

The Stability of American Freedom

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Abstract

The concept of freedom, while subjective, has had a clear transformation in its implications throughout American history, beginning with Enlightenment philosophies that emphasized individual rights and liberty. These ideas ignited the American Revolution, resulting in the establishment of a nation based on democratic principles. The drafting of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights not only solidified set freedoms but also set the stage for current debates about the scope and limitations of government powers and individual rights (Wood, 2011). The mix between liberty and government presents a fundamental issue, delivering a delicate debate between protecting citizens and preserving their freedoms.

Social movements, including the Abolitionist and the Civil Rights movements, reflect the persistent struggle to expand freedoms to under-represented groups. These movements challenged the initial promises of freedom enshrined in founding documents of America, revealing inherent contradictions and systemic inequalities (Davis, 2017). Every one of these struggles has contributed to an evolving scope of freedom, accentuating the need for continual advocacy and reform to ensure that liberty is inclusive and true to all Americans.

In contemporary discourse, the role the government takes in safeguarding freedom raises important questions about the Constitutionality of national security policies and their impact on civil liberties. As society handles terrorism, surveillance, and public health crises, the tension between security and freedom persists, necessitating a critical examination of how policies reflect societal values and priorities (Smith, 2020). The buildup of these tensions is critical to the limitations placed on freedoms in sacrifice of security in today's age.

Keywords: Freedom, Enlightenment, Civil Rights, National Security, Social Movements

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Introduction

Pursuing freedom in America is both a foundational ideal and a complex and controversial topic. From the philosophical understandings of the Enlightenment to the practical struggles of various social movements, the meaning of freedom has had different applications to individuals in each era, generally building off of and expanding on the previous generations. Over the centuries, the concept evolved to not just pertain to the original fight against Great Britain's tyranny, but also to the active fight for universal liberty, especially for those habitually discriminated against throughout America's history. Throughout its existence, key events such as the American Revolution, the drafting of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the Abolition Movement, and civil rights struggles have molded freedom's meaning to America's generally tolerant social standards today. Furthermore, modern-day freedom tackles the issues between national security policies and the role of government, indicating to its constantly changing behavior.

Problem Statement

A key part of American history includes the reoccurring conflicts between America's foundational ideals on the topic of freedom and the contrasting realities of perpetuated inequality and suppression and how that has contributed to social sentiment regarding true freedom. While the United States was conceived as a nation structured around freedom, building off of the principles of liberty and justice, many groups have been habitually denied these very rights throughout history, raising critical contradictions about the authenticity and universality of America's promise of freedom. **Where:** this struggle takes place is significant, comprising of the entirety of the United States, starting at its colonial origins and existing all the way through to its current status as a global superpower. **When:** these challenges take place is over a large timeline,

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beginning with the instillment of 18th century Enlightenment thought and extending through the American Revolution and into the contemporary era. **Who:** has been involved in this struggle includes a diverse array of individuals and groups—Enlightened philosophers who inspired the founding fathers, enslaved individuals seeking liberation, women fighting for suffrage, civil rights leaders advocating for racial equality—each of these participants have played a vital role in shaping the discourse of freedom, often putting themselves at a considerable personal risk and sacrifice for such means.

This paper will examine the causes of these struggles through a deliberate analysis of key historical documents, significant social movements, and the repercussions of national security policies. By exploring the developments between philosophical ideals and practical realities, this examination aims to highlight the ongoing challenges in defending freedom in America.

Background of the Problem

American freedom was born from the culmination of Enlightenment thought, which emphasized individual rights, questioning reason, and the social contract. Influential philosophers like John Locke and Montesquieu argued for the inherent rights of the individual and the necessity of a limited government (Bailyn, 1992). Their philosophical ideologies attributed to the revolutionary sentiment and featured in the Declaration of Independence, asserting that all men were created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Despite its reasoning, the existence of slavery in the colonies completely contradicted these standpoints, revealing the lack of moral and ethical responsibility for what was the beginning of the American identity.

The formation of the Constitution in 1787 and the ratification of the Bill of Rights in 1791 established a never-before-seen framework for government to protect individual liberties.

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However, the original Constitution contained sections that permitted slavery and proudly disenfranchised women and non-white individuals, exposing the deep-rooted contradictions between America's proclaimed values and practices (McPherson, 1991). This inconsistency would resurface at different points in American history, acknowledging its unfairness to more and more alienated groups.

The 19th century featured the bubbling of the Abolition Movement, directly challenging the foundations of slavery and the society that upheld it. Activists like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth pushed for the freedom of enslaved individuals and the recognition of their rights as complete citizens (Blight, 2001). Actions through activism by those in the movement grew into the Civil War, prompting the 13th Amendment and the abolition of slavery. However, the oppression did not end at the halting of slavery, as secondary racism and discriminatory laws continued to subjugate black Americans. Subsequently, the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century struck forth another crucial page in America's fight for freedom. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X emphasized the intrinsic connection between racial equality and human rights, advocating for legal and social reforms to strip segregation and proprietary racism (King, 1963; Malcolm X, 1965). Their efforts constructed monumental legislation in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Despite these advancements, ongoing struggles for true equality remain as various forms of discrimination continue to persist today.

In recent years, national security threats have added to the complexity of the order of civil liberties. Following the September 11 attacks, acts such as the Patriot Act raised important questions about the balance between civil liberties and national security (Cole, 2003). Critics of

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the act believe that it would act as a component to disproportionately hinder communities that are assumed to be dangerous, further complicating the conflicted state of freedom in America.

Literature Review

Freedom in America has demonstrated its dynamic nature throughout history, seen in its philosophical discussions and in social movements that challenge it. In order to grasp the current state of America's collective freedom, the historical underpinnings of the events which transcribed it must be first understood, starting from the colonial era all the way up to the contemporary debates about national security and liberty. By analyzing Enlightenment influences, the American Revolution, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the Abolition Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, ongoing struggles for freedom, and the role of government, a comprehensive understanding of "The Stability of American Freedom" can be gained.

