

A NEW DISCOURSE ON THE NATIONAL INTEREST CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT. *National interest can be analyzed from two perspectives: what people think about it (primarily politicians and scientists), and as the object of an independent author's research, which claims to comprehend the essence of national interest. Many scientists prefer to follow one of the two primary schools of studying national interest—"realism" and "idealism," which leads to a theoretical impasse. This dilemma arises when researchers decide whether to agree that the study of a particular state's national interest can only be carried out based on the founders' teachings or attempt to rethink the theoretical vision of the problem. In modern international relations, prominent regional actors in developing national development strategies need a systemic understanding of the foundations of national interests. The "conflict" between "realists" and "idealists" is purely theoretical and represents a dispute over various nuances in views on the problem of ensuring a unified national interest.*

KEYWORDS: *National Interest, Foreign Policy, Security Studies, Global Politics, Regionalism, US Strategy, Central Asia, Geopolitics.*

Introduction

Almost every researcher of the concepts of national interests of states faces a serious methodological task: determining the subject of their research.

National interest can be analyzed mainly from two sides: 1) either as what people think about it (primarily politicians and scientists), and then the task of the researcher becomes the theoretical and historiographical systematization of existing concepts and opinions;



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2) or as the object of an independent author's research, claiming to comprehend the very essence of national interest.

The problem is that many scientists prefer to follow one of the two primary schools of studying national interest in their development: "realism" and "idealism."

Thus, they replenish the ranks of their supporters, but do not resolve the problem from a theoretical impasse.

In this case, a dilemma inevitably arises: to agree that the study of a particular state's national interest can only be carried out by the teachings of the founders (C. Bird, E. Carr, G. Morgenthau, etc.) and make only clarifications and adjustments to the already established concept, or to try to rethink the theoretical vision of this problem itself, looking at it from a completely different angle.

In modern international relations, prominent regional actors in developing national development strategies need a systemic understanding of the foundations of national interests—for example, Sh. Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, has actively promoted and initiated large-scale reforms embracing key issues of national development, and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust in Central Asia.

In this context, the existence in political science of two main theoretical directions in the interpretation of national interest has led to the school of political realism consistently occupying the leading positions, which is considered the most applicable to the practice of direct political decision-making by the country's top leadership.

The current US administration, led by Donald Trump, introduced a large-scale tariff policy, which was, of course, guided primarily by the national interests of the United States. Unlike its predecessors, it resorts to various instruments for its implementation in foreign trade, viewing international trade as a zero-sum game of failure. According to Trump, "...the benefits of some outweigh the losses of others - hence his obsession with the trade deficit." While the 2016 campaign and subsequent mandate were aimed at China, the Republican strategy in 2025 is already aimed at trade with allies and international trade institutions in a new, tougher format.

Many political scientists believe that such a radical understanding of President D. Trump's new model of national interest risks accelerating the erosion of international

economic institutions, including the most significant ones—the World Trade Organization.

Literature Review

The concept of national interest has long been a subject of theoretical contention in international relations, particularly within the classical opposition between the schools of political realism and idealism. Foundational realist thinkers, such as Hans Morgenthau (1969), George Kennan, and E.H. Carr, emphasized power, survival, and strategic positioning as central to understanding state behavior. Realism traditionally privileges external security and foreign policy as the primary domains of national interest, often excluding domestic political or societal factors from its analytical scope (Clinton, 1988; Osgood, 2023).

In contrast, idealist and liberal institutionalist scholars have highlighted the role of international norms, cooperation, and moral values in shaping national priorities (Wilson, 1919; Nye, 2004). However, the boundaries between these schools have proven fluid. Even so-called idealists, such as Woodrow Wilson, operated under pragmatic constraints, and realist frameworks have evolved to include soft power and domestic legitimacy.

