

HST 203: U.S. History Sp18 (Escobar Meta 41002 43590)

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Forum 1 American Exceptionalism

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American Exceptionalism

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 9:04 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 one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: American Exceptionalism

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How to define Success?



by Hayley Allen - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 2:04 PM

The main similarity of our current nation's leaders with those at the turn of the century is the belief in a democratic nation. America's foreign policy still revolves around the notion of spreading liberty, freedom and democracy to all corners of the world. This idea of democracy which America prides its 'American exceptionalism' off of has not changed since the beginning of our nation. Although this exercising of exceptionalism may have fluctuated from president to president however it has always been a source of pride and patriotism for all leaders.

Specifically looking at the remarks of President Obama relating to 'American Exceptionalism', I feel he is not given the benefit of context for his statement. First, his speech is given in France, which has extremely strong beliefs in French Exceptionalism as being a just and democratic nation built on the brave revolutionaries much like Americans. Second, Obama's experience living in the U.S. is different than say Evan Sayet, the second speaker from the video clip. Evan Sayet attacks Obama's response blaming the liberal ideology and saying that he has insulted the U.S.'s success (Video: 2:20 min).

However I would argue that Sayet is mistaken by only looking at one perspective of success: economic (GDP growth) and military power. The U.S. has one of the largest economies in the world as well as the strongest military, these are true but does this really make us successful? While most are busy believing we are the best, in terms of developed nations we rank rather low in many categories including education, health care, income equality and life expectancy at birth (Time Mag Article). In my opinion if we boast to be the best than maybe our quality of life should reflect that a little better. I think what Obama was saying is that all people see themselves as being better than everyone else, as American's this is incredibly true with our belief of 'Exceptionalism' however how can we argue that if the facts and statistics don't reflect this. If our exceptionalism comes from being a nation of liberty and freedom than this statistic should be very confusing: "In October 2013, the incarceration rate of the United States of America was the highest in the world, at 716 per 100,000 of the national population. While the United States represents about 4.4 percent of the world's population, it houses around 22 percent of the world's prisoners" (Wikipedia). I am not saying our nation is not exceptional because we are in many ways but it is difficult to ignore some of our flaws as we have much more work to do before we can say we are the greatest nation in the world.

<http://time.com/4693280/us-best-countries-world-ranking/>

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

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Re: Making America great again?

by [Carly Minow](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 10:51 AM

If we were so destined for greatness, why must we make America great again?

The belief in exceptionalism seems to be a focal point of conservative politics. Author Evan Sayet claims that the indoctrination into neutrality by the "leftists" is forced upon the public starting as young as kindergarten. (video 0:32-1:02) He then continues to cite that President Obama does not find our Constitution, Judeo-Christian beliefs, nor our "protestant work ethic" exceptional. (video 1:33-1:41) His points seem to mimic those of the beginning of the 20th century, almost taking a liberal progressive/reform stance. (Ch 21, Where Reform Incubated) Those at the turn of the century believed that America was destined to become the best country in the world, whether through military, or Anglo-Saxon background, or government and laws.

Donald Trump starts his campaign for the presidency in 2015. His familiar red hats and rallies are emblazoned with the statement "Make America Great Again", effectively stating that America is no longer exceptional. This is wildly different from liberals and conservatives, both a century and a decade ago. Gone is the viewpoint of American exceptionalism, with the new conservative mindset being the one they did not want to admit.

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Agree or disagree with american exceptionalism?

by [Chris Castro](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 4:08 PM

Of the arguments and differing points of view expressed by the five speakers in the video clip, who do agree and/or disagree with most?

In my personal opinion I mostly agree with Charles Murray. Murray made a point the "We used to be exceptional", and that about sums it up for me. You see in Americas history there is no doubt that we were the best. Murray even states that "During the 1900's the united states was easily the best and most powerful nation in the world". This i agree with. Back then we were doing things that no other country was doing. Religious freedoms were being brought about, personal freedoms, the right of all men, and our limited government. No other country out their was doing what we were. Fast forward to today and I'm not so sure. If we compare the United States to the rest of the world we are better in a lot of ways than a majority of countries. However a lot of

countries have caught up and even surpassed us. Just looking at where we lie in world rankings can give some indication. The U.S dollar currently ranks at eight among the worlds currencies. We also rank 31st in life expectancy, and we aren't even in the top ten for happiest nations on earth. Now I'm not trying to say that America isn't great because we are. However I would argue that we are no longer "Exceptional". In fact the only thing America is exceptional in anymore is our military might.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/duncanmadden/2018/03/27/ranked-the-10-happiest-countries-in-the-world-in-2018/#431f8cc773e9>

<https://fxssi.com/top-10-of-the-strongest-world-currencies-in-current-year>

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

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Re: Agree or disagree with american exceptionalism?

by [Carly Minow](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 6:20 PM

I definitely do agree that our country's exceptionalism is debatable and at times nonexistent. However, I think there is more to American excellence than our military. For example, our democracy and peaceful turnover of leadership from party to party is a concept some developed, civilized countries struggle with. We may have large populations of citizens disappointed by leaders and choices, but we fight through protest and legislation, not by waging war on D.C. While our education system is greatly flawed, we are home to world-renowned colleges and universities. Although we may have a lower life expectancy than other countries, we are the best for health research and care.

