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**A Historical Investigation of the Developing Role of the Supreme
Court in the USA**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

We dedicate this work to our families, friends, and every one we love.

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Abstract

This research traces the developing role assigned to the United States Supreme Court across the American history. The concept of an institution preserving the colonies' rights had long been seen as an unattainable objective. However, the determination of the colonists to fight for their independence and to break ties with their homeland government paved the way for the establishment of a country, which builds its political system upon the principle of separation of power. In this perspective, this study seeks to investigate the role played by the US Supreme Court in settling disputes, protecting people from different injustice acts, interpreting laws, and preserving the credibility of the American Constitution. The research incorporated the historical method in the analysis of data. The latter were fully collected by documentary sources, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of the Confederations, the US constitution as well as the cases suited by the Court itself. The attained results revealed the significant role played by the United States Supreme Court in the American political and social life. As the branch where the Judiciary is vested, the Court checks the constitutionality of laws, settles disputes amongst the States, between the States and the Federal Government, and most importantly, it ensures that all citizens enjoy equal protection under the law.

Keywords: Civil Rights- Judicial Review- Judiciary - Supreme Court

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACA	Affordable Care Act
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
USA	United States of America

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General Introduction

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The Supreme Court was conceived as the weakest branch of government, with limited authority and influence. Its role has historically evolved from a modest, uncertain institution into a strong and influential branch of American government. At its founding, the Court was created by Article III of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, yet it held little practical power or authority in the early years of the Republic. Its role was not clearly established, and it was often overshadowed by the legislative and executive branches (Hoffer, Hoffer, & Hull, 2007).

This changed primarily with the landmark case *Marbury v. Madison* (1803). This decision introduced the principle of judicial review, allowing the Court to interpret the Constitution and invalidate laws it deemed unconstitutional. This fundamental shift laid the groundwork for the Court's central role in the American system of checks and balances (Hall, 2009).

Over the decades, the Supreme Court's function evolved further in response to key historical events such as the Civil War, Reconstruction, the industrial era, the New Deal, the civil rights movement, and modern political conflicts. In each period, the Court adapted its interpretation of the Constitution to meet new social, political, and economic challenges. The Court's evolution was not purely legal, but also shaped by the personal ideologies of the justices, the political context, and public sentiment (Irons, 2006).

2. Statement of the Problem

The U.S. Supreme Court was established to interpret the Constitution and balance power among the branches of government. In its early years, it lacked authority and was overshadowed by Congress and the President. Over time, it gained power through key

decisions, but this rise brought controversy and debate. Some questioned whether unelected justices should have the power to overturn laws, while others debated how the Constitution should be interpreted—strictly by its original meaning or as a living document. The Court’s evolution influence also raised concerns about political bias and the lack of accountability due to lifetime appointments. This study examines how the Court’s role evolved and how it came to shape American law and society.

3. Research Questions

To conduct this investigation, the following questions need to be tackled:

- How has the role and perception of the U.S. Supreme Court developed since its inception?
- What key historical events and landmark cases have formed this development?
- How has the Court preserved its independence from the executive and legislative branches?

4. Aims of the Study

This study aims to trace the chronological evolution of the U.S. Supreme Court from its origins to its modern-day functions. It explores how the Court was established, the historical and political contexts that shaped its growth, and its expanding role in interpreting the Constitution, protecting individual rights, and influencing national policy. By examining key eras, foundational documents, landmark decisions, and its distinction from other legal institutions, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Supreme Court has become a central pillar in the American legal and political system.

5. Research Methodology

The methodology of research for this dissertation focuses on the methods used to conduct the study. Moreover, it accounts for the tools of data collection, and the process of their analysis.

The study under investigation is qualitative in nature. Since the study is concerned with analysing the historical data relevant to the historical investigation of the developing role of the Supreme Court in the USA, we find it logical to incorporate the historical method. Also, it focuses on understanding historical contexts, analysing textual information, and interpreting the evolution of concepts and strategies, which are all qualitative in nature.

In order to get comprehensive answers to the questions, we decided to gather information from documentary sources. The target of this choice is to obtain reliable data that we can rely on as solid evidence for conducting this study.

6. Significance of the Study

Studying the historical overview of the Supreme Court concepts is necessary for reference purposes of today's policies and strategies. This knowledge deficiency is bridged by this study that engages in event, strategy, and implication analysis from the past to the present and, in the process, provides for the much-needed critical reflection regarding the future on national security studies and contributes to the body of knowledge of this field. Furthermore, it delivers a contextual framework to better understand judicial behaviour and decision-making patterns over time. It also fosters a deeper appreciation of constitutional evolution, allowing for more informed interpretations and applications of legal doctrines in contemporary governance.

7. Structure of the Study

The study is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework and a literature review. It explores foundational understandings of the judiciary in the American political system, different scholarly perspectives on the role and function of the Supreme Court, and the institutional framework of judicial authority as it pertains to the United States. It also introduces key distinctions between the Supreme Court and other legal institutions, particularly the Department of Justice. The chapter provides an overview of the Court's constitutional basis, its independence, and how its role has been debated in legal and political discourse over time.

This chapter further examines the establishment of the U.S. Supreme Court, from the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution and the Judiciary Act of 1789. It then traces the chronological development of the Court across different historical periods—from the foundational era and the landmark rulings of the Marshall Court, through the legal complexities of the 19th and early 20th centuries, to its expanded influence in the civil rights era and its modern function in a politically divided America.

The second chapter presents a historical analysis of the evolving role of the Supreme Court in shaping American law, governance, and society. It discusses the Supreme Court's position in the system of checks and balances, highlighting its power of judicial review, and its interactions with the legislative and executive branches. The chapter also investigates the Court's role in upholding justice, interpreting the Constitution, protecting individual rights, resolving major legal disputes, and shaping national policy. Through an examination of key legal doctrines and landmark cases, the study reveals how the Supreme Court has both responded to and driven transformative moments in U.S. history.

By analysing these developments, the dissertation aims to uncover the dynamic nature of the Supreme Court's role and its continuing significance in American democracy. It ultimately highlights how the Court has been a crucial actor in the evolution of the U.S. legal system and in mediating the relationship between the state and its citizens.