Recent scholarship has begun to transcend this binary by emphasizing discursive constructions of interest (Weldes, 1999), the cultural and psychological underpinnings of strategic thinking (Gray, 1988), and the performative dimensions of leadership and public persuasion (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Additionally, the growing influence of populism, digital media, and cultural polarization in American politics has prompted re-evaluations of how national interest is framed, contested, and operationalized (Benkler et al., 2018; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

This study contributes to this evolving body of literature by proposing a conceptual reframing of U.S. national interest through the interrelated triad of survival, leadership, and stability, while embedding it within the historical and cultural logic of the American strategic imagination.

Scope of Research

This article focuses specifically on the conceptual evolution and structural composition of the American national interest, with a particular emphasis on the interplay between internal and external drivers of strategic behavior. While traditional analyses often reduce national interest to a set of foreign policy priorities, this study adopts a broader, integrative

framework that incorporates political culture, historical consciousness, public discourse, and geopolitical perceptions.

The temporal scope spans from the early 20th century, focusing on the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, through the Cold War era and into the contemporary post-bipolar landscape, including developments under the Trump administration. This periodization allows for the tracing of discursive continuities and disruptions in how the U.S. national interest has been defined, justified, and contested.

Geographically, the study centres on the United States, but considers its interactions with key global actors (e.g., China, Russia, regional blocs such as BRICS) insofar as they shape or challenge conceptions of leadership and security. The analysis draws on primary sources, including policy speeches, strategic documents, and political commentary, as well as secondary literature in international relations, political theory, and security studies.

While the study does not employ quantitative methods, it offers a qualitative and interpretive approach rooted in discourse analysis and conceptual history, aiming to provide a more holistic and historically grounded account of the national interest.

The states of Central Asia provide valuable case studies for understanding how small and medium-sized powers conceptualize and pursue their national interests under conditions of geopolitical vulnerability and regional interdependence. While the United States defines its national interest through global leadership and systemic stability, Central Asian states primarily frame theirs around survival and domestic security. However, within this narrower scope, each country has developed its model of balancing between external powers and internal priorities, which can be effectively interpreted through the "triangle of power": survival, leadership, and stability.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, discourse-analytical approach to examine the evolving concept of national interest in American political thought and practice. Rather than relying on quantitative indicators or comparative country analysis, this research focuses on key speeches, policy documents, and strategic frameworks articulated by American political leaders and scholars across different historical periods.

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Central to the analytical framework are two conceptual tools: the notion of "*challenge*" and the "*triangle of power*" structure, composed of survival, leadership, and stability. The term "challenge" is treated not merely as a synonym for threat, but as a broader category that encompasses systemic pressures—both internal and external—demanding a strategic response from a state. This reframing allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the United States perceives and responds to international dynamics.

The "triangle of power" is introduced as a heuristic device to conceptualize the interdependent dimensions of American national interest. Rather than reducing national interest to a single factor—be it security, economy, or ideology—the model emphasizes the equilibrium required among these three foundational imperatives. This methodological lens offers a more integrated view of national interest, one that considers both domestic and international drivers, and reflects the inherently adaptive nature of American strategic behavior.

Specifics of U.S. Policymaking

The political trajectory of Donald Trump should not be viewed as an aberration but rather as a continuation of long-term structural transformations in American society that have evolved since the end of the Cold War (Skowronek, 2011; Lowndes, 2017). Following his re-election, assessments suggest a shift in presidential behavior compared to his first term, where nationalist and populist tendencies have increasingly been accompanied by centralized executive decision-making and a reduced emphasis on institutional checks and balances (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). His economic worldview reflects a zero-sum interpretation of global trade, where gains for one actor are perceived as losses for another - challenging cooperative multilateral frameworks (Reinhardt & Rich, 2020).

Trump's political resilience, as evidenced by his survival of two impeachment proceedings and multiple legal challenges, has significantly consolidated his authority within the Republican Party (Mounk, 2018). For a substantial segment of his electoral base, he has assumed a symbolic role that transcends traditional political leadership, generating concerns about democratic norms and the instrumentalization of institutions (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). His electoral victory has, in this context, emboldened a governance style that increasingly deprioritizes conventional democratic safeguards.

