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Texas Annexation:
A Debate among Nations

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It was late in the year 1821 that Stephen Austin, the man who became known for his successful attempts to bring American settlers to Texas, first came to the region. Following Mexico's successful revolution against the Spanish, Mexico granted Austin a generous portion of land in Texas. By the end of the decade, Austin had acquired many other pieces of land, eventually accumulating one hundred thousand acres. While Austin amassed this vast territory, he continually promoted it to prospective settlers in the United States. The advertisements of these fertile lands proved to be successful. The 1820's saw a large influx of North American immigrants into Texas. The prospect of land enticed these settlers to come to Texas in large numbers. According to historian Joel H. Silbey, the non – Indian population of Texas reached 40,000 by the mid – 1830's and hit 150,000 by 1845.¹ The settlers that came pouring into Texas brought more with them than just their personal belongings. Their culture, language, values and ways of life entered the territory with them. With a steadily growing population of North American settlers, Texas began to take on this culture and share many similarities with the United States. President Andrew Jackson described his view of Texas to Congress in 1836. Jackson claimed “a large proportion of its civilized inhabitants are emigrants from the United States, speak the same language with ourselves, cherish the same principles, political and religious, and are bound to many of our citizens by ties of friendship and kindred blood; and, more than all, it is known that the people of that country have instituted the same form of government with our own.”² Jackson saw the growing similarities between the United States and Texas. He felt that the Texan people were linked to the United States by these similarities.

¹ Joel H. Silbey, *Storm over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

² Silbey, *Storm over Texas*, 7.

Jackson saw the Texan people and realized that they were his own. He believed that it was the duty of the United States to reach out to their brethren and bring them into the nation.

Although Texas annexation played a role in how the United States felt about expansion, the issues surrounding it were not limited to those within the Texas Republic itself. They were influential in the ways that the United States conducted business, foreign policy and the development of their national mindset. The Texas situation affected not only citizens within that republic, but those of other nations as well. The realization that Texas was becoming closely intertwined with its American neighbor was just one of many issues in a debate which saw the nations of Great Britain, France, the United States and Mexico compete for control of Texas' future. Additionally, Texan economic hardships, conflicts over the morality of slavery, fear of war between the United States and Great Britain, and ultimately war itself between the United States and Mexico fanned the flames of international competition. The sovereign nation of Texas was a focal point for the imperial ambitions of European and American countries alike.

Historians have studied the issue of Texas annexation from multiple perspectives. Some researchers analyzed the topic based on contemporary political agendas. Others chose to view the issue through cultural lenses, observing the similarities and differences among the nations in question. Additionally, historians have examined Texas annexation with regard to morality, incorporating the slavery issue into their analyses.

Historians have addressed several questions relating to the annexation of Texas. Ephraim Douglass Adams examines opposition to Texas annexation. In *British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846*, Adams' main focus centered on Britain's role in Texas and why it opposed its annexation to the United States. Texas was a foothold for British power in North America. If the United States were to annex it, the British would lose this base of power and with it the ability to

undermine the growth of America.³ However, his book contains little analysis of how Britain's neighbor, France, fit into the competition. Britain and France crossed paths multiple times during the annexation debate. This essay will analyze French opposition to the proposed annexation, helping to further explore the competition between nations over the future of Texas.

Several authors have addressed the argument of those in favor of annexation and gave reasons for why many Americans predicted Texas would eventually become part of the Union. Michael A. Morrison wrote on this topic in his article "Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party." Morrison claimed that American expansion inevitably included the region of Texas. He suggested that the Whig Party fought against the annexation of Texas even though it was destined to become part of the Union.⁴ While historians like Morrison explored the pro – annexation sentiment through the lens of inevitable expansion, others have studied the issue with regard to the cultural connections between the United States and Texas. In the article "The First Stage of the Movement for the annexation of Texas," George P. Garrison discussed how many Americans, as well as Texans, reached out to each other for union. The occupation of Texas by Anglo – Americans propelled the pro – annexation movement due to the longing for the merger of two culturally similar peoples.⁵

Historians have also examined the reasons for supporting and opposing annexation in relation to morality. A major issue that contributed to the conflict over annexation was slavery. Frederick Merk, for example, addressed this issue in relation to Texas annexation. In his article, "A Safety Valve Thesis and Texan Annexation," Merk discussed theories held by Americans

³ Ephraim Douglass Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846*. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: P. Smith, 1963), 13 – 17.

⁴ Michael A. Morrison, "Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party." *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 222. JSTOR, www.jstor.org.

⁵ George P. Garrison, "The First Stage of the Movement for the annexation of Texas." *The American Historical Review* 10 (1904): 72 – 96. JSTOR, www.jstor.org.

who opposed annexation. For example, he claimed that Benjamin Lundy believed the War for Texan Independence was a Southern conspiracy to spread slavery.⁶ Lundy was not the only individual to express these sentiments. William Ellery Channing, a northern preacher, reiterated this theory in a letter written to Henry Clay. The third person to hold this view was John Quincy Adams who believed the conspiracy included the American government in addition to that of Texas.⁷ In addition to Merk, Kinley J. Brauer explored the annexation issue from the slavery point of view as well.

In the article, “The Massachusetts State Texas Committee: A Last Stand Against [sic] the Annexation of Texas,” Brauer discussed this committee and how they resisted the annexation of Texas to the bitter end. It was the committee’s goal to persuade the northerners in the House of Representatives to reject the proposed Texas constitution and, by extension, admission to the Union.⁸

While the examination of these questions has proved to be important to the study of Texas annexation, scholars have not adequately addressed how these issues propelled the nations of Europe and North America into fierce competition. Additionally, the subject has not received an in depth study in several decades, leading to the inclusion of older sources in this analysis. In this essay, the subject of Texas annexation will be revived and examined in a manner which reveals how the United States, Mexico, Great Britain and France became involved in rivalries over the control of Texas.

