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American Exceptionalism

by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 12, 2013, 5:03 PM

This forum thread is for American Exceptionalism posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the individual questions in SEPARATE posts.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

Since there are multiple questions, BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Don't simply leave it RE: American Exceptionalism

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President Obama is not very American and hardly exceptional

by Gregory Vandelune - Monday, April 15, 2013, 4:16 PM

I believe that saying that modern politicians practice Imperialism through American Exceptionalism is a stretch. Theodore Roosevelt felt "the need to expand the scope of U.S. intervention in hemispheric affairs." (p. 758) The Panama Canal was essentially American manipulation in Central America for personal gain. (p. 762) Wilson adopted a similar policy in the Caribbean, intervening militarily there "more than any American president before him." (p. 765) Taft's "dollar diplomacy" sought to "expand opportunities for corporate investment." (p.764) I find claims of President Obama having a sense of American Exceptionalism to be little more than rhetoric. President Obama bowed to both Emperor Akihito of Japan and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. (<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2009/11/on-president-obamas-bow-to-the-japanese-emperor-an-academic-friend-writes-that-both-the-left-and-the-right-are-wrong/>) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/5128171/Barack-Obama-criticised-for-bowing-to-King-Abdullah-of-Saudi-Arabia.html>) President Obama is

clearly not interested exerting U.S. influence over other nations, as can be inferred by the current administration's inability to get Iraq to either detain or turn over a Hezbollah terrorist responsible for killing Americans.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/world/middleeast/iraq-said-to-release-hezbollah-operative.html?_r=0)

Is it possible to practice American Exceptionalism when not even practicing generally accepted patriotic acts such as wearing an American flag pin, placing his hand over his heart during the national anthem, or attending a church where the pastor essentially sermonizes that America asked for the 2001 World Trade Center attacks?

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah_Wright_controversy,

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/23315711/ns/politics-decision_08/t/obama-may-face-grilling-patriotism/#.UWyH7-86j-s)

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Re: President Obama is not very American and hardly exceptional



by Alex McNeil - Tuesday, April 16, 2013, 1:26 AM

Can the measure of a president's adherence to American Exceptionalism be calculated from superficially patriotic or defferential acts like bowing to a foreign leader or putting ones hand over ones heart? In my opinion, we need to take a hard look at the Obama administration's approach to foreign policy to tell whether or not the administration practices exceptionalism.

Sure, Obama hasn't bullied Iraq into releasing a Hezbollah terrorist, but maybe his rationalizations for that have less to do with lack of patriotism and more to do with a willingness to abide by U.N. sanctions and protocols, to maintain a tenuous peace in an already destabilized region of the world.

I'd also like to note that the Jeremiah Wright scandal was pretty much resolved when Obama denounced some of the more radical views that the Reverend espoused. Check out this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQFAsnr2YNA>

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: President Obama is not very American and hardly exceptional



by Gregory Vandelune - Tuesday, April 16, 2013, 6:27 AM

Here is an interesting point to ponder, was the Jeremiah Wright scandal resolved after Obama made that denouncement or did it meet the bare minimum to quell a very biased media that had chosen to support him over Sen. Clinton for the Democratic nominee (see documentary Media Malpractice, available in clips on youtube or Netflix <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLroWPePriqFscrftisaV2D->

JbEx5bb4Lc). I would like to point out that over seven years had passed since Wright first began his onslaught of anti-American preaching before Obama denounced him. Coincidentally, his denouncement came only after the questions had been raised largely by the small number of moderate to conservative media outlets.

As commander-in-chief, silly little things like rendering proper customs and courtesies to the flag do matter. As president, he sends 30,000 additional troops into harms way yet does not honor the sentiments which inspire the majority of them to serve. I do take issue with that and believe that is a reflection of his patriotism and views of America, which tie into the belief of American Exceptionalism. As for the Ali Muss Daquduq incident, the Obama administration had Vice President Biden unsuccessfully attempted to talk sense into Maliki. This would be an attempt at strong-arming as much as anything else. I find it difficult to fathom that any U.S. president would be willing to abide by U.N. sanctions or protocols unless it were self-serving because the U.N. is about as effective as a high school student body government when it comes to matter of national security or combatting transnational terrorism. The U.N., likely because of its design, often becomes a petri dish breeding corruption and inefficiency. (<http://www.economist.com/node/4267109>, <http://www.cfr.org/un/effectiveness-un-security-council/p11520>) I am more than willing to discuss the current administration's foreign policy or lack thereof case-by-case if you would like. I still hold true to my belief that the current president has no belief in American Exceptionalism.

