

**Within the Ashes of Decline: The American Renewal**

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### **Abstract**

The United States of America, a relatively new empire, has dominated the geopolitical realm for a little under a century. Transforming from a British colony into a global superpower, the country undertook a massive role as the 'leader of the free world' following the aftermath of World War II. Despite the massive military and economic presence of the United States, within the last decades conversations surrounding the country's decline have circulated political debates. First, this paper will analyze the rise of the United States, as to understand its subsequent decline. It then explores three major theoretical frameworks: American Exceptionalism that argues that the United States will grow for more decades to come, and avoid decline; Declinism theory contends that the country has overstretched their imperial power and cannot sustain their global dominance leading to imperial decline; Neo-Imperialism theory asserts that the pursuit of global power, has led to a neglect of domestic duties. Ultimately this paper argues that by 2075 the United States will be replaced by another global power. However, through the ashes of the American Empire, a social renewal will emerge within the American people that will fundamentally alter the nation's identity and future.

### **Within the Ashes of Decline: The American Renewal**

Established in 1776 from the ashes of a long and bloody fight for independence, the United States of America started as thirteen measly British colonies but has evolved over the past 249 years to span across the North American Continent. The United States federal republic consists of fifty states, the federal capital district of Washington D.C., as well as fifteen U.S. territories which includes American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The military strength and presence of the United States has stretched around the world through hundreds of military bases and stationed troops within foreign countries they wish to intervene and disrupt for economic profit. The transformation from colonial entity into the global superpower seen today is short lived, despite the country's claim on the economic global capital, the United States is miles behind their fellow industrialized countries in access and quality of healthcare, affordability of housing, racial equality and overall standard of living (U.S. News & World Report, 2024). Conversations challenging the global power of the United States have popularized within the international community in recent decades asking the question, if the U.S. can continue to be a stable force fifty years into the future and beyond? Individuals from the school of American Exceptionalism theory claim that the United States is not declining and will continue this trend of global expansion because they have an ordained destiny to do so. Members from the Declinist theory would contend that the United States has overstretched their imperial power. Additionally, the emergence of a multi-polar global stage, allowing for rising nation-states to compete with U.S. economic and military power, Declinist argue that the dominance of the United States has dwindled. The Neo-Imperialism school of thought concurs with this sentiment, theorizing that due to the quest for international power, the United States has neglected domestic duties, ultimately leading to a decline. They are not far from the truth. Domestically, the idea that the

U.S. is ‘the best country in the world’ has diminished within the American public due to the worsening of economic conditions and awareness of systematic racial marginalization in the last ten to twenty years. Evidence in this essay from the Declinist and Neo-imperial school of thought will counter the theories of American Exceptionalism to explain how the current socio-political climate of the United States on both the domestic and the international stage is shifting downwards. This examination will demonstrate that by 2075, the decline in the United States’ global power will lead to a domestic renewal of American Culture focused on the abolition of the racial capitalist institutions embedded within the country’s foundation.

Before this paper can examine the international and domestic decline of the United States, it is essential to explore the foundations of the country’s democracy and political institutions that have nurtured the spread of American dominance through imperialism. Prior to the massive shift of the country’s global expansion, their sovereignty was initially limited to the original thirteen British colonies from which gained freedom after the Revolutionary War. Professor of Early Christianity at Claremont School of Theology, Burton Mack comments in the *Yale University Press* that the United States’ freedom from Britain differed historically from other European revolutions, due to the American Revolution having, “the value of personal freedom to pursue the practical projects called for by living in America as a “new land” (Mack, 2017). In other words, the American Revolution was driven by the desire of colonists to have the personal freedom to create and expand their own economy. Thus, the first American century was defined by the notion of ‘westward expansion’ even at the expense and brutalization of indigenous populations. This expansion was directed by the concept of ‘Manifest Destiny’. The Smithsonian American Art Museum defines this term as, “the belief that the expansion of the United States was divinely ordained, justifiable, and inevitable, was used to rationalize the

removal of American Indians from their native homelands” (“Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal”, n.d.). To explain further, the desire to move westward into the North American continent was exemplified by the idea that the U.S. had a divine calling to expand further for the common good of both the Indigenous tribes and American citizens. Having already gained land after the French and Indian war in 1763, and in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the rhetoric of manifest destiny became stronger in social influence. Due to the implementation of discriminatory policies such as the Indian Removal act of 1830, as well as receiving modern day California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah after the Mexican-American war (1846–1848), westward expansion was almost entirely complete by the end of the first American Century. The desire to expand through the sentiment of manifest destiny works as the origins of American imperialism that will continue to motivate intervention beyond the country’s border and evolution of American military strength for the next two centuries.

