

**STRATEGY
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PROJECT**

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**A KINGDOM LOST:
THE U.S. ANNEXATION OF HAWAII**

BY

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by

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ABSTRACT

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By the mid-1800s, the U.S. considered the Hawaiian Islands invaluable to the future development of commercial export and defense in the Pacific region. The U.S. Navy began using the harbor of Pearl River on Oahu as a coaling and repair station for its ships operating in the Pacific and commercial vessels used Hawaii for the same purposes during the long voyages back and forth to Japan, China, Hong Kong, Australia, and other Pacific trade destinations. The U.S. use of forward basing in the Philippines and Guam during the Spanish-American War additionally confirmed Hawaii's strategic value and location in the central Pacific.

In January of 1893, Queen Liliuokalani announced her intentions to promulgate a new constitution that would restore the power of the Hawaiian monarchy. Liliuokalani's proposed constitution threatened to withdraw U.S. concessions and remove power from the appointed legislature, chief officers of state, and the diplomatic corps. This attempted Coup d' Etat was the beginning of the end for the Kingdom of Hawaii. For the next five years, Queen Liliuokalani would unsuccessfully attempt to reestablish the Hawaiian monarchy. On 7 July 1898, President McKinley signed the bill for Hawaii's annexation and any hope for sovereignty and the kingdom was lost.

This strategic research paper explores the historical events that led to Hawaii's annexation and addresses the military, political, and economic interests and implications of this crucial acquisition in the Pacific.

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A KINGDOM LOST: THE U.S. ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

The Pacific Ocean, its shores, its islands, and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theater of events in the world's great hereafter.

—William H. Seward, 1857

Modern history in the Hawaiian Islands began on 20 January 1778 when Captain James Cook discovered the islands on his third and final voyage into the Pacific. From that day forward, Hawaii's isolation from the rest of the world ended. Starting as a traditional Polynesian society, Hawaii would spend the next 120 years evolving through a "bewildering series of cultural and social events that included: nationhood; contact with Western technology and ideas; population decline; massive in-migration of non-Polynesians; overthrow of the Monarchy; a short-lived Republic; and eventual annexation as a U.S. territory."¹

Hawaii's position in the Pacific Ocean off the U.S. western coast resulted in a strong American interest and influence in the affairs of the Kingdom. U.S. whaling ships dominated Hawaiian waters through the early 1800s and Puritan missionaries arrived in 1820 to add their mix of U.S. religious culture and values. Agriculture quickly became a great source of wealth for transplanted U.S. citizens in the islands and sugar, rice, tropical fruit, and coffee became the principle items of commercial export.

By the mid-1800s, the U.S. considered the Hawaiian Islands invaluable to the future development of commercial export and defense in the Pacific region. The U.S. Navy began using the harbor of Pearl River on Oahu as a coaling and repair station for its ships operating in the Pacific and commercial vessels used Hawaii for the same purposes during the long voyages back and forth to Japan, China, Hong Kong, Australia, and other Pacific trade destinations. The U.S. use of forward basing in the Philippines and Guam during the Spanish-American War additionally confirmed Hawaii's strategic value and location in the central Pacific.

Because of this early U.S. interest and influence in the Hawaiian Islands, on 7 July 1898, President William McKinley signed a joint resolution for the U.S. annexation of Hawaii. This resolution was ratified by unanimous vote in the Hawaiian Legislature and passed in the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 209 to 91 and in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 42 to 21. "It may have been a happy day for the businessmen and new ruling classes of Hawaii, but for many others it was a day of sadness. Large numbers of royalists and common Hawaiians gathered quietly at the home of deposed Queen Liliuokalani and Crown Princess Kaiulani to silently console them and pay homage to the last monarch of the forever-lost kingdom."²

International law states, "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace. All peoples have the right to self-determination and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected."³

At the time of the initial overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1893, President Grover Cleveland stated to Congress,

