. This article examines the second shift within the comparative contexts of the United States and Georgia, drawing on recent empirical research (2020–2025) and institutional reports from OECD, UN Women, and the International Labour Organization. The findings demonstrate that, despite increased participation in the labour market, women continue to perform the majority of unpaid labour, leading to sustained work-family conflict, constrained career progression, and adverse psychological outcomes. Furthermore, the expansion of remote work has intensified rather than alleviated these burdens. The study concludes that the second shift is maintained through the interaction of structural policy gaps and deeply embedded cultural norms, requiring coordinated institutional and societal reforms.

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Introduction

The transformation of women's participation in the labour market represents a major social development of the modern era. However, this transformation has not been accompanied by an equivalent redistribution of unpaid domestic responsibilities. As a result, women continue to experience a dual burden: engagement in paid employment alongside primary responsibility for household and caregiving duties. This phenomenon, widely conceptualised as the "second shift," remains a key mechanism through which gender inequality is reproduced.

In contemporary societies, the second shift extends beyond traditional domestic tasks and includes emotional and cognitive labour. Women are not only responsible for performing household duties but also for organising, planning, and managing them. This "mental load" is essential to family functioning yet remains largely invisible and undervalued.

Global evidence confirms that the second shift is a persistent structural issue. According to OECD (2023) and UN Women (2024), women perform more than twice as much unpaid care work as men across both developed and developing contexts. This imbalance demonstrates that economic progress alone does not eliminate gender inequality in domestic labour. (OECD, 2023; UN Women, 2024; Sullivan, 2021).

Global Patterns of Unpaid Domestic and Care Work

Empirical data consistently reveal a significant gender gap in unpaid labour. Women perform approximately **70–75% of unpaid domestic and care work globally**, while men contribute only a minority share.

Figure 1. Distribution of Unpaid Domestic and Care Work by Gender (%)

Gender Share of Unpaid Work (%)

Women 72%

Men 28%

Source: OECD (2023); UN Women (2024); ILO (2022)

As illustrated in Figure 1, women perform nearly three-quarters of all unpaid domestic labour worldwide. This unequal distribution reflects deeply rooted gender norms that position women as primary caregivers. The consequences of this imbalance extend beyond the household, affecting women's economic participation, career development, and overall well-being. (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022).

The unequal allocation of unpaid labour significantly reduces women's available time and limits their ability to engage fully in paid employment. As a result, women often face structural disadvantages in labour markets, including reduced working hours, lower earnings, and limited career advancement opportunities. (Craig and Churchill 2022).

The Evolution of the Second Shift in the 21st Century

Although the concept of the second shift was introduced several decades ago, its relevance has increased in the contemporary period. Recent studies confirm that, despite changes in labour market participation, domestic labour remains unequally distributed.

Research conducted between 2020 and 2025 indicates that women continue to spend substantially more time on unpaid work than men, even in dual-income households. This suggests that the second shift is not a temporary imbalance but a deeply embedded structural condition. (Craig & Churchill, 2022; Chung & van der Horst, 2023).

Furthermore, unpaid labour has become increasingly complex. In addition to physical tasks, women are responsible for cognitive and emotional labour, including coordinating family schedules, managing children's education, and maintaining social relationships. These responsibilities are time-intensive and psychologically demanding, yet they are rarely recognised in formal economic measures.

Remote Work and the Intensification of the Second Shift

The expansion of remote work has introduced new dynamics into work-family relations. While flexible work arrangements were expected to support work-life balance, evidence suggests that they have often intensified the second shift for women. Flexible work research also supports this observation (Chung & van der Horst, 2023).

The blurring of boundaries between work and home environments has resulted in overlapping roles. Women working from home frequently manage professional responsibilities simultaneously with domestic tasks, leading to increased role strain.

This dynamic aligns with Work-Family Border Theory, which emphasises the importance of clear boundaries between work and family domains. When these boundaries become unclear or permeable, conflict increases, contributing to higher levels of stress and reduced well-being.

Health and Psychological Consequences

The cumulative burden of the second shift has significant implications for women's mental and physical health. Studies consistently demonstrate that women who perform a disproportionate share of unpaid labour are more likely to experience stress, fatigue, and burnout. (Sullivan, 2021).

Excessive domestic responsibilities contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduce opportunities for rest and recovery. Over time, this can lead to chronic stress and long-term health problems.

