

**Annexation of Hawaii:**  
**American Impositions on Hawaiian Rights and Sovereignty**

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Paper

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When I saw this year's theme, Rights & Responsibilities in History, I realized there were many paths I could follow. It was by chance that I clicked a website and discovered Queen Liliuokalani, the deposed Queen of Hawaii. International relations have always been a fervent passion of mine and I quickly became enthralled with Liliuokalani's story and the tale of Hawaii's annexation. The United States, a global symbol of democracy and liberty, failed to uphold Hawaii's rights as an independent nation. Supporting a coup and repeated bids for annexation make evident that Hawaii's autonomy was stripped in order to benefit American interests, illustrating how the themes of rights and responsibilities are embedded in this topic.

I began my research by creating a timeline of Hawaiian history throughout the 19th century. Firstly, I used encyclopedias and databases to develop an accurate understanding of events leading to annexation. Since the topic took place over a century ago, it was a challenge to locate primary sources from both the U.S. and Hawaii. I turned to clippings from both local and large-name newspapers to place myself in the time period. Ulukou's Hawaiian Newspaper Collection, the Library of Congress, and the National Archive were great platforms for finding such articles, many of which were quoted within my paper. Messages from the president and congressional records were vital to creating arguments for and against annexation. Additionally, reading the exact language used in official documents such as the Bayonet Constitution and the Newlands Resolution allowed me to analyze exactly how the words allowed for exploitation and violation of Hawaiian rights.

After my research was complete, I was left with an overwhelming list of sources and fragmented notes. I wrote my thesis to cement the direction of my paper and then wrote a first draft simply detailing a chronological order of events. Then, I reorganized my paper and clarified my argument by creating separate sections to discuss the military and ethical objections for

annexation. I completed my introduction and conclusion section last as I wanted them to accurately reflect my overall discussion throughout the paper.

My historical argument is that the Hawaiian people had the right to choose their own form of government and deserved the opportunity to do so. The United States of America violated ethical responsibilities by helping overthrow Queen Liliuokalani and disregarding the opinions of Native Hawaiians by annexing Hawaii. These events demonstrate the importance of upholding diplomatic and ethical standards within our foreign policy. Hawaii is seen as a paradise, a vacation spot. Its tumultuous history is buried and not often discussed despite it continuing to have socio-economic impacts on Native Hawaiians. What occurred in Hawaii affected millions and impeded on civil liberties, displaying why it is significant in history. My paper questions the extent to which countries should weigh economic prosperity over democratic principles through analysis of U.S.-Hawaii interactions. Hawaii's fate did not close debate on this question, as the topic of American imperialism is pertinent to the world today.

## Introduction

On July 7th, 1898, President William McKinley signed the Newlands Resolution and gave the United States autonomy over the Hawaiian Islands. The United States once battled a tyrannical foreign power for the right of self-governance; however, with McKinley's pen stroke, the U.S. infringed upon the very freedoms it had deemed “unalienable.”<sup>1</sup> The United States repeatedly disregarded Native Hawaiians’ rights to suffrage and land ownership in favor of American business. U.S. displacement of Queen Liliuokalani in 1893 and the annexation of Hawaii in 1898 were two severe impositions on a foreign nation. U.S. failure to respect Hawaiian rights and lack of accountability for a century demonstrates negligence towards the civic and humanitarian responsibility the United States holds as a member of the international community.

## Historical Context

In 1810, the Hawaiian islands were susceptible to rapacious American and European imperialism. Businessmen were enticed by a promising sugar harvesting industry, and Hawaii was soon riddled with private sugar planters. Monarchs were bullied into unfair Western treaties, signing away acres of land to maintain their thrones.<sup>2</sup> Britain and France pursued Hawaii’s resources; however, during the 19th century, the United States emerged as protectorate of the islands.<sup>3</sup>

The United States stripped Native Hawaiians of fundamental rights and helped the wealthy American elite claim Hawaii as a stronghold. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1878 between the Hawaiian Islands and the United States permitted U.S. usage of Pearl Harbor and enriched

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence," (1776)  
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

<sup>2</sup> "Annexation of Hawaii," in *Gale U.S. History Online Collection* (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2024), [Page #], Gale in Context: U.S. History.

<sup>3</sup> "Novemaba 28: Lā Kū'oko'a" [November 28: Independence Day], University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, last modified November 26, 2018, accessed January 16, 2025,  
<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/punawaiola/2018/11/26/novemaba-28-la-ku'oko'a/>.

sugar barons by lifting Hawaiian sugar tariffs. Sugar exports to the U.S. roughly quintupled between 1876 and 1883, and Hawaii's economy became increasingly dependent on American trade.<sup>4</sup> On July 6, 1887, King David Kalakaua was ambushed by Lorrin Thurston and Sanford Dole, Hawaiian legislature members, alongside a mob of an estimated 150 sugar planters outside his palace. King Kalakaua was made to sign the Bayonet Constitution, gutting his executive power and limiting suffrage. Native Hawaiians and Asian laborers were disenfranchised through new voting requirements, such as ownership of "taxable property in this country of not less than three thousand dollars."<sup>5</sup> Gradually, the United States increased its presence in Hawaiian affairs, encroaching on native rights for American economic gain.

