

Analyzing the Outcomes of the Mexican-American War

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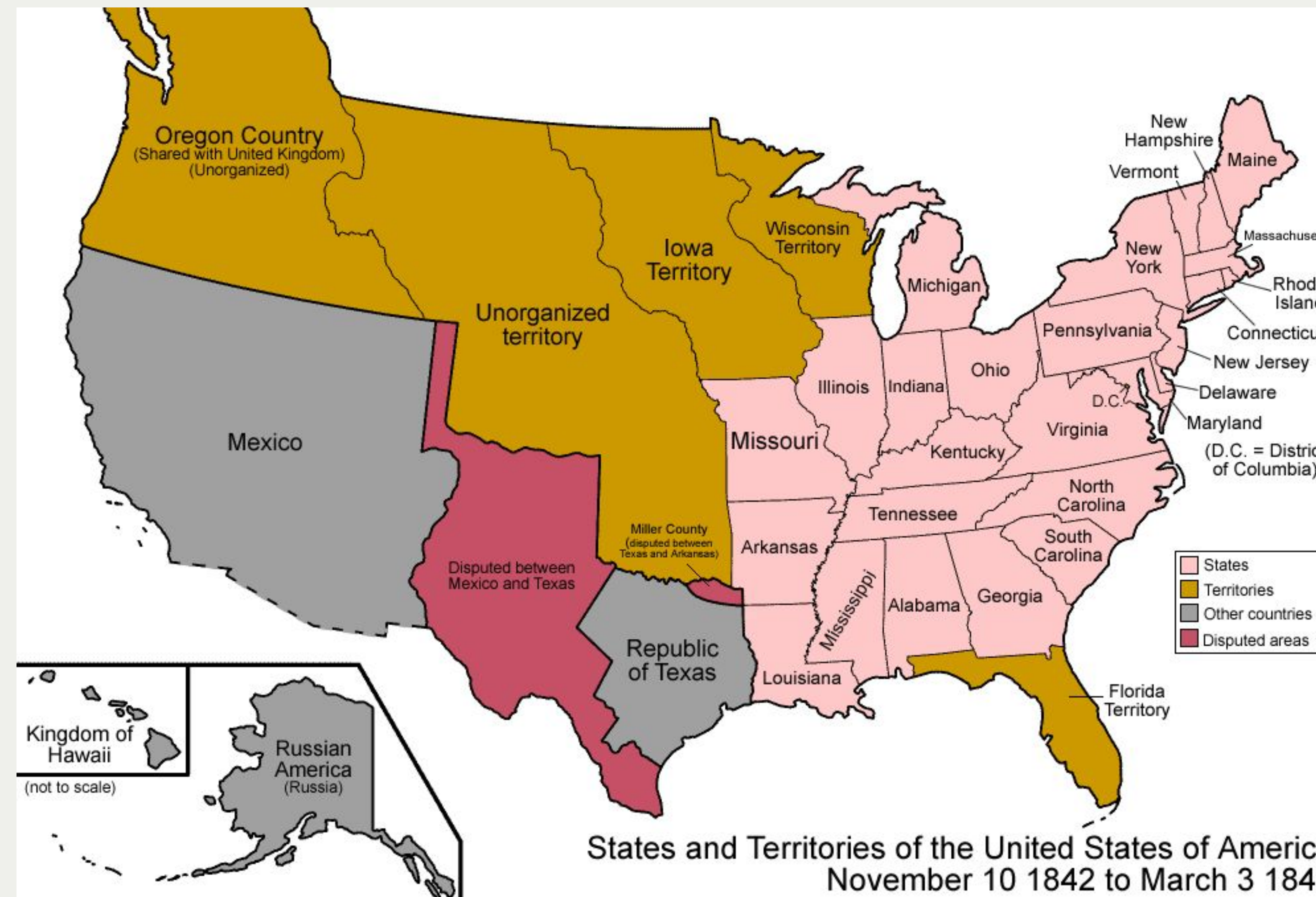
Thesis

Research Question: Why did the United States only take Mexico's Northwestern territory following the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) when they could have taken it all?

My Thesis: The United States did not take all of Mexico following the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) due to historical tension between Protestants (US) and Catholics (Mexico), incompatible cultures, and the political and societal ramifications of merging such opposing cultures, particularly in regards to slavery within America.

Future Research: Given the amount of land acquired, especially California, there is no doubt that the war played a role in America's development into a modern World Power. It also had a huge impact on Mexico's development as a nation. After researching this subject, it is also clear that the Mexican-American War was crucial in setting the stage for the American Civil War (1861-1865).

The US Prior to Mexican-American War



Key Terms & Figures

-James K. Polk: The 11th President of the United States. He ran as a Democrat in the Election of 1844 on an expansionist platform. During his sole term as President, he annexed Texas, settled the Oregon Question, and acquired the California and New Mexico territories as a result of the Mexican-American War.

-Slavery in North America: The existence of slavery, and the desire to spread it, influenced the Polk administration's decision to pursue annexing Texas despite knowing it would cause a war, as well as their decision not to incorporate all of Mexico once the war had been won. By the 1840s, there were an estimated 2.5 million African slaves in America.

-Manifest Destiny: The belief that it was the United State's God-ordained purpose to spread across North America. This ideology was highly racialized.

