

US foreign policy and American Exceptionalism (selected quotes)

Read the following quotes and trace the development of the United States' outlook towards its place and role in the world.

1. *John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity", 1630.*

We must consider that we shall be a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world

2. *Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801 - First Inaugural Address.*

"Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations - entangling alliances with none."

3. *Thomas Jefferson (date unknown).*

"We are destined to be a barrier against the returns of ignorance and barbarism. Old Europe will have to lean on our shoulders, and to hobble along by our side... What colossus shall we be when the southern continent comes up to our mark!"

4. *Thomas Jefferson, writing to James Monroe on November 24, 1801*

However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern, if not southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws; nor can we contemplate with satisfaction either blot or mixture on that surface.

5. *John O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity", The United States Democratic Review, Vol. 6, No. 23, 1839.*

[O]ur national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity.

6. *Reverend H. W. Bellows, March 1847.*

It becomes a simple calculation, how soon, at this rate, we shall reach the Pacific ocean. And long before that time our cup must run over in the southern direction. That Mexico will ultimately fall a political prey, not to force, but to a superior population, insensibly oozing into her territories, changing her customs, and out-loving, out trading, exterminating her weaker blood, we regard with as much certainty, as we do the final extinction of the Indian races, to which the mass of the Mexican population seem very little superior; and we have no reason to doubt that this country will not have doubled its three centuries of existence, before South America will speak the English tongue and submit to the civilization, laws and religion of the Anglo-Saxon race.

7. *New York Sun, October 22, 1847.*

The Mexican race is perfectly accustomed to being conquered, and the only new lesson we shall teach is that our victories will give liberty, safety, and prosperity to the vanquished, if they know enough to profit by the appearance of the stars. To *liberate* and *ennoble*—not to *enslave* and *debase*—is our mission.

8. John Fiske, "Manifest Destiny" (1880), from *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History: Three Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in May 1880 (Excerpts)*.

It is enough to point to the general conclusion, that the work which the English race began when it colonized North America is destined to go on until every land on the earth's surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization shall become English in its language, in its political habits and traditions, and to a predominant extent in the blood of its people. The day is at hand when, four-fifths of the human race will trace its pedigree to English forefathers, as four-fifths of the white people in the United States trace their pedigree to-day. The race thus spread over both hemispheres, and from the rising to the setting sun, will not fail to keep that sovereignty of the sea and that commercial supremacy which it began to acquire when England first stretched its arm across the Atlantic to the shores of Virginia and Massachusetts. The language spoken by these great communities will not be sundered into dialects like the language of the ancient Romans, but perpetual intercommunication and the universal habit of reading and writing will preserve its integrity; and the world's business will be transacted by English-speaking people to so great an extent, that whatever language any man may have learned in his infancy he will find it necessary sooner or later to learn to express his thoughts in English.

9. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 1893.

Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise.

10. Senator Albert Beveridge, 1898.

American Factories are making more than the American people can use: American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours... We will establish trading posts throughout the world as distributing points for American products. We will cover the ocean with our merchant marines. We will build a navy to the measure of our greatness. Great colonies, flying our flag and trading with us, will grow about our posts of trade. Our institutions will follow our flag on the wings of commerce. And American law, American order, American civilization and the American flag will plant themselves on shores, hitherto bloody and benighted, but, by those agencies of God, henceforth to be made beautiful and bright...

A hundred wildernesses are to be subdued. Unpenetrated regions must be explored. Unviolated valleys must be tilled. Unmastered forests must be felled. Unriven mountains must be torn asunder and their riches of gold and iron and ores of price must be delivered to the world.

11. Senator Pettigrew, 1898.

Throughout all recorded time manifest destiny has been the murderer of men. It has committed more crimes, done more to oppress and wrong the inhabitants of the world than any other tribute to which mankind has fallen heir. Manifest destiny has caused the strong to rob the weak and has reduced the weak to slavery... Manifest destiny is simply the cry of the strong in justification of the plunder of weak.

12. *President Woodrow Wilson, Fall 1919.*

The isolation of the United States is at an end, not because we chose to go into the politics of the world, but because, but because by the sheer genius of this people and the growth of our power, we have become a determining factor in the history of mankind. And after you have become a determining factor you cannot remain isolated, whether you want to or not. Isolation ended by the processes of history, not by the processes of our independent choice, and the processes of history merely fulfilled the prediction of the men who founded our republic...