### **American Involvement**

From January 14-17, 1893, what began as a step towards a hopeful future for many Hawaiians disastrously collapsed into a foreign coalition takeover. On January 14, 1893, Queen Liliuokalani (successor to Kalakaua) informed the public of a plan to revolutionize the Bayonet Constitution. A firm proponent of Native Hawaiian rights, the queen designed a constitution where "rights of all have been regarded- A constitution suited to the wishes of the people."<sup>6</sup> The crowd cheered. Liliuokalani's Cabinet was infuriated. The Bayonet Constitution favored nobles and aristocrats, which pleased Cabinet Ministers. Hawaiian ministers, now threatened with losing their financial stronghold, flocked to Lorrin Thurston. Thurston and members of his newly founded "Annexation Club" saw an opportunity to rally westerners behind American annexation and promptly prepared to strip Liliuokalani of her power. On January 17, 1893, Thurston, Dole,

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<sup>4</sup> Sumner J. La Croix and Christopher Grandy, "The Political Instability of Reciprocal Trade and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom," *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 1 (1997): 172, JSTOR.

<sup>5</sup> Bayonet Constitution (1887), 166, accessed January 17, 2025, [https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Bayonet\\_Constitution.pdf](https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Bayonet_Constitution.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> "Revolution! The Queen Attempts a Coup d'Etat," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands), January 16, 1893, accessed January 13, 2025, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1893-01-16/ed-1/seq-4/>.

and the Annexation Club formed the Committee of Safety and successfully staged a coup against the queen of Hawaii.<sup>7</sup>

The Committee of Safety could not feasibly remove Liliuokalani without the backing of a stronger force. Believing the Queen's constitution threatened the safety of Thurston's followers, U.S. Minister of Hawaii John Stevens ordered the dispatch of 162 marines and sailors from the USS *Boston* to protect the Committee of Safety. Stevens, as spokesperson of the U.S., agreed to recognize the Committee as the provisional government of the Hawaiian Islands if they gained "possession of the [Hawaiian] Government."<sup>8</sup> Thurston described Queen Liliuokalani as "desirous of extending rather than giving up any of the power and privileges which she now possesses."<sup>9</sup> However, now intimidated by potential conflict with her "mighty neighbor" the United States, Queen Liliuokalani, in her own words, "yielded under protest" to prevent "aimless bloodshed."<sup>10</sup> Through John Stevens, the United States accepted and perpetuated the removal of a foreign leader from her rightful post as head of state.

### **First Attempts at Annexation**

The U.S. promptly began negotiating a treaty for annexation with the independent Hawaiian Republic. President Benjamin Harrison, aware of the rapidly-approaching March 4th inauguration of Grover Cleveland, aggressively lobbied for annexation. Harrison justified the legitimacy of the Hawaiian Republic to the Senate, declaring the overthrow to be "not in any

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<sup>7</sup> Liz Sonneborn, "Overview: Queen Lili'uokalani and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom," in *Queen Lili'uokalani and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Facts On File, 2023), History Research Center.

<sup>8</sup> President's Message Relating to the Hawaiian Islands, H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 53-47, 2d Sess. (Dec. 18, 1893). Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.presidentsmessag00unit/?sp=1&st=pdf&pdfPage=10>.

<sup>9</sup> Sonneborn, "Overview: Queen,".

<sup>10</sup> "The Quarrel Was Sought.," *The New York Times* (New York City, NY), March 10, 1893, 5, accessed February 1, 2025,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1893/03/10/106862700.html?pageNumber=5>.

way promoted by this Government[.]”<sup>11</sup> However, Liliuokalani stated her surrender of the throne was “on the conviction that the American minister and the American troops were promoters and supporters of the revolution.” According to Queen Liliuokalani’s letter on January 17th, she agreed to “yield to the superior force of the United States of America” who she saw as an extension of the provisional government led by Thurston and Dole, contradicting Harrison’s fervent denouncement of U.S. involvement.<sup>12</sup>

To the dismay of pro-annexationists, on March 11, 1893, President Cleveland withdrew the treaty from legislative consideration. Cleveland emphasized that the coup against Liliuokalani was “an act of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress,” which undermined the American principle of upholding “international morality.”<sup>13</sup> Representative James Blount headed an investigation of U.S.-Hawaiian relations, an endeavor Cleveland hoped would uncover the truth behind the Committee of Safety’s rise to power. Four months and over a thousand pages of documents later, the completed report definitively stated that Stevens participated in an “act of war” and the United States permitted a “lawless occupation of Honolulu[.]”<sup>14</sup>

Cleveland sparked a complicated debate on the fate of Hawaii. However, this debate wouldn’t return to the Senate floor again until the McKinley administration.

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<sup>11</sup> Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty to Annex the Hawaiian Islands, S. Exec. Doc. No. 52-76, 2d Sess. (Feb. 15, 1893). Accessed December 9, 2024. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/message-the-senate-transmitting-treaty-annex-the-hawaiian-islands>.

<sup>12</sup> President’s Message, H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 53-47, 2d Sess.

<sup>13</sup> Special Message, Exec. Doc. No. 53, 2d Sess. (Dec. 18, 1893). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-770>.

<sup>14</sup> Special Message, Exec. Doc. No. 53, 2d Sess. (Dec. 18, 1893). Accessed February 14, 2025. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-770>.

