Origins of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the Context of United States Strategic Interests in the Caribbean (1938-1950)

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to explore the political and military considerations that provided the frame of reference for the promulgation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952. Since 1492 possession of this island has been coveted by nations with vital interest in the Caribbean region. To the United States, who conquered the island in 1898, Puerto Rico formed the backbone of the defense perimeter for the Panama Canal and adjacent shipping lanes. Experience during World War II and the subsequent threat from the Soviet Union reinforced the military value of the island. The importance of the geostrategic location of the island to the United States was the crucial factor that determined the type of political system that substituted fifty years of U.S. colonial rule with a measure of self-government. The leadership of Luis Munoz Marin and the moderate ideology of his Partido Popular Democratico (Popular Democratic Party) proved to be the best vehicle for the implementation of the reforms that would guarantee both the preservation of U.S. sovereignty over Puerto Rico and the improvement of the welfare of the people of the island.

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Government. Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth in association with the United States. The chief of state is the President of the United States of America. The head of government is an elected Governor. There are two legislative chambers: the House of Representatives, 51 seats, and the Senate, 27 seats. The major differences between Puerto Rico and the 50 states are exemption from some aspects of the Internal Revenue Code, its lack of voting representation in either house of the U.S. Congress (Senate and House of Representatives), the ineligibility of Puerto Ricans residing on the island to vote in presidential elections, and its lack of assignation of some revenues reserved for the states. Puerto Rico (Spanish for "Rich Port"), officially the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Spanish: Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, lit. "Free Associated State of Puerto Rico") and briefly called Porto Rico, is an unincorporated territory of the United States located in the northeast Caribbean Sea, approximately 1,000 miles (1,600 km) southeast of Miami, Florida.