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2

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Re: President Obama is not very American and hardly exceptional

by Alex McNeil - Friday, April 19, 2013, 8:02 PM

I'm not going to make the argument that one facet of president Obama's duty isn't to honor symbols of Americanism like the flag. I **am** going to make the argument that equating patriotism to how-well-one-honors-American-symbols would be to oversimplify.

We could go back and forth all day citing articles crediting and discrediting Obama's patriotism, but that wouldn't get us anywhere.

In my opinion, we should be wary of making hasty generalizations about the patriotism of a man who's run the electoral gauntlet and secured the votes of a plurality of American citizens. Twice. Aren't those credentials impressive enough to dismiss the idea that president Obama lacks patriotism?

I agree with you about the UN. It doesn't have the power to enforce its dictums. Even so, cooperating with a toothless organization has with

its own rewards. Our adherence to UN "law" creates a global climate of cooperation. When the US abides by the policy of the UN, we send a message to countries smaller than us that it's their duty to do the same. There's value in that.

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Re: President Obama is not very American and hardly exceptional

by Gregory Vandelune - Friday, April 19, 2013, 11:46 PM

I still differ with you on the patriotism issue but I will concede that President Obama does believe in American Exceptionalism. I can think of no other reason why the president would not send a member of his administration to the funeral of Margaret Thatcher. (http://www.usatoday.com/story/theoval/2013/04/16/obama-margaret-thatcher-james-baker-george-schultz/2087011/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A%2FNewsTopStories%2F%28News%2B%2BTop%2BStories%29). I assumed that the traditional protocol would be followed to pay respect to America's greatest ally during the Cold War and in turn to Great Britain, America's most significant ally. If President Obama bowed to the King of Saudi Arabia but refused to acknowledge the death of arguably the third most powerful person in the world during her tenure, it must be to show that America does not have to follow time honored customs. That is certainly a belief in American Exceptionalism. "We're Number One!"

Alright, enough of my ranting. There is some benefit with dilly dallying with the UN but I believe that is limited still. I would like to believe if it was an important organization, the Ambassador Susan Rice would not have been appointed. She is the same person who advised the Clinton administration not to acknowledge the genocide in Rwanda and tried to deceive the America people about the Benghazi attack. (<http://www.cnn.com/2012/12/13/politics/rice-withdraws-secretary-of-state>, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/12/13/why-obama-blinked-on-susan-rice-nomination/>) I suppose the people of foreign governments can't read our newspapers and do not know about the concern over her judgement. Perhaps that is my personal American Exceptionalism leaking out (in concert with President Obama's).

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Karlee Andrew - Monday, April 15, 2013, 7:20 PM

It is clear that still till this day the United States uses exceptionalism. Whether its our freedom, our rights or are superior military. The United States is exceptional in valuing the indivisual and ones liberty (to most extent). The United States is also exceptional in world power. Other countrys look up to us, "The land of the free". The United States also has economic strength with money (we pay the loser after we defeat them). really? pay who we defeat, that shows we are pretty exceptional, What other countrys would do that? Everything i just lsited also was going on in the 20th century. The United States achieved its major objectives in world affairs with its superior militairy. Also we expanded America as well as held are democratic ideals , of people government instead of dictatorship.

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Keeler McJunkin - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 9:52 PM

I completely agree. There has always been American exceptionalism. We have seen examples of that this week. The swift movement and capture of the Boston suspect shows us that. Not many countries would be able to accomplish something of that level so quickly, if any. It showed the strength and resolve we have as a country and the ability to help each other in times of need. America at its best.

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Defining Exceptional

by Andrew Schubert - Monday, April 15, 2013, 8:13 PM

Defining Exceptional

I can see now why our instructor felt the need to mention that the political spectrum would be at play on this issue. But after reading the required material, I'm starting to wonder if that really need be the case. Although I understand that the two main political parties in our country feel very strongly on this issue, I feel it's important to take two or three steps backwards, and look at this issue first by defining its terms. Noting that the term exceptional means simply "not typical", it should also be observed that it could be interpreted as "Unusually Good" or "Outstanding". Is it possible that at least some of the heat located in this topic is being derived from different interpretations of the word? Obviously there are an overwhelming number of

citizens that believe the USA “has a unique character that makes it **the greatest country in the world.**” But do you have to be among those numbers to believe that our country is “not typical”? My answer would be no.

