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INTRODUCTION

The connection between domestic and foreign policy has long been a central focus in the study of International Relations. In the case of the United States, one of the world's most influential actors, this relationship takes on particular significance. The years 2020 – 2024 are especially noteworthy, marked by the COVID–19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, heightened political polarization, socio–economic shifts, and various institutional challenges. These domestic developments inevitably influenced the goals, priorities, and tools of U.S. foreign policy. Therefore, a careful analysis of how domestic politics shaped America's international actions during this period not only advances scholarly understanding but also provides practical insights into the country's engagement on the global stage.

The relevance of this study can be understood on several levels. First, although there is a substantial body of literature on U.S. foreign policy, the specific link between domestic policy shifts during 2020 – 2024 and their direct effects on foreign policy decision–making remains insufficiently explored and systematized. Many existing studies tend to examine either domestic polarization or foreign policy strategies in isolation, thereby overlooking the critical interplay between the two. Second, the political significance of this topic is clear: policymakers and diplomats – including those in Ukraine – must consider the domestic drivers and constraints of U.S. foreign policy when shaping both bilateral and multilateral relations. Third, the scientific importance of the research lies in its effort to conceptualize how internal structural factors and agent–driven dynamics influence the external behavior of a global power during a period marked by crises, partisan contestation, and socio–economic transformations.

This research aligns with the empirical tradition in International Relations, as it aims to examine the relationship between specific variables rather than simply interpret their meanings. The dependent variable in this study is U.S.

foreign policy during the period 2020 – 2024, while the independent variables encompass selected aspects of domestic policy, including political polarization, institutional dynamics, socio–economic challenges, and presidential leadership. These factors are both structural – such as polarization, institutional constraints, and socio–economic pressures – and agent–driven, reflecting the influence of political leaders and administrations. This framework enables the study to empirically demonstrate the causal linkages between domestic conditions and foreign policy outcomes, highlighting how internal dynamics shape the United States’ engagement on the global stage.

The guiding **research question** is: *How did domestic policy developments in the United States during 2020 – 2024 influence the country’s foreign policy priorities and strategies?* The research purpose is to identify and analyze the principal domestic factors that conditioned the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy in the given period. To achieve this purpose, the study pursues the following objectives:

1. To review and critically assess existing academic literature on the interrelation of U.S. domestic and foreign policy.
2. To analyze the main domestic political, institutional, and socio–economic dynamics in the United States between 2020 and 2024.
3. To investigate how these domestic dynamics shaped U.S. foreign policy orientations toward major regions and international issues.
4. To compare the impact of structural domestic factors with individual leadership factors on foreign policy outcomes.
5. To evaluate the implications of the findings for understanding the role of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy of great powers.

In accordance with the chosen theme, the **object** of the study is U.S. foreign policy during 2020 – 2024 as part of contemporary international relations. The

subject of the study is the impact of domestic policy on the formation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy in this period.

This study is guided by several **hypotheses**. First, it is posited that domestic polarization, particularly partisan divisions within Congress, significantly constrained the scope and flexibility of U.S. foreign policy initiatives. Second, it is hypothesized that the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic influenced foreign policy priorities, prompting a stronger focus on restoring alliances and rebuilding international cooperation. Third, it is suggested that presidential leadership – especially under the Biden administration – played a mediating role, seeking to balance domestic pressures with the imperatives of sustained global engagement.

The **chronological framework** of this research spans the years 2020–2024. The starting point, 2020, marks the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and War in Ukraine in 2022, the events that profoundly reshaped the domestic political and socio-economic landscape in the United States and represented a critical turning point for both domestic and foreign policy. The endpoint, 2024, corresponds to the conclusion of President Biden’s first term, providing an opportunity to assess how domestic factors influenced U.S. foreign policy over an entire electoral cycle. This time frame is analytically appropriate, capturing a period characterized by political transition, crisis management, and strategic recalibration on the global stage.

The **methodological framework** of this study is based on a triangulation of complementary research methods. Data collection draws on both primary sources – such as official documents, presidential speeches, legislative acts, and policy reports – and secondary sources, including academic monographs, journal articles, and think-tank publications. Data analysis is conducted through multiple approaches. The systematic method allows for examining the interconnections between domestic and foreign policy processes. The comparative method is employed to assess variations in U.S. foreign policy behavior under differing

domestic conditions. The case study method provides an in-depth analysis of selected foreign policy decisions, situating them within their broader domestic context. The **historical method** traces the evolution of domestic–foreign policy linkages over time, while the sociological method captures the influence of socio–economic structures and public opinion. The **formal legal method** is applied to the analysis of domestic legislation relevant to foreign policy. Additionally, **content analysis** and discourse analysis are used to examine official texts, speeches, and media communications, revealing patterns of argumentation and representation. By combining these methods, the study ensures a comprehensive, balanced, and empirically grounded examination of the interplay between domestic politics and foreign policy.

The **scientific novelty** of this research lies in its systematic and integrative approach to examining U.S. foreign policy through the lens of domestic developments during 2020 – 2024. While previous studies have often focused on individual factors – such as political polarization or the impact of the Ukraine war – this work offers a comprehensive framework that links multiple domestic variables to foreign policy outcomes within a clearly defined period. Furthermore, the study advances theoretical understanding by exploring how structural factors and agent–driven dynamics interact to shape the external behavior of the United States, providing a nuanced model for analyzing the domestic foundations of foreign policy decision–making.

The **practical significance** of the study lies in its relevance for scholars, policymakers, and diplomats. For Ukraine in particular, understanding the domestic determinants of U.S. foreign policy can inform more effective engagement with Washington, allowing for the anticipation of policy shifts and the design of strategic partnerships. On a broader level, the findings contribute to policy analysis regarding the influence of domestic environments on great power behavior in the international system.

The **structure** of the thesis is determined by the research purpose and objectives. The work consists of three main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical and methodological foundations of studying the relationship between domestic and foreign policy. The second chapter examines the domestic policy developments in the United States between 2020 and 2024, including political polarization, socio-economic challenges, and institutional dynamics. The third chapter analyzes the impact of these domestic developments on U.S. foreign policy orientations and strategies. The thesis concludes with general findings and recommendations. The total length of the work is approximately 90–100 pages, excluding the bibliography and appendices.

In summary, the introduction establishes the relevance, research framework, methodological approach, novelty, and structure of the thesis. By focusing on the period 2020 – 2024, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and empirically grounded analysis of how U.S. domestic policy shaped its foreign policy during a time of crisis and transition.

CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Domestic–Foreign Policy Interdependence

The study of international relations (IR) has long been characterized by a debate over the extent to which domestic political dynamics shape foreign policy. While traditional realist theory privileged systemic factors such as anarchy, power distribution, and balance-of-power mechanisms, more recent scholarship emphasizes the embeddedness of foreign policy in domestic structures, institutions, and societal cleavages (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018). The 2020 – 2024 period in the United States provides a particularly relevant context for testing theoretical assumptions, since foreign policy decisions during both the Trump administration’s final year and the Biden administration’s first term were deeply conditioned by partisan polarization, institutional contestation, and identity-based narratives at home (Borg, 2024; Johnson, 2021).

Realism and Neorealism: Structural Constraints with Domestic Mediators

Realist theory, developed by Hans Morgenthau and advanced by neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz, views states as rational actors driven by the national interest and the need to survive in an anarchic system. Waltz (1979) argued that foreign policy outcomes are determined primarily by the distribution of capabilities rather than domestic preferences. However, the application of realism to U.S. foreign policy in the Trump and Biden eras reveals important limitations.

Taim (2020) illustrates how Trump’s embrace of “America First” foreign policy was consistent with realist skepticism toward international institutions, yet the actual content of policy was filtered through domestic populism and electoral incentives. Trump’s decisions to reduce support for NATO, challenge alliances in Asia, or pursue transactional diplomacy with adversaries (Brooks, 2020) cannot be explained solely through systemic constraints. Instead, domestic political imperatives – including appeasing his electoral base and responding to

Republican isolationist traditions (Gul, 2024) – mediated how realist principles were operationalized.

Biden’s foreign policy demonstrates a different realist logic. Although the structural imperative of counterbalancing China and containing Russia’s revisionism was evident, Biden linked these systemic threats directly to domestic renewal, claiming that “foreign policy for the middle class” must restore domestic legitimacy to sustain external commitments (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). Thus, realism’s state–centric focus is insufficient without accounting for internal conditions, which determine how the U.S. mobilizes power.

Liberal Institutionalism and Neoliberal Interdependence

Liberal and neoliberal institutionalist theories argue that cooperation arises from institutions, interdependence, and regimes that constrain state behavior (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Within this framework, domestic politics plays a crucial role, as governments must ensure that international commitments are credible at home.

Biden’s re–engagement with allies, from recommitting to NATO to rejoining the Paris Agreement, illustrates this logic. Retter, Pezard, Flanagan, Germanovich, Grand–Clement, and Paillé (2021) stress that transatlantic security after Trump was contingent on the restoration of U.S. domestic credibility, which Biden sought to rebuild by strengthening democratic institutions and passing major economic recovery legislation. The Biden–Macron Joint Statement (2021) explicitly framed the transatlantic partnership as grounded in shared domestic democratic values, showing the overlap between internal legitimacy and external institutional cooperation.

Scholars have emphasized that even economic policies such as trade liberalization or the Indo–Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) are inseparable from domestic conditions. Bailey and Goldstein (2008) demonstrated that U.S. trade policy historically depended on domestic political preconditions, and more

recent analyses (Chen, 2023) argue that U.S. trade initiatives during the Biden era were constrained by labor unions, congressional resistance, and electoral considerations. Liberal institutionalism therefore acknowledges that without domestic support, international agreements lack sustainability.

Constructivism: Identity, Narratives, and Polarization

Constructivist approaches emphasize that foreign policy is not only a response to material structures but also a reflection of identity, norms, and discourse. The 2020–2024 period illustrates how domestic narratives directly influenced external strategies.

Borg (2024) highlights how U.S. polarization produced competing foreign policy discourses: Republicans emphasized sovereignty and unilateralism, while Democrats foregrounded democracy promotion and alliance restoration. These narratives were not purely rhetorical but influenced concrete outcomes, such as debates over military aid to Ukraine or relations with NATO. Wright (2020) notes that Biden’s framing of foreign policy as both “restoration” (return to pre-Trump alliances) and “change” (adapting to new systemic rivalries) was rooted in domestic debates over America’s global role.

Moreover, democracy promotion abroad became inseparable from defending democracy at home. The Carnegie Endowment (2024) argues that Biden’s global democracy agenda was constrained by the January 6 Capitol insurrection and persistent threats to U.S. electoral legitimacy, highlighting how domestic crises undermined external credibility. This confirms constructivist claims that norms and legitimacy at home shape the ability to project values abroad.

The English School: Domestic Legitimacy and International Society

The English School of IR emphasizes the interplay between domestic legitimacy and participation in “international society.” According to Hedley Bull

(1977), states sustain international order not only through power but also by adhering to rules and institutions that reflect shared values.

Speck (2020) demonstrates that U.S. elections in 2020 were perceived by European allies as decisive for the future of transatlantic security. Erlanger (2021) similarly shows how European leaders responded with relief to Biden's victory, interpreting it as a restoration of shared norms after Trump's challenge to multilateralism. These reactions illustrate the English School's insight: domestic political outcomes shape the willingness of others to accept the U.S. as a legitimate participant in international society.

The Biden–Macron Joint Statement (2021) further reinforced this linkage, explicitly tying domestic democratic resilience to external cooperation. Shevin–Coetzee (2019) had already noted that repairing U.S.–EU defense ties required a credible domestic foundation, without which external commitments could not be trusted.

Critical and Neo–Marxist Perspectives: Domestic Structures and Global Power

Critical theories, including world–systems and dependency approaches, also illuminate the domestic–foreign policy nexus. Wallerstein's world–systems theory emphasizes that domestic economic structures position states within global hierarchies. Johnson (2021) argues that U.S. foreign policy cannot be disentangled from domestic capitalism, social inequality, and partisan cleavages that affect how global leadership is exercised.

Casey and Herrero (2020) provide a concrete example: U.S. sanctions and policy toward Venezuela reflected not only strategic calculations but also domestic pressures from oil markets and political constituencies in Florida. Similarly, Choe (2019) shows that U.S. demands for South Korea to pay more for U.S. troops were influenced by Trump's domestic narrative of burden–sharing,

revealing how global commitments are monetized to appeal to domestic audiences.

Synthesis: Toward a Multi-Level Framework

No single theory adequately explains the domestic–foreign policy interdependence of 2020–2024. Realism highlights systemic pressures, but it cannot explain why U.S. responses varied with domestic political shifts. Neoliberal institutionalism shows the need for internal legitimacy to sustain external commitments, but it underestimates polarization. Constructivism clarifies how identity and narratives mediate foreign policy, while the English School captures the link between domestic legitimacy and external credibility. Neo–Marxist perspectives add structural insights about capitalism and inequality.

Hamilton and Tiilikainen (2018) suggest that the most fruitful approach is to integrate these perspectives, treating domestic determinants not as secondary variables but as co–equal with systemic pressures. This aligns with Borg’s (2024) argument that U.S. polarization has become an independent variable shaping foreign policy outcomes.

Thus, the theoretical foundation of this thesis adopts a multi-level framework: U.S. foreign policy in 2020 – 2024 was the outcome of systemic rivalry (realism), mediated by institutional commitments (liberalism), shaped by identity narratives (constructivism), judged by international society (English School), and constrained by socio–economic structures (neo–Marxism). This synthesis provides the conceptual lens for analyzing how U.S. domestic politics conditioned external strategy during this turbulent period.

1.2. Domestic Political Drivers of U.S. Foreign Policy

The formulation of U.S. foreign policy cannot be fully understood without analyzing the domestic political drivers that shape and constrain decision–making. While traditional theories of international relations often emphasize systemic pressures, the empirical reality demonstrates that domestic political

variables – ranging from public opinion, party competition, electoral cycles, and lobbying by interest groups to the structural dynamics of Congress and the presidency – are indispensable in explaining both the direction and content of American foreign policy.

One of the most salient domestic drivers is **public opinion**, which consistently influences the scope of international engagement. Surveys conducted by Pew Research Center (2024) reveal that Americans increasingly prioritize domestic concerns, such as economic stability, inflation control, and health care, over expansive foreign policy commitments. Similarly, data from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2023) indicate a growing preference among U.S. citizens for reducing foreign aid in favor of greater domestic spending. This shift reflects a broader societal recalibration in which international engagements are often judged through the lens of their impact on domestic welfare. Recent reporting confirms this trend: a Reuters investigation (2025) revealed that Washington cut security assistance to certain states bordering Russia in response to budgetary pressures, underscoring how domestic fiscal considerations directly reshape U.S. commitments abroad.

