



The Source of American Exceptionalism

The idea that the United States is unique among the world's nations has been recognized by many historians and ordinary citizens who sense our exceptionalism without fully knowing its genesis. That is why we have been such a strong magnet for immigrants. All they know about us is that we are the land of opportunity, a free country. Freedom is the main theme of our being. Indeed, freedom has made us the richest and most advanced nation in history.



Few writers have bothered to analyze the source of our exceptionalism. But most Americans sense that its origin is embodied in our founding documents that gave us the best form of government for a free people. As a result, Americans became exceptional human beings capable of using their brains and talents to unleash their creative impulses. No government, no society, no culture in history had given human beings this sovereignty over themselves.

The Declaration of Independence states: "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Thus is stated, for the first time in human history, the idea of the supremacy of the individual under God to whom he owes his life, and to whom he is responsible for his behavior.

The Declaration then advances another very radical idea:

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." In other words, the source of government are the individuals who create it in order to "secure" their unalienable rights.

The source of government is not some king ([L'Etat c'est Moi](#)), or the mystical Hegelian state, or some dynastic family, or the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the Shariah Law of the Koran. Individuals, under the God of the Bible, create a government to secure their God-given rights, which are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

And all of this can be summed up in the word: Individualism. But where did it come from? It came from a predominantly Protestant culture in which salvation was understood as an individual's relationship with God. And although it was promulgated by the Puritans who would have liked to maintain a purely Puritan society, they could not stop the growth of religious freedom among Americans. While the Calvinist church believed in church discipline, it could not stop Christians from differing from their churches.



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Under the Congregationalist church there was no hierarchy of church leadership. Ministers were chosen by their congregants. The Puritans had rejected Queen Elizabeth's church with its archbishop and bishops, which they believed too closely resembled Catholic hierarchical practice. But this kind of religious freedom opened the way for the freedom of individual conscience, even the freedom to preach heresy.

Since the Bible had replaced the hierarchical Church of England as the source of religious belief, it also opened the floodgates of individual interpretations of the Bible.

Thus, the doctrine of individualism was not only enshrined in our founding documents, but it also began to flourish as a religious exercise. Freedom of religion reinforced individualism because it permitted individuals to read their Bibles in any way they wanted and to exercise their spiritual freedom to suit their own personal convictions.

The result was the development of a great variety of religious denominations, each interpreting Scripture in its own way, providing individuals with the freedom to choose how they would worship. Almost no prior governments in history had ever given human beings such spiritual freedom. In governments with state churches you were required to worship as the state required. In Moslem countries you were required to submit to Islam. In Buddhist countries, you surrendered to fate.

Thus, American individualism got its power from its religious freedom, the Christian concept of individual salvation, and the concept of freedom of conscience. Also, the idea of limited government, accountable to the people who created it, gave American individuals a freedom that no other people in world history had ever had. The result was human creativity and inventiveness that turned the United States into the most advanced nation in history. The pursuit of happiness not only unleashed human creativity, it also permitted individuals to pursue wealth by honest means, using their brains and ingenuity in the process. Thus was created the richest nation in history.

All of our great inventors were individuals who used their own creative powers to produce inventions that would change the world. Some got their ideas from English and French inventors, but Americans stressed their application. Thus, the steamboat was invented by Robert Fulton, the Cotton Gin by Eli Whitney. Samuel F. B. Morse invented the telegraph. The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell, the electric light by Thomas Alva Edison. The Wright Brothers invented the airplane. None of them required government help. It took one American, Edison, to light up the world. He also invented many other great marvels without government assistance.

We also created a Patent Office to protect the private property of inventors, without which they would not have been able to gain financially from their inventions. Indeed, if you read the yearly reports of the Patent Office, you will see how American ingenuity at work without government interference created the physical foundation of our modern civilization. The latest example of a great American inventor and individualist is Steven Jobs, who also changed the world with his Apple computer and I-Pods. No other nation has produced individuals who have changed the world for good on the scale that America has.

But since man is a fallen creature, his dark side will inevitably try to destroy the good. Thus, the challenge to the philosophy of Individualism came early from collectivists of various types. First came Robert Owen from England who believed that both religion and individualism were evil, and came to America to set up his experimental secular-communist colony at New Harmony, Indiana, in 1825. When it failed, he blamed it on the fact that the participants had all been educated under an individualist system. He therefore turned his efforts to creating a government education system that would promote



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collectivism. These collectivized students would become the socialist adults who would change America. Meanwhile, in Europe, Karl Marx wrote his *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, which set the world communist movement on its course to the Bolshevik revolution and creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia in 1918. Marx's "Dialectic Materialism" was based on German philosopher Hegel's concept of how history progressed toward a collectivist new world order by a dialectical process. This philosophy was adopted by several American students at Yale University who had studied in Germany and decided in 1832 to form a secret society for senior students at Yale, the notorious Skull and Bones. The members of the society would use the dialectical method work with similar, like-minded organizations to lead America into their utopian New World Order.

In Europe there were utopian socialists like Charles Fourier, August Comte, Ferdinand Lassalle, and Saint-Simon spreading the gospel of collectivism in France and Germany. And in 1884 utopian socialists in England created the Fabian Society, which had a strong influence on American socialists, who called themselves Progressives.

In America, the socialist movement gained political traction during the Depression when the liberal Roosevelt administration began creating the socialist entitlement programs that would slowly make Americans more dependent on Government for their well-being.

John Dewey and the Progressives took over the American public school system and busily carried out Robert Owen's plan to create the kind of education that would turn children into collectivists. And, of course, with socialist Barack Obama in the White House, we are at the final stage of the complete takeover of America by the collectivists.

But the philosophy of individualism is still strong enough in America to stop the dialectical process toward socialism. Libertarians, Conservative Republicans, Tea Party activists, and the followers of Ayn Rand and Ron Paul are expected to reverse the socialist trend in the presidential election of 2012.

It should be noted that in his speech on September 8th, in which he introduced his American Jobs Act, Obama paid lip-service to American individualism, but then went on to extol collectivist action as the means of advancing America's future. He did not offer to repeal his nationalized healthcare system. He simply offered to reduce taxes for small businesses provided the Congress voted to increase taxes for the rich. More of class warfare, which many Americans are now sick of.

And so the life-and-death struggle between our original political philosophy of Individualism, the source of American exceptionalism, and utopian socialism, the philosophy of communist Russia and Cuba, is now joined as never before. It is expected that the American people will be able to tell good from evil, and will return the nation to the original source of its greatness.



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