⁶ Frederick Merk, “A Safety Valve Thesis and Texan Annexation.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 61 (1962): 414. JSTOR, www.jstor.org.

⁷ Merk, “A Safety Valve Thesis and Texan Annexation,” 414.

⁸ Kinley J. Brauer. “The Massachusetts State Texas Committee: A Last Stand Against [sic] the Annexation of Texas.” *The Journal of American History* 51 (1964): 214 - 231.

The idea of “manifest destiny,” which held the belief that the United States was divinely obligated to march west, had grown in popularity during the 1840’s. Americans believed that it was their duty to expand, spread liberty and bring civilization wherever they went.⁹ Texas was included in territory that Americans felt compelled to settle. Andrew Jackson thought of Texas as an “essential component of his dream of empire.”¹⁰ In a letter written in 1844, he mentioned a connection between the United States and ancient Rome. Jackson said that, just like the Romans, the United States should never give up territory. Instead, it should be the goal of the nation to constantly add land, thus spreading liberty to the people who inhabit it.¹¹ Although he never mentions the phrase manifest destiny, Jackson certainly supported the ideal. His mentality gained additional credibility when, in his letter, he expressed sorrow over a failed, early attempt to acquire Texas from the Mexican government. After negotiations between the United States and Mexico collapsed, Jackson felt embittered. To him, the American abandonment of claims to Texas was an injustice.¹²

To a supporter of manifest destiny, unsuccessful attempts at gaining territory were seen as affronts to their country. The idea of manifest destiny was to expand the borders of the nation. Therefore, hostile reactions occurred when the extension of national boundaries did not come about. Robert C. Winthrop, a representative of Massachusetts, stated his opinion of America’s obligation to expand. Part of his 1846 speech to the House of Representatives gave the impression that the annexation of Texas was justified. In his speech, he discussed the “new

⁹ Walter T. K. Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 234, 235.

¹⁰ Morrison, “Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party,” 226.

¹¹ Andrew Jackson, *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*. Texas: Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 1844. http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/annexation/part4/andrew_jackson_feb12_1844_2.html.

¹² Jackson, *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*.

revelation of right which has been designated as the right of our manifest destiny to spread over this whole continent.”¹³ The entitlement of which Winthrop spoke held characteristics which would ultimately lead to competition among the United States, Mexico, Great Britain and France. Each of these nations had agendas involving Texas. The sentiment that the United States was at liberty to incorporate territories, many of which were contested, gave rise to international rivalries and struggles over the Texas territory. Winthrop’s way of thinking and the scenario discussed in Jackson’s letter explain how the ideals of manifest destiny led to competition between nations. Multiple nations wanted Texas for themselves. If a nation firmly believed it was obligated to expand, it would undoubtedly encounter resistance from its neighbors. A territory which one country claimed may have had connections to a rival. Competition over the ownership of land proved to be a critical aspect of the international focus on Texas.

Other Americans, while agreeing with the idea of manifest destiny, believed that the acquisition was potentially dangerous and should be handled carefully. The American author and annexationist, Edward Everett Hale, thought the addition of Texas as a whole would be detrimental to the power of the United States. Including Texas as a single territory would allow it to become the “real Empire State of the country,” gaining power and the ability to “overrule all opposition.”¹⁴ Hale offered solutions that, he felt, would prevent Texas from seizing power once it entered the Union. It was his belief that Texas should be “from time to time subdivided, as need be.”¹⁵ If the American government could gain influence in Texan councils, the state would no

¹³ Julius W. Pratt, “The Origin of “Manifest Destiny,”” *The American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 795.

¹⁴ Edward Everett Hale, *How to Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us*. Boston: Redding, 1845
<http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2357.tkl>.

¹⁵ Hale, *How to Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us*.

longer have slavery.¹⁶ This, Hale said, would not only restore balance between free and slave states, but help the growth of the abolitionist movement as well. Hale recognized the dangers of annexing Texas and warned his country to approach the issue carefully. Although Hale focused on the political differences that annexation would bring, other supporters looked to the kindred blood which united them.

The 1820's saw a major shift in cultural boundaries. Stephen Austin had successfully promoted his holdings in Texas, bringing waves of North American immigrants into the territory. However, North American whites were not the only ones migrating to Texas. On May 17, 1822, the Secretary of State wrote a letter to the Mexican government petitioning for the allowance of white European immigrants in Texas. The letter stated that 10,000 immigrants from Ireland and the Canary Islands would come to Texas and receive 6,000 square leagues of land.¹⁷ Texas saw further waves of transformation into European culture in the following decades. Alexander Bourgeois d'Orvanne, a French colonist, received colonization contracts from Texas in 1842. In 1844, it was reported that he had arrived in Texas and was in the process of planting a settlement. In the summer of the same year, German immigrants, unhappy with their country's seizure of private property, came into Texas in large numbers. By July of that year, the immigrants had founded colonies with populations ranging from 6,000 to 10,000 settlers.¹⁸

The more that white settlers came into Texas, the more the entire culture of the region changed. Not only did Europeans and Americans approve of the cultural shift, but many native

¹⁶ Hale, *How to Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us*.

¹⁷ The Office of the Secretary of State Department of Development, *Report of the Secretary of State on the Petition, May 17, 1822*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/shqonline/apager.php?vol=032&pag=079>.

