

18 The Failed Annexation of Hawaii

In 1842 the American President Tyler had cautioned his countrymen not to expect too much of the opening of China: '[T]he cheapness of labor among the Chinese, their ingenuity in its application, and the fixed character of their habits and pursuits may discourage the hope of the opening of any great and sudden demand for the fabrics of other countries'. But, he continued, Western products did 'find a market to some extent among the Chinese' (Tyler 1842). Americans had traded with China in Guangzhou, the country itself was among the first powers to enter into a treaty with China, and in the 1850s the presence of Americans in Shanghai had been significant enough for people to speak of a separate American settlement (though in fact a formal treaty with China confirming a settlement status did not exist) (Darwent 1905: 207).

The American Civil War from 1861 to 1865 and the loss of its merchant ships at that time had an effect on American China trade. The role of American freighters was taken over by ships sailing under another flag, concealing America's share in the China trade (LaFeber 1998: 19). Goods exported to China could end up being recorded as British in the statistics while in fact they had been produced in the United States. Another consequence was a decrease in the number of Americans travelling as merchants or sailors to the Far East, one insignificant indication of this being that baseball was no longer played in Shanghai (Darwent 1905: 190). Competitors, basing their assessment on real facts or imagination, continued to be awed by American China trade. In the 1870s an American advance figured prominently in pleas by Dupré and Garnier for a more active French colonial policy in Southeast Asia. The US was explicitly mentioned by Cooper (1871: 2), along with Great Britain and France, as three countries having 'vast trade' with China. In the 1880s America's interest in China was expressed in its role in the Ili crisis and the Shufeldt expedition to Korea. Nevertheless, around the turn of the century American trade with China was still small, although growing steadily.

In two regions American firms were relatively successful: Manchuria and Korea. In Manchuria American commercial interests exceeded those of the other powers except Japan (Millard 1906: 115; LaFeber 1998: 301). It was estimated that around 1900 American products accounted for half of the imports in Yingkou, one of the gateways to Manchuria and northern China (Beresford 1899: 435). Successful American imports in Manchuria included cottons and piece goods; a market Japanese merchants wanted

to conquer, and which they tried to do so, a former American Consul General in Manchuria complained, in an aggressive way. He even accused the Japanese of creating 'some hostility to American products' by imitating American trademarks, faithfully adding in English that the product, said to be inferior to the American equivalent, had been manufactured in Japan, a futile gesture as the Chinese did not read English (Lawton 1912: 1262). In Korea American investors had won a number of important contracts. They had constructed the first Korean railway, ran the electric tram in Seoul and managed the city's electricity, waterworks and telephone system. An American concern, the Oriental Consolidated Mining Company, owned a number of gold pits in Unsan; the only mining operation in Korea which was successful (Hamilton 1904: 155; Putnam Weale 1908: 515). By 1904 Americans and Japanese were said to compete for the first place among concession holders in Korea, leaving others far behind (Hamilton 1904: 148).

Though the United States remained conspicuously absent in the race to divide China into spheres of influence, there was much concern among politicians and businessmen about Russia gaining a hold over Manchuria. The taking of Port Arthur and the Bay of Jiaozhou only intensified fears that north Asia might become 'closed' to American trade. As Beresford (1899: 424) noted when he visited San Francisco in February 1899, in the city '[a]ll the mercantile community were intensely interested in the Eastern question, pointing out that San Francisco would naturally be the port for the great output of American trade when China was opened up'. Elsewhere he had encountered a similar mood. China trade and the restraints it might encounter 'excited a considerable amount of interest throughout the United States' (*ibid.*: 427). Businessmen demanded 'fullest protection' by Washington, while newspapers hinted at action to be taken against 'European aggression'. Some speculated about war, if it had to be in cooperation with Great Britain (LaFeber 1998: 381-2). Diplomats were equally worried. The American ambassador to Great Britain, John Hay, who within months was to become Secretary of State, informed his superiors in Washington about rumours in Great Britain that the Far Eastern Triple Alliance might try 'to exclude, as far as possible, the trade of England and America from the Far East, and to divide and reduce China to a system of tributary provinces' (*ibid.*: 380). His colleague in Beijing, Colonel Charles Denby, shared Hay's pessimistic outlook. In January 1898, he reported home that a partition of China 'would tend to destroy' America's China trade (*ibid.*: 354). Confronted with such opinions, Secretary of State John Sherman, himself an adversary of American territorial expansion, asked the German and Russian governments for guarantees that they would respect the Open Door principle in

China. As had been the case with the British request the response was affirmative (*ibid.*: 380).

Washington did not react, as London and Paris had done, by claiming a concession in China. It confined itself to stressing free trade, becoming one of the advocates, if not the major one, of the Open Door in China. Nevertheless, the United States took its share, not in China but in the Pacific, annexing Hawaii and the Philippines. Hawaii had already for some time been on the American agenda; the Philippines would be an unexpected bonus.

American interests in Hawaii

Throughout most of the nineteenth century American shipping and commerce had been predominant in the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands, located some 2,000 miles from America's west coast. American ships far outnumbered the other foreign whalers and merchantmen which called in at Honolulu on Oahu Island. It also served as an intermediate port of American trade with China, and, as a British navy captain had reported to the British Admiralty as early as 1815, a British naval station in Hawaii could 'effectually annihilate that trade' (Thomas 2010: 78). In the past, merchants and sea captains from Great Britain, France and Russia had shown an interest in gaining a foothold, but already for over half a century the United States had claimed a special interest in the island group, ever since, in the 1840s, Washington had left no doubt that Hawaii fell squarely within the American sphere of influence and that it would not tolerate a British or French annexation or a Russian incursion.