CHAPTER ONE:

Tracing the Development of the Supreme Court of the United States

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Introduction

This chapter explores the development of the U.S. Supreme Court. It begins with the early ideas of justice and equality in the Declaration of Independence, the limitations of the Articles of Confederation, and the drafting of the Constitution at the Philadelphia Convention. It also explains the Judiciary Act of 1789, which formally established the Court. The chapter then follows the Court's historical growth, including the Founding Era, the Marshall Court, federalism debates, and key rulings in the Gilded Age, New Deal, and Civil Rights era. It ends with the modern Court and its major changes. Finally, it compares the Supreme Court with the Department of Justice in terms of roles, responsibilities, and independence.

1. The Establishment of the U.S. Supreme Court

This section talks about the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation 1781, Philadelphia Convention and the American Constitution, and Judiciary Act of 1789.

1.1 Ambitions for Justice and Equality in the Declaration of Independence 1776

The Declaration of Independence is an influential and enduring statement of the American ambition to build a society rooted in justice and equality. Rather than being only a historical document announcing independence from Britain, it is seen as a visionary text that defines fundamental values such as equal rights, shared political participation, and the protection of human dignity. The Declaration sets a moral and political foundation for a democratic society in which all individuals are treated as equals, both under the law and in public life. The Declaration continues to inspire struggles for civil rights, social reform, and government responsibility, demonstrating its lasting role in guiding the pursuit of fairness, inclusion, and justice across American history (Allen, 2014; Pincus, 2016; Tsesis, 2012).

1.2 The Articles of Confederation 1781

The Articles of Confederation were a deliberate effort to protect state sovereignty and uphold the democratic values of the American Revolution. They reflected a deep fear of centralized authority and a strong commitment to local self-government. However, their structural weaknesses such as the lack of federal power to tax, regulate commerce, or enforce laws created significant problems for the new nation. These limitations eventually led to widespread recognition that a stronger national government was needed, resulting in the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in 1787 (Jensen, 1940; McDonald, 1964).

1.3 Philadelphia convention and the American constitution

The Constitutional Convention of 1787, held from May 25 to September 17 in Philadelphia's Independence Hall, was a transformative moment in American history. Originally convened to revise the ineffective Articles of Confederation, delegates from 12 of the 13 states—excluding Rhode Island—quickly shifted focus to drafting a new constitution that would strengthen the federal government (Linder, n.d.; Rakove, 1996).

Key debates centered around representation in Congress, with the Virginia Plan, introduced by James Madison and presented by Edmund Randolph, advocating for proportional representation, while the New Jersey Plan, proposed by William Paterson, favored equal representation for all states regardless of size (Wood, 2009).

The resulting Great Compromise blended both ideas, establishing a bicameral legislature: the House of Representatives based on population and the Senate with equal representation from each state. Other major compromises included the Three-Fifths Compromise, which counted each enslaved person as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation and taxation, and the Slave Trade Clause, which delayed congressional action

on banning the slave trade until 1808 (McDonald, 1985). The new Constitution also created an independent executive branch led by a president and a national judiciary topped by the Supreme Court. The document required ratification by nine of the thirteen states to take effect, eventually becoming the supreme law of the land and reshaping the foundation of American governance.

1.4 The Federal Judiciary Act of 1789

The Federal Judiciary Act of 1789 was a foundational statute that created the framework of the United States federal judicial system. While Article III of the U.S. Constitution had authorized the creation of a Supreme Court, it left many essential details undefined, such as the number of justices and the lower courts' structure. To address this ambiguity, Congress passed the Judiciary Act during its first session, and President George Washington signed it into law on September 24, 1789 (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], n.d.; Casto, 1995).

The Act established a three-tiered federal court system, which continues to influence the judiciary today. At the base were the District Courts, one in each of the thirteen states, which served as trial courts for federal cases. Above these were the Circuit Courts, which had both original and appellate jurisdiction. Notably, justices of the Supreme Court were required to serve on these courts by traveling throughout their assigned circuits, a practice known as “riding circuit” (Goebel, 1971).

At the top of the hierarchy was the Supreme Court, composed of six justices, including one Chief Justice and five Associate Justices. The Court was granted original jurisdiction in a limited range of cases and appellate jurisdiction over federal circuit and district courts, as well as specific state court decisions involving constitutional or federal legal issues (Maeva, 2003).

In addition to establishing the judicial framework, the Act introduced the position of the Attorney General, who would act as the chief legal advisor to the federal government and represent the United States.

2. The U.S Supreme Court: Historical Development

This section explores the Supreme Court Founding Era, the Marshall Court, the 19th Century, the Gilded Age and Early 20th Century, the New Deal Era, the Civil Rights Era, and the Modern Era.

2.1 The Founding Era

The early U.S. Supreme Court was not fully defined by the Constitution itself, but rather developed gradually through legislation, especially the Judiciary Act of 1789, and the efforts of early justices and Congress. During its first decade, the Court concentrated on establishing its procedures and authority while handling practical challenges like circuit riding. Although it played a modest role at first, the Court slowly began to shape federal law and assert its role within the national government, laying the foundation for its future power and influence (Currie, 1985; Marcus, 1985).

2.2 The Marshall Court

The Marshall Court was crucial in establishing the Supreme Court as a powerful, independent branch of the federal government. John Marshall's leadership helped define the constitutional role of the judiciary and secured its authority in the American political system.

One of the most important developments during this period was the establishment of judicial review, especially through the landmark decision in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803). This case marked a turning point where the Court claimed the power to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional. Marshall interpreted the Constitution not just as a political framework but as

binding law that the judiciary was obligated to enforce. Through *Marbury*, the Court asserted its role as the final interpreter of the Constitution, which greatly expanded its influence in shaping national policy (Smith, 1996).

The Marshall Court reinforced the authority of the federal government over the states. Through decisions like *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) and *Gibbons v. Ogden* (1824), the Court interpreted key constitutional clauses broadly such as the Necessary and Proper Clause and the Commerce Clause to limit state interference and expand national power. These rulings promoted federal supremacy and enabled a stable environment for economic growth, reinforcing the federal structure that the Constitution envisioned (Johnson, 1998).

Marshall elevated the stature and legitimacy of the judiciary. Under his leadership, the Court became more unified, with Marshall often writing majority opinions that reflected a consistent constitutional philosophy. Rather than being seen as a weak or reactive institution, the Court began to emerge as a co-equal branch of government, capable of standing firm against political pressure from both Congress and the President. This change was not merely legal, but institutional, giving the Supreme Court a foundational role in American governance (White, 1988).

