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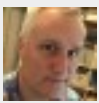
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American Exceptionalism

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Friday, April 8, 2016, 11:34 AM

This thread is for discussions on the American Exceptionalism topic.

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

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: American Exceptionalism

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Why The Attitude of American Exceptionalism Is Odd

by [Connor Miller](#) – Saturday, April 9, 2016, 3:49 PM

Hello everyone, I just had a few thoughts on American exceptionalism. Hopefully I do everything right format wise and the like.

American Exceptionalism is an odd concept to grasp. It implies that this country is simply better than every other country out there, and that we do things the way they should be done. It's a way of chest thumping that I just don't get. While I believe in patriotism, blind patriotism can be dangerous, and I think AE falls into that category sometimes.

So my question is (and odds are this question has already been asked) why does American Exceptionalism exist? Is it wrong to think of America as the greatest country on earth? Is it a well founded idea based on facts or a myth created out of fear?

Also, while trying to grasp some of the concepts of AE, I ran into this quote from an article that i highly recommend (Even if the article is a few years old.

"Declarations of American exceptionalism rest on the belief that the United States is a uniquely virtuous nation, one that loves peace, nurtures liberty, respects human rights, and embraces the rule of law. Americans like to think their country behaves much better than other states do, and certainly better than other great powers."
(<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/the-myth-of-american-exceptionalism>)

As we've seen so far in our class, those four things aren't always the case when it comes to the USA.

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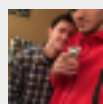
Differences and Similarities with Past and Current Leaders and Their American Exceptionalism

by [Meghan Jacinto](#) – Sunday, April 10, 2016, 2:46 PM

There are some differences and similarities concerning the past political leaders, such as Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson's concepts of American Exceptionalism and the political figures of today such as Barack Obama, Ted Cruz, and Herman Cain. When the United States was first properly formed with the start of the U.S Constitution, this was one pivotal moment in which our country demonstrated "American Exceptionalism". We, as a country, began showing exceptional qualities throughout the beginning of our nation. As Charles Murray (Source: the 3:30 point in the video clip) states in his interview, some examples included "expanding the frontier, the physical setting, the buffer of the Atlantic Ocean on the east, moving west, the existence of the frontier, and the unique political ideology." Most importantly, there was limited government. During the presidency of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson, this is when the size of the government began to drastically grow. This was also a time when our American Exceptionalism began to decline. Similarly in today's society, there is not a lot of limitation within the government. One main example consists of President Obama and candidate Bernie Sanders who push for more government involvement and federal programs.

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Re: Differences and Similarities with Past and Current Leaders and Their American Exceptionalism

by [Zachary Sielicky](#) – Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 1:12 AM

I like how you talked about the exceptionalism concept being around since America's founding. I would agree with you on that. I feel someone could argue that the idea of exceptionalism then was different to the ideology of exceptionalism in the early 1900s because it was more of an elitist, self empowered idea that they knew how to govern themselves better than a government that has been a world leader for hundreds of years. The exceptionalism ideology in the early 1900s was a "superiority" complex due to the rising power and influence of America on a world wide scale, the knew kid on the block mentality. Then obviously the idea shifted to a more "responsibility" as time passed.

Great post

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American Exceptionalism Today

