

America Is No Longer Exceptional

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We have moved well beyond the years when the myth of American exceptionalism should have been abandoned. Yet this myth persists despite the hysteria and chaos ripping the nation into unrecognizable shreds. America is spiritually bankrupt. "We suffer from a spiritual blackout," writes American philosopher and public intellectual Cornel West.

According to West, the nation's spiritual blackout "is characterized by a culture of superficiality, where appearance matters more than substance, and people are more concerned with image and spectacle than with cultivating genuine relationships and meaningful connections."

We have become a nation obsessed with trivial beliefs about freedom and individualism at the expense of higher virtues.

We sit paralyzed on a precipice incapable of restoring sanity to a regime built upon ever-contradictory propaganda, lies, deception and media indoctrination.

The tyranny and derangement of the country's collectivist ego has overthrown and usurped the democracy of the soul, a fear that did not go unnoticed by the Constitution's drafters. The nation's founders recognized the crucial dangers that the loss of ethical and tolerant virtues posed to the preservation of functioning democracy.

During his speech at the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin warned, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." And in a letter to the Massachusetts Militia in 1798, John Adams wrote, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

These voices should encourage us to pause and reflect for a moment on how the country has become unmoored and now drifts aimlessly in an ocean of social turbulence, uncertainty, and moral emptiness.

America had its moment of exceptionalism. That time has rapidly waned. For a growing number of developing nations, the old canards of John Winthrop's "shining city upon a hill,"

Abraham Lincoln's "hope of the world", and FDR's "beacon of democracy" are hollow banalities. "America is great because she is good," wrote de Tocqueville, "If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

Nations, especially in Africa and Latin America no longer regard Washington's foreign policy as a force for good. Last month, the number of countries that have applied for BRICS membership increased to thirty. As the US sends State Department and Pentagon officials to persuade African, Gulf states and Asian leaders to turn away from China and Russia, they now return home empty handed aside from harsh reprimands about American hypocrisy, electoral interference, militaristic bullying, sanctions as an economic weapon and unfair trade agreements and international bank loans. Within the new emerging multipolar world, the US, UK, EU and its few remaining allies seem guaranteed to be left in the cold if they continue with the nonsense of a US-based international order supported by the World Economic Forum's dystopian aspirations.

But the US is not history's first exceptional nation or empire. During the 208 year heyday of Pax Romana (27 BC to AD 180), Rome too was perceived as the world's exceptional power. Similar to the US, Rome's diversity allured foreigners throughout its empire - from Britannia, Hispania, Asia Minor, Dalmatia (modern Balkans) and beyond. People subservient to the harsher side of the Roman empire sought citizenship in order to gain access to civil rights, legal protections, social acceptance and greater opportunities for upward mobility.

Other citizenship perks included public education, healthcare, welfare services and grain security during times of food scarcity and famine. Yet the City of Seven Hills, the Urbs Aeterna or Eternal City's, exceptionalism was short lasting. As several classical historians, notably Cullen Murphy and Mary Beard, have observed, the parallels between the demise of Rome and the US are striking. Military overextension and perverse war expenditures at the expense of domestic economic health, political instability due to corruption and power struggles, inflation and debt, erosion of civil institutions, and widespread moral decay in the pursuit of hedonic satisfaction rather than genuine well being and societal cohesion are all clear indicators that the US is following Rome's trajectory to the dustbin of failed experiments in democratic governance.

Image: At the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, President George W. Bush ordered the U.S. military to conduct a devastating aerial assault on Baghdad, known as "shock and awe." (Source: Consortiumnews)



Surely, we witness these indicators of domestic and imperial decline plastered daily on our daily headlines and strangely exalted by mainstream media pundits. Continuing the façade of American military superiority as a means to bully nations into compliance with US interests is no longer justified. At one time or another during the past six decades, the US has supported every right wing dictatorship. Upon receiving the Nobel Prize in 2005, British playwright took the opportunity to rather brilliantly condemn US foreign policy:

“The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them... You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It’s a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis.”

Actually, the United States has fared better than many of the nation’s founders expected. In his recent book, *Fears of the Setting Sun*, Syracuse University historian Dennis Rasmussen presents America’s founders’ disillusionment and pessimism about the Constitution and the Republic’s likely inability to preserve it. For Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton and John Adams the new constitutional experiment wouldn’t last beyond a generation.

However, rather than acknowledging the nation’s decline and taking progressive corrective measures, the decay and rot in the system is glossed over with an abnormal hubris of progress, manicured and fictitious statistics of economic growth. Our exceptionalism in the world is carried to the point of comic absurdity to convince us that we are all better off today than yesterday.