The American claim was couched in the 'Tyler Doctrine'. In December 1842 Tyler, in a special message to Congress, which was as much about Hawaii as about trade with China, had pointed out that owing to 'their locality and to the course of winds which prevail in this quarter of the world, the Sandwich Islands are the stopping place for almost all vessels passing from continent to continent across the Pacific Ocean'. Stressing that five-sixths of all ships that visited Hawaii annually were American, he continued by stating that, in view of this, 'it could not but create dissatisfaction on the part of the United States at any attempt by another power ... to take possession of the islands, colonize them, and subvert the native Government' (Tyler 1842).

The following year, urged to do so by a Hawaiian delegation visiting London, France and Great Britain, whose warships had shown the Hawaiians the might of the European powers, promised to respect Hawaii's

independence. In November 1843 they issued a joint declaration signed by the British Foreign Secretary and the French ambassador vowing 'never to take possession, either directly or under the title of protectorate, or under any other form' of any part of Hawaii. The declaration also held an assessment of Hawaii, a kingdom too weak to put up a military defence against foreign aggression, but for the rest strong enough to function as an independent state: Hawaii had 'a government capable of providing for the regularity of its relations with foreign nations'.¹

Hawaii was not only important for American China trade. Though the archipelago was located much farther away than New Guinea was from Australia, people in the United States viewed a non-American acquisition of the islands much like the Australians did that of New Guinea. A foreign occupation was seen as a threat to America's security, transforming the islands into a base from which an enemy fleet could attack. At the same time, Hawaii figured as a forward station in the defence of California and the American Pacific coast. It was also a perfect place for an intermediate port. In 1853 Commodore Perry singled out Hawaii as a suitable place for a coaling station along the sea route to China. The islands were, as *The New York Herald* wrote in June 1854, the 'halfway point' between California and China (Dulles 1938: 159). When these opinions were expressed, Hawaii seemed to be for the taking. In 1851, and at the request of the ruler of Hawaii, King Kamehameha III, unable as he was to resist surprise attacks by foreign warships, backed-up by their government or not, the first specific negotiations regarding American protection took place, disregarding protests from London and Paris. Washington was prepared to pay US\$300,000 for gaining control over Hawaii. Nothing came of it. Kamehameha died before the deal could be concluded and his successor, Kamehameha IV, was passionately anti-American. Equally decisive was that opposition in Congress (where since domestic turmoil over the purchase of Alaska in 1868, a two-thirds majority in the Senate was needed for annexations; or, when that failed, a majority in both houses) was too strong to allow for the acquisition of regions outside the North American continent.

Americans would continue to look at Hawaii, coupling their pleas for protection, annexation or special prerogatives and their warnings that the islands should not fall to France and especially to Great Britain, with the observation about how important the islands were to the United States, for its defence and for its shipping. Among them was William H. Seward, Secretary of State between 1861 and 1869, the man who had purchased Alaska,

1 Anglo-French Declaration 28-11-1843.

and a fierce promoter of American mercantile expansion; he had high hopes for the boost in ocean sailing that would result from the construction of the American transcontinental railway. In a letter to the American ambassador in London in August 1868, Seward claimed that many of his fellow Americans wanted annexation, adding that in no way the islands should become British or French (Brookes 1941: 280). At that moment opposition by France and Great Britain and an anti-American king were the stumbling blocks for any concrete American steps, but Pacific trade continued to be a compelling argument. In the second half of the 1880s, during the first Cleveland administration, Hawaii came to be presented as a vital hub in America's commercial network in the Pacific; as a 'stepping-stone to the growing [American] trade in the Pacific', where other powers should stay clear of (LaFeber 1998: 54). And, as late as March 1893, one American admiral, George E. Belknap, warned in the *Boston Herald* that should Great Britain take possession of Hawaii 'Honolulu would soon become one of the most important strongholds of Great Britain's power' (Dulles 1938: 187).

Similar to Samoa and Fiji, Hawaii had experienced an influx of foreigners. White settlers, the most prominent among them Americans and other 'Americanized Europeans' (Musick 1898: 8) had the lion's share in the islands' main and almost sole export earner, the production of raw sugar for the American market. A smaller segment of the white community, but at least as influential, was formed by puritanical American clergymen. Missionaries and church leaders and their descendants played an important role in local politics and in the economy. To one contemporary author, Musick (1898: 8), Hawaii was even 'the land of missionaries'. The first of them had arrived in 1820 and four years later Protestantism had been declared the religion of the state. Another foreign element making its mark was the Chinese and Japanese labour force needed in the sugar industry. Arriving in increasing numbers they would eventually turn the Hawaiians into a minority in their own country (Coffman 2009: 64). As a migrant group they also established themselves outside the plantation sector. After having served their contract, Japanese labourers would stay on and try to find other employment on the islands, competing for jobs with Hawaiians and poor whites.

In the 1870s, the dominant position of the American community in Hawaii, and the close economic links between the archipelago and the United States, found their expression in the Convention for Commercial Reciprocity (that is of the reduction or doing away with tariffs, treaties also negotiated with other countries) concluded with King Kalakaua. The convention drew Hawaii even more into the American orbit. In 1866 Seward had already ventured that a reciprocity treaty would lead to a 'quiet absorption' of the

islands (Coffman 2009: 60). His successors took a similar view. A Reciprocity Treaty, Frederick Theodore Frelinghuysen, Secretary of State from 1881 to 1885, would explain, had 'all the benefits which would result from annexation were that possible' (LaFeber 1998: 49). The treaty, already considered for more than a decade and initially opposed by American sugarcane producers and Congress, was finally signed in 1875. It allowed for the duty-free import of a range of products in the United States and Hawaii, of which especially the growers of 'Sandwich Island sugar' and its refiners in the United States profited. Gaining free access to the American market, sugar production boomed, and with it also the immigration of Asian workers. From his side, Kalakaua pledged not to lease or cede any port or land to a third nation, or enter into a similar treaty. This time Congress consented. In doing so, it was partly guided by anti-British sentiments and a false perception of a British expansionist policy following the British annexation of Fiji, which had produced hints about an insatiable British appetite for new colonial possessions and remarks that America's history was 'but one history of difficulties' with Great Britain (Brookes 1941: 360).

