

HST 203: History of the United States Sp17 (Escobar Meta 41054 41053)

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Forum 1

American Exceptionalism

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American Exceptionalism

by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 14, 2017, 6:37 PM

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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American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Cameron Wray - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 8:02 PM

Over the past 100 years the use of American exceptionalism by our leaders has changed in certain aspects while remaining the same in others. The most notable change being how everyone, not just Americans view this concept. The emergence of new mediums, social media in particular and how fast information spreads has altered the landscape for presenting the concept of American exceptionalism. Information that fuels negative attitudes towards our country can be spread at any place or time. Andrew Bacevich in the exceptionalism video

comments that this idea, "that we are better, that we are chosen, that somehow we represent what the world is supposed to become" (7:57) can have harmful effects on us and many others. One of these effects is the negative perception that has formed of the United States.

One area that the use of American exceptionalism has stayed the same is its use to unite people over an event or for a cause. That event or cause may be in the form of a vote or over some crisis but as a tool for union, the ability to make a group of individuals feel more unique and have something to agree upon is powerful. Watching the exceptionalism video Evan Sayet responds to Obama's answer on American exceptionalism, "it's not our constitutional he find exceptional, it's not our Judeo-Christian heritage he finds exceptional, it's not our protestant work ethic he finds exceptional, he just happens to live here" (1:33). I don't have a lot of experience with politics or speeches but it sounds like he is hyping the crowd up in his favor.

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2



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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Monday, April 17, 2017, 8:42 PM

"One area that the use of American exceptionalism has stayed the same is its use to unite people over an event or for a cause."

Definitely agree here. Aside from being pretty vital to our collective (mental) health and sanity, a general feeling of superiority is a really good way to hype up people within your in-group with whom you share that feeling (or claim to).

You said somewhere in your post that "one negative effect of American exceptionalism is that it's harmed our rep abroad" or something like that, but you were more specific and tied it to a quote. I think I understand what you're getting at here, but I also think there are a few vital steps missing between American exceptionalism--> bad rep abroad.

Did ya'll know that some big American polling agencies--Gallup, for one--take *world* polls asking questions like "who is the greatest threat to world peace" and America has consistently taken the top spot for quite some time (and most recently as of 2013, from what I could

find http://www.wingia.com/en/services/about_the_end_of_year_survey/global_results/7/33/ and somehow I doubt we've improved since Trump took office). Anywho, the point I want to make is that people don't really care that we trumpet around about how great and superior we are and how it's our destiny to thrive and succeed. Pretty much everybody thinks they're great and superior. What's harmed our rep is our cynical and decidedly amoral way we've gone about seizing our destiny--coups, invasions, occupations, *proliferations*, etc, mass killings (arguably genocide) and the way we throw around our superpowered-ness to keep ourselves on top, often at the expensive of minor stuff like *human rights* and common decency. It's actions, not words, that have caused people all around the world to fear--and often hate--the United States. And in my view American hegemony is the result of a bunch of cynical and pragmatic decisions made by people for cynical and pragmatic and self-serving reasons that have very little to do with any strong ideology or morality. Take Woodrow Wilson, for example: claimed in public that he decided he wanted the Philippines because "God told him so" and "they must be brought into the light of Christ and civilization" i.e. it's for their own good, vs. his actual motive--to secure a channel to the incredibly lucrative Chinese market, for American goods.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Friday, April 21, 2017, 12:28 PM

Cameron, Very informative post about the similarities and differences of American Exceptionalism by our leaders today and our leaders back then. I can say that I agree with you on the area where exceptionalism is being used as a tool to bring people together for an event that may be in the form of a vote. Our leaders today know that the people of this nation have a unique power and I think it is a critical factor for them to mention American Exceptionalism in order for them to increase their chances of rising to power and staying there.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Cameron Wray - Friday, April 21, 2017, 2:17 PM

Yes, and over the years I think politicians have become more and more selective of where, when and how they acknowledge their nationalism/patriotism. I believe if they were to come off 100% for or against American exceptionalism it would exclude a lot of the voters which is really what they're after.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0



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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Kiet Bui - Friday, April 21, 2017, 12:34 PM

Can you explain in more details the reasons why exceptionalism caused the "negative perception" about the United States?