¹⁸ Justin Harvey Smith. *The Annexation of Texas*. New York: (Barnes and Noble, 1941,) 363.

Texans did as well. This view, which ultimately helped fuel the pro – annexation sentiment, was expressed by a member of the Tejano elite, a group of Texans with Latin - American descent. After the Mexican government passed the Law of April 6, 1830, which prohibited the immigration of white settlers to Texas, this Tejano stated that he thought the influx of immigrants to Texas was beneficial. In his letter, he listed several reasons why immigration to Texas was a good thing. He stated “The industrious, honest North American settlers have made great improvements in the past seven or eight years. They have raised cotton and cane and erected gins and sawmills. Their industry has made them comfortable and independent, while the Mexican settlements, depending on the pay of the soldiers among them for money, have [sic] lagged far behind.”¹⁹ A feeling of cultural inequality was being expressed by this Tejano. He believed that Americans were harder workers than Mexicans. American settlers, he argued, provided much more in the way of infrastructure, commerce and security than did the Mexicans. The differences between American and Mexican cultures forced Tejanos to choose a side with which to align themselves.²⁰ It was apparent that American society promised a better economic future for those that associated with it. With this Tejano, the choice was clear. He decided to improve his life by aligning himself with American culture rather than be left behind in Mexican society. The idea of America’s manifest destiny became accepted among non – white Texans.²¹

American and European immigration, coupled with the work of Stephen Austin, showed how the cultural tide of Texas had begun to turn towards that of whites. Austin’s contribution in bringing Americans to the province propelled the transformation of Texas into a white -

¹⁹ A Member of the Tejano Elite. *Anglo – Mexican Relations in Texas. Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 46 (1943): 328 – 329. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/mexican_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=41.

²⁰ A Member of the Tejano Elite. *Anglo – Mexican Relations in Texas.*

²¹ A Member of the Tejano Elite. *Anglo – Mexican Relations in Texas.*

dominated region, similar to that of the United States. The tide of European immigration continued this alteration. When Europeans crossed the Atlantic, they introduced their culture to Texas. Comparable to that of American immigrants, the European culture helped to make the region one of wealth and economic prosperity due to the founding of towns, businesses and farms. In addition to the introduction of white culture, Tejano acceptance and support of America's manifest destiny helped to further push Texas toward the status of a white region. In a province where the culture was once almost homogeneously Latin - American, the advantage was beginning to favor whites, whether they were of American or European origin. Ultimately, this shift became a major issue in the competition between nations over the future of Texas' independence. The cultures pushed against each other in the territory, and a rivalry resulted. Latin - Americans and whites were engaged in a struggle to save the pride of their respective cultures from the encroachment of their enemies.

Americans who had been flowing into Texas developed the expectation that the United States would eventually include them in the Union. In 1825, President John Adams and Henry Clay attempted to acquire Texas through negotiations with the Mexican government. In 1829, another attempt to purchase Texas was made by President Andrew Jackson and his Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren, which was referred to in Jackson's letter. Although the union between the United States and Texas did not materialize until 1845, the cultural ties the nations shared were already established.²² In addition to the benefit of cultural similarities, other supporters of annexation saw advantages in the political arena.

Andrew Jackson, fearing the presence of Great Britain in Texas, expressed his worries about the consequences of not annexing it in a letter written in 1844. Jackson held the view that Texas could potentially serve as a military foothold for the British Empire. In the letter, he

²² Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, 7, 8, 462.

described a scenario that, he felt, could happen should Texas not be admitted to the Union. He claimed “Great Britain has already made treaties with Texas; and we know that far – seeing nation never omits a circumstance in her extensive intercourse with the world, which can be turned to account in increasing her military resources. May she not enter into an alliance with Texas?”²³ Jackson felt that the overall well being of the United States would be compromised if Texas aligned herself with Great Britain. He feared that the military of Great Britain could use Texas as a launching point for her imperial ambitions. Jackson feared a war would ignite between the United States and Great Britain under these circumstances. He predicted that the British Empire would concentrate her forces in Texas, stockpile supplies, and launch an aggressive campaign in the southwest before the United States could muster a military response, resulting in a major loss of life.²⁴

In addition to Jackson, others related Texas annexation to Great Britain as well. Theodore Sedgwick, who was Speaker of the House of Representatives, claimed that although the British would not look upon the annexation issue silently, they had no right to interfere.²⁵ He believed that, if the acquisition of Texas was legal, Britain would not become involved in the matter. Sedgwick was steadfast in his belief that the governments of Europe did not reserve the right to, as he put it, “interfere with the free governments of this hemisphere.”²⁶ Sedgwick’s opinions, the nightmarish scenario presented by Jackson and the overall fear of war with Great Britain prompted substantial American support for the annexation of Texas. Foreign tensions had made

²³ Jackson, *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*.

²⁴ Jackson, *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*.

²⁵ Theodore Sedgwick. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States*. New York: D. Fanshaw, 1844. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-ptb-2387.tkl>.

²⁶ Sedgwick. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States*.

Texas a focal point on the world stage. The competing, potential futures of the Texan Republic influenced the mindsets of nations who had invested in the sovereign country.

