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## THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US GOVERNMENT AND NATIVE AMERICANS

**Abstract.** From the time of the first colonization of the Americas during the fifteenth century, many relationship dynamics have been at play between the Native Americans and the Europeans. Establishing a government on the soil of the newfound continent of North America raises questions on the role and position of Indians in their fatherland. Striving for sovereignty and recognition as a unique cultural group versus economic dependence and assimilation into the US are a couple concerns that Natives (and the federal government) have to face. In this paper, I will be looking at and analyzing secondary sources by different scholars in order to understand the interrelation between the government and Indians. One of the main discernments in this paper is that how both the US federacy and Natives view what it means to be Indian heavily influences what political decisions each makes in regards to one another.

**Keywords:** Native Americans, federal government, assimilation, self-determination, tribal government, reservations, sovereignty

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**Аңдатпа.** Американы алғашқы отарлау уақытынан бастап он бесінші ғасырдан бері американың байырғы тұрғындары мен европалықтардың арасында көптеген қарым-қатынастар динамикасы өрбіді. Жаңа ашылған Солтүстік Америка құрлығында үкімет құру үрдісі үндістердің өз атамекеніндегі рөлі мен позициясы жайында сұрақтар туындатады. Тауелсіздікке және бірегей мәдениет тобы ретінде танылуға ұмтылу, оған керісі АҚШ-қа экономикалық тәуелділік және ассимиляциялану – үндістердің (және федералды үкіметтің) алдында тұрған мәселелердің бірі. Осы мақалада байырғы американдықтар мен АҚШ үкіметінің арасындағы қарым-қатынасты түсіну үшін әртүрлі ғалымдардың қайталама көздеріне қарап, талдаймын. Осы мақаланың негізгі қорытындыларының бірі - федералдық үкімет пен байырғы үндістердің түсініктеріндегі «үндіс болу» сөзінің мағынасына қарай бір-біріне қатысты саяси шешімдер өзгереді.

**Кілт сөздер:** Американың байырғы тұрғындары, федералды үкімет, ассимиляция, өзін-өзі анықтау, тайпалық үкімет, резервация, егемендік

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**Аннотация.** Со времён первой колонизации Америки в течение пятнадцатого столетия между коренными американцами и европейцами наблюдалась большая динамика отношений. Создание правительства на земле новообретенного континента Северной Америки ставит вопросы о роли и положении индейцев в их отечестве. Стремление к суверенитету и признанию уникальной культурной группы в противовес экономической зависимости и ассимиляции в США – это основные проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются коренные жители (и федеральное правительство). В данной статье автор рассматривает и анализирует вторичные научные источники, для того, чтобы понять взаимосвязь между правительством США и коренным населением – индейцами. Одним из основных заключений в этой статье является то, что значение словосочетания «быть индейцем» в понимании федерального правительства и коренных индейцев влияет на политические решения, принимающиеся в отношении друг друга.

**Ключевые слова:** Коренные американцы, федеральное правительство, ассимиляция, самоопределение, племенное правительство, резервация, суверенитет

**Main part.** The discovery of a new world. More specifically, the world of North America. The first arrival of Columbus on this newfound continent brought with it many other Europeans hoping to start a new life and discover their own riches. However, this new land was not completely vacant, with the first interactions of different peoples on the strange island being those between the Native Americans or «Indians» and the European journeyers. Their first connections were based mainly on trade and the Indians trying to help the latter navigate. As the settlers started increasing in number, so did a need for a government, and eventually Native Indians were slowly marginalized into plots of land (or «reservations») so that the former could conquer with ease. Many wars, diseases, treaties, and other such interactions took place in the many years afterward. The intercommunication between the new and old people certainly took many a turn, affecting both simultaneously, but the Natives immensely more so, leading the latter into poverty and confusion of a sense of self. So a question I have wondered is: what are the relations between the Native Americans and the government of the United States like, developing from their first meeting to the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are they more dependent or independent? In this paper, I will be arguing that how Native Americans and «greater society» (thus, everyone else) understand what it means to be «Indian» will greatly influence the political actions and decisions that are taken in regards to one another. I will be looking mainly at secondary scholarly sources in order to understand the roots of Indian problems nowadays.

