DOCUMENT PROJECT 20

Imperialism versus Anti-Imperialism

On January 16, 1893, the USS *Boston* sailed into Honolulu harbor, in a show of support for U.S. businessmen who were aligned against Queen Liliuokalani, Hawaii's ruling monarch. Liliuokalani sought to overturn the 1887 constitution that had been forced on King Kalākaua. This "Bayonet Constitution," as it came to be known, favored U.S. and other foreign interests and limited the political power of native islanders, the poor, and the monarchy. The day after U.S. forces landed, Liliuokalani abdicated, and a provisional government, the Republic of Hawaii, was set up under the control of U.S. sugar growers. Native Hawaiians continued to rebel against their U.S.-dominated government, and in 1897 representatives from several political groups issued the Hawaiian Memorial (Document 20.5). This petition for self-rule failed, and Hawaii was formally annexed in 1898. In that same year, U.S. territorial acquisitions from the War of 1898 intensified the heated debate over U.S. imperialism and the principles of self-governance and democracy.

The following documents reveal the viewpoints of imperialists, anti-imperialists, and colonized people. Those supporting imperialism could find no greater advocate than Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, who served from 1899 to 1911. His speech entitled "The March of the Flag" compared Philippine colonization to U.S. westward expansion across North America and argued that Filipinos were a child-like and savage race incapable of self-governance (Document 20.6). A different view of the Philippine conflict came from a New Hampshire woman who in 1899 wrote to her local newspaper to scold U.S. women for failing to speak out against the "murderous, cowardly, dastardly war" in the Philippines (Document 20.8). Throughout this period—on the Senate floor and in town meeting halls, schoolrooms, national magazines, and local newspapers (Document 20.7)—Americans deliberated the significance and implications of international expansion.

Document 20.5

The Hawaiian Memorial, 1897

Hawaiian political groups sent the following petition (also called a memorial) to the U.S. government as a formal request to remove the provisional government of the Hawaiian Islands, which they viewed as illegitimate. Although the U.S. Senate initially refused to ratify President McKinley's effort to annex Hawaii in 1897, the following year Congress adopted a joint resolution annexing Hawaii as a territory.

To the President, the Congress, and the People of the United States of America:

This Memorial respectfully represents as follows:

1. That your memorialists are residents of the Hawaiian Islands; that the majority of them are aboriginal Hawaiians; and that all of them possess the qualifications provided for electors of representatives in the Hawaiian Legislature by the Constitution and laws prevailing in the Hawaiian Islands at the date of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Constitutional Government, January 17, 1893.
2. That the supporters of the Hawaiian Constitution of 1887 have been, thence to the present time, in the year 1897, held in subjection by the armed forces of the Provisional Government of the Hawaiian Islands, and of its successor, the Republic of Hawaii, and have never yielded and do not acknowledge a spontaneous or willing allegiance or support to said Provisional Government, or to said Republic of Hawaii.