The recent debt ceiling crisis alone should awaken the public to Washington’s system malignancy. The federal government’s failures to lessen incurring national debt, now at \$31.8 trillion with \$188 trillion in unfunded liabilities, has led to a crisis of bankrupting the Treasury, which would spin the nation into a very long recession. Unsurprisingly the infinite lack of political wisdom in Washington has found ways to blame China and Putin for this financial crisis in order to deflect attention away from our elected leaders’ repulsive ineptitude.

Biden’s recent debt ceiling bill is simply a game of the duopoly parties exchanging bargaining chips. The bill only provides more time to cut the deficit a measly \$1.5 trillion in a decade while increasing the defense budget to \$886 billion in order to further feed Washington’s irrational obsessions to weaken Russia and plan for a confrontation with China. Within this madness, federal programs for poor working families and jobless individuals are downsized. The qualification age for food stamps, health coverage and income assistance within a “work-reporting” requirement has been increased; and this is coupled with slave labor restrictions that would pay qualified persons \$3.51 per hour, approximately on par with the minimum wages of Cambodia and Myanmar.

The level of American illiteracy is astounding. The average American lives in an astral garbage heap of superstitions, legends, political clichés and meaningless slogans. This dark specter of media-controlled groupthink lingers over the heads of the misinformed. Following the warnings of social psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s, the American populace is being “deindividuated.”

Deindividuation is a state whereby individuals lose their sense of self-awareness and their realistic and healthy personal identity in order to become part of a crowd that opposes other crowds. Normal moral restraints are cast aside and replaced by impulsive and deviant

behavior.

The entire woke narrative giving way to antisocial behavior is a notable consequence of current deindividuation accelerating even into the halls of government and corporate boardrooms. Deindividuation may reinforce illiteracy and blatant stupidity. When Democrats brought Aimee Arrambide, an executive for an abortion rights organization, before the House Judiciary Committee to give testimony, she claimed men could get pregnant and have abortions.

One Biden judicial nominee didn't know several articles to the Constitution that are prerequisites for every federal judge. Another nominee for the Supreme Court, Ketanji Brown Jackson, refused to give her definition of a woman because she claimed she is not a biologist. Given the observable decline in the nation's so-called intelligentsia, as the above examples show, it is reasonable to predict that few Americans likely know about the Bill of Rights and its two-year history of heated debates, contentions and numerous compromises and revisions between rival factions before the first ten amendments were ratified in 1791.

The Bill of Rights, a cornerstone of American democracy, was designed to safeguard individual liberties and limit government power. However, as society has evolved and now confronts unanticipated technological challenges in the 21st century, it becomes increasingly apparent that the Bill of Rights has serious shortcomings that undermine certain human rights and freedoms.

The challenges posed by digital technologies and more complex societal issues reveal the need for a nuanced and adaptive approach to protect individual rights and freedoms while preserving the nation's fundamental principles. Without such reform, the Bill of Rights risks becoming an outdated fossil for safeguarding liberties.

With the arrival of the digital age, the First Amendment guaranteeing freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion is imperiled in ways the nation's founders could never have predicted. Private tech corporations operating in collusion with federal intelligence agencies possess inordinate control over social media platforms and readily censor and suppress narratives contrary to their agendas of population control. This concentration of power, and the silencing of dissenting voices, highlights the limitations of the Bill of Rights to protect free speech in the 21st century.

The rapid development and infiltration of technology into every aspect of Americans' lives has fundamentally altered the landscape of privacy rights. The Fourth Amendment, which was intended to protect against unwarranted searches and seizures, fails to sufficiently address the serious consequences of digital surveillance, mass data collection, and the invasive capabilities of modern technology. Without satisfactory and principled legal protections, widespread deployment of surveillance cameras, electronic monitoring, and the collection of personal information by both government and private corporations threaten the citizenry's privacy.

Nor is the US's most revered document, the US Constitution, as monolithic and everlasting in order to address the complexities of the modern world. For example, the Electoral College outlined in the Constitution dismally fails to represent the will of the people in a population with 332 million citizens. The democratic principle of one person, one vote, is now completely undermined by the disproportionate allocation of electors that can override

a majority vote. This discrepancy is clearly evident in recent elections, which has fuelled demands for an electoral reform to ensure elections more accurately reflects the vote of the people.

In addition, the absence of Congressional term limits horribly hinders the evolving needs of the nation at a time of increased acceleration of technology, climate change and shifting global economic partnerships. Without term limits, entrenched incumbents prioritize their personal and partisan interests over the welfare of their constituents. This has resulted in senior legislators being captured by corporate interests for decades. Consequently our political arena has become ineffectively stagnant with zero accountability and incapable of moving forward on critical reforms to stay abreast of domestic and international change.