In my point of view, the reason why exceptionalism could cause a bad reputation for the U.S. is probably the same thing as what it is used for: "to united people over an event or for a cause", especially if those events or causes are internationally related. Once Americans are united under their country's exceptionalism(or should I say nationalism?), and then act for its pride or idealism, the world could perceive the United States' resultant actions as some kind of dogmatism. Yes, the U.S. is the most powerful country in world, but that does not mean it should do whatever it wants, especially in modern days. How would you feel if you were in a lesser country, with Americans telling you what you should and should not do because Americans are somehow better than you are? We all know that human nature.

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1



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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Cameron Wray - Friday, April 21, 2017, 2:14 PM

The main reason I say that American exceptionalism is a major contributing factor to why other countries might perceive the United States negatively is how intertwined with nationalism it is. Throughout the past century the U.S. has gotten involved with so many countries. From what I understand a lot of those countries would prefer if we stayed out of their business. It comes off as arrogant to almost be pushing our ways on other countries. Like you said about the U.S. being the most powerful country "that does not mean it should do whatever it wants" and I think to a lot of countries that's what it looks like we're doing.

I really am not trying to come off as anti-American because I love this country but I do believe that we are involved in a lot of other countries business and maybe we shouldn't be. There are probably a lot of reasons we are involved so much, some good, some bad none of which I really know but it would be nice to have some reason for optimism about the future of our country in terms of its national debt.

During the exceptionalism video Andrew Bacevich says that he released his book in 2008 because "I was hopeful at that moment, the time might be right for Americans to seriously examine this claim of our uniqueness and of our mission to the rest of the world" (6:32). This line stood out to me the most of the entire video because I think that after 9 years since its release we are still at the same point where I believe we should examine this claim. Self-Awareness is a great for arrogance prevention.

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Re: American Exceptionalism: Sameness While Changing

by Kiet Bui - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 2:17 PM

Actually from my standpoint, the world prominent power should be involved with international events. The problem here is that when gathering supports from American people for such interventions, using exceptionalism could make a very reasonable action sound pretty unjust to other countries. Of course an important reason for that is the development of communication, not to mention practices similar to "yellow journalism" these days.

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Weichang Gu - Monday, April 17, 2017, 12:18 AM

Over 100 years, the country's leaders always try to make American to be the leader of the free world. They are proud for American Exceptionalism, because they feel American is a powerful country, and better than other countries. Older leader believe arm interference problem, "A war with Spain in 1898 gave the United States an opportunity to upgrade its military and acquired colonies and influence in the Western Hemisphere and Asia." (Textbook p.742) but new leader believe modern diplomacy is commercial. "Taft and Knox letter Which is promising substitute "dollars for bullets," and thus offer a more peaceful and less coercive way of maintaining stability and order. Taking a swipe at Roosevelt's "big stick" policy, Taft announced that " (Textbook p.764) Not exactly, American leaders understand wars are not best choose to develop United State. According to textbook "The United States, under Wilson, was looking for a way to support These peoples' democratic aspirations while also safeguarding their own

economic interests. The First World War would make this quest for a balance between democratic principles and national self-interest all the more urgent. "(Textbook p.767) I agree President Obama told" I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism. "(0:20 sec into Exceptionalism speakers video) Where is honor for British? Where is honor for Greeks? No, They are no longer exist. President Obama want to tell people that American have to be more stronger. China threat theory is good choose to warning the public.

The right side or left side of the political are both want to make better society, but they use different way to realize the goal. " Many Americans of the time judged their nation by both standards and thus faced a dilemma that would extend throughout the 20th century. On the one hand, they believed with Roosevelt that the size, economic strength, and honor of the United States required it to accept the role of world power and policeman. On the other hand, they continued to believe with Wilson that they had a mission to spread the democratic values of 1776 to the farthest reaches of the earth."(textbook p.767) I think left side will more patient, conversation first then use force. Right side will more tough, less negotiation. I am a left side political; Socialism. Obama articulate radical form of American exceptionalism. " They believed that the United States should build a strong navy, solidify a sphere of influence in the Caribbean, and extend markets into Asia. " (textbook p.764) Obama's speech mean American could plunder others right. 92 percent of Republicans are "extremely" or "very" proud to be an American. Things are not so fervent among Democrats on the patriotic meter: 67 percent said they were proud, along with 73 percent of independents. (washingtontimes p.1) conservatives see America as exceptional because of our shared belief in the dignity and creativity of the individual. We know that it is innately human to work, to risk, and to dream.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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The Constitution and American Exceptionalism

by William Mc Mahon - Monday, April 17, 2017, 5:16 PM

In regards to the speakers in the videos, I found their arguments for American exceptionalism flawed.