Institutional Dynamics

The Trump administration exhibits several structural characteristics: (1) a notable centralization of executive authority based on the doctrine of unitary executive theory (Barron & Lederman, 2008); (2) the politicization of judicial appointments and processes; and (3) the use of federal mechanisms to engage in conflicts over cultural, educational, and media narratives (Sunstein, 2019). Communication strategies have relied heavily on direct digital engagement, enabling narrative control and the strategic use of disinformation or polarizing rhetoric (Benkler, Faris, and Roberts, 2018).

The transformation of geopolitical rivalry after the Cold War into internal political conflict has contributed to a shift from external threat perception to internal cultural and ideological polarization (Hochschild, 2016). Two interrelated movements have played a role: (a) the rise of religious-political activism among Christian nationalist networks, such as the New Apostolic Reformation, which challenge secular liberal norms (Diamond, 2022), and (b) the intensification of racial identity politics in response to demographic and civil rights shifts (Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

The Culture War & Political Discourse

The concept of the "culture war" was articulated by Patrick Buchanan during the 1992 Republican National Convention, where he argued that the United States was experiencing a profound internal ideological conflict comparable in magnitude to the Cold War (Buchanan, 1992). Though initially perceived as a marginal viewpoint, these themes have gradually gained mainstream political influence.

Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House from 1995 to 1999, further institutionalized confrontational rhetoric within Republican strategies. His "Contract with America" campaign and supporting materials, such as "Language: A Key Mechanism of Control", emphasized dichotomous linguistic framing, promoting binary categories that delegitimize political adversaries (Zelizer, 2020). This discursive approach contributed to a broader redefinition of political competition, framing it as existential rather than deliberative—a shift that has significant implications for democratic practice (Klein, 2020).

Idealism vs. Pragmatism

Despite his association with liberal internationalism and idealist rhetoric, President Woodrow Wilson exemplifies the strategic fusion of moral vision with pragmatic interests. In advocating for the League of Nations, Wilson himself acknowledged the limitations of idealistic appeals: "Why did Jesus Christ fail to make the world believe in his teaching? He preached only ideals and did not indicate a practical way to achieve them. I propose a practical scheme..." (Wilson, 1919, cited in Ekirch, 1966, p. 61). His policies reflected a nuanced blend of moral justification and geopolitical calculation, with an emphasis on naval supremacy for national security. This highlights that even so-called "idealists" in American foreign policy have historically acted within realist constraints.

Security & Realist Ascendancy

The post-World War II period, particularly the Cold War, marked the institutional dominance of political realism. Thinkers like Hans Morgenthau framed national interest primarily in terms of power, survival, and international conduct. Although Morgenthau acknowledged variables such as geography and morale, his overall framework prioritized state behavior in an anarchic international system (Morgenthau, 1969).

During this period, national interest became essentially synonymous with foreign policy and national security. Figures such as Secretary of Défense Caspar Weinberger and Senator Sam Nunn articulated U.S. objectives in terms of deterrence, alliance maintenance, access to global markets, and arms control—emphasizing hard power priorities and strategic reach (Weinberger, 1987; Nunn, 1988).

However, as critics noted, this narrow conceptualization excluded domestic social and economic concerns. R.B. Osgood's notion of "national self-interest" attempted to broaden the discussion, but remained rooted in survival and external strategy, rather than incorporating holistic national development (Osgood, 2023).

Emerging Contradictions

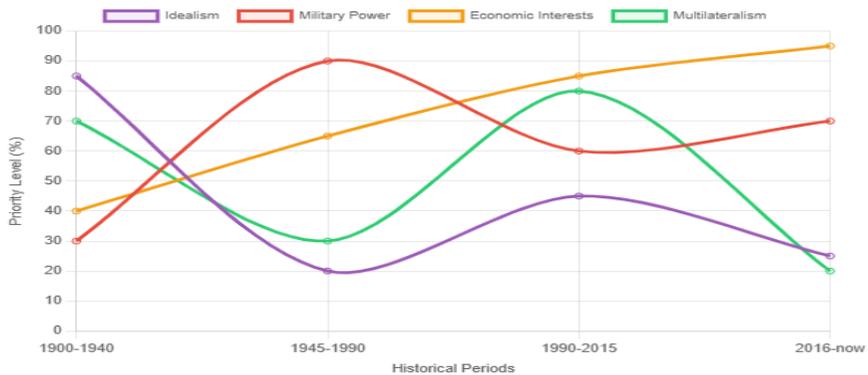
Following the end of the Cold War, the United States faced a qualitatively different set of challenges. The geopolitical structure that had previously justified narrow realist thinking began to shift. President Jimmy Carter's attempts to infuse morality into foreign policy—an effort sometimes framed as