Westward expansion was not the only culturally defining event during the first century of the United States. This period was filled with intense turmoil and cultural division over the future of the economic institution of slavery. Tracing back to before the Revolutionary War, the enslavement of African Americans was essential to the American economy for over 400 years. That is to say, institutions of racial capitalism have permeated within the country before the American victory from Britain. Coined by American professor and political philosopher Cedric Robinson, racial capitalism defined by scholar Charisse Burden-Stelly as the “continuation of “the social, cultural, political, and ideological complexes of European feudalisms”—that is, its “racial, tribal, linguistic, and regional” antagonisms—into the capitalist form” (Burden Shelly, 2020). Robinson argues in his conceptualization of racialized capitalism that the economic system emerged from foundations of feudal Europe that concurred with European racial, and

ethnic divisions. Due to this, capitalism has an inherent exploitative nature on the basis of race and ethnic background to ensure the domination of the white race over nonwhite races (Burden Shelly, 2020). Within the United States, the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade was constructed as the foundation of the country's economy based off the exploitation and inferiority of African Slaves from the pre-existing European feudal order.

As the country began to expand with the acquisition of new land, there became a heavy dispute over the expansion of slavery into the newly possessed territories. Southerners whose livelihood depended on the labor of enslaved African Americans wanted the territories to be deemed 'slave states', whereas abolitionist northerners wanted these areas to be 'free states'. This dispute escalated throughout the century with numerous calls of secession by the southerners but with the aid of mediation efforts, these calls were silenced for a short period. The election of President Lincoln in 1860 marked the first round of southern states to secede. Many Southern states followed, leading up to the official start of the American Civil war with the confederate attack on Fort Sumter. What occurred from this war was a great tragedy, American historian James McPherson theorized that, "At least 620,000 soldiers lost their lives in the war, 2 percent of the American population in 1861" (McPherson, 2010). The bloody war lasted for four years resulting in the mass deaths of both union and confederate soldiers, as well as creation of three post war constitutional amendments. The 13th amendment abolished slavery within the country with the exception of criminals, the 14th amendment provided equal citizenship and rights under the law, and the 15th amendment granted equal voting rights to all citizens.

The transition into the second American Century focused on rebuilding the country after a short but bloody civil war. Entitled the 'Reconstruction era', between the years of 1865 and 1877 with the implementation of the post-war amendments, the country focused on reintegrating

the seceded southern states, as well as maintaining equal rights to the newly emancipated slaves. This short time of hope for freed slaves to achieve true equality was quickly squashed with the implementation of another racial caste system that uplifted the previous institutions of racial capitalism. The passage of Jim Crow laws that specifically targeted Black Americans, degraded them to second class citizens and stripped them of the rights previously awarded after the war. These laws were kick started from the Supreme Court ruling *Plessy V. Ferguson* (1896) that set the precedent for the separate but equal doctrine, and authorized legal racial discrimination against Black Americans. Cultural attitudes of the Jim Crow south justified their unconstitutional segregation of Black people through creating fear and hysteria about the equality of races. Dr. David Pilgrim from the Jim Crow Museum explains his phenomenon, stating, “craniologists, eugenicists, phrenologists, and Social Darwinists, at every educational level, buttressed the belief that black people were innately intellectually and culturally inferior to white people. Pro-segregation politicians gave eloquent speeches on the great danger of integration: the mongrelization of the white race” (Pilgrim, 2000). To further explain, maintaining the idea that Black people were culturally, racially, and anatomically inferior to white people was essential to a continuation of the racial hierarchies that existed due to slavery. The documentary *13th* further details the effects of Jim Crow laws that worked to criminalize the black body and ensure that black communities would be over policed and underfunded. All in the effort to funnel Black Americans back into pre-war conditions through the loophole within the 13th amendment that allowed for legal slavery within the prison system (DuVernay, 2016). The foundations of racial capitalism through the institution slavery never ended, only evolving into the second American century in what is seen as now as institutions of incarceration.

