

AN EMERGING WORLD POWER**Issues Connector: Territorial Expansion of the United States**

The question of territorial expansion divided public opinion in the United States. This was particularly true when the United States began considering expansion beyond its borders. One of the central themes in the debate over expansion was whether the character of U.S. life and the system of government could be preserved if the nation added more land, incorporated more diverse peoples, or resorted to methods of government in far away territories that would have been contrary to the principles employed in the United States.

1803 Louisiana Purchase: Proponents saw this as an opportunity to double the size of the country at a relatively low price and provide future generations with room for westward expansion. Opponents worried that the new territory would shift power and influence away from the East, lower the land values, and irrevocably change the nature of the country. One senator from New Hampshire said, "We have already without Louisiana more uncultivated lands than we can sell, and I am confident that the ratification of this treaty & possession of the immense territory will hasten that dissolution of our present government."

1845 Texas Annexation: Soon after Texas gained independence, it petitioned the United States for annexation. Many people opposed annexation because they believed that it would be seen as a declaration of war against Mexico. Others opposed it because the addition of slave-holding Texas would upset the balance between free and slave and states. In a letter, the famed U.S. Senator, Henry Clay, spoke out on this topic: "I conceive that no motive for the acquisition of foreign territory would be more unfortunate, or pregnant (filled) with more fatal consequences, than that of obtaining it for the purpose of strengthening one part against another part of the common Confederacy. . . . For if today Texas be acquired to strengthen one part of the Confederacy, tomorrow Canada may be required to add strength to another."

1848 Mexican Cession: After the annexation of Texas, the war that many people had predicted with Mexico began. When it ended, the United States possessed enormous tracts of formerly Mexican territory in the Southwest and West. To many, this seemed a great boon; however, the issue of whether to allow slavery in the new territories precipitated a crisis that nearly caused civil war. Only after two years of compromises and negotiation in Congress was a solution found: California entered the Union as a free state, and New Mexico and Utah were formed from the rest of the Mexican Cession with no restriction on slavery. The divide over slavery was ultimately not solved by the Compromise of 1850, as the secession of the South would show just over a decade later.

1867 Alaska Purchase: The purchase of Alaska for \$7,200,000 worked out at two cents per acre; however, the Alaska purchase was ridiculed at the time as a "folly." Secretary of State William Seward understood Alaska's strategic importance to a nation that was beginning to stretch its reach of influence across the Pacific. Over time, Seward was proven correct. Alaska's abundant natural resources have enriched the United States, and its natural beauty has been a source of pride and tourism revenue.

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1893 Hawaiian Revolt: When American planters in Hawaii overthrew Queen Liliuokalani in 1893, they had the support of the U.S. officials on the scene as well as the United States Marines. Although President Harrison was eager to endorse the new government's request for annexation, his successor, Grover Cleveland, doubted the authenticity of the new government and the revolt itself. Even though U.S. business interests might have been served through a takeover of the islands, Cleveland and others saw the U.S. government acting in an imperialistic, aggressive, and underhanded way. They had grave doubts about taking on what would essentially be a colony. Nevertheless, Cleveland took no decisive action to restore the previous Hawaiian ruler, and in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the United States annexed Hawaii.

1898 Spanish-American War: Many Americans entered the Spanish-American War intending to free Cubans from Spanish domination. They did not imagine that they would come out of the brief war the new "owners" of the Philippine Islands—in addition to several other former Spanish territories. The question of what to do with these new possessions was hotly debated. In the end, the treaty granting the United States control of the Philippine islands passed the U.S. Senate with the required two-thirds majority. However, Filipino rebels tried to overthrow their new occupiers. Prominent social leaders such as Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, and even former President Grover Cleveland joined the American Anti-Imperialist League and spoke out forcefully about U.S. injustices in the Philippines and the damage the occupation was doing to America's reputation, system of government, and national spirit.

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[J]ust beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable (limitless) markets. . . . China is our natural customer. . . . [Britain, Germany and Russia] have moved nearer to China by securing permanent bases on her borders. The Philippines gives us a base at the door of all the East. . . . They [the Filipinos] are a barbarous race, modified by three centuries of contact with a decadent race [the Spanish]. . . . It is barely possible that 1,000 men in all the archipelago are capable of self-government in the Anglo-Saxon sense. . . . The Declaration [of Independence] applies only to people capable of self-government.

—*Senator Alfred Beveridge (R-Indiana), From a speech in Congress on January 9, 1900*

. . . The overthrow of the monarchy was not in any way promoted by this Government but had its origin in what seems to have been a reactionary and revolutionary policy on the part of Queen Liliuokalani, which put in serious peril not only the . . . interests of the United States in the islands, but all foreign interests, and, indeed, the decent administration of civil affairs and the peace of the islands. . . . The restoration of Queen Liliuokalani to her throne is undesirable, if not impossible. . . . The influence and interest of the United States in the islands must be increased and not diminished.

—*President Benjamin Harrison, address to Congress, February 15, 1893*

Territorial Expansion

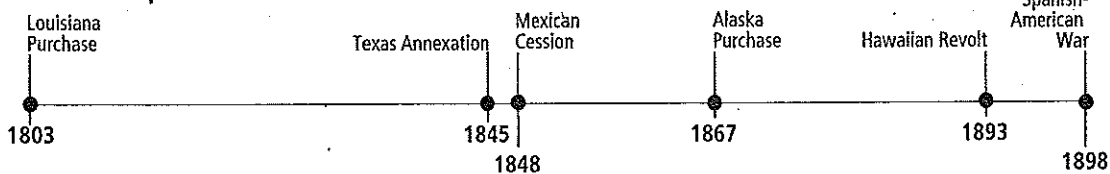
. . . Thus it appears that Hawaii was taken possession of by the United States forces without the consent or wish of the government of the islands, or of anybody else so far as shown, except the United States Minister. . . . A substantial wrong has thus been done which a due regard for our national character as well as the rights of the injured people requires we should endeavor to repair.

—*President Grover Cleveland, address to Congress, December 18, 1893*

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism. . . . We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation (conquest) of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our Government.

—*Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, October 18, 1899*

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Directions: Look at the timeline, and read the excerpts about U.S. territorial expansion. (You may also refer to the timeline in the textbook.) Then answer the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why does Senator Beveridge believe that control of the Philippines is beneficial to the United States?
2. What arguments do the Anti-Imperialists make that oppose Senator Beveridge's point of view?
3. How do the views of Presidents Harrison and Cleveland differ about the overthrow of the Hawaiian Queen?
4. Is President Harrison more likely to agree with Senator Beveridge or the Anti-Imperialist League? Explain your answer.
5. **Summarize** All of the speakers believed they were operating in a spirit of patriotism, trying to further the best interests of the United States. Summarize in your own words a) Beveridge and Harrison's view of how to protect and strengthen America, and b) the contrasting view of the Anti-Imperialists and President Cleveland.
6. **Draw Conclusions** From the time of the Louisiana Purchase through the Spanish-American War and beyond, Americans have held divergent views on territorial expansion. Why do you think this issue has concerned Americans over time?