

# What is american exceptionalism?



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**American Exceptionalism Definition**

American exceptionalism is a concept which depicts that the United States is unique and different from the rest of the world. According to various research conducted over the years, it can be deduced that most Americans believe the United States is an “ exceptional” nation (Onuf, 2012: 1). The question now remains- what makes it unique? Is being different really a good thing? Based on the above definitions, it can be considered more on the positive view since it is portrayed as having predominance over others. On the contrary, exceptionalism tends to come with its own disadvantages, for instance the United States has been particularly exposed with negative qualities like racism, discrimination, violence and so forth. Even though, Americans had a different aim or purpose, which is to uphold human rights and display liberty and democracy. Thanks to Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, in 1948 the United States started the process of becoming a United Nations by writing a universal declaration of human rights (Ignatieff 2005: 1). This decision made America to be at the top in international level.

If being exceptional means that Americans believe their country is special, then there is nothing special about this exception since all nations treasure their national myth. If this means that the U. S. is very benevolent, gifted, dedicated to civil and religious freedom, equality, justice, prosperity, social mobility, peace and harmony with all countries, and then plays by the book, then it is very contradictory to the facts because the United States has time without number fallen so short from these ideals. On the other hand, American exceptionalism refers to its strength, values and “ indispensable” status, and the United States are exempt from the rules of conduct and

implementation of other countries, the enemy, neutral, and allies must be pushed back (Hodgson 2009: 14). For these reasons, the “exception” becomes a burden, may be even more dangerous than it is worth.

American exceptionalism is indeed a complex topic and shall need not to explore all the twist of it, from a historian point of view says that the United States of America can be exceptional in the sense that they know where they are coming from and the development they have gone through without associating it with ethnical involvement.

## **OVERVIEW OF EXCEPTIONALISM**

Throughout American history, idealists and materialists have changed the theme of exceptionalism. Their different interpretation relative importance of the nationalist intention ideological and material interests’ dominance of foreign policy historians obsessed republican principles and national interest. They served as or disguised export and universal focus. At one extreme, a materialist view that, in the United Kingdom the United States is unique in facts on the ground never is replicated elsewhere: Patriot propaganda of the role is remind fellow colonists to the interests endangered and arouses them in their defence. After series of terrorist attacks in the Iraq war, American exceptionalism has become one of the dominant issues discussed. This abstraction is not just a popular idea, but, on the hostile, a concept common in the United States. These deep historical roots can be traced back to its origin and development of the main characteristics and influence. On one hand, freedom and equality of the highest priority. However, many U. S. citizens feel proud to consider their way of life is superior to other countries,

and actively seek to share on the basis of the Constitution, which often is not logically consistent with equality and freedom.

The term American exceptionalism was actually founded from the brilliant work of Alexis de Tocqueville which stands for qualitatively different from all other western countries. One of the important reasons of this exceptionalism was the freeing of the United States from the British. Exceptionalism itself was sought out from colonial period up to 1776 when American became a separate independent country from the British. Since then, the concept became more popular and replaced the idea of apparent destiny.

The essence of uniqueness went back to 16th century, when John Winthrop expressed his opinion to his peer Puritans, that there will be a city upon a hill where they would never have to experience the bad things they had gone through in old Europe. One of the main factors that influenced the National identity of America at that time was that they had vast pool of resources, which Europe didn't have at that moment. America now as a nation which supports human rights can refer to the fact that the first people who populated North America were usually eager seekers of a new destiny, better living and the dominant encouragement for their risky location was basically land and the possibility of recognition of their own values and ideas. So now North America was called new world and this cut the eyes of those who were against the old world. The illustration regarding society, liberties, wealth, government and God were polished to create a better place for surviving than old Europe.

Now the question is what makes a country to be exceptional? For a country to be exceptional is has to have these four qualities. Firstly, is to have the eagerness to stand on its own to face variety of issues, along with the perceived liberty to withstand the pressures and strong evaluation of others. Secondly, it also believes that its national values and routine are widely known and its policy positions are right, not just beneficial. Thirdly, is to have strong ability to visualize things inwards, domestic political study and development, being persuasive in international meetings. Lastly, but not the least is the national policy which states that makers and legislators are not obligated to follow their nation's interest and acting through multilateral institution is just an option.

It is a well-known fact that, exceptionalism is not only in the United States, but what makes it different from others is the wideness and magnitude of American power, with the interest it has are without prior, they influenced ideology and idealism with deep efforts, and also they are sharpened by political system, established by the separation of powers and by prejudiced difference over foreign policies. Now for many Americans exceptionalism has been a part of their perspective, values and national character which receives only questions and comments. As earlier mentioned, many countries are considered “ exceptional” but in the case of America's position its shows its exceptionalism in the real world not only in some international meetings. So till this date no other country has come close to America in international power and for the past few years the gap is just been increasing wider (luck 2003: 4).

