

United States: 1776-2026

By Don Sutherland

The Declaration of Independence is more than a formal document explaining why thirteen British colonies had chosen for themselves a new destiny. Its words echo across time. They belong to free peoples everywhere: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

These words present liberty as a universal inheritance that is beyond the authority of any king, czar, or dictator to usurp. Its principles rest on human dignity, lawful self-government, and the right of communities to determine their own future. This universal language creates a shared moral vocabulary. Nations may differ in history, culture, religion, language, and political institutions, but free societies can recognize one another in the Declaration’s central claims that human beings possess rights government does not create, that legitimate authority depends on consent, that government exists to protect liberty, not extinguish it, and that people may rightly resist tyranny when power becomes destructive of their rights.

The Declaration also reminds the United States and its allies that friendship among free peoples is not simply transactional. It is a partnership in defense of human dignity, self-government, lawful liberty, and the hope that people everywhere may live without oppression. Free nations must be able to rely on one another in moments of danger, as they have on numerous occasions since July 4, 1776. After all, free nations are not distant strangers. They are partners in a shared human project for a better, more prosperous, and more tolerant future in a contested, turbulent, and still violent world.