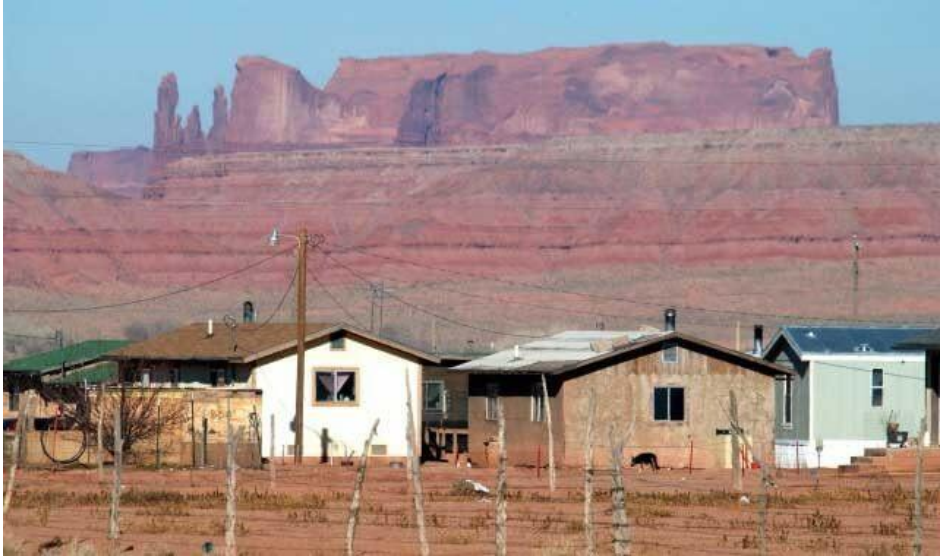


Fig.1. A Native American reservation

First, let us define some common terms. Who are the *Native Americans* ? These are peoples who have migrated to the American continents from Asia long before others. They are now at risk of disappearing in number. The *federal government* is the central government of the USA, making decisions for the whole country rather than only one state. *Reservations* are lands owned and looked over in trust by the new government now, meant for Native Americans to live on, but which allow Europeans in the past to colonize lands freely, as well as to teach Indians the ways of the Western world across the sea, and to assimilate them. These reservations later started gaining their own sovereignty and separate governance, led by the *tribal government*. Thus, each such reservation could have very different rules than each other or from the rest of the US population.

There are several problems that have risen in the current days in regards the role and position of Native Indians in their fatherland and their current situation. Many Natives have fallen into a cycle of poverty. Despite, or shall I say, because of the financial dependency of the Indian tribes on the help of the US government, there has been an increasing lack of motivation for economic development. This, in combination with poor farming land, and a stagnation in business decisions where no step can be taken without going through several approvals and permissions from above, has greatly encouraged unemployment and further economic dependency. The Native Americans, according to statics, also are the highest alcohol and drug abusers, as well as having the highest suicide rate, showing the youth lacking hope and optimism. The education system is poor, and many who go on to study in college have a high percentage of dropping out.

There are also other problems that the Indians and the US government have to face, especially in relation to one another. One such issue, is that of assimilation into US culture versus preserving their the unique Native tradition. There was a time when young Indians were sent to boarding schools in order to learn English and to incorporate American and European culture into themselves. They were even forbidden to practice their own religion. However, later policies, such as the Indian Reorganization Act, have understood the fault of the government, and instead allowed and encouraged Natives to discover and preserve their own cultures. The latter were encouraged also to head their own government independent from the federacy. However, this has led to its own set of problems, according to scholars, as tribal governments have aspects that make it hard for it to function productively in a proper manner.