While I don't believe there is any one best country, our society has a lot more to offer than just a powerful military.

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Re: Agree or disagree with american exceptionalism?

by [David Nguyen](#) - Friday, April 20, 2018, 8:22 AM

I agree with your point. I think "exceptional" is a little too much to describe our nation today. Don't get me wrong, I love this country, but I think our country is just "good", not "exceptional". There are still some things that I do not agree with the government. and I see there are things that our country would need some

improvements. We are not the best country in the world anymore in a lot of areas. I understand that "we set our standard a little too high compared to some other countries" (Mr. Escobar, first week of lecture). However, I think it's a good thing to set our standard high. It's good because we would always striving to meet the standards, which would make our country better. We cannot just say "Oh, our country is the best. We're exceptional. We don't need any improvements", which I believe would eventually cause our country to go downhill faster.

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Re: Agree or disagree with american exceptionalism?

by [Katrina Kreklau](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 8:40 PM

I do agree that we used to be exceptional and Andrew Basich also had a point when he said that "Every nation is unique, every state in the union is unique." This was a great point because yes, every state is different and unique. So, to say were unique, I can understand. He also had a point in saying that even Australians and Nigerians and Egyptians can all make the same claim.

If there is one thing that has caused our nation to not be exceptional in the sense that we used to be it, I think would be because of all the fake social media and politics.

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Re: American Exceptionalism, What Is It and How Has Its Meaning Changed?

by [Holland Holub](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 9:48 PM

American exceptionalism during the early 20th through current day hasn't exactly evolved, but the public's opinion of it may have. It doesn't have an exact definition and it's hard to tell if it's good or bad or both. It can be seen as a positive - America was the only country founded on new land - or negative - America, as a country, was founded on stolen land with a violent history. Because "American exceptionalism" has such a loose definition it's hard to tell what exactly it's true about it. During the early 20th century the public seemed to have a more positive outlook on it. America began to thrive and the economy started to improve, many people during this time supported the country and its history. As time went on, views began to change. The great depression and the Vietnam war may have been times when the American people started to see the flaws of their country. I'm still having trouble forming my own opinion of American exceptionalism. What exactly is it and is it all good or all bad or a little bit of both?

OF BOTH:

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what similarities or differences can you infer concerning the country's leaders of Chapter 22 and the leaders of today and their understanding of American Exceptionalism.

by [Katrina Kreklau](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:31 PM

Separated by over 100 years, the country has many similarities and differences concerning the country's leaders of chapter 22 and the leaders of today. One of the many similarities that the leaders of chapter 22 and the leaders of today have in common is imperialism. Once the united states became a world power it seemed that President McKinley pushed for larger borders. *"First, he annexed Hawaii, giving the United States permanent control of Pearl Harbor. Next, he established the US Naval Base at Manila. Never before had the United States on such a large military presence outside the Western Hemisphere."* (Pg. 725) As the nation's power grew it became more and more imperial. Because of this, I think President McKinley and vice president Roosevelt saw exceptionalism as having a nation far greater than the history of the Roman empire. While also trying to keep to how the nation was founded. Today, however, the nation is more imperial then exceptional. While the nation has exceptional qualities and views, many of the things today's leaders have done show the imperialism. In chapter 22 all everything the nation did was to create peace, safety, and understanding. Today whenever the news comes on, it seems like one leader of another no longer wants to play by the rules. It also seems that the leaders of our nation want to "Humanize" other nations that don't have the same beliefs and customs as that of the united states.

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Re: what similarities or differences can you infer concerning the country's leaders of Chapter 22 and the leaders of today and their understanding of American Exceptionalism.

by [Hayley Allen](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 11:33 AM

I agree with your statements regarding the imperialism of the early 1900's however I am curious if you could clarify exactly what you are referring to when you say "Today, however, the nation is more imperial than exceptional"? I do believe our nation is very imperial when it comes to business and culture over other nations but I don't necessarily see the same with government or political dominance. There is definitely the constant military presence in many nations around the world trying to "spread democracy" which may be what you were talking about when you said

spread democracy which may be what you were talking about when you said leaders no longer want to play by the rules.

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Re: what similarities or differences can you infer concerning the country's leaders of Chapter 22 and the leaders of today and their understanding of American Exceptionalism.

by [Carly Minow](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 3:02 PM

I agree with your points that America still does subscribe to some imperialistic belief through our presence in almost every country. However, I do not agree with your Roman empire point. I believe that President McKinley and Vice President Roosevelt tried to emulate the powers of other European leaders such as the British Empire and French Empire. This is furthered by the Roosevelt Corollary (pg 735).