That Kalakaua signed the Reciprocity Convention may well have had much to do with the events surrounding his accession to the throne in 1874. His becoming king had not been undisputed and he had only succeeded because American marines had restored order and had occupied Honolulu for about a week. Starting his reign as someone who was on good terms with the Americans, within a decade Kalakaua distanced himself from the United States. Domestically, using the slogan 'Hawaii for the Hawaiians' he aimed at the restoration of a kingdom in which Hawaiians were firmly in control; and where the powers of the monarchy would again be as they had been in the past, before white settlers had made their influence felt. Internationally, he irked the Americans by visiting Japan on a trip around the world to solicit a treaty of mutual support in 1881, but did so without success. He tried, in vain, to interest Japan in the idea of a Pacific federation (Coffman 2009: 188).

Kalakaua's trip to Japan was part of a role he had taken upon himself, but could not deliver, to prevent further annexations by the powers in Polynesia. In 1881 he had also visited Thailand and, inspired by the position of the Thai king, he aimed at uniting Polynesia into one kingdom, under his own leadership (Krout 1898: 8). In pursuing these ends, Kalakaua found a close ally in 'an American renegade' Walter Murray Gibson, a former Mormon who, in 1852 had been arrested in Sumatra by the Dutch for holding out American assistance in the struggle of one of its sultanates, Jambi, against the Dutch. He was sentenced for high treason but escaped (Locher-Scholten

2004: 101-14). Three decades later, in 1882, Gibson became Kalakaua's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; and he was as much opposed to any cession to the United States of a coaling or naval station as Kalakaua was (Hardy and Dumke 1949: 410-1; Sewall 1900: 20). Both had become enchanted by the ideals of the Australian journalist Charles James Herbert de Courcy St. Julian, who in the 1850s, as Commissioner to the Polynesian islands of the Hawaii King, Kamehameha III, had already aimed at forming a Polynesian federation made up of all islands groups in the region which were still formally independent (Day 1984: 45).

To forge closer ties with the latter, a British merchant vessel was purchased and turned into a warship in 1887. Renamed the *Kaimiloa* (Seeker of Knowledge) it was sent as 'a vessel of peace and not of war' to Samoa, manned with 'older boys from the Industrial Reformatory School', a school for children of the poor and juvenile delinquents, and some marines and white sailors (Allen 1988: 125). A band also went along. Captain of the *Kaimiloa* was George Jackson, a former British naval officer and head of the reformatory school (Thomas 2010: 274). On board was John E. Bush, the King's 'Envoy Extraordinary to the Courts of Samoa and Tonga and High Commissioner to the High Chiefs and peoples of Polynesia'. Among his tasks was discussing a Hawaiian-Samoan Alliance with Malietoa Laupepa, which, as his instructions read, would give Hawaii 'a right to speak authoritatively to foreign powers on behalf of the independence of Samoa' (Sewall 1900: 21). As could be expected, nothing came out of Kalakaua's adventure, though a treaty with Laupepa was concluded in February 1887; if only because the latter had included the clause that the treaty was subject to the obligations Malietoa Laupepa had entered into with other countries (Sewall 1900: 23).

In Germany, the suspicion was that Washington was behind the *Kaimiloa* expedition in order to enhance America's own position in Samoa. German politicians also did not take kindly to Hawaiian interference in Samoan affairs. Consequently, Bismarck informed Washington that should Hawaii 'try to interfere in favour of Malietoa, the King of the Sandwich Islands would thereby enter into a state of war with us' (Sewall 1900: 19, 25).

The white settlers take charge

In Hawaii his conduct and ideals brought Kalakaua into conflict with the community of white settlers. In 1887 a rebellion by foreign residents threatened. In January of that year, foreigners had formed an underground organisation, the Hawaiian League, headed by Lorrin Andrews Thurston, a

lawyer, businessman-cum-newspaper owner, and the grandson of one of the first American missionaries who had come to Hawaii. It claimed some 400 members, all sworn to secrecy (Coffman 2009: 80). On 30 June a mass meeting took place, guarded by the Honolulu Rifle Company, popularly known as the Honolulu Rifles, a settlers' militia dating from 1846. On the instigation of Thurston a resolution was drawn up, in which it was observed that the Hawaiian government had 'ceased through incompetence and corruption to perform the functions and afford the protection to personal and property rights for which all governments exist' (Krout 1898: 3). When, subsequently, a company of armed men marched to the Palace, Kalakaua had to give in; if he had not, a Republic would have been proclaimed (Coffman 2009: 82).

King Kalakaua had to allow for changes in the Hawaiian constitution, which curbed his powers and increased the say of the foreign residents in the running of the kingdom. The new 'Bayonet Constitution' that was proclaimed on 6 July shifted the balance of power to community of the white settlers. The right to vote, which had previously been denied to them, became dependent on property. To be eligible to vote, one should 'have paid his taxes' (Art. 62), while members of the House of Representatives had to own 'real estate within the Kingdom of a clear value' (Art. 61). Kalakaua also had to accept that Gibson and his cabinet had to go. Gibson, narrowly escaping being lynched, was forced to leave Hawaii. On 1 July, a new cabinet assumed office, headed by William Lowthian Green, a British businessman. Thurston became Minister of the Interior.

