The United States Of America's Major Growth

In the early 1800’s, the United States of America experienced major growth. Prior to this growth the newly formed nation had been in constant conflict with Great Britain over a myriad of issues. From heavy taxation without representation and countless unjust laws, to the continued violation of colonists’ rights which fostered the growing unity in the New World, the thirteen colonies finally declared their independence from the Crown in July of 1776. Loosely formed under the Articles of Confederation, the colonies were up against the greatest global power at the time, yet their strategies proved extremely effective. Finally, in 1783, the American soldiers were able to coerce soldiers to surrender at the Battle of Yorktown. Recovering from the battle wounds, the United States later ratified a national constitution in 1789 which fostered a government system that was unlike the previous tyrannical ruling of King George III. Placing emphasis on the people, rather than the ruler, the new democratic system developed the foundation of the nation. However, continuing in its early stages, the country experienced severe growing pains that would soon prove perilous.

After officially gaining their independence from Great Britain in 1783, America continued to expand in many ways. At the turn of the century, the United States spanned 864,745 square miles, but an irresistible offer was soon made by the French in 1803. After temporary transfers of the Louisiana Territory from the French to the Spanish, the land west of the Mississippi River proved to be highly desirable. The French had recently reclaimed their land from the Spanish as Napoleon Bonaparte took reign of France. Bonaparte was in desperate need of funding at this time, as he planned to go to war against Great Britain in the near future. This caused him to offer the entirety of the Louisiana Territory to the United States in exchange for sufficient funds to support his army. As President Thomas Jefferson primarily sought out to retrieve the land of New Orleans, Bonaparte’s offer was extremely generous. Bonaparte ultimately offered over 825,000 square miles of land to Jefferson in exchange for only fifteen million dollars. An entire square mile of land in this exchange only cost America eighteen dollars. This massive land exchange in 1803, known as the Louisiana Purchase, drastically expanded the new nation by nearly doubling American territory. This contributed significantly to westward expansion but also played a subtle role in causing the War of 1812.

The French primarily sold the Louisiana Territory for the purpose of collecting money to finance the expected war against. In order to guarantee a successful sale, the French, not needing the land but greatly needing the money, carefully evaluated the funding necessary to support the needs of their army and other industries to go war. When the French offered to sell this land at such a low price, it was impossible for the United States to refuse the offer. Therefore, when France received their money, they were willing and able to properly prepare for war against Great Britain. Within that same year, Napoleon Bonaparte declared war on Great Britain, which ultimately began the Napoleonic Wars. The Louisiana Purchase, along with infringement of naval rights, American weakness, impressment, economic turmoil, and Native American quarrels ultimately led to the War of 1812.

The Napoleonic Wars were a big factor in the undermining of American economies during the early 1800’s. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, these wars began in earnest. Overseas, however, America was experiencing new economic prosperity, especially from their valuable

raw materials. American exports were supporting several economies over in Europe, and European involvement aided new growth in America. Though as tensions between England and France continued to grow, each country began to put forth efforts in restricting American and other European trade with the opposing country. In doing so, France and England believed they would reach global dominance, but the whole situation ultimately caused significant harm to everyone involved. Countries were no longer able to engage in their typical trading affairs, which stunted many economies.

The strong French and conflict led to specific tensions in America as well. Americans were initially improving their country's wealth through healthy trading relationships with Spain and France, as they deemed trade to be a neutral matter, regardless of the international quarrels. Due to the previous struggles between Britain and the United States, Americans were not as friendly with. Preceding scars from high tariffs and unfair advantages caused a loss of trust between the two countries, as France became closer with the States. Due to this relationship, Great Britain felt strong jealousy towards the situation and decided to reinstate their Rule of 1756 in 1805. This rule, initially established during the Seven Years' War, demolished the idea of neutral trading, and instead claimed that any trading relationships that were restricted during the peaceful periods were prohibited during any time of struggle or war. Trading with neutral countries was also restricted if the neutral countries engaged in affairs with enemy countries. America's reaction to the rule, however, was to avoid seizure by developing ports to act as a mid-point on the path of goods to the West Indies.

Once realized how the Americans were able to avoid the true consequences of the Rule of 1756, they established the Essex Decision, after the trading ship, Essex, was captured by England on its way between France and the West Indies. Overall, it drastically increased raids of American ships and intensified restriction against re-export trade, which further added to the turbulence between Great Britain and the United States. The Essex Decision not only injured American connections, but halted French involvements as well. The French, under the reign of Napoleon, enacted the Berlin Decree in response which formed similar restrictions but in favor of their nation. However, the Americans were affected by the Essex Decision in a more severe manner.