## Period of Peace

President McKinley argued that annexing Hawaii would be a “natural result of the strengthening ties” between the two states and developed a treaty for annexation of the Hawaiian islands, showcasing a different perspective than his predecessors.<sup>15</sup> Already signed by ambassadors from both countries, the 1897 treaty awaited Senate ratification. Just weeks after McKinley’s State of the Union Address, the Senate received a 600 page document containing signatures from roughly 21,000 Native Hawaiians “earnestly protest[ing] against the annexation of the said Hawaiian Islands to the said United States of America in any form or shape.”<sup>16</sup> Over half of Hawaii's native population from all eight major islands joined together to petition against American annexation.

This cry for independence was a dealbreaker for many Senators. Consequently, the treaty only received 46 votes in favor. Although the Senate refused to reinstate the monarchy, Hawaiians succeeded in a call for self-determination, and if the treaty had passed it would have been seen as a gross overstep in U.S. relations with a foreign country. The petition certified the true public opinion of Hawaii, one not convoluted by the American nobility in power, but one overwhelmingly unfriendly to acquisition. The 44 senators who voted against McKinley’s treaty upheld the rights of Hawaiian citizens by voting with them in mind, touching the core American value of self governance.<sup>17</sup>

This exhibition of care for native opinion in Hawaii seemed to have settled the debate on Hawaii’s annexation. Unfortunately, this period of peace was short-lived.

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<sup>15</sup> William McKinley, "First Annual Message to Senate," speech presented in Washington D.C., U.S., December 6, 1897, Miller Center: University of Virginia, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-6-1897-first-annual-message>.

<sup>16</sup> Petition, "Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii," September 11, 1897, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/petition-against-annexation-hawaii>.

<sup>17</sup> "The 1897 Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii: Additional Background Information," National Archives (Educational Resources), accessed April 13, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition>.

## **Military Concerns:**

Congress officially declared war against Spain on April 25, 1898, marking the beginning of a volatile conflict for Cuban independence and returning Hawaii to the Congressional spotlight.<sup>18</sup> Congressman Francis Newlands of Nevada submitted House Joint Resolution 259 for the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands two weeks into the war. Instead of a treaty presented to the Senate, Newlands proposed a joint resolution to acquire Hawaii, requiring a simple majority of both houses as opposed to a supermajority (two-thirds) of the Senate to pass. The resolution's introduction sparked fiery debate that officially commenced June 11 in the House of Representatives.

Hawaii's perceived strategic value was its primary selling point: It was a crucial fueling station for active naval ships fighting Spanish forces in the Pacific. Although the United States was in possession of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was a neutral nation in the Spanish-American war. By occupying territory on the islands the U.S. found itself in a "dishonorable position of declaring and guaranteeing Hawaiian independence" while "disregarding their neutrality," in the opinion of Representative Robert Hitt.<sup>19</sup> Hitt pointed out during congressional debate that the United States had already "piled up 10,000 tons of coal in Honolulu Harbor" without consent of the Republic.<sup>20</sup> Hitt and other supporters felt that the United States presented itself as a nation violating laws of neutrality. Annexation, per Hitt, would make their actions legally permissible, saving them from international scrutiny. Opposition deemed the military value of Hawaii overstated; possession of

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<sup>18</sup> John L. Offner, "McKinley and the Spanish-American War," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2004): Gale in Context: U.S. History.

<sup>19</sup> 31 Cong. Rec. 5772-75 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Hitt). Accessed January 13, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.

<sup>20</sup> 31 Cong. Rec. 5772-75 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Hitt)

Hawaii was redundant since coal stations located nearer to the U.S. than Hawaii were already under American jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup>

Paranoia of other foreign colonization of Hawaii was a significant motivator behind annexation efforts.<sup>22</sup> In 1893, American admiral George E. Belknap warned that if England took possession instead, “Honolulu would soon become one of the most important strongholds of Great Britain’s power.”<sup>23</sup> In the words of Hitt, annexing Hawaii “would be taking a point of advantage instead of giving it to your enemy.”<sup>24</sup> Japanese immigrants were the second largest demographic in Hawaii, consisting of over 22% of the population compared to the mere 10% of Europeans/Americans.<sup>25</sup> The U.S. feared that such considerable representation would lead to increased Japanese military presence in the islands. Many Americans wished to obtain Hawaii before it could fall to foreign empires due to its proximity to the United States. In the eyes of Senator Richard Pettigrew, this argument was insufficient. During a Senate debate, Pettigrew demonstrated that the best modern naval ships could not reach the U.S. from Hawaii efficiently enough to sustain a fortified attack.<sup>26</sup> Even if the United States were to annex Hawaii, according to Professor von Holst of the University of Chicago, it would be “not a source of strength, but of weakness[.]”<sup>27</sup> Hawaii would be the only part of the U.S. that could potentially face foreign

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<sup>21</sup> "Objections to Annexation," *The Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), February 21, 1893, accessed December 8, 2024,

[https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn99021999/1893-02-21/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.271,0.118,0.186,0.082,0.](https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn99021999/1893-02-21/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.271,0.118,0.186,0.082,0)

<sup>22</sup> Kees van Dijk, "The Failed Annexation of Hawaii," in *Pacific Strife*, ed. Tak-Wing Ngo (Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 361, JSTOR.