A second crucial driver lies in **partisan polarization and political leadership**. Since the Trump administration, foreign policy debates have increasingly been subsumed under partisan conflict. Trump’s presidency epitomized the rise of “transactional diplomacy,” privileging short-term domestic political gain over long-standing strategic commitments (Brooks, 2020). For example, The Guardian (2025) documented how Trump’s early foreign policy in his second presidency (2025) was guided more by domestic political calculations related to Ukraine and Gaza than by traditional strategic considerations, thus illustrating the deep entanglement of electoral imperatives with foreign decision-making. Conversely, Biden’s foreign policy agenda was explicitly framed around the defense of democracy “at home and abroad,” as reflected in his 2024 State of the Union address (Chatham House, 2024). This blending of foreign policy

rhetoric with domestic legitimacy politics demonstrates how leaders increasingly use international affairs to bolster internal credibility.

Congressional dynamics and interest group pressures also remain central. Legislative–executive bargaining over foreign policy frequently reflects domestic constituencies rather than purely strategic imperatives. For instance, debates over foreign aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan during the 2022–2024 congressional sessions were heavily shaped by electoral calculations in key districts rather than by long–term strategic consensus. This is consistent with broader findings in the literature: Johnson (2021) underscores how domestic roots – political, economic, and ideological – determine the scope of U.S. external actions, while the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s report (2020) highlighted the negative consequences of partisan–driven foreign policy under Trump.

Another decisive factor is the **role of economic interests and resource allocation**. Recent analyses reveal how domestic economic agendas frequently override internationalist rhetoric. For example, The Guardian (2025) published findings on fossil fuel subsidies, illustrating how entrenched domestic industries shape both U.S. climate diplomacy and its international negotiating credibility. Similarly, AP News (2021) reported that Biden’s withdrawal from Afghanistan – though justified strategically – was strongly informed by domestic exhaustion with “forever wars” and the need to redirect resources toward internal recovery. These examples demonstrate that domestic economic structures, corporate lobbies, and fiscal constraints impose decisive boundaries on the range of feasible foreign policies.

Finally, **electoral cycles intensify the domestic–foreign nexus**. Foreign policy traditionally plays a secondary role in U.S. elections, yet recent cycles suggest a shift. An AP–NORC poll (2024) found that more Americans than in previous decades considered foreign policy a top election priority, particularly regarding China, Russia, and global democracy promotion. This politicization is

evident in both parties: Republicans frequently mobilize isolationist, “America First” discourses to appeal to domestic voters skeptical of overseas commitments, while Democrats increasingly tie international engagement to issues of domestic democracy and social justice. PBS NewsHour (2024) even suggested that foreign policy may become a defining feature of national party conventions, reflecting its rising salience as an electoral wedge issue.

Taken together, these drivers illustrate that U.S. foreign policy is never the product of purely international considerations. Rather, it emerges from a complex interplay of public opinion, partisan conflict, congressional bargaining, economic lobbying, and electoral imperatives. As recent policy choices – from funding cuts to Eastern European security partners (Reuters, 2025), to Biden’s democracy-centered foreign policy (Chatham House, 2024), to Trump’s renewed transactionalism in 2025 (The Guardian, 2025) – demonstrate, domestic political landscapes decisively structure the contours of U.S. engagement abroad. Understanding this interdependence is thus indispensable for scholars and practitioners alike.

1.3. Historical Trajectories of Domestic Influences on U.S. Foreign Policy

The interdependence of domestic politics and U.S. foreign policy has a long historical trajectory, stretching back to the early Republic. Although foreign policy is often presented as the prerogative of the executive branch, in reality it has always been deeply embedded in America’s domestic political struggles, cultural identity, and institutional structures. Historical experience demonstrates that U.S. leaders rarely pursue international engagement in isolation from domestic political pressures. Instead, decisions about war, peace, trade, and alliances have been filtered through electoral imperatives, public opinion, party competition, and the institutional constraints of Congress and federalism.

Early Foundations: Republican Virtues and Isolationism

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, domestic debates over the very identity of the United States shaped its foreign posture. George Washington's Farewell Address famously warned against "entangling alliances," reflecting the domestic consensus that the fledgling Republic should focus on internal consolidation rather than external commitments. This orientation was not a purely strategic calculation; it was rooted in domestic political culture, where republican virtue was equated with agrarian self-sufficiency and fear of corruption from European power politics (Dolan, 2023). The Jeffersonian tradition of cautious engagement reflected anxieties about preserving American democracy at home, a pattern that has recurred in various forms across U.S. history.

19th Century Expansion and Domestic Drivers

As the United States expanded westward, domestic imperatives increasingly dictated foreign policy. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823, often celebrated as a bold statement of hemispheric leadership, was also a response to domestic pressures from southern slaveholding elites and western expansionists, who sought to secure the hemisphere from European interference to protect slavery and territorial ambitions. Similarly, the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) was justified in the name of manifest destiny but was largely driven by domestic political calculations, particularly the sectional struggle over slavery's expansion into new territories.

This interplay illustrates a recurring theme: U.S. foreign policy choices were never simply about external threats or opportunities, but about how those external actions reinforced or destabilized domestic coalitions.

Twentieth Century: From Isolationism to Internationalism

The First World War marked a decisive turning point in the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. President Woodrow Wilson's push for U.S. entry into the League of Nations was defeated in the Senate, not because of global strategic imperatives, but because of intense domestic political

opposition rooted in partisan rivalry and public skepticism about entanglement in European affairs. This failure entrenched isolationist sentiment during the interwar years, demonstrating how legislative politics and domestic opinion could override executive ambitions.

The Second World War and its aftermath saw the pendulum swing in the opposite direction. Domestic political consensus around the dangers of fascism and the lessons of appeasement created fertile ground for bipartisan support of the United Nations, NATO, and the Marshall Plan. Yet even here, domestic structures played a decisive role. The Truman administration framed the Marshall Plan not only as a tool to contain communism but also as a way to expand export markets for American farmers and industrial producers, thus linking foreign aid to domestic economic prosperity (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018).

The Cold War: Domestic Politics as Strategic Constraint

During the Cold War, the domestic–foreign policy nexus intensified further. Containment strategy, although often presented as a response to Soviet expansionism, was also sustained by domestic political imperatives. McCarthyism and the broader anti–communist consensus limited presidential flexibility, making “toughness” toward the Soviet Union a domestic political necessity. Leaders who deviated from this consensus, such as Truman during the Korean stalemate or Johnson during Vietnam, faced severe domestic backlash.

Vietnam in particular underscored the centrality of public opinion. Domestic protests, student movements, and congressional opposition eroded executive authority and forced a recalibration of foreign commitments. The “Vietnam Syndrome” that followed shaped U.S. engagement for decades, constraining interventions until the Reagan administration cautiously reasserted U.S. military power.

Post–Cold War: Global Leadership and Domestic Ambivalence

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened a new phase in which U.S. leaders embraced unipolar primacy, but domestic politics again defined its contours. While George H. W. Bush successfully marshaled bipartisan support for the Gulf War, subsequent administrations faced domestic ambivalence about globalization and interventionism. The 1990s debates over NAFTA, for example, revealed deep divisions in American society. As scholars note, U.S. trade policy during this period reflected the tension between liberal institutionalist commitments to free trade and protectionist demands rooted in domestic labor politics (Journal of Public Policy, 2008).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks momentarily reshaped the domestic–foreign balance by creating overwhelming public support for the War on Terror. Yet even this dramatic shift was filtered through domestic dynamics. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, justified through claims of weapons of mass destruction, was as much about consolidating domestic political legitimacy as it was about strategic calculations in the Middle East (Johnson, 2021). Over time, however, the Iraq War eroded public trust and contributed to the rise of anti–establishment sentiment, eventually fueling the populist wave that brought Donald Trump to power.

The Trump Era: Transactionalism and Populist Constraints

Donald Trump’s presidency represented a dramatic reassertion of domestic primacy in foreign policy. Trump explicitly rejected the traditional bipartisan consensus on alliances and multilateralism, favoring a transactional approach that prioritized short–term domestic political gains. This orientation was particularly visible in his treatment of NATO, where he publicly demanded that allies increase defense spending under the threat of U.S. retrenchment (Choe, 2019). As scholars have argued, Trump’s “America First” posture was not an ideological innovation but rather a reflection of resurgent domestic isolationism and the electoral appeal of skepticism toward globalization (Gul, 2024; Brooks, 2020).

Importantly, Trump's foreign policy was deeply entangled with his domestic political strategy. Confrontations with China, threats to withdraw troops from South Korea, and the use of sanctions were often deployed to appeal to his electoral base rather than to pursue coherent long-term strategy (Bender, 2020). As Borg (2024) notes, domestic polarization during and after Trump's presidency created unprecedented uncertainty in foreign policy, with allies and adversaries alike questioning the reliability of U.S. commitments.

The Biden Presidency: Domestic Renewal as Foreign Policy

Joe Biden entered office in 2021 with the explicit aim of linking domestic renewal to international leadership. His foreign policy agenda was framed as a defense of democracy "at home and abroad" (Chatham House, 2024). Initiatives such as the Build Back Better World partnership and renewed commitments to NATO were explicitly tied to rebuilding the domestic social contract, reflecting the recognition that America's global credibility rests on domestic democratic resilience (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

Yet Biden, too, faced structural domestic constraints. The withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 was driven less by strategic reassessment than by overwhelming domestic exhaustion with long wars and the need to redirect resources toward pressing domestic concerns (AP News, 2021). Similarly, while Biden rhetorically championed global democracy, congressional polarization limited his ability to pursue ambitious foreign aid and security packages without protracted domestic bargaining (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022).

Recent Trends: Polarization and the Erosion of Consensus

In the 2020s, the historical trajectory of domestic influences reveals a growing erosion of bipartisan consensus on foreign policy. Whereas the Cold War sustained a durable domestic foundation for global leadership, the contemporary period is marked by volatility and polarization. A Pew Research survey (2024) found that while Americans remain concerned about China and Russia, they also

prioritize reducing foreign commitments in favor of domestic investment. Reuters (2025) reported that Washington reduced funding to states bordering Russia, illustrating how fiscal pressures and voter preferences reshape even core security commitments.

Trump's return to office in 2025 has further deepened uncertainty. The Guardian (2025) reported that his early foreign policy moves – toward Ukraine, Gaza, and broader expansionist posturing – were framed not around coherent international strategy but around consolidating his domestic political base. This echoes earlier historical patterns where domestic imperatives shaped international engagement, but in today's polarized environment, the effect is magnified, producing erratic and unpredictable outcomes.

Conclusion

The historical record demonstrates that U.S. foreign policy has never been insulated from domestic politics. From Washington's isolationism, to Wilson's failed League of Nations campaign, to the Cold War consensus, to the post-9/11 interventions, and finally to the polarized politics of Trump and Biden, domestic political imperatives have consistently shaped the scope, direction, and legitimacy of U.S. international engagement. The contemporary period amplifies these historical patterns, with polarization, populism, and economic pressures exerting unprecedented influence over America's global role. Understanding this trajectory is indispensable for situating present-day U.S. foreign policy in its longer historical arc of domestic–foreign interdependence.

1.4. Sources of the Study

The study of the domestic determinants of U.S. foreign policy inevitably relies on a wide range of source materials. Since the research concerns both theoretical foundations and empirical case studies from recent U.S. administrations, it is necessary to integrate **primary sources** (government documents, policy statements, official reports, and speeches) with **secondary**

sources (academic monographs, peer-reviewed articles, and think tank studies). The combination allows for triangulation of perspectives: primary sources reveal how U.S. leaders publicly articulated their strategies, while secondary sources provide scholarly interpretation and critical analysis of these discourses.

Primary Sources: Official Documents, Reports, and Statements

Primary sources are indispensable for reconstructing the logic and rhetoric of foreign policy decisions as they were presented to domestic and international audiences. These include **presidential statements, government reports, congressional documents, and international agreements**, many of which directly illuminate the domestic–foreign policy nexus.

For example, the *Joint Statement by President Biden and President Emmanuel Macron of France* (2021) provides a critical insight into how U.S. leadership under Biden framed transatlantic partnership not merely as an external necessity, but as an extension of domestic democratic renewal and shared values (The American Presidency Project, 2021). Similarly, the *U.S.–European Relations in the 117th Congress* report (Congressional Research Service, 2022) highlights how congressional debates and partisanship directly influenced the shape of foreign aid packages, NATO funding, and responses to Russia.

Congressional and Senate reports also form a crucial body of evidence. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s *The Cost of Trump’s Foreign Policy: Damage and Consequences for U.S. and Global Security* (2020) offers a unique primary perspective on how domestic-driven unilateralism reshaped U.S. commitments, particularly in relation to alliances and global norms. Unlike academic commentary, this report reflects the institutional voice of U.S. policymakers grappling with foreign policy outcomes.

Statements and speeches by political leaders further illuminate the domestic drivers of foreign policy. Donald Trump’s insistence on “burden-sharing” in NATO, echoed in reports such as Choe’s (2019) coverage of demands on South

Korea, reveal how foreign policy became intertwined with electoral populism and domestic economic appeals. Biden’s State of the Union address in 2024, as analyzed by Chatham House (2024), similarly exemplified the fusion of foreign commitments with domestic democratic defense.

Primary sources also include journalistic investigations and direct reporting, which, although technically secondary in their analysis, are contemporaneous accounts that document official actions. For instance, Wall Street Journal reporting on Trump’s “foreign policy gamble” (Bender, 2020) and New York Times coverage of European reactions to Trump’s retreat (Erlanger, 2021) provide indispensable near–real–time perspectives on how domestic political calculations shaped U.S. foreign positioning.

Secondary Sources: Scholarly Works and Analytical Studies

Secondary sources provide the theoretical, methodological, and comparative grounding necessary to interpret primary data. These include books, journal articles, and think tank reports, which collectively frame the analytical lens of this research.

A key contribution comes from Hamilton and Tiilikainen’s edited volume *Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States* (2018), which systematically examines how domestic institutions, political cultures, and societal cleavages condition external action. Their work situates U.S. foreign policy in comparative perspective, highlighting that America is not unique in facing such constraints, but operates within a broader Western pattern of domestic–foreign interdependence.

Recent scholarship on polarization is central to this study. Borg’s (2024) article, *A Battle for the Soul of This Nation*, analyzes how domestic polarization after Trump has eroded the continuity of U.S. foreign commitments, producing unprecedented volatility. Similarly, Johnson’s (2021) *U.S. Foreign Policy: Domestic Roots and International Impact* argues that foreign policy must be read

as the external face of domestic contestation, where electoral cycles, media narratives, and lobbying reshape international behavior.

