

U.S. Imperialism**Lesson 1**

Imperialism and America

Key Terms and People

Queen Liliuokalani The Hawaiian queen who was forced out of power by a revolution started by American business interests

imperialism The practice of stronger countries extending economic, political, and military control over weaker countries

Alfred T. Mahan American imperialist and admiral who urged the United States to build up its navy and take colonies overseas

William Seward Secretary of state under presidents Lincoln and Johnson

Pearl Harbor Port in Hawaii where the United States built a naval base

Sanford B. Dole American businessman who headed the new government of Hawaii after the queen was overthrown

Before You Read

In the last lesson you read about the Woodrow Wilson administration. In this lesson you will learn how economic activity led to political and military involvement overseas.

As You Read

Use a diagram to take notes on the causes of U.S. imperialism.

AMERICAN EXPANSIONISM**Why did Americans support imperialism?**

In 1893 **Queen Liliuokalani** of Hawaii gave up her throne. Hawaii was about to be taken over by the United States.

By the 1880s many American leaders thought the United States should establish colonies overseas. This idea was called **imperialism**—the policy in which stronger nations extend economic, political, or military control over weaker territories. European countries had competed for territory all over the world. Most Americans gradually accepted the idea of overseas expansion.

Three factors fueled American imperialism: desire for military strength,

thirst for new markets, and a belief in the superiority of American culture.

Admiral **Alfred T. Mahan** of the U.S. Navy supported growing American naval power so the United States could compete with other nations. The United States built such modern battleships as the *Maine* and the *Oregon*. The new ships made the United States the world's largest naval power.

By the late 1800s technology had changed American farms and factories. They produced more than Americans could consume. So the United States needed foreign trade. American businesses needed markets for their products and raw materials for their factories.

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The third factor of American imperialism was a belief that the people of the United States were better than the people of other countries. This racist belief came from people's pride in their Anglo-Saxon (Northern European) heritage. People sometimes felt they had a duty to spread their culture and Christian religion among other people.

1. What were three reasons Americans supported imperialism?

THE UNITED STATES ACQUIRES ALASKA; THE UNITED STATES TAKES HAWAII

How did the Hawaiian Islands become a U.S. territory?

William Seward was secretary of state for presidents Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. In 1867 he purchased Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. Some opponents in Congress made fun of the deal, calling it "Seward's Icebox" or "Seward's Folly."

The Hawaiian Islands, in the Pacific Ocean, had been important to the United States since the 1790s. Merchants had stopped there on their way to China and India. In the 1820s American missionaries founded Christian schools and churches on the islands.

A number of Americans had established sugar plantations in Hawaii. In the mid-1800s these large farms accounted for about three-quarters of the wealth in the islands. Plantation owners brought thousands of laborers to Hawaii from Japan, Portugal, and China. This weakened the influence of the native Hawaiians. By 1900 the foreign laborers outnumbered the Hawaiians three to one.

In 1875 the United States agreed to

import Hawaiian sugar duty-free. Over the next 15 years, Hawaiian sugar production increased nine times. Then the McKinley Tariff in 1890 caused a crisis for Hawaiian sugar growers. With the duty on their sugar, Hawaiian growers faced stiff competition from other growers.

The powerful Hawaiian sugar growers called for the United States to annex Hawaii. The U.S. military had already understood the value of Hawaii. In 1887 the United States forced Hawaii to let it build a naval base at **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii's best port. Also in that year, white business leaders forced Hawaii's King Kalakaua to amend Hawaii's constitution, limiting voting rights to only wealthy landowners. But when Kalakaua died in 1891, his sister became queen. Queen Liliuokalani wanted a new constitution that would give voting power back to ordinary Hawaiians. American business interests did not want this to happen.

American business groups organized a revolt against the queen. The U.S. ambassador John L. Stevens helped them. The planters took control of the island. They established a temporary government headed by American businessman **Sanford B. Dole**.

Stevens urged the U.S. government to annex the Hawaiian Islands. President Grover Cleveland refused to take over the islands unless a majority of Hawaiians favored that. In 1897, however, William McKinley became president. He favored annexation. In 1898 Hawaii became a U.S. territory.

2. How did Hawaiians lose control of their islands?

Lesson 1, *continued*

As you read this lesson, fill out the chart below by summarizing reasons why the United States became an imperial power.

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM		
1. Economic roots	2. Political and military roots	3. Racist roots



4. What did Admiral Mahan urge the United States to do to protect its interests?

For each year on the timeline below, identify one important event in the history of U.S. involvement in Hawaii.

U.S. IMPERIALISM IN HAWAII	
1875	
1887	
1890	
1891	
1897	
1898	