



original article

The Effects of Racism on National Security in the United State of America (2020–2024)

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Abstract: The intersection of national security and racism continues to endanger Black lives in the United States of America (USA). While some individuals may escape these threats, the majority face systemic oppression and violence. Racism remains a widespread issue, leading to the loss of Black lives through persistent discrimination and deprivation of rights. This has led to disproportionate targeting, profiling, and marginalization of Black individuals and communities, compromising their safety and well-being. This study explored the convergence of racism and national security, concentrating on the safety of Black lives in the USA from 2020 to 2024. Our primary objective was to investigate how systemic racism, discriminatory policing practices, and racialized violence have influenced national security outcomes during this period of time. Adopting a qualitative methodology, we employed a historical approach, case study analysis, and secondary data drawn from scholarly literature, official reports, media archives, and organizational records. Our findings revealed that systemic racism is not only a civil rights issue but also a national security concern, as it undermines social cohesion, erodes trust in state institutions, and fuels domestic instability. Based on the results, our study highlighted a need for a comprehensive police reform in the USA, classifying racialized violence as a national security threat, as well as investment in marginalized communities and cross-sector collaboration to foster inclusion and resilience. Dismantling systemic racism is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for safeguarding national stability.

Keywords: racism, security, national security, human security, the blacks, the United States

Citation: Usamotu B. O., Ogunsola R. O. The Effects of Racism on National Security in the United State of America (2020–2024). *Vestnik Kemerovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya: Politicheskie, sotsiologicheskie i ekonomicheskie nauki*, 2026, 11(2): 209–219. <https://doi.org/10.21603/2500-3372-2026-11-2-209-219>

Received 16 Oct 2025. Accepted after review 24 Nov 2025. Accepted for publication 1 Dec 2025.

оригинальная статья

Влияние расизма на национальную безопасность в США (2020–2024 гг.)

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Аннотация: Взаимодействие национальной безопасности и расизма продолжает угрожать жизни чернокожих в США. Хотя некоторым людям удастся избежать этих угроз, большинство сталкивается с систематическим притеснением и насилием. Расизм остается широко распространенной проблемой, влекущей гибель чернокожих из-за постоянной дискриминации и лишения прав. Это привело к непропорциональному преследованию, профилированию и маргинализации чернокожих людей и сообществ, что поставило под угрозу их безопасность и благополучие. Цель – исследовать, как системный расизм, дискриминационная полицейская практика и насилие на расовой почве повлияли на результаты национальной безопасности в 2020–2024 гг. Использован исторический подход, анализ конкретных примеров и вторичных данных, взятых из научной литературы, официальных отчетов, архивов СМИ и документов организаций. В результате установлено, что системный расизм является проблемой не только гражданских прав, но и национальной безопасности, так как он подрывает социальную сплоченность, доверие к государственным институтам

и подпитывает внутреннюю нестабильность. Выявлена необходимость: 1) всеобъемлющей реформы полиции в США, классифицирующей насилие на расовой почве как угрозу национальной безопасности; 2) инвестиций в маргинализированные сообщества; 3) межсекторального сотрудничества для содействия интеграции и жизнестойкости. Ликвидация системного расизма является не только моральным императивом, но и стратегической необходимостью для обеспечения национальной стабильности.

Ключевые слова: расизм, безопасность, национальная безопасность, безопасность человека, чернокожие, США

Цитирование: Усамоту Б. О., Огунсола Р. О. Влияние расизма на национальную безопасность в США (2020–2024 гг.). *Вестник Кемеровского государственного университета. Серия: Политические, социологические и экономические науки*. 2026. Т. 11. № 2. С. 209–219. (In Eng.) <https://doi.org/10.21603/2500-3372-2026-11-2-209-219>

Поступила в редакцию 16.10.2025. Принята после рецензирования 24.11.2025. Принята в печать 01.12.2025.

Introduction

National security is a set of measures taken by a country to protect itself from internal and external threats that may jeopardize its interests, values, or existence. It encompasses a broad range of areas, including defense, intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic stability, and societal resilience [1]. The primary objective of national security is to ensure the safety and well-being of a nation's citizens, protect its borders, and promote its strategic interests. National security is not solely a domestic affair; it often requires international cooperation and alliances. Nations collaborate to combat global challenges such as terrorism, transnational crime, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction [2; 3]. Partnerships and alliances strengthen a nation's security by sharing intelligence, coordinating joint military exercises, and establishing diplomatic ties to promote stability and peace.