Neorealist and neoliberal interpretations also inform secondary analysis. The RAND study by Retter et al. (2021) on European strategic autonomy highlights the theoretical clash between realism – emphasizing power constraints – and liberal institutionalism – emphasizing the role of transatlantic norms. Scholars such as Jakštaitė–Confortola (2022) further examine how the Biden presidency integrated domestic democratic renewal with liberal internationalist commitments, while others like Taim (2020) assess how Trump’s realist-inspired rhetoric was still filtered through domestic populist pressures.

Journal articles add methodological diversity. The *Journal of Public Policy* article (2008) on the domestic preconditions of U.S. trade policy provides a structural economic perspective, showing how protectionist interests and liberalizing coalitions at home shape external commitments. More recent pieces, such as research on legislatures and foreign policy (ResearchGate, 2024), expand this framework by showing how institutional bargaining within Congress constrains presidential flexibility.

Finally, think tank and policy institute contributions bridge the gap between academia and practice. Wright’s (2020) Brookings piece *Between Restoration and Change* analyzes the domestic debates shaping Biden’s early foreign policy. Speck’s (2020) GMF report assesses how the outcome of the 2020 election influenced European security perceptions, again illustrating the transatlantic link between domestic politics and alliance credibility.

The Complementarity of Primary and Secondary Sources

The integration of these sources reveals both their distinct contributions and their interdependence. Primary sources provide the raw material: the official statements, legal texts, reports, and policies that articulate how leaders justified or implemented foreign policy choices. Secondary sources, meanwhile, offer

theoretical interpretation, situating those decisions within broader debates of realism, liberalism, or domestic polarization.

This dual approach is essential because relying solely on official discourse risks reproducing political rhetoric uncritically, while focusing only on academic analysis may lose sight of the actual language, framing, and institutional processes through which foreign policy is constructed. For instance, Biden’s *Joint Statement with Macron* (2021) must be read alongside Jakštaitė–Confortola’s (2022) scholarly analysis to understand both its rhetorical intent and its deeper significance for the theory of liberal internationalism. Likewise, Trump’s foreign policy speeches must be contextualized by works such as Brooks (2020) on transactional diplomacy to grasp their populist underpinnings.

The sources employed in this study thus reflect a **multilayered architecture**. At the core are official government documents, speeches, and congressional reports, which illuminate how U.S. leaders publicly framed the link between domestic politics and foreign action. Complementing them are scholarly analyses, think tank studies, and journalistic accounts, which provide theoretical frameworks and critical interpretation. Together, they ensure a balanced, nuanced understanding of the domestic determinants of U.S. foreign policy, while also identifying the “white spots” that remain – such as the long-term consequences of polarization for alliance credibility and the growing role of societal cleavages in shaping global commitments.

1.5. Research Methodology and Analytical Framework

The interdisciplinary character of international relations research requires a carefully selected methodological framework that integrates multiple approaches. The present study, devoted to the interdependence between U.S. domestic policy and its foreign policy during the period 2020 – 2024, employs a **multi-method strategy** designed to capture the complexity of the subject. Such a strategy is necessary because neither purely theoretical reflection nor exclusively empirical

description is sufficient to explain the dynamics of U.S. policy in a time marked by polarization, pandemic recovery, and global security crises.

Case Study Method

The cornerstone of the methodological design is the **case study method**, which provides a dynamic balance between detailed descriptiveness and the search for broader explanatory patterns. The cases selected – such as U.S. foreign policy in relation to NATO, Ukraine, and trade with China – are not isolated episodes but illustrative examples of how domestic political pressures shaped external behavior. The method enables the study to answer the “why” and “how” questions of causality, specifically why domestic political cleavages constrained foreign engagement, and how electoral politics redirected foreign commitments.

For instance, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, analyzed by Associated Press (2021), demonstrates how domestic fatigue with “endless wars” directly informed a foreign policy choice that reshaped U.S. credibility abroad. Likewise, Pew Research (2024) opinion surveys showing Americans’ prioritization of domestic spending over foreign aid provide evidence that leaders responded to societal demands when recalibrating international strategies.

Comparative and Historical Analysis

In addition to case studies, **comparative analysis** is employed to contrast the approaches of the Trump and Biden administrations. This comparison highlights the continuity and divergence in foreign policy that stemmed from differing domestic political foundations. Trump’s embrace of transactional diplomacy and Biden’s liberal internationalist restoration are thus contextualized within the same systemic framework of domestic polarization and populist pressures (Brooks, 2020; Jakšaitė–Confortola, 2022).

The **historical method** complements this approach by situating 2020–2024 developments within the longer trajectory of U.S. domestic–foreign policy interplay. Earlier precedents in U.S. history – such as protectionist pressures on

trade policy (Journal of Public Policy, 2008) – inform the analysis by demonstrating that structural tensions between domestic and international imperatives are not new phenomena, but have acquired unprecedented intensity in recent years.

Discourse Analysis

To capture the role of political rhetoric, the study applies **discourse analysis** to speeches, statements, and media coverage. Political leaders often use language strategically to frame foreign policy decisions as extensions of domestic agendas. For example, Biden’s repeated invocation of democracy as a guiding principle for both domestic renewal and international alliances (Chatham House, 2024) reveals how discourse bridges internal and external legitimacy. Similarly, Trump’s use of “America First” rhetoric, echoed in studies of Republican isolationism (Gul, 2024), underscores the ideological weight of language in reorienting international relations.

Statistical and Opinion Data

Complementing qualitative methods, the study also makes use of **statistical analysis** of public opinion and economic data. Surveys from Pew Research (2024) and the AP–NORC poll (2024) demonstrate quantifiable domestic attitudes that informed foreign policy positions. Likewise, reports on budgetary allocations, such as reductions in security assistance to Eastern European states (Reuters, 2025), provide empirical data illustrating how resource constraints were justified on the basis of domestic priorities.

Triangulation and Analytical Rigor

The combined use of case studies, historical analysis, discourse analysis, and statistical evidence ensures methodological **triangulation**. This approach strengthens validity by cross-verifying findings across different types of data. For example, an official government statement (primary source) can be compared against survey data (quantitative evidence) and scholarly interpretation

(secondary source) to ensure that conclusions are not derived from a single perspective.

By employing a multifaceted methodological design, this study ensures that the analysis of U.S. domestic–foreign policy interdependence during 2020 – 2024 is both empirically grounded and theoretically informed. The integration of qualitative and quantitative tools enables the research to move beyond descriptive narrative toward explanatory insight, ultimately clarifying the causal mechanisms through which domestic political structures, societal attitudes, and leadership discourses influenced the international behavior of the United States.

1.6. Interdependence of State and Foreign Policy

The interdependence of domestic and foreign policy constitutes a central analytical lens for understanding the dynamics of U.S. international engagement during 2020–2024. Domestic politics – including partisan polarization, public opinion, institutional checks and balances, and electoral incentives – interact dynamically with foreign policy decisions, producing outcomes that are simultaneously shaped by internal constraints and external imperatives (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024). This bidirectional relationship forms the theoretical and empirical core of the present research.

Domestic Political Drivers of Foreign Policy

Domestic political structures exert a significant influence on foreign policy through multiple channels. Partisan polarization, particularly during the Trump and Biden administrations, constrained the continuity and predictability of U.S. international commitments (Borg, 2024). In highly polarized political environments, foreign policy decisions are often interpreted and criticized through the lens of partisan interests, producing divergent strategies between administrations. For example, Trump’s “America First” approach emphasized transactional diplomacy and unilateral actions, often justified as fulfilling domestic economic or electoral objectives (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020).

Conversely, Biden's administration sought to restore alliances and multilateral commitments, framing these as extensions of democratic values and domestic legitimacy (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024).

Public opinion constitutes another key domestic determinant. Empirical surveys demonstrate that Americans frequently prioritize domestic spending, economic recovery, and social welfare over foreign aid or military engagement (Pew Research, 2024; Reuters, 2025). These preferences directly shape executive decisions, from allocation of defense budgets to international aid commitments, illustrating how domestic societal pressures constrain foreign policy flexibility. For instance, reductions in security assistance to countries bordering Russia in 2025 were justified publicly by prioritizing domestic resource allocation (Reuters, 2025).

Institutional Constraints and Mechanisms

The U.S. system of separated powers and institutional checks and balances further reinforces domestic–foreign policy interdependence. Congressional oversight, budgetary authority, and legislative approval of treaties function as structural constraints on presidential discretion (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022; Johnson, 2021). During the 2020 – 2024 period, congressional debates over NATO contributions, Ukraine assistance, and trade policies exemplify how domestic institutional arrangements mediate international action (Speck, 2020; Retter et al., 2021). Presidential initiatives must navigate these mechanisms to achieve implementation, underscoring that foreign policy outcomes are rarely the product of executive agency alone.

Presidential Rhetoric and Discursive Mediation

Beyond structural and institutional factors, presidential rhetoric serves as a crucial bridge between domestic priorities and foreign policy action. Through speeches, statements, and public addresses, the president frames foreign engagements in ways that resonate with domestic audiences while signaling

intentions internationally (Chatham House, 2024; Brooks, 2020). For example, Biden’s repeated emphasis on defending democracy at home and abroad illustrates how discourse mediates both domestic legitimacy and international credibility. Similarly, Trump’s “America First” messaging linked economic nationalism with foreign policy choices, shaping allies’ and adversaries’ expectations (Gul, 2024).

Feedback Loops Between Domestic and Foreign Policy

The interdependence of domestic and foreign policy is not unidirectional. Foreign policy decisions generate **feedback effects** on domestic politics, influencing electoral outcomes, party cohesion, and public opinion. For instance, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan’s withdrawal, and decisions regarding Ukraine, directly affected domestic political debates, media coverage, and public evaluations of the executive (Associated Press, 2021; Pew Research, 2024). This feedback reinforces the complexity of the domestic–foreign nexus, illustrating that domestic politics and international engagements are mutually constitutive rather than independent spheres.

Analytical Implications for the Study

Understanding this interdependence is critical for the design of the research methodology and for operationalizing the study’s variables. Domestic variables – including polarization, public opinion, and institutional constraints – are treated as independent variables, while foreign policy decisions are conceptualized as dependent variables (Borg, 2024; Johnson, 2021). Presidential rhetoric and discursive framing function as mediating variables, influencing how domestic pressures translate into external actions. This framework allows the research to examine causality, continuity, and variation in U.S. foreign policy during the selected period.

CHAPTER II. INTERDEPENDENCE OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

2.1. Domestic Factors Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy

The formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy are deeply embedded in domestic political, economic, and societal contexts. This subchapter analyzes the primary domestic factors that influenced U.S. foreign policy decisions during 2020 – 2024, including partisan polarization, public opinion, economic and budgetary considerations, electoral incentives, and institutional mechanisms. Understanding these factors is crucial because U.S. foreign policy is rarely autonomous from domestic constraints; rather, it reflects the interplay between internal pressures and external commitments (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018).

Partisan Polarization and Political Competition

Partisan polarization emerged as one of the most influential domestic determinants of U.S. foreign policy in the period under study. The division between Republican and Democratic perspectives created discontinuities in foreign engagements, especially during the transition from the Trump administration (2017 – 2021) to the Biden administration (2021 – 2024). Under Trump, foreign policy was characterized by **transactional diplomacy**, unilateral actions, and the prioritization of economic nationalism, consistent with the “America First” ideological framework (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020). Congressional debates often reflected starkly opposing partisan views, producing legislative constraints and delays in foreign policy implementation (Johnson, 2021; U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022).

For example, Trump’s pressure on NATO allies to increase defense contributions highlighted how partisan narratives about domestic economic responsibility directly informed external diplomatic strategies (Speck, 2020). Conversely, Biden’s approach emphasized the restoration of alliances and multilateralism, framing these engagements as consistent with domestic values of

democracy and international cooperation (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024). The sharp contrast between administrations demonstrates that partisan polarization is not merely a domestic phenomenon; it substantially conditions the **content, style, and continuity of U.S. foreign policy**.

Public Opinion and Societal Preferences

Public opinion constitutes another critical domestic factor shaping foreign policy. Survey data indicate that U.S. citizens often prioritize domestic economic recovery, social welfare, and national security over international commitments (Pew Research, 2024; Reuters, 2025). During the period 2020–2024, these societal preferences influenced budgetary allocations for foreign aid, defense spending, and multilateral engagements. Reductions in security assistance to countries bordering Russia in 2025 were justified publicly by prioritizing domestic programs, demonstrating how societal expectations directly affected strategic decision-making (Reuters, 2025).

Moreover, opinion polls reveal that Americans' views on foreign policy are increasingly issue-specific and aligned with partisan identity (US News, 2024; Pew Research, 2024). For instance, Republican-leaning constituencies expressed strong support for isolationist and transactional approaches, while Democratic-leaning populations endorsed multilateral engagement and alliance strengthening. The responsiveness of presidential administrations to these preferences highlights the **feedback loop** between domestic societal priorities and foreign policy formulation (Borg, 2024; Gul, 2024).

Electoral Considerations and Political Cycles

Electoral incentives and the timing of elections further shaped foreign policy decisions. Presidential and congressional elections create short-term pressures for political leaders to align international actions with electoral priorities (Johnson, 2021). For example, the 2020 U.S. presidential election and the 2022 midterm elections influenced decisions regarding troop deployments, trade

agreements, and international aid packages. Leaders were motivated to adopt policies that would demonstrate responsiveness to domestic constituencies while avoiding unpopular commitments abroad.

During the Trump administration, electoral considerations contributed to high-profile decisions such as the temporary withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, which was framed domestically as fulfilling a campaign promise to end “endless wars” (Associated Press, 2021). Under Biden, the administration emphasized restoring international credibility, but electoral cycles continued to shape the timing, intensity, and presentation of foreign policy initiatives (Chatham House, 2024; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). This illustrates that **electoral dynamics mediate the translation of domestic political goals into foreign policy behavior.**

Institutional Constraints and Checks

The U.S. political system is characterized by a separation of powers, federalism, and legislative oversight, all of which act as domestic constraints on foreign policy (Johnson, 2021; U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022). Congress possesses the authority to approve budgets, ratify treaties, and conduct oversight hearings, all of which shape the executive branch’s flexibility in conducting foreign relations. For example, congressional opposition or partisan control influenced debates over aid to Ukraine and NATO contributions, creating conditionality on executive decision-making (Speck, 2020; Retter et al., 2021).