While support for annexation arose in the United States partly due to national self – interest, others favored it from an economic point of view. Anson Jones, a native of Massachusetts and the last president of Texas, expressed his feelings about why annexing Texas was the right thing to do. In his letters, he described the economic despair that ravaged his country. Jones wrote “It is sufficient for my purpose to say, that the country was brought to the extremist point of depression – her means exhausted – her credit utterly prostrated – the loan, sought all over the U. States and Europe, refused on any terms – pressed and oppressed with debts – her currency at a discount of 97 ½ per cent.”²⁷ Two factors contributed to Texas’ unhealthy economy. The first involved Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, the second president of Texas who served from December 10, 1838 to December 13, 1841. Lamar had attempted to convince Great Britain and France to grant his nation several loans. When the European countries refused, Lamar resorted to pumping large amounts of paper money into his nation in an effort to stimulate the economy. The sum of the printed money injected into the system ultimately reached over \$1,800,000, which made the notes effectively useless, driving their value down to 14% of their intended rate.²⁸ In addition to internal troubles, Texas’ economy suffered at the hands of Mexico as well.

Following the Texas Revolution, Mexico fell on hard times. Her war for independence from Spain and the rebellion of the Texas province had left her treasury nearly empty. Mexico

²⁷ Anson Jones, *Letters, Relating to the History of Annexation, Letter 1*. Galveston: Civilian Office, 1848. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-pt-2390.tkl>.

²⁸ Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, 30, 35, 36.

was powerless to launch another military campaign in Texas.²⁹ However, by 1842, times had changed. In an attempt to reinvigorate the morale of the nation, Mexico began raiding the recently liberated territory. In March, an army successfully captured San Antonio. The Texans managed to take it back in September of the same year, but severe damage to the country had already been done. Due to the security threat to Texan property and the subsequent paranoia over where Mexican troops would strike next, the raids and conquests that they conducted had successfully put a halt to agricultural trade in the region. The Texan government attempted to remedy the situation by calling 3,500 men up for service to fight the raiding Mexican army. The move saw little in the way of positive results. The troops which they were called upon to fight were constantly on the move, making it difficult for them to be discovered. While the Texans were out looking for their enemies, the economy continued to suffer. The addition of 3,500 men to the military meant a severe worker shortage.³⁰

This economic meltdown led many Texans and Americans to become involved in the international competition over the former Mexican province. They believed that admitting Texas to the Union would remedy the economic hardships plaguing the republic by allowing it to be incorporated into the American economy. The Texan financial situation, combined with the pro-annexationist sentiment it generated, helped to further Texas's place on the world stage by involving countries which sought political and economic gains by taking an interest in its conduct and status. The Texan government was courting the favor of the United States. Many in the independent republic saw a union with America to be mutually beneficial. They believed that, should annexation take place, several problems would be solved. Statehood would lead to

²⁹ David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 35 – 37.

³⁰ Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, 38, 39.

the repair of the Texan economy and better protection against foreign aggression.

Simultaneously, the United States would benefit by expanding its borders, spreading democracy and eliminating the potential of having a British ally on its doorstep.

Although support for the annexation of Texas picked up steam for the reasons previously explored, there were an equal number of motives for its opposition. Moral concerns about the institution of slavery played an important role in the views of anti – annexationists. A special note should be made about the issue of slavery in the context of this essay. Slavery has been studied by a number of historians. Scholars such as Brauer and Merk examined the issue closely, taking into account the opposition to annexation caused by the sectional debates over slavery.³¹ The institution of slavery will be addressed only briefly in this essay.

George Allen, an abolitionist, wrote to the people of Massachusetts on the issue of Texas annexation in 1844. Allen held the view that the annexation of Texas was a plan to extend the institution of slavery. He wrote “It is clear that the only design of the measure – the *avowed* design, too – is, to fortify, extend, and perpetuate the slave – holding power.”³² Allen, while addressing the Massachusetts citizens, stressed his belief that Texas and slavery were tied together. One could not come without the other.³³ Allen’s argument was purely political. Rather than opposing annexation from a moral anti – slavery perspective, he clung to his theory of a joint Texas - slave holder political conspiracy.

Allen was not the only individual to hold these convictions. Benjamin Lundy, a Quaker abolitionist, wrote a book in 1836 which further spread the belief that the annexation issue was

³¹ Brauer, “The Massachusetts State Texas Committee: A Last Stand Against [sic] the Annexation of Texas,” 413.

³² George Allen, *Appeal to the People of Massachusetts, on the Texas Question*. Boston: C. C. Little and J. Brown, 1844, 3. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2360.tkl>.

³³ Allen, *Appeal to the People of Massachusetts, on the Texas Question*, 6.

forged by slave - holders and their supporters. Lundy claimed that much of the American public misunderstood the meaning of the Texas Revolution. He wrote that many uninformed Americans believed that the revolution was fought to secure liberty and inalienable rights. The real reason for the war, he suggested, was to reestablish the system of slavery in Texas, annex it to the United States and ultimately ignite a pro - slavery revolution.³⁴ In another book titled *Anti - Texass [sic] Legion*, Lundy continued his argument. He argued that advocates for slavery in the South wanted more land. Slaveholders believed that the annexation of Texas, coupled with the connecting lands of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua and Santa Fe, would afford them a substantial amount of land on which their slaves could work.³⁵ Lundy urged his fellow abolitionists to reject Texas before it even became a problem. He let his readers know his feelings on the matter by saying “Prevention is much easier than cure.”³⁶ The opposition to annexation began to advocate quickly disposing of the problems it created rather than incorporating them into their own circumstances.

Adams, an adversary of slavery, felt that the proposed annexation of Texas had spiraled out of control. He thought of President John Tyler as someone who had begun to disregard the liberties of the Constitution in order further his annexationist ambitions.³⁷ Tyler, according to Adams, had “bargained away much that the Free States deem valuable,” such as the right to

³⁴ Benjamin Lundy. *The War in Texas: A Review of Facts and Circumstances, showing that this Contest in the Result of a Long Premeditated Crusade Against the Government, Set on Foot by Slaveholders, Land Speculators, Ec. With the View of Re-establishing, Extending, and Perpetuating the System of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Republic of Mexico*. Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1836. <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/lundy.htm>.