by [Meghan Jacinto](#) – Sunday, April 10, 2016, 3:44 PM

Different modern political figures seem to interpret American Exceptionalism in various ways. In his speech during the video, Ted Cruz kept mentioning our "God given rights", which is also a reoccurring theme also seen in Herman Cain's article. This may be inference to the fact that our nation began with a religious element. Also, this connection to our religious heritage shows modern connection to past American Exceptionalism. In addition, Ted Cruz and Herman Cain use the term American Exceptionalism has having superiority over everyone else. For example, the first line in Herman Cain's article is "There is no denying it. America is the greatest country in the world." Ted Cruz also presents a theme of superiority by declaring "America as a shining city on a hill" in his speech. This type of interpretation may have also influenced Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson since there was involvement with imperialism, foreign policies, and becoming a world power during their time. The textbook mentions Anglo Saxon superiority as one of the main reasons that urged the United States to try and become a world power. Anglo Saxon superiority argued that the United States had the responsibility of spreading Christianity and civilizing other people in other nations. Furthermore, there was Rudyard Kipling's well-known poem "The White Man's Burden", which expressed the idea that America should take up the burden of Imperialism since the Western culture supposedly had the obligation to civilize other nations. As for Barack Obama, his definition of American Exceptionalism seems more personal. He is a supporter of Exceptionalism, but doesn't reference the religious aspects like Cain and Cruz. In an article by The Washington Post, it stated how 5 years later when Obama dismissed the topic originally, he proclaimed how he believed in American Exceptionalism with his whole being. He talked about American Exceptionalism within big and small moments, such as using "his last State of the Union speech" and "an Iftar dinner for Muslim Americans in the White House" as examples of the subject. In a sense, he believed "his life was proof of America's exceptional nature." Overall, modern day political figures seem to use the term "American Exceptionalism" both differently and similarly than past figures.

Sources:

<http://spectator.org/articles/38032/defense-american-exceptionalism>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2015/06/03/obama-and-american-exceptionalism/>

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Re: American Exceptionalism Today

by [Zachary Sielicky](#) – Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 1:17 AM

You talk about the "shining city" and how it refers to religion. You can see the history of that quote and the different interpretations of it through the eyes of many presidents and politicians.

This quote has an amazing history throughout America and is an excellent representation of American Exceptionalism.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_upon_a_Hill

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Re: American Exceptionalism Today

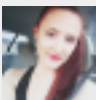
by [Miguel Perez](#) – Saturday, April 16, 2016, 10:47 PM

It seems as if we always focus on American Exceptionalism on a world scale, something that we have to prove to the world all the time. I would make the bold statement that we tend to ignore it here within American borders. American Exceptionalism within in our nation is often confused with AmericanArrogance. With racial inequality, with sexism, we have MANY internal problems. American Exceptionalism comes with this notion that we are infallible, which far from the truth. America does fail. But the beauty of American Exceptionalism is we always strive to be exceptional, we don't settle mediocrity, as long as we don't confuse Exceptionalism with arrogance, we will always set a world standard.

Miguel

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Serious consequences

by [Lauren Collett](#) – Sunday, April 10, 2016, 6:05 PM

It seems that people on the right are often very big on American exceptionalism, people on the left seem to be somewhere in between. From the article we know many people on the right believe Obama "does not love his country" because he "doesn't believe" in exceptionalism. The idea that if you don't think America is the greatest country in the world that you somehow don't love your country. If we all saw the same speech Obama gave its pretty clear that he does believe in American exceptionalism.

The difference between the right and left of the spectrum according the article seems to be how they implement American exceptionalism.

" the only real difference between neocons and liberal interventionists is that the latter insist on legitimizing their wars through the U.N. while the former don't care to. "

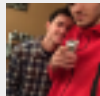
The writer of this article seems to believe that where George Bush had the support of the U.N. and other nations many democrats,Obama included, seem to act independently while calling there "wars" humanitarian interventions. As well as Obama's drone attacks and bombings not being legitimized by the U.N.

Where I stand on the spectrum is definetly on the left. Not to say that people on the left don't believe in American exceptionalism I'm just personally not a big believer in it. This may be an unpopular thing to say but America is not the greatest country in the world. Just like the article says believing you are better or superior has

"serious consequences." I think it is a dangerous idea that is pervasive in American culture.

