

“We Shall All Be Americans”: **“Benevolent” US Indian Policy in the Early Republic from Coexistence to Removal**

Jason Rose

United States Indian policies have been widespread and varying over the years. Indian removal and reservations are the most commonly known aspect of US Indian policy, but acculturation and coexistence or absorption was the original policy and Indian Removal was an adaptation of these principles. Acculturation worked to varying degrees and was effective in some areas. However, within the first fifty years of US existence, policies shifted from interactive Indian acculturation to Indian Removal. While the intermixing of cultures ultimately did not solve the problem of what to do with the natives, there were numerous incidents of cross-cultural relationships with varying degrees of stability. On the frontier, race and social classes were in frequent contact and this led to certain amount of racial fluidity. Furthermore, American policy-makers underestimated how strongly Enlightenment principles of self-determination took hold in the Indian Tribes that adapted these values and this ultimately led to the greatest Indian Expulsion, the “Trail of Tears.” This essay seeks to explore US Indian policy transitions and the cultural and societal impacts of the policy changes. The difference between theory and practice of these philosophies will also be investigated.

Early US policy was built around a quasi-pluralistic society designed to incorporate positive aspects of other groups into the American identity. However, regarding the American Indian, US policy dictated absorption of beneficial aspects of native society while simultaneously raising the Indian people and their culture into “civilized” American society. While many of the policies incorporated by the government were manipulative, many white Americans viewed their actions as benevolent. Overwhelming evidence suggests that US Indian policy was designed

to acculturate natives and to absorb them either biologically or through Europeanization into American society. These early attempts to elevate native society required intercultural mingling including trade, marriage, attempts to Christianize, as well as numerous other activities, such as agriculture, education and the adoption of private property.

The belief that marriages between Europeans and Indians could be beneficial has been around since first contact. As early as 1665, the French rewarded male French fur traders for intermarrying with indigenous populations.¹ In the early eighteenth century, the British Board of Trustees encouraged official policies of intercultural relationships, although later Virginia and North Carolina enacted laws designed to limited legal sexual interactions, but not necessary all sexual interactions.² In 1792, Henry Knox privately supported such polices including bounties for white males

marrying Indian women and encouraging unchaste white women to move to the frontier and seek Indian males.³ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Thomas Jefferson urged the intermixing of American Indians and white settlers: “let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix, and become one people.” Later in his Presidency Jefferson implored several American Indian leaders to “unite yourselves with us...and we shall all be Americans; you will mix with us by marriage, your blood will run in our veins, and will spread with us over this great island.”⁴ Jefferson had at least two motives for this: he felt that the Indians could be “civilized” and it would give white Americans a more legitimate

1 Jacqueline Peterson, “Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lake Metes,” *Ethnohistory* 25/1 (Winter 1978), 47.

2 Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* 5th Ed., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Preston Hall, 2006), 293-294. Nash goes on to say that Virginia made no laws forbidding fornication between Indians and whites like the laws made between free blacks and whites.

3 Reginald Horsman, “The Indian Policy of an ‘Empire of Liberty’,” in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman & Peter J. Albert, eds. *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (University Press of Virginia, 1999): 46.

4 Thomas Jefferson in Gary Nash, “The Hidden History of Mestizo America,” (Dec. 1995): 943.

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claim to the land. Jefferson's words and deeds later suggest that US Indian policy was designed to acculturate natives and to absorb them into American society.

On the margins of society, where the races intermixed by necessity, intercultural relationships helped in survival and served as a catalyst to bring differing groups together. The Métis of Michigan and Wisconsin are one such group. Products of interracial contact between French fur traders and native women, they considered themselves distinctly different from both groups.⁵ One of the most famous Indian captives, Mary Jemison, felt that she would never be white again and felt compelled to recount her life story in order to protect her mixed race children.⁶ The Métis and Jemison's story illustrates that there could be successful interactions, but also show that the children produced were outside white society. Another well-known example of this practice was James Beckwourth, who while living on the upper Missouri River in the late 1820s, married the daughter of a Crow chief in an attempt to solidify his standing as a Crow.⁷ Intercultural unions between the various factions on the frontier created kinship alliances among white traders and the native tribes.⁸ However, Beckwourth's example illustrates the problem with the difference between the theory and practice of intercultural unions between whites and natives. Beckwourth's marriage solidified his standing with the tribe of his spouse, which turned into a common problem among those who married Indians. Adding to these troubles, white males consorting with native females on a nonpermanent basis led to abandoned "half-breed" children who became some of the most notorious leaders of the early Indian rebellions east of

5 Peterson, "Prelude to Red River," 54-55.

6 Brown "'The Horrid Alternative,'" 146-147; James Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, (New York: American Scenic & Historical Preservation Society, 1824), 136-138.

