



## Understanding Manifest Destiny and its impact on American society and politics

Manifest Destiny was a belief that emerged in the 19th century among Americans, claiming that it was their divine right and destiny to expand across the continent from coast to coast. This ideology played a significant role in shaping American society and politics, leaving behind a lasting legacy that is still evident today.

The concept of Manifest Destiny had deep roots in America's history and was influenced by various factors such as religious beliefs, territorial ambitions, economic opportunities, and notions of racial superiority. It gained prominence during the era of westward expansion when thousands of settlers migrated towards uncharted territories seeking new lands, resources, and opportunities for growth. This expansionist mentality not only justified the displacement and marginalization of indigenous peoples but also laid the foundation for future conflicts over land ownership.

In terms of its impact on American society, Manifest Destiny fostered a sense of national identity rooted in notions of exceptionalism. The belief that Americans were destined to create an empire based on democratic principles led to an increased sense of patriotism among citizens. This ideology fueled waves of immigration as people from around the world were attracted by the promise of freedom and opportunity offered by America's expanding frontier.

Manifest Destiny had profound implications for American politics. It influenced policies related to territorial acquisition through military conquests or diplomatic negotiations with other nations. The acquisition of vast territories such as Texas, Oregon, California through treaties like Treaty with Mexico (1848) or Louisiana Purchase (1803), expanded U.S influence while also raising debates over issues such as slavery extension into new states.

In conclusion, the concept of Manifest Destiny shaped American society and politics profoundly throughout history until today. The belief in divine right to expand across North America impacted native populations, fueled nationalism, and influenced political decisions regarding territorial acquisitions. This essay will explore these effects further providing insights into how manifest destiny has left an indelible mark on both American society and politics.

### Expansionism and territorial acquisitions driven by Manifest Destiny

One significant example of expansion driven by Manifest Destiny was the annexation of Texas in 1845. The United States sought to incorporate Texas into its territory, leading to tensions with Mexico, which still claimed sovereignty over the region. This ultimately resulted in armed conflict and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), through which America acquired vast stretches of land from Mexico, including present-day California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

Another notable instance is the Oregon Territory dispute between Britain and America. Both countries laid claim to this region in the Pacific Northwest due to conflicting interpretations of previous treaties. Fueled by their belief in Manifest Destiny as well as economic interests such as fur trading and access to ports on the Pacific Ocean for trade with Asia, Americans pressed for sole control over Oregon. Eventually, a compromise was reached with Britain through the signing of an agreement that divided Oregon along the 49th parallel.

These territorial acquisitions significantly expanded American influence across North America while also raising questions about slavery extension into newly acquired regions. The acquisition of vast territories fueled debates between pro-slavery Southerners seeking to expand slavery into these areas and anti-slavery Northerners advocating for their exclusion from slaveholding states. These conflicts eventually escalated into one of the main catalysts for the American Civil War.

Expansionism driven by Manifest Destiny had far-reaching consequences on American society and politics during this era. Through military conquests like those seen in Texas or diplomatic negotiations such as those surrounding Oregon Territory disputes with Britain; Americans pursued their destiny to extend their dominion across North America despite international opposition or internal divisions regarding issues like slavery extension. This expansionism not only reshaped the map of America but also left a lasting impact on its society and politics.

## **The justification of westward expansion through religious and cultural beliefs**

The ideology of Manifest Destiny was deeply intertwined with religious and cultural beliefs, serving as a powerful justification for westward expansion. Many Americans saw themselves as chosen by God to spread Christianity and civilization across the continent. This belief was rooted in the idea of American exceptionalism, which held that the United States had a unique mission to fulfill.

Religious leaders played a significant role in promoting the idea of Manifest Destiny. They preached sermons emphasizing America's divine purpose and encouraged their congregations to support westward expansion. For example, Presbyterian minister John L. O'Sullivan coined the term "Manifest Destiny" in an article published in 1845, arguing that it was God's will for Americans to spread democracy and freedom from sea to shining sea.

Cultural beliefs also played a role in justifying westward expansion through Manifest Destiny. The concept of rugged individualism, which celebrated self-reliance and personal ambition, resonated with many Americans seeking new opportunities on the frontier. It fueled dreams of wealth and success through land ownership and economic prosperity.

Notions of racial superiority were intertwined with these religious and cultural beliefs. Many white Americans believed they were superior to indigenous peoples and other non-white populations inhabiting these territories. This belief justified displacement, violence, forced assimilation efforts such as Indian boarding schools or reservations policies against Native American tribes.

In conclusion, the ideology of Manifest Destiny was not only driven by economic ambitions but also deeply

influenced by religious convictions and cultural values. Religious leaders promoted the notion that America had been chosen by God for this destiny while cultural beliefs like rugged individualism fueled desires for personal wealth. The belief in racial superiority further rationalized actions taken against native populations. These factors combined served as potent justifications for westward expansion during this era.

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