2.3 The 19th Century: Federalism and Controversial Rulings

In its initial years, the Supreme Court emphasized national supremacy, asserting that the federal government derived its power from the people, not the states. Key rulings confirmed that Congress had both explicit and implied powers under the Constitution, expanding federal authority through a broad interpretation of the "necessary and proper" clause. The Court also declared that only Congress could regulate interstate commerce, limiting state interference.

Later, the Court shifted toward supporting states' rights, restricting federal power to only what the Constitution explicitly granted. This change aimed to rebalance federal and

state authority but had serious consequences. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the Court ruled that African Americans could not be U.S. citizens and struck down limits on slavery expansion, inflaming national tensions and undermining the Court's credibility.

These early federalism conflicts shaped American constitutional law, highlighting the ongoing struggle to balance national and state powers and the judiciary's critical, yet sometimes fragile, role (Schwartz, 1993).

2.4 The Gilded Age and Early 20th Century: Corporate Interests over Labor Rights

During the Gilded Age and early 20th century, the U.S. Supreme Court consistently used its authority to preserve corporate and property interests at the expense of labor rights and working-class movements. The Court's interpretation of the Constitution, especially through doctrines like freedom of contract and strong protections for private property, prioritized business autonomy and economic liberalism while limiting government regulation and undermining collective labor efforts.

The judiciary, particularly through decisions like *Lochner v. New York* and *Adair v. United States*, invalidated labor protections (such as maximum-hour laws and union rights) by framing them as unconstitutional interferences with the contractual freedom of employers and employees. These rulings essentially treated the labor movement's demands such as fair wages, safer working conditions, and the right to organize as threats to individual liberty and economic order, especially when they challenged the dominance of industrial capitalism.

Furthermore, the Court was not a neutral arbitrator during this era. Rather, it was an active participant in preserving a legal and constitutional framework that supported capitalist growth and corporate power, often against the rising tide of labor activism and progressive reform. This judicial bias helped entrench economic inequality and stifle democratic labor

rights during a period of intense social and industrial transformation in American history (Forbath, 1991; Forbath, 2014; Gillman, 1994; Nardulli, 2006).

2.5 The New Deal Era (1930s): Conflict and Transformation

During the New Deal era of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced significant opposition from the U.S. Supreme Court, which struck down many key New Deal programs as unconstitutional. Recognizing that the Court was a significant obstacle to his reform agenda, Roosevelt sought ways to change its direction and public image.

By 1937, a major shift occurred when the Court began upholding New Deal legislation, resulting in widespread debate about whether this represented a true constitutional revolution. Some saw it as a genuine transformation of constitutional interpretation, while others believed it was a calculated political adjustment by the justices under mounting pressure.

One of the most dramatic episodes of this struggle was Roosevelt's "court-packing plan," which proposed adding additional justices for every sitting justice over seventy years old. Although the plan was rejected due to fierce political resistance, the threat itself may have influenced the Court's more favorable rulings on New Deal policies.

Roosevelt's relationship with Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes played a key role during this period. Hughes, known for his political skill, sometimes resisted and sometimes moderated Roosevelt's initiatives.

The transformation of the Court accelerated with the appointments of Hugo L. Black and Felix Frankfurter. Hugo Black brought strong support for New Deal ideals, while Felix Frankfurter advocated judicial restraint, encouraging the Court to defer more often to legislative decision-making.

The Supreme Court's new direction during Roosevelt's presidency led to a broader interpretation of the Constitution, allowing for expanded federal powers to tackle social and economic challenges. This shift marked a significant transformation of American constitutional law, though the long-term effects were complex and evolved beyond Roosevelt's original expectations.

His confrontation with the Court ultimately redefined the balance of power among the branches of government during one of the most critical periods in U.S. history (Shaw, Pederson, & Williams, 2004).

2.6 The Civil Rights Era (1950s_1970s): Expanding Individual Rights

The U.S. Supreme Court during the Civil Rights Era (1950s–1970s) played a transformative role in expanding individual rights and promoting social justice. It actively used its authority to dismantle systems of racial segregation, protect the rights of marginalized groups, and uphold the principles of equality under the Constitution. The Court issued landmark decisions that ended segregation in public schools, strengthened the rights of criminal defendants, and expanded access to voting and political representation.

The leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren was central to this transformation. He directed the Court toward a broad interpretation of the Constitution that emphasized fairness, due process, and equal protection. Under his direction, the Court often acted boldly, stepping in when other branches of government failed to address civil rights issues. The decisions of this era reflected a belief that the judiciary had a responsibility to ensure justice and protect individual freedoms, making the Supreme Court a key force in the advancement of civil rights in America. (Kluger, 2004; Newton, 2006; Powe, 2000).

2.7 The Modern Era (1980s_Present): Ideological Divides and Major Changes

The U.S. Supreme Court underwent a transformation from 1980 to 2005 under the leadership of Chief Justice William Rehnquist, with a shift toward a more conservative and restrained approach to judicial review. The Court became increasingly polarized due to the political climate, with Rehnquist and justices like Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas leading a direction that sought to limit federal power and reinforce state sovereignty.

This conservative shift was evident in areas such as federalism, criminal law, and civil liberties, with the Court emphasizing strict interpretations of the Constitution and a reluctance to expand civil rights protections.

Major rulings during this period included decisions on abortion, affirmative action, and the rights of criminal defendants. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), the Court reaffirmed the constitutional right to abortion but allowed more state regulation, showing a more moderate stance than previous rulings like *Roe v. Wade* (1973).

In *Adarand Constructors v. Peña* (1995), the Court tightened scrutiny on racial preferences in federal contracting, reflecting a conservative approach to race and equality.

The ideological divide between conservative justices, led by Rehnquist, and liberal justices, such as John Paul Stevens and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was evident in their differing views on civil rights and equality. The Court's decisions on affirmative action and abortion reflected broader social and ideological shifts, with conservative justices seeking to limit policies favoring racial minorities and expand state power over federal control.

The Court's decisions during this era helped shape the political and legal landscape of the United States, reinforcing the broader culture wars, particularly in debates over abortion, religion in schools, and civil rights. Through its rulings, the Rehnquist Court played a key role

in influencing American law by maintaining a narrow interpretation of constitutional protections and curbing the expansion of civil rights (Baum, 2016).

Following the appointment of John Roberts in 2005, the Supreme Court entered a new era with significant ideological shifts. Appointed by President George W. Bush, Roberts replaced Chief Justice William Rehnquist, ushering in a period of conservative influence on the Court. As the Court became increasingly divided along ideological lines, the decisions on key issues like abortion rights, racial discrimination, free speech, and civil rights were often split between conservative justices, such as Roberts, Alito, and Thomas, and liberal justices, including Ginsburg, Kagan, and Souter.