The concept of national security is multifaceted, having evolved from basic definitions focused on the absence of military threats and political coercion. It is achieved when a nation can protect its legitimate interests without resorting to war and maintain them if challenged [4]. National security varies across different states and institutions, emphasizing not only military defense but also human, cultural, and political aspects within the nation. National security encompasses socio-political stability, territorial integrity, economic strength, ecological balance, cultural cohesion, moral consensus, and external peace, while also protecting national values from various threats [1].

Racism is one of the modern challenges for both national security and human security alike. Racism has historical, social, psychological, and economic dimensions that contribute to its existence everywhere in the world [5]. Its historical roots are in colonization, slavery, and segregation, which created racial hierarchies and institutionalized inequality. People

absorb social attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices via their upbringing, education, and media exposure, which may reinforce racist notions over time [6]. Socialization and cultural norms also play a part in this. Prejudice is frequently fueled by ignorance or a lack of exposure to varied groups; it can also result from fear or distrust of individuals who are seen as different [5]. Moreover, racism has been employed as a means of preserving authority and control, enabling privileged groups to hold onto resources and advantages.

Racism is intricately connected to economic exploitation, particularly slavery, resulting in enduring disparities in employment, wealth, and opportunities. It also exerts a psychological impact, fostering in-groups and out-groups that reinforce stereotypes and prejudice [6]. Racism is perpetuated through systemic inequalities embedded within laws, policies, and institutional practices. It can be defined as an ideology of racial domination that justifies the inferior treatment of certain racial groups based on perceived superiority [7]. The concept of racialization involves using physical differences to categorize people into races, which becomes racism when such categorizations lead to hierarchical valuations of the groups.

Racism differs from racial discrimination, which focuses on unequal treatment, and racial inequality, which pertains to unequal outcomes across various domains [8]. Contemporary racial issues may stem from factors other than current racism, suggesting a complex relationship between racism, discrimination, and inequality. Racism is a global issue manifested through violence, including genocide against indigenous groups. It is further exacerbated by international political systems influenced by economic and military powers [6]. Indigenous land rights are frequently dismissed for development and security reasons. Discriminatory immigration policies persist in Europe, Asia, and North America, alongside educational

systems that fail to provide equal opportunities based on race. Underlying racial divisions remain despite an outward commitment to social unity. They are often overshadowed by cultural barriers, segregation, and systemic inequality in demographics and policymaking.

Racism in America has roots in the colonial era with the displacement of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans. Slavery expanded in the antebellum South, leading to racial segregation laws that restricted African Americans' rights [8; 9]. If not properly investigated and swiftly curbed, this racism has the ability to destabilize the whole nation. According to research, Black Americans served in the military at greater rates and engaged equally in World War II to defend the United States. All Americans must be treated fairly and with respect if the United States is to be able to rely on them [10]. To what extent has racism affected the national security of the United States? To what extent has the U.S. government addressed issues related to racism and national security? What are possible solutions to racism in the United States? Some of these questions are addressed in this paper. This introduction is followed by research methodology, a historical excursus into racism in the US, and an analysis of the impact of racism on national security in 2020–2024. The final section offers our conclusion and recommendations.

This research employed a qualitative method which focuses on explaining and interpreting the meaning of racism and national security. We sought to gain insight into the research context by analyzing secondary non-numerical data collected from textbooks, magazines, newspapers, and journals. Also, we employed a case study approach, focusing on lived experiences of Black Americans to understand the broader impact of racism on national security. Finally, content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results

Historical Excursus into Racial Discrimination Against Blacks in the United States

The recent racism in the US is not an isolated incident. Rather, it has been part of US history, suggesting that racism is an enduring pattern or a systemic practice embedded in the country's institutions. Therefore, it is important to start with a historical excursus into racism in the United States.

The Colonial Period and Slavery (1607 to 1783)

The origins of racism in the United States began during colonialism when racial ideologies justified the exploitation of African people. Starting in the 1600s, European colonists imported enslaved Africans for labor

in plantations, establishing a system where Blackness was associated with bondage and inferiority [11]. Colonial laws in Virginia and Maryland transitioned African laborers from indentured servants to lifelong property. A significant 1662 law stipulated that a child's status followed the mother's, thus perpetuating slavery. By the late 1600s, laws further restricted Black people's rights, reflecting economic motives and fears of rebellion [4].