The judiciary also plays a role in domestic–foreign policy interdependence, particularly in reviewing executive orders or agreements for constitutional compliance. These institutional mechanisms ensure that foreign policy decisions are **embedded within a domestic framework of legality, accountability, and checks on unilateral executive action.**

Economic and Budgetary Considerations

Economic factors and budgetary constraints significantly influence foreign policy priorities. Decisions regarding international aid, defense spending, trade agreements, and global commitments are closely tied to domestic fiscal conditions and societal expectations (Pew Research, 2024; Reuters, 2025). For instance, fiscal pressures during the COVID–19 pandemic required trade–offs between domestic stimulus measures and international commitments. Administrations justified selective reductions in foreign aid or international security funding as responses to domestic priorities, reinforcing the link between **internal economic pressures and external policy choices** (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024).

Moreover, trade policy reflects the domestic economic agenda. The Trump administration’s tariffs and renegotiation of trade agreements with China and the EU were framed as protecting domestic industries and jobs (Journal of Public Policy, 2008; Brooks, 2020). Under Biden, trade policy emphasized strategic competition, supply chain resilience, and domestic manufacturing incentives, illustrating the continuing interconnection between internal economic goals and external trade strategy (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

The period 2020–2024 demonstrates that U.S. foreign policy is deeply embedded in domestic political, economic, and societal structures. Partisan polarization, public opinion, electoral considerations, institutional constraints, and economic imperatives collectively shape the **content, style, and continuity** of international engagements.

2.2. External Factors and International Constraints on U.S. Foreign Policy

While domestic factors critically shape U.S. foreign policy, external factors – including the international system, global power dynamics, alliances, multilateral institutions, and transnational threats – equally influence policy formulation and execution. U.S. foreign policy decisions are constrained not only by internal domestic pressures but also by structural, institutional, and normative elements in the international arena. Recognizing this duality is essential for

understanding the interdependence of domestic and foreign policy during the period 2020–2024.

Global Power Dynamics and Strategic Competition

The international system imposes structural constraints on U.S. foreign policy through the distribution of power and the presence of strategic competitors. During 2020–2024, the rise of China as a global economic and military power, alongside Russia’s assertive regional policies, shaped U.S. strategic choices. For example, tensions in the Indo–Pacific prompted the U.S. to strengthen alliances with India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea, while responding to Chinese technological and military expansion (AP News, 2025; Choe, 2019). Russia’s invasion of Ukraine further constrained U.S. policy options, requiring decisions regarding military aid, sanctions, and diplomatic engagement with NATO allies (Reuters, 2025; Speck, 2020).

Structural realism provides a theoretical lens for understanding these dynamics, emphasizing that U.S. foreign policy is influenced by the anarchic international system and the need to maintain balance against rising powers (Waltz, 1979; Gilpin, 1981). Strategic competition with China and Russia illustrates how external pressures shape U.S. decision–making, regardless of domestic preferences. However, the specific policy response is moderated by domestic political, economic, and societal factors, highlighting the **interdependent nature** of external and internal determinants.

Alliances and Multilateral Institutions

U.S. engagement in alliances and multilateral institutions represents another set of external constraints. NATO, the European Union, the United Nations, and various trade regimes create expectations, obligations, and norms that influence U.S. behavior. The Trump administration frequently criticized NATO allies for perceived underfunding, framing U.S. contributions as excessive relative to domestic priorities (Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Brooks, 2020). In contrast, the Biden

administration emphasized multilateral engagement and transatlantic cooperation, signaling a return to normative and alliance-based constraints (Joint Statement by Biden & Macron, 2021; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

External pressures from allies and partners can shape the timing, intensity, and scope of U.S. foreign policy initiatives. For instance, European states called for sustained U.S. support for Ukraine and stronger NATO deterrence, which influenced both military aid packages and diplomatic messaging (Speck, 2020; Retter et al., 2021). These obligations demonstrate that U.S. foreign policy operates not in isolation but within a network of **multilateral and alliance-based constraints** that limit unilateral action and shape policy preferences.

International Norms and the Rules-Based Order

Normative frameworks, including international law, treaties, and global expectations, also influence U.S. foreign policy. Decisions regarding arms control, human rights, climate commitments, and trade are subject to international scrutiny. For example, Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal reflected a willingness to challenge normative constraints when domestic political incentives aligned (Bender, 2020; Brooks, 2020). By contrast, Biden’s recommitment to multilateral agreements demonstrates how normative expectations interact with domestic priorities to shape policy decisions (Democracy Policy Under Biden, 2024; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

These dynamics illustrate that **normative pressures** – from both states and transnational institutions – cannot be disentangled from domestic factors. Even when external expectations are clear, domestic politics determines the extent and manner of compliance or engagement, highlighting the bidirectional nature of the domestic–foreign policy relationship.

Global Crises and Transnational Threats

Global crises and transnational threats further constrain U.S. foreign policy. The COVID–19 pandemic, Russian aggression in Ukraine, and escalating

tensions in the Middle East presented urgent international challenges that required both immediate action and long-term strategic planning (AP News, 2021; US Foreign Policy: Towards Middle East, 2018–2023). These external shocks necessitated policy responses that had to balance international obligations with domestic capacities, including economic, healthcare, and political resources (Reuters, 2025; Pew Research, 2024).

For instance, the decision to provide military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine was influenced by both domestic public opinion and the strategic necessity of supporting NATO allies. Similarly, U.S. engagement in the Middle East – balancing commitments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Israel–Palestine – illustrated the complexity of navigating **simultaneous external pressures and domestic constraints** (AP News, 2021; Casey & Herrero, 2020).

Economic Interdependence and Global Trade

Economic globalization and interdependence constrain U.S. foreign policy decisions by linking domestic economic health to international engagement. Trade disputes with China, tariffs on European imports, and the promotion of supply chain resilience under the Biden administration reflect the intersection of domestic economic policy and international obligations (Journal of Public Policy, 2008; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022).

Foreign policy is thus simultaneously constrained by external economic realities and domestic political pressures. For example, congressional scrutiny over trade deals, tariffs, and export controls demonstrates how internal political actors mediate the influence of global markets on foreign policy choices (Johnson, 2021; Brooks, 2020). This dual constraint exemplifies the **interdependent logic** of domestic and international determinants.

International Public Opinion and Soft Power Considerations

U.S. foreign policy is also influenced by perceptions abroad. Global public opinion, partner expectations, and the country's international image impact policy

formulation, particularly in the realm of democracy promotion, human rights, and climate diplomacy (Chatham House, 2024; Democracy Policy Under Biden, 2024). The Biden administration's emphasis on restoring the credibility of U.S. democracy abroad reflects recognition that international perception has both normative and strategic significance, shaping domestic legitimacy for foreign initiatives (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022).

By contrast, during Trump's presidency, U.S. unilateralism and skepticism toward multilateralism generated reputational costs that affected subsequent administrations, demonstrating how **external perception interacts with domestic politics** to shape policy continuity and adaptation.

In summary, external factors – including global power dynamics, alliances, international norms, global crises, economic interdependence, and international public opinion – constitute significant constraints on U.S. foreign policy. These factors do not operate independently; rather, they interact with domestic political, societal, and institutional pressures to produce policy outcomes. The period 2020–2024 illustrates the **interdependent nature of domestic and foreign policy**, where decisions are simultaneously shaped by internal constraints and external imperatives. This interdependence highlights the necessity of a holistic analytical framework that accounts for both domestic and international determinants of U.S. foreign policy.

2.3. The Bidirectional Feedback: How Domestic and Foreign Policy Shape Each Other

The interdependence of domestic and foreign policy is most clearly observed in the **feedback mechanisms** linking internal political dynamics with external strategic choices. While domestic factors shape foreign policy decisions and external constraints influence U.S. behavior, foreign policy outcomes in turn affect domestic politics, public opinion, institutional alignment, and electoral calculations (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024). This bidirectional relationship is particularly evident during the period 2020–2024, when the United

States navigated transitions between administrations, global crises, and strategic competition with rising powers.

Foreign Policy as a Driver of Domestic Politics

Foreign policy initiatives frequently produce domestic repercussions, shaping political debates, public opinion, and electoral behavior. The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2021 serves as a prominent example. While the executive framed this decision as fulfilling a long-standing electoral promise and reducing military overextension, domestic reactions were polarized. Public concern over humanitarian consequences, allied credibility, and the broader perception of U.S. leadership in the world generated extensive congressional scrutiny and media debate (Associated Press, 2021; Erlanger, 2021).

Similarly, U.S. military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine after Russia's invasion had significant domestic consequences. While many Americans supported aid to uphold NATO commitments and democratic values abroad, others questioned the prioritization of foreign commitments over domestic spending, reflecting the **interactive nature of policy legitimacy and public opinion** (Reuters, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). These cases illustrate that foreign policy choices are **not insulated from domestic political feedback**; rather, they actively shape political discourse, partisanship, and social perceptions within the United States.

Influence on Partisan Politics and Electoral Dynamics

Foreign policy decisions can also influence partisan dynamics and electoral outcomes. The contrasting approaches of the Trump and Biden administrations highlight how external engagements affect domestic political positioning. Trump's unilateralist and transactional diplomacy appealed to Republican constituencies by emphasizing economic nationalism and skepticism of international obligations (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020). However, this approach

simultaneously alienated some moderate voters and Democratic constituencies, fueling domestic political polarization (Gul, 2024).

Conversely, Biden's emphasis on alliance restoration, democracy promotion, and multilateral engagement sought to consolidate support among Democratic constituencies while projecting competence internationally (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024). In both cases, foreign policy decisions were consciously designed to **strengthen domestic political legitimacy**, demonstrating the reciprocal influence between internal politics and international action.

Economic and Budgetary Feedback Loops

Economic considerations illustrate another form of domestic–foreign feedback. Decisions to implement sanctions, military aid, or trade policies carry **domestic economic consequences**, which in turn affect public opinion and electoral evaluations. For example, sanctions on Russia and support for Ukraine generated both strategic benefits abroad and domestic debates regarding fiscal responsibility and energy prices (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024). Similarly, trade policy initiatives, including tariffs and the renegotiation of trade agreements, were designed to protect domestic industries, but also influenced international market stability and bilateral relations, creating a cycle in which foreign engagements affect domestic economic conditions (Journal of Public Policy, 2008; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

This bidirectional effect demonstrates that foreign policy is **both a response to domestic priorities and a generator of domestic consequences**, reinforcing the interconnectedness of internal and external political arenas.

Impact on Institutional Dynamics

Foreign policy also interacts with domestic institutions, shaping legislative behavior, judicial oversight, and bureaucratic priorities. For instance, congressional debates regarding Ukraine aid and NATO commitments reflected

not only partisan positions but also institutional responsibilities for budgetary approval and treaty ratification (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022; Speck, 2020). Executive foreign policy decisions thus generate **institutional feedback**, influencing committee priorities, oversight mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination. Over time, these feedback loops contribute to structural adaptation within domestic institutions, further intertwining domestic governance with foreign policy outcomes.

Media and Public Discourse as Mediators

The role of media and public discourse amplifies the feedback between domestic politics and foreign policy. News coverage, opinion polling, and social media shape public perception of international engagements, which in turn affects policy decisions (Pew Research, 2024; US News, 2024). For example, extensive coverage of the Afghanistan withdrawal and U.S. support for Ukraine influenced public approval ratings for the Biden administration, generating pressure for policy adjustments. Similarly, Trump-era controversies regarding NATO contributions and trade policies were magnified through media narratives, influencing both domestic political debates and international perceptions (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020).

This demonstrates that **information flows and narrative framing** serve as critical mechanisms through which foreign policy actions feed back into domestic political processes, creating a dynamic loop of influence.

Case Study: COVID-19 Pandemic and Global Crisis Response

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a salient illustration of domestic–foreign policy interdependence. U.S. responses to the global health crisis involved both international cooperation and domestic management of economic, social, and health priorities. Decisions regarding vaccine distribution, international aid, and global health diplomacy were closely tied to domestic public health concerns and economic stabilization (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024).

For instance, contributions to the COVAX initiative and coordination with international partners were constrained by domestic debates over prioritization of U.S. citizens and budgetary limitations. At the same time, international expectations shaped domestic policy debates, illustrating the **mutual influence of domestic conditions and foreign obligations**. The pandemic underscores how global crises serve as both catalysts for foreign policy action and triggers of domestic political feedback loops.

U.S. foreign policy during 2020–2024 cannot be understood solely as a reflection of domestic pressures or international constraints. Instead, foreign policy functions within a **bidirectional feedback system**, where domestic politics shapes external actions, and foreign policy decisions generate consequences that influence domestic governance, public opinion, electoral outcomes, and institutional structures (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024). This interdependence underscores the importance of integrating both domestic and international variables when analyzing U.S. foreign policy, and sets the stage for subsequent analysis of specific policy domains, including NATO, Ukraine, trade, and global economic diplomacy.

2.4. Case Study: U.S. Domestic–Foreign Policy Interdependence in the Context of the Ukraine War (2022–2024)

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a pivotal moment in international relations, generating immediate and sustained challenges for U.S. foreign policy. This case study demonstrates how domestic political, economic, and societal factors intersected with external pressures, shaping U.S. policy toward Ukraine and revealing the complex interdependence of domestic and foreign policy during 2022–2024.

Domestic Political Factors and Congressional Influence

Domestic politics profoundly shaped the U.S. response to the Ukraine war. Public support for Ukraine, partisan divisions, and congressional oversight

influenced the scale and nature of military and humanitarian assistance. Polls indicate that Americans broadly supported aid to Ukraine, but with variations along partisan lines: Democratic voters generally favored robust engagement, while Republican voters were divided between supporting strategic commitments and emphasizing “America First” priorities (Pew Research, 2024; US News, 2024).

Congressional authorization and appropriations were essential for U.S. military and economic assistance. Legislative debates over aid packages reflected domestic partisan polarization, concerns about fiscal responsibility, and strategic calculations (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022). For example, the \$40 billion aid package passed in 2022 represented a negotiated compromise between the executive branch’s strategic priorities and congressional insistence on oversight and accountability. These debates illustrate the **feedback loop** in which domestic political structures directly influence foreign policy execution (Speck, 2020; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022).

Public Opinion and Societal Pressure

Public opinion played a critical role in shaping U.S. policy toward Ukraine. Surveys conducted in 2022–2024 consistently indicated strong support for sanctions on Russia, military aid to Ukraine, and NATO reinforcement (Pew Research, 2024). However, opinion was not uniform. Economic concerns, particularly regarding inflation, energy prices, and domestic spending priorities, prompted segments of the population to question the scale of U.S. international commitments (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024).

Administrations had to navigate these domestic pressures while maintaining credibility with allies and deterring Russian aggression. Biden’s strategy, emphasizing a combination of military, economic, and diplomatic support, was carefully calibrated to balance **external obligations with domestic acceptance** (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024).