I believe that a candid and thorough examination of the facts will force the conviction that the provisional government (Hawaii) owes its existence to an armed invasion by the United States. It has been the settled policy of the United States to concede to people of foreign countries the same freedom and independence in the management of their domestic affairs that we have always claimed for ourselves. By an act of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress, the Government of a feeble but friendly and confiding people has been overthrown. If a feeble but friendly state is in danger of being robbed of its independence and its sovereignty by a misuse of the name and power of the United States, the United States cannot fail to vindicate its honor and its sense of justice by an earnest effort to make all possible reparation.⁴

The U.S. involvement in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and subsequent annexation as a U.S. territory was a violation of international law and the national character of the United States. The U.S. is known for maintaining the highest standards of honor and morality in its international relations with other nations. If true, why then did the U.S. Congress and President McKinley agree to the annexation of Hawaii in 1898? This strategic research paper explores the historical events that led to Hawaii's annexation and addresses the military, political, and economic interests and implications of this crucial acquisition in the Pacific.

BACKGROUND: 1852-1898

The long road to Hawaii annexation began on 14 June 1852. On this date, Kamehameha III, the current King of Hawaii, ratified a new constitution that gave voting rights to both native and naturalized citizens of the Kingdom. Article 78 of the constitution stated,

Every male subject of His Majesty, whether native or naturalized, and every denizen of the Kingdom who shall have paid his taxes who shall have attained the full range of 20 years, and who shall have resided in the Kingdom for one year immediately proceeding the time of election, shall be entitled to one vote for the representative or representatives of the district in which he may have resided three months next proceeding the day of election.⁵

This constitution also established a House of Nobles that were appointed by the King for life and a House of Representatives that were subject to annual elections. Through the House of Representatives and other cabinet and ministerial positions, leading white, pro-American

citizens living in Hawaii began to slowly take hold of the monarchy. The 1852 constitution remained in effect for the remainder of Kamehameha III's reign and through Kamehameha IV's death in November 1863.

Kamehameha V was proclaimed King following Kamehameha IV's death and immediately announced his intent to establish a new constitution for the Kingdom. He issued a proclamation for a constitutional convention and began the deliberations on 13 June 1864. Convention attendees included the King, 16 nobles, and 27 elected delegates. The convention attendees voted to proceed with constitutional changes and on 20 August 1864 established and ratified a new constitution. Against the wishes of the King, additional requirements for property ownership and the ability to read and write were added for voter qualification. These new requirements removed a large number of native Hawaiians from the rolls of registered voters. Kamehameha V was the last direct descendant of Kamehameha the Great (Hawaii's first King) and the last proclaimed King by birth. All future monarchs of Hawaii were elected by the legislature as a progressive step toward democracy.

The Hawaiian Legislature confirmed William Lunalilo as King on 12 January 1873. Lunalilo took control of the Kingdom with advanced tuberculosis and reigned only 13 months. The most significant event occurring during his short reign was the mutiny of the Royal Household Troops. This small body of personal soldiers to the King revolted in protest to the harsh leadership of their senior officers who were all white foreigners. The mutiny was put down through Lunalilo's personal intervention and guarantee of amnesty for all participants. As a result of the mutiny, the Royal Household Troops were disbanded. This left the Kingdom without a standing army, a factor that later smoothed the way of those who would overthrow the monarchy.

The Hawaiian Legislature elected David Kalakaua King on 18 February 1874. The only other popular choice to rule the monarchy was Queen Emma. Professor W.D. Alexander, a representative reformer from the time, stated, "the cabinet and the American party used all their influence in favor of the former (Kalakaua), while the English favored Queen Emma, who was devoted to their interest. It was believed that if Queen Emma should be elected there would be no hope of our obtaining a reciprocity treaty with the United States."⁶ The proposed reciprocity treaty provided for the duty free importation of Hawaiian sugar to the United States. This treaty was ratified by the Hawaiian Legislature in 1875 and signed into law for execution in 1876. Additionally, King Kalakaua signed a new constitution in 1887 that deprived him of nearly all power in the Kingdom. This constitution was never ratified by popular vote of the people and is often called the "bayonet constitution" because Kalakaua was forced to sign it by the threatened

use of military force. The following amendments had dire effects on the King's power and turned even greater control of the Kingdom over to foreign transplanted citizens.

