

The US Government Policy towards the Plains Indians

Learning Objective

To know the US Government policy towards the Plains Indians in the 1830s – 1850s and assess the reasons for the changes in policy that occurred.

Learning Outcomes

To describe the changes in the treatment of the Plains Indians by the US government and recognise the triggers that caused changes in policy. Target 4-5

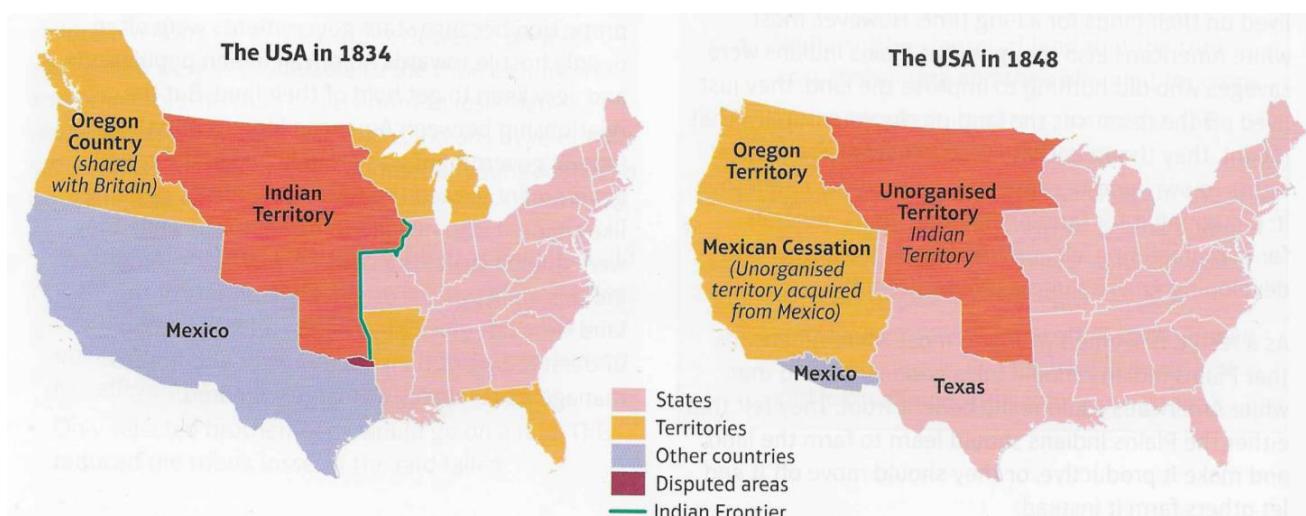
1830s

1) President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which forced 46,000 American Indians living in the Eastern states into moving to new lands west of the Mississippi river. He promised they would never have to give up this new land. Thousands died during this forced removal. It became known as the *Trail of Tears*.



2) A permanent Indian Frontier (border) was set up.

It also said white Americans could not settle on Indian land. However, by 1834 the land that was supposed to have been for the Plains Indians had already been reduced as new territories were added to the United States. This would happen again and again.



In the 1830s, few white Americans believed the land behind the Indian frontier was worth having. Consequently few white people wanted to cross into the Plains. However, from the 1840s this began to change:

In 1845, Texas became part of the USA.

In 1846 the USA gained control over Oregon Territory

In 1848, the USA won a war with Mexico and as a result gained a lot more land in the west, including California.

1840s

Now the US government wanted its people to move into its new lands in the west. To do this people would have to travel across Plains Indians lands. There were some trails (paths) already there. The government used its army to keep the Plains Indians away from these trails.



1850s

The Government passed the Indian Appropriations Act. This paid out government money to move Indians onto reservations*, whilst taking other land that the whites wanted.

* Reservation = An area of land 'reserved' for use by American Indians and managed by the Government