

The Economic Benefits of Texas Joining the United States of America

On February 19th, 1846, President Anson Jones personally lowered the flag of the Republic of Texas and raised in its place the Star and Stripes. This moment marked the end of Texas as a sovereign nation and its introduction as the 28th state in the United States of America. After ten years as a sovereign nation, Texas accepted a proposition from United States President James Tyler to join the Union. While Texas lost its sovereignty, it gained numerous economic and societal goods that otherwise may not have come about. These economic benefits were the reduction of war debts, un-tariffed trade with the United States, military protection, and access to greater infrastructure.

When Texas revolted against Santa Anna's oppressive dictatorship and began a war for independence, the Republic lacked funds to carry out a successful campaign against the mighty Mexican Army. Between 1836 and 1838, the Republic's legislature approved a total of ten million dollars in loans to afford a prolonged war. To raise the money, 10 percent bonds were issued. Nearly half of a million dollars worth of these bonds were purchased by the Pennsylvania Bank of the United States. The rest were bought by various other bondholders. In June of 1837, another \$830,000 worth of bonds was sold off. In a state report in 1851, Texas had a total estimated debt of \$12,436,991.34. Adjusted for inflation, Texas owed the equivalent of \$525,344,960 in unpaid bonds and loans. Texas was able to pay off a total of \$1,575,366.59 worth of debt between 1952 and 1902, but much of the debt remained. In 1855, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution, paying \$7,750,000 worth of Texas's debts. While Texas did pay off a significant amount of its war debts, the vast majority of the total was paid off by the larger and

more prosperous United States government. Due to that debt reduction, Texas was able to grow in wealth more quickly, eventually growing to one of the largest economies in the world. One of the main ways that countries grow their economies is through trade with other countries. When Texas was a sovereign nation, it was subject to all the tariffs that the United States put on other foreign nations. After its annexation, Texas became a state on equal standing with the other states. This meant that Texans could export goods to other states with no duties. In turn, other states were incentivized to send more goods to Texas as their products were no longer subject to import or export taxes.

In addition to less barriers to the exchange of goods, statehood reduced many of the barriers people faced in moving to the new state of Texas. More people meant more customers for existing businesses and new businesses throughout the state. Texas experienced rapid growth in population and business after 1845. Once backwater towns became booming centers of business. While Texas had long been a place where people could start over and build a new fortune, they could now do this without changing allegiance or sacrificing the security of being a U.S. citizen. As Brian Kilmeade notes in his book, *Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers*, between the end of the war for Texan independence and 1841, the population of Texas had more than doubled. After annexation, this rapid growth only continued.

With the threat of Mexican aggression diminished, Texas was ready to become an economic center, but one problem still persisted: the Indian Problem. Various Indian groups, primarily the Comanches and Apaches, terrorized the plains. They attacked small settlements, killing, burning, and stealing property and people. In some cases, such as the attack on Fort Parker, different Indian tribes would ally and attack and destroy larger outposts. When thirty-three

Comanche chiefs went to peace talks with Texan representatives, a fight broke out and all thirty-three of the chiefs were killed by soldiers and armed citizens. To avenge their deaths, the Comanches assembled an army five hundred strong and looted and burned many cities, including the port city of Victoria. Texas eventually drove them back, but the Indian problem was an ongoing dilemma for the Republic. After the annexation in 1845, Texas received the benefit of protection by the United States Army. A system of nearly fifty forts was established. These forts were widely spread across the breadth and length of the state, including Fort Elliot, located near my family ranch in the Panhandle. These forts were garrisoned by both cavalry and the famed "buffalo soldiers." While these forts by no means ended the threat of Indian attacks, they served as rallying points for citizens and deterrents to the Indians.

In conclusion, while Texas lost the sovereignty that had been bought so dearly, the people of Texas gained safety, freer trade, greater prosperity, and a more secure future. Without the annexation of Texas, there would have been no guarantee of the continuing freedom of its citizens. The freedoms we enjoy today were made certain by the strength and stability that the United States gave our forebears. Texas emerged as a leader for the whole nation. Through the grit and determination of our forefathers, Texas might have risen to similar heights on its own, but after fighting Mexico, Texas was indebted, weakened, and isolated. By joining the Union, Texas secured a prosperous, free, and happy future for us today. We must always remind ourselves that the economic and personal freedoms we hold so dear were bought at a high cost by the countless men and women who willingly sacrificed themselves for us. We must ask ourselves constantly whether or not we love those freedoms enough to fight for them. If we do our utmost to fill the long shadows that those fabled heroes cast, we will secure for our children

and their children the continued joy that only a free life in service of our state and our God can bring.

Works Cited:

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