naive idealism—were widely criticized as contributing to a perceived decline in U.S. global stature (Bell, 1960).

Ironically, as former President Carter later acknowledged, many of the most profound challenges to American leadership arose not from failures, but from the unintended consequences of success: the liberalization of trade and investment flows fostered the growth of global competitors (Carter, 1989).

In this transitional phase, domestic socioeconomic issues—such as inequality, declining infrastructure, and civic disaffection—began to threaten the United States’ ability to maintain global leadership. This redefined the concept of national interest: no longer exclusively external, but increasingly internal and structural.

Chart 1: Evolution of American Foreign Policy Priorities by Period



Deception & Indignation

The transformation of the American media landscape since the late 20th century has significantly contributed to the fragmentation of public discourse and political polarization. The emergence of Fox News in 1996, the proliferation of ideologically oriented talk radio programs such as those led by Rush Limbaugh, and the subsequent rise of algorithm-driven social media platforms have created distinct informational silos that reinforce pre-existing biases and contribute to affective polarization (Benkler, Faris and Roberts, 2018; Tucker et al., 2018).

These segmented media ecosystems foster what has been termed "epistemic closure"—a state in which individuals are repeatedly exposed to homogeneous content, resulting in diminished critical reflection and heightened political antagonism (Sunstein, 2017). In this context, disinformation and emotionally charged narratives are increasingly replacing evidence-based argumentation, thereby

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undermining democratic deliberation (Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler, 2020).

Parallel to this media evolution, the broader post-Cold War socioeconomic consensus, characterized by neoliberal policy frameworks, has faced erosion. Promises of widespread economic prosperity have not materialized uniformly. Instead, structural deindustrialization, increasing income inequality, and recurring systemic shocks (such as the September 11 attacks, the 2008 financial crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic) have contributed to a deepening sense of public discontent and distrust in political institutions (Rodrik, 2011; Piketty, 2020).

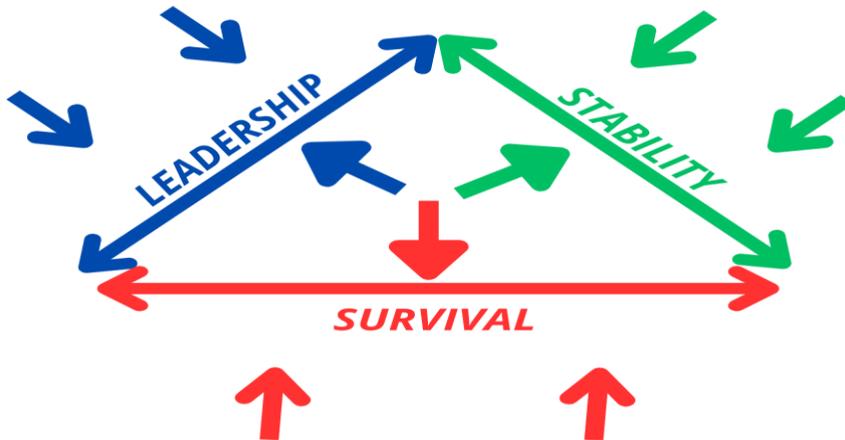
Within this context of structural uncertainty and media-driven polarization, Donald Trump has been interpreted by some scholars not as a deviation from democratic norms, but rather as an expression—or culmination—of long-term political and social trends (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). His rhetorical emphasis on national identity, traditional values, and political disruption resonates with a portion of the electorate seeking symbolic restoration in the face of perceived sociocultural decline (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). His communication style - marked by the deliberate rejection of political correctness and institutional conventions - further strengthens identification with disenfranchised groups (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009).