I agreed with something the first speaker said while arguing for American exceptionalism. He said, "America's success is unjust if we're not exceptional." (First Speaker, video) I believe this is true. That America is not exceptional, and thus, the success is unjust.

A large part of our economic success can be attributed to the fact that our earliest ancestors stumbled upon half a continent of pristine, bountiful land.

Many of the speakers referenced the Constitution as proof of American Exceptionalism, touting the notion that we alone lay claim to the idea that freedom is God-given while ignoring our somewhat abysmal record applying this principle to our own citizens, let alone the world.

At the end of the Spanish-American War, anit-imperialists believed that... "subjugating the Filipinos would violate the nation's most precious principle: the right of all people to independence and self-government." (Textbook pg. 727) Caught up in war fever, our country conveniently forgot about its own principles. This makes me skeptical of the idea of the United States as a beacon of liberty.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: The Constitution and American Exceptionalism

by Andrew Trott - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 5:19 PM

I am inclined to agree strongly with you. When stated, "the modern liberal has no choice but to believe that American success is the greatest injustice in human history," (American commentary on Exceptionalism m. 2:24) he hit the nail on the head for me. American Exceptionalism definitely does depend in some part on where our political ideology lies, as some people in this forum have pointed to.

The idea of Americans "war fever" seems to be somewhat an issue of the ends justifying the means. If America is able to create a stable democracy it doesn't matter who has to die or who is cast aside to achieve this goal. This idea sounds a lot like nationalism to me.

Would agree that a large part of American success is due to the exploitation of those with less and industry, through out american history?

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Economic Success

by William Mc Mahon - Friday, April 21, 2017, 11:49 AM

If we're talking about economic success then yes, I completely agree. One of the speaker's talked about our "Protestant work ethic," (Speakers on American Exceptionalism-1st speaker) but who built the railroads? Chinese immigrants, Catholic Irish. And all the cotton the South was selling overseas? Slaves, who weren't even considered human by some people. A lot of the labor that produced our national wealth did come as a result of exploitation on the working class. I think our nation is more capitalist than democratic sometimes.

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Re: Economic Success

by Andrew Trott - Friday, April 21, 2017, 2:49 PM

Capitalism and Democracy can coincide just as socialism and democracy can coincide. One is an economic system the other is a system of government. So I would say it is both democratic and capitalism. But certainly at points large business has had the largest voice in this country while working class people have little say, if any at all.

I do believe that protestant work ethic is made up or something that is exaggerated in order to achieve this idea of exceptionalism that leads to nationalism. Protestant work ethic is similar to the idea of pull yourself up by your boot straps mentality. Which coincide actually; if one believes they can pull themselves up by thier boot straps, and they believe in "protestant work ethic" being the driving force of the country. Then these together would justify the white male domination so prevalent in our culture. Certainly Roosevelt would subscribe to this flawed logic.

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Re: The Constitution and American Exceptionalism

by Weichang Gu - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 6:18 PM

This is a interesting theory. I think The United States is a beacon of liberty, but only for American. The right of all people to independence and self-government.(In America) Some people will argue The United States help a lot of countries do postwar reconstruction, and establish a democratic regime. I just want to say go to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan. America unwittingly, the desire to spread democracy in the Middle East led to the formation of ISIS from the insurgency against US occupation of Iraq, and the resultant Shia dominated democracy provided ISIS with a recruitment pool of alienated Sunnis.(<http://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/09/one-war-many-reasons-the-us-invasion-of-iraq/>) My conclusion is The United States is a great country for all american,

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Monday, April 17, 2017, 6:56 PM

There is nothing exceptional about American exceptionalism as a moral/religious position. Exceptionalism, broadly speaking, is completely ordinary. It's standard. Any culture, especially the big, accomplished ones (they've got a more fleshed out idea of how and why they're "exceptional", usually, they've developed their arguments further, basically) think they're special. Our neanderthal ancestors probably believed in *tribal* exceptionalism. It's just how we work. Is "it" still in use? Sure it is, in different forms, not always the "the creator of the universe favors *us* out of all 7 billion people on this planet for some inexplicable reason, isn't that great", but it's around. Even Obama pushed the American exceptionalism line pretty hard throughout his two terms, especially during the elections. I don't know about the quote that Herman Cain was responding to in the Spectator (maybe missing some context??) but Obama, just like every other American president I've ever heard of, either believes in American exceptionalism or is a very convincing liar.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/obamas-new-american-exceptionalism/493415/>

Here's an atlantic article analyzing Obama's recent address at the DNC, titled "Obama's New American Exceptionalism". The gist is that Obama's vision is a little closer to "shining city but improveable" vs "literally perfect as we are", but still, definitely, exceptionalism.