Key decisions marked this period. In *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), the Court ruled that restrictions on political spending by corporations and unions violated the First Amendment, fundamentally changing the landscape of U.S. electoral politics by boosting financial influence.

The ruling in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012) upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, marking a significant point in the healthcare debate.

In *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the Court's ruling on same-sex marriage established it as a constitutional right under the Fourteenth Amendment, a significant advancement for LGBTQ rights.

The Roberts Court became known for increasing political polarization, with contentious legal battles over divisive issues. The Court's role in forming American society became more pronounced as decisions on civil liberties, civil rights, and personal freedoms became increasingly partisan.

The ideological divide between conservative and liberal justices was evident, as many rulings reflected broader political and cultural divides (Coyle, 2013).

3. The Distinction in Function between the U.S. Supreme Court and the Department of Justice

3.1 Role and Function

The U.S. Supreme Court and the Department of Justice (DOJ) play foundational roles in the American legal and governmental system, though they operate within separate branches of government and fulfill distinct purposes. The U.S. Supreme Court, located at the apex of the federal judiciary, primarily functions to interpret the Constitution, ensure consistency in the application of federal law, and resolve legal disputes that have constitutional implications (United States Courts, n.d.; O'Brien, 2020). It holds the power of judicial review, enabling it to invalidate laws and executive actions that conflict with the Constitution (Epstein & Walker, 2021).

In contrast, the DOJ operates under the executive branch and is responsible for enforcing federal laws, prosecuting criminal offenses, and providing legal counsel to the federal government (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.; Harr, Hess, & Orthmann, 2020). While the Supreme Court does not initiate cases or investigations, the DOJ takes an active role in initiating legal proceedings, conducting investigations, and litigating in federal courts. Thus, while both entities serve the interests of justice, their core roles—judicial interpretation versus legal enforcement—are fundamentally different.

3.2 Core Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the U.S. Supreme Court are centered on interpreting laws and determining their constitutionality. It handles appellate cases, particularly those involving

significant legal or constitutional issues, and sets binding precedents for all lower federal and state courts. This ensures uniformity in how laws are applied throughout the United States. Additionally, the Supreme Court plays a critical role in balancing the powers of the three branches of government, acting as a safeguard against legislative or executive overreach (United States Courts, n.d.; Chemerinsky, 2019).

In contrast, the DOJ has a broader range of operational duties across legal, regulatory, and law enforcement domains. Its core functions include prosecuting violations of federal law through U.S. Attorneys, defending the interests of the United States in civil litigation, and managing key agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). The DOJ also works to protect citizens' rights by enforcing civil rights laws and supporting victims of crime (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.; Harr et al., 2020).

3.3 The Role in the Legal Process

Within the legal process, the Supreme Court typically engages at the final appellate stage. It reviews lower court decisions and ensures that constitutional principles have been correctly interpreted and applied. The Court chooses its docket through a process called certiorari, whereby it selects only the most pressing and significant legal questions—often those that have produced conflicting rulings in lower courts. The Supreme Court does not hold trials, gather evidence, or directly enforce the law; instead, its judgments are based on legal briefs, precedents, and constitutional interpretation (United States Courts, n.d.; O'Brien, 2020).

The DOJ, however, is present throughout nearly every stage of the legal process. It plays a role from investigation and arrest (through agencies like the FBI) to prosecution, trial, and appeals. DOJ attorneys represent the United States in both criminal and civil courts.

Additionally, through the Office of the Solicitor General, the DOJ handles appeals to the Supreme Court and presents oral arguments in cases where the federal government is a party (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.; Chemerinsky, 2019). Thus, the DOJ is actively engaged in the daily operations of law enforcement and litigation, serving as both prosecutor and legal advisor.

3.4 Organizational Structure

The organizational structures of the Supreme Court and the DOJ further highlight their differences. The U.S. Supreme Court consists of nine justices: one Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. These individuals are nominated by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serve life terms under the Constitution. This structure is designed to insulate the judiciary from political influence, allowing justices to make impartial decisions based on law rather than popular opinion or political pressure (United States Courts, n.d.; Epstein & Walker, 2021).

The DOJ is a sprawling executive agency overseen by the Attorney General, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Under the Attorney General are several key positions, including the Deputy Attorney General and the Solicitor General. The department is further divided into specialized divisions—such as the Criminal Division, Civil Rights Division, and National Security Division—each handling specific legal and policy areas. Agencies under the DOJ umbrella, like the FBI and DEA, have national law enforcement responsibilities. This structure allows the DOJ to respond to a wide array of legal issues across the country efficiently (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.; Harr et al., 2020).

3.5 Independence vs. Executive Branch Influence

A defining distinction between these two entities is the degree of independence from the executive branch. The U.S. Supreme Court is constitutionally protected from executive influence. Justices cannot be removed from office except through impeachment, and their life tenure allows them to render decisions free from political pressures. This ensures that the judiciary can serve as an effective check on the executive and legislative branches, maintaining the balance of power within the federal government (United States Courts, n.d.; Chemerinsky, 2019).

In contrast, the DOJ—while guided by principles of impartiality and the rule of law—is subject to executive oversight. The Attorney General and other key officials serve at the pleasure of the President. Although the DOJ maintains professional standards and procedural safeguards to protect against political interference, its proximity to the President and the executive agenda can occasionally raise concerns about the potential for undue influence. Nevertheless, long-standing traditions and legal ethics work to preserve its functional independence, particularly in criminal prosecutions and civil rights enforcement (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.; O’Brien, 2020).

Conclusion

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the evolution of the U.S. Supreme Court, beginning with its foundational roots in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, and continuing through its formal establishment under the Judiciary Act of 1789. It examined pivotal moments in the Court’s development, such as the influential leadership of the Marshall Court, major federalism debates, and landmark decisions during the Gilded Age, New Deal, and Civil Rights movements. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the Court’s transition into the modern era, emphasizing shifts in judicial philosophy and interpretive

approaches. Finally, it explored the contrasting roles and degrees of independence between the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice, underscoring the Court's critical role in shaping American legal and political institutions.