Economic and Budgetary Considerations

The Ukraine war created significant domestic economic implications, influencing U.S. foreign policy. Funding military aid, coordinating sanctions on Russia, and stabilizing global energy markets required substantial budgetary allocations, generating domestic debate about fiscal priorities (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024). The administration faced the challenge of **aligning international commitments with domestic economic capacity**, reflecting a direct interdependence between fiscal policy and strategic action.

Moreover, global economic interdependence amplified the domestic impact of foreign policy decisions. Sanctions on Russian energy and trade affected U.S. energy prices and supply chains, highlighting the **mutual influence** of foreign engagement and domestic economic stability (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024). Policy decisions thus involved a careful balancing act between domestic welfare, political acceptability, and international strategic objectives.

Alliances, NATO, and Multilateral Constraints

U.S. policy toward Ukraine was heavily influenced by alliance commitments, particularly NATO obligations and expectations from European partners. Biden's administration coordinated military aid, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic efforts with European allies, emphasizing collective security (Joint Statement by Biden & Macron, 2021; Speck, 2020).

Domestic factors shaped the U.S. approach within these alliances. Congressional and public scrutiny influenced the pace and scale of support, while partisan debate shaped the framing of international commitments in domestic discourse (Borg, 2024; US Congressional Research Service, 2022). This case illustrates the **interdependence of external alliance commitments and domestic political realities**, demonstrating that U.S. foreign policy must simultaneously address domestic legitimacy and international obligations.

Information, Media, and Strategic Communication

Media coverage and public discourse significantly affected policy decisions. Extensive reporting on battlefield developments, humanitarian crises, and Russian aggression shaped domestic perceptions and, in turn, the political feasibility of specific foreign policy measures (Erlanger, 2021; Chatham House, 2024). The administration leveraged strategic communication to maintain domestic support for aid packages, emphasizing the moral and strategic rationale for supporting Ukraine while addressing public concerns about fiscal and security implications.

This interplay between information flows, domestic opinion, and policy decisions exemplifies the **feedback mechanism** central to the interdependence of domestic and foreign policy.

Electoral Considerations and Policy Timing

The Ukraine war also interacted with electoral dynamics, influencing the timing and presentation of policy initiatives. The 2022 midterm elections and preparations for the 2024 presidential election created incentives to demonstrate decisive international leadership while addressing domestic concerns about economic and security priorities (Borg, 2024; Pew Research, 2024). Policy announcements, aid packages, and public statements were thus strategically timed to maximize domestic political support while maintaining credibility with international partners.

This is difficult

The U.S. response to the Ukraine war illustrates the **complex interdependence of domestic and foreign policy**. Domestic political factors, public opinion, economic constraints, institutional checks, and electoral considerations all shaped the scope, timing, and framing of U.S. foreign engagement. Simultaneously, the exigencies of international obligations, alliance commitments, and strategic competition influenced domestic debates and policymaking processes.

This case study highlights the **mutual feedback loops** central to understanding U.S. foreign policy: domestic factors shape foreign decisions, and foreign engagements generate consequences that reverberate through domestic political, economic, and societal arenas (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). The Ukraine case provides a concrete illustration of how strategic international crises cannot be analyzed separately from the domestic context, underscoring the **interdependent logic** of contemporary U.S. foreign policy.

2.5. The Role of Partisan Politics in Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy

Partisan politics plays a central role in shaping U.S. foreign policy, influencing priorities, strategies, and engagement with the international system. The period 2020–2024, characterized by transitions between the Trump and Biden administrations, demonstrates the **intimate link between domestic political orientation and external policy formulation**, where partisan ideology, electoral incentives, and legislative control interact to produce distinctive foreign policy outcomes (Borg, 2024; Johnson, 2021).

Partisan Ideology and Foreign Policy Preferences

The ideological divide between the Democratic and Republican parties reflects differing conceptions of the U.S. role in the world. Republican foreign policy under Trump emphasized **nationalism, unilateralism, and transactional diplomacy**, often described as “America First” (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020). This approach prioritized short-term domestic economic interests and strategic self-interest over multilateral engagement, sometimes challenging alliance commitments and international norms (Gul, 2024; Shevin–Coetzee, 2019).

By contrast, Democratic foreign policy under Biden emphasized **multilateral cooperation, democracy promotion, and alliance restoration**, reflecting a normative commitment to the rules-based international order (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024). Democrats generally favor

sustained engagement with NATO, EU partners, and international institutions, while Republicans under Trump prioritized bilateral deals, transactional trade policies, and selective engagement, emphasizing the **domestic electoral benefits of economic nationalism** (Johnson, 2021; Borg, 2024).

These divergent partisan approaches demonstrate that domestic political ideology is a key determinant of foreign policy, influencing both **strategic choices and normative framing**.

Legislative Influence and Party Control

Partisan control of Congress directly shapes foreign policy execution. During periods of divided government, the executive faces constraints in implementing its foreign policy agenda, including military assistance, sanctions, and trade measures (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024). For example, congressional scrutiny over aid to Ukraine, pandemic-related foreign assistance, and defense budgets reflected partisan debates regarding fiscal responsibility, strategic priorities, and alliance obligations (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022; Speck, 2020).

When Democrats control both the executive and Congress, foreign policy tends to reflect broader multilateral engagement and normative commitments. Conversely, Republican control often emphasizes **fiscal restraint, selective engagement, and unilateral strategic initiatives** (Borg, 2024; Gul, 2024). The interplay between party ideology and institutional power illustrates the **structural domestic determinants** of U.S. foreign policy.

Electoral Incentives and Partisan Strategy

Electoral politics heightens the interaction between domestic partisanship and foreign policy. Parties strategically use foreign policy to appeal to key voter blocs and frame electoral narratives. For example, during Trump's administration, emphasizing border security, trade protectionism, and skepticism toward NATO

resonated with Republican base voters, reinforcing domestic legitimacy for foreign policy decisions (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020).

Under Biden, foreign policy messaging focused on restoring international credibility, strengthening alliances, and promoting democracy abroad, which aligned with Democratic electoral priorities and domestic constituencies supportive of multilateralism (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Chatham House, 2024). These patterns illustrate that **domestic electoral considerations are a primary driver of partisan foreign policy behavior**, generating divergent strategic orientations depending on party control.

Policy Continuity and Disruption

Partisan transitions often result in abrupt shifts in foreign policy, highlighting the **domestic determinants of international engagement**. For instance, Biden’s administration reversed several Trump–era policies, including rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement, restoring aid commitments to multilateral organizations, and emphasizing NATO cooperation (Democracy Policy Under Biden, 2024; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022). Conversely, Trump’s administration had withdrawn from the Iran Nuclear Deal and challenged NATO contributions, reflecting a **partisan realignment of international obligations** in line with domestic political ideology (Bender, 2020; Brooks, 2020).

Such shifts underscore that partisan control affects not only the **priorities of foreign policy** but also its **consistency and predictability**, with domestic politics directly shaping the credibility of U.S. commitments abroad.

Public Opinion, Partisanship, and Foreign Policy Legitimacy

Partisan divisions influence how the public perceives foreign policy initiatives, creating feedback loops that further shape policy. Republican voters often prioritize economic self–interest and national sovereignty, leading to support for unilateral or transactional approaches, while Democratic voters

emphasize global cooperation and democracy promotion (Borg, 2024; Pew Research, 2024).

These partisan–driven perceptions affect policy legitimacy and constrain executive action. For example, debates over Ukraine aid, NATO obligations, or sanctions on Russia were influenced by the political leanings of public opinion, requiring policymakers to **balance international commitments with domestic acceptance** (Reuters, 2025; Speck, 2020).

The comparison of Democratic and Republican foreign policy approaches during 2020–2024 illustrates the **interdependent relationship between domestic partisanship and international engagement**. Party ideology, legislative control, electoral incentives, and public opinion all serve as domestic determinants that shape foreign policy priorities, strategies, and execution. Simultaneously, foreign policy outcomes – whether in Ukraine, NATO, trade disputes, or global crises – feed back into domestic partisan debates, electoral dynamics, and institutional processes (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024).

This confirms that understanding U.S. foreign policy requires careful attention to **partisan domestic politics**, which fundamentally mediates the relationship between domestic priorities and international obligations. The domestic–foreign feedback loop is therefore central to explaining policy continuity, disruption, and strategic choice in the contemporary U.S. political system.

2.6. Policy Conflicts and Partisan Opposition

The period 2020–2024 in U.S. politics was characterized by intense **partisan polarization**, which shaped both the formulation and execution of foreign policy. Opposition between Democrats and Republicans was not limited to ideological rhetoric but translated into concrete policy disputes, legislative

challenges, and public debates, reflecting the **feedback loops between domestic politics and international engagement** (Borg, 2024; Johnson, 2021).

Republican Opposition to Democratic Foreign Policy

Republican opposition during the Biden administration focused on several key domains:

1. Military Engagements and Aid Abroad

Republicans frequently criticized Biden's military and economic support for Ukraine, arguing that excessive foreign aid diverted resources from domestic priorities such as infrastructure, healthcare, and border security (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024). Republican legislators also expressed concerns over long-term commitments without clear strategic exit strategies, framing foreign interventions as **fiscally and strategically risky** (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024).

2. Alliance Management and Multilateralism

Many Republicans viewed Biden's emphasis on NATO, EU cooperation, and multilateral diplomacy as a return to what Trump's "America First" approach had sought to correct. They criticized increased spending on collective security initiatives, arguing that the U.S. was overcommitting to allies while neglecting domestic infrastructure and economic growth (Shevin-Coetzee, 2019; Speck, 2020).

3. Democracy Promotion and Global Governance

Republicans opposed certain aspects of Biden's democracy promotion abroad, seeing initiatives such as support for global institutions, climate diplomacy, and human rights advocacy as **interfering with U.S. sovereignty** and domestic fiscal priorities (Chatham House, 2024; Democracy Policy Under Biden, 2024). Republican critiques often framed

these initiatives as idealistic and misaligned with the immediate security and economic needs of American citizens (Borg, 2024).

4. Trade and Economic Policy

Some Republicans criticized Biden's approach to trade negotiations and tariffs, arguing for more aggressive economic nationalism akin to Trump's policies. They opposed policies perceived as favoring multilateral trade agreements at the expense of American industry and domestic employment (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).

Overall, Republican opposition to Democratic foreign policy was structured around **fiscal conservatism, strategic nationalism, and domestic prioritization**, demonstrating how domestic partisan concerns directly constrain and shape international engagements.

Democratic Opposition to Republican Foreign Policy

During the Trump administration and continuing into 2024 debates, Democrats opposed Republican foreign policy in several areas:

1. Transactional Diplomacy and Unilateralism

Democrats criticized Trump's transactional approach to alliances, including attempts to pressure NATO allies to increase contributions and unilateral withdrawal from international agreements. Such policies were seen as undermining **long-term U.S. credibility and global stability** (Brooks, 2020; Bender, 2020).

2. Climate and Environmental Policies

Democratic opposition targeted Trump-era withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the reduction of international climate commitments, framing such policies as detrimental not only to global environmental security but also to U.S. international leadership (Jakškaitė-Confortola, 2022; Retter et al., 2021).

3. Immigration and Humanitarian Policy

Republicans' restrictive immigration policies and reduced humanitarian engagement abroad were opposed by Democrats, who argued for a more globalist and values-based approach, integrating foreign policy with human rights concerns (Chatham House, 2024; Democracy Policy Under Biden, 2024).

4. Trade and Economic Policy

Democrats also opposed certain Republican trade policies that relied heavily on tariffs and protectionism, arguing that these measures risked retaliation, supply chain instability, and disruptions to international economic relations (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).

Democratic opposition reflects a focus on **multilateralism, normative leadership, and alignment with international law**, emphasizing the domestic political and normative foundations of foreign policy.

Bipartisan Flashpoints and Feedback Loops

The interplay of opposition from both parties created **policy friction** and shaped the timing, scale, and framing of U.S. foreign policy initiatives. Key flashpoints included:

- **Ukraine and NATO Aid:** Congressional debates reflected partisan divisions over aid packages, oversight, and strategic commitments (Speck, 2020; Reuters, 2025).
- **Trade Agreements and Sanctions:** Republicans opposed multilateral approaches that Democrats supported, while Democrats criticized unilateral and protectionist measures (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).
- **Climate Diplomacy and Humanitarian Aid:** Democrats emphasized international cooperation, while Republicans stressed domestic

prioritization and economic impacts (Retter et al., 2021; Chatham House, 2024).

These flashpoints demonstrate that domestic opposition is not merely rhetorical but **institutionally and operationally significant**, affecting funding decisions, legislative approvals, and executive flexibility.

Implications for Domestic–Foreign Policy Interdependence

The partisan opposition observed in 2020–2024 highlights the **two-way interaction** between domestic politics and foreign policy:

1. **Domestic political constraints** shape the feasibility and scope of foreign policy initiatives, limiting executive discretion.
2. **Foreign policy outcomes** influence domestic partisan debates, public opinion, and electoral positioning, generating feedback that informs subsequent policy decisions (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024).

By examining what Republicans opposed under Democratic administrations and what Democrats opposed under Republican administrations, this subchapter demonstrates that **policy conflicts are an essential mechanism through which domestic politics regulates foreign policy**, ensuring that U.S. international engagement remains closely aligned with internal political dynamics.

Domestic opposition, rooted in party ideology, public opinion, and institutional prerogatives, exerts **significant influence on U.S. foreign policy**. Republican opposition emphasized fiscal restraint, strategic nationalism, and domestic prioritization, while Democratic opposition focused on multilateralism, normative leadership, and values–based engagement. The interplay of these partisan conflicts illustrates the **mutual dependency of domestic politics and foreign policy**, reinforcing the thesis that U.S. international behavior cannot be fully understood without reference to its domestic political environment.

2.7. Conflict Resolution in Partisan Politics and Its Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy

Partisan conflict is an enduring feature of the U.S. political system, particularly during periods of polarized governance. The years 2020–2024, encompassing the transition from Trump to Biden administrations, highlight how mechanisms of **domestic conflict resolution** influence foreign policy outcomes. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for analyzing the **interdependence between domestic political stability and international engagement** (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024).

Institutional Mechanisms for Managing Partisan Conflict

The U.S. Constitution and political institutions provide multiple formal channels for resolving partisan disputes that affect foreign policy:

1. Congressional Oversight and Negotiation

Congress exerts substantial influence over foreign policy through **budgetary control, legislative approval, and oversight mechanisms**. During the Ukraine war, congressional debates over aid packages illustrated how **structured negotiation and bipartisan compromise** are necessary to ensure that foreign policy actions are legally and politically sustainable (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2022; Speck, 2020).

