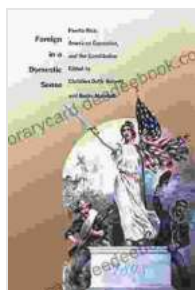


# Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution: A Historical Exploration of American Encounters Global



The acquisition of Puerto Rico by the United States in 1898 marked a significant turning point in the history of both the island and the United States. The island's status as an unincorporated territory of the United States has been the subject of debate and controversy ever since. This article examines the complex history of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States and the implications for the Constitution. It discusses the island's acquisition by the US in 1898, the subsequent debates over its status, and the ongoing struggle for Puerto Rican self-determination. The

article concludes with a reflection on the enduring legacy of American colonialism in Puerto Rico and its implications for the future.



## Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution (American Encounters/Global Interactions) by Eric Rauchway

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### **Puerto Rico in the Spanish Empire**

Puerto Rico was first colonized by Spain in the 16th century. The island became a strategic military and economic outpost for the Spanish Empire. Puerto Ricans enjoyed a degree of autonomy under Spanish rule, but they were also subject to discrimination and exploitation. In the 19th century, Puerto Rico began to develop a sense of national identity. The island experienced a period of economic growth and social change, and Puerto Rican intellectuals began to call for greater autonomy and self-government.

### **The Spanish-American War and the Acquisition of Puerto Rico**

In 1898, the United States and Spain went to war over Cuba. The war was a watershed moment in the history of the United States, and it marked the beginning of the country's rise to global power. The United States quickly

defeated Spain, and the Treaty of Paris of 1898 ceded Puerto Rico to the United States.

The acquisition of Puerto Rico was a controversial decision. Many Americans opposed the annexation of the island, arguing that it was not in the best interests of the United States. However, President William McKinley ultimately decided to annex Puerto Rico, believing that it would serve as a strategic military base and a potential market for American goods.

### **Puerto Rico as an Unincorporated Territory**

The Foraker Act of 1900 established Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory of the United States. This meant that Puerto Ricans were not US citizens, but they were granted some limited rights and privileges. The Foraker Act also established a civil government for the island, but it gave the US Congress ultimate authority over Puerto Rican affairs.

The Jones Act of 1917 granted Puerto Ricans US citizenship, but it did not change the island's status as an unincorporated territory. Puerto Ricans still lacked the full rights and privileges of US citizens, and they were not represented in the US Congress.

### **The Struggle for Puerto Rican Self-Determination**

The acquisition of Puerto Rico by the United States had a profound impact on the island's development. The US imposed a colonial regime on the island, and it suppressed Puerto Rican culture and identity. Many Puerto Ricans began to call for independence or greater autonomy, but their efforts were met with resistance from the US government.

In the 1930s, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party emerged as a leading advocate for independence. The party's leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, was a charismatic and vocal critic of American colonialism. The Nationalist Party was involved in several uprisings against the US government, and Albizu Campos was arrested and imprisoned.

The Nationalist Party's struggle for independence was unsuccessful, but it did raise awareness of the issue of Puerto Rico's status. In the 1950s, the United States began to grant Puerto Rico greater autonomy. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was established in 1952, and the island was given its own constitution and government. However, Puerto Rico remained an unincorporated territory of the United States, and Puerto Ricans still lacked the full rights and privileges of US citizens.

### **The Ongoing Struggle for Puerto Rican Self-Determination**

The struggle for Puerto Rican self-determination continues today. There are still two main political parties in Puerto Rico: the Popular Democratic Party (PDP), which supports statehood for the island, and the New Progressive Party (NPP), which supports independence. The PDP has been the dominant party in Puerto Rico for most of the past century, but the NPP has gained ground in recent years.

In 2012, Puerto Rico held a referendum on its political status. The referendum gave voters three choices: statehood, independence, or continued commonwealth status. A majority of voters chose commonwealth status, but the referendum was non-binding. The US Congress has not taken any action on the referendum, and Puerto Rico's status remains unresolved.

## **The Legacy of American Colonialism in Puerto Rico**

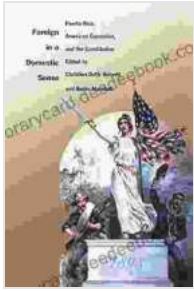
The history of Puerto Rico is a story of American colonialism. The United States acquired the island in 1898, and it has ruled the island ever since. The US has imposed a colonial regime on Puerto Rico, and it has suppressed Puerto Rican culture and identity. Puerto Ricans have struggled for self-determination, but their efforts have been met with resistance from the US government.

The legacy of American colonialism in Puerto Rico is complex and multifaceted. The US has brought economic development and infrastructure to the island. However, the US has also imposed a political and economic system that has stifled Puerto Rican self-determination and development. The US has also discriminated against Puerto Ricans, and it has denied them the full rights and privileges of US citizens.

The legacy of American colonialism in Puerto Rico is still felt today. The island remains an unincorporated territory of the United States, and Puerto Ricans still lack the full rights and privileges of US citizens. The island is also economically dependent on the United States, and it has a high rate of poverty and unemployment.

The history of Puerto Rico is a complex and fascinating one. The island has been shaped by its colonial past, and it continues to struggle for self-determination. The United States has a responsibility to address the legacy of its colonialism in Puerto Rico and to work with the Puerto Rican people to find a mutually acceptable solution to the island's status.

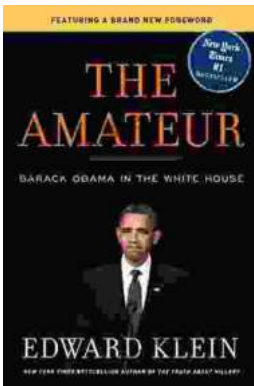
**Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution (American**



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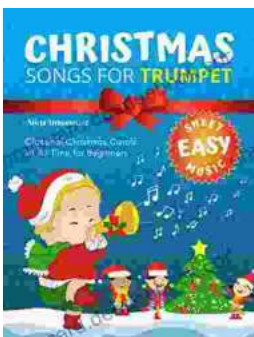
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