Article 41 states no act of the King shall have any effect unless it be countersigned by a member of the cabinet, who by that signature makes himself responsible. Article 48 withdraws the right of absolute veto hitherto possessed by the King, such veto being overridden by a two-thirds vote of the elective members of the legislature. Arts. 56, 58, and 59 increase the number of Nobles, attach a property qualification to the office, limit their term to six years, and deprive the King of the power to appoint them, such power being vested in a body of electors comprising all male residents of Hawaiian, American, or European birth or descent or allegiance, of twenty years old or over, who own property to the value of three thousand dollars, or are in receipt of an income of not less than six hundred dollars, who are able to read, and have resided for three years in the islands.⁷

King Kalakaua died on 20 January 1891 and was succeeded to the throne by his sister, Liliuokalani.

Queen Liliuokalani, long regarded as a reactionary by the Hawaiian Legislature because of her political and religious sentiments, started her reign by refusing to sign the existing constitution of 1887. Her refusal was based on the grounds that native Hawaiians generally felt it was not a good constitution and that it was forced upon King Kalakaua and the Hawaiian people. Yielding to pressure from the cabinet and legislature, Liliuokalani signed the constitution on 29 January 1891 and assumed duties as monarch. Through the next two years, mutual hostility between native Hawaiians and transplanted foreigners continued to grow as the Hawaiian people lost more rights and power in the Kingdom.

On 14 January 1893, Queen Liliuokalani announced her intention to promulgate a new constitution that would return power in Hawaii to the monarchy and restore the rights of her subjects. The most notable changes of the new constitution removed the principle checks on the powers of the crown and stated that only native Hawaiian subjects could vote. Realizing these changes would cause great unrest in the islands, her cabinet ministers refused to sign the new constitution. By their actions, the Queen was forced to partially yield her position and publicly announced she would postpone execution of the new constitution for a few days. In order to address this issue, a Citizen's Committee of Safety, composed of 13 white residents, was clandestinely organized. Their established goals were the "abrogation of the Monarchy, the establishment of a Provisional Government, with the ultimate object being annexation to the United States."⁸

In response to a request from the Citizen's Committee of Safety and in fear of total upheaval, the U.S. Minister to Hawaii ordered a military force of U.S. Marines from the U.S.S.

Boston to land in Honolulu to protect the lives and property of American citizens. Within two days, the monarchy was overthrown and the provisional government was in place with Sanford B. Dole as president. On the advice of her ministers and to avoid bloodshed, Queen Liliuokalani surrendered her kingdom under protest to the President and Government of the United States. Queen Liliuokalani sent the following message to President Harrison and President-elect Cleveland in Washington.

I, Liliuokalani, by the Grace of God and under the Constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the Constitutional Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a Provisional Government of and for this Kingdom.

That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America whose Minister Plenipotentiary, his Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said Provisional Government.

Now to avoid any collision of armed forces, and perhaps the loss of life, I do under this protest and impelled by said force yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the Constitutional Sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

Done at Honolulu this 17th day of January, A.D. 1893.

LILIUOKALANI, R.⁹

In spite of the circumstances surrounding the overthrow of the monarchy, President Harrison submitted a treaty for Hawaii annexation to the Senate on 15 February stating,

The overthrow of the monarchy was not in any way promoted by this government, but had its origin in what seems to have been a reactionary and revolutionary policy on the part of Queen Liliuokalani, which put in serious peril not only the large and preponderating interests of the United States in the islands, but all foreign interests, and indeed the decent administration of civil affairs and the peace of the islands.¹⁰

President Harrison's term of office expired before the Senate could vote on the treaty of annexation.

