

Hawaii's annexation to the us

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History is rife with instances of nations wielding power over independent states as a means to gain socio-political or economic ends. In the case of the US, numerous factors buoyed its resolve to acquire territories during the 1890s. Foremost of these is that resource-rich countries showed promise of fueling an industrial America. On the other hand, there was the influence of naval strategists. They succeeded in expounding the overall view to American political leaders that there are vast benefits in acquiring territories and ports of strategic naval importance.

Under the guise of Manifest Destiny, which rationalized dominant nations' imperialist expansion in the mid- to late 1800s, the US proceeded to aggressively expand and take control of nations, among them Hawaii.

Hawaii's Annexation to the US The annexation of Hawaii to the United States was preceded by a sequence of events that finally led to that crucial turning point in history. Still reeling from the ruins and desolation of the Civil War, America had rapidly marshalled efforts to promote its interests and embark on an overt colonization of countries that offered it distinct advantages.

Before it plunged head-on into an aggressive territorial expansion, it kept a wary eye both on foreign territories that were ideal for its commercial interests, as well as on dominant European powers that were also expanding beyond their borders and establishing colonies. Political and business leaders put forth the idea that " the rapid industrial development of the United States required the acquisition of foreign territories to gain easier access to vital raw materials" (Tindall and Shi, 2006, p. 59). The desire for new markets to be exploited economically eventually turned to coveting nations and creating an American empire, at all expense. William H. Seward, the

United States Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869, believed that “ the United States first had to remove all foreign interests from the northern Pacific coast and gain access to that region’s valuable ports” (Tindall & Shi, 2006, p. 862) if it intends to successfully conquer Asian markets.

A strategic imperialistic ploy adopted to indirectly take control over the economic life of a nation was to enter into trade agreements with them. Many years after the signing of a friendship treaty, came the sealing of the 1875 reciprocal trade agreement between Hawaii and the US, “ under which Hawaiian sugar would enter the United States duty-free and Hawaii promised that none of its territory would be leased or granted to a third power” (Tindall & Shi, 2006, p. 863).

This precipitated the next events that would lead to Hawaii’s annexation. Decades earlier, economic treaties had been offered to Hawaii by Great Britain and France, but the US had asserted itself to uphold its interests in Hawaii. The latter had actually “ signed trade and peace treaties with the United States, England and other foreign nations, each recognizing Hawaii's independence” (Sforza, 1996, para. 5) and this is why on hindsight, it sees the broken agreement with the US as some sort of betrayal.

In retrospect, back in 1820, American missionaries from Boston in 1820 stayed in Hawaii and soon turned out to be powerful sugar planters and politicians who served as advisers to the reigning monarchy (Sforza, 1996, para. 5). Queen Liliuokalani sought to shift power back to the monarchy, but the rapid succession of events eventually led to political turmoil “ engineered mainly by the American planters hoping to take advantage of the subsidy for

sugar grown in the United States” (Tindall ; Shi, 2006, p. 64). The imprisoned Queen Liliuokalani had issued a statement that pointed to the role of American diplomat, John L. Stevens in the conspiracy to overthrow the Kingdom of Hawaii. Amidst the commotion, a committee representative of the group that seized power from Hawaii's reigning Queen Liliuokalani had shown up in the US seat of government in Washington with a treaty calling for Hawaii's annexation to the US. President Grover Cleveland opposed the treaty and had attempted to restore the queen to power while seeking to provide amnesty to the coup instigators (Tindall ; Shi, 2006, p. 864). In December 1893, he expressed, " 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” (Sforza, 1996, para. 13).

Party politics and other issues, however, eased Cleveland out of office. As fate and US maneuvering would have it, Hawaii was eventually annexed to the US in 1898 “ at the urging of President William McKinley” (“ Annexation of Hawaii,” n. d. , para. 3). The island state became a territory in 1900. Statehood was deferred “ until a bipartisan compromise linked Hawaii's status to Alaska, and both became states in 1959” (“ Annexation of Hawaii,” n. d. , para. 3).

References

Sforza, Terry (1996). Hawaii's annexation a story of betrayal. Retrieved September 20, 2008, from <http://www.hawaii-nation.org/betrayal.html>

Tindall, G., & Shi, D. (2006). *America - a narrative history (7th ed .)*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.