



HAWAII ANNEXATION

TOPIC BULLETIN

EMILY HASHEM
AMAL YAZEJI
CHAIRS

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Hello all!

First off, we would like to express our gratitude and admiration towards you all for selecting this committee.

For many young American students, it comes as a shock to learn the gnarled past of Hawaii's relationship to the mainland. Hawaii is regarded by many as "the state one can always find on a map" or "a go-to vacation destination". Our goal in opening up the discussion surrounding Hawaii through this committee is to shed light on the history that many take for granted.

We are writing to you now in July of 2020, and, if you remember at all, this is a tumultuous time for our United States of America. It is the eve of July 4th, an independence day which comes this year as a bittersweet event as America reflects upon and rebels against the history of race-based discrimination and racial violence in our country. At the same moment when many rally behind the cause of racial equality, we are also revisiting America's past as a colonial power, a title which many Americans don't readily acknowledge or embrace.

Since the conception of the Monroe Doctrine, a seminal document which laid the foundations for American foreign policy, America has projected a front of non-interventionism and advocacy for the preservation of independence and democracy. However, dark periods of American history have seen this ideology fail, a notable example being the era surrounding the Spanish American war. In taking part in this committee, we, your chairs, ask you to research, develop your own perspective, and expose truth for yourselves in a profound exercise of what we believe is the epitome of patriotism: continuous reexamination of existing institutions and historical narratives.

We hope that you find this committee a worthwhile one, and we can promise to do everything in our power to make it so.

Looking forward to meeting you,
Your chairs, Emily Hashem and Amal Yazeji



Hawaii Annexation

Case Studies in American Expansionism:

Hawaii fits into the sociopolitical context of American expansionism that took place immediately before and in the time surrounding the Spanish American War. While this committee will begin in 1892 and the assigned role that you will assume will not have the historical context that will be presented in this section of the topic guide, part of the purpose of this committee is to passively examine historical events in terms of their consequences for American expansionist and isolationist policy. Over the course of committee, your assumed role will not reference any of these events, though you may reference the Monroe Doctrine, but you yourself will be prescient as to the impending consequences of the precedent US interference in Hawaii will set.



The Monroe Doctrine

The Monroe Doctrine was first revealed in President James Monroe's 1823 State of the Union speech. In this speech, Monroe declared that the Old and New worlds were different spheres of influence and should remain as such. To preserve this separation, the Monroe contained the following main points: 1) the Western Hemisphere was no longer available for further colonization; 2) the United States would assume a non-interventionist stance and not interfere with the internal affairs of Europe or their existing Western colonies; and lastly 3) any further attempts by European nations to assert power over any territories of the Western Hemisphere would be viewed as an antagonistic and aggressive act towards the United States.

Important Excerpts from the Monroe Doctrine

“In the discussions to which this interest has given rise and in the arrangements by which they may terminate the occasion has been

judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers ...

“Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so ...

“We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.



With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States ...

“It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new Governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious

that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in hope that other powers will pursue the same course.”

Spanish American War

The Spanish-American War was fought in the late spring and summer of 1898. This armed conflict resulted in the cession of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines from Spain to the United States, and the 1898 Treaty of Paris. The origins of this war are pinned in the Cuban struggle for Spanish independence, which began in 1895. Under General Valeriano Weyler—nicknamed ‘the Butcher’—ethnic Cubans were placed into ‘reconcentration areas’ with inadequate shelter, sanitation, medical care, or food. Thousands died from exposure. Aside from American humanitarian interests, American sugar plantations in Cuba were being destroyed by Spanish troops. Thus, the United States also had an economic reason for assisting Cuba in their fight for independence.



Support for an armed conflict against Spain was garnered through the use of sensational newspapers now known as Yellow Journalism. These newspapers portrayed the graphic conditions of the reconcentration camps which tugged at the heartstrings of American citizens. Thus, there was a widespread demand for action against Weyler and Spain. This grassroots-esque desire trickled upwards to Congress and the President. That being said, the U.S. avoided warfare with Spain for as long as possible.

Two main events provoked the start of the Spanish-American War. Specifically, one of these events was the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine in February of 1898. Some 300 soldiers were killed and another 300 were wounded. Though the exact cause of the explosion was unknown and still is to this day, yellow journalism newspapers spread word that Spain was the culprit. The second trigger to the Spanish-American War was a leaked letter by the Spanish minister to the United States, Enrique Dupuy de Lome, that insulted then-President McKinley.