-All Mexico Movement: A diverse group that advocated for the absorption of all of Mexico into the United States following the Mexican-American War.

-Antonio López de Santa Anna: The President of Mexico throughout the 1830s and 1840s. He led the Mexican Army during the Texas War for Independence (1836), the Pastry War (1838-39), and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848).

-Free Labor/Free Soil Movement: A movement that advocated against the expansion of slavery within the United States on the basis that every individual had the right to control their means of production, themselves.

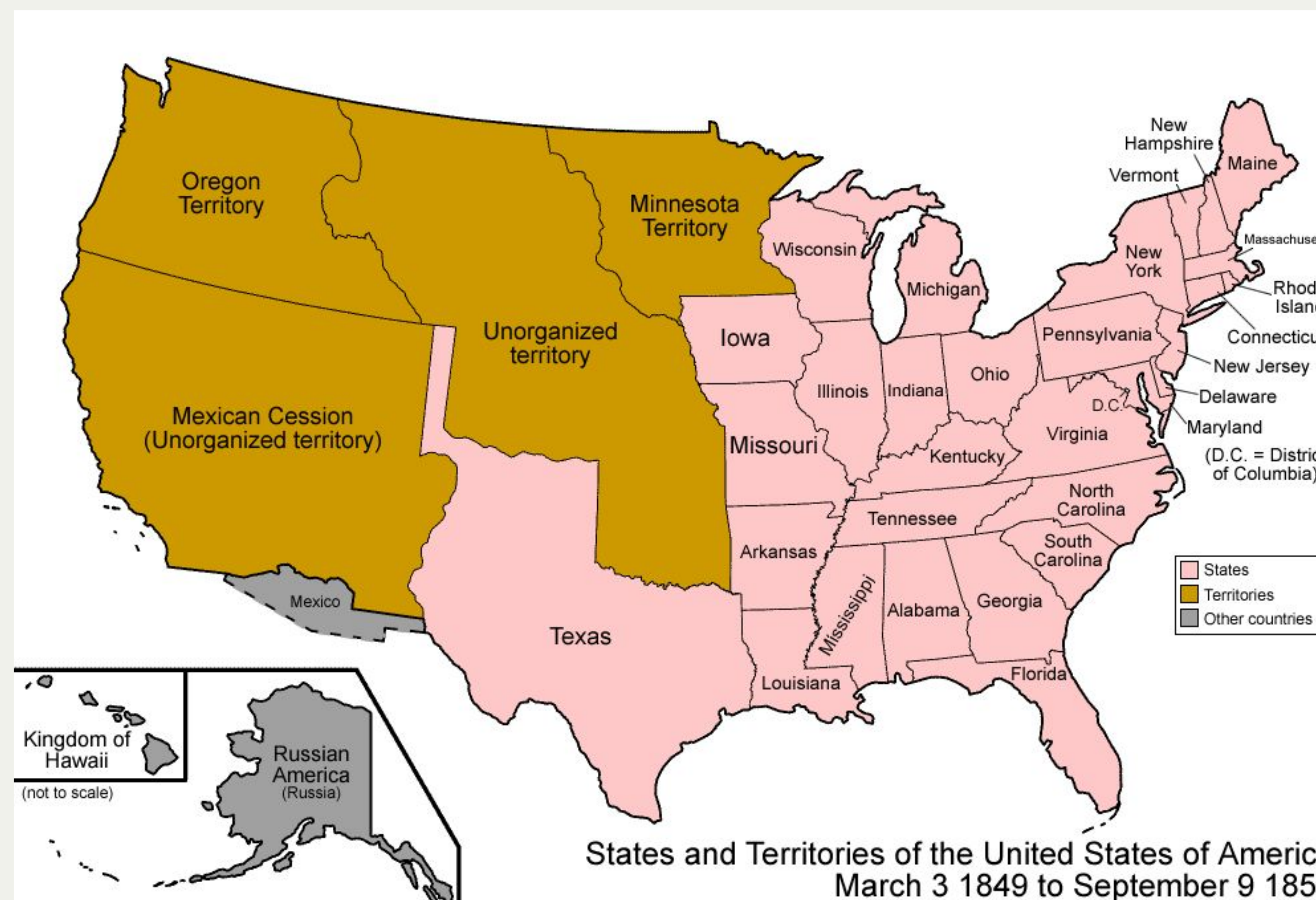
Findings

-Questionable Origins: Polk provoked a skirmish in the disputed territory between Mexico and the US, and used it to convince Congress to declare war, claiming "American blood was shed on American soil." The American public accepted this logic and supported the war, and the Polk administration largely avoided being seen as the aggressor, even though they were.

-Irreconcilable Differences: The US had racialized slavery with dehumanizing policies such as the % Compromise (1787) and the Naturalization Act of 1790. These severe policies discouraged mixing between races, and created an air of superiority within the United States. In short, Americans looked down on Catholics, people of color, and the Spanish language, and bridging these gaps would not have been easy.

-The Peculiar Institution: From 1492-1820, 7.7 million Africans were taken to the New World. While American society looked down on interracial mixing, Mexican society did not. As a result, Central America had a population 9/10 indigenous or African. Mexico also abolished slavery in 1821. The potential impact that absorbing Mexico would have on the American slave industry was enough to dissuade American politicians from pursuing incorporating it as a whole.

The US After Mexican-American War



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