7 Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, 291; Thomas D. Bonner, *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth: Mountaineer, Scout and Pioneer, and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), 105-109.

8 Peterson, "Prelude to Red River," 55-56.

the Mississippi River.⁹ Thus, as with the Métis, Jemison, Beckwourth, and the “half-breed” rebels many whites that married natives became more Indian than their spouses white.

Although some intercultural trysts produced “half-breed” Indian rebels, many of these unions benefited Colonial and Early American

society. The offspring of these unions often served as liaisons between white and native societies and served as ties to each community.¹⁰ Complicating things further, Indians captured people with whom they were fighting, believing that they would physically and spiritually replace their lost tribesmen, and many of the captured people chose to remain with their new tribes and intermarry when given the opportunity to escape.¹¹ There was a difference between the theoretical ideal and the reality of the people. Jefferson, Washington and several others wanted this union, but many of the common people refused. A few people on the fringes of society wanted these unions, mostly to build allegiances among a hostile population outweighed other considerations. However, none of these people sought to “civilize” native populations. This created a new problem; since intermarriage did not prove effective as most whites chose to adopt native culture, new ways to bring Indians to proper American society needed to be created, and the notion of trade and the intermixing of culture through more compulsory, yet peaceful coexistence emerged.

After the creation of the modern US Government, questions about Indian interactions needed to be addressed. Congress reacted by establishing the War Department in 1789, giving them jurisdiction over native populations, and passing the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790. The Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790 forbade any foreign nationals,

9 Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, 295; Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jefferson Philanthropy and the American Indian* (University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 4-5.

10 Michael Lansing, “Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (Winter, 2000), 415.

11 Nash, Gary B. “The Hidden History of Mestizo America.” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (Dec. 1995): 954.

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US citizens, or states from enacting treaties, making trade arrangements, or purchasing land from the native populations under the auspices that aboriginal peoples in the US were foreign nations. This allowed for consistent policies to be enforced as only the US Government could interact with aboriginal people, negating individual states' rights to make treaties with the differing Indian populations in their territory.¹² This also profited the government as only American citizens could trade with or live among the various Indian tribes.¹³ The Act, designed to maintain peace, formalized US policy regarding Indian right to land.¹⁴ Prior to becoming the Secretary of the War Department, Henry Knox promoted Indian claims that "...being the prior occupants, [they] possess the right to the soil. It cannot be taken from them except by their consent, or by rights of conquest in case of a just war." Knox contended that if Indians occupied the land and did nothing to justify removal, then "to dispossess them on any other principle would be a great violation of the fundamental laws of nature."¹⁵ Knox realized that if the US adopted right of conquest policies it would prove ineffective and create a more violent and unstable frontier.¹⁶ Knox favored acculturation, believing that it would be the best possible solution for everyone involved.¹⁷ Knox made a natural law argument based on Enlightenment principles and concluded that if the Indians became extinct due to actions of the US, it would be repugnant.

In a slightly different manner than traditional colonial powers, the leaders of the Early Republic turned to diplomacy to handle the Indian question. The Founders, as men of Enlightenment ideals, felt that the

12 David R. Wrono. "Indian Treaties and the Democratic Idea," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 70 no. 2 (Winter, 1986-1987), 88.

13 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 18, 21.

14 US Congress, "Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790," In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 15.

15 Henry Knox, "Report of Henry Knox on the Northwestern Indians In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 12.