3. That the Government of the Republic of Hawaii has no warrant for its existence in the support of the people of these islands; that it was proclaimed and instituted and has hitherto existed and now exists without considering the rights and wishes of a great majority of the residents, native and foreign-born, of the Hawaiian Islands; and especially that said Government exists and maintains itself solely by force of arms, against the rights and wishes of almost the entire aboriginal population of these islands.
4. That said Republic is not and never has been founded or conducted upon a basis of popular government or republican principles; that its Constitution was adopted by a convention, a majority of whose members were self-appointed, and the balance of whose members were elected by a numerically insignificant minority of the white and aboriginal male citizens and residents of these islands. . . .
5. That the Constitution so adopted by said convention has never been submitted to a vote of the people of these islands, but was promulgated and established over the said islands, and has ever since been maintained only by force of arms, and with indifference to the will of practically the entire aboriginal population, and a vast majority of the whole population of these islands.
6. That the said Government, so existing under the title of the Republic of Hawaii, assumes and asserts the right to extinguish the Hawaiian nationality, heretofore existing, and to cede and convey all rights of sovereignty in and over the Hawaiian Islands and their dependencies to a foreign power, namely, to the United States of America.
7. That your memorialists have learned with grief and dismay that the President of the United States has entered into, and submitted for ratification by the United States Senate, a treaty with the Government of the Republic of Hawaii, whereby it is proposed to extinguish our existence as a nation, and to annex our territory to the United States. . . .
9. That your memorialists humbly but fervently protest against the consummation of this invasion of their political rights; and they earnestly appeal to the President, the Congress, and the people of the United States to refrain from further participating in the wrong so proposed; and they invoke in support of this memorial the spirit of that immortal instrument, the Declaration of American Independence; and especially the truth therein expressed, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed—and here repeat that the consent of the people of the Hawaiian Islands to the forms of government imposed by the so-called Republic of Hawaii, and to said proposed treaty of annexation, has never been asked by and is not accorded, either to said government or to said project of annexation.
10. That the consummation of the project of annexation dealt with in said treaty would be subversive of the personal and political rights of these memorialists and of the Hawaiian people and nation. . . .
11. Wherefore your memorialists respectfully submit that they, no less than the citizens of any American Commonwealth, are entitled to select, ordain, and establish for themselves such forms of government as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . .
12. And your memorialists humbly pray the President, Congress, and the people of the United States that no further steps be taken toward the ratification of said treaty, or toward the extinguishment of the Hawaiian nationality, or toward the absorption of the Hawaiian people and territory into the body politic and territory of the United States of America, at least until the Hawaiian people, as represented by those citizens and residents of the Hawaiian Islands who, under the provisions of the Hawaiian Constitution, promulgated July 7, 1887, would be qualified to vote for representatives in the Legislature, shall have had the opportunity to express, at the ballot-box, their wishes as to whether such project of annexation shall be accepted or rejected.

13. And your memorialists, for themselves, and in behalf of the Hawaiian people and of the residents of the Hawaiian Islands, pledge their faith that if they shall be accorded the privilege of voting upon said questions, at a free and fair election to be held for that purpose, and if a fair count of the votes that shall be cast at such election shall show a majority in favor of such annexation, these memorialists and the Hawaiian people will yield a ready and cheerful acquiescence in said project.

Signed

J. Kalua Kahookano, Samuel K. Pua, F. J. Testa, C. B. Maile, Samuel K. Kamakaia, Citizens' Committee
James Keauiluna Kaulia, President of the Hawaiian Patriotic League
David Kalauokalani, President of the Hawaiian Political Association

Source: "The Hawaiian Memorial," *City and State*, December 2, 1897, 143.

Document 20.6

Albert Beveridge | The March of the Flag, 1898

In September 1898 Albert Beveridge, who was campaigning to become U.S. senator from Indiana, gave a rousing speech supporting the annexation of Spain's former colonies. At the time of this address, the war with Spain had ended, but U.S. troops still occupied the Philippines. Once in office, Beveridge was an ardent supporter of U.S. imperial policies.

Hawaii is ours; Porto Rico is to be ours; at the prayer of her people Cuba finally will be ours; in the islands of the East, even to the gates of Asia, coaling stations are to be ours at the very least; the flag of a liberal government is to float over the Philippines, and may it be the banner that [Zachary] Taylor unfurled in Texas and [John] Fremont carried to the coast.

The Opposition tells us that we ought not to govern a people without their consent. I answer, the rule of liberty that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government. We govern the Indians without their consent, we govern our territories without their consent, we govern our children without their consent. How do they know [what] our government would be without their consent? Would not the people of the Philippines prefer the just, humane, civilizing government of this Republic to the savage, bloody rule of pillage and extortion from which we have rescued them?

And, regardless of this formula of words made only for enlightened, self-governing people, do we owe no duty to the world? Shall we turn these peoples back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them, with Germany, England, Japan, hungering for them? Shall we save them from those nations, to give them a self-rule of tragedy?

They ask us how we shall govern these new possessions. I answer: Out of local conditions and the necessities of the case, methods of government will grow. If England can govern foreign lands, so can America. If Germany can govern foreign lands, so can America. If they can supervise protectorates, so can America. Why is it more difficult to administer Hawaii than New Mexico or California? Both had a savage and an alien population; both were more remote from the seat of government when they came under our dominion than the Philippines are today.

