

Opposing viewpoints: jefferson and the louisiana purchase



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Jefferson Goes Against His Own Philosophy: Louisiana Purchase The Louisiana Purchase was the acquisition by the United States of America in 1803 of 828,000 square miles of France's claim to the territory of Louisiana. The Louisiana territory encompassed all or part of 15 current U. S. states and two Canadian provinces. At the time, the purchase faced domestic opposition because it was thought to be unconstitutional. Although Thomas Jefferson agreed that the U. S.

Constitution did not contain provisions for acquiring territory, he decided to go right ahead with the purchase anyway in order to remove France's presence in the region and to protect both U. S. trade access to the port of New Orleans and free passage on the Mississippi River. Thomas Jefferson was strongly anti-federalist. While he might have written the Declaration of Independence, he definitely did not author the Constitution. Instead, that document was mainly written by James Madison. Jefferson spoke against a strong federal government and instead advocated states' rights.

He feared tyranny of any kind and only recognized the need for a strong, central government in terms of foreign affairs. He felt that all powers given to the National Government were enumerated. If they were not expressly mentioned in the Constitution then they were reserved to the states. By completing this purchase, Jefferson had to put aside his principles because the allowance for this type of transaction was not expressly listed in the Constitution. Jefferson's philosophical consistency was in question because of his strict interpretation of the Constitution.

Many people believed Jefferson were being hypocritical by doing something they surely would have argued against with Alexander Hamilton. There were <https://assignbuster.com/opposing-viewpoints-jefferson-and-the-louisiana-purchase/>

several effects of Jefferson's decision to go against his own philosophy. It can be argued that his taking liberties with the Constitution in the name of need would lead to future Presidents feeling justified with a continual increase in the elasticity of the Constitution. Jefferson should rightly be remembered for the great deed of purchasing this enormous tract of land, but one wonders if he might regret the means in which he earned this fame

Necessary and Beneficial Westward Expansion: Louisiana Purchase The Louisiana Purchase was one of the largest land deals in history. In 1803, the United States paid approximately \$15 million dollars for over 800, 000 square miles of land. The purchase spurred along the beginning of America's fascination with exploring the west. With the purchase of this new territory, the land area of America nearly doubled. This land deal was arguably the greatest achievement of Thomas Jefferson's presidency, but also posed a major philosophical problem for Jefferson.

As a strong Republican, Jefferson did not believe in straying from the exact words of the Constitution. With the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson had clearly not followed his own strict interpretation of the Constitution. Federalist critics howled that the Constitution nowhere permitted the federal government to purchase new land. Jefferson was troubled by the inconsistency, but in the end decided that the Constitution's treaty-making provisions allowed him room to act. As a president, he wisely allowed for his own views to bend in order to better the nation as a whole.

Although Jefferson's view of strict-interpretation did not allow for the purchase, Jefferson's actions were justified. Waiting for a Constitutional amendment might cause the deal to fall through. In 1801, Spain and France
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signed a secret treaty ceding Louisiana to France. France suddenly posed a potential threat to America. There was a fear that if America did not purchase New Orleans from France, it could lead to war. The change of ownership of this key port resulted in its closing to Americans. Therefore, Jefferson sent envoys to France to try and secure its purchase.

With increased pressure, Jefferson decided to go through with the purchase. Luckily, the people of the United States basically agreed that this was an excellent move. The Louisiana Purchase demonstrates Jefferson's ability to make pragmatic political decisions. Although contrary to some of his central principles, guaranteeing western expansion was so important to Jefferson's overall vision that he took bold action. Increased resources, westward expansion, and a growing sense of national pride all resulted from the purchase. The gains were dramatic, as the territory acquired would in time add 13 new states to the union.