



Forum 1

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Exceptionalism

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, April 11, 2015, 12:04 PM

This forum thread is for Exceptionalism Topic posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. For purposes of encouraging discussion, you should group your responses into 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

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Exceptionalism

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Variations of Exceptionalism

by Jesse Bowman - Monday, April 13, 2015, 3:16 PM

The idea of American Exceptionalism seems to follow the same path as a lot of historical definitions of a the period of time - loss of context of over-simplification of definitions.

I think that there a multi types of “American Exceptionalism” and that today’s government and leaders do in fact practice an “evolved” version of such an ideology.

The simplistic definition of American Exceptionalism is defined as the theory that the United States is qualitatively different from other nations. However, I believe the very practice of this ideology is interpreted many different ways. For example, focusing on the Executive branch with regards to foreign policy in the 20th century, The Roosevelt Corollary that was added to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904 was a bold example of American Exceptionalism that added on the responsibility of being an international police power (L.E.P., 758). I would define this type of exceptionalism as Divine Exceptionalism with the belief that the U.S holds the responsibility to govern the “moral rights” of the world.

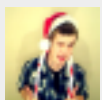
In todays practice I believe that we use mix of Realistic and Moralistic type of exceptionalism, which is not a rejection of the idea that the U.S is special - more of the idea to promote balance of power in the world and to make sure the U.S. is secure: stating this this is the best way for the U.S to be preserved and it’s freedom to provide an example for the rest of the world.

Personally, I am having a hard time differentiating between American Imperialism and the extreme end of the spectrum of American Exceptionalism. Today I do believe we toned down our over-zealous nature when it comes to the ideology of American Exceptionalism -- to a degree of course, we still have our fingers in many honey pots overseas.

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Re: Variations of Exceptionalism

by Jesse Bowman - Monday, April 13, 2015, 4:06 PM

there are multiple*

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Re: Variations of Exceptionalism

by [Darren Rolewicz](#) - Monday, April 13, 2015, 9:41 PM

The definition of Exceptionalism is that one country is qualitatively better from other nations, not just different. The idea is that a nation feels it's governing is better than any other. To me the Roosevelt Corollary was not a very bold example, as it only "formalized a policy" that was already being used by the United States(p.758). And it could be argued that this policy had already been formalized, in a sense, by the Platt Amendment. Although this amendment only gave authority to intervene in Cuba. However we still had used this policy in other South American nations. I do like the term Divine Exceptionalism though as our actions were viewed by Americans as almost a divine intervention. In regards to the current use of Exceptionalism in America today, your reference to America's freedom being an example for the rest of the world reminded me of Herman Cain's reference to our "unparalleled freedoms" that other countries envy. While I feel this would be true if we were living during the rise of U.S. Imperialism during the turn of the 20th century, it could not be further from the truth today in my opinion. There are numerous nations that enjoy the same freedoms we enjoy, and arguably more. I feel like when commenting on our freedom as an example or something to envy today, it can only be in comparison to countries in poverty with weak, unsubstantial governments. Because the American "Gold Standard", does not hold as true as it once did.

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American Exeptionalism Today

by [Alyssa Taylor](#) - Monday, April 13, 2015, 11:21 PM

I agree with your statement and I too do not believe that our freedom in this country today is a great example of American Exceptionalism. We may have been the golden child of countries back before the turn of the century as the number one leading country in industrialization and education but that is certainly not the case today. Many other countries such as Canada, Belgium and other European countries are far ahead of us in education and health care. We are also a country that is currently questioning our own foundation. For example, the religion that this country was founded on is becoming increasingly critisized, it's influence is seen in the decision of whether or not to remove 'In God We Trust' from US currency (1). Another Example is the recent debate over the 2nd Amendment which refers to the right to bare arms, this country is in a heated debate over our constitutional right because of a few of it's people decision. Which alone isn't terrifying until you find that President Obama used his Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to shut down the last Lead smelting plant in the United States (2). Meaning that we now must import lead from other countries. Not only did the price of bullets go up but so did air travel (lead is used in airplane fuel). Once again we are relying on other countries for our needs. To me is I was another country looking in on US I would not see the American Exceptionalism that we were at one time proud to own. When I think of American Exceptionalism I think of Theodore Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" (3). Herman Cain touched on Theodore Roosevelt's same mentality. That we are a nation built on "tenacity and triumph" (4) and that we have risked and worked throughout history to make America the best country in the World. I believe that we aren't better than other countries but rather that we have a deep connection and pride as Americans and that is what I see as American Exceptionalism.

