

19th Century Federal Indian Policies

Treaty Making involved signing a legal agreement between two sovereign nations. For 81 years, from 1790 to 1871, the US government signed 371 treaties with hundreds of Indian tribes. By 1903, all of these treaties had been **abrogated**.

Removal was based upon belief that if Indians were removed from their land, it could be more profitably farmed by white settlers. By 1783, all tribes east of Appalachians had been **dispossessed** of their land and removed. The **Removal Act of 1830** gave President Jackson the right to initiate “land exchanges” by moving tribes west of the Mississippi to Indian Country.

Reservations were designed to confine Indians to one specific place where they would receive temporary support to become “civilized” - Americanized and Christianized - and to be taught cultural, spiritual, and agricultural “self-improvement skills.”

Allotment was designed to destroy the reservation system and traditional land ownership which was believed to deprive Indians of incentives to improve his or her situation. Allotment was carried out through passage of the **Dawes Act of 1887** which gave 160 acres of reservation land to individual Indians who would receive final title to the land and American citizenship *after* 25-years during which he had willingly assumed all **agrarian** responsibilities. Any land remaining was sold to whites, with proceeds used to “civilize” reservation Indians.

Extermination was rationalized by the federal government by those who believed Indian resistance to federal laws was tantamount to a declaration of war against the US. In the 1890s, the Army declared war upon several tribes, began exterminating resisters, and absolutely **subjugated** survivors.