[America's mission] is to be the mediator of peace, the light of the world and to lead the world the assertion of the rights of peoples and the rights of free nations.... In the vengeful Providence of God, another struggle in which, not a few hundred thousand fine men from America will have to die, but as many millions as are necessary to accomplish the final freedom of the peoples of the world.

13. *Henry Luce, American Century, Life, February 1941.*

We must undertake to be the Good Samaritan of the entire world. It is the manifest duty of this country to undertake to feed all the people of the world who as a result of this worldwide collapse of civilization are hungry and destitute.

14. *President Harry Truman, campaigning for re-election in 1948.*

Now, this great Republic – the greatest in History, the greatest on which the sun has ever shone – is in charge of the world leadership for the well-being of the entire earth as well as ours.

15. *President Ronald Reagan, 1980s.*

I have always thought that this blessed land was set apart, in a special way; that there is a divine plan that places this big continent between two oceans to be discovered by peoples from the four corners of the world with a special passion for faith and liberty.

16. *President George H. W. Bush, February 3, 1991, National Day of Prayer for Operation Desert Storm.*

As one nation under God, we Americans are deeply mindful of both our dependence on the Almighty and our obligations as a people He has richly blessed.... Entrusted with the holy gift of freedom and allowed to prosper in its great light, we have a responsibility to serve as a beacon to the world -- to use our strength and resources to help those suffering in the darkness of tyranny and repression.

17. *Republican Senator Malcom Wallop in America's Purpose: New Visions of U.S. Foreign Policy, San Francisco, ICS Press, 1991.*

I believe the American idea was divinely inspired. It God's antidote to man's limitless ingenuity in finding ways to oppress and enslave his fellow man. America is the only society in history established expressly as an alternative to despotism, to allow the maximum liberty within a framework of public order. In standing for liberty and justice, Am stands for something beyond itself, for liberty and justice are the ends of decent men and women at all times and places [very universalistic]. What is unique in history is the existence of a particular country devoted to these universal ends.

18. *Senator Bob Dole, "Shaping America's Global Future", Foreign Policy, n° 98 (Spring 1995), pp. 28-43*

The declinists have multilateralist cousins who promote a view that am must work with and within international organizations because we do not have the resources to act on our own. Other mutilateralists believe America does not have a legal or moral authority to act without the sanction of international organizations. The declinists—and their

multilateralist kin—ignore the strength of America and underrate the power of American leadership...

U.S. sovereignty must be defended, not delegated: International organization—whether the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, or any others—will not protect American interests. Only America can do that.

19. *President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997.*

America is far more than a place. It is an idea, the most powerful idea in the history of nations. And all of us in this chamber, we are now the bearers of that idea, leading a great people into a new world.

20. *President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, January 19, 1999.*

My fellow Americans, this is our moment. Let us lift our eyes as one nation, and from the mountaintop of this American Century, look ahead to the next one – asking God's blessing on our endeavors and on our beloved country.

21. *Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.*

The reason why we must use force is because we are American. We are the indispensable nation. We see farther in the future because we stand taller.

22. *President G W Bush*

Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended.

...America is a Nation with a mission - and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire. Our aim is a democratic peace - a peace founded upon the dignity and rights of every man and woman.

.... The action we take and the decisions we make in this decade will have consequences far into this century. If America shows weakness and uncertainty, the world will drift toward tragedy.

23. *President Barack Obama*

I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.

24. *President Donald Trump*

No country has ever prospered that failed to put its own interests first. Both our friends and our enemies put their countries above ours and we, while being fair to them, must start doing the same. We will no longer surrender this country or its people to the false song of globalism. The nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony. I am skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down andI will never enter America into any agreement that reduces our ability to control our own affairs.

25. *President Joe Biden*

That must be this — we must start with diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values: defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity.

....America's alliances are our greatest asset, and leading with diplomacy means standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies and key partners once again.

....By leading with diplomacy, we must also mean engaging our adversaries and our competitors diplomatically, where it's in our interest, and advance the security of the American people.