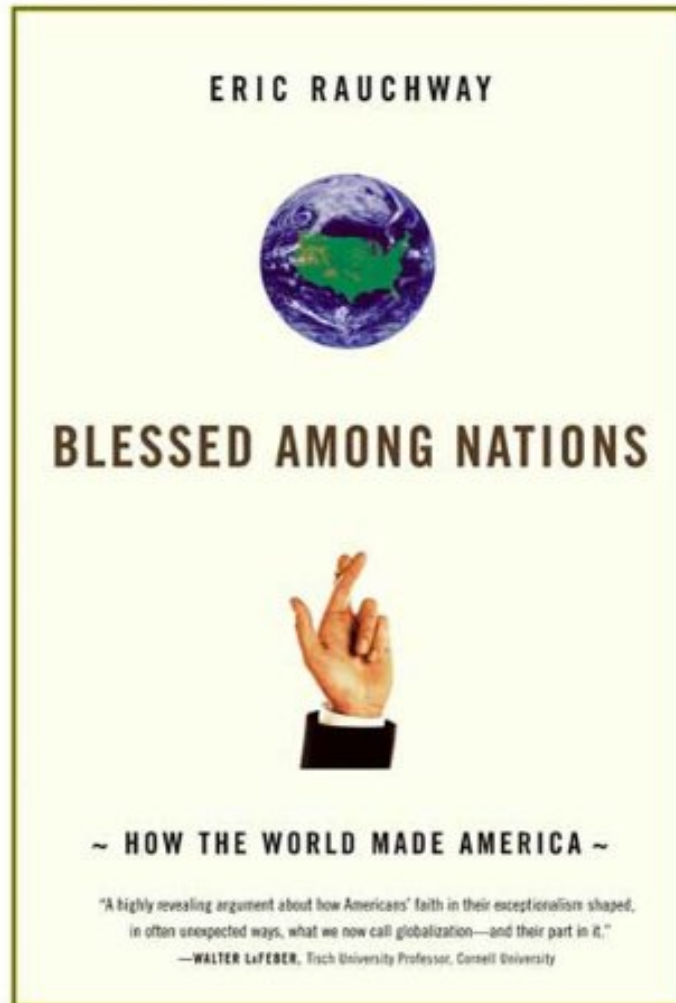


(Free download) Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America

Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America

Eric Rauchway

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Eric Rauchway : Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Good Analysis By R. Albin While devoted to the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, this book has a strong contemporary flavor. Its themes are the effects of 19th century globalization, the concept of American exceptionalism, and why the USA was so poorly prepared to exercise world leadership after WWI. Rauchway's essential point is that much of what is thought of as American exceptionalism is the result of the unique ways in which 19th century globalization affected American society. American exceptionalism in this case means emphasis on a modest role for government, free market fundamentalism,

avoidance of government responsibility for social welfare, and foreign policy based on unilateralism. Geography and historical circumstances placed the USA in a privileged position. Separated by the Atlantic from the complex European state system, and with its international commerce protected by British hegemony, the USA was able to expand across North America with little threat from other major powers. During that expansion, the USA faced the resistance only of aboriginal peoples of largely neolithic technology. The USA never had to develop the military and state apparatus seen in powerful European states. Similarly, American expansion was fueled by European, largely British, capital flowing through private channels with the state playing only a minor role in fueling development. Rapid American development was also made possible by an influx of inexpensive labor from diverse immigrants. Rauchway argues that the multi-ethnic nature of the immigration prevented the emergence of a strong American socialist movement with the corollary that no American government felt it necessary to develop social welfare policies to buy social peace. At the time of entry into WWI, the USA had a modest government by European standards and the prior American experience has equipped the elites and general public of the USA poorly to exercise the needed world leadership. The conclusion of American exceptionalism as a contingent result of specific historical circumstances rather than vague appeals to some American traditions is convincing. Rauchway's arguments are interesting and supported well by the evidence he presents. He may underplay a bit some other important features, such as the relative importance of states in our Federal system. I think also that the lack of an American aristocracy changed the dynamics of American middle class response to industrialization with Progressive era politics that inhibited the emergence of distinct socialist-working class political movements. Rauchway concludes with a brief and ironic section comparing our present situation and this earlier era of American life. Both are periods of globalization with considerable impact on American life. Both involve American hegemony. In the earlier period, however, globalization shaped America and brought about an America unprepared for world leadership. In our time, globalization is to a large extent the product of American policies since WWII. But, the policies that led to the present era of globalization were to a large extent the result of the repudiation of American exceptionalism. The return to American exceptionalism has not been particularly successful.