³⁵ Benjamin Lundy, *Anti-Texass [sic] Legion: Protest of some free men, states and presses against the Texass [sic] rebellion, against the laws of nature and of nations*. Albany: Patriot Office, 1845. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-ptl-2356.tkl>.

³⁶ Lundy, *Anti-Texass [sic] Legion*.

³⁷ Charles Francis Adams. *Texas and the Massachusetts Resolutions*. Boston: Eastburn’s Press, 1844. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-ptl-2355.tkl>.

petition and the freedom of speech.³⁸ Tyler's actions had won him the support of the Southern states. However, his relationship with the Northern states had begun to suffer. Adam's theory that "there are many ways in America to arrive at the same result" had shown that Tyler practiced unsavory tactics like bribes and threats to fulfill his goal of annexation.³⁹ James K. Polk, Tyler's successor to the presidency, followed in his predecessor's footsteps. The Massachusetts representative Stephen C. Phillips thought of Polk as a tyrant who hid under the disguise of democracy.⁴⁰ Polk had gone against the wishes of his country by supporting annexation even though the Senate, at the time, had been in complete opposition. Shortly before he had taken office, Tyler recognized that a treaty of annexation would never pass in the Senate due to the upset it would cause between free and slave states. As a workaround, he successfully persuaded his friends in Congress to pass the bill proposing the annexation of Texas as a joint resolution on March 1, 1845.⁴¹ This resolution bypassed the voices of those who attempted to have a say in the matter, neglecting wishes to speak out in opposition to it. Polk had successfully sidestepped the political system to further his dream of annexing Texas, disregarding those who attempted to stand in his way.⁴²

The abolitionist feelings in the United States contributed to the competition over Texas. While many Texans and Americans wanted to see the United States flag fly over Texas, these

³⁸ Adams. *Texas and the Massachusetts Resolutions*.

³⁹ Adams. *Texas and the Massachusetts Resolutions*.

⁴⁰ Stephen C. Phillips. *An Address on the Annexation of Texas, and the Aspect of Slavery in the United States, in Connection Therewith: Delivered in Boston November 14 and 18, 1845*. Boston: W. M. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1845. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-2361:1>.

⁴¹ Richard Peters, "Joint Resolution for Annexing Texas to the United States Approved March 1, 1845." *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, no. 5, p. 797-798, Boston, Chas. C. Little and Jas. Brown, 1850. <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/annexation/march1845.html>.

⁴² Phillips. *An Address on the Annexation of Texas, and the Aspect of Slavery in the United States, in Connection Therewith*.

abolitionists did not. It was too easy for them to make the connection between the land in question and the slavery controversy that would doubtlessly accompany it. The struggle over potential Texan statehood was a consuming issue for the nations of North America.

The objection to annexation from the anti – slavery perspective encompassed nations on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, abolitionists took a stance against Texan admission to the Union and the presumed spread of slavery which it would instigate. In Europe, British officials had spoken out against the institution and attempted to suppress the slave trade. Lord Palmerston, a British politician who later served twice as Prime Minister, was an avid opponent of the slave trade. In 1840, British interest in the abolition of the slave trade grew. As a stipulation for the British recognition of Texan independence, Palmerston demanded that Great Britain be given the “right to search,” which allowed for the investigation of individuals suspected of being slave traders.⁴³ If Texas was annexed to the United States, Great Britain would lose the opportunity to enter the country and inspect those who were thought to have been involved with the slave trade. Thomas Buxton, a British abolitionist, started the organization known as the “African Colonization Society.” The purpose of this group was to stop the flow of Africans from the interior of the continent to slavers and traders, thus breaking the line of the slave trade. By negotiating with African leaders, the African Colonization Society was able to establish colonies along the Guinea Coast and prevent the trading of slaves from native African chiefs to slavers.⁴⁴

Great Britain opposed the annexation of Texas for fear of the spread of slavery, just as many in the United States did. The issue of slavery was not confined to nations on the North American continent. The debate over annexation, combined with the controversies over slavery,

⁴³ Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 56.

⁴⁴ Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 56, 57, 69.

put Texas in the spotlight of the Western world. However, slavery was not the only reason for the growth of interest in Texas on an international level.

The British held considerable influence in Texas. They believed that if Britain became increasingly involved in Texan affairs, the United States would experience a loss of national power. The prospect of undermining American growth was attractive to Great Britain. Should the opposition to annexation succeed, the hopes of American expansion would be destroyed. Additionally, an independent Texas, one possibly allied with Great Britain, posed a military threat to America's southwestern border.⁴⁵ Not only would this opposition to annexation weaken American power, it would help to fuel Britain's own expansionist ambitions. Should Texas remain an independent nation, Britain could use their influence in the region as a launching point for western expansion. In David M. Pletcher's book, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War*, he discussed this motivation of the British Empire when he stated "Behind the fate of Texas, the British knew, lay that of California, even richer in resources and equally beyond Mexico's power to protect or hold."⁴⁶ President John Tyler was aware of Great Britain's intentions in North America. If Britain were to gain complete control of Texas, there would be nothing in the way of their march to the Pacific. Although Britain was not as invested in California as it was in Texas, the abundant resources of the territory were too attractive for the country to give up. Additionally, British eyes focused on the Oregon territory. American expansion had begun to threaten Britain's influence in the region. If this hazard was to be avoided, British officials knew they would have to keep Texas out of the Union. Successfully stopping Texas from becoming an American state would pave the way for British expansion in North America. Simultaneously, many Texans saw the potential benefits of being aligned with

⁴⁵ Jackson, *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*.