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Shift of American Exceptionalism Ideology
by [Zachary Sielicky](#) – Monday, April 11, 2016, 7:44 PM

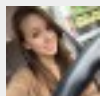
The idea of American exceptionalism has been around since the founding of the country, though the degree of that belief has changed drastically overtime. One of the biggest differences between the idea of exceptionalism in the turn of the century (1900s) and today’s idea of exceptionalism is much less elitist and much more viewed as a responsibility. In the book *Liberty, Equality, Power* it states, “[M]any Americans believed, the United States possessed the right to act unilaterally to protect its interests,” (730–731).

Obama states in a speech about Libya, “For generations the United States of America has played a unique roll as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom... but when out interests and values are at steak we have a responsibility to act,” (Obama, 2011). This demonstrates the major difference in the ideology of American exceptionalism.

The idea of our place in the world has shifted from an Imperialist mindset to a more egalitarian authority due to many wars and ideas of achieving a variety of interests abroad. I feel that Woodrow Wilson’s diplomatic policy is the corner stone for today’s liberal diplomatic ideology and idea of exceptionalism though it has also influenced many conservative views as well. Woodrow Wilson’s idea for a League of Nations set precedent for NATO and the United Nations which has implemented many policies like the Responsibility to Protect that focus on a right to protect other sovereign nations and their people on the basis of responsibility and duty and not on the basis of superiority. President Mckinley and many Americans believed that America had the right to rule and govern smaller countries such as Cuba, The Philippines and Puerto Rico on the grounds that they were “inferior” to Americans and didn't have the mental capacity to govern themselves. This demonstrates the major shift in the exceptionalism ideology of the early 1900s and today.

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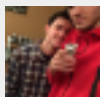


American Exceptionalism(Couldn't find questions)
by [Jamie Arscott](#) – Monday, April 11, 2016, 9:20 PM

Okay so between the “How Forum’s are graded page” and the forum groups I still have no complete idea exactly what I need to be writing, how much I need to write, what questions I need to answer, or exactly what I should be doing. However, I chose the group of American Exceptionalism because I knew nothing about the topic and it sounds intriguing. I googled the topic to see that it is the idea that american is to remain a uniquely free country governed and contained by specific ideals. This topic interests me because it has been an idea that has been around for centuries, and has greatly affected the ways our country has grown and developed.

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Re: American Exceptionalism(Couldn't find questions)
by [Zachary Sielicky](#) – Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 1:21 AM

When you get to the page where you can choose the different topics, on the top of that page there are big red letters that say "CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS TO THE REQUIRED MATERIALS AND QUESTIONS FOR THIS FORUM." Then after you click on that you can see different topics on the top in blue.

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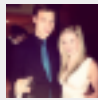
Response to Charles Murray
by [Andrew Bukur](#) – Monday, April 11, 2016, 9:37 PM

Charles Murray claims that, although there may yet remain exceptional elements in our nation, our overall

nations Exceptionalism has drastically declined and is hardly even visible today, and I agree. I like the way Murray divided American Exceptionalism into 3 main categories, physical setting, American ideology, and American culture. Because of these 3 things combined, America seemed to be the most exceptional country in the world during the 19th century. In modern times, without any new frontier to explore, the nation has lost the physical setting aspect of its exceptionality, but this seems to be the most minor of the 3. The gradual loss of the American ideology and American culture seem to be the main reasons for this decline in American exceptionalism. The nation was founded on the ideas of freedom, and limited government control. Today, both of these are threatened by increased government intervention. The conservation of these ideologies, which first defined our nation, is essential, because we are an example to many other nations. With someone like Donald Trump in office, the nation's founding ideals may further be threatened due to policies against immigrant workers, and we will move further and further from being exceptional. The American culture, which also played a large role in the identity of the United States, seems to be declining as well. Today, there is a huge emphasis on individuality, while one of the main ideas, which first defined our nation, was cooperation. I think it's really important to identify what made our nation exceptional so that we may move towards those ideals, which seemed to bring the nation much success; especially in this time of conflict.