That being said, I would also argue that despite your position on the issue, believing in “American Exceptionalism” should not give one the impression that just because they believe in their country, that their country has the right to impose itself on another. For example, despite how President Obama’s speech has been interpreted, I don’t believe that he, as a president and a human being, justifies his actions because of his patriotism. I do however, hate making arguments like this because who amongst us can say we know who a president really is.

To answer the questions in the forum topic, I believe that a number of differences can be inferred between The US’s leaders actions at the turn of the century, and those in power today, with regards to exceptionalism. The best example that comes to mind is Roosevelt’s parading of The Great White fleet in 1907 (Liberty, Equality, Power p763). I feel that such a brazen act, although perhaps commendable and effective, is not something that would take place in today’s world, or at least, not on such a grand scale. I would also argue that a huge factor in the presence of American Exceptionalism around the turn of the century was focused primarily on the belief that a democratic capitalist form of governing is better than any other option. Considering for example President Obama’s speech on Libya, a speech that, although touted the US as being exceptional, was more focused on being a moral leader, rather than a political one. Although I wasn’t around at the time, I have found very few examples, if any, in our textbook that highlights The United States as being a Moral Leader. Even our involvement in WW1 seemed to be focused more along the lines of maintaining commerce interests than participating in ending a war to save lives (Liberty, Equality, Power p776). Although both the situation in Libya and our actions around the turn of the century could be labeled as the results of a belief in American Exceptionalism, I believe that they are of two different varieties. I also don’t put a lot of stock in the speech given by President Obama in terms of Exceptionalism due to the thought that, the speech itself, was written by a speech writer who knew that “America rocks” polls well. Although it should be noted that this might just be the result of watching too many episodes of The West Wing.

Sincerely,

Andy Schubert

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Alex McNeil - Tuesday, April 16, 2013, 2:04 AM

The United States still practices Exceptionalist Imperialism, but it does it covertly—not through shows of arms or military might, but through economic manipulation and soft power.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, two global monetary organizations designated the task of keeping the world's economies healthy, allow the US and other affluent nations to engage in a modern version of the imperialism that was practiced at the turn of the 20th century. Without going into too much detail, the IMF and World Bank assist governments around the world by subsidizing their economies with loans. Both organizations are controlled by the countries that have the largest equity invested in them, so executive control goes to the US, Japan, Germany and the U.K..

The US, having the largest stake in the IMF and World Bank, usually gets to dictate the terms of the loans made to less affluent countries. Historically, the terms of these loans have compromised the economic sovereignty of the countries on the receiving end. Loaners often demand the adoption of neoconservative economic policies and the deregulation of exploitable markets. Additionally, oscillating interest rates often throw loan-receiving countries into uncontrollable spirals of debt, creating a dependence relationship between loanee and loaner (more or less the US).

The Exceptionalist Imperialism practiced by the US may have a different face now than it had in the past, but the motivating factor remains constant: profit. Though dolled up with concepts of "divine right" or patriotism, the physical occupations of the places we've been studying have conveniently served the best interests of the US economy. Acquiring the Panama Canal was a brilliant economic move—so was the acquisition of Hawaii partially as a means of protecting the economic interests of Dole.

The face of Exceptionalist Imperialism has changed, but it still exists. It may have donned a new mask in the form of economic—rather than physical—occupation, but the United States still reigns supreme as an imperialistic force--certainly as a practitioner of exceptionalism.

Some stuff about the IMF and World

Bank: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/IMF_WB/WhoAreThePeople.html

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Alex McNeil - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 8:37 PM

Here's an interesting book that deals with some of the things I was talking about: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_of_an_Economic_Hit_Man

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Re: American Exceptionalism



by Keeler McJunkin - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 10:15 PM

I would say the US shows examples of american exceptionalism both covertly and not. We don't shy away from publicly showing our strength and ability to be the biggest power in the world. When something happens to us we take a strong stance and get something back for what happened. I also agree with you in the fact we act covertly as well though. A big part of what happens is done behind the scenes, not seen by the general public. Whether we are talking foreign relations, money, war or many other things. We as a country show our ability to react and respond when needed. Behind the scenes and in public.

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