⁴⁶ Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War*, 113.

Great Britain. The Texas government courted the favor of the British in a fashion similar to how it enticed the United States. The acquisition of Texas meant expansion of the British Empire.⁴⁷ Although Great Britain was at the forefront of the European opposition to annexation, the French were determined to make themselves heard as well.

In 1844, Theodore Sedgwick reiterated that France, along with the United States and Great Britain, had fully recognized the independence of Texas.⁴⁸ He mentioned how a common theory in the United States involved the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Robert Walker, a senator from Mississippi, believed that Texas was already a possession of the United States because it “formed an original part of that territory of Louisiana.”⁴⁹ This opinion foreshadowed the competition over Texas that would arise between the United States and France. During the same period when Sedgwick made his opinions known, Calvin Colton, a member of the Whig Party, wrote a pamphlet that included his thoughts on how France might become involved in the competition over annexation. He believed that France was considering forming a partnership with Britain, Mexico, or both in order to enforce the continued independence of Texas.⁵⁰ He also feared that France might become involved even if the annexation of Texas was approved. The *Constitutionell*, a French journal, published the protest of annexation on “behalf of France” by Monsieur Guizot, the prime minister of Louis Philippe.⁵¹ Colton’s suspicions of potential French activity proved to be accurate when, after being approached by Great Britain, France agreed to

⁴⁷ Jones, *Letters, Relating to the History of Annexation, Letters I, II*.

⁴⁸ Sedgwick. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States*.

⁴⁹ Sedgwick. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States*.

⁵⁰ Calvin Colton, *Annexation of Texas. By Junius no. IX*. New York: Greeley & McElrath, 1844.
<http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2358.tkl>.

⁵¹ Colton, *Annexation of Texas. By Junius no. IX*.

the proposition of entering into a “Diplomatic Act,” which aimed to uphold the independence of Texas. Although this joint effort to protect the sovereignty of the Texan government experienced initial success, it did not last long. France ultimately retired from the coalition, claiming it was no longer necessary after Santa Anna, then president of Mexico, formally recognized Texan sovereignty.⁵² Although French opposition to annexation by way of partnership with Great Britain was short - lived, it still played a part in the competition over Texas by allowing for the effort of two major powers to keep the America flag from flying over Texan soil.

France had opposed annexation for other reasons as well. French diplomats in Texas had experienced harsh and insulting treatment, as was the case with Alphonse Dubois de Saligny. According to Dubois, the Texan administration behaved “ungentlemenly.”⁵³ When the French government received word of his supposed treatment, they responded in the same fashion, claiming Texas to be a country of ill mannered, unsavory individuals. Not wanting a group of people such as these to receive benefits, many in France opposed its annexation to the United States.

In addition to American, British and French opposition, Mexico joined the fight over the potential annexation of Texas as well. When the Adams administration attempted to purchase Texas in 1825, the Mexican government reacted by considering the implementation of measures meant to restrict further American immigration into Texas. Four years later, after another purchasing attempt was made by Andrew Jackson, these measures went into effect.⁵⁴ The

⁵² Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, 391, 406.

⁵³ Anson Jones. *Memoranda and official correspondence relating to the Republic of Texas, its history and annexation. Including a brief autobiography of the author.* New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1859, Letter from Saligny. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-ptb-2391.tkl>.

⁵⁴ Norman E. Tutorow, *Texas Annexation and the Mexican War: A political study of the Old Northwest.* (Palo Alto, California: Chadwick House, 1978), 17.

Mexican vice president initiated the Law of April 6, 1830 in an attempt to stem the tide of American immigration to Texas.⁵⁵

Texas annexation was also an issue that prompted military action by the United States and Mexico. In a pamphlet written in 1844, Colton warned of the international dangers associated with then annexation of Texas. He reminded his readers of Henry Clay's declaration that "Annexation and war with Mexico, [sic] are identical."⁵⁶ He was not alone in his fears. Anson Jones acknowledged that the annexation of Texas could cause a war by recounting the American feeling that Texas could not be annexed "so long as it involved the risk of a war with Mexico."⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Texans voted to join the Union on July 4, 1845.⁵⁸ Mexico, however, was still in opposition, claiming the border of the new state was the Nueces River, whereas the United States asserted that it was the Rio Grande. The Mexican government was in denial of the full annexation of Texas. Fearing a war over Texas, President Polk put the U.S. navy on alert, sending a portion of it to the coast of California and the rest to the Gulf of Mexico. Later, in the summer of 1845, American troops began to arrive at the Texas port of Corpus Christi. By the end of the year, 4,000 men were camped along the Nueces River. When word of American troop movements reached Mexican officials, they called up their military as a response. General Mariano Arista, commander of the Mexican Army of the North, gathered his soldiers at port of Matamoros, south of the Rio Grande. This standoff between two national armies culminated in

⁵⁵ The Vice President of the Mexican United States. *Law of April 6, 1830*. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/primary_resources/pdf/texas/Law_of_April_6_1830.pdf.

⁵⁶ Colton, *Annexation of Texas. By Junius no. IX*.

⁵⁷ Jones, *Letters, Relating to the History of Annexation, Letter 1*.