During that period, racism was ideological and economic, portraying Africans as savages and those suited for servitude. Scientific racism classified them as biologically inferior, influencing figures like Thomas Jefferson to uphold views of Black inferiority [10]. The growth of slave populations led to resistance, notably the Stono Rebellion of 1739, prompting harsher "slave codes" to enforce control [12]. By the 19th century, slavery was integral to the American economy, with racial ideologies perpetuating the image of Black people as dangerous and inferior. Events such as the Haitian Revolution only intensified fears among the slaveholders and led to stricter laws against Black assemblies and literacy viewed by authorities as threats to social order [10].

Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831 is a notable instance of Black resistance leading to severe repercussions, including the deaths of around 60 whites and subsequent violence against hundreds of Black individuals by mob retribution. This rebellion prompted the South to enact stringent laws against Black education and movement, enhancing surveillance measures [13]. The revolt linked Black resistance to threats against public safety and national stability, resulting in free Black communities being viewed with suspicion and accused of insurrection. Furthermore, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 expanded federal power to capture alleged runaway slaves, portraying free Black populations as inherently criminal and disordered, and thereby foreshadowing future associations of Blackness with public threat [12].

By the Civil War, racial ideologies were firmly established, with Southern leaders arguing that slavery was vital for social order and national security. The Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens asserted that their government's foundation was based on the belief of Black inferiority [14]. Both the Union and the Confederate perspectives intertwined racial issues with security concerns: the Union feared slave revolts, while the Confederacy relied on racial ideology to bolster support for the war. Although the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in 1865, it did not eliminate the underlying racial ideologies, which transformed and persisted in American society [12].

The continued fear of Black resistance and the rationale for oppressive measures remained ingrained in American institutions, shaping future policies and narratives¹.

The Period between 1865 and 1940s

The end of the Civil War in 1865 was significant for the abolition of slavery through the 13th Amendment, but it did not eliminate racism, which evolved into new laws and social practices [15]. The Reconstruction era (1865–1877) aimed to integrate formerly enslaved people into civic life, leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1866, as well as the 14th and 15th Amendments, to grant rights to Black men. However, a brief period of Black political participation sparked anxiety among white Americans who viewed it as a threat to the existing racial hierarchy [16; 17].

White supremacist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan founded in 1865, acted as violent enforcers of racial terror, conducting raids and lynchings aimed to intimidate Black voters and officeholders. This violence was a systematic effort to suppress Black citizenship and uphold white dominance [18]. Despite federal interventions, such as the Enforcement Acts (1870–1871), national commitment to Black rights diminished after federal troop withdrawal in 1877, effectively abandoning Black citizens. Historian Eric Foner notes that the end of Reconstruction initiated a regime of racial subjugation marked by Jim Crow laws mandating segregation in various aspects of life [4]. The Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld segregation, enabling discrimination for years. The Jim Crow era also saw extreme violence, with thousands of lynchings between the 1880s and 1940s often justified by white mobs as protection of community order, framing violence against Black individuals as a security measure [19].

The security dimension of racism during the Jim Crow era manifested through state policies such as convict leasing, where Black men were arrested on minor charges and exploited for labor. This system served as a new form of forced labor, marking a continuation of economic exploitation [4]. The legal system became a mechanism of racial control, criminalizing Black existence. Additionally, the Great Migration (1916–1940) saw millions of Black Americans fleeing the South for northern cities in search of better opportunities. However, they faced racism and hostility from white communities, who viewed them as threats to jobs and social stability. This led to race riots, notably

the Chicago Riot of 1919. Federal authorities often interpreted Black activism as subversive [20].

During World War I, the U.S. government monitored Black organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, fearing that civil rights advocacy could undermine national unity. The Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) documented Black activists and publications, linking demands for racial justice to national security threats. Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad notes that the portrayal of Black Americans as criminals was central to American racial ideology². The Jim Crow era's media reinforced these negative stereotypes through imagery and language, depicting Black men as violent and sexually aggressive, which justified segregation and violence. Films such as *The Birth of a Nation* further entrenched these racist narratives in American society [21].