The cynical explanation for why politicians always push the exceptionalism thing so hard is because it works. Clinton's exceptionalism and Trump's exceptionalism are different, but they're both forms of "we're really great, we've got the best stuff here in America, we're the best people" etc etc etc, because politics (at least the getting elected part) is all about popular appeal. That is, appealing to lots of people. And people like believing that they're better than other people. Stronger, smarter, richer, kinder, more generous, whatever. People like to believe the place they live and the culture they live within is the best. We like to be able to justify our many *exploits* overseas, whether it's the "christianize the savages" of yesteryear or the "you'll take our democracy and capitalism and *like it*" (or not, if you've got something we need or want to exploit) of today.

We invaded Iraq ostensibly to chase terrorists--The "War on Terror" and somehow we've turned the culture of Islam itself into our enemy.

(https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/article/the-21st-century-turn-to-culture-american-exceptionalism/EC510B299C961F52FF288C399FDF7884).

That's a *powerful* manifestation of American exceptionalism. So yeah. It's still here. It's still "in use". And as a belief system, it's both much larger and much smaller than "just" America. It goes from the very, very top all the way to the bottom.

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Re: American Exceptionalism--forgot the subject line

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Monday, April 17, 2017, 8:42 PM

Sorry--completely forgot to add a subject line. Maybe something like **"Exceptionalism, American and otherwise, is deeply rooted in our biology and is very much alive and even thriving today and it's not going to change anytime soon"** or something might work?

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Exceptionalism vs. Nationalism

by Kiet Bui - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 9:42 PM

It seems to me that, when expressing American Exceptionalism, american politicians would often say something like this : "America is the best country, we are the best people.", which you have mentioned above. So how does that exceptionalism differ from nationalism? Here is one of the definitions from the online Merriam-Webster dictionary of nationalism: "exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations". Is that the exact thing that you described about some American's viewpoint?

In my opinion, if it were the case that the term "exceptionalism" is used simply as a nicer word for "nationalism", then I think that is a very risky strategy to use. Too much pride can cause blindness, and many wars started with nationalism as a factor (e.g. WWI which we just discussed in class).

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Re: Exceptionalism vs. Nationalism

by Andrew Trott - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 5:25 PM

It does seem that exceptionalism and nationalism are very close to one another. Exceptionalism seems to be the ideas that propel nationalism and populist movements. So they are related but not inherently tied together, though there does seem to be a correlation.

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American Exceptionalism from a foreign viewpoint.

by Kiet Bui - Monday, April 17, 2017, 11:30 PM

After having watching the video combining the opinions of the five speakers, the point that seems most convincing to me is that of Andrew Bacevich. He has pointed out a very important meaning of American Exceptionalism, which implies not only just the difference, uniqueness of this country, but also its superiority, compared to other country: "Somehow we represent what the world is supposed to become, that our definition of freedom has a universal application" (8:00 into Exceptionalism speakers video). I can understand that America has been the world's leading country for the last hundred years, but in my opinion, that success did not come from just the U.S. or its citizens, but a combination of many factors. One of the important factors, which I would argue, is that at the turn of the 20th century, America has became a world power after the Manifest Destiny was completed, which opened up a lot of new markets and jobs opportunities, attracting immigrants to populate the country. In addition, from what I gathered from chapter 23, America was relatively almost undamaged during WWI, not to mention that the U.S., as one of the victors, could have been shared the 33 billions dollars from Germany (Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People p.765).

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Re: American Exceptionalism from a foreign viewpoint.

