

Politics of war extra



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Politics of War: War of 1812 The participants in the War of 1812 are the United States of America on one side and the British Empire on the other. The British Empire was composed of Great Britain and the British North America territories (some Canadian provinces). The United States was composed of the different states signatories to the union (18 states at that time), and the British Empire was allied with its Northern territories in Canada and the Native Indians.

The primary spark that set off the shooting was when the Chesapeake, a vessel of the U. S. Navy was detained by Leopard, a British frigate, and ordered to be searched for deserters. The Captain of the Chesapeake refused to be boarded and the ship was fired upon by the Leopard; as a result, about three men of the Chesapeake were killed and 18 were wounded. The Captain then gave in to the inspection, whereupon, four members of the crew who were allegedly deserters were removed from the Chesapeake. When the maimed Chesapeake later returned to Norfolk, outrage from across the country was expressed by the American people. As a result, “ American opinion not only supported, but demanded war” (Coles, p. 7).

The present international laws and regulations on war were not in place in the 1800s. The existing international and legal policies surrounding the declaration of war during the 1800s lay in each state’s right to exist and declare war. “ In the United States, it is confided to the federal legislature where it resides with the people and is retained by them as a portion of sovereign power; it must be exercised by them in their collective capacity as provided by constitutional law...” (Halleck, p. 351). On June 4th 1812, President James Madison asked the Congress to declare war; the latter immediately approved Madison’s proposal. After much debate, and only by <https://assignbuster.com/politics-of-war-extra/>

six votes, the Senate also approved Madison's proposal (Katcher, et. al., p. 3). Based on this approved process of declaring war existing at such time, the War of 1812 is considered legal.

The primary causes of the War of 1812 are the policies of impressment and trade imposed by the British Empire. Impressment subjected British subjects to compulsory military service and in service to the war being fought by the British Empire against Napoleon Bonaparte. Many British subjects who did not want to serve in the British military found work in many of the US ships and other American workplaces. Some Americans were also illegally impressed into service by the British military. This angered many Americans. Due to the war waging between France and Britain, America could not freely trade and transport its goods across the sea without being seized or boarded by either the French or the British ships. Many ships and goods were lost to either the British or the French. And "with so many losses of ships and cargoes, "Free Trade and Sailor Rights", became the rallying cry of Americans who opposed Britain's control of the seas" (Childress, p. 8). In this sense, the cause of the War of 1812 may be considered as economic.

The secondary cause of the war is that the United States wanted to expand its territories to the north. And while it was expanding its territories to the north, it was meeting a lot of resistance from the Indians. Many of the Indians did not want to give up their lands and be relocated farther up north. And they rejected the American colonials and were prompted to ally themselves with the British Empire. Nevertheless, many Indians sold their lands to the Americans, and American troops soon moved into these areas. This resulted to armed skirmishes between the resistant Indians and the American military. Indians refusing to accept American colonizers now

actively joined British service.

The United States was at fault for the conflict becoming a hot war. The impressments and trade policies of the British Empire was reason enough for the United States to declare war on Britain. And such reasons alone could have kept the war between the British Empire and the United States, however, the latter's expansion and invasion of the northern territories led to the war becoming an even bigger one. Madison wanted to conquer Canada. And such desire necessitated the involvement of the Indians and other Canadians who were peacefully occupying their northern territories. And the exploitive practices of the American people on the Indian lands spurred the Natives into taking up arms against the colonials. " The newcomers not only wanted to take land, but the agricultural economy they brought with them changed the environment, as they cut down the forests, chased away the game, and rendered existing native subsistence patterns non-viable" (Benn, p. 18). The British Empire also has its share of responsibility in the escalation of the war when it refused to allow Russia to negotiate a peace between these two nations.

The latest probable time for the conflict to have been avoided was when the American charge' d' affaires in London proposed an armistice in exchange for a renunciation of impressment. Britain refused. When Detroit was taken by the British, the Empire was now eager to consider the armistice agreement with the US. This time however, President Madison refused Britain's offer because he really wanted to take control of Canada (Benn, p. 82). The diplomatic channels which were being opened at several points in the conflict could have prevented the war. These two factions had a chance to peacefully resolve the conflict if only they inclined towards less lofty and

selfish goals.

Through the Treaty of Ghent, both parties agreed to end the war. From the point of view of the United States, they won the war. Many analysts still say that it is a very complicated war to call. The British Empire was able to retain control of its Northern territories in Canada, and the United States was able to regain control of its territories. The U. S. suffered financial losses from the war. Both parties also agreed to restore the Indians to the territories which were seized from them. Trade relations were restored. “ London business interests had learned enough to shift their investments in anticipation of renewed trade with the United States” (Benn, p. 82). On further analysis of the outcome of the war, no one really won because status quo was restored and both sides suffered losses from the war.

The country that started the war, the United States, did not achieve its goal. The United States was not able to gain control of the northern territories of the British Empire. It was also not able to seize control of the Indian territories. The United States did not achieve its goal for expansion because the Treaty of Ghent restored the status quo of all the warring factions.

The Treaty of Ghent which brought the War of 1812 to a close is relevant in the sense that it gave territorial gains for both Canada and the U. S. , “ but did establish boundary commissions to settle the welter of territorial disputes that still plagued the northeastern border of the United States with Canada” (Pastor, p. 52). The War of 1812 also directed the expansion of the U. S. to the west rather than the northwest. Canada was no longer an object of contention between the United States and Britain, and this gave way to Canada’s eventual detachment from the British Empire. These are the more relevant and long-term effects of the War of 1812.

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