Historical Context

The historical context for freedom in America is crucial to understanding its complexities and setbacks. Through the colonial period, to the nation's founding, to today's environment, the national search for freedom has been formed through a series of social, political, and economical factors. Historian and Professor, Gordon S. Wood, corroborates that the unique social structures of colonial America facilitated the emergence of revolutionary ideas (Wood, 1991). The suppression of British rule was a catalyst for the revolutionary cause, building off of a forming national identity centered on independence and freedom.

Prior to the revolutionary period, dissent from British customs was already in motion. The settlers' flight from religious persecution, as explored by Nathan O. Hatch, instilled a belief in the importance of individual conscience and the right to worship freely within colonial

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immigrants (Hatch, 1989). The Great Awakening further fueled a sense of individualism and egalitarianism, challenging traditional British hierarchies and encouraging the belief that all people could attain personal salvation (Noll, 2003).

Historians such as David H. Fischer highlight the unique influences on colonial thought, including religious dissent, economic aspirations, and Enlightenment philosophies, as factors that coalesced to create an environment ripe for revolutionary fervor (Fischer, 1989). The majority of the society, in holding these beliefs, culminated them into a foundational government which would prioritize individual rights and freedoms.

With the rupture of the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, by Thomas Jefferson, made a distinct claim that freedom pertained the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Jefferson, 1776). However, as a society entrenched in the economy of slavery, these ideals were applied selectively. This paradox demonstrates the complex nature of freedom as both an aspirational ideal and a limited reality at America's very beginning.

The aftermath of the American Revolution set the stage for continuous debates about freedom. While the war achieved independence from British rule, the new nation was conflicted with the question of who exactly would receive that independence. Historians like Gary Nash emphasize that the ideals of the Revolution were often selective, benefiting primarily white, property-owning men while marginalizing women, Native Americans, and enslaved individuals (Nash, 2005).

The history of American freedom is a complex amalgamation built from the mixing and clashing of Enlightenment thoughts, revolutionary ideals, and social struggles and beliefs on equality and justice. From the foundational documents of the nation to the contemporary fights

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for rights across various respects, the allotment of freedom has both expanded and narrowed, and then expanded more. Understanding this historical process is essential to grasping the current landscape of American freedom today and the continued efforts to ensure it.

Enlightenment Thoughts

The Enlightenment period was essential to the form of American politics and freedom. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu led the way for intellectual and theoretical propositions for the American Revolution and its following governance.

John Locke's ideology on natural rights was profound to the framers of the American government. Locke argued that individuals possess inherent rights to life, liberty, and property, which governments must protect (Locke, 1689). His philosophy heavily inspired Jefferson's drafting, inducing a vision of freedom that would emphasize a person's individual rights as a fundamental component of their dignity.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of the social contract further expanded the understanding of freedom by emphasizing the collective responsibility of citizens to create a society for themselves (Rousseau, 1762). His rhetoric was a constitutional belief, pivoting on colonial beliefs against tyranny and for the presence of the people within the government.

Montesquieu's advocacy for the separation of powers provided the fundamental breakdown of the American government. In "The Spirit of the Laws," he argued that dividing government into branches would prevent any one entity from gaining too much power, thus protecting individual liberties (Montesquieu, 1748, p. 150). This principle was adopted as a key feature of the U.S. Constitution, demonstrating the American agenda to absolve from potential tyranny.

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The Enlightenment was pivotal in shaping American concepts of freedom, introducing ideas about individual rights, government by consent, and the importance of governmental restriction. These principal beliefs are the cornerstone of the United States, continuing to inform and exalt contemporary discussions on freedom and justice. However, the persistence of injustice surrounding these ideals has continued to leverage a struggle to fully realize the promise of freedom for all.

The American Revolution and the Birth of a Nation

The American Revolution was the birth of conflicting ideas between freedom, citizenship, and governance. It was both a struggle for independence from British rule and a foundational moment in the establishment of the inspiring nation.

The revolutionary movement was fueled by Enlightenment ideals, heightening public dissatisfaction with the British authority. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" galvanized public support for independence to escape tyranny and create a government for the people (Paine, 1776, p. 48). This pamphlet played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and promoting the revolutionary cause.

The Declaration of Independence in 1776 idealized the revolutionary sentiment in one supporting document, articulating the perceived fundamental principles of liberty and equality. Jefferson's prose proclaimed that all men were created equal, yet the state of American society at the time starkly contradicted this assertion, capitalizing on the components of slavery and amassing wealth in a select few. Historians like Eric Foner point out how the revolutionary ideals were often limited in their application, particularly when concerning enslaved individuals and women (Foner, 1998). While the Revolution sought to establish a new nation founded on the principles of freedom, numerous components of American society were riddled with clashing

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situations. The Articles of Confederation, the nation's first governing document, proved this inadequacy, poorly balancing the complexities of liberty with government (Amar, 2005). With the inadequate governmental power and the economical disparities among the commonfolk, the succeeding Constitutional Convention sought to rectify these shortcomings, birthing a stronger, more centralized government which would better protect individual rights and equality.

The American Revolution was monumental in reshaping the political landscape and redefining the notion of liberty. It loosely, yet strictly, embedded the term of freedom in American society, leaving it open to future generations. While the foundations were made, however, freedom was far from completion as outlying prejudice and injustice persisted. The birth of the nation marked the beginning of the struggle to ensure that the promise of freedom is accessible to all; a journey that continues to unfold still.

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights dictate the foundational building blocks of freedom in America. The drafters intended to create a social order where government would continue to secure individual liberties. This would spark debates between those who believed the government should strongly impose itself and those who firmly believed otherwise.