⁵⁸ Thomas J. Rusk, *Ordinance of Annexation Approved by the Texas Convention on July 4, 1845*. Austin: Miner and Cruger, 1845. <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/annexation/4july1845.html>.

the Mexican – American War. It is worth noting that the war resulted in the United States acquiring a vast amount of territory. In the negotiations that followed the end of the war, the modern states of California, Utah, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico and Wyoming became American possessions.⁵⁹

The issue of Texas annexation excited two North American powers into war. Both sides, the United States and Mexico, had much to lose. The fact that the controversy over annexation could pull two nations into a war which resulted in the victor gaining a vast amount of their enemy's territory helped to further suggest that the Texas issue was one of international importance.

Debates over Texas annexation were important on an international level. The fact that these countries invested so heavily in the issue implied that Texas, and the disagreements over annexation for which the nations had become involved, were on the world stage. The prospect of annexation made the countries of North America not only fear war, but participate in its bloodshed. The issue was at a stage of importance where political leaders would knowingly send their troops into harm's way. The debate sparked a war which resulted in the United States acquiring almost half of Mexico's territory.

North American and European nations looked at the Texas situation through moral lenses as well. The issue, which brought about fierce debate and conflict, was critical on an international level. Citizens of differing nations spoke their minds and became involved in the annexation issue. Each nation had something to lose, thus they were drawn into the situation.

From the perspective of Texas itself, the competition caused by its proposed annexation to the United States involved beneficial factors for the republic. The Texas government courted the United States and Great Britain because it saw potential in being aligned with them. Both

⁵⁹ Feldman, *The Mexican – American War*, 14, 16 – 18, 68.

countries offered Texas economic prosperity. Additionally, they would offer protection from foreign threats. The Texan decision to court the nations of North America and Europe, coupled with the international competition surrounding the independent republic, added to the debate over annexation which was already framed by the emotionally - charged factors of moral grievances, foreign tensions, loss of life, and the love of one's country.

Primary Sources

Books

Adams, Charles Francis. *Texas and the Massachusetts Resolutions*. Boston: Eastburn's Press, 1844. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2355.tkl>

This source went into detail about the annexation of Texas and how hard the Free States fought against it. I used this source to give specific examples of how President John Tyler bypassed the political process to achieve his goal of annexing Texas.

Allen, George. *Appeal to the People of Massachusetts, on the Texas Question*. Boston: C. C. Little and J. Brown, 1844. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2360.tkl>

This source examined the opposition and the relationship it held with slavery. I used this source to discuss the supposed conspiracy between Texans and slave holders.

A Member of the Tejano Elite. *Anglo – Mexican Relations in Texas*. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 46 (1943): 328 – 329.
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/mexican_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=41

The author of this source explores the reasons why North American immigration into Texas is beneficial. The author argued against the Law of April 6, 1830 which prohibited Americans from entering Texas. I used this source to explain how non – white Texans started to accept whites.

Jones, Anson. *Memoranda and official correspondence relating to the Republic of Texas, its history and annexation. Including a brief autobiography of the author*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1859. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-pth-2391.tkl>

This book is a collection of memoirs and government reports. While it covers a wide variety of topics relating to the Republic of Texas, I used it to include more information on France's involvement with the country.

Lundy, Benjamin. *The War in Texas: A Review of Facts and Circumstances, showing that this Contest in the Result of a Long Premeditated Crusade Against the Government, Set on Foot by Slaveholders, Land Speculators, Ec. With the View of Re-establishing, Extending, and Perpetuating the System of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Republic of Mexico.* Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1836. <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/lundy.htm>

Lundy suggested that the war for Texas Independence was crafted and won by slave holders and land speculators in order to further strengthen the institution of slavery. I was able to include this source when exploring the connections between slavery and Texas.

Lundy, Benjamin. *Anti-Texas [sic] Legion: Protest of some free men, states and presses against the Texas [sic] rebellion, against the laws of nature and of nations.* Albany: Patriot Office, 1845. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-pth-2356.tkl>

In this source, Lundy continued his argument that the proposed annexation of Texas was a slave holder plot. I used this source to examine his belief that slavers in the South wanted to use Texas as a territory to put their slaves.

Sedgwick, Theodore. *Thoughts on the proposed annexation of Texas to the United States.* New York: D. Fanshaw, 1844. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-pth-2387.tkl>

Sedgwick talked about how Great Britain had no right to interfere in the Texas situation. He also discussed French involvement, namely the controversy over the Louisiana Purchase. I successfully used this source to examine American sentiments toward British intervention and French connections to the opposition of annexation.

Pamphlets

Colton, Calvin. *Annexation of Texas. By Junius no. IX*. New York: Greeley & McElrath, 1844.

<http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-ptb-2358.tkl>

Colton's publication discussed the annexation of Texas and talked about the dangers that accompanied it, such as war with Mexico. I was able to use this source extensively when discussing foreign affairs in relation to annexation.

Hale, Edward Everett. *How to Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us*. Boston: Redding, 1845.

<http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Pamphlets/meta-ptb-2357.tkl>

In this publication, Hale determined that the annexation of Texas should be approached carefully. I relied on this source to talk about the ways Hale felt Texas could safely enter the Union.

Phillips, Stephen C. *An Address on the Annexation of Texas, and the Aspect of Slavery in the United States, in Connection Therewith: Delivered in Boston November 14 and 18, 1845*. Boston: W. M. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1845. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-2361:1>

Phillips discussed the ways President Polk sidestepped the government to annex Texas. I used this source in conjunction with that of Charles Adams to explore how he managed to cheat the political system.

Letters

Jackson, Andrew. *Opinions of Gen. Andrew Jackson on the Annexation of Texas*. Texas: Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 1844. http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/annexation/part4/andrew_jackson_feb12_1844_2.html

In this letter, Andrew Jackson discussed his reasons for supporting the annexation of Texas. He believes that the addition of Texas to the Union would prevent a possible war with Great Britain, who had a strong influence in the region. I relied on this source to support his argument that annexing Texas was critical to American national security.