<sup>23</sup> "Should Accept the Offer: Admiral Belknap Urges the Importance of Annexing Hawaii," *The Duluth Evening Herald* (Duluth, MN), February 1, 1893, accessed January 16, 2025, <https://archive.org/details/jan2189305dulu/page/n17/mode/2up?q=Britain>.

<sup>24</sup> 31 Cong. Rec. 5772-75 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Hitt)

<sup>25</sup> Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Statistics for Hawaii* (Washington D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1913), 9, accessed January 16, 2025, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-hi.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Cong. Rec. 6607-25 (July 2, 1898) (statement of Richard F. Pettigrew). Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1898-pt7-v31/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1898-pt7-v31-17.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> "Why Hawaii Should Not Be Annexed," *The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), January 30, 1898, accessed December 8, 2024, [https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn85066387/1898-01-30/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.117,-0.026,0.754,0.332,0.](https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn85066387/1898-01-30/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.117,-0.026,0.754,0.332,0)

bombardment, as it is detached from the continental states. Fear could not be substantial reason to annex an independent nation.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Arguments against annexation chiefly centered around ethics. “Cool, deliberate, and patriotic statesmen” that constitute the American Congress do not purchase sovereign countries without approval, affirmed Representative John Dinsmore.<sup>28</sup> The Spanish-American war was supposedly a humanitarian war, fought by America to liberate Cuba from Spanish oppression.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the idea that a government derives its just powers from consent of the governed is a foundational principle of the United States. Outwardly, the U.S. was championing progressive ideals, being known as the global defender of democracy. Purchasing Hawaii, however, would impede on the sovereignty of another nation, and would be completed without the consent of Native Hawaiians.

The petition that arrived at the Senate’s doorstep in 1897 was concrete evidence that the dominating faction in Hawaii wanted to remain free. *The Independent*, an English-language Hawaiian newspaper, published a resolution reprinted from a mass meeting of natives in Hawaii. They appealed to the President and Congress to give the Hawaiian people a chance “to express at the ballot box their wishes as to whether to accept or reject Annexation.”<sup>30</sup> To annex the Hawaiian Islands would be to ignore their protest. As described by Representative Clark, it

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<sup>28</sup> 31 Cong. Rec. 5776-82 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Dinsmore). Accessed January 16, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.

<sup>29</sup> Offner, "McKinley and the Spanish-American,".

<sup>30</sup> "The Memorial," *The Independent* (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands), October 6, 1897, accessed January 16, 2025, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047097/1897-10-16/ed-1/seq-1/>.

would be in “flagrant violation” of the rights America once deemed inalienable.<sup>31</sup> It would be degrading Hawaiians, labeling them undeserving of sovereignty.

Since 1893, tension brewed between congressmen and Native Hawaiians over opinion towards annexation. Hawaiian language newspapers such as *Ka o ka Lahui* attacked proposed American ownership of the islands. Translated to “The Voice of the Nation,” *Ka o ka Lahui* was founded by John Edward Bush, president of the Hawaiian National Liberal Party. The party’s platform, a source of inspiration for Queen Liliuokalani, emphasized a “desire to retain the independence of the Country and defend its autonomy.”<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, in the U.S., senators such as John Morgan contended with such claims and stated plainly that annexation “has never been regarded with aversion” by the people of Hawaii.<sup>33</sup> Even so, publications such as “Ka o ka Lahui” articulated that if annexation were to occur, it should be “open” rather than “secret annexation for the benefit of a few capitalists and sugar planters.”<sup>34</sup> Ignoring Native Hawaiian protests and annexing by joint resolution were loopholes that simplified the purchase of Hawaii. It was a secretive annexation performed out of greed, not for the good of the Hawaiian people.

Congressmen understood there was little reason to acquire the Hawaiian islands besides it potentially strengthening U.S. war efforts, seeing as those rejecting the resolution were consistently more vocal than their counterparts. On July 7th, 1898, however, the Senate ratified

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<sup>31</sup> 31 Cong. Rec. 5788-95 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Clark). Accessed January 16, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.

<sup>32</sup> “Platform of Principle of the Hawaiian National Liberal Party,” *Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (Honolulu, HI), January 22, 1892, accessed January 13, 2025, <https://nupepa.org/?a=d&d=KLL18920122-01.1.5&srpos=19&e=-----189-en-20--1--txt-txNU-united+states----1892--->.

<sup>33</sup> “Senator Morgan's Report Recommending Hawaii Annexation (Excerpts),” in *Historical Controversies in History Primary Source Documents* (Infobase, 2020), History Research Center.

<sup>34</sup> “Hands off,” *Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (Honolulu, HI), October 23, 1891, accessed January 13, 2025, <https://nupepa.org/?a=d&d=KLL18911023-01.2.1&e=-----189-en-20--1--txt-txNU-united+states----1891--->.

the Newlands Resolution in agreement. Hawaii was made an official territory of the United States of America.<sup>35</sup>

### **Post-annexation:**

Prior to August of 1959, Hawaii was stuck in a liminal phase of being American property while not yet afforded statehood. Native Hawaiians were denied common civil liberties, including the right to elect their own governor or to vote in presidential elections.<sup>36</sup> U.S. actions deprived Hawaiians of their ancient culture and basic rights. Despite the United States not having an official language, the Hawaiian language was presented as secondary to English, exposing a tragic double standard. Assimilation efforts such as the “Programme for Patriotic Exercise in the Public Schools” lined up students military-style, requiring them to participate in chants of “One Country, One Language.”<sup>37</sup> Receiving citizenship in 1959 did not resolve the difficulties faced by Native Hawaiians. For instance, ancestral lands are used to support a booming tourism industry while nearly thirty-thousand Native Hawaiians remain on the Department of Hawaiian Home-Lands waitlist for land-grants.<sup>38</sup>