The Constitution in 1787 was the product of the Constitutional Convention, aiming to remedy the inadequacies of the Articles of Confederation. Federalist leaders like James Madison fought for a strong central government that would have the authority and capability to protect individual rights for the common good (Madison, 1788). The debates on the Constitution struck tensions between the federal authority over states' rights, reflecting the complex nature of freedom in a diverse society.

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The Bill of Rights in 1791 aimed to consolidate the concerns of Anti-Federalists who made known their fear of a strong central government that would infringe upon individual liberties. Scholars such as Leonard Levy designated the significance of the Bill of Rights as a fundamental safeguard of civil liberties, fundamentally sanctioning the Enlightenment principles that initially inspired the revolution (Levy, 1999). The Bill of Rights, the first ten Amendments of the Constitution, provides explicit protections for freedoms. Despite these protections enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the Constitution contains clauses that limited suffrage for women and non-white citizens, as well as the permission of slavery through the Three-Fifths Clause. This inconsistency demonstrates the consistent lack of inclusion in the definition of freedom. Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw discusses how these early legal frameworks perpetuated private inequalities that continue to persist in modern American society (Crenshaw, 1991).

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights are central to the American understanding of freedom, outlining a key that the American government must follow to safeguard individual liberties. While they represent significant advancements in the protection of rights, the argument over what freedom is has not been finalized. The issues which continue to trouble American freedom continue to this day. As the American society evolves, the interpretation and application of these documents will continue to be vital in forming the shape of America's perception of freedom.

The Abolition Movement and Civil Rights

The Abolition Movement emerged as a direct response to slavery, the sentiment of liberty contradicting the institute of slavery. Activists fought for the end of slavery, desiring civil rights for African Americans, and challenging the nation to live up to its founding ideals. This 19th century movement was marked by the efforts of many distinguished individuals, such as

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Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth, who selfishly sacrificed and fought for the liberation of enslaved individuals. Douglass's speeches and writings culminated in a national and moral obligation to end slavery, associating the struggle for Black freedom with the general consensus of American freedom (Douglass, 1852).

Religious groups like the Quakers and evangelical Christians played a part in the abolition movement as well. Their moral convictions in relation to God led them to advocate for the rights of enslaved individuals, contributing to the growing number of Abolitionist members in America (McKivigan, 1999). This grassroots activism disrupted the established prejudice and stimulated public support for the abolition of slavery, expanding the components of freedom.

Following the Civil War with a large win for freedom and the passing of 3 Amendments, the struggle for true liberty continued as habitual racism and discrimination persisted. The mid-20th-century Civil Rights Movement struggled to overthrow segregation and to gain voting rights for African Americans. A dream and a vision of equal economic and social justice, although by different means, were shared by leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (King, 1963; Malcolm X, 1965). These civil rights movements prioritized a war which generally brought together like-minded people, rather than just people of the same color. Scholars such as Bell Hooks argue that the movement must address the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class to achieve true liberation for all (Hooks, 1981), demonstrating the importance of everyone's participation.

The abolitionist and civil rights movements were instrumental in the upbringing of a universal freedom within America, changing unjust systems which explicitly disenfranchised a large minority. While much has been done to atone for the lack of equality, there remains remnants of these oppressive systems. As such, the efforts of prior movements should not be

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seen as a finale on the case of freedom, but rather a reminder that freedom can and will evolve, requiring a constant and united force to achieve societal needs.

Social Movements

Social movements have undoubtedly been a great contender to the cause of freedom, representing the evolving nature of society and its parallels with freedom. They challenge the preexisting power structures, advocating for previously drowned-out voices and pushing for absolute changes that expand the range of freedom. Various social movements come into play, including the labor movement, the feminist movement, and the LGBTQ+ rights movement, each having contributed to a further modified vision of American freedom.

Labor movements formed in protest to the inequalities in industrial capitalism, advocating for the worker's rights and fair labor practices. Historians like Alice Kessler-Harris emphasize that the labor movement's fight for economic justice is inherently linked to the broader struggle for freedom, demonstrating their right to unionize and call for action (Kessler-Harris, 2001). The labor movement's freedom sought to prevent corporal oppression and secure fair economic and social security.

The feminist movement during the 1960s and 1970s demanded a rethink of the gender roles laid down by society and clamored for expanding women's rights. Academic scholar, Linda Gordon, has investigated and directly followed the feminist agenda, noting its close relationship with other socialist movements (Gordon, 2002). This movement made way for women's voices in a predominately male society, rising up to challenge the patriarchal structure which hindered them. Prominent figures like Betty Friedan played important roles in the feminist movement's success. Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) spotlighted the limitations placed on women's occupation, promoting immediate reform (Friedan, 1963). Following, the formation of proactive

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feminist organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) helped initiate legislative policies like the Equal Rights Amendment. Notably, intersectionality, a concept popularized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, defines an individual's experience with oppression in relation to others' experiences; a crucial part in establishing empathy with a broader society (Crenshaw, 1991). Participants in the feminist movement have increasingly acknowledged that the struggles of women cannot be understood in part from other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. This understanding has brought forth an increasingly more powerful movement that incorporates a diverse range of experiences (Hooks, 1981).

The LGBTQ+ rights movement gained its momentum in the late 20th century, advocating for the rights of sexual and gender minorities. Historians like Martin Duberman have analyzed the movements and their setbacks, pointing to the lack of visibility and representation as its transgressors (Duberman, 1993). For LGBTQ+ activists, freedom represents the ability to publicly love whomever they may choose and express themselves without fear of discrimination. Advocates argued that denying free marriage rights was a denial of dignity and equality, prompting a push for same-sex marriage, which culminated in the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell vs. Hodges* (2015). The ruling in favor of same-sex marriage demonstrate how legal recognition can serve as a fundamental aspect of freedom (*Obergefell vs. Hodges*, 2015).