Moreover, this political configuration is increasingly supported by influential actors in the technological and economic domains. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), under the ownership of Elon Musk, have been associated with algorithmic amplification of partisan content and the erosion of traditional gatekeeping functions in the information space (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Tufekci, 2018). This convergence of digital infrastructure and ideological mobilization contributes to what has been termed "networked authoritarianism", in which symbolic power precedes institutional regulation (Morozov, 2011).

By employing these conceptual tools within a discourse-based analytical framework, this paper seeks to transcend the limitations of traditional realist-idealist dichotomies and offer a more context-sensitive, culturally embedded interpretation of the American national interest.

Consequently, what is frequently referred to as "Trumpism" may be more appropriately conceptualized as a broader ideological style and governance model rooted in nativist populism, reactionary identity politics, and institutional

disruption. It represents not merely the ambitions of one political figure but the articulation of a societal response to complex structural transformations, both domestically and globally (Mounk, 2018; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).



The proposed model of American national interest, conceptualized as a dynamic "triangle of power" composed of survival, leadership, and stability, is sustainable only if its three core dimensions remain in relative balance. Each element is functionally interdependent: the pursuit of leadership, for instance, cannot occur in the absence of internal political coherence and external legitimacy, both of which are premised on national survival and systemic stability. Similarly, stability at the international level depends on the United States maintaining strategic capacities— not limited to military force, but encompassing economic, technological, and diplomatic influence. Conversely, national survival is no longer reducible to territorial defense but also involves the preservation of global positioning, competitive advantage, and systemic integrity (Gray, 1988; Nye, 2004).

In this light, the national interest of the United States may be defined as the strategic effort to maintain the internal coherence and global viability of the "triangle of power" through adaptive responses to emerging challenges. This perspective offers several analytical advantages over traditional definitions. First, it integrates both foreign and domestic dimensions rather than artificially separating them. Second, it is expressed in conceptual terms derived from the sociopolitical language and self-understanding of the United States, rather than imposed external frameworks. Third, it accommodates the increasing prominence of *non-military instruments of power*—such as *economic statecraft* and

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symbolic leadership—in the post-Cold War international environment (Clinton, 1998; Nye, 2004).

This understanding is further supported by empirical observation. American political culture has consistently demonstrated a rallying effect in times of perceived external threat, where public opinion coalesces in support of the executive, regardless of the administration's prior approval ratings or responsibility for the crisis (Mueller, 1973). As observed by Hamilton (1986), even in an era of growing cosmopolitanism, American nationalism remains deeply rooted in a binary worldview of "us versus them," particularly under the pressure of external adversity.

Moreover, the conceptualization of national interest as a response to ongoing cycles of "challenges and responses" clarifies the transformation of American strategic concerns. Classical geopolitical formulations - such as "dominance in the Western Hemisphere" or "balance of power in Europe and Asia" - have become increasingly outdated due to the rise of new economic actors, ideological currents, and transnational threats. For example, the emergence of regional economic powers, persistent debt crises in Latin America, and shifting influence in the Indo-Pacific region have altered the parameters of U.S. global engagement.

Notably, the United States has contributed to these transformations through its policies. As former President Jimmy Carter acknowledged, "some of today's most serious challenges stem from our successes, not failures." Indeed, American investments and global liberalization initiatives have accelerated the development of competitors now capable of contesting U.S. technological and economic primacy (Carter, 1989).

At the same time, within the domestic sphere, there is a growing awareness among policymakers and scholars that maintaining U.S. leadership cannot be sustained without addressing structural inequality, social fragmentation, and infrastructure decay. The post-Cold War decline in military confrontation has brought to the forefront new types of systemic "challenges" - ranging from economic competitiveness and social cohesion to climate change and cybersecurity - which cannot be addressed solely through conventional hard-power mechanisms.