One of the first things President Cleveland acted on after assuming duties as President was to withdraw the treaty of annexation pending a full investigation into the Hawaiian Monarchy overthrow. President Cleveland sent Colonel James H. Blount to Hawaii as his special commissioner to investigate the circumstances surrounding the overthrow. Colonel Blount arrived in Honolulu on 29 March 1893 and within two days ordered the U.S. flag lowered from

the government building in Honolulu and the U.S. troops embarked back on their ship in the harbor. Colonel Blount reported back to President Cleveland that the monarchy had in fact been overthrown with the use of U.S. troops and with the full support of the U.S. Minister to Hawaii. President Cleveland recalled Minister Stevens and replaced him with the Honorable Albert S. Willis of Louisville, Kentucky. Minister Willis' instructions were to inform the Queen of the President's decision to reinstate her as monarch if she would grant full amnesty to everyone who had taken part in the overthrow. With some reservations, Queen Liliuokalani consented. On 19 December 1893, Minister Willis sent a formal demand from President Cleveland that the provisional government relinquish control of the monarchy and restore the Queen to power. President Dole and his provisional cabinet refused. In his reply to Minister Willis, President Dole stated,

The Provisional Government denies specifically and emphatically the principal allegations of fact on which President Cleveland's action was based; that the downfall of the queen was nowise caused by the interference of American forces; that the revolution was inevitable, and would have occurred if no such forces had been on the ground; and that it was carried through by the representatives of the same public sentiment which forced the monarchy to its knees in 1887, which suppressed the insurrection of 1889, and which for a score of years had been struggling to secure a responsible and representative government for the islands. It therefore respectfully and unhesitatingly declines to entertain the proposition of the President of the United States, that it should surrender its authority to the ex-Queen.¹¹

President Cleveland turned the matter over to Congress, which resulted in the "Turpie Resolution", dated 31 May 1894. This Congressional resolution stated, "that of right it belongs wholly to the people of the Hawaiian Islands to establish and maintain their own form of government policy; that the United States should in no wise interfere therewith and that any interference in the political affairs of the islands by any other government will be regarded as an act unfriendly to the United States."¹² This resolution opened the door for the provisional government of Hawaii. Knowing that the United States would not interfere in the affairs of the islands, the provisional government held a constitutional convention in May of 1894 to proclaim a new constitution and establish itself as the Republic of Hawaii. The new constitution was modeled after that of the United States, establishing a Senate, House of Representatives, and the executive branch of President. The Hawaiian Legislature elected Sanford B. Dole as the Republic's first president.

Toward the end of 1894 and the early days of 1895, a plot was undertaken by Royalists to overthrow the Republic and restore Queen Liliuokalani and the monarchy. In December 1894, a shipload of arms and ammunition from San Francisco were secreted into the islands and issued

to approximately 190 native royalists. Their plan was to enter Honolulu and attack the government headquarters and also capture the electric-light works, telephone offices, and the police station house. The rebellion was quickly put down and the participants were arrested and held for trial. Queen Liliuokalani was implicated in the rebellion and arrested on 16 January 1895. For the next nine months, she was confined as a prisoner in the former royal palace awaiting trial. On 24 January, Queen Liliuokalani, appealing to the government for clemency toward the conspirators, made the following statement to President Dole concerning the Republic, "The Government of the Republic of Hawaii is the lawful Government of the Hawaiian Islands, and that the late Hawaiian Monarchy is finally and forever ended and no longer of any legal or acute validity, force or effect whatever."¹³ With this official statement, Queen Liliuokalani also signed a certified oath of allegiance to the existing government of Hawaii. Later that year, all 190 royalists, to include the Queen, were tried in a military court on charges of treason and open rebellion. Queen Liliuokalani and 48 others received conditional pardons. Many others received the death sentence but clemency on the part of President Dole saved them and by January 1896, all prisoners involved in the rebellion were released.