Social movements have been instrumental in redefining freedom in the ever-changing scene of America, removing the boundaries of civil rights to include a diverse array of characters. The labor movement, the feminist movement, and the LGBTQ+ rights movement each contribute to a broadening picture of freedom, incorporating economic, gender, and sexual justice. As these movements continue onward, adapting to the values of the people of their time, their association with one another will continue to be an inspiring tool in finding true freedom.

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Ongoing Struggles for Freedom

Despite the gigantic steps made in way for freedom, the trial of American freedom is far from complete; it is an always-evolving struggle, heavily influenced by various social, political, and economic factors. These struggles for freedom occur across various platforms, including racial justice, economic equality, environmental justice, and immigrant rights. Each of these struggles display a deep fight against freedom limitations, seeking to change the status quo for the betterment of freedom.

With the start of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, public appeal has turned to stand witness to the issues of police violence and unjustified mass imprisonment, tracing back to national prejudice cemented in corrupt government systems. With the death of George Floyd in 2020, nationwide protests calling for urgent reforms have stimulated even further momentum within the movement (Browne, 2020). The BLM movement is a continuation of past movements, looking forward to that dream of equal safety, dignity, and equity. Conversely, this struggle for racial justice has grown bigger than its community, with activists arguing that the fight for Black lives is inherently connected to the struggles of other discriminated communities, creating a coalition of voices advocating for comprehensive social justice (Crenshaw, 2017). In relation, Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow" argues that mass incarceration operates as a contemporary system of racial control, disproportionately impacting African American communities and limiting their freedoms (Alexander, 2010, p. 2). This fact emphasizes the institutional ways structural inequalities continue to degrade the meaning of freedom for specific groups.

Additionally, voter suppression, which tends to target communities of color, remains a critical issue in the fight for civil rights. Legislative efforts to restrict access to voting have

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sparked widespread protests and advocacy campaigns for reform. Historians like Ari Berman detail the continuance of voter suppression and its detriments as key obstacles to democratic freedom (Berman, 2015). This struggle represents a sectional fight for freedom, showing how one form of marginalization can be replaced by another after it's been torn down. In addition to this, the environmental justice movement has emerged as a vital parallel in tandem with the fight against voter suppression. Scholars like Robert D. Bullard argue that environmental issues disproportionately affect poorer, traditionally darker, communities, further entrenching communities in inequalities (Bullard, 1990). These struggles, while not directly against anyone or anything, have a known history of being associated with groups that are habitually underrepresented, placing concern for freedom's availability to all.

The struggle for immigrant rights is demonstrational to the expansion of freedoms in America. Barriers often stand in the way of immigrants' access to basic rights, including everything from health care and education to legal protection. The demonization of immigrant communities, especially in step with anti-immigrant sentiment, has contributed to increased violence and discrimination against them (Menjivar, 2019). Organizations such as United We Dream and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) push agendas that aim to protect immigrants and bring about ways for them to obtain citizenship. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program plays an important role in providing relief from deportation for undocumented children in the U.S., providing early ways to freedom for these unfortunate children (Gonzales, 2016). Advocates argue that the difficulty of immigrant integration disrupts the narrative of America as a land of the free, because immigrants face such extreme exclusion. Activists have hopes for all members in America, regardless of their

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immigration status, to enjoy the benefits of life and participation in American society (López, 2020).

The struggles which America faces when allotting freedoms affect many, compromising racial justice, economic equality, environmental justice, and immigrant rights. Each of these struggles represents a grueling and expansive take on America's freedom, wishing to incorporate everyone. As activists continue to push for governmental changes, its arduous process will continue to demonstrate the evolving state of freedom, necessitating strong action and solidarity to securing true justice for all.

National Security Policies and the Role of Government

Threats to the national security of America have instilled major roadblocks to the vitality of freedom, especially in the post-9/11 era. The delicate scale balancing security with civil liberties has painted a fragile scene where the line between what government should and shouldn't do is indistinguishable.

With the framing of the Constitution, it is clear that the government was intended to be a protector of freedoms and rights, however, the current state of affairs has led the government to narrow their vision towards security over civil prosperity. The Bill of Rights was designed to designate specific rights and protections which the government could not encroach upon, but numerous legal battles have revealed the clashing tension between government concerns and the concerns of freedom (Levy, 1999). Legal scholar Richard Epstein emphasizes that an intricate balance between security and freedom must be achieved for the country, refusing to sacrifice liberty in the name of security (Epstein, 2005).

Historically, moments of crisis have habitually demonstrated the suspension or erosion of civil liberties in the name of national security. The internment of Japanese Americans during

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World War II and the Red Scare are examples of rash government actions justified by perceived threats, but are later recognized as violations of civil rights (Ng, 2002). These precedents strip freedoms from minority groups, hiding behind the panic of crisis. The ethical dilemmas posed by national security policies are complex. In this context, the government holds two important roles: (1) protecting its citizens with the utmost effort, and (2) preventing the sacrifice of individual rights in the process. The model of democracy is often at odds with this subject, being a powerful tool for the majority, yet often troubled with the cases of minorities (Sandel, 2010).

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, were a tragic and important mark on America's history, inducing immediate governmental change regarding national security. In response to the event, Congress passed the Patriot Act, which allotted for governmental surveillance of communications, as well as the ability for them to detain individuals without formal charges (Cole, 2003). In the panicked moment, these changes were necessary to the security of America, justifying the violative nature it had to civil rights. However, the Patriot Act's provisions, including roving wiretaps and the ability to access personal records without a warrant, were later criticized for eroding the constitutional protections guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment (Cole, 2006). Furthermore, critics have staked claims that these acts have a known history of unfairly assuming action against certain communities, particularly Muslims and people of color, further depriving freedom of its pure grandiose and fostering an environment controlled by fear and mistrust (Abu-Lughod, 20029).