16 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 18-1

17 Reginald Horsman, "The Indian Policy of an 'Empire of Liberty'," 46.

US was different than the other nations of the world, and sought treaties with the various native tribes, maintaining the belief that good and reason exists in everyone.¹⁸ This can be seen in Knox's handling of the Indian Policies and matches George Washington's belief that the problem can be solved by legitimate means, believing that the natives' ultimate humanity will allow them to see the reason and rationale behind adopting American civilization. In his Third Annual Message, President Washington said, "It is sincerely to be desired that all need of coercion in future may cease and that an intimate intercourse may succeed." Washington spoke favorably of building trust between the Indian tribes and the US Government. Washington then goes on to say that these measures are "calculated to advance the happiness of the Indians and to attach them firmly to the United States." He wanted a partnership with the native tribes, seeking a peaceful coexistence built on Enlightenment principles, and genuinely felt that once the natives adopted American and Enlightenment ideals they could be integrated into American society. Washington made his goals more clear toward the end of his message, stating that to establish a "system corresponding with the mild principle of religion and philanthropy toward an unenlightened race of men, whose happiness materially depends on the conduct of the United States, would be as honorable to the dictates of sound policy."¹⁹ This statement, although laden with ethnocentrism, articulates Washington's vision; he wanted the American Indians to adopt white American culture and civilization by means of charity and Christian goodwill. Although Washington's desire for Indians to adopt American culture stems from his belief that it would be beneficial for them, sometimes this same desire had more sinister overtones.

This desire for Indians to adopt American culture and civilization did have some aspects of manipulative benevolence as well. Every administration from Washington to John Quincy Adams, and Jefferson

18 David R. Wrone. "Indian Treaties and the Democratic Idea," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 70 no. 2 (Winter, 1986-1987), 86.

19 George Washington, "President Washington's Third Annual Address," In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 15-16.

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in particular, felt that government policy should be directed toward civilization and the incorporation of Indians into white American society.²⁰ In a letter to William Henry Harrison, Jefferson argued that the “decrease in game” for Indian hunters will necessitate Indians adopting agricultural practices as whites move west and encroach on their land. Jefferson then encouraged debt among the various tribes in an effort to sell their land quicker and to expedite the acculturation process.²¹ Jefferson expounded his desire further in his address regarding Indian trading houses. Showing concern for the plight of the American Indians as the rapidly increasing white populations expanded westward, Jefferson argued that the government should persuade the natives “to abandon hunting, to apply to the raising of stock, to agriculture, and domestic manufacture...” and establish more trading houses to “place within their reach those things which will contribute more to their domestic comfort than the possession of extensive but uncultivated land.”²² These same sentiments are echoed in the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 proclaiming “in order to promote civilization...and to secure the continuance of their friendship” the President can give the Indians “domestic animals and implements of husbandry.”²³ By this time, the Indians were becoming acculturated, but not quickly enough. Jefferson felt that the Indians’ pace of acculturation hurt them and therefore felt justified in adapting manipulative practices to force the native populations to adopt and join the market economy in an effort to prevent complete annihilation of the American Indian.

Further evidence of this desire can be found in the correspondence between Jefferson and William Henry Harrison. In one letter, Jefferson discusses how US policy was to “live in perpetual peace with the Indians,”

20 Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 3-4.

21 Thomas Jefferson “President Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 22.

22 Thomas Jefferson, “President Jefferson on Indian Trading House January 18, 1803,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 21-22.

23 US Congress, “Trade and Intercourse Act, March 30, 1802,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 17.

and, echoing the words of President Washington, “cultivate an affectionate attachment with them.”²⁴ In his proposal to maintain the Indian trading houses, Jefferson claims that they were essential to “bringing together their and our sentiments, and in preparing them ultimately to participate in the benefits of our government.”²⁵ Jefferson wanted the Indians to merge with American society, and could not understand why someone would not want to live in this nation and adapt its principles. The founders, guilty of naiveté, could not comprehend why someone would not want to become a fully functioning citizen of the US. Further evidence of Jefferson’s manipulative benevolence can be demonstrated when he unequivocally stated “I believe we are acting for their [Indians] greatest good.” Jefferson, a product of his times, believed in an optimistic future that once Indians adapted to the best of civilizations, the American civilization based on rationalism and Enlightenment ideals, they would flourish and be accepted by white society.²⁶ Jefferson, while clearly having mixed motives, does seem to have at least some genuine desire for Indians to become, at least from his perspective, better people.

The policies articulated by the Washington and Jefferson administrations continued. William H. Crawford, Secretary of War under James Madison, argued for the continuation of Jefferson’s policies. Crawford, replying to a Senate resolution and under increasing pressure from private traders, argued that to “succeed perfectly in the attempt to civilize the aborigines of this country, the government ought to direct their attention to the improvement of their habitations, and the multiplication of distinct settlements.”²⁷ Crawford argued that the promotion of trade houses, which allowed Indians to engage in trade while also receiving small dosages of American society, was the only way to achieve the

24 Thomas Jefferson, “President Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 22.

25 Jefferson, “President Jefferson on Indian Trading House January 18, 1803,” 21-22.

26 Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 7-8.

