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History 204

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### Lewis and Clarks impact on National Sovereignty

The Lewis and Clark Expedition had greatly impacted America by their establishment of National Sovereignty throughout the territory of the Louisiana Purchase. Their idea to establish trade with the Natives and affirm Sovereignty throughout that region of the Louisiana Purchase. America gaining this identity of a sovereign nation being governed by the ultimate overseer; since we were the ones who have conquered and bought this land and being governed by only Americans. The Lewis and Clark Expedition had shown that due to the expansion westward of the Louisiana Purchase, America had given itself the idea of American Sovereignty and the ability to govern itself; while a main objective for Lewis and Clark within the expedition was to spread National Sovereignty. That can all be seen through the ways through which Native Americans were interacted with and treated throughout the expedition.

The Louisiana Purchase had allowed for the United States to become something greater than they already were. This had nearly doubled the size of the U.S. and gave Jefferson a much larger nation to be governed. Allowing for the people to have the ability to move west and start the great expansion, for it was their God given right to imperialize the whole U.S. that they believed at the time. Some may argue against this

claim of those who wanted to move west, but in the end, it allowed for greater sovereignty within the U.S. This was caused by the effects of Lewis and Clark with their ability to talk to the Chiefs of the tribes they would encounter. With these encounters, most of the time the Natives were positive since Lewis and Clark meant no harm. They were just journaling the experiences and multitude of information that was picked up on the way through the expedition. The Louisiana Purchase gave the rest of the U.S. civilization an ability to govern a greater body than it already was and totally altered who was in control of the nation.

This would start with Jefferson's goal, for after the expedition had finished. Jefferson's ability to buy an empire had allowed for one of his goals to be met. This had also given the Jefferson the idea of owning the rest of the U.S. By noting that "Captain Lewis would be traveling through American territory, even if it was territory that no American had ever seen"<sup>[1]</sup>. I have felt that this sentence shows a great meaning to what America is to Jefferson. This meaning that America is already full, that this country is already ours. An idea of spreading National Sovereignty is something that Jefferson wanted Lewis and Clark to do by using their expedition to do so. Although, Natives who have been here longer than Jefferson and the American people; this idea that we are now a sovereign country takes place during this major event that is being drawn out. The Lewis and Clark expedition will spread National Sovereignty throughout the west.

Jefferson's idea of an empire had been shown throughout the journals of Lewis and Clark. It had also brought a huge idea of nationalism due to his very pro-American ideas within the readings. Some may argue against the idea that Lewis and Clark weren't doing this for strictly westward expansion, and they're correct because it

allowed for new trade partners to be gained. It had also allowed for different discoveries to be found. For that the rest of this Sovereign empire is being gained due to their examples of governance to the Native Americans. This idea of a sovereign empire being expanded westward is something that will show throughout the years after the Lewis and Clark expedition. Nationalism played a role upon Jefferson's idea, by viewing what was written "Jefferson gave you this country. Lewis and Clark showed you the way. The rest is your own course of empire"<sup>[2]</sup>. This idea post Lewis and Clark Expedition had begun to show that the U.S. as a sovereign empire. Being shown in the Lewis and Clark journals are the ways this came to be. Moving west was meant to be and can be connected to the Lewis and Clark journals; as well as the ideas of Thomas Jefferson and his reasoning for sending them. This led to an impact within National Sovereignty, because of the American government's ability to send Lewis and Clark to explore the rest of the west.

The way Natives have made their encounters with Lewis and Clark throughout the expedition and altered their views on them. These views would create a lesser image on Natives which will imply American sovereignty; the power of the founders ruling over those already here. For example, Lewis and Clark questioned the culture of Native Americans. Presenting this idea of a "primitive mind"<sup>[3]</sup> that made them seem easily conquerable while encountering them throughout their expedition. This example of a "primitive mind"<sup>[4]</sup> was an attack on Native's culture, for that they gave examples on how multiple offers would be made from generosity to the guest of honor during the

encounter. This does not fully commit to National Sovereignty; it does take steps forward that Lewis and Clark personally made for this idea to come true. Without the journals written, some may have never noticed the huge impact that was made in National Sovereignty, and the credit would have never been there. Just like how the Natives were able to treat Lewis and Clark as guests of honor, they would soon have to treat the American government the same way. Although Lewis and Clark weren't always negative to the Natives, they did show a sign of governance, which could be seen as a disrespect towards Natives, as if they were taken advantage of. The views on Lewis and Clark through the Native Americans point of view primarily stayed the same, that they were there to explore and do business.

Some historians may argue that Lewis and Clark did not always treat the Natives with the upmost respect. For that the respect they would show specifically to the Native Chiefs of the tribes, it was to open this idea of losing their sovereign rights. This is something that will become a problem later on in history. Although the Natives did not exactly know what they were getting into at the time, it allowed for Lewis and Clark to officially claim that land as U.S. territory that has been explored. Since Jefferson had already bought that land, the exploration part of it was where Lewis and Clark encouraged National Sovereignty. For example, William Clark was able to appease the chief of the Madane tribe by, "suffered 16 men with their musick to visit the 1<sup>st</sup> village for the purpose of danceing, by as they said the particular request of the chiefs of that village"<sup>[5]</sup>. This appeasement to the chief of the tribe had allowed for good word to spread amongst the tribesmen to gain their trust and respect. Appeasement goes a long way with these Native American tribes, and it allows for the idea of acceptance towards

Americans to take place. This had opened to new partners for trade and an ability to govern them without any huge complications. For that this idea of appeasement was taken far throughout their expedition to build safe and stable relations with the Natives. Although, this idea of expanding the sovereign nation will concluded to the absolute dismissal of Native peoples from their land. The impact that Lewis and Clark were able to make within National Sovereignty was showing this white American culture to the Natives.