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Friday, April 21, 2017, 1:04 PM

Kiet, very interesting post. In my opinion, I think America is the most powerful country in the world because mainly of the military and freedom but there is definately other factors that have helped America rise to being the most powerful nation in the world.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: American Exceptionalism from a foreign viewpoint.

by Weichang Gu - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:33 PM

Kiet, I agree with your opinion. 1. United State is the most diverse and inclusive culture on earth. 2. Complete industrial system. 3. Powerful army. 4. Gold standard system. 5. US dollar and oil system and so on.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Brogan Smith - Monday, April 17, 2017, 11:44 PM

Exceptionalism does not appear to have diminished on social media or in certain counties of America but as an idea in the minds of what I feel is the majority of the population post election: exceptionalism is gone because many don't believe in the government anymore. I imagine exceptionalism was stronger 100 years ago because our current leader does not, as I see it, hold himself to democratic ideals. Because "In a democracy, the rule of law protects the

rights of citizens, maintains order, and limits the power of government" (8th paragraph Stanford.edu). He does not want to limit the power of government with all the military spending he proposes.

To some Americans exceptionalism is alive and well and to others, it appears dead. This separation can add to the bubble that Americans feel. During the last election, exceptionalism was at an all time high. Everyone was patriotic and loving democracy because both Republicans and Democrats were thinking "we're going to win".

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Living in A Bubble of Exceptionalism^^ (better title)

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 12:15 PM

-

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Similarities and differences on past leaders and present leaders

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 12:05 AM

American Exceptionalism refers to the United States as a uniquely free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty. In other words, it is a belief that our country follows a path of history different from the laws or norms that governs other countries. Americans see this as a blessing of god that keeps our nation strong, independent and free. The understanding of American Exceptionalism of leaders from the past and leaders from the present have some similarities and some differences. In the past our leaders believed in this topic and had strong beliefs about it. They have believed for a long time that America has a special and unique role to play in this world. In today's era, our leaders still believe in American Exceptionalism but some of them have not supported it fully. Barrack Obama is a good example of that when he said, "I believe in American Exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the brits believe in british exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." (Speakers on American Exectionalism)

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Re: Similarities and differences on past leaders and present leaders

by Weichang Gu - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:49 PM

Your said. "In today's era, our leaders still believe in American Exceptionalism but some of them have not supported it fully." In my opinion, I believe American leaders still believe in American Exceptionalism; they never change. For example: US carrier starts 'routine' patrols in South China Sea.(<http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/19/us/us-carrier-south-china-sea/>) America still believe they have special responsibility in this world and they are unique.

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Then and Now; American Exceptionalism - Picking and Choosing

by Andrew Trott - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 4:18 PM

Our countries leaders still do use exceptionalism when they is something of value that we are after. When there is a country that we do not agree with we simply over through its government or pay to overthrow its government in the name of democracy. An example of this is when Roosevelt stage and funded rebellions from the Panamanians against the columbian government. When there is a government that we agree more strongly with we tend to deny our own exceptionalism in the name of another autonomy. "Wilson's relationship with Mexico in the wake of its revolution, however, reveals that he was trouble by foreign policy that ignored a less powerful nations right to determine its own future." (Murrin p. 742). After World War 1 Wilson made it very clear that autonomy was extremely important to him. We seem to use this exceptionalism in the same pick and choose form as we always have.

The idea of American Exceptionalism is in someways a product of propaganda. In American propaganda other sides are often displayed as savage, ruthless, and uncivilized. In class we discussed the Committee on Public Information. Thought this is officially when the government dedicated a sector exclusively to the image of America it was always something was being upheld by the yellow journalist of the time. Indeed this idea of America being morally superior goes back to at least the revolution, where we were bring "freedom of religion" and removing the oppressed from the oppressor, Britain.

One of the biggest differences I see when contrasting leaders of today compared to leaders in the early 20th century is that at the turn of the 20th century not only were these presidents imperialist, but they held racist tendencies that influenced their ideas of what it meant to be exceptional. Wilson, himself, started a eugenics program that still has ramifications today. "Less well known is that a crude eugenic sorting of groups into deserving and undeserving classes crucially informed the labor and immigration reform that is the hallmark of the Progressive Era" (Leonard, 2003). Roosevelt believed that white caucasians were superior and justified much of America's "exceptionalism" on this basis. It seems that the idea of American Exceptionalism is rooted strong with American Nationalism.

I tend to agree with former President Obama that many countries see themselves as exceptional and indeed probably have good reason too. There is no doubt that Britain at the height of its empire saw itself as exceptional and civilized. But I believe that India or many African cultures would disagree.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Then and Now; American Exceptionalism - Picking and Choosing

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 12:36 PM

That is an interesting point (2nd P). I often feel very unpatriotic compared to those around me because exceptionalism is very often used to shame people, as it is claimed to be a synonym for patriotism. But I see exceptionalism as an idea that encompasses personal liberty. The people in government who claim to promote exceptionalism, really aren't*, because in reality they are restricting the American people's movement's/liberty. Like we saw with the Immigration Restrictions earlier this year. And as Paul Larkin states "America has avoided the fate of nations that have traded freedoms for promises of security, or security for unlimited freedom, and achieved neither" (Heritage).