The Civil Rights Era (1950s to 1970s)

The Civil Rights Era (1950–1970) was a pivotal time in American history, characterized by movements advocating for racial equality and marked by significant legal victories against systemic racism [4]. The key events included the landmark 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which deemed racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, provoking backlash from white supremacists [Ibid.]. The Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–1956), ignited by Rosa Parks' arrest, propelled figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into prominence, advocating for nonviolent resistance. However, as Black activism intensified, it often clashed with state authorities, who viewed civil rights movements as threats to national stability amid Cold War anxieties, leading to increased surveillance of Black activists [Ibid.].

The FBI, led by J. Edgar Hoover, perceived civil rights leaders as potential threats to national stability. This can be exemplified by the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) initiated in 1956. Originally aimed at monitoring communist activities, COINTELPRO expanded to target civil rights organizations, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It amassed extensive files on figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., detailing their activities and personal lives [21]. The tactics employed were invasive and often unlawful, involving wiretaps, informants, and blackmail to *disrupt, misdirect, discredit*,

¹ Examining the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol. *FBI*. 15 Jun 2021. URL: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches-and-testimony/examining-the-january-6-attack-on-the-us-capitol-wray-061521> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

² Ibid.

or otherwise neutralize these leaders. Hoover labelled King as *the most dangerous negro of the future in this Nation*, responding to what was seen as a significant threat due to King's influence and advocacy for change. Concurrently, more radical elements of Black activism began to emerge in the mid-1960s [22].

The urban rebellions of the 1960s, particularly in Watts, Detroit, and Newark, were driven by police brutality and economic hardship, yet often mischaracterized as mere "riots". This labelling obscured underlying grievances and contributed to negative portrayals of Black urban communities [Ibid.]. The federal response increasingly viewed these events as security threats, resulting in military interventions and restrictive legislation. The Black Panther Party, founded in 1966, offered a more militant critique of systemic racism and capitalism through community programs and armed monitoring of police [18]. However, the authorities viewed them as a significant threat, which culminated in aggressive COINTELPRO tactics such as infiltration and violent confrontations, as exemplified by the police killing of Fred Hampton in 1969 [21]. The media frequently mirrored the authorities' narratives, focusing on violence while neglecting the peaceful protests and demands for justice [23].

This narrative illustrates how expansive policing and surveillance were justified, reinforcing public fears and informing policies. The Civil Rights Era achieved significant milestones, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet, the backlash against the Black political power intensified³. Exploiting white fears, the "Southern Strategy" set the stage for punitive criminal justice policies. By the 1970s, although segregation was legally abolished, the Black communities were still plagued by economic disparity, police violence, and mass incarceration. At the same time, Black activism continued to be viewed as a security threat, ultimately contributing to the modern carceral state [Ibid.].

Pre- and Post-September 11 (1980s to 2016)

The transition from the Civil Rights Era to the late 20th century saw American racism shift from segregationist laws to mass incarceration and aggressive policing. The War on Drugs, declared by Nixon and intensified under Reagan and Bush, targeted Black communities, framing racial inequality as a crime issue [24]. Media

sensationalism during the "crack epidemic" depicted Black neighborhoods as violent, justifying harsh sentencing laws such as the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act. This Act imposed mandatory minimums and created disparities in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine. Policing tactics evolved, with local police forces becoming more militarized and the political discourse becoming more racialized. This can be exemplified by the 1988 "Willie Horton" ad, which entrenched the perception of Black criminality. By the early 1990s, the U.S. had the highest incarceration rates globally, particularly among Black men, leading to what sociologist Wacquant termed the "carceral state" [14]. This era witnessed a defunding of social services in Black communities and a rise in surveillance techniques framed as public safety measures [14; 25]. The consequences of mass incarceration marginalized millions of Black Americans, perpetuating racial control. Despite claims of a colorblind drug war, racial disparities in arrests and convictions persisted, leading to public narratives of Black communities as security threats. By the late 1990s, criticism of mass incarceration grew, but the foundational racial biases within criminal justice policy remained, shaping ongoing debates into the 21st century [14].