CHAPTER TWO:

Discussion and Analysis

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Introduction

This chapter explores the evolving role of the U.S. Supreme Court. It starts with its absence as a true judicial authority under the Articles of Confederation. It then moves to its formal creation in the U.S. Constitution. The chapter examines the Court's functions in Article I, where the Chief Justice presides over presidential impeachment trials. In Article II, it outlines the nomination process involving the President and Senate. Article III grants the Court its judicial power and independence. The chapter also highlights the Court's key role in interpreting constitutional amendments. It shows how the Court upholds justice by interpreting the Constitution, protecting rights and liberties, resolving disputes, and shaping national policy through landmark decisions. It speaks as well about the U S Supreme Court Rulings throughout history.

1. Exploring the Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court

This section explores The Power of the U S Supreme Court in the US political system. To do so, the research implemented the historical analytic investigation. It collected data by means of documentary sources, mainly, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.

1.1 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by the Articles of Confederation

The text of the Articles of Confederation was deeply influenced by the revolutionary ideals of the American colonies, emphasizing the sovereignty and independence of each state. The Articles intentionally created a government structure that avoided centralized power, reflecting a strong distrust of any authority that might resemble the British monarchy or Parliament. Each state retained full sovereignty, freedom, and independence, ensuring that the union was a loose confederation rather than a unified nation-state.

The government under the Articles consisted of a unicameral Congress where each state had one vote regardless of its size or population, and representatives were appointed by state legislatures rather than elected directly by the people. This arrangement was designed to maintain equality among states and to keep national power subordinate to state control. The Articles did not establish an executive branch or a national judiciary, as there was a deliberate effort to avoid centralized enforcement and judicial power, leaving most administration of justice to the states.

Congress was granted limited powers, such as conducting foreign relations, declaring war, and managing western territories, but it lacked authority to levy taxes or regulate commerce. Instead, it depended on voluntary contributions from the states for funds and military support. The requirement for unanimous consent from all thirteen states to amend the Articles served as a safeguard to protect state autonomy and prevent changes imposed without full agreement.

The government's day-to-day work was managed largely by committees of Congress, reflecting a tradition of legislative committee governance and a reluctance to concentrate power in any standing executive. Overall, the Articles' content reflects a political philosophy centered on popular sovereignty, decentralized government, and a cautious approach to uniting the newly independent states while preserving their individual freedoms. The document represents a coherent and principled expression of the revolutionary values that formed early American governance (Jenson, 1940).

The Articles of Confederation neglected the judiciary.

1.2 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by the Constitution

This subsection talks about The Power of the U S Supreme Court in the Constitution: in Clause 6 and 7. Section 3. Article 1, in Clause 2. Section 2. Article 2, in Article 3, and in the Amendments.

1.2.1 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by Article 1

The Clause 6. Section 3. Article 1 of the Constitution establishes that the Senate holds the sole power to try all impeachments, and that when the President is tried, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall preside over the trial.

This provision does not grant substantive power to the Supreme Court as a judicial body in the impeachment process. Instead, it assigns a limited procedural role to the Chief Justice alone, specifically during presidential impeachment trials. This assignment is described as a constitutional safeguard meant to prevent a conflict of interest—namely, the Vice President (who is normally the presiding officer of the Senate) would stand to benefit from a President’s removal and thus cannot be permitted to oversee the trial.

This clause as is an example of careful constitutional design, showing the framers' intent to maintain neutrality, integrity, and balance among the branches of government. The Chief Justice’s role is symbolic of justice and institutional balance, rather than an indication of judicial authority over the outcome. The Senate remains the sole judge of impeachments, and the Chief Justice’s presence does not convert the process into a legal or judicial trial in the traditional sense.

The rest of the Supreme Court has no role in impeachment, reinforcing the principle that impeachment is fundamentally a political, not a judicial, process. Therefore, the Chief

Justice's participation is not about legal decision-making but about ensuring constitutional formality and procedural order.

The Clause 7. Section 3. Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution is delineating the boundaries of the Senate's authority in impeachment proceedings. This clause specifies that the consequences of an impeachment conviction are limited to removal from office and potential disqualification from holding future office. However, it also clarifies that the individual remains liable to criminal prosecution under the law.

This provision underscores the separation of powers by distinguishing between the political process of impeachment and the judicial process of criminal prosecution. The Senate's role is confined to political remedies—removal and disqualification—without encroaching upon the judiciary's domain of criminal justice. Consequently, the Supreme Court does not possess the power to review or overturn impeachment decisions made by the Senate. This separation confirms that impeachment remains a political process, distinct from criminal proceedings, thereby preserving the balance of powers among the branches of government (Gerhardt, 2019; Sunstein, 2017).

1.2.2 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by Article 2

The President has the power to nominate Supreme Court justices, including the Chief Justice, but this power is limited by the requirement of Senate approval which means that the United States Senate has formally voted to agree to or confirm a decision, typically after reviewing and discussing it. This process is crucial in several key areas: treaties made by the President must be approved by a two-thirds vote in the Senate to become official; high-level government appointments, such as ambassadors, federal judges, and Cabinet members, require Senate confirmation before the appointees can take office; and laws or resolutions

must be passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives before they can become law. This system is designed to prevent unilateral decisions, ensure cooperation between the executive and legislative branches, and protect the independence and integrity of the judiciary (Congressional Research Service, 2016).

1.2.3 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by Article 3

Article III of the U.S. Constitution creates the judicial branch of the federal government and provides the foundation for the structure and authority of the courts, including the Supreme Court. It begins by stating that the judicial power of the United States shall be vested in one Supreme Court and in such inferior courts as Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. This language ensures that while the Supreme Court is constitutionally required, the creation and structure of lower federal courts are left to Congress. It also guarantees judicial independence by allowing federal judges to serve during good behavior, which is interpreted as life tenure, and by protecting their salaries from being reduced during their time in office.

Article III also defines the scope of federal judicial power by limiting it to actual “cases” and “controversies.” This means that federal courts are only authorized to decide real disputes between parties; they cannot issue advisory opinions or address hypothetical questions. This requirement forms the basis for various justiciability doctrines, such as standing, ripeness, mootness, and the political question doctrine. Each of these doctrines serves to restrict the judiciary’s role to resolving live, concrete disputes rather than becoming involved in political or theoretical debates. For example, standing requires that a person bringing a case must show a specific and personal injury caused by the action being challenged, and ripeness requires that a case be ready for judicial decision, not based on future possibilities.

Although Article III does not explicitly mention judicial review—the power of the courts to declare laws or executive actions unconstitutional—this power was firmly established by the Supreme Court in the landmark case *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803. In that case, the Court declared that it is the role of the judiciary to interpret the law and to ensure that no act of Congress or the executive violates the Constitution. This principle has become a cornerstone of American constitutional law and gives the judiciary a crucial role in maintaining the balance of power among the branches of government.