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Domestic and International Differences

by [Ryan Helmericks](#) – Thursday, April 14, 2016, 11:44 AM

100 years ago, with presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, America was a completely different place. Is America the best country in the world? Hell Yeah! Imperialism was spreading rapidly and almost overnight the United States became the biggest producer in many major materials. Our navy was exponentially expanding and our army was slowly growing. Back then, saying the nation was the best in the world was expected. When presidents talk now, the audience is completely different. Many people believe that the United States, with its power, should not be a controlling force but a respectful and diplomatic country. Saying you are the best in the world is viewed by some as a negative way. Obama avoiding the question on American exceptionalism was the correct thing to do. There is not a true answer to the question. Sure we are the best in the nation. We just need to have a humble approach towards it when dealing with the rest of the world.

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Different perspectives

by [Lauren Collett](#) – Thursday, April 14, 2016, 10:08 PM

After watching the video clip of the five different speakers I definitely have some opinions about the views expressed.

Obama's view "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism. I'm enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world."

This is a view I would most align with. I'm proud of my country I think it's great, much like people who live in other countries think they are great and exceptional.

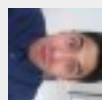
The next speaker Evan Sayet was obviously a conservative, I'm not just assuming things it literally said conservative on the podium. He didn't like Obama's quote because he knew he "obviously" meant he didn't believe in American exceptionalism. He compared it to being a Chicago Cubs fan. Then he said something along the lines of how could Obama explain America's success if America is not exceptional. Then that we are also "The most successful country in the world." I think he is being very dramatic. Why are we the most successful country in the world? What parameters is he basing his opinion on? Why does the president HAVE to believe we are exceptional?

The fourth speaker Andrew Bacevich made a good point when he said our claim to uniqueness could be made by anyone. Every nation is unique just like every state in the United States is unique.

The only thing I'll say about Ted Cruz is I don't think that "our rights don't come from man they come from God almighty." Sure if you believe that personally that is wonderful I have no problem with that but not when you want to be the leader of our nation. I feel like he said a lot of disjointed sentences that conjured up a lot of emotions in people, which in turn elicited a good response from the crowd.

I'd love to hear other peoples opinions on some of these speakers. I know I skipped one of the speakers but I saw someone else spent some time talking about Charles Murray already.

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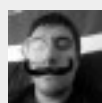
America became Great!
by Miguel Perez – Thursday, April 14, 2016, 10:59 PM

Our leaders today do not use American Nationalism as the leaders of the United States during the turn of the century once did. As our Liberty, Equality, Power texts states in Chapter 22. “For much of the 19th century, most Americans were preoccupied by continental expansion. Elections rarely turned on international events, and presidents rarely made their reputations as statesmen in the world arena.” At the turn of the Century, America was still proving itself. Proving that it had to the political power to have a say in international affairs, proving that we had a military to back up our political power. The 19th century served as a time to grow, correct the mistakes of sexism (which we are still working on) and correct the mistakes of racial inequality (which we are still working on). I think it is safe to say the United States proved itself.

So our American Nationalism is not the same as it once was. America today is already a great nation through the grit of those who came before us.

Miguel

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Presidents Views
by Joe Paredes – Friday, April 15, 2016, 4:02 PM

I believe our commanders-in-chief back in the 20th century and in present day have equal views on American Exceptionalism, but I do know and believe that Barack Obama has more of an idealistic view of it compared to his counterpart..

The world being more of an open-minded and free world now gives a better look on it and the answer Barrack Obama gives " yes I believe in American exceptionalism just like the British believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism" today that is viewed as a very straight up answer because of the world we live in but according to Evan Sayet (1:10)" It's not a belief based on the fact that he lives here"

I believe in those words because even after the recent event of him going to a country where we never had A president step foot in over 80 years, he still found peaceful way to talk with Castro's brother who's running the country now.

President McKinley, Wilson, and Roosevelt had very strong beliefs connected to American Exceptionalism, but the world is the same, BUT times are different which makes everything more difficult to understand and harder to compare multiple presidents.

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