During the years of 1896 to 1897, Japan began sending large numbers of contract laborers to the Hawaiian Islands as workers for the sugar and fruit industries. The Hawaiian Government soon noted that hundreds of Japanese laborers were arriving in the islands while avoiding the customs and immigration laws. The problem became so large, the government began to forbid their landing and return them to their country. This caused an immediate response from Japan. The Japanese Government dispatched the naval cruiser "Naniwa" to Hawaii to investigate the immigration matter, as well as, the preservation and maintenance of their treaty rights. "There is little doubt that the Honolulu officials intended to use the controversy with Japan as a lever to win support for annexation in the United States."¹⁴ Fearing a possible war with Japan and a threat to navigation rights in the Pacific, the United States, through the Hawaiian Government, paid Japan an indemnity of \$75,000 to resolve the issue with their government.

As war between the United States and Spain brewed in the early months of 1898, the question of Hawaii annexation was raised again in Washington. Within months of its start in Cuba, the war had spread throughout the Caribbean and halfway around the world to the Philippines. When it was finally decided to send troops to the Philippines, the long struggle for Hawaii annexation was nearing its end. According to the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, a newspaper based in Honolulu, "Dewey's (naval commander in the Philippines) call for reinforcements must inevitably lead to annexation because the United States would not break

international law by ordering its troops to stop in Honolulu, unless Hawaii was an American territory; and inasmuch as the ships had to dock for coal, the United States was morally bound to annex so as to make the act legal."¹⁵ A joint resolution for annexation was therefore passed through the House of Representatives and Senate and signed by President McKinley on 7 July 1898. On 12 August 1898, the U.S. flag was raised over the government buildings in Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands stepped toward the future as an official territory of the United States.

MILITARY REASONS FOR THE U.S. ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

The first and foremost military reason the U.S. annexed Hawaii was its strategic location in the Pacific Ocean. The distance across the Pacific east to west is from 7000 to 9500 miles. North to south, the Pacific stretches approximately 5000 to 6000 miles. "In the whole Pacific Ocean from the Equator on the South, to Alaska on the North; from the Coast of China and Japan on the West, to the American Continent on the East, there is but one spot where a ton of coal, a pound of bread, or a gallon of water can be obtained by a passing vessel, and that spot is Hawaii."¹⁶ The coal burning ships in existence at the end of the 19th century could not travel across the Pacific to the U.S. west coast and return to their homeport without recoaling. The very size of the Pacific prevented its transit without stopping somewhere and Hawaii became that stop. The U.S. government, therefore, quickly realized the strategic significance of Hawaii to the defense of the Pacific coast. Any nation who controlled Hawaii would have a naval base within five days steaming distance of any portion of the U.S. Pacific coast. Any foreign control of Hawaii would also stand as a permanent threat to U.S. and all other commercial shipping to and from that coast. In the words of the Honorable Lorrin A. Thurston, a Cabinet Minister under King Kalakaua, "It (annexation of Hawaii) will prevent the establishment of an alien and possibly hostile stronghold in a position commanding the Pacific Coast, and the commerce of the North Pacific, and definitely and finally secure to the United States the strategical control of the North Pacific, thereby protecting its Pacific Coast and commerce from attack."¹⁷ Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a highly regarded naval thinker of the time, also saw the criticality of controlling the Hawaiian Islands. He stated in 1897,

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the immense disadvantages to us of any maritime enemy having a coaling station well within 2,500 miles of every point of our coastline from Puget Sound to Mexico. Were there many others available we might find it difficult to exclude from all. There is, however, but the one. Shut out from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) as a coal base, an enemy is thrown back for supplies of fuel to distances of 3,500 or 4,000 miles – or between 7,000 and 8,000, going and coming – an impediment to sustained maritime operations well-nigh prohibitive. It is rarely that so important a factor in the attack or defense of a coastline – of a sea frontier – is concentrated in a single position, and the

circumstance renders it doubly imperative upon us to secure it, if we righteously can.¹⁸

The second military reason for the U.S. annexation of Hawaii was the fear of war with Japan. Japan began sending large numbers of contract workers to Hawaii as early as 1884. By 1897, 25,000 of a total population of 109,020 in the islands were Japanese. Of this total, Japanese contract workers numbered over half of the total male population on the islands.