Emerging into an industrial giant, the United States' economy boomed the decades following the Civil War. The rapid growth of industrial industries created urban cities where millions of unemployed Americans migrated to, looking for a job within the oil, steel, railroad and coal mining field. The newfound economic opportunity within the United States attracted an influx of immigration from foreign countries. The Library of Congress estimates that between 1870 and 1900 over 12 million immigrants arrived within the United States, whether the reason be the fleeing of famine, job shortages, or political instability these individuals arrived within the country for economic opportunity. Despite living in the same cities, and working within the same industrial factories, immigrants lived within cluster communities of shared ethnic background. These communities fostered a cultural hub where immigrants from all around the world could adjust to American life, as well as mesh their culture within American cuisine, art, and religion. The impact of immigrant labor on expanding the economic empire of the United States and changing of traditional American culture and identities was threatening to native born Americans who felt that their culture was under attack. Thus, sparking a wave of xenophobic nativism ideology across the nation. The movement of nativism as Britannica defines, is an "ideology, governmental policy, or political stance that prioritizes the interests and well-being of native-born...of a given country over those of immigrants, typically by advocating or enacting restrictions on immigration" (Samie, 2019). In other words, the spread of this ideology involved protecting the national Anglo-Saxon identity of native-born Americans from the incursion of non-native settlers, through restricting immigration. What occurred from this was intense social tension between native-born Americans and immigrants, as well as religious prejudice against Catholic and Jewish people, and ethnic prejudice of the Irish, Italians, Polish, and other European groups. This also includes racial prejudice against Asian immigrants, resulting in the Chinese

Exclusion Act of 1882 that effectively ended Chinese immigration for decades (Library of Congress, n.d.). Similar to the role of African Americans within the American economy, the labor of immigrants was essential to continuing economic growth of the United States and thus systems of racial capitalism. However, once they started to mix and disrupt traditional Anglo-Saxon culture, they were no longer considered desirable within the country, but instead a national threat. Xenophobic nativist movements against immigrants have become a recurring pattern throughout American history that has continued to be the topic of political debate and social tension into the modern political sphere.

Nativist ideology and the belief of 'manifest destiny' worked in tandem to marginalize ethnic and racial minorities while also supporting the spread of Anglo-Saxon ideals around the world for economic interests. With nowhere left to expand within the continent, and the rapid economic growth through industrialization, the United States' second century marks a new beginning of American expansion. The Council on Foreign Relations details that the first overseas territories acquired by the United States were a selection of islands within the Caribbean Sea, and Pacific Ocean for their abundance of guano, translated to bird poop. This natural resource was an extremely valuable fertilizer for farmers within the United States in areas that had extremely nutrient depleted soil (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Despite this conquest, the young country still had a small international reputation and global reach compared to the other European superpower of France, Great Britain and Spain. The Spanish-American war effectively changed this. In 1898, the United States declared war on Spain, after accusing them of blowing up the USS Maine, an American warship. However, after a few months of fighting, the United States defeated Spain and consequently acquired Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Additionally, around a year later in 1898 the United States

officially annexed Hawaii for control over their agricultural economy and thus expansion of American Businesses (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). The major victory against Spain for the United States set an international precedent that the former British colony that had quietly expanded over the last century had the potential to become a global imperial power.