27 William H. Crawford, “Secretary of War Crawford on Trade and Intercourse, March 13, 1816,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 27.

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“earnest desire of the Government to draw its savage neighbors within the pale of civilization.” Crawford not only echoed Jefferson’s appeal, but also Knox’s, by arguing that the “utter extinction of the Indian race must be abhorrent to the feelings of an enlightened and benevolent nation.”²⁸ Crawford then went on to say that the government should promote the introduction of “separate property” and to “let intermarriages between them and the whites be encouraged by the Government” illustrating the interwoven nature of the various means of acculturation. Crawford then concluded that it would enhance “national honor to incorporate, by humane and benevolent policy, the natives of our forests in the great American family of freemen.”²⁹ The US continued the policies that they believed were the most prudent and beneficial to all, which meant acculturation and promotion of Indians into the body politic of the US.

Other efforts to promote acculturation of the American Indian included the use of churches and education. Many believed education was the key to produce productive and good citizens and to thus convert tribes. The idea that missionaries could civilize Indians has been around as long as the idea of intermarriage. The Jesuits made numerous excursions among the Huron with some success, and Jonathon Edwards, the leader of the First Great Awakening, was also an Indian Missionary. The advocates encouraged Indian youths to leave their tribes to go to school believing that they would intermix into the predominantly white civilization and would no longer be Indian culturally.³⁰ This ultimately led to the passing of the Civilization Fund Act. Passed in 1819, the Civilization Fund Act promoted and funded the “habits and arts of civilization,” including the teaching of “reading, writing, and arithmetic” in an effort to prevent “further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes.”³¹ Missionaries

28 Ibid, 28.

29 Ibid.

30 David R. Wrone. “Indian Treaties and the Democratic Idea,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 70 no. 2 (Winter, 1986-1987), 97.

31 US Congress, “The Civilization Fund Act, 1819,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 33.

were the main beneficiaries of this act and when coupled with the strong Jeffersonian appeal to save the Indians from themselves, this made fertile soil for missionaries' desire to produce civilization out of savagery and to bring forth Christian souls.³² However, while philanthropy and Christian duty reigned in some areas, contacts between traders and Indians hindered progress in other areas and became exceptionally prominent when the Indian trade houses did not gain Congressional approval when the bill came up for renewal in 1822. The new act in its place allowed Indian agents to “grant licenses to trade with the Indians” to US citizens.³³ This allowed free enterprise to blossom on the frontier, but also hindered the US Government’s capabilities to monitor the trade between Indians and white traders, leading to friction, especially in the newly opened Missouri River Valley. It also hindered the government’s ability to use trade as a means of benevolent acculturation as economic gain became the primary motivating force.³⁴ Trade now became an instrument to expand wealth and removed the trade houses as a method of acculturation.

With the elimination of trading houses, early entrepreneurs changed the fabric of established etiquette on the Missouri River. The early deal between the traders and the Indians involved the Indians getting goods and trading them at the post, but with the removal of the trade system, traders sought to eliminate Indian middlemen by gaining pelts and hunting game for themselves.³⁵ In the early 1820’s, General William H. Ashley was granted the right to “trade, trap, & hunt” on the Missouri River and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun signed the order knowing that this would increase skirmishes between trappers and native inhabitants.³⁶ In June of 1823, the Arikaras attacked Ashley and

32 Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 5.

33 US Congress, “Act for Regulating the Indian Trade May 6, 1822,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 34.

34 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 38-39.

35 Jon T. Coleman, *Here Lies Hugh Glass*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012): 72-73.

36 John C Calhoun, “John C Calhoun, Secretary of War, to William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, Washington, July 1, 1822,” In *The West of William H. Ashley*, ed. Dale L Morgan, (Denver: Old West Publishing CO., 1964): 17; Jon T. Coleman,