However, the concept of exceptionalism change as time goes on. Although out of the United States during the colonial era, the United States was considered as a symbol of opportunity, wealth and political weight, the border was closed to many outsiders as to their origin, racial reasons, and practical considerations. At this point, the exception means power and protectionism. However, in the contemporary context, what is known as American exceptionalism can be seen in the current policy and ideology, ignoring any difference between the past and present, the reasons and opportunities resulting in symbolic values, and the principle of contradiction and controversy. Exception tend to maintain a positive view of the past, present and future, which is an essential element of the social doctrine and propaganda (Shafer 1991: 1)

## **THE TYPES OF EXCEPTIONALISM**

Exceptionalism can be distinguished into two forms which are the substantive and methodological exceptionalism. In contradiction to substantive exceptionalism and methodological exceptionalism are very different in approach, even if it is the court or by the legislative bodies in finding solution to freedom of expression arguments. In some countries like Canada, South Africa and Europe it is admitted that the American methodology has a deeply different acceptance of structure of freedom of expression judgement. besides the substantive view, it is mostly considered in some liberal democracies that the united states is an outlier not only with respect to freedom of expression opinion and policies, but with respect to freedom of expression methodology as well. Unlike substantive exceptionalism in which more is needed to be explained the methodological

exceptionalism is more briefly explainable in terms of natural course of rights complexification- where simply understandable rights become into a more elaborate ones as a problem of policy makers face a greater value perception mode in this array, making rules, principles and presumptions necessary for them to handle that larger array (Ignatieff 2005: 31).

## **IDEALISM AND REALISM**

Americans have been fighting over the relative importance of “ ideas” and the definition of “ interests” of the meaning of the United States. Idealists and materialists may not agree about human nature, but they provide complementary national narrative that supports exceptionalism. An idealist now looks idealists to celebrate the revolution in the past Patriot they waved the principle of self-determination is a universally applicable “ Equal World.” Their self-understanding converted to “ American ideology” an inspiring new concept of state’s role in the history of the world. This was significantly expressed by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address “ We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain-That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom-and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

While on the other hand materialism points out realistic story to articulate the interests even more than the ideas, but also to be devoted to the basic principles of self-determination. Paying attention to the first settlers to conquer the wilderness, they celebrate history of elf management, self-sufficiency and continuous improvement. The empire of British has been an empty shell, not mandatory act, serious damage to the vital interests of rights awareness settlers’ population. Patriot’s challenge is to remind his

fellow citizen's internal threats and overcome habitual loyalty gently jurisdiction the aggressive theme better things to do: " Our ancestors," Jefferson wrote in 1774, " are farmers, rather than the lawyer." moment of lawyers, such as Jefferson Empire crisis. They talk about " common sense." the principle of " self-evident" to a mobilization of people, causing them sleeping and a new sense of collective strength. (Onuf, 2012: 83)

## **EQAULTY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

The idea of equality in America back then might be imaginary for others. Equality meant a personal identity, free arbitrary class distinctions. There is equally disorientation because of the breakup of cultural diversity. Still the quality of interpretation of free exceptionalism is very strange, in some respects, because the centre of attention and analysis of the historical tradition to support this argument. The argument essentially is that the United States began to open political culture and everyone thought at this time to continue to shape the political debate and public policy. Such an interpretation can visually quite attractive. However, if we begin to consider by analysing the logic, such an explanation, we must question the mechanism, it is said to work here. What is the mechanism of dissemination and continuation of the political culture? Culturalism is not, of course, to say simply, each generation to the next through a fixed set of beliefs. Their argument is significantly more complex. Cultural theory in one of the most interesting attempts to defend the charges that is too static (Ekstein, 1988: 791)

Proposed this explanation is that, in an attractive and suspicious continuity. It is reasonable to expect that these basic interpretive filter through multiple



generations handed down, is not to adjust to change, even to fundamentally change the course of history. The culture will change, but also shows a mechanism, which should make us rethink the rest mass of the exceptions to the free parameters. He told us that substituting learning is clearly important, “ but a person’s world view is not dependent on exactly what their elders to teach them, but to shape their entire life experience, sometimes the formation of the younger generation of experience and profound from previous generations

The point here is that the values, culture, and the concept of change and experience. Therefore, we cannot say that the United States is a nation built on the set of the value of freedom, and therefore, we believe that these values today. A certain extent, we found a strong liberal / principle of individualism in American political culture in the late twentieth century, need more than their origins explained. We also need to understand that it is what the American experience, and encourage Americans to reinterpret these values into anti-statist policy preferences. (Inglehart, 1990: 4)

## **POLITICAL UNSTABILITY**

All the promising difficulties of religion and politics have been resolved by refusing that religious thought has had a very big impact in the political field. From a point of politics, business and government in the United States is like no other country, whose sates have made an important impact in the modernization process. Now because other countries were not influenced by business attraction than in the United States, so this made foreign government to push their workers to be in unions and they actually did it before the United States (Jacoby, 1987: 9)

The citizens of America have actually pointed out that in the survey that was carried out it persistently favours a non-united government and weak states. Most of the times when some majority of the populations are asked by the survey takers of their opinion in whether they want the President houses of congress to be commanded by one single party or dividend between two, in this case they select the last minute feedback by massive majority. In addition to that, they always show a difference for small governmental units to larger ones.

A very interesting and clever article written by J. P. Nett “ The state as a conceptual variable”

This article explains the huge difference between the American and the European conception of the state. He also pointed out that the latter is distinguished by the ‘ relative statelessness’.

Now the thing is that in the United States only their law is dominant. So what makes America and its people exceptional is the unique power their lawyers have (Shafer 1991: 8)

You see what made American exceptionalism different is that it is unlike what we have in Europe and Britain, in the United States I could say that the most influential factor that affect the political and social change are the lawyers and its experts. As we can see several times they have been the master mind for bringing it about. So these have opened a bigger argumentative guarantee of human right and civil liberties than the rest of the world.

(Shafer 1991: 9)