In the aftermath of crises, the monitorization of the country continued, significantly impacting the discourse on freedom and privacy in America. The post-9/11 environment has universally created a society in which surveillance is the standard. Many individuals now accept surveillance as a necessary trade-off for security, reflecting a societal normalization of

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government oversight (Lyon, 2015). However, this acceptance raises concerns about complacency and the erosion of the expectation of privacy that underpins democratic society. The presence of surveillance can have a chilling effect on free expression and dissent. Activists and ostracized communities may self-censor their speech and actions due to fear of surveillance and potential repercussions (Fuchs, 2014). The setting dishonors the concept of democracy which relies on free debate and opinionated voices. As the means of surveillance increase, more and more concerns about public privacy arise. New means such as the increasing use of artificial intelligence and data analytics raise ethical questions about the boundaries of surveillance and the responsibilities of governments in a digital age (O’Neil, 2016). Ensuring that future policies prioritize civil liberties while addressing security concerns will be crucial in navigating this landscape.

This application of surveillance technologies has and will continue to alter the fundamental proponents of civil liberties. The proliferation of data collection models, including the moderation and monetization of social media data, further government capabilities in predicting populations (Solove, 2004). Scholars like Shoshana Zuboff argue that this “surveillance capitalism” not only infringes on individual freedoms but also commodifies personal information (Zuboff, 2019, p. 6). In retrospect, legislation reforms have been made to correct this folly. For example, the Freedom Act of 2015 aimed to curtail bulk data collection by requiring more stringent oversight and greater transparency (Kerr, 2015). Despite these reforms however, critics continue pushing the freedom agenda, claiming that they prove unsubstantial in protecting rights and condemning abusive surveillance (Tufekci, 2015).

The difficulties of navigating national security within the boundaries of individual freedoms will remain a hard challenge in forward-moving liberties in America. While the

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government must keep up its relentless defense in the name of the country, they must make sure to do it in the name of the people as well. As society juggles a hectic scene between what it should and shouldn't do, there must remain a sense of loyalty to uphold the principles in the Constitution, ensuring that the price of security doesn't exceed that of justice.

Conclusion

From the era of the Enlightenment to the current-day concerns of national security, the cost of freedom has been a subject of debate and contradictions in America. As American society evolves and changes, there remains a need for a reevaluation of who should receive those freedoms in the land of the free. This question can be answered in today's standards by analyzing a series of historical events, philosophical influences, and social movements which precede it.

Analysis: The Stability of American Freedom

The collective identity of freedom within America has been formed by countless events, thoughts, and movements, each altering the declaration and understanding within society. It embraces the balance between security and civil liberties, the collective goal to expand liberties, and the necessity of uniting such struggles, examining them from three distinct perspectives—historical, sociopolitical, and philosophical—using four relevant theories: Liberalism, Marxism, Feminism, and Critical Race Theory.

Emerging Themes

1. The Tension Between Freedom and Control

One of the most prominent themes in the discussion of freedom is the persisting tension between the establishment of control structures within the government and the American need for individual freedoms. This topic is greatly heightened in states of crisis, accelerating calls for national security and losing scrutiny in the security of freedoms. Historical events, such as the

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Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, demonstrate the power which the government has in limiting the reach of freedom in order to cater to a sense of national security (Gordon, 1997). In the modern era, policies such as the Patriot Act, enacted after September 11, 2001, further concerns about civil liberties being compromised for the sake of security. This balance between ensuring national security while remaining protective of individual freedoms continues to challenge policymakers in America (Tushnet, 2005).

2. The Role of Collective Action

Another significant theme is the importance of collective action in order to protect freedom. Collective action has been a driving force in American social movements, revealing how grassroots organizing can challenge blatant oppression. The Women's March, for instance, is a contemporary example of collective action addressing a variety of social injustice, including gender equality, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ rights. Historically, the labor movement, with figures like Mother Jones and unions advocating for workers' rights, demonstrates how collective bargaining can challenge economic disparities and promote freedom from exploitation (Dubofsky, 1996).

3. The Intersectionality of Struggles

The theme of intersectionality investigates how various coverages of oppression—based on race, gender, class, and sexuality—interact and build off of one another. This complex mixing of experiences is imperative in understanding the state of freedom in America. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality pinpoints how overlapping identities within social minorities can create unique experiences of oppression, such as those of women of color (Crenshaw, 1989). Movements such as the BLM movement incorporate intersectionality as a key feature to combat systemic prejudice, as well as broader socioeconomic disparities (Garza,

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2016). The emerging themes of the tension between freedom and control, the role of collective action, and the intersectionality of struggles are absolute in discovering the definition of freedom in America. These themes represent the importance of historical reflection while maintaining onward vigilance and determination for liberty.

Perspectives and Theoretical Frameworks

Approaching the topic with multiple perspectives and the proposition of multiple theoretical frameworks is essential to understanding the complex situation around defending freedom in America. By examining these issues through historical, sociopolitical, philosophical, and critical race lenses, we can discover the meaning of struggles within America as they push for justice and equality. Each framework contributes unique dimensions to our understanding, furthering the magnanimous scope of what consists of true freedom to an American society.

1. Historical Perspective: The Evolution of Freedom

The historical perspective approaches the topic by looking back and reflecting on past actions and philosophical and political movements which have contributed to the growth of America. For example, enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed natural rights and the social contract, aiding in a fundamental policy with helps to define freedom in America (Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762).

