

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.

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Comparing American Exceptionalism between early 1900 to now

by Garrett Warner - Monday, April 17, 2017, 3:42 PM

When thinking of how our Presidents a hundred years ago compared to now about American Exceptionalism I think of our culture, and how that has changed. Back then our “ego” persay was extremely high. Right after the Spanish-American war, which was easily won by the Americans, made it so the people of America thought their way was best. Also our leaders at the time were retired war veterans. To me, this caused our country to be more aggressive about spreading the message of American ideals across the globe. Barack Obama’s comments about his views on American exceptionalism is very intriguing to me. Another man said that “he hid behind his answer” (video 1:29) by saying the Brits believe in British

exceptionalism and so on. I do think Obama believes in American exceptionalism, however he goes about it differently than perhaps a hard core conservative because in the past we have been leaning on the aggressive side. Charles Murray brought good points in his book by explaining that it isn't the President, who doesn't believe in it, it is the direction our culture is going. He explains that back then the people coming to the United States believed in that same exceptionalism that America is best. There was much to look forward to: not too much government power, the unexplored frontier, and a booming economy (video 5:20). I agree with him that the fact our country does not have that exciting new outlook. There will be nothing new to discover, land wise and our government is governing too much (to some). Very different ideals spanning between one hundred years.

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2



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Compared to 100 years ago I believe we have become even more aggressive. early 1900 to now

by Jeff Johnson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 9:39 PM

I agree with you point that after the Spanish American war America became a more aggressive and a bigger world player. The only problem I have is u imply that we were more aggressive a 100 years ago. I believe we are way more aggressive today than at any point in the past having the most massive military in the world with a budget that outstrips anyone else. I found an article online and here is a quote "According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2015 US defense spending outstripped that of China, Russia, UK, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia and India combined." (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/the-us-spends-more-on-defence-than-all-of-these-countries-combined/>). I believe we were told in class we were the 5th biggest military before ww1. In WW1 we managed to stay out of it until the last year. In Obamas second speech he is using American exceptionalism to justify the bombing of a sovereign nation. The outcry over Americas expanding empire may have been greater a 100 years ago but we were far less aggressive with a tiny military and budget compared with today.

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2



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American Exceptionalism Is still used as the rational for the expansion of the American empire

by Jeff Johnson - Monday, April 17, 2017, 6:05 PM

First off I do have to say the reporter asking the question was trying to bait Obama but Obama didn't fall for it and his response was a perfect blow off of the question. I have a little bit of a hard time with the idea that America was ever this perfect exceptional place. I do believe the American constitution holds some exceptional ideas but all of the writers were well off white men most of who owned slaves. And as far as our expansion west word went the native populations were destroyed. After the Spanish American war American exceptionalism was used as an excuse to gain influence into the world and unfortunately has turned us into

nothing more than an ever expanding empire. The guy right after Obama makes me wonder more and more where the belief in your country being exceptional gives u any right to force those same beliefs on others. The only difference between where we were are now and 1917 is the next world war we won't even have the debate of neutrality because of obligations like NATO.

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Video: I agreed most with Charles Murray (2:30)

by Jeff Johnson - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:14 PM

I agree most with Charles Murray and most of what he has to say. I agree in the 18th century as we expanded westward and had limited government most Americans had more freedom than anywhere in the world. I would say though that that is kind of forgetting the Native Americans, slaves, Catholics, women and so on. I like how he talks about American exceptionalism includes such things as hospitality. My favorite quote is at the end (5:30) where he talks of the need for a civic great awakening as one of our last hope to preserve it. I also like how he didn't once talk about it being our duty to spread American exceptionalism across the globe.

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Video: I disagree most with Evan Sayet (:30)

by Jeff Johnson - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:39 PM

I believe Obama answered the question exactly the way he did because of guys like Sayet. I do believe that America has a lot to offer but I also agree way more with Obama that every country has something to offer. This guy's is obviously a conservative trying to trash Obama but I think the only one he makes look bad is himself. America may be the most powerful right now but there were plenty of other before us and there will be more after. I think this guy would have been fans with McKinley and thank him for spreading American influence across the globe.

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Part 2 my response

by Jeff Johnson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 8:42 PM

I don't think Obama really changed his mind on his view of American exceptionalism u just have to take the context of the two videos. In the first video he was being asked a question by an obvious conservative trying to get a response out of him. In the second video Obama is explaining why we are going to bomb Libya and in that context he can use exceptionalism for his reasoning. One of the exceptional things this country has done is not allow one viewpoint to maintain power and control. The only difference between now and a 100 years ago is that even though the pacifist didn't manage to stop war this time u don't really hear any Politian talking about peace and non- intervention and won't be any way for us to stay out of the wars especially with leaders like Obama in this video with the need to spread freedom around the

world by bombing the crap out of it. Now we have Trump who seems to be even more willing to spread American exceptionalism by involving our military all over the world like the bombing of Syria and massive presence building in the water off N. Korea. I find this all extremely sad when people can justify that the exceptional part of our country is using its military might all over the world.

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My final thoughts after reading last two articles

by Jeff Johnson - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:37 PM

I found the Washington Times story interesting how the democrats feel less patriotic when a republican is in office. I believe that really is true with all the protest against Trump and the non-stop media coverage. In the article for Salon magazine they are just trying to silence the conservatives. Obama brings up American exceptionalism and uses it the way any good conservative would. I personally still find it ridiculous to use exceptionalism as an excuse for bombings. I think this quote sums it up "Stephen Walt argues, persuasively I think, that 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" (Salon article). I think we are in real trouble when both sides see our exceptionality as the ability to use our military might around the world "But the harder — and far more important — question is whether this American exceptionalism that you attribute to him is actually true, whether it's well-grounded, and whether it should serve as a premise for our actions in the world." (Salon last paragraph). I think the most interesting point anyone made was Charles Murray (video 5:30) in talking about how we need a new awakening and not a religious one but a civic.

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