Will you say by your vote that American ability to govern has decayed; that a century's experience in self-rule has failed of a result? Will you affirm by your vote that you are an infidel to American power and practical sense? Or will you say that ours is the blood of government; ours the heart of dominion; ours the brain and genius of administration? Will you remember that we do but what our fathers did—we but pitch the tents of liberty farther westward, farther southward—we only continue the march of the flag?

The march of the flag! In 1789 the flag of the Republic waved over 4,000,000 souls in thirteen states, and their savage territory which stretched to the Mississippi, to Canada, to the Floridas. The timid

minds of that day said that no new territory was needed, and, for the hour, they were right. But Jefferson, through whose intellect the centuries marched; Jefferson, who dreamed of Cuba as an American state; Jefferson, the first Imperialist of the Republic—Jefferson acquired that imperial territory which swept from the Mississippi to the mountains, from Texas to the British possessions, and the march of the flag began!

The infidels to the gospel of liberty raved, but the flag swept on! The title to that noble land out of which Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana have been carved was uncertain; Jefferson, strict constructionist of constitutional power though he was, obeyed the Anglo-Saxon impulse within him, whose watchword then and whose watchword throughout the world today is, "Forward!": another empire was added to the Republic, and the march of the flag went on! . . .

The ocean does not separate us from lands of our duty and desire—the oceans join us, rivers never to be dredged, canals never to be repaired. Steam joins us; electricity joins us—the very elements are in league with our destiny. Cuba not contiguous! Porto Rico not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous! The oceans make them contiguous. And our navy will make them contiguous.

But the Opposition is right—there is a difference. We did not need the western Mississippi Valley when we acquired it, nor Florida, nor Texas, nor California, nor the royal provinces of the far northwest. We had no emigrants to people this imperial wilderness, no money to develop it, even no highways to cover it. No trade awaited us in its savage fastnesses [remote places]. Our productions were not greater than our trade. There was not one reason for the land-lust of our statesmen from Jefferson to Grant, other than the prophet and the Saxon within them. But, today, we are raising more than we can consume, making more than we can use. Therefore we must find new markets for our produce.

And so, while we did not need the territory taken during the past century at the time it was acquired, we do need what we have taken in 1898, and we need it now. The resources and the commerce of these immensely rich dominions will be increased as much as American energy is greater than Spanish sloth. In Cuba, alone, there are 15,000,000 acres of forest unacquainted with the ax, exhaustless mines of iron, priceless deposits of manganese, millions of dollars' worth of which we must buy, today, from the Black Sea districts. There are millions of acres yet unexplored.

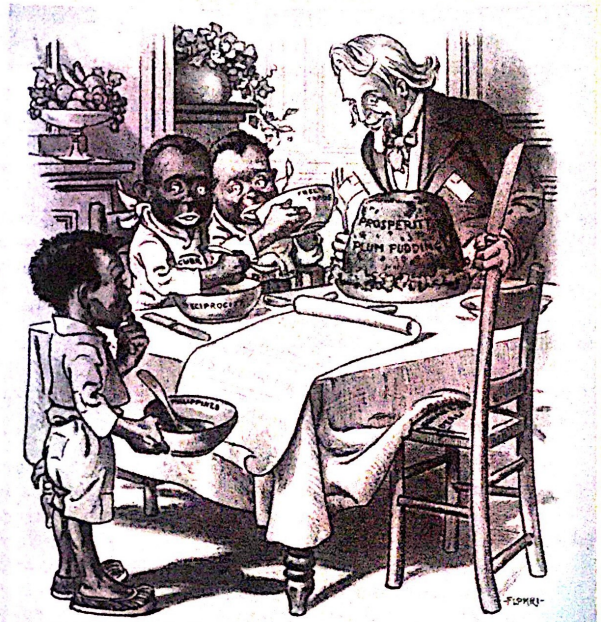
The resources of Porto Rico have only been trifled with. The riches of the Philippines have hardly been touched by the fingertips of modern methods. And they produce what we consume, and consume what we produce—the very predestination of reciprocity—a reciprocity "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." They sell hemp, sugar, cocoanuts, fruits of the tropics, timber of price like mahogany; they buy flour, clothing, tools, implements, machinery, and all that we can raise and make. Their trade will be ours in time. Do you indorse that policy with your vote?

