



The Guise of Exceptionalism

Unmasking the National Narratives of Haiti and the United States

by Robert Fatton

DESCRIPTION

The Guise of Exceptionalism compares the historical origins of Haitian and American exceptionalisms. It also traces how exceptionalism as a narrative of uniqueness has shaped relations between the two countries from their early days of independence through the contemporary period. Exceptionalism is at the core of every national founding narrative. It allows countries to purge history of injurious stains, and embellish it with mythical innocence and claims of distinction. Exceptionalism also builds the bonds of solidarity that forge an imagined national fellowship of the chosen, but it excludes those deemed unfit for membership because of their race, ethnicity, gender, or class. Exceptionalism, however, is not frozen. As a social invention, it changes over time, but always within the parameters of its original principles. Our capacity to reinvent it is dependent on the degree of hegemony achieved by the ruling class, and if this class has the infrastructural power to gradually co-opt and include the groups it had once excluded.

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AUTHOR/EDITOR BIOGRAPHY

ROBERT FATTON JR. is the Julia A. Cooper Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He is the author of many books, including *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery* and *Haiti's Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy*.

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