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Now we see the patterns

By BPI am glad to read this book which shows me the deep patterns of collective behaviour here in the US. It is at least more knowledge, even though with our current Supreme Court's view of whose property really matters in this country, there is little we can do with this knowledge. I am glad to know that the size of the "labor" pool, and corporate welfare have always been levers to turn on or off for profits, or for political control over the citizens by the most powerful. The ability to turn an immigration or capital markets spigot on to lower wages, or raise wages, or practice divide-and-rule is clearly not anomalous to our times in American history. What is new is the use of asset bubbles to break the population. At least within the 50 states. Its been freely practiced across the world by our "globalization" institutions for the last several decades. This freedom of the wealthy powerful few over the majority hardly seems to be "self-determination" to me, and in the next round this Supreme Court will have some hell to pay about that after three decades of bogus talk about free markets, freedom, and self-determination. But, I am glad to read this historian's factset about how all this has evidently always worked. My grandfathers told me as much growing up with 150 years of family history to back it up, but no data tables in textbooks!

It is also very funny that the Jacksonian movement which represented the Western States' collective interests against Banks and Big Capital in the age of railroads and commodities mining is the exact opposite of the de facto "conservative" or Tea Party movements these states now support. These movements are funded by and shill for the very Big Banks and Big Capital that drained wealth from those territories and depleted their people just as they are doing to the Majority of Americans today (not out in the open but using legalized deceit hidden behind some halls of mirrors this time). I like how the book closes comparing the USA to a child who thinks the rest of the world will take care of it through external manipulation of markets, rather than any serious soul searching and growing up to solve its own problems. This book shows me a lot about 200 years of collective patterns that can be construed as the nation's collective Karma. As we learn from teachings about Karma, we have to eventually recognize these patterns in our habitual responses to the world around us if we will ever master ourselves and experience true freedom. The US clearly needs to recognize the patterns from the past that are habitual, reactive, or reactionary without any reflection when those patterns emerge as no longer serving us to be healthy, prosperous, and wise. Clearly, the patterns of the last 200 years have served too few in the long-run. These patterns hand too much power over too much to too few who will not use that power to benefit everyone equally. It makes sense, since these patterns were set in the age of Oligarchy and Plutocracy. We haven't yet as a nation learned how to do it another way. Now the video footage on foreign TV channels about what happened to Nevada or Arizona's economy is evidence this Karma is now Bad Karma!

Rauchway's book helps me understand the origins clearly with lots of balanced evidence. Meanwhile, the rest of the world learns from their own and our mistakes, and 100M young Americans below 24 years of age sink into a Plutocracy, and failed democracy. It took 1500 years for democracy to re-emerge in the wreckage of the Roman Empire!

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. excellent and very readable description of America's economic dependence on other nations

By Wes Howard-Brook I'm very surprised to find that this excellent book hasn't yet been reviewed. Rauchway writes in a very direct and readable style, presenting a wide array of data without numbing the reader's mind. He takes one through the development of the sense of "American exceptionalism"

by showing how, all along, the US has been utterly dependent on foreign capital and the steady influx of foreign labor to develop the abundant resources lying at hand across the continent. A very helpful contribution to debates about immigration, global economics, and America's role on the world stage.

Nineteenth-century globalization made America exceptional. On the back of European money and immigration, America became an empire with considerable skill at conquest but little experience administering other people's, or its own, affairs, which it preferred to leave to the energies of private enterprise. The nation's resulting state institutions and traditions left America immune to the trends of national development and ever after unable to persuade other peoples to follow its example. In this concise, argumentative book, Eric Rauchway traces how, from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, the world allowed the United States to become unique and the consequent dangers we face to this very day.

From Publishers Weekly American exceptionalism is an old idea, but in at least one respect, historian Rauchway (*Murdering McKinley*) argues, it reflects a geopolitical truth that remains relevant to current trends in globalization. From the Civil War to WWI, he finds, the country's unique position in the global economy—unmatched flow of foreign capital and labor to its shores, expansive opportunities on the Western frontier—meant that the U.S., unlike European countries, was not forced to develop complex federal agencies to regulate commerce, assemble statistics, and provide for the unemployed. The small steps the U.S. did take in this direction, Rauchway contends, were distinctively shaped by the country's relationship to globalization. Efforts to regulate credit and monopolies, he says, arose not in response to Socialist agitation but out of distrust of foreign bankers among recent migrants in the West. Lacking strong, centralized government institutions experienced in large-scale economic matters, the U.S. was unprepared after WWI to take the leading role in the global economy, a failure that, he argues, led to the Great Depression and would eventually scare Americans into supporting international financial organizations after World War II. Rauchway notes with concern that in the decades since the 1960's, as the U.S. has shifted from international creditor to debtor, the country has again begun "edging away from its commitments to globalization" and leaving the international economy to take care of itself. Though he leaves the implications of his innovative historical analysis on the present largely implicit, he provides valuable perspective for the debate about America's proper role in the world today. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. nbsp;"Rauchway's book is right on time and right on target." --Kirkus s