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his men, eventually leading to a limited war with the Arikaras and their allies.³⁷ The ramifications of General Ashley's endeavors had lasting effects of white perceptions of the American Indians in general, and the necessity for the use of the US military in the area. Members of Ashley's party declared that they would not leave the area until they were able to "assist in shedding the blood," and US Indian Agent Benjamin O'Fallon referred to the Arikaras as "inhuman monsters" and expressed a desire for all the natives in the area to be collectively punished.³⁸ It may never be known what instigated the "unprovoked" attack on General Ashley and his men, what is certain is that Ashley and his compatriots' language indicates contempt and their descriptions illustrate the propensity of white Americans to blame altercations with the native populations on the natives themselves. Little regard, if any at all, is given to the natives' perceptions of the invasion of their land or the intrusion of financial rivals. The words and actions of Ashley's company illustrate the prejudices that were prevalent on the new frontier and illustrate the changing perceptions of multicultural absorptions articulated by Knox, Washington, and Jefferson. Consequently, the removal of the Indian trading houses could be viewed as the death knell of more benevolent American Indian acculturation policies, and coupled with renewed Indian hostilities on the new frontiers, leading to the full implementation of US policies of Indian Removal. However, this begs the question, how successful were US policies regarding acculturation?

Presidents Washington and Jefferson believed that these acts were benevolent and necessary, and the best way to promote US policy

Here Lies Hugh Glass, 71.

37 William H. Ashley, "William H. Ashley to a Gentleman in Franklin, Missouri," In *The West of William H. Ashley*, ed. Dale L Morgan, 17.

38 "Letter by One of Ashley's Men to a Friend in the District of Columbia," 30-31; "Benjamin O'Fallon, U.S. Indian Agent, Upper Missouri Agency, to William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, Washington, June 24, 1823," In *The West of William H. Ashley*, ed. Dale L Morgan, 38.

involved the civilization and Christianization of the Indians. Consequently, the US Government devised a two-pronged attack on native culture by a combination of Christianity and secular society, including promotion of education and American agrarian practices.³⁹ After all, it was inevitable that American and Indian interaction would change the landscape of Indian society, and after first contact Indian society could never be the same. All societies evolve and numerous encounters with diverse cultures accelerate this progression. Even the act of writing a treaty changed traditional indigenous culture in America. The notion that leaders could sign treaties, trading communal lands and making them private property radically altered some Indian perceptions as they became exposed to private property, which was alien to their culture.⁴⁰ Furthermore, some tribes did not even have a true chief in the traditional sense of the term. The Indians changed, and Thomas McKenney, US Superintendent of Indian Trade, became worried about the inability of natives to provide for themselves and encouraged the ban on liquor sales to Indians.⁴¹ Alcohol had been an ongoing problem with the American Indian tribes and Mary Jemison thought alcohol triggered the plight of her adopted people. Jemison lamented that “the introduction and use of that baneful article, which has made such devastation in our tribes, and threatens the extinction of our people, (the Indians,) I can, with the greatest propriety, impute the whole of my misfortune in losing my three sons.”⁴² Furthermore, Lewis Cass noticed that several Indian groups were no longer able to live without some form of governmental support.⁴³ Clearly, something needed to be done as the native populations gradual lost the ability to survive without assistance.

39 Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 3-4, 120.

40 David R. Wrone. “Indian Treaties and the Democratic Idea,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 70 no. 2 (Winter, 1986-1987), 92-94.

41 Thomas L. McKenney, “Thomas L. McKenney on Trading Sites February 14, 1826,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 43-44.

42 Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, 136.

43 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 60-61.

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General concern for native inhabitants proved common as President Monroe argued that self-removal may be necessary to procure a lasting peace that included the survival of the American Indian. Monroe felt that self-removal may be the best way to “promote the interest and happiness” and the US should act with a “generous spirit” to prevent the ruin of indigenous people. This could be accomplished through the creation of reservations which “would shield them from impending ruin” and “promote their welfare and happiness.”⁴⁴ The Louisiana Purchase allowed resettlement that was not as feasible before and Jefferson even alluded to this when he went to Congress about the purchase of Louisiana.⁴⁵ The idea of creating land for those ethnically and racially different was similar to the acquisition of Liberia for free slaves, with one major difference: natives could be successfully brought into American society. Monroe stated in his address that the Indian elders contained “sufficient intelligence” to realize the necessity of Removal. Once again, Monroe emphasized that Removal allowed the US to “teach them by regular instruction the arts of civilized life and make them a civilized people” and then declared that it “is an object of very high importance.”⁴⁶ Removal became viewed as benevolent as the Indian warfare and the advancement of white settlers decimated the morale of the Eastern Indians.⁴⁷ Reservations and the constricting of movements by the Indians would allow “regular instruction” and make acculturation practices easier in theory. White American elites believed that it would be possible to absorb Indian populations even on reservations while they did not think that was an option with blacks, thus paving the way for Indian Removal as a policy linked with earlier notions of benevolence.