The September 11, 2001 attacks significantly altered American policy, particularly regarding national security, with lasting effects on Black communities and racial dynamics in the U.S. Following 9/11, legislation such as the USA PATRIOT Act enhanced government surveillance and policing, often leading to increased scrutiny of minority communities, including Black activists [Ibid.]. The establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the notion of "Black Identity Extremism" in FBI assessments reflected a trend of racialized security practices that interconnected with historical patterns of repression [15]. Technological advancements in surveillance further exacerbated over-policing in urban areas with large Black populations [16; 17]. Events such as the response to Hurricane Katrina and high-profile police killings underscored these racial tensions, framing Black individuals within the context of danger and disorder⁴ [19; 26]. While Barack Obama's election in 2008 suggested progress, systemic racial issues persisted, culminating in the polarization of public discourse on race and security by the 2010s. This foreshadowed the emergence of movements such

³ Dholaka N. Fifty Years Ago Today, President Nixon Declared the War on Drugs. *Vera*. 17 Jun 2021. URL: <https://www.vera.org/news/fifty-years-ago-today-president-nixon-declared-the-war-on-drugs> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

⁴ Brookings Institution Annual Report 2022. Quality. Independence. Impact. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2022. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-annual-report.pdf> (accessed 1 Oct 2025).

as Black Lives Matter amidst the growing tensions around racial justice and public safety narratives⁵.

The Black Lives Matter movement, emerging in the 2010s after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for Trayvon Martin's death, has become a significant force against racism and police violence in the U.S. [26]. The movement gained momentum following several high-profile police killings, including Michael Brown in Ferguson, which highlighted systemic racial bias in policing practices. Social media played a critical role in mobilizing protests and sharing accounts of violence, but it also led to increased surveillance by law enforcement, which tracked the activists and protesters through digital means [27; 28]. The FBI's controversial labelling of certain Black activists as "Black Identity Extremists" reflected the attempts to frame these movements as security threats. The state responses often involved militarized policing, notably during various protests, indicating deep-seated racial injustices [29]. Despite the backlash and sensationalized media narratives that portrayed the protests negatively, Black Lives Matter has influenced national conversations about systemic reform, although significant legislative changes remain elusive. The ongoing struggle for racial justice underscores the need for sustained advocacy and broader discussions on equity and systemic change in America [30].

Effects of Racism on National Security

Racism has had a profound impact on the national security in the United States. It has shaped the stability of its domestic environment, the credibility of its international reputation, and the operational effectiveness of its security institutions. In its widest definition, national security encompasses more than just protecting the country from external threats. It also includes human security, which entails protecting the populace, institutions, and values from the dangers that jeopardize social cohesiveness [4]. In the U.S., racism has created internal vulnerabilities that adversaries have been exploiting to undermine institutional legitimacy. Furthermore, racism fuels forms of extremism that challenge the peace and stability of the state [31]. The years between 2020 and 2024 were particularly significant since they were marked by heightened racial tensions, unprecedented public protests, and high-profile incidents of racialized violence. As a result, the security agencies officially

recognized racially motivated domestic extremism as posing the most persistent and lethal threat to the United States.

After George Floyd was killed by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in mid-2020, the connection between racism and national security became evident [26]. Millions of Americans took part in the rallies throughout all 50 states, sparking the biggest racial justice movement in American history [32]. Although most of those demonstrations were nonviolent, some resulted in property destruction, altercations with law enforcement, and, in some cases, protracted periods of disturbance [33]. These events put a burden on the law enforcement resources, caused the emergency services to take time away from other tasks, and compelled the state governments to use the National Guard in some areas [31]. For more than a hundred nights in a row, the protests took place in towns such as Portland, Oregon, drawing counter-demonstrators of both the left and the right, some of whom were armed. The tenacity and scope of those mobilizations demonstrated that racial injustice is not just a moral issue but it also has the capacity to cause widespread social unrest that may upend local economies, interfere with governance, and fuel political instability [33].

At the same time, the security organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) openly declared that the deadliest and enduring domestic terrorism threat during that time was violent extremism driven by race or ethnicity, especially white supremacist extremism [29]. Viewing racism-inspired violence as a major security risk rather than a peripheral criminal issue signaled a dramatic change in the U.S. national security goals [15]. This conclusion was supported by well-known incidents, such as the May 2022 mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, when the gunman killed 10 people by targeting Black customers at a grocery [27]. The assault was fueled by a belief in the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, which is based on white supremacist ideology and claims a planned scheme to replace white people with non-white immigration. In addition to increasing public dread and undermining trust in the government's ability to protect the communities, the Buffalo shooting showed how racial hate and internet radicalization could result in large-scale, targeted acts of domestic terrorism that claimed a considerable number of lives⁶.