Jones, Anson. *Letters, Relating to the History of Annexation*. Galveston: Civilian Office, 1848. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/UNT/Annexation/Books/meta-pt-2390.tkl>

Jones discussed his reasons for supporting the annexation of Texas. He explained that the despair of Texas, both economically and militarily, warranted its annexation to the United States. I applied this source to my research in order to explore reasons why Texans wanted to be annexed.

Government Resolutions

Peters, Richard. "Joint Resolution for Annexing Texas to the United States Approved March 1, 1845." *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, no. 5, p. 797-798, Boston, Chas. C. Little and Jas. Brown, 1850.

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/annexation/march1845.html>

This source detailed the joint resolution that Tyler had passed in the Senate. I used this source to reveal the date that it took place.

Rusk, Thomas J. *Ordinance of Annexation Approved by the Texas Convention on July 4, 1845*. Austin: Miner and Cruger, 1845.

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/annexation/4july1845.html>

This document discussed the terms and conditions for the addition of Texas to the Union. I was able to use this source to mention the date that it took place.

The Office of the Secretary of State Department of Development. *Report of the Secretary of State on the Petition, May 17, 1822*.

<http://www.tshaonline.org/shqonline/apager.php?vol=032&pag=079>

This source revealed a petition for the admittance of European immigrants into Mexican - controlled Texas. I used it to discuss white immigration into Texas.

The Vice President of the Mexican United States. *Law of April 6, 1830.*

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/primary_resources/pdf/texas/Law_of_April_6_1830.pdf

This resolution of the Mexican government sought to limit the number of immigrants coming into Texas. Military occupation and economic stimulus were used to stem the tide of immigration. From the American point of view, this law was unreasonable. I analyzed the source and explored how it related to American feelings on the issue.

Secondary Sources

Books

Adams, Ephraim Douglass. *British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846.* Gloucester, Massachusetts: P. Smith, 1963.

This book discusses the roles that Great Britain played in Texas and its objection to annexation. Although it is older, I was still able to use it because, unlike the other secondary sources, it closely examined the opposition from the British point of view.

Feldman, Ruth Tenzer. *The Mexican – American War*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 2004.

The author of this book covered a wide variety of topics pertaining to the Mexican – American War. Among these topics were causes for the war, opinions on the home front, results of the war, and, most important for my research, the Texas question. This book was valuable because it allowed me to contextualize the Texas issue within broader events.

Nugent, Walter T. K. *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

The author of this book explores the ways that The United States had expanded into an “empire.” The issue of manifest destiny was explored in detail, encompassing America’s acquisition of Louisiana, Florida, Texas etc. This source benefited me because it helped me explore the Texas issue with regard to the ideals of manifest destiny.

Pletcher, David M. *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973.

Pletcher's book talks about many aspects of the Texas question. For my purposes, the book served as a source to use in relation to the theory that Britain wanted Texas as a launching point for expanding into western North America.

Silbey, Joel H. *Storm over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Silbey's book discussed the annexation of Texas and the political controversy that came about because of its proposition. I used this book to discuss populations in Texas and Jackson's belief that Americans and Texans were culturally linked.

Smith, Justin Harvey. *The Annexation of Texas*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1941.

This monograph covered a variety of aspects included in the Texas situation. I was able to use this source to discuss issues such as European immigration, economic problems and cultural ties. Even though the source is old, I found it useful for giving data, such as the value of Texas currency, and discussing the role France played in opposing annexation.

Tutorow, Norman E. *Texas Annexation and the Mexican War: a political study of the Old Northwest*. Palo Alto, California: Chadwick House, 1978.

Tutorow's book contained a great amount of information about proposed annexation and the opposition that followed it. I used this book to discuss how Mexico gradually turned Americans away, forbidding them from settling in Texas.

Articles

Brauer, Kinley J. "The Massachusetts State Texas Committee: A Last Stand Against [sic] the Annexation of Texas." *The Journal of American History* 51 (1964): 214 – 231. <http://0-www.jstor.org>.

Brauer's article examined the Massachusetts State Texas Committee's goal of preventing the annexation of Texas. Despite its age, I used this source because it allowed me to supplement my argument that slavery was a factor in the opposition.

Garrison, George P. "The First Stage of the Movement for the annexation of Texas." *The American Historical Review* 10 (1904): 72 – 96. <http://0-www.jstor.org>.

This source included information on the view that the United States and Texas were linked together. He talked about how the two countries, in some cases, reached out to each other for unification. Although old, I needed to use this source to support my argument that pro - annexationists felt the two nations were culturally similar.

Merk, Frederick. "A Safety Valve Thesis and Texan Annexation." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 61 (1962): 413 – 436. <http://0-www.jstor.org>.

Merk's article discusses the issue of slavery and how many people, such as Lundy, felt it was a conspiracy between Texas and slavers to achieve annexation. Despite its age, I felt I could use the source to back up my argument about the Texas - slaver conspiracy.

Morrison, Michael A. "Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party." *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 221 – 249. <http://0-www.jstor.org>.

Morrison's article discusses how America's expansion into the west will most certainly include the issue of Texas annexation. I plan to use this information in my paper to write about how the question of annexation affected the U.S. government.

Pratt, Julius W. "The Origin of "Manifest Destiny."'" *The American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 795 – 798. <http://0-www.jstor.org>.

Pratt's article discusses the phrase "manifest destiny" and how it came about. Despite it being an aged article, I was able to use it to support my argument that Americans believed they were obligated to expand their boundaries.