The Empire of Japan, a new actor on the world's stage, was flexing its power in the Pacific and particularly in Hawaii. Japan had signed its first treaty with Hawaii in 1871 that granted mutual rights of residence and included a most-favored nation clause. On 8 March 1886, Hawaii and Japan ratified a mutual labor treaty that allowed laborers from either nation to immigrate freely to the other, but only under valid contract. Once Hawaii realized Japan was flooding the islands with illegal immigrants in an apparent attempt at colonization, Hawaii requested help from the United States in preventing the islands from falling into Japanese hands. In a message to U.S. Secretary of State John Sherman, the U.S. Minister to Hawaii stated, "In case of Japanese riots the Hawaiian Government might not be able to protect American property in the islands. It looks to me as if a crisis were rapidly approaching in Japanese matters. A stand must be taken somewhere or abandon the country to Japan."¹⁹ Within days of this message, Japanese warships were on their way to Honolulu.

The general feeling in Hawaii was, failing annexation to the U.S.; Hawaii would be unable to maintain its independent existence in the Pacific. The Provisional Government of Hawaii firmly believed the only possible way out of the impasse was annexation. Acting Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt believed it too. In a message dated 3 May 1898, Roosevelt stated, "If I had my way, we would annex those islands tomorrow. Furthermore, the U.S.S. Oregon (at Pearl Harbor) should be ordered to raise the American flag over Hawaii before the two Japanese war vessels arrive."²⁰ On 9 June 1898, Roosevelt pressed President McKinley for Hawaii annexation. The President, however, was already acting and a treaty of annexation was being drawn up.

When Japan became aware of the U.S. intention to annex Hawaii, the Japanese Minister to the U.S. strongly protested citing Japan's treaty rights in Hawaii. U.S. Secretary of State Sherman quickly responded that the rights of Hawaiian Japanese would be fully protected under U.S. annexation. Had Japan been a stronger power at the time, the outcome may have been different. But, Japan backed down and the treaty of annexation was signed on 7 July 1898.

POLITICAL REASONS FOR THE U.S. ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

The first political reason the U.S. annexed Hawaii was to remove the islands from international politics and therefore eliminate a source of international friction in the Pacific. "Four times in its past history a foreign flag other than that of the United States has floated over the islands – first the Russian, then the French, afterward the British, and again the French. Any one of these Powers would gladly assume sovereignty again, and to them is to be added as a menace the rising power of Japan."²¹ . There were so many Japanese entering the islands by 1897, the white population began to fear losing their own supremacy. In a statement to President McKinley on the issue, Senator George F. Hoar stated, "They (the Hawaiian Islands) will fall, Mr. President, if we do not prevent it, a prey to Japan, not by conquest but by immigration. This result all parties agree that we must prevent. Japan is not, according to the opponents of annexation of this body, and of the press, to be allowed to get the Sandwich Islands either by force or by absorption."²²

By 1897, Chinese and Japanese contract workers made up nearly 50% of the total inhabitants of Hawaii. Added to these were large numbers of Portuguese, Germans, French, British, and Americans. As Hawaii continued to prosper in wealth and importance as the key to the Pacific Ocean, conflicts of interests began to grow among the many different nationalities represented. These conflicts in turn brought each represented government into the fray. By early 1898, the United States and the Provisional Government of Hawaii were greatly concerned that other nations with large resident populations would seek to advance their interests in the islands at the expense of the United States. As long as Hawaii remained an independent nation, international friction would continue in the islands and could ultimately cause an end to peace in the Pacific region. However, once annexed, Hawaii would become a territory of the United States and forever removed from the scene of international politics.