⁵ What we know about Daunte Wright's killing, and what it says about policing in America. *PBS*. 14 Apr 2021. URL: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/what-we-know-about-daunte-wrights-killing-and-what-it-says-about-policing-in-america> (accessed 1 Oct 2025).

⁶ Clayton A. Guns and lies: Mass shootings upended their lives. Now survivors are making the gun industry pay. *The Guardian*. 30 Sep 2024. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2024/sep/30/mass-shooting-survivors-lawsuits> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

The crisis of policing legitimacy further demonstrates the connection between racism and national security. Public trust in law enforcement agencies was undermined by the repeated instances of police violence against Black Americans, such as the killings of Tyre Nichols in 2023, Daunte Wright in 2021, and Breonna Taylor in 2020 [13]. National security depends not only on physical protection from threats but also on the legitimacy of the institutions responsible for providing that protection. When communities lose faith in police fairness and impartiality, they are less willing to cooperate with the investigators, share intelligence, or work together to solve problems [30]. The widespread protests following Tyre Nichols' death in Memphis once again caused the law enforcement agencies nationwide to reroute their personnel toward crowd management, illustrating how recurrent racialized incidents have a cyclical effect on resource allocation and operational readiness⁷. This mistrust can result in "security deserts" where law enforcement presence is resisted, further complicating efforts to prevent crime or respond to emergencies.

Additionally, racism has made it difficult for American military and security organizations to work together. Under Secretary Lloyd Austin, the Department of Defense recognized in 2021 that racist and extremist beliefs among the service personnel were a direct threat to military preparedness, operational effectiveness, and unit cohesion [13]. According to investigations, some of the people who participated in extremist actions, such as the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, were active or former military personnel [34]. These disclosures sparked worries that radicalized military personnel would jeopardize delicate operations, propagate extreme ideologies inside the units, or utilize their training to commit violent crimes. Mission success depends on unit cohesiveness, especially in high-stakes situations. Racism, whether it takes the form of harassment, unfair treatment, or extremist membership, has weakened the mutual trust and reliance necessary for military performance [25].

In order to wage information warfare, foreign adversaries have taken advantage of America's racial divisions. Disinformation campaigns by rival nations such as China and Russia have emphasized images and stories of racial injustice in the U.S. in order to paint the nation as unstable and hypocritical [22]. The U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, for instance, revealed that foreign accounts purposefully disseminated

racially divisive narratives during the 2020 presidential election cycle in an effort to reduce voter turnout and undermine democratic legitimacy [Ibid.]. This kind of manipulation shows how racial tensions at home may be used to further strategic goals that undermine the United States from inside.

Racial injustice episodes and the state's reactions to them have harmed the United States' diplomatic reputation and soft power on the global scene. According to J. S. Nye [35], American foreign policy frequently portrays the nation as a global champion for equality, democracy, and human rights. However, this image was damaged between 2020 and 2024 by the widespread worldwide coverage of racist police violence and large-scale demonstrations [23]. To highlight the disconnect between American ideals and domestic realities, organizations such as the United Nations Human Rights Council formally criticized institutional racism in American law enforcement [35]. The United States' moral authority to lead international efforts has been weakened, decreased, and/or constrained as a result of this reputational loss.

Although racism was officially acknowledged as a national security issue throughout this time, the efficacy of policy measures varied. In 2021, the House of Representatives enacted the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which aimed to establish a national police misconduct record, limit the use of chokeholds, and improve police accountability⁸. However, the law stalled in the Senate, which limited its immediate impact. In 2021, the Department of Defense mandated that all the branches observe an "Extremism Stand-Down," which required the units to suspend their regular operations in order to recognize and prevent extremist affiliations [22]. In an effort to address systematic misbehavior, the Department of Justice opened civil rights investigations against the police departments in Memphis, Louisville, and Minneapolis. Even though these actions showed progress, numerous fundamental security flaws remained because of their sluggish execution and political divisiveness [15].