The new cabinet gave the United States its first concrete foothold in Hawaii, by agreeing to a drastically changed Reciprocity Treaty and having it ratified by Kalakaua, who was, in fact against it, in October 1887. On the instigation of the leader of the Republican Party, James G. Blaine, and to remove domestic American opposition against its ratification, which demanded a clear compensation for the advantages the treaty offered to Hawaiian sugar producers, the American Senate had added a crucial clause (Coffman 2009: 92). It allowed the United States 'the exclusive right to enter the harbor of Pearl River, in the Island of Oahu, and to establish and maintain there a coaling and repair station for the use of vessels of the U.S.' (Department 2001). Pearl Harbor, not so far from Honolulu, was a price well worth paying. It had been on the American agenda since 1873, when an American military commission visiting the islands, had singled out Pearl Harbor as the only harbour in Hawaii that could be defended from the shore in times of war (Brookes 1941: 348).

Though both sides denied that the new clause distracted from the sovereignty of Hawaii, to many Hawaiians – to Kalakaua and certainly to

his sister, Lydia Kamakaeha Kaolamalii Liliuokalani, who was to succeed him – the new amended reciprocity treaty formed the first step on the road towards annexation (Allen 1988: 125). The reaction of the other powers was equally negative. Great Britain and France protested, calling into mind the joint Anglo-French Declaration of November 1843 about Hawaii's territorial integrity. In line with the suggestion of a joint three-power administration for Samoa made by the United States at the Washington Conference of 1887, they called for a joint statement by the United States, Great Britain and France guaranteeing Hawaiian independence. Washington refused. Berlin used Pearl Harbor as an argument to justify German action in Samoa. Washington was made to understand that up to that moment Germany had not used its own position of preponderance in Samoa to demand special privileges there, as America had done in Hawaii (Dulles 1938: 117).

Queen Liliuokalani ascended the throne in January 1891 after the death of Kalakaua. In the United States, President Benjamin Harrison, a Republican, clearly was not pleased with her becoming queen. He feared that her reign would favour 'schemes of those who are seeking to bring the islands under the control of European powers' (LaFeber 1998: 143). From the outset, Liliuokalani ran into trouble with John Leavitt Stevens, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States in Hawaii since 1889. He had arrived in Honolulu, shortly after his predecessor, George W. Merrill, in July of that year had requested the protection of his legation by American marines of the USS *Adams* during an ill-fated one-day coup d'état against Kalakaua (whose own role was not clear) by dissatisfied Hawaiians, headed by Robert W. Wilcox, who wanted to restore the old constitution. The marines had also provided the Honolulu Rifles, with ammunition.²

Stevens was an appointee of Blaine, now Secretary of State; a close friend of his, and like Blaine an ardent promoter of expanding America's hold over Hawaii. 'Destiny and the vast future interests of the United States in the Pacific', he wrote to the new Secretary of State, John Watson Foster, in November 1892 (Blaine had resigned in June for reasons of health), 'clearly indicate who at no distant day must be responsible for the government of these islands'. There were two courses of action open. The first was 'bold and vigorous measures for annexation'. The other was a list of prerogatives: 'a "customs union", an ocean cable from the Californian coast to Honolulu, Pearl Harbor perpetually ceded to the United States with implied but not

2 Testimony of William Dewitt Alexander before the Morgan Committee (morganreport.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Summary_of_Alexander; accessed 25-2-2011).

Figure 26 Queen Liliuokalani

Source: Musick 1898

expressly stipulated American protectorate over the island'. Stevens himself preferred the first option. It would be better for Hawaii and 'the cheapest and least embarrassing in the end to the United States'.³

Queen Liliuokalani's intention to continue the Hawaii-centred policy of her late brother clashed with Stevens' conviction that Hawaii should become part of the United States. She recollected later how Stevens, who had been 'constantly unfriendly and quarrelsome', had given a 'most inconsiderable speech', on her accession to the throne, which 'would lead me to suppose that he considered an American protectorate established on that day'. 'Not one of the other representatives', she stressed, 'chose my coronation day as an occasion for threats and penalties'.⁴ Stevens made it his job to convince his government that should the United States not interfere, Great Britain could well take advantage of domestic strife in Hawaii and take possession of the islands (Dulles 1938: 171-2). He even tried to persuade Washington to allow him to take an active role in preparing an American

3 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

4 Dutch envoy in Washington to Minister of Foreign Affairs 12-3-1893 (ARA A-Dos box 223).

annexation. In March 1892, he pleaded with Blaine to allow him and the senior naval commander of American warships present in Hawaii 'to deviate from established international rules and precedents' and go beyond a simple protection of American lives and property, should unrest erupt. The special relationship between the United States and Hawaii warranted such a course of action.⁵ A few months later he saw to it that Thurston, on a visit to the United States, could meet Blaine and other influential politicians. Harrison, wisely, refused to meet Thurston in person, but no doubt was left with Thurston that the American government would regard an annexation request with sympathy (Coffman 2009: 117).

The focus of the dispute between Liliuokalani and the foreign residents became the Bayonet Constitution, which Stevens had told her she should not try to do away with (Coffman 2009: 124). She could draw strength from the fact that in 1890, still under her brother, Kalakaua, an anti-American and anti-white establishment political party, the National Reform Party, had won the elections and Thurston and the other members of the cabinet had been forced to resign. Her people, she used to stress, wanted the constitution to be changed. Petitions to that effect had poured in, she could rightfully claim. Worried by such intentions, American residents, with the backing of Stevens, became even more intent on taking full control of the government and on handing over Hawaii to the United States.

Annexation offered some settlers an additional advantage. In 1890, on the initiative of the Republican Congressman William McKinley, soon to be President, Washington had abolished all import duties on raw sugar to become effective in two years later, and simultaneously had granted local American producers a bounty. The new import regulations did away with the advantages that the sugar growers in Hawaii had derived from the Reciprocity Treaty. They now had to compete with sugar producers in Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America. The consequences were immediately felt. The price of Hawaiian sugar plummeted, to fall below production costs in 1892 (Castle 1999: 77). A 'sense of panic' set in (Coffman 2009: 107). Dependent as it was on the export of sugar, the Hawaiian economy plunged into a depression. The prospects of becoming entitled to the subsidy made it all the more attractive for the producers of sugar for Hawaii to become part of the United States.