While some of the changes to the native culture were negative,

44 James Monroe, “Message of President Monroe on Indian Removal, January 27, 1825” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 39.

45 Horsman, “The Indian Policy of an ‘Empire of Liberty’,” 55.

46 James Monroe, “Message of President Monroe on Indian Removal, January 27, 1825 In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 40.

47 Reginald Horsman, “The Indian Policy of an ‘Empire of Liberty’,” 55.

such as the increase of alcoholism, some changes could be considered positive. The willingness of the Métis in Michigan and Wisconsin to assimilate may have momentarily spared other tribes from forcible conversion or Removal by appeasing whites.⁴⁸ The Métis also produced a prosperous middle ground between traditional life and adaption of their white forefathers' culture. One community of the Shawnees successfully acculturated and some became vital allies to the US government against Tecumseh and the British during the War of 1812.⁴⁹ In the southeastern US, the Five Civilized Tribes practiced limited Christianity and adopted farming and other agrarian practices. The Creek serve as an interesting example of mass cultural assimilation of Indians. During Tecumseh's revolt, the Creek splintered with some deciding to join his alliance while the remaining Creek sided with the US. This resulted in a civil war between the two factions of Creeks that merged into the War of 1812 and pitted people of varying degrees of acculturation against each other.⁵⁰ The revolting group, known as Redsticks, were devastated and all of the Creek people suffered and were forced to cede land as punishment, but eventually all of these tribes were forced to relocate.⁵¹ In a sad ironic twist, the introduction of enlightenment principles by the government brought the death of American Indian culture east of the Mississippi River, and only pockets of it remained outside the new reservations in the west. The most telling example of this unfortunate circumstance was the Cherokee.

The Cherokee, although not the first of the Five Civilized Tribes to convert, were probably the most successful. The Cherokee learned American farming practices, as well as how to make cloth by spinning

48 Jacqueline Peterson, "Prelude to Red River," 55.

49 R. David Edmunds, "'A Watchful Safeguard to Our Habitations' Black Hoof and the Loyal Shawnees," in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman & Peter J. Albert, eds. *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (University Press of Virginia, 1999): 163-166.

50 Joel W. Martin, "Cultural Contact and the Crises in the Early Republic: Native American Religious Renewal, Resistance, and Accommodation," in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman & Peter J. Albert, eds. *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (University Press of Virginia, 1999): 248-249.

51 Ibid, 255.

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cotton, from the US Government and missionaries.⁵² The Cherokee also quickly adopted and incorporated the use of African slaves. Still other Cherokee became wealthy businessmen led by many of the interracial children of traders, government agents, and missionaries.⁵³ Enlightenment principles took hold in the Cherokee and ideas of self-governance became prominent. By 1827, the Cherokee drafted a constitution similar to the US Constitution. In their constitution, the Cherokee tried to proclaim their ability to adapt in an effort to preserve their tribal traditions and their territorial claims against the growing white presence in the area. The Cherokee also proclaimed that they were one of the numerous nations that exists in the world, a sovereign entity, which antagonized Georgia.⁵⁴ Georgia sought numerous times to stop the growing sovereignty of the Cherokee people, and Congress even promised Removal as soon as possible “peaceably” and under “reasonable terms,” but this was largely ignored until the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 and his promotion of the Indian Removal Act in 1830.⁵⁵ Jackson declared before Congress in 1829 that the Cherokee “have lately attempted to erect an independent government within the limits of Georgia and Alabama” and then argued against its constitutionality. Jackson then stated his concern for the eventual decline of the Cherokee and “humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity.” Jackson then went further by stating that the emigration should be voluntary as it would be unethical to force people to leave their land and their family’s graves and memorials.⁵⁶ The following year, Jackson gave his second annual message and advocated removal and plans to “send [the Cherokee and other Indians] to a land where their existence may be

52 William Gerald McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 62-63; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 119-120.

53 Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era*, (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 2; Stanley W. Hoig, *The Cherokees and Their Chiefs: In the Wake of Empire*, (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 66-68.

54 Ibid, 67.

55 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 67.