In short, exceptionalism is used to control people, much like the propaganda that you talk about. America's image is, at times, fairly unstable and it is difficult to make decisions that impact the world without someone disagreeing with our manner of demonstrating exceptionalism.

*They may think they are but it's very difficult to balance Security and Liberty in a way that all Americans will agree with.

Citation:

How Must America Balance Security and Liberty: <http://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/report/how-must-america-balance-security-and-liberty>

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Re: Then and Now; American Exceptionalism - Picking and Choosing

by Kiet Bui - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:38 PM

"It is claimed to be a synonym for patriotism" explained a lot to me. When I was watching the Exceptionalism video, I had strong impression that Evan Sayet was trying to discredit president Obama for his response on American Exceptionalism.

Ironically, like you mentioned, American Exceptionalism which should be used to promote freedom, is used to control people, and tag people with a sense of not being patriotic if they disagree with it.

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Re: Then and Now; American Exceptionalism - Picking and Choosing

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:50 PM

Evan Sayet was most certainly disagreeing with Obama and saying that America was exceptional.

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Americian Exceptionalism political spectrum

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 8:39 PM

When talking about the political spectrum, being on the right side are conservatives that think America is allowed to do whatever they want and being on the left side are liberals that think we have to uphold our standards and help other countries solve their own problems. For the issue in Libya, Barack Obama is clearly on the left side of the spectrum being influenced by the fact that we are a country that helps others when help is needed. In his speech he mentions, "To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader, and more profounding our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances, would've been a betrayal of who we are."

(Obama Speech 0:58) For my own spectrum location, I would put myself on the left. In the Obama and American Exceptionalism article I really like Bensens description of Obamas Mindset, "the United States isn't like other countries; ours is a country with unique power, responsibilities, and moral obligations."

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Political Identity Crisis

by Cameron Wray - Friday, April 21, 2017, 2:49 PM

I've never been one to take firm political stances or identify where on the political spectrum I reside. I think this comes from my passive aggressive nature, trying not to take things too seriously so I don't get worked up. When it comes to political discussion if a situation becomes argumentative I usually withdraw myself. I used to think that not choosing where I stand allowed me to have a broader perception of things in order to form an unbiased opinion. Recently after being in this class for a few weeks I've embraced this awkward experience of trying to form a political stance, a place to reside on the spectrum because I've realized that withdrawing myself from this situation doesn't lead me to a conclusion. Instead of forming an unbiased opinion by not involving myself I just stay away from the subject altogether. As naïve as it sounds, the center seems like the most logical place to find solutions beneficial to both sides so if I had to pick where I think I am currently that would be it.

I bring this all up because I find a lot of what I read or hear from people in the articles or videos hard to digest when insults or personal attacks are brought up. This hard to digest feeling escalates when something regarding religion is brought up, especially in regards to how those beliefs may have shaped our nation. In the Spectator article by Herman Cain he says "American Exceptionalism is the standard that our laws reflect the understanding that we are afforded certain God-given rights that can never be taken away. We know that God, not government, bestows upon us these inalienable rights, and because of that, they must not be compromised by the whims of man." In my mind I will form an auto opinion on the whole article if I notice something like this.

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Re: Political Identity Crisis

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 12:11 PM

I agree, it becomes difficult to take a point seriously when the opposing side doesn't respect where you're coming from. Even though I may not agree with Cain, it's important to remember that many people "see American Exceptionalism not as an empty cry for nationalism, but instead, the blessings of God that keep our nation strong" (Spectator, 4th P). Based off of this differing of opinions and the multiple interpretations of Exceptionalism among McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson it shows us that there may not be different definitions of Exceptionalism but different ways to uphold the idea of it.