For Foster and Blaine the crisis was god-sent. In his November letter to Foster, Stevens mentioned the Hawaiian sugar crisis as one of the reasons

5 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

for annexation. Blaine had also tried to make use of the bad prospects of the Hawaiian sugar industry. He held out a new reciprocity treaty; offering a subsidy on Hawaii's sugar similar to the one American producers were given in return for American control over Hawaiian foreign policy and the right to land troops on the islands in the case of domestic disturbances. Kalakaua, regarding the proposals as aiming at a virtual protectorate, and advised to do so by the British envoy (much more outspoken than his government in London), refused (Coffman 2009:102). Liliuokalani, according to the Americans spurred on to do so by Canadian citizens with links to the Canadian transcontinental railroad and thus having a keen interest in an intermediate port for trans-Pacific shipping, took a similar position (LaFeber 1998: 143). She, moreover, found a new source of money, to ease Hawaii's financial problems: the Louisiana Lottery Company, the only surviving legal lottery in the United States. It was in need of a new outlet after anti-lottery legislation in the United States had gradually forced it to seek a new base of operation abroad. In 1884 the company had already tried to get a lottery bill accepted in Hawaii but had failed (Musick 1898 346). Liliuokalani, looking for ways to overcome a financial crisis in her country and ignoring domestic opposition by puritan Christians, saw to it that a lottery bill and an opium shop bill were promulgated in January 1893.

Under these dire economic circumstances, yet another pressure group of foreigners was formed in 1892, the Annexation Club. Again, Thurston was one of its initiators. It claimed a membership of two thousand (Krout 1898: 151). In 1893, after a period rife with rumours about serious trouble brewing in Honolulu, and the Queen trying to undo the power the white settlers had gained, matters came to a head. On Saturday 14 January 1893, Liliuokalani, claiming that she was acting at the request of 'her dear people', made an attempt to revoke the constitutional reform of 1887 (*Hawaiian Gazette* 17-1-1893). Later, in a statement widely cited in the American press, she would defend her actions by pointing out that the Bayonet Constitution had robbed the Hawaiians of 'their just and inalienable rights'. She also stated that it had not been her intention to 'deprive one white man of one legitimate right', but pointed out that under the Bayonet Constitution 'any newly arrived white man without interests or intention of residence' was 'placed as a voter over the heads of thousands of my subjects, to whom God had given these islands, and no other home'.⁶ In the afternoon of 14 January, the Queen dressed in a 'magnificent morning costume, with a sparkling coronet of diamonds', presented her four cabinet ministers with

6 Dutch envoy in Washington to Minister of Foreign Affairs 12-3-1893 (ARA A-Dos box 223).

a new constitution (*Hawaiian Gazette* 17-1-1893). They refused to sign and also would not step down. A crowd of Hawaiians had assembled outside. Scared, three Cabinet Ministers fled to the seat of government, Government Building. Having assured themselves of the support of leading members of the settlers community, they would later return and persuade Liliuokalani to postpone the promulgation of her new constitution. She did so 'with bitter reluctance' it was reported (*Hawaiian Gazette* 17-1-1893).

In a next step, still on 14 January, late in the afternoon, the Annexation Club, which at least had the sympathy of Foster and others in Washington if not their active support, called into being a Citizens' Committee of Public Safety, usually referred to as the Committee of Safety. During its first meeting, which took place behind closed doors, Thurston proposed forming a provisional government as a prelude to annexation by the United States. The conspirators turned to Stevens and asked for the assistance of American marines from the USS *Boston*, anchored in the harbour of Honolulu. Stevens, who well might have wanted to respond differently, refused, saying that he was prepared to disembark troops for the protection of American life and property only, not to support a rebellion.

On 16 January, the Committee staged a mass meeting, in which American, British and German residents, and what Krout (1898: 21), not a neutral observer, described as 'the best of the native element', participated. On that same day, Stevens acted, responding positively to a request 'by a respectable number of American citizens ... to protect their lives and property' (Musick 1898: 359) against, what one of them would later call, 'assaults and danger from the natives' (*New York Times* 15-4-1893). He ordered the Commander of the *Boston*, Captain G.C. Wiltse, to do all he could 'for the protection of the U.S. Legation and U.S. Consulate, and to secure the safety of American life and property' (Musick 1898: 359). Between four and five o'clock in the afternoon of 16 January, 160 American marines entered Honolulu and took control of the strategic buildings in the city. If we may believe one contemporary witness, when the troops passed the Palace, 'the Queen appeared upon the balcony and the troops respectfully saluted her by presenting arms and dipping the flag, and made no demonstration of any hostile intent'.⁷

On 17 January 1893, Liliuokalani informed Stevens that she would leave the Bayonet Constitution intact. It was to no avail. Stevens, claiming that he could not take sides, refused to come to her assistance. Still on the same day,

7 Morganreport.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=The_Rest_of_The_Rest (accessed 25-2-2011).

Liliuokalani was deposed.⁸ A Provisional Government was formed. This was done, a proclamation read out from the steps of Government Building stated, for 'the control and management of public affairs and the protection of the public peace'.⁹ The Provisional Government was to be in office until Hawaii had become part of the United States. An executive council of four was formed. It was chaired by Sanford Ballard Dole, a Hawaii-born lawyer and sugar planter and at the time a member of the Supreme Court. Dole, the son of a missionary, also assumed the posts of President and that of Minister of Foreign Affairs. His government had 'good support from the great majority of the better class of our foreign community', the Dutch consul in Hawaii, J.H. Paty, reported to his government.¹⁰