1. Liberalism

The Liberal perspective is more idealistic, dealing with the direct respect of Enlightenment ideas of freedom. With the proliferation of the Enlightenment ideas of individual rights, personal liberty, and the social contract, it sparked what would become the American Revolution, forming the Declaration of Independence (Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762).

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The Constitution and the Bill of Rights establish the intention to protect individual liberties and prevent governmental overpower, generally being an embodiment of Liberal principles (Amar, 1998). However, practical applications reveal that these freedoms were often limited to certain groups, primarily white male property owners. The ongoing struggle for inclusivity, particularly during the abolition and civil rights movements, directly tackles the incomplete realization of these Liberal ideals.

2. Sociopolitical Perspective: Power Dynamics and Resistance

The sociopolitical perspective focuses on how power dynamics influence the struggle for freedom. This perspective, particularly from a Marxist perspective, investigates into the connection between capitalism and social issues. Karl Marx, the predecessor of Marxist thought, argued that economic structures led to inequality within social and political institutions (Marx & Engels, 1848).

2. Marxism

Through Karl Marx's Marxism, he pushed a relation between capitalism and inherent inequalities perpetuated by social inequalities (Marx & Engels, 1848). The application of Marxist thought can extend to the Abolition Movement, as a struggle fought over morality and economic stability; the Southern economy depending on the institute of slavery. The civil rights movement similarly exposes how social struggles are intertwined with economic disparities, with African Americans facing obstacles to economic mobility and political power (Alexander, 2010). Many struggles for liberty and rights reflect Marxist themes of class struggle and resistance as they combat a larger system of oppression.

3. Philosophical Perspective: The Ethics of Freedom

The philosophical perspective brings insight not just to the freedom for women, but also to the deep connection between individuals and their relation to society. Feminist perspectives

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often incorporate the voice of a group, intermingling and diverse, in opposition to the traditional notions of single independence. The works of scholars like Bell Hooks emphasize the necessity of a collective approach to liberation that accounts for gender and racial disparities (Hooks, 2000).

3. Feminism

The feminist perspective furthers the discussion on freedom by examining the cross between gender, race, and class struggles. Feminist activists have argued that it is essential to recognize the importance that they have played, not just in the feminist movement, but in other movements as well (Crenshaw, 1989). Throughout history, vital roles played by females have often been overlooked. Figures like Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks not only fought for racial justice but also for women's rights, representing a bridge between the two conflicts (Davis, 1982). The feminist angle provides a deep expansion on freedom, referencing the participation of everyone in the struggle of all.

4. Critical Race Theory: Understanding Systemic Racism

Critical Race Theory (CRT) dives deeper into the relationship between continuous prejudice and the outgoing pursuit of freedom in America. Critical Race Theory declares that American society is embedded with racism, hindering individuals from discriminated backgrounds (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Such struggles like the abolitionist and civil rights movement demonstrate this fight, as cruelty and prejudice were an integral part of American society at the time. Despite the progress achieved through legislation such as the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, systemic racism continues to manifest in alternate forms, including police brutality and voter suppression (Alexander, 2010). The examination of legal frameworks through CRT illustrates how laws historically designed to protect individual rights have often

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excluded racial minorities. For instance, the “War on Drugs” disproportionately affected communities of color, indicating how precomposed assertions against minorities can undermine intentions of protection (Alexander, 2010, p. 9). Critical Race Theory calls for focused research into the cause of perpetuated inequality, pointing towards legislative and social standings in order to establish a target for movements to address systemic injustice. The recognition of intersectionality within CRT highlights the necessity of addressing multiple forms of oppression simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989). Moreover, CRT emphasizes the importance of those with oppressed experiences, encouraging the individual to speak out and be heard.

Conclusion

The perspectives and theoretical frameworks regarding “The Stability of American Freedom” reveal a complex mix of historical evolution, power dynamics, ethical considerations, and systemic racism. Each perspective contributes unique insights into understanding freedom, amassing into a broad concept shaped by social, political, and economic forces and revealing a sophisticated complexion of historical, sociopolitical, and philosophical factors. Major themes, such as the tension between freedom and control, the role of collective action, and the intersectionality of struggles, provide valuable insights into the causes of change within the fight for justice. By employing various theoretical frameworks, including Liberalism, Marxism, Feminism, and Critical Race Theory, we can better understand the broad nature of freedom in America and the continuous challenges that remain in realizing its full potential.

Ethical Implications

The defense of freedom in America has deeply evolved with the rise of ethical considerations surrounding the growing diversity of populations. From Enlightenment thought and the American Revolution, to the Constitution, to the Abolition movement, and to

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contemporary national security policies, each era raises critical questions when dealing with the topic of freedom. If these ethical dilemmas persist, their implications will impede and upturn the very foundations of the American belief, competing with the words of America's governing documents.

Historical Context and Enlightenment Thought

The Enlightenment was the foundational block of modern democracy, prioritizing individual rights and freedom of expression. Philosophers argued for natural rights, asserting that individuals were entitled to life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762). Despite their inclusion in the Declaration of Independence, these rights witnessed a history that was mostly limited to white male property owners, bringing its universality into question.

Were these injustices to remain unresolved, the repercussions within American society becomes evident. The presence of inequality in the democratic society brings forth resentment and destroys democratic debate. As Amar (1998) notes, "the failure to extend these rights to all citizens threatens the moral authority of the state" (Amar, 1998, p. 45). Without a commitment to inclusivity, the promise of freedom becomes a selective privilege rather than a universal right of the land.