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Political Party and Exceptionalism

by William Mc Mahon - Friday, April 21, 2017, 9:32 PM

I believe liberals and conservatives look at American Exceptionalism differently. Obama's speech did have a thread of exceptionalism to it, but there were a lot of qualifiers. I felt like if you prodded him he could defend his ideas. As opposed to George W. Bush who felt he was "called to defend freedom" (Salon Article.) His thoughts sound like mushy idealism. I think this is further reflected in the poll. In the poll conservative patriotism is more consistent. America is as much an idea to them as it is a country. Liberals, on the other hand, their patriotism reacts based on what party is in the White House, and what we're doing internationally. (Washington Times - Forum materials).

I side with the liberals in the poll. I think that how the government is currently engaging its citizens and the world is the real test of our "exceptionalism." I mean that in regards to both political parties.

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Republican's Consistent Patriotism

by Brogan Smith - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 3:08 PM

It makes more sense for the Republicans to feel more proud to be American than Democrats because Democrats are labeled liberal and are thus working towards new opinions/laws that go against the status quo. Whatever the goal, it never seems accomplished, because you can always go further with broadening opinions of traditionally minded people.

Republicans or Traditionalist's prefer the way things used to be. Overall America still stands for the same ideals (at least in the minds of the American people). Liberty, justice, equality are ideals to be proud of, so it is no wonder Republicans are happy to represent what this country was founded on.

Exceptionalism is equated with patriotism, and as stated above, Republicans are seen to be more proud/patriotic than Democrats then they will uphold traditionalist versions of exceptionalism. This is a difficult issue for me specifically to analyze from a Republican point of view because I fall closer to the left side of the spectrum. But it seems to me that Republicans are "with America no matter what" and Democrats constantly want change...so it is understandable that someone who is Republican may analyze the issue of exceptionalism and determine that everyone else should be supporting their country no matter what, just like them.

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 9:12 PM

I think it's a mistake to ascribe some sort of politically transcendental patriotism to Republicans, and also to confine close-mindedness and traditionalism to the left side of the spectrum. There's dogma and the left and dogma on the right and it's concentrated at the extremes, and speaking to my personal experiences and observations of the algorithmically-optimized echo-chamber that is facebook, just as poisonous from those on

the far left. Throughout the election cycle I saw calls for Trumps assassination (and worse) and near-universal adherence to the dogma of the democrats (there was a minor schism when the extent of the DNC meddling was revealed) but even then, within a day my feed was a solid wall of pro-Hillary rhetoric. And as for Republicans and their "patriotism", the virulence of the reaction against Obama should be enough to give the lie to that idea. I think at this point the salient distinction is between globalistic and nationalistic ideologies, and while the exceptionalist edge might be a little sharper on the nationalist side, it's certainly not mutually exclusive with globalism. And really, it's adisagreement about how best to go about projecting our dominance on the world--globalist progressives might talk a big game, but the rich are still getting richer, and the poor poorer--and the dominance of the dollar is just as effective--more--than that of an M16 or a Blackhawk. And that's why China's surge is so scary, but that's another blog post.

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Republicans hold no monopoly on dogma, OR patriotism

by Nadav Klappholz - Compton - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 9:18 PM

Sorry, forgot the subject line on my above post (again).

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:21 PM

I would agree that both sides hold dogma. But I wouldn't say that these dogma's are concentrated to the far left or the far right. They exist at all places within the spectrum. Wilson was certainly not a far leftist, but he certainly held dogma. When he was pushing for the silence of anyone who dissented WWI, he was pushing his dogma. He also took dogma into the Paris Peace conference with his "14 points" and idea of self governance. There is certainly dogma on the right as well. I think that the left and right also both have patriotism, there is a difference though between what that patriotism is.

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Re: Republican's Consistent Patriotism

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:36 PM

I'm not sure I agree that exceptionalism and patriotism are equatable. It seems that Patriotism + Nationalism = Exceptionalism. So they are related they are not the same. Exceptionalism seems to be a way to justify America's right to go into other governments and either overthrow them influence them somehow.

An example of Exceptionalism being an excuse to force ideals on others is the United Nations Declarations of Human Rights. This is a document that forces Governments to adhere to western ideals of liberty and justice. While I might agree with these ideas, there is

certainly the notice from those in the west that these ideals are the best and exceptional so other countries should take them up; if they don't then they are barbaric and unjust. The Declaration of Human Rights was signed after WWII with FDR, a hero of the left. Exceptionalism is certainly not a product only of conservatism.

I think that the left and the right will have different reasons for Exceptionalism. The left will think themselves exceptional because of the change they instill that is seen to them as positive. While the Right will see themselves as exceptional because of how well they adhere to tradition, a tradition that is correct and just.

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