1. Wing, Nick. "Atheists Lose Battle To Have 'In God We Trust' Removed From U.S. Currency." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com. 2013. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

2. Sherman, Amy. "Lead Bullets Will Have to Come from Overseas after EPA Closed Smelter, Chain Email Says." @politifact. Tampa Bay Times, 2014. Web. Apr. 2015

3. Liberty, Equality, Power pg. 763

4. Cain, Herman. "In Defense of American Exceptionalism." The American Spectator. The American Spectator Foundation, 2011. Web. Apr. 2015.

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Re: Variations of Exceptionalism

by [Jesse Bowman](#) - Saturday, April 18, 2015, 4:32 PM

Regardless whether or not the United States has certain granted freedoms that other countries posses or not, I still believe that the U.S practices forms of American exceptionalism, there is a strong difference in "better" and "different". And just to be clear, I am not arguing that I believe we are "better", but that the idea exists and influences

government.

I would argue that even Bush used Divine Exceptionalism during his presidency. For example from his inaugural address in 2001; "We have a place, all of us, in a long story, a story we continue but whose end we will not see. It is a story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, the story of a slaveholding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.". Unquestionably, Bush asserts his belief that the U.S is exceptional to the extent of being "a servant of freedom"

Even more so, I think that in times of distress (like Escobar has pointed out) we fall back to the right side of the spectrum to the extreme conservative (reactionary) side which I would say definitely exhibits signs of American Exceptionalism. From a speech Bush gave in 2001 "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.". I don't think it could get any more clear than describing America as "the brightest beacon for freedom" to believe that this government does still believe in American Exceptionalism.

George W. Bush: "Inaugural Address," January 20, 2001. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25853>.

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Re: Variations of Exceptionalism

by [Benjamin Bross](#) - Saturday, April 18, 2015, 5:30 PM

Personally, I think that in order to be a leader in a country you have to believe in that country's exceptionalism. That is why what Obama was saying made perfect sense. As a nations leader, you need to project to your country that they are living in the greatest place on earth. While I believe the true definition of exceptionalism is thinking that your country is the best in the world, today people like Obama use it to say that even though we may not be better at everything than other countries, what we do have is more than enough to make up for the deficiencies. So, while back in the early 1900's it was easy to say that the US was the best at everything, due to lack of knowledge of events in other countries and the power of the US, exceptionalism has evolved into more of a case by case issue. What I mean by that is, people tend to brag about the good parts of their country, while trying to avoid or change the bad. So the US may not be the best when it comes to healthcare, but Americans can brag about economic opportunities that aren't available in any other country. So while exceptionalism may not be as broad of a term as it once was, I still believe that it is used in a different form today.

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American Exceptionalism: Same Song, Slightly Different Tune

by [Darren Rolewicz](#) - Monday, April 13, 2015, 9:20 PM

I feel it goes without question that the idea of American Exceptionalism is still used by our country's leaders today. However I believe that it only relates to one of the ways it was used by our President's during our surge of Imperialism; to protect U.S. economic interests. We have heard from many of the recent Presidents that we must intervene in certain nations to protect America and her interests, but we see very seldom (or failed) attempts to allow countries to govern themselves; much like was seen at the end of the Iraq war. I feel that few politicians believe in U.S. Exceptionalism in the way that William McKinley or Theodore Roosevelt did. It seems to just be a phrase or idea used to justify our intervention in other nations. While the Presidents during the rise of U.S. Imperialism did use Exceptionalism to protect U.S. economic interests, like Roosevelt obtaining the Panama canal, Imperialists condoning the acquisition of certain territories "which they viewed as integral to the extension of U.S. interests"(p.752), and McKinley's changing support of the regimes in Mexico; there was a sense that they truly believed in it. Roosevelt felt we "were racially superior people destined for supremacy"(p.757). It also seems that Presidents of this era used Exceptionalism to justify their actions that were only to rival other world powers. Certain "colonization was necessary to prevent other world powers from gaining a foothold"(p.752). And McKinley only purchased what became the Virgin Islands after German influence rose in the West Indies(p.765). It was as if we had to establish ourselves as great an Imperial power only to out do other world powers. But we needed a safe ideal to justify these actions so we did not seem as harsh as these other Imperialist nations. So while Exceptionalism is still used to justify our actions today, I feel leaders of the past truly believed this ideal and at least attempted to use it for a democratic purpose.