Hawaii is a case study in territorial acquisition and the ethical violations that can occur along the way. The United States ignored Hawaii’s rights as a fellow sovereign nation, and later ignored the rights of Native Hawaiians as citizens of an official U.S. territory. From toppling the monarchy to ignoring anti-annexation protests to suppressing native culture, the U.S. blatantly

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<sup>35</sup> Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States, H.R.J. Res. 259, 55th Cong., 2d Sess. (Dec. 6, 1897). Accessed December 1, 2024. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730378>.

<sup>36</sup> Associated Students of the University of Hawaii, *Hawaii: 49th State* (1946), accessed December 13, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/hawaii/brochure.html>

<sup>37</sup> Department Of Public Instruction, Programme for Patriotic Exercises in the Public Schools, Territory of Hawaii (1906), 3, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.programmeforpatr00hawa/?sp=22&st=image&r=-1.768,-0.085,4.536,1.78,0>.

<sup>38</sup> Mahealani Richardson, "Survey: 45% of Those on Hawaiian Home Lands Waitlist Say They'd Accept Buyout," Hawaii News Now, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/03/15/dhhl-survey-45-respondants-would-accept-housing-assistance-be-removed-waitlist/>.

disregarded its diplomatic and governmental responsibilities. Senators, Representatives, and Presidents weighed economic and military objectives over their own constitutional principles. These events do not exist in a vacuum: Forty years prior to the Newlands Resolution, Commodore Matthew Perry flaunted U.S. naval fleets in the seas of isolationist Japan, forcing two Japanese ports to open for American trade.<sup>39</sup> The conclusion of the Spanish-American War was followed by U.S. occupation of various Latin American islands including Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba.<sup>40</sup> Puerto Rico remains an American territory today, demonstrating the legacy McKinley's imperialist policies have continued to cement in the U.S..

On the 100th anniversary of Queen Liliuokalani's overthrow, Congress acknowledged that they were wrong for their "suppression of the inherent sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian people."<sup>41</sup> Congress apologized to the Hawaiian people. Yet, old mistakes can be repeated in modern times. Over a century post-annexation, Native Hawaiians are still facing the negative impacts of U.S. imperialism, making evident the importance of abiding by moral responsibilities in global interactions.

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<sup>39</sup> "Open for Business. (Destination)," *Mercator's World*, March/April 2003, Gale Academic OneFile

<sup>40</sup> Offner, "McKinley and the Spanish-American,"

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Congress, "U.S. Apology for Overthrow of Hawaiian Kingdom (1993)," in *The Asian-American Experience*, American Journey (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Media, 1999), Gale in Context: U.S. History.

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Students from the University of Hawaii wrote this pamphlet to advocate for Hawaiian statehood. Hawaiians had to convince the American population that they were deserving of statehood, and outlined the issues with them being denied proper citizenship. It demonstrates the difficulties of Hawaiians post-annexation, and that Hawaiians continued to protest and petition for equality once a territory.
- Bayonet Constitution*. 1887. Accessed January 17, 2025. [https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Bayonet\\_Constitution.pdf](https://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/Bayonet_Constitution.pdf).  
This source is an exact version of the Bayonet Constitution that King Kalakaua was coerced into accepting as Hawaii's official constitution. It provided extremely valuable insight into how Native Hawaiian rights were restricted through the exact language of the Bayonet Constitution.
- Congress, U.S. "U.S. Apology for Overthrow of Hawaiian Kingdom (1993)." In *The Asian-American Experience*. American Journey. Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Media, 1999. Gale in Context: U.S. History.  
A century after Queen Liliuokalani's overthrow, the U.S. Congress admitted their role in helping the Annexation Club/Committee of Safety topple the Hawaiian monarchy. This admission of guilt and apology shows that Congress owned up to their faults and directly supports my historical argument that the U.S. did not uphold Hawaiian rights during that time period. This source also showed that if Congress could be wrong once, we could be wrong again in the future.
- Cong. Rec. 6607-25 (July 2, 1898) (statement of Richard F. Pettigrew). Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1898-pt7-v31/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1898-pt7-v31-17.pdf>.  
This statement from Senator Pettigrew during the 1898 debates regarding Hawaii annexation outlines why Pettigrew opposed the Newlands Resolution and refutes specific arguments relating to the strategic benefits of Hawaii. Reading exact dialogue from congressmen who had a part in deciding the fate of Hawaii shaped the military and ethical consideration sections of the paper. Pettigrew specifically supported the thesis by illustrating that the Senate knew of the strong argument against annexation during the time.
- 31 Cong. Rec. 5772-75 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Hitt). Accessed January 13, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.  
Unlike statements made by Dinsmore and Pettigrew, this statement by Representative Hitt emphasized the need for annexation of Hawaii for military purposes. Congressmen

like Hitt were crucial for swaying Congress's passing of the Newlands Resolution, thus this source was imperative when addressing the perspective of those supporting annexation.

