

# CHAPTER 13

## THE IMPENDING CRISIS

### **Chapter Summary**

Between 1845 and 1860, critical events and issues seemed to come in a rush, giving Americans little time to analyze what was happening and to reflect on long-range solutions. Emotion seemed to replace reason as the debate grew increasingly repetitious and loud. The question, or so it seemed, was the expansion of slavery into the territories gained during the Polk administration. But something far more fundamental was at stake—the future of the nation. Northerners had become convinced that the expansion of slavery threatened the democratic foundations of the United States and that expansion would give the South control of the government, which would lead to economic stagnation, unemployment, and financial ruin—all the effect of the depression of 1837 but magnified. From their point of view, the South, and its peculiar institution, threatened the nation's growth and progress and had to be overcome. The South, however, convinced of the legality of its position and the validity of its institutions, fought back and with remarkable success. By combining its power in the Democratic party (which gave it extraordinary influence in Congress and with the president) with its supporters on the Supreme Court, the slave states seemed secure. But still, they were fearful. Convinced that they had given up all they could in earlier compromises, they feared future gains by those they considered to be enemies, and those they feared most were the Republicans.

### **Objectives**

A thorough study of Chapter 13 should enable the student to understand

1. Manifest Destiny and its influence on the nation in the 1840s.
2. The origin of the Republic of Texas and the controversy concerning its annexation by the United States.
3. The reasons the United States declared war on Mexico and how the Mexican War was fought to a successful conclusion.
4. The impact of the Wilmot Proviso on the sectional controversy.
5. The methods used to enact the Compromise of 1850 and its reception by the American people.
6. The role of the major political parties in the widening sectional split.
7. The part played by Stephen A. Douglas in the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the effect of this act on his career and on the attitudes of Americans in all sections of the nation.
8. The impact of the *Dred Scott* decision on sectional attitudes and on the prestige of the Supreme Court.
9. The reasons for Abraham Lincoln's victory in 1860 and the effect of his election on the sectional crisis.

### **Main Themes**

1. How the idea of Manifest Destiny influenced America and Americans during this period.
2. How the question of the expansion of slavery deepened divisions between the North and the South.
3. How the issue of slavery reshaped the American political-party system.

**AP US History**  
**Chapter 13 Questions**  
**Assignment 1**

**Sources:**

**Textbook: pg. 339 to mid-pg. 347.**

**Questions:**

1. Explain the philosophy of "Manifest Destiny." What forces created this concept?
2. What was the "empire of destiny?" How was it achieved? What doubts were raised by its desirability?
3. How did the ideas of Manifest Destiny reflect certain racial attitudes prevalent in the country in the mid-19c?
4. Why was the policy of Manifest Destiny closely associated with the Democratic party?
5. Why did the Mexican government initially allow American colonization of Texas?
6. Who were the Tejanos? What role did they play in the Texas War for Independence?
7. What were the characteristics of western migration in the 1840s-1850s?
8. What problems did settlers migrating westward during the antebellum period face? How were these problems overcome?
9. Where did the Oregon Trail begin and end? Who were the overlanders who used the Trail to migrate West?
10. Why did Clay and Van Buren wish to avoid taking a stand on the question of the annexation of Texas? What effect did this have on their efforts to be nominated by their party?
11. How did Van Buren's position on Texas help the candidacy of James K. Polk? How did Polk's campaign catch the spirit of the time?
12. What effect did Clay's position on Texas have on his campaign?
13. How did James K. Polk's campaign catch the spirit of time? Why was he called "Little Hickory?"
14. What were the goals of President Polk? How did he resolve the Oregon question?

**AP US History**  
**Chapter 13 Questions**  
**Assignment 2**

**Sources:**

**Textbook: mid-pg. 347 to top of pg. 355.**

**Questions:**

1. What tensions emerged in the Southwest that threatened to lead the United States into war with Mexico?
2. How did American interest in California develop?
3. What were the origins of the Slidell Mission? What was its goal? What did it accomplish? What was Polk's response to it?
4. On what grounds did President Polk ask Congress to declare war on Mexico? On what grounds was Polk's call to war criticized?
5. What were the objectives of the American offensives in the Mexican War? Why were the Americans ultimately victorious?
6. List the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
7. What was the Wilmot Proviso? What arguments were advanced in its favor?
8. Identify the South's arguments against the Wilmot Proviso. On what points did they differ from the arguments given by the North?
9. What compromises were proposed to settle the issues raised by the Wilmot Proviso?
10. What part did the issue of slavery in the territories play in the election of 1844?
11. What problems faced President Zachary Taylor when he took office? How did he propose to solve them? What action did Congress take?
12. How did the South react to President Taylor's program?
13. What was the Compromise of 1850? How was it passed?
14. How did the 1850 Compromise negate the Missouri Compromise of 1820?
15. Identify the "younger" politicians who emerged after 1850. How did they differ from the leaders they replaced?