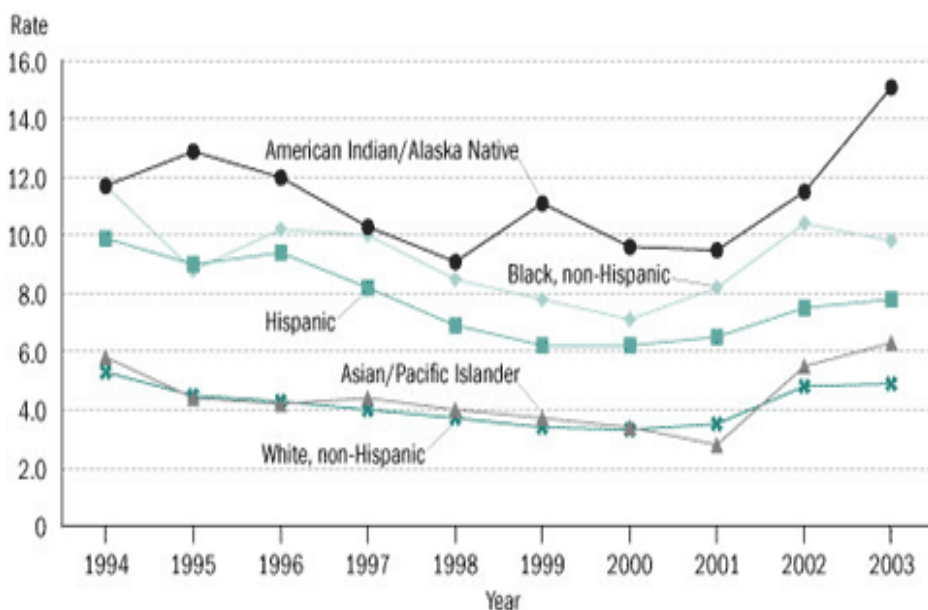


Fig.2. Unemployment Rates

There are also issues surrounding romanticism. Many Americans, scholars alike, when they think of «Indians» often see a frozen picture in history. They often do not imagine the community as dynamic and every-changing. For the government as well, it provides a kind of history for the country. Although Indians themselves may also want to go along with and may feel pressured to uphold these images, they often hinder development as not Natives nor others are able to efficiently deal or help with the realistic problems of drugs, alcoholism, unemployment, etc. among Indians.

## Past Month Illicit Drug Use among Persons Aged 12 or Older by Race/Ethnicity, 2009

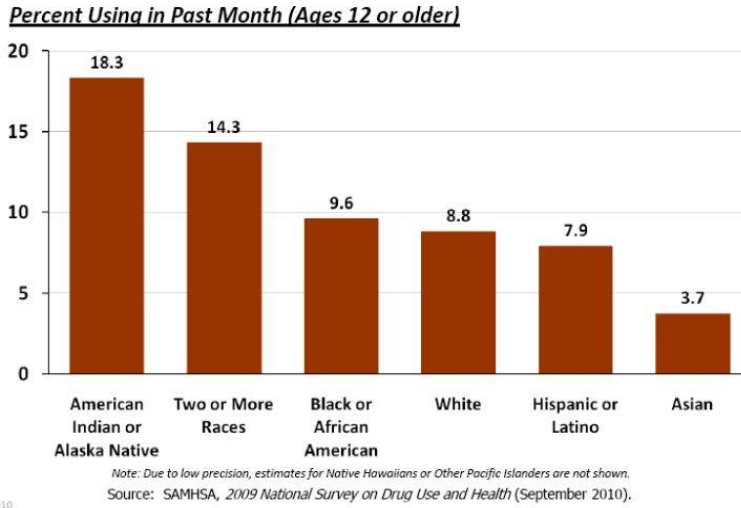


Fig.3. Drug use statistics

Why is the relationship between the US federacy and Native Americans relevant? This topic raises questions on several other broader themes. Such as, how important is history in determining the sovereignty of a country ? Is it better for the US to ignore a part of its history that it deems not as pretty, or is it better to attract others with the romantic image of the historical Native Indian ? Does reminders of its Indian past make the government feel guilty? Could the US citizen start to question the true sovereignty of the federacy ? To civilize or to allow to co-exist as a separate governments? These are all just a few of the questions that I imagine the current bureau specializing in Indian affairs has to juggle with.