Despite the mass economic growth, and international expansion of the United States, the country wanted to stay isolated from international conflicts, specifically wanting to keep out of World War I occurring in Europe. President Woodrow Wilson was initially successful in his promise to keep the U.S. out of the war, however in 1917 the United States officially entered WWI to aid the Allied powers (France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, and Japan) against the Central powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). Due to their late entry into the war, and lack of warfare occurring within their sovereignty, the United States ended the war economically well off compared to their European allies and gained international prestige among world powers (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

In between World I and II, the United States fell back into isolation due to the great depression that occurred after the stock market crash in 1929. The effects of this global recession were catastrophic to the American people, The Library of Congress reports that as stocks continued, “businesses failed, and unemployment rose dramatically... one of every four workers was unemployed. Banks failed and life savings were lost... With no job and no savings, thousands of Americans lost their homes”. Without any strong efforts of government intervention, the poverty stricken American public lost hope in their government as they sank deeper into the depression. This was until Franklin Roosevelt came into office, introducing the ‘New Deal’ that involved bank reform laws, emergency relief and work relief programs, union protections, Social Security, and various federal agencies that worked on social services. The

relief programs and agencies created by the New Deal were extremely successful in increasing employment, and aiding Americans in getting out of poverty. As a result, Roosevelt created the foundation of a strong central government that functioned to involve itself within the social and economic affairs of the public (Library of Congress, n.d.).

As the United States was slowly recovering from the economic fallout resulting from the depression, World War II began in Europe. At that time, the country wanted to stay out of the war at all costs, only supplying weapons to the Allied powers. However, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States joined the fight against the Axis powers. The war officially ended in 1945 at the Japanese surrender following the United States' dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war's closure brought an American victory that subsequently pushed the country into extreme global power.

Post-war, the United States became the face of democracy and peace within the international arena, they worked to rebuild the European economy and promote democratic (capitalists) ideals, much to the opposition of the Soviet Union who wanted to expand their empire of communism. What was once a multipolar international landscape with global power split between various countries, was now after WWII only big enough for one rising power, thus the United States filled that spot for the next century (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

Now that the foundation of the United States' entrance into global power has been thoroughly outlined, there can now be a discussion on how such power has dwindled since their peak in the aftermath of World War II. Members of the American Exceptionalist school of thought would disagree, viewing the rise of the United States as an ordained event in history. Stephen Walt, a columnist at *Foreign Policy*, explains that American Exceptionalism, "presume that America's values, political system, and history are unique and worthy of universal

admiration...The United States is both destined and entitled to play a distinct and positive role on the world stage” (Walt, 2011). In other words, this school of thought argues that the United States is inherently superior due to their unique democratic values, political system and historical development from colony to global superpower. Building off the movements of ‘Manifest Destiny’, American Exceptionalism encourages the United States as the ‘Leader of the Free World’ to continue to expand their imperial power into the sovereignty of other nations.

Fostering ideological support for such foreign intervention has been extremely important, Burton Mack in the *Yale University Press* explains that American exceptionalism drove sentiments that the United States had, “a special responsibility to exert global leadership...promote democracy and human rights around the world...[and] lead by building strong alliances, usually with other democracies” (Mack, 2017). Thus, the spread of ‘Pro-American’ propaganda curated the illusion to the public that American intervention into foreign countries was actually an act of national security. Through the use of the foreign policy strategy such as ‘containment’ during the Cold War, the United States intervened within Vietnam, and Korea, both conflicts ended in extreme American casualties and little to no success. This however did not curb American intervention, the country continued to involve itself into smaller foreign countries. Ronald Reagan in his 1985 State of the Union Address, affirmed such expansion, stating, “We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. Support for freedom fighters is self-defense” (Carpenter, 1986). The concept that the United States was fighting for freedom and democracy, implies that the country is morally justified in their imperial efforts. The sentiment of American exceptionalism within imperialism has spanned decades, into the post-cold war political sphere, especially useful during

the ‘war on terror’ in the aftermath of 9/11, to excuse the military invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

The international power of the U.S. in the eyes of American Exceptionalists is not fleeting as some may say, but instead the country will actually continue to grow. Conservative politicians in recent days are focused on maintaining such global economic and military dominance. Newly elected President Donald Trump’s political slogan of ‘Make America Great Again’ focuses on expanding and strengthening American influence, as well as cementing a cultural shift back to traditional American norms. It is important to mention that going back to ‘traditional American ideals’, is another phrase for restricting the rights of women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals and racial minorities. Concurring with American exceptionalist thought, practices of making America greater works to ensure that the country will never fall behind their international peers and will continue their global imperial strength into the next fifty years and beyond.