The second political reason the U.S. annexed Hawaii was the U.S. government believed Hawaii was virtually a colony and therefore the U.S. had a strong claim to the islands. President Lincoln stated,

In every light which the state of the Hawaiian Islands can be contemplated it is an object of profound interest for the United States. Virtually it was once a colony. It is now a near and immediate neighbor. It is a haven of shelter and refreshment for our merchants, fishermen, seamen, and other citizens, when on their lawful occasions they are navigating the Eastern seas and ocean. The people are free and its laws, languages, and religion are largely the fruit of our own teaching and example.²³

There were many in Congress and other agencies of the government who felt as President Lincoln did. They felt such a strong attachment to Hawaii; they were unwilling to contemplate

any other course of action but annexation. They believed the U.S. had the right to annex Hawaii based upon the millions of dollars that had been poured into the Hawaiian economy. This U.S. investment brought life and prosperity to the islands and enabled many Hawaiian based merchants and plantation owners to grow rich on U.S. trade and shipping. Additionally, "Americans gave them a written language, organized their schools, taught their kings the principles of government, for more than half a century were the real administrators of public affairs, and until the rulers demonstrated their utter incapacity were the firmest supporters of the native Government."²⁴ The United States' own arrogance as an emerging world power took on a "Manifest Destiny" view of Hawaii that made annexation of the islands virtually inevitable.

ECONOMIC REASONS FOR THE U.S. ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

The first economic reason for the U.S. annexation of Hawaii was to secure the commerce of the islands for the United States. Prior to signing the Hawaiian Reciprocity Treaty in 1876 with the United States, commerce in the islands was on a steady decline. According to the annual reports from the collector-general of customs of the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. Treasury Department records, "The total export and import trade of the Hawaiian Islands from first year of official data recorded, 1855, to December 31, 1892, amounts to \$265,136,486. This is with all countries."²⁵ The reciprocity treaty brought immediate life to the Hawaiian economy by providing for duty free imports and exports between the U.S. and the Hawaiian Islands. Of the \$265,136,486 commercial total identified above, \$203,145,447 of the total was the registered value of imports and exports between the U.S. and Hawaii after the reciprocity treaty was signed. This phenomenal economy boost in the islands was a direct result of the reciprocity treaty and good trade relations between the U.S. and Hawaii. By 1897, Hawaii was the U.S. Pacific coast's best customer and the largest consumer of U.S. goods in the Pacific. In 1896 alone, Hawaii imported \$7,164,561 worth of goods of which \$5,464,208, or 76%, came from the United States. The astonishing results of Hawaii's booming economy was primarily focused on the U.S. providing a free market for Hawaii's sugar, rice, and banana exports. Under annexation, Hawaii would have a free market for all of its products of which most were completely untouched. "With a population of only 109 thousand, Hawaii in 1896, had a foreign trade of over \$208 per capita for every man, woman, and child in the country; a record almost unparallel in the history of the world."²⁶ Under the existing laws of 1897, the Hawaiian general tariff of 10% allowed about 25% of Hawaii's imports to come from countries outside of the United States. Once Hawaii was annexed as a territory, the U.S. protective tariff of

approximately 50% required the Hawaiian Islands to conduct all of its foreign trade with the U.S. This provision guaranteed the prosperity and commerce of the islands for the United States.

The second economic reason for the U.S. annexation of Hawaii was to secure the shipping business of the islands for the United States. The Hawaiian Islands at the time of annexation were the main stay of U.S. merchant marine foreign trade. U.S. Treasury records, dated 30 June 1896, show that,

The number of American vessels entering American ports during the year ending June 30, 1896, were:

From the United Kingdom.....88

From Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Oceanica combined.....210

From Hawaii.....191²⁷

As seen by these figures, 40% of all maritime cargo coming into the United States was from Hawaii. The total value of this cargo was \$15,515,230. As for ships entering Hawaiian ports in 1896, U.S. shipping accounted for 243,983 tons of cargo valued at \$7,164,561. U.S. cargo comprised 92.26% of all imports and exports to and from the islands. Annexationists argued that once Hawaii was established as a U.S. territory, all imports and exports to the islands would be required by coasting trade laws to be transported in U.S. vessels. This included both freight and passenger traffic. Annexation was expected to greatly expand the U.S. shipping industry as a whole and within ten years, the industry was predicted to double in size.