Likewise, as the country grapples with 21st century complexities, the Constitution's major points require careful ethical reevaluation by a new enlightened standard as a potential for reform. But sadly, no one in Washington reaches the caliber of integrity required to undertake such a moral assessment free from the three modern poisons of greed, power and influence.

In an effort to offer up a progressive platform to rekindle a flame for a democratic renaissance in the US, we proceed very cautiously. If history is any indicator of success, a progressive renaissance cannot rely solely on turning our gaze towards the past and what might have been. That too has its own audacity and fuels the illiteracy built into the fabric of the worst forms of nationalism. Again we are reminded of Jefferson's words "Illiteracy is the enemy of progress and the ally of tyranny."

Today, America qualifies as Nelson Mandela's description of a "society in chains" — a citizenry now psychologically crippled for making informed decisions to participate thoughtfully in a democratic process. Consequently, a democratic renaissance can only proceed following a revitalization of moral and spiritual values that have universal appeal and can respect pluralist ideals both within and beyond our borders. This requires our elected leaders casting aside the pretentious vanity of exceptionalism that has caused a growing percent of the world's population to despise us. To be worthy of participating in any viable possibility for a democracy in the 21st century, it is necessary to return to becoming John Adams' "moral people."

Progressive Action List

- Create legislation to curtail the vulnerability of people's savings accounts due to the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act.
- Create a Marshall Plan to rebuild our forests to reduce the acceleration of climate change
- Reverse Trump's opening of public lands to private interests and implement a moratorium on private exploitation of national parks (eg, fossil fuels, mining, lumber)
- Create a national food program to ensure that the 16 million hungry children in the US are fed.
- Increase regulations on trading in those commodities that are essential to life such as food, crops, water privatization.
- Moratorium on the Federal Reserve from giving no-interest loans to banks and corporations.
- Declare a national moratorium on home foreclosures now that the US and

Europe are on the verge of a new recession

- Forgive student loan late fees and cap all interest on student loans at 1-2%.
 - Eliminate pay day loans and credit card interest rates, late or not, at 18% or more. Set maximum interest at approximately 10%
 - Support senior citizens with free community hospital service and food coops.
 - Eliminate all federal subsidies to fossil fuel industries of any kind.
 - Remove the influence of money from elections:
1. Halt all corporate funding of candidates, PACs and political parties
 2. Forbid corporations to publicly or privately endorse candidates or solicit endorsements or funding for candidates through the use of corporate resources; however, individual officers and employees of a corporation are free to endorse any candidate publicly or privately .
 3. Forbid all sources of funding for a candidate except:
 - A. Biological persons (including the candidate), with contributions capped at a maximum of \$2,500 per person in order to prevent billionaires from buying the election with personal contributions
 - B. A government election fund that gives money based on how much that candidate has received from individual contributions. (Contributions to a PAC or political party of a candidate will count against the \$2,500 limit for that candidate, unless the party or PAC is running more than one candidate, in which case a person may contribute the maximum for each candidate backed by the party or PAC for each race, with the understanding that if a person is making multiple contributions for multiple candidates, the party or PAC must record each contribution and allot it to the candidacy of each candidate, the party or PAC cannot reallocate, combine or aggregate multiple contributions in a manner not intended by the individual who donated the funds.
- Launch a federal review and audit of partisan astroturf groups (eg, ALEC, Americans for Prosperity, Center for American Progress, American Council on Science and Health, Moveon.org) and support stronger laws to limit their influence on federal and state legislators
 - A congressional investigation into USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy to clean them of intelligence agency influence and/or interference so that they may serve their stated mission and cease serving as a vehicle of interference in or replacement of foreign governments.
 - Pardon all whistleblowers. Strengthen whistleblower protection laws and criminalize efforts to silence and threaten whistleblowers.
 - Campaign finance reform and return to manual balloting; cessation of gerrymandering — voting districts to be determined by independent, non partisan review based upon the specific needs of populations in the regions.
 - Normalize foreign relations with China and Russia and pivot from the unipolar agenda of the World Economic Forum and move closer towards a national recognition of the rapidly multipolar world that is dethroning the dollar's hegemony.
 - Reduce military budget to a size no greater than needed to defend the nation from attack, while simultaneously converting our factories, manufacturing facilities, environmental resources, technology and labor from war making

production to the production of consumer goods, infrastructure renewal, cultural enrichment and other socially beneficial ends – in effect, a reversal of WWII policies when peacetime factories, manufacturing facilities, environmental resources, technology and labor were converting from producing automobiles and other consumer goods to the production of military hardware and weapons. The government would use the no-longer exaggerated budget to smooth the conversion and retain the labor pool.