The American Revolution and the Birth of a Nation

The American Revolution was begged as a fight for liberty; however, the simultaneous existence of slavery compromises this agenda. The Declaration of Independence's assertion that "all men are created equal" stood in stark contrast to the reality of enslavement and oppression faced by African Americans and Native Americans at the time of its establishment and long after (Foner, 1988, p. 101). This contradiction presents a flaw in the integrity of America. The legacy of hypocrisy damages the nation's moral standing and fosters a culture of disillusionment. As

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Wood (1991) argues, “the failure to reconcile these ideals with the reality of exclusion perpetuates a cycle of injustice” (Wood, 1991, p. 12). Similar unresolved ethical dilemmas surrounding freedom threaten to fracture social cohesion and diminish trust in democratic institutions.

The Abolition Movement and Civil Rights

The Abolition movement and civil rights struggles oversaw the ethical necessity of extending freedom and justice to all. Activists like Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr. argued that true freedom cannot coexist with oppression (King, 1963, p. 85). Ignoring these moral operatives perpetuates systemic inequalities, violence, and disenfranchisement. If the lessons of these movements are overlooked, society risks repeating past mistakes. The current challenges related to police violence, voter suppression, and economic disparity emphasize the need for a new system that addresses historical grievances and modern inequality. Alexander (2010) emphasizes that “failing to confront these issues perpetuates a cycle of injustice that can destabilize society” (Alexander, 2010, p. 9). The results of inaction are the bubbling of social unrest, greatly attributing to conflict with the establishment of democracy.

Social Movements and Ongoing Struggles for Freedom

Social movements have played a crucial role in advocating for disrespected communities, even more when they form a united front. The feminist movement, LGBTQ+ rights movement, and Black Lives Matter movement demonstrate movements which mix and intertwine for the greater goal (Crenshaw, 1989). Della Porta and Diani (2006) argue that “the failure to recognize and address these intersections can weaken the collective fight for justice and freedom” (Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 25). Ignoring the interconnectedness of these struggles not only threatens social justice but also disrupts the stability of democracy. If ongoing struggles for freedom remain

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unaddressed, the societal implications are profound; an ethically fragmented landscape results in a society where specific groups are purposefully and perpetually marginalized.

National Security Policies and the Role of Government

In modern America, national security policies often prioritize state security over individual freedoms, causing concern over this diminishment of rights. The Patriot Act displays the loss of civil liberties with the application of heavier state security (Tushnet, 2005). If cases in which measures jeopardize civil liberties proceed, the fundamental workings of democracy are disregarded as well. Without a proper balance between the two, abusive governmental oversight is very plausible, leading to the erosion of rights for all citizens, especially those from minority communities. Friedman (2005) emphasizes that “the ethical responsibility of government lies in balancing security measures with the protection of individual liberties” (Friedman, 2005, p. 90). The failure to balance these creates an unstable society where freedom and democracy are overruled.

Conclusion

The scene on freedoms in America has and will experience dire situations and changes in which work must be done, reflecting and building off of the past state of freedom and their challenges in America. From the beginning of America and the inclusion of Enlightenment thought to the current challenges faced by legislators in balancing national security, the need for a well-thought, comprehensively ethical, national framework is clear. If the issues within American systems are not examined carefully, it is highly likely that they will continue to compromise the idealized freedoms and integrity of the nation.

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Policy Recommendations

The defense of freedom in America is a long and tedious task, adapting to various groups and pivoting off key thoughts, documents, and movements. To form a society which prioritizes justice and equality, the following comprehensive policy recommendations are intended to make way for freedom in the United States. Each section highlights specific recommendations, supported by relevant citations and references.

1. Historical Context

Recommendation:

Establish a commission focused on spreading historical truth and reconciliation.

Rationale:

In order to provide necessary changes to accommodate for the societal expectations of freedom, America must first confront their past wrongdoings. A commission would aim to promote transparency and accountability regarding past wrongs, such as slavery, segregation, and the treatment of Indigenous peoples. Research indicates that truth commissions can help societies reconcile with their past and foster social cohesion (Tutu, 1999).

Action Steps:

1. Create a bipartisan commission to investigate historical injustices.
2. Rigorously engage community stakeholders in the process.
3. Develop educational materials to disseminate findings.

2. Enlightenment Thoughts

Recommendation:

Better proliferate and integrate Enlightenment principles into civic education.

Rationale:

Understanding Enlightenment ideas, such as individual rights and the social contract, will better empower citizens, arming them with the knowledge of their freedoms. This education can enhance civic engagement and critical thinking among students (Wolfe, 2006).

Action Steps:

1. Revise K-12 curricula to include extensive lessons on Enlightenment thinkers and their impact on American democracy.
2. Train educators in instructional approaches that promote engagement with fundamental texts and liberties.

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3. The American Revolution and the Birth of a Nation

Recommendation:

Public commemoration of the ideals of the American Revolution through public art and educational programs.

Rationale:

Celebrating the principles of liberty can inspire pride and engage the public with ongoing conflicts that parallel the subject. Public art and educational initiatives can serve as reminders of the collective responsibility to uphold these values (Baker, 2010).

Action Steps:

1. Fund public art projects that reflect the themes of the American Revolution.
2. Develop educational programs for schools focusing on revolutionary principles and their relevance today.

4. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

Recommendation:

Take legislative measures to strengthen and uphold civil liberties.

Rationale:

Building off of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, further legislative action to strengthen integral protections would help prevent their obstruction, especially in the discussion of national security and surveillance (Amar, 1998).

Action Steps:

1. Introduce legislation to prioritize privacy and limit government surveillance.
2. Conduct public awareness campaigns on the importance of civil liberties.

5. The Abolition Movement and Civil Rights

Recommendation:

Establish a federal initiative to dissolve racism.

Rationale:

Ingrained racism still persists in the corners of government and society. This initiative would aim to rid those structural inequalities and prejudices (Alexander, 2010).

Action Steps:

1. Develop targeted programs in education, housing, and employment to address racial disparities.
2. Partner with community organizations to remedy inequalities.

6. Social Movements

Recommendation:

Support grassroots social movements through federal funding and resources.