31 Cong. Rec. 5776-82 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Dinsmore). Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.

Representative Dinsmore's statements in front of the House of Representative attempted to convince other representatives to vote against the Newlands Resolution. Seeing how congressmen like Dinsmore opposed annexation and reading congressional records from 1898 provided an inside look on how the annexation of Hawaii was treated within congress.

31 Cong. Rec. 5788-95 (June 11, 1898) (statement of Rep. Clark). Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1898/06/11/31/house-section/article/5769-5797?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22June+11%2C+1898%22%7D&s=7&r=345>.

This statement of Representative Clark was another against Hawaii annexation, however using moral arguments. His statement, like the other statements from congressmen cited, helped build the atmosphere of debate in Congress and also showed why annexation was unfavorable.

Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census. *Statistics for Hawaii*. Washington D.C.:

Government Publishing Office, 1913. Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-hi.pdf>.

This 1910 census for Hawaii compiled statistics regarding Hawaii's population and inhabitants. Information on the racial composition of Hawaii in 1910 was proof of the growing percentage of the population taken by Japanese immigrants. Many supporters of annexation were worried of Japanese interest in the islands, and this source gave validity to their claims.

Department Of Public Instruction. *Programme for Patriotic Exercises in the Public Schools, Territory of Hawaii*. 1906. Accessed January 17, 2025.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.programmeforpatr00hawa/?sp=22&st=image&r=-1.768,-0.085,4.536,1.78,0>.

This official U.S. document set up a program in order to promote Western beliefs amongst the young, school going population throughout the Hawaiian islands. As a result, newer generations were made to feel detached from their ancestry and heritage, and assimilated into American society. Administrators were instructed to incorporate specific patriotic songs/chants, marching formations, and group religious prayers into the curriculum, displaying the new set of challenges that Native Hawaiians were forced to work through because of American officials.

*The Duluth Evening Herald* (Duluth, MN). "Should Accept the Offer: Admiral Belknap Urges the Importance of Annexing Hawaii." February 1, 1893, 18. Accessed January 16, 2025. <https://archive.org/details/jan2189305dulu/page/n17/mode/2up?q=Britain>.  
In this article, admiral George E. Belknap proclaimed that Hawaii would be a powerful tool for Great Britain to possess, dramatizing the need for the U.S. to annex the islands immediately. His quote supplemented the claim that Americans were scared of the possibility of other foreigners making Hawaii their own.

*The Independent* (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands). "The Memorial." October 6, 1897. Accessed January 16, 2025. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047097/1897-10-16/ed-1/seq-1/>.  
The Independent, an English-language newspaper in Hawaii, voiced the views of the many Hawaiian citizens opposed to annexation and provided a perspective that differed from the ones of American senators. "The Memorial" was a resolution adopted by an assembly of Hawaiian citizens who gathered to petition annexation bids, displaying the truth: Hawaiians were actively protesting annexation efforts and called for a voice in their future.

Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States, H.R.J. Res. 259, 55th Cong., 2d Sess. (July 7, 1898). Accessed December 1, 2024. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730378>.  
My paper is centered around this Joint Resolution that sealed Hawaii's fate as a U.S. territory. To start understanding how and why the resolution impacted Hawaiians, I needed to understand what the resolution entailed.

*Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (Honolulu, HI). "Hands off." October 23, 1891, 4. Accessed January 13, 2025. <https://nupepa.org/?a=d&d=KLL18911023-01.2.1&e=-----189-en-20--1--txt-txNU-united+states----1891--->.  
It was necessary to read Hawaiian publications from the time period as well as American publications to observe the disparities in how history was told from either perspective. This article is an example of Native Hawaiians explicitly stating their disinterest in annexation, and that they hope for an "open" over "secret" annexation. The article was used in my paper to show that Native Hawaiians wanted a voice in what happened to their country, even if it were to be annexed.

*Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (Honolulu, HI). "Platform of Principle of the Hawaiian National Liberal Party." January 22, 1892, 5. Accessed January 13, 2025. <https://nupepa.org/?a=d&d=KLL18920122-01.1.5&srpos=19&e=-----189-en-20--1--txt-txNU-united+states----1892--->.  
This article was the official platform of the Hawaiian National Liberal Party, and since the party's founder ran this newspaper, it is indicative of the paper's perspective/bias. This article also displays that Native Hawaiians were attempting to regain control of the government and internally rebel against annexation, which was not discussed in statements from American officials who said all Hawaiians supported annexation.

Lili'uokalani. "Letter from Queen Lili'uokalani to the House of Representatives." December 19, 1898. <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/memorial-queen-liliuokalani>.

In this letter written post-annexation, former Queen Liliuokalani protested the Newlands Resolution and called for the U.S. to restore her power as reigning monarch of the Hawaiian islands. Due to length constraints and wanting to avoid sounding repetitive, I did not use this source in my paper, however it is another act of civil protest against annexation that was ignored by Congress and President McKinley.

McKinley, William. "First Annual Message to Senate." Speech presented in Washington D.C., U.S., December 6, 1897. Miller Center: University of Virginia. Accessed March 2, 2025. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-6-1897-first-annual-message>.

President McKinley was a proponent of the annexation of Hawaii, and in his State of the Union address, he urged the Senate to pass a treaty that would make Hawaii an American territory. His bid for annexation was the first since Cleveland had revoked Harrison's 1893 treaty, and I used this document in my paper to assert his views on the topic.

Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty to Annex the Hawaiian Islands, S. Exec. Doc. No. 52-76, 2d Sess. (Feb. 15, 1893). Accessed December 9, 2024. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/message-the-senate-transmitting-treaty-annex-the-hawaiian-islands>.

President Harrison sent this message along with a proposed treaty for annexation to the Senate calling for prompt annexation of the Hawaiian Islands. This message was sent on February 15, a month after Queen Liliuokalani's overthrow, and Lorin Thurston is listed as a commissioner on behalf of the Hawaiian Government. Harrison denied any involvement in the Committee of Public Safety's rise, yet this source illustrates the urgency he had in recognizing it as Hawaii's governing body and how he desperately wanted to annex the islands.

*The New York Times* (New York City, NY). "The Quarrel Was Sought." March 10, 1893, 5. Accessed February 1, 2025. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1893/03/10/106862700.html?pageNumber=5>.

This New York Times article published a statement from Queen Liliuokalani discussing her proposed Constitution, U.S. Minister John Stevens, and the motive behind her surrender. Liliuokalani stepped down because she thought she would be restored as Queen by the U.S. government, but also because she felt her and her people were in danger. There is a stark contrast between how she portrays herself and how Thurston referred to her, and I juxtaposed these two claims in my paper.

*The Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE). "Objections to Annexation." February 21, 1893, 1. Accessed December 8, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn99021999/1893-02-21/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.271,0.118,0.186,0.082,0>.

This article contested that there were military/naval advantages to acquiring Hawaii as a U.S. territory. I used the contents of this article to strengthen the perspective of those opposing annexation specifically when discussing the debate over Hawaii's strategic value. Additionally, I was able to connect this article from Omaha in 1893 with articles

from various parts of the U.S. in 1898 to emphasize that the debate over the annexation of Hawaii was the same argument rehashed many times.

*The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands). "Annexation!" July 14, 1898. Accessed January 15, 2025.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1898-07-14/ed-1/seq-1/>.

This article, written after the American flag was officially hoisted in Honolulu, depicted the annexation of Hawaii as a joyous event. While this source was not directly cited in my paper, it is a prime example of how pro-annexation/American run newspapers glazed over Hawaiian protest and focused on the triumph of annexation.

*The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands). "Revolution! The Queen Attempts a Coup d'Etat." January 16, 1893. Accessed January 13, 2025.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1893-01-16/ed-1/seq-4/>.

This article from *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, an English-language and pro-annexation Hawaiian newspaper, detailed the events of January 14th, 1893 containing a transcript of the speech Queen Liliuokalani gave to the audience regarding her proposal for a new Constitution. Insight on the Queen's thought process, reading how she addressed the crowd, and also seeing how biased media portrayed developments in Hawaii as Thurston prepared to stage a coup allowed me to understand the climate in Hawaii during those three days. Furthermore, this article gave me access to statements from the Queen that I would not have been able to read otherwise, which added to the sophistication of my paper.

Petition, "Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii," September 11, 1897. Accessed December 12, 2024.

<https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/petition-against-annexation-hawaii>.

This petition was crucial in turning senators against the 1897 treaty for Hawaii's annexation. This document was signed by over half of Hawaii's native population in protest of U.S. acquisition of the islands. The Senate receiving this document shows that the American government was aware of true Hawaiian opinion, and that Hawaiians were not passively accepting annexation.

President's Message Relating to the Hawaiian Islands, H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 53-47, 2d Sess. (Dec. 18, 1893). Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.presidentsmessag00unit/?sp=1&st=pdf&pdfPage=10>.

This source is what is dubbed as "Blount's Report", and compiles hundreds of documents (interviews, letters, transcripts) collected by Blount during his investigation of the Queen's overthrow in Hawaii. Due to length constraints, I was only able to incorporate information from Blount's questioning of Mr. Damon, a member of Thurston's Annexation Club, and also Queen Liliuokalani's official surrender. Blount's interpretation of the latter document was that Liliuokalani only surrendered because she thought the United States supported Thurston, and I used this argument in my paper as well.

*The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA). "Why Hawaii Should Not Be Annexed." January 30, 1898. Accessed December 8, 2024.  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn85066387/1898-01-30/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.117,-0.026,0.754,0.332,0>.

The San Francisco Call transcribed Professor Von Holst's remarks against annexation of Hawaii in 1898. Von Holst's argument contended the views that Hawaii was needed militarily and affirmed that acquisition of Hawaii would be a weakness rather than a strength. This unique perspective was not one that I found from many other scholars in 1898 which is why I included it in my 'Military Concerns' section of my paper.

"Senator Morgan's Report Recommending Hawaii Annexation (Excerpts)." In *Historical Controversies in History Primary Source Documents*. Infobase, 2020. History Research Center.

Senator Morgan's report to Congress contended Blount's report/investigation that was commissioned by President Cleveland. Morgan argued that annexation would be mutually beneficial for the United States and Hawaii, and his statement that Hawaiians wanted annexation is contrasted in my paper with opposing statements from Hawaiian-language newspapers.

Special Message, Exec. Doc. No. 53, 2d Sess. (Dec. 18, 1893). Accessed February 14, 2025.  
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-770>.