- Begin closing the 800-plus foreign military bases that serve no defensive purpose while retraining and redeploying to civilian jobs the million-plus US service personnel currently deployed on military bases.
 - Cease conducting proactive and confrontational military exercises and war games near borders and territorial waters of Russia, China, Iran or any other nation that has not posed a direct threat to the US.
 - Ban interference or participation, overt or covert, in foreign domestic affairs or foreign military conflicts by US military or government personnel unless specifically authorized and funded by Congress for that specific circumstance.
 - Immediately cease current operations other than intelligence gathering by the 17 or more US intelligence agencies, and begin the process of defunding, destaffing and dismantling their capability to conduct such non-intelligence gathering operations..
 - Restore healthy relations with international institutions, especially the United Nations. As even the Democratic party propaganda mouthpiece, the Council on Foreign Relations, puts it: “Continuing to refuse to ratify the above treaties and countless others erodes US global leadership and sends a message to the rest of the world that the United States remains unwilling to commit to action on issues like human right and arms control. A stalwart commitment to narrow conception of national sovereignty and to the ideal of American exceptionalism undermine the United States’ ability to participate as a leader and partner on the international stage.”
 - Review and where advisable, reactivate, restore, ratify or sign international treaties and/or agreements that address world peace, defense, human rights and the environment, which virtually all nations have signed but which the US has either refused to sign, withdrawn from, terminated, or simply refused to honor. For example”
1. Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention that expanded the Geneva Convention to accommodate technological developments in international warfare after World War II.
 2. The Arms Trade Treaty intended to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by governing arms transfers.
 3. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that imposes a legally binding ban on nuclear explosive testing.
 4. Convention on Biological Diversity to establish an international framework for “conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
 5. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination that defines an international bill of rights for women to eliminate discrimination against women.
 6. The Landmine Ban Treaty (aka, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines).

7. Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty adopted by the UN Assembly General in 1996 and ratified by 166 countries
8. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
9. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants and widely distributed toxic chemicals.
10. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that grants economic, social and cultural rights to non-self-governing and trust territories and individuals.
11. UN Convention on the Law of the Sea that establishes a legal framework for all maritime activities.
12. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which only the US and Somalia refused to ratify.
13. International Labor Convention, which recognizes freedom of association and protection of the right to organize.
14. Geneva Agreement of 1954 to end the Korean War and Vietnam War which the US refused to sign.
15. Paris Climate Accord, which the Trump withdrew the US in 2017
16. Convention on Torture
17. Iran Nuclear Agreement.

- Abandon the US-defined “rules based international order” in which the US has unilaterally arrogated to itself the right to set those rules, as well as break or ignore them whenever it pleases or so desires.
- Overall of the USDA and its ties to the agro-chemical and big food industries to strengthen scientific oversight on dangerous agricultural toxins damaging the environment and unhealthy food additives that impair health.
- Federally mandate the labeling of foods containing GMO ingredients
- Audit the Federal Reserve, the Department of Defense, Homeland Security, and the CIA, reducing their budgets to what is actually necessary for the nation’s security and defense, and make the budget public
- Allow corporations that cannot be maintained to go through structured bankruptcy instead of a bailout.
- Reject the ratification of the World Health Organization’s Pandemic Treaty
- Universal healthcare under Medicare that includes some alternative medical therapies as in some other European nations
- Create a national preventative health program.
- Undertake an independent scientific review of the causes for our autism epidemic and support a concerted review of the role of the CDC’s vaccine schedule in the rise in childhood physical and mental illnesses.
- Make efforts to revoke or substantially amend corporate privileges in Citizens United
- Accelerate efforts to amend Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act and expand the legal oversight to include large nonprofit internet organizations such as Wikipedia.
- Regulation of the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence in areas where it may infringe on fundamental human rights
- Initiate a proper, independent review and analysis of the short and long term implications of central bank digital currency replacing a cash society, social credit scores attached to block chain technologies, and vaccine passports.

- Eliminate and/or set more strict rules on privatized prison systems; stop the growing practices of debtors prisons and bail for non-violent crimes.
- Promote stronger prosecution of corporate and banking executives convicted of serious financial fraud and crimes
- National program to have potential law enforcement officers undergo a psychological screening — many are former vets who have serious PTSD and other mental health issues

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