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Rationale:

Social movements are instrumental to promoting awareness for causes and advocating for changes within systems of unfairness. Providing resources can enhance their effectiveness and amplify their voices (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Action Steps:

1. Establish a federal grant program for grassroots organizations.
2. Provide training and resources for community leaders and activists to engage others.

7. Ongoing Struggles for Freedom

Recommendation:

Designate a national task force, whose goal is to address ongoing human rights issues.

Rationale:

A dedicated task force that can identify and address current challenges related to civil rights, such as voting access, police reform, and immigrant rights would provide needed coverage on dire topics of freedom (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Action Steps:

1. Assemble a diverse group of experts and community leaders to serve on the task force.
2. Conduct regular assessments of the condition of human rights in the U.S.

8. National Security Policies

Recommendation:

Implement reforms to national security policies that protect civil liberties.

Rationale:

A democratic society must prioritize civil liberties while still maintaining a strong degree of national security, ensuring that it doesn't lean too much towards one at the expense of the other. Reforming security policies can prevent abuses and protect civilians' rights (Tushnet, 2005).

Action Steps:

1. Review and amend the Patriot Act to limit surveillance practices.
2. Enhance oversight mechanisms for intelligence agencies.

9. The Role of Government

Recommendation:

Promote transparency and accountability in government actions.

Rationale:

Transparency lends to improve governmental trust, ensuring that citizens can judge their freedom for themselves. This is essential for maintaining a democratic society (Bennett, 2013).

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Action Steps:

1. Enact laws requiring government agencies to publish detailed reports on activities related to civil rights and freedoms.
2. Establish independent watchdog organizations to monitor government compliance.

Conclusion

The policy recommendations outlined above address the historical and contemporary challenges surrounding “The Stability of American Freedom.” By implementing these measures across diverse areas—including education, civil rights, economic justice, and national security—society can work toward a more desirable future for everyone. The ongoing commitment to defending freedom is essential for obtaining America’s promise to everyone as outlined in the Constitution.

Summary

The examination of “The Stability of American Freedom” provides a comprehensive analysis of how America’s past, such as Enlightenment thought and various social movements have worked to shape the national agenda for freedom. This paper is structured around several key factors, each one playing an important part in building up a complex definition of freedom.

From the Historical Context, the basis of freedom has been built up and modified by a diverse demographic and many historical settings. From the colonial era to modern times, the U.S. has combatted issues of oppression and continuously sought true liberty. Recognizing this history is essential in understanding the inequalities which still exist today (Tutu, 1999). The history of struggles and their insolvent, including slavery and the discrimination of Indigenous peoples, remain important events to inform contemporary discussions on freedom.

Regarding Enlightenment Thoughts, the Enlightenment thinkers significantly influenced the ideological fervor of the American Revolution. Concepts such as individual rights and the social contract became integral to the nation’s founding documents. Following the revolution,

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these ideals continued to inspire the founding of a democratic nation (Wolfe, 2006). By integrating more Enlightenment principles and practices into education, the nation can hope to create a more knowledgeable citizenry capable of advocating for themselves and their liberty.

From the position of the American Revolution and the Birth of a Nation, the American Revolution as a whole was a statement of freedom, emphasizing ideals such as liberty, equality, and self-governance. The birth of the nation embedded the United States as a nation that strove to uphold and protect individual freedoms (Amar, 1998). However, the implementation of these ideals often falls short, with continuous inequality and prejudice continuing for centuries.

While the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were foundational documents with implications for the protections of civil liberties, it is the continued tension between national security and individual rights that raises fundamental questions with regard to government overreach versus the protection of freedoms (Tushnet, 2005). Legislative measures that strengthen civil liberties are essential for striking a balance between security and freedom.

On the position of the Abolition Movement and Civil Rights, these efforts illustrate the long-standing struggle against systemic racism and injustice. Figures such as Frederick Douglass and organizations advocating for civil rights have played vital roles in this ongoing battle, highlighting the importance of collective action in achieving societal change (Alexander, 2010). These movements demonstrate that the fight for freedom is far from over and requires sustained engagement.

In the area of Social Movements, these events throughout American history have been crucial in shaping public policy and awareness around issues of freedom. Grassroots efforts, from women's suffrage to LGBTQ+ rights, illustrate the power of collective action in advocating

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for justice and equality (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Supporting these movements through federal funding and resources can amplify their impact and promote long-lasting change.

When covering Ongoing Struggles for Freedom, there remain many issues and challenges that must be examined and resolved, such as voting rights, immigration policies, and police reform. Addressing these struggles requires a government capable of ensuring fairness in all aspects including equality (Human Rights Watch, 2020). A national task force dedicated to human rights can help identify and address contemporary inequalities.

In the case of National Security Policies, the policies must be thoroughly scrutinized in order to ensure they do not diminish civil liberties. There exists a delicate balance between protecting citizens and protecting their individual liberties, necessitating reforms that prioritize individual rights over surveillance and governmental overreach (Tushnet, 2005). Legislative reforms should be introduced to safeguard privacy and limit unwarranted surveillance practices.

The Role of Government is considered to be the final determinant of “The Stability of American Freedom.” The role of government power to defend freedom is paramount. Promoting transparency and accountability within government institutions fosters public trust and ensures that actions align with democratic principles (Bennett, 2013). Engaging citizens within the process of government is essential for preserving the ideals of liberty and justice for all.

In summary, “The Stability of American Freedom” illustrates that the effort to secure freedom is a persistently arduous task, surrounding many aspects of society. By addressing historical injustices, reinforcing foundational principles, supporting social movements, and ensuring that national security policies respect civil liberties, the U.S. can move toward a more equitable future. This commitment to defending freedom requires continuous effort, reflection,

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and action from all members of society, forming the collective American sentiment around freedom.

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