The psychological effects of the second shift also extend to workplace performance. Women experiencing high levels of work-family conflict often report decreased productivity, lower job satisfaction, and increased likelihood of workforce withdrawal.

Career Implications and Economic Inequality

The second shift plays a critical role in shaping women's economic outcomes. Time constraints and energy depletion limit women's ability to invest in career development and professional advancement.

Women are therefore underrepresented in leadership positions and continue to experience income disparities compared to men. The "motherhood penalty" further exacerbates these inequalities, as mothers are often perceived as less committed to their careers. (Williams & Bornstein, 2023).

In contrast, men frequently benefit from the "fatherhood premium," highlighting the gendered nature of workplace expectations. This reinforces structural inequalities and perpetuates gender gaps in employment and income.

Comparative Analysis: United States and Georgia

United States

In the United States, the second shift is closely linked to gaps in social policy. The absence of federally mandated paid parental leave and the high cost of childcare create significant challenges for working families.

Although flexible work arrangements are available in some sectors, access remains unequal. Lower-income workers are less likely to benefit from such policies, leading to compounded inequalities based on both gender and socio-economic status.

Georgia

In Georgia, traditional gender norms play a more dominant role in shaping the second shift. Women are widely expected to prioritise family responsibilities, regardless of their employment status.

Institutional support for working mothers remains limited, particularly in terms of childcare access and workplace flexibility. As a result, women face significant barriers to balancing work and family responsibilities. (UN Women Georgia, 2024; CRRC Georgia, 2023).

Structural and Cultural Drivers of Inequality

The persistence of the second shift reflects the interaction between structural and cultural factors. Structural factors include policy gaps, labour market conditions, and access to childcare services, while cultural factors involve societal expectations regarding gender roles.

Together, these factors create a system in which women are expected to fulfil both professional and domestic responsibilities without sufficient support.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Addressing the second shift requires comprehensive policy interventions, including:

- Expansion of paid parental leave
- Increased access to affordable childcare

- Promotion of flexible work arrangements
- Encouragement of shared domestic responsibilities

Such measures have been shown to reduce gender inequality and improve overall social and economic outcomes. (Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2024).

Conclusion

The second shift remains a defining feature of gender inequality in contemporary societies. Despite significant progress in women's participation in paid employment, the unequal distribution of unpaid labour continues to limit women's opportunities and well-being.

Achieving meaningful gender equality requires a fundamental transformation in how care work is valued and distributed. Only through coordinated policy reform, workplace change, and cultural shifts can the second shift be effectively addressed.

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From Independence to Migration: Georgian Mobility to the United States in the Context of American Founding Ideals

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Abstract

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence provides an opportunity to examine the influence of American founding ideals beyond the borders of the United States. While liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness are often discussed within the framework of American political development, these principles have also shaped global perceptions of the United States and influenced migration aspirations across generations. This article explores Georgian migration to the United States through the lens of American founding ideals, arguing that the attraction of America has historically extended beyond economic opportunities and political stability.

Drawing upon the author's doctoral research on the three waves of Georgian immigration to the United States, the study examines how different groups of Georgian migrants perceived America during distinct historical periods. The first wave emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under Russian imperial rule. The second wave consisted largely of political refugees and exiles following the Soviet occupation of Georgia and the aftermath of the Second World War. The third wave developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and has been primarily characterized by economic migration and increasing transnational mobility. Although each wave was shaped by specific political, economic, and social conditions, all reveal a recurring perception of the United States as a society associated with freedom, opportunity, and self-realization.

The article argues that American founding ideals have functioned as a symbolic factor influencing Georgian migration aspirations across different historical periods. By linking migration history with the intellectual legacy of the Declaration of Independence, the study demonstrates how national narratives can transcend geographical boundaries and continue to shape human mobility more than two centuries after their articulation.

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Introduction

In 2026, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, one of the most influential political documents in modern history. Adopted on July 4, 1776, the Declaration articulated principles of liberty, equality, individual rights, and the pursuit of happiness that would become central not only to American political culture but also to global understandings of freedom and self-government. Throughout the past two and a half centuries, these ideals have inspired democratic movements, shaped political discourse, and influenced the aspirations of millions of people worldwide.

Migration represents one of the most visible manifestations of this influence. For many individuals, the United States has long represented more than a geographic destination; it has functioned as a symbol of opportunity, freedom, and social mobility. While migration scholars traditionally emphasize economic incentives and political conditions as primary drivers of migration, perceptions, values, and symbolic narratives also play a significant role in shaping migration decisions.