As C.W. Maynes observed, the essence of American global leadership in the 1940s and 1950s rested on nuclear supremacy, control over global energy supplies, and the dominance of the U.S. dollar in international finance. By the

1990s, however, economic competitiveness had replaced traditional geopolitical concerns as the core diplomatic priority. At the same time, non-traditional threats—such as environmental degradation, transnational crime, and global inequality—came to redefine the national interest agenda (Maynes, 1989).

This reconceptualization facilitates a functional reconciliation between the normative assumptions embedded in American political culture and the empirical realities that shape strategic decision-making. Rather than viewing national interest as a fixed doctrine, it can be more usefully understood as a fluid lens through which the United States perceives its role in the world and formulates appropriate strategies. In this respect, national interest functions not merely as a prescriptive tool but as a culturally informed mode of cognition and justification.

The analytical model presented here is not intended to be definitive. Instead, it offers an alternative conceptual framework that integrates structural, historical, and civilizational variables into the study of national interest. Categories such as strategic planning, power parameters, and geopolitical ambition—often analyzed in isolation—benefit from being reconsidered in light of the socio-cultural context and long-term trajectory of the US developmental process.

Central Asian Case

Central Asia's current transformation is best understood through a "Triangle of Power" that links security, sovereignty, and economic statecraft in the prism of their perception of the national interest concept. Where security is fragile, sovereignty is bargained away for support; where economic leverage grows, states gain room to maneuver in foreign policy; and where sovereignty is asserted, the costs must be financed by credible economic strategies and credible security partners, presenting country-by-country cases and regional-level milestones in their understanding of the concept of national interest.

For example, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan resumed open and direct interactions as a powerful confidence signal ahead of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's state visit to Dushanbe on March 9–10, 2018. In the months that followed, the two sides simplified visa requirements, restored transportation links, and reopened long-shuttered crossing points, easing movement for families and traders along the once-barren border. In March 2018, Uzbekistan also waived visas for Tajik

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citizens (for 30-day visits), a policy that solidified gains from the diplomatic thaw.

At the regional level, the thaw catalyzed a long-awaited Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State—the first, held on March 15, 2018, in Astana—that reintroduced a “Neighbours First” approach to dialogue. The meetings took place in Tashkent in November 2019, Cholpon-Ata on July 21, 2022, Dushanbe on September 14, 2023, and Astana on August 9, 2024.

These meetings are not formal integration, but they improve leader-level coordination on borders, water, transport, and trade resilience without external chaperones—an important sovereignty dividend.

Uzbekistan’s pursuit of east-west and north-south corridors is the security side of the same coin. The long-gestating China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan (CKU) railway crossed a key threshold on June 6, 2024, when the three governments signed an intergovernmental agreement in Beijing, marking a significant step toward shifting part of China-Europe traffic away from Russia and the Caspian bottleneck. The Kyrgyz parliament approved the treaty on June 19, 2024, and Bishkek also signed an investment agreement that same month. If delivered on schedule, CKU will rebalance the region’s logistics map and reduce single-route risk revealed by 2022–2025 energy and sanctions shocks.

Uzbekistan’s readiness to work with Afghanistan is another sovereignty-enhancing hedge: Tashkent reopened the Termez crossing on September 1, 2021, to maintain trade with northern Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover.

Region-Level Milestones

A. Leaders’ Consultative Meetings (2018–2024). What began on March 15, 2018 (Astana) as a cautious experiment has become an annual format of regional political process, with Dushanbe (Sept. 14, 2023) and Astana (Aug. 9, 2024) sustaining momentum. These meetings transform repeated crises (at borders, over water, and in transit) into priority agenda items, thereby strengthening regional sovereignty without dominant supranational structures.

B. CKU RAILWAY (2024–). The June 6, 2024, intergovernmental agreement provided a legal foundation for decades of discussion. Kyrgyzstan’s ratification on June 19, 2024, and subsequent investment steps indicate that, this time, route, gauge, and financing questions are being solved in sequence. Strategically, CKU reduces exposure to CPC-

style chokepoints and sanctions spillovers, strengthening the economic leg of sovereignty.

