

Did the idea of  
manifest destiny  
simply mean acquiring  
more territory for the  
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The concept of 'manifest destiny' and the acquisition of more territory for the United States of America are inseparable. 'Manifest destiny' acts as the soul for the ideological concept that it is the right of the Americans to acquire more territory. During the 19th century the U. S. population was expanding at a rapid pace. For a variety of reasons, intrepid Americans ventured forth to settle western lands as they heeded the famous words commonly attributed to New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley: " Go West, Young Man."

Meanwhile, the nation expanded by acquiring title to more and more territory, whether by purchase or negotiation or as a result of war. Many Americans began to believe that it was the nation's " Manifest Destiny" to expand westward.

Manifest Destiny refers to a concept often used to explain or justify American expansion, especially in the decades preceding the Civil War (1861-65) and again in the late 19th century. While debate over expansion goes back to the beginnings of American expansion in the late 18th century, the phrase " Manifest Destiny" did not come into vogue until the 1840s. In 1845, John O'Sullivan, a democrat leader and editor of the New York newspaper 'The Morning Post, wrote: " Our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty". (O'Sullivan, John L. " Annexation", The United States Democratic Review)

To many it seemed inevitable that lands to the west of the Mississippi, once claimed by Mexico, England, and a host of American Indian tribes, should eventually be settled by Americans. John O'Sullivan the editor of the influential 'Democratic Review' and the 'The Morning Post' had coined the phrase " Manifest Destiny" to describe this vision of a United States  
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stretching from Atlantic to Pacific. Yet anti-slavery activists and Democrats, whose belief in federal power was threatened by the South, were opposed to any expansionist move that would add new slave-holding states to the Union and thereby upset the fragile balance of power between North and South. A treaty with Great Britain, this conflict settled on Texas, settled once the Oregon territorial boundary. Having declared their independence from Mexico in 1836, a number of Texans sought annexation by the U. S., and got it in 1845. For the Republic of Mexico, this constituted an act of aggression against what their sovereign territory.

Once the concept was given the name 'Manifest Destiny' it became widely used, appearing in newspapers, debates, paintings and advertisements.

Many Americans held the belief in manifest destiny in the 1840s that the United States was destined to expand across the continent, if necessary by force. It became the leading light for westward expansion. Throughout the 1840s westward expansion gained pace. People living in the crowded east were lured west with promises of inexpensive land and open spaces.

The supporters of Manifest Destiny used two main arguments. Some advocates believed that the United States, as a more advanced culture, had a God-given right to expand its borders. Such expansion would have a civilizing influence in the west, they argued. Many asserted in particular that such expansion benefited Indians and people in newly acquired territories by spreading American democratic, cultural and religious values and institutions. Others argued that the territorial expansion that Manifest Destiny entailed strengthened the foundations of the new union, making it invulnerable. In addition, they said, expansion into new territories was

necessary to accommodate a dramatic increase in. population of the United  
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States. The notion of Manifest Destiny explained the mindset of many expansionist policy makers of the time, who sought to push the nation's borders further west. Political leaders used it to justify efforts to acquire the Oregon Territory, California and the vast Mexican lands in the Southwest. Thus the ideological concept of 'manifest destiny' was used as a mean to acquire more territory by winning over the hearts and minds of the citizens of America that it was their God given right to expand their territories.

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