Numerous case studies demonstrated the extent and enduring influence of racism on the U.S. national security. The 2020 George Floyd demonstrations tested the ability of law enforcement by showing how swiftly racial injustice may turn into a national uprising [29]. The Capitol attack on January 6 demonstrated how widespread violence against democratic institutions can

⁷ Wolfe E. What we know about Tyre Nichols' fatal beating and the officers involved. *CNN*. 8 May 2025. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/08/us/tyre-nichols-officers-trial-what-we-know> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

⁸ Greve J. E. What is the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and is it likely to pass? *The Guardian*. 6 Feb 2023. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/feb/06/george-floyd-justice-in-policing-act-explainer-tyre-nichols> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

result from the intersection of white supremacist ideas with more general anti-government radicalism [23]. While the Tyre Nichols' murder in 2023 established that segregated policing still sparked public indignation and disruptive protests, the Buffalo supermarket shooting in 2022 illustrated the deadly nature of racially motivated domestic terrorism [32]. From immediate risks to life and property to long-term harm to institutional legitimacy, each of those instances had an impact on security, both directly and indirectly.

Thus, racism has frequently led to internal instability by inciting civil unrest and mass mobilizations, fueled violent extremism that continues to endanger lives and safety, weakened the operational cohesion of law enforcement and military institutions, and given foreign adversaries exploitable vulnerabilities in the information domain. Additionally, it has made America less able to project leadership based on morals, which has hurt its reputation abroad. These repercussions show that racism is a strategic liability in addition to a social evil. Therefore, fighting racism is not only a moral obligation, but also a crucial prerequisite for preserving American security, stability, and resilience at a time of intricate and multifaceted challenges.

Efforts in Curbing Racism

Noteworthy, the U.S. government has had a mixed record when it comes to dealing with racism as a national security problem. In the past, racial injustices were sustained by the security institutions themselves. For example, in the 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. and other Black civil rights activists were singled out by the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, which classified them as national security risks [29]. Because of the history of racist monitoring, many Black Americans are wary of reforms spearheaded by the government. Despite this skepticism, the U.S. government has made efforts to address racism and national security concerns over time, especially in reaction to public pressure, civil unrest, and greater knowledge of structural racial imbalances [4]. Nevertheless, these reactions have frequently been reactive rather than proactive, with many of them dispersed or executed unevenly at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Legislation, governmental action, court rulings, and institutional reforms have all contributed to advancements. However, there are still a lot of holes, particularly when it comes to tackling the underlying causes of structural racism

that have an impact on national security both directly and indirectly.

George Floyd's 2020 demonstrations were some of the most prominent government initiatives to address systematic racism [23]. The situation forced the state and federal authorities to reconsider institutional prejudices and enforcement methods. President Joe Biden responded by issuing a number of executive directives that advanced racial justice. In 2021, the Federal Government instructed all federal agencies to determine if their policies sustained structural obstacles and to put equity action plans into place under Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities"⁹. Although this was the first step in the direction of institutional self-examination, the order depended on the desire of each agency to comply and lacked robust enforcement measures.

The National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, published by the Department of Homeland Security in 2021, clearly acknowledged that violent extremism with racial motivations, especially white supremacist ideology, was a serious danger to internal security. The plan placed a strong emphasis on strengthening community trust, preventing the spread of misinformation, and facilitating better information exchange between the authorities. This was a significant change from the earlier decades, when international terrorism was frequently given more priority than homegrown white nationalist organizations.

Some governments have tried to reduce racial inequities in police via reforms. These include civilian oversight boards, unconscious bias training, and body-worn cameras. Additionally, police agencies accused of human rights violations have been the subject of pattern-or-practice investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice, which has led to consent decrees requiring improvements¹⁰. For example, widespread abuse and racial profiling were brought to light by the Department of Justice's 2023 investigations into the Memphis Police Department after Tyre Nichols was killed. However, all of these initiatives have not been efficient and many departments have been sluggish or hostile to change.

In particular, legislative attempts to implement comprehensive change have come to a standstill. In 2021, the House of Representatives approved the Justice in Policing Act, which aimed to create a national police misconduct record, abolish qualified immunity, and outlaw chokeholds¹¹. Yet, the political party differences

⁹ Greve J. E. What is the George Floyd Justice...