After the proclamation had been read, supporters of the new Republic marched to the Palace where they 'found no one save an indignant woman, once a queen but now deserted by her cabinet, and her soldiers safely housed in the police quarters making no effort to save her' (Musick 1898: 358). Liliuokalani blamed 'American capitalists' and those aiming at 'the restoration of the sugar bounty' for the coup d'état.¹¹ In a statement she delivered to the Provisional Government, the queen stressed that she yielded 'to the superior force of the United States of America whose Minister Plenipotentiary, His Excellence John L. Stevens, had caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu'. She had resigned, the statement continued, 'under protest ... until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative'.¹² On 18 January, the new government proclaimed martial law. All liquor stores were closed and the lottery was forbidden. Power in Hawaii had been seized by the missionaries, a British Member of Parliament concluded, giving the impression that he regretted the end of betting in Hawaii and the blow to horseracing this had implied (as well as the obligation to attend church on Sunday he said that had been instituted).¹³

8 After she had been deposed agents of the Louisiana Lottery Company contacted Paul Newman (one of her confidants) and informed him that they wanted to buy the Island of Lanai for 'a syndicate of sporting men' to turn it into a gambling resort (Musick 1898: 230). In return, they were prepared to finance the Queen's return to power. Newman reported the conspirators to the new authorities and they ended up in jail.

9 Proclamation establishing a provisional government at the Hawaiian Islands Art 2.

10 Paty to G. van Tienhoven 18-1-1893 (ARA F.O. A-dos box 223).

11 Dutch envoy in Washington to Minister of Foreign Affairs 12-3-1893 (ARA A-Dos box 223).

12 Statement Liliuokalani cited in Gresham to Cleveland 18-10-1893 (*New York Times* 11-11-1893).

13 Beckett in House of Commons 19-7-1897 (hansard.millbanksystem.com/commons/1897/jul/19/foreign-office-vote).

Assessments of the state of affairs Honolulu was in at that moment by contemporaries, and in later reconstructions of the dethronement of Queen Liliuokalani, depend on sides taken. Opponents of annexation would maintain – as by the end of the year the new American President, Stephen Grover Cleveland, would do – that the American marines occupied a quiet town, where there were no signs of unrest or disorder. In Cleveland's words, Honolulu was 'in its customary orderly and peaceful condition'.¹⁴ His Secretary of State, Walter Q. Gresham, was to give a similar assessment. He was to write that when the marines landed, the Provisional Government 'had little other than a paper existence' and that Liliuokalani's government was still in 'full possession and control of the palace, the barracks and the police station'.¹⁵ Those condoning the act pointed at a tense situation that had come about in the city. Stevens would later defend his action by stating that he had been motivated by 'the fear of incendiarism, tumult and robbery, and the danger of alarming panic in the night' (*New York Times* 30-11-1893).

Annexation or not?

On 1 February, Stevens, who later claimed that because there was no telegraph connection with the continent he had not been able to consult Washington, had his own proclamation read from the steps of Government Building by an officer of the *Boston*: 'To the Hawaiian people!' In the statement, he announced that for the protection of life and property and at the request of the Provisional Government he had assumed protection of the Hawaiian Islands in the name of the United States of America. As a kind of postscript, it was mentioned that the action had the approval of Wiltse, the Commander of the *Boston*. Subsequently, the American flag was hoisted on top of the tower of Government Building (and later also at the Palace; Liliuokalani would stay in her mansion, Washington Place). Marines of the *Boston* and volunteers of the Honolulu Rifles standing in line in front of the building saluted the flag and shots were fired by the *Boston*. Stevens' proclamation was also to be published in the press. At Government Building, the Hawaiian flag (still the same one as that used under the monarchy) continued to fly, albeit considerably lower, in the grounds. As Dole assured the Dutch consul in Honolulu, the 'Hawaiian

14 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

15 Gresham to Cleveland 18-10-1893 (*New York Times* 11-11-1893).

flag still flies from the staff in front of Government Building and will be displayed in all the Government offices on customary occasions'.¹⁶ Still on the same day, Stevens sent a letter to the State Department in Washington explaining his action. 'The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it', he wrote to try to convince his superiors of the wisdom of his action.¹⁷ He must have been busy. Also on 1 February, letters went out to the foreign consuls, informing them that at 'the official request of the Provisional Government', he, 'aided by the United States Naval Force in the Harbor of Honolulu', had assumed 'temporary protectorate of the Hawaiian Islands' and that the status of Hawaii would be decided by negotiations in Washington.¹⁸

Stevens justified his move by pointing at the evil intention of other powers, claiming that had he not raised the American flag, the British or Japanese might have taken advantage of the situation (Dulles 1938: 176).

We have said in effect, if not in words, to other nations: "You may, if you will, take possession of many islands in the Pacific, subdue and improve them at your will, but in these islands, standing at our gates and fronting our coasts, American rights and interests are before all foreign claimants, the natives shall be protected and civilized, and American interests defended",

he would explain later in a speech. Hawaii had become American and 'all dangers of dual or tripartite arrangements' were avoided. At the same occasion, Stevens would use a similar argument to the one he had used to justify the landing of American marines. The Provisional Government had insufficient security forces to maintain order. 'Fear and panic began to make headway in the city. A riot was feared. Millions of American property and life and order were in peril' (*New York Times* 30-6-1893).