Since the strengthened ruling was considered to infringe on the neutrality of naval trading rights, the United States enacted the Non-Importation Act. This completely blocked off trade with England, as the Americans felt threatened by their over controlling habits, but caused other tension with France as well. Soon after, in 1807, Jefferson enacted a more severe act, the Embargo Act, which cut off all trade to foreign nations in hopes to solidify and identify American trading rights. However, the act had much stronger negative consequences on the United States than it did on anyone else. In an attempt to minimize the damage, the Intercourse Act was later passed which solely restricted trade from France and Great Britain. This lessened the impact but still proved negatively for the nation.

Ultimately, during this time period, the trading triangle of the United States, France, and England was extremely messy and harmful on a global scale. The Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France had many indirect consequences and proved harmful to several national economies. Anyone who tried to interfere with another country would inevitably damage relations with several other powers. This resulting European and overseas trading networks became highly complex and destructive. During this time, The United States was especially targeted by foreign ports as European powers wanted independent connections with their

resources. This situation damaged not only European economies but the American economy which led to many other instabilities.

Along with the trading quarrels came impressment of soldiers. During the time of the Napoleonic Wars and the hectic trading relations overseas in America, Navy was struggling. At the time, did not have much naval control as their overall military force was extremely weak. Due to several disadvantages, such as extremely low wages and very few men who held the requirements, few were properly qualified. Further, the government grew extremely desperate as participating in the naval force was highly unappealing to many citizens. This led to impressment of men, both who lived near the trading centers and American soldiers overseas. Even alleged individuals who were thought to have fled the English Navy were forced back into service, which ended up collecting many innocent Americans. In fact, several thousand Americans were held hostage by during this time. This forced recruitment allowed for army to continue to be successful in their endeavours. Even throughout the lifetime of impressment, though rules were passed to exempt the young and older men, commanders became so desperate that even those rules were obliterated.

Impressment grew to be an extremely large issue, especially for the Americans. As were attempting to increase their naval power against the French, the Americans' frustration and intolerance grew. Their soldiers were being held helplessly to serve for the opposing nation, their ships were being significantly damaged, and their goods were being attacked. In 1807, Americans were beyond outraged after a vessel, the H.M.S. Leopard, shot at the American ship Chesapeake. The then took over four of the main sailors which led to extreme frustration when the Americans heard about the situation. This incident was seen to be one of the last straws and contributed significantly to increasing disputes between England and America.

Although impressment was primarily concentrated overseas, a more local situation in the United States related to the Native Americans. The Louisiana Purchase had previously fostered westward expansion, and by this point most Americans wanted their country's boundaries to grow as much as possible. However, wanted to restrict American's growing dominance in any way possible. As Canada was a colony during the nineteenth century, the English realized they needed to develop a barrier between their valuable Canadian land and the growing United States. The Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions were heavily populated by Native American tribes at the time, and decided to take advantage of their relations with the natives to prevent Americans from migrating too close. The decided to use their power to provide aid for the Native Americans as they tried to protect their land and engage in the thriving fur trade. They would supply the natives with anything necessary to defend and sustain their land. These amenities ranged from guns, cannons, and other weapons, to food, textiles, and other goods. These conveniences helped both by restricting the growth of the United States and the Native Americans by maintaining their property. The United States wanted to take over the Canadian land, while the Native Americans and wanted the Indians to preserve it. Thereby the Indians and the English had a common enemy at this point-- the Americans. However, although their alliance was strong, they were no match for the ever-powerful United States. The threats and attacks on the United States territory were taken seriously as the military understood the need to defend their young and growing nation. sympathies in defending Canada against American advancement contributed heavily to more distrust between the two countries.

Another smaller cause of the War of 1812 was American plans to conquer Canada. At the time, Canada was a valuable colony of. The United States figured that if they could dominate the

majority of Canadian lands, then they could expand significantly as a country. This massive territory would more than double the burgeoning young nation at the time. The Americans had ideas to expel Britain from their overseas colony and dominate the entire American frontier, contributing to the expansionist ideals. Similar to the rest of the territorial situations like the Louisiana Purchase and disputes with the Native Americans, the desire to conquer Canada exacerbated the conflict between England and the United States.

Another minor, yet notable, cause of the War of 1812 was the influence of the War Hawks. During the presidency of James Madison, a group of congressmen, known as the War Hawks, developed a strong sense of urgency to go to war. Developed by John Randolph, the congressmen continued to grow in their aggressive mindsets. These men demanded that the United States should not only go to war with England but to invade Canada as well. After intense campaigns, the War Hawks were successful in persuading James Madison to go to war with Great Britain. The War Hawks were the last pressing factor of the War of 1812.

In conclusion, several factors contributed to the War of 1812. The chaotic relations between the French and severely impacted the American economy as trading networks continued to be altered; countless maritime agreements, including the Embargo Act, toyed with economic stability; competitive naval powers, like Great Britain, gained control by impressment of American soldiers, angering those in the United States; westward expansion was restricted through alliances with the Native Americans in hopes to stunt the growth of their common enemy; and ultimately, the War Hawks were able to lead America to declare war on Great Britain in their second and final battle for independence.