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government. *The White House*. URL: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/equity/> (accessed 10 Oct 2025).

prevented the Act from passing the Senate. Long-term policy solutions have been impeded by the political hostility around race and police in the United States, which is reflected in this legislative standstill [22].

The importance of diversity and inclusion in the military and intelligence communities has increasingly come to light. The U.S. Department of Defense has implemented programs to combat extremism among the ranks and increase racial representation in senior positions [13]. The Diversity and Inclusion Board was formed in 2020 to offer suggestions on how to advance racial justice in the military [Ibid.]. However, racial differences in representation in high-ranking jobs, court-martial rates, and promotions continue to exist, demonstrating how deeply ingrained structural inequity is.

Initiatives to combat hate crimes and enhance public safety in underserved areas have received funding from the federal grant programs at the local level. Attempts to include grassroots actors in solutions include the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services and the Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative [15]. Despite their significance, these projects frequently lack scalability and support.

Conclusion

National security is not merely a matter of protecting territorial boundaries or countering foreign threats. It also involves human security – safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of citizens within the state. In this study, we examined the extent to which racism has affected national security and the extent to which the government has responded to curb it in the U.S. We discovered that racism, especially anti-Black racism, is a persistent, deeply embedded challenge in the United States, with significant implications for its national security. It is a truism that racism is not just a moral issue; it is a structural problem that threatens the peace, safety, and unity of the nation. It breeds distrust in institutions, fuels domestic unrest, and provides a narrative for both domestic extremists and foreign adversaries to exploit. Black Americans, in particular, face a form of structural violence that is inseparable from the national security policies and practices.

While there have been policy shifts and symbolic acknowledgments of these issues, especially after the global protests in 2020, the governmental response remains fragmented and reactive, necessitating comprehensive and enforced change. In addition, racism should be treated not only as a civil rights issue but also as a security priority that requires the same level of urgency, coordination, and resources as other

national threats. National security cannot be achieved without social justice. Our research also reinforces that ending racism is a long-term, intergenerational struggle. It requires cultural transformation as well as institutional changes. Without addressing the root causes of racial inequality – historical legacies, structural barriers, and cultural narratives – the symptoms of racism will continue to resurface in various forms.

The U.S. Congress should prioritize the passage of enforceable national standards for policing that apply uniformly across the United States, ensuring core civil rights protection everywhere. Independent oversight bodies should be established in every jurisdiction to monitor police conduct, investigate misconduct without bias, and ensure that officers are held accountable for their actions. To strengthen compliance, federal funding to local police departments should be contingent upon demonstrable adherence to the civil rights standards, creating a strong incentive for reform and ensuring that public resources are directed only to those agencies which uphold democratic values. Agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense should formally classify systemic racism and white supremacist extremism as national security threats, placing them on par with other urgent risks such as terrorism.

Equally important is that public policies, particularly those related to housing, education, healthcare, and law enforcement, should undergo rigorous racial equity impact assessments to prevent the perpetuation of structural inequities and promote fairness and inclusivity. Reinvesting in historically disinvested Black and marginalized communities through targeted economic initiatives, guided by community input, can foster economic self-sufficiency and dismantle structural barriers. Educational reforms should ensure that curriculum standards provide accurate and inclusive accounts of U.S. racial history, fostering critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness. Media platforms should adopt clear anti-racist standards, counter hate speech, and promote inclusive narratives. Governments should engage in reparative justice initiatives for African Americans, including direct financial compensation, investment in institutions, education grants, or land restitution. Coordinated action across all sectors of society, including government agencies, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector, is necessary to eliminate systemic racism and strengthen social cohesion. Only a collective approach can ensure comprehensive, resilient, and adaptive anti-racist efforts.

Finally, having established that the security of Black lives is an essential component of genuine national security of a country, we argue that the fight against racism is not merely a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for the stability and legitimacy of the United States in particular and the whole world in general.

Conflict of interests: The authors declared no potential conflict of interests regarding the research, authorship, and / or publication of this article.

Конфликт интересов: Авторы заявили об отсутствии потенциальных конфликтов интересов в отношении исследования, авторства и / или публикации данной статьи.

Contribution: All the authors contributed equally to the study and bear equal responsibility for the information published in this article.

Критерии авторства: Авторы в равной степени участвовали в подготовке и написании статьи.

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