Stevens and Dole almost got their way. In Washington Harrison and Foster shared Stevens' fear that the British and the Japanese might advance their interests should the coup d'état fail. Great Britain took centre stage in such doom scenarios and, ostensibly to forestall any British action, Harrison had seen to it in 1891 that an American warship would frequent Honolulu (Coffman 2009: 112, 123). Foster would write in retrospect that he was convinced

16 Dole to Paty 1-2-1893 (ARA F.O. A-Dos box 223).

17 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

18 Stevens to Paty 1-2-1893 (ARA A-Dos box 223).

that if the Hawaiian islands did 'not soon become American territory, they would inevitably pass under the control of Great Britain or Japan' (LaFeber 1998: 146). Such anxieties, if they were sincere, had little to do with reality. London had no intention of annexing Hawaii. Japan lacked the military capacity to contemplate such a step and was much more concerned with its conflict with China over Korea and the threat Russia might pose to its own security. In line with this, Tokyo had informed Washington that it had no intention at all of annexing Hawaii. As *The New York Times* (15-4-1893) wrote, there was reason to believe that rumours about Japan's evil intention originated from those in Hawaii (and in the United States) seeking annexation. Japan did send a warship, the *Naniwa*, to Hawaii to show – as other powers were also in the habit of doing – that it was not indifferent to the fate of its citizens abroad when local unrest threatened. Its arrival caused a brief panic. As Stevens was to relate, he feared a collaboration between the Japanese and the 'fallen queen, the lottery ring, and the palace gang' to restore Liliuokalani to the throne (*New York Times* 30-11-1893). In London the British government saw no reason to take a similar step. British lives and property were 'safe under American protection'.¹⁹ The presence of the *Naniwa* and the expected arrival of a British warship figured prominently in Stevens' defence of his action. He knew about London's position, but also knew, as he would state, that the British representative in Hawaii was of a different opinion (*New York Times* 30-6-1893). The consul's opposition to the Provisional Government, was probably shared by part of the British residents, according to one contemporary, who attributed this to their 'jealousy of the Americans', even by a majority of them.²⁰

Washington instructed Stevens to cooperate with the new administration and on 15 February 1893, almost at the end of Harrison's term of office, a draft annexation treaty was transmitted to the Senate. Here, Republican members tended to be in favour, while the Democrats who opposed it were not inclined to make haste, awaiting Cleveland's inauguration. The Senate was given the impression that the Committee of Safety had acted independently of any American support. To underline this, a number of letters were supplemented to the draft of the treaty. One was from Harrison, who vowed that his government in no way had promoted the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. Another was a copy of a message from Foster to Harrison, which incorrectly stated that the proclamation of

19 Grey in House of Commons (hansard.millbanksystem.com/commons/1893/feb/02/the-sandwich-islands-1).

20 Morganreport.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Summary_of_Alexander (accessed 25-2-2011).

the Provisional Government of Hawaii had been read before the American mariners had disembarked. The new government had been recognised, it claimed, only after the Queen had abdicated and after the rebels were 'in effective possession of the government buildings, the archives, the treasury, the barracks, the police station, and all the potential machinery of the government'.²¹ As an additional argument to convince the Senate, Harrison stressed the danger of other nations intervening: 'It is essential that none of the other great powers shall secure the islands. Such possession would not consist with our safety and the peace of the world' (Dulles 1938: 177).

It seemed that within less than a month after the reading of the proclamation, the plotters had achieved their aim. Change in government in Washington, and the anti-annexation mood strengthened by the developments in Hawaii, put a spoke in the wheels. The opposition against the United States becoming a colonial power drew upon an mixture of idealistic, economic and racial considerations. Some took their inspiration from American history. To them, acquiring territory outside the North American continent violated American democratic principles and was a betrayal of the own history as a former colony. Others preferred to make a cost-benefit analysis; coming out in favour of free trade as an alternative to colonial aggrandisement of which the financial burdens of conquest and rule might well exceed the profits. Yet a third objection was a racial one. The United States had closed its borders to Asians. Since 1882 a Chinese Exclusion Act was in force. Incorporation of Hawaii and the Philippines might open the door again to Asians. Or, as Henry Johnson, vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League (founded in June 1899) rhetorically asked: 'Are you ready to grant citizenship to those your laws exclude from coming into this country?' (Miller 1982: 125). In the case of Hawaii, 'alien, inferior, and mongrel races' had to be kept out (Miller 1982: 124). With respect to the Philippines, and with an evident lack of knowledge of the ethnic map of Asia, worry was expressed about the 'Malays, Chinese Mestizos' and people of 'other inferior race' brought into the American system (Miller 1982: 15). Even the spectre of Filipino Senators, who would 'destroy' the American Constitution, was held out (Miller 1982: 125).

On 4 March 1893, Cleveland, a Democrat, took office. In contrast to his predecessor, Cleveland – a man averse to Jingoism in all things, as *The New York Times* (15-4-1893) described him – was not convinced that annexation

21 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

Figure 27 The proclamation of the Republic of Hawaii on 4-7-1894

Source: Musick 1898

was the right way to proceed. Within days, Cleveland, stating that a re-examination was in order, withdrew the draft annexation treaty from consideration in Congress and sent James Henderson Blount, chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as special commissioner to Hawaii with paramount powers to investigate.

From the outset Blount, who arrived in Hawaii on 29 March, may well have been averse to annexation. He was accused of having an open ear to the opinion of Hawaiians, but hardly making time for representatives of the Provisional Government and other white settlers (Kroust 1898: 208). Stevens even criticised Blount's choice of hotel. It was owned by a former chamberlain of Kalakaua, and the owner of a firm that primarily wanted to do business with Great Britain; in short, a venue supporters of the Provisional Government were hesitant to enter (*New York Times* 30-11-1893). One of Blount's first deeds, on 1 April, was to order the withdrawal of the American marines from the city. On the same day, in the presence of a large crowd and a bugle sounding the notes of the retreat the American flags were lowered and replaced by the old Hawaiian flag; creating, *The New York Times* (14-4-1893) reported, 'among the American party a feeling of consternation not altogether unmixed with indignation'. At the Palace, the flag-lowering ceremony was witnessed by many. As elsewhere in the Pacific the scene was quite telling for racial relations. 'The native and Oriental

population crowded the side-walk across the road in front of the Palace, the Americans and Europeans were collected in the grounds or upon the pavement adjoining' (Krout 1898: 159).

