

## How Did the United States Become an Imperialistic Power?

*President Benjamin Harrison submits to the Senate a treaty for the annexation of Hawaii, February 14, 1893.*

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 interest of the United States in the islands, but all foreign interests . . . The restoration of Queen Liliuokalani to her throne is undesirable, if not impossible, and unless actively supported by the United States would be accompanied by serious disaster and the disorganization of all business interests. The influence and interest of the United States in the islands must be increased and not diminished .

. . . I think . . . [annexation] will be highly promotive of the best interests of the Hawaiian people, and . . . will adequately secure the interests of the United States. These interests are not wholly selfish. It is essential that none of the other great powers shall secure these islands. Such a possession would not consist with our safety and with the peace of the world . . .

Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, XIII, 5783.

*Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii protests (January 17, 1893).*

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 . . . by certain persons claiming to have established a Provisional Government of and for this Kingdom.

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 Provisional Government.

W. D. Alexander, *History of the Later Years of the Hawaiian Monarchy and the Revolution of 1893*. Honolulu. Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1896, 150.

*President Cleveland, returning to the White House in March, 1893, before the Senate could act, withdraws the Hawaiian annexation treaty.*

. . . the ownership of Hawaii was tendered to us by a Provisional Government set up to succeed the constitutional ruler of the islands, who had been dethroned, and it did not appear that such Provisional Government had the sanction of either popular revolution or suffrage. Two other remarkable features of the transaction naturally attracted attention. One was the extraordinary haste, not to say precipitancy, characterizing all the transactions . . .

But a protest also accompanies said treaty, signed by the Queen and her ministers . . . which explicitly stated that she yielded to the superior force of the United States, whose minister had caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support such Provisional Government . . .

The report [ordered by the President], with its accompanying proofs . . . justifies, in my opinion, the statement that when the President [Harrison] was led to submit the treaty to the Senate with the declaration that "the overthrow of the monarchy was not in any way promoted by this Government," and when the Senate was induced to receive and discuss it on that basis, both President and Senate were misled . . .

I believe that a candid and thorough examination of the facts will force the conviction that the Provisional Government owes its existence to an armed invasion by the United States.

Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, XIII, 589359011 passim.

*Sanford B. Dole, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Acting President of the Provisional Government of Hawaii, replies to Cleveland.*

While we accept the decision of the President of the United States, declining further to consider the annexation proposition, as the final conclusion of the present Administration, we do not feel inclined to regard it as the last word of the American Government upon this subject . . .

The additional portion of your communication [requesting re-instatement of the Queen] . . . might well be dismissed in a single word . . . We do not recognize the right of the President of the United States to interfere in our domestic affairs . . .

Alexander, *History of the Later Years of the Hawaiian Monarchy*, 1909

Question: If American troops had been used, without the President's authority, to overthrow the legal government of Hawaii, did the President have the right now to demand reinstatement of the Queen? Give your reasons.