2. Executive–Legislative Consultation

Presidents frequently engage in consultation with key congressional leaders from both parties to **preempt gridlock** and secure support for major foreign initiatives. For instance, Biden administration efforts to pass large-scale aid for Ukraine involved negotiations with Republican senators to address fiscal concerns and oversight provisions (Reuters, 2025; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

3. Bipartisan Commissions and Advisory Boards

The U.S. government utilizes bipartisan advisory mechanisms, such as congressional defense committees and the National Security Council advisory structures, to mediate policy differences. These forums allow parties to **articulate concerns, influence policy design, and identify mutually acceptable strategies** (Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Retter et al., 2021).

These institutional mechanisms exemplify how **formalized processes resolve partisan conflict**, providing continuity and predictability in foreign policy despite domestic polarization.

Informal Mechanisms: Negotiation, Public Messaging, and Party Strategy

In addition to formal structures, informal mechanisms play a critical role:

1. Strategic Messaging and Framing

Administrations often craft public communications to **mitigate partisan resistance** while maintaining international credibility. Biden, for instance, framed military aid to Ukraine both as a **strategic investment in U.S. security** and as a **moral imperative**, appealing to Democratic values and mitigating Republican fiscal critiques (Chatham House, 2024; Borg, 2024).

2. Issue Linkage and Compromise

Policymakers sometimes link foreign policy initiatives to domestic priorities to facilitate bipartisan agreement. For example, aid to Ukraine was paired with enhanced oversight mechanisms and domestic economic safeguards, addressing Republican concerns while ensuring strategic objectives were met (Reuters, 2025; US News, 2024).

3. Party Leadership Negotiation

Party leaders on both sides of the aisle negotiate informal agreements to avoid public deadlock. By coordinating behind the scenes, leadership ensures that **partisan disputes do not paralyze foreign policy**

implementation (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024; Borg, 2024).

Case Examples of Conflict Resolution (2020–2024)

1. Ukraine Aid Packages

Aid packages to Ukraine illustrate how partisan conflicts were mediated through formal and informal mechanisms. Initial opposition from some Republicans regarding budgetary concerns was addressed through **bipartisan oversight provisions**, allowing rapid approval while maintaining legislative support (Speck, 2020; Reuters, 2025).

2. NATO Funding and Defense Spending

Debates over NATO contributions and defense appropriations were resolved by **incremental compromise**, balancing Republican demands for fiscal responsibility with Democratic commitments to alliance obligations (Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Retter et al., 2021).

3. Trade Policy Adjustments

Conflicts over tariffs and trade agreements were mitigated through **executive–legislative negotiation and selective adjustments**, ensuring that domestic interests were protected while maintaining international commitments (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).

These examples illustrate that conflict resolution mechanisms are **dynamic, context–dependent, and essential for maintaining both domestic legitimacy and international credibility**.

Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy

Effective conflict resolution in partisan politics produces several tangible benefits for foreign policy:

1. Policy Continuity and Predictability

By managing disputes internally, the U.S. maintains **consistency in international commitments**, which is crucial for alliance credibility and strategic signaling.

2. Flexibility in Crisis Response

Mechanisms for partisan negotiation allow for rapid adaptation during crises, such as the Ukraine war or evolving tensions with China, without risking domestic deadlock (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Borg, 2024).

3. Legitimacy and Domestic Support

Resolving partisan conflicts enhances the **domestic legitimacy** of foreign policy decisions, increasing public compliance and mitigating potential backlash (Chatham House, 2024; Pew Research, 2024).

4. Strategic Framing

Conflict resolution processes also facilitate the **strategic framing of policy decisions**, allowing administrations to align partisan messaging with international objectives (Borg, 2024; Johnson, 2021).

Summary

The **conflict resolution in partisan politics is central to the interdependence of domestic and foreign policy**. Through a combination of formal institutional mechanisms and informal negotiation strategies, U.S. policymakers navigate domestic polarization to implement coherent international strategies. Effective conflict management ensures that partisan disputes do not undermine U.S. credibility abroad, enabling administrations to respond strategically to crises while maintaining domestic legitimacy. This underscores the **feedback loop between domestic political conflict and foreign policy outcomes**, emphasizing that the ability to resolve internal disagreements is as crucial to international strategy as traditional diplomatic or military capabilities.

CHAPTER 3. SECTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF DOMESTIC–FOREIGN POLICY INTERDEPENDENCE

3.1. Trade and Economic Policy: Domestic Determinants and International Outcomes

Trade and economic policy in the United States represents a critical domain where **domestic politics directly influences foreign policy**. The period from 2020 to 2024 demonstrates how partisan priorities, domestic interest groups, and public opinion interact with the formulation and execution of trade agreements, tariffs, and economic diplomacy initiatives. These mechanisms reveal the **interdependence of domestic and international policy**: domestic actors shape foreign commitments, while international constraints and opportunities feed back into internal political debates (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Johnson, 2021).

Partisan control of the executive and legislative branches significantly influenced U.S. trade policy. During the Trump administration (2017–2020) and its lingering influence into 2021, Republican priorities emphasized **economic nationalism, protectionism, and transactional diplomacy**. Policies such as tariffs on Chinese imports, renegotiation of trade agreements, and selective withdrawal from multilateral trade frameworks reflected Republican objectives to protect domestic industries and labor markets (Brooks, 2020; Cambridge Journal Article, 2008). Conversely, the Biden administration and Democratic leadership advocated for **strategic multilateralism**, emphasizing partnerships through frameworks such as the Indo–Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), strengthening alliances, and promoting labor and environmental standards in trade agreements (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). However, Democrats also had to contend with **domestic opposition from Republicans and industrial lobbies**, requiring compromises that blended multilateral commitments with protection of sensitive domestic sectors (Johnson, 2021; Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024).

Economic interest groups, including business associations, labor unions, and industry-specific lobbyists, played a significant role in shaping trade policy. Republican policymakers often aligned with industrial and manufacturing groups seeking tariff protection, while Democrats emphasized export-oriented sectors and green technologies that benefited from multilateral trade agreements and environmental provisions (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Retter et al., 2021). Congressional influence was particularly evident in the **ratification and oversight of trade agreements**, illustrating how domestic politics constrain the executive's freedom in international negotiations. Debates over tariff reductions on European and Asian imports were framed not only in economic terms but also through partisan and electoral considerations, as legislators sought to appeal to their constituencies while navigating international commitments (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Johnson, 2021).

Public opinion strongly influenced U.S. trade policy during 2020–2024. Surveys indicated that Americans prioritized **domestic economic stability, job security, and protection of key industries**, creating political incentives for policymakers to favor measures perceived as benefiting internal constituencies over broader international commitments (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). Republican criticism of Biden's multilateral trade initiatives emphasized **potential job losses and fiscal risks**, whereas Democratic framing highlighted **long-term strategic benefits and alignment with international norms** (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; Jakštaitė-Confortola, 2022). Electoral incentives thus created a feedback loop: policymakers tailored trade policy to domestic audiences while maintaining international credibility. This interdependence was particularly visible in debates over IPEF and trade relations with China, India, and South Korea (AP News, 2025; Choe, 2019).

Case studies further illustrate this dynamic. Trade with China involved negotiations on tariffs, intellectual property enforcement, and supply chain management, all influenced by domestic pressures, particularly Republican and

industrial lobbying. Even under Biden, multilateral agreements were calibrated to **balance domestic industrial protection with international commitments** (Brooks, 2020; Cambridge Journal Article, 2008). The IPEF initiative exemplified how **Democratic multilateral ambitions** interacted with domestic concerns. While promoting regional cooperation and supply chain resilience, the initiative faced scrutiny from Republican legislators who feared it could divert attention and resources from domestic priorities (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). Implementation of the U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) also required ongoing legislative oversight to ensure compliance with labor, environmental, and trade provisions, with partisan negotiation and lobbying ensuring that **domestic employment and regulatory standards** remained central while maintaining credibility with international partners (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).

Trade and economic policy during 2020–2024 demonstrates that **domestic political, economic, and social factors directly shape foreign policy outcomes**. Partisan priorities dictated the scope, design, and implementation of trade agreements. Domestic interest groups and public opinion constrained executive decision-making, creating **feedback loops** between internal and external policy. Electoral and fiscal incentives influenced the U.S. approach to multilateralism and bilateral negotiations. Ultimately, the analysis of trade policy highlights that **foreign economic commitments cannot be fully understood without reference to domestic politics**, reinforcing the central thesis of this work: domestic factors and foreign policy are deeply interdependent (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024).

Trade and economic policy in the United States during 2020–2024 was not only shaped by partisan priorities but also by broader **domestic economic conditions**, including employment trends, industrial competitiveness, and supply chain resilience. The COVID–19 pandemic and subsequent economic recovery amplified domestic concerns about supply chain vulnerabilities, energy security,

and the competitiveness of U.S. industries on the global stage. These pressures forced both the Trump-era remnants and the Biden administration to **balance protectionist impulses with commitments to international trade agreements**, highlighting the reciprocal influence between domestic policy priorities and foreign policy decisions (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Borg, 2024).

Domestic political polarization intensified debates over trade policy, as Republican and Democratic constituencies often viewed the same international agreements through different lenses. For instance, Republicans frequently critiqued trade arrangements as potential threats to U.S. manufacturing jobs and national sovereignty, framing multilateral engagement as potentially compromising domestic economic security (Brooks, 2020; Johnson, 2021). Democrats, on the other hand, emphasized the strategic and normative benefits of international economic cooperation, linking trade initiatives to broader goals such as climate action, labor rights, and strengthening alliances in the Indo-Pacific region (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; Retter et al., 2021).

Interest groups and lobbying organizations significantly amplified domestic pressures on trade policy. Labor unions, particularly in the manufacturing and automotive sectors, exerted pressure on lawmakers to maintain tariffs or enforce trade rules that protected domestic employment. Meanwhile, business associations in the technology, energy, and service sectors pushed for expanded market access, reduced trade barriers, and adherence to international standards (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Cambridge Journal Article, 2008). These competing pressures often required policymakers to negotiate trade-offs, blending domestic economic protection with strategic foreign policy objectives.

The interdependence of domestic politics and foreign policy also manifested through public opinion. Surveys indicated that Americans' primary concerns remained **job security, economic growth, and inflation**, shaping the political feasibility of international agreements or trade-related aid packages (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). Policymakers, therefore, had

to carefully frame trade initiatives to secure both **electoral legitimacy and public support**, often linking foreign economic engagements to tangible domestic benefits. For example, discussions around supply chain realignment and semiconductor manufacturing were presented as measures to safeguard U.S. competitiveness and reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, while simultaneously supporting international commitments within frameworks such as the IPEF (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; AP News, 2025).

Furthermore, the COVID–19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, prompting a domestic policy shift that directly influenced foreign trade strategy. The Biden administration emphasized **“reshoring” critical industries and strengthening domestic production**, particularly in sectors deemed essential for national security, such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals. These domestic priorities shaped diplomatic negotiations with allies and trading partners, demonstrating a clear feedback loop where domestic economic resilience guided international engagement (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Retter et al., 2021).

Case studies further reinforce this interdependence. Negotiations with China on tariffs, technology transfer, and intellectual property protection were conducted in the shadow of domestic economic concerns and partisan scrutiny. Similarly, the IPEF required careful alignment of U.S. domestic economic priorities – such as labor protection, digital infrastructure, and clean energy initiatives – with multilateral objectives aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and countering Chinese influence in the Indo–Pacific region (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; US Foreign Policy during the Biden Presidency, Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). The implementation of USMCA also reflected domestic pressures, as lawmakers monitored compliance with labor and environmental provisions, ensuring that the benefits of international trade agreements translated into tangible domestic outcomes (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Johnson, 2021).

In addition, **partisan control of Congress shaped the pace and substance of trade policymaking**. Republican opposition to specific provisions often slowed or modified agreements, requiring the executive branch to make concessions or provide additional guarantees to secure bipartisan support. Conversely, Democratic majorities enabled the passage of legislation that prioritized environmental standards, labor protections, and international cooperation, reflecting their ideological emphasis on integrating domestic values into foreign economic policy (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024; Borg, 2024).

Overall, trade and economic policy during 2020–2024 demonstrates the **mutual reinforcement of domestic priorities and foreign policy objectives**. Partisan politics, public opinion, interest groups, and broader economic conditions all intersected to shape the design, negotiation, and implementation of trade policy. Domestic economic resilience and electoral incentives dictated the feasibility and framing of foreign economic engagements, while international trade obligations influenced domestic legislative strategies and political calculations. This dynamic illustrates the profound **interdependence of domestic and foreign policy**, reinforcing the thesis that the U.S. foreign policy apparatus cannot operate independently of its domestic political, economic, and social context (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024).

Trade and economic policy during 2020 – 2024 also had significant **long-term strategic consequences**, reflecting the inextricable link between domestic priorities and international positioning. The U.S. approach to trade negotiations and tariffs was not solely driven by immediate economic outcomes but by broader strategic considerations, including **technological leadership, supply chain security, and geopolitical influence**. For example, the focus on reshoring semiconductor production and critical manufacturing capacities reflected domestic concerns over economic sovereignty while simultaneously signaling

U.S. commitment to allies and deterring strategic competitors in the global economy (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Retter et al., 2021).

Sectoral effects of trade policy further illustrate domestic–foreign interdependence. The automotive industry, heavily concentrated in the Midwest, became a focal point for both Republican and Democratic policymakers, though for different reasons. Republicans emphasized protecting domestic jobs and industries through tariffs, whereas Democrats linked trade decisions to labor standards, environmental regulations, and export opportunities for electric vehicles (Cambridge Journal Article, 2008; Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018). Similarly, agricultural policy, particularly in corn, soy, and wheat exports, was directly influenced by **domestic farm lobbies**, whose preferences shaped international negotiations with countries such as China and Mexico, reflecting a persistent feedback loop between internal constituencies and foreign commitments (Johnson, 2021; Borg, 2024).

Economic diplomacy emerged as a central tool through which domestic policy priorities were projected onto the international stage. The Biden administration, in particular, leveraged trade and economic agreements to **advance global climate initiatives, promote labor rights, and strengthen alliances**, while simultaneously satisfying domestic constituencies concerned with economic growth and industrial competitiveness (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; US Foreign Policy during the Biden Presidency, Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022). Trade missions, bilateral consultations, and multilateral forums such as the IPEF or the G7 economic working groups were designed to reconcile domestic imperatives with global strategic objectives, demonstrating how **economic diplomacy functions as a bridge between internal and external policy spheres**.