CONCLUSION

The 46-year road to Hawaii annexation is a unique one. It began in 1852 with the slow erosion of Hawaiian power by white residents of Hawaii and transplanted U.S. citizens. The overthrow of the monarchy in 1893 and a "we do not want to annex Hawaii" attitude from the U.S. quickly changed in 1898 with the Spanish-American War and the rising threat of Japan in the Pacific. Hawaiian annexation only came when the United States realized it needed Hawaii for its own protection and exclusive use. Hawaii had become a strategic U.S. national interest for defense of the Pacific coast and U.S. commercial shipping across the Pacific region. The strategic importance of the Hawaiian Islands was fully understood by the nations of Europe and Asia, but none of them made any serious attempt to acquire them, and the islands themselves, did not actually apply for annexation prior to 1893. The next five years were marked with racial tensions and a futile attempt to restore the Monarchy. By 1898, this group of mid-Pacific islands, with an area of over 6,400 square miles, and a mixed population of approximately

150,000, came permanently under the American flag. The 150-year reign of the Kamehamehas and the Hawaiian Kingdom was lost forever.

Although annexation of the Hawaiian Islands violated the national character of the United States, acquisition of the islands was in the best national interest of the United States. Hawaii, in the late 1800s, was key to U.S. merchant marine foreign trade and shipping in the Pacific. As Hawaii moved onto the international stage, it became clear that control of Hawaii meant control of the only coaling station and naval base between the U.S. west coast and East Asia. Hawaii was absolutely vital to the defense of the U.S. Pacific coast and essential for naval operations in the Pacific. Manifest Destiny did in fact play its role in the U.S. acquisition of Hawaii. As the United States moved into the role of an emerging world power, annexation of this critical chain of islands in the Pacific became inevitable. The Honorable John W. Foster, ex-Secretary of State said it best,

As a rule, I do not believe in the extension of our territory beyond our present ocean limits. I think we should develop within our own domain a great English-speaking nation, controlled by the principles marked out for us by the fathers of the Republic. But it is precisely because I want to see a great and powerful nation – much greater and more powerful than the one we now have – developed on this continent that I hail the opportunity now offered of securing this outpost of our Pacific frontier, and thus protecting for all time our future mighty commerce and rapidly growing interests on that coast from the encroachments of the great Powers striving for ascendancy in that quarter of the globe.²⁸

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Joseph G. Mullins, Hawaiian Journey (Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing Co., 1978), 1.
- ² Ibid., 27.
- ³ William W. Bishop, Jr., International Law (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 325.
- ⁴ Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Intervention of United States Government in Affairs of Foreign Friendly Governments, Report No. 243, 53d Cong., 2d sess., 21 December 1893, 12-14.
- ⁵ Ibid., 30.
- ⁶ Ibid., 33.
- ⁷ William Fremont Blackman, The Making of Hawaii (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1899), 126.
- ⁸ Ibid., 132.
- ⁹ Ibid., 134.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 135.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 138.
- ¹² Ibid., 138.
- ¹³ Ibid., 143.
- ¹⁴ William Adam Russ, Jr., The Hawaiian Republic (1894-98) and its Struggle to Win Annexation (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 1961), 135.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 288.
- ¹⁶ Lorin A. Thurston, A Hand-Book on the Annexation of Hawaii (St. Joseph, Michigan: A. B. Morse Company, 1897), 3.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 3.
- ¹⁸ Honorable John W. Foster, The Annexation of Hawaii, An Address Delivered Before the National Geographic Society, at Washington, D.C. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Gaylord Bros., 1897), 14.
- ¹⁹ Russ, 135-136.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 143.
- ²¹ Foster, 15.

²² Russ, 320.

²³ Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hawaiian Islands, Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, with Accompanying Testimony, and Executive Documents Transmitted to Congress from January 1, 1893 to March 10, 1894, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 803.

²⁴ Foster, 15.

²⁵ Congress, Senate, 776.

²⁶ Thurston, 14.

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ Foster, 16.

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