Roosevelt's main goal was to establish America as the only power in the Western Hemisphere, just as Europe had in the Eastern. Also, it was an effort to keep Europe out of any prospective affairs in other countries. In summary, I think it was an imperial reaffirmation of the Monroe Doctrine to show European powers like France and Britain that America was equal in power and influence, not a wanting to be like an ancient power.

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American Exceptionalism In Use Today

by [Jacob Spriggs](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 11:42 PM

American Exceptionalism began when the United States got involved in Cuba and started the Spanish-American War. Since then, American Exceptionalism has been and, for the most part, still is popular ideology in the U.S. I believe that our nation's leaders still use exceptionalism and we a very recent example of it. The U.S. has been involved in the Syrian civil war for a few years now but just a couple days ago we bombed Syria. Just because Donald Trump is the president and some Democrats don't support these bombings doesn't mean that American Exceptionalism is merely a right wing ideology today, and there's proof of that too. Part 2 of the American Exceptionalism Forum Materials page has a video of President Obama giving a speech about U.S. military actions in Libya, and although he doesn't say the words, he is clearly supporting American Exceptionalism. He says, "the United States has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom" (0:20-0:32). These examples are proof that our leaders still use American

Exceptionalism and show no signs of pushing that ideology out the door.

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Re: American Exceptionalism In Use Today

by [Hayley Allen](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 11:59 AM

I agree with your statements regarding American Exceptionalism as the popular ideology in the U.S. and I do believe our leaders are still using American Exceptionalism as means to intervene militarily in other countries much like they were doing in the Spanish-American War. The only issue I have with this statement is the narrow definition of what "American Exceptionalism" means. In the Forum 1 materials video, there are several different meanings of what people consider to be American Exceptionalism. If it means "an anchor of global security and advocate for human freedom" or "American success" (economic, military, socially?) or being "unusually good, outstanding" as defined from a google search of the word exceptional.

With these definitions, I question to what extent our leaders are actually practicing this 'American exceptionalism'. With a quote from a newspaper clipping I read on the internet in response to the missile attack on Syria for using chemical weapons on their citizens explains my feelings, "I'm just thankful that Syria didn't bomb us for poisoning the children of Flint or gassing natives at Standing Rock" (Amber Zirkelbach Wooster). I argue if we are to consider ourselves 'exceptional' enough to attack other countries then we must live up to these standards in our own country. There are many examples of our government not protecting Americans' rights and freedoms that we hold so dear to our country's exceptionalism.

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Do our nation's leaders still use exceptionalism, as they did at the turn of the 20th Century?

by [David Nguyen](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 11:54 PM

Yes, I do believe that our nation's leaders still use exceptionalism to some level. Exceptionalism is deeply rooted in our nation's values. However, people has a different point of views, and I think our nation's leaders do believe in exceptionalism ,but deep down, they still do not think where are the best. For example, President Trump's logo: "Make America Great Again" shows that he believes that our nation was once great, but because of difference believes in the government, some how, over time, has made America not so great and, of course, he believes he will make America great again.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Do our nation's leaders still use exceptionalism, as they did at the turn of the 20th Century?**by [Carly Minow](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 3:25 PM

I see your point about how our leaders and politicians still use American exceptionalism and how people can have differing views. However, I offer a counterpoint to your position that politicians say we are excellent but do not believe it.

I have to disagree with that point because, to me, it seems that politicians who make American excellence the cornerstone of their beliefs and actions do not believe that America's faults make it any less excellent. An example of this is Herman Cain's *American Spectator* article. While biased, he does share that "We see American Exceptionalism not as an empty cry for nationalism, but instead, the blessings of God that keep our nation strong, independent, and free. We see the American story as one of tenacity and triumph, not as one inherently flawed and in need of rewriting. We recognize the times we have stumbled but are assured that it is not due to weakness of our foundation, but instead, the imperfection of mankind."

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Do our nation's leaders still use exceptionalism, as they did at the turn of the 20th Century?**by [Hayley Allen](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 12:50 PM

I agree that our Nation's leaders still use exceptionalism that is deeply rooted in American nationalist beliefs. With this pride in being American and the love for this country, people like Donald Trump are able to successfully use slogans like "Make America great again" that truly pull on the heart strings of patriotic Americans. What I mean by this is that because people love America so much and believe in American exceptionalism then we must fight to regain that 'greatness' that we lost, just because someone said we 'lost' it, they are willing to believe in a false threat to America's greatness ignoring the actual statistics and conditions of the country. I do believe America is no longer the greatest nation in the world in a lot of ways however we do still protect many individual freedoms that other countries don't. That being said, looking backwards and reminiscing on America's accomplishments does not help the current needs of the nation. The problems we face are not the

same as they were and to consider ourselves 'exceptional' then we must progress or we will truly lose all that makes America the land of the free. Whether our leaders think we are the best or not, they must actively work towards improving the nation rather than looking back on the great history of the country and accepting our decline from greatness.

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