



American Narcissism: The Myth of National Superiority

Wilber W. Caldwell

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Nationalism is not unique to America: it was invented with the birth of modern nations. But nationalism is unique in America. Americans conceive themselves and their nation to be incontrovertibly superior to the other peoples and nations of the earth. When does national pride cross the invisible boundary that separates benign patriotism and malignant nationalism?

Americans have much to be proud of, but national pride can cross the invisible boundary that separates benign patriotism and malignant nationalism. The author surveys the evolution of Americans grandiose view of themselves and the contrasting impression created in the wider world.

Historically, American notions of superiority spring from myths of the unique regenerative power of the new land; from visions of chosen-ness, mission and high destiny; from the indelible legends of frontier self-sufficiency; from the confidence and self-reliance needed to succeed as immigrants; from a powerful sense of America's isolation and uniqueness; from the realization of abundance; and finally from the perceived universality of American ideology.

This predisposes us to a distinctively virulent strain of nationalism unlike that found in almost any other modern nation. As the unipolar moment fades into memory, this sense of unquestionable superiority expressed through politics and foreign policy does not play well before the global audience. In fact, it never did.

Drawing on sources from within the academic disciplines of history, sociology, political science and foreign affairs, the book seeks to decode scholarly jargon and lay bare this corner of the American mind for the benefit of a wider readership.

The discussion is organized in four parts:

Nationalism

The Evolution of the American Superiority Myth

The Presumption of National Superiority

Tolerance And Plurality

In America today, notions of national superiority are far more deeply ingrained and far more potentially ruinous than most of us imagine. This is a journey that slides from reason to emotion, from individual liberty to mass tyranny, and from humanity to inhumanity.

This book will interest readers of US history, current events, and social commentary; and all who wonder, Why do they hate us?

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