In the historical journey of every civilization on Earth, there has never been an imperial power that sustained their peak military strength, wealth and global influence forever. Every mighty empire has fallen, whether it be with fire and lights such as the Roman Empire or fell quietly in the background of global politics like the British Empire. The United States, a fairly new empire only receiving their peak global influence less than one hundred years ago, is not the exception to this trend as American Exceptionalist scholars might think. As stated previously, members of the American Exceptionalist school of thought believe that the country will not experience the fate of decline any time soon. However, members of the Declinists school of thought believe to see a different future for the United States of America. They argue that, by 2075 the United States will no longer be the single global power, and will be replaced by another

industrialized country, most likely China. In Paul Kennedy's book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, he dissects the great empires from as far back as 1500 into 2000, in an effort to figure out why great powers decline. He asserts in his book that, "Military and naval endeavors may not always have been the *raison d'être* [reason for being] of the new nations-states, but it certainly was their most expensive and pressing activity" (Kennedy, 1987, p.71). In other words, having and maintaining a strong military is an essential reason for the continuation of empires and thus a decline in such power is detrimental to the sovereignty of the empire.

Circling this back to the United States, it has become clear in the last couple decades that the country has expanded their military to such a great extent that it is no longer sustainable. Kennedy speaks directly of this concept of imperial overstretch within the American Empire, stating, "Decision-makers in Washington must face the awkward and enduring fact that the sum total of the United States' global interests and obligations is nowadays far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously" (Kennedy, 1987, p. 534). That is to say, global economic interests and imperial maintenance of the United States that was attainable within a post-World War II global stage, is not the case within the modern age with rising multipolar entities. USA FACTS reported on the 2024 defense overview, finding that, "after adjusting for inflation, defense spending has risen 62% since 1980, climbing from \$506 billion to \$820 billion by 2023" (USA FACTS, 2024). This massive sum of taxpayer money funneled into the U.S. defense budget supports American dependency on oil interests through military operations in foreign territories around the world. The Cato Institute estimates that the United States has over 750 military bases in 80 countries around the world as of 2021, this is three times as many as the industrialized countries of other industrialized countries of Russia, the United Kingdom and China (Bandow, 2021). Not only are these military bases financially expensive to

maintain, but David Vine, et al, in a study from the Quincy Institution states, that they are also very costly, “politically, socially, and environmentally. US bases in foreign lands often raise geopolitical tensions, support undemocratic regimes, and serve as a recruiting tool for militant groups opposed to the US presence and the governments its presence bolsters” (Vine, et al, 2021). In essence, the presence of U.S. military bases within foreign countries has exacerbated geopolitical conflicts and actually has worked to recruit militia groups against American imperialism. Thus, resulting in increased conflict and more American taxpayer money into endless wars in the name of the imperial empire.

Due to the sheer massive amount of defense spending that the United States shells out on endless wars and military conflicts every year, one would assume that their military dominance would be unmatched. However, with the emergence of a multipolar international stage that has fostered the rising of multiple global economic powers, the military efforts of the United States are acts to maintain a hold on their former unipolar dominance. Jeff Janaro of the *Foreign Policy Journal* reports on Harvard Professor, Niall Ferguson’s article, *Sinking Globalization*, where Ferguson argues that “the United States also suffers from personnel deficits’...the 500,000 deployable troop limit which he [Ferguson] says is not sufficient to win “all the small wars” the United States is waging and will have to wage in order to maintain the current military posture” (Ferguson, as cited in Janaro, 2023). That is to say, the current military reach of the United States is so large that they cannot financially or even realistically stretch their personnel and resources within all the conflicts that they put themselves in.