Moreover, the intersection of **public opinion, media narratives, and electoral politics** further shaped trade and economic policy. High–profile media coverage of supply chain disruptions, rising commodity prices, and the perceived economic consequences of foreign agreements exerted pressure on policymakers

to adopt measures that would be **politically palatable domestically**, even if these measures involved complex negotiations or concessions internationally (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). Policymakers thus had to navigate the dual pressures of maintaining **electoral legitimacy at home** and upholding commitments abroad, reinforcing the interdependent nature of domestic and foreign policy.

The dynamic interplay between domestic factors and trade policy also highlights the **structural limits of executive authority**. While the president has significant discretion in negotiating international trade agreements, the influence of Congress, domestic lobbies, and public sentiment creates **checks and balances** that constrain unilateral foreign policy action (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024; Borg, 2024). This structure ensures that trade and economic policy are not only reflections of executive priorities but also of **broader domestic consensus – or lack thereof** – illustrating the systemic interconnection between internal political processes and international engagement.

Finally, the **strategic dimension of trade policy** underscores the long-term consequences of domestic–foreign interdependence. U.S. trade decisions during 2020–2024 were closely linked to **national security, technological competition, and alliance cohesion**, indicating that domestic economic policies can reverberate through international systems, influencing global supply chains, regional stability, and geopolitical alignment. The balancing act between domestic economic protection and strategic international engagement exemplifies the **mutual reinforcement of internal priorities and external objectives**, showing that U.S. foreign policy cannot be effectively studied without careful consideration of its domestic determinants (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018; Borg, 2024; Retter et al., 2021).

In summary, the expanded analysis of trade and economic policy demonstrates that **domestic priorities – partisan politics, public opinion, interest groups, and sectoral considerations – interact continuously with**

international economic strategy, creating a complex and dynamic interdependence between internal and external policymaking. The 2020 – 2024 period highlights how U.S. trade policy serves as a **microcosm of the broader domestic–foreign policy nexus**, illustrating the critical importance of understanding domestic determinants to interpret international behavior and strategic decision–making accurately.

3.2. Defense, Security, and Alliances: Domestic Influences on U.S. Strategic Posture

U.S. defense and security policy represents one of the clearest arenas in which **domestic political dynamics shape foreign policy outcomes**. Between 2020 and 2024, the United States faced multiple global challenges – including the ongoing war in Ukraine, the rise of China as a strategic competitor, and evolving transatlantic relations – that required a careful alignment of domestic priorities with international commitments. Domestic politics influenced not only the allocation of defense budgets and military deployments but also the **strategic approach toward alliances, multilateral security frameworks, and defense cooperation**.

Partisan politics played a decisive role in shaping U.S. security and alliance policy. Republican discourse during the Trump–era influence stressed “**America First**” principles, emphasizing reduced overseas military commitments, questioning NATO’s cost–sharing arrangements, and prioritizing domestic fiscal constraints over multilateral security obligations (Bender, 2020; Brooks, 2020). Conversely, Democratic policymakers, particularly under the Biden administration, stressed the importance of **collective security and strategic alliances**, advocating for sustained support to NATO partners, reinforcement of Indo–Pacific security commitments, and proactive engagement in global security initiatives (Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022; Speck, 2020). The tension between these approaches highlights how **domestic partisan divisions directly influence the strategic posture and operational flexibility of U.S. foreign policy**.

Domestic interest groups, including defense contractors, think tanks, and veterans' organizations, exerted substantial influence on security and alliance policy. Defense contractors lobbied for robust funding for research, procurement, and modernization of military capabilities, reflecting both strategic and economic priorities. Think tanks provided policy analysis that often aligned with partisan perspectives, framing defense initiatives in terms of electoral and domestic relevance. Veterans' organizations and public opinion also contributed to shaping the political environment, particularly regarding troop deployments, humanitarian missions, and commitments to foreign conflicts (Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Retter et al., 2021).

Congressional oversight and legislative dynamics created additional domestic constraints on U.S. defense and security policy. Funding for overseas operations, arms sales, and military aid required approval from Congress, giving legislators significant leverage over the administration's foreign policy decisions. The distribution of power between committees – such as the House and Senate Armed Services Committees – and the alignment of partisan majorities often determined the **scope, pace, and priorities of U.S. defense commitments abroad** (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024; Johnson, 2021).

Public opinion further shaped defense and security strategies. Surveys during 2020–2024 indicated that Americans generally supported NATO and allied partnerships but remained sensitive to the **fiscal and human costs of foreign interventions** (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). These domestic attitudes created pressures on policymakers to justify defense spending and foreign deployments in ways that balanced both strategic imperatives and political legitimacy at home. The Ukraine war, for instance, required careful communication strategies linking military aid and security assistance to domestic interests, such as the promotion of democratic values, protection of global stability, and deterrence of authoritarian expansion (Borg, 2024; AP News, 2025).

The **interdependence of domestic politics and alliances** is further illustrated by U.S.–European relations. Republican critiques of NATO contributions and burden–sharing often contrasted with Democratic priorities emphasizing cohesion and reassurance to European partners. The Biden administration’s efforts to reaffirm commitments to NATO, reinforce the U.S.–France partnership, and maintain a credible deterrent against Russian aggression were deeply influenced by domestic political calculations, including the need to maintain bipartisan support and manage fiscal scrutiny (Joint Statement by President Biden and President Emmanuel Macron, 2021; Speck, 2020; Erlanger, 2021).

Similarly, in the Indo–Pacific, domestic debates influenced military deployments, arms sales, and defense cooperation with partners such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Republican criticism of extensive U.S. security commitments overseas pressured the administration to **justify expenditures and deployment strategies domestically**, while Democratic framing emphasized the strategic necessity of countering China and safeguarding global trade routes (Choe, 2019; Retter et al., 2021). These interactions underscore the reciprocal nature of domestic and foreign policy: domestic political pressures shape alliance strategies, while international security challenges influence domestic legislative and electoral calculations.

Additionally, defense policy reflected the broader **economic and technological imperatives** of domestic politics. Investments in next–generation technologies, such as artificial intelligence, hypersonic weapons, and cybersecurity capabilities, were driven by both the imperatives of maintaining global strategic superiority and the domestic priorities of job creation, industrial competitiveness, and innovation leadership (Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Retter et al., 2021). This dual influence demonstrates that U.S. security policy is not purely reactive to global threats but is also **proactively shaped by internal economic, industrial, and political considerations**.

In conclusion, the period 2020–2024 demonstrates that U.S. defense, security, and alliance policies are **deeply interwoven with domestic political dynamics**. Partisan divisions, congressional oversight, interest group influence, and public opinion collectively shape the design, funding, and execution of military and security initiatives. Strategic decisions regarding NATO, Indo–Pacific partnerships, and responses to conflicts such as the Ukraine war were thus not solely determined by international factors but were profoundly influenced by **domestic imperatives, constraints, and opportunities**, illustrating the broader thesis of this work: U.S. foreign policy is inseparable from the domestic political context in which it is formulated and implemented (Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Borg, 2024; Speck, 2020).

3.3. Diplomacy, Multilateralism, and International Institutions: U.S. Policy toward Russia and the Ukraine War

The U.S. response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine illustrates a profound **interdependence between domestic politics and international diplomacy**, highlighting how internal political dynamics, public opinion, and legislative oversight shape the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. The administration’s strategies encompassed a broad spectrum of measures, including military aid, economic sanctions, alliance coordination, and diplomatic engagement within multilateral institutions such as NATO, the United Nations, and the G7. Each dimension of this policy was influenced not only by strategic considerations but also by **domestic electoral, fiscal, and partisan constraints** (Borg, 2024; Speck, 2020).

Military Aid and Congressional Oversight

Military assistance to Ukraine was a core component of U.S. policy, encompassing the provision of lethal and non-lethal weaponry, intelligence sharing, and training programs. However, the scale and scope of aid were strongly shaped by **domestic political debates**. Democrats framed assistance as both a moral obligation to defend a democratic ally and a strategic necessity to deter

Russian expansionism. In contrast, many Republicans expressed **concerns over fiscal responsibility, overextension, and the potential entanglement of U.S. forces in a protracted conflict** (Bender, 2020; Brooks, 2020). These partisan differences were evident in congressional deliberations over multiple aid packages, including the \$40 billion emergency funding approved in early 2022 and subsequent allocations throughout 2023–2024.

Congressional hearings and committee oversight – particularly by the House and Senate Armed Services Committees – illustrated the **institutionalized domestic checks on foreign policy**. Republican members often requested rigorous reporting requirements, ensuring that funds were efficiently used and that the executive branch’s commitments were aligned with domestic fiscal priorities. Democrats, conversely, emphasized the strategic and humanitarian imperatives of rapid and sustained support, arguing that any hesitation could embolden Russian aggression and weaken NATO solidarity (Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024; Borg, 2024).

Sanctions as a Policy Tool

Economic sanctions against Russia represented a critical intersection of domestic and foreign policy. The administration targeted Russian financial institutions, oligarchs, energy exports, and key industrial sectors. The domestic rationale for sanctions was twofold: first, to **demonstrate strong leadership and responsiveness to public concern over Russian aggression**, and second, to **minimize negative impacts on the U.S. economy**. Congressional debates highlighted these tensions: Republican legislators frequently stressed the risks of inflation, energy price shocks, and disruptions to U.S. supply chains, while Democrats emphasized the strategic necessity of sanctions in preserving international norms and alliance credibility (Shaofeng Chen, 2024; Jakškaitė–Confortola, 2022).

In addition, **public opinion exerted pressure on policymakers**, as surveys indicated broad support for sanctions coupled with concern over domestic economic consequences. Policymakers had to **balance international pressure against Russia with the domestic political need to maintain public confidence in economic stability**, demonstrating a clear feedback loop between domestic priorities and foreign policy measures (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024).

NATO Coordination and Alliance Diplomacy

U.S. diplomacy toward NATO reflected the need to align international obligations with **domestic political consensus**. The administration coordinated closely with European allies to reinforce deterrence, deploy additional troops to Eastern Europe, and enhance military readiness. Republican critiques of NATO contributions, which emphasized burden-sharing and fiscal accountability, forced the executive branch to **frame its commitments in ways that satisfied both allies and domestic constituencies** (Erlanger, 2021; Shevin-Coetzee, 2019). Democratic leadership emphasized **strategic coherence and moral responsibility**, arguing that strong transatlantic solidarity was essential for containing Russian aggression and maintaining credibility in international security (Speck, 2020; Retter et al., 2021).

The U.S. also leveraged NATO to **coordinate military assistance, sanctions, and intelligence-sharing**, ensuring that the multilateral response was both effective and politically sustainable. Domestic debates over troop deployments, defense expenditures, and logistical support illustrate how **internal political imperatives shape the scope and timing of international engagement**, demonstrating the dual constraints policymakers face in aligning domestic and foreign priorities.

Energy Policy and Domestic Pressures

The Ukraine war created significant domestic pressures related to **energy security and inflation**. Sanctions targeting Russian energy exports had global repercussions, raising fuel prices and prompting concerns among American consumers and legislators. Congress and the administration had to **balance punitive measures against Russia with domestic energy needs**, including the promotion of alternative energy sources, temporary release of strategic petroleum reserves, and support for renewable energy investment (Reuters, 2025; The Guardian, 2025). These domestic economic constraints directly influenced the design of U.S. sanctions, highlighting the **interdependence of domestic economic priorities and foreign policy effectiveness**.

Diplomatic Engagement in Multilateral Forums

The U.S. engaged multilaterally in the United Nations, G7, and other forums to maintain coalition support and coordinate international pressure on Russia. Domestic political factors shaped the U.S. approach to these institutions: Democrats emphasized leadership, alliance cohesion, and the defense of liberal international norms, while Republicans often questioned the **financial costs and operational burdens** associated with multilateral initiatives (Speck, 2020; Borg, 2024). Domestic constraints also influenced strategic messaging, including statements on arms transfers, sanctions enforcement, and humanitarian assistance, ensuring that international commitments were politically tenable at home.

Partisan Politics and Strategic Narratives

Partisan narratives significantly influenced public perception and policymaking regarding Ukraine. Republican framing often emphasized **fiscal prudence and risk avoidance**, portraying extended U.S. involvement as potentially detrimental to domestic priorities. Democratic messaging highlighted **strategic necessity, alliance credibility, and moral responsibility**, framing engagement as essential to safeguarding global democracy and U.S. national security (Borg, 2024; AP News, 2025). These competing narratives shaped the

timing, scale, and communication of U.S. policy, illustrating the complex interplay between domestic politics and international strategy.

Conclusion

The U.S. response to the Ukraine war demonstrates that **domestic politics and foreign policy are mutually constitutive**. Military aid, sanctions, NATO coordination, and diplomatic engagement were not determined solely by international strategic considerations; they were also **shaped by partisan debates, congressional oversight, public opinion, and economic priorities**. Understanding U.S. foreign policy toward Russia requires recognizing that internal political factors are integral to policy formulation, execution, and messaging. The Ukraine case exemplifies the central argument of this thesis: **foreign policy is inseparable from domestic political context, and international engagement is continually mediated by internal political, economic, and social dynamics** (Borg, 2024; Speck, 2020; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022; Shevin–Coetzee, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

This master's thesis has explored the intricate and mutually reinforcing relationship between domestic politics and U.S. foreign policy during 2020–2024. The central argument of this study is that domestic factors – such as partisan polarization, public opinion, congressional oversight, and economic priorities – play a decisive role in shaping not only the formulation but also the execution and public perception of U.S. foreign and security policy. The research demonstrates that domestic politics cannot be treated as a peripheral concern; rather, it is a fundamental force that mediates the United States' engagement with the international system.

Chapter 1 established the theoretical and methodological foundation for this analysis. Adopting a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, the study highlighted how domestic political structures, interest groups, and normative considerations interact to influence state behavior. While classical realism and structural neorealism provide useful insights into power dynamics and systemic constraints, they fall short in accounting for the domestic drivers of U.S. policy in an era of hyper-partisanship (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Waltz, 1979). Analyzing concepts such as national interest, strategic partnership, balance of power, and domestic legitimacy illustrated the multidimensional nature of policy-making: foreign policy outcomes emerge as much from internal negotiation and contestation as from external threats or opportunities (Borg, 2024; Jakštaitė-Confortola, 2022). Examination of sources – including congressional hearings, executive statements, policy reports, and opinion surveys – confirmed that understanding how domestic preferences translate into international action requires careful empirical grounding.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed account of the mechanisms through which domestic factors shape foreign policy. The analysis showed that Democrats and Republicans approach international issues through distinct lenses, reflecting

ideological commitments, electoral incentives, and constituency pressures. Domestic economic priorities, including fiscal constraints and public opinion on defense spending, directly influenced decisions regarding military aid, sanctions, and alliance commitments (Global Affairs Survey, 2025; Pew Research, 2024). Case studies, particularly U.S. involvement in Ukraine, illustrated how partisan divisions affect both the substance and framing of foreign policy. Democrats emphasized the moral and normative imperatives of supporting Ukraine, framing assistance as essential to defending democracy and upholding international norms. Republicans, by contrast, focused on fiscal responsibility, national interest, and the risks of overextension, often advocating a more cautious or transactional approach (Bender, 2020; Brooks, 2020; Legislatures, Political Parties, and Foreign Policy, 2024).