Source: Albert J. Beveridge, *The Meaning of the Times and Other Speeches* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1908), 48–50, 52–53.

Document 20.7

"There's Plenty of Room at the Table," 1906

The satirical weekly magazine *Judge* was a strong supporter of President McKinley and the Republican Party. Its illustrations often depicted imperial expansion as good for the U.S. public as well as for colonized nations.



THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM AT THE TABLE. WHY NOT ASK THE HUNGRY LITTLE FELLOW TO SIT DOWN?

Library of Congress, 3c37921

Document 20.8

Anti-Imperialism Letter, 1899

What began in 1898 as a conflict to free the Philippines from Spanish control quickly became a struggle to subdue Filipino rebels intent on establishing their own government. The following letter was written to the *Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican* just one month after the new Philippine Republic declared war on the United States. The brutality of the fighting caused many Americans to question the motives and methods of U.S. imperial aspirations.

To The Editor of the Republican:

I cannot longer hold my peace, though only a woman. I am thankful to see today that the business men (some of them, I should say) have started a plan for the cessation of this murderous, cowardly, dastardly war. Also I saw yesterday that Gamaliel Bradford [an American writer and poet] has volunteered to speak in the same just and holy cause wheresoever needed. This is the thing I have longed to see done weeks and weeks ago. The "peace" treaty never would have been ratified if the nation had been waked up to the meaning of its iniquity. Speaking everywhere is needed, such as we had at the beginning of the civil war, giving light to the thousands that now do not care. "It is no business of theirs." "Congress will take care," they say, reading the papers that hurrah for McKinley. What do they know about it? They don't feel the burden much yet. Taxes are bad enough, but those that must come with the McKinley policy long continued, they don't feel yet. It is healthy for all they see out there, none of theirs have died, and it's only the Filipinos mostly that are killed: and we are to be a "bigger country." What the whole country needs is to rouse the people, that they demand that this sin shall cease, that America's shame may be wiped out ere it is too late!

I blush for my sisters who call themselves "Colonial Dames," "Daughters of the Revolution," "Abraham Lincoln circle of the Ladies of the Grand Army," and such patriotic sounding titles, where is their claim to such? In all these months of anxiety and anguish never one word of protest have I heard of their breathing! They have gathered for various social reasons and held good times, but the solemn duties and responsibilities that should be their first concern seem to have been utterly ignored. Cannot they be induced to begin likewise an appeal in every place where their orders exist, signed by every woman who has at heart the love of her country and its true honor. Only that something should be done! While we wait the islanders are being murdered by hundreds and a price put on the head of their brave leader!

J. W. P.

Source: Letter to the editor, *Springfield Republican*, March 16, 1899.

Interpret the Evidence

1. Why do the petitioners of the Hawaiian Memorial (Document 20.5) claim that the provisional government is illegitimate? How do they describe their government and people before annexation, and how do they characterize the United States?
2. Why does Albert Beveridge claim that it is the United States' duty to colonize the Philippines, and what does he think are the benefits to Americans and Filipinos (Document 20.6)? How does he respond to the anti-imperialist argument that the United States shouldn't govern a people without their consent?
3. What common arguments against U.S. colonization connect the Hawaiian Memorial (Document 20.5) and the letter from J. W. P. (Document 20.8)?
4. How do imperialists and anti-imperialists portray each other in these documents?
5. How do imperialists and anti-imperialists shape their arguments to appeal to either men or women?

Put It in Context

Why did the arguments of the imperialists prevail over those of anti-imperialists from 1898 to 1904?

In what ways do you think the anti-imperialist arguments might have contributed to reshaping the imperialist cause after that time?

Synthesis

In what ways do these arguments mirror debates over international involvement in earlier periods of American History?

What similar debates have happened in America's more recent history?

Connections to Secondary Sources

In what ways could these documents be used to support or refute the argument presented in each of the secondary sources on Imperialism you analyzed?