These two events occurred just six days apart. Less than two months later, the United States declared war on Spain on April 21, 1898. The relative rapid nature of this war declaration meant that Spain was wholly unprepared for an armed conflict with the United States, who had a somewhat powerful Naval force. Fighting ensued in both Cuba and the Philippine Islands. Before the war's end, American troops had also occupied Spanish-ruled Puerto Rico in August of 1898. The Treaty of Paris was signed December 1898, and it ceded to the United States the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico and relinquished Cuba from Spain's rule. The victorious United States had emerged from the war as a new world power with possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Historical Context:

In Preparation of American Imperialism

American territorial expansions have been taking place since the



colonial era. Specifically, territorial gains westward resulted from a series of American-Indian Wars fought by then-American and Canadian colonists against native peoples. Fueled by decades of conditioning to believe in Anglo-Saxon –more specifically Anglo-American superiority– manifest destiny was a cultural phenomenon observed in the 19th century United States. It entailed beliefs that acted as justification for continental expansion. Specifically, these beliefs encompassed opinions surrounding the virtues of the American people, a mission –or destiny– to subject new populations to these superior values in order to tame them.

Under Washington, a precedent of non-interventionist policy was set that lasted well into the 1800s. During this time period, much of Latin and South America was under European colonial rule. The beginning of the 19th century was marked by the Spanish American wars of independence, which eventually ended Spanish rule in the region. In the midst of these wars, the Monroe Doctrine was issued in 1823. This doctrine’s

policy opposed European colonial powers in the Western Hemisphere, in enforcement of keeping the Old and New Worlds as separate spheres of influence. It was stated that further efforts to colonize Latin or South America would be viewed as “the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.” Furthermore, the Doctrine continued the non-intervention streak by vowing to not meddle in European affairs or existing European colonies. However, enforcement of this Doctrine ultimately led to the beginnings of the American Empire.

Happenings of Late 19th Century Hawaii

American interest in the annexation of Hawaii was established in the early 1800s. By the 1850s, Hawaii’s economy was composed almost entirely of American sugar plantations. The native Hawaiians often refused to man these sugar fields, and wages for American laborers were way too high for the plantations to remain profitable, so American planters brought in cheap



labor from China, Portugal, and Japan. By 1872 the native Hawaiian people were extremely outnumbered by white Americans and foreigners brought in for labor. By 1875, under King Kalakaua, a treaty was signed that removed tariffs on goods traded between Hawaii and the United States. By 1887, this treaty was removed and Pearl Harbor was established as a coaling station to refuel American naval ships traveling in the Pacific. Also in 1887, the white American planter majority of the population forced King Kalakaua to alter the constitution to ensure that only land-owning men were eligible to vote. This alteration of the Hawaiian Constitution effectively silenced the native Hawaiian people and the tens of thousands of foreign laborers. Thus, power over Hawaii was now in the hands of American planters and businessmen. Hawaii then suffered extreme economic hardship due to the McKinley Tariff of 1890, which established taxes on numerous goods including sugar, Hawaii's main export. Consequently, Hawaiian sugar was no longer being sold as it was

pre-1890, and an economic depression swept Hawaii.

Following the deaths of King Kalakaua and the heir apparent, Queen Liliuokalani assumed the throne in 1891. Prior to Liliuokalani's rule, she had made her anti-American businessmen positions clear while serving on Kalakaua's Cabinet. Specifically, her opposition of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1887 had alienated her from the foreign planters who now had significant power in Hawaii. After assuming the throne, she wished to alter the constitution once again to undo the property qualifications from the right to vote imposed by Kalakaua.

Committee Outline:

To preface the description of our committee, the chairs would like to advise you to thoroughly investigate the sources we provide as well as those that you come across in your research. Our committee is designed to be a showcase of many perspectives, and understanding the motives and intentions of the actors in these events as well as



having a firm foundation of the objective facts is essential. We have provided you with some brief outlines of events and historical context, but it's necessary for you to seek out your own historical literature as well as (ideally) primary sources from your assumed role or people they were affiliated with. Additionally, we advise you to create a visual representation of major events--a timeline, so to speak--to serve as a resource for your committee and as a means for you to organize your thoughts and research.