The Constitution also divides the Supreme Court's jurisdiction into original and appellate categories. Original jurisdiction refers to cases that can begin directly in the Supreme Court, such as disputes between states or those involving foreign diplomats. Appellate jurisdiction, which makes up the vast majority of the Court's caseload, refers to the power to review decisions made by lower courts. Congress has the authority to regulate and make exceptions to the Court's appellate jurisdiction, which reflects the Constitution's design of a judiciary that is both powerful and limited.

Through Article III, the Constitution crafts a judicial branch that is independent, restrained, and structured to function as a co-equal branch of government. Over the centuries, courts have interpreted this article in ways that both define and limit judicial power. The principles derived from Article III ensure that the federal judiciary acts only within its proper constitutional role—resolving genuine disputes according to law—while avoiding overreach into areas that belong to the legislative or executive branches. It is this careful balance that allows the judiciary to play its vital role in protecting rights, interpreting laws, and upholding the Constitution (Chemerinsky, 2023).

Article III of the U.S. Constitution establishes the Supreme Court as the highest judicial authority, responsible for interpreting the Constitution and federal laws. It ensures the Court's independence through lifetime appointments and gives it the power to check the legislative

and executive branches by declaring laws or actions unconstitutional. This role preserves the balance of power and protects constitutional rights (Amar, 2005; Congressional Research Service, 2016; Hamilton, Madison, & Jay, 2003; Story, 1833; Warren, 1922).

The U.S. Supreme Court's power under Article III to resolve disputes between states is crucial for ensuring justice, preserving national unity, and maintaining stability in the federal system. This authority allows a neutral and centralized court to fairly settle conflicts between states, preventing bias and rivalry. It corrects the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and ensures peaceful and lawful relations among the states (Amar, 2005; Hall, 2005; Hamilton, Madison, & Jay, 2003; Kutler, 1984).

1.2.4 The Power Allocated to the U S Supreme Court by the Amendments

The U.S. Supreme Court plays an essential and far-reaching role in interpreting the amendments to the Constitution, shaping the way American law and society understand and apply fundamental rights. While the text of the Constitution and its amendments provide the foundation for American law, it is the Supreme Court that breathes life into these words by determining their practical meaning. Through its authority to interpret the Constitution, the Court decides how these rights operate in real-world situations, resolving disputes that arise from competing interpretations of constitutional provisions. This judicial function ensures that the Constitution is not merely a historical document, but a living instrument capable of guiding modern legal decisions.

When the Court interprets amendments such as the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth, it does far more than clarify their literal wording. It defines the scope of rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to privacy, due process of law, equal protection under the law, and the protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. These

interpretations determine when and how these rights can be exercised, what their limits are, and how they apply to individuals, government actions, and institutions. For example, the Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment not only to protect speech from government censorship but also to safeguard symbolic speech, such as flag-burning, and to set standards for permissible limitations, such as restrictions on incitement or obscenity.

Similarly, the Court has played a pivotal role in defining the protections of the Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable searches and seizures. Through its decisions, the Court has outlined what qualifies as a “search,” what counts as “unreasonable,” and when law enforcement officers must obtain a warrant. These decisions impact everything from digital privacy and cellphone searches to the use of surveillance technology and stop-and-frisk policies. Without the Court's interpretations, these rights would remain vague and inconsistently applied, leaving citizens uncertain about their protections.

Perhaps most significantly, the Supreme Court’s interpretations of the Fourteenth Amendment have had a profound effect on civil rights and liberties in the United States. The Equal Protection Clause and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment have been the basis for landmark decisions addressing racial segregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*), same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*), reproductive rights (*Roe v. Wade*, later modified by *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*), and voting rights. These rulings extend and refine constitutional protections, ensuring they remain meaningful as society evolves and new issues arise.

Each time the Court rules on a constitutional question, especially one involving an amendment, it often creates or reinforces a legal doctrine—a principle or test that guides how similar cases will be decided in the future. These doctrines become a part of constitutional law and serve as precedent for lower courts and future Supreme Court decisions. For example, the "strict scrutiny" standard for laws affecting fundamental rights or involving suspect

classifications like race, or the “clear and present danger” test for limiting speech, are judicial doctrines created through interpretation.

Moreover, the Supreme Court’s interpretations are not static. As societal values, technologies, and understandings change, the Court may revisit and revise its interpretations to keep the Constitution responsive to contemporary challenges. This dynamic process allows constitutional law to develop while remaining grounded in foundational principles. It also reflects the Court’s awareness of its role not just as a legal institution, but as a moral and cultural arbiter that must balance the Constitution’s enduring values with the evolving needs of American society (Congressional Research Service, 2016).

2. The Role of the Supreme Court in Establishing Justice in the United States

2.1 Interpreting the Constitution

The U.S. Supreme Court plays a critical role in interpreting the Constitution, serving as the final authority on constitutional matters and shaping the framework of American governance through judicial review. The landmark case *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) was the first to establish the principle of judicial review. In this case, Chief Justice John Marshall articulated the idea that it is the duty of the judiciary to say what the law is. If a law is found to be in conflict with the Constitution, the Court has the authority to declare it void. This precedent significantly strengthened the judiciary’s role in maintaining the supremacy of the Constitution and in ensuring that legislative and executive actions remain within constitutional bounds (*Marbury v. Madison*, 1803).

Over time, the interpretation of the Constitution has sparked considerable debate, primarily between two dominant judicial philosophies: originalism and living constitutionalism. Originalists, like the late Justice Antonin Scalia, argue that the Constitution

should be interpreted based on its original meaning as understood by the framers. Scalia (2012) maintained that this approach preserves democratic governance by limiting judicial discretion and adhering closely to the text's original intent. In contrast, proponents of living constitutionalism, such as Justice Stephen Breyer (2005), believe that the Constitution is a dynamic document that must evolve with societal changes. Breyer argues that the framers intended for the Constitution to be adaptable in order to protect fundamental rights in a changing society.

These differing philosophies have significantly influenced Supreme Court decisions. For instance, in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Court adopted an originalist perspective in ruling that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess firearms for lawful purposes, such as self-defence within the home. This interpretation, rooted in historical analysis of the framers' intent, marked a pivotal moment in Second Amendment jurisprudence and continues to fuel debates on gun rights and regulation (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008).