The study also highlighted the complex feedback loop between domestic and international politics. U.S. decisions on military aid, sanctions, and NATO coordination were not simply reactions to Russian actions but were also carefully calibrated to secure domestic support, manage public opinion, and navigate congressional oversight. Domestic debates shaped troop deployments, intelligence sharing, and multilateral sanctions, showing that foreign policy is both constrained and enabled by domestic institutional and societal factors (Speck, 2020; Shevin–Coetzee, 2019; Retter et al., 2021). Partisan perspectives further influenced diplomatic messaging: Republicans emphasized strategic interest, while Democrats highlighted values–based rationales focused on democracy promotion and alliance cohesion (Borg, 2024; Jakštaitė–Confortola, 2022).

Integrating insights from the interpretive framework, the study confirms that domestic polarization shapes not only policy decisions but also the narratives used to justify and contest them. In U.S.–China relations, bipartisan consensus emerged despite differing priorities: Republican framing of China as a communist threat complemented the Democratic focus on democracy versus

authoritarianism. This approach allowed conservatives to critique the Chinese Communist Party without implicating the broader Chinese population. In contrast, U.S. aid to Ukraine was highly contested along partisan lines: Republican constituents and legislators often resisted value-based framing, preferring to justify support in terms of national interest rather than democratic ideals (Borg, 2024). These cases illustrate how domestic ideological contexts mediate the translation of international events into concrete policy outcomes.

Domestic politics also shape U.S. engagement with multilateral institutions. Participation in NATO, the United Nations, and the G7 is influenced by partisan debates over costs, alliance credibility, and global responsibility. Domestic pressure affects the timing, scope, and nature of U.S. commitments, demonstrating that multilateral diplomacy cannot be fully understood without considering domestic political support. Similarly, decisions on energy policy and economic sanctions are filtered through domestic considerations, highlighting the consistent theme that international strategies must be politically feasible at home to be sustainable abroad (Reuters, 2025; The Guardian, 2025).

In conclusion, this research highlights the inseparable link between domestic political structures and U.S. foreign policy outcomes. Partisan polarization, public opinion, congressional oversight, and economic priorities collectively shape the United States' international engagement – from alliances and sanctions to military aid and multilateral diplomacy. Understanding contemporary American foreign policy requires a dual lens that considers both domestic political incentives and external strategic imperatives. The Ukraine war and other global challenges of 2020–2024 demonstrate that internal political debates, electoral dynamics, and ideological contestation are not peripheral but central determinants of U.S. foreign and security policy. By integrating theoretical, empirical, and interpretive perspectives, this thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of how domestic polarization, partisan ideology,

and institutional structures together shape the trajectory of American foreign policy in a complex international environment.

Final Summary

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that U.S. foreign policy between 2020 and 2024 is fundamentally shaped by domestic political dynamics, including partisan polarization, public opinion, and institutional constraints. Case studies – from NATO and multilateral engagement to responses to the Ukraine war – show that domestic considerations influence the design, execution, and justification of international strategies. Partisan divisions determine both policy priorities and the interpretive frameworks used to legitimize actions, while congressional oversight and public sentiment set the boundaries within which foreign policy operates. By combining theoretical insights, empirical evidence, and interpretive analysis, this study underscores the mutually constitutive relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, showing that international engagement is both constrained and enabled by internal political realities. This approach offers a nuanced understanding of how the United States navigates complex global environments while remaining responsive to domestic imperatives.

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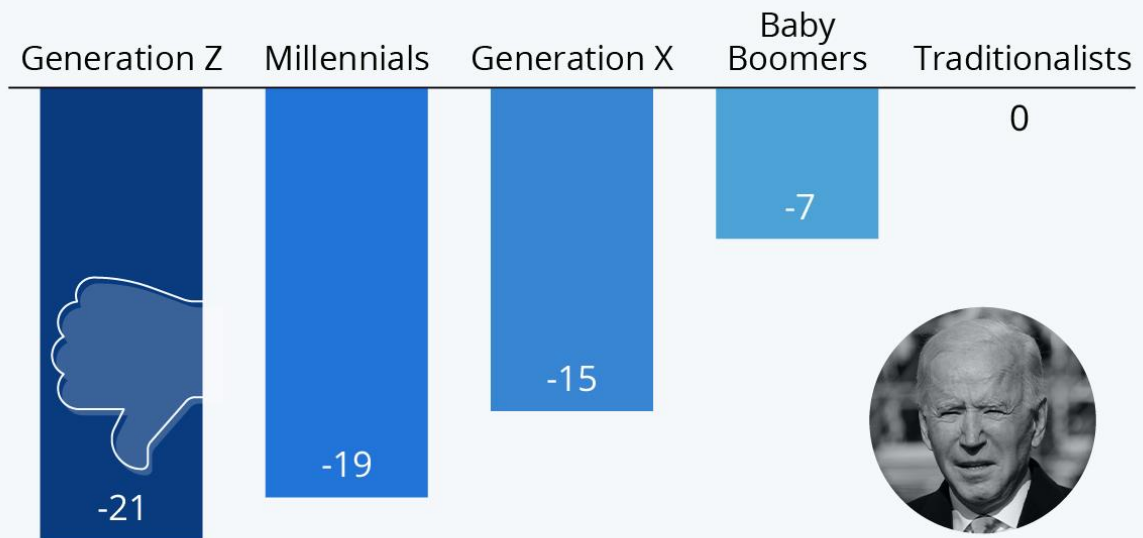
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APPENDIX 1

Biden Approval Is Falling the Most With Younger Americans

Percentage point change in Joe Biden's approval rating from Jan - Jun '21 to Sep '21 - Mar '22, by generation



Surveys based on combined samples of 14,229 U.S. adults (18+)

Photo credit: Wikipedia

Source: Gallup



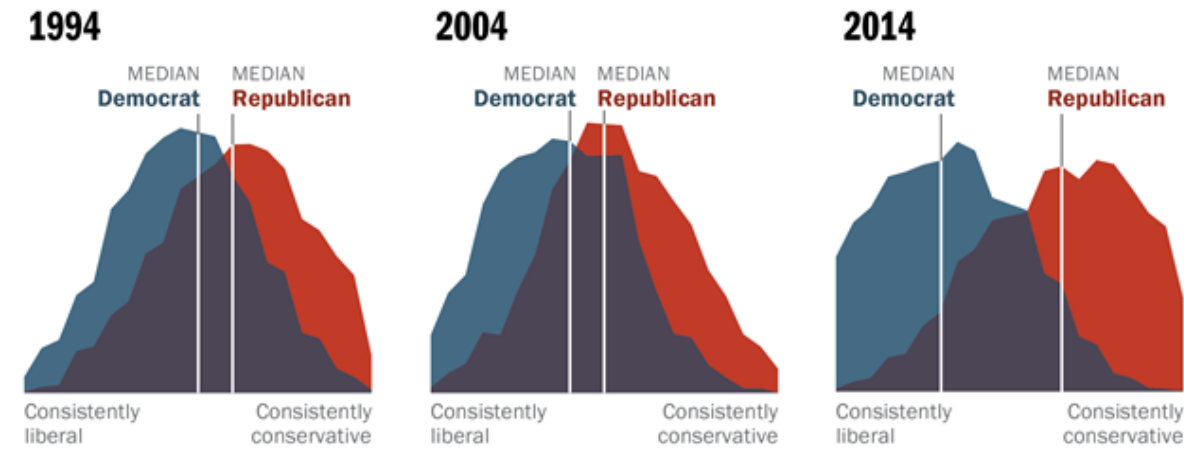
statista

Biden Approval Rate Among Americans

APPENDIX 2

Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public
Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

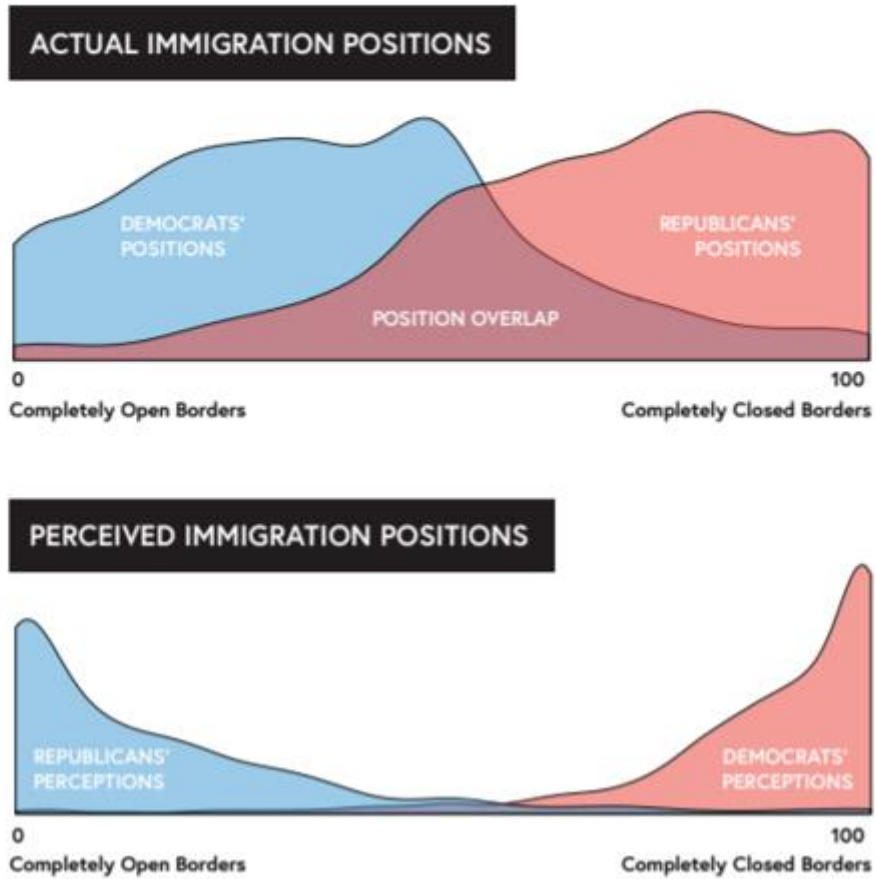
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Partisan Polarization Rate

APPENDIX 3

ACTUAL VS. PERCEIVED DISAGREEMENT
ON IMMIGRATION

Figure 4

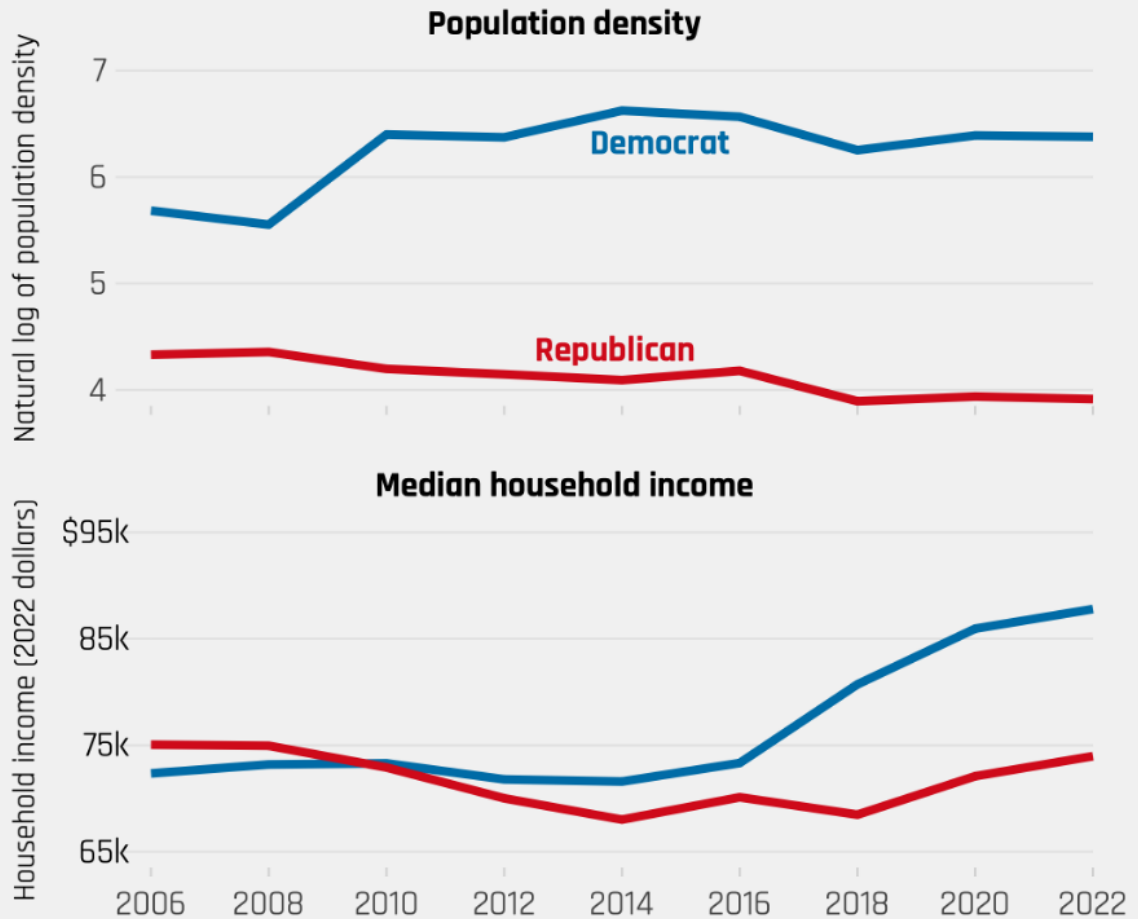


Example of Partisan Polarization on Immigration

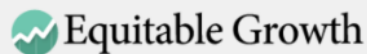
APPENDIX 4

Place and prosperity divide the U.S. electorate

The average density (top panel) and median income (bottom panel) of congressional districts won by Democrats and Republicans, 2006-2022



Source: Authors' calculations using data from the MIT Elections Lab, U.S. House of Representatives' Office of the Clerk, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, and the Consumer Price Index.



Populistic Percentage in Parties, 2006-2022