Our committee will begin in December of 1892, and we will cap it in January 1901. Since we are progressing through a historical timeline, committee will occur in an evolving crisis world, so please be prepared for those. Parliamentary procedure will be continuously clarified throughout committee, however, so don't feel intimidated.

The committee itself begins as a meeting between residents of the Hawaiian islands. These residents may include White citizens and noncitizens, members of the court of Liliuokalani, US diplomats, emissaries, and officials, and

stakeholders in Hawaiian/American businesses and affairs. The premise of the meeting is that US minister to Hawaii John L Stevens and affiliates of the former Hawaiian League have assembled constituents of Queen Liliuokalani to negotiate the terms of American-Hawaiian business relations.

Multiple Perspectives:

The Royal Administration and Supporters of Queen Liliuokalani:

For a brief outline of the Constitutional Monarchy of Hawaii, please visit: <https://www.hawaiiankingdom.org/govt-system.shtml>

One of the queen's first initiatives was an attempt to replace the Bayonet Constitution, established in 1887, which granted Americans greater powers in the monarchy at the expense of King Kalakaua's control. Despite Americans' growing interest in Hawaii as an avenue for increasing their stake in



the global sugar market, Hawaiians, and their queen, showed increasing resentment for American influence and sought to detach themselves from it. This comes in tandem with Queen Liliuokalani's notable stubborn character. The queen's new constitution did not receive unanimous support in her own cabinet, and a committee for public safety formed thereafter established itself in Hawaii to oppose the queen. The aims of this organization were to protect American military and shipping interests. Despite the queen's inherent ability to issue a new constitution by edict, revolutionary groups continued to oppose her.

The goal of the queen and her supporters was to negotiate a middle ground between foreign interests and domestic interests. She felt that Americans controlled an undue portion of the Hawaiian economy. Her predecessor, King Kalakaua, had instated many policies that afforded special privileges to foreign businessmen in Hawaii. In trying to reverse many of these policies, Queen Liliuokalani garnered the mistrust and disdain of many US businessmen.

After the arrest of Queen Liliuokalani in 1895, her supporters advocated for her release and continued to inform her of current events in Hawaii even while she was imprisoned in Iolani palace, sending her many gifts as well. Upon her arrest, an array of weapons was discovered in the garden of her private home, which was later revealed to have been for the use by her supporters to restore her to the throne.

After her forced resignation and in the face of President Benjamin Harrison's pro-annexation stance, Liliuokalani relied on Harrison's successor, Grover Cleveland, to support her return to the throne. When President Grover Cleveland returned to office and offered his support to return Liliuokalani to the throne, the queen was mistrustful at first, and her hesitation is said to have prompted Cleveland to hand the decision regarding Hawaii's annexation over to Congress.

The Presidential Administration of Grover Cleveland:

“It has been the boast of our government that it seeks to do justice in all things without regard



to the strength or weakness of those with whom it deals. A substantial wrong has thus been done which a due regard for our national character as well as the rights of the injured people [the native Hawaiians] requires we should endeavor to repair. 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 Reparations.”

- President Grover Cleveland

Grover Cleveland served two non-consecutive terms, between which President Benjamin Harrison granted the Committee for Public Safety's pleas to be annexed by the United States and attempted to enact a treaty of annexation. Throughout his career, Cleveland was categorized as a staunch anti-interventionist when it came to his foreign policy. Upon returning to office, Cleveland withdrew the treaty of annexation immediately and advocated to restore the monarchy of Hawaii. After this initial rejection, the Americans in Hawaii forced King Kalakaua to

sign the “Bayonet Constitution” in order to maintain some level of power within Hawaii whilst waiting for the next administration, in hopes they would support Hawaii's annexation.

At the beginning of his second term, an 1893 report by James H. Blount, an agent sent to represent President Cleveland, concluded that the Hawaiian people also felt that Liliuokalani was wrong and should be returned to the throne. He also pointed the finger at Minister Stevens, whose successor, Albert S. Willis, was encouraged by Cleveland to offer his help and support to the queen.