Stevens was dismissed. Blount reported to Cleveland that Stevens must have had prior knowledge of the coup d'état and that the majority of Hawaiians did not support the new government (which they indeed did not, as was well known at that time). As he wrote to Secretary of State Gresham:

The present Government can only rest on the use of military force, possessed of most of the arms in the islands, with a small white population to draw from to strengthen it. Ultimately it will fall without fail. It may preserve its existence a year of two, but no longer (Musick 1898: 369-70).

Naturally Stevens had no good word for Blount. He called Blount and those who backed him 'extremely un-American', 'unpatriotic', and acting 'in direct opposition to the civilizing and Christianizing influence on the Hawaiian Islands' and suggested that Blount 'was aiding ultra-British interests' (*The New York Times* 30-11-1893).

Blount's report, completed in July 1893, made Cleveland order the restoration of Liliuokalani to the throne in November. Similar to the situation in Great Britain and London's reluctance to acquire new territory, American expansionists branded such restraint a big mistake. For the Republican Senator, Henry Cabot Lodge, typified in a recent study of American imperialism by Immerman (2010: 130), as 'a pivotal force in driving America's rise to global dominance', the refusal to annex Hawaii was a reason to entitle one of his articles *Our Blundering Foreign Policy*. Among the reasons for him – and for Mahan – to do so was the importance Hawaii would acquire once ships could sail the Panama Canal. Hawaii was, as Lodge would put it, the Gibraltar of the Pacific (Immerman 2010: 140, LaFeber 1963: 409).

The person who had to guide the restoration to power of Liliuokalani was Albert Shelby Willis, the new American envoy to Hawaii. Willis arrived in Honolulu in November 1893. He needed all his powers of persuasion to accomplish his task. For one, he had to convince Liliuokalani that Dole and his associates should be pardoned. She should, as Willis said to her, 'show forgiveness and magnanimity' and show that she wished to be 'the queen of all the people, both native and foreign born' (Musick 1898: 376). He also asked her to include some of her opponents in her cabinet. Initially, Liliuokalani refused. Law demanded that traitors should be beheaded and that their property should fall to the state. Later, after Cleveland had impressed upon her that she should show lenience, she agreed to an amnesty.

Dole, whom Cleveland addressed as his 'great and good friend', also stood his ground and refused to agree to a restoration of the monarchy; indeed, he threatened armed resistance. Cleveland was unable to force the Provisional Government to resign and decided to leave the matter to the American Congress. In defiance of all who had stressed the strategic importance of Hawaii, he left no doubt that, in his opinion, Harrison had been wrong. On 18 December, referring to the ideals of America's own history, Cleveland wrote a lengthy message to Congress, denouncing Stevens' action. The annexation of islands 'more than two thousand miles removed from our nearest coast' departed from an 'unbroken American tradition'.²² Explaining his position, he compared the statements of the previous administration about the non-involvement of American troops in the coup d'état with other information that ran counter to it. Cleveland concluded rather diplomatically that Harrison and Congress had been 'misled'. In strong words, he condemned what had happened in January in Hawaii. The occupation of Honolulu had been 'wholly without justification', while, according to him, it did not appear that the Provisional Government had 'the sanction of either popular revolution or suffrage'. Stevens was disavowed. Citing from Stevens' correspondence with the State Department, Cleveland depicted Stevens as a man who had 'zealously promoted' an annexation of Hawaii. Stevens had 'an ardent desire that it should become a fact accomplished by his agency and during his ministry, and was not inconveniently scrupulous as to the means employed to that end'.

Congress, for the time being, put an end to any annexation ambitions. On February 1894, the House of Representatives in a resolution denounced 'interference with the domestic affairs of an independent nation' as 'contrary to the spirit of American institutions' and spoke out against annexation or establishing a protectorate as being 'uncalled for and inexpedient'.²³ The Senate followed. In the Turpie Resolution of 31 May 1894, it declared that domestic affairs in Hawaii were a matter of the Hawaiian people themselves and that the United States should in no way interfere (adding the warning that intervention by other powers would be 'regarded as an act unfriendly to the United States').²⁴ Congress, having decided against American rule, also rejected American military assistance to restore Liliuokalani to the

22 Message of President Cleveland to American Senate and House of Representatives, *New York Herald* 19-12-1893.

23 Resolution as cited in en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Hawaii (accessed 25-2-2011).

24 Resolution as cited in morganreport.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=The_Rest_of_The_Rest (accessed 25-2-2011).

throne; which, in view of opposition by the white settlers in Hawaii, might not have been an easy matter.²⁵ With incorporation into the United States out of the question, in a show of pro-American feelings on 4 July 1894 (the Fourth of July was enthusiastically celebrated by the white community in Hawaii, as was Thanksgiving, complete with the consumption of turkeys), the Provisional Government proclaimed the Republic of Hawaii.

When, in 1894, under the provisions of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act a high import tariff for sugar was instituted, Hawaii remained exempt due to its reciprocity treaty with the United States, a circumstance highly advantageous to the new Republic. To quell any doubt about America's position, Great Britain, Japan and Russia were warned for the umpteenth time not to interfere in domestic Hawaiian affairs. Just how much the United States cared about Hawaii became clear in January 1895 when royalists tried to stage a coup d'état and Washington directed a naval squadron to the islands. The event sealed the fate of Liliuokalani. After weapons had been found in her garden she was arrested on 16 January 1895 and abdicated on the 24 January. Liliuokalani was imprisoned in Iolani Palace, now the seat of the republican administration, tried, found guilty of not informing the authorities about plans to stage an insurrection involved, and was pardoned a few months later.

25 In reaction to Cleveland's message the Senate Foreign Relation Committee chaired by John Tyler Morgan started an investigation into what had happened earlier that year in Hawaii. The Morgan report, which was completed in February 1894, questioned many of the conclusions Blount had drawn. It denounced the plans of Liliuokalani to change the Bayonet Constitution, condoned the landing of American troops, as, it concluded, at that moment there was no government in Honolulu capable of maintaining law and order, but rejected the proclamation of a protectorate by Stevens.