56 Andrew Jackson, “President Jackson on Indian Removal December 8, 1829,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 47-48.

prolonged and perhaps made perpetual.”⁵⁷ There is much conjecture on why Jackson seemingly changed his position, but Jackson as purely an Indian hater is a modern caricature. Jackson had friends that were Indians, had Indians allies during the War of 1812 that helped him fight against other Indians, and even adopted an orphaned Indian child. Jackson may be a great many things, but labeling him a debased hater of Indians does not seem justified when examining his actions and deeds in context.

When the Cherokee drafted their constitution and modeled it after the US, it concerned members of the US Government and the state legislature in Georgia. A country emerged based on American principles and sought independence based on many of the same reasons the US did, such as self-determination. The Cherokee Nation took Georgia to court and sought every legal means available to them to maintain their traditional land.⁵⁸ Their understanding of the US legal system and their adaption of a constitution further illustrates their adaption of American principles of civilization. Jackson argued in 1835, that “all preceding experiments for the improvement of the Indians have failed. It seems now to be an established fact that they cannot live in contact with a civilized community and prosper.”⁵⁹ At first glance Jackson seems to be contradicting reality, but within context this passage seems justified. Jackson showed concern that the Indians suffered at the hands of Georgians, and contact with white settlers produced a belief in sovereignty among the Cherokee which could not be tolerated. The sovereignty of the Cherokee could not coincide with the sovereignty of Georgia and Jackson realized that this would end badly for the Cherokees. From this perspective, when Jackson argued that Removal “will secure their prosperity and improvement,” he argued for the safety of the Cherokee as

57 Andrew Jackson, “Andrew Jackson Endorses Removal, 1830,” In *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848* 2nd Ed, ed. Sean Wilentz, Jonathan Earle & Thomas Pater-son, (Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 247.

58 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 71.

59 Andrew Jackson, “President Jackson on Indian Removal December 7, 1835,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 71.

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the militias of Georgia would continue to harass the natives.⁶⁰ If Jackson is to be despised, it should not be due to his actions regarding the Cherokee themselves, as he really had no other viable options, but because his Removal of the Cherokee set the precedent of forced Indian Removal on a larger scale. The discovery of gold, land for farming cotton, and greed in general all played a role in the removal of the Cherokee, but none of these matched the threat of a sovereign nation, another potential “empire of liberty” adjacent to the US, and squarely in its midst.

US policies regarding Indians significantly changed after Removal. However, the desire to integrate Indians into American society did not wane, just the means of doing it. Constant integration among Indians and white Americans no longer sufficed and notions of keeping races separated reigned. Reservations replaced pockets of Indian settlements surrounded by white Americans and many elites felt that although the Indians could still be elevated into a more “civilized” people, the interactions were hindering progress. By twenty-first century standards, deliberate acculturation by a dominant group would be classified as cultural imperialism and some may even call it cultural genocide. While few individuals would not be troubled by these practices today, during the infancy of the US it was not viewed as such. History, at least in part, is the story of human migration and if human groups compete during these periods of migration, then Washington’s and Jefferson’s similar plans of mass acculturation may have been the most benevolent option available at the time. The idea of a vibrant multicultural society is a relative new concept that was not feasible in their minds and to judge them accordingly is not fair. Furthermore, there would be some mutual adaptations, which happened to a degree already in American society, but not a total cultural domination as some people believe. It would be akin to Latin America where the cultures merged and made distinctive cultural groups, neither

⁶⁰ Andrew Jackson, “President Jackson on Indian Removal December 7, 1835,” In *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha, 72.

fully Indian nor Spanish.

During the Early Republic, members of the US Government undertook numerous methods to deal with the Indian question. Ranging from intermarriage, coexistence and trading, to eventually Removal, all of them dealt with the underlying conviction that acculturation and absorption into white society was the best solution. Although some of the plans had secondary ulterior motives, all methods sought to elevate the native populations of America into a more civilized society in the manner that seemed best to them at the time. While the rationale was seemingly benevolent to white societal elites, the methods and actual practices could be cruel and contained numerous unforeseen consequences. However ethnocentric the leaders of the Early Republic seemed, it must be remembered that while operating from their contemporary framework, many of them were proposing ideas that they sincerely believed to be the best course of action for everyone involved.

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<p>Jason Rose is a senior and will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) in History. This paper was written for Dr. Timothy Willig's J495 Proseminar for History Majors course.</p>
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