While the U.S. has been attempting to financially support their military endeavors, other countries such as China have been slowly building their economic power to rival that of the United States. Economist Dean Baker from the Center for Economic and Policy Research, cites

data from the International Monetary Fund to illustrate such rivaled growth. He states as of 2023, “measuring by purchasing power parity, China’s economy passed the U.S. in 2014, and it is now roughly 25 percent larger. The I.M.F. projects that China’s economy will be nearly 40 percent larger by 2028,”. To explain further, the purchasing power parity examines the cost of living, and prices of goods and services within a country’s economy, to measure what people within a specific country can buy with the money they have. When economists say that China’s economy has surpassed the U.S. in 2014 and is continuing to grow since then by measures of PPP, they are reporting that China consumes and produces more goods and services, thus making their economy larger. The international impact of China’s economic growth is staggering. In 2020 China accounted for 14.7% of good exports, whereas the United States accounted for 8.1%. Additionally in 2023, China was responsible for \$90 billion of foreign direct investments, whereas the United States was only responsible for \$66 billion (Baker, 2023). Does this data directly say that China will replace the United States as the new global powerhouse? No. However, the numbers do not lie when telling the story of the United States’ economic decline in recent decades, compared to their peak after WWII.

To combat the economic powerhouse that China has become, the United States in recent years by the work of President Donald Trump, has initiated an international trade war. AP News reports that the ‘trade war’ began in February of 2025, by the implementation of 10% American tariffs on Chinese imports, and the resulting retaliatory 15% tariffs from China on American imports on coal, liquidated natural gas products, and a 10% levy on crude oil, agriculture machinery and large-engine cars imports (Grantham-Phillips, 2025). Additionally, the United States also inflicted 10% tariffs on Canada and Mexico, their closest ally geographically, as well as economically. In April of 2025, President Trump expanded his plans of tariffs to nearly all

U.S. trading partners, with an additional 34% tax on Chinese imports on top of their already imposed tariffs and levies on the country. Jennifer Clark from the BBC reports, that reasoning for these tariffs, are to, “encourage US consumers to buy more American-made goods, increase the amount of tax raised and lead to huge levels of investment in the country..[and] to reduce the gap between the value of goods the US buys from other countries and those it sells to them”(Clarke, 2025). Ultimately, the Trump administration wants to put the United States back at the center of international trade, but to do this they must limit rivaling economic powers. However, despite the reasoning for these tariffs, the effects have been detrimental to the United States’ economy. CNN reports that nearly days after the announcement of the Trump Administration's 145% tariff on China, the U.S. stock market fell dramatically. S&P 500 fell 3.6%, Nasdaq Composite fell 4.31%, and the Blue-Chip Index fell 2.5%. Additionally, the US dollar index fell 1.7%, and gold prices hit an all-time high of \$3,170 an ounce (Goldman, 2025). What does this all mean? Investors are losing confidence in the economic future of the United States; people are selling their stocks instead of buying them. The U.S dollar became weaker as the prices of goods and services rose, and thus the price of Gold began to rise because people want to protect their wealth from the deteriorating dollar. Although this trade war is ongoing, and there cannot be a clear knowledge on the long-term effects, it is clear to see that these efforts are not for the benefit of the American people but a way for the United States to assert their dominance. The United States is in clear knowledge that their dominance in the international economic sphere is dwindling, these tariffs by the Trump administration is a last-ditch effort to combat this. However, through alienating their allies and putting the needs of their citizens below their economic interests, the United States is actually digging their hole of destruction at a faster pace than ever before.

As the United States empire has continued to grapple with their imperial decline, they have forgotten the key importance for all nations to succeed; the happiness of their citizens. The Neo Imperialism school of thought examines this pattern within empires, as the United States continues to expand and subsequently overstretched their imperial power, they have neglected the domestic issues that are plaguing their citizens. Professor James Petras, illustrates this theory, stating, “a prosperous empire is cause and consequence of increases in families, and the growth of healthy and educated plebeians who serviced and served the rulers. In contrast, declining empires plunder the domestic economy; concentrated wealth as the expense of the labor force, heedless of the diminution of its health and life expectancy” (Petras, 2018). That is to say, it is essential for a prosperous empire to meet the needs of their citizens or risk the ultimate demise of the empire as a whole. Within the United States, this theory has become an increasing reality for the American public. The Social Progress Index assesses 170 countries around the world on the well-being of their people and overall quality of life, in 2025 the United States ranks 31, underperforming in education, healthcare, housing, water sanitation, environmental quality and political opportunities (Social Progress Imperative, 2025). In the so-called ‘greatest country’ in the world, how is this possible? The simple answer is corporate greed. The United States Government has time, and time again prioritized the corporate interests of billionaires, introducing tax cuts to the rich, rolling back on new deal social service programs and ignoring practices of environmental degradation. These actions in recent decades have exacerbated wealth inequality throughout the country. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities highlights data from the Federal Reserve showing that the least-wealthy fifty percent of U.S. households hold less than four percent of the nation’s wealth, while the top ten percent of wealthy households hold over two-thirds (Sherman, et al, 2024).

