Factsheet: Manifest Destiny

- It's a belief from the 19th century that the USA is destined to expand

- Advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that expansion was not only wise but that it was readily apparent (manifest) and inexorable (destiny)→Manifest Destiny

Exact content:

- Expansion across the North American continent, from the Atlantic Seaboard to the Pacific Ocean

- Rests on three main pillars:

  - the virtue of the American people and their institutions (also known as American exceptionalism)
  - the mission to spread these institutions, i.e. building the world in the image of the U.S., and
  - the destiny under God to accomplish this work

Usage and results:

- It's more a notion than a policy

- It was used to justify deportations of Native Americans

- After President James K. Polk and the British government decided that the 49th parallel was to become the border between Canada and the USA, the compass of Manifest Destiny pointed west and southwest

- So Democrats used it to justify the Mexican war (1846)

- Wealthy advocates of Manifest Destiny financed military expeditions to Latin America, Mexico and Cuba (Without official government support because of disagreements over the expansion of slavery between south and north)

- Finally the United States annexed the States of Nevada, Arizona, Utah, California, Texas and New Mexico

"End" of this Belief:

- With the American Civil War in 1860, the Age of Manifest Destiny came to an "end"

- Manifest Destiny can be defined in different ways: According to Frederick Merk, "The doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which in the 1840s had seemed Heaven-sent, proved to have been a bomb wrapped up in idealism."

- after a revival in the 1890s (as a result of this the USA annexed Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines after the war with the Spain) Manifest Destiny declined in usage

- in the recent past America stopped its desire to expand and now it's more the "Police of the World", which fights for Democracy and human rights

Fabian Waldenmaier Q11/2