C. CHINA–CENTRAL ASIA FORMAT (C+C5). By June 17, 2025, Beijing had elevated its diplomatic engagement in the region with a treaty of permanent good neighborliness and cooperation, promising grants, air links, and logistics upgrades (including a nod to CKU). The region is hedging by banking Chinese capital and market access while keeping European, Turkish, Gulf, and multilateral channels open.

By employing these conceptual tools within a discourse-based analytical framework, this paper seeks to transcend the limitations of traditional realist-idealist dichotomies and offer a more context-sensitive, culturally embedded interpretation of the American national interest.

The experience of Central Asian states demonstrates that even under conditions of limited resources and heightened external vulnerability, strategic thinking centers on balancing security, sovereignty, and economic resilience. These aspects demonstrate that the “triangle of power” is not only applicable to great powers but also serves as a universal tool for understanding the behavior of medium and small states. At the same time, the specificity of the national interest concept lies in the fact that the very exact dimensions—survival, leadership, and stability—are pursued on a global scale and are embedded in unique cultural, historical, and institutional foundations. This distinction enables the “triangle of power” to serve as a general conceptual framework within which these cases assume distinct characteristics.

Executive Summary

The concept of national interests in international relations has been the subject of theoretical debate, particularly within the classical opposition between the schools of political realism and idealism. Historically, realism has prioritized foreign policy and external security as the primary domains of national interest, frequently excluding domestic political or societal factors from its analytical scope. In contrast, idealist and liberal institutionalist scholars have emphasized the influence of international norms, cooperation, and moral values on national priorities.

The analysis is based on primary sources, such as policy speeches, strategic documents, and political commentary, as well as secondary literature in international relations, political theory, and security studies. The study aims to provide a more comprehensive and historically grounded

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understanding of the national interest by employing a qualitative and interpretive approach that draws on discourse analysis and conceptual history. Quantitative methods are not employed in this study.

Central Asian states provide valuable case studies for understanding how small and medium-sized powers conceptualize and pursue their national interests in response to geopolitical vulnerability and regional interdependence. Although the United States defines its national interest in terms of global leadership and systemic stability, Central Asian states primarily define theirs in terms of domestic security and survival. The "triangle of power": survival, leadership, and stability, which effectively interprets the model of harmonizing internal priorities and external powers that each country has developed, is a helpful framework.

A qualitative, discourse-analytical approach is employed in this study to investigate the changing concept of national interest in American political thought and practice. It concentrates on the strategic frameworks, policy documents, and key speeches that American political leaders and scholars have articulated throughout various historical periods. The analytical framework is founded on the definition of "challenge" and the "triangle of power" structure, which consists of stability, leadership, and survival. The "triangle of power" highlights the equilibrium required among these three foundational imperatives, while the term "challenge" encompasses systemic pressures that necessitate a strategic response from a state.

The dynamic "triangle of power" paradigm in the national interest concept is conceptualized as a combination of stability, leadership, and survival. It is only sustainable if its three fundamental dimensions are maintained in a state of relative equilibrium. The United States' national interest can be defined as the strategic endeavor to preserve the internal coherence and global viability of the "triangle of power" by responding to emergent challenges adaptively.

The emergence of new economic actors, ideological currents, and transnational threats has rendered classical geopolitical formulations increasingly obsolete. New forms of systemic "challenges" have emerged as a result of the post-Cold War decline in military confrontation, including economic competitiveness, social cohesion, climate change, and cybersecurity.

National interest serves as a culturally informed mode of cognition and justification, rather than solely a prescriptive tool.

The analysis presents a novel conceptual framework for understanding national interests with a particular emphasis on the "Triangle of Power" that connects security, sovereignty, and economic statecraft. This framework highlights the importance of striking a balance between economic resilience, sovereignty, and security within the context of national interests. The "triangle of power" is a universal tool for understanding the behavior of medium and small states, as demonstrated by the experience of Central Asian states, which show that strategic thinking focuses on balancing security, sovereignty, and economic resilience.

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