Additionally, Oxfam International reports that, “in the US alone, billionaire wealth increased by \$1.4 trillion—or \$3.9 billion per day—in 2024... Meanwhile, the number of people living in poverty has barely changed since 1990” (Oxfam International, 2025). To elaborate, the price of essential goods and services have risen, while wages have not increased with the natural rate of inflation. Additionally, millions of Americans are swamped with student debt, during which the cost of housing and healthcare has astronomically increased. Despite the struggle of the average American, the top 1% of American billionaires have increased their wealth tenfold. It has not helped that within the less than four months that the Trump Administration has been back in office, they have gutted the Department of Education, plan to cut the Federal Health Department budget, have laid off thousands of Federal employees, and initiated a trade war that has toppled the American economy. These are not actions of a prosperous empire, in fact quite the opposite. Actions rooted in unregulated racial capitalism have continued to reinforce racial and wealth inequality across the country, to a degree that is no longer sustainable for the people of any empire to ignore.

Since the inception of the United States, systems of racial capitalism have permeated within every institution, working to exploit racial and ethnic groups for profit as to continue imperial expansion. As explained previously, the economic institution of slavery for Black Americans and brutalization of Native Americans set the stage for racialized capitalism within the foundations of the country. Institutionalized slavery was replaced with institutions of incarceration or known as the ‘Prison Industrial Complex’. The term first coined by American activist, scholar and professor Angela Davis, defined by Critical Resistance, is the, “overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems” (Critical Resistance, n.d.). To explain

further, the PIC is a term to illustrate the connected networks of incarceration through prisons, detention centers, and mental facilities, with the private economic industries that subsequently profit off the imprisonment, and policing of Americans. For centuries, the PIC has been responsible for perpetuating Jim Crow racial stereotypes in media portrayal of black, indigenous people of color, and immigrants that display them as criminals, or deviant entities (Critical Resistance, n.d.). This portrayal is essential to continue the intense surveillance and police presence within POC neighborhoods, using actions such as ‘Stop-and-Frisk, detailed by the Journal Article, *Guilt by Association: How Police Data Bases Punish Black and Latinx Youth*, police forces have, “targeted young Black and Latinx men under no individual suspicion of a crime because they fit the department’s racist profile of who engages in criminal activity”(Ratto, et, al, 2023). The racial biases of the United States’ police force across the country results in intense racial disparities of incarceration. The Sentencing Project reports that in 2021, Native Americans and Latinx individuals were incarcerated at rates of 4.2 and 2.4 times higher, respectively, than White Americans, and Black Americans were incarcerated at 5.0 times higher than the rate of White Americans (Ghandnoosh, 2023). These numbers display that mass incarceration was not a lapse in judgment ten, twenty, or even thirty years ago, it is a systemic injustice currently unfolding that is still affecting communities of color.

The impact of incarceration does not only involve getting arrested and sitting a cell, but also court fees, phone call fees, pay-to-stay fees in certain states, and even forced labor. Sharon Zhang from Truthout reports that food chains such as Target, Walmart, Whole Foods, Burger King, Chipotle, Domino’s, McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, and Pepsi use prison labor within their production process. Inmates are forced within hellish conditions for measly 40 cents an hour for their labor that contributes to multibillion dollar corporations. This can only be deemed slave

labor but since these individuals are incarcerated it is legal under the 13th amendment (Zhang, 2024).