President Cleveland detailed his reasons for withdrawing Harrison's proposed annexation treaty and called for the restoration of the queen in this message to Senate. The dialogue between Presidents and Senate is important to my paper as it shows that annexation was an urgent issue to all of them. Cleveland was an outlier in the sense that he, unlike Harrison or McKinley, felt that the U.S. wronged Hawaii, which is why his opinion needed to be understood.

## Secondary Sources

"Annexation of Hawaii." In *Gale U.S. History Online Collection*. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2024. Gale in Context: U.S. History.

The secondary source was part of my preliminary research of my topic and provided me with a starting point to build off of. After reading this source, I had a general understanding of my topic and was able to dive in to more nuanced aspects of it.

Chang, Williamson. "'Darkness over Hawaii: The Annexation Myth Greatest Obstacle to Progress.'" *Asian-Pacific Law and Policy Journal* 16.2 (2015): 71-115. Accessed December 10, 2024.

[https://manoa.hawaii.edu/aplpj/wp-content/uploads/sites/120/2015/09/APLPJ\\_16\\_2\\_Chang.pdf](https://manoa.hawaii.edu/aplpj/wp-content/uploads/sites/120/2015/09/APLPJ_16_2_Chang.pdf).

Chang's perspective as seen in this journal article leans on controversial, for he is against the annexation of Hawaii but takes steps further and states America does not have authority over the Hawaiian islands. Chang's usage of statements from Congressmen informed me of specific senators/representatives I should look for when reading congressional records from 1893-1898 discussions regarding annexation. I did not use

Chang's thoughts explicitly in my paper, but his fiery words showed how passionate people continue to be over Hawaii being an American state.

"The 1897 Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii: Additional Background Information."

National Archives (Educational Resources). Accessed April 13, 2025.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition>.

This source contained context surrounding the petition submitted by Native Hawaiians protesting annexation. Information regarding how the petition was received in Congress as well as the number of senators who supported McKinley's bid for annexation after reading the petition was used in the paper.

La Croix, Sumner J., and Christopher Grandy. "The Political Instability of Reciprocal Trade and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom." *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 1 (1997): 161-89. JSTOR.

Although the paper is centered around the annexation of Hawaii, looking into U.S. relations with Hawaii prior to annexation is still necessary. The portion of La Croix's article used in my paper delves into Hawaii's economy pre and post the Reciprocity Treaty, and displays the problematic dynamics that existed between the two nations even before the topic of annexation was brought to the table.

"Novemaba 28: Lā Kū'oko'a" [November 28: Independence Day]. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Last modified November 26, 2018. Accessed January 16, 2025.

<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/punawaiola/2018/11/26/novemaba-28-la-ku'oko'a/>.

To avoid sending the message that the U.S. was the sole pursuer of Hawaii, I used the knowledge learned from this source to accurately state that Britain and France were both once involved in the islands, however they bowed out in the 1840s. The declaration pictured in this source was the reason the U.S. became the main imperial power in Hawaii.

Offner, John L. "McKinley and the Spanish-American War." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2004): 50+. Gale in Context: U.S. History.

The Spanish American war is directly tied to the annexation of Hawaii, since the push for annexation only succeeded after the Spanish-American war began. For these reasons, I needed to research the Spanish American war, and this secondary source describing the war allowed me to draw connections between it and Hawaii annexation.

"Open for Business. (Destination)." *Mercator's World*, March/April 2003, 80. Gale Academic OneFile.

This article briefly explains how Matthew Perry opened Japan to foreign trade. Japan's Treaty of Kanagawa and Hawaii's Reciprocity Treaty, both signed with the U.S., had similar results- the opening of ports for U.S. trade. In my paper, I used this source to compare Japan and Hawaii and stress that what happened to Hawaii was not a one-off incident.

Richardson, Mahealani. "Survey: 45% of Those on Hawaiian Home Lands Waitlist Say They'd Accept Buyout." *Hawaii News Now*. Accessed January 17, 2025.

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/03/15/dhhl-survey-45-respondants-would-accept-housing-assistance-be-removed-waitlist/>.

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands was established to help Hawaiians become more self-sufficient, however this web page reveals that Hawaiians are frustrated with its lack of efficiency. Hawaiians on the waitlist for land grants are willing to leave their spot in exchange for compensation, according to Hawaii News Now. The enormity of the DHHL's waitlist illustrates that Hawaiians continue to suffer in modern times despite being accepted as a state.

Sonneborn, Liz. "Overview: Queen Lili'uokalani and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom." In *Queen Lili'uokalani and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom*. Facts On File, 2023. History Research Center.

This secondary source allowed me to build an accurate timeline of events leading up to Queen Liliuokalani's overthrow. Sonneborn's description of the Hawaiian monarchs and their relation with American businessmen provided an outline for the 'Historical Context' of my paper and my analysis of what occurred between January 14-17, 1893.

van Dijk, Kees. "The Failed Annexation of Hawaii." In *Pacific Strife*, edited by Tak-Wing Ngo, 359-80. Amsterdam University Press, 2015. JSTOR.

Van Dijk's description of Hawaiian interaction with white settlers and the first attempt at annexation aided in my overall understanding of that portion of the topic while researching. Ultimately, his analysis said that one significant reason used for Hawaii's annexation was fear of it being conquered by a different country. I expanded on this point of view in my paper and performed my own research to develop that perspective.