The history of Georgian migration to the United States provides a valuable case study for examining this relationship. Georgian mobility to America spans more than a century and encompasses three distinct migration waves shaped by different historical contexts. Despite substantial differences in motivation and circumstances, each wave reveals recurring perceptions of the United States as a society where individuals could pursue opportunities unavailable in their homeland. This article explores how American founding ideals influenced Georgian migration aspirations and contributed to the development of Georgian-American identity across different generations.

American Founding Ideals and Migration Aspirations

The Declaration of Independence occupies a unique position in world history because its principles were framed as universal rather than exclusively national. Its assertion that all individuals possess inherent rights and are entitled to pursue happiness transformed political thought and influenced democratic movements around the world.

Over time, these principles became closely associated with the broader concept of the American Dream. The belief that individuals can improve their lives through hard work, personal initiative, and equal opportunity became one of the most recognizable features of America's global image. For

prospective migrants, this image often carried as much significance as economic indicators or labor market conditions.

Migration scholars increasingly recognize that migration decisions are shaped not only by material realities but also by perceptions and aspirations. The United States emerged as a particularly powerful destination within global migration imaginaries because it represented a political and social order grounded in individual liberty and democratic governance. These perceptions frequently influenced migrants long before they arrived in the country itself.

For Georgians living under imperial rule, Soviet domination, or post-Soviet instability, America represented both a practical destination and an ideological alternative. Consequently, migration decisions often reflected a combination of economic necessity and attraction to the values associated with American society.

Georgian Mobility and the Three Waves of Migration

The first wave of Georgian migration emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Georgia was incorporated into the Russian Empire. According to the author's doctoral research, early migrants primarily originated from the regions of Guria and Racha and were motivated by social hardship, economic difficulties, and aspirations for a better future. Although limited in scale, this wave established the first connections between Georgia and the United States and introduced the idea of America as a land of opportunity.

The second wave developed after the Soviet occupation of Georgia in 1921 and expanded following the Second World War. Unlike the earlier migrants, these individuals were primarily political refugees, intellectuals, aristocrats, and anti-Soviet activists. For them, the United States represented not only safety but also the preservation of democratic values and political freedom. Migration became both a practical necessity and a symbolic rejection of authoritarian rule. Georgian political émigrés actively participated in diaspora organizations and sought to preserve Georgian national identity while adapting to American society.

The third wave began after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Economic instability, unemployment, and social uncertainty encouraged many Georgians to seek opportunities abroad. While economic motivations dominated this wave, the symbolic attraction of the United States

remained evident. For many migrants, America continued to represent upward mobility, educational opportunities, personal freedom, and professional advancement. The third wave differs from previous migrations in its greater emphasis on integration into American society while simultaneously maintaining transnational ties with Georgia.

American Ideals and Georgian-American Identity

Migration does not end upon arrival. Migrants continuously negotiate their identities between homeland and host society. Georgian-Americans provide a particularly interesting example of this process because they have generally succeeded in integrating into American society while preserving elements of Georgian culture, language, and tradition.

The experience of Georgian migrants demonstrates that American founding ideals are not merely historical concepts but living principles that continue to influence identity formation. Liberty and opportunity have encouraged integration into American civic life, while the multicultural nature of American society has enabled Georgian migrants to maintain connections with their heritage.

This dual identity reflects the broader success of the American democratic model. Rather than requiring complete cultural assimilation, the United States has historically provided space for immigrant communities to participate in civic life while preserving distinct cultural traditions. Georgian-American communities illustrate how migration can simultaneously promote integration and cultural continuity.

Conclusion

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence offers an opportunity to reconsider the global influence of American founding ideals. The case of Georgian migration demonstrates that these principles have shaped not only political discourse but also migration aspirations across multiple generations.

Although Georgian migrants were influenced by different historical circumstances, including economic hardship, political repression, and social instability, the United States consistently appeared as a destination associated with freedom, opportunity, and self-realization. American founding ideals

therefore functioned not merely as political concepts but as powerful symbols that influenced perceptions, aspirations, and migration decisions.

More than two centuries after their articulation, the principles of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness continue to resonate far beyond American borders. Georgian migration to the United States illustrates how these ideals remain relevant in shaping individual choices and collective experiences in an increasingly interconnected world.

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