Another interesting point is that early European migrants had thought themselves authorized to capture American lands, as they viewed the Indians as barbaric and in-need of help and transformation to Christianity. Although the US is now officially secular, it still has many little reminders of religion in its Constitution and money. Similarities in needing to rescue Indians from their religion in the past, also rings a similarity to the current will to spread democracy, suggesting, maybe the government and peoples haven't changed as much in nature, even though they may have in substance (with their many policy and legal changes).

However, in the case of Native Americans, it really depends on how the federacy and Natives view what it means to be «Indian» that will change the dynamic of their relationship. Just as in history they have acted on each other based on what role they viewed themselves in, whether both take an active stance depends on how they view themselves.

In conclusion, looking at examples in history and the different progressions in the role of Natives in their land, it seems that more Indians are being held back from positive progression and a dependence on the US government, because of their views of themselves. Although the issue is much more complex, taking a more direct approach to solving its own problems can help the Indian tribes. The Native American nation is unique, no doubt, however, there are lessons of sovereignty, self-governance, and the role of history that can be applied to broader models.

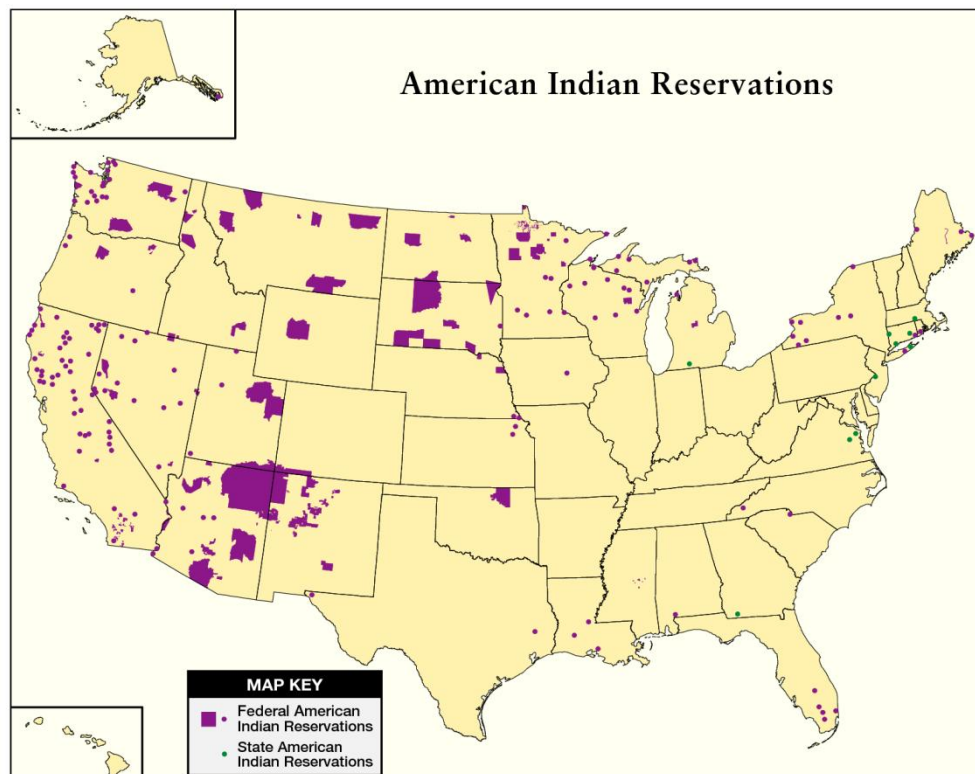


Figure 4 Native American reservations labeled in purple

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