Our exceptionalism

by Nicolas Gibson - Monday, April 13, 2015, 10:20 PM

First, this is all going on my basic understanding of what exceptionalism means, which is that a citizen of a country believes that their country is the greatest, either based off that countries achievements or perhaps from a massive amount of pride for their nation. With that thought, exceptionalism is a very easy thing to see in America. From this countries past exploits and success, being such a huge dot on the map, it is very easy to see American exceptionalism. In fact, it ran so deep in our blood that many still feel that way today. Even I feel some of that pride. While I do think this country is quickly spiraling out of control (and has been for many years) I still feel like America is the best nation in the world. Not just because I was born here, but because of what this country does for its people, and what a few are volunteering to do for the country. That there are people that save lives all over the world purely for the satisfaction of saving lives. They don't care about the glory, but that this country has given them the chance to change the world. It's happened in the past and I strongly believe it will happen again.

On another note though, it's quite understandable why someone would say that this idea is quickly falling apart. As I stated above, I think this country is starting to go downhill, and ever since the Vietnam War, fewer and fewer people feel that this country is as special as their parents thought it may have been. While our leaders do have the nations best interest at heart, they have also let the nation down. Forcing people to go to war is never a popular idea, neither is forcing the people to act or buy something that's new, and perhaps not wanted. There will always be times of increase and decrease in this ideals popularity, we're simple in a trough.

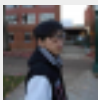


Re: Our exceptionalism

by Alyssa Taylor - Thursday, April 16, 2015, 10:11 PM

I like the line you said about how war is never popular but neither is paying for something we don't want. After reading some of the other comments I believe that people lump American Exceptionalism with American Imperialism far too easily. What you said in that line reminded me of what we talked about in class today with those Liberty Bonds. I am not comparing them to directly but I feel that they carry the same idea. Forcing people to purchase something that is helping or supporting the Government is American Imperialism. After 9/11 when George W. Bush decided to declare war on Iraq in 2003 because they messed with our territory I feel that that as well was an act of American Imperialism (1). Both of these examples represent a time when our government has used political or military force in influence power based decisions. One of the key images of American Exceptionalism to me is again Theodore Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" (2). By sending out his ships, he didn't mean to harm or invade anyone. He purely wanted the other countries to see just how strong and big of a country that we are. To me, that is just like how we send our best athletes to compete in the Olympic games, showing the world just how skilled and impressive we are as a country. To me that is American Exceptionalism, proving to others that we have a strong place in this world.

- 1. "Bush Declares War." CNN. Cable News Network, 2003. Apr. 2015.
- 2. Liberty, Quality, Power p. 763



Re: Our exceptionalism

by Jie Lai - Saturday, April 18, 2015, 11:50 PM

You can see that American exceptionalism contains a complicated and often contradictory set of assumptions. Do these assumptions stand up to the test of logical and empirical analysis? I do not think that they do, but one must face that fact that exceptionalism is an idea that has thrived in American society, though with many ups and downs in its levels of support. Ideas do influence human society, so in this sense American exceptionalism may be important in explanations of how Americans think and how they have acted. But thought is not everything. One must not neglect material circumstances that limit and shape what any society can do—the actual social history of the American people and the concrete political institutions that have shaped American life.



Re: Exceptionalism
by [Daniel Schulman](#) - Tuesday, April 14, 2015, 12:19 AM

Exceptionalism is one of the beauties of our country. Because we believe our country is extraordinary, we are more driven to innovate, continue what has made America what it is today. For a century we have been considered the military and economic powerhouse of the globe, with this a huge contributor to the fact. Who wouldn't want to be a protector, or apart of the "number one nation"? It's what allowed to think progressive, like the praised Woodrow Wilson, who believed democracy could be achieved worldwide via the League of Nations.

It was most displayed in this chapter by Germany through the sinking of *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. Without warning the sub was sunk by german U-Boats. Germany had no regard for universal law by sinking it without warning, and claiming it's attack was for the same reason for the blockades. Although Germany pledged it would never launch another attack on a neutral nation, it once again, but this time fired upon the French passenger ship the *Sussex*.

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Where still better
by [Perry Washington](#) - Thursday, April 16, 2015, 8:35 AM

I’m not really sure why a great deal of people seemed eager to say wither or not Obama believed in American exceptionalism. I believe exceptionalism is ingrain in our society, and it’s not something you choose to believe in. In the continuum that is the radical left to the extreme right, your power, greatly dictates where you might fall issue to issue. I also think that exceptionalism is destine to come from any nation with a history of imperialist power structures. Because people feel superior to each other, then it’s easy to see how we can believe we are superior to others. Does the U.S. government and/or our leaders still use exceptionalism, as it/they did at the turn of the 20th Century? While I believe at times yes when Obama talked about Libya he seamed to justify are involvement as necessary intervention because that’s how where perceived. It’s slightly different because it’s sneakier and less blatantly raciest.

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