2.2 Protecting Rights and Liberties

A cornerstone of the Supreme Court's role in the American legal system is its duty to protect the constitutional rights and liberties of individuals, especially when those rights are threatened by government action or societal norms. This protective function has been evident in numerous landmark rulings that have redefined civil rights in the United States.

One of the most transformative cases in this regard was *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In this unanimous decision, the Court declared that racial segregation in public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This ruling overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and

signaled a decisive step toward dismantling systemic racism in American institutions. *Brown* not only reshaped public education but also energized the broader Civil Rights Movement, serving as a moral and legal catalyst for further reforms (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954).

Another pivotal case in the Court's history is *Roe v. Wade* (1973), in which the Court recognized a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion under the right to privacy implied by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court's decision established a legal framework that protected reproductive freedom during the first trimester of pregnancy and set strict limits on state interference thereafter. Despite its polarizing effect, *Roe* represented a significant expansion of individual liberty. Garrow (1994) provides a comprehensive exploration of the legal, political, and cultural impact of this decision, underlining its enduring influence on both jurisprudence and public discourse (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973; Garrow, 1994).

Similarly, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) marked a major civil rights victory by extending the fundamental right to marry to same-sex couples. The Court held that the denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples violated both the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. This decision not only affirmed the dignity and equality of LGBTQ+ individuals but also reshaped legal frameworks around marriage, family law, and civil status nationwide (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015).

2.3 Resolving Legal Disputes

Beyond interpreting the Constitution and safeguarding rights, the Supreme Court plays a vital role in resolving high-stakes legal disputes that often have nationwide implications. Through its rulings, the Court frequently determines the direction of American law and policy.

A notable example of this function is *Bush v. Gore* (2000), which effectively decided the outcome of the 2000 presidential election. The Court's 5-4 decision to halt the Florida recount was based on Equal Protection grounds, as the lack of uniform standards in the recount process was deemed unconstitutional. This ruling allowed Florida's certification of George W. Bush's victory to stand, granting him the presidency. The case remains controversial, with critics arguing that the Court's intervention was politically motivated and undermined public confidence in judicial neutrality (*Bush v. Gore*, 2000).

Another influential case was *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012), which addressed the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In a surprising majority opinion authored by Chief Justice Roberts, the Court upheld the individual mandate — a requirement that individuals purchase health insurance — by interpreting it as a constitutional exercise of Congress's taxing power. Although the Court limited the federal government's ability to coerce states into expanding Medicaid, the ruling preserved the core structure of the ACA, thus affirming the federal government's role in shaping healthcare policy (*National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, 2012).

2.4 Shaping National Policy

Although the Supreme Court is not a legislative body, its decisions carry the weight of law and have far-reaching effects on national policy. By interpreting constitutional principles in landmark cases, the Court often sets precedents that influence public institutions, social norms, and legislative agendas.

For example, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) not only ended de jure racial segregation in public education but also sparked a national reckoning with racial injustice. The decision provided legal support and moral authority to activists demanding civil rights

legislation, eventually contributing to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It illustrated how the Court's interpretations can steer the course of national reform movements and policy changes.

Similarly, *Roe v. Wade* (1973) had profound implications for national and state policies regarding reproductive health. It influenced the development of healthcare practices, federal and state funding rules, and political platforms, while also igniting decades-long debates over judicial activism, federalism, and moral values. Politicians, advocacy groups, and legislators continue to frame their agendas in relation to the legacy and subsequent challenges to *Roe* (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973).

Finally, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) demonstrated how the Court can shape national social policy by affirming constitutional protections for marginalized groups. By legalizing same-sex marriage, the Court did not merely resolve a legal question — it helped redefine the concept of family in American law and culture. The decision impacted areas ranging from tax law and immigration to adoption rights and health care benefits, showing the broad societal impact of the Court's constitutional interpretations (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015).

3. The U S Supreme Court Rulings throughout history

The foundation of judicial power in the United States was firmly created through the Supreme Court's decision in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803). This landmark ruling introduced the principle of judicial review, granting the Court the authority to strike down laws that conflict with the Constitution. As a result, the judiciary was elevated to a co-equal branch of government, capable of checking the powers of the legislative and executive branches. Later, in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), the Court affirmed the supremacy of federal law over state

law and upheld the implied powers of Congress. This decision provided a broad interpretation of federal authority, solidifying the foundational balance of power within the federal system.

The fight for civil rights and equal protection under the law has been shaped by a series of pivotal Supreme Court cases. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), the Court infamously ruled that African Americans were not citizens and therefore had no standing to sue in federal court, a decision that intensified national tensions and contributed to the onset of the Civil War. This was later overturned by the 14th Amendment. Decades later, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld racial segregation under the doctrine of “separate but equal,” legalizing systemic discrimination. This was dramatically reversed in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which declared that segregated public schools were inherently unequal, marking a major victory for the Civil Rights Movement and setting the stage for desegregation.

The Court has also played a central role in defining personal liberty and privacy. In *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), the Court recognized a constitutional right to privacy in marital relations, which laid the foundation for future privacy-related rulings. This right was expanded in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), where the Court held that a woman’s decision to have an abortion fell under the protection of the Due Process Clause. Though *Roe* remained a defining case for decades, it was ultimately overturned in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022), shifting the regulation of abortion back to the states and reshaping the national conversation on reproductive rights.

Institutionally, the Court has modernized its procedures while maintaining judicial integrity. The 2023 Rules of the Court reflect efforts to streamline case management through clearer guidelines for electronic filings, the submission of amicus briefs, and the scheduling of oral arguments. These updates demonstrate an ongoing commitment to accessibility and procedural efficiency. Archived versions of the Court’s rules also reveal the historical

evolution of its internal operations, underscoring the relationship between procedural formality and the quality of legal deliberation throughout the Court's history.

Freedom of expression under the First Amendment has been reinforced in cases like *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), which prohibited government-mandated prayer in public schools, affirming the separation of church and state. In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969), the Court upheld students' rights to express themselves in school, affirming that constitutional protections extend into educational settings. These rulings have had a profound influence on how freedom of speech and religion are understood in American public life.

The Second Amendment's interpretation was notably expanded in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), where the Court recognized an individual's right to own firearms for personal use, independent of militia service. This decision marked a significant shift in gun rights jurisprudence and redefined the legal framework surrounding the right to bear arms in the modern era.