Insurgents and Agents of the Coup:

Even before the coup, the aforementioned committee for public safety had morphed into a revolutionist faction. The revolutionary sector consisted of many of the White citizens of Honolulu, some with ties to the government and many of which with ties to business. John L. Stevens, the American minister to Hawaii, encouraged the affair and even ordered American troops into Hawaii to assume control of government buildings and “defend”



the safety of Americans in Hawaii. The Committee came to be led by Sanford B. Dole, an American founder of a pineapple company in Hawaii and a prominent advocate for Hawaiian Westernization, who argued that Queen Liliuokalani was a monarch leaning toward the tyrannical and did not have the experience needed to lead Hawaii to a prosperous future. Dole and fellow American Lorrin A. Thurston had already been involved in the Hawaiian League during King Kalakaua's reign. Angry with Kalakaua's irresponsible spending and seeking to increase their power in the government, the Hawaiian league established policy that restricted voting rights to swaths of the population and granted voting rights to foreigners. It was they who prompted Kalakaua to sign the Bayonet constitution.

The Committee would ultimately overthrow Queen Liliuokalani and petition to be annexed by the US several years later. The coup which deposed Liliuokalani took place by means of intervention by the US Marines. The Queen was forced to surrender and a provisional government established by the revolutionaries. In justifying the coup d'etat to the Harrison

administration and the public, the enactors insisted they were restoring the moral high ground of Hawaii by deposing a queen who abused her power.

The Presidential Administration of Benjamin Harrison:

Benjamin Harrison served a single term from 1889 to 1893. His administration is characterized by American Imperialism, as many of the members supported American expansionism. Most notably, the most avid supporters in his advisory board were his secretary of state James G. Blaine, secretary of navy Benjamin Tracy, and minister to Hawaii John L. Stevens. All three had tried to persuade him to annex Hawaii for the first three years of his presidency, but they did not have any success. In fact, Stevens often depicted Queen Liliuokalani in a particularly tyrannical manner, reporting to Sec. of State Blaine, and his successor John W. Foster, that the islanders would be aided economically and gain political freedom by ousting the queen. It is important to note, though, that both Harrison and his second secretary of state Foster, while they were both sympathists of the



Americans in Hawaii, they both wanted to be prudent with the level of expansion that the US pursued. Not to mention. President Harrison initially feared that he would face backlash from the public as well as his political opponents if he pursued such aggressive action.

Regardless, after he received news of the overthrowing of Queen Liliuokalani in Hawaii in January of 1893, he proceeded to negotiate a treaty of annexation with commissioners of the revolutionary government. But, Democrats in the Senate blocked ratification of this treaty until Harrison's term came to an end.

The Presidential Administration of William Mckinley:

It was President Mckinley who signed the annexation of Hawaii into law in 1898. After his inauguration, Mckinley met with members of the government of Hawaii (Lorrin Thurston, Francis Hatch, and William Kinney), to sign the treaty to annex Hawaii that was later brought before Congress. In opposition to this move, the Hui Aloha Aina (Hawaiian Patriotic League) organized petition drives to sway the decision. The petitions

were signed by over half of Native Hawaiians, and Liliuokalani herself was also involved in campaigning against the annexation in Washington. The Senate contained both pro and anti annexation factions. The treaty was defeated in the senate, but the issue of annexation was brought before Mckinley again in the wake of the explosion of the USS Maine in Cuba. Annexation was then voted upon and passed by joint resolution.

A focus of president Mckinley was the power of the United States in the Pacific. This prompted him to go against Cleveland's policies and push for the annexation of Hawaii as well as American possession of the Philippines. Mckinley feared that the Japanese population in Hawaii as well as Hawaii's proximity to Japan would put the US at risk of the Japanese Empire using Hawaii for their benefit.

In consideration Mckinley and his associates and supporters, it's important to understand the push by Imperialists and Anti-Imperialists at the time.



The American Business Sector:

For decades prior to the coup, Hawaii had been experiencing an influx in White settlers and “Americanized Europeans”, among which were sugar growers and other businessmen who dominated Hawaiian markets in addition to many Christian missionaries. These agents, unable to influence Liliuokalani to act in the interest of American business the way they had influenced her predecessor, were said to have staged the coup to overthrow Liliuokalani in an effort to “add forty dollars a ton to the price of their sugar.” The coup came in the wake of the McKinley tariff act of 1890, which rolled back many of the advantages Hawaiian sugar growers and exporters had received following the reciprocity treaty of 1875. Many businessmen saw the annexation of Hawaii as the solution to their plight. For many investors (as well as politicians and military strategists, though that is a whole other point), Hawaii was a gateway into many Asian markets. This idea influenced deliberations about annexation until the turn of the century.

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