This idea includes expanding the knowledge of what Native people may not know. For the Natives out west have yet to see American military uniforms. These military uniforms that Lewis and Clark had with them were symbolic of how they were spreading National Sovereignty. This idea of military might is shown within the journal articles of Lewis and Clark saying that, “the Chief said they all thanked me verry much for the fatherly protection which I shewed towards them, that the village had been crying all the night and day for the death of the brave young man, who fell but now they would wipe away their tears, and rejoice in their fathers protection, and cry no more”<sup>[6]</sup>. This idea of showing military might is something that comes often throughout the journals of Lewis and Clark and was a great example of them spreading National Sovereignty. Military shows the sovereignty that already exists in the Nation but is just expanding further west. The impact that Lewis and Clark had on National Sovereignty by being a “father figure”<sup>[7]</sup> sign of protect just shows how the government should work. It is even stated that, “Lewis made every effort to search out and approach Indians in a way that would be accepted as friendly”<sup>[8]</sup>. This imagery of a father figure approaching in a

friendly way had a lasting impact on the Native Americans. This impact had also given the ability to expand National Sovereignty. The reason for that is because, this father figure image is the one who is now governing the Native peoples. For expanding the knowledge about the U.S. military on the Native Americans, was able to show the impact of what spreading National Sovereignty looked like.

Lewis and Clarks ability to imply governance over a different society of people within western America can show their impact for the spread of National Sovereignty. An example can be seen though a famous speech Lewis made towards a tribe. This speech said that “His Red children were now under the protection of a new father, the Great White Father at Washington. They must keep the peace. The Great White Father would send traders to supply them with all necessities.”<sup>[9]</sup>. This speech had shown the Native Americans there at the time who was in charge. It gave Lewis the opportunity to spread his word throughout the west and stake their claim to “possessing the tribes sovereignty, land, and allegiance”<sup>[10]</sup>. That is a great example of what Lewis and Clarks impact on National Sovereignty had looked like. Going back to the speech, when he said “His Red children were now under the protection of a new father”<sup>[11]</sup>, it was implying that Thomas Jefferson oversaw them now. Although they were addressed as “children”, this was primarily one form of disrespect that could be seen; but a father figure defending these Native Americans is something to be encouraged. For that it allows National Sovereignty to spread throughout the west and into the tribes. This shows that the Natives must follow the rules due to them being the governed now. The

idea of Lewis giving this speech to the group of Native Americans was a sign of transferring sovereignty onto them. Speeches were able to persuade Chiefs of tribes and have them respect Lewis and Clark a lot more. This small speech had impacted the way this group of Natives had viewed the Americans; by the generosity of offering help to this tribe. Now the idea of National Sovereignty has spread amongst this Native American group in the west and the impact Lewis and Clark had left behind.

With how generous the Native Americans were, they were able to become excellent trade partners. The way Lewis and Clark were able to use trade through impacting National Sovereignty is by the usage of American currency and items that were considered valuable or symbolic to their main objective of spreading National Sovereignty. This was a way to establish National Sovereignty by exposing Native Americans to U.S. currency, and valuable items. There are examples of this within the journals that Lewis and Clark had written while on their expedition. They have documented that “we informed them who we were, where we came from, where bound and for what purpose and requested to purchase & exchange a few horses with them, in the course of the day I purchased 11 horses & exchanged 7 for which we gave a few articles of merchandize”<sup>[12]</sup>. This had allowed for the Native Americans to slowly be introduced to European American goods at that time. For that Lewis and Clark had also “gave 4 chiefs medals & a few small articles with tobacco”<sup>[13]</sup> allowing for the Chiefs to see what these medals are. Spreading a subtle message of American Sovereignty by introducing them to these military medals. These possessions that were given to the Chiefs were believed to be “highly valued the symbolically laden possessions”<sup>[14]</sup> by

Lewis and Clark. It was highly valued, because they were of things that the Native Americans have had yet to see or encounter. These material goods that were traded with the Native Americans included flags too. It was a symbolic way of showing the spread of National Sovereignty. If Lewis and Clark were not to distribute flags to Native American Chiefs, the impact that they left may not be as large as what it came to be. This form of giving American currency, medals, and flags were a symbol of impact on how the tribes would view these white men. Allowing for Lewis and Clark to impact the spread of National Sovereignty.

This journey that Lewis and Clark went on shows how they truly impact westward expansion and the idea of spreading National Sovereignty. All the people they have encountered, all the animals and plants they have discovered, and the journals they've written. It shows that these "first sightings" of the experiences that Lewis and Clark had went through made-up what America was about to become. The Native Americans they were able to encounter allowed for word to be spread of what Lewis and Clark were there for. The amazing way they were able to translate what the explorers and what the Natives were trying to converse to each other allowed for a higher intellectual thinking. Everything they have went through to spread this idea of National Sovereignty is what made them impactful. Lewis and Clarks ability to go throughout the west and explore the territory of the Louisiana Purchase while making it an objective to claim the land and possessions around them while spreading National Sovereignty is the impact they have made.

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Purchase. Their idea to establish trade with the Natives and affirm Sovereignty throughout that region of the Louisiana Purchase territory. America gaining this identity of a sovereign nation being governed by the ultimate overseer; since we were the ones who have conquered and bought this land and being governed by only Americans. The Lewis and Clark Expedition had shown that due to the expansion westward of the Louisiana Purchase, America had given itself the idea of American Sovereignty and the ability to govern itself; spreading National Sovereignty being one of Lewis and Clarks main objectives for this expedition. That can all be seen through the ways through which Native Americans were interacted with and treated throughout the expedition.

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