Using this knowledge of racial incarceration and legalized slavery, it is no surprise that Latinx, Indigenous, and Black communities are also the most over-represented group within poverty. The United States Census reported that both Black and Latinx individuals, despite making up 13.5% and 19.3% of the U.S. population respectively, are overrepresented in poverty with a poverty ratio of 1.5. Additionally Native American makeup 1.2% of the U.S. population but have the highest overrepresentation poverty ratio of 2.2 (United States Census Bureau, 2022). Thus, racial capitalism as the foundation of the country has worked in tandem with the PIC to enforce racial hierarchies within systemic racialized poverty and incarceration of black, brown and indigenous communities. While the United States has continued to expand within expensive military interventions around the world to sustain their global influence, racial minorities within the country are trapped within cycles of curated poverty. What occurs from such systematic failures, is the changing of American culture sparked by the calls for abolition of the racial capitalists' systems currently in place.

The fires of rebellion birthed the United States of America; therefore, it lies within the foundation of its government. The second amendment of the U.S. constitution even allows for the people to overthrow or abolish any form of government that becomes tyrannical and start again. Throughout American history there have been many acts of civil unrest to create social and structural change, such examples can be seen in Women's Suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement and Labor movements, to name a few. However, in recent years in response to the failing economy, poor housing market, rising inflation, and systematic racial barriers exacerbated by racial capitalism, a societal shift in American culture has occurred. According to a national

poll reported by the Pew Research Center, as of May of 2024, only 22% of Americans say they trust their government. In contrast, the same poll collected in 1965, found that 77% of Americans voiced their trust in the government. This trust has eroded over the last six decades due to failings of the United States government to provide for their people. The lasting impacts of this social distrust have been destructive. The CDC reports that birth rates have been steadily dropping within the last 10 years, with an historic low of 55 births for every 1,000 women in 2023 (Martin, et al, 2024). The public can no longer afford to raise children within a failing economy, and many couples are choosing not to have kids. Additionally, in 2024 the Pew Research Center found that 63% of Americans are in favor of abolishing the Electoral College, this can be traced to increasing upset of recent Presidential elections that were based on the electoral votes not the actual popularity of the candidate within voters (Kiley, 2024). Lastly, *The New Yorker* reveals that in 2024 Army missed their recruitment goal by 25%, the same as the Navy, and as well as the Army reserve has not met their standard since 2016 (Filkins, 2025). The failure of military recruitment is not due to DEI as the current administration would like to assume, but instead the decreased confidence that the people have in participating in U.S. imperial efforts. The results of these numerous findings reflect that the American people are tired of watching oligarchs within congress make decisions that decrease their quality of life and increase the wealth of the top 1%. The American people no longer want to die for the interests of the capitalist oil barons or maintain global dominance from which they do not benefit from. The American people are tired of living within oppressive conditions that maintain continuous cycles of generational poverty. Thus, the American people have begun to change.

## Conclusion

The United States of America as the unipolar global superpower is a relatively recent development, having truly emerged only within the last century of world history. Through evaluating the former colony's rise into a global empire, with their subsequent international and domestic standing, it becomes evident that the United States is heading towards a steep decline in global economic and imperial power. Thus, by the year 2075, the days of American exceptionalism will no longer be the driving force of western geopolitical discourse, but one should not be worried by their sudden downturn. Within the ashes of the former empire, there will be a domestic social renewal of American culture.

As the United States continues their imperial overstretch, while also ignoring systematic wealth and racial inequalities exacerbated by institutions of racialized capitalism, the American people have begun to wake up. The international decline of the United States has led to a social turning for the American public to no longer focus on reforming the system but fully abolishing it. The Occupy Wall Street movement that opposed wealth inequality within the country, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement that focused on abolishing the PIC and defunding police forces, all encouraged the overturn of institutions that perpetuate racial and wealth inequality in the country.

Despite current governmental actions to maintain the United States' position as the world's leading power, the American public is simply no longer interested. Displayed by declining governmental trust within citizens, and increased support by the public to break away from traditional structures. Thus, within the next fifty years, whether for better or worse, the tides will turn on the American Empire, leaving behind a new generation of citizens who may

finally embrace the true ideals of freedom and equality that the country has claimed for over two centuries.

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