In recent years, the Supreme Court has demonstrated a notable shift in constitutional interpretation through key decisions. *Dobbs v. Jackson* reversed nearly fifty years of federal abortion protections, significantly altering the legal landscape for reproductive rights. Additionally, in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2023), the Court struck down affirmative action in college admissions, signaling a move away from race-conscious policies and reinterpreting the Equal Protection Clause in a more colorblind direction. These decisions reflect a modern Court that is reshaping constitutional doctrine in significant and often controversial ways (Supreme Court of the United States, n.d.).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the developing role of the U.S. Supreme Court. It began with its absence as a true judicial authority under the Articles of Confederation and then moved to its formal establishment in the U.S. Constitution. The chapter discussed the Court's functions in Article I, where the Chief Justice presided over presidential impeachment trials. In Article II, it described the nomination process involving the President and the Senate. Article III granted the Court its judicial power and independence. The chapter also emphasized the Court's key role in interpreting constitutional amendments. It showed how the Court upheld justice by interpreting the Constitution, protecting rights and liberties, resolving disputes, and shaping national policy through landmark decisions. It talked as well about the U S Supreme Court Rulings throughout history.

General Conclusion

Over the course of American history, the role of the Supreme Court has evolved significantly, shaped by legal, political, and societal transformations. This historical investigation set out to explore the development of the Supreme Court's function in the United States—from its constitutional foundations to its current position as a central arbiter of law and protector of constitutional principles. Despite its well-established status within the American political system today, a comprehensive understanding of how the Court's authority and influence have been constructed and expanded over time remained essential. This dissertation sought to address that need by analysing the shifting nature of the Court's role through various historical epochs and landmark decisions, revealing its dynamic interaction with broader institutional and ideological developments.

Beginning with the Judiciary Act of 1789 and early foundational rulings such as *Marbury v. Madison*, this research traced the trajectory of the Supreme Court as it gradually asserted its role in constitutional interpretation and established the doctrine of judicial review. The study examined key periods including the Marshall and Taney Courts, the judicial responses to the Civil War and Reconstruction, the New Deal era confrontations with the executive branch, and the transformative civil rights decisions of the Warren Court. In each era, the Court's authority was both challenged and reinforced, reflecting broader political pressures and evolving societal values.

The research addressed three central questions. The first sought to examine how the role and perception of the U.S. Supreme Court has developed since its inception. The second examined the key historical events and landmark cases that have contributed to this development. The third investigated the way the Court has preserved its independence from the executive and judiciary branches.

A combination of historical, descriptive, analytical, and comparative methodologies was employed. Historical methods provided a chronological framework for understanding the development of the Court's role, while descriptive approaches outlined the jurisprudential trends and institutional changes. Comparative methods highlighted the contrasts in the Court's function across different political and constitutional crises, and analytical strategies were used to evaluate the broader implications of judicial decisions on American governance and society.

The findings of this investigation revealed that the role of the Supreme Court has never been static. While originally envisioned as a relatively limited judicial body, it has gradually evolved into a powerful institution capable of shaping national policy, checking the powers of the other branches of government, and responding to fundamental questions of rights and liberties. From defending federal supremacy in the early republic to becoming a central actor in civil rights, abortion, and executive power debates, the Court's influence has reflected the changing contours of American democracy.

In summary, the development of the Supreme Court's role throughout U.S. history illustrates its adaptive nature and enduring relevance within the constitutional system. This study reinforces the importance of historical context in understanding the Court's decisions and their societal impact. By tracing its evolving function, we gain deeper insight into how the judiciary contributes not only to legal interpretation but to the ongoing project of defining justice, liberty, and the rule of law in the United States. This understanding is essential for citizens and policymakers alike as the Court continues to shape the nation's future amidst new legal and constitutional challenges.

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ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث تطور الدور الذي لعبته المحكمة العليا في الولايات المتحدة على مرّ التاريخ الأمريكي. في البداية، كان من الصعب تصور وجود هيئة تحفظ حقوق المستعمرات، فقد بدا ذلك هدفًا بعيد المنال. لكن إصرار المستعمرين على نيل الاستقلال والانفصال عن الحكومة البريطانية مهّد الطريق لتأسيس دولة جديدة تقوم على مبدأ فصل السلطات في نظامها السياسي. وفي هذا الإطار، تسعى الدراسة إلى فهم الدور الذي تؤديه المحكمة العليا الأمريكية في حل النزاعات، والدفاع عن الأفراد في وجه الظلم، وتفسير القوانين، وضمان احترام الدستور الأمريكي. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج التاريخي، حيث جُمعت البيانات من مصادر وثائقية مهمة مثل إعلان الاستقلال، مواد الاتحاد، الدستور الأمريكي، إضافة إلى القضايا التي نظرت فيها المحكمة نفسها. وأظهرت النتائج أن المحكمة العليا تقوم بدور أساسي في الحياة السياسية والاجتماعية في الولايات المتحدة. فهي تمثل السلطة القضائية، وتراجع مدى توافق القوانين مع الدستور، وتحسم الخلافات بين الولايات أو بينها وبين الحكومة الفيدرالية، والأهم من ذلك، تضمن أن يتمتع جميع المواطنين بالمساواة في ظل القانون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحقوق المدنية – الرقابة القضائية – السلطة القضائية – المحكمة العليا.

Résumé

Cette recherche retrace l'évolution du rôle attribué à la Cour suprême des États-Unis tout au long de l'histoire américaine. L'idée d'une institution chargée de défendre les droits des colonies semblait autrefois hors de portée. Pourtant, la volonté des colons de conquérir leur indépendance et de rompre avec le gouvernement britannique a permis la naissance d'une nation fondée sur le principe de la séparation des pouvoirs. Dans cette optique, l'étude s'intéresse au rôle que joue la Cour suprême dans le règlement des conflits, la protection contre les injustices, l'interprétation des lois et la préservation de la légitimité de la Constitution américaine. Pour mener cette analyse, la méthode historique a été adoptée. Les données ont été extraites de sources documentaires telles que la Déclaration d'indépendance, les Articles de la Confédération, la Constitution des États-Unis, ainsi que des décisions rendues par la Cour elle-même. Les résultats obtenus mettent en lumière l'importance de la Cour suprême dans la vie politique et sociale américaine. En tant que gardienne du pouvoir judiciaire, elle veille à la constitutionnalité des lois, tranche les conflits entre les États ou entre les États et le gouvernement fédéral, et surtout, elle garantit l'égalité des droits pour tous les citoyens.

Mots-clés : Droits civiques – Contrôle juridictionnel – Pouvoir judiciaire – Cour suprême.